

UNIVERSITY OF READING

**G. W. M. Reynolds and Charles Dickens, 1837-1870:
The Construction of a Rivalry**

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Abstract

This thesis presents a critical examination of the rivalry between G. W. M. Reynolds and Charles Dickens between 1837 and 1870. Specifically, the thesis analyses three distinct phases of their rivalry. The first is its inception in 1837 following Reynolds's publication of *Pickwick Abroad*, his 'sequel' to Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836). The second phase concerns the 1840s, examining how Reynolds's success and reputation directly impacted upon Dickens's position in the literary market. The final phase addresses the most explicit and combative chapter of their rivalry as the two traded insults across their publications in the 1850s and Dickens looked to 'displace' his more radical counterpart. Commonly cited as a peripheral figure in Dickens's career, this thesis argues for Reynolds as a more significant presence. By analysing their publications in parallel, often viewing one through the lens of the other, this study offers a fresh perspective on two authors competing for readerships and commercial marketspace while grappling with authorial identities in the first age of mass culture.

The thesis presents three principal arguments. Firstly, it seeks to contest the reductive perception of Reynolds as a cheap plagiariser of Dickens's work by analysing the more nuanced and complex aspects of Reynolds's early re-appropriations. Secondly, it argues that Reynolds's precipitous rise to literary fame and political notoriety after 1844 had a significant bearing on the fiction Dickens produced thereafter. It is contended that Dickens's abrupt shift from the political incendiaryism of *The Chimes* in 1844 into a 'transitional period' in 1845, after which his fiction became more domestically, or family-oriented, can be understood as a response, or reaction to Reynolds's concurrent literary successes and his growing reputation as a radical and political subversive. Finally, it is reasoned that the bitter exchange of insults between Dickens and Reynolds in the 1850s and the seemingly mutable tone of their rivalry up until Dickens's death in 1870 illustrates a relationship not entirely the product of natural antipathy, but one cultivated for commercial and political purposes. It is argued that both Dickens and Reynolds constructed an image of the other in order to mask their similarities and natural affinities and to bolster and better define their own position in the literary marketplace.

Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Russell Hodgson

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I would like to express my thanks and deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr Andrew Mangham for his expertise, his constant reassurance, and his unfailing readiness to read and comment on this thesis as it has evolved.

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Introduction

On 26 July 2014 a bicentenary event was held at the Westminster Archives Centre at the University of Roehampton to celebrate the life and writing of a man who, upon his death in 1879, was described by a publication aptly named *The Bookseller* as ‘the most popular writer of our time’.¹ In a century that saw the emergence of a truly mass literary market, and which was flooded with the publication of what is conservatively estimated as around 60,000 novels,² this was certainly a remarkable feat. Both the writer and this achievement were not, however, universally popular. Karl Marx called him ‘a scoundrel’ and ‘a rich and able speculator’.³ Chartist poet and novelist Ernest Jones indirectly referred to him when commenting on the literary material available in the 1840s: ‘we cannot afford to spend our time every Saturday night in endeavouring to dig a few stray gems of liberty from a dense morass of moral filth. When we sit down to the feast of democracy we must not have the table spread with garbage’.⁴ The man responsible for this popular literary ‘garbage’ was George William MacArthur Reynolds, the author of ‘thirty-five or forty million words’ published across fifty-eight novels between 1835 and 1864,⁵ the most famous of which was the long-running *Mysteries of London* (1844-1848), a penny serial that assumed ‘a

¹ ‘Obituary for G. W. M. Reynolds’, *The Bookseller: A Newspaper of British and Foreign Literature*, 260 (1879), 600-1.

² These figures are taken from Louis James, *The Victorian Novel*. (Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2006); James in turn, took the figures from ‘The Publisher’s Circular between 1837 and 1901’. While James qualifies that ‘there can be no accurate account’, the number stated above ‘excluded novels published only in periodicals’. James, *The Victorian Novel*, p. 3; For broader discussions of the sheer extensiveness of Victorian fiction see John Sutherland, *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

³ Marx described Reynolds as such in letters to Ferdinand Lassalle on 28 April 1862 and to Frederich Engels on 8 October 1858. *The Letters of Karl Marx*, ed. by Saul K. Padover (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 465; The second quotation is taken from Virginia Berridge, ‘Popular Sunday papers and mid-Victorian society’, in George Boyce, James Curran, and Pauline Wingate, eds., *Newspaper History: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (London & Beverly Hills: Constable and Sage, 1978), p. 254.

⁴ Ernest Jones, ‘To The Chartists’, in *Ernest Jones, Notes to the People*, 2 vols. (London: J. Pavey, Holywell Street, 1851-2), Vol II, pp. 765-6 (p. 766).

⁵ Anne Humpherys, ‘G. W. M. Reynolds: Popular Literature and Popular Politics’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 16 (1983), 79-89 (p. 81); Although fifty-eight is the number of novels listed in Humpherys’s article, a 2015 Ph.D. thesis lists the number as ‘approximately thirty’. Jessica Hindes, ‘Revealing Bodies: Knowledge, Power and Mass Market Fictions in G. W. M. Reynolds’s *Mysteries of London*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2015), p. 15. The discrepancy between the two figures is most likely attributable to the fact that it is, as Louis James explains, ‘impossible at this date to compile a complete and accurate bibliography of Reynolds’s fiction’. Louis James, ‘A Bibliography of Works by G. W. M. Reynolds’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 273-284 (p. 273); A further contributing factor to the complexities in verifying Reynolds’s writing stem from accusations of Reynolds deploying ‘ghost’ writers. Such claims have proven difficult to substantiate throughout his career. See James, *The Victorian Novel*, p. 137.

central role in contemporary debate' and dominated the popular market.⁶ Reynolds was also the founder and editor of the extremely popular periodical *Reynolds's Miscellany* (1846-1869) and its successors and sister journals *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* (1850-1879) and *Reynolds's Political Instructor* (1849-1850). Among other journalistic enterprises, including writing for the *London and Paris Courier* (1838), Reynolds also briefly edited *The Teetotaler* magazine between 1840 and 1841, having himself signed the temperance pledge.⁷ Between 1848 and 1850 Reynolds swore his allegiance to another cause by assuming a prominent role in the Chartist Movement,⁸ a period that marked both the zenith of his fame and popularity and, conversely, for his political opponents, the peak of his notoriety.

In 1848, at the close of a decade known as the Hungry Forties, and as Europe underwent a series of full-scale revolutions and Britain teetered on the precipice of its own popular uprising, Reynolds, already publicly known for his 'inflammatory' literature,⁹ launched himself to further 'radical celebrity' as a new figure at the forefront of the Chartist Movement.¹⁰ In March of that year Reynolds spoke impromptu at a

⁶ James, *The Victorian Novel*, p. 15; *The Mysteries of London* dominated the popular market in the sense that Reynolds 'outsold all of his rivals'. His *magnum opus* is estimated to have sold in excess of a million copies. Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 170.

⁷ Although, as McWilliam notes, 'by 1841 he had become Director-General of the United Kingdom Anti-Teetotal Society'. McWilliam, "The Mysteries of G. W. M. Reynolds", p. 185.

⁸ Mary L. Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street: The Print Culture of a Victorian Street* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), p. 70; Reynolds was elected to the National Chartist Association's National Executive in 1848, winning more votes than any of his fellow committee members, beating Feargus O'Connor by 1,805 to 1,314. W. E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom* (London: Hutchinson, 1903), p. 236.

⁹ James, *The Victorian Novel*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Mary L. Shannon, 'Spoken Word and Printed Page: G. W. M. Reynolds and "The Charing-Cross Revolution", 1848', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 18 (2014), I, para 2 <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.683>> [accessed 24 April 2019]; Gregory Vargo's recent scholarship provides a concise summary of the Chartists' activities between the late 1830s and into the 1850s, describing the movement as seeking 'the expansion of democratic rights as a way to redress social, economic, and political wrongs. It emerged from a variety of other struggles, including the movement for union rights and factory reform; the effort to rescind taxes on the press, which constrained working-class publishing and reading; and the anti-new Poor Law movement. The latter agitation challenged the program of social retrenchment instituted by the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and contested the world view of an increasingly hegemonic political economy. Besides critics of the New Poor Law, Chartism enrolled under its banner Republican internationalists, Owenites, unionists, and many other stripes of radicals. It convulsed British society for more than a decade and became a touchstone for describing political upheaval for the rest of the country'. Gregory Vargo, *An Underground History of Early Victorian Fiction: Chartism, Radical Print Culture, and the Social Problem Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 3; Regarding the radical currency of the movement, Andrew Sanders has described the Chartists as 'heirs to the radical Dissent of the French Revolutionary era' as well as 'the vanguard of a newly self-conscious and expanding industrial working class'. Andrew Sanders, 'High Victorian Literature 1830-1880', in *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 408.

rally in Trafalgar Square to an audience of expectant working-class Chartists and protestors where he ‘turned the issue of the day away from taxation and towards revolution’.¹¹ The speech, in which Reynolds explicitly expressed his endorsement of French Republicanism and called for universal suffrage, was typical of his opportunism and his political boldness.¹² Due to his massive print popularity Reynolds had already come to the attention of the governing classes,¹³ who viewed his fiction as tawdry, even pornographic, and allegedly designed to ‘debase and demoralize the people’.¹⁴ His appearances at Trafalgar Square, and in the subsequent meeting at Kennington Common,¹⁵ effectively served to compound and reify the danger his writing supposedly posed to the ruling classes as he attempted to transform his ‘imagined network of readers’ into ‘actualized’ and ‘real’ protestors on the streets of London.¹⁶ Reynolds’s actions, which further

¹¹ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 69; Reynolds had ‘asked the demonstrators to vote in favour of the revolution in Paris, which they duly did. Amidst riotous support he then led the crowd down the Strand to his house in Wellington Street, where he addressed them from the balcony’. Elisabeth Jay, *British Writers and Paris 1830:1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 35-36; For an account of the meeting at Trafalgar Square see ‘The Open-Air Meeting in Trafalgar Square’, *The Times* (7 March 1848), 8.

¹² Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 200; As John Plunkett remarks: ‘Reynolds’s commercial success existed alongside, and because of, his outspoken Republican politics’, and *The Mysteries* continued to push his political agenda using a heady mix of vice and sensationalism. John Plunkett, ‘Regicide and Regimania in G. W. M. Reynolds and *The Mysteries of London*’, in *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, ed. by Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 15-30 (p. 22).

¹³ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 221.

¹⁴ Michael Diamond, ‘Charles Dickens as Villain and Hero in Reynolds’s Newspaper’, *Dickensian*, 89 (2002), 127-138. (p. 129); It is certainly true that Reynolds’s fiction was littered with passages in which he dwells on the female form in a manner less tolerable to the ‘respectable’ fiction of the period. Common descriptions of women in *The Mysteries of London*, for example, include: ‘A female of great beauty [...]. Her head reposed upon her hand, and her elbow upon the pillow: and that hand was buried in a mass of luxuriant light chestnut hair, which flowed down upon her back, her shoulders, and her bosom; but not so as altogether to conceal the polished ivory whiteness of the plump fair flesh’. G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I (Missouri: Valancourt Books, 2013), p. 44. In a similar passage describing an attack on a female character’s virtue, Reynolds writes: ‘Scarcely had his hand thus invaded the treasures of her bosom’. *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 146. While these scenes were undoubtedly risqué, it is important to recognise that Reynolds often empowered female sexuality, inveighing against the hypocrisy that sees society unfairly ‘pursue the unfortunate female who has made one false step, with the most avenging and malignant cruelty—it hunts her to suicide or to new ways of crime’. *Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 68. Such hypocrisy is illustrated when a female character, who has undergone an attack on her virtue, holds her male counterpart to account for his behaviour, to which he claims in exasperation: ‘This is absurd! [...]. Will not my humblest apology—my sincerest excuses—my future conduct, —will nothing atone for one false step’. *Mysteries of London*, p. 152.

¹⁵ See G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘The Editor’s Speech at the Monster Meeting on Kennington Common’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 3 (1848), 326-326.

¹⁶ Mary Hammond claims that, by the 1860s, there was a concern ‘over a potential leakage between popular books and bodies. This had disturbing class consequences, as though in certain public spaces and through certain fictional forms class could be carried like a disease from book to reader’. Reynolds’s actions at Trafalgar Square and Kennington Common in 1848 appear to pre-figure such concerns. Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 10; Similarly, Lorna Huett explains of cheap weekly publications, with which Reynolds’s reputation became attached, that ‘a sense of contagion began to hang around [...], and it fell noticeably out of favour as a medium for the publishing of good-quality fiction aimed at a readership more discerning than that of the bloods. Lorna Huett, ‘Among the Unknown Public: Household

catalysed the hopes and fears about French revolutionary action being repeated this side of the Channel,¹⁷ swiftly saw him blacklisted as a legitimate threat to the stability of the British State.¹⁸ Reynolds's efforts to forge a tangible connection between fiction, the spoken word, radical politics and urban space',¹⁹ through what were particularly fraught years in Britain, ought to have stamped his name indelibly into histories of the period. Yet, despite his prolific literary output, contemporary popularity, and political prominence earning him an almost ubiquitous status across cultural and political domains in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, Reynolds has since suffered a dramatic effacement from literary history and is 'now totally unknown to many modern Victorianists'.²⁰ The erasure, or 'collective "forgetting" of a vital chapter in the development of nineteenth-century popular culture and popular politics',²¹ and the correspondingly scant critical return Reynolds's life and writing has garnered, is remarkable. In fact, little was written on Reynolds until the middle of the twentieth century and certainly nothing positive. In 1957 Margaret Dalziel published *Popular Fiction One Hundred Years Ago: An Unexplored Tract of Literary History*, which provided the first favourable account of Reynolds's significance to nineteenth-century print culture.²² However, while Dalziel recognised Reynolds as a substantial literary talent, her summary of his career ultimately echoed that of Marx and Ernest Jones, regarding the moral thrust of his work as 'peculiarly disagreeable'.²³ Despite Reynolds maintaining that all of his writing contained a 'high moral purpose',²⁴ Dalziel dismissed such

Words, *All the Year Round*, and the Mass-Market Weekly Periodical in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 38 (2005), 61-82 (p. 66).

¹⁷ John Stuart Mill, for example, 'foresaw a domino effect' in which 'all the rest of Europe, except England and Russia will be Republicanised in ten years, and England itself probably before we die'. Elisabeth Jay, p. 36; citing *The Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill, 1812-1848*, ed. by F. E. Minneka, 2 Vols (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1996), II, p. 732; Similarly, although Matthew Arnold felt that there was little actual danger of the British monarchy being unseated, he felt sure that 'the hour of the hereditary peerage & eldest sonship and immense properties' was coming to an end. *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by C. Y. Lang, 6 vols (Charlottesville University Press of Virginia, 1996-2001), I, p. 91.

¹⁸ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 70; Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 221; Reynolds's advocacy of French Revolutionary activities was, Iain McCalman remarks, steeped in a 'hostility to capitalists and competition' and rooted in 'the basic Paineite idea that the English social system had evolved out of plundering, cheating and oppression'. McCalman, p. 200.

¹⁹ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 70.

²⁰ Humphrys, 'G. W. M. Reynolds: Popular Literature and Popular Politics', p. 79.

²¹ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 5.

²² Dalziel distinguished Reynolds from 'the usual run of things in cheap periodicals' according to his skill as a writer. Reynolds, she claims, has 'a fluent, luscious, polysyllabic style which never fails him. Not only is he never ungrammatical, but is almost never awkward or clumsy'. Margaret Dalziel, *Popular Fiction One Hundred Years Ago: An Unexplored Tract of Literary History* (Cohen and West: London, 1957), p. 41.

²³ Dalziel, p. 41.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 43.

claims as a limp justification of his fixation on vice and cruelty; Reynolds, she sardonically remarked, apparently ‘muck-rakes only to reform’.²⁵

Dalziel’s comments reflect the ambivalence with which critics have approached Reynolds’s writing, and especially his politics. Indeed, following Dalziel’s remarks, Reynolds continued to be regarded as a marginal figure in literary scholarship, commonly afforded only passing mention. Virginia Berridge’s study in 1978, for example, contains only a brief account of *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper*, despite the periodical enjoying mass circulation as a major organ of the nineteenth-century press and regarded by Rohan McWilliam as ‘the most successful and enduring working-class newspaper of its day’.²⁶ In my view, Reynolds argued convincingly in defence of a new category of cheap, or ‘Economic Literature’,²⁷ yet Berridge pejoratively compared the tone and style of his newspaper with that of Edward Lloyd, a publisher of cheap, popular journalism and (often plagiarised) serialised fiction, similarly deemed to possess few ‘improving’ or ‘respectable’ qualities.²⁸ The 1970s did, however, represent something of a turning point in the critical attention Reynolds began to receive, producing a slow burn of reparative and revisionary readings of his fiction and journalism.²⁹ In the wake of pioneering studies undertaken through this decade,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Rohan McWilliam, ‘The Mysteries of G. W. M. Reynolds: Radicalism and Melodrama in Victorian Britain’, in *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J. F. C. Harrison*, ed. by Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (Hampshire: Scolar, 1996), pp. 182-98 (p. 182).

²⁷ Trefor Thomas has observed that Reynolds offered a defence of ‘a new category of “Economic Literature” which was replacing old forms: its energy, the author argued, “is electric” and would “burst through the veil of ignorance, and break into the inmost recesses of all institutions, social, moral and political”’. G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. xvi; John Wilson Ross (one of Reynolds’s colleagues at the *London Journal*) similarly argued that cheap literature was increasingly important because it delivered ‘the benefits of imagination into the poorest homes in the land’. John Wilson. Ross, ‘Essays: The Influence of Cheap Literature’, *London Journal*, and *Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art*, 1 (1845), 115 (p. 115).

²⁸ Berridge, pp. 247-264; For further discussions on *Reynolds’s Newspaper* see Anne Humpherys, ‘Popular Narrative and Political Discourse in *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper*’, in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Brake, Laurel, and others (New York: St. Martin’s, 1990), pp. 33-47; Adam Smith, ‘Victorian Radicalism and the Idea of America: *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 1850-1900’, in *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776-1914*, ed. by Ella Dzelzainis and Ruth Livesey (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 135-146; Michael Shirley, ‘On wings of everlasting power: G. W. M. Reynolds and “Reynolds’s Newspaper”, 1848-1876’ (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1997); Virginia Berridge, ‘Popular Journalism and Working-Class Attitudes, 1854-1886: A Study of *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* and the *Weekly Times*’ (University of London, Birkbeck College, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1976).

²⁹ Criticism in the 1970s which discuss Reynolds include: *The Penny Dreadful; or, Strange, Horrid & Sensational Tales!*, ed. by Peter Haining (London: Victor Gollancz, 1976); Stanley Harrison, *Poor Men’s Guardians: A Record of the Struggles for a Democratic Newspaper Press, 1736-1973* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974); Louis James, *Print and the People* (London: Allen lane, 1976); Cyril Pearl, *Victorian Patchwork* (London: Heinemann, 1972);

the most notable of which were produced by Louis James and Anne Humpherys,³⁰ there followed a further resurgence of interest in Reynolds in the 1990s.³¹ While the overall condition of Reynoldsian scholarship might still be termed embryonic, continual signs of growth are also evident in twenty-first century criticism.³² To date, the most comprehensive compendium of scholarship undertaken on Reynolds can be found in Anne Humpherys's and Louis James's work *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, and Stephen Knight's more recent study, *G. W. M. Reynolds and his Fiction: The Man Who Outsold Dickens*.³³ These are the only book-length studies dedicated solely to Reynolds (Humpherys's and James's work is an edited collection of essays) and together constitute the preeminent bodies of work on an author and journalist pushed to the margins of literary and social histories. Contemporary scholars such as these have now begun to proffer more nuanced accounts of Reynolds's life and writing which challenge the critical tendency, initially established in Reynolds's own day, to portray him as a peripheral figure in the literal sense, operating on the fringes of middle-class, respectable Victorian literary culture. Similarly contested are notions of Reynolds as a shadowy or shady character in the

Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth-century British Working-class Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1974); Burt Daniels, 'A Victorian Gothic: G. W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*', *New York Literary Forum* 7 (1980), 144-158.

³⁰ Although Richard C. Maxwell also produced an important essay in the 1970s entitled, 'G. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and the *Mysteries of London*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32 (1977), 188-213. Maxwell's essay proves of particular interest in the third chapter of this thesis as it discusses a significant shift in the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

³¹ Humpherys and James claim that during the 1990s 'Reynolds and his works slowly began to enter into critical discussions'. Anne Humpherys and Louis James, 'Introduction', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 1-15 (p. 7); Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*, for example, was reissued in abridged form in the 1990s. See G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996).

³² Mary L. Shannon's text, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, is particularly significant to the arguments put forth in this thesis as it details the significance of the physical proximity of the thriving print networks based around London's Fleet street on the north bank of the Thames, providing an insight into market culture and the often-tangled relationships of authors operating out of a relatively tight space, but also because it promotes Reynolds as equally significant to our understanding of the period as more familiar authors like Dickens and Mayhew. Additionally, a number of recent Ph.D. theses have focussed on Reynolds. Jessica Hindes's 2014 thesis, for example, entitled 'Revealing Bodies: Knowledge, Power and Mass Market Fictions in G. W. M. Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*', was she claims, 'the first to consider the *Mysteries* cycle in its entirety'. Hindes, p. 7; A further sign of growing interest in Reynolds is reflected by the establishment of the Reynolds Society in 2017 under the presidency of Mary Shannon, this new community providing a platform for the collaboration of Reynolds scholars and enthusiasts. See <<https://gwmreynoldssociety.com>>

³³ Anne Humpherys and Louis James, *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008); This text also includes the most comprehensive bibliography of criticism produced on Reynolds; Stephen Knight, *G. W. M. Reynolds and his Fiction: The Man Who Outsold Dickens* (New York: Routledge, 2019). Knight builds on the work of Humpherys and James, offering the most expansive overview of Reynolds's entire canon in terms of breadth, if not depth, of critical analysis.

figurative sense, drawn towards vice, cruelty and semi-pornographic material.³⁴ Where Berridge conflated Reynolds with journalists like Edward Lloyd, James distinguishes between them according to ‘both the relative quality of Reynolds’s writing and the radical thrust of his social and political comment’.³⁵ Graham Law similarly distinguishes Reynolds from his contemporaries, who were popular proponents of the cheap press and Newgate novels, remarking of this particular tranche of writers and journalists:

Reynolds was probably at the same time the most sophisticated in stylistic terms as well as the most challenging to conventional morality. However, in the bourgeois world, these crude penny bloods had a blanket reputation for scurrility and indecency that they hardly deserved.³⁶

Notwithstanding the efforts of scholarship now seeking to overturn, or at least challenge this reputation for indecency, Reynolds’s legacy remains ‘a fraught issue among historians of literature and culture’ and he continues to be subject to the type of prejudices first established in his own day.³⁷

In the foreword to Reynolds’s newly re-issued *magnum opus*, *The Mysteries of London*, James notes that ‘a recent standard study of literature in the period [...], gives Reynolds’s sprawling novel nothing more than a six-line passing reference’.³⁸ This offers some indication of the deeply entrenched critical stance on a writer commonly defined by his crass populism and callous commercial opportunism. As James and Humpherys explain: ‘the largely middle-class commentators and reviewers who wrote for the press’ in the

³⁴ Thomas Clark, a fellow Chartist member denounced Reynolds following a dispute in a lengthy and acerbic letter in 1850 as a man capable of producing ‘filth’ from a ‘sink-like mind’, and ‘a wretch who ought to be placed without the pale of civil society’. Clark excoriated Reynolds’s writing as ‘libidinous prints’ full of ‘scenes of infamous corruption which have emanated from that reservoir of lewdness, your depraved intellect’. He labelled Reynolds a ‘dangerous pest, because [...] you have contrived to intermingle your most criminal immorality with democratic sentiments, and with denunciations of the wrong-doings of the Government of the land’. On the *Mysteries of the Court of London*, Clark concludes that Reynolds ultimately deserved to be acquainted, ‘for the rest of your days [...] with mysteries of Newgate’. Thomas Clark, *A Letter Addressed to G. W. M. Reynolds, reviewing his conduct as a professed Chartist, and also explaining who he is and what he is, together with copious extracts from his most indecent writings* (London: T. Clark, 144 High Holborn, 1850), pp. 4-35.

³⁵ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I (Missouri: Valancourt Books, 2013), p. ix.

³⁶ Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. 21.

³⁷ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 140.

³⁸ *Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. v.; James refers to Philip Davis, *The Oxford English Literary History: Volume 8: 1830-1880: The Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

mid-nineteenth century were ‘without exception overtly hostile to Reynolds’s politics and works’.³⁹ Consequently, the author of the period’s best-selling work of fiction also became ‘a major figure that the Victorian “respectable” public conspired to ignore’.⁴⁰ Reynolds, whose writing increasingly targeted a working-class demographic as his career developed, was quickly identified as a key figure among a cohort of writers described ‘as disreputable, manipulative and unscrupulous populists’.⁴¹

It has now been argued that Reynolds’s general effacement was the result of a ‘concerted effort [...], made at various levels in politics and culture to exorcise him and the discourse of Chartism from the historical and literary record’.⁴² Ian Haywood’s scholarship lends credence to the proposition that ‘the “classic” Victorian novel read and studied today was largely written by and for a specific, large, but restricted middle-class readership, and consolidated middle-class cultural values’.⁴³ As a means of ensuring the hegemony of

³⁹ Humpherys and James, ‘Introduction’, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 140; The most recognizable of this infamous cohort includes the publisher Edward Lloyd, who printed novels such as *The String of Pearls* (1846-47), the authors of which are believed to be Thomas Peckett Prest and James Malcolm Rymer. Commonly referred to as Penny Dreadfuls, Penny Bloods or Newgate Novels, and defined by their fixation on violence, gore, and crime, this type of fiction, despite often being derived from more allegedly respectable literature such as Dickens’s, triggered a wave of moral panic at the close of the nineteenth century as the texts were deemed to glamourize a life of crime. Through much of the twentieth century the genre remained neglected by critical histories of literature as was the extent of their influence on the more respectable fiction of the mid-Victorian period. See, for example, Timothy D’Arch, ‘The Penny Dreadful’, *Dickensian*, 342 (1964), 44-46; See also, Edward Jacobs, ‘Bloods in the Street: London Street Culture, “Industrial Literacy,” and the Emergence of Mass Culture in Victorian England’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 18.4 (1995), 321-347; Jacobs describes how such fictional enterprises were feared as countercultural at a street level, threatening to ‘interfere with “paternalist institutions like The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and “popular education”, which had been trying for decades to incorporate the lower classes into the hegemony of literate, christian middle-class culture’. Jacobs, p. 321; Louis James describes Victorian penny fiction as a ‘massive but lost body of literature’. James, *The Victorian Novel*, pp. 137-138; For a discussion on Rymer’s penny serial *Varney the Vampyre; or, The Feast of Blood* see Sara Hackenberg, ‘Vampires and Resurrection Men: The Perils and Pleasures of the Embodied Past in 1840s Sensational Fiction’, *Victorian Studies*, 52 (2009), 63-75; Hackenberg compares Rymer’s serial with Reynolds’s *Mysteries of London* examining the ‘uncanny transformations of the corpse—an object poised between the human and the non-human’ across both texts. Hackenberg, p. 63.

⁴² Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 221.

⁴³ James, *The Victorian Novel*, p. 4; Catherine Gallagher similarly explores the function of the Victorian middle-class novel as only ostensibly supportive or sympathetic to the plight of the working classes before ‘finally retreat[ing] into the private, familial areas of the plot, apparently leaving their social concerns behind; the endings have, therefore, been seen as false solutions, and their falseness has been traced either to their authors’ fears of working-class revolt or to some inherent incompatibility between the presentation of the social problems and the novel form’. According to such an interpretation, the middle-class Victorian novel, particularly those produced during the 1840s under the umbrella of social and industrial fiction and as a response to Carlyle’s Condition of England question, were ‘merely a way of rescuing the same social realm it pretended to despise. The rescue, moreover, has been said to disable an entire tradition of anti-industrial social criticism by appropriating and disarming it, and then putting it to the uses of its adversaries’. Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 148; 264.

this particular bracket of literature, which was tethered to the political, social and cultural aspirations and anxieties of the rising, industrial middle classes,⁴⁴ a figure like Reynolds, a major influence in ‘the emergence of the periodical press and a significant voice in the ‘Condition of England Debate’’,⁴⁵ was disparaged, obscured and elided. This process, begun in Reynolds’s day, was subsequently compounded by modern critics, at least up until the latter half of the twentieth century, as his writing continued to be approached with less critical circumspection than it might otherwise have been. Exposing the extent to which this type of prejudice was, and continues to be, reflective of a wider cultural and historical neglect of a working-class literature that ‘circulated largely unknown to the middle-class reading public’,⁴⁶ Haywood argues that this ‘concerted effort’ has in turn produced a filtered understanding of the period, leaving ‘untold the vital story of the Victorian ‘remaking’ of the common reader’.⁴⁷ As a central, even representative, figure of working-class literature of the period, Reynolds, whose presence loomed large in

⁴⁴ Raymond Williams characterises the middle-class fiction of the mid-nineteenth century using the term ‘structure of feeling’, which describes, as ‘the common property’ of this generation of social and industrial novelists, the ‘recognition of evil’ as ‘balanced by fear of becoming involved’. For Williams, ‘sympathy was transformed, not into action, but into withdrawal’, and is arguably most apparent in the conclusions to social problem novels, which were unable to divest themselves of their middle-class fears of working-class agency. For Williams, even those authors who strove to combat society’s ills simply ended up reinforcing the dominant cultural values of the governing classes and, in the process, betraying the working-class struggle for autonomy. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1963), p. 119; P. J. Keating makes a similar point, claiming that by ‘consistently playing down the mass power of the workers and discrediting their leaders, the industrial novelists were not simply responding from fear of physical violence: they had an ideological point to make as well. The real danger lay in the possibility of the workers consolidating their position by mass adherence to any social philosophy which tended to accentuate class difference’. For middle-class novelists, ‘there was little difference in effect between Chartism, Socialism, Communism or Trade Unionism: all of them weakened the social viewpoint they themselves wished to advance – conciliation between the classes on terms put forward by exemplary employers’. P. J. Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1971), pp. 232-233; Pertinent examples of Williams’s and Keating’s theories include Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1854), commonly accused of sweeping aside the concerns raised by Stephen Blackpool’s dilemma as a working-class character caught between the authority of his master in the factory and the trade unionists’ demands for his loyalty as part of their strike force. The close of the novel instead places greater emphasis on Louisa’s emotional reconciliation with her father. For further discussions on *Hard Times* see Anne Smith, ‘The Martyrdom of Stephen in “Hard Times”’, *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 2 (1972), 159-170; Julian Markels, ‘Toward a Marxian Reentry to the Novel’, *Narrative*, 4 (1996), 197-217; Geoffrey Carnell, ‘Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, and the Preston Strike’, *Victorian Studies*, 8 (1964), 31-48; A further example is Elizabeth Gaskell’s industrial novel *Mary Barton* (1848), commonly charged with transitioning away from its social realist focus on the despair and destruction of the self-sacrificing Chartist John Barton – a trade unionist regularly out of work owing to the economic slow-down in the early 1840s – towards a more melodramatic mode of fiction that fixates on the romance plot of Mary Barton, largely negating any social comment in the first half of the novel. A final example is Charles Kingsley’s *Alton Locke* (1850), which turns away from Chartism as proffering a solution to the working-class problem through any social or political measures, and instead embraces Christian Socialism as a transcendental force, effectively rendering working-class political agency as futile.

⁴⁵ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ See Louis James, ‘The View from Brick Lane: Contrasting Perspectives in Working-Class and Middle-Class Fiction of the Early Victorian Period’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 11 (1981), pp. 87-101 (p. 87).

⁴⁷ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 3.

mid-nineteenth century Britain, has remained a largely ‘invisible presence behind the middle-class urban novel’.⁴⁸

This thesis seeks to expand upon the calls of critics like Haywood, James and Humpherys to further investigate Reynolds’s place within, and his significance to, our understanding of the period.⁴⁹ Contributing to the ongoing revision of Reynolds’s cultural and literary legacy, the thesis adopts a comparative approach, examining Reynolds in parallel with, and relative to, his long-standing rival, Charles Dickens. By way of contrast with Reynolds’s career, Dickens experienced deep and enduring affection during his lifetime. He was revered and venerated in a manner which also built the foundations for an enduring cultural legacy surpassing that of virtually all other Victorian writers and certainly eclipsing Reynolds. If, as Humpherys and James remark, Reynolds’s ‘attitude towards his contemporaries in both literary and political culture is hard to determine with certainty’, making him ‘difficult to place in the overall picture of nineteenth-century society and culture’,⁵⁰ Dickens’s place in this picture has been forensically examined. Yet, given the uncanny parallels, stark contrasts and fiery and complex exchanges which took place between Dickens and Reynolds over at least three decades, an extensive comparative study between the two has remained curiously absent within Victorian studies.

More than most authors of the period, I argue, Dickens shared particular affinities with Reynolds. However, any similarities between the two have commonly been masked by the antipathy the two appeared to share for one another. It is my contention that by examining their complex relationship between 1837 and 1870, a more comprehensive insight can be gained into the nature and strategy by which authors of the ‘first age of mass culture’ constructed their professional identities.⁵¹ In the case of Dickens and Reynolds, analysis

⁴⁸ James, *The Victorian Novel*, p. 137.

⁴⁹ As Cyril Pearl similarly remarked, Reynolds’s ‘neglect by the pundits of his time is easily explained: he was a violent Republican and radical and he wrote of sex with a lusty and exuberant freedom unique in the popular fiction of his time’. By the second half of the twentieth century, however, the lack of critical attention he has been afforded is somewhat ‘less understandable’. Pearl, *Victorian Patchwork*, p. 71.

⁵⁰ Humpherys and James, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

⁵¹ The phrase ‘first age of mass culture’ is borrowed from Juliet John, *Dickens and Mass Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 14; John in turn takes the phrase from Laurel Brake’s, Bill Bell’s and David Finkelstein’s

demonstrates how their rivalry was both subject to, and reflective of, the conditions of the marketplace in which they competed. Offering reparative and revisionary readings of Reynolds, the comparative approach of my thesis also contributes a novel interpretation of Dickens's career trajectory, particularly in the late 1840s, and postulates that Reynolds in fact had a far greater bearing on the course of his rival's fiction than has been acknowledged. Challenging the general critical consensus that perceives Reynolds as a peripheral nuisance in Dickens's career, I argue instead that Reynolds in fact had a significant impact on Dickens's career, shaping both the tone and content of his fiction, and playing a crucial role in the more famous author's strategizing around the cultivation of his readership and, in turn, his approach to the literary market.

It is true that Reynolds's career was fashioned in Dickens's image almost from its outset. In 1837 Reynolds published a novel entitled *Pickwick Abroad*, hot on the heels of *The Pickwick Papers* (1836), and he would return to Dickens's canon numerous times in the following years. However, by examining Reynolds's and Dickens's career trajectories as mutually affecting or engaged in a type of cut and thrust dynamic, my analysis illustrates that theirs was a more nuanced and certainly more complicated rivalry than has been appreciated hitherto. Spanning almost four decades, their public aversion and hostile regard for one another in fact masked something more reciprocal and interdependent. While Reynolds's early career appeared to piggyback on Dickens's successes, by the late 1840s and early 1850s Dickens's writing was arguably similarly influenced by the reputation and popularity of his less esteemed counterpart. This passage in Dickens's career, and Reynolds's role within it, certainly constitutes a less examined line of critical investigation, revealing much about the literary and commercial practices of mid-nineteenth century authors and the conditions present in an emergent mass culture.

The thesis seeks to achieve three primary objectives: the first is to contribute to the ongoing revisions of Reynolds's work and legacy, challenging his diminished and reductive status as simply a plagiarizer of Dickens, particularly given that Reynolds experienced a political and commercial surge in the latter half of

study *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finkelstein (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. 7.

the 1840s which effectively reversed his dynamic with Dickens. The second objective is to demonstrate that Reynolds's radical politics had an increasingly direct impact on Dickens's writing. I argue that by 1844 both authors occupied broadly similar positions in the literary market, producing fiction deemed to be of a radical stripe, but following the publication of *The Chimes* (1844), Dickens's political output (particularly in his fiction) decreased, before re-appearing in *Bleak House* (1852), *Hard Times* (1854) and *Little Dorrit* (1857). It is my contention that this extended period (between 1844 and 1852) of what I term Dickens's remission of the radical, coincides with the ubiquity and notoriety achieved by Reynolds's fiction and journalism. As Reynolds quickly generated a reputation as a dangerous political radical, Dickens grew increasingly fearful of the conflation of their names and work. This fear was a result, among other factors, of the similarities in their writing style, a likeness brought about chiefly by Reynolds's imitations or re-appropriations of his fiction. It was this potential conflation, I argue, that played a role in Dickens's turn towards a less political brand of fiction. The final objective is to demonstrate the extent to which the rivalry between the two, particularly from the 1850s onwards, was in fact constructed. Arguing that both Dickens and Reynolds installed each other as their literary and political counterpart, my analysis demonstrates how both authors entered into a mutual dynamic wherein they perpetuated an exaggerated image of the other in order to bolster their own political and commercial objectives. Analysing Dickens and Reynolds in parallel, and relative to one another, helps to expose the mechanisms and strategies by which both attempted to demarcate their space in the market, drawing into sharper relief their political stance and commercial positioning during a period of great social, cultural and political flux. The findings, I argue, have wider implications for similar types of rivalries that existed through the period, and reveal the need to further revise the often-vast disparities between the more familiar canonical authors of the period and those exponents of fiction or journalism deemed non-canonical, since these necessarily informed and shaped the trajectories of their allegedly more respectable counterparts and *vice versa*. Between 1837 and 1870 Reynolds and Dickens were engaged in competition for supremacy in the marketplace and the mantle of the 'people's author'. It is my contention that examining the two together provides a rich understanding and a more comprehensive picture of an expanding and immensely competitive marketplace.

i. Methodology and critical approach

While the thesis runs in roughly chronological order, the nature and scope of the subject necessitates, at times, a certain amount of jumping forward and revisiting of certain periods. However, in the main, analysis tracks the development of their rivalry from its inception in 1837 up until Dickens's death in 1870, with each chapter addressing the most pertinent texts or incidents from across these decades in order to reflect the condition of the relationship as it developed. A heavier emphasis is placed on the paralleling works of fiction in the 1830s and 1840s, while analysis of their rivalry through the 1850s focusses largely on their respective journalism. Given the vastness of their bodies of work, the scope of the thesis is, therefore, necessarily confined to the most pertinent texts. Works studied have been selected as the most relevant to the relationship between the two authors and the arguments they explore. This thesis also draws upon the extensive body of unpublished and non-fiction material of both authors, since the language Dickens propounded in his letters when discussing Reynolds provides valuable insights into the anxiety the former felt regarding his rival as an emerging force for popular radical fiction. I rely heavily upon the journalism both men produced, especially in the 1850s, as their periodicals published through this decade prove integral to an understanding of their rivalry and further reflects the competitive nature of the marketplace.⁵² The weaving together of their fiction, journalism and private correspondence serves to blur the boundaries between each medium, but, when studied concomitantly, provides a richer insight into the nature of their rivalry. Studies such as John Drew's *Dickens the Journalist* and Robert L. Patten's *Charles Dickens and Boz: The Birth of the Industrial-Age Author*, are of particular value in this regard. Where both critics detail Dickens's development as an author and journalist, my analysis seeks to evaluate the degree to which Reynolds's successes, and the notoriety he gained in the process, impacted upon his more 'respectable' rival.

⁵² It is worth noting that the distinction between fact and fiction was often more complex in Victorian periodical culture. While fact and fiction were 'axiomatic', with authors seeking to 'validate their fictions in terms of their 'factuality [...], the most cursory investigation of the pages of many popular Victorian journals and periodicals [...] turn up not only "fiction" clearly labelled as such, but also a variety of "true" stories and reports that are strongly similar to the clearly designated fictional contributions in event, structure and language', such that the 'Victorian letter press may belong to a single discourse'. Anne Humpherys, 'Popular Narrative and Political Discourse in Reynolds's *Weekly Newspaper*', p. 35.

This thesis also contributes to the numerous contemporary studies undertaken by book historians seeking to re-contextualise Victorian authorship by extending the scope of material under critical scrutiny to include, as Patten describes, the combined

surrounds of Dickens's fiction (e.g., advertisements, wrappers and casings for his books, title pages, prefaces to original and reprinted editions), from his correspondence about his writings and his diaries, and from publisher's records and histories, with the history of copyright across Europe and North America.⁵³

This includes discussions on 'the place of the "author" within it, and brief mentions of the careers of his fellow authors who paved the way or illuminated the stony path for writers.'⁵⁴ This more inclusive or holistic approach combats the more customary 'privileging [of] the volume edition over the periodical issue', which 'distorts the nature of the fiction and the history of the book'.⁵⁵ Book historians have convincingly emphasised the need to understand these 'combined surrounds' as vital to an understanding of 'mass cultural practice',⁵⁶ in which writers and novelists operated in accordance with the 'modernising forces' of the industrial age.⁵⁷ Arguing that such rapid and wholesale technological advances necessarily affect perceptions of culture and the meaning attributed to a given book or text,⁵⁸ this growing body of

⁵³ Robert L. Patten, *Charles Dickens and "Boz": The Birth of the Industrial-Age Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. xiv.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Robert Patten, 'Dickens as Serial Author: A Case of Multiple Identities', in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Bill Bell and David Finkelstein (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 137-153 (p. 137).

⁵⁶ John defines 'mass cultural practice' as the more substantial consideration of the 'specificity of historical conditions, locale, medium, and audience' as key factors in the development and production of literature. John, *Dickens and Mass Culture*, p. 27.

⁵⁷ Hammond, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Mary Hammond provides a concise summary of the myriad changes brought about by 'modernising forces' in the early to mid-nineteenth century, which 'created spatial change and new outlets for art in the shape of galleries, museums, railway stations and public libraries, and contributed to formal development within literary narratives as well as changes in the physical appearances of books. [...]. New printing techniques had enabled the rapid production of millions of copies in a variety of formats to suit almost every pocket. New technologies then enabled their rapid distribution (albeit sometimes illicitly) throughout the world via steamship, railway or cablegram. New networks of communications (including newspapers and periodicals) ensured that potential customers knew about the work in advance and were able to discuss it afterwards. New social spaces enabled purchasers to read, and be seen to read, their new acquisitions. New markets opened up, encouraging the spread of new forms of literature [...]. What a given

critical work continues to proffer ‘a more finely calibrated sense of cultural history and theory’.⁵⁹ Periodicals were, of course, ‘time-released’ texts,⁶⁰ and as such were mutable according to the ‘process of reading, by reviewers and by audience feedback’.⁶¹ Patten credits Dickens’s serialised publishing strategies as representing the ‘invention of a kind of “industrial-age” authorship’ according to Dickens’s conscious efforts to ‘to gain control over the means and ends of his writing’,⁶² an examination of which is imperative not only for a deeper understanding of Dickens’s connection to his age, but equally, I argue, of his connection to fellow authors of the period.⁶³ Intrinsic to Dickens’s conception of authorship and his ability to own the means and modes of his own production was his ability to construct his identity and a space in the market, both of which were contingent upon, in part, the identities of fellow authors similarly jostling for space and market share. It is concerning this particular point that my thesis seeks to further examine the intersection between Dickens and Reynolds. Specifically, my study seeks to analyse how Reynolds’s career in England was, in part, made possible by his ability to exploit the paratextual spaces around Dickens’s serially published fiction. While Dickens effectively utilised such spaces to try and control his own authorial identity and by extension his readership, these same spaces simultaneously created opportunities for authors such as Reynolds to challenge and undermine Dickens’s identity. How Reynolds exploited the paratextual space around Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* as a means of establishing himself within the same market, effectively using Dickens as a springboard to success, has been less examined within book histories of the period. Furthermore, my analysis proposes new insight into the notion that Dickens, who initially resisted

book “meant” in culture therefore had new definitions, sometimes many of them, and sometimes simultaneously’. Hammond, p. 9.

⁵⁹ John, *Mass Culture*, p. 27; For a further study on book history see *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. by Leslie Howsam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); David Finklestein and Alistair McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005).

⁶⁰ Laurel Brake, ‘Writing, cultural production, and the periodical press in the nineteenth century’, in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. by J. B. Bullen (Harlow: Longman, 1997), pp. 54-72 (p. 66); Brake’s phrase, ‘time-released’, refers to the format in which periodicals appeared, making them ‘self-consciously historical, contingent, looking backward and forward, with a historical identity [...]. This constitutes a powerful antidote to the apparent self-containment or isolation suggested by the subsequent form of book publication – the format in which almost all Victorian writing reaches us now’. Brake, p. 54.

⁶¹ Catherine Delafield, *Serialization and the Novel in Mid-Victorian Magazines* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), p. 4.

⁶² Patten, *The Birth of the Industrial-Age Author*, p. xvi.

⁶³ Patten’s studies are central to the critical efforts to recontextualise Dickens’s writing. His edited collection of essays draws together a comprehensive collection of studies that clarify Dickens’s relationship to his age. *Dickens and Victorian Print Cultures*, ed. by Robert L. Patten (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012).

Reynolds's efforts to establish himself as a genuine rival to Boz as simply the flagrant theft of his work, gradually began to develop a more reciprocal dynamic, one which was to benefit both authors, commercially and politically. The complex relationship between Dickens's and Reynolds's writing reveals much about the strategies by which authors not only constructed their own identities in accordance with rivals in the market but, in the process, also constructed an image of that rival. In the case of Dickens and Reynolds, I argue that the latter's ability to engage Dickens in a dialogue of sorts through the paratextual spaces around their early texts laid the foundations for their rivalry.

Of additional relevance is the sparing attention afforded to the efforts of Dickens and Reynolds to utilise one another as commercial and political instruments. Offering a more inclusive approach to authorship, contemporary scholars such as Catherine Delafield have observed that there still exists further scope for attaining a better understanding of the 'verbal and visual interactions which took place during the serialization', one aspect of which was the 'dialogue [...] between editor and contributor, between fiction and non-fiction and, at an external interface, between the periodicals themselves'.⁶⁴ This final aspect, certainly in Dickens's and Reynolds's case, has, I argue, yet to be fully unpacked.⁶⁵ If, as Delafield claims, 'ongoing discussion of the contents between issues and the onward circulation of the magazine' constituted a 'reciprocal marketing tool',⁶⁶ then the extension or application of this same analysis ought to be applied to Dickens's publication rivalry with Reynolds. Margaret Beetham has written that

⁶⁴ Delafield, p. 2.

⁶⁵ In his 1974 text, *Dickens and his Readers*, George Ford sought to shed new critical light on a facet of Dickens scholarship that extended beyond 'a listing of reviewers' notices into a more general study of novel-reading'. One aspect of Ford's investigation is stated as the examination of Dickens's 'working-class popularity compared with Reynolds'. This intriguing line of inquiry within the context of the print marketplace is, however, limited to only passing comments, both of which chime with the common accounts and perceptions of Reynolds in twentieth century criticism. The first example observes how, 'according to *The Times* [...], one of Dickens' great contributions to education was his capacity to lure away some working-class readers from their diet of Reynolds'. As a sensational story *Great Expectations*, it claimed, 'contained enough marvels to be able to compete successfully with Reynolds's serials on their own ground'. While Ford recognises that Reynolds had indeed established his 'own ground', how this was achieved, relative to, or in spite of Dickens, is left unsaid. My thesis seeks to further unpack such omissions, the conclusions of which have been drawn without acknowledging the pathway by which Dickens and Reynolds ended up with rival periodicals and engaged in a tempestuous feud which lasted nearly four decades. George H. Ford, *Dickens and His Readers: Aspects of Novel-Criticism since 1836* (New York: Gordian Press, 1974), pp. vii-xiv; 80.

⁶⁶ Delafield, p. 2.

a periodical is not a window on to the past or even a mirror of it. Each article, each periodical number, was and is part of a complex process in which writers, editors, publishers and readers engaged in trying to understand themselves and their society.⁶⁷

It is my contention that the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds demonstrates how the relationship and rivalry between two authors constituted a significant part of this self-identifying and self-understanding. The wider implication of the findings in this thesis is, therefore, the continued need to revise the contributions of those authors relegated to the fringes of literary histories since these necessarily affected the identity of more canonical figures to a greater extent than has often been acknowledged.⁶⁸

In attempting to place Dickens and Reynolds within the complex context of an emerging mass literary marketplace, my analysis draws upon Juliet John's scholarship on both authors, which has scrutinised Dickens's commercial practices as counterbalanced against his political objectives, and has in turn examined Reynolds's perception of literature as a saleable commodity. Where much twentieth-century criticism compounded the notion of Reynolds as operating on the commercial side of the art/market divide only, my thesis revises such assertions and expands upon John's scholarship by analysing how Reynolds's literary and political market strategies were not dissimilar to Dickens's.⁶⁹ My approach is therefore couched

⁶⁷ Margaret Beetham, 'Towards a theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre', *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Brake, Laurel, and others (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), pp. 19-32 (p. 25).

⁶⁸ In his examination of 'the impact of nineteenth-century publishing patterns on the development of the Victorian novel', Graham Law demonstrates the critical tendency, particularly through the twentieth century, to fixate on fiction produced by middle-class authors, such as Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy. As a means of combatting such tendencies, Law credits the 'remarkably generous and eclectic' definitions of the wider field explored by critics such as Pollard, Altick and Louis James, and implores the need to continue broadening the scope of interest in authorship of the period in order to avoid 'a materialist equivalent of Leavis's "Great Tradition"'. Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, p. xiii; xv.

⁶⁹ In *The Mysteries of London* Reynolds describes the print networks in England's capital as both a 'mart of miscellaneous trades', and as 'rising into a bazaar of booksellers'. G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 892; Juliet John explains that, for Reynolds, the marketplace was 'a process of cultural traffic or migration in which no person, group or place acts as a centre of power'. He perceived the mechanisms of the market as a social leveller, since no author's work was immune from its functioning as a 'shifting continuum', such that, 'if so-called high art is intertwined with commercial art, then the logic of the market necessitates that commercial and high art are intertwined with pornography [...]. Thus, though it is true that Reynolds's texts pander to soft porn tastes, it is also correct that he subjects those tastes to economic and political scrutiny'. Juliet John, 'Reynolds's *Mysteries* and Popular Culture', in G. W. M. Reynolds: *Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 161-177 (p. 167; 173).

in the critical work undertaken on mass culture, the common touchstone of which, in modern cultural theory, has concerned the ‘tension between the goals of commercial culture and those of a genuinely “popular” culture consonant with the values and interests of the people, and of a more equal society’.⁷⁰ Particularly relevant to the contrasting legacies of Dickens and Reynolds in this regard are approaches to literature and popular culture that ‘look for the redeeming features of commodity culture in the act of consumption’.⁷¹ How and why these redeeming features have been recognised in Dickens’s writing and not Reynolds’s forms a crucial aspect of the analysis undertaken in this thesis.

Germane to this critical discourse are the apparent tensions between differing literary cultures circulating alongside one another, interacting and intersecting within a complex and fluid mass market.⁷² Indeed, as Mary Hammond observes: ‘from the 1860s on the debate began to reflect increasingly clearly the patriarchal capitalist world in which it [the novel] circulated, becoming one about “good” novels (initially canonical, historical and usually male-authored) versus “bad” novels (initially popular, contemporary and usually female-authored)’.⁷³ Prior to the 1860s, the ‘division between the “highbrow” text designed for a limited readership and the “lowbrow” production aimed at a mass market’ was less defined.⁷⁴ Later critics

⁷⁰ John, ‘Reynolds’s *Mysteries* and Popular Culture’, p. 163; Discussions regarding this tension grew up around Walter Benjamin’s seminal essay, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in which Benjamin delineates how the ‘mechanical reproduction of art’ necessarily ‘changes the reaction of the masses towards the art’. ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), pp.1235-1241 (p. 1237); For the specific application of theories of mass culture as applied to Dickens see Juliet John’s *Dickens and Mass Culture*; For broader discussions see Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991); Dwight MacDonald, ‘A Theory of Mass Culture’, in *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, ed. by Bernard Rosenberg and David Manningwhite (Gelnco IL: Free Press, 1957), pp. 59-73.

⁷¹ Simon Firth, ‘The Good, the Bad and the Indifferent: Defending Popular Culture from the Populists’, in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. by John Storey (London: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 570-586 (p. 571).

⁷² How these literary cultures interacted remains a point of critical debate. Ian Haywood ascribes great significance to the Reform Act of 1832, the failures of which deepened class tensions in Britain, effectively marking ‘the year in which the British working class were (in E. P. Thompson’s famous description) “made” – that is, born out of exclusion, absence, and denial of fundamental human rights’. For Haywood, the 1832 Reform Act ‘betrayed its initial promise of delivering universal suffrage’ by awarding the ‘vote only to the middle classes’. Ian Haywood, *Working-Class Fiction: from Chartism to Trainspotting* (Northcote House Publishers: Plymouth, 1997), p. 1; As a result, Haywood claims that the aftermath of these events now requires further investigation in order to uncover the ‘extensiveness of these counter-measures’, supposedly designed to nullify and discredit the demands made by the working classes, since such measures have ‘not yet been fully appreciated by social and literary historians. Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 221.

⁷³ Hammond, p. 5; citing Nicole Diane Thompson, *Reviewing Sex: Gender and the Reception of Victorian Novels* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 20.

⁷⁴ Elisabeth Jay, p. 7.

would more readily consign ‘both realism and popular novels to the “wide margin of the century” in favour of a more exclusive canon’.⁷⁵ It is this exclusivity that has arguably played a significant role in denying Reynolds a place among the more canonically recognisable peers in the mid-nineteenth century.⁷⁶ This reductive and narrow perception of literature allegedly designed to function exclusively as a commercial entity in the mass market captures the reception of Reynolds’s writing through much of the twentieth century.⁷⁷ As Juliet John explains, ‘the idea that mass culture puts profits before people, caters for the lowest common denominator, and anesthetizes rather than awakens political consciousness, has been a recurrent concern in contemporary cultural theory’.⁷⁸ The complex dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds precisely demonstrates the dangers of such simplistic assumptions. Reductive perceptions of this kind have compounded Reynolds’s reputation as a debasing literary and political force, yet greater critical circumspection has defended Dickens against such accusations, at times glossing over the less scrupulous aspects of his legacy.⁷⁹ Sally Ledger, for example, has argued convincingly in Dickens’s defence against

⁷⁵ Hammond, p. 6; citing Raymond Williams, ‘When was Modernism?’, in *The Politics of Modernism*, ed. by Tony Pinkney (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 31-36 (p. 35); Williams claims: ‘If we are to break out of the non-historical fixity of post-modernism, then we must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century, a tradition which may address itself not to this by now exploitable because quite inhuman rewriting of the past but, for all our sakes, to a modern *future* in which community may be imagined again’. Williams, p. 35; Mary Hammond similarly observes of the art/market divide, that historians are still unsure exactly ‘how the divide functioned, and how it may function still, in the formation of literary taste and its relationship with social identities’. Consequently, further investigation is required into the practices of figures such as Reynolds who have been effaced along such lines without sufficient critical circumspection. Hammond, p. 7.

⁷⁶ This is perhaps most aptly illustrated by Simon Eliot’s 1992 study on 28 public library catalogues between 1883 and 1892. Across all 28 libraries Eliot’s findings revealed ‘a total of only four copies of Reynolds’s works’, a factor Johnathan Rose attributes to ‘respectable librarians’, who ‘made sure that his sordid fiction was banished from their shelves’. Jonathan Rose, ‘Education, Literacy and the Victorian Reader’, in *Dickens and Victorian Print Cultures*, ed. by Robert L. Patten (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), pp. 231-247 (p. 239); Rose cites Simon Eliot, *A Measure of Popularity: Public Library Holdings of Twenty-four Popular Authors 1883-1912* (Oxford and Bristol: History of the Book – On Demand Series, 1984).

⁷⁷ As Rose explains, it is ‘often assumed rather simplistically that “popular culture” somehow reflects the attitudes of “the masses” and this has often resulted in a critical emphasis on textual analysis as infallible evidence of cultural opinion’. Jonathan Rose, ‘Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 3 (1992), 47-70, (p. 48); Reynolds, I argue, serves as a convenient case in point regarding the reductive divides enforced by the emergence of modernism. Hammond’s description of this process explains how ‘the separation of the unscrupulous publisher from the gullible reader in need of guidance has become a common refrain, often – paradoxically – alongside that of the public as an ill-educated, degenerate herd and the best-selling writer as a conscienceless exploiter of its baser instincts’. Reynolds’s critics underwent extensive efforts to portray him as emblematic of the conscienceless, best-selling writer seeking to exploit an ill-educated public. Subsequent critics of the twentieth century compounded this image and it remained largely unchallenged until the second half of the twentieth century. Hammond, p. 9.

⁷⁸ John, *Mass Culture*, p 27.

⁷⁹ Critics like Juliet John and Sally Ledger have convincingly debunked ‘the blanket pessimism about popular culture in a capitalist context’, especially regarding Dickens. Ledger’s scholarship traces Dickens’s radical political roots back to the Regency Radicals of the late eighteenth century in order to demonstrate a richer radical political currency

accusations that his work constituted a ‘hubristic marketing ploy’,⁸⁰ and instead celebrates Dickens for blending contradictory strands within a literary, political and cultural hybrid as ‘an aspect of affective and political belief in the possibility of affinity or “likeness across different and often contradictory social positionings”’.⁸¹ Ledger also effectively argues for the re-blurring of any broadly definitional lines in the marketplace, claiming

the (quite understandable) desire to impose some kind of order on the truly massive, protean body of writing that constitutes the Victorian periodical and newspaper press has [...] sometimes led cultural historians too readily to lay down rigid boundaries between “popular”, “radical”, and “progressive”, and “middle-class” and “working-class” publications.⁸²

Such rigid boundaries, she claims, have the effect of ‘occluding the instability’ between these categories. Where Dickens’s legacy has benefited from such critical intervention, Reynolds is still commonly used as a commercial counterpart to the more earnest radical authors of the period.⁸³

to his writing beyond the profitability it garnered and the assumptions of middle-class values which upheld his readership. Her scholarship celebrates Dickens’s capacity to ‘fully straddle the two modes’ of radical and commercial popular culture, distinguishing him from Reynolds in this regard. John, *Mass Culture*, p. 27, 28; See Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸⁰ John, *Mass Culture*, p. 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 150; Gregory Vargo has similarly refuted the notion that an indissoluble boundary separated middle-class fiction from radical literature targeted at the working classes. Citing the publication of Disraeli’s *Conningsby* (1844) in the radical organ of the press, *The Northern Star*, Vargo observes how the literature and press of all classes were interchangeable within the complex culture of mass literature. This type of mutable context, Vargo claims, ‘has remained largely unknown, in part because literary historians have too readily accepted middle-class writers’ descriptions of the gulf separating “the two nations of rich and poor”, assuming that the cultural world of the Victorian middle class remained isolated from working-class print culture’. Gregory Vargo, *An Underground History of Early Victorian Fiction: Chartism, Radical Print Culture, and the Social Problem Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 1; Like Vargo, Gallagher disputes those interpretations which seek to demarcate the hegemonic middle-class fiction from radical working-class literature. Instead her approach favours the consideration of the Condition of England Debate not as rooted in the political dominance of the middle classes, since this description is ‘both limiting and insufficiently specific’, but as permitting ‘the enunciation of other class interests as well’. The characterisation of the Condition of England Debate as ‘peculiarly bourgeois’ is, for Gallagher, a misnomer according to the evidently ‘illimitable’ discourse that saw ‘even the most radical Chartist tracts and the most reactionary aristocratic diatribes’ finding their way into print. Gallagher, p. xiv.

⁸³ In comparing Reynolds with Ernest Jones, Ledger herself describes the former as mercenary, dishonest and unethical and thus reflective of a figure for whom ‘commercial viability was [...] an end in itself’. This is contrasted with the ‘economic necessity’ that forced Jones to compromise on his radical leanings, which were apparently ‘more politically focused’ than Reynolds’s. Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 151.

Although my thesis engages with this complex critical framework, it does not necessarily seek to reconcile any opposing critical stances. It does, however, find particular utility in the critical approach outlined by Pierre Bourdieu, whose assessment of the literary market describes how ‘participants are always in economic competition even when they appear to be on the same side, and can be on the same economic side even when they appear to be in symbolic competition’.⁸⁴ Bourdieu, I argue, better captures the sense of symbiosis and interconnectedness which informs the rivalry between Dickens and Reynolds, one in which ‘every position – even the dominant one – depends for its very existence, and for the determinations it imposes on its occupants, on the other positions constituting the field’.⁸⁵ My analysis seeks to ascribe to Dickens’s and Reynolds’s rivalry this type of interdependent dynamic, one which enabled the two authors to actively construct their own image and that of their rival for literary and political benefit.

A dual-author study of Dickens and Reynolds naturally taps into the long critical history of comparative studies, particularly regarding Dickens.⁸⁶ Indeed, ‘the practice of comparing Dickens with other writers began almost as soon as *Sketches by Boz* appeared’.⁸⁷ The obvious distinction between this thesis and those that began to appear with more frequency through the twentieth century, is that this study concerns a non-canonical writer, whose influence over Dickens and the extent of his impact upon the period in general has been subject to a prolonged cultural effacement. Jerome Meckier, for example, describes ‘nineteenth

⁸⁴ Hammond, p. 16.

⁸⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979; London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 30-32. (p. 30); Mary Hammond claims that such ‘mutual dependency helps to examine the invisible but vital forces at work in the relationships between taste, history and society’. Hammond, p. 16.

⁸⁶ Valerie L. Gager, for example, examines ‘the infinite variety of ways in which Dickens uses Shakespeare for his own creative purposes’. *Shakespeare and Dickens: The Dynamics of Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 18; William Oddie analyses the more contemporary influence of Thomas Carlyle upon Dickens’s writing and politics in *Dickens and Carlyle: The Question of Influence* (London: The Centenary Press, 1972); Further examples include John R. Reed, *Dickens and Thackeray: Punishment and Forgiveness* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969) – although this text is largely a consideration, by comparative means, of both authors’ writing on Christianity; Mark Spilka, *Dickens and Kafka: a mutual interpretation* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1963) – which examines, for example, the parallels between Dickens’s *Bleak House* and Kafka’s *The Trial*; A more recent study is Lillian Nayder’s, *Unequal Partners*, in which Nayder examines Dickens’s relationship with peer-turned-rival, Wilkie Collins, discussing the former’s propensity to control the radical strains of his protégé and elide any material deemed potentially offensive to the middle-class readership he had carefully cultivated with his periodical *Household Words*. Lillian Nayder, *Unequal Partners: Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁸⁷ Laurence W. Mazzeno, *The Dickens Industry: Critical Perspectives, 1836-2005* (New York: Camden House, 2011), p. 226.

century British fiction' as 'a honeycomb of intersecting networks' in which novelists 'rethink and rewrite other novels as a way of enhancing their own credibility'.⁸⁸ Meckier's study examines the rivalries between Dickens and Anthony Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, and George Eliot, each of whom 'attempted to make room for themselves in the 1850s and '60s by pushing the preeminent Dickens aside'.⁸⁹ Seeking to achieve status by means of 'taking away someone else's' credibility—generally Dickens's, these authors engaged in a dynamic in which they 'read and reread one another' in order to position and measure themselves in the literary market.⁹⁰ Tellingly, Meckier's study excludes the influence of writers such as Reynolds, who are commonly perceived as irrelevant to the overall conception of the period, particularly concerning notions of reform more generally deemed to be the achievements of the middle classes. Neglecting a fundamental force in the literary rivalries and networks, Meckier omits Reynolds's capacity to similarly threaten Dickens's 'credibility', particularly among the working classes, with whom Reynolds quickly established an enormous readership via his endorsement of the Chartist cause, his sympathy for the workers, and his persistent attacks on the privileged classes.⁹¹ This thesis seeks, therefore, to further uncover Reynolds as more than a peripheral figure in Dickens's career, and by extension, an important force more generally in the shaping of nineteenth-century literary culture.⁹²

⁸⁸ Jerome Meckier, *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), p. 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ By 'status' Meckier refers to the competition between authors to be regarded as the most celebrated exponent of the realist novel, and by extension, the most astute social critic. *Ibid.*

⁹¹ It is interesting to note that Rob Breton's recent study, while supposing that this divide did exist, all but excludes Reynolds from the debate and even denigrates his fiction as ushering the Chartist debate into the domain of the 'low-brow "melodrama"'. Breton notes that authors like Ernest Jones and Thomas Wheeler worked to maintain a 'distinct Chartist narrative strategy', which existed prior to Reynolds, and was not a 'concession to Reynolds's popularity'. Rob Breton, *Oppositional Aesthetics of Chartist Fiction: Reading Against the Middle-Class Novel* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 5; Such analysis gives some indication of the uncertainty still surrounding Reynolds's political and cultural positioning.

⁹² In this regard, this thesis is more akin in its critical approach to Nayder's study of Catherine Hogarth, which explores Dickens's wife as concealed or suppressed beneath her husband's significant celebrity, depicting her as a victim of his capacity to control the narrative of her life as well as his own. Nayder states her intention for the study to be the contesting of Catherine's legacy as determined and defined entirely by her husband, observing: 'Since 1870, critics and biographers have assumed that Catherine's life has meaning only insofar as it illuminates that of Dickens, and that unless she is defined in relation to him, her story is no story at all'. Her study, therefore, 'challenges that assumption, dislodging Dickens from the centre of Catherine's story and replacing him with a range of figures whose lives illuminated, and were illuminated by, hers'. By 'wresting away from her husband the power to shape Catherine's biography', Nayder pushes Dickens 'to the margins, giving voice to a spectrum of Victorians instead'. Her introductory chapter is entitled 'Constructing Catherine Dickens', alluding to Dickens's ability to create an enduring, yet artificially self-serving image of his wife in order to sterilise any potential threat to his own reputation. My thesis seeks to demonstrate how Dickens engaged in a similar construction of Reynolds's identity. Lillian Nayder, *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 1-2.

ii. Chapter summary

Dickens and Reynolds shared similar backgrounds, with both born in the early 1800s into a Britain undergoing huge social changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution yet suffering economically from the costs of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars of the late eighteenth century. The two shared similar life spans; Dickens was born in 1812 and died in 1870, while Reynolds was born in 1814 and died in 1879. Both were born into the middle classes broadly defined (Reynolds the upper; Dickens the lower), and both were to experience financial instability; Reynolds's fecklessness and unfortunate investments reduced him to bankruptcy on at least three occasions, while Dickens was forced into employment in a blacking factory as a child to service the financial profligacy of his father. In fact Dickens remained haunted 'all his life by a typically lower middle-class fear of being dragged down into the popular masses',⁹³ and was deeply fearful of 'the proximity of debt amongst friends and family'.⁹⁴ Both he and Reynolds sympathised with those who struggled on the margins in destitution and impoverishment, railing against the institutions that failed the neediest in society and both maintained lifelong fascinations with Paris and France, claiming at varying points to be Republicans.⁹⁵ Both also displayed considerable and radical opposition towards a defunct aristocratic class, whose idleness and lack of empathy consistently drew their ire.

Their careers have been similarly marked by their ability to produce literature that was popular in the sense that it both sold in vast quantities and claimed to speak for "the people".⁹⁶ The two authors dominated the literary market at a moment when 'the novel lay at a crux point', poised at the threshold of a surge towards

⁹³ Terry Eagleton, 'Dickens: a Marxist view', *On the bicentenary of Charles Dickens' birth, Terry Eagleton looks at the contradictions of the man and his work* (2012), <<http://marxistupdate.blogspot.com.au/2012/02/dickens-marxist-view.html>> [accessed November 10 2016].

⁹⁴ Ledger, p. 168.

⁹⁵ Fred Kaplan describes Dickens's early leanings towards Republicanism as 'unsophisticated', explaining that Dickens 'expected to find a model against which British failures could be measured and criticized, an experiment in democracy whose successes would strengthen his commitment to reform and his self-definition as a radical'. Fred Kaplan, *Dickens, A Biography* (New York: William Morrow, 1988), p. 125; While Dickens's beliefs were shaken by what he saw in America in 1842, his Republican principles ultimately survived. Ian Ward explains, for example, that 'Dickens was granted an audience with Victoria in 1869, at the Queen's instigation. Protocol demanded that both parties stood throughout the full hour and a half, which given Dickens's precarious health was an undoubted strain. Though rather thrilled by the honour, Dickens remained Republican in temperament, and later made it plain through private channels that he would prefer not to be offered a baronetcy'. Ian Ward, *Sex, Crime and Literature in Victorian England* (Oxford: Hart Publishing Ltd, 2014), p. 128.

⁹⁶ John, 'Reynolds's *Mysteries* and Popular Culture', p. 163.

rapid commercialisation, thus acting as ‘fungible objects—saleable commodities’ and ‘sublime effusions’ whose value, paradoxically ‘depended on exemption from commerce’s usual laws’.⁹⁷ Although both authors were consistently able to negotiate the collision of these ‘dual conceptions’, Reynolds’s achievements have once again been significantly overshadowed by Dickens’s in this regard.⁹⁸ Like the less-

⁹⁷ John, *Dickens and Mass Culture*, p. 22; John is citing John Plotz, *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. xv.

⁹⁸ Robert Patten, for example, describes Dickens as a writer who carefully cultivated his image ‘for public consumption’. Patten, *The Birth of the Industrial-Age Author*, p. 26; The meticulous management of his public image, as Juliet John explains, effectively masked the commercial drive of his work and his legacy remains that of a writer who ‘unified readers of all social classes’, revered as the first novelist to ‘cultivate the idea of cross-class “intimate public”’. John, *Mass Culture*, p. 5; Dickens’s commercial astuteness was evident to his peers. Anthony Trollope wrote that Dickens was able to consolidate his popular legacy because he ‘knew exactly how to tap the ever newly-growing mass of readers as it sprang up among the lower classes. He could measure the reading public, – probably taking his measure of it unconsciously, – and knew what the public wanted of him’. ‘Charles Dickens’, *St. Paul’s Magazine*, 6 July 1870, 370-375 (p. 371); For discussions on how Dickens perceived and managed his relationship with the capitalist marketplace, and how the trappings of his ‘trade’ as a writer required him to ‘surrender to the mass’ in order to secure an ‘endurable retrospect’, see Claire Pettitt, ““The Spirit of craft and money-making”: The Indignities of Literature in the 1850s”, in *Dickens and Victorian Print Cultures*, ed. by Robert L. Patten (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), pp. 433-460 (pp. 433-444); Relative to Dickens, it has only recently been observed that Reynolds demonstrated a similar ‘ability to take the popular pulse’, balancing his commercialism and his politics in a manner which contests his tarnished legacy as an author primarily concerned with profit. Anne Humpherys, ‘G. W. M. Reynolds: Popular Literature & Popular Politics’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 16 (1983), 79-88 (p. 86); Reynolds’s insincerity was, and often still is, commonly connected to the notion that ‘the people were less important to him as people than they were as consumers – or that his political radicalism was less important to him than his commercialism’. John, ‘Reynolds’s *Mysteries* and Popular Culture’, p. 164; Humpherys, however, has argued convincingly in Reynolds’s defence, adopting the phrase ‘negative capability’, in order to celebrate his ‘ability not to try to blend the various elements of the popular mind into a unified position’, but instead truthfully and accurately reflect ‘the contradictions of the audience he was writing for’, thus avoiding ‘any “irritable” effort at resolution’. Humpherys, ‘Popular Literature & Popular Politics’, p. 83; Michael H. Shirley similarly admires Reynolds’s persistence to the cause of Republicanism while understanding that, ‘In the meantime [...], he had to earn money to live’. Michael Shirley, ‘G. W. M. Reynolds, Reynolds’s Newspaper and Popular Politics’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 75-90 (p. 89); There was, Shirley recognises, a naturally tempering effect on political radicalism by financial obligation, as reflected by W. L. Burn’s observation that, generally speaking, ‘the day-to-day necessity of earning a living can greatly inhibit revolutionary activity’. W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study in the Mid-Victorian Generation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), p. 110; For a further compelling defence of Reynolds’s principles as belying accusations of commercial opportunism see Andrew King, ‘Reynolds’s *Miscellany*, 1846-1849: Advertising Networks and Politics’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 53-74; King’s examples resist Sally Ledger’s depiction of Reynolds, which juxtaposes his supposedly affluent lifestyle with Ernest Jones’s desperate living conditions, describing the former as ‘a very rich man [...], living in a large country house, whilst Ernest Jones was spending his second year in prison, jailed for sedition in July 1848’. Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 166. As King makes apparent, Reynolds, like Jones, was no stranger to debt; his ostensible wealth was just as fragile. In 1848 he declared bankruptcy for the third time, confessing in court ‘that he was losing between £8 and £10 a week on the *Miscellany*, and by the time of the hearing owed “upwards of £20,000”’. Subject to the same bylaws of the marketplace, which required a trade-off between politics and commercialism, King cites instances wherein Reynolds exhibited a principled approach to his publications, which quickly saw his *Miscellany* fall behind the modern method of commercial reproducibility and rigid deadlines and risked losing sales. Described as ‘old-fashioned’, Reynolds would issue ‘public justifications’ after frequently missing publishing deadlines and quotas. This is offered by King as evidence illustrative of Reynolds’s dislike for the ‘radical alienation of labour in the face of industrial production and demands by the consumer’. Other periodicals had, by this stage, chosen to cover their shortcomings by projecting ‘an identity based on the regular, reliable, smoothly operating steam

talented sibling, Reynolds's career has been overshadowed by that of his rival. Their careers were even launched by the same set of characters. When Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836) catapulted him to celebrity almost overnight, Reynolds saw his opportunity and made swift use of Pickwick's staggering success, publishing *Pickwick Abroad* in 1837 and describing it as a 'continuation' of Dickens's original.⁹⁹

Pickwick Abroad, then, marks the inception of their rivalry and forms the focus of chapter one. The intention of the analysis is twofold; firstly, to illustrate the greater nuance in Reynolds's novel than has commonly been acknowledged by examining its function as a political work as well as a commercial text seeking to emulate Dickens's success. Secondly, the chapter proposes that the seeds of their rivalry, as it was to unfold and develop through the next twenty years, were sown in this early text as Reynolds looked to undermine Dickens and propel his own name into the public consciousness as a legitimate biographer to the immortal Mr Pickwick and the convivial Sam Weller. Despite his prevailing status as one of many Dickens imitators that spawned through the late 1830s and early 1840s, I argue that Reynolds presented a more substantial political threat to Dickens than his contemporaries, capable of matching his creative ingenuity but also willing to express a bolder, more explicit brand of radical politics. *Pickwick Abroad* has received sparing critical attention, but a more comprehensive analysis of its relationship to Dickens's original lays the foundation for a deeper understanding of how the rivalry would develop.

Chapter two examines the transition from the late 1830s into the 1840s and is specifically concerned with instances in which Dickens's and Reynolds's careers continued to intertwine. As Reynolds looked to maintain his momentum as Pickwick's biographer, he penned two short Pickwickian tales in a new journal, of which he was the editor. Entitled *The Teetotaler*, Reynolds was a seemingly rapid convert to the temperance cause, having taken the pledge before deploying his Pickwickian tales as a vehicle to advance

press, a conception where bodies were replaceable just like the spare parts of a machine'. An interchangeability of staff operated within these periodicals to counter any unseen vicissitudes. This was a 'split of body and name which in the 1840s Reynolds was resolutely refusing to submit to', preferring instead to maintain an honest dialogue with his readers. Such instances, I argue, signal the need to revise commonly held perceptions of Reynolds and his relationships to his peers and to the period more generally. King, pp. 58-65.

⁹⁹ James, *The Victorian Novel*, p. 136.

the journal's rather myopic agenda, proselytising on the evils of alcohol and railing against the government's unscrupulous role in its mass propagation. Regardless of the vehicle for the Pickwickian tales, it was, I argue, Reynolds's persistent use of Dickens's material which eventually drew a response from the latter in *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1841). Analysing a previously unexamined passage in that novel, I contend that Dickens's response, although cryptic, specifically targeted Reynolds. Demonstrating how the ongoing issue of plagiarism continued to connect the two into the 1840s, the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds as that of originator and plagiariser was largely maintained through these years as Reynolds continued to follow in Dickens's increasingly considerable shadow. An additional objective of the chapter is to examine examples across Reynolds's and Dickens's fiction between 1836 and 1844 in which a political affinity is evident, proposing that by 1844 the two in fact shared broadly similar political and commercial trajectories based upon their willingness to challenge social mores and conventional moralities, and exhibit a proclivity for radical, and even revolutionary, sentiment. The chapter thus begins to establish the complex dynamic that came to define their rivalry, one which required both proximity to, and somewhat paradoxically, distance from one another. The chapter concludes in 1844 as, in my view, this constitutes a critical juncture in their respective careers, marking what was arguably the apotheosis of Dickens's radicalism before an abrupt turn towards a more domestic mode of fiction, in tandem with the advent of the radical serial which precipitated Reynolds's swift rise to literary and political celebrity. Chapters two and three are coupled in the sense that, post-1844, the dynamic between the two authors underwent a significant shift wherein Reynolds seemingly began to eclipse Dickens as a literary and political force, assuming a radical platform which complicated both Dickens's position in the market as well as his particular brand of fiction. After 1844 and the publication of *The Mysteries of London*, Reynolds's career flourished independently of Dickens's and he began to push ahead of his rival. These chapters therefore contribute both a new explanation for Dickens's complex trajectory through his 'transitional period' in the 1840s,¹⁰⁰ as well as providing a further reparative reading of Reynolds's effect on both Dickens and the social and political climate in general.

¹⁰⁰ As later chapters make clear, I have adopted the phrase 'transitional period' from Marxist critic T. A. Jackson, who categorises Dickens's writings into three brackets, the middle of which he describes as Dickens's 'transitional'

Between 1844 and 1848 Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* catapulted him to popular literary success and entailed a similarly swift rise to public political prominence as a leading figure in the Chartist movement. This occurred through the exact period in which Dickens's fiction underwent an abrupt transition, shifting from the publication of what Michael Slater regards as 'the most overtly Radical fiction he ever wrote',¹⁰¹ *The Chimes* (1844), to the publication only one year later of his third Christmas tale, *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), defined as 'quiet' and 'pretty' and reliant on an almost insipid morality. In chapter three I argue that *The Cricket* saw Dickens fall into a kind of political remission through the remainder of the decade, with *Dombey and Son* and *David Copperfield* following in 1846 and 1849 respectively. As his fiction steered towards a preoccupation with the family and the home, I propose that these two timelines are interconnected, contending that Reynolds's surge to popularity and political notoriety between 1844 and 1850 effectively reversed the established dynamic of Reynolds as plagiariser, with Dickens unable or unwilling to compete with his bold Republicanism and insouciant attitude towards the moral codes or expectations for literature of the period, and with the cultural sensibilities of the era in general. By the 1850s, following a period of sustained commercial success for Reynolds, it appears that Dickens even took to 'borrowing' from a rival he so despised for the theft of his own work in the 1830s and 1840s, drawing on Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* and a novel entitled *The Seamstress* (1851) in the formulation of *Bleak House*. In a remarkable turnaround, the late 1840s were years in which Dickens began to act as Reynolds's shadow.

Chapter four examines the most common touchpoint in their rivalry. In the 1850s the two traded bitter insults across their respective periodicals in a series of exchanges which have commonly been used to depict them as enemies. Having launched his *Household Words* periodical in 1850, Dickens took immediate aim at Reynolds, describing him as one of the 'Bastards of the Mountain, draggled fringe on the Red Cap,

writings according to their search for greater narrative cohesion, achieved by their diminished social concern and a return to the individual morality of his early picaresque fiction. T. A. Jackson, *Charles Dickens: Progress of a Radical* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Michael Salter, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 229.

Panders to the basest passions of the lowest natures – whose existence is a national reproach'.¹⁰² Reynolds responded in typically truculent fashion, brandishing Dickens a 'Lickspittle Hanger-on to the robes of the aristocracy' and a 'wretched sycophant of aristocracy' who had the gall to 'consider himself the people's friend'.¹⁰³ This chapter examines how these caustic and hyperbolic remarks, exchanged at the peak of their powers as literary and public figures, effectively frame the two as bitter enemies in a binary fashion. Where Dickens condemned not only Reynolds's writing but his very 'existence', Reynolds's criticism was quite obviously misplaced concerning Dickens's position on the aristocratic order. Both employed language that consciously constructed an often-exaggerated image of their rival, shown in this instance by Dickens's portrayal of Reynolds donning the apparel of the French Revolutionists with the 'Red Cap', while in response Reynolds projected an image of Dickens as clinging desperately to the 'robes' of the patrician classes.

Examining the binary generated by these traded invectives, I argue that the resulting dichotomy between the two, produced by an over-reliance on the insults they exchanged in the 1850s, masks the deeper, underlying complexity of their rivalry, one which originated in 1837 and carried substantially more baggage than has been recognised. I contend that rather than rivals of bifurcated politics and literary inclinations, as their insults suppose, Dickens and Reynolds are more accurately described as distorted mirror images of one another. Analysis, therefore, unpicks the language the two directed at each other as an extension of the melodramatic mode that informs their fiction, as the two constructed an image of their rival in order to play into the broader dynamic of hero and villain. This was, I argue, a strategic means to better circumscribe their own identities. As such, this thesis is also concerned with the metaphors that better define the rivalry between the two, such as shadows and mirrored reflections. Such metaphors contest the binary model of enemies, and instead cultivate a sense of their entanglement, more accurately reflecting their complex

¹⁰² Charles Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word', *Household Words*, 1 (1850), 1-2 (p. 1); As Stephen Knight explains, 'the first comments link Reynolds to the leftist French radicals of 1848, and the later ones attack his direct treatment of sexuality'. Knight, p. 8.

¹⁰³ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Charles Dickens and the Democratic Movement', *Reynolds's Newspaper: A Weekly Journal of Politics, History, Literature and General Intelligence*', 43 (1851), 7.

dynamic that at times sees both authors seeking proximity to their rival, where at other times they looked to distance their names and writing. Like Magwitch and Compeyson caught in their death grip in *Great Expectations*, Dickens's and Reynolds's grappling with one another to gain supremacy sometimes sees their identities converge, overlapping on issues of politics, where at other times their rivalry appears as one between figures at opposing ends of a political and literary spectrum. Each, I argue, contains truth, and each is the result of their efforts to manage their own image as well as that of their rival, a process necessarily undertaken in step with the shifting political and literary context of the period as well as their own sense of literary and commercial status.

Mary Shannon has remarked that the animosity between Dickens and Reynolds was not fuelled by irrevocable differences of opinions but instead ‘emerged precisely because [they] were *not* on “distinct trajectories”’.¹⁰⁴ This crucial distinction identifies a greater complexity in their rivalry, since their conflict was ‘a kind of territorial battle for space within nineteenth-century print culture. However, for this clash to take place they both had to presuppose that there was such a territory over which to fight. Their war of words produced the very space over which they fought’.¹⁰⁵ Expanding on Shannon’s work – which grounds Dickens’s and Reynolds’s rivalry in notions of physical, geographical territory, chiefly represented by Wellington Street, where both Dickens and Reynolds occupied their offices mere doors away from one another – chapter four examines the significance of both authors’ perception of the literary market as a finite space. Analysis is interested in the significance of Reynolds entering the periodical market in 1846 as an independent editor and proprietor of his own journal prior to Dickens, effectively occupying the space Dickens had earmarked for his own publication. Dickens’s adversarial tone in the opening address of *Household Words* is then examined as a response to Reynolds’s enterprise, as he depicted the latter as a villain in the melodramatic mode and expressed his intention to ‘displace’ him. Interested in instances where the two novelists framed their work and that of their rival in terms of a physical, finite space, as if jostling for a strictly circumscribed position within the marketplace, this chapter is concerned with how

¹⁰⁴ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

both Dickens and Reynolds mapped a spatial understanding onto the abstract notion of the literary market, a perception which demanded, as Dickens makes clear in his response to Reynolds's pre-existing periodical, that a rival need be pushed out in order to make room for a new publication.

Language pertaining to the construction of identity, both of the self and of a given rival, reveals the degree to which novelists and journalists of the period viewed themselves as a commodity, or in more modern market terms, a brand, and the need for continual adaptation in order to remain viable in a literary market undergoing rapid commercialisation. As such, Dickens's and Reynolds's writing also commonly reveals a preoccupation with movement. In Reynolds's case dynamism is often pitted as anathema to stagnation, ideas which are then explicitly tied to politics, with the status quo tending to stand still, whereas radical politics is full of intensity and reflective of a desire for change. Analysis of this kind is touched upon throughout the thesis as a continuing motif that developed across their rivalry, demonstrating how Dickens and Reynolds not only constructed the territorial space in the marketplace for which they would compete, but as a direct corollary of this, they also began to actively construct each other as part of conscious strategy to better define and bolster their own commercial and political position in the literary market.

Chapter 1

‘Pickwick is so well done by Mr Reynolds that we must warn Boz to look to his laurels’: The Making of a Rivalry in *Pickwick Papers* and *Pickwick Abroad*

This chapter compares Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* (1836) and G. W. M. Reynolds’s *Pickwick Abroad* (1837) in order to contest the reductive notion of Reynolds as a cheap plagiariser, whose allegedly ‘straightforwardly mercenary motives’ were grounded in ‘the guaranteed audience and pecuniary success’ of a Dickens copy.¹ The analysis instead demonstrates that Reynolds used *Pickwick Abroad* to establish a multi-faceted and nuanced rivalry with Dickens in which his politics were of equal if not greater importance than his commercial motivations. Where the imprecision or tenuousness of the copyright legislature permitted in the late 1830s,² Reynolds sought not only to take advantage of Dickens’s works by placing the Pickwickians into a sequel; he also actively looked to provoke Dickens in the process. *Pickwick Abroad* makes clear that Reynolds considered Pickwick as much his property as it was Dickens’s. Where the novel’s title supposes not only a sojourn overseas, but the letting loose of Pickwick into the wider literary world, beyond the control of Dickens, the language Reynolds directed towards Dickens, particularly in the preface, was neither placatory, playful, nor deferential as a kind of homage to the original, but was instead subtly antagonistic and combative as he sought to legitimise his status as a commercial and political rival and undermine Dickens’s in the process. By offering a more comprehensive analysis of the key tenets of Reynolds’s novel, I argue that *Pickwick Abroad* is deserving of greater recognition, since it marks the inception of a lasting rivalry forged between two of the period’s most prolific authors, a rivalry that would shape the trajectory of both their careers. Moreover, when considered in tandem, the novels grant an insight

¹ Sara James, ‘G.W.M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 19-32 (p. 25).

² Indeed, as Brander Matthews wrote in 1860: ‘much of which is called plagiarism’ was ‘not criminal at all, but perfectly legitimate’. Brander Matthews, ‘The Ethics of Plagiarism’, *Longman’s Magazine*, 8 (1886), 629; Robert Macfarlane explains that it was only ‘from the late 1850s onwards’ that ‘received notions of originality (as the pre-eminent literary virtue) and plagiarism (as the pre-eminent literary sin) came under increasingly sceptical scrutiny. Victorian writers and thinkers began to speak out against the excessive animus which existed towards literary resemblance’. Robert Macfarlane, *Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 6.

into the dynamics of nineteenth-century publishing ventures within a new, mass literary culture. The analysis offers, therefore, a reparative reading of an author who would ultimately elevate himself above the numerous Dickens-imitators that flooded the market, and establish his voice as a popular fiction writer on a more radical political platform than Dickens was willing, or able, to compete with.

1.1 Dickens, Reynolds and Pickwick: A culture of plagiarism

There is little doubt that the personal animosity between Dickens and Reynolds stemmed from Reynolds's plagiarism, as Dickens saw it, of *Pickwick Papers*. In December 1837, less than two months after Dickens's novel concluded, Reynolds began the serial publication of *Pickwick Abroad; Or, The Tour in France*, inducing in Dickens an 'almost apoplectic wrath'.³ The indignation Dickens felt at the theft of his work was not directed exclusively at Reynolds, however, as a culture of plagiarism flourished in the 1830s and 1840s, often at Dickens's expense.⁴ Indeed, *Pickwick Papers* 'suffered more plagiarizing than any other book of its time' and was, for Dickens, an unfortunate by-product of the literary frenzy which has been called Pickwick 'mania' or the Pickwick 'phenomenon'.⁵ Despite adopting the nickname 'the inimitable', an assertion of Dickens's apparent belief that 'there was no other writer at work who could surpass him' or 'could match his energy and ambition',⁶ by September 1839 'at least twenty-five adaptations of Dickens's writing had been appropriated by other writers'.⁷ Rather than an indication of Dickens's confidence, I would argue that the self-ascribed moniker also betrays an anxiety on Dickens's behalf over the sheer quantity of

³ Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), p. 290.

⁴ As will be discussed later in the chapter, Dickens called his imitators 'dishonest dullards', who were characterised by their 'mental smallness' and their willingness to prey on the 'unwary and the credulous' in their production of 'cheap and wretched imitations of our delectable works'. Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby: Reproduced in facsimile from the original monthly parts of 1838-9 with an essay by Michael Slater*, 2 vols (London: Scholar Press, 1982), I, p. xxix.

⁵ See Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-50* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), p. 52; Fred G. Kitton, *Dickensiana: A Bibliography of the Literature Relating to Charles Dickens and His Writings* (London: George Redway, 1886); *Catalogue of the Pickwick Exhibition*, ed. by William Miller (London: Dickens Fellowship, 1936); Eliot Engel, *Pickwick Papers: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990); John Bowen, *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); p. 9. Irene Wiltshire, 'Pickwick and the Pirates', *Dickensian*, 102 (2006), 32-44; Miller, W. 'Imitations of Pickwick', *Dickensian*, 32 (1936), 4-5.

⁶ Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2012), p. xlvii.

⁷ Robert L. Patten, *Charles Dickens and "Boz": The Birth of the Industrial-Age Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 204.

imitations of his work. The title was formulated as a strategy to bolster his own claims to originality.

Hack fiction writer Thomas Peckett Prest, described by Mary Teresa Gowan as ‘a shadowy figure’,⁸ a metaphor similarly applicable to Reynolds’s relationship to Dickens, was arguably the most prolific exponent of ‘Boz’ imitations, churning out numerous publications including *The Penny Pickwick* (1836-1838), *Oliver Twiss* (1837-1839), and *Nickelas Nickleberry* (1841),⁹ each of which was published in Edward Lloyds’s cheap and popular periodical *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*. Contemporaries of Prest’s in the cheap publications market were similarly eager to profit from Dickens’s popularity, comprising what Adam Abraham describes as a ‘league of imitators’ looking to fill the ‘narrative void’ created by Dickens’s famous text.¹⁰ In keeping with this thesis’s interest in both Dickens’s and Reynolds’s perception of the literary market as a finite physical space, it is noteworthy that Abraham describes Dickens’s work as creating a narrative ‘void’, thus either displacing other texts and authors, or in this case producing gaps around what is left unsaid. This was a recurring facet of Dickens’s and Reynolds’s rivalry and is discussed in greater detail in chapter four. Furthermore, to describe this body of fiction Abraham applies the collective noun ‘prostheses’ (again a means of filling space) to the numerous imitations, copies, re-appropriations and imitations of Dickens’s text, each of which served to

make available aspects of the original that are omitted, muted, implied, curtailed, forgotten, repressed, or secreted to distant corners. They interpret and interpenetrate with *The Pickwick Papers* and stand, alongside reviews and newspaper extracts, among the earliest and most vivid responses to Dickens’s text’.¹¹

These ‘prostheses’, which acted as ‘artificial extensions to the Pickwick corpus’,¹² were facilitated, or

⁸ Mary Teresa McGowan, ‘Pickwick and the Pirates: A Study of Some Early Imitations, Dramatisations and Plagiarisms of *Pickwick Papers*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1975), p. 366.

⁹ Patten, *Charles Dickens and “Boz”*, p. 76.

¹⁰ Adam Abraham, ‘Plagiarizing Pickwick: Imitations of Immortality’, *Dickens Quarterly*, 32 (2015) 5-20. (p. 5).

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 6.

enabled, by the rather slack legal framework around copyright, which afforded authors ‘little redress against plagiarism’.¹³ Dickens fought relentlessly against these escalating re-appropriations of his writing, filing legal injunctions against Lloyd’s *Penny Pickwick*, for example, which awarded him costs. The minor punitive success of this case left Dickens ‘jubilant’ and encouraged him to pursue a further ‘five chancery suits against the publishers and booksellers’.¹⁴ Ultimately, though, he was fighting a losing battle.¹⁵ In fact, *Pickwick Papers* was dedicated to Thomas Noon Talfourd, the back bench M. P. campaigning for more rigorous copyright law, but his Bill struggled against the popular current within literary circles and the public in general. As Catherine Seville details, in 1836 Talfourd began efforts to ‘promote the various copyright measures’ with the express aim of a ‘thoroughgoing consolidation of all aspects of copyright’, but was met with stern resistance when copyright ‘instead became characterised as harmful by a significant body of popular opinion, and a campaign of resistance was organised. After a lengthy battle, the bill’s sponsors were forced to settle for the compromise effected by the 1842 Act’.¹⁶ It was against this backdrop of legislative reform that Dickens’s and Reynolds’s novels were published. In the meantime, however, Dickens-inspired fiction continued to proliferate.

Dickens’s early career was thus dogged by issues of copyright and plagiarism and it never failed to rattle. The problem crossed the Atlantic, where copyright law was even more lax than in Britain, leaving Dickens

¹³ James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 51.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 52.

¹⁵ In 1836 authors were still operating under the legal jurisdiction of the 1814 Copyright Act. The scope of this Act was rather limited and, relative to the explosion of printed material and the mass expansion of the literary market, which would ensue in the first half of the 1800s, the legislation around what constituted plagiarism remained loose up until the reform of 1842. Edward Lloyd, for example, was sued by Dickens for the ‘flagrant imitation’ of his work in *The Penny Pickwick*, a case Lloyd won simply ‘by arguing that no one could confuse the two texts’. Anne Humphreys, ‘Victorian stage adaptations and novel appropriations’, in *Charles Dickens in Context*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Holly Furneaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 27-34 (p. 33).

¹⁶ Catherine Seville, *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England: The Framing of the 1842 Copyright Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1-2; It is interesting to note a modern parallel between Dickens’s struggle in the 1830s and 1840s and the European Parliamentary vote in 2018, which rejected proposed changes to European copyright law, specifically Articles 11 and 13. A committee of MEPs voted on a proposal to bring ‘copyright laws in line with the digital age’. The proposed changes centred on fairer remuneration for publishers and targeted content-sharing platforms. While changes drew support from the artistic community, particularly the music industry, it experienced stern resistance from over seventy ‘influential technology leaders, including Vint Cerf and Tim Berners-Lee’, who described the legislation as a threat to internet freedom. Mark Savage, ‘Controversial copyright law rejected by EU parliament’ (5 July 2018), <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-44712475>> [accessed 5 July 2018].

frustrated at the lack of remuneration he was receiving relative to his expanding popularity.¹⁷ It would colour his much-anticipated trip to America in 1842, when, much to the displeasure of his audiences, Dickens turned a number of public engagements towards the issue, imploring the need for more stringent copyright laws.¹⁸ Despite his persistence on the matter in Britain, Dickens struggled to maintain control not only over his writing but also over his authorial identity as ‘Boz’. Peckett Prest, for example, wrote under the assumed name ‘Bos’, and it quickly became common practice to simply swap out the initial letter in ‘Boz’ and push into circulation Dickens-like sketches under the penname ‘Poz’.¹⁹ As Robert Patten remarks, ‘Boz’ ‘came to name a genre as well as an author’, and it proved to be a genre particularly susceptible to mimicry since imitations were simply considered ‘alternative modes of writing not prohibited by copyright’.²⁰ The notion of author and genre as public property, coupled with the lack of distinction between plagiarism and imitation, left Dickens especially vulnerable.

The nascent condition of copyright legislation was reflected by the distinct lack of compunction voiced by peddlers of Dickens imitations. W. T. Moncrieff, a notorious theatrical hack, who would ‘anticipate’ the conclusions to Dickens’s serials and present them on stage prior to final publication, once remarked ‘that the common practice of dramatizing works before their original authors have completed them is an unfair

¹⁷ At a dinner in Boston in February 1842 Dickens explained, ‘You have in America great writers...who will live in all time, and are as familiar to our lips as household words...I take leave to say, in the presence of some of those gentlemen, that I hope the time is not far distant when they, in America, will receive of right some profit and return in England from their labours; and when we, in England, shall receive some substantial profit and return from ours. Pray do not misunderstand me. Securing myself from day to day the means of an honourable subsistence, I would rather have the affectionate regard of my fellow men, than I would have heaps and mines of gold. But the two things do not seem to me incompatible [...]. I would beg leave to whisper in your ear two words, International Copyright’. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), III, pp. 59-60; Peter Baldwin, for example, writes that ‘Dickens saw himself as “the greatest loser . . . alive” of America’s lack of international copyright. His American fans thought their adulation so burnished his reputation that it compensated for his lack of royalties. Some argued that he was so popular precisely because his writings were unprotected and therefore cheap and widely read. Dickens himself could think of little but the monies foregone’. Peter Baldwin, *The Copyright Wars: Three Centuries of Trans-Atlantic Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 121.

¹⁸ See K. J. Fielding, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1958), p. 64; For a discussion on Dickens and international copyright law see Lawrence H. Houtchens, ‘Charles Dickens and International Copyright’, *American Literature*, 13, (1941), 18-28; For a discussion on Dickens in America see W. G. Wilkins, *Charles Dickens in America* (New York, 1911); Larisa T. Castillo, ‘Natural Authority in Charles Dickens’s *Martin Chuzzlewit* and the Copyright Act of 1842’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 62 (2008), 435-464; Sidney P. Moss, *Charles Dickens’ Quarrel with America* (Troy, N.Y.: Whitson Publishing Co., 1984).

¹⁹ Patten, *Charles Dickens and “Boz”*, p. 76.

²⁰ Ibid.

and vexatious one; but it did not originate with me'.²¹ This rare moment of sympathy, without amounting to an admission of foul play on Moncrieff's part, was perhaps as much as Dickens could have hoped for. Otherwise, his writing was considered fair game. Rohan McWilliams explains that there was a feeling generated amongst opportunistic publications in early-Victorian Britain that 'a fictional character was simply too important to be the property of one author alone'.²² Again, Dickens was easy prey in this regard, as his 'greatest characters can exist independently of the novels partly because of their pictorial conception in the tradition of portraying comic *types*'.²³

In posterity, Dickens's writing has largely eclipsed these imitations, at least outside of a niche academic interest best exemplified by Louis James's scholarship, which assigns a greater significance to these fictional spin-offs due to their ability to illuminate the class division in literary production and readership in the mid-nineteenth century. James's scholarship has, therefore, contributed an important and often corrective viewpoint on print culture through these boom years.²⁴ It has long been known that authors like Peckett Prest and dramatists like Moncrief fired Dickens's deep indignation, but seldom has the imitative author's relationship to Dickens been considered in more extensive detail. Instead, this 'unwieldy batch' has been reduced to their penchant for commercial opportunism and the desire to 'exchange' their work 'for shillings and pence'.²⁵ While this facet of these imitations is certainly true, one figure emerged from the Pickwickian frenzy who was to have a more lasting impact on Dickens's career. Indeed, other than G.

²¹ S. J. Adair Fitz-Gerals, *Dickens and the Drama* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1910), pp. 121-126.

²² Rohan McWilliams, 'The French Connection: G. W. M. Reynolds and the Outlaw Robert Macaire', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 33-52 (p. 41).

²³ James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 53.

²⁴ For a discussion on the comparative value of analysing working-class re-workings of Dickens's novels with the originals, as a means to further understanding the literary class divide, see Louis James, 'The View from Brick Lane: Contrasting Perspectives in Working-Class and Middle-Class Fiction of the Early Victorian Period', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 11 (1981), 87-101; The existence of these working-class plagiarisms is also addressed in another of James's studies, *Fiction for the Working Man*, in which Haywood attempts to divest Dickens 'of the myth of a universal readership' (p. xv); See also Ian Haywood, *Working-Class Fiction: From Chartism to Trainspotting* (Northcote House Publishers: Plymouth, 1997); E. P. Thompson traces the heritage of much of this working-class fiction back to the radical literary culture of Cobbett, Carlisle, Wade, Gast and Owen amongst others, placing great stock in the Queen Caroline affair and the period of the Regency as a catalytic moment. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982).

²⁵ Abraham, p. 5.

W. M. Reynolds, no other member of the ‘league of imitators’ can lay claim to an enduring rivalry with Dickens, sustained over several decades. Reynolds’s relationship and long-standing rivalry with Dickens was complex and deeply nuanced, undergoing numerous vicissitudes, yet the critical legacy of their connection has been narrowly and reductively defined by the plagiarist and originator dynamic.

Reynolds defined *Pickwick Abroad* as a ‘sequel’ to *Pickwick Papers*, yet the novel has rarely been considered by critics as anything other than the product of an astute commercial operator capitalising on the developments and trends in the literary market. Reynolds’s alleged habit of seeking commercial gain from his writing, often at the expense of any political principle, has survived as perhaps his defining hallmark. As Juliet John confirms, his apparent lack of sincerity has commonly led critics to believe that ‘people were less important to him as people than they were as consumers – or that his political radicalism was less important to him than his commercialism’.²⁶ It is my contention that, from the outset of his literary career in Britain with *Pickwick Abroad*, Reynolds pursued a far more sophisticated agenda, utilizing Dickens as a vehicle to establish his own political and commercial footing in the marketplace. My analysis is, therefore, less concerned with the prevailing copyright legislature (or lack of) and is instead interested in the culture of plagiarism and the opportunities it provided for authors like Reynolds. It was, I argue, a culture that provided Reynolds with instant success as a writer of Dickens-like fiction and would ultimately render him a far more germane influence on Dickens’s career than has commonly been acknowledged.

It is hardly worthwhile attempting to argue that financial motivations did not play a role in Reynolds’s choice to pursue Pickwick as his subject matter. Even a cursory glance at the parallel fortunes of Reynolds and Dickens heading into the latter years of the 1830s suggests a pecuniary motive on Reynolds’s part. Following his defection as a young man of sixteen from his training at the Royal Military Academy,

²⁶ Juliet John, ‘Reynolds’s *Mysteries* and Popular Culture’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 161-177 (p. 175); Reynolds’s overarching literary approach, as Raymond Williams similarly describes, was ultimately deemed as ‘not “for the people” but for the money – amoral and apolitical’. Raymond Williams, ‘Radical and/or Respectable’, in *The Press We Deserve*, ed. by Richard Boston (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 16-23 (p. 21).

Sandhurst,²⁷ and already acquainted with Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791),²⁸ Reynolds promptly took himself off to France where he experienced a Paris 'heady with excitement just after the Revolution of July 1830'.²⁹ During his time in France, he married, had his first child,³⁰ took up residence in a Parisian bookshop, joined the National guard between 1830 and 1836,³¹ and claimed to have become a naturalized French citizen.³² He became the editor of the *Paris Literary Gazette*, through which 'he gave the young W. M. Thackeray, then a struggling art student in the city, his first earnings as a writer',³³ worked for the *London and Paris Courier* as well as *The Paris Advertiser and Journal of English and Foreign Literature*, and penned his first novel, *The Youthful Imposter*, in 1835.³⁴ Clearly, Reynolds had every intention of remaining in France for the foreseeable future, but his Parisian existence was curtailed due to financial difficulties.³⁵ Bankruptcy ultimately forced him and his wife to return to England and once back in London his situation appeared bleak, 'living in cramped, impoverished quarters',³⁶ with the fate of his family now entirely dependent on his ability to earn a living as a writer.

Meanwhile, prior to Reynolds's return to England, Dickens's career was primed and ready to explode into public life with the publication of *Sketches by Boz* (1836) followed swiftly by *Pickwick Papers* (1837) and

²⁷ Anne Humpherys and Louis James, 'Introduction', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 1-15 (pp. 1-2).

²⁸ Rohan McWilliam, 'The Mysteries of G. W. M. Reynolds: Radicalism and Melodrama in Victorian Britain', in *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J. F. C. Harrison*, ed. by Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (Hampshire: Scolar, 1996), pp. 182-98 (p. 184).

²⁹ Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 2.

³⁰ Reynolds's youngest sons were called Ledru Rollin and Kossuth Mazzini, homages to the two contemporary European revolutionaries. See Elisabeth Jay, *British Writers and Paris 1830:1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 178.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² M. R. Atal casts doubts over Reynolds's claim to French Citizenship, citing the largely 'hypothetical' evidence that supports the claim in his article 'G. W. M. Reynolds in Paris 1835-6: A New Discovery', *Notes and Queries* 55 (2008), pp. 448-453 (p. 451); Louis James corroborates Reynolds's claim to French citizenship in 'Reynolds, George William Macarthur (1814-1879)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23414>> [accessed 13 June 2018].

³³ Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 3.

³⁴ Jay, p. 156.

³⁵ Jay explains that 'it is uncertain whether the failure of the former [either *the Paris Literary Gazette* or the *Paris Advertiser and Journal*] or the collapse of the latter [*London and Paris Courier*] was more responsible for Reynolds being forced to declare himself bankrupt in 1836 and settle with his French creditors from London the following year'. *Ibid.*

³⁶ Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 4.

Oliver Twist (1837-1839). ‘Boz’ was quickly acquiring a reputation as a pioneering and radical voice in the 1830s, his sweeping popularity generated by his whimsical sketches of urban life in his early works, followed by depictions of the working-class poor, the criminal underworld, and the degraded slums in *Oliver Twist*. The blend of *Oliver Twist*’s melodramatic mode and its gritty realism made Dickens’s writing accessible to both a working-class readership, as well as to a middle and upper-class readership capable of enacting the reform needed to combat the social ills his fiction exposed.³⁷ These early works generated a cross-class popularity that was even capable of competing with ‘the sensational and pornographic fiction for the masses which normally overtopped the sales successes of the serious Victorian novelists’.³⁸ Dickens’s fiction utilized an innovative serialised publication to produce ‘ramifying subplots’ that ‘provide[d] the minor climaxes and succession of incidents needed to sustain readers’ interrupted interest’.³⁹ This novel mode of publication marked ‘the birthday of modern authorship, the industrial-age authorship,’ increasingly defined by ‘enlarging markets, improved mechanisms for the production and distribution of printed materials, heightened publicity, [and] the development of celebrity culture,’ all of which transformed ‘the conventional templates of authorship’.⁴⁰ It is likely, therefore, given their contrasting fortunes during this period – one poised to spearhead a new, potentially lucrative, literary movement while the other was returning destitute from France with little or no reputation to advance his career – that Reynolds would have been eyeing Dickens’s popularity with a mixture of envy and opportunism.

There is a general truth to Rohan McWilliam’s remark that Reynolds was consistently ‘shadowing

³⁷ The radical tenor of *Oliver Twist* was reflected by the push-back it received from prominent public figures. Then Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, for example, deplored the novel’s depiction of the conditions among the slums, declaring: ‘it’s all among Workhouses and Coffin Makers, and Pickpockets [...]. I don’t like those things; I wish to avoid them; I don’t like them in *reality*, and therefore I don’t wish them represented.’ Queen Victoria, from her diaries, 7 April 1839’, rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1971), p. 44; Whereas, numerous contemporary critics have accused the novel of turning away from issues of social condition by ultimately revealing Oliver to have genteel origins. See Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 264.

³⁸ Martin Fido, *Profiles in Literature: Charles Dickens* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Patten, *Charles Dickens and “Boz”*, p. 143; Kathleen Tillotson similarly remarks that Dickens ‘leapt into fame’ with *Pickwick*, a novel which ‘initiated a virtually new method of publishing and fiction and established in the public the habit of buying novels as well as borrowing them.’ Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 28.

Dickens',⁴¹ regularly looking to the rising 'Boz' for material through the 1830s and early 1840s. This proclivity on Reynolds's part has, however, led to the perception of him as someone who displayed a 'bare-face cheek in ripping off other people's ideas'.⁴² Michael Diamond's analysis of Reynolds's and Dickens's relationship between 1850 and 1870 describes how 'Reynolds seems to have been obsessed with Dickens over at least twenty years'.⁴³ It is my contention that the condition of their rivalry between 1850 and 1870 is contingent upon an understanding of how their relationship developed from 1837 until 1850; Reynolds did not appear on Dickens's radar for the first time in 1850. It is apposite, therefore, to utilize a more inclusive approach to the fiction both authors produced across their entire careers in order to develop a more comprehensive picture of their rivalry. This, I argue, affords a revision of Diamond's assertion that Reynolds was 'obsessed' with Dickens, proposing instead that this obsession, or at least preoccupation, was at various points in their respective careers, a far more reciprocal, or mutual process.

Although Reynolds's later successes have now been reviewed more favourably, some contemporary critics still tend to perceive his early novels as simply commercially driven plagiarisms of Dickens's work. Berry Chevasco, for instance, describes how, 'when back in Britain Reynolds attempted to repeat the successes of authors like Dickens by close copies or plagiarisms of their well-known works'.⁴⁴ Reynolds knew that *Pickwick Abroad* would come under fire, concluding the novel by having Pickwick champion his cause as successor to 'Boz':

⁴¹ McWilliam, p. 39.

⁴² Ibid, p. 34.

⁴³ Michael Diamond, 'Charles Dickens as Villain and Hero in Reynolds's Newspaper', *Dickensian*, 98 (2002), 127-138 (p. 137).

⁴⁴ Berry Chevasco, 'Lost in Translation: The Relationship between Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* and G. W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 133-146 (p. 139); McWilliam describes some of Reynolds's early novels simply as 'pirated', while Juliet John refers to Reynolds as a 'plagiaristic author'. Bolder still is John Sutherland's description of Reynolds's *Pickwick* as banking 'on unvarnished plagiarism to suborn the Dickens public'. McWilliam, p. 39; Juliet John, 'Reynolds's *Mysteries* and Popular Culture', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 161-177 (p. 163); John Sutherland, 'Chips off the Block: Dickens's Serialising Imitators', in *Dickens and Other Victorians: Essays in Honour of Philip Collins*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1988), pp. 977-122 (p. 103).

It therefore remains for me to find one who will be bold enough to undertake it, with the fear of being called an imitator and a plagiarist before his eyes. I am perfectly aware that there will be much hypercriticism to contend with—that many journals will be severe [...] and that even the public will look suspiciously upon the commencement of a new editor's labours.⁴⁵

Pre-empting criticism by casting out a message of defiance and courage, Reynolds's phrasing suggests a sense of uncertainty when considering how to proceed. While his concern appears only to extend as far as the 'fear of being called an imitator and a plagiarist', rather than actually being one (thereby supposing a degree of confidence in his own position), Reynolds's adoption of the term 'hypercriticism' anticipates a degree of hyperbole in the response of the press. However, where this might have mitigated against any sway journals held over the public, his slightly unfortunate use of the phrase, 'even the public will look suspiciously', arguably betrays his perception of the general reader as a less discerning critic. Reynolds's intention was, I think, to suggest that the reading public was less prone to bouts of over the top 'hypercriticism' and less concerned with the issue of plagiarism in general. His subsequent reference to his work as the product of his 'labours', would indicate the latter is the more plausible, as he adopts a term more likely to resonate among his working-class readership. Ultimately, while Reynolds could not have known just how tethered his reputation would become to accusations of dishonesty, this early example demonstrates his conscious management of the perceptions, both among the public and critics, of the culture of plagiarism around literature of the period and his efforts to foster the loyalty of his new found readership.

Critics, including Louis James, have argued that there in fact exists between *Pickwick Abroad* and *Pickwick Papers* enough dissimilarity to consider the former as an original work.⁴⁶ Indeed, Diamond similarly defends Reynolds as having 'claimed with some justification that he wrote sequels to *Pickwick* rather than plagiarisms'.⁴⁷ For at least a century and a half, though, critics almost unanimously sided with Dickens on

⁴⁵ G. W. M. Reynolds, *Pickwick Abroad; Or, the Tour in France* (London: Willoughby and Co., 1839), p. 607.

⁴⁶ James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 62.

⁴⁷ Diamond, p. 127.

the issue, with *Pickwick Abroad* remaining wholly under-examined.⁴⁸ It is my view that *Pickwick Abroad*, as examined alongside *Pickwick Papers*, is deserving of greater attention, since together they mark the first and therefore significant instance of the nascent rivalry between two of the Victorian period's most popular and influential authors. Deeper analysis of Reynolds's intentions for *Pickwick Abroad* offers an important corrective to the reductive views which have dismissed or neglected Reynolds's early efforts as those of a writer for whom 'commercial viability was [...] an end in itself'.⁴⁹

1.2 *Pickwick Abroad*: Plagiarism and/or 'justifiable' sequel?

Of course, Reynolds's claim that *Pickwick Abroad* was a sequel is difficult to defend, and his inconsistent stance on plagiarism undermines his justification for the novel's originality. In the preface to the novel he explains: 'there are numerous tales and legends episodically introduced into this work: it is therefore necessary to inform the reader, that they are all purely original, and were composed at the moment before the manuscript was required'.⁵⁰ This statement reflects both Reynolds's awareness of the potential criticism he was to endure in re-appropriating Dickens's work as well his own perceptions of plagiarism as somewhat fluid. Reynolds's is arguably not a compelling defence, not least because the last-minute submission of a manuscript is just as likely to imply the borrowing of a pre-existing work in order to meet a deadline, rather than the spontaneous penning of a 'purely original' piece of fiction. However, the term 'purely original' suggests Reynolds perceived some delineating degrees of originality, subtly creating a grey area around what might otherwise be considered an absolute term. Nevertheless, the statement indicates Reynolds's desire to avoid accusations of plagiarism. He goes on to allude to 'the numerous songs and other specimens of poetry introduced into the work', reminding readers that 'the source of those that are not original is invariably mentioned'.⁵¹ His intent is clear, but there remains a glaring inconsistency between his efforts to safeguard his own material from accusations of plagiarism by his adherence to an acknowledgement of

⁴⁸ See Louis James's chapter 'The Beginnings of a New Type of Popular Fiction: Plagiarisms of Dickens', in *Fiction for the Working Man*, pp. 51-82.

⁴⁹ Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 166.

⁵⁰ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. vi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

outside material, and his apparent comfort with *Pickwick Abroad* as a work drawn entirely from the use of 'the Pickwickians, who all retain their proper names'.⁵²

Such inconsistency is indicative of Reynolds's somewhat contradictory approach towards plagiarism in general. In his first novel, *The Youthful Imposter* (1835), Sara James observes in Reynolds a certain 'hesitation over what constituted plagiarism',⁵³ suggesting that the uncertainty with which he interpreted the practice of plagiarism reflected 'his anxieties about his ability to generate completely new material'.⁵⁴ In a footnote in *The Youthful Imposter*, Reynolds notes that 'the idea of a condemned malefactor listening to the song of another in a similar predicament, is borrowed from *Le dernier jour d'un condamné*, of Victor Hugo,' adding: 'but I fancy the plagiarism is so trivial, it was scarcely necessary to acknowledge it'.⁵⁵ While the terms 'fancy' and 'scarcely' might suggest Reynolds's unease with the view espoused, they might equally reflect his willingness to play fast and loose with the idea of plagiarism. Certainly, I would contest James's connection between Reynolds's apparently equivocating position on plagiarism and his inability to pen new material, if only on the grounds of the sheer volume of fiction Reynolds produced over his lifetime. Indeed, by *Pickwick Abroad*, there is arguably already a dropping off of this type of concern over plagiarism as Reynolds's liberal use of 'Boz's' set of characters is never qualified by any reference to Dickens. Rather, Reynolds appeared happy to borrow from another author's work, and in doing so, as we shall see, even sought to deliberately pull ownership away from Dickens.

Reynolds's insouciant attitude was evident again in 1850 when he stated that 'the most original writers are the greatest thieves'.⁵⁶ Where the qualifying term 'most' again suggests Reynolds's belief in a scale of

⁵² James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 61.

⁵³ Sara James, 'G.W.M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France', p. 21.

⁵⁴ Ibid; Jay offers a defence of sorts for Reynolds's inconsistencies by further contextualising his attitude as linked to his early professional career in Paris, describing how 'old Paris hands such as Thackeray and G. W. M. Reynolds were less fazed by the fine distinction between adaptation and plagiarism than some of their London colleagues'. Jay, p. 200; For further discussion on the 'reprisal of literary originality and plagiarism which occurred in Britain between 1859 and 1900', see Robert Macfarlane, *Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 6.

⁵⁵ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Youthful Imposter*, 3 vols (Paris: G. G. Bennis, 1835), vol. 3, p. 145.

⁵⁶ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Byron's Defence of His Plagiarism', *Reynolds's Miscellany, of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 5 (1850), 150-150 (p. 150).

originality, it is hard to read this as anything other than a bold, almost impudent defence of his use of Dickens's material. Yet, just two years prior to this statement, Reynolds was rendered furious when his former editor for *The Mysteries of London* (1844-1848), George Stiff, printed “a wretched travestie” of *The Coral Island* – Reynolds's new tale in his *Miscellany* – under the title ‘The Corral Island’ in his new replica publication of Reynolds's periodical.⁵⁷ Stiff and fellow editor George Vickers also duplicated features from *Reynolds's Miscellany* in order to ‘mislead the public’ and siphon sales from Reynolds.⁵⁸ An affronted Reynolds wasted little time in filing for an injunction. Dick Collins writes of the saga that

Reynolds demanded an explanation, and Vickers easily provided one: it was pure coincidence. There was nothing Reynolds could do but issue a long, rambling editorial consigning Vickers and Stiff to the lowest pouches of hell.⁵⁹

In many ways, this episode saw Reynolds experience the annoyance he had previously inflicted upon Dickens, as the victim of what he perceived as piracy. This was not a stand-alone instance either; Trefor Thomas notes a similar occurrence, wherein Reynolds, having concluded *The Mysteries of London* serial, was angered by Stiff's immediate employment of ‘Thomas Miller and later E. J. Blanchard to continue the original title’.⁶⁰ As Thomas describes: the ‘arrangement was, not unnaturally, angrily contested’.⁶¹ Reynolds, it appears, wanted to play both sides of the issue. Having his cake and eating it too, he evidently regarded it as his right to use another author's ideas but wanted protection for his own work.

Tied up in the common perception of Reynolds as a plagiarist, I argue, is the neglect (deliberate or otherwise) of his capacity to generate original writing that appealed across class boundaries in much the

⁵⁷ Andrew King, ‘Reynolds's *Miscellany*, 1846-1849: Advertising Networks and Politics’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 53-74 (p. 60).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Dick Collins, ‘George William MacArthur Reynolds: A Biographical Sketch’, in *The Necromancer*, ed. by Dick Collins (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2007), p. xxxi.

⁶⁰ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. x.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

same manner as Dickens. Where Dickens has commonly been celebrated for his blend of popular and improving fiction, which cultivated a diversity of readership, Reynolds, by contrast, has been derided as a writer who appealed mostly to working-class readers, and whose popularity was achieved chiefly by canny market strategy, a preoccupation with sales, and piggybacking on the labour of other writers.⁶² Despite this perception, Reynolds's writing often exhibits a similar type of hybridity that was so integral to Dickens's seemingly universal appeal. Dickens's extensive critical legacy has, however, extended him considerations not afforded to Reynolds to the same degree, and the originality of Reynolds's canon has yet to be fully recognised. Consequently, the latter's achievements have been vastly underappreciated. Louis James, who has produced a compelling case against the alleged diversity of Dickens's appeal, observes that his fiction was in fact often deemed 'too "literary"' for working-class readers,⁶³ the corollary of which is the supposition that *Pickwick Abroad* and Reynolds's fictional mode acted as a more accessible version of Dickens's work for a less literate reader, in much the same manner attempted by Peckett Prest's Dickens-imitations. Yet, how the quality and skill of Reynolds's writing achieved this less 'literary' appeal, while also retaining interest among tranches of the middle classes, has yet to be been fully examined.⁶⁴

In 1957 Margaret Dalziel recognised the inherent skill in Reynolds's writing, which far surpassed that of his 'cheap periodical contemporaries':

The first distinction which we notice between this work [*The Mysteries of London*] and the usual run

⁶² For example, in 1959, Monroe Engel's study on Dickens was already addressing the tension between the popular and the 'serious' as part of Dickens's legacy, writing: 'Nothing confuses our view of Dickens more than his great popularity, which was not merely granted but obstinately sought. What confuses us is the present, seemingly ever-increasing distance between popular and serious writing, and between their respective audiences, and our suspicion therefore that any writing that is popular must also be inferior, vulgar'. Dickens's ability to blend the two has since been the subject of much criticism, yet Engels's description of popular as equating to vulgar stuck to perceptions of Reynolds for far longer. Monroe Engel, *The Maturity of Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 4.

⁶³ James, 'The View From Brick Lane', p. 88.

⁶⁴ Louis James observes that Reynolds's body of work, 'if often uneven, padded out and overloaded with secondary narratives, contradict[s] the image of Reynolds as a repetitive literary hack'. Rather, his serial productions 'show restless invention and ingenuity, a skill in plotting and in the manipulation of concealed identities'. Louis James, 'Time, Politics and the Symbolic Imagination in Reynolds's Social Melodrama', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 179-198 (pp. 199-200).

of things in cheap periodicals is the skill with which it is written. Reynolds has a fluent, luscious, polysyllabic style which never fails him. Not only is he never ungrammatical, but is almost never awkward or clumsy.⁶⁵

In my view, this distinction is equally applicable to *Pickwick Abroad*, a fact corroborated by numerous reviews of the novel that viewed Reynolds as a legitimate threat to Boz.⁶⁶ Indeed, in numerous passages Reynolds's prose is almost lyrical, reading like blank verse while retaining his characteristic melodrama:

Madness! Thou hurricane of the passions and the feelings, into which the deluded imagination is plunged; —Madness! Thou parent of suicide, of violent death, of misery, and of woe—how terrible a scourge art thou! Madness! At one moment thy votaries, led on by every brilliant and sanguine hope, ascend to the seventh heaven of joy and delight; and in the next, they are plunged, under the influence of the same illusions, into the deepest hell of despair!⁶⁷

Dalziel's criticism is significant because it distinguishes Reynolds's work from the 'penny bloods' and 'Newgate novels' he was (and continues to be) commonly associated with. The quality of his writing exceeded these cheap publications, in style if not in content. Dalziel's criticism does, however, reveal a tension between Reynolds's 'fluent' and 'luscious, polysyllabic style' and his target working-class audience. If Dickens's style was considered 'too "literary"' to reach the working classes, who preferred a more prosaic and accessible style without Dickens's 'carefully ritualized' scenes – such as the murder of Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, which James likens to *Othello* –⁶⁸ then surely Reynolds's similarly literary style would produce the same alienating effect? How well-received by the less literate class of reader, for example, were phrases such as 'sesquipedalian' (ironically itself a synonym for polysyllabic phrases) that

⁶⁵ Margaret Dalziel, *Popular Fiction 100 Years Ago: An Unexplored Tract of Literary History* (London: Cohen and West, 1957), p. 37.

⁶⁶ See *Pickwick Abroad*, p. iii.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 289.

⁶⁸ James, 'The View From Brick Lane', p. 91.

Reynolds litters throughout the sprawling *Mysteries of London* serial.⁶⁹ How comprehensible were those numerous passages in which Reynolds shifts between complex terminology and Latin phrasing, as when Vernon (also in *The Mysteries* serial) disputes George Montague Greenwood's truthful accusations that he was attempting to murder his brother by surreptitious poisoning by asking: 'is my character to suffer by the scandal of superannuated dowager and the tattle of Club *quid nuncs?*'⁷⁰ Rather than exposing Reynolds as a cheap imitator of Dickens, these examples are demonstrative of Reynolds's creative capacities as an author. Able to alternate between a hifalutin, florid and technical prose and an authentic street-level lexicon, frequently adopting intensely cryptic criminal vernacular, Reynolds's writing achieved a polyphonic quality that was characteristic of Dickens's more vaunted fiction.⁷¹ *The Mysteries of London*, for example, will often open chapters using a proselytising brand of fiction, in which Reynolds chastises the sorry condition of a society using didactic rhetoric as a blunt instrument:

The more civilization progresses, and the more refined becomes the human intellect, so does human iniquity increase. It is true that heinous and appalling crimes are less frequent;—but every kind of social, domestic, political and commercial intrigue grows more into vogue [...]. Hypocrisy is the cloak which conceals modern acts of turpitude, as dark nights were trusted to for the concealment of the bloody deeds of old: mere brute force is now less frequently resorted to; but the refinements of education or the exercise of duplicity are the engines chiefly used for purposes of plunder.⁷²

Reynolds often transitions rapidly, but seamlessly, between these openings, which offer deeper expositions on the overarching developments in history (ordinarily class-driven history), and a more concise mode of statistically driven writing, which reflected the culture of political economy and the Blue Books produced by social reformers of the period with the intention of utilising data and empirical proof to more accurately

⁶⁹ The full quotation reads; 'Nevertheless, one of those antiquaries whose sesquipedalian researches are undertaken with a view to elucidate matters of this kind'. *Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 536.

⁷⁰ *Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 848.

⁷¹ For a discussion of Dickens's polyphonic qualities, see Malcolm Andrews, *Charles Dickens and his Performing Selves: Dickens and the Public Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷² *Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 408.

capture broader societal trends. In one section Reynolds depicts, using an illustration of scale, the vast population density of the lower orders of society relative to the scant numbers which comprise the Sovereign class, showing how the numbers that make up each strata of society decreases as their status and privilege increases. This illustration is followed by a breakdown of the average annual incomes of each of these class factions; the Sovereign class averaging £500,000 compared with the ‘member of the industrious classes’, who earns just £20 per year.⁷³ Finally, using a table, Reynolds lists the luxury food items enjoyed by the privileged classes in a lengthy list, which includes ‘Turtle, venison [...], jellies, trifle and fruits of all kinds’. This is contrasted with the meagre rations of bread, bacon, potatoes, and gruel allocated to the ‘pauper in the workhouse’.⁷⁴ More akin to the language of journalism, Reynolds’s fiction writing deployed multiple modes in order to appeal to the widest possible readership and to give the greatest possible resonance to his political intent.

This ability to traverse numerous literary styles also saw Reynolds include passages of working-class poetry tracts and even songs, such as ‘The Song of the Workhouse’:

Stooping over the ample grate,
Where burnt an ounce of fuel,
That cheered not the gloom
Of the workhouse room,
An aged and shivering female sate,
Sipping a pint of gruel:
And as she sopped a morsel of bread
In that liquid thin and poor,
With anguish she shook her aching head,
And thought of the days that were o’er - ⁷⁵

This more earnest form, which has later echoes in the grave and melancholic overtones of Kinglsey’s *Alton*

⁷³ *Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 499.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 866.

Locke (1851) and Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), both of which draw upon Chartist fiction, coexists in Reynolds's fiction alongside passages of broad political satire. In one instance Reynolds pokes fun at the condition of a commercial literary market in which 'nothing now succeeds unless it's in the comic line',⁷⁶ a trend which has produced works entitled: "The Comic Wealth of Nations;" "The Comic Parliamentary Speeches;" "The Comic Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners," with an Appendix containing the "Comic Dietary Scale;" and the "Comic Distresses of the Industrious Population". As Reynolds's bookseller explains: 'All these books sell well: they do admirably for the nurseries of the children of the aristocracy. In fact, they are as good as manuals and text-books'.⁷⁷ Such variation in narrative modes might otherwise be uneasy bedfellows, yet Reynolds's writing displays an evident comfort with diverse tones, vernaculars and angles of attack in his writing, all of which help to explain his popularity, certainly in a more comprehensive manner than those claims that suggest his success was only ever commercial and achieved using his salacious, semi-pornographic style.

It is interesting to note that, even if Reynolds's early writing was deemed by his detractors to be an imitation of Dickens's, produced almost as a mimicry of his more esteemed rival, it is still possible to defend his efforts on these grounds, because mimicry, often considered synonymous with imitation, was similarly integral to Dickens's career. Malcolm Andrews, for example, describes mimicry as

the cornerstone of Dickens's success as a Reader. It was also fundamental to his distinctiveness as a novelist, in that he had both a fine ear for nuances of accent and speech style and also a capacity to reproduce speech and behavioural idiosyncrasies on the page [...]. Dickens's novels were generated by acts of impersonation [...]. It is no wonder that Dickens took to the public platform to professionalize his talent for histrionic impersonation, for exploring other selves: it had always been seminal to his art.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 75.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 76.

⁷⁸ Andrews, p. 98.

There is, I argue, a degree of fluidity between what is understood by mimicry, imitations, impersonation and finally assumption, defined as ‘the complete absorption of the self into another’,⁷⁹ and while Andrews claims that Dickens’s capacity for each of these qualities on the ‘terminological gamut’ is evident in his novel writing,⁸⁰ Dickens himself clearly wished to draw a far more rigid distinction concerning Reynolds’s ability to imitate his Pickwickian characters and his own writing more generally. There appears to me to be a kind of loose hypocrisy at work here. Indeed, by extension of such logic, Dickens’s own career can be understood as forged in the image of those authors he admired. Anna Faktorovich, for example, explains that when Dickens first developed the idea for *Barnaby Rudge* in 1835, he ‘studied Scott’s literary technique closely enough to mimic it’.⁸¹ James Kinsley similarly observes that the ‘literary antecedents of Sam’ in *Pickwick Papers*, derive from ‘the romance of Cervantes and the picaresque fiction of Fielding and Smollett’.⁸² Of *Pickwick Papers*, the *Sunday Times* wrote on 12 June 1836 that ‘the style of this little work...is that of Fielding and Smollett, and we can truly affirm that no modern writer has approached so nearly to these great originals’.⁸³ While the time lapse between Fielding, Smollett and Dickens, compared to that of Dickens and Reynolds was markedly different – and of course, Dickens did not replicate either of his predecessors characters, nor corrupt titles of their fiction for his own purposes – Reynolds might still be perceived as an original writer in the Dickens tradition, at least within the loose parameters that applied through the years in which their fiction was composed. While it is important to draw distinction between Dickens’s pioneering and culturally resonating fiction and Reynolds’s use of his subject matter, it is also the case that few have leapt to Reynolds’s defence by unpacking this more nuanced context. As a consequence, a critical lop-sidedness has prevailed wherein Reynolds’s efforts are commonly, and crudely, denigrated as plagiarisms, while Dickens’s re-appropriations are celebrated.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 115.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Anna Faktorovich, *Rebellion as Genre in the Novels of Scott, Dickens and Stevenson* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2013), p. 113; It is interesting to note that Charles Reade referred to Walter Scott’s *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) ‘in one of his many defences of plagiarism, admiring Scott’s talent at “transforming” the texts of others’. Macfarlane, p. 144.

⁸² Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. viii.

⁸³ ‘Literature’, *Sunday Times* (12 June 1836), 1.

Arguably, this imbalance concerning Reynolds's reputation is reflected in Chevasco's representation of Reynolds in her chapter 'Lost in Translation: The Relationship between Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères des Paris* and G. W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*'. While not directly concerned with Reynolds's motivations, Chevasco places an implicit emphasis on his reputation as improvident. Indeed, Reynolds's return to Britain was punctuated by frequent appearances in the bankruptcy courts, and as his reputation quickly began to precede him, he became the focus of the hostility and disdain with which cheap popular fiction was commonly held by the literary establishment.⁸⁴ Implied in Chevasco's emphasis on the sequence of events, which views *Pickwick Abroad* primarily as the result of an attempt to repeat Dickens's successes in order to alleviate his dire financial situation, is the notion that Reynolds's rivalry with Dickens was born solely out of coincidence and pecuniary opportunism, as if the latter so happened to be the most popular writer of the period with a fictional mode that was prime for imitation. While this is at least partially true, it is also important to recognise Reynolds's more sophisticated efforts to develop a rivalry with Dickens, wherein political differences of opinion were just as important, if not more so, than financial viability.

It is certainly the case that *Pickwick Abroad* reveals its closeness to Dickens's original in numerous passages. Reynolds displays an ability to mimic literary tropes exhibited in *Pickwick Papers*, especially those used to generate the dialogically driven scenes set around the dinner table. Reproducing the same set-patterns of speech, almost verbatim in each of these dinner scenes, the conversational mode focusses on the affability and mirth of the Pickwickians and their alcoholic over-indulgence. With acts of semi-debauchery masquerading as edifying conversation and humorous civility, Reynolds's characters are reducible to their stock phrases in a manner that reveals his efforts to keep these scenes as reminiscent of the original Pickwickian dinners as possible and avoid straying from Dickens's successful patterns. It is in these passages that *Pickwick Abroad* most overtly reveals itself as a copy of the original.

The idiosyncrasies of speech afforded to each character, even those devised by Reynolds, show his writing

⁸⁴ Chevasco, p. 139.

as tightly tethered to Dickens's style, as in chapter thirty-seven, which finds the Pickwickians at supper at Mr Kallaway's cottage. As the scene unfolds the dialogue relies on the typical refrains of each character as a means of recapturing the humour in similar scenes from the original. The passage highlights Reynolds's attempts to closely conform to the Pickwickian types, beginning with one of Scuttle's anecdotes of his absent-mindedness wherein he 'put the chestnuts into the slippers and my toes between the bars' of the fire, failing to notice the mistake 'till I hadn't a bit of skin left on my foot'.⁸⁵ This prompts Mr Siffkin to proclaim, 'if I ever heard of so extraordinary an anecdote!', a phrase he repeats at the termination of each anecdote Scuttle offers the group. This in turn causes Mr Chitty to quip in his customary latin translation 'callidum opus—hot work, at all events',⁸⁶ before Mr Hook Walker adjoins his usual dogmatic phrase, 'by no means a part of my system'.⁸⁷ In quick succession, these stock phrases carry the bulk of the dialogue as Reynolds looks to forge the dynamic of the group, much as Dickens did with the original Pickwickians.⁸⁸

Passages such as this exhibit Reynolds's reliance on the original source, not to generate plot, but to flesh out the more dialogic episodes, and it is arguably these passages that reveal the degree of 'cheap' populism in Reynolds's writing that would gain him an unflattering reputation over time. The most notable in this regard is the excessive use of the popular 'Wellerisms'. Sam's dialogue is frequently punctuated – in fact, almost every time he speaks – by one of these observations, exposing Reynolds's strategy of capitalizing on Sam's popularity in the original *Pickwick*. However, it is also arguable that Reynolds's overall effectiveness as an imitator of Dickens is best measured by the moments of quintessentially Dickensian humour he produces through Sam. This is evident in the sharpness of the linguistic play, as when Pickwick asks Sam what is meant by the term 'Jug', Sam having explained that a man named Gubbins 'vos sent to Orsemonger Lane Jug'. Enlightened by Sam's explanation that the term refers to prison, Pickwick replies, 'Oh! I see, --a synonyme', causing Sam to remark, 'No, Sir it ain't a sin on 'em to be there, coz they can't

⁸⁵ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 310.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Louis James makes a similar observation in his assessment of *Pickwick Abroad* in *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 62.

help it'.⁸⁹

Reynolds's mimicry of Dickens is similarly adept in the broader comic set-pieces in *Pickwick Abroad*, as in chapter thirteen when the sledge carrying Pickwick, Winkle and Sam careens through the Parisian boulevards at the mercy of some uncontrollable horses, before unexpectedly encountering an omnibus causing the sledge to overturn, with 'the unfortunate trio of great men being precipitated into the quiet and undisputed seclusion of a large heap of snow that had accumulated by drifting on one side of the road. As is usual in such cases, the horse stood perfectly still, and doubtless pondered on the ruins he had caused'.⁹⁰ The scene echoes the comedic events of chapter five of *Pickwick Papers*, where two similarly obstinate horses wreak havoc on the Pickwickian journey from Rochester to Dingley Dell. The first, in refusing to obey Pickwick's commands, effectively simulating a kind of humorous dance between Pickwick and the defiant animal, then 'quietly trotted home to Rochester leaving, Mr Winkle and Mr Pickwick gazing on each other with countenances of blank dismay'.⁹¹ The second, meanwhile, performs an escape in the other direction, the haste of which prompts Snodgrass and Tupman, the remaining passengers on the still attached coach, to leap dramatically from the vehicle into the hedge. This type of broad comedy is repeated throughout *Pickwick Abroad*, as in chapter eighteen where Reynolds has Pickwick disembark from his post as coach driver (a position he assumes due to Sam's inebriated state) in order to chase his hat, blown by the wind through the streets of Paris. The unexpected pursuit leads to Pickwick donning a brown wig that he finds caught in a tree. Using this to protect himself from the inclement weather, much to the amusement of passers-by, Pickwick is then arrested under suspicion of committing a robbery. The misunderstanding occurs due to the actual perpetrator having abandoned the wig which had formed part of his disguise. Meanwhile, the now driver-less coach still holding the sleeping and therefore oblivious Winkle and Tupman is once again upset in the muddy road by two errant horses who took it upon themselves to continue the journey without instruction. From these examples, it is clear that Reynolds was able to closely recreate

⁸⁹ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 103.

⁹¹ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 57.

Dickens's linguistic humour as well as his broadly comedic scenes wherein coincidence and simple misunderstandings drive improbable plots which lead to humorous mishaps.

Reynolds's success with *Pickwick Abroad* was achieved, in part, by his ability to recreate and recapture the essence of Pickwick as it appeared in Dickens's original. This was clearly reflected by his impressive sales figures, claiming a 'weekly sale of 12,000', all of which warranted its re-issue in twenty parts,⁹² supporting Louis James's observation that *Pickwick Abroad* was indeed 'the best of all the Dickens plagiarisms'.⁹³ Significantly, though, it is not only Reynolds's ability to channel Dickens that has been, or ought to be, recognised. As Elisabeth Jay has observed:

it has been customary to denigrate Reynolds's early work as so much methodical plagiarism, but focussing on the imitative element of Dickens's amiable Pickwickians misses the creative pleasure Reynolds derived from describing his crook's shameless capacity for self-reinvention—a characteristic mirrored in the author's own versatile appropriations of other writer's ideas and forms.⁹⁴

Jay's argument is in fact self-reflexively demonstrated in a passage in *Pickwick Abroad* in which Mr Tupman finds himself utterly beguiled by the talents of the confidence man, Mr Crashem, in the art of lying and deceit. As Reynolds's principal vehicle for the self-invention of his crooked characters, his own pleasure in the creativity required for deception is clearly apparent as Tupman revels in Crashem's skill:

The ingenuity of that extraordinary individual, in Mr Tupman's idea, had elevated a common-place act into a masterly science: he had given to it dignity and grace; his lies had a richness, a persuasive eloquence, a smoothness in them, which rounded off their improbability, as oil often softens down

⁹² James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 59.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 62.

⁹⁴ Jay, p. 269.

salad, and old port relieves the asperity of the olives. Before he had heard Mr. Crashem, lying was only lying: now it was painting—poetry—drama—music: he was Correggio for softness of touch, a Rossini for promising sounds, a very Kemble for cajolery!⁹⁵

I would extend Jay's point to suggest that those instances wherein Reynolds derives pleasure from the creative re-inventing of his crooks also highlights the aspects of his novel which are not reliant on Dickens's original. It is in Reynolds's interpolated tales of gothic sensation that his individual style is most apparent and distinct from Dickens's. These tales are clear forerunners to the numerous sub-plots deployed in *The Mysteries of London* and aptly illustrate Reynolds's ability to strike a balance between the imitated style of 'Boz' and his own desire to explore, commonly through the tangential plot-lines, his literary penchant for a more scandalous and often darker style of writing, embracing the more tawdry and sordid aspects of urban living, at least relative to Dickens, as will be examined in future chapters.

1.3 The quasi-biographical form of *Pickwick*

Reynolds's ability to pitch *Pickwick Abroad* as a sequel was largely predicated on his skilful reprisal and subsequent maintenance of the quasi-biographical form initially adopted in *Pickwick Papers*. What Reynolds's strategy for continuing Pickwick's adventures reveals is the extent to which Dickens's claims to ownership of his characters are complicated and undermined by the 'machinery' of his own novel.⁹⁶ Moreover, in the process of turning Dickens's own devices back on himself, he also repeatedly sought to loosen Dickens's grasp on Pickwick, the ultimate goal of which, I argue, was to provoke a response from Dickens and thereby open a dialogue of sorts and establish himself as a legitimate rival worthy of Dickens's attention. That Dickens was conscious of this particular pitfall in his novel was arguably evident in his choice to abandon the biographical form before the close of the novel, as well as in his later attempts in the preface of a new edition to detail his creative process in conjuring the characters. The further examination of Reynolds's strategies therefore proffers an unexamined line of defence for *Pickwick Abroad*.

⁹⁵ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 230.

⁹⁶ *Pickwick Papers*, p. xxiv.

In order, then, to embark on his sequel, Reynolds first re-ignites Pickwick's intrepid spirit, which Dickens had seemingly quelled at the close of *Pickwick Papers* by preparing him for retirement in Dulwich. Dickens began *Pickwick Papers* by adopting a strictly quasi-biographical form, frequently stressing how the material had been collected and collated by a detached editor. However, by the conclusion of the novel he appeared to distance himself from this narrative mode. It was a shift that betrayed his anxiety that his control over both his characters and his own authorial identity was beginning to slip. Early in the novel Dickens outlined his function as biographer, describing how

many authors entertain, not only a foolish, but a really dishonest objection to acknowledge the sources from whence they derive much valuable information. We have no such feelings. We are merely endeavouring to discharge, in an upright manner, the responsible duties of our editorial functions; and whatever ambition we might have felt under other circumstances to lay claim to the authorship of these adventures, a regard for truth forbids us to do more than claim the merit of their judicious arrangement and impartial narration [...] The labours of others have raised for us an immense reservoir of important facts. We merely lay them on, and communicate them, in a clear and gentle stream, through the medium of these numbers, to a world thirsting for Pickwickian knowledge.⁹⁷

Clearly divesting himself of any duties beyond the collation of material gathered by the Pickwickians, Dickens goes so far as to say that failure to acknowledge and adhere to the original sources is tantamount to foolishness and dishonesty. According to Dickens, *Pickwick Papers* was established as a novel ostensibly based upon 'the labours of others'. Moreover, as will become pertinent, Dickens adopts the collective 'we', furthering the sense of collaboration.

In chapter seven we are reminded of the biographer's commitment to his detached, impartial role as editor.

⁹⁷ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 41.

Unable to discern the ‘unintelligible’ handwriting of Mr Snodgrass, to whose notes this particular chapter is indebted, the narrator-cum-editor divulges only the piecemeal information that remained legible and discloses that, ‘enthusiastic as we are in the noble cause to which we have devoted ourselves [...] we are not disposed to indulge in any of the speculations to which they may give rise’.⁹⁸ ‘Boz’ refuses to overstep his role as biographer, and the apparatus of the novel is reaffirmed. Chapter thirteen repeats the same commitment: ‘Knowing the deep reliance to be placed on every note and statement of Mr Pickwick’s, and not presuming to set up our own recollection against the recorded declarations of that great man, we have consulted every authority, bearing upon the subject, to which we could possibly refer’.⁹⁹ Having gone to repeated lengths to consolidate this narrative mode, by chapter fifteen Dickens begins to play with the form:

Thus Mr Pickwick was led by the very warmth of his own good feelings to give his consent to a proceeding from which his better judgement would have recoiled – a more striking illustration of his amiable character could hardly have been conceived, even if the events recorded in these pages had been wholly imaginary.¹⁰⁰

Dickens plays with boundaries of the quasi-factual and straight notions of fiction here, and regardless of whether his readers truly believed in the existence of Pickwick or would have acknowledged this as a type of inside joke between author and reader, the passage sees Dickens sticking steadfastly to the fictional mode.

By the close of the novel, however, the shift away from this form surfaces:

It is the fate of most men who mingle with the world, and attain even the prime of life, to make many real friends and lose them in the course of nature. It is the fate of all authors or chroniclers to create

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 86-87.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 180.

imaginary friends, and lose them in the course of art. Nor is this the full extent of their misfortunes; for they are required to furnish an account of them besides. In compliance with this custom – unquestionably a bad one – we subjoin a few biographical words, in relation to the party at Mr Pickwick's assembled.¹⁰¹

While the passage draws a parallel between the loss of ‘real friends’ and the author’s or chronicler’s loss of ‘imaginary friends’, ‘Boz’ appears to have subtly moved away from the former towards the latter. It is interesting to note in the preface to the volume edition of the novel, issued at the conclusion of its serialisation in 1837, that Dickens had dropped any pretence of Pickwick being anything other than a fictional construct: ‘The author’s object in this work,’ he explained, ‘was to place before the reader a constant succession of characters and incidents; to paint them in as vivid colours as he could command; and to render them, at the same time, life-like and amusing’.¹⁰² If this depiction of Pickwick as the product of Dickens’s imagination is not clear enough, he goes on to describe how, in constructing Pickwick, he deferred ‘to the judgement of others in the outset of the undertaking’ when he ‘adopted the machinery of the club’, a mode which was ‘gradually abandoned’.¹⁰³ Furthermore, where Dickens previously utilised the collective ‘we’ to explain the mechanism of the novel, this explanation now refers solely to ‘the author’ as he tries to tighten his grasp on his property. While intending the incidents of the novel and the characters to be life-like, Dickens fully reversed the mode adopted at the outset of the novel, and instead became intent on deconstructing the artifice of Pickwick and his biographer ‘Boz’, discussing *Pickwick Papers* as a work of fiction where previously he sought repeatedly to reaffirm its biographical form.

The explanation as to why Dickens performed such a reversal of the narrative mode, or ‘machinery’ of the novel, arguably lies in the numerous thefts of the work as he was writing it. By emphasizing the creative process in ‘bringing to life’ Pickwick and his amiable friends, Dickens was attempting to lay claim to the

¹⁰¹ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 717.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

authenticity of his famous character, distinguishing him from the imitations that began to proliferate. His desire to avoid any further plagiarisms or copies also explains the manner in which he closes the novel, attempting to shut down any potential avenues for Pickwick's continued adventures. Across the final two chapters of *Pickwick Papers* there are several explicit references to Pickwick's resolution to adopt a new lifestyle. In the penultimate chapter Pickwick remonstrates with Sam, 'I am growing older, and want repose and quiet. My rambles, Sam, are over',¹⁰⁴ a sentiment which is then repeated following Sam's incredulity, with Pickwick maintaining, 'I speak after long deliberation [...] and with certainty that I shall keep my word [...]. New scenes have closed upon me; my rambles are at an end'.¹⁰⁵ Dickens's final chapter is none-too subtly entitled, 'Chapter fifty-seven: In which the Pickwick Club is finally dissolved, and everything concluded to the satisfaction of everybody'. Evidently Dickens was determined in the closing stages of the novel to convey a definite sense of finality.

In his study, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, D. F. McKenzie explains that a literary text has two possible readings; the first interprets the work as 'authorially sanctioned, contained, and historically definable,' while the second sees the text as 'always incomplete, and therefore open, unstable, subject to perpetual re-making by its readers, performers, or audience'.¹⁰⁶ Pickwick's many imitators clearly subscribed to this second reading of the novel, despite Dickens's efforts to create a sense of the novel as 'contained' and 'authorially sanctioned' in order to discourage any further re-incarnations. Reynolds was amongst the horde of plagiarists looking to circumvent Dickens's will in this regard. As examples from future chapters confirm, Reynolds evidently combed Dickens's texts diligently, and perhaps saw the opportunity for *Pickwick Abroad* in the closing passages of *Pickwick Papers*. Indeed, notwithstanding his best efforts, Dickens unwittingly left the door ajar for Reynolds when he articulated the speculation between friends following Pickwick's prolonged absence; some assumed 'a matrimonial alliance' was in order, a theory that was 'strenuously repudiated' by the ladies in Pickwick's life, while others rather inclined to the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 732.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: British Library, 1986), p. 45.

belief that he had ‘projected some distant tour’.¹⁰⁷ Whether this reference to a ‘distant tour’ was the inspirational spark for Reynolds’s sequel to be played out on the continent is, of course, impossible to verify, but Reynolds appeared to snatch at the opportunity and swiftly pulled Pickwick from retirement.

While Reynolds’s efforts angered Dickens, the consideration of *Pickwick Abroad* as a sequel finds inadvertent validation from G. K. Chesterton, one of Dickens’s most ardent supporters. A staunch champion of Dickens’s literary achievements, in 1906 Chesterton commented that ‘the greatness of Dickens and especially the greatness of Pickwick is not of a kind that could be affected by somebody else suggesting the idea first’.¹⁰⁸ The remark concerned the controversy that surrounded the conception of Pickwick, which was initially contested by the widow of the original illustrator of *Pickwick Papers*, Robert Seymour, who claimed that her late husband had in fact created Pickwick and ought, therefore, to be due further credit.¹⁰⁹ Chesterton concluded that, even if Seymour were the originator ‘in spirit’, since it was true that ‘Dickens would at this time get his materials from anywhere, in the sense that he cared little what materials they were’, ultimately ‘the power which he proceeded at once to exhibit was the one power in letters which literally cannot be imitated, the primary inexhaustible creative energy, the enormous prodigality of genius which no one but another genius could parody’.¹¹⁰ Chesterton’s first point, concerning the origin of the idea as being less important than the genius required to bring the idea to life, renders *Pickwick Papers* and Dickens vulnerable, as evidenced by Reynolds’s text.

Where Chesterton does judge Dickens harshly is in his inability to rise above libel and slander. Such was Dickens’s sensitivity on the issue of personal and intellectual property ‘that even his sacred sense of humour

¹⁰⁷ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 713.

¹⁰⁸ G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* (London: J. M. Dent, 1906), p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ A recent novel by Stephen Jarvis entitled *Death and Mr Pickwick* (2015) has resurrected the contentious episode that shrouded the inception of *Pickwick Papers* and the controversy around the suicide of the novel’s original illustrator, Robert Seymour. Jarvis’s fiction is intended as a corrective for the version of the events as told by Dickens. Jarvis explains in an address to his readers that, despite being a work of fiction, the novel ‘departs at certain points, from the “accepted” origin of Pickwick, as put forward by Dickens and his publisher Edward Chapman. It does so for a good reason. The accepted origin is not true.’ Stephen Jarvis, *Death and Mr Pickwick* (London: Vintage, 2016).

¹¹⁰ Chesterton, p. 56.

deserted him. He turned people into mortal enemies whom he might have turned into immortal jokes'.¹¹¹ Chesterton's analysis of *Pickwick Papers* makes no reference to Reynolds's 'sequel', and whether he had read *Pickwick Abroad* is doubtful. Regardless, Reynolds was surely one such adversary whom Dickens might have turned into a joke instead of the enemy he became. It is somewhat ironic that one of Dickens's great admirers inadvertently, and we presume, quite unknowingly, validates the efforts of another author in taking up Pickwick's adventures in France, by suggesting that the origin of the idea for Pickwick was not especially significant, since, according to Chesterton, 'it was quite easy to originate "Pickwick". The difficulty was to write it'.¹¹²

Clearly Dickens's efforts to terminate Pickwick's adventures failed to deter Reynolds but neither apparently did it satisfy Chesterton. Chiming with McKenzie's second reading of a text as 'always incomplete, and therefore open' and 'unstable,' Chesterton claimed that it was not possible to summarily conclude Pickwick, as 'no novel with a plot and a proper termination could emit that sense of everlasting youth—a sense as of the gods gone wandering in England'.¹¹³ In praising the timelessness of *Pickwick Papers* Chesterton again indirectly validates Reynolds's decision to continue Pickwick's adventures. Choosing, essentially, to ignore Dickens's efforts to retire Pickwick, Chesterton instead declared that the novel, 'properly speaking has no end':

As it happens the book ends after Mr Pickwick has taken a house in the neighbourhood of Dulwich. But we know he did not stop there. We know he broke out, that he took again the road of the high adventures; we know that if we take it ourselves in any acre of England, we may suddenly come upon him in a lane.¹¹⁴

Arguing that Dickens had managed to create a character in Pickwick so vibrant as to be uncontainable by

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 51.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 57.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

the parameters of a novel and the finality of any kind of conclusion, Chesterton's analysis intends to heighten Dickens's genius, proving its inimitability according to his capacity to create such a boundless character. Interestingly, Chesterton's analysis reads almost like a facsimile of Reynolds's preface to *Pickwick Abroad*, as both adopt precisely the same logic, playing on Pickwick's enduring and inexhaustible spirit of adventure. Upon visiting Pickwick at his home in Dulwich, Reynolds discovers that Pickwick had of course 'violated the promise' to retire from his adventures and had 'undertaken a journey to Paris, all with 'that noble disregard for danger and difficulty, and that spirit of enterprise and perseverance'.¹¹⁵ In both instances, the power of Pickwick's character overrides the ability of his author to circumscribe his activities. Pickwick is beyond the control of Dickens. Both Chesterton and Reynolds saw benefit in this, but for singularly different reasons.

If Chesterton (inadvertently) provides some justification for *Pickwick Abroad*, John Bowen's analysis of *Pickwick Papers* similarly demonstrates its susceptibility to piracy within a climate of slack copyright legislation. As Bowen explains, from its inception

as letter-press to book of sporting illustrations...even the title is uncertain. Is it *Pickwick* or *The Pickwick Club* or *Pickwick Papers* or *The Pickwick Papers* or *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*...edited by 'Boz' [...] all of these variations of title appear in the book's first announcement. The full title's key words—papers, club, edited—speak of a certain fictional impersonality: a club is a collection of individuals, an editor authors nothing, a society's minutes traditionally conceal as much as they reveal.¹¹⁶

The overall effect of the 'endlessly proliferating and regressive nature of the text, which rests on a wholly fictional and lost original of which there is no copy',¹¹⁷ is obfuscation. The novel self-reflexively

¹¹⁵ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Bowen, pp. 49-52.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 49.

complicates its origins, since *Pickwick Papers* is itself a novel about ‘the perils of writing’.¹¹⁸ Pickwick, for example, records everything for posterity, but the translation of his experience into words is frequently banal or entirely lacking in clarity. He is not the only character who behaves in such a manner. Among the interpolated tales and tangential plots is the scientific gentleman who witnesses Mr Pickwick’s flashing lantern and mistakes the light for an electric phenomenon. Despite his obvious error, the gentleman is later revered as a great man of science for his ‘supposed’ discovery. Dickens derives humour from the considerable gulf between the benign reality and the grandeur of its interpreted meaning. Language is irrepressibly cryptic, layered and prone to misinterpretation. Even Mr Pickwick’s clipped and seemingly innocent shopping list sent to Mrs Bardell, which read simply, ‘Chops and Tomato Sauce’,¹¹⁹ is ultimately used as evidence in court against Mr Pickwick, somehow twisted into a declaration of affection for his landlady. As John Bowen explains, it is as if ‘the whole world seems to be a matter of hoaxes and impositions, impostures and deceptions’,¹²⁰ an assertion which lends credence to Steven Marcus’s claim that *Pickwick Papers* remains ‘the greatest of Dickens’s mysteries’.¹²¹

It is apparent from this interpretation how and why *Pickwick Papers* was vulnerable to plagiarism, as the novel continually complicates its own authenticity. Bowen illustrates this effect using the enigmatic tale of the bagman’s uncle in chapter forty-nine, an interpolated story of a man whose uncle experiences a dream in which he is aboard a ghostly mail coach and saves a woman from the evil clutches of the dream’s villains. Upon waking, the uncle swears his eternal love for the female apparition, thereafter remaining a confirmed bachelor. The tale is, as Bowen describes, *Pickwick Papers* ‘in miniature’, since ‘the same possibilities and contradictions’ are repeated in the novel. ‘We will never know whose story this is, whether it rightly belongs to the bagman, his uncle, or the editor of the Pickwick Club papers’.¹²² These mysteries are arguably what make *Pickwick* so compelling as a novel. The ‘deferred action, paradox and impossibility’ constitutes the

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 52.

¹¹⁹ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 426.

¹²⁰ Bowen, p. 57.

¹²¹ Steven Marcus, ‘Language into Structure: Pickwick Revisited’, *Daedalus*, 101 (1972), 183-202 (p. 183).

¹²² Bowen, p. 57.

‘non-originary origin of Dickens’s writing’.¹²³ These same qualities, however, also create a space in which writers like Reynolds were able to wrestle control of *Pickwick* away from Dickens.

Both Bowen’s and Chesterton’s analyses reveal the degree to which Dickens’s novel, which consciously plays on the ‘regressive nature’ of its own origins, actually aided authors like Reynolds, who was able to justify his continuation of the narrative which, by its very form, blurs the parameters of the factual and fictional, the authentic and the borrowed. If these factors aided Reynolds’s transition into *Pickwick Abroad*, it was to be Dickens’s irascibility over personal authorship, coupled with the fact that he was no longer profiting from all of *Pickwick*’s adventures, that would cause Reynolds’s name to catch in his throat. As Chesterton observed, Dickens’s quarrelsome nature meant that ‘anybody could draw him; any fool could make a fool of him [...] any penny-a-liner who chose to say that Dickens wore no shirt collar, could call forth the most passionate and public denials’.¹²⁴ This, I argue, uncovers one of Reynolds’s chief motivations for *Pickwick Abroad*, which was to prompt a response from Dickens. The anger Reynolds’s ‘sequel’ induced in Dickens was not forgotten and would have a subsequent bearing on all future engagements between the two. Problematic for Dickens, though, was that any such response provided guaranteed publicity for Reynolds, just as any instance which coupled Dickens and Reynolds, particularly in antipathy, helped to establish the rivalry in the minds of readers and critics alike. Naturally, at this early stage of their careers, Reynolds was keen to cultivate this proximity with Dickens and provoke such a response, evidence of which is contained in the language Reynolds deployed in his preface and in the opening address to the reader.

1.4 Paratextual sparring: Undermining Dickens’s authority

If *Pickwick Abroad* is not a straightforward mimicry of Dickens’s work, nor is it a spring board from which Reynolds can pursue original work that divests itself entirely of Dickens’s influence. Instead, the novel provides the first insight into the complexity of the relationship that existed between the two authors, as

¹²³ Ibid, p. 51.

¹²⁴ Chesterton, p. 51.

Reynolds simultaneously sought proximity to, and distance from, Dickens. This complexity is evidenced by Reynolds's subversive imitation of the paratextual writing Dickens used to develop a more intimate connection with his readership.¹²⁵ When Dickens ventured into the literary market under the pseudonym 'Boz' he did so using the language of humility in his prefaces, effectively attributing his success to his readers. In the second edition of the first series of *Sketches by Boz* (1836), he wrote: 'if the pen that designed these little outlines, should present its labours frequently to the Public hereafter; if it should produce fresh sketches, and even connected works of fiction of a higher grade, they have only themselves to blame'.¹²⁶ He goes on to remark that his readers were 'guilty' of the continuation of 'Boz's' career because they had supported a 'young and unknown writer, by their patronage and approval'.¹²⁷ The phrasing is coloured with humility and gratitude, which places on a pedestal the regard in which Dickens held public opinion.

Noticeably, then, Reynolds's language in the original preface to *Pickwick Abroad*, entitled 'To The Reader', adopts a similar tone but with a subversive twist. Reynolds utilizes Dickens's own strategy as a means to open Pickwick, and, by extension, all the Pickwickians, to public ownership. In doing so he paved the way for his own adoption of the role of Pickwick's biographer, writing;

In conclusion, gentle reader, allow me to remark that if the talented "Boz" have not chosen to enact the part of Mr. Pickwick's biographer in his continental tour, it is not my fault. The field was open to him who had so well and so successfully traced the progress of that great man during his travels in England; and as it is now my destiny to compile and put in order those notes taken by him abroad,

¹²⁵ For a study on the types and subtypes of paratext see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); A recent Ph.D. study has examined Dickens's writing, and Victorian serial fiction more generally, as a means of contesting an expanding upon Genette's definition of the paratextual, claiming: 'We need only compare the genesis of *The Pickwick Papers*, initially conceived as a set of visual caricatures joined by supporting letter-press, with its eventual success attributed largely to Dickens's writing, to see how unstable categories of text/ paratext were in the protean world of Victorian serial publishing. Given such shifting categories, and their repercussions at the generic level of the novel, an exclusively textual approach, such as Genette's, fails to account for the relationship between the material conditions of the novel and the author-functions that emerge from these conditions'. R. G. Allen, 'Paratext, serialisation and authorship in Victorian England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2012). p. 25.

¹²⁶ Charles Dickens, *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers*, 1833-39, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), I, p. xl.

¹²⁷ Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, p. xl.

and reduce them to a systematic narrative, I cannot do otherwise than pledge myself for the sincerity and impartiality with which I shall present each Number of that important work to the public.¹²⁸

Rather than paying tribute to his readers, Reynolds mocks Dickens's inability to see the potential for Pickwick's ventures abroad. 'The field was open', but Dickens was unwilling or unable to capitalise on this possible avenue of interest. The use of the term 'fault' ironically mimics Dickens's use of the terms 'guilty' and 'blame', as Reynolds looked to absolve himself of any wrongdoing in pursuing the project. This phrasing, which contains echoes of Moncrief's earlier-mentioned half-apology in its divestment of blame on behalf of the imitator, allows Reynolds to subvert Dickens's own language and logic and suggests that the latter had in fact indirectly encouraged him to write *Pickwick Abroad*; Dickens had, in Reynolds's own words, shaped his 'destiny'.

Reynolds's imitation, not only of Dickens's subject matter, but also of his paratextual addresses to his readers, was neither placatory nor infused with any deferential sentiment. Rather, it was antagonistic in tone and design. Given how their relationship was to develop, this early exchange across publications affords an insight that has received little critical attention. Jessica Rae Valdez's paper, "The part of Mr Pickwick's Biographer": Charles Dickens, George W. M. Reynolds, and the Construction of Authorship', discusses the mimicry of language between the two authors, describing how Reynolds 'playfully undermined Dickens's ownership of *Pickwick's* characters' by 'limiting Dickens's role to mere biographer'.¹²⁹ I argue there was not much playfulness in Reynolds's intention as he was undoubtedly aware that Dickens would not have seen this imitation as flattering. Rather than playful, I am more inclined to perceive Reynolds's actions as the firing of a warning shot across Dickens's bows; he was alerting Dickens to the fact that he held no dominion over the commercial space that *Pickwick Papers* occupied and that *Pickwick Abroad* marked Reynolds as an emerging rival and competitive force.

¹²⁸ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 2.

¹²⁹ J. R. Valdez, "The Part of Mr Pickwick's Biographer": Charles Dickens, George W. M. Reynolds, and the Construction of Authorship', unpublished paper delivered at the conference 'The 2015 Victorian Modernities Conference' (University of Kent, 25-27 June 2015), abstract.

As we have seen, in order to undermine Dickens's ownership of Pickwick, Reynolds wilfully ignored Dickens's efforts to 'retire' Pickwick as well as his attempts in the later chapters of *Pickwick Papers* to abandon the notion of 'Boz' as a passive editor and begin to establish Pickwick as a fictional creation. Reynolds no doubt saw that it would be difficult for Dickens to contest the sequel since he himself went to great lengths in the early passages of *Pickwick Papers* to reinforce the notion of 'Boz' acting merely in a passive role as editor. The opening of *Pickwick Papers* sees 'Boz' proclaim himself as the 'editor of these papers' who 'feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of careful attention, indefatigable assiduity and nice discrimination, with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted'.¹³⁰ 'Boz' then adds his gratitude to the secretary, 'to whose notes we are indebted for the following account',¹³¹ before explaining that, despite there being 'no official statement of the facts which the reader will find recorded in the next chapter [...], they have been carefully collated from letters and other MS. Authorities, so unquestionably genuine as to justify their narration in a connected form'.¹³² Observable across these statements, through the functioning of the narrator as biographer, the notes collected by the secretary, and finally through the authority of 'genuine' documents, is a clear attempt to lend authenticity to Mr Pickwick's character through quasi-factual sources. Reynolds, then, simply continued this quasi-biographical form, emphasising Pickwick as existing beyond the parameters of the editor, who exists solely to 'compile and put in order those notes taken by him [Mr Pickwick] abroad'.¹³³ By placing emphasis on the form of the biography and the role of the biographer in *Pickwick Abroad*, Reynolds's novel operates as a sequel, continuing where the original *Pickwick Papers* concluded.

If Dickens would have struggled to argue against a problem partially of his own creation, he would certainly have been irritated by Reynolds's feigned modesty and apparent reluctance to pursue the sequel. Reynolds explains: 'it is only with extreme diffidence' that 'a new historian has ventured to continue the lives of

¹³⁰ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 1.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 2.

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 6.

¹³³ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 2.

those extraordinary individuals'.¹³⁴ Coupled with the claim that it was not 'his fault' but rather 'Boz's' for not recognizing the opportunity to edit Pickwick's notes from France, Reynolds's rather affected coyness was likely only to have heightened Dickens's annoyance. Moreover, Reynolds supposes, via the role of the historian, that the task was fairly straightforward, since it comprised of collating the notes compiled during Pickwick's travels, before putting these in order to form 'a systematic narrative' for the more convenient perusal of the readers. This undermines the creative process Dickens wished to emphasise at the close of *Pickwick Papers* and assigns the skill and humour in the text to Pickwick, not 'Boz'. Reynolds in fact describes 'Boz' as 'the biographer of one of the most extraordinary men the present or any other age has produced'.¹³⁵ Again, the emphasis is placed on Pickwick as extraordinary, not his creator. Pickwick is a product of the age as opposed to a product of 'Boz's' imagination. This interpretation, endorsed by critics such as Chesterton, inadvertently casts Pickwick as a free agent ready to be picked up by any biographer or historian who wishes to continue documenting the events of his life. Thus, 'Boz' becomes diminished in this role, a figure portrayed by Reynolds as having merely 'traced the progress of that great man during his travels in England'.¹³⁶

Beyond diminishing his role, Reynolds also appears to take issue with the use of Dickens's pseudonym, 'Boz'. The preface to *Pickwick Abroad* not only attempts to detach Dickens from his ownership of Pickwick, it also tries to undermine the reader's faith in their 'intimate' literary friend. In the opening chapter Reynolds refers to 'the no less immortal "Boz"',¹³⁷ adopting the use of inverted commas around Dickens's nom de plume. The passage conflates 'Boz's' name with the phrase 'the immortal Pickwick', with which Dickens introduces us to the novel's hero.¹³⁸ The merging of the fictional, timeless Pickwick, in this sense of the word 'immortal', with the dubious fictionality of 'Boz', signals, I argue, an attempt to cast doubt over the constructed nature of Dickens's authorship.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 1-2.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 1

¹³⁸ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 1.

Dickens, of course, tended to issue his work with the name ‘Boz’ in inverted commas, which naturally produced a fictionalising effect, marking ‘Boz’ as a persona with an unknown attachment to the real author. Now, just as Reynolds turned Dickens’s own structure against him to produce *Pickwick Abroad* in the biographical style, he appears to play with Dickens’s own use of the word immortal to add an additional degree of ambiguity to Dickens’s identity. This begs the question as to whether Reynolds is implying that ‘Boz’ is immortal in the sense that he has created a defining literary legacy through the creation of popular works of fiction, or, that ‘Boz’ is immortal in the fictional sense of the word, in the same way that Nell is immortal because one only need re-read *The Old Curiosity Shop* and she is alive and well again. Either way Reynolds is effectively attempting to sow seeds of doubt and uncertainty. Notably, in the later published preface, in which Reynolds revels in his own success, the quotations marks around ‘Boz’ have been expanded to capture the words immortal as well: ‘A partial feeling of satisfaction and pride cannot therefore be blamed in the author of “*Pickwick Abroad*,” when he contemplates the successful termination of his labours in the Twenty Parts to which no other imitator of the “*immortal Boz*” [emphasis added] has yet attained’.¹³⁹ It is my view that, if the quotation marks are in place to allude to ‘Boz’ as a fictional construct, then it must also be supposed that his immortality be similarly considered in the fictional sense.¹⁴⁰

Reynolds’s efforts at undermining Dickens’s authority and authorial identity echo Abraham’s description of the Dickens plagiarisms as constituting the ‘drawing’ of Pickwick ‘closer to the race of ordinary men’, which in turn ‘narrows the gap between an emulating author and Charles Dickens’.¹⁴¹ Whether Reynolds’s intention was to draw Pickwick and Dickens, as Abraham suggests, closer to the mortal realm, or whether

¹³⁹ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. v.

¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, Reynolds would adopt the same phrasing in *Pickwick Abroad* in his attack on a character he calls the ‘immortal M. Bennis’. *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 423; It was in fact M. Dennis who presided over ‘the circulating rivalry in the Rue Neuve Saint Augustin’, an establishment Reynolds worked for during his time in Paris. His target is ‘barely disguised’ by the altered initial, and the example serves to corroborate Reynolds’s rather sarcastic swipe at the supposed ‘immortality’ of the man, just as he does with Boz. Elisabeth Jay places this particular incident within the wider context of Reynolds’s desires to settle ‘scores of his own [...] with various proprietors’ concerning both his treatment in Paris and the ‘unhealthy state of the Anglophone newspaper industry in Paris. Jay, pp. 156-157; Attacking another representative of the Circulating-Library Department for his ‘shameful’ treatment of ‘a young English gentleman in respect of that library’, Reynolds brandishes the figure ‘the greatest liar in Paris’ while calling ‘the Frenchman, who is the sleeping proprietor of the establishment to which he belongs [...], the most notorious villain in existence’. *Pickwick Abroad*, pp. 339-340.

¹⁴¹ Abraham, p. 9.

he sought to transcend his own status to that of an immortal by virtue of producing an equally popular episode of Pickwick's adventures, is largely a moot point. What I argue was more important to Reynolds was that both outcomes served to anger and undermine Dickens. It is my view that Reynolds intended to open a dialogue with Dickens, whom he knew was 'sensitive on points of personal authorship'.¹⁴² Reynolds alluded to the construct of both author and character and, by extension, strategically placed his own name alongside Dickens's in a process which may have caused readers to begin grouping the two when thinking of Pickwick.

Additional linguistic tricks are apparent in the preface to *Pickwick Abroad*, helping to corroborate the notion of Reynolds attempting to irritate Dickens. Reynolds's justification, for example, for penning *Pickwick Abroad* states: 'if the talented "Boz" have not chosen to enact the part of Mr. Pickwick's biographer in his continental tour, it is not my fault'.¹⁴³ Within this statement there is a conspicuous use of the plural 'have' which further points towards Reynolds's intentions to discredit Dickens. The curious insertion of the plural 'have' rather than the singular 'has' is, I argue, indicative of Reynolds's suspicion that 'Boz' was the product of numerous authors or ghost writers.¹⁴⁴ Of course, common practice for fictional autobiography, and for fiction and journalism of all types through the period in general was the use of the editorial 'we', as evidenced by Dickens himself in *Sketches by 'Boz'*.¹⁴⁵ In fact, Reynolds commonly utilized the plural noun, as in 'we ourselves', despite there being only his name attached to the work. However, when considered alongside the evidence discussed above, it is plausible that Reynolds intended to nourish any seeds of doubt as to the identity of 'Boz' in the minds of his readers. The use of a plural may well have

¹⁴² Chesterton, p. 51.

¹⁴³ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ This was an accusation levelled at Reynolds many years later during the publication of the lengthy *Mysteries of the Court of London*. As Louis James details: 'J. J. Wilson stated that Reynolds trained several "ghost" writers' to achieve this monumental task. James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 47; Trefor Thomas similarly makes reference to accusations of this nature, remarking that Reynolds 'explicitly denied the claims sometimes made that an "army" of writers was employed' to complete his writing on time'. *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas, p. viii.

¹⁴⁵ Dickens opens 'A Parliamentary Sketch', for example, with the caution: 'We hope our readers will not be alarmed at this rather ominous title. We assure them that we are not about to become political, neither have we the slightest intention of being more prosy than usual'. 'A Parliamentary Sketch', in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers, 1833-39*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), pp. 151-161 (p. 152).

caused a more discerning reader to speculate on the identity of ‘Boz’, potentially lessened their sense of personal connection with the author. Indeed, as Patten remarks, ‘many of Boz’s readers believed in the transparency of his narrational identity’, which was that of a ‘middle-aged, solitary, melancholy figure’.¹⁴⁶ During the premiere of his operatic burletta *The Village Coquettes* in 1836, Patten explains that ‘Boz’s’ personal appearance in public in fact rather ‘startled’ the audience due to its disparity from the image they had cultivated in their imaginations.¹⁴⁷ Reynolds, as later examples corroborate, kept close tabs on Dickens, frequently commenting on his public appearances at charitable events. It is therefore feasible that Reynolds’s efforts were designed to unsettle the reader’s impression of ‘Boz’ as an intimate friend by widening the ‘disjunction between pseudonym and person’. Ultimately, in doing so, Reynolds may have felt he was further opening the ‘field’, as he termed it, for his own work to flourish as another writer equally entitled to ‘trace’ Pickwick’s adventures.¹⁴⁸

It is, I argue, the cumulative effect of each of these instances – the conspicuous use of the plural when referring to Boz, the shifting punctuation around Dickens’s pseudonym drawing attention to the grouping of the terms Boz, Pickwick and immortal, and the ironic mimicry of Dickens’s language in the preface to his readers in *Pickwick Papers* – that collectively lend credence to the notion that Reynolds was seeking, at every opportunity, to highlight the constructed nature of Boz and to undermine and antagonise Dickens in the process. Without ever being explicitly antagonistic, since this may have proven too harsh for a public in thrall to Boz during these early years, Reynolds’s efforts in *Pickwick Abroad* constitute a sustained attack on the man whose work he was re-appropriating. Such attempts to undercut ‘Boz’s’ authority and identity must have been maddening for Dickens, who had been mulling over the question of his pseudonym for several years.¹⁴⁹ He would certainly have felt hugely aggrieved at the contrived efforts of a plagiarist to question his integrity as a writer, or attempts to wrestle control from him. Indeed, Dickens’s feelings towards ‘Boz’ began to alter in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Feeling constricted by perceptions of his

¹⁴⁶ Patten, p. 73.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Patten, p. 73.

pen name, and frustrated by the success of the plagiarists in co-opting his name and fiction, Dickens exhibited an increasing desire to edge out ‘Boz’ and supplant him with his own name. As Patten makes clear, this was in no small part due to his wish to more effectively cultivate a sincere connection with his readers.¹⁵⁰ ‘An identity, once stolen, is hard to recover’, and Dickens began to work hard to render ‘Boz’ ‘a past authorial self’.¹⁵¹ By 1841, with the publication of *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens was enacting a rebellion of sorts against ‘parents, publishers, fellow authors, fictional genres, Tories, pirates, plagiarists, and his own pseudonymous alternates’.¹⁵² Clearly, as early as 1841, Dickens was feeling suffocated by the furore his rapid rise to celebrity had precipitated. The nascent scions of such anxiety were already evident in the closing stages of *Pickwick Papers*, as Dickens began to manage his response to the plagiarisms that were disseminating even prior to the conclusion of the novel.

Dickens’s pseudonym was not an issue Reynolds allowed to fade either. In 1845, when writing in the ‘Notices to Correspondents’ column for the *London Journal*, Reynolds was asked by a reader what ‘Boz’ meant, to which he responded: ‘The nom de guerre, “Boz,” has no meaning’.¹⁵³ Worse than a concealed identity, Reynolds disregards the name as entirely vacuous. A somewhat softer explanation was offered in *Reynolds’s Miscellany* the following year, in which he stated: ‘the nature of my profession is such that its duties *must* be discharged by myself, and *cannot* be performed by a substitute’.¹⁵⁴ For Reynolds, then, ‘Boz’ was a ‘substitute’ behind which Dickens could hide. By contrast, Reynolds remained consistent on this point, naming his first periodical *Reynolds’s Magazine* (which then switched to *Reynolds’s Miscellany* after only four issues), as well as two subsequent periodical properties; *Reynolds’s Political Instructor* in 1849, and *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper* in 1850. Each new property placed a heavy reliance on ‘what modern-day marketing calls the product’s unique selling proposition. Reynolds no doubt believed in the saleability

¹⁵⁰ Patten notes that by the early 1840s it became apparent to Dickens that ‘Boz’s’ identity ‘threatened to restrict his creativity and his audience’ and Dickens began, effectively, to write him out of existence. *Ibid*, p. 23.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 172; p. 326.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, p. 325.

¹⁵³ G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘Notices to Correspondents’, *London Journal, and Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art*, 3 (1845), 96-96 (p. 96).

¹⁵⁴ G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘To My Late Constituents of Derby’, *Reynolds’s Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 3 (1848), 432-432 (p. 432).

of his name'.¹⁵⁵ It is important to add to the analysis here that Reynolds also felt there was an honesty in this practice, hence his distrust and dislike of 'Boz'. Preferring to maintain a transparency with his readers, Dickens's 'substitute' identity, when coupled with the righteous indignation Dickens exhibited over the ownership of his property and his intimate connection to his readers, presumably resonated as hypocritical.

Reynolds's attempts to discredit Dickens on these grounds provides for an interesting debate on the gradations of plagiarisms and identity. Arguably there is a loose hypocrisy at work considering that, throughout his career, Reynolds acted as something of a literary 'bandit [...] engaged in literary piracy, employing other people's visions to create something of his own',¹⁵⁶ frequently 'adopt[ing] his own disguise, presenting himself in effect as Harrison Ainsworth' for his novel *Robert Macaire* (1839-1840), before 'a few years later...turn[ing] himself into Eugène Sue'.¹⁵⁷ Reynolds presumably believed that his re-appropriation of the works of other authors and their literary styles was still preferable to Dickens's concealed identity as long as it remained under his own name. Nevertheless, for Dickens it must have felt as though Reynolds was revealing a secret of the trade which might implicate himself, that of the ever-shifting identity of the author in the age of mass culture adapting to the sway of the market.¹⁵⁸ This was particularly troublesome for Dickens, as part of his dilemma over how to move on from 'Boz' was that he had been so acutely cultivated 'for public consumption'.¹⁵⁹ This is a particularly revealing statement, which demonstrates the extent to which authors such as Dickens were conscious of how their identities were constructed and subsequently managed, as well as the capacity of other rival authors to infringe on this construction and mutate it out of the control of the original author. Reynolds's advantage, at least in these early years, was that although he produced fiction which imitated a range of other authors, he had the boldness to attach his own name to his work. Nevertheless, by adopting a strategy that depicted 'Boz' as

¹⁵⁵ King, 'Reynolds's Miscellany, 1846-1849: Advertising Networks and Politics', p. 53.

¹⁵⁶ McWilliam, p. 41.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 49.

¹⁵⁸ John Drew elegantly describes Dickens's early journalistic efforts as evidence of a 'gymnastic voice: adept at assimilating all the different languages and forms – the different discourse – that were available for reporting this social and political flux, and developing a new metalanguage to comment archly upon it'. John M. L. Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Patten, p. 33.

the passive collector of Pickwick's notes and a figure that acted merely as the fortunate observer of a remarkable man like Pickwick, Reynolds also ran the risk of pursuing a self-defeating line of logic. His work, according to this passive role, must also be considered simply as the relayed observations of Pickwick, with whom the true greatness resides. Reynolds, consistently more brazen and impulsive than Dickens, and more willing to throw himself headlong into a cause (as he had done with the Teetotal Movement, the anti-Teetotal Movement, and the Chartist cause) was likely aware of the flaw in this approach but presumably deemed the ends as justifying the means. This is not to say that Reynolds was reckless; the potential depreciation of his own work was worthwhile if it provoked a response from Dickens, which was more valuable to him in the long run in terms of establishing his own name alongside Dickens's as an author of repute and stature. Evidently, according to the earlier passage in which he pre-empted the critical backlash from Dickens' admirers for his use of the Pickwickians, coupled with his own satisfaction at the success of the novel's circulation, Reynolds was keenly aware of his reception in the marketplace and the impact of his own work, just as Dickens was. The risks were calculated rather than rash.

Despite these potential pitfalls, Reynolds may have felt that the success of *Pickwick Abroad* would be enough to secure his reputation as a legitimate rival, and he made efforts in his preface to underscore the reviews of the work that saw merit in the originality of his work. Building upon his efforts in the preface to *Pickwick Abroad*, which both mimics and subverts Dickens's own addresses to his readers, Reynolds also re-printed a series of favourable reviews in the preface to the volume edition of *Pickwick Abroad*. That these reviews were almost the first thing readers would see, and no less than twelve reviews were given pride of place at the front of the novel, was no coincidence. In Reynolds's later periodical enterprises, of which he was chief editor, he consistently used advertising space to market his own work and was commonly self-aggrandizing about his own fiction. This was perhaps rooted in his understanding of a commercial marketplace as much as it was of his sense of self-worth, but it renders safe the assumption that Reynolds pushed to have the reviews of *Pickwick Abroad* front and centre. The reviews helped Reynolds to emphasise three points in particular. The first is the originality of the work, which allowed him to build upon his efforts to loosen Dickens's grasp on ownership, since reviewers recognised in *Pickwick*

Abroad the same original and creative qualities that rendered ‘Boz’ immortal. The second is the conflation of Dickens, or ‘Boz’, with his own name in the minds of the readers and reviewers alike. Finally, Reynolds was keen to stress the French elements of the novel, both to repair the prejudices which had formed against a nation that had undergone bloody revolution and also as a way of marking out a commercial and political niche. Reynolds even included a French review to this effect to authenticate his observations on French culture, tastes and manners.

On his originality and emerging rivalry with Dickens, the *Age* wrote: ‘*Pickwick Abroad* is so well done by G. W. M. Reynolds, that we must warn Boz to look to his laurels’.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, the *Doncaster Chronicle* wrote: ““*Pickwick Abroad*” promises to rival the celebrated “*Pickwick Papers*””.¹⁶¹ Most telling perhaps is the *Sunday Times*, which lamented Reynolds as the writer as opposed to Dickens, but noted that ‘the writer has powers that may be more worthily employed in working out an original story (which, to a certain degree, this is) in an original manner’.¹⁶² The *Sun*’s review reads with a similar reservation, commenting: ‘If “*Pickwick Abroad*” were not a work built on another man’s foundation, we should say it was one of the cleverest and most original productions of the modern British Press. We rise from the first Number with the only regret that Charles Dickens himself had not written it’.¹⁶³ Interestingly the *Sun* identified Charles Dickens, as opposed to ‘Boz’, as the author of the original, whereas the *Dublin Pilot* chose to retain the notion of a fictional author, comparing Reynolds to Cervantes’s fictional author in *Don Quixote*, writing: ‘If the name of G. W. M. Reynolds did not stand upon the title-page, we should be induced to believe that the identical Cid Hamet Benengeli, who introduced the immortal club, had taken up his pen again to chronicle their sayings and doings’.¹⁶⁴ The omission of Dickens entirely in this particular review is testament to the thriving culture of piracy in general, to the efforts of figures like Reynolds in distancing the original author from the ownership of their characters, and to Reynolds’s creative abilities as a writer

¹⁶⁰ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. iii.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. iv.

¹⁶² *Ibid*.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p. iii.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. iv.

of popular fiction.

1.5 A Republican *Pickwick*: The addition of a radical political dimension

Aside from a convenient route into the marketplace, *Pickwick Papers* also provided a point of contrast against which Reynolds could pitch his own politics. The ready-made readership presented an opportunity for Reynolds to siphon off sections of Dickens's audience by means of exposure to the politics of Republicanism, that was, he believed, in the better interests of the working classes as a distinct social entity. It was, therefore, a political alternative unlikely to be presented to them, or even actively discouraged by writers with vested middle-class interests, like Dickens, because it retained very vivid connotations of violence and unrest associated with the French Revolution. In this regard, Reynolds's politicisation of Dickens's original novel chimes with Abraham's definitions of Pickwickian imitations, which 'uncover the *Pickwick* that they want to read or to believe or desire'.¹⁶⁵ *Pickwick Abroad* as a sequel also acted as a kind of extension of '*The Pickwick Papers* beyond the already copious limits that Dickens offered the world from 1836 to 1837'.¹⁶⁶ For Reynolds this extension included the Republican politics of France. While Abraham's analysis focusses primarily on those prostheses that 'draw on darker, hidden energies and discover instances of anti-Semitism, racism and sexual desire',¹⁶⁷ the politics of Reynolds's imitation is not addressed. This additional dimension created by Reynolds contains within it the seeds of a political rivalry which was to develop between himself and Dickens. At times their politics found affinities and even overlapped, particularly in the early years of the 1840s, as the following chapter examines. At other times, however, both Dickens and Reynolds would use their political differences to forge a distance between their respective positions in the market and place a buffer between their names. The early signs of an emerging political rivalry were cultivated by Reynolds in *Pickwick Abroad*.

John Bowen claims that '*Pickwick* may be the least politically or socially focussed of Dickens's

¹⁶⁵ Abraham, p. 18.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid p. 6.

novels'.¹⁶⁸ He also claims that, despite the absence of a political dimension, 'the possibility of political change haunts the fringes of the novel'.¹⁶⁹ This metaphor seems apt considering Reynolds shadowed or haunted Dickens through this period. If Dickens pushed politics to the margins of his novel – as the example concerning Mr Jingle below demonstrates – only calling upon them episodically in order to flex his satirical muscles, Reynolds took every opportunity to inject politics into *Pickwick Abroad*. His choice of title alone infers a stepping out of Pickwick's comfort zone into the wider world that exists abroad. In a sense, Reynolds's novel can be read as the realisation of Dickens's fundamental desires to achieve a kind of cross-class solidarity. Bowen claims that *Pickwick Papers* seeks 'to create a form which can counter or bypass the social distinctions and aesthetic segregations imposed by class-divided societies',¹⁷⁰ describing the ambition in *Pickwick Papers* as 'ironic pastoralism',¹⁷¹ a phrase drawn from William Empson's work.¹⁷² Effectively, the 'unpleasant surprises' of the 'natural world' are transcended by the humour and mockery in the novel, which not only "evades but breaks through" the class conventions of the society in which it appears'.¹⁷³ The final phrase captures Empson's belief in the importance 'for a nation with a strong class-system to have an art-form that not merely evades but breaks through it, that makes the classes feel part of a larger unity or simply at home with each other. This may be done in odd ways, and as well by mockery and admiration'.¹⁷⁴ If Dickens subscribes to Empson's theory of class-solidarity using humour and wit, Reynolds looked to challenge class conventions and rigid class structures by drawing attention to a political model that actively fought for greater social equality and the dissolution of class boundaries and distinctions. The contextual and literal backdrop of the French Revolution and the Republicanism of his beloved France afforded him this opportunity.

The political distinction between *Pickwick Abroad* and *Pickwick Papers* can be illustrated by an encounter in chapter two of the latter, with Alfred Jingle. The enigmatic Mr Jingle possesses a 'stenographic, verbless'

¹⁶⁸ Bowen, p. 76.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 77.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 78.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Hogarth, 1986).

¹⁷³ Bowen, p. 78.

¹⁷⁴ Empson, p. 199.

speech pattern,¹⁷⁵ likened by Jeremy Tambling to Dickens's skilful practice of short-hand required by his job as a reporter in the Doctor's Commons. Having boarded a coach heading to Rochester along with Mr Pickwick and his companions, Mr Jingle, in his broken utterances, launches into a string of observations in which a chronological oddity occurs. Mr Jingle regales the gang with a glibly humorous account of a tall mother of five, who, upon taking a similar journey, and forgetful of the low archway that marks the entrance to the coach-house, duly had her head knocked off leaving her children aghast as the mother remained standing, headless, holding her half-eaten sandwich: 'mother's head off – sandwich in her hand – no mouth to put it in – head of a family off'.¹⁷⁶ Transitioning breathlessly from this account to a reference to the beheading of Charles I in front of Whitehall (which causes Mr Pickwick to ruminate momentarily over the 'strange mutability of human affairs'),¹⁷⁷ the conversation then moves by way of a non-sequitur to philosophy, before finally touching on Mr Snodgrass's poetical inclinations. This then prompts Mr Jingle to extol his own poetical prowess, explaining in his staccato style how he composed a poem in the Epic tradition on the events of the July revolution: 'Epic poem, - ten thousand lines – revolution of July – composed on the spot – Mars by day, Apollo by night, - bang the filed-piece, twang the lyre'.¹⁷⁸ Mr Snodgrass then immediately questions Mr Jingle on his presence at such a 'glorious scene' to which he replies, 'Present! think I was; fired a musket, - fired with an idea, - rushed into wine shop – wrote it down – back again – whiz, bang – another idea – wine shop again – pen and ink – back again – cut and slash – noble time, sir. Sportsman, sir?'¹⁷⁹ It is notable that this passage is marked in some editions of the novel with an explanatory footnote, which describes Mr Jingle's claim to being present in Paris as a 'remarkable instance of the prophetic force of Mr Jingle's imagination; this dialogue occurring in the year 1827, and the Revolution in 1830'.¹⁸⁰

The rapidity of the conversation, which switches from the absurd to the historically seminal, to the

¹⁷⁵ Jeremy Tambling, *Dickens's novels and Poetry: Allegory and Literature of the City* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), p. 78.

¹⁷⁶ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁰ Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2000), p. 16.

chronologically impossible, and finally to the tangential and somewhat oblique reference to Snodgrass's sporting prowess, concerned authors such as Wordsworth, who saw Dickens's facetious treatment of the paradigm-altering events across the Channel as a threat to the status of literature in the classical tradition. Mr Jingle's anachronistic statement on the revolution, Wordsworth believed, would negatively impact on the 'sale of the classics'.¹⁸¹ Mr Jingle's composing of an Epic 'on the spot', while simultaneously fighting in the streets and ducking in and out of wine shops, served to devalue the tradition of the Epic and downplays the historical importance of the event described therein. Swept along on a current of inconsequential observations of everyday life and its inevitable 'mutability', *Pickwick Papers* creates a kind of apolitical timelessness. As John Bowen concurs: 'Forgetting the July events and the death of Charles I, Mr Pickwick and his friends bowl along the streets of London into the timeless world of an eternal England, seemingly free of politics forever'.¹⁸² Dickens effectively removes Pickwick from history; he becomes 'a man without a history, created, as it were, entirely in the present'.¹⁸³ Philip Rogers agrees, noting that 'Pickwick represents a triumph over time'.¹⁸⁴ For Bowen this timelessness allows Dickens to draw politics as irrelevant. For Abraham, this non-linear approach to time marks the novel as 'strangely atemporal', casting Pickwick back into the immortal realm.¹⁸⁵ Yet imitations of the novel often tended to place Pickwick 'into the past and the future',¹⁸⁶ fixing him in time. For Abraham this meant that Dickens's imitators 'either misunderstand Dickens's purpose in concealing Pickwick's past or they willfully [sic] ignore this choice in an attempt to make the protagonist more palpable, more subject to the laws of biography and biology'.¹⁸⁷

My intention here is to draw attention to Reynolds's work by comparison, and a particular passage concerning Mr Jingle in chapter eight of *Pickwick Abroad* that signifies Reynolds's greater political intent. Beginning the chapter by reminding the reader that Pickwick's proceedings are 'calculated not only to

¹⁸¹ Wordsworth expressed these concerns in a letter penned to Edward Moxton on 1 April 1842. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth Vol. 7: The Later Years: Part IV: 1840-1853*, 2nd Revised Edition, ed. by Ernest De Selincourt and Alan G. Hill, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 314.

¹⁸² Bowen, p. 77.

¹⁸³ Steven Marcus, *Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), p. 25.

¹⁸⁴ Philip Rogers, 'Mr. Pickwick's Innocence', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 27 (1962), 21-37. (p. 28).

¹⁸⁵ Abraham, p. 8.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

interest [...] but also to instruct and improve his mind',¹⁸⁸ Reynolds returns to an instance Dickens touched upon regarding the events of the French Revolution, having Pickwick revisit an entry in his private journal, penned on 11 November 1834:

I took up the biography of myself and friends, and glanced curiously over the notes which I have prepared for my editor "Boz". Found that in 1827 I had made Mr Jingle declare himself to have written a poem on the French Revolution, which only took place in 1830. Could not mean the first Revolution, as Mr Jingle was present (according to my notes) at the one of which he wrote; and he was not born when the first began. Must think of this: there is a grievous error somewhere.¹⁸⁹

In this passage Reynolds is performing neither an imitation nor a sequel, but rather, is enacting a retrospective revision of the original novel. Reynolds abrogates Pickwick's and indeed Mr Jingle's original timelessness, or his atemporality, and instead fixes Pickwick within the correct timeframe. Utilizing Pickwick's diary and the quasi-factual memoranda, which provided the material for 'Boz' in the original *Pickwick Papers*, Reynolds duly amends the 'errors' in Dickens's account. In the process, as Abraham's analysis suggests, Reynolds renders Pickwick 'subject to the laws of biography and biology' in a way that Dickens did not.¹⁹⁰ Anne Humpherys describes this process as follows:

Reynolds's texts are structured and written in the style of Dickens. They are thus not in the romantically defined usage of the word completely 'original'. They fall into some borderland where what actually is original is then embedded in Dickens's pretext, and what is derivative and taken from Dickens is reshaped by Reynolds into something new.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 53.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 54.

¹⁹⁰ Abraham, p. 8.

¹⁹¹ This quotation is drawn from an unpublished article entitled 'Pickwick Abroad: G. W. M. Reynolds Writes Dickens and France' (unpublished article). (The paper was kindly given to me by Anne Humpherys in the autumn of 2017. She also kindly granted permission for the material to be cited in this thesis).

Humpherys aptly coins the term ‘aftering’ to describe Reynolds’s actions here, a process which ‘expands, but also intervenes, fills in, and “corrects” a charismatic pretext’.¹⁹² She suggests a point of comparison between *Pickwick Abroad*’s ‘aftering’ of Dickens’s original text and Peter Carey’s novel *Jack Maggs* (1997), a late twentieth-century appropriation of *Great Expectations* (1860) which explores the omission or ‘gap’ created by Abel Magwitch’s time in Australia, or the revision of Bertha Mason’s colonial heritage in *Jane Eyre* performed by Jean Rhys’s prequel novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). For Humpherys, Reynolds’s purpose in ‘aftering’ Dickens’s text is to embed politics, specifically the politics of Republican France into his own novel, creating an additional dimension largely absent in Dickens’s original.

Reynolds performs a second revision of this sort when Pickwick notes a further error ‘in the *memoranda* of a speech which I wrote on the night before my first sally forth in search of adventures in 1827’.¹⁹³ Reynolds provides an explanatory footnote which states: ‘We are sorry to find that Mr. Pickwick omitted these necessary corrections; and that his Editor, “Boz,” has also unaccountably suffered them to remain’.¹⁹⁴ This time Reynolds explicitly underscores Dickens’s fault, calling into question ‘Boz’s’ diligence as editor, and, in the process, exhibits his own credentials as Boz’s new, more assiduous editor. Through these revealing instances, Reynolds both chips away at Dickens’s authority while also attempting to de-trivialise his treatment of an historical and political event by re-inserting facts into the narrative, the absence of which in the original constitutes a ‘grievous error’. Reynolds fixes Pickwick in time in order to impose his more political intentions onto his novel.

This is not to suppose that all passages concerning the events of the French Revolution or references to the Republican system were bereft of humour. Reynolds sought to strike a balance wherein the comedy at times facilitated the political message which sought to pedal positive views of French liberty brought about by the revolution; while at other times it offset the more earnest political objectives of the novel. Sam is often

¹⁹² Humpherys, ‘*Pickwick Abroad*: G. W. M. Reynolds Writes Dickens and France’ (unpublished article), p. 7.

¹⁹³ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 54.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

the vehicle for Reynolds's politically infused comedy, as evidenced by the use of the catachresis Dickens commonly deployed in Sam and Tony Weller's speech. The malapropistic error, which in *Pickwick Papers* sees Tony turn 'legatees' into 'leg-at-ease',¹⁹⁵ is similarly utilized by Reynolds in *Pickwick Abroad* when Sam explains to Pickwick that the French have lost their manners ever 'since a period vich they calls the evolution'.¹⁹⁶ For Reynolds, of course, Sam's malapropism acts as an appropriate synonym, since the French Revolution ushered in a new constitution and signalled an advance from the former despotic and defunct monarchic rule. Sam claims that since this 'evolution' there 'hasn't been no manners in France' because equality disposed of the master and servant relationship and the manners that Sam perceives as absent were those cultivated by a disparity in status; Sam claims that 'a servant is as good as his mas'er, Sir'.¹⁹⁷ A contemporary reading public, likely to be unfamiliar with Reynolds's political stance at this stage, may not have perceived the irony that the modern, familiar reader observes in this opening passage, since, as future chapters explore, Reynolds placed no faith in the example set by the master in his fiction or journalism; the aristocratic classes invariably enacted the most perfidious schemes and exhibited the most abhorrent behaviour with the working classes suffering as a result.

Pickwick repudiates Sam's claim as 'rather exaggerated',¹⁹⁸ but Sam remains obstinate on the point. Although humorously conveyed through Sam's eccentric linguistic tropes, Reynolds is in fact laying out his political intentions for the novel, as he ultimately performs a conversion of sorts on Sam, who moves from a position of prejudice to one of political sympathy with the more liberal French model. Crucial within this conversion is the relationship between Pickwick and Sam. Indeed, despite the greater focus through the novel on the former, it is the latter whom Reynolds elects for political conversion. Across both authors' novels Pickwick is presented as a figure who, despite his previous career in business and his accumulated wealth, is rather 'green' on issues of worldliness, often requiring Sam's greater sagacity to resolve a situation or to enlighten him on an unfamiliar custom. Dickens fostered a deep affection for the humanity

¹⁹⁵ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 718.

¹⁹⁶ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

of Pickwick, but it is Sam's judgement and common sense that is respected. Pickwick's conversion, as a man of the upper middle classes, is less important to Reynolds than Sam's, who is of working-class extraction. By beginning the novel with Sam's scepticism, blind to the virtues of equality, Reynolds can perform the political conversion of the more identifiable character for a working-class reader. Thus, Sam's conversion hopefully anticipates or even precipitates the envisaged conversion of the English working classes as they become acquainted with a political model designed in their better interest.

By adopting Dickens's semantic technique, wherein the humour is derived from the corruption of the word, which still retains a type of inverse or accidentally appropriate meaning, Reynolds is able to introduce foreign political notions into the narrative without it feeling overly didactic. For Reynolds, revolution, which becomes 'evolution' in Sam's mouth, has the same effect but with an additional political twist. Undercutting Sam's obvious dislike of the effects on class hierarchy produced by the Revolution, Reynolds has him accidentally adopt a term otherwise defined as the progress or development of something, contradicting Sam's perception of the event. Sam's early scepticism about French manners as inferior to the British is inadvertently and ironically expressed as the rejection of evolution, or progress. Indeed, Sam begins the novel ignorant of French customs and politics, shaking his head forlornly and claiming, 'tis a lost country, Sir'.¹⁹⁹ By the conclusion of the novel, however, he experiences his own evolution, embracing the progress he sees in France. This is first apparent in chapter two when Sam casts aspersions over French manners, yet by chapter sixteen he is discovering the virtues of the French nation, revealing: 'I hates to speak ill o' my own country [...] all I can say is, that the French is much more politer and curtious than the English is. Besides, the wery tradesmen and even the vaiters their-selves is as vell-behaved and gen-teel as our English gen'lemen'.²⁰⁰

Reynolds stated in his preface that one intention for the novel was to

¹⁹⁹ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 10.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 128.

clear away from the minds of my untraveled fellow-countrymen, a few of those prejudices, in reference to the French, which are still tenaciously adhered to, and place the character of our great and gallant neighbours—and, thank God! Present and sure allies—in a new and better light than they have ever yet been viewed [...] I venture to assert, without fear of contradiction, that there is no nation in the universe where a citizen or a foreigner enjoys more real liberty than in France.²⁰¹

The passage is hardly a bold endorsement of Republicanism and is somewhat tepid in tone compared with the exclamations he would later issue in his fiction, as the following chapter will examine. Sam's gradual conversion, however, provided a subtler means for Reynolds to introduce radical themes to a potentially unreceptive audience, and to alleviate the lingering effects of the revolutionary events across the Channel and the latent fears residing in the collective British consciousness from the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, all of which were still within living memory. Certainly, the post-revolutionary 'rapid slide from high ideals to scenes of indiscriminate butchery'²⁰² had not been forgotten, and Reynolds's softer, more conciliatory language provided a means of introducing a political dimension without provoking a negative response. The Pickwickians' encounter with Republicanism marks a bold step, and Reynolds cushioned the impact by approaching these politics through a beloved English character. Initially inferred by a title which grants wider scope to Pickwick's adventures, beyond the bounds of England, readers of *Pickwick Abroad* were surreptitiously and methodically introduced, through a familiar conduit, to a more radical and perhaps alien brand of politics than that offered in *Pickwick Papers*. Reynolds continued to persuade Sam of the benefits of French customs in chapter forty-two, which sees him write home to his wife Mary, explaining:

many wery remarkable things I've seen an' heerd since I've bin in this powerful city. but von thing is calkilated to charm a forinner more than all, and that is there ain't no beggers. or so fu that they ain't vorth speekin' ov. you doesn't see peopple dyin' here in the streets at night threw actival vant as

²⁰¹ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. vii.

²⁰² Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Becoming Dickens: The Invention of a Novelist* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 73.

you does in england, mari. but then you get as much bred here for thrippense as you does in england for atepense [...] and that must be a grate blessin' for the poor. I only vonder that on that wery account alone all the old vimen in england doesn't cum over to to france.²⁰³

Passing comments such as this are interspersed throughout the novel, as when Pickwick discovers the greater leniency with which the French system deals with its debtors: 'No foreigner can remain in in prison more than ten years – and no Frenchman more than five, even if he owes millions', to which Pickwick replies, 'and very humane laws they appear to be'.²⁰⁴ Reynolds is careful to ensure that Sam in particular experiences the whole gamut of French society in order to guarantee that his experience is trustworthy. Thus, early in the novel, Sam experiences the French legal process when he is arrested for disrupting an opera. Resisting the officers' efforts to escort him to the police stations, Sam defiantly proclaims: 'but you're a d—d unconstitutional force, you air—and I'm a freeborn Englishman, vich won't submit to none o' your Johnny Darmies'.²⁰⁵ There is here a noticeable anglicisation of the word Gendarme which helps to colour Sam's opinion of the French with what Reynolds saw as a typically English stance. Feeling indignant at being subjected to a foreign law, since as a 'freeborn Englishman' he is apparently entitled to greater liberties, through the remainder of the novel Sam experiences the French legal system in a more positive light, to the extent that it ultimately appears superior to its English counterpart. As Sam ultimately confirms: 'Blowed if I don't think von is more freer here than in England, Sir'.²⁰⁶

The introduction of the travel writer Wegsworth Muffley helps to throw Sam's transition into sharper relief. In chapter twenty-six Sam re-joins the group having attended an election, another important facet of French life Reynolds incorporated into Sam's experience, describing what he witnessed as 'wery fair [...] There's no public wotin' as in England; it's all by ballot, as they calls it; consequenty there ain't no room for

²⁰³ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 351.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 85.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 26.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 505.

bribery, nor cor-ruption, nor gammon [...] an' a wery pretty sight it where too'.²⁰⁷ Sam goes on to propound: 'the more I sees, the more I becomes convicted that the English is a d—d sight too proud to borrow anything vich is good in another country'.²⁰⁸ There is an interesting and satirically loaded malapropism here that sees Sam conflate 'convince' and 'convict', as Sam resolves ultimately to turn his own hand to a travel account, proclaiming: 'Blest if I don't think I'll write a book myself about them matters, ven ve returns to England'.²⁰⁹ Thus, when fellow travel writer, Wegsworth Muffley, is introduced to the group towards the close of the novel, he is presented as the antithesis of what both Reynolds, and indeed Sam, are seeking to achieve with their accounts. Muffley's accounts of France and its people are informed by fleeting observations which are then extrapolated into sweeping generalisations that grossly misrepresent the nation and contribute to the prejudices commonly held by the English. Adhering to the 'grand secret' of commercially viable travel writing, the type of which Reynolds presumably believed was circulating in England, Muffley intends 'to be as spiteful and malevolent against the city or country you write about, as possible'.²¹⁰ By contrast, both Sam's, and by extension, Reynolds's more extensive notes and their protracted stays in Paris are granted greater authority and authenticity. This is a particular type of self-aggrandizing on Reynolds's part, since Sam's efforts draw attention to his own experience of French society.²¹¹ It is also a device by which Sam's greater experience is validated, crucially, in the eyes of working-class readers.

Sam's prospective book would prove, with the benefit of his greater experience and softening of his prejudices against the French, to be the exact opposite of the book Muffley intends to publish. This contrast between Sam and Muffley once more reflects Reynolds's purposeful installing of Sam as a popular vehicle for changing the opinions of the English working class. Combatting the ignorance of the pompous Muffley, Sam is now endowed with significant first-hand experience of the virtues of the French political and legal

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

²¹¹ *Pickwick Abroad* in fact provided something of a 'manual for English travellers in France', one that would also 'have brought a Paris they had never visited imaginatively closer for some of Reynolds's audience'. Jay, p. 261.

system and the socially levelling effects wrought by the Revolution, even in its complex state of flux following the overthrow of the Monarchy in July 1830. The passage concludes with Mr Winkle offering Sam a word to the wise regarding his book, proclaiming: 'you will have some difficulty, Sam, to make the English believe that foreign institutions are better than their own'.²¹² Further marking the conversion undergone by the Pickwickians, Mr Winkle refers to English institutions as 'their own' rather than ours.

Perhaps the most interesting political episode in the novel is the one in which Reynolds leaves the reader to ponder on the correct course of action in a fashion more interactive than his typically didactic tone. In chapter fifty-two the Pickwickians attend the convening of a committee, of which Pickwick is swiftly installed as chairman. The committee discusses the recent attempted regicide of King Louis-Philippe, forming and carrying a succession of resolutions on the event, each of which is simply a pointless repetition of the first resolution. Sam then takes it upon himself to interject, claiming: 'You seem stuck jist here, for a fifth ressylootion; 'cos I'm blowed if the four dust is'nt all the same'.²¹³ After the intervention of Sir Robert Still, perplexed at the participation of a servant, and one 'in livery too!',²¹⁴ Sam is forced to withdraw his own motion and is ultimately excluded from the 'annexed list' of committee members.

Reynolds builds hierarchy into the scene using the titled Sir Robert Still as the objector to Sam's contribution, a figure of aristocratic standing who notably also supplied the first resolution. Sam's refusal to retreat is justified by his claim: 've vis all ekal in this here country'.²¹⁵ The scene demonstrates Sam's total conversion from a figure dismayed by the lack of subservient courtesy and manners shown by the French servant class to their masters, to one confident enough, and even expectant of, having his voice heard amongst a committee of his otherwise superiors. Pickwick checks Sam for his intrusion in terms couched in English etiquette, since Sam's behaviour was 'neither becoming nor decent'.²¹⁶ The reader,

²¹² *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 222.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

however, is left with a definite sense of injustice owing to the fact that Sam's contribution was in fact valuable, providing a much-needed injection of common sense into the proceedings. Despite Sam's own ironically protracted and tangential anecdote used to state his case, his point on the tautology of the committee's resolutions highlights the gulf between useful action and futile talk of the members of the upper and middle classes. Reynolds no doubt hoped that Sam's opinion would be appreciated or recognised by the reader, rendering Pickwick's exclusion of Sam's point as poor judgement and highlighting the virtue of a democracy that values the opinions of all citizens as equal. Moreover, Pickwick is subscribing to the English proclivity for stagnation, as implied by Sam's suggestion that the proposed resolutions are 'stuck'. In this regard, it is no coincidence that the surname of the meeting's most vocal member is 'Still', as Reynolds infers that the English attitude is unhelpfully tied to notions of status quo.

Reynolds was not so bold as to make any explicit comments on the matter of the regicide for which purpose the committee had convened, but while he implies that Sam was right to intervene, by extension, he also leaves floating the possibility that if the committee were wrong to dispel Sam, perhaps they were also wrong to condemn the men who attempted to assassinate King Louis-Philippe. A parallel is encouraged between the erroneous and pompous Sir Robert Still, an elite figure on the self-appointed committee, and King Louis-Philippe, also a figurehead for a top-down system of wealthy elites and who, by implication, may possess similarly flawed judgement.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Reynolds's intent is arguably substantiated in his subsequent novel, *Robert Macaire* in 1839, in which this same incident is described as follows: 'The Boulevard du Temple is not less famous for the attempt of the brave but too enthusiastic Fieschi, and for the death of the unoffending beings whose bosoms received the bullets intended to pierce the heart of the vile King who has been so deservedly kicked off the throne, and sent into a miserable exile'. G. W. M. Reynolds, *Robert Macaire; Or the French Bandit in England* (London: John Dickes, 313, Strand, 1839), p. 30; Reynolds's attitude towards regicide would become more overt as his fiction progressed. Whereas in *Robert Macaire* he declared Fieschi as 'brave' in his attempt to rid of 'the vile King', by *The Mysteries of London* Reynolds's position was clearer still as he sought to combat the popularly held opinion that cited insanity as the cause of such regicidal mania attempted by 'royal stalkers and would-be assassins who came to be known as "The Queen's Lovers"'. Andrew Mauder and Grace Moore, *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), p. 2; Mauder and Grace explain: 'in the case of "The Queen's Lovers" the stalkers' regicidal attempts are reduced to expressions of insanity, rather than acts of discontent at the state of the nation during the "Hungry Forties"'. However, for the fictitious counterparts of these men, the characters in G. W. M Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*, the links between assassination attempts and radical politics are made more explicit. p. 2; The topic is also addressed in John Plunkett's essay 'Regicide and Regimania', in which he argues that the young Henry Holford attempts to assassinate Victoria and Albert due to his resentment at the contrasting social conditions prevalent across society. Holford, a pot-boy originally employed by the chief villain of the serial – the criminal known as the Resurrection Man – sneaks into the Palace to perform a robbery and becomes side-tracked by his growing obsession with the splendours

If, for a new audience more familiar with the apolitical tones of ‘Boz’, Reynolds retains a subtlety in Sam’s gradual conversion over matters such as the committee depicted in chapter fifty-two, there are passages within *Pickwick Abroad* where Reynolds’s ‘editorial’ voice pierces the narrative, infusing the political events connected with famous Parisian landmarks with enthusiasm. When Pickwick crossed the Rue de la Paix, for example, the location is thus described: ‘It was at this great portal, that in the three days of glorious revolution which hurled a tyrant from his desecrated seat, and paved the way for the ascent of a dynasty whose sons shall long rule with honour to themselves, and benefit to the greatest of nations’.²¹⁸ Where ‘Boz’ looked to retain a strict detachment from the opinions as recorded, these passages read very much as if the boundaries between Pickwick’s voice and Reynolds’s have blurred. *Pickwick Papers* contains very few, if any, pointed comments concerning social inequities, other than those that are comedically imbued. As in the case of Mr Pickwick and Sam Weller passing through a rather dilapidated town, prompting Sam to observe: ‘it’s a very remarkable circumstance, sir [...] that poverty and oysters always seem to go together [...] What I means sir [...] is that the poorer a place is, the greater call there seems to be for oysters [...] Blessed if I don’t think that ven a man’s wery poor, he rushes out of his lodgings, and eats oysters in reg’lar desperation’.²¹⁹ A political inference can be made here, since the humour derives from Sam’s comments on the condition of the poor. However, by playing on a feigned misunderstanding of oysters being all that the poor can afford, thereby explaining their ubiquity in an insalubrious town, Sam’s recognition of one’s poverty as requiring validation by the purchasing of oysters in order to drown one’s sorrows sees Dickens suppress any more earnest political implications concerning the condition of the poor beneath the humour of Sam’s linguistic play. The same may apply to Dickens’s most famous Wellerism: ‘Business first, pleasure afterwards, as King Richard the Third said when he stabbed t’other king in the

of the royal lifestyle and his voyeuristic love for the young Queen Victoria. He quickly develops a self-loathing of his own miserable condition in comparison to the wealth and luxury of life inside the palace and, having eventually been discovered and expelled from the royal domain, is ultimately driven to attempted regicide. Crucially then, Holford’s attempt was the ‘result of the inequity in wealth between the Court and the majority of the population: the very difference in their conditions causes his fetishist attraction to Victoria’. Thus, Reynolds proffers a political and social explanation for this allegedly aberrant behaviour which contests the blanket assumption that determined regicide as being exclusively the behaviour of the insane. John Plunkett, ‘Regicide and Regimania in G. W. M. Reynolds and *The Mysteries of London*,’ in *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, ed. by, Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 15-30 (p. 26).

²¹⁸ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 248.

²¹⁹ *Pickwick Papers*, p. 270.

Tower, afore he smothered the babbies'.²²⁰ As Humpherys observes, despite its political overtones, the 'overall impact is not specifically political',²²¹ certainly not to the same extent achieved by Reynolds's writing.

Reynolds's own Wellerisms are therefore distinguishable from Dickens's according to their greater political impetus and topicality, as when Sam proclaims: 'its lucky that they don't know all as in store for 'em, as the nobleman said ven he set the man-traps to catch the poachers',²²² a joke that barely masks the callous inhumanity of the noblemen, who perceive the working men poaching game for sustenance as wild animals to be hunted themselves. Reynolds evidently assumes a degree of topical insight from his readers familiar with Game laws and the tensions wrought by the protectionist Laws through the 1840s. He also commonly injects tones of Republicanism or egalitarianism into Sam's speech, offering a more explicit social critique than Dickens's original text. Sam frequently chastises the inequality that is manifest across class divides, commenting in one instance on the farcical state of the English political system when he jokes: 'The more fools there is the more we laughs, as the Speaker says ven he takes the cheer in the House o' Commons'.²²³ *Pickwick Abroad* is littered with comments of a similar ilk, as when Reynolds describes the ability of the fraudulent Adolphus Crashem to escape punishment and suspicion due to his aristocratic pretences: 'no person of taste ever doubts the word of a gentleman in these times of superior refinement, although the honour of the most respectable tradesmen be daily called into question'.²²⁴ There exists beneath, alongside and often embedded in the humour of *Pickwick Abroad* a class-based indignation largely, if not entirely, absent in *Pickwick Papers*. Reynolds, however, carefully and astutely maintains what is beloved about Pickwick and Sam in order to 'after' his politics into his sequel without deterring his readers.

As *Pickwick Abroad* progresses there is a noticeable shift in the narrative focus, indicative of Reynolds's

²²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 304.

²²¹ Humpherys, 'Pickwick Abroad: G. W. M. Reynolds Writes Dickens and France' (unpublished article), p. 8.

²²² 'Pickwick Married', *The Teetotaler: A Weekly Journal Devoted to Temperance, Literature, and Science*, ed. by G. W. M. Reynolds, 1 (1840), 257-264 (p. 257).

²²³ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 516.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 24.

increased confidence in his own style and the assurance of the serial's commercial success.²²⁵ In the final quarter, the attention afforded to Pickwick and his friends is somewhat diminished, with Reynolds instead focussing more on the interpolated gothic tales, many of which take on a more distinctly Reynoldsian quality, more akin to the later *Mysteries of London*. These tales contain what would become his customarily racy descriptions of women, an increased reference to subterranean criminal dwellings (countering the affluent existence of Pickwick), the endless duplicity of characters' identities, and a central focus on crime. Chapters such as 'The History of Anastasie De Volage' act as natural forerunners to the *Mysteries of London*, implementing the motif of criminal behaviour as having its root cause in the misdemeanours of the elite and the aristocratic (a facet of Reynolds's writing explored in future chapters). Reynolds's increasing sense of security due to the sustained success of each instalment of *Pickwick Abroad*, was reflected by his own reference to 'his satisfaction and pride' in the completion of the novel where his competitors 'died of pure inanition'.²²⁶ Evidently feeling more confident, Reynolds began to explore and express his own style to a greater extent, dedicating fewer passages to the activities of the main cast of characters and instead branching out into tangential sub-plots. If Sam's conversion was incrementally achieved over the duration of the novel, then so too is Reynolds's gradual distancing of his writing from Dickens's. With these later chapters Reynolds finds a pace and rhythm of his own that he would carry through the ensuing years and into the *Mysteries of London* in 1844. Once more, it is notable that Reynolds's description of his rivals in the marketplace as suffering by 'inanition' affirms his association between commercial and literary death, and remaining static.

Reynolds's increased assuredness is similarly reflected in his final parting shot at Dickens. As if to rub more salt into the wound, Reynolds has Adolphus Crashem fraudulently pass himself off as Pickwick. On returning to England, Pickwick discovers that his identity has been stolen by an impersonator who has been trading and profiting from his reputation. Having been exposed by the true Pickwick as an imposter,

²²⁵ Humpherys and James remark that *Pickwick Abroad*'s print run in the *Monthly Magazine of Politics, Literature and the Belles-Lettres* 'greatly increased the journal's circulation and the work itself remained in print throughout Reynolds's lifetime'. Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 4.

²²⁶ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. v.

Crashem unremorsefully justifies his claims to be worthy of the name Pickwick, stating: ‘A man may take any name he chooses—and as for my being a great traveller, why—Pickwick is nothing to me. He has never gone farther than Paris, and I have been not only as far as Tartary, but also round the world fourteen times’.²²⁷ The episode conveys a distinct feeling of Reynolds mocking Dickens, lauding the success of *Pickwick Abroad* over his rival. Crashem, a prodigious liar, swindler, and ultimately plagiariser of Pickwick’s character, represents an exaggerated version of how Dickens perceived him. Now assured of the success of *Pickwick Abroad*, in one final effort to irritate Dickens, Reynolds’s caricatured version of himself eventually succeeds in ‘inveigling a rich old widow into the matrimonial noose’.²²⁸ By escaping punishment, Crashem (and Reynolds) continue to thrive through nefarious schemes. Reynolds, then, appears to hint that any efforts at seeking retribution are ultimately futile, opting for an almost clichéd act of immorality and cruelty to drive the point home.

1.6 France as a literary and political battleground for an emerging rivalry

Reynolds describes Pickwick on at least three occasions as having ‘made a little noise in the world’.²²⁹ Reynolds too was looking to make a little noise as he began to build his reputation in England. One advantage he had at his disposal was his experience and knowledge of France, and particularly Paris.²³⁰ Having chosen to grapple with Dickens over Pickwick, France represented Reynolds’s best chance to shift Dickens’s work into a territory he felt more accomplished in. As Sara James remarks, ‘throughout his career, G. W. M. Reynolds flaunted his associations with France’.²³¹ Arguably Reynolds was much better placed to incorporate Republican views into *Pickwick Abroad* as he was better acquainted than Dickens with French politics at this time.

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 619.

²²⁸ Ibid, p. 626.

²²⁹ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. 328.

²³⁰ Jay compares Reynolds’s proficiency in the French language with that of Thackeray, who also spent many years in Paris, writing: ‘Reynolds’s colloquial French was almost certainly better than Thackeray’s’. The former was able to remark on ‘the generational differences between an old Frenchwoman’s scarcely intelligible *patois*, her soldier son’s more accessible use of language, and her grandchild’s good command of grammar’. Jay, p. 250; Thackeray, by contrast, found that the language ‘never came very trippingly from his stout English tongue’. W. M. Thackeray, ‘Continental Snobbery Continued’, in *The Book of Snobs*, *The Oxford Thackeray*, ed. by G. Saintsbury (17 vols, London: Oxford University Press, 1910), ix, p. 383.

²³¹ Sara James, ‘G.W.M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France’, p. 19.

However, while Dickens's career was connected metonymically with London, Paris too held a special place in his affections. Dickens 'was enormously keen to master French himself and to ensure his children received a good grounding',²³² and, as early as 1840 he 'was taking French lessons from a serious French teacher',²³³ a reflection of his fondness for the nation across the Channel.²³⁴ In 1844, the year *Pictures From Italy* was published, in which Dickens details his travels across France before arriving in Italy,²³⁵ Dickens wrote to his friend Count D'Orsay, 'I cannot tell you what an immense impression Paris made upon me. It is the most extraordinary place in the world!'²³⁶ In 1848 he wrote a gushing letter (in French) to Forster wherein he describes the French language as 'language of gods and angels – language, in one word, of the French'.²³⁷ His affection and fascination for the French nation continued to develop in a richer vein throughout his career, culminating in *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859, a novel which permanently stamped the city of Paris onto the popular conception of Dickens as an author (although this was not an altogether positive portrayal). His relationship with France was indeed complex and at times he displayed the type of political equivocation and inconsistency displayed in his earlier fiction.²³⁸ This was most prevalent in his sympathy for the masses under a tyrannical French monarchy, which was mitigated by his fear of the immoderate mob violence that marked the French Revolution. By comparison, Reynolds's relationship with France and the Republican cause was consistent and unwavering.

In 1839 Reynolds published a compendium on French writers entitled *The Modern Literature of France*

²³² Jay, p. 251.

²³³ Tomalin, p. xlvi; See also William J. Carlton, 'Dickens Studies French', *Dickensian*, 59 (1963), 21-27.

²³⁴ It is interesting to note that both Reynolds and Dickens were careful not to alienate their audiences through their use of French language. Reynolds would include translations as well as ensuring that any humour derived 'from linguistic misunderstanding was skilfully manipulated so that its arrows are deflected away from the reader', whereas Dickens's 'decision not to employ French in his fiction [...] seems very deliberately tailored to his desire for a wide audience'. Jay, p. 250; 251.

²³⁵ Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998).

²³⁶ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), IV, p. 166.

²³⁷ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2011), p. 466.

²³⁸ See *Dickens on France: Fiction, Journalism, and Travel*, ed. by John Edmundson (Interlink Books, 2007); This work brings together Dickens's short stories, extracts from novels as well as any of his travel writing that concerns France and the French people.

(1839).²³⁹ His activities with the Chartist during the turbulent events of 1848 continued to see him connected ‘indelibly with revolutionary France’,²⁴⁰ as he drew inspiration from French revolutionary activities as impetus for similar action in England. His actions thus marked him, as far as the political establishment were concerned, as a far more dangerous radical than Dickens would prove to be. Thus, while *Pickwick Abroad* launched Reynolds’s literary career as Dickens’s shadow, it also laid the foundations for his later radical political stance. Reynolds looked for every opportunity to utilize this niche as he began to build his literary career in England, taking on a self-ascribed role as an ambassador, a vehicle for cultural exchange between the French and the British, as evidenced by the titles of his subsequent fictional works, *Alfred; or, the Adventures of a French Gentleman* (1838), *Robert Macaire; or, The French Bandit in England* (1839), and his aforementioned non-fictional compendium on French literature. It was in *Robert Macaire* that Reynolds first introduced what would become his more customary radical strain of Republican French politics into British fiction. This facet of his writing would remain consistent through the remainder of his career, most notably informing his most popular and notorious serial, *The Mysteries of London*.

It is in the cultural crossover between the capitals of England and France, two cities that harboured (amongst other things) numerous criminals and pulsated with the rhythms of a sinister underworld, that it is possible to draw an analogy between the two authors. Indeed, Reynolds’s ‘imagination was based around two cities, Paris and London, which were sources of attraction and repulsion’, a characteristic ‘not dissimilar to Dickens in this respect’.²⁴¹ However, by virtue of their contrasting politics, Dickens and Reynolds themselves came to be analogous with London and Paris respectively, since ‘London and Paris represented two paths to urban modernity, cities that dealt with comparable problems in different ways’.²⁴² Reynolds dealt with modernity in Parisian fashion, by endorsing a Republicanism that identified the aristocratic peerage and the corrupt monarchy as the root of inequality, poverty and suffering. Meanwhile Dickens’s

²³⁹ See Sara James, ‘G. W. M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France’; Rohan McWilliams, ‘The French Connection: G. W. M. Reynolds and the Outlaw Robert Macaire’.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 19.

²⁴¹ McWilliam, p. 34.

²⁴² Ibid, p. 33.

modernity in London, also one of inequality and suffering, called for reform, not revolution, reflecting, as the subsequent chapter will examine in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), Dickens's inability to separate revolution from fears of anarchic violence. Dominic Rainsford describes Dickens's relationship with France as though he 'views the two sides of the Channel as rival factions to be played off against one another, or as rival deities, each of whom must be lauded and appeased, from time to time, but whose ingrained jealousy of one another must not be provoked too far'.²⁴³ This summary rather neatly encapsulates the nature of Dickens's relationship with Reynolds; broadly speaking the two represented the politics of their home, or adopted, nations.

What remains important, however, despite the political divide that separated them, was the comparable issues at the core of these modernities. A shared concern with inequity and suffering initially united Dickens and Reynolds, but these shared ideals diverged over time, and were ultimately swallowed up by the personal animosity between the two. Michael Diamond remarks that 'although Reynolds was a revolutionary and Dickens was not, the two men could have agreed on many issues, had the good will existed'.²⁴⁴ Rainsford observes that Dickens's prejudicial attitude towards the French had softened by the 1850s, as Dickens observed how 'a long and constant fusion of the two great nations [...] has taught each to like the other, and to learn from the other, and to rise superior to the absurd prejudices that have lingered among the weak and ignorant in both countries equally'.²⁴⁵ This is where the analogy ends, as Dickens at least was never able to 'rise superior' to the prejudices he held against Reynolds. The irreparable damage to any potential common ground arguably occurred when Reynolds published *Pickwick Abroad*.

Conclusion

Pickwick Abroad demonstrates that Reynolds possessed a literary skill that could easily have flourished

²⁴³ Dominic Rainsford, 'Crossing the Channel with Dickens', in *Dickens, Europe and the New Worlds*, ed. by Anny Sadrin (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Limited, 1999), pp. 3-14. (p. 9).

²⁴⁴ Diamond, p. 127.

²⁴⁵ Rainsford, p. 11 quoting from Charles Dickens, 'Our French Watering-Place', *Household Words*, 241 (1854) 265-270.

outside of an association with Dickens. Capable of producing fiction almost as inexhaustibly inventive and prolific as the ‘immortal Boz’, Reynolds chose instead to imitate and then politicise *Pickwick Papers*. The novel proved so popular that it even inspired other imitators, convincing Pecket Prest, or ‘Bos’, to also seek foreign shores,²⁴⁶ while managing to crowd out other competition.²⁴⁷ Reynolds revelled in the success of *Pickwick Abroad*, claiming that it elevated him above the status of his many competitors:

Many other works, in a similar strain, and advertised to be published in similar form, were issued from the press at about the same time: but, in spite of the announcement ‘that they were to be completed in twenty Numbers,’ they died of pure inanition one after another. A partial feeling of satisfaction and pride cannot therefore be blamed in the author of ‘*Pickwick Abroad*,’ when he contemplates the successful termination of his labours in the Twenty Parts to which no other imitator of the “immortal Boz” has yet attained.²⁴⁸

Reynolds, while seemingly accepting of his role as ‘imitator’, made it clear that he was ready to battle with ‘the inimitable’. *Pickwick Abroad* certainly sent a clear warning to Dickens that he was capable of meeting the demands of the marketplace and would not be deterred or over-awed by Dickens’s relentless output and commercial might.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ James, *Fiction for the Working Man*, p. 62.

²⁴⁷ Jay explains how, ‘hard on the heels of the final number of *The Pickwick Papers* in October 1837, Thackeray published his tale of Charles Yellowplush in *Fraser’s Magazine*’. Yellowplush, Jay claims, ‘owed more than a little to Dickens’s worldly-wise Sam Weller’ and ‘the valet’s cockneyfied Franglais might have kept both Thackeray and his readers amused for longer had Thackeray not found himself almost immediately outflanked in December by the first episode of Reynolds’s *Pickwick Abroad* in 1837. Furthermore, Thackeray ‘seems to have taken something from Reynolds’s version of *Pickwick*. The selection of *The Book of Snobs* devoted to English swindlers prowling the French ports and Paris in search of gullible English tourists represents something of a turning away from the straightforward enjoyment of the cynical manoeuvres of Yellowplush and his master, to a tone more akin to Reynolds’s sympathy with the exploited, as does chapter 36 of *Vanity Fair*, which deals with the capacity of Rebecca and Rawdon Crawley to “live well on nothing a year” during their stay in Paris, a city shown at the mercy of a host of marauding English gamblers, debtors, and imposters who are wholly without conscience in their fleecing of French hoteliers, shopkeepers, and servants’. Jay, pp. 212-3.

²⁴⁸ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. v.

²⁴⁹ Reynolds was described by a contemporary as writing ‘like a steam engine’. John Ross Dix, *Lions: Living and Dead, or Personal Recollections of the Great and the Gifted* (London: Tweedie, 1852), p. 284.

Although ‘built upon another man’s foundations’,²⁵⁰ *Pickwick Abroad* marked Reynolds’s first effort to forge his own path into a literary realm of which Dickens had hoped to be the sole occupant of. For a novel that has been remembered largely as a cheap ploy to reap the rewards of a more successful author’s ideas, Reynolds’s work contains within it a deeper, less appreciated complexity that has a greater bearing on how his relationship with Dickens was to unfold in the coming decades. These additional complexities include Reynolds’s concerted attempts to undermine Dickens’s ownership of *Pickwick*, chipping away at the latter’s authorial identity in the paratextual spaces around the novel, exploiting both the form and content of Dickens’s novel as a means of establishing his own credibility, and infusing an explicitly Republican politics into his writing directed at a working-class readership. For these reasons *Pickwick Abroad* should be reconsidered as a seminal text in the developing rivalry between Dickens and Reynolds.

²⁵⁰ *Pickwick Abroad*, p. iii.

Chapter 2

Pre-1844: The Continuing Plagiarism Feud and the Building of Radical Political Energy

This chapter seeks to illustrate the political affinities in Dickens's and Reynolds's fiction between 1836 and 1844, positioning both as radical, even revolutionary figures on broadly similar trajectories at this stage of their careers. The objectives of the chapter are twofold; the first is to trace how the ongoing feud over plagiarism continued to connect Dickens and Reynolds through these years, as the former repeatedly voiced his general frustrations at the numerous imitations in the market, before he began to target Reynolds specifically. I argue that Reynolds's further appropriations of *Pickwick* in two short tales produced for *The Teetotaler* journal, followed by *Master Timothy's Bookcase* (1842) – a response to Dickens's *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41) – catalysed a more reciprocal dynamic between the two authors as Dickens began to consider Reynolds a more pressing threat to his authorial identity. The second objective is to examine instances across the fiction of both authors in which their radical and at times revolutionary politics can be aligned. Although their dynamic as plagiariser and originator was largely maintained, their fiction occupied a relatively similar position politically. I argue, therefore, that through this period both Dickens and Reynolds can be considered as radical figures, sympathetic to the working-class condition and willing to entertain ideas of reform or even revolution rooted in a deep disdain for the aristocratic order.

The chapter concludes in 1844, which, I contend, constitutes a critical juncture in their respective careers, since it marks both the apotheosis of Dickens's radicalism, and the advent of Reynolds's radical *Mysteries of London* (1844-48), the serial that would precipitate his swift rise to literary and political celebrity. Post-1844 (the period analysed in the following chapter), the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds undergoes a significant shift, wherein Reynolds arguably begins to eclipse Dickens as a literary and political force, assuming a radical platform that Dickens was unable, or unwilling, to compete with. These chapters contribute both a novel explanation for Dickens's complex trajectory through what T. A. Jackson termed

his ‘transitional period’ in the 1840s, as well as a further reparative reading of Reynolds’s effect on both Dickens and the social and political climate in general.¹

2.1 Plagiarism feud escalates, Reynolds remains in Dickens’s shadow

Following the publication of *Pickwick Abroad* (1837) and the inception of his rivalry with Dickens, Reynolds’s subsequent novel was *Robert Macaire* (1839-1840), the story of a French bandit whose criminal activities range from impersonation to petty theft, and ultimately murder before concluding with the customary repentance. In many ways the novel marks a natural continuation of the themes explored in *Pickwick Abroad*, since the picaresque protagonist Macaire bears a marked resemblance to Adolphus Crashe, the duplicitous character successfully impersonating Pickwick. The character of Crashe illustrates Reynolds’s proclivity towards the darker gothic tale and the activities and mysteries of the criminal underworld, which began to predominate over Pickwick’s narrative strands in the later sections of *Pickwick Abroad*. Having dined off Pickwick’s reputation, Crashe’s reappearance at the close of the novel underlines Reynolds’s fascination with this type of imposter over the unwavering virtue and unimpeachable innocence of a man like Pickwick. Reynolds clearly revelled in Crashe’s chameleon-like identity, which affords him a degree of fluency across social boundaries and locales. Macaire is similarly invested with these characteristics and Reynolds utilizes the character’s popular image as a ‘demotic symbol’, which ‘exposes the fact that the powerful were no different from anyone else’,² as a vehicle for his Republican politics.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Reynolds frequently described figures, politics or literature associated with a stagnating status quo using language of movement. Those that remain still will fester, while those that continually move and portray a dynamism are associated with progress. Thus, issues of fluidity concerning authenticity and ownership of identity are continued in *Robert Macaire* in a similar vein. The

¹ T. A. Jackson, *Charles Dickens: Progress of a Radical* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), p. 8.

² Rohan McWilliam, ‘The French Connection: G. W. M. Reynolds and the Outlaw Robert Macaire’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 33-52 (p. 36).

character of the French bandit had already undergone a process of re-appropriation in French literature, and subsequently on the stage in Britain:

Robert Macaire was a fictional character and symbol who charmed Britain and France in the nineteenth century, although he did not prove to be an enduring figure, unlike some contemporary characters in the novels of Victor Hugo or Alexandre Dumas. Technically, Macaire was the creation of Benjamin Antier, Jean Armand Lacoste and Alexis Chaponnier, who introduced the character in their stage melodrama, *L'Auberge des Adrets*. In most other respects, Macaire was the creation of the great actor Frédéric Lاماître, who played Macaire in the original production [...]. Lاماître disliked the play and refused to stick to the script [...]. Instead he sent up the action, introduced all sorts of comic business for Macaire and delivered such a flamboyant performance that the character took over the play.³

Lamaître's comic portrayal of Macaire effectively released the character from the sole ownership of his author(s) and into the public realm, where it could be freely re-appropriated. The complicated origins of the character rendered Macaire a figure vulnerable to piracy and it is clear, given his previous pirating of *Pickwick*, why Reynolds would have been attracted to such a character, one whose appeal spanned the Channel yet refused to be contained by any one author or dramatic production.

Perhaps inevitably, *Robert Macaire* would carry much the same baggage as *Pickwick Abroad*, with Reynolds again attracting accusations of plagiarism. Despite the French origins of the character, Rohan McWilliam implies that Reynolds's portrayal of Macaire is another example of an idea he borrowed from Dickens. McWilliam cites Dickens's admiration of Lاماître, who, as Juliet John notes, played Macaire in his favourite childhood play, *The Dog of Montargis* (1814), and whose performances appealed precisely

³ Ibid, p. 35.

because he captured ‘the furthest reach of melodrama’.⁴ As Dickens described: ‘He did the finest things, I really believe, that are within the power of acting [...]. Never did I see anything, in art, so exaltedly horrible and awful’.⁵ McWilliam remarks that the inspiration for Reynolds’s Macaire was in fact Dickens’s Mr Jingle, the ‘conman or confidence trickster’ of *Pickwick Papers*.⁶ Given Dickens’s interest in *Lamaître*, McWilliam concludes that it was ‘poetically appropriate that Reynolds, who was shadowing Dickens at this time with his literary piracies, should have turned to Macaire in 1840’.⁷ Thus, despite being a tale about a French bandit, Reynolds is still perceived as operating in Dickens’s shadow, and lacking in any truly original ideas. Elisabeth Jay, while contesting McWilliam’s theory, still supposes that Reynolds’s inspiration for the character was likely to have been drawn from another contemporary English author (Thackeray), and was lifted from an article he penned in 1839.⁸ Thackeray, who worked for Reynolds in Paris in the 1830s, ‘found the figure of Robert Macaire in his “dandified rags” an altogether more disturbing contemporary example of the villain as potential hero, attractive in his comic energy’.⁹ From here, Jay remarks, it was ‘easy to guess where Reynolds next turned his attention’.¹⁰ Both McWilliam’s and Jay’s conclusions are reasonable, the former’s in particular resonating with Reynolds’s attraction once again to the ‘energy’ with which Jay describes Thackeray’s version. Both, however, fail to consider the possibility that Macaire would always have appealed to Reynolds independently of any association with Dickens or Thackeray, a notion with particular merit given Reynolds’s close affiliation with French literature. Given McWilliam’s proposal in particular, it is interesting to note, as a reflection of the deep cultural bias skewed in Dickens’s favour, that no mention is made of Dickens’s use of Macaire as the inspiration for Mr Jingle as engaging in the same practice of plagiarism, copy, or re-appropriation. Thus, the prevailing critical consensus is formed wherein, amidst any uncertainty over the origin of inspiration, the benefit of the doubt is ceded in favour of Dickens, with Reynolds’s work once more following in tow.

⁴ Juliet John, *Dickens’s Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 80.

⁵ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), VI, p. 536.

⁶ McWilliam, p. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Elisabeth Jay, *British Writers and Paris: 1830-1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 270.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Jay, p. 270.

Dickens, meanwhile, published *Oliver Twist* in 1837-39, which overlapped with the early numbers of *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), but his mind was clearly still troubled by the numerous iterations of his work that had saturated the market after *Pickwick Papers*. *Nicholas Nickleby*, a novel about a bereft and penniless young man and his sister who must navigate through life while suffering from the cruel machinations of their avaricious uncle, Ralph Nickleby, contains within it one tangential episode which reveals Dickens's continued frustration at the lack of control over his intellectual property. Towards the end of the novel Nicholas encounters the sketchy Mr Snittle Timberry, referred to as a 'literary gentleman'.¹¹ Nicholas, who is quick to anger and somewhat petulant by nature – a characteristic overtly displayed on two earlier occasions in the novel when he 'snapped' at Mr Squeers and Sir Mulberry Hawk with violent repercussions – voices a similar impatience and indignation towards the professional practices of his new acquaintance, who engages in the 'craft' of an 'adaptor', staging the literary works of other authors that in some cases have yet to publish their final numbers and conclusions. The episode is noteworthy for Dickens's obvious evangelizing, as Nicholas's irascibility becomes a rather transparent conduit for his own grievances on the issue. The instance is less a case of the conflation or subtle alignment of the author with the characteristic behaviour of the protagonist, and more a case of Dickens shaping the narrative in order to air his continued objections on the issue of piracy.

As the incident unfolds, Mr Timberry mistakes as flattery Nicholas's comment on his 'craft', believing he has been favourably compared to Shakespeare. Clearly a distinction Dickens wishes to elucidate, the word craft, which might ordinarily imply a certain level of skill, creativity or guile, in Dickens's eyes is distinct from the actual act of creating. Nicholas explains that 'Shakespeare derived some of his plots from old tales and legends in general circulation', but, he continues, 'it seems to me, that some of the gentlemen of your craft, at the present day, have shot far beyond him'.¹² Mr Timberry mistakenly acknowledges the comment as a compliment, replying that 'Bill' was indeed a fellow 'adaptor' – the colloquial abbreviation of the surname to 'Bill' conveying Timberry's sense of equality with Shakespeare – before Nicholas intervenes

¹¹ Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 632.

¹² *Nicholas Nickleby*, p. 633.

to explain the misunderstanding. By the phrase ‘beyond him’, Nicholas in fact meant that ‘whereas Shakespeare brought within the magic circle of his genius, traditions peculiarly adapted for his purpose, and turned familiar things into constellations which should enlighten the world for ages, you drag within the magic circle of your dullness, subjects not at all adapted to the purposes of the stage, and debase as he exalted’.¹³ As the difference is made clear – one requires the genius of a Shakespeare to turn familiar things into constellations – it is safe to assume that Dickens, at best, viewed Reynolds as a proponent of this type of literary ‘craft’, who, rather than expanding the horizons of Pickwick, dragged him within the magic circle of his dullness and debased what Dickens had exalted.

Now, building up a head of steam, and using Nicholas as a convenient if rather transparent mouthpiece, Dickens launches into a diatribe wherein he claims that figures like Mr Timberry merely ‘vamp up ideas not yet worked out by their original projector, but which have doubtless cost him many thoughtful and sleepless nights’.¹⁴ The passage concludes with Nicholas rhetorically demanding to know ‘the distinction between such pilfering as this, and picking a man’s pocket in the street’.¹⁵ Much like Moncrief’s rather tepid response to accusations of questionable morality, if not illegality, in engaging in this practice of ‘adapting’, Mr Timberry offers only an apathetic shoulder shrug coupled with the truism, ‘Men must live, sir’.¹⁶ Unconvinced, Nicholas replies disparagingly that this ‘would be an equally fair plea in both cases’.¹⁷ At this juncture the conversation is curtailed by the intervention of the on-looking Mr Crummles in order to diffuse the situation. Mr Timberry then disappears from the novel as quickly as he arrived, a dialogic device inserted into the narrative purely to allow Dickens to proselytise on the unfair practices of hack dramatists, and indirectly recapitulate the injustices he has suffered as a result. Nicholas’s rant, while

¹³ *Nicholas Nickleby*, p. 633.

¹⁴ Ibid; The phrase ‘original projector’ is presumably a reference to *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). While this might be seen to detract somewhat from Dickens’s argument, since the projects of Swift’s men of academia, science and philosophy were dedicated to useless abstract knowledge, it is possible that Dickens simply meant to elevate the work of Shakespeare (and himself) into the upper echelons of learned men compared to Reynolds, and those only capable of ‘craft’.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 634.

¹⁷ Ibid.

specifically aimed at the practices of figures like Moncrief in the theatrical sphere, captures Dickens's general frustration regarding the continued theft of his work moving into the early 1840s.

Further evidence of Dickens's simmering annoyance at those he called 'pirates', appears in his original 1838 preface to *Nicholas Nickleby*, in which 'Boz' issues a bold and acerbic 'Proclamation', branding his imitators as 'dishonest dullards' characterised by their 'mental smallness' who prey on the 'unwary and the credulous' in their production of 'cheap and wretched imitations of our delectable works'.¹⁸ It is an interesting choice of metaphor, as pirates engage in a kind of displacement, boarding another ship and taking control by supplanting the crew. Clearly Dickens's concern was still the protection of his own market space as much as it was a concern over identity. While the address to his many 'pirates' initially appears whimsical in its extension of the mariner metaphor, it quickly turns rather more visceral as he explains that he has

at length devised a mode of execution for them, so summary and terrible, that if any gang or gangs thereof presume to hoist but one shred of the colours of the good ship *Nickleby*, we will hang them on gibbets so lofty and enduring, that their remains shall be a monument of our just vengeance to all succeeding ages; and it shall not lie in the power of any Lord High Admiral, on earth, to cause them to be taken down again.¹⁹

Dickens appears to suggest that any future acts of 'vengeance' he perpetrates will no longer be inhibited by proper recourse to the law, as no 'Lord High Admiral' will have the 'power' to reverse the action he takes. The threat is clear and graphic as Dickens now elevates his cause above the rule of law. If the imagery conjured by the 'remains' left hanging on the gibbets as a warning to other pirates is slightly disturbing, the passage which precedes it is similarly caustic and equally visual in its concern for both movement and

¹⁸ Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby: Reproduced in facsimile from the original monthly parts of 1838-9 with an essay by Michael Slater*, 2 vols (London: Scholar Press, 1982), I, p. xxix.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. xxx.

space. Dickens describes his imitators as ‘vermin’, who ‘follow near our heels, but are constrained to creep along by dirty and little-frequented ways, at a most respectful and humble distance behind’.²⁰ Despite mixing his metaphors Dickens creates an image in which he is the leader, pacing out in front of a pack of scavengers who ‘creep’ along in his wake, looking to feed off the crumbs that fall from his pockets. ‘And whereas,’ Dickens continues, ‘in like manner, as some other vermin are not worth the killing for the sake of their carcases, so these kennel pirates are not worth the powder and shot of the law, inasmuch as whatever damages they commit, they are in no condition to pay any’.²¹ By striding out ahead Dickens frees himself from the cloying sense of being surrounded by imitators and having his space and identity encroached upon. He assumes a position not only of financial superiority with a rather supercilious jibe at the poverty endured by these cheap imitators relative, we might presume, to his growing wealth, and he also takes a more threatening stance by implying that while he has the capability to kill them, it simply isn’t worth his effort. Instead, the phrases ‘follow near our heels’ and ‘kennel pirates’ imply that they might be trained in their subservience to Dickens, the master.

Dickens’s preface is a defiant statement aimed at his imitators, positioning himself at the summit of a hierarchy as ‘the only true and lawful ‘Boz’’.²² The image of an orderly line behind him, however, as the previous chapter examined, was simply illusory, since Pickwick ‘mania’ appeared rather to resemble a frenzied pack of scavengers, which quickly overran Dickens’s ability to maintain control over any shred of his writing or authorial identity. Amongst this frenzied pack heading into the 1840s was Reynolds, who, on 27 June 1840, in his role as editor, published the first issue of *The Teetotaler: A Weekly Journal Devoted to Temperance, Literature and Science*. Reynolds’s time as a member of the Temperance movement was short-lived and the earnestness with which he swore his commitment to the cause remains open to question.²³ Nonetheless, having signed the pledge, Reynolds took the helm of the journal between 1840

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, p. xxix.

²³ W. E. Adams wrote of Reynolds: ‘it was rather as a charlatan and a trader than as a genuine politician that G. W. M. was regarded by the rank and file of Chartism’. W. E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom* (London: Hutchinson, 1903), p. 235.

and 1841, and printed articles that laid the blame for drunkenness and debauchery at the door of a government that it alleged cared more for profits than the condition of society. Reynolds used the platform to reprise Pickwick and his faithful servant Sam Weller in two consecutive tales entitled *Noctes Pickwickiane* and *Pickwick Married*. Both tales mark a continuation from *Pickwick Abroad* by maintaining a political dimension that distinguished them from *Pickwick Papers*, as well as helping to cement Reynolds's status as Pickwick's biographer.

In the first of the two tales, *Noctes Pickwickiane*, Reynolds features himself in the opening issue, just as in *Pickwick Abroad*, with Sam mentioning to Pickwick that he had in fact witnessed Reynolds signing the pledge: 'An' then comed that young gen'leman with spectacles on, as wrote the wery celebrated ac-count o' our adwentures, doin's and sayin's in France, under the title o' *Pickwick Abroad*, you know, Sir. Wery much surprised I wos to see him there'.²⁴ This is typical of Reynolds's tendency to self-publicise; not only does he write himself into his own story, in his own journal, he then uses the opportunity to heap praise on his other 'celebrated' fiction in the same breath. The incident also recalls the argument made in the previous chapter in which Reynolds's appearance in the text complicates Boz's and Pickwick's status as 'immortal', since Sam and Pickwick have seemingly continued with their lives beyond the gaze of the biographer, apparently only encountering each other by chance. Presumably we are supposed to believe that both Sam and Pickwick requested this same bespectacled man to act as the editor for this tale as he did for *Pickwick Abroad*. However, contrary to *Pickwick Abroad*, there is no further mention thereafter of the role of the editor in the short tales, and while this perhaps reflects Reynolds's sense of comfort as Pickwick's biographer, having achieved commercial and critical success with his first attempt, the effect of placing himself amongst Sam and Pickwick remains the same as in *Pickwick Abroad*, both 'drawing Mr. Pickwick closer to the race of ordinary men' and narrowing 'the gap between an emulating author and Charles Dickens'.²⁵ It is worth noting that this process also serves a third concomitant purpose, for Reynolds at

²⁴ 'Noctes Pickwickiane', *The Teetotaler, A Weekly Journal Devoted to Temperance, Literature and Science*, ed. by G. W. M. Reynolds, 1 (1840), 1-8 (p. 8).

²⁵ Adam Abraham, 'Plagiarizing Pickwick: Imitations of Immortality', *Dickens Quarterly*, 32 (2015) 5-20. (p. 9).

least, which is to further distance Pickwick from his original author, as it becomes more difficult to discern Dickens's Pickwick among a crowd of impersonators.

Noctes Pickwickiane sees the continuation of the pattern established in *Pickwick Abroad* wherein Sam leads and Pickwick follows. Where Sam was the vehicle for political conversion during Pickwick's adventures in France, gradually becoming enamoured with the principles which underpinned French Republicanism and displaying a fondness for egalitarian principles in general, he now signs the temperance pledge first and his example encourages Pickwick to do the same: 'I approve of the alteration, Sam [...] when you lay the cloth for dinner to-day, don't put any wine or beer upon the table'.²⁶ Much of the mirth in *Pickwick Papers* is of course derived from the excessive indulgence in alcohol of the Pickwick clan, a theme Reynolds had similarly taken advantage of to produce numerous scenes of drunken revelry and mishaps in *Pickwick Abroad*. This sobering turn of events, brought on by the pledge, would not have met with Dickens's approval. While Dickens objected strongly to the excessive consumption of alcohol, made apparent in numerous *Sketches*, most notably 'Gin Shops', 'Making a Night of it', and 'The Drunkard's Death',²⁷ he was equally vehement in his opposition to teetotalism, preferring instead the principle of moderation. In a later article for the *Examiner* in 1848, Dickens remarked that the temperance movement was merely 'an attempt by the weak-willed to make the temperate suffer for their inability to drink moderately'.²⁸ Indeed, in *Pickwick Papers*, temperance 'is associated with the hypocrisy of Stiggins'.²⁹ If Dickens's ire was provoked by Reynolds's drawing Pickwick out of retirement before softening him to French Republicanism, having the famous duo abstain from alcohol was likely to have infuriated him the more.

²⁶ 'Notces Pickwickiane', *The Teetotaler, A Weekly Journal Devoted to Temperance, Literature and Science*, ed. by G. W. M. Reynolds, 1 (1840), p. 8.

²⁷ 'Gin Shops', in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers, 1833-39*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), pp. 180-185; 'Making a Night of it', in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers, 1833-39*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), pp. 265-269; 'The Drunkard's Death', in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers, 1833-39*, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), pp. 463-472.

²⁸ Fred Kaplan, *Dickens, A Biography* (New York: William Morrow, 1988), p. 227.

²⁹ Abraham, p. 11.

In the succeeding tale, *Pickwick Married*, Reynolds continues this tendency to have Pickwick engage in activities which would have provoked Dickens's disapproval, this time by having Pickwick tie the marital knot. The plot of *Pickwick Papers* is largely dependent on Pickwick's status as a bachelor, which allows for his famed comedy of errors with members of the opposite sex. As John Glavin describes it, Pickwick 'repeatedly [...] blunders into erotically pregnant situations',³⁰ most notably perhaps when he mistakenly enters into Miss Witherfield's room and, in a state of undress, is forced to hide behind the curtains when the unsuspecting maiden returns to her chambers. As the situation becomes more desperate Pickwick is forced to make his inadvertent presence known, much to the mortification of both. The humour of these instances is sanitised by Pickwick's non-threatening asexuality, since sex 'is no temptation for [Pickwick]'.³¹ Where James Kincaid defines the entire novel by its 'almost complete extinction of sex',³² Abraham remarks that Pickwick 'would rather go to jail than enjoy the nuptial favours of Martha Bardell'.³³ Yet Reynolds now erases this thematic trope by having Pickwick renounce his bachelorhood.

These two examples of Reynolds altering the Pickwickian formula would have displeased Dickens, but this was not unique to Reynolds's imitations. Dickens, as we have seen, claimed Pickwick to be immortal in his famous opening sentence, yet an anonymous work entitled *Pickwick in India*, which appeared in the *Madras Miscellany* between 1839 and 1840, 'left its protagonist literally at sea', sending Pickwick to an altogether 'harsher end' apparently 'devoured by a Shark!'.³⁴ In Peckett Press's *Pickwick in America* the source of Pickwick's wealth is probed; an omission in Dickens's original text, the provenance of Pickwick's money is found to reside in property in the United States, which 'devolved to Pickwick on the death of his father'.³⁵ Imitators simply projected the Pickwick they wanted onto their text, regardless of Dickens's implicit or even explicit intentions for his hero. Abraham's article, 'Plagiarizing Pickwick: Imitations of Immortality', has conveniently compiled a range of examples from these Pickwickian spin-offs in order to

³⁰ John Glavin, *After Dickens: Reading, Adaptation and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 89.

³¹ W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 416.

³² James R. Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 23.

³³ Abraham, p. 15.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10; 'Preface to the Volume', *The Madras Miscellany*, July 1839–March 1840 (Madras: J. B. Pharoah, 1840).

³⁵ Thomas Peckett Prest, *Pickwick in America*, ed. by "Bos." (London: E. Lloyd, 1838–39), p. 2.

show how ‘illuminating’ these can be to our understanding of the original text. He does, however, entirely neglect to mention the quality in Reynolds’s writing which, I argue, rendered him a greater threat to Dickens than his fellow imitators. Among other cited examples which deal with anti-Semitism and racism, Abraham does refer to Reynolds’s marrying of Pickwick and his signing of the pledge, but oddly credits these as creating ‘a more wholesome vision’ of Pickwick, a version ‘Dickens did not foresee: the bourgeois house-husband’.³⁶ Given Reynolds’s often-combustible politics, it is hard to agree with Abraham’s analysis of Reynolds’s tales as benign. Notwithstanding this interpretation of Reynolds’s version of Pickwick, which omits entirely the more radical aspects of Reynolds’s novel, the politics pursued by the latter in both tales remain as evident as they were in *Pickwick Abroad*.

Reynolds was not the only imitator to attempt the politicisation of Dickens. Authors like Bos specifically targeted their stories at the working classes, often ascribing ‘lower-class foibles to the bourgeoisie’ as a vehicle for satire.³⁷ Despite the efforts of other imitators, none developed a rivalry with Dickens on the scale achieved by Reynolds, and neither did their fiction elevate them to the public political status Reynolds acquired in the latter half of the 1840s. The seeds of this political threat were being sown in each of Reynolds’s early Pickwickian imitations, as he looked to pull Dickens’s readers towards politics of a more radical creed. In *Penny Pickwick* Bos attempted a similar feat, having Pickwick contest but ultimately fail to win a seat in Parliament, after being ‘dazzled by the prospect of becoming an M. P.’.³⁸ While Abraham’s analysis touches on Bos’s difficulty in realising this particular plot, since Pickwick’s politics are naturally ‘ineffable’,³⁹ there is no mention of the political efforts of Reynolds in either *Pickwick Abroad*, or the passages in the two Pickwickian tales, which push an obvious agenda of reform in favour of the working classes. Peckett Prest admits (of Pickwick) in the *Penny Pickwick*: ‘we cannot say whether he was radical, whig, conservative, or destructive’.⁴⁰ Reynolds’s *Pickwick Abroad* skilfully bypasses this difficulty by

³⁶ Abraham, p. 16.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 12.

³⁸ Thomas Peckett Prest, *The Penny Pickwick*, ed. by ‘Bos’ (London: E. Lloyd, 1837-1839), p. 113.

³⁹ Abraham, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Peckett Prest, *The Penny Pickwick*, p. 122.

effecting a political conversion overseas, thereby removing the obstacle of English prejudice, and by using Sam, not Pickwick, as the vehicle for conversion.

In *Pickwick Married*, the political tone struck in *Pickwick Abroad* is still apparent. The third chapter in particular continues to use Sam as a disenchanted voice of the oppressed working classes. Finding Pickwick enjoying the pleasant morning weather, effusing that it makes one appreciate ‘being born a free-born Englishman’,⁴¹ Sam returns to his lodgings frustrated at having been denied access to the parks by ‘a great hulking feller, with a bagganet,’ who told him: ‘you’ve got your undress veskitt on’.⁴² Sam explains that ‘the workin’ man stands no chance o’ walking in the pleasure grounds for vich he helpd to pay, if be so he ain’t got a precious good coat on his back’.⁴³ ‘Poverty’, Sam concludes, is ‘a wery great crime in this country as the overseer said to the pauper’.⁴⁴ This punctuating Wellerism marks another continuation of Reynolds’s use of this popular speech pattern adapted in *Pickwick Abroad* for a more punchy satirical effect. Sam’s complaint recalls the liberties he enjoyed during his sojourn in France, a comparison Reynolds was eager to encourage, reminding readers with both the print on the masthead of each issue and the advertising space at the back, that he was also the author of *Pickwick Abroad*. In fact, the entire journal is not only continually bookended with reminders of this text as well as his work *The Modern Literature of France* (1839), but by issue number fifteen of the first volume, Reynolds even fills some space by re-printing choice extracts from *Pickwick Abroad*. *The Modern Literature of France* arguably serves a similar political purpose for Reynolds, allowing him to lionize the progress of French liberty. The text, which reads as a paean to the enlightened condition of the nation, sees Reynolds describe how post-revolution France emerged ‘regenerated, and suddenly raised from a state of slavery to a position of comparative freedom, the people felt their ideas expand; and they imparted to their writings that spirit which fired their souls’.⁴⁵ Again adopting spatial imagery, as was implied by his taking Pickwick abroad, the revolution produced an

⁴¹ ‘Pickwick Married’, *The Teetotaler, A Weekly Journal Devoted to Temperance, Literature and Science*, ed. by G. W. M. Reynolds, 1 (1840), 257.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ George. W. M. Reynolds, *The Modern Literature of France* (London: George Henderson, 1839), p. xiv.

expansion of ideas once the shackles of slavery were thrown off. Certainly, the image depicted of France is a far cry from the petty restrictions placed upon Sam as a member of the wrong social class who simply wants to stroll in the parks.

Sam's experience in the park initiates a string of political comments; firstly, he discusses reports in the newspaper regarding the public hanging of a drunkard who killed his wife in an inebriated rage. Akin to the agenda of *The Teetotaler*, Sam blames the government for the crime, not the drunkard, lamenting: 'Laws make drunkards and laws punishes 'em'.⁴⁶ The government's interest, Sam attests, does not extend beyond the revenue generated from the sale of the liquor: 'they doesn't care wot becomes o' the people, so long as they drains the money out on 'em somehow or another'.⁴⁷ Tellingly, where in *Pickwick Abroad* Sam's observations are frequently dismissed by Pickwick as exaggerated, his master concurs here that 'there is a great deal of truth in your observations Sam'.⁴⁸ The story is indicative of Reynolds's long-held political stance on the faults of the elite and ruling classes, specifically their tendency to place the problem on working-class shoulders and absolve themselves of any responsibility.

The passage continues with Pickwick and Snodgrass consulting the newspaper where they peruse the details of an advertisement for a hair conditioning product targeted at working men. The advertisement states: at a 'moment when the dearness of bread is calling the attention of all classes of society in England to the present universally execrated system of the Corn Laws, one source of comfort [...] which may serve as consolation for the tyranny of the oppressive political systems in these trying times is "Rowland's Macassar Oil"'.⁴⁹ A genuine product that gained popularity through the final decades of the eighteenth century, Reynolds's (presumably) satirical advertisement takes a sideswipe seemingly at the product as being entirely out of touch with the needs of working men. Contrasting the suffering and inability of the working classes to afford their basic subsistence with the apparently ameliorating qualities of a superficial cosmetic

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

product, Pickwick's reaction to the advertisement suggests that Reynolds's intention may have been to highlight the tendency of certain factions of the press to report on the abject condition of the poor without proffering viable solutions. Indeed, Pickwick, as Snodgrass was reading the piece, waited on 'tenter-hooks of expectation and expense [...], in a pleasing state of wonder and uncertainty at the nature of the blessing which was to recompense Englishmen for the tyranny of a political system'.⁵⁰ The advertisement thus reflects a prevailing sentiment of callous apathy, certainly amongst the wealthy elite, who endorsed protectionist laws while the masses starved. Snodgrass's newspaper then fluctuates wildly between grim accounts of crime, vice and poverty and the excess and splendour of the royals, pressing the theme of neglect by the governing classes and the respectable press towards the condition of the poor. The disparity drawn is seldom subtle: 'Next his eye caught sight of a paragraph which stated that the Queen had sat down to dinner at precisely seven minutes and a half past eight on the preceding evening; and then he came to the case of a poor man who had not had any dinner for the last three days'.⁵¹

2.2 Dickens targets Reynolds: Master Humphrey and Master Timothy

By 1841 Reynolds had certainly extracted considerable mileage out of Dickens's beloved characters. He had taken the Pickwickians to France, seen some of them married, and had both Sam and Pickwick sign the temperance pledge. He nevertheless maintained his political agenda throughout, a facet of his writing that distinguished his works from Dickens's original. Two months prior to the publication of the first issue of *The Teetotaler*, which carried *Noctes Pickwickiane*, Dickens had begun the weekly serial publication of a periodical entitled *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1841). While the work has received less attention than Dickens's previous novels, it is my view that the text is pivotal to the developing rivalry between the authors, since it contains within it not just remarks on plagiarism, but ones that targeted Reynolds specifically. Moreover, I argue that Reynolds's final Dickens imitation, *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, was produced in response to Dickens's remarks. Despite his apparent eagerness to retire Pickwick into a life of

⁵⁰ 'Pickwick Married', *The Teetotaler, A Weekly Journal Devoted to Temperance, Literature and Science*, ed. by G. W. M. Reynolds, 1 (1840), 257.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 258.

sedentary seclusion in Dulwich at the close of *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens does in fact revive Mr Pickwick in a cameo role in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. From the central stem, which features Master Humphrey's literary club, comprised of himself and his eclectic friends who meet at predetermined times in order to share their manuscripts with one another and to alleviate their loneliness, the text contains a collection of interpolated or inset tales. These tales include the weekly instalments of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), in which the characters from Master Humphrey's literary club perform peripheral crossover roles, helping to bind the whole work together. The serial was short-lived as sales figures dipped before Dickens curtailed the work after little over a year and a half. Modern volume versions keep the interpolated tales, but omit *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*. What remains significant to his ongoing rivalry with Reynolds, however, is Dickens's decision to reprise Pickwick.

Mr Pickwick's reintroduction into this narrative has often been presumed, as Peter Preston notes, to have been a response to flagging or 'uncertain sales figures'.⁵² Similarly, the reappearance of the popular Sam Weller and his father were attempts to further bolster the periodical's commercial appeal. Preston proposes that such an attempt 'smacks of desperation' and is 'at worst artificial'.⁵³ While Preston implies that Dickens's motivations were purely financial, it is my view that the novel contains an easily overlooked passage which suggests Dickens may also have re-introduced Pickwick as a response to the ongoing plagiarisms of his work. Moreover, I argue that the passage in question refers specifically to Reynolds, and that Pickwick's return should be read as an attempt by Dickens to regain control and authority over Pickwick, at least to the same extent as it can be understood to fortify the commercial viability of the text. Pickwick's return in *Master Humphrey's Clock* therefore marks the first instance of what would become the more reciprocal cut-and-thrust type of rivalry between Dickens and Reynolds that came to the fore in the 1850s when the two began to trade insults explicitly.

⁵² Preston notes that 'sales of the first number, in April 1840, exceeded even Dickens's optimistic projections: 6000 copies were printed and sold and another 10,000 were ordered. After this brilliant start, however, sales for the second and third numbers dropped sharply'. Charles Dickens, *The Mysteries of Edwin Drood and Other Stories* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited., 2005), p. xvii.

⁵³ Dickens, *The Mysteries of Edwin Drood and Other Stories*, p. xvii.

In Dickens's serial, when Mr Pickwick introduces himself to Master Humphrey, he does so with the hope of securing one of the advertised, and much vaunted seats at the table of the exclusive literary club, as chaired by the owner of the grand antique clock. Through this introduction, Dickens is unable to resist the opportunity to reflect upon *Pickwick Papers* and respond to the plagiarisms that followed its publication. Referring to *Pickwick Papers*, Master Humphrey explains to Pickwick that he 'had read his adventures very often',⁵⁴ and now, presented with a 'good opportunity of adverting to the circumstance [...] condoled with him upon the various libels on his character which had found their way into print'.⁵⁵ Pickwick responds by referring to the 'introduction to the second part' of *Don Quixote*, noting that this 'fully expressed his sentiments on the subject'.⁵⁶ Their acquaintance progresses swiftly and the passage otherwise appears fairly innocuous. It is my view, however, that the reference to Cervantes's famous literary work – and the contentious official sequel Cervantes penned ten years after the original – subtly integrated into the pleasantries between the two, is in fact a veiled reference to Reynolds's sequel *Pickwick Abroad*, thus affording Dickens a rather esoteric riposte without an explicit mention of Reynolds's name or the title of his novel.

The passage initially appears somewhat vague regarding the exact libels Master Humphrey refers to, since there were of course many 'libellous' attempts to reproduce, pirate, or re-appropriate *Pickwick*, as discussed in chapter one. Equally, Master Humphrey could simply be referring to the events of the novel, wherein Pickwick is slandered and serves an unjust prison sentence due to a misunderstanding with Mrs Bardell over a breached promise of marriage. It is, however, Pickwick's reference to 'the second part' of *Don Quixote* which, I argue, resonates specifically with Reynolds's *Pickwick Abroad* above other Pickwickian imitations, or indeed with the events of the novel itself. Reynolds pitched *Pickwick Abroad* as a sequel to *Pickwick Papers*, with the novel commencing from the point at which the original concludes, with Pickwick retired in Dulwich. In the case of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes published the original novel in 1605 before

⁵⁴ Dickens, *The Mysteries of Edwin Drood and Other Stories*, p. 286.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

eventually penning the ‘second part’, to which Pickwick refers, in 1615. Dickens draws upon the example of Cervantes’s text since *Don Quixote* had experienced a popular explosion similar to *Pickwick Papers* more than two hundred years earlier, but more importantly, because in 1614 a spurious author named Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda published a work entitled, *Second Book of the Ingenious Knight Don Quixote of La Mancha*. This commonly came to be known as the ‘false Quixote’ and was heavily repudiated in Cervantes’s official second part published in 1615.⁵⁷ Arguably inspired by the fraudulent effort of Avellaneda to profit from his original, Cervantes dealt sternly with this imitation utilizing the metafictional trope of the original novel to effectively place Avellaneda’s text within his own, official sequel.⁵⁸ The discourse around Cervantes and Avellaneda has remained shrouded in mystery, but the parallel Dickens perceived between himself and Reynolds with Cervantes and Avellaneda helps to explain its inclusion in *Master Humphrey’s Clock*.

The parallel Dickens draws, by proxy, negates any need for him to further propound his own argument against Reynolds’s sham re-appropriation, since Cervantes had suffered a similar fate at the hands of literary bandits. Thus, *Master Humphrey’s Clock* now performs the same role as Cervantes’s official ‘second part’, discrediting a fraudulent sequel and highlighting its inferiority. In this sense Dickens may have intended *Master Humphrey’s Clock* as the sequel to *Pickwick Papers*, thus eclipsing *Pickwick Abroad* as an intervening aberration. The parallel also has the added effect of elevating *Pickwick Papers* to the same canonical status as *Don Quixote*, whose literary significance ultimately prevailed over its unofficial sequel,

⁵⁷ Via two allegorical tales in the preface to Part II of the novel, Cervantes compares Avellaneda firstly to a man from Sevilla who was ‘seized with as whimsical a conceit as ever entered a madman’s brain’, as he inflated a dog by blowing air through a straw ‘dextrously applied [...] to the dog’s posterior’, before the second tale conflates the actions of the fraudulent author with that of a ‘maniac’. The cautionary tales, designed to disparage Avellaneda’s efforts, conclude by heeding: ‘Thus warned, perhaps our historian may think it necessary, before he again lets fall the ponderous weight of his wit, to look and examine where it is likely to drop. Tell him also that, as to his threatening by his counterfeit wares, to deprive me of my expected gain, I value it not a rush’. Miguel De Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote De La Mancha*. A Revised translation based on those of Motteux, Jarvis, and Smollett, Part II. (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1866), p. 252.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Stephen Gilman, ‘Alonso Fernández De Avellaneda, a Reconsideration and a Bibliography’, *Hispanic Review*, 14, (1946), 304–321; Tom Lathrop, ““Don Quixote” and Its Errant Author”, *New England Review* 31 (1990), 8–19; E. C. Riley, ‘Three Versions of Don Quixote’, *The Modern Language Review*, 68, (1973), 807–819; Joseph R. Jones, ‘Notes on the Diffusion and Influence of Avellaneda’s “Quixote”’, *Hispania*, 56 (1973), 229–237; Jonathan Bailey, ‘How Don Quixote Handled an Unauthorized Sequel’, (2015), <<https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/2015/05/18/how-don-quixote-handled-an-unauthorized-sequel>>

thus simultaneously demoting Reynolds's work. Designed to be insouciantly or even superciliously dismissive of Reynolds by refusing to acknowledge him or his novel by name,⁵⁹ the passage certainly appears to have evaded critical attention. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Reynolds read Dickens's work closely and combed *Pickwick Papers* for factual anomalies. It seems highly likely, therefore, that Reynolds would have spotted the coded slight Dickens dropped into the new text, and moreover, he would have viewed this as confirmation of having registered on Dickens's radar. Having irritated Dickens sufficiently to provoke a response, Reynolds promptly commenced the publication of his next novel, *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, in 1842.

Stephen Carver describes Reynolds's second close copy of a Dickens novel as undertaken in an almost innocently mischievous manner, claiming that 'Reynolds rather cheekily returned to Dickens's portfolio once more in 1841 with *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, a knock-off of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, which was then being published weekly by Chapman & Hall'.⁶⁰ As with *Pickwick Abroad*, critics have offered few alternative explanations for Reynolds's motivation for publishing *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, beyond financial incentives. However, given the success of *Pickwick Abroad*, which Reynolds himself claimed had introduced him to the British public and given him a solid platform from which to pursue his own fiction,⁶¹ why did he feel the need to return to Dickens's canon at all? Furthermore, if commercial success was the primary motive, why would Reynolds have chosen to imitate Dickens's least successful novel to date? Prolific plagiarists like Thomas Peckett Prest had elected to re-appropriate the more successful *Nicholas*

⁵⁹ This feigned apathy reflected Cervantes's approach to Avellaneda as described in the 'Preface to The Reader' in Part II of the novel, as he explained to his readers: 'with what impatience must thou now be waiting in this Preface! doubtless prepared to find it full of resentment, railing, and invective against the author of the second Don Quixote—him I mean who, the world says, was begotten in Tordesillas and born in Tarragona. But in truth, it is not my intention to give thee that satisfaction; for, though injuries are apt to awaken choler in the humblest breast, yet mine this rule must admit of an exception. Perhaps thou wouldest have me call him ass, madman, and coxcomb; but no:—be his own folly his punishment'. Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, p. 251.

⁶⁰ Steven Carver, 'The Man who wasn't Dickens: A Profile of G. W. M. Reynolds (1818-1879)', *Ainsworth and Friends: Essays on 19th Century Literature and the Gothic* (2013),

<<https://ainsworthandfriends.wordpress.com/2013/02/13/the-man-who-wasnt-dickens/>> [accessed 28 January 2017].

⁶¹ Trefor Thomas, for example, simply lumped *Pickwick Abroad* and *Master Timothy's Bookcase* in together as opportunistic attempts to 'emulate Dickens's commercial success'. *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. xi; Likewise, for Rohan McWilliam, Reynolds's repeat offences were a reflection of his 'bare-faced cheek in ripping off other people's ideas'. McWilliam, p. 34.

Nickleby, in 1841, yet Reynolds curiously chose the text Dickens curtailed after only twenty months of publication. As has been demonstrated for *Pickwick Abroad* in the previous chapter, a commercially motivated explanation alone does not altogether suffice for this new re-appropriation. What is plausible, given the analysis above, is that Reynolds was motivated by the comments Dickens made in *Master Humphrey's Clock* and this second visit to Dickens's canon was his response.

Master Timothy's Bookcase is an interesting text in the development of Dickens's and Reynolds's relationship. The structure of Reynolds's serial certainly resembles Dickens's framed narrative mode in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Stemming from a central story, each chapter then follows a type of infinite perpetuation; one mystery after another is unravelled, each time concluding with a chance encounter with a proximate set of characters, leading the reader into the next mystery and propelling the plot at a breathless pace. Like Dickens's text, the interpolated tales in Reynolds's novel can be read in isolation, but they also remain connected, as the central protagonist Edmund Mortimer explains, by 'an almost invisible chain' which 'connects distant episodes in our lives together'.⁶² This was a metaphorical device that pre-figures both Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* and Dickens's *Bleak House*, the latter of which deploys what Anne Humphrey's describes as a 'rope-plot' that skilfully holds numerous narrative threads together.⁶³ Interestingly, the concept utilized by Reynolds, that of a supernatural apparition conferring a 'boon' upon the protagonist who must use this power to learn from the historical mistakes committed by his ancestors, resembles Dickens's *Christmas Carol*, which was published one year later in 1843. Instances of this sort concerning points of chronology and the resulting implications regarding plagiarism are discussed in more detail in the following chapter of this thesis. In any event, Reynolds brings the serial to a tidy conclusion, as the moral lesson, which none of the ancestors had achieved and which was the only way to save each from their unhappy fates, was to wish for 'the gift of virtue'. He explains:

⁶² G. W. M. Reynolds, *Master Timothy's Bookcase; or the Magic-Lanthorn of the World* (London: W. Emans, 1844). p. 99.

⁶³ Anne Humpherys, 'Generic Strands and Urban Twists: The Victorian Mysteries Novel', *Victorian Studies*, 34 (1991), 455-472.

A great privilege was within your power. You resemble monarchs, who, on their elevation to their thrones, forget the welfare of their subjects, and dream only of ensuring their own despotic power on a more solid foundation. In a word, each and all of you have consulted the selfish feelings of your souls, and have neglected the broad principle which would have led you to bless the power that conferred the boon upon you.⁶⁴

Unlike Dickens's Christmas Tales, Reynolds avoids an overly mawkish conclusion by ensuring that, as prophesied in an earlier plot point, Edmund Mortimer is brutally murdered by an assailant with a grudge to bear. It is also worth noting that the moral is bound up in a typically Reynoldsian take on the self-interestedness of the monarchy, who, in his eyes, come to represent the worst excesses of avarice and tyranny.

Considering the craft with which Reynolds had drawn a through-line for each of his previous chapters, the final chapter, which sees the return of Pickwick, appears to be grafted somewhat gratuitously on to the end of the novel. The chapter is even introduced as a means to literally fill the space and figuratively kill the time. Having concluded the penultimate tale, which tied up the straggling mysteries and signalled an end to the interconnected episodes, Mortimer finds himself with 'three or four more days alone' which he must 'pass by himself'.⁶⁵ His friend then fortuitously visits and attempts to alleviate the boredom and lift the sombre mood afflicting the doomed protagonist by suggesting they indulge in some literature which concerns 'a most interesting series of adventures, which occurred to a very remarkable and illustrious person'.⁶⁶ It thus appears that Pickwick (to whom Mortimer is referring) was a relative afterthought and that the serial could have functioned just as well without his inclusion. All of this makes it difficult to understand why Pickwick was called upon at all. Had sales figures for the serial flagged, as they had in Dickens's case, Pickwick would surely have appeared earlier to boost interest in a manner after his rival.

⁶⁴ *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, p. 586.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 485.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 485.

Yet Pickwick features almost arbitrarily at the end, as a means to pass time and fill space on the page, and moreover, not even in an original tale, since the chapter is lifted almost verbatim (but with minor, yet important omissions) from *Pickwick Married*, which ran one-year prior in *The Teetotaler*.⁶⁷ One possible explanation for Pickwick's revival could be that the readers were expecting another instalment of Pickwick, since Dickens had set a precedent with his serial. This is plausible but could be refuted according to the appearance of Pickwick in *The Teetotaler*, which ran concurrently with *Master Humphrey's Clock*. It also fails to explain why Reynolds would simply re-issue an old story instead of producing something original. The demands on Reynolds's time might otherwise explain this curious choice, but the rest of his career, in which he appears remarkably prolific, producing novels and newspaper articles at a dizzying pace, convincingly belie this. The answer, I argue, resides instead in those sections Reynolds purposefully selected to be re-issued.

It is my contention that the condensed version of the original tale Reynolds re-worked into the final chapter of *Master Timothy's Bookcase* was chosen precisely with Dickens in mind. Amongst the adaptations undertaken in the re-issue, the most obvious is the alteration of the incident in which Pickwick meets his wife-to-be, Miss Teresina Hippolyta Sago. Reynolds removes from this section the police-officer's mistaken identification of Miss Sago's erratic behaviour as drunkenness. No longer associated with the Temperance Society, this aspect of the narrative is now discarded. Indeed, prior to commencing the story, Reynolds alludes to wine on the table at the point where Mortimer and his friend make themselves comfortable.⁶⁸ The other sections remain true to the original tale, but exclude large passages presumably deemed extraneous. While this would ordinarily suppose an editorial diligence, sifting through the plot to extract its most salient aspects, it should be noted that *Master Timothy's Bookcase* was likely privy to a larger readership than a niche publication like *The Teetotaler*, and certainly more likely to attract a greater crossover of Dickens's readers. Given Dickens's dislike for the temperance movement, he was unlikely to have regularly perused this particular journal. Now though, hot on the heels of Dickens's *Master*

⁶⁷ *Pickwick Married* ran across twenty-two volumes of *The Teetotaler* between 23 January 1840 and 19 June 1841.

⁶⁸ *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, p. 485.

Humphrey's Clock, Reynolds took particular care over which extracts he placed in his own novel in order to maximise its impact.

Having altered the opening scene, the chapter still finds Pickwick attempting to perform a chivalrous deed. Eyeing a young, unaccompanied lady in the street being approached by a police officer who 'rudely seized upon her',⁶⁹ Pickwick intervenes and tries to apprehend the officer. The police officer, who (in this version) is similarly nobly intentioned yet over-zealous in his desire to appear 'an active officer' to the young lady,⁷⁰ mistakes Pickwick's action for aggression and duly escorts him to the stationhouse for the night. It is a quintessentially Pickwickian incident which then sees Sam Weller's re-introduction, in customary fashion, coming to Pickwick's rescue. The incident is notable because, despite Reynolds cutting large swathes of text from the original, he leaves in the passage in which Sam pokes fun at Pickwick's heroics, asking him: 'An' so it's wery genteel is it [...] to go an' make a Don Quixote o' von's self for the sake of a young gal with a rayther pretty face?''⁷¹ The reference is glancing, but arguably contains a greater significance, following the reference to *Don Quixote* made by Dickens in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Reynolds might easily have omitted this passage in favour of several other interactions between Pickwick and Sam on the same topic. However, given Reynolds's previous efforts to undermine and irritate Dickens in order to elicit a response, this shared reference is worthy of further scrutiny.

The reference may of course have been purely coincidental, but in light of Dickens's attempts to discredit Reynolds's work by analogously comparing him to Cervantes's plagiaristic counterpart, Reynolds's reference to *Don Quixote* could now read as a sly mockery of Dickens's attempt to undermine both *Pickwick Abroad* and its author. Where Dickens appeared to encourage a comparison between his work and Cervantes's in order to cast Reynolds in the role of Avellaneda, Reynolds's reference to the novel's protagonist instead conflates Pickwick with *Don Quixote*, a character famed for his rampant and often

⁶⁹ *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, p. 486.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

misplaced chivalry, which commonly manifests itself in embarrassing behaviour and failed schemes, all of which, as Sam points out, ‘ain’t very respectable’.⁷² The implication which may be drawn, however abstract, is that Dickens’s attempts are similarly unbecoming, a cause for embarrassment, and doomed to failure. The connection may appear tenuous, but Reynolds made a conscious choice to include the passage while discarding all sections either side of this dialogue in the original tale.

It is fair to claim, despite the explicit threat issued in the proclamation in *Nicholas Nickleby*, that Dickens’s attempts to regain control of Pickwick failed. Apart from the many other imitators, Reynolds made liberal use of Pickwick between 1840 and 1842, as he seemed to take encouragement from Dickens’s apparent uncertainty over how to stem the flow of plagiarisms. Following *Pickwick Abroad*, the press had earmarked Reynolds as a legitimate rival to Dickens (as Reynolds’s reviews testify). Yet, while Dickens was almost invariably unwilling or unable to ignore threats to his personal authorship, owing to his ‘indefinite touchiness and susceptibility’,⁷³ he was also unwilling to call Reynolds, or any other impersonator, out by name. In the previous chapter I argued that Reynolds had played to this vulnerability in *Pickwick Abroad* and any response elicited from Dickens would have been received as a triumph and would have, and arguably did, encourage Reynolds to initiate further appropriations. It follows that, had Dickens been able to resist placing this potentially provocative comment in *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, Reynolds might not have returned to the Dickens canon.⁷⁴ Indeed, problematic for Dickens was the positive reception Reynolds’s novel had received from both readers and critics. One review, as the previous chapter noted, had even compared Reynolds’s skill to Cervantes’s *Cid Hamet Benengeli*,⁷⁵ which rather nullified

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* (London: J. M. Dent, 1906), p. 51.

⁷⁴ Indeed, Dickens’s ostensible indifference towards Reynolds’s efforts mimic Cervantes in this regard. Cervantes claimed that his imitator’s work was unworthy of a retort, that he valued it ‘not a rush’, yet his preface to Part II is largely written as a sustained mockery of his rival, at one point claiming: ‘we should not add to the sufferings of the afflicted; and, that this gentleman’s case must be lamentable is evident from his not daring to appear in open day: concealing his name and his country, as if some treason, or other crime, laid upon his conscience’. For Reynolds, these types of comments, even with the analogous remove, may well have proved too tempting to ignore. Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, p. 252.

⁷⁵ *The Dublin Pilot* claimed: ‘If the name of G. W. M. Reynolds did not stand upon the title-page, we should be induced to believe that the identical Cid Hamet Benengeli, who introduced the immortal club, had taken up his pen again to chronicle their sayings and doings’. *Pickwick Abroad*, p. iv.

Dickens's efforts to relegate him to lesser literary status.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Cervantes's attempts to disparage and discredit Avellaneda's sequel perversely garnered the fraudulent text more attention than it might otherwise have received, and without Cervantes's intervention the spurious work may well have fallen into total obscurity. Of course, ultimately Dickens's efforts succeeded as Reynolds's readership rapidly declined after his death, but in Dickens's lifetime, his efforts to draw a parallel between Avellaneda and Reynolds, and his attempt to portray the latter as an inferior writer failed to produce the desired effect. It is possible, however, that Dickens was beginning to see some benefits in the plagiarisms his work spawned; just as Avellaneda's plagiarism allowed Cervantes to portray himself as the exploited genius, so too could Dickens claim a similar status, as plagiarisms served to enhance the value of the original text. Considering how Reynolds's and Dickens's rivalry would unfold in the coming decades, especially during the 1850s, it is plausible that Dickens entertained the notion of actually encouraging Reynolds's efforts in a display of mutual or reciprocal opportunism.

By the 1850s, as future chapters will explore in greater detail, there existed a mutually beneficial dynamic in their animosity, with both authors creating exaggerated versions of their rival as a means to better define their own position in the literary market. Dickens had quickly acquired a well-established reputation for commercial astuteness, and, I argue, was beginning to consider the benefits of a rival like Reynolds, as early as 1840. Anthony Trollope, for example, in his obituary of Dickens, described him as a writer who 'could measure the reading public, – probably taking his measure of it unconsciously, – and knew what the public wanted of him'.⁷⁷ What has thus far been read as Dickens's stubborn inability to ignore slander and libel, then, could instead be perceived as further evidence of a commercial shrewdness regarding one of his chief plagiarisers. Sally Ledger's scholarship lends credence to this idea, noting how the sheer volume of piracies of Dickens's work actually proved beneficial to his career. Rather than tarnishing Dickens's

⁷⁶ Dickens had been bestowed with similar praise by *Metropolitan Magazine* in January 1837, which declared Mr Pickwick to be 'the legitimate successor to Don Quixote [...], the cockney Quixote of the nineteenth century'. In light of Reynolds's later success with *Pickwick Abroad*, which drew a similar comparison with Cervantes's work, Dickens may well have felt that this type of praise was doled out rather too casually. 'Unsigned Reviews of *Pickwick Papers*' *Metropolitan Magazine*, May 1836 - May 1837, rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 31.

⁷⁷ 'Charles Dickens', *St. Paul's Magazine*, 6 (July 1870), 370-375 (p. 371).

reputation, plagiarisms and copies potentially enhanced it, confirming him ‘as a commercially massively successful writer as well as a popular one, a writer much emulated by a rising generation of commercial publishers keen to attend to the reading habits and preferences of an expanding non-elite customer base’.⁷⁸ Mary Shannon likewise observes this mutually beneficial aspect of the culture of plagiarism for Dickens, since ‘the many plagiarisms, imitations, appropriations, and re-writings of Dickens, of which Reynolds’s were only a few [...] helped to keep Dickens in the public eye’.⁷⁹ Dickens, it seems, may well have had ulterior motives for not killing the so-called vermin he deemed ‘not worth the powder and shot of the law’. In fact, his reference to Cervantes’s repudiation of his imitator lends credence to this notion, with Cervantes claiming: ‘If my wounds be disregarded by those who simply look on them, they will be honoured by those who know how they were gained: for a soldier makes a nobler figure dead, in the field of battle, than alive, flying from his enemy’.⁸⁰ Drawing a parallel between his heroic actions in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 in which he was badly injured, Cervantes implies that his imitator’s exertions served not to damage his reputation, but to enhance it, since ‘the scars on the front of a brave soldier are stars that direct others to the haven of honour, and create in them a noble emulation’.⁸¹

As *Master Humphrey’s Clock* struggled financially, Dickens perhaps began to see the commercial benefit in stoking up some controversy in order to aid sales figures. Reynolds, who, like Dickens, possessed a similar ‘ability to take the popular pulse’,⁸² was hopeful of *Pickwick Abroad* catalysing a rivalry with Dickens, attempting to cultivate an antipathy between them that might capture the public’s imagination – two warring authors, sparring across their fiction and competing for the loyalty of the common reader. Now, following *Pickwick Abroad*, and with his latest fiction struggling, Dickens not only saw fit to re-introduce Pickwick, he also began to recognise the mutually advantageous dynamic of antithesis, and began to engage

⁷⁸ Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 143.

⁷⁹ Mary L. Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street: The Print Culture of a Victorian Street* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), p. 42.

⁸⁰ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, p. 251.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Anne Humphrys, ‘G. W. M. Reynolds: Popular Literature & Popular Politics’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 16 (1983), 79-88 (p. 86).

in what would eventually become, by the 1850s, a ‘war of words’ with Reynolds.⁸³

I would argue that Dickens’s obscure reference to Reynolds in *Master Humphrey’s Clock* was an early example of him testing the waters of a more cut-and-thrust, reciprocal dynamic with a rival who duly responded with his Pickwickian tales in *The Teetotaler* and *Master Timothy’s Bookcase*. This interpretation, although reinforcing the commonly held view that Reynolds looked to boost his commercial appeal by borrowing from Dickens, also suggests a more nuanced, and largely unrecognised degree of reciprocity between the two authors. It also marks the beginning of a shift in their dynamic as plagiariser and originator. According to this interpretation, Dickens’s reference to Cervantes deliberately re-opened the door for Reynolds and invited the development of a rivalry still in its infancy.⁸⁴ Viewed from this angle, Dickens’s move was contrived, colouring his animosity towards Reynolds with a tinge of the artificial, since the cultivation or construction of their animosity meant both remained relevant in the public eye. This more nuanced and shifting dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds rejects the notion of their relationship as simply one between an originator and a plagiariser. As future chapters will explore, over the course of the 1840s, and especially into the 1850s, stronger evidence exists to offer a corrective to this reductive stance on their rivalry.

This section has sought to highlight that, beneath the ongoing feud over plagiarism between the two authors, a more complex relationship was developing. The analysis ascribes to *Master Humphrey’s Clock* a greater significance than has commonly been attributed to a text often defined by its commercial failings, since it reveals Dickens’s burgeoning pre-occupation with Reynolds, whose shadowy presence as a potential legitimate rival would develop in the coming years into a much more substantial threat. By 1842, the success of *Pickwick Abroad* and the ensuing texts drawn from Dickens’s work had already ‘ensured a measure of

⁸³ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 45.

⁸⁴ According to this interpretation, Cervantes’s passive aggressive comments, in which he implores that ‘we should not add to the sufferings of the afflicted’ since this ‘gentleman’s case must be lamentable’, read as a challenge to Reynolds. It was as if Dickens was trying to goad him into a response, comparing him to the cowardly Avellaneda, who made his guilty condition apparent by ‘his not daring to appear in open day: concealing his name and his country, as if some treason, or other crime, laid upon his conscience’. Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, p. 252.

crossover in the readerships' of the authors.⁸⁵ Through these years, I argue, Dickens also began to see the merit in such a crossover, and looked to cultivate an unofficial, or even tacit dynamic with Reynolds in which a type of call and response process emerged. Arguably, the provoking of such a response was deployed as a means to validate the popularity in his own fiction artificially, making it appear more commercially appealing than sales suggested.

My argument now moves away from the issue of plagiarism, which existed as a continuing point of tension between the two, and begins to examine how Dickens's fiction, published between 1837 and 1844, can be aligned with Reynolds's radical and even revolutionary politics. It has now been recognised, most recently by Mary Shannon's scholarship, that the rivalry between the two 'emerged precisely because Reynolds and Dickens were *not* on "distinct trajectories"',⁸⁶ and their conflict became 'a kind of territorial battle for a space within nineteenth-century print culture. However, for this clash to take place they both had to presuppose that there was such a territory over which to fight. Their war of words produced the very space over which they fought'.⁸⁷ Although concerned with the exchanges between the two in the 1850s, Shannon's analysis is crucial to the broader objectives of this thesis, as it marks a departure from previous scholarship in which Reynolds was viewed primarily as a less successful imitator of Dickens. Shannon instead more readily accepts the natural simpatico between them that may arguably have flourished had they not entered into an originator and plagiarist dynamic early in their careers. Of course, it was the strength of their commonalities that made Dickens such an ideal conduit for the popularisation of Reynolds's own fiction, a factor that should be borne in mind as my analysis progresses into an examination of their imbricating political inclinations.

⁸⁵ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 42.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 46.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 45.

2.3 The ‘shared ideals’ of radical politics

Much like *Pickwick Abroad* before it, *Robert Macaire* contains evidence of Reynolds’s burgeoning radicalism, particularly his desire to further the Republican cause. And, much like the vignettes in *Pickwick Abroad* which detail Parisian landmarks, *Robert Macaire* rarely misses an opportunity to celebrate French revolutionary activity, often attaching the locale to historic events: ‘the palace which has seen detestable tyrants exiled by glorious revolutions [...] the Palace of the Institute—that seat of learning; and the Chamber of Deputies—now displaced by the National Assembly of the Republic!'⁸⁸ There is also a continuation of Reynolds’s efforts in *Pickwick Abroad* to champion France over England. The action of the novel is divided between London and Paris and Reynolds is keen to press Paris as a city of progress, as demonstrated by a passage which shifts from the grandeur of the Palace, beyond Notre Dame to the morgue. In his usual melodramatic mode, Reynolds contrasts descriptions of the more luxuriant aspects of the city with the sinister underworld, the darker reflection of the glossy splendour. The morbid reputation of the Pont Neuf at night, for example, would ordinarily provide the perfect juxtaposition between the vibrancy of Palace life by day, and the desperate murder and suicide associated with the bridge by night. Instead, Reynolds merely comments that ‘instances of assassination upon this bridge are, however, now rare: and the bad fame of the Pont Neuf is rather borrowed from the deeds of the past than from the events of the present’.⁸⁹ The straggling figures occupying the bridge at night, rather than waiting for the shroud of darkness to commence their criminal activities, are simply ‘glad to retire early to their beds, in order that they may rise early in the morning’.⁹⁰

There is of course a Parisian underworld, and a thriving subculture which exists beneath the grand veneer, but Reynolds imbues this world with a revolutionary energy rooted in almost dogmatic principles. This is evident when Macaire visits a tavern, discreetly hidden down an obscure lane and admissible only to the initiated, where he is welcomed (somewhat ironically, given his disdain for the monarchy) as ‘a king and

⁸⁸ George. W. M. Reynolds, *Robert Macaire; Or, the French Bandit in England* (London : John Dicks), p. 50.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

patron'.⁹¹ Ostensibly a 'gang of thieves and desperadoes',⁹² Reynolds instead describes the gathering as a society and a club, as Macaire chairs a meeting of sorts wherein the 'principles of universal equilibrium' are discussed in relation to his recent activity in defrauding some English gentlemen.⁹³ It is the second occasion in the novel wherein Macaire expounds a philosophy or maxim by which he conducts his activities. The first occurs in the opening chapter after Macaire spares the life of his victim during a highway robbery, stating that he likes 'to be economical of life' and 'good people are precious'.⁹⁴ Now, in the tavern, Macaire's philosophy is further outlined in a Robin Hood type of chicanery, only robbing those who can spare the money, before then offering his contribution to the common lot of the group gathered therein. The crime committed is underpinned by principles 'which must never be forgotten' and are rooted in 'Republican opinions',⁹⁵ sparing Macaire from any straight accusations of avarice or selfishness and endowing him with a sort of nobility that conflicts with his behaviour in general. It is a confusion or ambiguity that is deepened by Reynolds referring at times to Macaire as our 'hero', while at other moments he is unequivocally villainous.

The novel reads as a forerunner to *The Mysteries of London*, in which Reynolds's Republican politics become increasingly explicit, the clearest exponent of which is the peripheral figure of Thomas Armstrong. An imprisoned Republican revolutionary, Armstrong assumes an oracle-like role, steering Richard Markham on his path to political enlightenment, culminating in his heroic liberation of an Italian state, Castelcicala, from the despotic rule of a tyrant King. Reynolds is careful to avoid a fairy-tale-esque ending, as Richard quickly relinquishes his awarded title to its rightful recipient, while the wealth he inherits from Armstrong is qualified, earmarked for benevolent purposes and guaranteed by the integrity of Richard's character in an assurance that echoes Macaire's 'principles of equilibrium': 'the larger your resources [...] the wider will be the sphere of your benevolence'.⁹⁶ The conflation of Reynolds and the Republican

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 51.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 51.

⁹⁶ George W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, (Virginia: Valancourt Books, 2015), p. 769.

Armstrong, whose principles guide Richard Markham and underpin the entire narrative, was clearly intended. In fact, in 1848 Reynolds experienced something akin to Richard's ascendance to the public political stage, after he emerged from the literary sphere to assume a role as Chartist leader and champion of the working-class, just as Armstrong and Richard are revealed as champions of the people.

Despite its troubling moral ambiguity at times, *Robert Macaire* demonstrates a progression from *Pickwick Abroad* towards what would become Reynolds's unique blend of radical gothic, coupled with his salacious and licentious approach to violence, sexual mores and vice of all manner. While these qualities bolstered his commercial appeal, crucially, his politics were developed in tandem. It was a political platform Reynolds was increasingly comfortable with, contrasting starkly with Dickens's grappling with his own political instincts and his desire to avoid the reputation Reynolds was quickly acquiring. Despite the differences in the manner of their development, it is my contention that a similar radical political energy was present and building in both authors' fiction through the early 1840s.

Dickens's struggles over the political currency of his writing pre-date his connection with Reynolds, arguably stemming from his first publication, *Sketches by Boz* in 1836. In the eight years between 1836 and 1844 Dickens was at his most prolific as a writer of fiction, producing six novels, two Christmas stories and three collections of short stories (including *Sketches*). Critical commentaries on these years have continued to debate Dickens's fluctuating political tone. Sally Ledger, for example, neatly summarises the overarching shift on the topic of Dickens's politics, observing that the perception of Dickens as a

radical political writer on the side of the poor and the dispossessed was blazingly clear to his contemporaries and to many critics in the first half of the twentieth century. Most subsequent critics, though, have followed Humphry House's 1941 evaluation of Dickens as an essentially middle-class writer committed to middle-class values.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Sally Ledger, 'From Queen Caroline to Lady Dedlock: Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32 (2004), 575-600, (p. 576).

This is well-trodden critical ground, and while my analysis engages to some extent with the debate, my intention in this section is to progress, in a roughly chronological manner, through Dickens's early fictions, highlighting those instances where a radical political energy was present and illustrating the similarities these examples share with the tone of Reynolds's fiction of the same period.

Dickens's biographer and confidante, John Forster, frequently attempted to downplay any instances of overt politicisation in Dickens's writing. For example, when Dickens pre-empted a political explosion in America on the issue of slavery, triggered by an event in New Orleans related to him by his friend Macready in 1844, in which a man lay 'under the sentence of death' because he 'did not deliver up a captive slave to the torture', Dickens responded:

The largest gun in that country has not yet burst—but it will [...]. I declare I never go into what is called "society", that I am not aweary of it, despise it, hate it, and reject it. The more I see of its extraordinary conceit, and its stupendous ignorance [...] the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when, being incapable of reforming itself, it will have to submit to be reformed by others off the face of the earth.⁹⁸

Clearly for Dickens, the current system of government in America was desperately inhumane and the seamless conflation of society and slavery, he felt, was not exactly distinct from conditions in Britain: 'Heaven help us too, from explosions nearer home!'⁹⁹ Forster described this kind of exasperation as episodic: 'Thus we see that the old radical leanings were again rather strong in him at present, and I may add that he had found occasional recent vent for them by writing in the *Morning Chronicle*'.¹⁰⁰ Dickens's articles for the *Morning Chronicle* certainly were full of a 'wrath and invective' that was supposedly 'quite

⁹⁸ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), IV, p. 74.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2011), p. 295.

out of character for ‘Boz’.¹⁰¹ As John Drew remarks, it seems for Forster as though Dickens’s ‘political views were a kind of chronic disease that broke out periodically’,¹⁰² and, having given vent, Dickens would revert to his naturally cosy or bourgeois state. It is difficult to reconcile these ‘occasional’ outbursts of radicalism with the apolitical persona Dickens cultivated as ‘Boz’. Indeed, the example relating to slavery in America is taken from a letter Dickens wrote in 1844. Although concerned primarily with the fiction produced through these years, Dickens’s letters prove a valuable resource in divining his evolving political views. As Graham Storey observes: ‘the partitions between his art and his life, as rendered in his more committed letters, are often surprisingly thin’.¹⁰³ By ‘committed letters’, one can presume Storey refers to the correspondence in which Dickens addressed a topical political issue, as opposed to those in which he merely touches base with acquaintances. For the purpose of my argument, a significant corollary of this observation is the ‘dominant impression’ which prevails from Dickens’s letters; namely that of a sense of ‘energy uncontained, boiling over’.¹⁰⁴ The simmering fury evident in Dickens’s letters, running in parallel with his apparently more reactionary fiction, is, I argue, problematic to Forster’s attempts to downplay Dickens’s supposedly sporadic radical outbursts.

This simmering political radicalism in the early 1840s was in fact present from the outset in Dickens’s first publication, *Sketches by Boz*. In spite of their superficial apolitical tone, *Sketches* have been shown by critics John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson to have undergone a process of revision, with each new edition seeing Dickens suppressing or effacing any residual political or profane references as his reputation shifted towards middle-class respectability. Such efforts to sanitize his previous work were resulting, as Robert Patten argues, in Dickens’s increasing desire to break away from ‘Boz’ and establish a new authorial identity less restricted by expectations of his apolitical reputation.¹⁰⁵ What Butt’s and Tillotson’s study demonstrates, though, is that some radical sentiment was present at an early stage, since Dickens saw fit to

¹⁰¹ John M. L. Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 58.

¹⁰² Drew, p. 59.

¹⁰³ Graham Storey, ‘Dickens in his Letters: The Regress of a Radical’, in *Dickens and Other Victorians: Essays in Honour of Philip Collins*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1988), pp. 65-76 (p. 66).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Patten writes that Dickens tried to render ‘Boz’ ‘a past authorial self’. Robert L. Patten, *Charles Dickens and ‘Boz’: The Birth of the Industrial-Age Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 326.

continually amend the more contentious passages. From here it is possible, I argue, to develop a (somewhat crude) through-line to *The Chimes* in 1844. This early point of origin suggests that, far from being a set of episodic outbursts, Dickens's radicalism had been consciously measured, and at times contained, from the outset of his career.

Writing as 'Boz' helped Dickens to avoid, as Forster described it, the familiarity of slang while the *Sketches* still painted things 'literally as they are'.¹⁰⁶ The pseudonym and attached personae allowed Dickens to remain an impartial observer, once removed and therefore better able to capture 'truthful observation'.¹⁰⁷ Dickens, however, as proven by the subsequent prefaces to each new edition, sought to distance his later fiction from the *Sketches*. By 1850 he even denigrated the body of work commended for its 'startling fidelity',¹⁰⁸ describing the *Sketches* as 'extremely crude and ill-considered [...] written when I was a very young man; and sent into the world with all their imperfections (a good many) on their heads'.¹⁰⁹ What concerned Butt and Tillotson was the critical neglect, not only of 'the sheer merit of the *Sketches*', but also the 'care which Dickens took in revising them'.¹¹⁰ My argument supports Butt and Tillotson's view that *Sketches* remains significant as a means of demonstrating Dickens as caught between an apolitical 'family' voice and his natural political inclinations which conveyed a desire to rail against the political and social injustices of his day.

The conflict between the apolitical and the vehemently political in Dickens's early writing is illustrated by comparing 'A Parliamentary Sketch', published in December 1836, with a pamphlet entitled 'Sunday Under Three Heads', published in the same year. 'A Parliamentary Sketch' opens with Dickens immediately seeking to reassure readers that the title is somewhat misleading: 'We hope', he explains, that 'our readers will not be alarmed at this rather ominous title. We assure them that we are not about to become political,

¹⁰⁶ John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, *Dickens at Work* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1957), p. 38.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ 'Unsigned Review of *Sketches by Boz*' *Metropolitan Magazine*, May 1836 - May 1837, rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 30.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Dickens, *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers*, 1833-39, ed. by Michael Slater, 4 vols (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), I, p. xli.

¹¹⁰ Butt and Tillotson, p. 35.

neither have we the slightest intention of being more prosy than usual – if we can help it'.¹¹¹ The phrases 'hope' and 'if we can help it' betray a sense of Dickens as desperate to let loose his politics, but nonetheless the article remains politically tepid. In 'Sunday Under Three Heads', however, Dickens takes Sir Andrew Agnew to task over his renewed attempt to pass a Bill for the 'Better Observance of Sunday'. The pamphlet draws clear dividing lines between an idle aristocratic class unable to relate to, or sympathise with, the toils of the working classes in a manner that distinguishes it from his other sketches, even those with ostensibly political titles. Dickens is scathing of Agnew's 'wilful blindness' to the plight of the poor, whose only day of leisure is being threatened by a 'bill of blunders' that is 'directed exclusively, and without the exception of one solitary instance, against the amusements and recreations of the poor'.¹¹² Dickens's tone is irreverent as he claims that it is 'high time to speak of Agnew and his legislation, as they appear to deserve, without that gloss of politeness, which is all very well in an ordinary case, but rather out of place when the liberties and comforts of a whole people are at stake'.¹¹³ The phrase 'gloss of politeness' here again suggests that Dickens's anger lay simmering below the surface of his public politeness.

The stark contrast in tone between this radical pamphlet and the apolitical objectives of 'A Parliamentary Sketch' is best exemplified by Dickens's strong allegiance to the working classes in the former. Contemptuous of the ignorance of the patrician classes as they seek to amend the laws and practices impacting on the lower orders of society, Dickens doubts that 'the pampered aristocrat, whose life is one continued round of licentious pleasures and sensual gratifications [...] can possibly form an adequate notion of what Sunday really is, to those whose lives are spent in sedentary or laborious occupations, and who are accustomed to look forward to it through their whole existence, as their only day of rest from toil, and innocent enjoyment'.¹¹⁴ Revealingly, the terms 'pampered', 'licentious', as well as the reference to their

¹¹¹ 'A Parliamentary Sketch', in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers*, 1833-39, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), pp. 151-161 (p. 152).

¹¹² 'Sunday Under Three Heads', in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers*, 1833-39, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), pp. 475-499 (p. 486).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 477-478.

perpetual ‘sensual gratifications’, paints this idle class in a state of debauchery, rather befitting of Reynolds’s idiolect.

In the *Mysteries of London* Reynolds depicts aristocratic self-interest in a similar manner. In a chapter entitled ‘The Club-House’, Reynolds describes George Montague Greenwood amongst his influential peers, each ‘festooned’ in gold chains, clad in the ‘most recent Parisian fashion’ and discussing developments in the political world.¹¹⁵ The proposition of a new Game Bill is put forth and the men unanimously begin to lobby for harsher penalties for those caught poaching on private land. Colonel Cholmondeley supposes ‘a murderer or a highwayman to be an estimable character in comparison with a poacher’.¹¹⁶ Lord Dunstable concurs, stating: ‘A murderer kills his victim—a highwaymen robs a person; and the thing is done. The individuals murdered or plundered alone suffer. But a poacher deprives hundreds of noblemen and gentlemen of their legitimate sport: he preys upon the aristocracy, as it were’.¹¹⁷ The irony is unmissable here as an out of touch aristocrat believes he is the victim of a working-class assault on his rights. The stringency of the current laws are then discussed, and a new entirely farcical bill is proposed with Lord Dunstable advocating, for example, ‘transportation for life to shoot game without a license, and transportation for fifteen years for looking at a bird or a hare with an unlawful purpose’.¹¹⁸ The penalties are justified according to the Marquis of Holmesford, because the apparent motivation for the ‘millions, as they call themselves’, for poaching on aristocratic land, is because ‘they’re jealous [...]—because we have carriages and horses, and they have not’.¹¹⁹ As Anne Humpherys remarks, for Reynolds, the exploitation of the working classes was primarily and consistently the fault of an oligarchic aristocracy that was ‘selfish, hedonistic, irresponsible and arbitrary in its use of power’.¹²⁰ These descriptions, contrasting with scenes of degradation among the lower orders, are the blunt instruments by which Reynolds satirises the social

¹¹⁵ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 288.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 299.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Anne Humpherys and Louis James, ‘An introduction to G. W. M. Reynolds’s “Encyclopedia of Tales”’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 123-133 (p. 127).

blindness of the privileged classes. Such examples signal how Reynolds and Dickens (in ‘Sunday Under Three Heads’) were writing in the same climate and with similar political sensitivities, both finding an affinity in a political rhetoric that contrasted the conditions of the rich and the poor, and identifying the former as the root cause of immorality and ignorance.

Where Reynolds would have disapproved, though, was of Dickens’s use of yet another pseudonym, which effectively distanced ‘Boz’ from any political furore that the pamphlet might create. ‘Sunday Under Three Heads’ is a cutting political polemic but it is penned under the name Timothy Sparks, not ‘Boz’, thus creating an additional buffer for Dickens. Much like the impression created by his letters, the radical political energy is ‘boiling over’ in this pamphlet, as Dickens reprimands the aristocracy in a manner reminiscent of Reynolds’s unencumbered treatment of the privileged classes.¹²¹ Dickens, though, was clearly reluctant for this stance to be associated with the apolitical ‘Boz’. It proved to be a ploy he would continue to fall back on throughout the early 1840s. When negotiating with the new editor of the *Morning Chronicle* in 1844, who ‘wished to recruit Dickens at any price’, mainly for his opinions on ‘the movement for repeal of the Corn Laws’,¹²² Dickens offered to contribute to the paper only under the condition that he maintained the freedom to write ‘under any signature I chose’.¹²³ By 1844, then, despite penning some political pieces with radical sympathies and expressing an evidently staunch set of beliefs on the disparate conditions of the social classes, Dickens was clearly anxious about the attachment of his name to any overtly political issues or causes. The caution inherent in the use of pseudonym had the effect of distancing him from Reynolds, whereas his radical politics drew him closer.

A certain ambiguity regarding Dickens’s political identity was evident from his very first publication. He

¹²¹ Indeed, as John Drew makes apparent, the first readers of ‘Sunday Under Three Heads’ ‘would hardly have hesitated in setting “Timothy Sparks” down as an ultra-Radical and Chartist-in-the-making’. Drew, p. 34.

¹²² Drew, p. 59.

¹²³ Ibid.

at once felt compelled to address political injustice, yet was aware, as early as 1837, that his name was being ‘established as a popular ‘family’ author’.¹²⁴ According to this ‘keener sense of his audience and of his responsibilities towards it; he was rising socially, and possibly especially sensitive to imputations of vulgarity’.¹²⁵ For Butt and Tillotson this explains why, with each new edition of the *Sketches*, Dickens performs a ‘modification of the journalistic manner of the original sketches’, whereby the ‘glare of the propagandist’ is substituted by ‘the bland smile of the periodical essayist’.¹²⁶ With each amendment Dickens was regressing to a more respectable, sanitised political style in order to maintain his appeal to the middle classes.

Despite this evidence of Dickens’s muted, or managed, radical urges, critics such as Amanpal Garcha have made a compelling case for the overall reactionary tone of *Sketches* by placing them within the context of the 1832 Reform Bill. Garcha observes how *Sketches* ‘responds not just to the urban phenomena Dickens encountered during his life in London but, more specifically, to one issue that lay at the centre of both the press’s growth and Reform: the relatively new notion that England was, first and foremost, a nation not of “rich” and “poor” but of a commercially oriented, rising “middle class”’.¹²⁷ For Garcha, *Sketches* is characterised by Dickens’s use of physical mobility as indicative of class distinction. The middle classes are dynamic while the lower classes are ‘unable to move, adapt, and redefine themselves’.¹²⁸ This contrast marks the working classes as ‘the middle-class characters’ other’.¹²⁹

Christopher Herbert concurs with Garcha’s analysis, describing the urban poor as comprising an ‘anticulture’ according to their lack of mobility. Inhabiting a space separate from the middle classes, the existence of the urban poor is described as a ‘crazily unstructured state which value and meaning have

¹²⁴ Butt and Tillotson, p. 57.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 46.

¹²⁷ Amanpal Garcha, *From Sketch to Novel: The Development of Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 114.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, pp. 114-115.

deserted'.¹³⁰ This constructed 'otherness' of the urban poor served Dickens and his middle-class readers by allowing them 'to imagine themselves in a wholly different relationship with capitalism, in which they reap the empowering benefits of modern dynamism without suffering from the degeneration, alienation, and debility evident in lower-class bodies'.¹³¹ For Garcha, Dickens's efforts distinguish him from authors like 'Sala and Baudelaire, who wished to some extent to shock middle-class readers'.¹³² Instead, 'Dickens worked to some extent to comfort them'.¹³³ This presents a fascinating contrast with Reynolds's endowing of the working classes with an energy and industry compared with the stagnation of the sedentary upper orders, as was examined in *Pickwick Abroad*.

While Garcha's and Herbert's arguments are compelling, they fail to explain the evident tension that exists between Dickens's efforts, under the pen name 'Boz', to 'comfort' the middle classes, and his radical sentiments expounded as Timothy Sparks in 'Sunday Under Three Heads', or indeed in *The Chimes* in 1844 (which will be discussed shortly), in which he voices in no uncertain terms his indignation at the behaviour of the governing classes. His omission of working-class agency, according to Garcha, renders the characters of the lower classes in *Sketches* as 'nonthreatening', relative to 'the Chartist agitators who had thrust themselves recently into the upper classes' consciousness'.¹³⁴ Again, this conflicts with Dickens's voice in 'Sunday Under Three Heads', which signals that the point of inaction and politeness had given way to anger as the 'liberties [...] of a whole people are at stake'. Likewise, it fails to explain Dickens's evident exasperation in his letter to Forster, in which he bemoans the current state of affairs and appears to hint at a more wholesale, even destructive, type of reform: 'the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when, being incapable of reforming itself, it will have to submit to be reformed by others off the face of the earth'.

¹³⁰ Christopher Herbert, *Culture and Anomie: Ethnographic Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) p. 209.

¹³¹ Garcha, p. 116.

¹³² Ibid, p. 120.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 130.

Dickens successfully trod a rather precarious line through these years, since the inconsistencies in his political writing did not diminish his popularity. As well as masking his political inclinations, Dickens also maintained an ulterior motive when writing as Boz, since the ‘adoption of Boz’s *flaneur* persona’ helped him ‘to hide his alienated status as a paid worker and a “commodity” in the marketplace under the guise of relaxed bohemianism’.¹³⁵ Dickens’s political ambiguity and ‘Boz’s’ hidden status would have frustrated Reynolds, whose own politics were increasingly clear, refined with each novel to reflect his staunch Republicanism, and boldly printed with his own name atop the publication. Certainly, as suggested in chapter one, Reynolds disliked ‘Boz’s’ lack of transparency, which allowed him to play to readers on either side of the political balance. This is not to suppose, however, that Reynolds’s political positioning was entirely consistent. As a letter from his fellow Chartist member Thomas Clarke argued during their dispute in 1850, Reynolds had stated in *A Sequel to Don Juan* in 1843, that ‘The Chartists are the worst enemies in existence to the true cause of freedom’.¹³⁶ This was of course five years prior to Reynolds joining the movement,¹³⁷ and while Clarke could not reconcile this type of comment with Reynolds’s later enthusiasm for the Chartist cause, the shifting sands of politics during this period and the propensity of political opinion to develop over time should go some way to mitigating against any blanket accusations of hypocrisy regarding the sincerity of his commitment to the cause. Such examples, therefore, serve as reminders that neither Dickens nor Reynolds had fixed or entirely consistent political identities, just as politics was in a constant state of flux.

For Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby* marks the departure from the purely picaresque of *Pickwick Papers* and the continuation of the episodic attacks on specific social abuses described in *Oliver Twist*, the latter of which famously provoked Prime Minister Lord Melbourne to comment on its ‘low debasing style’,¹³⁸ a

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 138.

¹³⁶ Thomas Clark, *A Letter Addressed to G. W. M. Reynolds, reviewing his conduct as a professed Chartist, and also explaining who he is and what he is, together with copious extracts from his most indecent writings* (London: T. Clark, 144 High Holborn, 1850), p. 10.

¹³⁷ It is worthwhile noting that Reynolds’s ‘explanatory note’ qualifies this rejection of the Chartists with the caveat that the proposal for universal suffrage ought to be preceded by the imperative need ‘to educate the people first’, in order that they understand how to ‘exercise the privilege with justice’. G. W. M. Reynolds, *A Sequel to Don Juan*, (London: John Dicks, 1846), p. 10.

¹³⁸ K. J. Fielding, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction* (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1958), p. 36.

quality which again draws comparisons with Reynolds's writing. The institutions in the cross-hairs in *Nicholas Nickleby* were the Yorkshire schools, fronted by the despotic headmaster of Dotheboys Hall, Wackford Squeers, portrayed 'not as the study of a human being, but 'the representative, pure and simple, of a vile institution'.¹³⁹ While at times the tone of the novel suggests the emergence of a broader, more focussed criticism of society, *Nicholas Nickleby* also fits the first classification described by T. A. Jackson's tripartite model of Dickens's fiction as broadly defined by a sense of 'youthful optimism'.¹⁴⁰ K. J. Fielding's analysis largely concurs, summarising *Nicholas Nickleby* in much the same mould as (the succeeding) *Oliver Twist* and the *Old Curiosity Shop* according to its 'comic treatments of grim seriousness', albeit it with a slightly more 'serious purpose in his comedy'.¹⁴¹ While a few of Dickens's early novels, including *Nicholas Nickleby*, do address institutional abuses, they are, owing to their episodic nature and recourse to humour, more vulnerable to Orwell's criticism of Dickens's writing in general, which proposed that 'in reality his target is not so much society as 'human nature''.¹⁴² Orwell deemed Dickens's criticism of society to be 'almost exclusively moral', rooted entirely in the individual, and ultimately undermined by any lack of a 'clear sign that he wants the existing order to be overthrown, or that he believes it would make very much difference if it *were* overthrown'.¹⁴³

It is my view, however, that clear evidence exists of an emerging radical political energy in Dickens's early fiction. Such passages are often fairly innocuous and commonly overshadowed by scenes of broader satire, which have the propensity to undercut any serious comment on the political process. In *Nicholas Nickleby*, for example, an ostensibly political scene incorporated into the early chapters has Nicholas encounter the self-serving M.P. Mr Gregsbury. Extremely adept and well-versed in empty rhetoric, which he deploys in order to subdue and deflect the interrogations of the press who have gathered in his office with the vain hopes of holding the recently re-elected M.P. to account, Mr Gregsbury embodies Dickens's early treatment

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ Jackson, p. 8; Jackson's tripartite model is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

¹⁴¹ Fielding, p. 40.

¹⁴² George Orwell, 'Charles Dickens', in *Critical Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1846), 7-56 (p. 10).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

of the political sphere in a manner that recalls his earlier ‘Parliamentary Sketch’. Although the ire of the press has been provoked by Mr Gregsby’s hypocrisy, the accusations levelled by the newspaper men are suitably trivial and are thus casually swatted away by Mr Gregsby, courtesy of a series of meaningless blandishments on how his ‘conduct has been, and ever will be, regulated by a sincere regard for the true and real interests of this great and happy country’.¹⁴⁴ The press having been dismissed, Nicholas then enquires after the job advertised as secretary to the M. P. and is left aghast as Mr Gregsby proceeds to reel off his would-be-secretarial duties, which in effect require him to perform the entire job of M.P., whose only remaining function would be to appear as the public face of any successes achieved. Mr Gregsby is self-entitled, self-interested, and egotistical as well as work-shy. He thus captures Dickens’s opinions of the elite political class and of the political process as a whole, and subsequently disappears from the novel as quickly as he arrived, endowed with an appropriately ephemeral quality, which has no bearing on the lives of the novel’s main characters.

This passage could be considered as fairly typical of Dickens’s, or ‘Boz’s’ approach to anything political at this stage of his career and is certainly in keeping with the apolitical intentions laid out in *A Parliamentary Sketch* earlier. The scene is glancing and predominantly satirical, rendering it peripheral and inconsequential to the overall novel. However, a noticeable shift is apparent towards the end of the text, when Dickens begins to display a broader vision of society, which reads more like a forerunner to his later fiction in the 1850s. The passage of concern sees Nicholas at his lowest ebb, as he finds himself wandering defeatedly into London, downcast at his prospects and casting his eyes ‘listlessly’ upon the scenes that surround him, pondering on society’s injustices and inequities. This episode breaks from the novel’s previously inward and character-driven focus as Nicholas reflects on how

youth and beauty died, and ugly griping age lived tottering on [...] how, in seeking, not a luxurious and splendid life, but the bare means of a most wretched and inadequate subsistence, there were

¹⁴⁴ *Nicholas Nickleby*, p. 192.

women and children in that one town, divided into classes, numbered and estimated as regularly as the novel families and folks of great degree, and reared from infancy to drive most criminal and dreadful trades – how ignorance was punished and never taught – how gaol-doors gaped, and gallows loomed, for thousands urged towards them by circumstances darkly curtaining their very cradles' heads, and but for which they might have earned their honest bread and lived in peace [...] how much injustice, misery, and wrong, there was, and yet how the world rolled on.¹⁴⁵

Signifying, if not a broadening of Dickens's social perspective, as I have argued that this simmered below the surface from the outset of Dickens's career, but a greater willingness to write it, Nicholas's brooding over the abject condition of society has an expansive and sombre effect on the novel. By setting his struggles alongside the wrongs and ills of the wider world, Nicholas achieves a greater social consciousness and his personal plight becomes symbolic of a society rife with injustice.

The building of a radical political energy is evident in this scene as Nicholas's wider social outlook extends beyond the exposure of specific social abuses and indicates the requirement of a more substantial reform of society, perhaps even of a root-and-branch type. Nicholas's musings indicate a deepening of Dickens's thought process on these issues, or at least a greater willingness to work these into his fiction under his own authorial identity, where previously they may have been hidden behind a pseudonym, as was the radicalism of Timothy Sparks in 1836. The passage also resonates with the tone of Reynolds's fiction. Though Reynolds is often more explicit, and Dickens is arguably more eloquent, the parallels remain clear, as illustrated by this example from *Robert Macaire*:

What, then, is to be done in a world inhabited by people so perverse and obstinate? Why – to act in accordance with their stupid laws, and leave the rich and the poor man in undisputed possession, the one of his wealth, the other of his poverty.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 693.

¹⁴⁶ *Robert Macaire*, p. 20.

Reynolds is quicker to associate any injustice with the faults of the aristocracy, as voiced by a disgruntled cabman, who states: 'That's jist the vay the aristocracy and great folks drives and wollops, and upsets the poor devils that work for 'em; and their cruelty towards the millions, makes many of us cruel in return. That's a fact'.¹⁴⁷ While less explicit than Reynolds's sardonic and rhetorical style, in *Nicholas Nickleby* Dickens expresses the same sentiment through the rakish and lecherous behaviour of the aristocratic Sir Mulberry Hawk and his understudy Lord Frederick Verisopht, whose cruel designs to humiliate Kate Nickleby, and ultimately each other, reflect the callousness of a debauched patrician class.¹⁴⁸ Both examples show Dickens and Reynolds possessing a shared intention of exposing injustice and inequity, with the added implication that wide-scale reform is necessary.

Reynolds would return to this theme of society as upside down or inside out on numerous occasions, rewarding criminal behaviour and punishing the virtuous. In *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, Reynolds takes aim at the fortunes of the speculators in the city and the corrupt mechanisms by which they generate their wealth. Being propositioned by a city-man (fittingly named Joseph Swindlehem) seeking investment for his new bank, which generates its profits via a fraudulent and exploitative use of foreign colonies, the speculator brazenly explains the ironies of the system to Pickwick:

If a poor devil fails for a hundred pounds and unfortunately loses monies entrusted to him by friends, he must apply to the Insolvents' Court, and gets remanded to Prison for two years for fraud. His character is blasted, and his name can never afterwards divest itself of the stigma attached to it. But if a man fails for a million, half of which, or the whole, is money entrusted to him by clients or friends to lay out for them to the best advantage, he goes boldly forward to the bankruptcy Court, demands

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 80.

¹⁴⁸ Chapter 26 captures the two in a sorry state of idleness after the 'gentlemanly frolics' of the previous night. In their listless state they conceive their abhorrent plan to pursue Kate and profit from the misfortune of others. *Nicholas Nickleby*, p. 331; Similarly, Dickens's later revolutionary novel *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) touches upon this same theme of aristocratic indifference, as the Marquis callously tosses a coin into the huddled masses as compensation after his coach knocks over a child in the street.

its protection, never goes to prison at all, is allowed an income for six weeks, obtains a general release from all his debts, and holds up his head higher than ever when it is all over.¹⁴⁹

Such inequities are subsequently explored in Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* as well as in Dickens's later fictions, most notably in *Little Dorrit*, with Mr Merdle's proto-Ponzi scheme fronting as an investment bank and the self-defeating logic propping up the Marshalsea debtors' prison.

Following Nicholas's sombre reflections, Dickens explains that his protagonist is still young and 'youth is not prone to contemplate the darkest side of a picture it can shift at will'.¹⁵⁰ Just as Nicholas's youth permits this swift and hopeful turn, so too Dickens, still only a young man himself, is able to turn events to the positive. This marks the lowest point in the novel, the narrative thereafter taking an upward turn with good ultimately triumphing over evil, restoring parity to some degree, at least for Nicholas. This instance of renewed hope quashing pessimism as soon as it arises is typical of the swift reversion to the type of optimism T. A. Jackson claims defines Dickens' early fiction. While this often serves to dilute the radical political elements in Dickens's early novels, and by extension obscure the similarity of political views held by himself and Reynolds, a recent study by Gregory Vargo reminds us that *Nicholas Nickleby* was in fact re-run 'in a context that might surprise contemporary critics',¹⁵¹ the context being a re-print by the radical arm of the Chartist Press, the *Northern Star*, who 'reviewed and republished portions of the novel in the spring of 1838, and the winter of 1844-45'.¹⁵² Vargo explains that this context 'has remained largely unknown, in part because literary historians have too readily accepted middle-class writers' descriptions of the gulf separating "the two nations of rich and poor", assuming that the cultural world of the Victorian middle class remained isolated from working-class print culture'.¹⁵³ The blurring of this boundary, or of what Vargo terms 'the transaction between the working-class radical press and reforming novelists', was

¹⁴⁹ *Master Timothy's Bookcase*, p. 508.

¹⁵⁰ *Nicholas Nickleby*, p. 693.

¹⁵¹ Gregory Vargo, *An Underground History of Early Victorian Fiction: Chartism, Radical Print Culture, and the Social Problem Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 1.

¹⁵² Vargo, p. 1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

‘complex and contradictory, characterized by violent denunciations and significant borrowings’.¹⁵⁴ That both authors operated within this fluid environment goes some way towards explaining the difficulties in understanding the inconsistencies in both Dickens’s and Reynolds’s political writings, as each would navigate in the market to match their own objectives. Despite this, both authors clearly held similar political views, which, as my analysis now turns to, extended to the theme of revolution.

2.4 Revolutionary politics in *Barnaby Rudge*

Alongside a *Tale of Two Cities*, *Barnaby Rudge* was one of only two historical novels written by Dickens. The decision to pursue an historical novel was criticised by William O. Aydelotte for its conservative or reactionary use of a historical remove.¹⁵⁵ For Aydelotte, Dickens, like many novelists of the 1840s, ‘looked to the past instead of the future [...] favoured a system of class distinctions’ and ‘showed little sympathy for democracy’.¹⁵⁶ Aydelotte’s analysis overlooks the obvious analogy Dickens was drawing between the Gordon Riots of 1780 and the Chartist agitation, which had been rumbling since the 1830s. In this sense, the novel is only indirectly about the Gordon Riots, a point acknowledged by Chris Vanden Bossche, who claims that while *Barnaby Rudge* ‘does not depict Chartism, it does represent the past in terms of contemporary parliamentary discourse depicting the competition between the aristocracy and the middle class for the right to govern the nation’.¹⁵⁷ The scenes of riot and social unrest were politically topical and would no doubt have resonated with contemporary readers experiencing widening divides between the classes and the increasing possibility of physical force as an agent of political change.¹⁵⁸ If the novel achieved a contemporaneity it also carried memories of a more recent past: ‘the burning of Newgate appears

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ William O. Aydelotte, ‘The England of Marx and Mill as Reflected in Fiction’, *The Journal of Economic History*, 8 (1848), 42-58.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁵⁷ Chris Vanden Bossche, *Reform Acts: Chartism, Social Agency, and the Victorian Novel, 1832-1867* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 60; Edmund Wilson claims that *Barnaby Rudge* is the most interesting of Dickens’s early novels because he ‘had been planning and reflecting on [it] for a long time before he wrote it’. Moreover, Wilson claims that ‘what is obviously in Dickens’s mind is the Chartist agitation for universal suffrage and working-class representation in Parliament’. Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* (London: Methuen & Co., 1952), p. 16.

¹⁵⁸ On the ‘topicality’ of *Barnaby Rudge*, see Butt and Tillotson’s *Dickens at Work*, p. 82, which lists the numerous political events with which the action of the novel is relevant to, or even analogous with, through the 1830s and ‘40s.

more terrifying than all the attacks upon the Catholic chapels and property in its expression of the lawlessness of the mob; and to the next generation it carried the shadow of a far greater historical event, the fall of the Bastille'.¹⁵⁹ The anarchic energy of the riot scenes were rooted in Dickens's recognition 'that in the popular mind madness, crime, and revolutionary agitations ran into and coloured each other'.¹⁶⁰

Arguably, *Barnaby Rudge* is better understood as a melodrama than as an historical novel. Often 'compared to a tragedy', John Bowen argues that the novel 'is much more akin to melodrama',¹⁶¹ at least according to its propensity towards 'the static and picturesque, to heightened polar emotions and implausible coincidence'.¹⁶² Read as such, the novel can be understood as a natural successor to *Oliver Twist* and as a precursor to *Bleak House*,¹⁶³ the latter in particular similarly depicting society as an organic social body in which class conflicts and ostensibly disparate interests are in fact indissoluble. *Barnaby Rudge* exhibits a preoccupation with the demarcation of space as a reflection of class interest. Stephen Connor explains 'the tendency of city design in the nineteenth century [...] to map out patterns of distinctions between working and living [...] distinctions between urban and rural areas [...] distinctions between the so-called "separate spheres" of male and female'.¹⁶⁴ Any such mappings were 'intensely political' as they increasingly reflected a more 'general concern with health and disease' as well as anxieties over crime.¹⁶⁵ Perversely, it seems, the 'desire for clear distinctions between the different regions of the city' also 'heightened the concern that such distinctions could break down or be blurred'.¹⁶⁶

There are numerous examples in *Barnaby Rudge* where this type of anxiety around the demarcation of space manifests itself in the actions of the characters, as when Sam Tappertit visits Sir John Chester carrying

¹⁵⁹ Butt and Tillotson, p. 78.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 83.

¹⁶¹ John Bowen, *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit* (oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 174.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ It is worthwhile noting that Dickens had conceived of *Barnaby Rudge* at around the same time as *Oliver Twist*. In fact, Dickens had 'held it in his mind since 1836' and 'made a false start on it in the autumn of 1839'. Steven Marcus, *Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p. 170.

¹⁶⁴ Steven Connor, 'Space, Place and the Body of Riot in *Barnaby Rudge*', in *Charles Dickens*, ed. by Steven Connor (London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1996), pp. 211-229. (p. 212).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 213.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 213-214.

with him a lock, which the latter demands be locked outside of the room due to its smelling of oil, ‘thus, bizarrely, as it were, locking out the lock’.¹⁶⁷ Sir John’s excessive fretting is due to Sam having come straight from Newgate, prompting the former to spray a circle of disinfectant around him as if to erect a barrier between his own private sanctuary and the grubby public and criminal world of Newgate. Sir John’s neurotic actions constitute a type of idiosyncratic farce that is later repeated in *Great Expectations* (1860) with Jaggers’s obsessive handwashing and his digging under his fingernails with a penknife. Troubled by the remnants of Newgate on his hands, a consequence of his job as a lawyer, Jaggers’s neurotic routine is a literal attempt to maintain a distinction between what is public and what is private, while figuratively his behaviour represents the attempted absolving of moral responsibility. *Barnaby Rudge* is littered with the realisation of this type of demarcation anxiety over ‘the violation of boundaries, between health and sickness, the rich and the poor, the legitimate and the criminal’.¹⁶⁸ Effectively, Dickens collapses boundaries of all types and demonstrates the futility of protecting private spaces against invasion from the public.

The Maypole Inn is the space that Dickens goes to the greatest length to dramatize the threat of collapsing class boundaries between what is public and what is private. Located ‘at a distance of about twelve miles from London’ with a provenance stretching back to ‘King Henry the Eighth’, the Inn stands impervious to Time,¹⁶⁹ rooted in England’s past and sheltered from the vice of the modern city. The space behind the bar at the Maypole is sacrosanct, a microcosm of the Maypole itself, with none but the obstinate publican John Willet authorised to occupy. Described as a space even ‘the boldest never entered without special invitation – the sanctuary, the mystery, the hallowed ground’,¹⁷⁰ the mob then proceeds to indiscriminately violate this space of secure interiority by razing the Maypole to the ground and leaving Willet stricken and dumbfounded, a tacit witness to the destruction of his private sanctuary, ‘his powers of reason and reflection in a sound and dreamless sleep’.¹⁷¹ The manner and speed in which the rioters enter the bar, suddenly

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 214.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 213.

¹⁶⁹ Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 450.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 454.

‘crammed with men, clubs, sticks, torches, pistols: filled with a deafening noise, oaths, shouts, screams’,¹⁷² reflects Dickens’s propensity to painstakingly and purposefully construct a space for the express purpose of its rapid destruction. The Maypole prefigures a similar attack on Newgate, as the penetration and ‘saturation of the space [becomes] equivalent to the liquidation of boundaries’,¹⁷³ performed in the most violent way imaginable. In this way, *Barnaby Rudge* demonstrates that no space is impervious to the will of the people, and that due deference must be paid to the needs of the lower orders to avoid such violent repercussions.

Interestingly, these anarchic scenes resonate sympathetically with the rioters, even if Dickens ultimately reprimands their actions as irrational and futile; ‘thus, Dickens’s most explicitly political novel of his early period also appears to be his most reactionary one’.¹⁷⁴ This, as we have come to see, is a typically Dickensian position, which although complex in its contradiction, does not efface the radicalism apparent in the novel. In fact, there is too much evidence to suggest that Dickens revelled in the actions of the mob to dismiss the novel as conservative or reactionary only, and *Barnaby Rudge* marked a moment in Dickens’s career where he was keen to express himself politically.¹⁷⁵ Whereas later in his career he would often bemoan the exertions required to complete his writing on time,¹⁷⁶ in 1841 his letters to Forster tell of his invigorated spirits as he penned the novel:

I am warming up very much [...]. Oh! If only I had him, from this time to the end, in monthly numbers [...] I am in great heart and spirits with the story [...]. I have just burnt into Newgate, and am going in the next number to tear the prisoners out by the hair of their heads [...]. I have let all the

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 450.

¹⁷³ Connor, p. 221.

¹⁷⁴ Bowen, p. 178.

¹⁷⁵ This is discussed in relation to Robert Patten’s analysis in chapter one in which Dickens was keen to use *Barnaby Rudge* to distance himself from the apolitical “Boz”.

¹⁷⁶ Dickens ‘complained vociferously about the “crushing” difficulty of space and lack of elbow-room’ when he was penning *Hard Times*, for example. The novel had a ‘dual impetus’, attempting to land a heavy blow against factory conditions and the cold and abstract rule of political economy, but also seeking to rectify the drop in the circulation and profits generated by *Household Words*, hence the abbreviated length of the novel relative to his previous fiction. Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000), p. x.

prisoners out of Newgate, burnt down Lord Mansfield's, and played the very devil [...]. I feel quite smoky when I am at work. I want elbow room terribly.¹⁷⁷

Dickens appeared to be enjoying the destruction he was conjuring with his pen, exclaiming to Forster: 'By Jove, how radical I am getting [...] I wax stronger and stronger in the true principles every day. I don't know whether it's the sea, or no, but so it is'.¹⁷⁸ Dickens, it seems, was rather swept up in the revolutionary fervour he was exploring within the text, inspired, he supposes, by his proximity to the sea.

Dickens, of course, wrote *Barnaby Rudge* whilst overlooking the sea from his house in Broadstairs, Kent. The sea was to become a metaphor of sparing use but real importance for Dickens. Symbolic of forceful and inevitable change, the sea is similarly referred to in *The Chimes* a few years later, and then again in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), two texts which also deal closely with themes of revolution, and which will be discussed shortly. Although not discussed at length here, the sea is also significant as a symbol of change in *Dombey and Son* in 1846, and *David Copperfield* in 1848. Tolstoy once remarked: 'If you sift the world's prose literature, Dickens will remain; sift Dickens, *David Copperfield* will remain; sift *David Copperfield*, the description of the storm at sea will remain'.¹⁷⁹ This particular storm scene was similarly admired by John Ruskin, with Dickens's descriptions of the tempestuous conditions subscribing to Ruskin's own theory in which the 'inspired writer, in full impetuosity of passion, may speak wisely and truly of the waves, by keeping his eyes "fixed firmly on the *pure fact [sic]*" [...]. Most people think of waves as rising and falling. But if they look at the sea carefully, they will perceive that the waves do not rise and fall. They change'.¹⁸⁰ Ruskin appreciated Dickens's descriptions precisely because they refrain from the use of the phrase 'rising and falling' and instead expresses 'the waves as hills and valleys', which simply reflect continual change. This, I argue, is a crucial interpretation of Dickens's metaphoric use of natural forces, which possess an

¹⁷⁷ Forster, p. 134.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 154.

¹⁷⁹ Nanako Konoshima, 'Storm and Sunset: Turnerian Seascapes in David Copperfield', *Dickensian*, 502 (2017), 150-159 (p. 152).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 152-3.

ineluctable sense of transformation. When writing *Barnaby Rudge*, the sea not only becomes synonymous with change and coupled with notions of truth, or ‘pure fact’, but even appears to be associated with revolution. There is a clarity of thought and conviction, expressed through metaphor, indicative of Dickens’s embrace of revolutionary themes and ideas of wholesale change.

It is not the sea, however, that represents the actual force of social action in *Barnaby Rudge*, but fire. Again, typical of Dickens’s self-reflexive doubling, fire is at once a force of destruction and comfort in equal measure.¹⁸¹ It provides the light and warmth for the weary traveller seeking shelter at the Maypole, before ripping irrepressibly through the cosy inn as the rioters descend. Fire is an ambiguous marker; on the one hand a tool of the civilised in its tamed and controlled state, and on the other, a primordial and barbaric force of devastation. It is in keeping with this doubling that Vanden Bossche views Barnaby’s progression from irrationality towards rationality as a process that occurs in direct contradistinction to the regression or degeneration of the mob. For Vanden Bossche, the novel ultimately unites the lower and the middle classes, and at the close of the novel finds Barnaby more adept at moral judgement and therefore resigned to the faults of his actions. In his irrationality and ignorance, Barnaby’s accidental complicity in the riots is understandable, and sympathetically drawn, although still not morally justifiable as it results in needless and unproductive violence. But, while Barnaby grows more rational, the mob acts inversely, rapidly descending into anarchic irrationality. Dickens’s depiction of the frenzied throng suggests that he does not advocate the autonomy of the working classes,¹⁸² since their violence is ultimately self-destructive. The descent from rationality to irrationality begins with the protestors’ call for ‘no popery’, which quickly slips, by way of Hugh’s confusion, into the misheard or misunderstood calls for ‘no property’, before collapsing

¹⁸¹ Although focussed on the aesthetic qualities of his writing as opposed to sociological concerns, John Kucich provides a useful additional dimension to the doubling or paradoxical elements in Dickens’s work, describing the ‘special kind of tension between energy and limits’ in Dickens’s writing. John Kucich, *Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 1; Kucich also produced a later essay, in which he compares the dual modes of rhetoric deployed in Dickens’s writing with a specific focus on *Our Mutual Friend*. The first rhetorical method is ‘workmanlike’, used to ‘carry his story and meaning forward’, while the second consists of ‘language that exuberantly wastes itself, flaunting its freedom from such economical, reductive, and reasonable relation to meaning’. John Kucich, ‘Dickens’s Fantastic Rhetoric: The Semantics of Reality and Unreality in *Our Mutual Friend*’, *Dickens Studies Annual*, 14 (1985), 167-90. (p 168).

¹⁸² Vanden Bossche, p. 66.

completely into the nihilistic mantra, ‘Down with everybody, down with everything!’¹⁸³ For Dickens, the logical and inevitable end to this type of immoderate mob violence is then graphically illustrated by the descriptions of rioters literally being swallowed up amidst the flames of their own protest, as in this vivid example:

There were men who cast their lighted torches in the air, and suffered them to fall upon their heads and faces, blistering the skin with deep unseemly burns. There were men who rushed up to the fire, and paddled in it with their hands as if in water; and others who were restrained by force from plunging in, to gratify their deadly longing. On the skull of one drunken lad [...] who lay upon the ground with a bottle to his mouth, the lead from the roof came streaming down in a shower of liquid fire, white hot; melting his head like wax.¹⁸⁴

The passage is visceral in effect, and interestingly, contains within it two instances of the fire behaving like water: Some men ‘paddled [...] as if in water’ while the drunken lad was showered by a stream of ‘liquid fire’. Despite electing to utilize fire as his principal agent of change, Dickens perhaps still associated this type of social action with the cleansing effect, or transformative power, of water, as in this instance, in which it enacts a literal baptism by fire.

Myron Magnet reads the novel as a cautionary tale, urging moral restraint against ancestral urges, as the fire threatens to sweep away civilization with brutal atavistic force. For Magnet, the lesson of *Barnaby Rudge* is that civilization is won by exercising control; it is the ‘renunciation of aggression’ that ‘makes civilization possible’.¹⁸⁵ Symbolically, the fire, a source of comfort when tamed in the fireplace in the hearth, when fuelled can quickly become uncontrollable and reclaim back to savagery what was once civilised. It is revealing, therefore, that Magnet describes Dickens’s almost carnal enjoyment of the riot

¹⁸³ *Barnaby Rudge*, p. 316.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 462.

¹⁸⁵ Myron Magnet, *Dickens and the Social Order* (Delaware: ISI Books, 2004), p. 93.

scenes in *Barnaby* by adopting a sea metaphor, as natural forces continue to be associated with change: ‘He always loved the power, but clearly in *Barnaby* he was accepting the concomitant responsibility of a pre-eminent public figure. Yes, he can raise the human sea: the point is not to let it—or himself—surge out of control’.¹⁸⁶ Dickens revelled in the prospect of change but always remained inhibited by the potential for unbridled chaos. Carefully selecting the major institutions which the rioters will abolish, Dickens chose bastions of social order represented by the library in Lord Mansfield’s house, which holds years of accumulated wisdom, and Newgate, the holding place for those who threaten civilised order, keeping barbarity at bay. As Harry Stone remarks, ‘the mob [...] can evoke the primitive savage in man’,¹⁸⁷ a factor which positively frightened Dickens because ‘it was anarchic and animalistic. It threatened the very foundations of humanity, of civilized behaviour and civilized intercourse. It also threatened Dickens’s precarious belief in the human and the rational’.¹⁸⁸ Yet, the same mob clearly held equal fascination and even a salacious enjoyment for Dickens, drawing him into the chaos he feared and revealing a telling sympathy for those who must ultimately resort to the mob in order to affect change.

It is interesting to parallel Dickens’s ambiguous sympathy and disdain for the razing of Newgate with examples from Reynolds’s concomitant fiction. A passage from an interpolated tale in *Master Timothy’s Bookcase*, for example, sees Reynolds similarly describe the destruction of the prison:

With what fury had the justly incensed mob formerly attacked that complication of dungeons, and razed the infernal pile to the ground! With what a shout of exultation must an avenging populace have welcomed the downfall of the fortress of despotism, and the incipient gleams of a dawning liberty, that has since become a noon-day sun towards which the eyes of all the earth are turned!¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 66.

¹⁸⁷ Harry Stone, *The Night Side of Dickens: Cannibalism, Passion, Necessity* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994), p. 172.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 173.

¹⁸⁹ *Master Timothy’s Bookcase*, p. 171.

Butt and Tillotson claimed that Dickens's Newgate scene would have been a disconcerting reminder of the falling of the Bastille, hence Dickens's efforts to condemn the rioters even as he indulges in descriptions of their behaviour. By contrast Reynolds's description unequivocally endorses an event he believed proceeded towards a 'dawning liberty', rather than being swallowed up in its own violent actions. Similarly, passages from the climactic scenes of Reynolds's 1839 novel, *Alfred de Rosann; or the Adventures of a French Gentleman*, while resonating strongly with Dickens's descriptions of the riots in *Barnaby Rudge*, with Reynolds appearing to relish the energy of such scenes, also exhibit markedly less ambivalence towards the violence of the revolution which played out in the streets of Paris in 1830:

For three days the combat raged with sanguinary violence. The trees of the Boulevards were cut down to form barricades against the approach of the cavalry regiments which still supported the Bourbon cause; and when the citizens lacked arms and ammunition, they tore up the pavement to hurl at their opponents. From every window was pointed a deadly weapon of some kind: old men, young maidens, infants, and feeble women lent their aid to repel the royalists. Many a widow avenged her slaughtered husband's massacre—many a veteran, with hoary locks and wrinkled brow, laid aside the staff that for years had supported his tottering limbs, and brandished the glittering sword. The tri-coloured banner waved in all directions—cries of "Freedom!" echoed on every side; and the rash monarch repented his audacity when too late.¹⁹⁰

Far from the misunderstood or misinterpreted cause in *Barnaby Rudge*, which saw calls for 'no Popery' morph into the indiscriminate 'Down with everybody, down with everything', in Reynolds's novel the French people of all generations are resolute in their belief in liberty. Moreover, the violence does not end up being self-defeating, as it does in *Barnaby Rudge*. In fact, Reynolds makes sure to guard against such accusations, writing:

¹⁹⁰ G. W. M. Reynolds, *Alfred de Rosann; or the Adventures of a French Gentleman* (London: J. W. Southgate, 164, Strand, 1839), p. 223.

The French fought for liberty and not for gain,—they did not make the principles of a glorious insurrection an excuse for pillage and licentiousness [...]. No robbery, no rape, no misdemeanour of any kind sullied that revolution, nor did it prepare a throne for Robespierre and a Napoleon. It was a glorious sight to see heroes fighting in a righteous cause. Paris had awakened from a profound stupor—the people were wearied of languishing beneath a tyrant's rod—the watchword had been passed round—and thousands came forward to hoist the tri-coloured flag. There was but little indecision after the appearance of that royal mandate, which threatened to reduce a mighty nation to the lowest abyss of slavery. The flame of the revolution broke out in two or three places at the same time.¹⁹¹

For Reynolds, just as for Dickens, fire is the symbol of revolution, yet this ‘flame’ only illuminates the righteous ‘heroes’, where Dickens’s fire carries pejorative and barbaric implications.

Of the first passage from *Alfred de Rosann* cited above, it is interesting to note that Elisabeth Jay felt Reynolds’s language ‘exhibited a certain nervousness about the internecine slaughter occasioned by revolution’.¹⁹² The ‘celebratory passage’, she claims, ‘retreats into a tableau of the aggrieved rather than engaging with the reality of street fighting’.¹⁹³ If this degree of restraint on Reynolds’s part is granted, as Reynolds contemplated the sensitivities of an English readership, his belief in the capacity of a just cause to unify every strata of society reads far more like a paean to revolution than *Barnaby Rudge*:

Hundreds of strangers were in the ranks of the insurgents; inhabitants of distant towns were on the spot to aid the popular cause; and the visage of many a notorious character was recognised by the police in the heat of the battle. The refuse of society—the lowest of the low—the escaped criminal,

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 224.

¹⁹² Elisabeth Jay, *British Writers and Paris 1830:1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 34.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

the undetected malefactor, the lurking thief, the daring adventurer, and the insolent beggar, all forgot their separate avocations, and joined in the general shout of “Liberty! Liberty!”¹⁹⁴

While there is evident contrast between each author’s treatment of revolutionary or insurrectionary events, Dickens’s more complex, and arguably more nuanced positioning on the storming of Newgate and acts of revolt and riots in general is still clearly invigorated by the ideals of revolution. Although Reynolds’s fiction displays a greater willingness to fully and unapologetically embrace the fire of revolutionary activity, the radicalism infused through *Barnaby Rudge* should not be understated. While the novels compared here deal with two very different historical events, both can also be considered to be a reflection of the conditions present in England from 1832 onwards.¹⁹⁵ For Dickens, the Gordon Riots, like the Chartist cause, are presented as ‘an ambiguous set of events’ wherein the ‘riots occur for a number of deeply contingent reasons’.¹⁹⁶ *Barnaby Rudge* is therefore rife with the type of ambiguities common to Dickens’s political writing: ‘On the surface he reprobates Lord George Gordon and the rioters for their fanatical or brutal intolerance; but implicitly he is exploiting to the limit certain legitimate grievances of the people’.¹⁹⁷ This ambiguity has prompted a suitably diverse set of critical interpretations. Vanden Bossch reads the novel as a deterrent against working-class agency, while Anna Faktorovich has drawn conclusions which echo the radically infused readings of Edwin Pugh, G. B. Shaw and T. A. Jackson in the mid-twentieth century. Faktorovich claims: ‘Dickens was a radical from his youth to the end, with a predominant radical, socialist purpose behind his writing, and especially behind his rebellion novels’.¹⁹⁸ *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities* are determined by Faktorovich to be Dickens’s two rebellion novels, designed principally to threaten ‘the monarchy, aristocracy or capitalists’.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ *Alfred de Rosann*, p. 225.

¹⁹⁵ Jay in fact suggests this link between Reynolds’s *Alfred de Rosann* and the Reform Act of 1832. Jay, p. 34.

¹⁹⁶ Bowen, p. 160.

¹⁹⁷ Wilson, p. 17.

¹⁹⁸ Anna Faktorovich, *Rebellion as Genre in the Novels of Scott, Dickens and Stevenson* (London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2013), p. 113.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 16.

Faktorovich's case for *Barnaby Rudge* as an unequivocally radical and socialist text is twofold; firstly, we see 'Dickens siding with rebellion in general, no matter if it is for or against "Popery" [...]. The violence is a mad frenzy, but it is a frenzy that has a just cause as it is perpetrated by poor and desperate people'.²⁰⁰ Faktorovich even disputes Vanden Bossche's assessment of the violence of *Barnaby Rudge* as self-defeating, claiming instead that Dickens intended the rebels to lose, since the 'losses help to make their stories tragic, and therefore more sympathetic'.²⁰¹ Secondly, and somewhat less convincing, is the argument that the novel's radical currency was reflected by its negative contemporary reviews.²⁰² Faktorovich conveniently dismisses any conservative aspects of Dickens's fiction as the clever machinations of a legally trained mind subtly able to circumvent censorship and the looming threat of sedition laws.²⁰³ 'Subversive techniques', she claims, 'were necessary to carry an extremist radical, socialist or rebellious message because the reality was that some rebellious novels were censored or otherwise blocked from going into popular production'.²⁰⁴ Authors including Dickens, Robert L. Stevenson and Walter Scott were equipped to 'navigate the uncertain waters of libel and truth' because they were 'lawyers by education or by profession'.²⁰⁵ Faktorovich's claim, that authors' political freedoms were hamstrung by excessively diligent treason laws, departs from Tillotson's earlier analysis which proposes instead that the 1840s were not in fact as oppressively prudent or repressive as the 1850s would come to be. Tillotson describes the Condition-of-England novels 'as the delayed fruits of Reform' which rose 'directly from the Commission Reports, as part of the instinctive barricade against revolution'.²⁰⁶ Despite the looming threat of revolution and the heightened political climate, the authors of the social, political and industrial novels published in a flurry in the 1840s saw few restrictions applied to their writing. Most 'moved freely within' any restrictions that did apply and there was 'no fatal discrepancy between what the writer wished to say and what his public was willing to let him say'.²⁰⁷ This more liberal interpretation of the decade negates Faktorovich's claim,

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 126.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 7.

²⁰² Ibid, p. 122.

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 3.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 11.

²⁰⁶ Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 123.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 64.

exposing it as desirous of a quick dismissal of the reactionary elements in novels like *Barnaby Rudge*, which tempered and muted Dickens's otherwise rampant radical sympathies.

The more tenable critical position, I argue, is one that recognises both conservative and reactionary elements alongside the radical and subversive aspects of the novel. Dickens captured a radical sympathy as well as a frightful disdain for the collective political action of the mob in *Barnaby Rudge*. Compared with Reynolds, Dickens's political writing oscillated to a far greater degree, but this does not necessarily belie the radicalism, which at times borders on the revolutionary and finds in moments a definite affinity with Reynolds's staunch Republicanism. That Dickens consistently refused throughout his fiction to portray any mob in a reductive fashion renders these scenes all the richer and prevents any over-simplified or dichotomised views of his politics in the novel as either radical or reactionary.

2.5 An American interlude: Dickens' wavering belief in the Republic

An example of the oscillations Dickens's radicalism underwent through these years is perhaps best illustrated by his trip to America. Dickens set sail across the Atlantic in 1842, but even prior to his trip his reputation had begun to precede him. As a result of the revolutionary energy of *Barnaby Rudge* and the social comment in *Oliver Twist*, certain presumptions were made about how he would receive American culture and where his political sympathies would lie. His anticipated judgement on the Republic was undoubtedly one of unfettered endorsement:

During the prelude to and early stages of his tour, Dickens was fêted as a visitor likely to be politically sympathetic with American Republicanism and egalitarianism, a homespun hero "with no other nobility about him than the universal title of simple and glorious manhood," and one who would bring on "the English revolution (speed the hour!) far more effectively than any other of the open assaults of Radicalism or Chartism".²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Drew, p. 61; Dickens's own account of his arrival in America reads as a paean to his own greatness. In a letter to friend, W. C. Macready, Dickens wrote: 'I can give you no conception of my welcome here. There never was a King

This account clearly confirms the contemporary critical perception of Dickens as a revolutionary and upon his return to Britain his *American Notes* (1842) and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1842-44) were received ‘with such expectant stirring’ that ‘it was news rather than literature’.²⁰⁹ It was quickly apparent, however, that the assumed ringing endorsement of the Republic had not materialised. Dickens was deeply disappointed in America and the experience ‘profoundly affected his sense of his own identity both as man and as artist’.²¹⁰ Jerome Meckier claims that ‘Dickens discovered his real self in 1842’, and it was a self decidedly ‘more English and Victorian after visiting America’ and evidently less Republican.²¹¹ While still in America Dickens wrote to his friend Macready: ‘I infinitely prefer a liberal monarchy’.²¹² His vision of America had proven illusory, and he wrote lamentably to his friend: ‘this is not the Republic I came to see. This is not the Republic of my imagination’.²¹³

Bowen writes that Dickens’s radicalism ‘received an apparent setback in his deep disappointment with the USA’, whose ‘brutal and exploitative economic system’ became, for Dickens, ‘barely distinguishable from legalised crime’.²¹⁴ Much of this implies that America served as a ‘watershed for his opinions about industrialism’ and radical politics in general.²¹⁵ I am more inclined, however, to adopt Patrick Brantlinger’s view which posits that, rather than precipitating a dramatic shift towards a more conservative mode of thinking, America simply contributed to the complexity that surrounded issues of industrialism and of alternative political modernities. This greater complexity was reflected in Dickens’s subsequent

or Emperor upon the Earth, so cheered, and followed by crowds, and entertained in Public at splendid balls and dinners, and waited on by public bodies and deputations of all kinds’. In another post to Thomas Mitton, Dickens exclaimed: ‘It is impossible to tell you what a reception I have had here. They cheer me in the Theatres; in the streets; within doors; and without [...] – it is nothing to say that they carry me through the country on their shoulders, or that they flock about me as if I were an Idol’. The adulation Dickens received was such that Sydney Smith wrote to Thomas Carlyle imploring, with a touch of humour: ‘Pray tell Dickens for me to remember that he is still but a man’. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), III, p. 43; III, p. 44; III, p. 42.

²⁰⁹ K. J. Fielding, ‘American Notes and some English Reviewers’, *MLR*, 59 (1964), p. 536.

²¹⁰ Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 194.

²¹¹ Jerome Meckier, *Innocent Abroad: Charles Dickens’s American Engagements* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), pp. 37-38.

²¹² *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, III, p. 156.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ This quotation is from Bowen’s foreword to *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997), p. xvi.

²¹⁵ Patrick Brantlinger, ‘Dickens and the Factories’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 26 (1971), 270-285 (276).

equivocations over issues he endorsed prior to visiting America. ‘The subject of child labor in factories’, for example, conspicuously ‘vanishes from Dickens’s writings’ after 1842 and his speeches thereafter describe factories as ‘paeans to British industry and ingenuity’.²¹⁶ Outwardly this suggests a clear shift in Dickens’s political perspective. However, Brantlinger resists these types of sweeping conclusions and instead argues that any alterations in Dickens’s thinking were simply a reflection of his receptivity to new information and his ability to recognise that all-encompassing issues such as the merits and failings of industrialism were too complex to be solved by one author alone: Dickens simply ‘sense[d] the inadequacy of all remedies and theories, including his own, to cope with the situation’.²¹⁷

Brantlinger’s article contests critics such as Humphry House, who proposed that Dickens was largely ignorant on the subject of industrial disputes. In the mid-twentieth century, House’s scholarship served to galvanise a ‘lingering tendency to consider Dickens politically naïve and historically “vague”’.²¹⁸ More accurate than House’s blanket assertion, I would argue, is Bowen’s assessment of Dickens’s time in America, which asserts that he ‘did not become a reactionary or conservative in response [...], but started to examine and depict those very forces that had so shocked and horrified him [...] leading him to question not just the abuses of the capitalist system but the very system itself’.²¹⁹ In this sense, despite the vanishing of his attacks against child labour in factories, America actually appears to have reinforced Dickens’s radicalism as he began to perceive and consider deeper systemic failings of the prevailing system.

The trip was a formative experience for Dickens, and it also proved to be influential in his rivalry with Reynolds, albeit in a curiously deferred fashion. Prior to Dickens’s trip, it could be said that both Dickens and Reynolds were strong advocates of Republicanism and the benefits this provided via a less restricted and more inclusive popular culture; yet America caused Dickens to reconsider his views. He wrote

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid, p. 284.

²¹⁸ Gareth Steadman Jones, ‘The Redemptive Power of Violence? Carlyle, Marx and Dickens’, *History Workshop Journal*, 65 (2008), 1-22, (p. 15).

²¹⁹ *Martin Chuzzlewit*, p. xvi.

scathingly about the ugly avariciousness he witnessed in America, describing their greed in passages such as this from *Martin Chuzzlewit*:

Dollars. All their cares, hopes, joys, affections, virtues, and associations seemed to be melted down into dollars. Whatever the chance contributions that fell into the slow cauldron of their talk, they made the gruel thick and slab with dollars. Men were weighed by their dollars, measures were gauged by their dollars; life was auctioneered, appraised, put up, and knocked down for its dollars. The next respectable thing to dollars was any venture having their attainment for its end. The more of that worthless ballast, honour and fair-dealing, which any man cast overboard from the ship of his Good Nature and Good Intent, the more ample stowage-room he had for dollars. Make commerce one huge lie and mighty theft. Deface the banner of the nation for an idle rag; pollute it star by star; and cut out stripe by stripe as from the arm of a degraded soldier. Do anything for dollars! What is a flag to them!²²⁰

Ultimately, what Dickens gleaned from his experiences across the Atlantic were the real dangers inherent in unbridled mass culture. Juliet John claims that Dickens's overall impression of America was its likeness to 'a dystopian vision' rather than the idealised view he held in his mind prior to the trip. His subsequent 'dislike of the American press' became, therefore, 'one prominent facet of his antipathy to a debased mass culture'.²²¹ This discovery created space between Dickens and Reynolds. As the latter's career developed, he became for Dickens, as well as much of the ruling classes and the respectable press, an emblem of this 'debased mass culture,' which was increasingly gaining a foothold in Britain and threatening established notions of respectability. Reynolds's particular blend of Republicanism and his liberal attitude towards sexuality was 'a kind of nightmare vision of what mass market literary culture might become'.²²²

²²⁰ Ibid, pp. 267-8.

²²¹ John, *Mass Culture*, pp. 75-76; p. 101.

²²² Jessica Hindes, 'Revealing Bodies: Knowledge, Power and Mass Market Fictions in G. W. M. Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2015), p. 94.

While Dickens's disillusionment with the excesses of a more expansive and inclusive American culture under Republican rule created a distance between himself and Reynolds, the effects of this in 1842 were negligible. In fact, it was only in 1857 that Reynolds made it apparent that Dickens's opinions on America had touched a nerve, launching a scathing indictment of Dickens's position as 'champion of the poor'. Due to the protracted length of time between Dickens's trip and Reynolds's criticism, a disparity of roughly fifteen years, a discussion of this incident is deferred until later chapters, which deals in more detail with the nature and tone of the exchanges between the two through the 1850s. What remains pertinent here, however, is that while America was a formative experience for Dickens and one that contributed to the vacillating political character of his writing, it did not blunt his radicalism. Indeed, directly following the publication of *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens turned his attention to his second Christmas story, *The Chimes*, a tale generally considered to be his most radical work.

2.6 Revolutionary politics in *The Chimes*

Upon its publication in 1844, *The Chimes* received a glowing review from *The Northern Star*. Owing to the *Star*'s status as the major organ of the Chartist cause and of working-class agency, the review is of particular interest because it seeks to position Dickens as a political radical on broadly the same trajectory as Reynolds. The radical weekly declared *The Chimes* to be 'expressing views of man and society far more comprehensive than he has before put forth' as 'Mr DICKENS enters the public arena, as *the champion of the people!*'²²³ By way of contrast, the more conservative press, like the Tory weekly *John Bull*, 'accused Dickens [...] of pandering to "the low Radical doctrines of the day"'²²⁴. Intended to 'strike a blow for the poor',²²⁵ *The Chimes* 'amply justified Dickens's prediction that it would "make a great uproar"' and arguably marks the apex of his political radicalism.²²⁶

²²³ 'A Christmas Garland' *The Northern Star*, 28 December 1844', rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 157.

²²⁴ Slater, p. 231; citing the Tory weekly, *John Bull*. The quotation continues, accusing Dickens of 'holding up to ridicule and contempt the efforts of the higher classes to ameliorate their condition [...]. All the vices, all the crimes, all the profligacy of the lower orders, are represented as the necessary consequences of the neglect of society'. 'Literature', *John Bull*, 14 (1844), 824; It is interesting to note that this was the very same accusation levelled at Reynolds's radical fiction.

²²⁵ Forster p. 320.

²²⁶ Slater, *Charles Dickens*, p. 231.

Forster describes the ‘passionate zeal’ with which Dickens commenced the writing of *The Chimes*,²²⁷ while in a letter to Forster Dickens himself described the ‘ferocious excitement’ with which he would ‘blaze away, wrathful and red-hot’ on the tale.²²⁸ The energy Dickens describes recalls his state of mind as he penned the riot scenes of *Barnaby Rudge*. Michael Slater reflects on the tone of Dickens’s letters, suggesting that ‘all the pity and anger that had been building up in him over the past two years or so in relation to the increasingly desperate plight of the English poor, emotions fuelled by Carlyle’s fierce polemics, now burst forth to create the most overtly Radical fiction he ever wrote’.²²⁹ The fact that this pity and anger had been rumbling for two years is surely argument enough against Forster’s attempts to dismiss Dickens’s radicalism as episodic, an aberration in his customary conservative or reactionary state. Forster claims to have observed in Dickens’s writing and demeanour, ‘several months before he left England’ for his trip to Italy, ‘the habit of more gravely regarding many things before passed lightly enough; the hopelessness of any true solution of either political or social problems by the ordinary Downing street methods’.²³⁰ By this final statement Forster suggests that Dickens was turning increasingly towards Carlyle’s writing for guidance,²³¹ which, I argue, implies that he was beginning to consider more revolutionary action was required in order to effect change.

Despite this growing pessimism, Forster appears not to have harboured any fears over the radical intent of *The Chimes*, as he had done in *Barnaby Rudge*. Forster, it would seem, was too quick to conflate *The Chimes* with *A Christmas Carol*, and, despite his admiration for Dickens’s attempt to strike a blow for the poor, he defined the indignation of the text as morally, not politically determined. Accordingly, he perceived the type of change Dickens was trying to effect in *The Chimes* as similar to that performed on Scrooge, achieved ‘by showing that society’s happiness rested on the same foundations as those of the individual, which are mercy and charity not less than justice’.²³² The two tales were linked in Forster’s mind

²²⁷ Forster p. 320.

²²⁸ Ibid, pp. 320-323.

²²⁹ Slater, *Charles Dickens*, p. 229.

²³⁰ Forster, p. 320.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

by ‘the same kind of moral’.²³³ It is my view that the radicalism present in *The Chimes* is in fact more similar to that in *Barnaby Rudge* and the later *A Tale of Two Cities*, as works connected by their revolutionary energy; moreover, *The Chimes* helps to place Dickens and Reynolds on shared political ground by the close of 1844.

Dickens’s second Christmas tale follows elderly ticket porter Trotty Veck, who falls into a state of despondency on New Year’s Eve over the wretched immorality that appeared to abound in society. Despairing at the miserable condition of the working classes supposedly responsible for such behaviour – a theory, Dickens explains, that Trotty has acquired by reading the newspapers – Trotty’s misery is compounded by the four figures he meets, all representative of the social establishment; A Justice of the Peace, an M. P., a rich paternalist and a political economist in the Malthusian mould. He then experiences a spiritual visitation in which he has died and is shown a future without hope wherein the lives of his friends and family crumble into further despair. Trotty learns that he must maintain his faith in mankind, as the tale appears to repeat the mechanism of *A Christmas Carol*. It is, however, Dickens’s shift in focus that distinguishes it from his previous Christmas story and infuses *The Chimes* with a far more radical character.

The tale notably pulls focus away from middle-class characters, pushing these to the margins as the unthinking parrots of political economy, utilitarianism and Malthusian philosophy, and instead draws characters of working-class extraction to the centre of the narrative. As Marilyn Kurata explains: ‘Lilian’s prostitution, Richard’s drunken degradation, and Meg’s near infanticide are fictional versions of what Dickens’ contemporaries read about in the daily newspapers’.²³⁴ Dickens draws pathos from the abject conditions suffered by the working classes and the ease with which the embers of their happiness are snuffed out by the blind callousness of those of greater privilege. Deborah Thomas observes that *The Chimes* assigns ‘the blame for the frequency of behaviour such as prostitution, infanticide, and suicide by the poor

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Marilyn J. Kurata, Marilyn, ‘Fantasy and Realism: A Defense of *The Chimes*’, *Dickens Studies Annual*, 13 (1984), 19-34. (p. 26).

on society's failure to help those who desperately need help'.²³⁵ It is in both Dickens's placement of the working-class characters at the heart of the tale and the absolving of blame for their condition that *The Chimes* finds its greatest affinity with Reynolds's writing. Indeed, this became one of the principal tropes in Reynolds's fiction, and is particularly evident in *The Mysteries of London*, where criminals frequently describe the tragic provenances of their lives of crime and destitution, whose trajectories are then invariably traced back to their cruel and nefarious treatment by a member of the aristocratic or governing class. Such a staple of his fiction, the trope could be described as Reynoldsian, and as *The Chimes* saw Dickens engaged in the same practice, in the same year as *The Mysteries of London* commenced publication no less, Dickens's and Reynolds's writing find through this motif a political kinship.

What propels *The Chimes* from a radical work into a potentially revolutionary one, is Trotty's exclamation of an impending and transformative change: 'I know', he claims, 'that our inheritance is held in store for us by Time. I know there is a Sea of Time to rise one day, before which all who wrong us or oppress us will be swept away like leaves. I see it, on the flow!'²³⁶ Michael Slater describes how, 'at one stage [...] Trotty even seems to be prophesying some kind of social revolution, using the very metaphor for it that Dickens will re-use many years later in *A Tale of Two Cities*'.²³⁷ The metaphor is of course the sea, as Dickens returns to its use as a force for social change, bringing with it the 'inheritance' of the poor and sweeping away oppression. The passage signals *The Chimes* not, as Forster believed, to be portending a shift in morality, but as envisioning dramatic political change for the working classes. Trotty foresees a coming sea of justice, rendered inevitable by this natural force of change. The vision supposes, like the 'true principles' with which Dickens described the scenes of *Barnaby Rudge*, an innate truth, emphasised by the repetition and prophetic tone of the word 'know'. Dickens's imagery assures us that change of this sort and the restoration of justice has a higher calling. Again, Dickens's prophetic rhetoric resembles the

²³⁵ Deborah A. Thomas, *Dickens and The Short Story* (Philadelphia: U. Pennsylvania Press, 1982). p. 43.

²³⁶ Charles Dickens, 'The Chimes', in *A Christmas Carol: And Other Christmas Stories* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2013), pp. 64-126 (p. 123).

²³⁷ Slater, p. 230.

language Reynolds uses to describe the revolutionary events in Paris in *Alfred de Rosann*. As the unrest begins to unfold on the streets, Reynolds confirms Leblond's foretelling of such an event:

Foremost in the ranks of the revolutionists, De Rosann recognised Leblond. That mysterious agent of the vast intrigues which had accomplished the events now brought about, gave a significant nod to our hero—and when a sudden movement brought them near each other, he cried, in a triumphant tone, “Did I not prophesy truly, M. De Rosann? Has not the glorious moment proclaimed its own presence?” And without waiting for a reply, he again brandished the gory weapon of death which he held in his hand, and rushed upon the royal cohorts with demoniac courage’.²³⁸

Just as Trotty's vision supposes something preordained, the revolution is, for Reynolds, the realisation of a destiny for the French people. Similarly, an extended passage in *The Mysteries of London* sees Reynolds dwell on the providence of Time. Reynolds adopts imagery of the sea, as ‘the tide of Time rolls on’, mirroring the prophetic tone of Dickens's vision before he portends the collapsing of the current order: ‘For the day must come when the Pyramids themselves, the all but immortal children of antiquity, shall totter and fall’.²³⁹ For Reynolds, just as for Dickens, the current order has resulted in a society in which the ‘rights of labour are denied; and the privileges of birth and wealth are dominant’ and where the mechanic, the labourer and the miner, ‘the sons and daughters of toil’, must eventually ‘exalt his voice from those hideous depths, and demands the settlement of labour’s rights upon a just basis’.²⁴⁰ For both, it appears, at this stage in their careers, where revolution is dynamic and in perpetual motion, the current civilised order is in a state of entropy and ‘antiquity’, as the Pyramids crumble and change threatens.

By 1844 both Dickens and Reynolds had displayed a sympathy with, if not an explicit endorsement of, ideas of revolution. As Reynolds depicted scenes of glorious and violent revolt against the monarchy in

²³⁸ *Alfred de Rosann*, p. 225.

²³⁹ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 831.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 831, 832.

France and extolled Republican principles across his fiction, *The Chimes* proved so perfectly ‘made-to-order’ for Chartist ‘propaganda purposes that *The Northern Star* reviewed favourably adaptations of the tale as they were performed at the Lyceum and the Adelphi’.²⁴¹ It is interesting to note that through these years Dickens was also forming associations with other figures of radical stripe, such as Douglas Jerrold, who lent Dickens a copy of Thomas Cooper’s poem, *Purgatory of Suicides*, of which Dickens not only approved but was allegedly so ‘taken with’ that he forgot to return it.²⁴² Cooper, jailed for inciting Chartist rioters in 1843, counted Dickens as a friend, and while Dickens and Reynolds’s animus assured a measure of distance between them, through the early 1840s they were certainly mixing in similar circles and exhibiting broadly similar political sympathies.

Conclusion

Building on the earlier analysis of *Pickwick Abroad* and *Pickwick Papers*, this chapter has demonstrated that while Reynolds appeared to have closely pursued Dickens’s career, earning him a reputation as a plagiariser, his writing also developed politically in a manner which challenged Dickens by competing for the loyalties of his readership. Moreover, out of the continuing plagiarism feud, a dialogue of sorts began to develop between the two authors. I have argued for the marked political affinities evident in both authors’ fiction between 1836 and 1844, suggesting that towards the end of this period, both authors were expressing revolutionary sympathies, and were therefore closely aligned politically. While Reynolds’s stance on Republicanism was consistent, their shared political ideals become most apparent when Dickens’s fiction flirts with revolutionary energy, and when he embraces the indignation he felt for the poor and underrepresented in society, as clearly expounded in *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Chimes*.

Given Reynolds’s peripheral status, his Republican politics and explicit sympathies with the working-class condition in his early texts have seldom been considered as having impacted upon Dickens’s early work.

²⁴¹ Peyrouton, N C. ‘Dickens and the Chartists. I’, *Dickensian*, 60 (1964), 78-88 (p. 80).

²⁴² *Ibid*, p. 81.

Yet, it appears that through these years, a dialogue had begun to develop, with Dickens using *Master Humphrey's Clock* to revive Pickwick in an effort to regain control of a character who had proliferated beyond his control, but also, I have argued, as a specific response to Reynolds, who was emerging as a threat to Dickens's position in the market place. This dialogue had significant implications for their rivalry as it was to unfold from 1844 onwards, but it also has wider implications regarding the nature of rivalries in an emerging mass market. How authorial identities were constructed in response to, or as a means of guarding against the threat posed by a rival author presents a paradoxical set of conditions in which collaboration, or mutual dependency, is achieved via the process of competition. As the threat Reynolds posed to Dickens's readership increased, so too did its capacity as an advertisement for Dickens's work. This commercial dynamic, in which Dickens began to encourage a rivalry with Reynolds in order to install him as a definitional other in the marketplace, was arguably a crucial facet of industrial-age authorship, yet Reynolds's role in this mutual endeavour has largely gone unnoticed.

Chapter 3

‘Dickens came to sound like Reynolds rather than vice versa’: A Shift in the Dynamic of Plagiariser and Originator

This chapter examines the shift in the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds which occurred in 1844 and arguably lasted into the early years of the 1850s. Precipitated by the popularity of *The Mysteries of London* (1844-48), Reynolds was propelled into literary celebrity before achieving further political prominence in 1848 after he assumed an influential position in the Chartist movement. While Reynolds’s trajectory was clearly in the ascendancy through these years, Dickens’s activities have arguably proven more difficult to define. The intention for this chapter is, therefore, to examine this specific period in Dickens’s career in tandem with, and through the prism of, Reynolds’s commercial success and political notoriety, arguing that this approach demonstrates both a marked divergence in their respective career trajectories and, furthermore, suggests that each had a bearing upon the other. It is my contention that, as Reynolds’s political radicalism peaked through years ‘riven by pre-revolutionary tensions’,¹ leading to his increasing influence over the working classes, Dickens retreated from the political polemics of *The Chimes* into a type of radical remission with the publication of *A Cricket on the Hearth* in 1845 followed by *Dombey and Son* in 1846 and *David Copperfield* in 1848.

Having largely been perceived as Dickens’s shadow up until 1844, and as one of the ‘vermin’ that followed near Dickens’s heels at a most ‘humble distance behind’, my analysis demonstrates how, in the second half of the decade, Reynolds effectively ‘got ahead of Dickens’, who then ‘kept his distance’.² I argue that this phase in their careers is crucial to a reparative reading of Reynolds’s significance to the period in general and to Dickens specifically, since it contributes a fresh explanation as to why the tone and structure of the latter’s fiction began to alter in the second half of the 1840s. Positing that Reynolds’s popularity amongst the working classes, his explicit Republicanism, and his willingness to nail his political colours to the

¹ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. vii.

² Richard C. Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p. 167.

Chartist mast in 1848, complicated Dickens's position as a fellow radical in the marketplace, the chapter examines the resulting shift in the dynamic of their rivalry after 1844 as the former plagiarist effectively stole a march on his rival. As Richard Maxwell observes, such was the extent of Reynolds's success that by the 1850s it could be said that 'Dickens came to sound like Reynolds rather than vice versa'.³ This chapter seeks to unpack this little acknowledged shift in momentum through crucial years in Britain's cultural, political, and literary history.

3.1 Violence, taboo and revolutionary politics in *The Mysteries of London*

Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*, which commenced in 1844, marked a seminal moment in his career. The mammoth work became his *magnum opus* and ensured that his place in Victorian fiction would not be entirely forgotten. While I argue that the serial acquired for Reynolds, perhaps for the first time, a reputation outside of Dickens's influence, it still bears many hallmarks of the man in whose image Reynolds had fashioned his career. *The Mysteries of London* continued to build upon themes and fascinations which he shared with Dickens, but it also reads as less cautious, more explicit, and certainly more risqué, as Reynolds began to test the boundaries of respectable fiction. As John Plunkett remarks, 'Reynolds's commercial success existed alongside, and because of, his outspoken Republican politics', and *The Mysteries* continued to push his political agenda using a heady mix of vice and sensationalism.⁴ The serial can therefore be read simultaneously as an homage to Dickens's earlier works and as a signal of Reynolds's intent to distance himself from his rival by reinventing himself as a radical, even revolutionary, figure.

This section focuses on the commonalities *The Mysteries of London* shares with Dickens's writing between 1836 and 1844. Louis James observes that 'Reynolds's *Mysteries* bears many traces of *Oliver Twist*—the alternating detailed objectivity and passionate subjectivity, the closely juxtaposed worlds of wealth and

³ Ibid.

⁴ John Plunkett, 'Regicide and Regimania in G. W. M. Reynolds and *The Mysteries of London*', in *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, ed. by Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 15-30 (p. 22).

poverty, and the pulsating moments of high melodrama'.⁵ In fact, specific scenes from *The Mysteries of London* are clearly appropriations of Dickens's Sikes and Nancy. Moreover, Reynolds's portrayal of the violent drunk Bill Bolter and his wife Polly resemble his efforts in *Pickwick Abroad*, in which he imitated Dickens's style and lifted characters wholesale from his rival's work. As with *Pickwick Abroad*, there is a notable distinction in Reynolds's re-appropriation of Nancy and Sikes which suits his differing political motivations. In accordance with James's article, 'A View from Brick Lane', which analyses the comparable passages between Sikes and Nancy and Bolter and Poll along a class divide, it is my view that episodes such as this reveal the strategies by which Dickens was increasingly appealing to a predominantly middle-class readership, whereas Reynolds became increasingly intent on targeting a working-class demographic. If, as James claims, 'the murder of Nancy is the climax of physical violence in Dickens's novel',⁶ it is also a 'carefully ritualized' scene.⁷ Sikes's approach to Nancy's room has, James suggests, distinct echoes of *Othello*,⁸ which may have rendered Dickens's style 'too "literary"' for a working-class readership to fully appreciate.⁹ The supposition, therefore, is that Dickens's blend of realism and melodrama was heightened by the latter in these violent scenes as a means of sanitising the brutality of life as it truly was.¹⁰ It is my view that the comparable event in *The Mysteries of London* acted as a continuation of Reynolds's efforts in *Pickwick Abroad* to expose Dickens's greater concern for retaining the patronage of his middle-class readers, while still appeasing a working-class readership, whose proclivities had been shaped by penny dreadfuls and cheap newspapers.

In the climactic scene between Sikes and Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, the product of a cumulative building of

⁵ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I (Missouri: Valancourt Books, 2013), p. vii.

⁶ Louis James, 'The View from Brick Lane: Contrasting Perspectives in Working-Class and Middle-Class Fiction of the Early Victorian Period', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 11 (1981), 87-101. (p. 91).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁰ In this regard James's criticism reflects Dickens's own contradictory assertions in the 'Authors Preface to the Third Edition' of *Oliver Twist* in which Dickens explained that he wanted to depict 'associates in crime...in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives; and to show them as they really are', yet coupled this desire with a contradictory wish to avoid giving unnecessary offence: ' I endeavoured while I painted it in all its fallen and degraded aspects, to banish from the lips of the lowest character I introduced, any expression that could possibly offend'. Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. lxii-lxv (p. lxii; p. lxiii).

tension between the violence threatened by Sikes's temper and Nancy's increasingly guilty conscience at her transgressive ways, Dickens dramatizes the scale of the crime Sikes commits at the expense of the novel's ability to portray the working-class condition in a more realistic manner. In the immediate aftermath of Nancy's murder, Dickens suggests that this kind of extreme violence was an anomaly, a tragic combination of events leading to a fatal outcome. The events of the previous night are described as extraordinary: 'Of all the bad deeds that, under the cover of darkness, had been committed within London's wide bounds since night hung over it, that was the worst'.¹¹ Crime is ever-present in the city, but the nature of Nancy's murder is particularly gruesome. The guilt-ridden Sikes is sent into a spiral of torment, haunted by the vision of Nancy's eyes.¹² By contrast, in *The Mysteries of London*, having returned from the regularly frequented 'boozing ken', Bill Bolter's confrontation with his wretched wife contains all the facets of squalor and misery without any of the ritualized scenes that would otherwise heighten the staginess of the violence. In this regard, the death of Poll is simply 'a direct consequence of overcrowding and of ugly joyless lives'.¹³ Unlike the progression towards the climactic scene of Nancy's murder, which builds through the novel, Bolter's anger is triggered in an instant. The scene of Poll's murder occurs in the early chapters; there is no real pre-amble or plot development, or much dwelling on the event afterwards. Bolter is held accountable for his crime soon after, captured by the authorities and sentenced to death with the novel proceeding without further regard for the children he left behind, so common is this type of violence. Reynolds is clearly keen to draw a parallel with the scenes in *Oliver Twist* where Sikes wrestles with his guilt, as Bolter is subsequently 'struck dumb' during a later attempted murder and 'convulsed with alarm: the apparition before him—the vision of his assassinated wife—and the reminiscences of other deeds of darkest dye, came upon him'.¹⁴ However, where the vision of Nancy's eyes haunts Sikes's every move, eventually causing him to fall to his death, Reynolds simply has Bolter brush aside such feelings and jump

¹¹ *Oliver Twist*, p. 323.

¹² Juliet John describes the extraordinary impact of the memory of Nancy's eyes on Bill Sikes. Isolated from all human contact the eyes of Nancy are a reminder for Sikes that Nancy was 'the only human being who cherished any humane feelings towards him'. It is interesting to note that, for John, the heightened melodrama of Dickens's 'passionate villains' renders them 'most human only when they become most inhuman'. Juliet John, *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 116-7.

¹³ James, 'Brick Lane', p. 99.

¹⁴ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 145.

through a window to temporarily affect an escape, before finally being apprehended in a rather less dramatic and arguably more realistic manner.

In his allusion to Sikes and Nancy, Reynolds is rather more concerned with the gritty reality excluded by Dickens due to the latter's concerns over middle-class notions of what constitutes offence. Instead, Reynolds's scene deepens the misery and despair. Bolter is first baited by his wife for returning late in a drunken stupor. He immediately lashes out, felling Poll with one blow before he 'brutally kicked her as she lay almost senseless at his feet'.¹⁵ Poll recovers, only to cruelly vent her own frustrations on their children, who stood witness to this scene. Harry, the elder child, sought desperately to protect his sister 'with his own thin and emaciated form' as 'a torrent of blows rained down upon his naked flesh'.¹⁶ This in turn is too much for Bolter to endure, not owing to any sympathy he felt for the suffering children, but according to his heated desire 'to thwart or oppose' the wife he so 'hated' in that moment.¹⁷ He lashes out again and his fist falls 'upon the back part of the ruthless mother's head with stunning force. The woman fell forward, and struck her face violently against the corner of the deal table. Her left eye came in contact with the angle of the board, and was literally crushed in its socket'.¹⁸ The differences between Dickens's scene and Reynolds's are stark; firstly, Nancy's innate goodness, sympathetically drawn by Dickens, is stripped away as Poll's fate lacks the pathos we might expect for a victim of violent domestic abuse. This is largely due to Poll's previous behaviour, in which she brutally beat her two children before devising a ploy to blind her daughter by placing cockle shells over her eyelids, tied round her head with a bandage, each with large black beetles inside. This cruel plan is conceived for the purpose of inducing greater sympathy when begging in the streets, with Poll claiming: 'there's nothin' like a blind child to excite compassion'.¹⁹ Secondly, despite the violence of Reynolds's scene having its basis in flashes of rage, the actual descriptions of violence are extended to a far greater length than Dickens's. Far from the ritualized scenes and the poetic,

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 135.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 136.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 121.

almost perversely beautiful aftermath of Nancy's murder, which sees the morning sun glint off the blood spilled onto the floor, Reynolds's scene instead repeats the ghastliest detail of the incident in a coldly iterative manner, describing again Poll's deathly 'countenance which was rendered the more hideous by the bleeding eye-ball crushed in the socket'.²⁰ Reynolds's account is drawn to the facts and the description of the violence in a manner befitting a newspaper;²¹ more gruesome, yet more ordinary than the murder of Nancy. Reynolds's language, Louis James implies, seeks to describe a scene which is more reflective of the working-class experience, those who recognised all too well the 'ugly joyless lives' of Bill Bolter and Poll. While I agree that there are evident distinctions between the two texts, it is important to recognise that the passages in *The Mysteries of London* are still undoubtedly produced in the melodramatic mode. The working classes had developed a taste for gory literature through Newgate novels, cheap newspapers and street broadsides, and while Reynolds never strayed too far from this type of extreme melodramatic account,²² he sought to tip the scales towards a more realistic account of such violence in order to avoid the sanitising effect of melodrama evident in Dickens's writing.

If the *Mysteries of London*, like *Oliver Twist*, engaged with themes of violence and criminal behaviour, the serial also shared Dickens's willingness to confront taboos in a manner similar to *Barnaby Rudge*. From the outset of his career, as the previous chapter discussed, Dickens had been wrestling with his role as a family writer and his desire to express his more radical sentiments. He had been searching for a fictional form that appealed to the widest possible audience, through both radical poetics and middle-class domestic iconography. As we have seen, the riotous scenes of anarchy in *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) were a figurative attempt on Dickens's part to distance himself from the largely apolitical soubriquet, 'Boz'. The novel was therefore less cautious in its drawing of characters like Hugh, whose animalistic behaviour is particularly sinister, coloured by a predatory sexual element, and deepened further by cannibalistic overtones. The scene

²⁰ Ibid, p. 138.

²¹ James, 'Brick Lane', p. 99.

²² For further discussion on the topic see Sally Powell, 'Black Markets and Cadaverous Pies: The Corpse, Urban Trade and Industrial Consumption in the Penny Blood', in *Victorian Crime, Madness, and Sensation*, ed. by Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 45-58.

depicting Hugh's capture and detainment of the young and vulnerable Dolly Varden is arguably more frightening and more risqué than was customary for Dickens, as John Carey explains:

Dickens is just as excited as Hugh and his confederates at the sight of tempting, helpless femininity, and hardly conceals the fact. "Poor Dolly! Do what she would, she only looked the better for it, and tempted them the more. When her eyes flashed angrily, and her ripe lips slightly parted, to give her rapid breathing vent, who could resist it?" Not Dickens, we gather, who is evidently salivating freely.²³

It is important to note that, while the passage is more erotically charged than is customary for Dickens, the perverse excitement and lust present in the scene is, rather than any unhealthy feeling on his part, better attributed to the perceived demands of a marketplace increasingly shaped by working-class tastes. Nevertheless, Dickens's risqué language finds its parallel in the scenes Reynolds commonly revelled in throughout *The Mysteries of London*, as when George Montague Greenwood is driven to distraction by his lust for Eliza Sydney. Unable to defer his desire until they are married, Greenwood steals into the slumbering Eliza's chamber 'in a frenzied manner', whispering under his breath as he approaches, 'She shall be mine, she shall be mine'.²⁴ His attempt on Eliza's virtue is repelled when she brandishes a knife, but the speed with which Montague transforms from the 'cool, calculating man he hitherto had been' to one whose passions had become 'ungovernable' is typical of Reynolds's ability to build tension in racy and debauched scenes.²⁵

Worse still is the precipitous fall from grace of the rector, Reginald Tracy in the second volume of *The Mysteries*. Seduced by Cecilia Harborough, whose own misfortunes had led her to contrive the entrapment and subsequent disgracing of the respectable and monied rector, Tracy experiences a latent sexual

²³ John Carey, *The Violent Effigy: a study of Dickens's imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 23.

²⁴ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, pp. 148-149.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 148.

awakening, which rapidly descends into a madness of lust for women to whose charms he had previously been oblivious. Ellen Monroe plays another unsuspecting victim as Tracy engages in a scene of menacing voyeurism, watching Ellen with his ‘licentious eyes’.²⁶ Concealed from Ellen’s sight, Tracy ‘gnashed his teeth with rage’ as ‘the fires of gross sensuality raged madly in his breast’ and ‘his brain seemed to throb with violence’.²⁷ Tracy’s character, described using overtly sexual language, becomes animalistic, with the gnashing of teeth echoing descriptions of Hugh as hungering over his prey.

Carey describes Hugh’s actions as constituting ‘by far’ Dickens’s ‘sexiest scene, which makes the cannibalistic hint more worth noting’.²⁸ Michael Slater observed that not only did *Barnaby Rudge* create scenes of implicit cannibalism and sexual violence, it also ‘touched on prostitution, arson, and infanticide’.²⁹ By 1841 Dickens’s radical energy was beginning to explore new avenues and these passages lend themselves to comparison with Reynolds’s more scandalous and sensational style. Both authors were testing the limits and appeal of Victorian taboos, yet Reynolds exhibited far less caution than Dickens, regularly returning to provocative descriptions of women, in a manner that fellow Chartist Thomas Clark would later brandish as the products of a ‘sink-like mind’, issued in ‘libidinous prints’ full of ‘scenes of infamous corruption which have emanated from that reservoir of lewdness, your depraved intellect’.³⁰

Barnaby Rudge also deployed a device Reynolds was to draw heavily upon in his fiction, and stands as further evidence that by the mid-1840s the two authors were working with similar material, entertaining similar fascinations, and potentially pursuing similar literary and political objectives. One of Reynolds’s favoured tropes in *The Mysteries* was the tracing back of crimes, ostensibly committed by the criminal underclass, to aristocratic perpetrators. In *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens deployed the same strategy with the principal villain, Sir John Chester. A figure of stature and wealth and later an M.P., Sir John abuses his

²⁶ George W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, (Virginia: Valancourt Books, 2015), p. 68.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 69.

²⁸ Carey, p. 23.

²⁹ Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 230.

³⁰ Thomas Clark, *A Letter Addressed to G. W. M. Reynolds, reviewing his conduct as a professed Chartist, and also explaining who he is and what he is, together with copious extracts from his most indecent writings* (London: T. Clark, 144 High Holborn, 1850), pp. 4-35.

privilege by coercing and manipulating figures like his estranged son Hugh, an hostler at the Maypole Inn, and locksmith apprentice Sam Tappertit, into doing his bidding, resulting in both becoming foils for his criminal activities. Reynolds had already experimented with similar plot devices in *Pickwick Abroad*, as discussed in chapter one, with characters' descents into criminality invariably revealed as having more allegedly respectable origins. Reynolds's purpose in consistently presenting working-class criminal behaviour as a by-product of the misdemeanours of the patrician classes was to challenge the prejudice against the working-class character as debased and innately immoral. It would quickly become a staple of *The Mysteries* serial, but clearly, in 1841, it was also a device deployed by Dickens to lend a degree of sympathy to the rioters whose motivations were inextricably linked to the whims and pernicious desires of the governing classes.

As a recurring motif throughout *The Mysteries of London*, the chief villains, cheats and swindlers such as Bill Bolter, the Resurrection Man, who commits untold acts of violence and blackmail, including the exhuming of graves, and the Buffer, a criminal associate of the Resurrection Man, are each afforded a voice through which they regale their companions with the unfortunate tale of how they sank to criminal depths. Often through the improvidence of their parents, custodians or employers, these figures are portrayed as products of an unequal and unjust system. One episode retells the story of a coal-heaver, whose toiling existence is exploited by a corrupt system wherein publicans employ the colliers, meaning that employment can only be gained through the patronage of the publican's house. The coal-whippers and heavers are effectively blackmailed into spending their wages on drink in order to maintain good standing with their employer.³¹ Yet these same men, obligated to drink to excess, then read in the paper 'that the upper classes is always a-crying out about the dreadful immorality of the poor!'³² As the Resurrection Man explains of

³¹ A similar exploitation of workers is examined and exposed by Disraeli in his novel *Sybil, Or; The Two Nations* (1845). With a small party of miners gathered to vent their frustrations at their working conditions, Master Nixon appeals to the group: 'What is wages? I say, 'tayn't sugar, 'tayn't tea, 'tayn't bacon. I don't think 'tis candles; but of this I be sure, 'tayn't waistcoats'. Nixon is complaining about the truck-shop, or 'Tommy' system, controlled by a 'Butty', a middleman in the mining district who operates an exchange wherein the labourers' wages are paid in goods instead of money. The party gathered lament the absurdity of attempting to pay one's rent with a waistcoat. Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil; or The Two Nations*, ed. by Sheila M. Smith (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 141-143.

³² *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 565.

the predicament the working classes found themselves in: ‘here we are, in this room, upwards of twenty thieves and prostitutes: I’ll be bound to say that the laws and the state of society made eighteen of them what they are today’.³³

In *The Mysteries of London* the chief device for drawing these connections between the criminal characters and the governing classes is the Dark House, which functions as a story-telling sanctuary. With each visit the reader experiences a new ‘orator’ for ‘the evening’ as the depravity of the criminal is shown to be the product of corrupt legislation and the vested interests of the wealthy. Reynolds effectively cuts beneath the commonly held perception of the poor as innately immoral to reveal an underlying truth and, in turn, generate sympathy. As one patron of the Dark House chimes in: ‘people see girls like us laughing and joking always in public—but they little know how we weep and moan in private’.³⁴ The characterisation of Sir John in *Barnaby Rudge* has much the same effect. Like the Resurrection Man, Hugh commits heinous acts but it is Sir John who employs and coerces Hugh and Sam Tappertit to enact his cruel designs. Sir John’s role effectively excuses, or at least lessens the accountability of the working classes for their role in the mob violence, since they are the victims of exploitation, while those who are guilty of such ploys remain anonymous in the eyes of the law. A further comparable example from *The Mysteries* is the wealthy financier and M.P. George Montague Greenwood, who surreptitiously employs the Resurrection Man to carry out his perfidious schemes in order to keep his own hands clean.³⁵ In this regard both authors’ texts bear resemblance to William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794), which depicted the grievous hypocrisy built into a legal system that granted immunity to the wealthy and the influential, while assuming guilt on behalf of the poor. When Caleb discovers his master, Squire Falkland, is a murderer, he also uncovers society’s

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 566.

³⁵ An interesting parallel exists between Dickens’s Mr Gregsby in *Nicholas Nickleby*, discussed in the previous chapter, and George Montague Greenwood, the principal villain in Reynolds’s *Mysteries of London*. Gregsby, it appears, effectively constituted the prototype for Reynolds’s character, who also rises to the position of elected M. P., before shunning his responsibilities and wielding his influence by nefarious means in order to exploit those around him. However, whereas Dickens rendered Gregsby largely irrelevant to the novel, illustrating his political disinterest in the early 1840s, it is noticeable that the self-interested behaviour of Reynolds’s character is central to the narrative, implicating countless lives around him and ruining many. Although both depicted similar characters, Reynolds looked to exploit and expose the machinations of the wealthy and influential to a far greater extent than Dickens.

instruments of power and its victims. Pursued through the novel by Gines, Falkland's sinister agent tasked with preventing the 'potential betrayer' Caleb from ever revealing the truth,³⁶ the latter finds himself framed for a robbery, falsified by Falkland in the knowledge that his superior social status and his incomparable wealth will quash any chance Caleb has in the courtrooms of England.

The deployment of Gines in Godwin's novel marks the introduction of

the proto-type of the state-employed but "legitimate" professional; agent, whose number will henceforth multiply as capitalism's new exploiting order creates not only wealth but also a disorder and injustice that must be "managed". He and his unnerving presence reproduce very accurately here the mechanical characteristics of those historically real presences soon to be recruited *en masse* for the defence of a capitalist society, by the early 1800s the richest economy on earth, but one already in social crises: those "insolvent" servants and engines of the liberal state apparatus we call the *police*.³⁷

Godwin's influence is unmistakeably present in the corrupt police force in Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*, and in the institutional ineptitude of the Chancery courts of *Bleak House*, which drags its unwilling victims into financial strife ostensibly in the name of the law, masquerading as excessive diligence over a case in which the inherited wealth of an aristocratic family is tied up in an estate. Godwin's novel was a vehicle for ideas of revolution in Britain. Published coevally with the Treason Trials of 1794, in which Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke and John Threlfall were prosecuted for revolutionary causes (the latter of these two were friends of Godwin's), Godwin claimed that *Caleb Williams* was intended to 'expose the evils which arise out of the present system of civilised society, to disengage the minds of men from presupposition, and launch them upon the sea of moral and political enquiry'.³⁸ Fired by 'sentiments of

³⁶ William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* [1794] (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2009).

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. x.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. xi.

Liberty', Godwin admitted 'I could not refrain from conceiving sanguine hopes of a revolution'.³⁹ Such sentiment is particularly apparent in Dickens's depiction of the Gordon Riots in *Barnaby Rudge*, but, while Dickens displayed a fascination with the rioters, and sympathy for their cause in the same vein as Godwin, he also conveyed a deep objection to the self-defeating violence of mob behaviour. As discussed in the previous chapter, Dickens was at times willing to write with a polemical fire, expressing anti-aristocratic and anti-governmental sentiments in *The Chimes* (1844) and 'Sunday Under Three Heads'.

Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* is similarly underpinned by the threat of revolution, infused by the sentiments of Godwin. Having first established the current condition in which society exists as divided between the two opposing states of wealth and poverty, 'the two words known in the moral alphabet of this great city; for all virtues are summed up in the one, and all vices in the other',⁴⁰ Reynolds then describes an impending storm to foreshadow the imminent threat of revolution:

Everything portended an awful storm. In the palace of the peer and the hovel of the artisan the windows were thrown up; and at many, both men and women stood to contemplate the scene [...]. At an interval of a few seconds the roar of the thunder, reverberating through the arches of heaven—now sinking, now exalting to its fearful tone, like the iron wheels of a chariot rolled over a road with patches of uneven pavement here and there—stunned every ear, and struck terror into many a heart—the innocent as well as the guilty. It died away, like the chariot, in the distance and then all was solemnly still. The interval of silence which succeeds the protracted thunder-clap is appalling in the extreme. A little while—and again the lightening illuminated the entire vault above: and again the thunder, in unequal tones,—amongst which was one resembling the rattling of many vast iron bars together,—awoke every echo of the metropolis from north to south, and from east to west. This time the dread interval of silence was suddenly interrupted by the torrents of rain that now deluged the

³⁹ Ibid, p. xiv; Godwin's own radical beliefs were bolstered by Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, on which he wrote: 'The seeds of revolution it contains are so vigorous in their stamina that nothing can overpower them'. Godwin, p. xv.

⁴⁰ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 1.

streets. There was not a breath of air; and then the rain fell as perpendicularly straight as a line. But with it came a sense of freshness and of a pure atmosphere, which formed an agreeable and cheering contrast to the previously suffocating heat. It was like the spring of the oasis to the wanderer in the burning desert.⁴¹

The scene sets the tone for the entirety of the novel, which frequently sees Reynolds turn the established order upside down. Dickens similarly deployed providential imagery in *The Chimes*, as the ‘Sea of Time’ threatened to rise up, ‘before which all who wrong us or oppress us will be swept away like leaves’.⁴² Similarly, in his letter to Macready, Dickens expressed his disdain for the state of society claiming: ‘the more I see of its extraordinary conceit, and its stupendous ignorance [...] the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when, being incapable of reforming itself, it will have to submit to be reformed by others off the face of the earth’.⁴³ Notably, Reynolds’s opening chapter in *The Mysteries of London* is littered with biblical imagery, each of which plays on a similarly providential theme. From ‘the arches of heaven’ to the ‘wanderer in the burning desert’, and finally to the cleansing baptism of the rain, Reynolds emphasises the natural capacity of the storm to violently and inevitably turn order on its head. The storm clears all before it and leaves a ‘freshness’ and a ‘pure atmosphere’ following the ‘suffocating heat’, in a manner that recalls Reynolds’s description of France in its post-revolutionary state, as it emerged ‘regenerated, and suddenly raised from a state of slavery to a position of comparative freedom, the people felt their ideas expand; and they imparted to their writings that spirit which fired their souls’.⁴⁴ The storm threatens to erase the boundaries between the rich and the poor, throwing disparate classes together, pairing ‘the palace of the peer and the hovel of the artisan’, the innocent and the guilty, and collapsing the physical boundaries between the north, south, east and west of the metropolis. In this regard, Reynolds’s description also echoes Dickens’s efforts in *Barnaby Rudge*, which indulged in the supposed stability afforded by such

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 5.

⁴² Slater, p. 230.

⁴³ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2011), p. 295.

⁴⁴ George. W. M. Reynolds, *The Modern Literature of France* (London: George Henderson, 1839), p. xiv.

binaries, building a false sense of security, before tearing it to the ground, as exemplified by events at the Maypole Inn, Newgate and Lord Mansfield's House.

Each of these examples illustrates how the writing of both authors was coloured by a simmering radical, and at times, revolutionary political energy. While much of the radicalism in *The Mysteries of London* bears a resemblance to Dickens's earlier work, Reynolds's politics and his scenes of impropriety were made more explicit, an undoubtedly crucial factor in his ability to develop his appeal amongst the working classes and establish his status as a popular author in his own right. This same popularity also brought with it a reputation as a dangerous political subversive, and, as Reynolds's influence grew among the working classes and the Chartists in the mid-1840s, Dickens took heed and began to pursue a different tone in his own fiction, beginning with *A Cricket on the Hearth* in 1845.

3.2 Wrath and fury to 'cosy and interesting': *The Chimes* to *The Cricket on the Hearth*

When Dickens published his third Christmas tale in 1845 it was particularly well-received by the market. As Edgar Johnson remarks, the new work 'was immensely popular, doubling the circulation' of previous Christmas stories.⁴⁵ The greater popularity of *The Cricket on the Hearth* has arguably masked the significance of the drastic change of tone from its predecessor, *The Chimes*. Outwardly there seemed little change in Dickens's continued ability to produce well-received stories at Christmas. Yet within twelve months Dickens had gone from a text described by Michael Slater as 'the most overtly Radical fiction he ever wrote',⁴⁶ and one which prompted the radical weekly *Northern Star* to hail Dickens as their new hero,⁴⁷ to the publication of a Christmas tale characterised by its almost insipid domesticity and conventional morality.

⁴⁵ *Letters From Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841-1865*, ed. by Edgar Johnson (London: Lowe and Brydone Ltd., 1953), p. 75.

⁴⁶ Slater, p. 229.

⁴⁷ *The Northern Star* forgave the shortcomings in 'plot and construction' because in its 'political character and bearings *The Chimes* was 'decidedly the best work Mr Dickens has produced'. 'A Christmas Garland' *The Northern Star*, 28 December 1844', rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 158.

Dickens's progress reports, sent to Forster when writing *The Chimes*, 'included such terms as "ferocious" and "wrathful"'.⁴⁸ However, with the publication of *The Cricket on the Hearth* the following December, Dickens referred to the new tale in a letter to Angela Burdett-Coutts, as 'very quiet and domestic'.⁴⁹ Gone apparently were the hopes of landing any significant blows for the poor with a tale to arouse a 'great uproar'.⁵⁰ In its place Dickens pursued the rather more subdued hopes of being received as 'interesting and pretty'.⁵¹ Slater thus observes that *The Cricket* 'certainly marks a distinct departure from the pattern established by the *Carol* and *The Chimes* in that there is no particularly seasonal element in the story and not the least vestige of social criticism'.⁵² The plot centres on the activities of the Peerybingle family and husband John's suspicion of his wife's unfaithfulness. John's misgivings are proven to be unfounded and merely the result of a misunderstanding. Domestic bliss is quickly restored with the help of the chirping cricket who sits atop the hearth acting as the family's guardian angel. Despite Dickens's proclivity to oscillate between radicalism and something akin to conservatism at times, it is difficult to reconcile the political drive of *The Chimes* with the triteness of *The Cricket* just one year later.

As a measure of the disparity between *The Chimes* and *The Cricket*, we can refer to Orwell's citing of anecdotal evidence which described how, 'towards the end of his life [Vladimir] Lenin went to see a dramatized version of *The Cricket on the Hearth*'.⁵³ The communist revolutionary was perhaps hoping to see the 'wrathful' Dickens of *The Chimes*, but instead 'found Dickens's "middle-class sentimentality" so intolerable that he walked out in the middle of a scene'.⁵⁴ Ironically, Marx failed to recognize in Reynolds a greater revolutionary kinship, and instead brandished him as a 'rich and able speculator' and a 'scoundrel', while revering Dickens as part of 'the present splendid brotherhood of fiction-writers in England' due to the 'social truths' his fiction exposed (one presumes this brotherhood did not include Reynolds).⁵⁵ Yet

⁴⁸ Slater, p. 229.

⁴⁹ *Letters From Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts 1841-1865*, p. 75.

⁵⁰ Slater p. 231.

⁵¹ *Letters From Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841-1865*, p. 75.

⁵² Slater, p. 239.

⁵³ George Orwell, 'Charles Dickens', in *Critical Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1846), 7-56 (p. 7).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ The full quotation reads: 'The present splendid brotherhood of fiction-writers in England, whose graphic and eloquent pages have issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional

Lenin, a disciple of Marx, found the Dickens of one year later to be intolerably bourgeois. Perhaps Lenin may have found Reynolds's relentless 'lashing of the aristocracy' more favourable.⁵⁶

Dombey and Son (1846) and *David Copperfield* (1849) marked the continuation of the apolitical tone of *The Cricket*, containing a notable diminution of the social indignation he was venting (albeit intermittently) in the first half of the decade. In both novels Dickens also began to develop a more cohesive narrative structure. *Dombey and Son* is a more insular, family-centred novel, while its successor, *David Copperfield*, is a largely autobiographical text. Thus, Dickens transitioned from the political incendiaryism of *The Chimes* to the morality of *Dombey and Son*, before turning his attentions to the 'hearty and wholesome DAVID COPPERFIELD'.⁵⁷ Assessing the overarching structure of *Dombey and Son*, Kathleen Tillotson explains how even 'the "minor" characters radiate from the centre of the novel, both in action and in theme. Each one is related, at not more than one remove, to the Dombey household or firm'.⁵⁸ It is a novel of far greater insularity than his later social fictions, such as *Bleak House*, and is aptly described by Tillotson as a novel 'dominated by a leading idea, embodied in a single character'.⁵⁹ The idea is pride and the character is the selfish Mr Dombey, whose strained relationship with his long-suffering daughter constitutes the novel's major narrative arc. Alongside his attempts at a tighter narrative structure, *Dombey and Son* sees Dickens exhibit a greater depth of 'psychological insight' than any previous novel.⁶⁰ Stephen Marcus describes the novel as 'consistently hard, compact and unsparing'.⁶¹ It is also, according to Marcus, 'the first of Dickens's

politicians, publicists and moralists put together, have described every section of the middle class from the "highly genteel" annuitant and fundholder who looks upon all sorts of business as vulgar, to the little shopkeeper and lawyer's clerk. And how have Dickens and Thackeray, Miss Brontë and Mrs. Gaskell painted them? As full of presumption, affectation, petty tyranny and ignorance; and the civilised world have confirmed their verdict with the damning epigram that it has fixed to this class that "they are servile to those above, and tyrannical to those beneath them." Karl Marx, 'The English Middle Class', *New-York Tribune*, 4145 (1 August 1854).

⁵⁶ This quotation refers to a footnote in a letter Dickens wrote to Macready in 1849. The letter explains how a bookseller at Brighton Station told Thackeray that Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* 'was by many, many times the most popular of all periodical tales then published, because says he, "it lashes the aristocracy!"' *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), V, p. 603.

⁵⁷ Lionel Stevenson, 'Dickens's Dark Novels 1851-57', *The Sewanee Review*, 51 (1943), 398-409 (p. 398).

⁵⁸ Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 182.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p 163.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 165.

⁶¹ Steven Marcus, *Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p. 293.

works that might be thought of as a domestic novel' conveying 'what can be called a massive kind of simplicity'.⁶²

The novel did not exist in a vacuum, however, and both Tillotson and Marcus make cases for the social resonances of the narrative. For Tillotson, 'every family event has its reverberations in the humming chorus of the servants' hall'.⁶³ Essentially the household hierarchy acts as a synecdoche for society at large. However,

as far as *Dombey and Son* is a "social novel", its prevailing mood is one of deep disquiet about contemporary values, a suggestion that more is amiss with them than mere exposure and reform can hope to touch [...]. Dickens is not writing a tract for the times, even at the distance of allegory. There is no overt social reference in his draft of his general design.⁶⁴

Although the sparing descriptions of the modern train as a 'fiery devil thundering along', shaking the ground with a 'fierce impetuous rush',⁶⁵ remain powerful Carlylean-esque comments on the condition of society in which the dizzying speed of life in the new industrial and 'mechanical age' was not necessarily matched by a similarly rapid sense of moral progress,⁶⁶ for the most part, Tillotson's analysis of Dickens's improved structural coherence and psychological nuance is more substantial than the analysis of the novel as a social

⁶² Ibid, p. 297.

⁶³ Tillotson, p. 198.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 195-196.

⁶⁵ Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 839; Dickens's descriptions of the railway borrows almost verbatim from Carlyle's descriptions of 'English Commerce', and by extension Carlyle's 'Steamengine' analogy: a 'huge demon of Mechanism' which 'smokes and thunders, panting at his great task, in all sections of English land'. Thomas Carlyle, 'Chartism', in *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, ed. by Alan Shelston (St Ives: Penguin Books, 2015), pp. 119-202 (p. 144).

⁶⁶ From 'Signs of the Times', Carlyle writes: 'Were we required to characterise this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word; the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches and practises the great art of adapting means to ends. Nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance [...] On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one [...] Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour'. 'Signs of the Times', in *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, ed. by Alan Shelston (St Ives: Penguin Books, 2015), pp. 31-55, (pp. 34-37).

critique.⁶⁷

In his 1938 study, *Charles Dickens: The Progress of a Radical*, Marxist critic T. A. Jackson developed a useful model by which Dickens's career might be demarcated, bracketing his major works into three discrete classes. The first is defined by its sense of 'fun, high spirits, a tendency even to literary horseplay—alternating, it is true, with spells of sentimentality'.⁶⁸ This class includes *Pickwick Papers* (1837), *Oliver Twist* (1839), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). The second class, described as the 'transitional period',⁶⁹ includes all five Christmas books, *American Notes* (1842), *Pictures from Italy* (1846), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), and *Dombey and Son*. The final class, characterised by a 'steadily intensifying pessimism',⁷⁰ is comprised of *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865).⁷¹ While I agree generally with Jackson's classification, I would argue that there is a greater political significance to *Oliver Twist* as a pioneering and radical social melodrama, as well as a notable building of radical political energy in both *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Chimes* (1844), such that these novels sit uneasily in Jackson's model. For Graham Storey the model proposed by Jackson, which attempts to advance Dickens's work towards 'socialism, on all fronts, in virtually a straight line,' is guilty of a gross 'over-simplification'.⁷² Storey describes Jackson's study as typical of those which Philip Collins's scholarship has subsequently corrected, exposing them as 'dangerously simple' in their interpretation.⁷³ Both Storey's and Collins's interpretations of Jackson's narrow proto-Marxist agenda are, I suggest, correct, since it is more accurate to describe Dickens's writing as consistently belying any strict or binary political definition. However, it is Jackson's identification of a 'transitional period' in Dickens's career

⁶⁷ Tillotson, p. 192.

⁶⁸ T. A. Jackson, *Charles Dickens: Progress of a Radical* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

⁷¹ My list is reproduced according to Jackson's amended list which sees *Martin Chuzzlewit* lifted from the second bracket and placed in the third, and *David Copperfield* pushed back into the second bracket from its original place in the third.

⁷² Graham Storey, 'Dickens in his Letters: The Regress of a Radical', in *Dickens and Other Victorians: Essays in Honour of Philip Collins*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1988), pp. 65-76 (p. 65).

⁷³ *Ibid*.

that is deserving of greater investigation.⁷⁴

Jackson situates *Dombey and Son*, for example, within the ‘transitionary period’ based on its failure to proffer a more robust social criticism. Although the novel recognises the ‘infinite complexity of the issues raised in social life’,⁷⁵ it fails for Jackson because it ultimately falls back on a tepid and individualised morality:

The moral of *Dombey*, instead of being the, “God’s in his Heaven, all’s alright with the world” moral of the first period novels, is, at most, the pathetic moral, “little children, love one another”. Or, in other words—there is so much incurable evil in the world, that it is a positive sin not to make the most out of whatever has in it any measure of good.⁷⁶

Although Dickens displays signs of ‘recognition of class as a positive fact’, Jackson concludes that in *Dombey and Son* there is ‘no clear recognition of class-conflict, as such, and no indication of a function for political struggle’.⁷⁷ In this regard Tillotson’s analysis accords with Jackson’s to the extent that the novel represents a shift towards a more pronounced introspection, facilitated by its ‘responsible and successful planning’, which wrought a greater ‘unity not only of action, but of design and feeling’.⁷⁸ While ‘the social

⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that several critics have proffered models by which to demarcate Dickens’s work in order to try and understand the development of his writing. Joseph Gold explains how Dickens moved from writing described as an ‘Anatomy of society’ into the ‘Autonomy of Self’: ‘Dickens’s cannon’, Gold claims, ‘can be divided along roughly chronological lines into major phases of preoccupation. The first, [...], Anatomy of Society, describes those earlier novels that centre mainly on the attempt of a character to be happily integrated into a hostile and destructive society. The emphasis here is on a society that ought to be radically altered so as to permit the integration of the individual and an end to injustice and cruelty. The second phase could be described as an Autonomy of Self, to indicate how the later novels concentrate on the individual character and on the search for freedom and for answers within himself [...]. Society becomes more and more an abstraction and self becomes more and more a concrete reality’. Joseph Gold, *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 2; Likewise, Monroe Engel was concerned with how Dickens reached the latter, mature phase of his career and sought to divide these works into ‘three groups: A. The sense of Society: *Dombey and Son*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, *Our Mutual Friend*. B. The sense of Self: *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*. C. The Sports of Plenty: *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Monroe Engel, *The Maturity of Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. xii.

⁷⁵ Jackson, p. 116.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 118.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 119.

⁷⁸ Tillotson, p. 157.

criticism in *Dombey and Son* cannot be totally abstracted from the novel',⁷⁹ Tillotson's analysis ultimately views it as assisting narrative cohesion rather than addressing the social maladies of its day. In this sense, the novel prefigures *David Copperfield* to a greater extent than it does *Bleak House* and the more socially-driven fiction of the 1850s.

Neither Tillotson's nor Marcus's analyses of *Dombey and Son* resist Jackson's categorisation of the novel as part of Dickens's 'transitionary period'. It is my view that this definition is generally credible, since Dickens clearly developed his style from the roguish and episodic *Pickwick* to the narratively complex *Bleak House* and its successors (particularly *Our Mutual Friend*). It is also my view that within this broader transition, the change that occurred between *The Chimes* and *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and on through *Dombey and Son* and *David Copperfield* in the 1840s, warrants further critical investigation, particularly when one considers that Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* rose to prominence through these same years. Furthermore, Dickens's retreat into a kind of apolitical domesticity coincides with a period fraught with political unrest as Britain and Europe underwent a series of protests, rebellions and revolutions between 1846 and 1848.⁸⁰ Dickens's trajectory, relative to Reynolds's precipitous rise to success and political prominence, as well as the raging Condition of England debate, which spawned numerous social, political and industrial novels, has, I argue, received less critical consideration than it deserves.

Criticisms of Dickens's fiction in the 1840s has proffered numerous explanations for the curious trajectory of his writing relative to his middle-class peers,⁸¹ yet none has considered the concurrent success of

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ The notion of Dickens's pulling back from a more explicitly radical political stance was observed by Orwell, who claimed that, when faced with the proposition of representing or supporting the working class through his fiction, 'Dickens instantly retreats into the middle class attitude'. Orwell, p. 33; Michael Sanders similarly proposes that Dickens 'is prepared to criticise the existing social order on behalf of the working class, but is reluctant to allow that class to voice that same criticism itself'. Michael Sanders, 'Politics', in *Dickens in Context*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Holly Furneaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 235-242 (p. 241).

⁸¹ Martin Fido, for example, describes the change of direction of Dickens's work relative to his middle-class peers in the latter half of the 1840s as working 'against the trend, meeting his contemporaries on the same ground around 1850, and then stepping chiastically onto territory they had abandoned, while they moved into his earlier terrain'. The ground occupied by Dickens's contemporaries, referred to by Fido, is that of the social problem novel, also known as the political or industrial novels of the late 1840s. Catalysed by Carlyle's Condition of England question, authors like Gaskell, Kingsley and Disraeli published fiction concerned with the political condition of the working classes.

Reynolds as a contributing factor.⁸² Marcus, for example, dedicates a chapter to Dickens's activities between 1844 and 1848, offering some insight into his more sombre and restless mood through these years, suggesting that Dickens had difficulties simply keeping his head above water with all of his commitments, choosing to spend time abroad in order to recharge:

He began to multiply his already manifold commitments, even as he was being oppressed by them.

He could not endure living in England, and once abroad he could not endure living away from it. He was pressed by finances, devised a hundred schemes of economy, yet managed to live more grandly than ever and to acquire additional dependents. He founded a daily newspaper and having done so

Through this same period, however, Dickens was cultivating a fictional mode which could be described, primarily, as domestic. Louis Cazamian, *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs Gaskell and Kingsley*, trans. by Martin Fido (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. x; Critics like Humphry House also discuss Dickens's participation (or lack thereof) in the Condition of England debate. Given Dickens's ability to savagely critique social ills, his 'knowledge of the world', and his 'unusually good opportunities of observing them', House asks: 'why were they not used till 1849-1850?' Essentially questioning Dickens's political retreat during the peak years of the Chartist movement and the height of revolutionary turbulence, House claims that it was 'the social atmosphere of the 'forties' that caused Dickens 'to revise his pattern of interpretation'. Due to his proclivity for caution Dickens only properly re-entered the political frame in the 1850s, having taken a back seat in order to better understand the implications of the changes occurring through the 1840s. House then attributes Dickens's tendency towards caution as commercially motivated by, and revealing of, his innate political conservatism. Humphry House, *The Dickens World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 155; Lionel Stevenson also considered Dickens's shift in narrative tone in the 1850s to be the product of changing competition in the 1840s, observing that, 'during the first ten years of his career[,] Dickens only had negligible competition in the writing of novels', but by the 1840s, especially between 1847 and 1849, years that 'had an importance out of all proportion to their duration', a new 'competitive force' was present in the market. In 1848 'came two novels that presented social problems in an earnest and consistent light—Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and Charles Kingsley's *Yeast*'. Stevenson thus suggests that Dickens was forced to respond to this new wave of novels concerned with the working-class condition, producing his own social novels in the 1850s, each of which were marked by 'their pronounced unlikeness to his other books', according to their sombre moods, wrought by 'the futility of the characters' within inescapably corrupting and debilitating social structures. Described as his 'dark novels', Dickens's fiction in the 1850s became structured around a more stringent social criticism facilitated by a greater cohesion of plot. Lionel Stevenson, 'Dickens's Dark Novels 1851-57', *The Sewanee Review*, 51 (1943), 398-409, (pp. 399-402).

⁸² Louis Cazamian, for example, while acknowledging the existence of working-class literary movements, dismisses them entirely from critical consideration. He rejects Chartist tracts and working-class poetry as non-canonical works and, therefore, 'of secondary importance for the understanding of "social conscience"'". He also dismisses the radical socialist figures of the period, claiming that 'it would be quite impossible to use the socialist writings of Owen, Hodgkin and Thompson as the focal point of this investigation' since 'these writers never apparently influenced the bourgeoisie'. We can safely presume that the omission of Reynolds from Cazamian's study is due to his fiction and journalism falling into either of these categories, perhaps even both. Cazamian, *The Social Novel in England*, (p. 7); P. J. Keating demonstrates a similarly exclusive approach towards the Chartist fiction produced in the mid-nineteenth century, claiming: 'Chartist fiction is too blatantly propagandist, and artistically too close to working-class romance, for its interest to be other than historic'. Keating refers to Reynolds as 'the dominant literary influence on Chartist fiction', but criticises his fiction, and all those of Chartist persuasion, for not being able to justify their claims to 'provide a unique inside view of working-class life'. P. J. Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1971), pp. 234-235.

resigned. He fought so often with his publishers, and changed or threatened to change them so regularly, that the history of his transactions with them, whoever at the moment they happened to be, reads like a history of negotiations over the boundary between two Balkan states.⁸³

Unable to extricate himself from the frequent quarrels with publishers, Marcus makes much of Dickens's 'constant reiteration of the need for the streets, particularly the streets of London',⁸⁴ as he also struggled to capture inspiration abroad. Dickens's longing for London, Marcus claims, is linked to 'a massive return of the past' as he became 'seized with the desire to write directly about himself'.⁸⁵ His analysis is compelling, but does not necessarily preclude an alternative theory that considers Reynolds as a pertinent factor in his trajectory. After 1844, Marcus explains that 'Dickens's growth as an artist during these troubled years had been considerably slowed down; it had ceased to unfold with the ease and simplicity of his earlier development'.⁸⁶ Certainly exhaustion brought on by his numerous commitments helps to explain this, but it is my view that Reynolds's surge to popularity also impacted upon Dickens's ability to pursue writing infused with a radical currency like *The Chimes*, without his name and writing being potentially conflated with the increasingly notorious Reynolds.

The timelines of their respective publications reveal that just as Reynolds's political trajectory took a more radical turn, Dickens became more introspective, working to improve the narrative cohesion of his novels before exorcising the demons of his childhood in *David Copperfield*. While I do not doubt the impact that Dickens's personal fixations and preoccupations had upon his mental state at this point in his life, or that it had a direct bearing on the tone and direction of his fiction, I would argue that criticism has focussed too heavily on these personal factors and, as a result, the impact of a figure like Reynolds upon Dickens has been overlooked. As a factor in Dickens's career, Reynolds's influence has rarely been discussed within the context of the political and social unrest that peaked between 1846 and 1848, years which saw the latter

⁸³ Marcus, p. 271.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 278.

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 283-288.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 282.

at the height of his powers. Criticism concerning Dickens's radicalism has instead tended to fixate on texts like *The Chimes* before leaping to *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* in the early 1850s, bypassing a period of at least six years wherein his fiction, although still developing artistically, appeared to retreat into a type of domestic quietude.⁸⁷ Clearly an enormous transition in narrative style and tone occurred between *Pickwick Papers* in 1836 and *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Mysteries of Edwin Drood* (1870) more than thirty years later. That Dickens's writing would evolve and adapt is obvious, but critics have been more comfortable commenting on the distinctions between texts at the extreme ends of Dickens's career.⁸⁸ What Reynolds offers, I argue, is an alternative theory for Dickens's choice of an apolitical route between 1845 and 1850. It is no coincidence that during a period in which Reynolds's radical politics were beginning to gain traction and draw the attention of an increasingly concerned governing class, Dickens appeared to retreat from an

⁸⁷ Michael Sheldon's article, “‘The Chimes,’ – and the Anti-Corn League’, illustrate this curious gap in Dickens's political timeline. In his analysis of *The Chimes* Sheldon recognises that Dickens's ‘attempt to persuade his readers of the need to reform overshadows the narrative, and as a result the plot is somewhat mechanical and the characters one-dimensional’. For Sheldon, this ‘mechanical’ plot is part of a trade-off, since what the tale lacks in creative exuberance it makes up for with its radical zeal. We see Dickens ‘attempting for the first time to give an entire fiction a single, coherent political purpose, based on free trade radicalism, to which Dickens seems to have adhered more and more tenaciously through the 1840s – well beyond the victory of the Anti-Corn Law League in 1856 – and in to the 1850s. Indeed, *The Chimes* can be seen as the forerunner of Dickens's great social novels of the 1850s, which also express free trade radicalism’. Sheldon's statement is revealing because it indirectly exposes the juncture in Dickens's career in which Reynolds's influence should, I argue, be factored in. Effectively bridging the gap that exists between *The Chimes*, published in 1844 and the next novels identified as having significant social and political purpose (those published in the 1850s), Sheldon's analysis glosses over a period in which Dickens's fiction is out of step with his middle-class peers, whose fiction was engaging directly with the condition of the working classes. Sheldon cites the evidence in *The Chimes* and *Bleak House* as an indication of continuity on Dickens's part since the later social novels ‘express essentially the same political message’ as the radical Christmas tale. However, this supposed continuity is somewhat at odds with a period of almost eight years in which Dickens was less political than his peers and rivals, years which also saw the country managing the revolutionary agitations of the Chartist movement. Unable to trace a political through-line from *The Chimes* to *Bleak House*, or reconcile the morality driven domesticity of *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *Dombey and Son* and *David Copperfield*, Sheldon simply skips over this phase. Michael Sheldon, “‘The Chimes,’ – and the Anti-Corn Law League’, *Victorian Studies*, 25 (1982), 328-353. (pp. 328-330).

⁸⁸ This is observable in statements such as James M. Brown's, which highlights the huge disparity in how Dickens's characters were drawn at either end of his career: ‘By the time he created Miss Wade, Magwitch and Bradley Headstone Dickens had come a long way from the view of environment which presented Bill Sikes's passion as a moral evil independent of his environment and socialisation. The moral oppositions which characterise the mature work (e.g. between Woodcourt and Smallweed, Doyce and Merdle) are given a sound social basis’. Brown's analysis emphasises Dickens's lack of social concern in 1837, with characters largely detached from ‘environment and socialisation’, compared with the deeply embedded social context in which the characters of novels post 1852 are couched. The picaresque and sketch-based humour of the early fiction contrasts sharply with the pessimistic, socially-concerned, and complex plots of the 1850s. The period I have identified, between 1844 and 1852, marks a period of less convincing critical analysis, particularly concerning the exact causes that prompted Dickens to suddenly alter the direction of his fiction. Crucially, this was also a period in which the influence of Reynolds was most apparent concerning the condition of popular fiction and the social and political climate in Britain. It stands, therefore, that Reynolds's influence on Dickens's writing is deserving of greater consideration. James, M. Brown, *Dickens: Novelist in the Market-Place* (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1982), (p. 17).

immediate engagement with the Condition of England debate with fiction centred on the home and the hearth.⁸⁹ Comparative analysis from *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *Dombey and Son* and *David Copperfield*, alongside the radical polemics Reynolds was voicing through these years in *The Mysteries of London*, highlights the marked divergence of two authors after 1844.

Prior to 1845, as discussed in previous chapters, violent episodes were often given free vent in Dickens's fiction. In *The Cricket on the Hearth*, however, we see Dickens only flirting with the possibility of violence. In fact, in *The Cricket*, the threat of violence is used in order to throw into sharper relief the soothing and rationalising power of domesticity. When John Peerybingle believes he has discovered his wife's infidelity, his temper flashes and violence threatens to disrupt the otherwise amiable tone of the tale. However, his anger dissipates as quickly as it rises. Having grasped his rifle in a fit of jealous rage, John heads to the door of the stranger he believes to be complicit in his wife's betrayal, before the chirping Cricket intervenes

⁸⁹ Chapter two discusses Dickens's wrestling with his role as a family author, and it has been suggested that the 1840s represented a period of greater propriety and more extensive and oppressive limitations on the writer in general. Kathleen Tillotson, however, argues instead that this decade was not as oppressively prudent as the 1850s would come to be. On the stifling Victorian sense of propriety, Tillotson explains that 'it is an error to refer this attitude back into the eighteen-forties. There were then – as far as my knowledge goes—no similar instances of squeamish editors, and fewer protests from readers and critics'. Thus, while Tillotson views the Condition of England novels 'as the delayed fruits of Reform [...], rising directly from the Commission Reports, as part of the instinctive barricade against revolution', she makes it clear that few restrictions applied to the writers of the 1840s and most 'moved freely within' any restrictions that did apply. There was 'no fatal discrepancy between what the writer wished to say and what his public was willing to let him say'. Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, pp. 57-58; 123; 64; 64; If Dickens was afforded relative freedom in his writing (compared with the more morally-concerned 1850s), why did he refrain from political engagement and turn his fiction inwards towards domestic concerns? Ian Haywood's scholarship explains that the 1840s, if not overly concerned about notions of offence, were coloured by an 'anti-radical rhetoric', which informed the middle-class outlook on working-class politics and literature. This rhetoric essentially considered 'radical politics and sensational fiction' as 'merely two sides of the same coin: the debased currency of demagogic and commercialism'. Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 140; If this were so, Dickens's decision to pursue a more domestically-oriented mode of fiction from 1844 onwards is perhaps better explained as an attempt to circumvent the political turmoil of the period. This is actually borne out by Tillotson's reference to the 'uncontrolled sale of corrupting literature,' which 'worked against the novelist's freedom' as it became 'imperative that the dividing line between novels and the produce of Holywell Street should be clearly maintained, the more so since family readings of novels was, as we have seen, increasing'. Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, p. 62; We may safely assume, therefore, that Reynolds's work formed part of this body of corrupting literature and Dickens, conscious of this deepening political and literary dichotomy, was keen to be perceived as residing on the respectable side of this particular divide. It is my view that Tillotson's analysis indirectly helps to tie Dickens's trajectory to Reynolds's, even in its omission of the latter. If Dickens experienced the sort of leniency offered by the 1840s, whereby the heavy sense of propriety was not imposed upon him by the public as it would be in the 1850s, it is plausible that the restriction he felt most acutely was that of maintaining a distance between his writing and a figure like Reynolds, with whom he already shared a literary and political affinity.

as a timely reminder of the inviolability of the home. John quickly shifts from the contemplation of how the ‘great bond of his life was rent asunder’,⁹⁰ causing him to fall under the persuasion of murderous thoughts, enraged by the knowledge that ‘he could have better borne to see her lying prematurely dead before him with their little child upon her breast’,⁹¹ to a state of passivity, compassion and forgiveness.

Rather than John’s anger manifesting itself in rash and violent action, the emblem of household domesticity, the Cricket, recalls both his wife’s affection for the creature, reminding him of her sweet voice, which was one ‘for making household music at the fireside of an honest man’.⁹² The hearth and the cultivation of domesticity act as the ultimate antidote to violence and irrationality,⁹³ as the Cricket’s chirp ‘thrilled through and through his better nature, and awoke it into life and action’,⁹⁴ placating John’s temper and returning him to a docile state of worship at the ‘Altar of your Home; on which you have nightly sacrificed some petty passion, selfishness, or care, and offered up the homage of a tranquil mind’.⁹⁵ *The Cricket on the Hearth* in fact sees all of Dickens’s concerns turn decidedly inwards, or indeed, homewards. The entire tale takes place within the Peerybingle’s home. Even when Mrs Peerybingle ‘looked out of the window’, she ‘saw nothing, owing to the darkness, but her own face in the glass’.⁹⁶ When John leaves in order to tread his two regular ‘beats’, working as a carrier, everything about the home seems to call him back:

The Kettle and the Cricket, at one and the same moment, and by some power of amalgamation best known to themselves, sent, each, his fireside song of comfort streaming into a ray of the candle that shone out through the window; and a long way down the lane. And this light, bursting on a certain person who, on the instant, approached towards it through the gloom, expressed the whole thing to

⁹⁰ Charles Dickens, ‘The Cricket on the Hearth’, in *A Christmas Carol: And Other Christmas Stories* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2013), pp. 127-190 (p. 169).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Edmund Wilson argues that ‘the ideal—the domestic unit which preserves the sounds values of England—is located by Dickens through this period in the small middle-class household’. Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* (London: Methuen & Co., 1952), p. 30.

⁹⁴ *The Cricket on the Hearth*, p. 169.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 170.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 129.

him, literally in a twinkling, and cried, “Welcome home, old fellow! Welcome home, my boy!”.⁹⁷

The inward focus of Dickens’s writing here reflects, arguably more than any previous work of fiction, the cultural shift towards notions of domesticity as a private bulwark against the volatility and uncertainty of the public realm.⁹⁸

Aside from the self-sacrifice and compassion required to sustain a companionate marriage and a happy household displayed by Mr and Mrs Peerybingle, the tale also deals with the moral development of Tackleton, the miserly toy-maker, who must learn that a home is more than ‘Four walls and a ceiling!’ In Scrooge-esque fashion, Tackleton cries ‘Bah! what’s home?’, asking the Peerybingles, ‘why don’t you kill that Cricket? I would! I always do. I hate their noise’.⁹⁹ Ultimately, Tackleton learns to embrace the ‘Household Gods’; finding acceptance and happiness among those he previously shunned as conventional domestic morality drives the tale and political concerns are almost entirely discarded.

It appears at one stage in *The Cricket* as if Dickens is leaning towards a political analogy of sorts as Bertha, the blind daughter of Tackleton’s beleaguered employee, Caleb Plummer, sits assembling a society of Dolls:

There were houses in it, finished and unfinished, for Dolls of all stations in life. Suburban tenements for Dolls of moderate means; kitchens and single apartments for Dolls of the lower classes; capital

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 130.

⁹⁸ ‘The House’, as Catherine Waters explains, ‘became both the setting and the symbol for the middle-class family’. Waters’s study, *Dickens and the Politics of Family*, is couched in the theory that ‘the family’s function as a *construct* in Dickens’s writing [...] is inescapably political’, and, moreover, the politics are quintessentially middle class in their formation. Indeed, the ‘shared notion of family life – as ‘naturally’ based on close kinship, with a male breadwinner necessarily venturing forth into the alienating realm of commerce and industry in order to support the haven of privacy superintended by his self-sacrificing wife – helped to create a coherent and distinct class identity and to mark clear ideological boundaries that distinguished the middle classes from those social and economic groups above and below them’. Catherine Waters, *Dickens and the Politics of Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 12–14; For a further study on Dickens’s ‘fascination with families’, see Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 7.

⁹⁹ *The Cricket on the Hearth*, p. 141.

town residences for Dolls of high estate [...] The nobility and gentry, and public in general, for whose accommodation these tenements were designed, lay, here and there, in baskets, staring straight up at the ceiling; but in denoting their degrees in society, and confining them to their respective stations (which experience shows to be lamentably difficult in real life), the makers of these Dolls had far improved on Nature, who is often forwards and perverse; for they, not resting on such arbitrary marks as satin, cotton-print, and bits of rag, had superadded striking personal differences which allowed of no mistake. Thus, the Doll-lady of distinction had wax limbs of perfect symmetry [...] As to the common-people, they had just so many matches out of tinder-boxes for their arms and legs, and there they were—established in their sphere at once, beyond the possibility of getting out of it.¹⁰⁰

Dickens appears to manufacture an opportunity to comment on this model society as constructed by its blind creator, blind not only to physical appearance but to moral character as well, since Bertha suffers from a fabricated image both of her father as young, vibrant and prosperous, and of Tacketton as an innately benevolent figure whose kindness is masked by his penchant for ironic and cruel jokes. Certainly, the ‘wrath’ and ‘fury’ infused through *The Chimes* would have made more of this opportunity. When Trotty’s delusion regarding the alleged immorality of the working-classes is shattered, his vision for the future comprises a revolution which will sweep away the current order. In *The Cricket*, however, Dickens merely punctuates the passage analogously, describing the constructed and rigid hierarchy of society with the resigned use of the word ‘lamentably’. Shielded from the truth by her father Caleb, who fears, despite his lies being borne of kindness, that they will surely ‘break her heart at last’,¹⁰¹ Bertha’s discovery of the truth does not lead to a revelation akin to Trotty’s. Instead, she is spared any agony and only admires her father more for his true nature. Notably, nothing is made of her shabby surroundings and the exhausted condition of her forlorn father, which are the direct result of his exploitative and cruel master. Class is simply not on Dickens’s agenda in *The Cricket* as the home and notions of domesticity envelop all other concerns, acting as the ultimate panacea.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 147.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 163.

Compare the domestic turn in *The Cricket* with the radicalism Reynolds was beginning to produce in *The Mysteries of London* from 1844 onwards, and the divergence between the two becomes marked. Dickens stages *The Cricket* in the sanctuary of the Peerybingle's home, barely permitting the prospect of violence from taking root within a space of such saccharine domestic bliss. It is likely that Reynolds would have had John follow through with his act of violence, or at least sustained the threat for longer, before tracing the origin of John's transgressions back to class disparity caused by those in positions of influence. Reynolds would certainly have been more explicit about the immorality of Tackleton as a master. Arguably, the conflict of the tale would have emanated from his misdeeds as the possessor of power and influence, as has been discussed with Bill Bolter and Poll as well as the colliers forced to expend their wages in the corrupt publican's inn to remain in employment. Reynolds would have steered the tale in a more radical and explicit political direction and away from the moral and domestic resolution achieved between John and his wife.

Dickens's willingness to resort to conventional domestic morality continued in *David Copperfield*, a novel in which, as Emily Rena-Doza argues, Dickens attempts to re-write Henry Fielding's novel, *The History of Tom Jones* (1749).¹⁰² Suggesting that Dickens's intention is to offer 'an improvement on the immoral (but masculine) novels of the eighteenth century',¹⁰³ for Rena-Doza *David Copperfield* is 'an indicator of the moral progress made in the nineteenth century'.¹⁰⁴ Dickens apparently associates this progress with the domestic realm, since 'nineteenth-century conceptions of morality have progressed to include women and men on the same moral plane'.¹⁰⁵ Dickens's overarching purpose was to reclaim the novel as a masculine pursuit, countering the increasing threat of female novelists posed by Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters and Elizabeth Gaskell.¹⁰⁶ It is Dickens's advocacy of a morality associated with the domestic sphere that contrasts sharply with Reynolds's frequent, and often extended diatribes on an era he feels was entirely bereft of morality:

¹⁰² Emily Rena-Doza, 'Re-gendering the Domestic Novel in "David Copperfield"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 50 (2010), 811-829 (p. 814).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 815.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 822.

We declare most solemnly that we believe no age to have been more disgraced than the present one, and no country more culpable than our own. In this age of Bibles and country of glorious civilisation,—in the epoch of missions and land of refinement,—in this period of grand political reform, and nation of ten thousand philanthropic institutions—in the middle of this nineteenth century, and with all the advantages of profound peace—and, what is worst of all, in that great city which vaunts itself the metropolis of the civilised world, there are thousands of young children whose neglected, hopeless, and miserable condition can only be looked upon as an apprenticeship calculated to fill our streets with prostitutes of finished depravity—to people our gaols, hulks, and penal colonies with villains familiar with every phase of crime—and to supply our scaffolds with victims for the diversion of a rude and ruthless mob!¹⁰⁷

Unable to find solace in the placating role of the domestic sphere, Reynolds instead finds hope in ‘the industrious classes’ who constitute ‘the pillars of England’s greatness’.¹⁰⁸ In *The Chimes*, Trotty’s vision of revolution appears to share Reynolds’s sentiment, yet only one year later Dickens’s fiction barely alludes to class conflict.

Much like *David Copperfield*, *Dombey and Son* provides a further example of Dickens’s unwillingness to entertain political solutions. As Lyn Pykett suggests: ‘like so many Victorian novels, *Dombey and Son* resolves the social and historical problems it has confronted and the tragic possibilities it has suggested by transcending them, in this case by means of a recourse to an enhanced childhood state which is a return to innocence, to a world redeemed by love, grace, suffering, persistence, and good fortune’.¹⁰⁹ The novel, like *The Chimes*, is thematically concerned with the inevitability of change and the threat of stagnation that comes with a reluctance to embrace this. However, the impending change in *Dombey and Son* is not found in the sweeping tides of revolution, but rather in the regression of Mr Dombey to a child-like state. In this

¹⁰⁷ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 546.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 1047.

¹⁰⁹ Lyn Pykett, “‘Dombey and Son’: A Sentimental Family Romance”, *Studies in the Novel*, 19 (1987), 16-30 (p. 25).

regard the novel remains firmly rooted in notions of domestic philosophy, achieving ‘its resolution, wherein human nature is purified, raised to its highest moral dignity’.¹¹⁰ Secured ‘by means of that typically Dickensian pattern in which “bourgeois domesticity fabulously triumphs over greed and materialism”’,¹¹¹ this is a decidedly un-radical solution, especially relative to those Dickens hinted at in previous works. At the heart of *Dombey and Son* is the concept of money. When Paul asks his father about money and what it can do, Mr Dombey replies that ‘money caused us to be honoured, feared, respected, courted, and admired, and made us powerful and glorious in the eyes of all men; and how that it could, very often, even keep off death, for a long time together’.¹¹² For Mr Dombey, quite simply, money ‘can do anything’.¹¹³ Ultimately, however, Dombey succumbs to what David W. Toise describes as an alternate economy whose value is drawn from the ‘purely non-economic, deeply interpersonal love’,¹¹⁴ represented in the novel by Florence. Reynolds, comparatively, proffers an alternative, and arguably more radical, solution to Dombey’s rampant mammonism with figures such as Robert Macaire, who advocate the redistribution of wealth to those in greater need. Robbing the rich and redistributing the funds according to principles of Republican-driven egalitarianism, Reynolds’s solutions to excessive wealth are made more explicit and remain grounded in the public realm, where Dickens’s favouring of the private, domestic morality was arguably a shying away from tackling such issues head on.

Between 1844 and 1849 Dickens’s fiction chimed with middle-class conventional morality in its use of the home and the hearth as a comforting veil drawn over the brash and untamed public sphere. Dickens’s successful efforts to cultivate a domestic image of himself through these years are reflected firstly in a review published in 1846 by the *Morning Chronicle*, which recognised that Dickens had become ‘so peculiarly a writer of home life, a delineator of household gods, a painter of domestic scenes’,¹¹⁵ and then

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 27; Pykett is referencing Deidre David, *Fictions of Resolution* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. xi.

¹¹² *Dombey and Son*, p. 111.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ David W. Toise, “As Good as Nowhere”: Dickens’s “Dombey and Son”, the Contingency of Value, and Theories of Domesticity’, *Criticism*, 41 (1999), 323-348. (p. 327).

¹¹⁵ ‘Review of The Battle of Life, by Charles Dickens’, *Morning Chronicle* (24 December 1846), 5; This review was reprinted in Margaret Lane, ‘Dickens on the Hearth’, in *Dickens 1970: Centenary Essays*, ed. by Michael Slater (New

four years later by a similar review of *David Copperfield* published in 1850 in *Fraser's Magazine*, which claimed: 'There is not a fireside in the kingdom where the cunning fellow has not contrived to secure a corner for himself as one of the dearest, and by this time, one of the oldest friends of the family'.¹¹⁶ Reynolds, by contrast, fixated on removing the shroud of domesticity. In *The Mysteries of London* Reynolds argues: 'shall we be charged with vanity, if we declare that never until now has the veil been so rudely torn aside, nor the corruptions of London been so boldly laid bare?'¹¹⁷ For him, Dickens's turn towards domesticity would not solve the problem of the working classes and it certainly did not validate Dickens's recent anointment as 'champion of the poor'. Adopting a more radical political position in *The Mysteries of London*, Reynolds proclaims that 'in undertaking this work, we were determined at the outset to be daunted by no fear of offending the high and the powerful: we were resolved to misrepresent nothing for the purpose of securing ourselves the favour of those whom so many sycophants delight to bespatter with their sickly praises'.¹¹⁸

Throughout *The Mysteries* Reynolds relentlessly attacks the governing classes. With each chapter that marks a new year, Reynolds offers a scathing summary of the condition of the nation. In one such chapter, Reynolds excoriates the wealthy and the legislation which serves them as 'an oligarchy' which 'has cramped the privileges and monopolised the rights of a mighty nation. Behold the effects of its infamous Poor-Laws;—contemplate the results of the more atrocious Game-Laws;—mark the consequences of the Corn-Laws'.¹¹⁹ He rails against the Poor-Laws, explaining how the 'workhouse is a social dung-heap on which the wealthy and great fling those members of the community whose services they can no longer render available to their selfish purposes'.¹²⁰ He inveighs against the Game-Laws, describing them as 'a rack whereon the aristocracy loves to behold its victims writhing in tortures and where the sufferers are

York: Stein and Day, 1970), p. 171; See also Sally Ledger, 'Christmas', in *Dickens in Context*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Holly Furneaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 178-185 (p. 180).

¹¹⁶ 'Charles Dickens and *David Copperfield*' *Fraser's Magazine*, December 1850, rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 244.

¹¹⁷ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 927.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 415.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

compelled to acknowledge as a heinous crime a deed which has in reality no moral turpitude associated with it'.¹²¹ Finally, the Corn-Laws are denigrated as 'a broom which sweeps all the grain on the threshing-floor into one corner for the use of the rich, but which leaves the chaff scattered everywhere about for the millions of poor to use as best they may'.¹²² The solution, Reynolds proposes, resides in the inevitability of revolution by force, since 'the day must come, sooner or later, when those who thus dare trifle with this generous elasticity will be struck down by the violence of recoil'.¹²³

Between 1844 and 1848 Reynolds's fiction gave voice to his unequivocal position on revolution and the role of violence in effecting such change. Using the oppressed Italian state of Castelcicala, Reynolds draws clear lines of distinction between what is achievable, but also what is just:

The inevitable result must be the dethronement of the Grand Duke and the elevation of Alberto to the sovereign seat. 'That the project is practicable, I can believe,' said Markham; 'that it is just, I am also disposed to admit. But do you not think that a bloodless revolution might be effected?' 'We hope that we shall be enabled successfully to assert the popular cause without the loss of life,' returned Morosino. 'But this can only be done by means of an imposing force, and not by mere negotiation'.¹²⁴

During a period wherein 'the central "movement" of Dickens's novels 'might rather be said to be one of constancy to a childlike state', as exemplified by Paul and Florence (among others), or a regression, a return to or rediscovery of the lost innocence of childhood, as exemplified by Mr Dombey,¹²⁵ Reynolds meanwhile is effectively advocating physical force Chartism. By delineating between the types of Civil War, Reynolds provides his working-class readers with a template for revolution: 'Civil wars are excited by two distinct

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid, p. 416.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 137.

¹²⁵ Pykett, p. 17.

motives [...]. In one instance they are produced by the ambition of aspirants to power: in the other, they take their origin in the just wrath of a people driven to desperation by odious tyranny and wrong. The latter is a sacred cause'.¹²⁶ If, in 1844, Dickens's and Reynolds's politics were situated in a broadly similar position, between 1845 and 1850, their fiction pursued drastically different directions. It is my contention that Reynolds's political notoriety had a direct bearing on Dickens's retreat.

3.3 Reynolds complicates Dickens's position

To illustrate the impact of Reynolds's success on Dickens's trajectory from 1844, it must first be demonstrated that their rivalry, which had been developing from 1837, still existed. A comment made by Reynolds in 1848, which referred to *Dombey and Son*, serves as evidence that Reynolds retained an ongoing interest in his rival's work beyond 1844, while also suggesting that he, like Dickens, felt a shift in their dynamic as a result of the success of *The Mysteries of London*. Indeed, Reynolds's own perception of his literary standing as having risen in the world is reflected by a disparaging remark on Dickens's attempts in *Dombey and Son* to construct a more cohesive narrative structure. Reynolds printed a parody advertisement in which he wrote: 'LOST.- [...] the plot of the story of "Dombey and Son". No use to anybody but the owner, and not much to him. Whoever will address the same to Mr. C. Dickens, care of Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, shall receive a copy of the work, when finished'.¹²⁷ Thus, as Dickens looked to tie his narrative threads together with a greater degree of sophistication, Reynolds assumed the position of a supposedly superior writer, one already accomplished at producing lengthy narratives which expertly weaved disparate strands of plot around centralised themes. In fact, Reynolds's adeptness in narrative plotting had produced the popular adage 'for would-be writers in the period', which advised that they 'write character like Dickens and plot like Reynolds'.¹²⁸ It is plausible, therefore, that having displayed a skill set in *The Mysteries of*

¹²⁶ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 138.

¹²⁷ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Advertisements Extraordinary', *Reynolds's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 3 (1848), 170-171 (p. 170); A footnote explains that this was taken from *The Man in the Moon* (3 Jan 1847) 8.

¹²⁸ Anne Humpherys, 'An Introduction to G. W. M. Reynolds's "Encyclopedia of Tales"', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 123-133 (p. 123).

London that surpassed Dickens's at this stage of his career, Reynolds relished the chance to mock the efforts of the figure he previously shadowed.

Crucially, Dickens also monitored Reynolds's activities though these years. *Dombey and Son* contains within it a passage in which Dickens mocks the mysteries genre with which Reynolds had found popular and political success. Labelling the schoolteacher Mr Feeder as 'silly' for his indulgence in 'the craze for the novel of urban mysteries',¹²⁹ Paul observes how Mr Feeder 'spoke of the dark mysteries in London' and how he hoped to experience these for himself in the upcoming holidays. This leads Paul to perceive the schoolteacher as 'if he were the hero of some book of travels or wild adventure'.¹³⁰ Dickens's subtle jibe at the sensational tone of the genre was perhaps intended to demonstrate the sharp contrast between *The Mysteries* and the resonating emotional and psychological richness of his own text. Inferred in Dickens's mockery is the dismissal of Reynolds's choice of genre for the *Mysteries* as nothing more than a trivial hobby, something aimed at schoolboys and thus distinct from improving and respectable literary pursuits. Given, as we shall see, that Dickens would produce his own mysteries novel in the form of *Bleak House* within the next five years, this mockery is somewhat undercut and exists instead as further testament to the complex struggle between Dickens and Reynolds through these years. Nevertheless, the two examples illustrate that the authors remained very much on each other's radar from 1844.

By 1845 *The Mysteries of London* had already gained significant traction in the marketplace. By 1847 Reynolds referred to the 'immense circulation' of the novel, whose numbers were 'exceeding that of any published novel in the last twenty years', calling the serial 'a national tale'.¹³¹ Trefor Thomas describes the text as acquiring 'emblematic status in the raging cultural battle for the minds of the working classes'.¹³² Reynolds had clearly established himself as a viable commercial threat to Dickens, effectively achieving an objective he had established back in 1837 with *Pickwick Abroad*. As Richard Maxwell remarks, although

¹²⁹ Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, p. 166.

¹³⁰ *Dombey and Son*, p. 212.

¹³¹ *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas, p. vii.

¹³² *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas, p. vii.

‘Mr. Feeder’s aspirations’ in *Dombey and Son* ‘were hardly to be taken seriously, within a few years Reynolds seemed more of a threat’.¹³³ Maxwell is referring to the years in which Reynolds held a more prominent position in the Chartist movement during a period of Europe-wide political unrest, economic strain and deepening class tensions in Britain, all of which produced a subsequent spike in Chartist activity.

It was in 1848 that Reynolds spoke impromptu during a Chartist rally at Trafalgar Square after the organizer of the protest, Charles Cochrane, was ‘informed by the commissioners of the police that he could not hold such a meeting so close to Westminster’ as it violated the terms of the ‘so-called “Sidmouth’s Gagging Act”’, designed to prevent rioting and sedition more generally.¹³⁴ Grasping the opportunity to capitalize on the success of *The Mysteries of London*, Reynolds’s eloquent and impassioned performance transformed him from an author of popular fiction and radical journalism into ‘a radical celebrity’,¹³⁵ and a *bona fide* political figure. Reynolds played on his reputation as a radical popular author, a status attested to by the costermongers recorded in Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, who proclaimed: ‘Of all London, Reynolds is the most popular man among them’.¹³⁶ Feeding off this momentum as well as the energy from recent events in France, which had seen the overthrow of King Louis Philippe and the installment of the Second Republic, Reynolds ‘declared solidarity with the French people on behalf of the “English nation”’.¹³⁷ The performance was rapturously received and he was ‘carried in triumph back to his house in Wellington Street, where he addressed the crowd from his balcony’, attacking ‘those elements in the press which referred to the Chartists as “a mob, ruffians or riffraff”’.¹³⁸

Reynolds’s public stance was troublesome for a British government ‘already uneasy about the turmoil on the continent and the presence of so many radical refugees in London’,¹³⁹ and he became a marked man

¹³³ Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, p. 166.

¹³⁴ Mary L. Shannon, ‘Spoken Word and Printed Page: G. W. M. Reynolds and “The Charing-Cross Revolution”, 1848’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 18 (2014), III, para 4 <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.683>> [accessed 24 April 2019].

¹³⁵ Shannon, ‘Spoken Word and Printed Page’, I, para 2.

¹³⁶ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), p. 25.

¹³⁷ Shannon, ‘Spoken Word’, I, para 2.

¹³⁸ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. xii.

¹³⁹ Shannon, ‘Spoken Word’, I, para 2.

thereafter. Maxwell is correct when he remarks that the threat posed by Reynolds increased or at least became real and tangible in the eyes of the governing classes with his involvement in the Chartist movement. Reynolds continued to pledge his allegiance to the revolutionary cause when in 1849 he published a detailed biography of Louis Kossuth, otherwise known as ‘the master-spirit of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution’.¹⁴⁰ However, specific to Reynolds’s impact on Dickens, it is my view that it was the success and the radical tenor of *The Mysteries of London* which had initially hindered Dickens’s ability to pursue the more radical instincts in his own writing, a currency he had been trading in and developing through *Oliver Twist*, *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Chimes*.

Between 1844 and 1850 Reynolds’s fiction was to undergo a heavy and relentless barrage of critical derision designed to discredit his status as an author and a serious political voice. Lampooned by the press to the extent that it became, for those authors around him, as Thomas Clark termed it, ‘an insult’ to be compared with ‘the author of the “Mysteries of the Court of London”’,¹⁴¹ it is my contention that Reynolds’s status, even by 1845, was already problematic for Dickens. As earlier chapters discussed, Reynolds built his early career in Dickens’s image and the two shared broadly similar political views as well as a common penchant for the melodramatic mode mixed with an urban gothic realism. With each passing year that Reynolds accumulated further attention and scrutiny, Dickens increasingly ran the risk of being conflated with a notorious figure during a time fraught with political tension. Such tension was reflected in a literary market with increasingly starker class lines. As authors within the Condition of England debate appealed to the loyalties of either the working-class, Chartist cause, or the bourgeois calls for reform, Dickens’s continued ability to appeal to a mixed market, across such charged political boundaries, became more problematic.

As the previous section illustrated, Dickens can be seen as having trodden a precarious line between radical politics and respectable, ‘improving’ literature, which Reynolds then ran roughshod over with the more

¹⁴⁰ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. xxiii.

¹⁴¹ Clark, *A Letter Addressed to G. W. M. Reynolds*, p. 35.

explicit radicalism of *The Mysteries of London*. Reynolds was ‘more direct in his portrayal of violence and sexual passion than contemporary mores allowed’,¹⁴² and his politics, as Ian McCalman describes, were more overtly shaped by a ‘hostility to capitalists and competition’, with roots in ‘the basic Paineite idea that the English social system had evolved out of plundering, cheating and oppression’.¹⁴³ Where Dickens had been labelled champion of the poor by the *Northern Star*, and accused by the Tory press of pandering to radical sympathies, Reynolds experienced similar accusations, having been called ‘a rabble-raiser, the “can on the mad dog’s tail,”’ and ‘a traitor to his class’.¹⁴⁴ His dangerous reputation, however, quickly eclipsed that of Dickens, and in all likelihood began to cause Dickens a degree of consternation.

Though Dickens’s early fiction had similarly embraced a number of the themes dealt with in *The Mysteries of London*, themes which were now causing deep concerns about Reynolds’s immoral influence, it follows that Dickens may have begun to fear that continuing in the same vein as *The Chimes* would encourage readers and critics alike to perceive similarities between his work and Reynolds’s. Rather than a validation of his radical motives, the title of champion of the poor, bestowed upon him by a radical arm of the press, may instead have been regarded as something of a curse. Indeed, as Reynolds established himself as an ardent supporter of the Chartist cause, he was similarly confirming an affinity with Dickens. As the political tensions between the classes deepened during the 1840s, Dickens was perhaps increasingly fearful that a continuation of his radicalism would now not only unsettle his middle-class readers, but crucially, would run the risk of his work being conflated with Reynolds’s, as a fellow advocate of working-class radicalism. Margaret Dalziel observed that while Reynolds was ‘the most popular writer of our time’ he was also a ‘notorious writer’.¹⁴⁵ This proved a combination of such potency, corralling a mass readership that Reynolds’s politics then threatened to turn towards revolution and notions of Republicanism, that it provoked a concerted cultural effort to suppress the extent of his influence. Consequently, it seems plausible

¹⁴² *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. x.

¹⁴³ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 200.

¹⁴⁴ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. vi.

¹⁴⁵ Margaret Dalziel, *Popular Fiction One Hundred Years Ago: An Unexplored Tract of Literary History* (Cohen and West: London, 1957), p. 36.

to suggest that the man who so quickly acquired a reputation as a dangerous radical and a debased pornographer was also a man from whom Dickens would seek some distance, especially considering their shared history and their similar writing style.¹⁴⁶

In 1851 a Parliamentary Select Committee was convened to discuss ‘the present state and operation of the law relative to newspaper stamps’.¹⁴⁷ As part of the proceedings an interviewee named Abel Heywood was brought before the Committee in his capacity as a bookseller in Manchester. Heywood’s testimony provides a rare, but significant account of Reynolds’s popularity as well as reflecting the general cultural anxiety surrounding him through this period. In his account, Heywood reluctantly ‘report[ed] higher sales for the *Mysteries* than for any other publication’.¹⁴⁸ His ‘testimony [was] marked by a determination to downplay the popularity of Reynolds’s work’,¹⁴⁹ describing the sales figure as ‘just 1,500’, despite Dickens’s rival publication, *Household Words*, only achieving sales of 600.¹⁵⁰ Remarking on how he felt the sales of the serial acted as ‘a test for the taste of readers generally’, Heywood claimed: ‘I believe that you could not educate people so that there could not be found 10,000, 15,000, or 20,000 of people in this country disposed to buy it’.¹⁵¹ Reynolds’s rapid ascent to print popularity, as reflected by the findings of the Select Committee, coupled with his expanding political influence and notoriety meant he quickly assumed a position that could be damaging to Dickens’s established reputation. The political radicalism put forth in *The Mysteries of London* was increasingly of a style Dickens was uncomfortable with, or unable to pursue with equal enthusiasm or candidness, especially if he wished to maintain his middle-class readership. As

¹⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that the Chartist support Dickens had won with *The Chimes* had begun to wane by 1848. Although ‘*The Northern Star* did not choose to attack Dickens for his lack of sympathy with their activities’ in 1847, able to separate the negative portrayal of the Chartists by Dickens’s employer *The Daily News* from Dickens himself, they grew tired of his subsequent fiction, which they described as ‘the trash coined from the muddled brains of Charles Dickens’. This supposes Dickens’s fiction intentionally looked to distance itself from the title he was awarded in 1844. Peyrouton, N. C. ‘Dickens and the Chartists. II’, *Dickensian*, 60 (1964), 152-161.

¹⁴⁷ House of Commons, *Report from the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps; with the proceedings of the Committee* (18 July 1851)

<https://archive.org/stream/reportfromselect19grea/reportfromselect19grea_djvu.txt> [accessed 15 April 2019].

¹⁴⁸ Jessica Hindes, ‘Revealing Bodies: Knowledge, Power and Mass Market Fictions in G. W. M. Reynolds’s *Mysteries of London*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2015), p. 12.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁵⁰ *Parliamentary Papers, Report of the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), p. 374.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 378.

Louis James explains, ‘Reynolds had a different perspective’ from that of Dickens and other middle-class writers whose ethos was based upon ‘understanding and reconciliation’.¹⁵² Reynolds instead inveighed ‘against the wrongs of privilege and wealth inflicted on the exploited poor’ and he used *The Mysteries of London* to effectively expose this system as perverse.¹⁵³

As Dickens’s writing became increasingly associated with respectability and morality, these same qualities were felt to be entirely lacking in Reynolds’s writing. As the publication *The Bookseller* summarised:

In too many instances this clever writer has, we regret to say, administered the poison and forgotten the remedy – pandered to the readers’ morbid love of excitement, without attempting to point the moral that should always accompany the descriptions of successful vice or splendid villainy.¹⁵⁴

It is my view, however, that Reynolds’s morality was in fact very apparent, and, for the most part, explicitly drawn. He was not indulging in vice only for the sake of the readers’ ‘morbid love of excitement’, but was consistently placing the blame for social inequity squarely at the feet of the aristocratic classes. Humpherys proposes that ‘the best writers of the period who use the “contrasts” theme – writers like Dickens, Mayhew, and Reynolds – project at an abstract level a more complex organization of the city’.¹⁵⁵ What troubled the elite and the respectable press of the period concerning Reynolds’s work, was that his ‘complex organization of the city’ was connected by the disconcerting force of crime. The *Glasgow Examiner*, for example, reviewed the serial as entirely preoccupied with crime, writing: ‘In *The Mysteries of London* all is crime – crime – and though the morbid state of people’s taste in the present day may render such a work very popular, the effects on their morals must be far from beneficial’.¹⁵⁶ While much of Reynolds’s oeuvre,

¹⁵² *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. vi.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Obituary for G. W. M. Reynolds’, *The Bookseller: A Newspaper of British and Foreign Literature*, 260 (1879), 601; Upon Reynolds’s death *The Bookseller* re-ran this excerpt in Reynolds’s obituary. It was originally printed in July 1868, p. 488.

¹⁵⁵ Anne Humpherys, ‘The Geometry of the Modern City: G. W. M. Reynolds and “The Mysteries of London”’, *Browning Institute Studies*, 11 (1983) 69-80 (p. 74).

¹⁵⁶ ‘Biographical Sketches of Eminent Living Authors: Mr G. W. M. Reynolds’, *Glasgow Examiner*, 84 (1845), 1; The remainder of the review in the *Glasgow Examiner* waxed lyrical on Reynolds’s prestige as a writer, drawing

at least prior to 1850, is preoccupied with crime, such reviews are blind to Reynolds's purpose, which was to show the poor as virtuous and that their morality was lost to the conditions in which they were forced, by a corrupt society, to exist.

Reynolds's principal vehicle for mobilizing crime in the novel is through the terrifying character of the Resurrection Man. Described as having a 'cadaverous countenance', the Resurrection Man not only moves across the boundaries constructed between the rich and the poor, but seamlessly glides between the living and the dead, moving amongst the graves in the churchyard like an 'animated corpse'.¹⁵⁷ In this sense, the serial's chief villain is a sinister pre-figuring of the role of the fog in *Bleak House* which emanates from Chancery, ensnaring and then choking the life from the victims caught in its clutches. Anne Humpherys describes *Bleak House* as employing a 'rope plot',¹⁵⁸ which connects the lives of the characters together using a central thread, or theme. If the fog performs this role in *Bleak House* the Resurrection Man performs a similar function in *The Mysteries*, his crimes acting as the rope which ties otherwise disparate characters and plot threads together. In Reynolds's own words: 'crime places the menial upon a footing with the master, and compels the haughty aristocrat to brook the insolence of the vulgar desperado'.¹⁵⁹ Reynolds's leveling of the social hierarchy clearly proved unsettling to the respectable classes, evidenced by the objections voiced by critics over the serial's lack of morality.

comparisons between Reynolds and Ainsworth that were then repeated in the subsequent issue, which profiled Dickens. 'Biographical Sketches of Eminent Living Authors: Mr Charles Dickens, *Glasgow Examiner*, 85 (1845), 1; Despite this more positive perception of Reynolds, a reputation as debasing and immoral clung to him until the middle of the twentieth century, as evidenced by Dalziel's remark that Reynolds's 'whole view of human nature and society' is 'fundamentally cynical. It is impossible in reading him, to avoid the conviction that he relishes the description of vice and crime'. Dalziel, p. 43; As an emblematic figure of the cheap press, Reynolds was also broadly subject to reviews such as those published by the *Saturday Review* in June 1856, which denigrated the English press in general regarding its 'long accounts of crime and criminals, [written] professedly with the object of denouncing the hypocrisy of society...but really for the sake of pandering to that prurient curiosity about wickedness which is one of the lowest appetites of human nature'. 'Our Civilisation', *Saturday Review*, 28 June 1856, p. 195.

¹⁵⁷ Sara Hackenberg, 'Vampires and Resurrection Men: The Perils and Pleasures of the Embodied Past in 1840s Sensational Fiction', *Victorian Studies*, 52 (2009), 63-75 (p. 64).

¹⁵⁸ Anne Humpherys, 'Generic Strands and Urban Twists: The Victorian Mysteries Novel', *Victorian Studies*, 34 (1991), 455-472.

¹⁵⁹ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, pp. 897-898.

Reynolds uses crime and the omnipresent Resurrection Man as a connecting force in the novel in order to suggest that society functions through a series of criminal activities and, moreover, to suggest that these activities originate with the governing classes. Thus, morality is not entirely absent in Reynolds's work, but is suppressed beneath the immorality disseminated by the wealthy and the elite. This type of subversion is reflected in Reynolds's depiction of the police. Dickens, for the most part, was respectful of the police and exhibited a fascination with the work of the newly commissioned detectives, best exemplified by Mr Bucket of *Bleak House*.¹⁶⁰ His view of this new profession, as Collins remarks, was 'dramatic, indeed romantic',¹⁶¹ 'but he also has a respect and even a fellow-feeling for a notable member of this new profession who is, like himself, a self-made man, a dealer in secrets, and an unraveler of mysteries'.¹⁶² Reynolds, by contrast, was disparaging about all strains of the law, at least in England.¹⁶³ By way of introducing the legal framework operating in London, the early chapters of *The Mysteries of London* subtly conflate the police with the activities of the thieves they are supposedly apprehending and deterring. Following the break-up of a gambling ring, which the novel's hero Richard Markham had been naively coerced into visiting, Richard is dragged to the station house where he witnesses the curious behaviours of the police:

These men could talk of nothing but themselves or their pursuits: they appeared to live in a world of policeism; all their ideas were circumscribed to station-houses, magistrates' offices, prisons, and criminal courts of justice. Their discourse was moreover garnished with the slang terms of thieves;

¹⁶⁰ Mr Bucket was based on Dickens's shadowing of the 'sagacious' and 'vigilant' Inspector Field. His article, entitled 'On Duty with Inspector Field', depicts the shrewd inspector with a 'roving eye' as having an imperious command of London's streets and an almost infallible authority. Charles Dickens, 'On Duty With Inspector Field', *Household Words*, 3 (1851), 265-270; Dickens penned an earlier article, also in *Household Words*, with a similarly respectful and admiring tone, entitled, 'Detective Police'. Printed in two parts in 1850, the article praises the formation of the new 'Force', which is 'well chosen and trained, proceeds so systematically and quietly, does its business in such a workmanlike manner, and is always so calmly and steadily engaged in the service of the public, that the public do not know enough of it, to know a tithe of its usefulness'. This newly established branch of the police is effusively praised as 'ever on the watch, with their wits stretched to the utmost, these officers have, from day to day and year to year, to set themselves against every novelty and trickery and dexterity that the combined imaginations of all the lawless rascals in England can devise' Charles Dickens, 'Detective Police', *Household Words*, 18 (1850), 409-414; 20 (1850), 457-460.

¹⁶¹ Collins, Philip. *Dickens and Crime* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962), p. 209.

¹⁶² Norman Page, *Bleak House: A Novel of Connections* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, A Division of G. K. Hall & Co., 1990), p. 39.

¹⁶³ It is notable, however, that Reynolds's depictions of the law operating in France are typically far more humane and progressive.

they could not utter a sentence without interpolating a swell-mob phrase or a Newgate jest. They seemed to be so familiar with crime (though not criminal themselves) that they could not devote a moment to the contemplation of virtue.¹⁶⁴

The ‘world of policeism’ slowly merges with the world of the criminal as their language is infused with ‘Newgate jest’ and ‘the slang terms of thieves’. Only moments later Richard describes himself as being ‘at the mercy of the caprice of ignorant, tyrannical, and hard-hearted men’,¹⁶⁵ still referring to the two policemen in whose custody he remained. A few chapters later a policeman enters the boozing-ken, the favourite locale of the criminal and the petty thief, and is described as seeming ‘well acquainted with many of the individuals there, and laughed heartily at the jokes’.¹⁶⁶ The distinction between the law and crime, the policeman and the criminal, is swiftly blurred as Reynolds establishes the notion that nothing is as it appears.¹⁶⁷

There are a number of examples across the serial in which Reynolds reverses expectations in a similar fashion. One telling description is the passage detailing the conditions inside Bethlem Hospital, an institution representing the ‘vast improvements which civilisation has introduced into the modern management of the insane’.¹⁶⁸ The institution represents the antithesis of Newgate, where cruelty and debasing conditions appeared to preside.¹⁶⁹ We experience the hospital through the eyes of Henry Holford,

¹⁶⁴ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 93.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 96.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.134.

¹⁶⁷ This contrasts with Dickens’s depiction of the police, particularly in his article ‘Detective Police’, which acts like the reverse of Reynolds’s Dark House. Rather than criminals gathering round to retell tales of past crimes, Dickens gathers the Detective Police and six sergeants in his offices at Wellington Street with each relating their capturing of notorious criminals using astute detection techniques. Some stories even culminate ‘amidst general applause’ as the officers display an ‘amicable brotherhood’. In fact, the officers only ever ‘come in to the assistance of each other – not to the contradiction’. ‘Detective Police’, p. 413; Crucially, Dickens describes Inspector Field, not as subtly merging with the criminals around him but standing out as the ‘Sultan of the place. Every thief cowers before him, like a schoolboy before his master’. ‘On Duty with Inspector Field’, 64 (1851), 266.

¹⁶⁸ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 844.

¹⁶⁹ In his Sketch, ‘A Visit to Newgate’, Dickens describes Newgate as a ‘gloomy depository of the guilt and misery of London’. Dickens is rendered ‘horror stricken in vain, for the recollections of it will haunt us’. Describing the ‘condemned pew’ as ‘a huge black pen, in which the wretched people, who are singled out for death, are placed on the Sunday preceding their execution’, Dickens then reveals his hope that more humane practices would prevail: ‘At one time – and at no distant period either – the coffins of the men about to be executed, were placed in that pew, upon the seat by their side, during the whole service. It may seem incredible, but it is true. Let us hope that the increased spirit

convicted and diagnosed as insane following his attempted assassination of Victoria and Albert. Reynolds's description stresses that Holford is of sound mind, and moreover, as he encounters other allegedly 'insane' inmates, that the insanity each supposedly suffers from does not sound like madness at all. The first inmate, struggling against the constraints of his straitjacket, declares that 'the nation is falling',¹⁷⁰ a statement of no discernible irrationality given the nature of society depicted by Reynolds throughout the serial; neither does his supplementary claim that 'only I can save it' appear so ridiculous, given that the novel follows Richard Markham's almost single-handed orchestration of the liberation of the Italian state of Castelcicala.¹⁷¹ Reynolds then, confronts the more prosperous classes with their own immorality by consistently demonstrating that criminality, the origins of which reside in the upper echelons of society, is the driving force behind a supposedly prospering nation, while those marginalized are in fact conscious of, and victimised by, society's sickness.

Reynolds performs a reversal of a number of characters in the novel in order to produce the same disconcerting effect. By the middle of the second volume we have seen the respected and pious rector, Reginald Tracy descend into a lecherous sexual deviant and ultimately to a murderer. As a point of contrast, Mr Smithers, the local hangman with a sinister enthusiasm for his civic duty (echoing Ned Dennis, the Hangman in *Barnaby Rudge*), whose character was reviled as the very devil, evoking fear in passers-by, is then reformed under the influence and virtue of Richard Markham into a figure of renewed faith in mankind, determined to repent of the ill treatment of his daughter. Malcolm Andrews writes that the Victorian middle classes were largely suspicious or uncomfortable with this type of fluidity of identity or character, since it refuted 'the code of behaviour' that required a gentleman to 'bear himself with "external formality and constraint"'.¹⁷² This behaviour 'impressed itself partly by disparaging cultures where such manifestations

of civilisation and humanity which abolished this frightful and degrading custom, may extend itself to other usages equally barbarous'. 'A Visit to Newgate', in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, I: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers*, 1833-39, ed. by Michael Slater (London: J. M. Dent, 1994), pp. 199-210 (p. 206).

¹⁷⁰ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol II, p. 845.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Malcolm Andrews, *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves: Dickens and the Public Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 39.

of self-control were not observed' and was also 'stigmatised by association with the theatre'.¹⁷³ As the Victorian era underwent a rapid process of professionalisation, accompanied by specific professional discourses, the expectation that developed in tandem was that of 'emotional restraint'.¹⁷⁴ Coupled with an interest in upward social mobility these professions suffered from an 'anxiety about pronunciation', which was in turn 'associated with anxieties about social class',¹⁷⁵ since this had the potential to betray unfavourable social origins. Thus, the 'polymorphousness' exhibited in Reynolds's writings, in which characters assume disguises, work as imposters, or stray from the definitional boundaries of their character or profession, all threaten the Victorian sense of self by highlighting 'the potential diversity of selves of which the single identity might be composed'.¹⁷⁶ Of course, Dickens's writing exhibited this same multiplicity of voices, dialogues and identities, all of which were discomforting to the Victorian sense of stability. The idea of unknown, hidden or shifting identities threatened the notion of stability required to maintain order. One consequence of such fear was that many 'reverent Victorians shunned theatricality as the ultimate, deceitful mobility, since it connotes not only lies, but a fluidity of character that decomposes the uniform integrity of the self'.¹⁷⁷ The crucial difference, in my view, is that while Dickens's writing worked to placate any middle-class anxieties with a heavy impetus placed on morality, Reynolds's *Mysteries* continually exploited this popular prejudice as he performed frequent subversions of characters, or of institutional behaviours like that of the police, in order to unsettle or undermine any sense of security or continuity.

Reynolds's willingness to task authority and subvert social order in his fiction quickly saw the respectable press turn against him. While his fiction was, relative to the period, undeniably racy, the respectable press felt it to be sullied and damaging in an era concerned with 'improvement'. If 'the keyword of the 1840s was moral earnestness',¹⁷⁸ the 1850s represented the peak of propriety, 'the era of high Victorian

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 107.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 259.

¹⁷⁷ Nina Auerbach, *Private Theatricals: The Lives of the Victorians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ Louis James, *The Victorian Novel* (Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2006), p. 15.

morality'.¹⁷⁹ Heading towards this era of heightened morality, Reynolds's lasciviously-depicted women, the infusion of French Jacobinism and deep indignation towards the aristocracy clashed with the values of 'polite' society.¹⁸⁰ His 'combination of soft-core eroticism, Gothic sensationalism and radical politics not only spoke to the desires of the new reading audience, but fit neatly into popular prejudices about mass-market fiction'.¹⁸¹ It is, therefore, plausible, that by the latter half of the 1840s Dickens would have sought to maintain a distance between himself and Reynolds, as the latter, both in his writing and his public political positioning, increasingly came to represent a more pronounced and explicit version of the darker aspects of Dickens's own character. Steven Carver in fact describes Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* as reading like 'Dickens at his darkest and most Manichaean'.¹⁸² Carver's analysis, however, ought to be extended, since Dickens is likely to have perceived in Reynolds, particularly during his rapid ascent to political prominence, a more sinister and radical mirror image of himself, a figure who indulged the aspects of his own character he had embraced when spreading the anarchy of *Barnaby Rudge* or giving vent to the polemical fire of *The Chimes* or even 'Sunday Under Three Heads' years earlier. Reynolds was consistently and increasingly bolder, politically, than Dickens, and was certainly less equivocal in assigning blame. Dickens's recognition that Reynolds was a sinister, darker version of himself was, I argue, a plausible contributing factor in the cultivation of a less polemical and radical style in his fiction. This is chiefly demonstrated by his rather more subdued ambitions for *The Cricket on the Hearth* in 1845, wishing it to be received as a 'cosy and interesting' tale.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 19.

¹⁸⁰ Jessica Hindes has offered a defence against Reynolds's depiction of nude women in *The Mysteries of London* as empowering, as in the example of Ellen Monroe, who is driven to modelling in order to earn money after her reputation has been tarnished. Initially ashamed of her 'naked bust, and naked arms, and naked legs—the feeling of shame gradually wore away'. Ellen was paid 'handsomely' for her work and shortly thereafter, her likeness begins to sell, and her picture was 'set in a very costly frame, to hang in the most conspicuous place' in the mansion of a wealthy art patron. Eventually, completing a shift from semi-pornography to highbrow art, Ellen's image was preserved, 'in all attitudes, and on many plates, in the private cabinet of a photographer at one of the metropolitan Galleries of Practical Science', as Reynolds blurs the lines between high and low culture. *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 482-483, 488; See Jessica Hindes, 'Revealing Bodies: Knowledge, Power and Mass Market Fictions in G. W. M. Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2015).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 12.

¹⁸² Stephen James Carver, 'The Wrongs and Crimes of the Poor: The Urban Underworld of *The Mysteries of London* in context', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 147-160 (p. 150).

3.4 ‘Reynolds got ahead’ and ‘Dickens kept his distance’

In 1977 Richard Maxwell published an essay entitled ‘G. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and the Mysteries of London’, in which he identifies a crucial but little-acknowledged shift in the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds that occurred between 1844 and 1852. Maxwell was the first modern critic to observe not just the similarity between *Bleak House* and the *Mysteries of London*, but to implicitly draw attention to their chronology. In the article he describes the plot of a lesser known Reynolds novel, *The Seamstress; or, The White Slaves of England* (1850),¹⁸³ as featuring

a Duke who resides often in London, his somewhat younger Duchess who has a secret love affair in her past, the black-mailing French lady’s maid of the Duchess, a scheming lawyer who has worked his way into the confidences of the Duke [...]—as well as various lower-class characters who become entangled with the aristocratic group.¹⁸⁴

This description could easily be mistaken for a summary of *Bleak House*. There exists a definite similarity between the Duchess of Belmont and the tortured Lady Dedlock and, to a slightly lesser degree, between the Duke of Belmont and Sir Leicester Dedlock. In Reynolds’s *Seamstress*, the martyred and chivalrous Mr Lavenham suffers according to his inferior social status which prevents him from pursuing his love for the Duchess of Belmont and forces him to withdraw into a life of sacrificial anonymity and pecuniary struggles.

¹⁸³ As well similarities to Dickens’s *Bleak House*, *The Seamstress* also appears to echo Kingsley’s 1850 novel *Alton Locke*, with its proselytising on the ills of an exploitative sweated tailor’s trade. The chapter entitled ‘The Temptations of the Seamstress’ reads remarkably like Kingsley’s tract *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*. Reeling off a statistically driven diatribe, Reynolds claims: ‘Of the thirty thousand females living in London ostensibly by the needle and slop-work, not less than twelve thousand are *under* twenty years of age; - and nine-tenths of those poor girls are plunged into the vortex of vice before they scarcely know what vice means! Eighty thousand daughters of crime walk the streets of London’. True to form, Reynolds leaves no doubt as to where the blame and sympathy ought to lie, generating pathos around fallen women like Miss Barnet, as she appeals to Virginia for her understanding: ‘I could not make up my mind to die for virtue’s sake: and so I live in comparative comfort on what priests and prudes may denominate the wages of vice. Well—but these wages are better than starving virtue—and human nature is too frail to hesitate long between alternatives. Let those who blame me, act justly and blame society. I am one of its victims—not one of its modellers. The modellers of society are the rich, the wealthy, and the indolent great;—and the poor, miserable, starving workers are the victims’. G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Seamstress; or, The White Slave of England* (London: John Dicks, 1853), p. 93; p. 44.

¹⁸⁴ Richard C. Maxwell, Jr., ‘G. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and the Mysteries of London’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32 (1977), 188-213 (p. 198).

This is a close parallel with Nemo's plight in *Bleak House*, a former Army officer fallen on hard times, working as a copier for Mr Snagsby and battling opium addiction. Furthermore, both plots are centred on the products of their respective and tragic romances, namely Virginia Mordaunt in *The Seamstress* and Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*. These illegitimate children both toil amongst the working classes as an unfortunate consequence of their hidden heritage (albeit Esther's situation is made rather more comfortable by her appointment at Bleak House under the paternal Mr Jarndyce).

Maxwell observes that 'specific plot resemblances to *Bleak House* can be found in Reynolds's *The Seamstress; or The White Slaves of England*',¹⁸⁵ and, while '*The Seamstress* is much less wide-ranging than either *The Mysteries of London* or *Bleak House*', it demonstrates superbly the degree to which both writers worked with the same kind of material'.¹⁸⁶ Maxwell's primary intention is 'to show that Dickens and Reynolds share certain literary conventions',¹⁸⁷ which, as previous chapters have demonstrated, is apparent from the outset of their careers. It was these common fascinations and literary proclivities that originally rendered Dickens, with his greater popularity, a natural target for Reynolds's imitations. What is, in my view, of greater significance is the implication that by 1852 Dickens was actively borrowing from Reynolds's work, signalling a remarkable reversal of their established dynamic. Given that their rivalry was largely predicated on Reynolds acting as plagiariser to Dickens, it would be a fair assumption that Reynolds had once again dipped into the Dickens canon to source material for his novel, yet the reverse is now true. The ambiguity of Maxwell's statement slightly obscures the fact (since *Bleak House* necessarily follows the *Seamstress*) that the dynamic between the two is now reversed with Dickens borrowing from Reynolds. Maxwell's phrasing is perhaps a reflection of the novelty of this idea which, in 1977, contradicted nearly a century of criticism establishing Reynolds as a persistent plagiariser. The article subsequently says little else on the act of imitation or on the point of chronology.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Maxwell, 'G. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and the Mysteries of London', p. 198.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁸⁸ It is interesting to note Maxwell's assertion that, in *Bleak House*, 'the residual seriousness of the mysteries novel is one basis for a conspicuous literary success'. Despite Maxwell's implication that the popularity of Dickens's novel of 1852 was a product of the ground work laid for the mysteries genre by authors like Reynolds in the 1840s, too few critics identified the connection for this to be deemed conspicuous. Certainly, little appears to have been said on the

The notion that Dickens would have sourced his material from a figure he so despised would have been slightly unsavoury or even unpalatable to his admirers. Indeed, the legacy of this type of critical lop-sidedness is still noteworthy, as evidenced by Paul Schlicke's review of Anne Humphrys's and Louis James's study on Reynolds in 2009, in which he writes of Reynolds's unsurpassed sales figures in the period: 'it is disconcerting to be reminded that Dickens was not the most popular author of his day'.¹⁸⁹ The Dickens Fellowship proves an interesting case in point for this sense of discomfort regarding any threat posed to Dickens's legacy as a popular author. At its inception thirty-two years after Dickens's death, the Fellowship was comprised of a collection of enthusiastic, often amateur, Dickensians. Catherine Malcolmson describes how the Dickens Fellowship sought to counter the potential threat of a downturn in critical and public opinion, both from an academy marching towards modernism and a public tired of stifling Victorian morality.¹⁹⁰ In their enthusiasm, however, which Malcolmson suggests already reflected a 'particularly uncritical appreciation of Dickens' and instead supposes 'that his following was guided less by reasoned, scholarly appreciation than by an emotional response to his works', the Fellowship reacted in the twentieth century according to a relatively unfounded fear of Dickens's fading relevance, and suffered from regular losses of objectivity.¹⁹¹ As a result, they 'began to present Dickens as a figure beyond reproach'.¹⁹²

The actions of the Dickens Fellowship illustrate both the depth of Dickens's cultural permanence, as well

notion that it was in fact Dickens on the wrong side of the plagiarist argument through these years. Maxwell, 'G. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and the Mysteries of London', p. 198.

¹⁸⁹ Paul Schlicke, 'On a Study of G. M. W. [sic] Reynolds', *Dickensian*, 477 (2009), 66-68. (p. 63).

¹⁹⁰ Catherine Malcolmson, 'Constructing Charles Dickens: 1900-1940' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 2012), p. 5.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 80; A similar example concerning Wilkie Collins's relationship to Dickens helps to illustrate the obstinance of avid Dickensians and the strategies they developed for dealing with criticism that might potentially discredit his name or writing. In 1924 J. W. T. Ley wrote of a supposed shortcoming in Dickens's later novel writing: 'When Dickens gave himself up to plot his spontaneity disappeared [...]. And in all this I trace the Wilkie Collins influence'. J. W. T. Ley, 'Wilkie Collins's Influence upon Dickens,' *Dickensian*, 20 (1924), 65-66; Robert P. Ashely complained of such criticism, that such 'militant Dickensians lost no opportunity to bewail the Dickens-Collins relationship', to such an extent that the 'fact that Collins seems to have influenced Dickens as much as Dickens influenced Collins made the younger novelist...guilty of a kind of heresy'. Robert P. Ashely, 'Wilkie Collins and the Dickensians', *Dickensian*, 49 (1953), 64; For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between Dickens and Wilkie Collins, see Lillian Nayder, *Unequal Partners: Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 4.

as the loyalty, and sometimes biases, fostered among his admirers. Robert Patten reminds us that Dickens in fact began the process of securing his own popular cultural legacy, since he ‘not only wrote, he wrote himself’.¹⁹³ Juliet John similarly describes Dickens as cognisant of his position in the ‘first age of mass culture’ as he ‘consciously engineered’ his popularity in order to negotiate these contextual shifts and ensure an ‘endurable retrospect’.¹⁹⁴ Fundamental to the success of this legacy was ‘the *image* of a universal Dickens’,¹⁹⁵ yet Malcolmson’s study illuminates how the Fellowship didn’t simply contribute ‘in a substantial way to secure Dickens’s cultural legacy [...], they also shaped this legacy, constructing a cultural icon based on a mythologized version of Dickens which met the needs and objectives of their organisation’.¹⁹⁶ I agree with Malcolmson that the efforts of the Fellowship have, at times, tended to dismiss or neglect figures who had a more significant impact on Dickens’s career than has otherwise been recognised.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, the critical neglect of Reynolds stands as a case in point.

¹⁹³ Robert L. Patten, *Charles Dickens and ‘Boz’: The Birth of the Industrial-Age Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 21.

¹⁹⁴ Juliet John, *Dickens and Mass Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 14; p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁶ Malcolmson, ‘Constructing Charles Dickens: 1900-1940’, p. 7; Lillian Nayder’s biography of Catherine Hogarth lends further credence to the construction of Dickens’s image and legacy as resulting in the marginalisation of crucial figures in his life and career. Nayder’s study details the life of the much maligned and tacitly suffering wife of Dickens. Describing Dickens’s own efforts to suppress Catherine’s narrative as ‘self-serving fiction’, following Dickens’s dissemination, upon the dissolution of their marriage, material that publicly disparaged Catherine as a wife and mother, Nayder describes how, through the sheer force of his fame and personality and his ‘tendency to seize control of narratives’, Catherine was relegated to the fringes of Dickens’s biography. ‘Eclipsed by that of a much younger woman, Ellen Ternan’, the teenage actress and object of Dickens’s mid-life infatuation, Catherine became a version of herself constructed by Dickens to guard against the threat of a public scandal and to protect his own unimpeachable reputation as an arbiter of morality and respectability, even in posterity. The criticism of Catherine, perpetuated by critical admirers of Dickens, helped edge Catherine further into the shadow that the ‘Inimitable’ cast across the Victorian era. Lillian Nayder, *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 1; For broader studies on the construction of the Victorians see Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians*. (London: Faber and Faber, 2001); Sweet observes ‘the reciprocal construction between contemporary critics and the Victorians based upon the needs of both eras to self-identify’, asserting that while the ‘Victorians invented us [...] we in our turn invented the Victorians’. Sweet, p. xii; See also John Gardiner, *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect* (London: Hamledon and London, 2002); Gardiner believes that the ‘inventions’ that have shaped Dickens’s legacy have resulted in a version of Dickens that ‘looms large in the imagination and in our retrospective sense of the Victorian age’. Dickens, he claims, has subsequently become ‘crucial to our sense of the Victorians. Indeed, it may even be felt that Dickens in some way is key to the Victorian age; “Dickensian” often illuminates “Victorian” rather than vice-versa’. Gardiner, p. 161; Both Sweet’s and Gardiner’s scholarship detail the degree to which contemporary perceptions of the Victorians are based upon this type of construction, which, over time, threaten to compound omissions and biases.

¹⁹⁷ Humphry House warned against the ‘mild complacency’ creeping into historical revisions as early as 1941, as Dickens began to consume all other historical nuance: ‘Dickens history’, House claims, ‘is inseparable from Dickens reformism’, and reformism, in turn, defines the age. Humphry House, *The Dickens World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 9-10.

The legacy of organisations such as the Dickens Fellowship perhaps makes it unsurprising that Ian Haywood's exposure of the concerted efforts undertaken to efface Reynolds from literary and social histories, particularly through the latter half of the 1840s, was met with some resistance.¹⁹⁸ However, this avenue of discourse, progressed by Haywood's scholarship, has revealed an area of investigation increasingly acknowledged as potentially fruitful. As Schlicke remarks, despite the contemporary scholarship on this divisive figure proving 'challenging' to the well-established and popularly constructed image of Dickens, it is certainly true that a 'better acquaintance with Reynolds [...] can serve to clarify the distinctiveness of Dickens's popularity'.¹⁹⁹ While the overarching objective of this thesis is to further develop this particular discourse, this chapter seeks to identify and emphasise as particularly important Dickens's political output between 1844 and 1850 relative to Reynolds's coeval successes, since this juncture exposes the largely unaddressed or unacknowledged degree to which the career of the latter shaped that of the former. Propounding comments made in his essay of 1977 on the likeness of Dickens's fiction to Reynolds's earlier novels, Maxwell issued a bolder assertion in 1992, remarking:

Claiming that Dickens wrote like G. W. M. Reynolds would have seemed pointless during the 1830s or 1840s. The lesser author began as an imitator—almost plagiarist—of the greater, concocting such now-forgotten works as *Pickwick Abroad*. Later, when Reynolds had his success with *The Mysteries*

¹⁹⁸ Sally Ledger, for example (despite affording Reynolds greater critical circumspection than most), refutes the notion, that 'the "explicit political motivation" for a periodical like *Household Words* was to launch "a major counter revolution" against such cheap publications as those circulated by Reynolds, Lloyd and others, "with the aim of regulating and pacifying the common reader"'. Ledger instead declares that Dickens's intentions were 'to bridge – in a manner more imaginative, if not more lucrative, than anything ever conceived of by Reynolds – the incipient chasm that was opening up between popular and radical culture from the 1840s onwards'. Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 171-172; Of course, in many respects Ledger is correct to oppose Haywood's conflation of Dickens with 'state apparatus', since substantial evidence exists to suggest that Dickens was far from a mouthpiece for the governing classes. Ledger, p. 171; Edmund Wilson argues that, 'of all the great Victorian writers', Dickens was 'probably the most antagonistic to the Victorian Age itself'. Wilson, p. 26; Equally, however, Haywood's scholarship convincingly demonstrates that Reynolds was subject to a cultural ostracising. Anne Humpherys concurs, noting: 'the largely middle-class commentators and reviewers who wrote for the press were without exception overtly hostile to Reynolds's politics and works'. Dickens's own hostility towards Reynolds neatly aligns with the general patterns and strategies adopted by the elite press in their attempts to denounce and discredit Reynolds, as will be discussed in the following chapter. My view aligns, therefore, with Humpherys's opinion that at least part of what was intended to be obscured or suppressed was the notion that Reynolds's 'novels had an unacknowledged influence on Dickens'. Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 7; p. 7.

¹⁹⁹ Schlicke, p. 64.

of *London*, Dickens kept his distance.²⁰⁰

This, I argue, better reflects the dynamic between the two through these years. The statement recognises that Reynolds had assumed a position of initiative over Dickens. The 1990s marked a decade in which similar theories of this nature began to formulate. Seeking to elevate Reynolds to a more prominent position within the landscape of mid-nineteenth century literary, critics such as Trefor Thomas boldly asserted that, together, Mayhew's, Dickens's and Reynolds's works constituted a 'literary triptych representing the culture of the metropolis from three distinct perspectives at an epochal moment of social and political transition'.²⁰¹ Although this revived interest in Reynolds signalled progress, the question posed by Maxwell still remained unanswered. The closely interlinked careers of the two made it 'hardly surprising that Reynolds and Dickens still sound alike in the middle of the century'. The difficulty, though, was that this observation alone 'cannot explain how Reynolds got ahead of Dickens'.²⁰²

It is my contention that Dickens's willingness to utilize Reynolds's writing as material for *Bleak House* necessitates the type of revision undertaken in this thesis regarding Dickens's fiction relative to Reynolds, particularly between 1844 and 1852. Given Reynolds's notorious reputation in the latter half of the 1840s, and Dickens's strained relationship with the man he deemed a thief, Maxwell was certainly correct to question Dickens's motivations: 'No one', he observes, 'writes a novel echoing the work of someone he despises socially and politically. At least no one does this without a good reason'.²⁰³ We know that Dickens 'was—culturally at least—no snob [...] Like Shakespeare he learned from all sorts of disreputable materials (and was himself disreputable in certain circles)'.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, that Dickens would stoop so low as to borrow from Reynolds was 'beyond the pale'.²⁰⁵ The 'challenge' remains, therefore, 'to discover that

²⁰⁰ Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, p. 166.

²⁰¹ *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas, pp. vii-viii.

²⁰² Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, p. 167.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

reason, to seek the terms on which Dickens choose [*sic*] to stray into Reynolds's territory'.²⁰⁶ It is my view that Dickens's willingness to encroach on Reynolds's fiction in 1852 with *Bleak House* is actually observable between 1844 and 1852, and, moreover, that it is important that emphasis be placed on the notion that *The Mysteries of London* had indeed established Reynolds's own territory into which Dickens now strayed, since this distinction confirms the reversal of their established dynamic prior to 1844 and places Reynolds as integral to an understanding of Dickens's career, particularly through these years.

There is certainly merit in the description of *Bleak House* as a 'version' or a 'transformation – of the Reynoldsian serial story'.²⁰⁷ In fact, this was an observation made by literary critic George Brimley, who reviewed *Bleak House* in 1853 for *The Spectator*. Brimley derided the novel, among other reasons, for its 'absolute want of construction'.²⁰⁸ Modern critics have largely discredited this line of criticism, with *Bleak House* commonly revered as an example of Dickens's ability to organize a cohesive novel which braids numerous and disparate sub-plots together, while also alternating skilfully between first- and third-person narration. Indeed, the whole premise of the novel is to answer the question:

What connexion can there be, between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom, who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connexion can there have been between many people

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 167; Maxwell's own explanation as to why Dickens felt compelled to shadow Reynolds is couched in the theory posited by philosopher Georg Simmel in his study *Soziologie* (1908); Discussing the use of secrets in Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* and *Bleak House*, Maxwell uses Simmel's theory to explain how 'what is public becomes ever more public, and what is private becomes ever more private'. The mysteries trope, defined by the dissemination and withholding of information, connects the novels thematically. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. by Kurt Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 336-337; Anne Humphrey's article 'The Geometry of the modern City', investigates Dickens's and Reynolds's shared preoccupations as both depict London as an urban labyrinth, exploring the complex and often paradoxical condition of anonymity and inextricable interconnectedness inherent in modern city life. While this common fascination explains Dickens's willingness to pursue a mysteries novel of his own and on similar terms to Reynolds, as indeed Henry Mayhew also did in his letters for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849, Maxwell's explanation leaves room for further, more expansive inquiries into 'the terms' on which Dickens broached Reynolds's writing in order to source his material for his own.

²⁰⁷ Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, p. 170.

²⁰⁸ George Brimley, 'Dickens's *Bleak House*', *The Spectator* 26 (1853), 923-24 (p. 923).

in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!²⁰⁹

In *Bleak House* Dickens draws society as a social anatomy, a complex urban tangle, which both alienates and anonymises people, yet creates connections and associations, regardless of social stature or the demarcation of physical spaces. Brimley's criticism of the novel is important, therefore, not because it is misplaced, but because it reveals the complexity of Dickens's relationship to Reynolds following *The Mysteries of London*. Given the impact of Reynolds's serial on the literary market through these years – *The Mysteries of London* outsold by some margin Dickens's work in the mid-to-late-1840s as well as trumping Thackeray's, Disraeli's and Ainsworth's circulation numbers – Brimley's comment is also worthwhile unpacking because it is a reflection of the wider cultural and political anxiety around Reynolds at this point in time, an anxiety that was then compounded by twentieth-century criticism.²¹⁰

Reynolds's practice of plagiarism has been well documented, and his legacy has suffered as a result of being tightly tethered to a reputation for cheap and opportunistic piracy. Meanwhile, Dickens has benefited from a critical tendency to gloss over the less flattering aspects of his career, including, it seems, his borrowing from Reynolds in *Bleak House*. Norman Page's study of *Bleak House*, for example, venerated the originality of Dickens's novel, claiming that it produced 'a comprehensive picture of a complex modern society' and that 'no one had ever done it before this time, so that in a sense Dickens invented a new kind of novel'.²¹¹ Given that much of what Page credits in *Bleak House* is similarly evident in Reynolds's fiction, this is certainly a contestable assertion. Comparing Dickens to his middle-class peers, Page describes *Bleak House* as superior to their efforts because Dickens undertook something that none of the others [Brontë, Thackeray and Gaskell] attempted or even contemplated doing, and that was to give a full picture of English

²⁰⁹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 235.

²¹⁰ In terms of sales alone Juliette Atkinson records the Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* as selling approximately '40,000 copies a week in 1847', compared with the 20,000 copies Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) and *David Copperfield* achieved. Juliette Atkinson, 'Cultural Competition', in *French Novels and the Victorians* (London: British Academy Scholarship Online, 2018), p. 9 <10.5871/bacad/9780197266090.001.0001> [accessed 13 January 2019].

²¹¹ Page, p. 3; p. 1.

society and a revelation of what it is that keeps people apart and binds them together'.²¹² Where Brontë analysed the individual and selfhood, discussing passion and destruction, Thackeray was concerned with the changing structure of society and Gaskell sought to expose 'the nursery of hardships of the poor'.²¹³ *Bleak House* produced, for Page, a medley of each of these in a more cohesive and innovative manner.

Notably absent from Page's analysis is any reference to Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*, which is structured in much the same manner as *Bleak House*, similarly describes society as a social anatomy, and explores those factors which keep people apart as well as binding them together. Taking Reynolds's description of the London omnibus experience as a metaphor for the interacting factions of society, Reynolds writes:

The old and the young—the virtuous and wicked—the rich and the poor, are invariably thrown and mixed up together; and yet their interests are always separate. Few stretch out a hand to help a ragged or decrepit man into the vehicle; and the well-dressed draw back and avert their heads as the impoverished wretch forces his way with difficulty past them up to the vacant seat in the farthest corner. The moment a well-dressed individual mounts the steps of the omnibus, every hand is thrust out to help him in, and the most convenient seat is instantaneously accorded to him. And then the World's omnibus hurries along, stopping occasionally at the gates of a church-yard to put down one of its passengers, and calling at some palace or some cottage indiscriminately to fill up the vacant seat [...] Sometimes, by the caprice of the passengers, or by the despotic commands of the masters of the World's omnibus, the beggar and the rich man change garments and places; and then the former becomes the object of deference and respects, while the latter is treated with contempt and scorn. In the World's omnibus might makes right;— but cunning frequently secures a more soft and comfortable seat than either.²¹⁴

²¹² Ibid, p. 17.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 280.

Reynolds's use of the omnibus metaphor not only depicts society as in a constant state of movement, it also offers a microcosm of the inequality between social classes as the 'ragged or decrepit man' is ignored while passengers clamour to help the 'well-dressed individual'. However, the omnibus has the capacity to reverse these positions capriciously, as 'the beggar and the rich man change garments and places'. Reynolds creates the same paradoxical sense of distance and proximity found in Dickens's exploration of the 'connexion' between people. The omnibus moves 'indiscriminately' between the palace and the church-yard in order to fill the 'vacant seats'. Both Dickens's and Reynolds's novels are interested in the way people from different worlds 'are invariably thrown together' collapsing any distinctions into commonalities, either of physical proximity or some inescapable unifying force. Where Jo, the illiterate crossing sweeper's fate is tied to that of Esther Summerson and her estranged mother, Lady Dedlock, via the contraction of smallpox, Reynolds, as discussed above, dissolves the boundaries between the rich and the poor using the ubiquity of crime among all classes. Any claims to the originality of *Bleak House* are, therefore, complicated by the fact that it shares fundamental thematic and structural similarities with Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*, a novel published roughly eight years earlier. Where Dickens observed in *Bleak House* 'how civilization and barbarism walked this boastful island together',²¹⁵ his sentiment bears a striking resemblance to Reynolds's earlier musing over a city 'in which contrasts of a strange nature abound', for 'the most unbounded wealth is the neighbour of the most hideous poverty; the most gorgeous pomp is placed in strong relief by the most deplorable squalor; the most seducing luxury is only separated by a narrow wall from the most appalling misery'.²¹⁶

Similarly, Page makes a case for Dickens having lifted the plot for the murder of Tulkinghorn by Lady Dedlock's bitter French maid, Hortense, from 'a celebrated criminal case that was only three years old, still fresh in the memories of most readers of 1852-1853'.²¹⁷ Recapitulating the criminal trial of Mr and Mrs George Manning, 'who had been convicted of brutally murdering their lodger',²¹⁸ Page claims that 'it seems

²¹⁵ *Bleak House*, p. 165.

²¹⁶ *Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. 1.

²¹⁷ Page, p. 40.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

highly probable that the latter had captured the imagination of Dickens as well as that of the public at large'.²¹⁹ The veracity of this statement is confirmed by Dickens's two-part article in *Household Words* which discusses the case,²²⁰ but any connection with the Manning case pales in comparison to the closeness with which Dickens's plot resembles Reynolds's use of a French maid and a calculating lawyer in the *Seamstress*. It therefore appears more probable that Dickens in fact re-appropriated this plot point from Reynolds, an assertion lent further credence by similar examples in which Dickens appears to have borrowed from Reynolds's earlier fiction.²²¹ It is notable, therefore, that Stephen Knight's recent scholarship on Reynolds's body of work marks a shifting of critical opinion on this point, with Knight claiming with greater certainty than Maxwell, that 'Dickens's move to such a model from his early under-organized sequences of action and reaction, first seen in *Dombey and Son* [...] and perfected in *Bleak House* [...], seems very probably learnt from reading *The Mysteries of London* through 1845'.²²²

Revealingly, Page makes extensive use of Brimley's analysis of *Bleak House*, in most instances defending the reviewer's disparaging remarks according to its contemporaneity, since the novel is naturally now

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²²⁰ Dickens discusses the apprehension of Mrs Manning by a detective in a two-part article in *Household Words* entitled 'Detective Police' in July and August, 1850. He describes the case as 'the most celebrated and horrible of the great crimes that have been committed within the last fifteen or twenty years'. 'Detective Police', p. 410; A year earlier Dickens had written an impassioned and indignant letter to *The Times* concerning the very public nature of the capital punishment by hanging administered to the guilty couple. Despite his protestations as 'astounded and appalled', the article is fired by the same heady mixture of horror and excitement as passages from *Barnaby Rudge*. Rather transparent is the excuse Dickens offers for his own presence at the event – his intention, he claims, was only to observe 'the crowd gathered to behold it'. Charles Dickens, 'To the Editor of the Times', *The Times*, 14 November 1849, p. 4.

²²¹ John Alfred Baruch, for example, observes that Reynolds 'may even have provided the basis of a novel for Dickens'. In *The Mysteries of London*, he claims, 'Reynolds devotes a chapter to the evils of Chancery which is similar to some aspects of *Bleak House* which appeared several years later, in 1853. In the Reynolds version an old man tells his fellow debtors that he has had a case in Chancery for twenty-two years, and that Chancery is "the most damnable inquisition—the most awful grinding, soul crushing, heart-breaking engine of torture that the ingenuity of man ever invented!" [...]. The old man is as obsessed with Chancery as Miss Flite and Richard Carstone in *Bleak House*'. Furthermore, Baruch notes that 'Reynolds cites a case [Attorney General vs. Trevelyan] which was begun in 1695 and had lasted 162 years at the time of writing'. John Alfred Baruch, 'Chartist Era Writings: Poverty, Paranoia and Propaganda in Nineteenth-Century Britain' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, 1999), p. 182; The source material is given by Reynolds as a pamphlet entitled 'Chancery Infamy', from which he then refers readers to Reynolds's *Political Instructor* and an article entitled 'The Law and its Abuses', *Reynolds's Political Instructor*, 7 (1849), 52. Written by a Mr. Weston, the pamphlet describes a case presented to Chancery in which, like the conclusion to *Bleak House*, the originally contested sum of money is ultimately lost to legal fees.

²²² Stephen, Knight, *G. W. M. Reynolds and his Fiction: The Man Who Outsold Dickens* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 193-194; Knight similarly corroborates John Alfred Baruch's hunch, writing that Dickens seems to have 'reused' Reynolds's Chancery scenes in *Bleak House*. p. 77.

‘evaluated by the modern reader in relation to his novels that followed it as well as those that preceded it’.²²³ Reminding the modern reader that Brimley’s response ought to ‘be judged in this light’ this goes some way to mitigating the review’s rather misplaced attack on the structural organisation of the text.²²⁴ What remains conspicuous, however, is the exclusion of Brimley’s most stinging criticism of Dickens’s novel, in which he expressed his disappointment that *Bleak House* was ‘disagreeably reminiscent of that vilest of modern books, Reynolds’s *Mysteries of London*’.²²⁵ Brimley’s comment provides an avenue by which Dickens’s and Reynolds’s rivalry through the latter half of the 1840s may be understood, primarily because it reveals the perceived threat Reynolds supposedly posed to Dickens and the problematic position *The Mysteries of London* placed him in after 1844.

Other contemporary critical objections to *Bleak House* also appear to chime with accusations commonly levelled at *The Mysteries of London*, evidenced by an anonymous review published in *Bentley’s Magazine* which ‘deplored’ the novel’s “‘tendency to disagreeable exaggeration”, which was more “conspicuous” than in any of Dickens’s earlier books’.²²⁶ For this particular reviewer, ‘the grotesque and the contemptible have taken the place of the humorous’.²²⁷ Criticisms of this nature ought to have garnered further attention as a means of tying Dickens’s work to Reynolds’s, particularly, as in Brimley’s case, when the merits and form of *Bleak House* are being measured in the wake of the critical response to *The Mysteries of London*. Such comments reveal Reynolds as a yardstick by which authors such as Dickens were now being measured, as well as affecting how their own fiction was pitched and positioned in the literary marketplace, relative to this popular and contentious text. Examined through this critical lens, criticisms of *Bleak House* give some indication of the wider cultural anxiety surrounding Reynolds during these years as well as the type and extent of the prejudices Reynolds’s writing was subject to. In their fervent hostility towards Reynolds’s sensational and tawdry style, and as part of the wider ‘counter revolutionary cultural measures

²²³ Page, p. 18.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Brimley, p. 923.

²²⁶ Page, p. 19.

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 20.

designed to find an antidote to Reynolds's influence',²²⁸ critics like Brimley appeared particularly eager to dismiss any work of similar style or tone as debasing, even including work by Dickens.

3.5 The triangulation of Eugène Sue, Dickens and Reynolds: An historical precedent

By virtue of their beginnings, with Reynolds fashioning his career using Dickens as a springboard, it is likely that the latter always felt that any territory Reynolds claimed thereafter was in fact rightfully his. It is my contention that the triangulated relationship between Reynolds and Dickens and the popular French author Eugène Sue, was also a significant factor in their rivalry, as well as in Dickens's strategic decision to defer the publication of *Bleak House* until such time that Reynolds's influence had dwindled. It is my view that Eugène Sue's favourable reputation in Britain suffered from his association with Reynolds, effectively setting a precedent that Dickens would certainly have been aware of.

After returning destitute to England in 1837, Reynolds 'was keen to affiliate himself with France at every opportunity'.²²⁹ His time spent across the channel had garnered him a breadth of knowledge of contemporary French literature that few Victorian writers could compete with,²³⁰ and his fiction between 1837 and 1844 has a distinctly Gallic theme. After *Pickwick Abroad*, Reynolds published *Alfred; or, the Adventures of a French Gentleman* (1838), *Robert Macaire* (1840), and a non-fiction volume entitled *The Modern Literature of France* (1838). As discussed in earlier chapters, Dickens also held a lifelong fascination with France. He was, as Dominic Rainsford phrases it, 'an Englishman for whom France is not really very foreign'.²³¹ His love affair with all things French would only deepen over the course of his life and he spent many years living and travelling in the country. He was, like Reynolds, an advocate of the Republic and in 1848, after the dethronement of Louis Philippe and birth of the second French Republic, Forster received a letter which, among other encomiums on the French nation, saw Dickens declare: 'MON

²²⁸ Haywood, p. 140.

²²⁹ Sara James, 'G.W.M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 19-32 (p. 20).

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Dominic Rainsford, 'Crossing the Channel with Dickens', in *Dickens, Europe and the New Worlds*, ed. by Anny Sadrin (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), p. 11.

AMI, je trouve que j'aime tant la République, qu'il me faut renoncer ma langue et écrire seulement le langage de la République de France -- langage des Dieux et des Anges -- langage, en un mot, des Français!'²³² Although the writing of Reynolds and Dickens has almost metonymic associations with the cities of London and Paris, it was their respective connections with one distinguished French author that would have a significant bearing on their careers.

In 1842 Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* proved a popular sensation in France. Christopher Prendergast's study on Sue's seminal work combines the available statistical data on print-runs and subscription figures, coupled with 'the rich vein of anecdotal testimony', to explain just how popular *Les Mystères* proved to be.²³³ While many of the anecdotes are presumed apocryphal, Prendergast alludes to their sheer volume as indicative of the unprecedented public interest which contributed to 'the legend that the whole of France waited with baited breath for the next day's instalment'.²³⁴ These anecdotes included 'stories of queues forming in the early hours of the morning outside the offices of *Le Journal des débats* to get a copy', or 'of fights breaking out in the "cabinets de lecture" over access to Sue's novel'.²³⁵ Much like the Pickwick phenomenon sparked by Dickens in England, Sue's work generated interest and readership 'across the whole spectrum of literate France'.²³⁶

Les Mystères actually had its roots in the English gothic tradition of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), but Sue's serial transposed the rural gothic setting typified in Radcliffe's novel onto the urban landscape of Paris. This transition commonly sees the work credited with the creation of the urban mysteries genre;²³⁷ its gothic trappings, coupled with its direct focus on the lives of the urban poor, made

²³² Forster, p. 466.

²³³ Christopher Prendergast, *For the People by the People? Eugène Sue's Les Mystères de Paris: A Hypothesis in the Sociology of Literature* (Oxford: LEGENDA, 2003), p. 2.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Anne Humphrys marks a further distinction between the mystery genre and the mysteries genre, observing: 'The plural "mysteries" distinguishes this novel from the detective or "mystery" novel with which it has sometimes been confused. "Mysteries" refers linguistically to the fragmented and hence incoherent experience of the modern city as well as to the resulting feelings of disconnectedness. The urban mysteries novel multiplies crimes, criminals, and victims even as do modern police novels or television series where the sense of urban crime conveyed by having more

Sue's serial unlike any novel hitherto, 'with the exception of Dickens's *Oliver Twist*,' in the extent to which it examined 'the grimmer realities of urban life'.²³⁸ The serial swept across France and the rest of Europe, spawning numerous imitations, one of which was Paul Féval's novel *Les Mystères de Londres* (1844). Reynolds was fast on Féval's heels, quickly recognizing the extensive success of Sue's serial and its potential for re-appropriation and he began the publication of *The Mysteries of London* in 1844.²³⁹

Sue's serial had quickly 'become a byword for success in writing and anyone seeking to gain their livelihood or increase their fame and influence as a writer would have been unable to ignore the example of Sue's achievement. In terms of monetary gain alone, his accomplishment was indisputable'.²⁴⁰ Reynolds claimed to have established a personal connection with the Frenchman during his time living in Paris, adding 'that he "enjoyed the friendship of several of the most eminent authors of France"'.²⁴¹ According to Cyril Pearl, Sue was just one of Reynolds's acquaintances.²⁴² As with so many of Reynolds's claims, there exists some doubt over the truth of this assertion. Maha Atal, for example, describes such friendships as 'hypothetical'.²⁴³ Indeed, an article published in *Reynolds's Magazine* in 1847 undermines Reynolds's own claim. Drawn from a recollection of seeing Sue while strolling through the Rue Croix des Petits Champs in

than one story running at the same time. In the detective novel, on the other hand, there is usually one central mystery and detective, though there can be several "red herrings" and more than one secret disclosed in the course of the revelation of the central one. The concentrating of all mysteries into one is part of the reason that the most persistent locale of the detective novel is an isolated place. The result of the detective's work is an affirmation of order and coherence. But the limited nature of crime and its detection, as well as the restricted space, also limits the potential for reading any large social significance into the solution of the "mystery". Moreover, the mysteries genre relied on 'the combination of popular formulas, an exposé of urban institutions', and 'a rope plot to effect integration'. Formed as a 'fictional response to urbanization and the mid-nineteenth century', the mysteries novel provided 'a bridge between two more genres, the Newgate novel of the 1830s and the sensation novel of the 1860s'. Humpherys, 'Generic Strands and Urban Twists', 456-457; 456; 455.

²³⁸ Berry Chevasco, 'Lost in Translation: The Relationship between Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* and G. W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 133-146 (p.137).

²³⁹ For a further discussion see Louis James, 'From Egan to Reynolds: The shaping of Urban 'Mysteries' in England and France, 1821-48', *European Journal of English Studies*, 14 (2016), 95-106.

²⁴⁰ Chevasco, p. 138.

²⁴¹ Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 3.

²⁴² Cyril Pearl, *Victorian Patchwork* (London: William Heinemann, 1972), p. 73.

²⁴³ Atal claims that while 'the influence of French authors such as Eugene Sue and French political thinkers such as Ledru-Rollins on Reynolds's work, has long been thought of as a result of his personal friendships with them in Paris [...] that such biographical ties might now be finally verified or refuted by further research into the Parisian acquaintances identified in the archival file'. M. R. Atal, 'G. W. M. Reynolds in Paris 1835-6: A New Discover', *Notes and Queries* 55 (2008) 448-453, (p. 451).

Paris in 1832, Reynolds's article describes Sue's appearance at length, speculating on his genealogy and his age, details which suggest only a passing familiarity with the Frenchman rather than any substantial friendship.²⁴⁴ By 1847 Reynolds appears no more familiar with Sue than he was in 1832, yet he describes the sighting in 1832 rather loosely as constituting having 'met' the French author. Regardless, it is apparent that Reynolds's eye remained keenly trained on his beloved Paris and Sue's revelatory serial was put to quick use in his own appropriation based in London. Given his experiences with *Pickwick* in England, Reynolds no doubt saw the advantage of expediency, aware that the germination of Sue's new genre would not take long to propagate within the literary markets in England.

Berry Chevasco has observed the complex relationship between Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* and Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*, describing how the conflation of the two works was largely misplaced and ultimately had a negative impact on Sue's reputation in Britain. Sue was initially well-received in Britain,²⁴⁵ but, as Reynolds's serial gained notoriety due to its salacious style and Republican politics, contemporary critical commentaries began to draw similarities between Reynolds and Sue, substantiating commonalities which were in fact 'altogether superficial',²⁴⁶ or simply did not exist. In truth the serials contain more dissimilarities than commonalities, especially politically. It was, however, an easy connection for critics to re-trace; Reynolds was a radical Republican and claimed to be a naturalized French citizen who regularly celebrated the revolutionary events occurring across the Channel. The title for his novel being directly borrowed from his antecedent, a fellow Frenchman, whose fiction was forged in the violence and anarchy of the French Revolution, and who also wrote about exploitation and suffering in urban environment, all led the British press to draw crude similarities between the two. Simply stated, it was 'not an association that advanced Sue's reputation in Britain'.²⁴⁷ *Les Mystères* was swiftly 'labeled as irredeemably "popular"' and though his 'novels remained widely read [...] he lost the credibility of

²⁴⁴ Reynolds also uses the description of Sue to draw an unfavourable comparison with Dickens, remarking: 'The Countenance of Eugene Sue, as I saw it, in himself, not on the canvas, was far more striking than that of our own Charles Dickens'. G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Personal Appearance of Eugene Sue', *Reynolds's Magazine of Romance, General Literature, Science and Art*, 1 (1847), 136-136 (p. 136).

²⁴⁵ By 1844 at least 'six translated editions [...] were available'. Chevasco, p. 137.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 146.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 139.

mainstream critics, who ceased to review his work except within the context of prevailing controversies of the dangers of popular fiction'.²⁴⁸

It is my view that the conflation of Sue and Reynolds, two authors with contrasting politics, also affected any perceived or possible connection between Dickens and the French author. Sue, 'in his paternalism and in his reasoned plea for sympathy and reform, bears a far greater resemblance to Dickens, especially in his later novels, than to Reynolds'.²⁴⁹ Unlike Reynolds, both Dickens and Sue sought not to provoke revolution or aggressive working-class agency. They instead looked to make the poor visible to the rich, and hoped that, cured of their ignorance and knowledgeable of the 'social wrongs they can put right', the governing classes would 'do so without hesitation'.²⁵⁰ It is true in the main that Sue's perception of the patrician classes as 'well meaning and humane' differs from Dickens's more sceptical opinion of this same class's willingness to enact such immediate change.²⁵¹ This notwithstanding, their respective politics align far more closely than with Reynolds's, who was less interested in uniting social classes and more intent on pitching the wealthy and the aristocratic as the 'enemies of the people'.²⁵²

Sue's name was apparently soured by an association with Reynolds, yet Dickens's letters reveal his own persistent attempts to meet the Frenchman up until 1848. Dickens's efforts to develop a relationship with Sue afford space to speculate as to why he wished to cultivate the connection. One plausible explanation is that Dickens, like Reynolds, espied an opportunity to produce a mysteries novel in the same vein as *Les Mystères de Paris*, and to capitalize on Sue's example. It is certainly true that Dickens 'sought Sue out [...] when he visited Paris a year later in 1846',²⁵³ and displayed a persistence thereafter in establishing a relationship of sorts. By this time, however, Reynolds had effectively beaten him to the punch, further

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 142.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 141.

²⁵¹ Ibid, p. 140; Towards the end of his career Dickens stated: 'my faith in the people governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in The People governed is, on the whole, illimitable'. *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. by K. J. Fielding (Hemel Hempstead, 1988), p. 407.

²⁵² Chevasco, p. 143.

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 138.

complicating any plans he may have had for pursuing a similar type of fiction.²⁵⁴ According to this hypothesis, *Bleak House* must be viewed as a deferred enterprise. Maxwell helps to substantiate this claim, describing *Bleak House* as strategically delayed until such time as Reynolds's influence had begun to diminish. Following the turn of the 1850s and the dissipated threat of revolution, Dickens suddenly appears more willing to 'borrow' from Reynolds, without fear of recrimination. It had, as Maxwell states, become easier 'for respectable fiction to echo the conventions of the *Mysteries* novel'.²⁵⁵ Dickens had hoped that *Bleak House* would contain enough subtlety or improved degrees of sophistication in its re-working of the thematic and narrative tropes used in Reynolds's work and that enough time had elapsed between the two novels for critics to be blind to their similarities. Given that this likeness did not escape the attention of critics like Brimley, it appears Dickens underestimated the depth of hostility towards Reynolds within literary and political circles, whose senses were sharpened to any literature produced in the same vein as this dangerous and subversive figure.

The first reference to Sue in Dickens's letters occurs on 17 October, 1845, in which Dickens writes on behalf of the former to the Directors of the Athenaeum. Prior to that, in December 1844, Dickens had attempted to contact Sue in Paris through his long-time friend William Macready.²⁵⁶ That Dickens subsequently established a connection with Sue seems likely, since the letter Dickens wrote to the Athenaeum appears to speak of a more familiar relationship. The purpose of the letter was for Dickens to act in the capacity of trusted confidante, passing on Sue's sentiments of gratitude to the theatre as a means

²⁵⁴ Again, just as with *Pickwick Abroad*, which effectively crowded out Thackeray's attempt to capitalise on Pickwick's success with his own cockney valet, Charles Yellowplush, Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* appeared to have the same effect on Thackeray's efforts to exploit Eugène Sue's success. As Elisabeth Jay writes: 'Thackeray's diary entry for 6 January 1844 records him as engaged in translating Eugène Sue's immensely popular serial *Les mystères de Paris*, originally published in *Le journal des débats* during 1842-43. The failure of Giraldon, the French publisher, to pay him promptly has usually been cited as the reason for Thackeray not completing this project. While this would certainly have been a contributory factor, the fact that six other translations became available in Great Britain in the course of 1844 would have acted as a further disincentive. The *coup de grâce* seems likely to have been the news that Reynolds was once again promising to outflank him and threaten damage by association, by publishing a year-long serial in penny numbers, beginning in October 1844, entitled *The Mysteries of London*'. Jay, p. 214; This example lends further credence to the notion that through the latter half of the 1840s Reynolds was consistently out in front of his rivals, swooping in before them and complicating the positions of those around him in the market.

²⁵⁵ Maxwell Jr., 'G. W. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and The *Mysteries of London*', p. 197.

²⁵⁶ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), IV, p. 278.

of acknowledging their invitation to the French author to present his work in Britain.²⁵⁷ The invitation extended to Sue was not universally popular. A footnote to the invitation in *Dickens's Letters* notes that 'the Athenaeum (1 Nov 1845) thought it regrettable "if the particular scope and character of [Sue's] writing is to be presumed an expression of the philosophy of...the institution"'.²⁵⁸ Subsequently, in 1849 'Carlyle remarked to Milnes: "If Beelzebub were to appear in England, he would receive a letter from the secretary of the Manchester Athenaeum, as Eugène Sue did, requesting the honour of his interesting company, and venturing to hope for an address"'.²⁵⁹ It is possible that Carlyle's reference to Beelzebub refers to the Abrahamic use of the word, which describes a figure bringing destruction, murder and war, a possible reference to Sue's French heritage and his alleged association with revolutionary politics. Apparently unphased by these types of objections to Sue's presence in England, Dickens remained keen in 1845 to pursue an affiliation with the French author.

In 1846 Sue reappears in Dickens's letters, this time with Dickens requesting Lady Blessington to introduce him to the French author: 'if you would give me my credential to Eugène Sue, I would rather have them from your hand than any other'.²⁶⁰ Rather than a familiar and trusted confidante, such a request suggests a rather tenuous relationship, since Sue is apparently still unfamiliar with Dickens. A meeting planned with Sue in Paris on 27 January 1847 failed to materialise, with Dickens writing to Lady Blessington: 'Eugène Sue is not in Paris, and has relinquished his apartment in the Rue de la Pépinière. But I have sent to him in the country'.²⁶¹ Sue's reputation (in France at least) may have been the reason for Dickens's perseverance: 'Now at the height of his fame, Sue was noted both as a dandy and for the socialism shown in his best-known works, *Les Mystères de Paris*, 1842-1843, and *Le Juif Errant*, 1844-45'.²⁶² It is plausible that Dickens felt a mutual respect was owed to him, and that a natural affinity existed between the two following an article in *La Revue Indépendante*, in March, 1847, which compared the authors and observed that

²⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 404-405.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 405.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 684.

²⁶¹ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁶² Ibid.

Dickens ‘had created the genre Sue was using, though stressing their different points of view and commitment’.²⁶³

Dickens and Sue appeared destined to pass like ships in the night, but there is a suggestion in Dickens’s letters from around this period that they finally met. Again, a footnote [in *Dickens’s Letters*] explains that Sue ‘must have returned to Paris, since Forster says that Dickens and he “supped with” Dumas and Sue’.²⁶⁴ Sue receives only one further mention in Dickens’s letters after September 1847; tucked within correspondence discussing the scandalous murder of a Duchess, he claims to see a ‘bloody reflection of our friends Eugène Sue and Dumas in the whole melodrama’.²⁶⁵ Perhaps Dickens’s pursuit of Sue had been successful and by 1847 he stood on friendly terms with one of France’s most renowned authors. The rather generalised or colloquial use of the word friends leaves room for reasonable doubt as to the actual strength of their relationship. Little else is made of Dickens’s ties to Sue, either in the footnotes to his letters, or indeed across the vast critical corpus on Dickens. It is certainly possible, however, to infer from the evidence in these letters that between 1844 and 1847 Dickens was particularly keen to associate with Sue. It is entirely consistent with Dickens’s character and his commercial instincts that he would have looked, as Reynolds did, to turn the French author’s success in France to his advantage in Britain with a mysteries novel transposed onto London, a city with which he had almost unsurpassed familiarity. That little has been made of Dickens’s relationship to Sue is arguably revealing in itself. Indeed, it is hard to imagine when Dickens did meet Sue, in early 1847, that Reynolds’s wildly popular and controversial re-appropriation of Sue’s work did not enter into the conversation, particularly given how the association between Sue and Reynolds had damaged the former’s reputation in Britain and stood as the most obvious obstacle between Dickens and his own appropriation of Sue’s serial. Although Sue shared more similarities with Dickens than Reynolds, Dickens may ultimately have been wary of a more substantial association with an author

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 451.

²⁶⁵ The letter refers to the ‘Praslin business’, a saga involving Charles Laure Hugues Theobald, Duke de Choiseul-Praslin, a prominent figure at the French court during the reign of Louis Philippe, who brutally murdered his wife, the Duchess, in August of 1847. Dickens jests that the Duchess was ‘one of the most uncomfortable women in the world’ claiming, ‘it would have been hard work for anybody to have gotten on with her.’ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, V, pp. 158-159.

whose reputation in Britain had suffered due to his links to Reynolds, one which was driven largely (and unfairly) by the threat of radical sentiment.

Effectively, *The Mysteries of London* had set an historical precedent that Dickens would have been cautious of, as any fiction which shared traces of Reynolds's brand of sensational radicalism, Republican sympathies, or a preoccupation with vice and crime, could prove damaging, even for an author as revered and established as himself. Reynolds was a more revolutionary, more 'Manichaean' version of Dickens, making political waves between 1844 and the peak of political turmoil in Britain in 1848. His success and reputation played a part in forcing Dickens to pursue an alternative type of fiction, shifting as he did abruptly from the 'wrathful' polemics of *The Chimes*, to the domesticity of *The Cricket on the Hearth*. Reynolds had seemingly forged ahead of Dickens and in doing so had become the standard-bearer for the allegedly perfidious and corrupting power of the cheap press. In response, Dickens strategically exercised caution and looked to maintain a distance between himself and Reynolds through the remainder of the decade.

Conclusion

In the 1840s Reynolds stepped out from his rival's shadow and, in the process, left Dickens with a dilemma over how to pursue the brand of radical fiction he had been exploring intermittently since 1836 without inviting a potentially damaging association with a man branded, in the words of one Home Office correspondent in 1848, as 'the most wicked and dangerous man in London'.²⁶⁶ As the familiar, canonical authors of the 1840s began to address working-class issues from a more radical political viewpoint, Dickens stepped back from the debate, in no small part, I argue, due to the influence of Reynolds, whose impact on Dickens through these years has been underestimated. Reynolds's peripheral status has seen him excluded from any wider critical discussions concerning the Victorian novelists' response to the Condition of England debate. Yet, as I have demonstrated, his influence stretched far beyond the bounds of popular and sensational fiction typically consumed by working-class readership and had a direct impact upon authors

²⁶⁶ This quotation is cited in Louis James's foreword to G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, foreword.

deemed more canonical and therefore allegedly better reflective of the cultural values of the period. Reynolds's success through the 1840s illustrates that, in the emerging mass literary culture, the recycling of ideas and inspiration possessed the same capacity for impact as originality and creativity. Moreover, the pervasiveness and influence of a working-class literary culture that sought to re-write, re-appropriate or re-politicise the fiction of the middle classes, and the tangible responses this elicited, necessarily expands the scope of the cultural site from which a truly comprehensive understanding of the period can be gleaned.

Contrary to his prevailing reputation, by the final years of the 1840s Reynolds had established himself as a prime mover, operating at the very centre of the literary, and by extension, the political world. If the meteoric success of *The Pickwick Papers* rendered Dickens's novel as the yardstick by which all other authors were measured, by the latter half of the 1840s Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* had arguably usurped this status. With a political energy and literary identity of its own, despite being forged in the image of another author, Reynolds's serial lays a serious claim to the title of the foremost literary work of the decade. His ability through this decade to capitalise on opportunities saw more familiar, canonical authors like Dickens and Thackeray forced to react and, in some cases, re-think the direction of their publications.²⁶⁷ For an author who began his career in England defined by his ability to sound like Dickens, and whom Dickens described as 'vermin humbly following at his heels', Reynolds's capacity to outflank his more 'respectable' rival during the late 1840s meant that, remarkably, the prevailing dynamic between the two authors at the turn of the half century had reversed, with Dickens looking to Reynolds for source material.

²⁶⁷ Elisabeth Jay remarks: 'Thackeray had kept a close professional eye on the complex twists and turns of Reynolds's career'. Just like Dickens's natural affinities with Reynolds's writing and their connection forged by Reynolds's appropriations his work, Thackeray's spell in Paris 'had acquainted him more closely with the working practices of radicals such as G. W. M. Reynolds and Albert Smith than he might subsequently have wished to admit'. Thus, much like Dickens, Thackeray was forced to consider his position relative to Reynolds's as a means of capitalising on his successes but avoiding any conflation of reputation. This explains why, in 1848, 'when Thackeray was asked to give a speech to an assembly of literary men, his own recent success and Reynolds's very public move into radical politics as a member of the Chartist executive afforded [him] the opportunity to cast himself as a novelist and member of the literary set, rather than a mere journalist, and to distance himself simultaneously from Reynolds's populism and from his association with French revolutionary politics'. Jay, p. 162; p. 207; pp. 214-215.

Chapter 4

‘Dickens, the Fake Reynolds’ and Reynolds, the Fake Dickens: Heroes and Villains, Imposters, and People’s Champions

This chapter focusses on a new phase in the rivalry between Dickens and Reynolds as they entered into the periodical market as editors and proprietors of their own weekly magazines. Initially examining Reynolds’s efforts to press the advantage he had gained over Dickens in the middle years of the 1840s by entering into the periodical market ahead of his rival, my analysis considers Dickens’s stuttering attempts to secure a property and emulate Reynolds’s successes. As the two began the most renowned phase of their rivalry throughout the 1850s, trading explicit and often cutting insults across their publications, analysis looks to expose the more artificial element that lay beneath these testy exchanges, revealing their feuding as constructed for both commercial and political purposes, and therefore more reciprocal in nature than previously acknowledged. Focussing next on Dickens’s efforts to wrestle the ascendency away from Reynolds through his periodical, *Household Words*, which was cultivated to chime with the cultural and political shifts in the early 1850s, I argue that Reynolds was eventually drawn into the world of domestic fiction, in which his radical politics were less effective and increasingly less relevant. Finally, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the abrupt transformation Reynolds performed in 1859 as he discarded his combative approach to Dickens and instead adopted a curiously conciliatory tone, bordering on flattery. This final about-turn performed by Reynolds lends further credence to the notion of Dickens’s and Reynolds’s rivalry as constructed, and reveals the need to place their dynamic within the broader context of the shifting grounds of the literary marketplace

4.1 Reynolds enters the periodical market ahead of Dickens

It has now been recognised that Dickens and Reynolds ‘shared ideals’,¹ and that ‘there was at least as much

¹ ‘The Other Dickens’, *Sunday Feature*, BBC Radio, 3 July 2012.

to unite the two men as to divide them'.² Such analysis rejects the prevailing perception of Dickens and Reynolds as binary figures, both politically and commercially. As Mary Shannon observes, the distance between the two authors was in fact made necessary by their striking similarities; their rivalry 'emerged precisely because Reynolds and Dickens were *not* on "distinct trajectories".'³ Dickens and Reynolds developed 'a kind of territorial battle for a space within nineteenth-century print culture. However, for this clash to take place they both had to presuppose that there was such a territory over which to fight. Their war of words produced the very space over which they fought'.⁴ While still drawing on the fiction of both authors, this section examines the extended territory of the periodical marketplace in which they sought to establish themselves through the 1840s, placing emphasis on the effect of Reynolds's prior successes upon Dickens's subsequent ability to secure his own foothold.

The success of *The Mysteries of London* afforded Reynolds the opportunity to enter into the periodical market, and in 1845 he co-founded the *London Journal* (1845-1928) with partner George Stiff and publisher George Vickers. Reynolds held the position of editor, but after little under two years, he left the *Journal* in 1846 and launched his autonomous and eponymously titled *Reynolds's Magazine* (1846-1869). Although the *Magazine* experienced an unsettled beginning, quickly switching its name 'to its more familiar title', *Reynolds's Miscellany*, 'without warning' after only five issues (a move that was oddly 'never explained'),⁵ the periodical ultimately saw 'Boz's' former shadow establish his property in the market as one of 'the four penny fiction weeklies that served most to inform the cultural imaginary of Britain'.⁶

At roughly the same time as Reynolds was expanding into the popular-press market, Dickens also had designs on a periodical property, firstly with a venture he intended to call *The Cricket*, which never

² Michael Diamond, 'Charles Dickens as Villain and Hero in Reynolds's Newspaper', *Dickensian*, 98 (2002), 127-138 (p. 137).

³ Mary L. Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street: The Print Culture of a Victorian Street* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), p. 46.

⁴ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 45.

⁵ Andrew King, 'Reynolds's *Miscellany*, 1846-1849: Advertising Networks and Politics', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 53-74 (p. 55).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

materialised, and then with a short stint at the *Daily News*. Any connection or parallel between the origins of Dickens's and Reynolds's respective periodical publications seems never to have been drawn. However, it is my view that both developed comparable strategies in order to achieve similar objectives for both their prospective and realised endeavours in the periodical market. It follows, then, that their respective publications had an impact on the formulation of their rival's work. The previous chapter contended that Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* had pre-empted Dickens's intentions to potentially pursue his own mysteries novel and that Reynolds's successes in general had complicated the direction of Dickens's career. Given these arguments, the timing of Reynolds's periodical ventures must have been similarly frustrating for Dickens, who was entertaining the same plan around this period. This section, therefore, examines the impact of Reynolds's ability to press his advantage over Dickens and establish himself in the market prior to Dickens's eventual successful periodical, *Household Words*, in 1850.

When Reynolds left the *London Journal* he presented his new property to his readers using language Andrew King describes as typically Whiggish in its 'flattery of the reader by praising the moral "progress" of the reading public [...] followed by the customary promise of a singularly appropriate mixture of the *utile* and *dulce*'.⁷ Reynolds also sought to position the magazine in neutral territory:

Appearing in opposition to no existing Cheap Publication, - started without the least idea of rivalry, - and issued in the full belief that there is room for its being, without displacing any other, this MAGAZINE is established to supply a desideratum which has for some time been acknowledged. The remark on one side has been that certain Cheap Publications contain too much light matter, while on the other side it has been observed that another set of Periodicals are too heavy. To steer the medium course is the object of REYNOLDS'S MAGAZINE.⁸

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 59.

⁸ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'To Our Readers', *Reynolds's Miscellany* of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art, 1 (1846), 16-16 (p. 16).

Reynolds's convivial tone was in keeping with the general atmosphere of cooperation at the time, as for the most part, 'editors stated a wish to work harmoniously with their contemporaries'.⁹ This was, ostensibly at least, Reynolds's intention. His desire 'to diffuse any possible tension with rivals' was, in all likelihood, directed towards his former employer, George Stiff.¹⁰ According to King, Reynolds referred to his quarrel with his former partner in order to clarify publicly that the dispute had not arisen due to his departure from the *London Journal*, and that he now wished to avoid any further conflict moving forward with *Reynolds's Magazine*.

An interesting comparison can be made between the opening address in *Reynolds's Magazine* with an idea for a periodical Dickens had proposed to Forster a year earlier in 1845. In fact, Dickens had been attempting to gain a foothold in the periodical marketplace ever since returning from America in 1842,¹¹ but no cogent idea had presented itself. The periodical was to be titled *The Cricket* and Dickens's sales pitch to Forster referred to the need to establish his own distinct space as a unique product in the marketplace defined by what would become his trademark focus on the hearth:

A cheerful creature that chirrups on the Hearth. / [Goldsmith's] *Natural History*. / [...] I would come out, sir, with a prospectus on the subject of the Cricket that should put everybody in good temper, and make such a dash at people's fenders and arm-chairs as hasn't been made for many a long day. I could approach them in a different mode under this name...I would at once sit down upon their very hobs; and take a personal and confidential position with them which should separate me, instantly, from all other periodicals...And I would chirp, chirp, chirp away in every number until I chirped it up to – well, you shall say how many hundred thousand!¹²

⁹ Jessica Hindes, 'Review of Mary L. Shannon's *Dickens, Reynolds and Mayhew on Wellington Street: The Print Culture of a Victorian Street*', *The Review of English Studies Advance Access*, 67 (2016), 1014-1016 (p. 1015).

¹⁰ King, 'Reynolds's Miscellany, 1846-1849: Advertising Networks and Politics', p. 61.

¹¹ John M. L. Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 67.

¹² I have borrowed John Drew's abridged version of this lengthy extract as it neatly pulls together the pertinent aspects for the argument I am putting forth here. Drew's quotation is drawn from *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), III, p. 481; For Drew's excerpt, see John Drew, *Dickens the Journalist*, p. 69.

The financial investment in *The Cricket* never materialised. Dickens's other interest, *The Daily News*, took precedence as the capital had already been secured for this property.¹³ *The Daily News* then suffered from 'the spectacular bankruptcy of a major City stockbroker dealing in railway shares'.¹⁴ This was followed by an uncertain tenure with Dickens at the helm as Literary Editor, which culminated in his resignation after only seventeen issues. Dickens departed with dignity intact, despite the 'half-successes of the paper',¹⁵ but, in the meantime, *Reynolds's Magazine* was already underway.

Dickens would later turn *The Cricket* into a Christmas short story, in which an insect sits atop the household hearth, enacting the role of family guardian. In subsequent years Dickens would distinguish himself as a writer of endurance 'in the noblest range of English literature', while Reynolds was merely one of the 'insects of the house, who raised their little hum and died'.¹⁶ Given Dickens's desire to elevate his work above that of Reynolds, there is an irony in the former's choice of title, both for his original idea and the Christmas Tale, as, apparently, we must read clear distinction between the 'chirp' of the noble cricket and the 'hum' of the lowly insect. Where Dickens looked for difference, he sometimes found a likeness. In this regard Dickens's thinly-veiled reference to the financial motivations behind the longevity of *The Cricket*, as implied by the phrase 'how many hundred thousand', was also problematic, given his attacks on the cheapness of Reynolds's publications. Dickens was always preoccupied with the financial potential of his work, and in November 1846 he stressed cheapness as an imperative for his new venture, declaring, 'I strongly incline to the notion of a kind of spectator [...]—very cheap, and pretty frequent'.¹⁷ While both authors sought to shape their work according to circumstances, there is a loose hypocrisy here, given that

¹³ Drew, p. 70.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 73.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 82.

¹⁶ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, III, p. 481; Dickens's language of dichotomy (in the early 1840s) prefigures the language John Ruskin would later utilise to frame literature of the period more broadly. As Mary Hammond explains: 'Ruskin is often cited as being among the first to recognise that some sort of divide was emerging between "popular" and "literary" forms [...], as early as 1865 he was writing that "books are divisible into two classes, the books of the hour, and the books of all time"'. Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880-1914* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 7; John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, ed. by Deborah Epstein Nord (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 1-95 (p. 31).

¹⁷ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), IV, p. 660.

Dickens would later launch several invectives against the cheapness of Reynolds's various outputs as betraying their lack of substance. Indeed, in a letter to Henry Morley in 1852 Dickens described Reynolds's periodicals as 'perilous stuff [...] produced at a cost about equal to the intrinsic worth of its literature'.¹⁸

During this period, Dickens, like Reynolds, appeared to conceive the marketplace in terms of physical space, as both plotted out the available sites in which their properties might be situated. The means by which their periodicals would enter the marketplace were similarly rooted in their intention to offer something unique, and in doing so avoid any conflict or rivalry with periodicals already in existence. Dickens's 'confidential position' would 'separate him, instantly' where Reynolds's steering of 'the medium course' distinguished him from other periodicals either too light or too heavy. Reynolds's approach, while chiming with the cooperative mood of the marketplace, sits oddly alongside his growing reputation as a radical, even revolutionary political figure, a Republican and French sympathiser with a proclivity for a scandalous and combustible mode of fiction. Moreover, as Reynolds appeared customarily to feed off conflict, this conciliatory image of him is difficult to reconcile with that of the figure so adept at riling Dickens. His more measured approach to the *Magazine*, which omits any explicit reference to politics, and instead proposes to satisfy the demand in the market for literature and journalism that was neither too polarised nor partisan, is, I suggest, better understood as an example of his ability to take the public pulse and assess the market climate.

Dickens's adoption of the personal, even confidential tone for *The Cricket* clearly pre-figured *Household Words*, with its focus on the domestic hearth as an intimate space from which the periodical would operate. The stated intentions for *The Cricket* were to 'put everybody in good temper and make such a dash at people's fenders and arm-chairs';¹⁹ *Household Words* would later state its ambition to be 'admitted into many homes with affection and confidence'.²⁰ Now, though, the tone of Dickens's address, as a response

¹⁸ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), VI, p. 790.

¹⁹ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, III, p. 481.

²⁰ Charles Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word', *Household Words*, 1 (1850), 1-2 (p. 2).

to the market demands for conciliation, mirrored the tone of *Reynolds's Magazine*; both were assuaging and made no explicit mention of politics. Reynolds's referral to the 'light' and the 'heavy' skirted nimbly around the topic while Dickens omitted any mention of politics to Forster, instead focussing on his personal connection with the reader – a familiar and familial approach.

Beyond their mutual objectives and their astute assessment of the market, there seems superficially to be no direct connection between the two authors' attempts to establish periodicals. However, it is my view that Reynolds's periodical activities and his break from his more customary combative style can in fact be linked to his rivalry with Dickens. Moreover, I argue that the ideas Dickens entertained after *The Cricket* were influenced by the fact that Reynolds had already effectively usurped and then occupied the space in the market Dickens also had designs on. That Reynolds achieved his objective of establishing a property in the periodical market prior to Dickens is, therefore, crucial to interpreting the latter's actions through the following years, allowing these to be read specifically as a response to Reynolds's activities rather than simply a struggle to find a suitable idea to take to market.

Reynolds was unlikely to have known about Dickens's specific intentions for *The Cricket* in 1845, given these were voiced through private correspondence, but he was certainly aware of his struggles during his time at *The Daily News*. He even passed comment on this in *The Mysteries of London*, wherein a character called Mr Bubbleton Styles discusses Dickens's efficacy as a newspaper editor with an advertising agent, remarking: 'the name Charles Dickens was rather damnatory than useful to a newspaper speculation. Everyone must admit that Boz is a great novelist [...] but he is totally incapable of writing for a newspaper'.²¹ This comment was written at the peak of *The Mysteries*'s popularity and reveals Reynolds's greater assuredness of his own position as a popular fiction writer, since he was at least willing to concede

²¹ George. W. M. Reynolds *The Mysteries of London: Volume IV* (London: Walter Sully, Bonner House Printing Office, Seacoal Lane), p. 209.

that Dickens was a ‘great novelist’, a compliment he had been reluctant to pay previously.²² By 1846 Reynolds’s growing stature as a writer of popular fiction and now an independent editor somewhat contrasts with Sara James’s assessment of his early career, which was marked by ‘anxieties about his ability to generate completely new material’.²³ Reynolds was far from anxious; rather, he was revelling in his successes and appeared to have enjoyed the chance to flaunt his achievements over Dickens’s.

It is interesting to note, however, that through these years Reynolds still displayed a tendency to measure his success against Dickens’s. This, I argue, illustrates that their rivalry and competitive spirit remained a significant element in both their careers through the latter half of the 1840s. Indeed, during Reynolds’s time at the *London Journal* he still appeared to be monitoring Dickens closely, using the ‘Correspondents’ section of the journal to posture over the healthy sales of the *Journal*. Reynolds claimed that the ‘sale of [...] the *London Journal* [is] a hundred and twenty thousand’, whereas ‘the circulation of Boz’s *Pickwick Papers* amounted to about forty thousand’.²⁴ The comparison is odd and somewhat redundant, given the differing nature of the publications as well as the time span between *Pickwick*’s publication in 1836 and the figures drawn for an 1846 edition of the *London Journal* (a period in which the popular press underwent considerable expansion and literacy rates began to boom). Comments of this ilk suggest that Reynolds still used Dickens as a yardstick by which to assess his own achievements.

Mary Shannon observes of the ‘Correspondents’ section for both the *London Journal* and the later *Reynolds’s Miscellany*, that Reynolds regularly received letters from readers who adopted pen names from Dickens novels.²⁵ Shannon explains that assumed names ‘like “Newman Noggs” (from *Nicholas Nickleby*) and “Boz”’, were mixed in ‘alongside “Tom Rain” (*Mysteries Series II*) and ‘Richard Markham’ (*Mysteries*

²² As chapter two argued, Reynolds’s compliments in *Pickwick Abroad* are typically directed towards Mr Pickwick, rather than ‘Boz’, a strategy purposefully deployed to undermine Dickens’s authority over his comic creation by suggesting that Pickwick existed outside of ‘Boz’s’ authorial control.

²³ Sara James, ‘G.W.M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 19-32 (p. 21).

²⁴ G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘Notices to Correspondents’, *London Journal and Weekly Record of Literature, Science and Art*, 2 (1846), 400-400 (p. 400).

²⁵ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 46.

Series I and II)'.²⁶ This appeared to be a fairly common practice and one which suggests that readers felt no need to distinguish between authors. Arguably, Reynolds would have been encouraged by this lack of distinction between his fiction and Dickens's, since it suggested an equality of sorts, and provided a justification for his efforts in *Pickwick Abroad*, where he first began to establish his name alongside Boz as a biographer of Pickwick. Certainly, readers did write to Reynolds with questions about how he and Dickens were connected. One such response in February 1851 simply reads: 'Mr Charles Dickens was born in 1812. Mr G. W. M. Reynolds is several years his junior'.²⁷ The question is easily inferred to have been about the similarity in age between Dickens and Reynolds, further evidence that the two 'were paired in the imaginations of some readers'.²⁸ Other responses are similarly revealing of how Reynolds's name became paired with Dickens's. In January 1847 a reader using the name 'Tom Rainford' prompted a response from Reynolds that speaks to the sense of fluidity and perhaps saturation in the literary marketplace as readers found it increasingly difficult to distinguish between texts and authors. Reynolds explains to 'Tom Rainford' that 'Judge Haliburton wrote "The Clock-maker," Mr Dickens (Boz) wrote "Master Humphrey's Clock," and Sir E. Bulwer Lytton wrote "Eugene Aram"'.²⁹ Presumably the reader was seeking clarification between each of these works and, given that he wrote to Reynolds, who himself penned *Master Timothy's Bookcase* (1842), it seems likely that there may also have been a confusion concerning the three separate texts (four including Reynolds's) owing to the common use of the terms 'Clock' and 'Master'. I would argue that Bulwer Lytton's novel may have been similarly conflated with these titles as the name Eugene appears in Lytton's title and is also used by Reynolds in the *Mysteries* serial, which was itself most likely a homage to [the French author] Eugène Sue. This tangled web of names and texts helps to illustrate the intersectionality of names and titles, revealing something of the closeness of authors at this time, conjuring an image of authors jostling for space in a crowded and fluid marketplace.³⁰

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Notices to Correspondents', *Reynolds's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 6 (1851), 63-63 (p. 63).

²⁸ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 46.

²⁹ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Notices to Correspondents', *Reynolds's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 1 (1847), 175-176 (p. 175).

³⁰ Such confusion also speaks to the newly emerged mass market of literate readers referred to by Wilkie Collins in 1858 as the 'Unknown Public'. Wilkie Collins. 'The Unknown Public', *Household Words*, 18 (1858), 217-222.

By 1846 Reynolds had arguably outgrown the need to tie his writing to Dickens's, yet he consistently fell back on the dynamic, stoking controversy where none need have existed. His periodical success had further altered his relationship with Dickens, pressing the advantage he had gained through the popularity of *The Mysteries of London*, and effectively pre-empting his rival's intentions, much in the same vein as *The Mysteries of London* had hindered Dickens's ability to pursue a possible response to Eugène Sue's work. With Reynolds now occupying the space in the market Dickens had been vying for, the dynamic between them shifted into a new phase, to be played out in the periodical market.

If Reynolds closely followed Dickens's activities through the latter half of the 1840s, it is my view that the reverse is also true. In 1849, following the shelving of *The Cricket*, Dickens proposed a new periodical to Forster which arguably bears strains of Reynolds's influence. Dickens presented to Forster a 'floating fancy for a weekly periodical which was still and always present in his mind'.³¹ The four years which had elapsed since *The Cricket* clearly weighed on his mind, as evidenced by the exasperation with which he urged himself to get into

such harness one of these days, please God, in connexion with that long-deferred-but-never-sufficiently-to-be-considered-and-never-to-be-approached-though-not-yet-planned-or-named Periodical as shall carry us to Chambers-like profits at a hand gallop.³²

A reference to the financial incentive for the property appeared again, much as it had in the proposal for *The Cricket* and in his letter from 1846, but the familial and confidential qualities that emanated from the domestic hearth was now replaced by more sinister imagery:

I want to suppose a certain SHADOW, which may go into any place, by sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, candlelight, and be in all homes, and all nooks and corners, and be supposed to be

³¹ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2011), p. 862.

³² Drew, p. 106.

cognisant of everything, and go everywhere, without the least difficulty. Which may be in the Theatre, the Palace, the House of Commons, the Prisons, the Unions, the Churches, on the Railroad, on the Sea, abroad and at home, a kind of semi-omniscient, omnipresent, intangible creature.³³

John Drew explains that Dickens's shadow concept 'threatens to undermine any such separation of spheres, and spare no-one'.³⁴ Without the softening, intimate language of *The Cricket*, however, this omnipresence becomes difficult to read as anything other than 'an uncomfortable foreshadowing of an Orwellian future'.³⁵ Louis James describes Dickens's use of the metaphor as suggesting 'passivity', whereas "restless" Dickens was anything but passive'.³⁶ Forster equally struggled to 'make anything out of it' and the idea, like *The Cricket* before it, was shelved.³⁷ It is my view that this new idea is significant, not because it reveals Dickens's eagerness to establish a foothold in the periodical market, lending further credence to the notion that at this point in their careers Reynolds was leading and Dickens was following, but because the description of the SHADOW seemed to owe something to Reynolds's Resurrection Man in *The Mysteries of London*. Dickens wanted the SHADOW figure to 'be cognisant of everything, and go everywhere, without the least difficulty'. In reeling off the list of spaces the SHADOW may occupy, the Palace is mentioned, presumably to demonstrate the narrator's ability to penetrate even the most exclusive of domains. Able to float through Parliament and appear in 'Prisons' and the 'Theatre', the figure is equally present in the realm of the governing classes, criminals, and the people *en masse*. Dickens's description of the omniscient energy or force is uncannily reminiscent of the role played by the Resurrection Man, who is consistently described as threateningly omnipresent and similarly capable of shifting seamlessly between locales.

³³ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), V, p. 622.

³⁴ Drew, p. 107.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Louis James, "'Restless Shadow: Dickens the Campaigner': Charles Dickens Museum, London, 9 May – 29 October 2017', *Dickensian*, 113, (2017), 183-184. (p. 183).

³⁷ Drew, p. 107; For a brief discussion on Dickens's SHADOW motif see Richard Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), pp. 259-262.

Described in the previous chapter as a central thread in *The Mysteries of London*, Reynolds's career criminal serves to tie disparate strands of the serial together. Acting as a galvanising force, the indiscriminate acts committed by the Resurrection Man, each with adherence to his sole principle of client and employer confidentiality, facilitates the numerous coincidences which occur through the serial, helping to achieve a narrative unity even across such a sprawling text. As my previous analysis illustrated, it was the use of crime as a levelling force that was most unnerving for contemporary readers, particularly those of the ruling classes, as the all-pervasive Resurrection Man threatens every strata of society, even the most private of sanctums. The similarity with Dickens's SHADOW is aptly illustrated when the Resurrection Man threatens Viola, the wife of Arthur Chichester, an improvident and heartless gambler. Viola has been interred in the Resurrection Man's subterranean dungeon as part of a cruel plot devised by himself and Arthur to extort from the latter's wife an inheritance of eight thousand pounds, the sum being agreed upon as a concession for her freedom. Should she break her avowed silence as to the identity of her capturers, the Resurrection Man warns her that 'she would repent it; for let her be surrounded by friends – let her be protected by a regiment of soldiers – let her take refuge in the Queen's palace, I would still find means to tear her away, and bring her back to this dungeon'.³⁸ Reynolds endows the novel's chief villain with sinister omniscient and omnipresent qualities, which haunt the action of the novel. This was no empty threat either, as prior to Viola's capture the Resurrection Man had broken, undetected, into Buckingham Palace in order to retrieve the young boy tasked to perform a burglary. The daring feat, drawn from actual events reported in the news wherein a pot-boy had remained concealed and unnoticed in the Palace,³⁹ was appropriated by Reynolds in order to undermine people's faith in the security and sanctity of private space as a barrier against crime and violence. As John Plunkett explains, '*The Mysteries of London* is keyed into the general fascination exerted by a royal private sphere'.⁴⁰ The Resurrection Man renders such sanctuaries as vulnerable to the forces of crime and the threat of an invasive underworld.

³⁸ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I (Missouri: Valancourt Books, 2013), p. 964.

³⁹ Reynold's fictionalised version of the pot-boy is called Henry Holford. The incident was drawn from an event known as the 'Boy Jones story' which was printed by numerous publications ranging from *Punch* to the *Penny Satirist*. See John Plunkett, 'Regicide and Regimania in G. W. M. Reynolds and *The Mysteries of London*', in *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, ed. by Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), pp. 15-30 (p. 22).

⁴⁰ Plunkett, 'Regicide and Regimania', p. 22.

A further similarity shared by Dickens's SHADOW figure and the Resurrection Man is the almost ephemeral quality of his appearance. Throughout the *Mysteries of London* Reynolds repeats numerous times the description of the Resurrection Man as having a 'cadaverous countenance', shifting between the realm of the living and the dead. Coupled with his omniscience, appearing fortuitously and coincidental, helping to drive the plot using the development of criminal pursuits, he is often manifest as something less than human. Dickens's SHADOW is similarly described as an 'intangible creature', not a human, but something other. Such factors no doubt contributed to Forster's rejection of the idea. Indeed, given his proclivity for the grotesque and his tendency towards an 'attraction of repulsion', Dickens would certainly have been fascinated by the liminal and detestable qualities of the Resurrection Man,⁴¹ and his depiction of the SHADOW certainly appears to echo Reynolds's most menacing villain. Such comparisons provide further evidence of Dickens having borrowed directly from Reynolds (as proposed in chapter three regarding elements of *Bleak House*), and it certainly demonstrates the extent to which the two were still working with the same material and entertaining the same fascinations, particularly those 'mystery' elements inspired by Sue. Additionally, it might be considered that because Dickens conceived of *Pickwick Papers* as a type of magazine, it could be supposed that he drew his inspiration from the Resurrection Man as a means of developing the SHADOW as a periodical. Likewise, the long and rambling form of the *Mysteries of London* bears many resemblances to a periodical with its sheer breadth of content and serial form, carried in monthly installments across four years. The distinctions between journals and serial novels were not always clear

⁴¹ In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the grave robber, or 'resurrectionist' Jerry Cruncher is described as a 'knowing nod to Reynolds's "Body-Snatchers"'. Elisabeth Jay, *British Writers and Paris 1830:1875* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 275; Gaffer Hexham of *Our Mutual Friend* provides a further example; Hexham's profession involves dredging the Thames and exhuming corpses in order to sell the bodies or to strip them of their residual valuables. Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2002); Magwitch of *Great Expectations* also shares eerily similar qualities with the Resurrection Man. We first encounter Magwitch when he effectively springs from a grave and startles Pip. Magwitch also utters a similar threat to that issued to Viola Chichester in *The Mysteries of London*, warning Pip of the consequences should he cross him and his sinister companion out on the marshes: 'You do it, and you never dare to say a word or dare to make a sign concerning your having seen such a person as me, or any person sumever, and you shall be let to live [...]. [A] boy make lock his door, may be warm in bed, may tuck himself up, may draw the clothes over his head, may think himself comfortable and safe, but that young man will softly creep up and creep his way to him and tear him open'. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Inc, 1967), p. 38; Chris Baldick describes how Dickens conveys in his fiction a 'nightmare world' wherein 'animation of the apparently inanimate is key characteristic'. For Baldick, monsters are the product of a society which does not value humanity. Chris Baldick, 'The Galvanic World: Carlyle and the Dickens Monster', in *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth Century Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 103-120. (p. 108); For further discussions on Dickens's preoccupation with death and dying see Andrew Sanders, *Charles Dickens: Resurrectionist* (London: Macmillan, 1982).

cut, and in this regard, Dickens may have decided to lift the central stem from Reynolds's novel and re-appropriate it within a periodical of his own.

The Resurrection Man and Dickens's intangible creature see both authors deploying shadow imagery, which is rather fitting in a wider sense. As I have argued, Reynolds performed the role of Dickens's shadow early in his career, in that he imitated Dickens's work, and also in a more sinister sense as his work offered a darker, more dangerous, and more radically infused counterpart to Dickens's. In the late 1840s, as Reynolds shifted to the forefront of literary and political consciousness, Dickens was arguably forced into Reynolds's shadow, unable or unwilling to compete with the licentious style or political flammability of his rival. Like Reynolds, Dickens saw opportunity for reflection from this position and now proposed to adopt the metaphorical shadow as a principal function of his periodical writing in order to mimic Reynolds's successes, or to try and re-claim his own territory from the author whose career was built upon an imitation of his own. In any case, Dickens's new role as the shadow encapsulates a reversal of their dynamic through these years.⁴²

As a character, or a concept, the SHADOW never came to fruition, but Dickens was successful with *Household Words* less than a year later in 1850. By now, however, the proposition in front of Dickens had been altered by Reynolds's presence in the marketplace. Of Dickens's feelings on these developments,

⁴² There appears to be a general reluctance around labelling Dickens as a plagiarist in the same manner that this accusation was attached to Reynolds's name. Elisabeth Jay, for example, details numerous similarities Dickens's later fiction shared with Reynolds's, such as Jerry Cruncher, who, much like 'Reynolds's gang leader, Anthony Tidkins, crosses the Channel, and is supplied with a family life in which he regularly indulges in domestic violence'. Jay also notes that the opening scene of *A Tale of Two Cities*, 'in which the mailcoach making its way to a Channel crossing seems likely to be interrupted by a highwayman, plays a similar role in moving characters back and forth from Paris to London in Reynolds's earlier novel *Alfred de Rosann; or the Adventures of French Gentleman* (1838), whereas the double-dealing turncoat, confidence trickster, and spy, Solomon Pross, who operates under the alias of Barsad in Paris, could easily have come, courtesy of Vidoq, from Reynolds's extensive rogues' gallery'. Given these examples, however, Jay steers away from straight accusations of plagiarism, instead remarking: 'My point is not to accuse Dickens of plagiarism—he swiftly borrows from a common pool with highly individualised tics—but to confirm the fairly tight range of stereotypical situations and characters from which mid-Victorian novelists constructed their pictures of city life, and more specifically Parisian life'. Jay, p. 275; In the previous chapter this argument was made concerning the similarities and convenient timings of *Bleak House*, which appears to borrow heavily both from Reynolds's *The Seamstress* and *The Mysteries of London*. I argue that, cumulatively, these examples constitute something more than the typical practice of borrowing from a 'common pool', and instead suppose a conscious engagement on Dickens's part to repurpose Reynolds's work in much the same manner that Reynolds had re-appropriated Dickens's work in the late 1830s and early 1840s.

Sally Ledger remarks that, by 1850, ‘the combination of Reynolds’s commercial success and his potentially massive cultural influence on the working classes [...] perplexed the editor of *Household Words*’.⁴³ *Reynolds’s Miscellany* had effectively stolen the commercial space Dickens had espied a year earlier, and with a property whose intentions were stated in much the same fashion as he had outlined in *The Cricket*. Dickens’s unsuccessful attempt to enter the periodicals market between 1845 and 1850, coupled with Reynolds’s coeval success, must surely have galled him. With Reynolds already established in the periodical market, Dickens was forced to alter his approach with the SHADOW. Its disparity from the cosy effect of *The Cricket* signified his recognition of the need to react to Reynolds. It is plausible that the Resurrection Man formed the template for Dickens’s SHADOW concept, which can be traced forward to *Bleak House* where it was ultimately transposed into the pervasive fog, a device used to create the same sense of omniscience, permeability and interconnectedness between physical spaces. Again, this supports the notion of Reynolds having seemingly moved ahead of Dickens through these years, and moreover, that their influence on each other was far more reciprocal than is commonly acknowledged.

Dickens’s opening address in the inaugural number of *Household Words* in 1850 marked the beginning of a more proactive response to Reynolds. The new periodical combined the unique aspects of *The Cricket*, namely the confidential, familial and intimate tone, with a new combative element, which in the first instance targeted Reynolds. Unlike Reynolds’s efforts with his *Miscellany*, Dickens had no such intention of downplaying the rivalry. Rather than a ‘placatory gesture’, Dickens, somewhat ironically, began his venture, designed to be inclusive, improving, and a force to unite the household, with a scathing imperative calling for the displacement of Reynolds.

Some tillers of the field into which we now come have been before us, and some are here whose high usefulness we readily acknowledge, and whose company it is an honour to join. But, there are others here – Bastards of the Mountain, draggled fringe on the Red Cap, Panders to the basest passions of

⁴³ Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 169.

the lowest natures – whose existence is a national reproach. And these, we should consider it our highest service to displace!⁴⁴

This opening address signalled a significant shift in his strategy for dealing with Reynolds. Following two failed attempts to enter the market, Dickens appeared to have steeled himself towards a new and explicitly confrontational rivalry, declaring the displacement of Reynolds (presumably among other popular writers such as Edward Lloyd) as the ‘highest service’ for his periodical. Moreover, he enlisted his readership in this endeavour, proclaiming this affirmative action against his rival as a necessary corrective against the ‘national reproach’, which had seen Reynolds established as a popular literary and political figure. By now Dickens would certainly have been both incredulous of Reynolds’s supposed good intentions and disbelieving of his stated cooperation with his fellow writers and editors. He therefore decided to pursue Reynolds explicitly, marking him out publicly as the enemy, looking not to join him, but to supplant him in the market. The adversarial note Dickens struck in the opening address largely set the tone for their rivalry for the next eight years.

A major factor in Dickens’s desire to hold proprietorship of a periodical continued to be the potential financial security provided by the market. Once *Household Words* had found its footing, Dickens stated to Angela Burdett-Coutts in a letter in April 1850: ‘The *Household Words* I hope (and have every reason to hope) will become a good property. It is exceedingly well liked, and “goes”, in the trade phrase, admirably. I daresay I shall be able to tell you, by the end of the month, what the steady sale is. It is quite as high now, as I ever anticipated’.⁴⁵ The financial security resulting from his work was never too far from Dickens’s mind. Financial stability was, no doubt, a similarly motivating force for Reynolds, and, in the period between 1846 and 1850, the sound financial management of John Dicks (Reynolds’s publisher for *The Mysteries of London*) enabled him to launch *Reynolds’s Weekly Magazine* in 1848 and *Reynolds’s Political*

⁴⁴ Charles Dickens, ‘A Preliminary Word’, *Household Words*, 1 (1850), 1-2, (p 2).

⁴⁵ *Letters From Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841-1865*, ed. by Edgar Johnson (London: Lowe and Brydone Ltd., 1953), p. 168.

Instructor in 1849.⁴⁶ It must have seemed to Dickens as if Reynolds was flooding the market, leaving little room for competing periodicals. However, with *Household Words*, Dickens was poised to begin his efforts to undermine his rival by attempting to carve out a niche in the periodicals market.

The title of the periodical, *Household Words*, eschewed the common practice of putting his own name to the publication, with Dickens emphasising his desire to appeal to the most intimate and private of spaces, the family home:

We have considered what an ambition it is to be admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as a friend by children and old people; to be thought of in affliction and in happiness; to people the sick room with airy shapes 'that give delight and hurt not,' and to be associated with the harmless laughter and the gentle tears of many hearths. We know the great responsibility of such a privilege.⁴⁷

Persisting with his original intentions for the abandoned *Cricket*, which sought to trade on the uniqueness of its intimate positioning, Dickens also stripped away any mention of financial motivation, substituting any explicit reference to the commercial aspects of the periodical with language relating to the ideological and physical space of the domestic home, a space integral to the (middle-class) cultural identity of the period.⁴⁸ The address adopts a tone of humility in seeking admission to the homes of the people, blending his recognition of the privilege and responsibility of this position with his typically Dickensian sentiment,

⁴⁶ Reynolds did in fact file for bankruptcy one final time, even under the steadier hand of Dicks, in 1848, but thereafter his turbulent financial affairs were stabilised. Indeed, upon his death on June 17, 1879 Reynolds left an estate valued at £28,000. Anne Humpherys and Louis James, 'Introduction', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 1-15 (p. 7).

⁴⁷ Charles Dickens, 'A Preliminary Word', *Household Words*, 1 (1850), 1-2 (p. 1).

⁴⁸ In order to maintain strict control over the identity of the periodical Dickens assumed an authoritarian role, using the self-appointed title of 'conductor', which was printed on the masthead of each issue. As Margaret Beetham explains: 'It is true that the editor or proprietor will try to enforce a certain consistency of style and position but the tight editorial control and policy of rewriting contributions which Dickens followed in *Household Words* was and is exceptional'. Margaret Beetham, 'Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre', in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Brake, Laurel, and others (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), pp. 19-32 (p. 25).

⁴⁸ Diamond, p. 132.

centred upon the hearth.⁴⁹ It is no coincidence, however, that this passage is followed directly by the more combative insinuations of immorality levelled at Reynolds, labelling him a ‘Bastard of the Mountain’. In melodramatic fashion, Dickens uses the contrast of his moralising, family-orientated tone, to heighten the differences between himself and the allegedly debasing Reynolds. He thus creates a strange blend of familial yet confrontational sentiment, entering into a more explicit phase of his rivalry in which he was more willing to trade direct slights and accusations in order to undermine his rival and support his own ventures. It is my contention that both these facets of *Household Words*, its desire to displace Reynolds, and its concern with the domestic idyll, reflect Dickens’s continuing preoccupation with his rival. Indeed, the success of *Household Words* was celebrated in private by Dickens according to its ability to disrupt the equilibrium of Reynolds’s properties. He wrote to Burdett-Coutts in 1850, expressing his thoughts on the new venture, stating: ‘It is playing havoc with the villainous literature’.⁵⁰

That Dickens commonly began to refer to Reynolds as a proponent of ‘villainous literature’ provides an avenue into the notion of Dickens and Reynolds as engaged in the construction of their *other*. Naturally perturbed by Reynolds’s success in making headway in the periodical market, Dickens now recognised the commercial advantage in constructing Reynolds as the enemy. By installing his adversary as such, Dickens created a contrast which helped to better circumscribe his own position as sincerely concerned with ‘the people’, hoping to earn their intimacy and loyalty. This was to be especially important if both authors were concerned with the lack of space in an already crowded marketplace, where identities were difficult to discern and periodicals jostled for position. The opening address of *Household Words* was not, then, simply a reflection of Dickens’s overview of the periodical market, it was also a significant response to Reynolds and an expression of the frustration he felt. Reynolds was by no means the first to pursue this type of periodical publication, yet Dickens consistently singled him out above others. That Dickens chose to target

⁴⁹ Dickens’s success with this strategy is arguably best reflected by the remarks of American scholar Charles Eliot Norton, who claimed: ‘No one thinks of Mr Dickens as a writer. He is at once, through his books, a friend. He belongs among the intimates of every pleasant-tempered and large-hearted person. He is not so much the guest as the inmate of our homes. He keeps holidays with us, he helps us to celebrate Christmas with heartier cheer, he shares at every New Year in our good wishes’. Charles Eliot Norton, ‘Charles Dickens’, *North American Review*, cvi (April 1868), p. 671.

⁵⁰ *Letters From Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841-1865*, p. 168.

Reynolds speaks volumes about the latter's influence over the period, and over Dickens specifically. As Sally Ledger observes, given their respective successes and popularity, it was curious that:

Dickens repeatedly attacks G. W. M. Reynolds rather than Ernest Jones in the early 1850s; it was after all, Jones, who had been the leading figure in manoeuvring Chartism to the left... Dickens's targeting of Reynolds suggests that it was not so much (or not only) the radicalisation of Chartism that troubled him in the early 1850s as its coupling with the (as he saw it) cheap sensationalism of Reynolds's newsprint.⁵¹

Jones may have been the more prominent figure amongst the Chartists, particularly in the 1850s after Reynolds parted company with the organisation, but, crucially, Jones did not share Reynolds's history with Dickens. Dickens's fixation on Reynolds was not, therefore, only about the politics of the Chartists. Neither was it about the brand of sensational journalism Reynolds promulgated, since Reynolds 'had learned the dramatic appeal of the breathless staccato' from Lloyd's serials, 'which was in turn indebted to the style of the "penny-a-line" reporters who were paid by the column inches'.⁵² Instead, I argue, Dickens's compulsion to respond to Reynolds was developed in the late 1830s and rumbled through the early 1840s, as their relationship developed from one of antipathy into reciprocity.

Eschewing the general atmosphere of camaraderie, since this might make his publication difficult to distinguish from Reynolds's or any other competitor plying their trade in the fluid and busy marketplace, Dickens instead chose, in 1850, to emphasise the rivalry that existed between them. *Household Words* was presented as occupying the moral high ground, which by implication meant that Reynolds's periodical was simply a propagator of base material. Dickens and Reynolds were no doubt conscious that any comparisons drawn between them would render their respective commercial spaces and political positioning more

⁵¹ Ledger, p. 169.

⁵² Louis James, 'Time, Politics and the Symbolic Imagination in Reynolds's Social Melodrama', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 179-198 (p. 187).

difficult to distinguish from one another. In this sense, as Shannon suggests, they ‘sniped at each other as they battled over a broadly similar readership [...] effectively working to define that audience’ before competing for their loyalty.⁵³ The two, it seems, needed one another, rather than Reynolds simply needing Dickens.

If Dickens used the opening address of *Household Words* to create clear dividing lines with Reynolds, who was now assigned the role of villain, by implication he became the hero and the voice of higher moral purpose. Dickens intended their rivalry to play out in the space demarcated as domestic, a space he had been constructing in his fiction since 1845.⁵⁴ Not only did this domain serve to mask Dickens’s own financial motives for the periodical, appealing to the readers’ sense of camaraderie and familial closeness, it also portrayed Reynolds as a hostile force, threatening the stability of this private space. As Catherine Gallagher’s analysis suggests, the private domain was consciously cultivated by middle-class novelists in the 1840s to combat the influence of figures such as Reynolds, who continually stoked the agitation of the working classes whose suffering was associated with the public, industrial workspace. This was performed via the transferring of ‘social conflicts [...] into private conflicts’,⁵⁵ negating any need for the type of collective action advocated by figures such as Reynolds.

John Drew’s analysis helps to tie Dickens’s intentions for the construction of this domestic space together with the failed *Cricket* venture, which Drew regards as an early attempt to ‘distil from the fictional specificities of *A Christmas Carol* and *The Chimes* the essence of their radical political stance, and their

⁵³ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Indeed, Lorna Huett’s study, which reflects on Wilkie Collins’s article ‘The Unknown Public’, published in *Household Words* in 1858, has demonstrated that, under Dickens’s heavy editorial hand, efforts were still being made to cultivate this middle-class identity and space. Huett claims that, while ‘Collins initially appears to be writing from a privileged position of smug superiority, as staff writer on a successful, respectable journal conducted by one of the most celebrated literary men of the day, there is an inherent ambivalence in his article. This ambivalence in turn comments on the nature of *Household Words* itself, and calls into question the stable, superior identity Collins is so eager to construct for the journal. Rather than engaging in an anthropological enquiry into the nature of the reading public, the author is in fact employed in simultaneously addressing and creating a middle-class audience for the journal.’ Lorna Huett, ‘Among the Unknown Public: *Household Words*, *All the Year Round*, and the Mass-Market Weekly Periodical in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 38 (2005), 61-82 (p. 66).

⁵⁵ Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form 1832-1867* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 114.

apotheosis of the family hearth as the nucleus of social stability'.⁵⁶ Drew's analysis is problematic, however, for the same reasons discussed in chapter three, since *The Cricket*, ultimately published as a short Christmas tale, was distinctly lacking in the radicalism exhibited in the previous two tales. Moreover, the radical apotheosis Dickens supposedly attempted to achieve with *The Cricket*, in fact made little impact on the Condition of England debate. Rather, as I have argued, it virtually excluded Dickens from that discussion. By 1850, this domestically-driven ideology had assumed a greater importance and lent a greater security to Dickens's writing, especially because it meant he could attack his rival from a niche area in the marketplace in which Reynolds had very little purchase. As Louis James makes clear in his foreword to *The Mysteries of London*: 'Reynolds gives little space in his fiction to the Victorian ideal of love and harmony, the family circle'.⁵⁷ Thus, Dickens's position as an exponent of writing from the hearth was far less susceptible to conflation with Reynolds's brand of writing.

Developments in the periodical market demonstrate that Reynolds was well-established by the time Dickens secured his property in 1850. It is my contention that prior to, and even with the advent of, *Household Words*, Dickens was playing catch-up with, and navigating his position relative to, Reynolds. It is revealing that critics such as Tillotson describe the relationship of *Reynolds's Miscellany* to *Household Words* as one of a convenient trial project, one which Dickens could learn from and improve upon. 'The interest' of serials such as Reynolds's is thus described as being 'mainly sub-literary; [...] such periodicals helped to prepare the way for Dickens's twopenny weekly *Household Words*'.⁵⁸ This is fairly typical of the critical approach to Reynolds's work. Unable or unwilling to reconcile Reynolds's influence with Dickens's activities, analysis has tended to overlook Reynolds's achievement in assessing the marketplace and establishing his own periodical before Dickens was able to do the same. I argue instead, that it is important to the overall arc of Dickens's and Reynolds's rivalry to recognise the reversal effected by Reynolds from 1844 until approximately 1850, not only because it contributes a wider corrective reading of the extent to which his

⁵⁶ Drew, p. 69.

⁵⁷ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, pp. ix-x.

⁵⁸ Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 31.

influence over nineteenth-century periodical culture can be seen, but also because it provides a richer understanding of Dickens's motivations heading into the 1850s; it colours how the feuding between the two, which peaked in this decade, might be interpreted.

4.2 Trading (in) insults: The 'Bastard of the Mountain' and the 'Lickspittle Hanger-on'

Prior to *Household Words*, Dickens's comments on Reynolds were more commonly voiced within the confines of his private correspondence or surreptitiously hidden within his fiction in an often-cryptic manner, as chapter three examined with the veiled reference to Reynolds in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. By 1850, however, *Household Words* provided for Dickens a more secure commercial and political platform from which he felt more comfortable confronting Reynolds. This was partially due to the recognition that typifying Reynolds as a villain was useful to the sales of the periodical, and the explicitness of the remarks from 1850 onwards certainly suggests a greater degree of confidence than he had exhibited during the latter half of the 1840s, when Reynolds was reaching the apex of his popularity. The main source of this confidence was recognised by Margaret Oliphant's review in 1855, in which she observed: 'The middle class in itself is a realm of infinite gradations...But nowhere does the household hearth burn brighter – nowhere is the family love so warm, - the natural bonds so strong; and this is the ground which Mr Dickens occupies *par excellence* – the field of his triumphs, from which he may defy all his rivals without fear'.⁵⁹ Dickens's authority over this domestic domain would drastically alter the dynamic between himself and Reynolds, as the former established himself firmly as 'the pre-eminent novelist of the middle-class family'.⁶⁰

The differences between the comments Dickens directed towards Reynolds pre-1850 and post-1850 are subtle but can be explained using the following example. In August 1849, following Reynolds's public and

⁵⁹ Margaret Oliphant, 'Charles Dickens' *Blackwood's Magazine*, April 1855, rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge, 1971), pp. 328-329.

⁶⁰ Catherine Waters, *Dickens and the Politics of Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 15.

allegedly extemporaneous performance at Trafalgar Square the previous year, Dickens wrote to his friend Macready:

I feel strongly for the genuine working men who are Chartists, but have no sympathy whatever with the amateurs. If “Mr. G. W. Reynolds” be the Mr. Reynolds who is the Author of the *Mysteries of London*, and who took the chair for a mob in Trafalgar Square before they set forth on a window-breaking expedition, I hold his name to be a name with which no lady’s and gentleman’s should be associated.⁶¹

This excerpt is revealing for two reasons; firstly, it was voiced in (relative) privacy.⁶² That Dickens chose to conceal his thoughts in a private letter reveals an anxiety over Reynolds’s reach as an author and now a public, political figure. Secondly, even in his private letters, Dickens chose to maintain a pretense of ignorance regarding Reynolds’s identity and status, apparently only able to infer that the Reynolds ‘who took the chair for a mob’ was the same Reynolds ‘who is the author of the *Mysteries of London*’. Dickens

⁶¹ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, V, p. 622.

⁶² I have added the word relative in parentheses since Dickens was, or at least became, acutely conscious of the potential transparency and publicity that all of his writing would be subjected to in posterity. In 1860 he in fact burnt huge swathes of his correspondence, explaining to the Dean of Rochester, Samuel Reynolds Hole in 1864: ‘A year or two ago, shocked by the misuse of private letters of public men, which I constantly observed, I destroyed a very large and very rare mass of correspondence. It was not done without pain, you may believe, but, the first reluctance, conquered, I have steadily abided by my determination to keep no letters by me, and to consign all such papers to the fire’. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), X, p. 465; Less than three months later on 1 March 1865 Dickens wrote in similar vein to his friend, the actor William Charles Macready explaining: ‘Daily seeing improper uses made of confidential letters in the addressing of them to a public audience that have no business with them, I made not long ago a great fire in my field at Gad’s Hill, and burnt every letter I possessed. And now I always destroy every letter I receive – not on absolute business, – and my mind is so far at ease’. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), XI, pp. 21-22 465; Interestingly, the tampering with private correspondence was also an issue Reynolds took umbrage with in *The Mysteries of London*. The chapter entitled ‘The Black Chamber’ depicts the General Post Office on London’s *Saint Martin’s-le-Grand* as staffed by ‘five individuals’ the most ‘superior’ of which is an elderly, unassuming man known as the Examiner. Wielding immense power, it is the job of these individuals to control the dissemination of mail deemed to be of political importance. Achieved by steaming open the mail, reading its contents and collecting notes ready to be sent to the appropriate office of government, before re-sealing and posting the letter to its rightful recipient, the post office constitutes a major narrative arc in the novel. Reynolds’s post office operates at the heart of modern London, defined by the control of information, yet operating as a mechanism of blackmail, chicanery and treachery. For further discussion on Reynolds’s ‘Black Chamber’ see David Vincent, *I Hope I Don’t Intrude: Privacy and its Dilemmas in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); For wider discussions see David Vincent, *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain, 1832-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

would have been in no doubt that it was indeed Reynolds at the helm, as the opening address to *Household Words* makes clear less than a year later. Referring to Reynolds not as a ‘tiller of the field’, one of many that had come before him, but as an ‘other’, a ‘Bastard of the Mountain’ and a ‘draggled fringe on the Red Cap’, Dickens indicates that he was conscious of Reynolds’s activities during the previous four years, at least to the extent that he could cast aspersions on the now ‘draggled fringe’ of political inclinations Reynolds had indulged and promulgated through the second half of the 1840s.

Prior to *Household Words* Dickens was more likely to exhibit a type of feigned apathy towards Reynolds, as if his influence had barely registered, a point which is partially reflected in his letter to Macready. Dickens’s comments, I argue, are also knowingly misplaced. When he remarks that Reynolds’s name ought not to be associated with any ‘lady’s or gentleman’s’, he was surely aware that Reynolds would have been happy to be publicly distanced from the bourgeois class. When Dickens proclaims, ‘I hold his name’, it suggests that he sees himself as the arbiter on such matters, casting his authority over Reynolds as a kind of public service or sense of duty, and determining his future reputation. It is my view, however, that such statements align Dickens with the other middle-class writers and public figures of the period, all of whom harboured anxieties over Reynolds’s influence. As Ian Haywood has demonstrated, the late 1840s was a period of literary counter-revolution as much as it was of revolutionary fervour, as the ‘respectable’ press and governing classes held an especial interest in, and reservation towards, Reynolds.⁶³ Described by Haywood and Anne Humpherys as constituting a sustained cultural effort, Reynolds became ‘a major figure that the Victorian “respectable” public conspired to ignore’.⁶⁴ Dickens’s feigned ignorance of Reynolds ought to be read in this same vein, as an attempt to downplay the latter’s influence and a masking of deeper anxieties; hence the collective action at Trafalgar Square being reduced to a petty ‘window-breaking expedition’.

⁶³ See Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Humpherys and James, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

As I have demonstrated, the careers of Dickens and Reynolds were intertwined from 1837 onwards. With Dickens's move into the periodical market in 1850 facilitated by the physical relocation of his offices to Wellington Street, the proximity of the two authors became more entangled than at any point hitherto. Shannon's examination of the cultural geography and propinquity of the two within what she terms 'the imagined print networks' and the close configuration of the printing and publishing district of London, helps to cast further and serious doubt over the veracity of Dickens's claims to be unsure as to who exactly Reynolds was. It is important, in keeping with the notion of Reynolds as having moved 'ahead of Dickens',⁶⁵ to emphasize that 'Reynolds had been in Wellington Street before Dickens arrived there'.⁶⁶ Wellington Street was a thriving hub of London's print culture, associated with the respectable press, where Holywell Street acquired a more scurrilous reputation. In fact, even prior to this move, Dickens had already existed in the same physical space as Reynolds, as the offices for the *London Journal* 'were only a few doors away from Dickens's publishers Chapman & Hall, on the Strand'.⁶⁷ Now, the proximity between Dickens and Reynolds could literally have been measured in yards and the latter would have been able to see the offices for *Household Words* from his window.⁶⁸ By implication, Dickens could also see Reynolds's place of work, and the notion that Reynolds was in any sense an obscure figure on Dickens's radar was highly unlikely. In this regard, Dickens's statements in 1849, which advocated a distancing of the respectable classes from any association with Reynolds's name, read somewhat hypocritically considering Dickens then immediately moved his own place of work just a few doors down from this supposedly debasing influence.

The close physical proximity of Dickens and Reynolds through these years, as Shannon's study explains, was due to the narrowly circumscribed print and publishing district on the north bank of the Thames. Upwards of twenty newspaper outlets shared commercial space across Wellington Street, Fleet Street, the

⁶⁵ Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, p. 167.

⁶⁶ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 41.

⁶⁷ Andrew King, *The London Journal, 1845-83: Periodicals, Production and Gender* (London: Routledge, 2017). p. 77.

⁶⁸ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, pp. 38-47.

Strand, Paternoster Row, and Holywell Street.⁶⁹ The physical confines reflected the close community-like print networks and the heightened milieu in which rivalries and collaborations existed. Given the likelihood ‘that the two authors crossed paths occasionally’,⁷⁰ it is understandable how difficult it may have been to distinguish between plagiarism and piracy and the natural, coincidental overlapping of ideas, sourced from events and incidents reported by editors operating in the same space, often from similar vantage points:

For a ‘respectable’ writer like Dickens, the danger of so much print being produced from a relatively tight geographic area in London, despite rivalries between different networks, is that the disreputable corollary of yourself may be working on a weekly serial publication just as you are, and be doing so from an office on the same street, only a few doors away.⁷¹

This, I would argue, is where the crux of the animosity between Dickens and Reynolds lies, with Wellington Street acting as a ‘physical and metaphorical example of the complexity of their connection with one another: it was certainly more complicated than has been previously argued’.⁷² A modern urban environment, defined by its sense of anonymity amidst the masses, is also, according to the law of large numbers, one in which coincidences are in fact more likely to occur. As Shannon explains: ‘the often coincidental and contingent interactions on Wellington Street between those who used the street for business and leisure on a regular basis fed into literary imitation, repetition, plagiarism, and competition across titles and texts’.⁷³ The fluidity and permeability of ideas across publications, even those of differing political intention, reveals the difficulty of maintaining a degree of separation from other authors. In 1850 Dickens and Reynolds occupied the same physical space and were acutely conscious of the potential for conflation of their names and reputations.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Graham Law, ‘Reynolds’s “Memoirs” Series and “The Literature of the Kitchen”’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 199–210 (p. 206).

⁷¹ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 43.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 41.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 11.

As they entered into this new phase of their rivalry, intensified by the close physical proximity and the simmering of tensions which carried through from the previous decade, it became imperative for each author to find a new way to distance his identity from the other. The pairing of their names had been occurring ever since Reynolds penned *Pickwick Abroad* and had looked to cultivate his career at least partially in Dickens's image. As a result, by 1850, 'not only did writers link the two in their minds, but readers did, too [...] Reynolds and Dickens were paired in the imaginations of some readers'.⁷⁴ Dickens and Reynolds were even 'lampooned by co-editors Angus B. Reach and Albert Smith in the same volume of *The Man in the Moon*. Yet in their addresses to their readers they worked to distinguish themselves from each other, to suit the politics, the demands, and the desires of different groups of readers'.⁷⁵ However, with his own successes in the 1840s, Reynolds would have been less dependent on an association with Dickens, even if he remained preoccupied with him. The solution was clear to Dickens, who used the opening issue of *Household Words* to heighten the conflict between them and construct a clear dividing line, one which must account for the intertwining of their careers as well as the fact that they were now publishing from the very same street, mere doors apart.

Graham Law has noted that 'Reynolds was not personally attacked until the *Household Narrative* editorial of April 1851',⁷⁶ and from this point onwards, Dickens became more explicit and direct. In response, Reynolds raised his level of rancour to almost hysterical proportions. Following his opening salvo in the 'Preliminary Word' of *Household Words*, Dickens proclaimed that 'the first name affixed to this Chartist programme is that of a person notorious for his attempts to degrade the working men of England by circulating among them books of a debasing tendency'.⁷⁷ Dickens effectively set out his stall as the proprietor of a periodical that would vehemently and morally oppose Reynolds's enterprises. By virtue of

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 46.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 41.

⁷⁶ Law, 'Reynolds's "Memoirs" Series', p. 206.

⁷⁷ Charles Dickens, 'The Three Kingdoms', *The Household Narrative of Current Events: Monthly Supplement to "Household Words"*, Conducted by Charles Dickens (1851), 73-75 (p. 73).

his experience in the periodicals market, Reynolds was to Dickens a ‘tiller of the field’, an established voice that required expunging. Reynolds responded in belligerent fashion, branding Dickens a

Lickspittle Hanger-on to the robes of the aristocracy - Charles Dickens esq, originally a dinnerless penny-a-liner on *The Morning Chronicle*, has made a desperate onslaught upon the Chartist programme, in a trumpery monthly print which he edits [...]. Mr. Dickens proceeds to describe the Chartist leaders as ‘selfish and sordid braggarts’ [...]. And yet this wretched sycophant of aristocracy, this vulgar flatterer of the precious hereditary peerage is impudent enough to consider himself the people’s friend.⁷⁸

If Dickens’s objective was to displace the promulgator of this ‘debasing’ and ‘villainous’ writing, Reynolds in turn sought to expose Dickens as a charlatan, proclaiming: ‘we have thought it right to unmask the imposter and show the public what sort of character he really is’.⁷⁹ Framed by these competing objectives, the staging for their rivalry for the next eight years was thus quickly established.

By now Dickens was attuned to Reynolds’s antagonistic strategies and would have expected that his attack in *Household Words* would elicit a response. He must also have anticipated that his greater willingness to engage in a type of cut-and-thrust would open the floodgates to Reynolds’s often-bombastic tirades, and it did indeed precipitate a period of far more personal remarks and rejoinders. For Dickens to be willing to tackle Reynolds head on, breaking from the reservations he held in this regard over at least ten years, he must have felt a greater degree of comfort and security in his own position by 1850. *Household Words* was launched at an opportune moment for Dickens, as Reynolds’s relevance had begun to fade, at least politically. It was as if both Dickens and Reynolds could feel the momentum between them shifting as the former began to re-assert his dominance. With this shift of momentum, Dickens saw an opportunity to

⁷⁸ G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘Charles Dickens and the Democratic Movement’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper: A Weekly Journal of Politics, History, Literature and General Intelligence*, 43 (1851), 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

exorcise the frustration he felt towards Reynolds, which had been rumbling since 1837. It is my contention, however, that the nature of the language deployed against one another created an exaggerated version of their rivalry. By deconstructing the heightened language utilized by both, their rivalry is revealed to be as much a product of respective design as it was genuine dislike. Conscious of their similarities, it became important for both authors to construct a version of their rival which helped to distance their respective positions and thus avoid any further conflation of their identities.⁸⁰ This construction has largely underpinned the wider critical perception of the two as diametrically opposed and has effectively masked the depth and complexity and indeed commonalities of their writing. One corollary of this constructed binary has been the exclusion, or marginalisation of Reynolds from critical conceptions of the mid-century periodical marketplace, without due recognition of the utility such construction held for both authors. Instead Dickens's version of the narrative of their rivalry has too commonly been accepted as the truth and Reynolds has been cast as the counterpart, relegated to the peripheries of Dickens's career and the period in general, leaving him somewhat obscured as 'a tantalizingly shadowy presence in mid-Victorian culture'.

Both Dickens and Reynolds were proponents of the melodramatic mode in their fiction, drawing upon dualities and contrast to structure narratives. Contemporary critical analysis has now undertaken extensive revisions of their respective fondness for the literary style and it has been instrumental in pairing the two

⁸⁰ This strategy arguably reflects the wider cultural, social and political tendencies to categorise, delineate, and generally rely upon definitional binaries. Mary Poovey explains that the 'currency of the realm' for the Victorians increasingly became determined by, and in accordance with, 'the peoples they designated *other*'. Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 181; Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore similarly describe how the Victorians were 'completely fascinated with the "other", whether that other was the imperial subject in a far-off colony, the revolting emaciated inhabitant of the slum dwelling or the newly demonised criminal'. Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore, *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, p. 4; Victorians created dualisms based on sexual, racial and spatial differences. Such dichotomies of difference were, arguably, a means of projecting order onto a period of complex fluidity, a response to rapid industrialism and paradigm altering-political reform. These differences were frequently deployed as rhetoric of binary opposition that drew distinction between capital and labour, rich and poor, city and country, order and disorder, all of which were arguably a wider reflection of a political divide between the enfranchised and the disenfranchised following the 1832 Reform Act. See, for example, Vanden Bossche's study, which details the dichotomous Chartist and Parliamentary discourses as a galvanizing moment in the formation of a tripartite class system with distinct class-interests in Britain; or, as Kathleen Tillotson phrased it, the period in which the condition of the people was 'seen in the sharply antithetical terms'. Chris Vanden Bossche, *Reform Acts: Chartism, Social Agency, and the Victorian Novel, 1832-1867* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014); Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, p. 81.

authors.⁸¹ As touched upon in chapter two, scholarship has identified the self-reflexivity inherent in Dickens's writing as he consistently sought to deconstruct, or even destroy, the order he first established. Reynolds too has now been recognised for his efforts to transpose the gothic melodrama onto an urban setting, much of which is designed around the contrasting factions of the rich and poor. Just as in Dickens's fiction, Reynolds also seeks to deconstruct or collapse order, as in the *Mysteries of London* in which security and respectability is constantly undermined by the pervasiveness of crime at all levels of society. Tellingly, however, while the melodramatic mode of their fiction has undergone analysis, their exchanges with one another have not been afforded the same attention, despite the language directed towards one another often reflecting the melodramatic language used in their fiction.⁸² It would be apposite, therefore, to deconstruct Dickens's and Reynolds's exchanges through the 1850s with their shared history in mind, as this approach highlights how a constructed version of their rivalry served to better define and circumscribe their own commercial and political identity.

4.3 Placing Dickens's and Reynolds's rivalry in literary and political context

It is now well-established that Reynolds's comments in 1851 were 'wide of the mark concerning Dickens's inclinations towards the aristocratic classes'.⁸³ Dickens maintained a lifelong disdain for what he saw as an

⁸¹ See, for example, Anne Humpherys, 'Generic Strands and Urban Twists: The Victorian *Mysteries* Novel', *Victorian Studies*, 34 (1991), 455-472; As the previous chapter argued, perhaps the first contemporary critic to compare the texts was Richard C. Maxwell in his article 'G. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and the *Mysteries of London*'. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32 (1977), 188-213.

⁸² There is an episode in *Pickwick Papers* in which Dickens depicts two warring editors in the fictional town of Eatanswill. The two literary men present an ironic and prophetic vision of Dickens's and Reynolds's future rivalry as the melodramatic language they use to attack one another reflects, almost as a fictional facsimile, the insults Dickens would later exchange with Reynolds. Mr Pott describes his rival, Mr Slurk, as 'still dragging on a wretched and lingering career. Abhorred and despised by even the few who are cognizant of its miserable and disgraceful existence; stifled by the very filth it so profusely scatters; rendered deaf and blind by the exhalations of its own slime; the obscene journal, happily unconscious of its degraded state, is rapidly sinking beneath the treacherous mud which, while it seems to give it a firm standing with the low and debased classes of society, is nevertheless riding above its detested head, and will speedily engulf it forever'. This passage could be lifted verbatim into *Household Words* to describe Dickens's thoughts on Reynolds's career. The interchangeability of the insults the two editors trade allows Dickens to satirise the rivalry between Mr Pott and Mr Slurk as one ostensibly rooted in antithesis, but which was in fact actually driven by two figures who share much in common and engage in the same practices. Dickens exposes their positioning and posturing as the two supposedly distinct entities of the press become indistinguishable from one another. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, this would become a crucial aspect of the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds, as the two cultivated an animus in order to distance their commercial and political positioning from one another. Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000), pp. 644-645.

⁸³ Ledger, *The Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 171. See, for example, Andrew Sanders, 'The Aristocracy', in *Dickens in Context*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Holly Furneaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 252-259.

idle and increasingly defunct class, a view most cogently and vociferously expressed in ‘Sunday Under Three Heads’.⁸⁴ It is my view that Reynolds was in fact fully conscious of the disingenuous nature of the accusation, describing Dickens as a ‘wretched sycophant of aristocracy’.⁸⁵ However, by constructing a version of Dickens as a sycophant (the implication being that Dickens climbed to success by virtue of his ‘vulgar flattery’ of the aristocracy), his own reputation as a radical, independent of such patronage, appears stronger. Equally, there is something slightly contrived about Dickens’s attack on Reynolds as a ‘Bastard of the Mountain’ and a ‘draggled fringe on the Red Cap’ coming in 1850, rather than two years earlier when Reynolds was at the peak of his political activism. As Lionel Stevenson explains, after 1848 ‘the great upsurge of proletarian unrest, the Chartist movement, had failed through the ineptitude of its leadership, and its suppression brought a glow of relief to the privileged classes, whose complacency had been shattered for a few months by the sick dread of revolution’.⁸⁶ Dickens, thereafter more comfortable in this ‘glow of relief’, was arguably happier to play on the class divide which placed Reynolds on the side of a debate which had rapidly lost momentum.⁸⁷ *Household Words* was considered, as Louis James observed, to be

⁸⁴ One also thinks of Dickens’s speech at the Birmingham and Midland Institute in 1869 in which he proclaimed: ‘my faith in The People governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in The People governed is, on the whole, illimitable’. *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. by K. J. Fielding (Hemel Hempstead, 1988), p. 407.

⁸⁵ In a final homage to Dickens in June 1870 Reynolds explained: ‘Upon the duchess in her boudoir Dickens never bestowed a thought; for the duke, as a lord-lieutenant in his uniform, he cared not a straw. The aristocracy never received the praises of his pen’. G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘Charles Dickens in Westminster Abbey’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 1036 (1870), 1; This article is unpacked later in this chapter.

⁸⁶ Lionel Stevenson, ‘Dickens’s Dark Novels 1851-57’, *The Sewanee Review*, 51 (1943), 398-409 (p. 401).

⁸⁷ It is interesting to note that Dickens used an article published in *The Examiner* in 1848 entitled ‘Judicial Special Pleading’ to heavily admonish a judge who claimed, ‘in the course of a Chartist trial, that the poor in France had been better off before than after the Revolution’. Noting that there was much political benefit to be had by Chartist leaders from such false claims, Dickens’s ‘underlying’ concern, according to Elisabeth Jay, ‘was the folly, in danger of being repeated in this side of the Channel, of ignoring the “struggle on the part of the people for social recognition and existence”’. Jay, p. 38; citing Charles Dickens, ‘Judicial Special Pleading’ (*The Examiner*, 23 Dec. 1848) in *The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens’s Journalism, II: The Amusements of the People and Other Papers 1834-51* (London: J. M. Dent, 1996), 137-142; Despite his fiction operating at the fringes of politics of the working classes through these years, Dickens appears to have made a timely, yet carefully measured intervention in 1848, one that defended notions of liberty and the social struggle, yet still maintained a calculated distance between himself and the Chartists. It is, I argue, no coincidence that his readiness to comment on the issue came after the steep drop-off in the impact of Chartist politics. A further illustration of this type of political strategizing can be drawn from a speech Thackeray gave in 1848. Having been asked to address ‘an assembly of literary men’, Thackeray reminded his audience of the events that unfolded in April: ‘arriving at my own country, I beseech you to remember that there was a time, a little time ago, on the “10th of April last”, when a great novelist—a great member of my own profession—was standing upon Kennington Common in the van of liberty, prepared to assume any responsibility, to take upon himself any direction of government, to decorate himself with the tricolour sash, or the Robespierre waistcoat; and but for the timely, and I may say “special” interposition of many who are here present, you might have been commanded by a president of a literary republic, instead of by our present sovereign...I don’t believe that the country as yet requires so much of our literary men’. T. Taylor, *Thackeray the Humourist and The Man of Letters* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1864), 208-9; Jay claims that Thackeray used his speech to distance himself from Reynolds. However, Thackeray’s language

'Dickens's contribution to lower-class reading',⁸⁸ further proof of Dickens's willingness to compete directly with Reynolds as he looked to siphon his rival's primary demographic; prior to 1850, as Richard Maxwell observes, he had 'kept his distance'.⁸⁹

Dickens was unwilling to square up to Reynolds when the political tension surrounding the Chartist was at its peak. Reynolds, likewise, was happy to play fast and loose with the truth concerning Dickens's associations with the aristocratic classes. What is important about this exchange is that it throws into sharper relief their respective identities, at least as they wished to be perceived both commercially and politically heading into the 1850s. Dickens used the expression 'national reproach' in an attempt to align his periodical with the widest possible readership. Equally, his prioritisation of Reynolds's displacement as the nation's 'highest service' supposes that it remains incumbent on those that wish to self-identify as respectable, almost as a type of patriotic duty, to refrain from endorsing Reynolds any further. Dickens's periodical thus looked to transcend Reynolds's particularly narrow and ultimately futile brand of radical popular fiction and polemical politics, and sought to re-assert his role as the voice of the people, a role which was arguably (and ultimately temporarily) usurped by Reynolds in the 1840s.

This pattern of exaggeration would continue in the coming years, with Dickens labelling Reynolds as one

is far more generous towards Reynolds than the majority of his peers. While this was perhaps partially owing to his shared professional past with Reynolds in Paris in the 1830s, I would argue it more likely that his favourable comments reflect an anxiety around Reynolds's reach and influence through these years. Although post-1848 it was clear that the potency of his politics was fading along with the Chartist cause, Thackeray was arguably being especially careful to maintain ties with a figure whose popularity and cultural influence may still render him a useful ally. Certainly there is an ambiguity to Thackeray's language, illustrated by R. A. Colby's interpretation of the speech as voicing resounding support for Reynolds, 'both as a man and an author'. R. A. Colby, *Thackeray's Canvass of Humanity* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), 272, n. 65; Thackeray, therefore, wades into the murky waters Dickens wished to avoid concerning Reynolds, attempting to play both sides of the political and cultural divide. Having labelled Reynolds a 'great novelist', included him as a member of his profession, and envisioning him as the head of a 'literary republic', he ultimately ensures that his own beliefs fall into alignment with those of the middle-class 'literary men', whose 'timely' interventions prevented the further ascendance of Reynolds seemingly at an inopportune time. Thackeray's language, I contend, betrays the type of anxiety surrounding Reynolds through these years and the difficulty the latter's popularity and political influence caused other authors as they sought to position themselves relative to him. Dickens was especially careful to avoid any such complications and deferred any explicit attacks on Reynolds until such time that the threat or the scope of his influence had further dissipated.

⁸⁸ Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-50* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), p. 49.

⁸⁹ Maxwell, *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, p. 167.

of the ‘selfish and sordid braggarts’ at the forefront of the Chartist movement.⁹⁰ Dickens, in turn, was ‘a manufacturer of Christmas stories, in which sentimental ticket porters talk blank verse very full of pathos as the language of everyday life, and with an affected style of interrupted rhapsody, with occasional bursts of pious moralising’.⁹¹ Reynolds even ‘recycled in fictional form’ the same insults he was printing in his periodicals.⁹² In his novel of 1851, *Mary Price; or the Memoirs of a Servant Girl*, he includes a passage that quite obviously refers to Dickens using a virtually pointless alternative surname: ‘a great literary character...Mr Charles Wiggins, who from having been a penny-a-liner on the *Morning Chronicle*, has been dishing up all kinds of absurdities which he called “humour”, and throwing into the hodge-podge a dash of maudlin sentimentalism...has managed to establish his renown as a popular author’.⁹³ Commonly attacking Dickens’s credentials as a radical figure, Reynolds accused him of seeing the world ‘through the spectacles of *The Times*’,⁹⁴ an agent of Tory bias, and he began to pursue relentlessly what he believed was Dickens’s feigned radicalism and his falsely won title as ‘essentially the people’s author’ (a mantle bestowed by Wilkie Collins according to the unparalleled reach of Dickens’s popularity).⁹⁵ In doing so, however, rather than heightening his own credentials, the increasingly acerbic nature of these attacks began to convey a sense of Reynolds losing the advantage he had held over Dickens during the preceding four or five years.

As Dickens re-asserted his position as an arbiter of morality, setting out his stall in direct opposition to his rival, Reynolds began to double down on a particular line of attack, one that stemmed from the battle over Pickwick, namely that Dickens was an imposter. Reynolds looked to take advantage of any opportunity to expose Dickens, but these attacks would become increasingly tenuous, as evidenced by Reynolds’s treatment of an inconsequential reference Dickens made to a relation of Prince Albert, calling him ‘a very

⁹⁰ Charles Dickens, ‘The Three Kingdoms’, *The Household Narrative of Current Events: Monthly Supplement to “Household Words”*, Conducted by Charles Dickens (1851), 73-75 (p. 73).

⁹¹ G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘National Prosperity: Opinions of Ledru-Rollins and Charles Dickens’, *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper: A Journal of Democratic Progress and General Intelligence*, 7 (1850), 3.

⁹² Law, ‘Reynolds’s “Memoirs” Series’, p. 207.

⁹³ G. W. M. Reynolds, *Mary Price; Or, the Memoirs of a Servant-Maid*, vol. 1 (London: John Dicks), p. 364.

⁹⁴ ‘National Prosperity: Opinions of Ledru-Rollins and Charles Dickens’, *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper*, 3.

⁹⁵ Wilkie Collins, *Rambles beyond Railways; or, Notes in Cornwall Taken A-Foot* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), p. 242.

capable man'.⁹⁶ This was seized upon by Reynolds, who extrapolated from such a glancing compliment the following response: 'here is this drivelling, fawning lickspittle Dickens endeavouring to curry favour with Prince Albert by praising his relative'.⁹⁷ Similar in tone was the recounting of a tale from Dickens's travels in Scotland, reported by the *Dumfries Courier* and re-printed in *Reynolds's Magazine*, in which the author and his respectable party were refused access to the home of the poet Drummond. Apparently disbelieving, Dickens pompously appealed to 'his fame' to circumvent the rules normally applied to the public and subsequently demanded that the gatekeeper read his written order. The woman in question dismisses such an attempt claiming: 'What's the use of lettin' me see an order when I canna read?'.⁹⁸ Likely apocryphal, Reynolds, it seems, pounced without hesitation on any account such as this to chip away at Dickens's saintly image as man of the people.

In November 1852 Reynolds attacked Dickens again, this time describing his writing, in caustic terms, as 'wire-drawn, exaggerated and frequently vapid sketches, the feeble resuscitation of by-gone creations purporting to be from nature, but are in reality the mere torturing of character'.⁹⁹ Claiming that Dickens was 'struggling painfully and effectually against premature exhaustion, and the evident drooping and decay of imaginative faculties',¹⁰⁰ Reynolds was once more treading a precarious line, having built his early career upon his own 'resuscitations' of Dickens's characters and suffering accusations thereafter of lacking sufficient creativity to pen an original tale. As the decade wore on with Reynolds's attempts producing little impact on Dickens's reputation, his language grew more hyperbolic. By April 1858 Reynolds unleashed his most scathing and extended diatribe yet:

Mr Charles Dickens has been reading one of his ridiculous Christmas stories for the benefit of some metropolitan charity, and is about to give a series of readings for his own benefit [...]. There are no

⁹⁶ 'National Prosperity: Opinions of Ledru-Rollins and Charles Dickens', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Miscellaneous: My Name is Dickens', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 432 (1858), 4.

⁹⁹ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Reviews of Books', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 117.1 (1852), 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

doubt a considerable number of minds to whom the unnatural sentiments of Mr Dickens are acceptable, just as there are palates who relish nothing so well as meat in a very advanced stage of putrefaction. It is, however, a monstrous perversion to term the selfish gratification of a diseased taste a desire to minister to the wants of the afflicted. We know that there are plenty of self-deluded people, who, when they are stuffing their own maws with the choicest viands - tickling their jaded palates with the costliest sauces, and stimulating their sluggish souls into abnormal activity by the fiercest spirits or the most delicious wines – lay the flattering unction to their souls that they are doing something sublime and holy, and the whole world would not contain a more charitable set of persons than those same gluttons and wine-bibbing human swine. By a similar process of self-deception Mr Dickens may imagine that he is doing something charitable, when he is merely puffing himself, and his admirers suppose that they are sacrificing to benevolence, when they are only ministering to their own morbid appetites.¹⁰¹

It would be easy to view Reynolds's behaviour as the unprovoked actions of an embittered rival struggling against his own beleaguered reputation. However, given the treatment he received at the hands of the respectable press through much of the 1840s, Reynolds clearly felt that this type of response was simply the ongoing 'war of words' he had been engaged in with Dickens. When Reynolds took to the platform at Trafalgar Square in 1848, certain members of the press, such as the anti-Republican, satirical periodical *Puppet-Show*, reported the day's events in 'gloriously mock-heroic style'.¹⁰² Their ridicule, in which they subverted the genuine threat of the Chartist movement into an attack on Reynolds, effectively masked the depth of concern felt around the Chartist threat, and Reynolds's actions in particular. The report stated that 'a dreadful rumour prevailed that MR. G.J.M.N.O.P.Q.W REYNOLDS contemplated reading a chapter of his *Mysteries of London* to the populace! The military have been summoned to prevent this catastrophe'.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Gossip of the Week', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 402 (1858), 4.

¹⁰² Mary L. Shannon, 'Spoken Word and Printed Page: G. W. M. Reynolds and "The Charing-Cross Revolution", 1848', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 18 (2014), III, para 3 <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.683>> [accessed 24 April 2019].

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, para 3.

The respectable press opted for satirical side swipes designed to lure the focus away from the politics of the day, and from Reynolds's ability to corral the gathered masses, using his alleged lack of talent.

Humpherys and James have observed similar efforts at public slander directed at Reynolds, his allegedly improper behaviour being a particular target. One such case was a 'retrospective' statement, composed by 'Reynolds's erstwhile guardian', Dr. McArthur, and sent to the Home Office in 1848, in which Reynolds was supposedly exposed as a swindler and a gambler who refused to honour his debts. The date of the statement is important, as Humpherys and James note, since the charges of fraud and immorality were 'not made until Reynolds was under attack as a Chartist leader', and subsequently 'appear to be malicious'.¹⁰⁴ The likelihood of fabrication rests both on the highly coincidental timing of the statement, designed to discredit Reynolds and subdue the popular fervour building around the Chartists at this time, and on the similarities between the nature of the accusations with certain plot points in the *Mysteries of London*, as if these fictional accounts were taken as proof of Reynolds's own criminal past. Given that Reynolds was subjected to such tactics, his own exaggerated drawing of Dickens as a sycophant and a vulgar flatterer can be understood as part of the wider cultural clash between the cheap and the respectable press, and their respective comments must therefore be placed within this wider context.

The principal method by which the rival factions of cheap and respectable press discredited one another was through the construction of their political 'other'. As Vanden Bossche examines, concomitant with the increasing desperation and hunger suffered by the working poor in the 1840s, a simmering resentment was growing amongst the Chartists. Problematic to their actions, however, was their consistent representation in the respectable press as an insurrectionary and revolutionary movement. Paradoxically for the Chartists, any action taken, even if informed by a rhetoric consistent with Parliamentary discourse or constitutional principle, was deemed dangerously subversive by virtue of operating outside the official parliamentary framework. As Vanden Bossche explains: 'The elite press sought to define political participation and social

¹⁰⁴ Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 2.

agency in ways that confined it to the enfranchised parliamentary parties, each of which sought to turn the rise of Chartism to its own advantage'.¹⁰⁵ One method of capitalizing on the Chartist exclusion from parliamentary representation for the elite press, was to use violence as a political tool. As the Chartists looked to generate support through peaceful demonstrations, the elite press purposefully cultivated a more dangerous image of their actions by manipulating the truth: 'Parliamentary discourse consequently treated even moral-force activities as, at bottom, forms of physical force or revolutionary violence. Press reports on what were generally peaceful demonstrations frequently depicted Chartist oratory as "violent", "inflammatory", or "incendiary", a choice of words that conflates speech that is impassioned with speech that urges its audience to violence'.¹⁰⁶ This is evidence of the 'othering' of the working class as the elite press created a version of the working class to suit their political ends.

Haywood offers further historical evidence to support the notion of violence as being constructed within political discourses, tracing the strategy back to the late 1700s:

Art historians have noted that most of the grotesque political imagery in the 1790s emanates from the loyalist or conservative side, and its preponderance and intensity has even led critics to suspect a level of imaginative collusion in the violence which is supposedly condemned. The association of British radicalism with violence was in this respect a loyalist invention, a fantasy which superimposed Jacobin atrocities on to a British popular politics.¹⁰⁷

E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) provides a similar account of this process, tracing the complicated provenance of revolutionary violence back to the Peterloo Massacre and the enactment of a 'class war' that was also a decidedly 'one-sided war'.¹⁰⁸ Thompson explains how, despite the initial 'cry of "vengeance"', the protest at Peterloo 'swung [...] back into constitutional forms of protest'

¹⁰⁵ Vanden Bossche, p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁰⁷ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982), p. 753.

which was ‘largely working class in initiation and character’.¹⁰⁹ After brute force was perpetrated by the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry against an unarmed crowd, the radicals responded in kind and the event was coloured by violence, which swiftly became associated only with the working classes. Thompson suggests that the general pattern of violence through the period was, at least in part, initiated by the ruling classes, often seeking and sometimes inciting violence in order then to justify the passage of censorship legislation, as evidenced by the hurried passage of the Six Acts, which directly followed events at Peterloo.¹¹⁰ The use of this same strategy was evident again following the failures of the 1832 and 1838 Reform Acts, when, frustrated by their continued exclusion from the parliamentary process, the Chartists split into two factions, known as Moral-Force Chartism and Physical-Force Chartism. Any action subsequently taken by the Physical-Force faction was interpreted by the enfranchised classes as violent in its intentions and cited as proof that the ultimate objective of the working classes was violent revolution, not reform, thus invalidating any calls for their inclusion in the franchise.

The fabricated nature of this constructed image was a two-way process, however, as the Chartists deployed a similar strategy. Vanden Bossche explains that in order to consolidate their own political positioning the Chartists sought to convey an adversarial mentality by ‘collapsing’ the distinctions between the aristocracy and middle classes ‘into variants of the same class that possesses the franchise’.¹¹¹ This permitted the projection of a simplified order onto an otherwise fluid and complex political period, and allowed the Chartists to adopt the rhetoric of binary opposition. The Chartists formulated an image of the enfranchised classes to suit their own frustration over their political alienation:¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 757.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 772; The Six Acts ‘appear as a codification and extension of the legislation of 1795 and 1817’. Collectively the acts created stricter legislation around sedition laws, prohibiting ‘drilling and “military” training, extending the rights of authorities to ‘search houses, without warrants’, on suspicion of there being arms, prohibiting ‘meetings exceeding fifty in number’, and increasing the stamp duty on periodical publications’. The ‘fifth and sixth Acts were designed to extend for seditious the power of the authorities, especially in actions and expedite libel. The only measure of the earlier repressions which was not repeated was the suspension of Habeas Corpus.’ E. P. Thompson, p. 768.

¹¹¹ Vanden Bossche, p. 26.

¹¹² Steadman Jones observes a similarly symbiotic dynamic in the clash between the working-class radicals and the governing classes, since ‘radicalism was premised upon the active and oppressive role of monopoly political power and the state’. The governing classes were ‘the principal enemy upon whose actions radicals had always found that their credibility depended,’ and they collapsed the middle and upper classes accordingly into a more homogenised

Chartist discourse in effect denied the emergence of a new middle class and depicted it merely as an expansion of the aristocracy. To this end, the Chartist press deployed a range of terms – *aristocracy* and *millocracy*, “landlords and the fundlords”, “landed aristocracy” and “steam aristocracy” – portraying the landed and commercial interests as “rival aristocracies” that are ultimately “one flesh”.¹¹³

While the nature of these attacks on both sides of the debate are revealing of these deeper cultural, political and social anxieties, broadly speaking this conflict was between the working classes, facilitated in general by the cheaper organs of the radical press (of which Reynolds was an honorary member) and the respectable press, which voiced middle-class concerns over the revolutionary and unconstitutional threat posed by the former, particularly through the second half of the 1840s.¹¹⁴ Arguably, though he straddled the political divide, by 1850 Dickens had pitched his tent on the side of the latter. There was, then, between Dickens and Reynolds, a wider cultural war being played out as the two increasingly took aim at each other from two opposing camps throughout the 1850s. This was reciprocal and contained within it a degree of contrivance, couched in the Manichean language of melodrama,¹¹⁵ since the projection of their rivalry in

group that collectively possessed voting rights. Gareth Steadman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 158-178.

¹¹³ Vanden Bossche, p. 26; These quotations are drawn from three articles published in *The Northern Star*: ‘To the Imperial Chartists’, *The Northern Star*, 5 (1842), 1; ‘The Steam Aristocracy’, *The Northern Star*, 2 (1839), 3; ‘The Discontents of the Working Classes’, *The Northern Star*, 1 (1838), 3; Reynolds was a clear exponent of this strategy wherein the middle classes are collapsed into the aristocracy, preferring instead to delineate between the rich and the poor or the working and the idle. In a leading article in *Reynolds’s Newspaper* in 1851 Reynolds explains: ‘so horrible is the existing system in its operations, that the class of workers is actually compelled to keep not only itself, but also two classes of non-workers, or idlers, in addition! Every man who works has to keep the lazy aristocrat who will not work, and the unhappy pauper whom the system excludes from work’. ‘How the Social System Works’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 44 (1851), 1; For additional examples of this rhetoric see ‘The Rich Few and the Poor Many’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 36 (1851), 1; ‘Who Create Wealth, and Who Enjoy It’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 46 (1851), 1.

¹¹⁴ Whereas my argument tends to situate Reynolds on the radical working-class side of this divide, it is interesting to note that Rob Breton’s recent scholarship presents something of a push-back against Reynolds as a radical figure, describing him as holding a ‘liminal class position’ and a less than clear ‘place in the tradition of working-class writing’, owing to his tendency to ‘exploit mass markets by writing sensationalistically’. Rob Breton, *Oppositional Aesthetics of Chartist Fiction: Reading Against the Middle-Class Novel* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 92.

¹¹⁵ Anne Humphrys observes: ‘Popular political thought in all times and places tends to be melodramatic – whether it is a case of Reynolds’s aristocracy versus workers, Disraeli’s “two nations”, Marx’s capital versus labour, America’s democracy versus communism, or simply everyone’s them versus us’. Anne Humphrys, ‘Popular Narrative and Political Discourse in *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper*’, in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Brake, Laurel, and others (New York: St. Martin’s, 1990), pp. 33-47 (p. 42); It is, I argue, this same dynamic that Dickens and Reynolds looked to establish between themselves, a Manichean type struggle which makes clear one’s political positioning relative to an opposing or binary figure.

antithetical terms helped to disguise their similarities and better define their own position in the marketplace. Within this context, further light is shed on the language of Dickens's letter in 1849, which can be assimilated with the wider middle-class efforts to discredit Reynolds, diminishing his influence among the Chartists to that of an 'amateur' and a rabble-rouser who took 'the chair for a mob'.

It follows that where the respectable press lampooned Reynolds to hide their growing concerns over his influence in the final years of the 1840s, Reynolds's visceral attack on Dickens's charitable readings in 1858 were equally revealing of his own anxieties. As Dickens's reputation once more began to dominate, Michael Diamond suggests that 'the violence of Reynolds's language' and 'the repulsive nature of this imagery, betrays more than a rational objection to Dickens's readings';¹¹⁶ it was clearly an emotional response. Diamond's article, 'Charles Dickens as Villain and Hero in Reynolds's Newspaper', helps to capture the double standards that so embittered Reynolds, as his reputation suffered by accusations of a debasing populism, while Dickens's reputation remained largely unimpeached. This potential hypocrisy is aptly demonstrated by Reynolds's final attempt to undermine Dickens's image of piety.

In 1858 rumours began to circulate concerning Dickens's marital difficulties. Reynolds responded quickly, offering his more 'respectable' rival some rather condescending words of wisdom as he sought to debunk Dickens's public image. After the rumours had panicked Dickens into publishing his 'Personal' note in *Household Words* on 12 June 1858, wherein he sought to placate the scandal surrounding his name, Reynolds was quick to remind Dickens of his supposedly infallible morality:

The names of a female relative and of a professional young lady, have both been, of late, so intimately associated with that of Mr. Dickens, as to excite suspicion and surprise in the minds of those who had hitherto looked upon the popular novelist as a very Joseph in all that regards morality, chastity, and decorum...No journalist had heretofore any right to interfere with Mr Dickens in his domestic

¹¹⁶ Diamond, p. 132.

concerns; but, as he now thrusts them before the public, the case is altered...Let Mr Dickens remember that the odious – and we might almost add unnatural – profligacy of which he has been accused, would brand him with life-long infamy.¹¹⁷

The passage reveals Reynolds clearly relishing Dickens's potential fall from grace and the opportunity to assume the moral high ground. Turning away from the 'violence' of his last attack on Dickens's charitable public readings, his language was now replaced by the supercilious tone of one who had apparently hitherto retained a journalistic integrity in his avoidance of the subject, a rather difficult pill to swallow given the nature of his previous assaults. Dickens was of course aware of the potential magnitude of the fall-out and did not need reminding by Reynolds about the fragility of his meticulously cultivated public image; hence his ill-conceived efforts to circumscribe the publicity that the rumours might generate.¹¹⁸

That Reynolds weighed in on the matter would not have surprised Dickens. Indeed, it may be safely assumed that the threat Dickens issued – that 'whosoever repeats one of these rumours after this denial, will lie as wilfully and as foully as it is possible for any false witness to lie, before Heaven and earth' – was aimed specifically at Reynolds.¹¹⁹ The language of Dickens's personal statement relied heavily upon his image as loyal and transparent: 'I have tried to be faithful to the Public, as they have been to me. It was my duty never to trifle with them, or deceive them'.¹²⁰ In this moment Dickens appears to test the loyalties of the readership he had actively cultivated. His language is intimate to the point of effectively placing the reader on the same footing as his wife, speaking of his duties to be faithful to them and never to deceive. He then resigns himself to the concessions that someone in his 'conspicuous' position must make, which have made him 'the subject of fabulous stories and unaccountable statements', stating that while 'occasionally things have chafed me, or even wounded me [...] I have always accepted them as the shadows

¹¹⁷ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Mr C. Dickens', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 409 (1858), 3.

¹¹⁸ Dickens's friend Percy Fitzgerald captured the sense of disbelief over the public scandal, writing: 'Who [...] could have conceived or prophesised that in the year of grace 1858 the whole fabric should have begun to totter [...]. Who could have fancied that [...] so disturbing a revelation of his domestic life should have been abruptly placed before the astonished public?' Percy Fitzgerald, *Memories of Charles Dickens* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1913), p. 189.

¹¹⁹ Charles Dickens, 'Personal', *Household Words*, 429 (1858), 601-601 (p. 601).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

inseparable from the light of my notoriety and success'.¹²¹ Reynolds undoubtedly felt that such a finely balanced statement rendered Dickens vulnerable to the accusation of hypocrisy. Clearly, Dickens's relationship to Reynolds and his relentless pursuit of retribution for the work he had seen plagiarised by him and other authors, suggests that he was not as willing as he claimed to 'accept' these incidents 'as the shadows inseparable' from his reputation. Rather than resignedly 'wounded', Dickens was more often bent on reprisal.

While the extent of Dickens's threat appeared to subdue Reynolds's response, the latter adopting a less confrontational and more considered tone than was customary, and instead relying on the power of suggestion to do his bidding, Reynolds ensured the rumour mill kept turning with a short article published the following week, in which he observed: 'The Charles Dickens *scandalum magnatum* rolls along the highways and byways of public conversation, and gathers as it rolls'.¹²² Maintaining his condescending tone, Reynolds added: 'We said last week that the greatly injured, or grossly guilty, gentleman was either too communicative or too reserved in his allusions to his misfortunes'. In a return to the strategy of *Pickwick Abroad*, in which Reynolds blamed Dickens's short-sightedness for the conception of his sequel, he again places the blame for the dissemination of any 'ugly interpretations' of the events squarely at Dickens's feet, since his ill-advised statement in *Household Words* 'suggests anything, but disproves nothing'.¹²³

Even if it refrained from his more usual bombast, that Reynolds responded at all infuriated Dickens as unwarranted and excessively personal. Dickens wrote to his friend De Cerjat on 7 July 1858 proclaiming that he 'had covered the wound up, and left it to heal'.¹²⁴ With Dickens seemingly having sufficiently convalesced, his friends Wills, Ouvry and Forster briefly considered libel action against Reynolds, ultimately deciding, in a manner befitting earlier analysis which sought to dismiss Reynolds, that he was 'too small to be thought about', a statement which, by virtue of their discussion alone, was somewhat self-

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Gossip of the Week', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 410 (1858), 6.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, V, p. 597.

defeating. Clearly Reynolds had rattled Dickens, and on a matter most personal. Again, however, when we consider Reynolds's treatment at the hands of his middle-class peers and the respectable press, his perhaps merciless desire to respond to a potential hypocrisy on Dickens's part is understandable. He had endured a decade and half of figures like Dickens labelling his endeavours as 'perilous stuff [...] produced at a cost about equal to the intrinsic worth of its literature',¹²⁵ all the while having their own sense of propriety exalted and lionised. Even in this regard, Reynolds was justifiably aggrieved, given that in 1846 Dickens had proposed that his own periodical ought to be 'very cheap' in order to get it to market and that 'it was only when Reynolds became frighteningly popular in the late 1840s that Dickens sanctioned the "cheap editions" of his works'.¹²⁶ Now, the arbiter of morality, 'Joseph'-like, 'in all that regards [...] chastity, and decorum', was on the brink of the ultimate hypocrisy that would surely alter all that had gone before and tilt public opinion in Reynolds's favour. Reynolds remained determined, therefore, to pursue his original intention of exposing Dickens as an imposter. The apparent hypocrisy of Dickens was too tantalising to resist, and the seeming levelling of their reputations long overdue.

Concerning this particular marital episode, history ought to have been kinder to Reynolds. His relentless insinuations portrayed him in an unfavourable light, yet these were subsequently proven accurate. Accordingly, when one considers that *The Scotsman* 'rallied to Dickens's defence, stating that "the name of a young lady on the stage has been mixed up with the matter – most cruelly and untruly',¹²⁷ the entire saga reveals the cultural biases which existed in favour of respectable authors like Dickens. Had the roles been reversed, it seems likely that few, if any, would have sprung to Reynolds's defence and his reputation would in all probability have been wilfully and gleefully dragged through the mud.

4.4 Dickens regains the ascendancy as Reynolds's political relevance fades

If *Household Words* ushered in the beginning of a more explicit cut-and-thrust type of relationship between

¹²⁵ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, VI, p. 790.

¹²⁶ Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 163.

¹²⁷ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, V, p. 745.

Dickens and Reynolds, it also signalled another shift in the dynamic between the two. Where Reynolds's success and political prominence in the latter half of the 1840s had forced Dickens to respond to his former plagiarist, a further shift occurred in the 1850s wherein Reynolds appears to be reacting once again to Dickens. The previous chapter assessed *Bleak House* as a response to *The Seamstress* and *The Mysteries of London*, in which Dickens appeared to borrow plot points and to employ a narrative style that caused critics to draw an unwanted comparison (for Dickens at least) between the novels. Yet *Household Words*, two years prior to *Bleak House*, had helped establish Dickens as a sort of guardian of morality, an advocate of domesticity and a promoter of the family setting, all of which was couched in imagery of the cosy hearth. By contrast, Reynolds's politics reflected the class divisions which had deepened since the Reform Act of 1832. Reynolds's potency as a political force was arguably, therefore, dependent upon, or at least aided by, the worsening conditions of a decade marked by an economy in decline and food shortages. These conditions gave rise to the largely working-class Chartist movement and brought Britain to the precipice of a revolution. By the turn of the 1850s, however, and in the aftermath of the failed protests of 1848, Chartist calls for suffrage began to fade, and with it, Reynolds's immediate relevance as a political force.

Contrary to the opinion of critics including Humphry House, who felt the failed Chartist petition of 1848 resulted in the rather expedient curtailing of both the movement and of working-class agency in general,¹²⁸ the influence of the organisation continued to be felt into the 1850s. Gareth Steadman Jones contests the notion that Chartism died in 1848 as a 'middle-class myth', remarking that the Chartists had catalysed a 'ratchet effect' since 'advances, once gained, cannot again be put into question without politically explosive consequences'.¹²⁹ Chartist influence did not evaporate, but merely shifted its focus away from the issue of suffrage and towards association, Co-operative Societies and trade unionism. Both Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850) and Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) remain the most obvious examples, in this sense, of the lasting influence of the Chartist movement into the 1850s. What had receded was the pending threat of

¹²⁸ Humphry House claimed that 'the Chartist failure of '48 meant widespread disillusionment in the possibilities of working-class action'. Humphry House, *The Dickens World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 209.

¹²⁹ Steadman Jones, *Languages of Class*, pp. 71-72.

revolution and the general potency of the Chartists as a force for major political reform.

Reynolds parted with the Chartist movement in 1850 after his leadership began to be questioned.¹³⁰ Despite being relatively short-lived and turbulent,¹³¹ Reynolds's rise to literary and political pre-eminence between 1844 and 1848 had been precipitous, and his efforts to translate the popularity generated by his fiction into tangible action, mobilised by the protestors gathered at Trafalgar Square in April 1848, constitutes a significant moment in British political and cultural history. Reynolds assumed his place on the plinth and seized control of the moment, addressing the gathered masses with a firm belief 'that fiction was a legitimate means of promoting radical politics' and that it was possible to connect the 'imagined readers of urban fiction to real protestors on London's streets'.¹³² The protest ultimately came to nothing, but it should not be forgotten how close Britain came to the type of revolution seen across much of Europe through this same period. Reynolds was bold enough to step beyond the pages and genuinely engage with his audience and attempt to influence change. His efforts to mobilise working-class agency earned him 'a government file' and a reputation as London's 'most wicked and dangerous man'.¹³³ It was no doubt a heady time and 'he was never to forget that moment of glory [...] vividly recount[ing] the experience at the annual festival held for his and Dick's employees in 1875'.¹³⁴ It proved to be the summit of his political and literary fame and a period in which his actions held great bearing for the Victorians' most eminent authors, and Dickens in particular, who was forced to consider Reynolds as a genuine threat and a legitimate rival.

Following the peak of working-class radicalism in the 1840s, the advent of mid-century saw another shift

¹³⁰ The tensions between Reynolds and other prominent Chartists is best exemplified in Thomas Clarke's extensive and highly charged letter to Reynolds which sought to expose the author of *The Mysteries of London* as a hypocrite and render his position within the movement untenable. Thomas Clark, *A Letter Addressed to G. W. M. Reynolds, reviewing his conduct as a professed Chartist, and also explaining who he is and what he is, together with copious extracts from his most indecent writings* (London: T. Clark, 144 High Holborn, 1850).

¹³¹ Louis James explains how Reynolds had caused tension on both sides of the political divide: 'Ostracised by the "respectable" Victorians as a dangerous radical on one hand, suspected by working-class leaders as having middle class sympathies on the other, he scandalised both groups'. *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. vi.

¹³² Shannon, 'Spoken Word and Printed Page', I, para 5.

¹³³ Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street*, p. 70; G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, foreword.

¹³⁴ Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 5; See also 'Festival of Messrs. Reynolds's and Dicks's Establishment', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 1300 (1875), 1.

in the political climate, instigated by greater economic prosperity and galvanised by the lavish display of the wealth and imperial dominance of Britain at the Great Exhibition of 1851. The 1850s also brought a change in the focus of the popular press and a cultural shift in the literary marketplace. Described by Raymond Williams as a transition towards a greater regard for commercial profit, the shift prioritised a form of ‘popular press that was “not for the people” but for the money’.¹³⁵ Effectively, the ‘reduced official opposition lessened the intense focus and tone, and the introduction of a profit motive into the popular press, when the technological developments in printing and distribution became practical, aborted any expansion of those early radical journals’.¹³⁶ This meant that by the 1850s, the radicalism of the working-class journals and periodicals had lost their potency. Reynolds was a key player within this movement, and however fraught his own relationship between commercial profit and political integrity was perceived to be, he was forced along by the current of a new market trend. It was a shift that would impact upon his rivalry with Dickens virtually through the remainder of the decade.

Dickens entered the periodical market ‘at a key moment in the emergence of commodity culture in Victorian England’.¹³⁷ The periodical was both at the forefront of a new interest in ‘the spectacle of the commodity’ as well as fronting the domestically-centred wave of literature which had been gaining traction in the late 1840s. Dickens was astute and built safeguards into his periodical to guard against accusations of exploitative commercialism, such as those levelled at Reynolds. *Household Words* focussed on popular culture as a vehicle of inclusivity, which became, as Catherine Waters explains, ‘a key factor in its growth’ because ‘it helped members of the new mass reading public to acquire the cultural capital that might enable them to be upwardly mobile’.¹³⁸ Given his efforts in the 1840s to develop his fiction in a more domestic direction, the transition into *Household Words* was a natural move for Dickens. For Reynolds, however, the transition marked a rather abrupt change in the focus of his fiction. As Graham Law observed,

¹³⁵ Raymond Williams, ‘Radical and/or Respectable’, in *The Press We Deserve*, ed. by Richard Boston (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 16-23 (p. 21).

¹³⁶ Humpherys, ‘G. W. M. Reynolds: Popular Literature and Popular Politics’, p. 83.

¹³⁷ Catherine Waters, *Commodity Culture in Dickens’s Household Words: The Social Life of Goods* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), p. 2.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 7.

Reynolds's novel of 1851, *Mary Price*, breaks from his conventional style and 'in more than one respect [...] constituted a new departure. The novel was to be narrated in the first person and have a domestic setting in contemporary England, a combination of features that had no precedent in the author's oeuvre'.¹³⁹ Each of Reynolds's previous novels had 'tended to avoid scenes of family life,' and he now extended to his readers 'a lengthy explication of the rationale of the new work':¹⁴⁰

To dissect the social body in the minutest manner – to penetrate beneath the surface of every-day life – to draw aside the veil from the domestic hearth, and look deep into the modes and existence practiced by families of all grades – and thus lay bare the mysteries of English society, – such is a faint shadowing forth of the author's design in his New Tale. In carrying out this aim he has adopted a machinery which has appeared to him the best suited for the purpose – namely, the autobiography of a Servant-Maid, whose experience, observations and adventures in the various families which she successively enters, form the basis of the work.¹⁴¹

Although Reynolds sticks steadfastly to his thematic penchant for exposing hidden secrets, promising 'to draw aside the veil', he has resigned himself to the shift in the trend of the popular press and fiction. Reynolds thus felt he needed to justify this transition away from his customary brand of writing by such a 'lengthy explication' which promised to retain his objectives of revealing deeper truths and championing transparency. His willingness to venture into scenes of family life demonstrated, however, that he was no longer as proactive a force in the marketplace as he was in the mid-to-late 1840s but was instead reacting to the press and fiction around him, much as he had done in the 1830s.

It is my view that Reynolds's justification for entering the domestic realm was in fact written with Dickens

¹³⁹ Law, 'Reynolds's "Memoirs" Series', p. 201.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Advertisement', in *Reynolds's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 7 (1851), 272-272 (p. 272).

in mind. Dickens's *Household Words* assumed a prominent role in the periodical market and helped to lead the domestic charge on the back of his already established reputation. The periodical, as I have argued, stemmed from the domesticity that shaped *The Cricket on the Hearth* back in 1845. This, of course, was originally material intended for a periodical, and the delay between 1845 and the eventual advent of *Household Words* lends credence to the idea that Dickens was biding his time, waiting for the passing of Reynolds's moment in the sun. Now, with the threat of full-scale revolution fading, the attainment of the domestic idyll supplanted the call of the disenfranchised for political representation. Remaining largely absent from the debate that raged through the late 1840s, Dickens reappears in force, slandering the Chartist movement, casting aspersions over Reynolds's political sincerity and proposing a domestic solution to the problem of working-class non-agency. It follows that Reynolds would have perceived Dickens's actions as the shunning of his political loyalties to the people that were most apparent in *The Chimes* in 1844, thus prompting Reynolds's continued efforts to expose his rival as an imposter. In fact, the language used to present *Mary Price* is almost a facsimile of the language Reynolds used when he had previously proclaimed his objective to 'unmask' Dickens as an 'impostor' and 'to show the public what sort of character he really is'.¹⁴² Reynolds's concern was the duplicity practised within the domestic sphere and the partial view afforded by Dickens's writing, who 'sees the condition of [London's] population but dimly [...] and hopes to cure all the complaints and troubles of its inhabitants by a little small talk, "familiar as household words," and about as much use as lip-sympathy to a starving man'.¹⁴³

In order to expose his rival, Reynolds even recalled instances where Dickens had supposedly betrayed his position as 'Man of The People', such as his denigration of the republic he encountered on his American trip in 1842. In 1842 Reynolds had not yet achieved the reputation that *The Mysteries of London* would garner him, but his sequels to *Pickwick Papers* and *Master Humphrey's Clock* were challenging Dickens's political positioning. Yet Reynolds made no comment on Dickens's disparaging remarks on American Republicanism. Now, roughly fifteen years later, in retrospect Reynolds saw fit to revisit this material in

¹⁴² 'Charles Dickens and the Democratic Movement', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 7.

¹⁴³ 'National Prosperity: Opinions of Ledru-Rollins and Charles Dickens', *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 3.

order to indict Dickens. Reynolds ran an article on 14 June 1857, which commented on *American Notes* (1842) and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1842-44), describing Dickens's time in America as comparable with that of

a sleek and scented spaniel, that, upon paying a visit to St Paul's cathedral, had its pampered paws trodden upon, and its shining and well-combed hair ruffled in the pressure of the crowd of visitors and worshippers. The petted puppy, accustomed to the caresses of his mistress, would not relish such rough and unceremonious treatment and, being able to write, it would upon his return publish his "Notes" as a warning to all the other well-bred spaniels to beware of magnificent buildings in general and of St Paul's in particular.¹⁴⁴

In an acerbic, yet satirically amusing detraction of Dickens's experiences in America, Reynolds takes his rival to task over his feigned Republicanism and hauls over the coals Dickens's credibility as a social reformer: 'If', Reynolds writes, 'Dickens sets up as a reformer, as a reformer let him be tried, without any reference to his merits as a painter or caricaturist'. Avowing to test, 'by the canons of common sense and under the light of reason', Dickens's trustworthiness as a voice of liberty, Reynolds casts aspersions of conceit on Dickens, claiming: 'He viewed everything through his own active and all-absorbing vanity. His sole moral and political criterion was his own personal convenience'. As a result, Dickens exposed himself as 'one of the silly number' of people who, 'because the ills of thousands of years of slavery are not remedied by a single day of freedom, lose all faith in liberty'.¹⁴⁵

Reynolds's attack on Dickens's assessment of American Republicanism also reveals the extent to which the former felt that he was a victim of double standards, and that Dickens was in fact the perpetrator of the theft of his identity, rather than vice versa. Indeed, in Reynolds's eyes, 'Dickens is seen as the usurper of the position which Reynolds claimed for himself. He is hailed as the people's champion, but is no such

¹⁴⁴ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Charles Dickens', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 357 (1857), 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

thing – the real people’s champion is Reynolds’.¹⁴⁶ Dickens was merely ‘a false prophet who claimed to love the people, to prefer them to the aristocratic oligarchy ruling Britain, but who, in *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, showed his true colours when faced for the first time with a people’s republic’.¹⁴⁷ Reynolds thus describes Dickens, with a telling return to the pseudonym ‘Boz’, as ‘the abuser’ of democracy. ‘Boz’, he claims, ‘does not approve of republics—the Cockney scribe pronounces democracy a failure’, and, in ‘imagining himself a prophet, or an apostle, destined to deliver mankind from the corruption of which in his heart he idolizes’, he labours under the ‘gross and laughable’ delusion that he could arrogate ‘to himself the character of a social and political reformer’. Concluding on a message of defiance, Reynolds’s exposé claims that this ‘won’t do’, that Dickens the social reformer was simply ‘a character which the public cannot swallow’, leaving scope for the suggestion that if Dickens cannot ‘be accepted as a reformer of the manners or the morals, the lives or the institutions, of the British people’, perhaps another more principled Republican is required.¹⁴⁸

Published in 1857, Reynolds’s attack on Dickens is a prime example of the former’s commercial opportunism, attacking his rival’s stance on Republicanism years after the fact. It is also, however, a natural

¹⁴⁶ Diamond, pp. 133-134.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 133; Reynolds’s objections might have been directed at any number of grievances Dickens aired across *American Notes* or *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In *American Notes*, for example, Dickens described Washington not as the capital of a thriving Republican democracy, but the centre of ‘Despicable trickery at elections; under-handed tamperings with public officers; and cowardly attacks upon opponents, with scurrilous newspapers for shields, and hired pens for daggers’. Charles Dickens, *American Notes: for General Circulation*, Vol I (London: Chapman and Hall, 186, The Strand), p. 290; In *Martin Chuzzlewit* Dickens’s American episodes caused great uproar in America. Originally in the seventh instalment of the novel, and now in most modern editions beginning in chapter sixteen, these chapters, ‘prompted by hatred and loosing his satire upon everything American’, saw Dickens ‘exaggerate the worst aspects of the United States and [...] ignore any of its good ones’. He presented ‘the eating habits of American men to be piggish and the tobacco juice they voided in everyone’s vicinity inexhaustible, he satirized American newspapers; American politics; Americans’ unremitting brag of liberty and independence; American slavery, all the worse in a land that bragged of liberty and independence; American anglophobia continually blustering about war with England; American commercialism; American repudiation of State debts; and American impoverishment in manners, conversation, and the arts’. Sidney, P. Moss, ‘The American Episode of “Martin Chuzzlewit”: The Culmination of Dickens’ Quarrel with the American Press’, *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1983), 223-243. (pp. 227-228); Dickens also wrote of his disdain for the New World in a letter to an English friend in which he cautioned: ‘I tremble for a radical coming here, unless he is a radical on principle, by reason and reflection, and from the sense of right’. If not, he claimed, ‘I fear that if he were anything else, he would return home a tory... I say no more on that head for two months from this time, save that I do fear that the heaviest blow ever dealt at liberty will be dealt by this country, in the failure of its example to the earth’. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, III, p. 90.

¹⁴⁸ G. W. M. Reynolds, ‘Charles Dickens’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 357 (1857), 3.

reaction to the treatment he felt he had suffered at the hands of Dickens and the ‘respectable’ press, who had continually belittled his radicalism as populist and self-serving. For Reynolds, the timing of his attack, the highly personal nature of his insults, and the exaggerated terms he deployed against Dickens betray an anxiety about his perceived fading influence. Diamond claims that by the 1850s ‘Reynolds no longer felt the same sense of professional rivalry with Dickens; by this time neither author was as prolific as he had been. Perhaps by the late eighteen-fifties Dickens’s criticisms of the chartists no longer weighed so heavily with Reynolds’.¹⁴⁹ Rather than Reynolds being less fazed by the nature of Dickens’s criticisms or by their diminishing frequency, it is my view that Reynolds’s fading political leverage meant that his ripostes now simply carried less weight. As the political and social climate shifted, Reynolds was left clinging on to any remnants of political conflict in order to keep himself relevant, and he continued to keep Dickens’s public image firmly in the crosshairs.

The trouble for Reynolds was that, even as Dickens’s personal life threatened to topple his reputation,¹⁵⁰ Reynolds’s efforts to remind his readership that he, not Dickens, was the real ‘voice of The People’, were ultimately unsuccessful. The timing and the domestic focus of *Mary Price* was indicative of how Reynolds was once more operating in response to Dickens, and specifically to *Household Words*, with Dickens having effectively re-set the terms of their rivalry to something more akin to the late 1830s. Law observes that Reynolds’s transition into the domestic realm was in fact commercially successful, though the impressive sales figures achieved are easily attributable to Reynolds’s deftness at maximising the profitability of his writing; published as sequels to *Mary Price*, the novels *Joseph Wilmot* (1853-55), *Rosa Lambert* (1854) and *Ellen Percy* (1855-57) were each reissued in serial format ‘at half the original price’.¹⁵¹ Reynolds’s self-publicising skills have been challenged or doubted to a lesser extent than his morality, and he drew upon every possible strategy, in this instance the ‘abolition of the substantial paper tax’,¹⁵² in order to take full commercial advantage of a given piece of writing. Whether he succeeded in maintaining the political

¹⁴⁹ Diamond, p. 134.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 133-134.

¹⁵¹ Law, ‘Reynolds’s “Memoirs” Series’, p. 202.

¹⁵² Ibid.

potency he had achieved through the late 1840s, or whether he (or indeed any other detractor) had managed to expose Dickens as an imposter, was another matter. Nevertheless, his fiction persisted with a new domestic angle in *Mary Price* as he continued to fight the war against the patrician classes, this time through the strategy of the illegitimate aristocracy.

Ellen Bayuk Rosenman demonstrates how Reynolds attempted to maintain his political agenda despite transitioning into a domestically focussed mode of fiction, a mode which had been cultivated by middle-class writers looking to allay the revolutionary fervour that had been building in the 1840s. As Rosenman observes, in *Mary Price*, 'the discovery of illegitimacy is, surprisingly, a good thing, enabling worthy characters to ascend socially without leaving their working-class identities and virtues behind'.¹⁵³ Although his attempts to reward his

humble protagonists with aristocratic status [...] might seem to represent, at best, a crude wishful thinking, and at worst, bad faith, especially for Reynolds, whose unrelenting attack on the aristocracy secured his popularity with working-class readers. As a potential fable, however, this plot resonates strongly with Chartist ideas in circulation around the novels. The imaginary construction of a foundational, inclusive British nation underlies popular politics and fiction, linking them through shared fantasies of entitlement and restitution.¹⁵⁴

Rosenman's analysis chimes with Evan M. Gottlieb's analysis of Kingsley's novel *Alton Locke* (1850), which applies Gramscian theories of class in order to distinguish between the traditional and the organic intellectual.¹⁵⁵ In Kingsley's novel the eponymous hero experiences a struggle to ascend socially without abandoning his class roots. Upon transcending his own class by virtue of his poetry, which succeeds only

¹⁵³ Ellen Bayuk Rosenman, 'The Virtue of Illegitimacy: Inheritance and Belonging in *The Dark Woman* and *Mary Price*', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 213-226 (p. 217).

¹⁵⁴ Rosenman, p. 220.

¹⁵⁵ See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

by shedding its working-class agenda,¹⁵⁶ Alton is thrown into a desperate moral spiral, which is ultimately resolved by rejecting Chartist and working-class agency in favour of the transcendental experience of Christian Socialism. In this sense, the novel can be categorised according to Gallagher's assertion that a number of middle-class novelists engaged in a process of 'rescuing the same social realm it pretended to despise. The rescue, moreover, has been said to disable an entire tradition of anti-industrial social criticism by appropriating and disarming it, and then putting it to the uses of its adversaries'.¹⁵⁷

In *Mary Price*, Reynolds's illegitimate characters are a form of realisation of Gramsci's organic intellectual, ascending socially despite the hegemonic forces exerted on their identity. If, for Gramsci, hegemony is 'the process by which a dominant class wins the willing consent of the subordinate classes to the system that ensures their subordination',¹⁵⁸ the illegitimate aristocratic status of Reynolds's characters undermines the hereditary principles underpinning the established social hierarchy 'by enabling worthy characters to ascend socially without leaving their working-class identities and virtues behind'.¹⁵⁹ For Gramsci, the organic intellectual tends 'to be more closely linked to their original class. They are intellectuals, not by virtue of their vocation, but by their function "in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong"'.¹⁶⁰ Reynolds's illegitimate characters portray an 'honesty and humility bred by a modest upbringing' which helps to 'rejuvenate corrupt aristocratic families, infusing them with a much-needed moral tone',¹⁶¹ thus performing a kind of reverse of the Disraelian *noblesse oblige* propounded in *Coningsby, or the New Generation* (1844) and *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (1845).

It is my view that, while an admirable attempt to destabilise the hereditary strength of the aristocratic class via the interjecting of illegitimacy, Reynolds's decision to use these illegitimate characters to infuse 'a

¹⁵⁶ Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke: Tailor and Poet: An Autobiography* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1890).

¹⁵⁷ Gallagher, p. 264.

¹⁵⁸ Fiske, John, 'Culture, Ideology, Interpellation', in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Maiden: Blackwell, 1998) pp. 305-11. (p. 310).

¹⁵⁹ Rosenman, p. 217.

¹⁶⁰ Evan M. Gottlieb, 'Charles Kingsley, the Romantic Legacy, and the Unmaking of the Working-Class Intellectual', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 29 (2001), 51-65 (p. 57).

¹⁶¹ Rosenman, p. 217.

much-needed moral tone' actually weakens his political stance. As James remarked, *The Mysteries of London* was arguably strong precisely because it 'was not written for an audience looking for domestic realism of the middle-class novel'.¹⁶² Although the anticipation of Gramscian class theory helps to justify Reynolds's shift into domestically-centred fiction as driven by egalitarian principles, the overall strength of the attack on the ruling classes lost potency. The Reynolds of the 1840s, who troubled Dickens's own position in the marketplace, begins once more to read as Dickens's shadow, reacting to the domestic agenda advocated by *Household Words*. Despite Reynolds maintaining his political radicalism in his weekly magazine, which, as Graham Law describes, 'remained closest to its original working-class readership and old-style radical politics',¹⁶³ the shift in Reynolds's fictional mode allowed Dickens to effectively regain the ascendancy, pushing literature and the popular press in a new, domestically-preoccupied direction. Reynolds looked to maintain his rivalry with Dickens, continuing to attack him across his fiction and his journalism; but the hyperbolic and personal nature of the insults increasingly suggested a kind of desperation as his own security of position (at least politically), established in the mid-to-late-1840s, appears to have slipped.

4.5 The best of enemies: A rivalry constructed

When Dickens launched *All the Year Round* in the April of 1859 as a replacement for *Household Words*, it was greeted with fulsome praise by one publication as 'abounding in amusement and instruction' and edited 'with judgment, taste and talent'.¹⁶⁴ According to the same publication this new weekly ought to 'command success' simply by virtue of being the vehicle for Dickens's latest fiction, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859).¹⁶⁵ That such effusive endorsement came from the pen of Reynolds is one of the more perplexing instances in the history of the tempestuous rivalry between the two figures. Following two decades of sparring and ever-growing antipathy between the two, the 'volte-face' exhibited in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, which was now

¹⁶² *The Mysteries of London*, Vol I, p. x.

¹⁶³ Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. 116.

¹⁶⁴ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Reviews of Books', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 577 (1859), 2.

¹⁶⁵ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Reviews of Books', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 577 (1859), 2.

openly championing Dickens, is remarkable.¹⁶⁶ The sudden reversal of opinion must have stunned Reynolds's more habitual readers but, following 1859, the 'tide had turned forever', with Reynolds remaining generous in his treatment of Dickens thereafter.¹⁶⁷

It is my contention that this quite extraordinary about-turn in Reynolds's sentiments towards Dickens exposes their rivalry as one built primarily by a process of artificial construction, as opposed to the result of any deep personal and professional enmity which developed between them. This section examines how and why, in the late 1850s, Reynolds abruptly began to flatter where once he looked to maim. I argue that Reynolds's curious actions necessarily complicate any dichotomous positioning of the two established through much of the 1850s. The stark contrast in Reynolds's treatment of Dickens has remained largely unexplained, or has at least been subsumed within broader perceptions of Reynolds as a commercial and capricious opportunist whose sincerity to a given cause was always suspected to be rather fleeting. Diamond's article, 'Charles Dickens as Villain and Hero in Reynolds's Newspaper', which traces Reynolds's treatment of Dickens through this specific publication, remains one of the few critical texts to discuss their rivalry beyond the insults traded in the early 1850s.¹⁶⁸ While providing an overview of the undulating disdain and esteem Reynolds appears to feel for Dickens, Diamond's analysis can be used to support my contention, but also reveals limitations which I seek to address. Where Diamond fixates on Reynolds's 'obsession' with Dickens,¹⁶⁹ I instead propose a more reciprocal dynamic, in which both authors knowingly constructed a rivalry wherein they portrayed each other in excessive or exaggerated terms for commercial and political means. The process, I argue, served to better circumscribe each author's position in the market by way of contrast with a natural antithesis. According to this interpretation, Reynolds's

¹⁶⁶ Diamond, p. 134.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ It is true, however, that recent scholarship and a more general interest in the doubling element in Dickens's and Reynolds's careers is reflected by works and events mentioned above, such as the 2014 Bicentenary event at Westminster City Archives Centre, convened by The University of Roehampton, entitled 'Remarkable Reynolds: Dickens's Radical Rival'; Similarly, a BBC Radio 3 production in 2012 was titled, 'The Other Dickens'. BBC Radio 3, *Sunday Feature*, July 2012; This title shares its name with Lillian Nayder's study, *The Other Dickens*. Where Nayder's title referred to Catherine, Dickens's long-suffering and historically-effaced wife, the BBC 3 production sees Reynolds assume the role of the marginalised figure struggling beneath Dickens's domineering shadow.

¹⁶⁹ Diamond, p. 137.

sudden change of heart towards Dickens in 1859 can be explained as an attempt on Reynolds's part to shift his rivalry away from that of bitter enemies into something more akin to the best of enemies, wherein a latent respect was finally acknowledged. The motivations behind such a strategy are discussed within the framework of print networks, rivalries and collaborations between authors of the period.

I have thus far argued that the numerous inconsistencies that colour Dickens's and Reynolds's rivalry render problematic any perception of the two as binary figures. Where both had constructed the other, cultivating a rivalry rooted in a heightened or exaggerated animosity, Reynolds now looked to discard this well-established dynamic. Diamond proposes that this shift occurred because Dickens, by virtue of 'walking out on his publishers' at *Household Words* and beginning *All The Year Round*,¹⁷⁰ had finally earned Reynolds's respect. *Reynolds's Newspaper* acknowledged Dickens's proactive decision in language of the utmost admiration:

Mr Dickens was perfectly justified in all these proceedings no man of common sense can deny. His talent is his own commodity – his pen is his stock in trade – his industry is his capital; and he has a right to carry them all into whatsoever market produces the largest amount of profit. His fame is likewise his own; and it may be looked upon as the hoarded wealth [...]. We wish to record the expression of our delight that Mr Dickens, undeterred by legal proceedings, has boldly and chivalrously asserted the lofty rights of the author as paramount [...]. In a word, he has denied the right of any one to profit, without his consent, by the sale of something which bears the reflection of his fame; and the entire literary world will unite in a feeling of cordial gratitude for the championing of its rights.¹⁷¹

Even if we accept the new supportive tone which Reynolds now adopts, his commendation of Dickens's actions is still more complex than it initially appears, since his comments hark back to his own decision

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 134.

¹⁷¹ 'Reviews of Books', *Reynolds Newspaper*, 577 (1859), 2.

years earlier to leave the *London Journal* and assert ‘his independence of the fraternity of publishers and booksellers’.¹⁷² Reynolds clearly believed his actions had set a precedent and, moreover, now sought to attribute Dickens’s decision to leave his publishers to the example he had previously set. This interpretation helps to explain the somewhat haughty tone as Reynolds takes it upon himself to assert Dickens’s rights as an author and to speak on behalf of ‘the entire literary world’ in their uniting behind Dickens’s decision. Despite the reverential tone, Reynolds’s approval of Dickens’s actions was in fact still rooted in rivalry as the former asserted his self-perceived superiority as a pioneer in the marketplace over Dickens, who plays the role of imitator. In a bizarre irony, Reynolds, the figure who had tormented Dickens in the 1830s and 1840s over his inability to harness the necessary legal rights to prevent the imitation of his fiction and the disbursement of his profit into another author’s pocket, now champions Dickens’s ‘talent’ as his commodity and ‘his stock in trade’. Despite the message of solidarity, in all probability Dickens would still have been displeased, even galled, to receive this kind of encouragement from the man he saw as only too happy to steal liberally from this same ‘stock’.

Furthermore, Reynolds’s statement, which champions Dickens’s right to chase the maximum profit for his work, also reveals an ulterior motive, since Reynolds’s declaration of support exposes an element of Dickens’s enterprise he wished to keep hidden from his readers, namely his financial motivations. In 1842 Dickens made little secret of his belief in the connection between profits and the affections of his readers, claiming: ‘I would rather have the affectionate regard of my fellow men, than I would have heaps and mines of gold. But the two things do not seem to me incompatible’.¹⁷³ Dickens’s pecuniary interest in periodical properties conflicts somewhat with his apparent primary motivation to be on an intimate and confidential footing with his readers, a position made less personal and familial if Reynolds indirectly reminds the readership of the financial transaction required to sustain such a relationship. Reynolds’s endorsement of Dickens’s choice to break with his publishers at *Household Words* emphasises Dickens’s writing as a commodity first and foremost, and by couching his language in financial terms like ‘commodity’, ‘stock’,

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, III, p. 59.

‘trade’, ‘industry’, ‘capital’, ‘market’ and ‘profit’, suggests a departure on Dickens’s part from the familial bonds of *Household Words* and a desire instead to pursue profit. Indeed, even Dickens’s fame is regarded as ‘hoarded wealth’ as he looked to break the monopoly of publishers and retain the profits for himself.

If Reynolds’s statement was grounded in a sense of his own superiority as a pioneer in the marketplace, it is still difficult to imagine how Dickens’s decision to leave his publishers could instantly have erased over twenty years of deep-seated enmity on Reynolds’s part, unless, of course, the animosity which peaked in the 1850s had been exaggerated. Diamond proposes that Reynolds’s dramatic reversal of attitude towards Dickens demonstrates the strength of Reynolds’s obsession with the former for nearly twenty years, concluding that, had the latter recognised these similarities with Dickens prior to 1859 and ‘had the good-will then existed’ between them,¹⁷⁴ their relationship could have been very different. This is a telling phrase, which Diamond uses to frame his article, and which allows him to speculate on an alternative version of events that may have played out between Reynolds and Dickens. While this is a tempting hypothesis to entertain given that ‘there was at least as much to unite the two men as to divide them’,¹⁷⁵ ultimately this good-will would have served little purpose. Dickens’s and Reynolds’s shared ideals and similar literary styles were, by the mid-1840s, the very factors that necessitated a distancing in order to avoid damaging conflations of their works and political positions. Diamond’s conclusion is guilty, therefore, of failing to consider the formative years of their rivalry, which were based initially on imitation largely made possible by the natural crossovers in their narrative mode and political inclinations. As Reynolds’s reputation developed to a level of national notoriety, it became necessary for the two (certainly for Dickens) to mask any common ground between them and install the other as a rival. This was achieved, as we have seen, in part by a bitter feud voiced across periodicals, and, while this allowed both authors to better define their commercial and political positions, it left little to no room for the flourishing of any ‘good will’.

The final stages of the relationship between Dickens and Reynolds again ostensibly portray the latter in a

¹⁷⁴ Diamond, p. 135.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 137.

rather unflattering light due to his willingness to abandon a position he had cultivated for the best part of twenty years. However, as I have sought to demonstrate, it must be remembered that Dickens was complicit in this strategy. It becomes imperative, therefore, that this final period not be abstracted from their rivalry as a whole and examined in isolation, since this naturally lends itself to the unfair conclusion that Reynolds's 'obsession' with Dickens was a one-sided affair effected only by Reynolds's capriciousness. The 'obsession', or at least preoccupation, had a greater degree of mutuality, as illustrated by Dickens's willingness to draw material from Reynolds's fiction in the 1850s and the contention put forth in this chapter that *Household Words* traded commercially and politically on the denigration of Reynolds's labours. Reynolds himself seemingly believed he held a degree of influence over Dickens, as evidenced by an article for *Reynolds's Newspaper* published in May 1861, in which he again pays compliments to his rival, this time with reference to *Great Expectations*. Singling out Magwitch as a character of particular distinction and re-printing an extract from chapter forty-two of the novel, the choice of passage is clearly designed to show Dickens as 'following in Reynolds's footsteps', describing 'Magwitch's account of his early life and how he became a criminal'.¹⁷⁶ According to Reynolds, Magwitch was simply a further example of Dickens borrowing his favoured motif, the tying of criminal behaviour to the transgressions of the ruling classes. This is, as we have seen, particularly prevalent in *The Mysteries of London*, in which several chapters are dedicated to criminal gatherings wherein a different felon regales his peers with the tale of his past and connects his misfortune to the avarice or exploitative behaviour of the wealthy. Even if Reynolds exaggerated his influence over Dickens, betraying an anxiety over the realisation that Dickens had produced multiple literary masterpieces where his fiction remained tightly tethered to notions of commercial popularity only, the example continues to demonstrate a crossover in material even in the latter stages of their careers, promoting an interpretation of their careers as inextricably intertwined.

An alternative interpretation as to what exactly prompted Reynolds to turn away from his customary animosity towards Dickens and adopt a new respectful, even admiring approach to his rival, can be posited

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 135.

according to Reynolds's wider perception of his middle-class literary peers, and particularly his relationship with William Thackeray. When Thackeray died in December 1863, at the request of some of his personal friends, Dickens was asked to pen his remembrances of the 'great English writer' for Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine*.¹⁷⁷ Despite their many 'differences of opinion',¹⁷⁸ Dickens paid a touching tribute to Thackeray, describing their relationship as a deeply personal one. Dickens regarded these differences not as bitter antipathies, but as the natural push and pull of a 'brother in arms' and an 'old comrade',¹⁷⁹ explaining that whenever they met and 'fell upon these topics, it was never very gravely' but in the spirit of 'the warmest generosity'.¹⁸⁰ Dickens, gushing with compassionate sentiment, wrote that 'no one can ever have seen him more genial, natural, cordial, fresh, and honestly impulsive, than I have seen him at those times. No one can be surer than I, of the greatness and the goodness of the heart that then disclosed itself'.¹⁸¹ Compare this with Reynolds's comment on Thackeray's death, and the tributes it drew, and one may infer that Reynolds's relationship with Thackeray was rather more acrimonious. In fact, Reynolds and Thackeray shared a colourful past. Reynolds gave Thackeray his first paid work as a writer when they were both living in Paris and evidence exists which suggests they remained on cordial terms until 1852.¹⁸² From hereafter, however, Thackeray was 'to be treated very roughly',¹⁸³ and cast 'as thorough a snob as ever breathed',¹⁸⁴ with Reynolds remarking, following Thackeray's death, that 'it is really sickening to peruse the slavering encomiums that are lavished upon the deceased Mr Thackeray'.¹⁸⁵ Despite these comments post-dating 1859, when Reynolds had seemingly entered into the complimentary phase of his relationship with Dickens, it can still be safely assumed, given the mawkishness of his tribute to Thackeray, that his criticism was targeted at Dickens. Indeed, a few years before, in 1858, *Reynolds's Newspaper* reported on the Royal

¹⁷⁷ Charles Dickens, 'In Memoriam', *Cornhill Magazine*, 50 (1864), 129-133 (p.129).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 130.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 129.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁸² Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 3; Maha Atal describes how Thackeray was among the few Victorian writers to defend Reynolds against contemporary criticism of his radical politics and sensationalist, often lurid, fiction'. M. R. Atal, 'G. W. M. Reynolds in Paris 1935-6: A New Discovery', *Notes and Queries*, 55 (2008), 448-453 (pp. 448-449); Atal is citing from Lewis Melville, *The Life of William Makepeace Thackeray* (London: 1899), p. 66.

¹⁸³ Diamond, p. 131.

¹⁸⁴ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Mr Thackeray: The Showman of the Four Georges', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 349 (1857), 5.

¹⁸⁵ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Reviews of Books', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 704 (1864), 2.

Academy dinner, at which both Thackeray and Dickens spoke. Reynolds's choice of language in describing the behaviours of the two literary figures shows similar disdain for the type of outpouring of obsequiousness which coloured Thackeray's obituaries:

Mr Dickens made a speech, and of course praised Mr Thackeray, who of course returned the compliment. Now we have a right to ask if this sort of thing is to go on for ever? Is this incessant mutual slavering on the part of this couple of comic caricaturists never to have an end? Why should the public be everlastingly pestered by the reciprocal puffing of this brace of funny storytellers? It is notorious that of late they are as inseparable as the Siamese twins. Are they really as enamoured of each other as they would have the world believe? [...]. It is not seemly: and however sincere this mutual respect may be, those who do not belong to the craft will not fail to attribute their perpetual puffing of one another to the most contemptible vanity, if not to motives of a more reprehensible character.¹⁸⁶

Clearly aggravated by the toadyism he perceived between the two, Reynolds sought to conflate Thackeray and Dickens as sycophants, fawning over one another as a means of perpetuating their own self-interests, before diminishing the status of their literature by drawing them as caricaturists, rather sardonically pointing up the inability to see the funny side of their somewhat nauseating antics. Both tarred with the same brush, there was seemingly little love lost between Reynolds and these two literary 'comrades'. Yet, fast forward to 1870 and Dickens's death, and the tone of Reynolds's obituary is markedly different. In 'sharp contrast' to the treatment Thackeray received,¹⁸⁷ Dickens's death was initially addressed by *Reynolds's Newspaper* with a respectful and measured piece. The article, which dispassionately relayed the details of Dickens's death from official reports before recounting the events of his life and his publications, notably referred to

¹⁸⁶ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Gossip of the Week', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 404 (1858), 9.

¹⁸⁷ Diamond, p. 136.

Thackeray simply as Dickens's 'great rival',¹⁸⁸ rather than as the sycophantic counterparts Reynolds had previously depicted them as.

The triangulation of Dickens, Thackeray and Reynolds across the three instances discussed (the Royal Academy dinner, the respective obituaries for Thackeray, and Reynolds's comments on Dickens's passing in 1870) demonstrates the complexity of Reynolds's relationship to his contemporaries. These events contain within them many of the facets that render Reynolds's sincerity somewhat questionable. Firstly, Reynolds's report of the speeches at the Royal Academy dinner differs from other reports on the event. Although these reports are qualified by the recognition that they were 'perhaps inadequate',¹⁸⁹ there is a notable absence of any reference to Thackeray within Dickens's speech, with the exception of one remark about Thackeray's 'failed attempt to become the illustrator of *The Pickwick Papers*'.¹⁹⁰ One possible conclusion, therefore, is that Reynolds fabricated, or at least exaggerated, the camaraderie on display between Dickens and Thackeray. Given that Reynolds's history is chequered with libellous incidents, this cannot be ruled out.¹⁹¹ Naturally this provokes questions over Reynolds's integrity, recalling Humpherys's observation that it is 'hard to separate sincere political expressions from clever careerism in Reynolds' work'.¹⁹² It also raises questions over his motivations for presenting Dickens and Thackeray in this unflattering light.

It is my contention that whether this 'mutual slavering' and self-congratulating between Dickens and Reynolds actually occurred is a moot point. Reynolds published his comments regardless, and his words betray a sense of his own mixture of envy and resentment at being excluded from the collective of literary peers. If Dickens, despite his quarrels with Thackeray, ultimately considered him a 'comrade' and 'brother in arms', then why did he not think of Reynolds in these terms? In all probability the steadfast animosity

¹⁸⁸ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Death of Mr Charles Dickens', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 1035 (1870), 5.

¹⁸⁹ Diamond, p. 131.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid; Diamond refers to *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. by K. J. Fielding, pp. 264-5, as the most detailed account of this event.

¹⁹¹ Diamond refers to at least two further instances where Reynolds utilized a 'false claim' or deployed the 'wildest gossip' in order to defame Dickens. Diamond, p. 29, p. 130.

¹⁹² Anne Humpherys, 'G. W. M. Reynolds: Popular Literature and Popular Politics', p. 83.

stemmed from the irreparable damage done by Reynolds's theft, as Dickens saw it, of *Pickwick*, while Thackeray only criticised.¹⁹³ There must be a degree of conjecture here, but this instance highlights Reynolds's willingness to construct an image of his rivals, in this case, a type of camaraderie, in order that he can then brandish it as sickly in its sycophancy and in turn promote his own image of integrity and not as a toady in the same vein. This type of slander has contributed to the prevailing opinion of Reynolds as a quarrelsome character, quick to feel indignation. Reynolds was capable of blowing hot and cold in an instant, a characteristic which no doubt contributed to Louis James's and Anne Humpherys's remark that Reynolds's 'attitude towards his contemporaries in both literary and political culture is hard to determine with certainty, which makes him difficult to place in the overall picture of nineteenth-century society and culture'.¹⁹⁴

One such contemporary with whom Reynolds shared a fraught relationship was the radical writer Douglas Jerrold. When Jerrold died in 1857, a conflict arose between Dickens and Reynolds over a 'printed paragraph' in a letter that appeared in the 'Editorial Correspondence' section of *Reynolds's Newspaper*, addressed to the editor and signed 'Anti-Humbug'.¹⁹⁵ The letter, presumed to be written, or at least endorsed by Reynolds, alleged that Jerrold was guilty of a 'cruel neglect' in his failure to leave any financial legacy for his surviving family, or to insure his life for their protection.¹⁹⁶ Dickens responded by denying such accusations, proclaiming the letter to be 'as preposterously exaggerated as anything I have ever seen in my life'.¹⁹⁷ This marks the last reference to Reynolds in Dickens's correspondence and is fittingly captured by an act of needlessly provocative defamation on Reynolds's part, and a melodramatic statement on Dickens's (somewhat ironically designed to level the very same accusation of exaggeration at Reynolds). Most

¹⁹³ The distinction may well have been crucial for Dickens as Thackeray even declared war against 'Boz', explaining: 'my books are a protest against his—that if one set are true, the other must be false'. Walter C. Phillips, *Dickens, Reade, and Collins: Sensation Novelists* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1919), p. 22; As earlier chapters alluded to, however, Thackeray penned the tales of Charles Yellowplush, a character that owed much to Dickens's Sam Weller.

¹⁹⁴ Humpherys and James, 'Introduction', p. 1.

¹⁹⁵ 'Editorial Correspondence: The Late Mr. Douglas Jerrold', *Reynolds's Magazine*, 360 (1857), 1.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), VIII, p. 365.

revealing in this exchange, however, are the references to ‘the set’, the ‘literary clique’, and ‘a certain literary and dramatic league’, a collective which contains within it, Carlyle, Thackeray, Tennyson, Paxton, and Dickens. Each is accused of ‘cliquism’, ‘snobbery’, and ‘funkeyism’,¹⁹⁸ and constitute at least a sub-set of so-called esteemed authors and literary figures instrumental in the exclusion of Reynolds from such ‘sets’, and broadly complicit in the discrediting and disparaging of his name and reputation.

Each rallying around the Jerrold family, Reynolds espied a literary community he had been marginalised from. Perhaps, as the dust settled in the 1850s following their heated feuds, Reynolds felt that Dickens and his peers would begin to consider him in the same light as Thackeray, as a comrade and a brother in arms, a figure with whom a rivalry undertaken in earnest had helped to shape their respective careers. Reynolds never received such recognition from Dickens nor any hint of reconciliation between them. Regardless, upon Dickens’s death in June 1870, rather than electing to lambast those same toadies who appeared in force once more to garland the deceased with excessive praise, as must have been at least half-expected, Reynolds opted to pen a respectful, if dispassionate obituary.

Their rivalry had spanned four decades and, by virtue of Reynolds surviving Dickens, he had been afforded the final word. Reynolds approached the opportunity with caution, recognising Dickens’s career achievements, and suppressing the malice he had inveighed over the excessive and false praise for the deceased Thackeray for a more objective and detached piece, making not a single reference to his own tempestuous relationship with Dickens. Reynolds was in fact especially careful to avoid offence of any sort, and his criticism was unusually measured and heavily qualified:

About the time of the publication of “Master Humphrey’s Clock” appeared his “Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi,” the celebrated clown, almost his only production which deals with the plain prose of facts,

¹⁹⁸ ‘Editorial Correspondence: The Late Mr. Douglas Jerrold’, *Reynolds’s Magazine*, 360 (1857), 1; This information is also given in a footnote in a letter Dickens penned to William Irvine entitled ‘In remembrance of the late Mr. Douglas Jerrold’. *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, VIII, p. 365.

and with every-day life divested of all imagination. Though much interest attaches to the work, we shall not be suspected of any intention of depreciating the author's reputation when we say that his imaginative powers rank far higher than his skill as a biographer. In fact, while "Pickwick" and "Nickleby" live, "Grimaldi" is forgotten.¹⁹⁹

With no mention of any shared history, connection, kinship, or of their acrimonious rivalry, the synopsis of Dickens's career was devoid of any emotion, existing in stark contrast to the tangled immediacy and fiery exchanges with which their lives and careers had unravelled through the previous three decades. Reynolds's comments have the outward appearance, therefore, of genuine respect. I would argue, however, that Reynolds's relentless and, at times brazen, self-publicising tendencies still provide the more plausible interpretation for the tone elected for the obituary.

Reynolds never stopped reading the public mood and would certainly have recognised, amidst a climate of national grief and mourning, that he no longer stood to gain anything from his vehement opposition to Dickens. Aware instead of the potential public reaction to the savaging of a national treasure, Reynolds's obituary reads with unusual objectivity. Rather than returning to Diamond's assertion that Reynolds begrudgingly came to publicly respect Dickens, it is my contention that the obituary published on June 12 strategically ensured his *Newspaper* published a report on news of such national, even international significance, while allowing Reynolds to test the waters of sentiment among the other periodicals and journals. Reynolds would have been unable to omit entirely any mention of Dickens's death from his columns, as this would surely have been received as a snub on par with an unwarranted excoriation, yet he also knew he could not adopt the same position he had taken when Thackeray died. Although Reynolds had the strength of his convictions to continue to criticise Thackeray at his death and call out those around him who claimed to be lamenting his loss as an exercise in social climbing,²⁰⁰ he also knew that Thackeray was

¹⁹⁹ 'Death of Mr Charles Dickens', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 5.

²⁰⁰ Reynolds claimed in 1864: 'we are deluged and surfeited with stereotyped passages about Mr Thackeray's "great heart," and his "noble head", and "glorious countenance". We suspect that few, if any, of his acquaintances know

not nearly as beloved as Dickens. Criticising Dickens would have run a far greater risk. Of course, Reynolds had made a career of attacking Dickens with flagrant disregard for the mores and sensibilities of the period, or of Dickens's privileged status, but the public reaction to his death provoked an overwhelming outpouring of grief and affection,²⁰¹ as proven by the *Daily News*, which had already begun to safeguard Dickens's legacy, claiming: 'He was without any exception or any chance of approach the most popular author of the time. He was emphatically the novelist of the age'.²⁰² Reynolds wisely, therefore, elected to pursue a more cautious tone in his obituary, while still carefully avoiding an excess of flattery.

Read in isolation, Reynolds's remarks in 1859 and in Dickens's obituary, are at once thoroughly unrepresentative of their often-mordant relationship, yet at the same time they accurately capture the constant state of flux between the two and the constructed nature of their rivalry, as each sought to utilise the other for their own benefit. For much of the 1850s their combative dynamic had served to bolster their political identities against one another. After the political aspect of their rivalry began to fade, Reynolds attacked Dickens on a personal front before then assuming the role of the elder statesman, rather haughtily congratulating Dickens for following in his own pioneering footsteps as an autonomous editor. By 1870, however, the only benefit Reynolds could plausibly derive from his rivalry with Dickens was to be considered as a peer in the opinions of the public. Accordingly, much like the ulterior motive that lay behind Reynolds's praising of Dickens's departure from *Household Words*, it is my contention that Reynolds elected to publish a final celebration of Dickens as an attempt to gain a place alongside him in posterity in the pantheon of great writers. Subsequently, one week after his obituary, and having witnessed an ongoing flurry of glowing tributes to Dickens, Reynolds issued the article 'Charles Dickens in Westminster Abbey',

anything of the former; whilst all the world of London is cognisant of the fact that he was about the ugliest and most uncouth man in the metropolis'. G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Reviews of Books', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 704 (1864), 2.

²⁰¹ Dickens's death prompted an outpouring of public sentiment, ranging from cabbies to Queen Victoria. 'The lamentation', Philip Collins explains, 'was general, at all ages and many levels of literacy, as well as all over the world'. As Benjamin Jowett remarked in his sermon at Westminster Abbey: 'Men seemed to have lost, not a great writer only, but one whom they had personally known; who was the friend of them and of their families'. 'Obituary Tributes, 1870', in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 502.

²⁰² 'The Death of Mr Charles Dickens' *Daily News*, 10 June 1870, rpt. in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Philip Collins (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 504.

in which he waxed lyrical over his rival's legacy, heaping praise upon his writing, championing his social reforming as a man of the people, and admiring his charitable endeavour, all traits he had spent the best part of three decades ruthlessly deconstructing.²⁰³

The language in Reynolds's final tribute sees him attempt to set his own voice apart from those who 'imitate[d] the language of formal and stilted praise in which the career of the departed master of the pen has been treated by contemporaries who never sympathised with the great object of his life'. By implication, Reynolds did understand Dickens and even implies that it may now be up to him to take the baton passed on by Dickens: 'The battle', he explains, 'is not over yet; there is work to be done by all good men—work which will try our hearts and compel us to great labour'. Assuming the mantle of the champion of the people, Reynolds avows to 'fight the battles and win the victories', and thus assure his own place 'in the temple of the nation'.²⁰⁴

Notwithstanding the kinder treatment Reynolds had ostensibly offered Dickens after 1859, the almost saccharine tone of this final homage sits somewhat incongruously at the end of more than twenty years of sustained attacks and does appear to lend credence to the notion that Reynolds simply changed his tune. Yet it still seems unlikely that a feud which had been rumbling for decades could be so swiftly erased by a late, and abruptly blossoming respect. Moreover, this latent deference only travelled in one direction with Dickens never coming close to overturning his public views on Reynolds. What remains more plausible, therefore, is the notion that Dickens's and Reynolds's rivalry was constructed for political and commercial benefits, designed to better define one's own identity against that of a definitional counterpart. This requires a more holistic examination of their respective career trajectories and the tracing of their relationship from its inception in a more reciprocal manner, as demonstrated by this thesis, which has sought to reveal the complexity and capriciousness of their individual rivalry as a function of an emerging mass market culture in mid-Victorian Britain.

²⁰³ G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Charles Dickens in Westminster Abbey', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 1036 (1870), 1.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The ‘first age of mass culture’ fostered a marketplace in which authors with a radical political message necessarily tailored their output to the changing requirements of that market in order to remain commercially viable.²⁰⁵ Given that environment, as Michael Shirley explains, any calls for mid-nineteenth century periodical journalists such as Reynolds to maintain a consistency are totally misplaced. It is, he claims, not only unattainable in any given marketplace, but also unattainable in human beings:

This ability to make money from that which he decried has caused some scholars to denounce Reynolds as a hypocrite who was interested in the working classes solely for the profit they would bring him; Berridge is especially harsh. But this call for purity of motive is naïve; accusing people of being hypocrites is accusing human beings of behaving like human beings. Reynolds was no more hypocritical than were his readers, and he was realistic in recognizing that the news business was a business, and that breadth of coverage was essential.²⁰⁶

It follows that if Reynolds is to be considered as a hypocrite, then so too is Dickens, since both authors competed for broadly the same audience. The gulf in their reputations, in this instance regarding their ability to manage these contradictory forces, has, in posterity, distanced the two where a greater proximity had in fact always existed. Analysis in this chapter has addressed the omissions which have masked the proximity between Dickens and Reynolds. While theirs was a complex rivalry, which by the 1850s was being played out across massive periodical enterprises that were dominating the popular literary markets, a singular focus on Dickens results in their relationship being perceived as purely binary. When measured against Dickens in this manner, Reynolds has been viewed as hypocritical and consequently his successes, achieved using the same strategies as Dickens, and often-times in conjunction with Dickens, have been neglected. I have instead attempted to demonstrate how their rivalry ought to be understood as one which rejects accusations

²⁰⁵ John, *Mass Culture*, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ Michael Shirley, ‘G.W.M. Reynolds, Reynolds’s Newspaper and Popular Politics’, in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 75-90 (p. 81).

of hypocrisy and indeed any overarching attempts to apply a consistent model or strict framework to their behaviour, particularly towards one another. Theirs was a rivalry of construction as much as it was one of natural animosity, artificially cultivated in order to maintain commercial viability and better define their respective political positioning, and in which both installed the other as the enemy. Their feuding necessarily, therefore, reflects the vicissitudes of a commercial marketplace that was inextricable from a political climate in a continued state of change. Increasingly commodified, the market naturally favoured a fickle approach, with authors adopting and then abandoning a position at whim in order to remain relevant and viable. This required skills in the management of content and of self-image for public consumption. Just as Wilkie Collins rather coldly lamented the loss of a working day to attend Dickens's funeral,²⁰⁷ the marketplace seemingly cared little for loyalty and bred inconsistency as a desirable or marketable trait. Dickens and Reynolds, it appears, saw the mutual benefit to be had from a marketplace rival, to be manipulated as a marketing tool in their efforts to establish an enduring readership and promote a political agenda.

²⁰⁷ Lillian Nayder, *Unequal Partners: Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 1.

Conclusion

In the 1850s, as the periodical market shifted towards a culture more heavily couched in the domestically- or family-centred language of publications like Dickens's *Household Words*, proprietors and editors were also forced to adapt to a more commodity-driven market environment. One catalyst underpinning the first of these cultural shifts was the tirade of assaults levelled at the immorality of the popular or cheap press, represented by authors like Reynolds. Margaret Dalziel observes that the relentless attacks on the allegedly debasing tendencies of popular literature 'seem gradually to have forced Reynolds, for example, to change his tone and style'; he had instead 'to conform to better standards'.¹ Interestingly, Dalziel also claims that, 'on the other hand, a man like Dickens accepted the implicit challenge to provide better cheap literature, producing his periodical *Household Words*'.² While there is some evidence that Reynolds's fiction and journalism did 'conform to better standards' after 1850,³ Dalziel's comments reveal the commonly-held view of Dickens as the innovator, rising to the challenge, with Reynolds following (or coerced by, in this instance) his example. Although Dalziel recognises both authors as bending to the pressures of cultural transition, her analysis does not draw any more substantial connections between these two statements, failing to acknowledge that Reynolds was editing his own periodical prior to Dickens launching *Household Words*, and any impact this may have had on Dickens's own efforts. In fact, rarely in contemporary scholarship have Reynolds's and Dickens's careers been analysed as mutually affecting in any meaningful way.

Largely entrenched in common perceptions of the rivalry between Dickens and Reynolds is the notion of Dickens's greater worth, be it literary or cultural. This encourages the tendency to favour his version

¹ Margaret Dalziel, *Popular Fiction One Hundred Years Ago: An Unexplored Tract of Literary History* (Cohen and West: London, 1957), p. 46; As a point of comparison, Graham Law observes how Edward Lloyd 'had "turned respectable" during the course of the 1850s'. Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000). p. 23.

² *Ibid.* p. 46.

³ Trefor Thomas offers some evidence that Reynolds did tidy up his act, noting of later reprints of *The Mysteries of London*, that 'some of the more lurid or salacious illustrations which appeared in early number published by George Vickers were completely replaced when reissued in volume form by John Dicks'. G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, ed. by Trefor Thomas (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. xvii.

of events over Reynolds's and in doing so confirms the latter's status as the villain, a commercial mercenary and, in turn, an insincere radical and plagiarizer at root. Jerome Meckier claims that 'the intention behind the re-use of character and theme is always contradiction, but permutations are reconstructive as well as deconstructive; they are never plagiarisms'.⁴ This claim provides a valuable avenue into analysing Reynolds's relationship to his more canonical peers, and Dickens in particular, since it reveals the greater willingness with which critics have accepted the relationships between Dickens and Collins, Gaskell, Trollope and Eliot as a process wherein each rethink and rewrite one another in a surreptitious and tacitly acknowledged process of rivalry, yet simultaneously consider Reynolds's engagement in the same practice as cause for his exclusion from the 'literary set'.

The twentieth century was, for the most part, guilty of perceiving Reynolds through Dickens's eyes. Mary Hammond explains that by the late nineteenth century

a complex set of conditions prevailed in the qualitative categorisation of novels, which meant it was sometimes difficult to know just by looking at a book (or even reading it) whether it was "popular" or "literary", "bad" or "good". This meant a new emphasis on that most slippery of things, cultural "know-how", a supplementing of the centuries-old policing of literature through religious censorship with a far subtler form of policing through the pages of a critical journal.⁵

Dickens, it appears, was trusted as an arbiter of this type of 'cultural know-how', and his opinions on Reynolds have been approached with less critical circumspection than they might have been. This thesis offers a fresh perspective on two figures who shared numerous literary and political affinities, but whose careers were necessarily constructed in opposition to one another in accordance with the changing conditions and culture of the marketplace in which they were competing. An analysis of the rivalry

⁴ Meckier goes on to claim that 'competing fictions are assertions as well as rebuttals, offerings as well as substitutions or cancelations; their proposals are simultaneously counterproposals and vice versa'. Meckier, *Hidden Rivalries*, p 7.

⁵ Hammond, p. 5.

between them over an extended time period reveals the extent and significance of the connection the two shared from 1837 onwards, while also contributing to a more accurate understanding of Reynolds's career trajectory, and by implication, offering a revision of Dickens's.

Viewed through the cultural lens constructed by Dickens, the 'immortal one' is seen as the vanguard of respectable propriety, humanising and moralising an increasingly cold and abstracted marketplace, shaped by the dominant principles of capital economy. From this perspective, Dickens's writing satirised, through his own dark, radical tendencies, the social ills of the period. Constructed in contrast, Reynolds appears to have indulged in needless immorality in order to remain commercially successful. His writing, described as 'perilous stuff',⁶ was charged with promoting vice by propagating it as entertainment. According to Dickens, Reynolds's promise to represent the people was a sham designed to encourage sales, to be used as a smokescreen for the self-interestedness and prosperity of his own endeavours. This version of Reynolds helped draw into sharp relief Dickens's own virtues as a genuine and intimate friend of the reader. Equally, Reynolds was involved in exactly the same practice of identity construction. He projected his own image as a darker, revolutionary version of Dickens, a Dickens unshackled from the restraints of Victorian mores. Reynolds believed his politics represented everything the Victorian upper-middle and aristocratic classes appeared to fear; the exposition in his fiction and journalism of the working-class condition as a direct product of the exploitative machinations of the wealthy elite and the increased mobilisation of an organised and united working class were indeed deeply disconcerting for the ruling classes. As his reputation as a radical grew, he looked to paint Dickens in contrast as an insincere voice of 'the people', a hypocritical peddler of tepid, self-serving bourgeois sentiments which diminished the radical currency of his writing.

I have argued that the dynamics of this rivalry, manifesting itself explicitly in the early 1850s, was the product of a simmering dispute which began in 1837 with Reynolds's appropriation of *Pickwick* in a

⁶ *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House and others, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), VI, p. 790.

more radical political form. As the two authors battled for supremacy, their careers developed into something of an arms-race. That Reynolds engineered a career which saw him emerge from Dickens's shadow in the mid-1840s as a popular author of his own accord, is testament to his ability as a savvy operator in a commercial marketplace, but also a reflection of his prolific literary talents. Their rivalry played out in a literary market which was fiercely competitive and in a constant state of flux, with both perceiving the market in terms of a physical space in which they strove to establish an identity that was popular, radical, and, importantly, unique. The construction of their rivalry was, therefore, a strategy by which authors of the first age of mass culture were able to bolster and define their own position within the market and establish a political identity in the process. However, after Reynolds had tied his career inextricably to Dickens's with the publication of *Pickwick Abroad*, the future efforts of both authors to appear entirely unique were necessarily compromised.

I have attempted to demonstrate that Dickens's retreat, between 1845 and 1850, into a more insular and self-contained brand of fiction built around the domesticity of the fireside and the hearth, was a direct result of his rivalry with Reynolds. As the latter began the publication of his extremely popular *Mysteries of London* in 1844, a serial infused with a radical currency rooted in the principles of the French Revolution, Dickens was unable or unwilling to compete without potentially tarnishing his reputation as a respectable, family author. As Reynolds's popularity grew to almost ubiquitous proportions across literary and political domains in the latter half of the 1840s, he became more than just a convenient counterpart to the canonical fiction of the period. However, by assuming a central role in the discourse of the period he was also subjected to efforts to discredit his reputation and dismiss his politics as insincere and populist. What has been obscured, particularly with reference to the years between 1844 and 1851, even as Reynolds's life and writing has undergone more concerted revision, is the extent of his impact on Dickens's career. His transition into the domestic-fiction market in 1850 was partly undertaken in order to 'unveil' Dickens as an imposter hiding behind the sentimentality of the family, instead of exposing the real political and social struggles still faced by the working classes. That Reynolds's fiction in the mid-1840s pre-figured Dickens's *Bleak House*, which began serialisation in

1852, and that Dickens appears to have borrowed from Reynolds's 1850 novel *The Seamstress* in order to formulate plot points for *Bleak House*, should have afforded the latter more substantial critical interest. Signalling a new phase of Dickens's career, in which seemingly disparate narrative threads were skilfully woven together, *Bleak House* was itself a mysteries novel in the vein of Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* before it. Dickens took precautions to avoid any damaging conflation between the two works, yet Reynolds's impact upon Dickens's interest in the genre has been under-examined. Moreover, given the plagiaristic origins of their rivalry, and the lasting damage this did to Reynolds's reputation, Dickens's adoption of the same practice warrants greater recognition, as it raises wider questions concerning the depth of cultural biases and the exclusivity of the canon, suggesting the need for further revision on the impact of literature produced either from outside the hegemonic classes, or which was expressly designed to contest the cultural philosophy of the ruling classes in the mid-nineteenth century.

The notion that, by the 1850s, each was shaping the direction, tone and tenor of their rival's publications has deeper implications for our understanding of the conditions of the marketplace in the mid-nineteenth century and, as noted above, of wider notions of canonicity. If Dickens was coerced into dropping the price of his periodical in order to compete with the successes of figures like Reynolds, venturing to win back the loyalties of those readers effectively siphoned from him in the 1840s – readers that defected to the Reynolds camp having been seduced by the more scandalous style and revolutionary tone of serials like *The Mysteries of London* – then Reynolds was similarly pressed into adhering to a more respectable code in order to maintain his commercial viability. This was particularly pertinent after the tinderbox political climate of the late 1840s - during which time Reynolds's political radicalism had peaked - had effectively fizzled out. Dickens was a leading voice in the march towards greater respectability, and *Household Words* became emblematic of the general cultural and social aspirations towards domestic sanctuary, as opposed to political revolution. Reynolds's more overtly radical politics were deemed to pose a direct threat to the family home, to notions of 'social stability' and, therefore, to 'the very nucleus

and foundation of the state'.⁷ He thus provided the perfect scapegoat for Dickens, who labelled the popularity Reynolds had enjoyed as a cause for 'national reproach'. Using the opening address in *Household Words*, Dickens effectively sought to galvanise Reynolds's status as one of the villains of the age.

Given that the dynamic between Dickens and Reynolds was complex and often reciprocal, Reynolds ought, therefore, to be credited in the same manner as Dickens as a major force in the shaping and expansion of the popular press. He was a crucial catalyst in the development of the sensation novels of the 1860s, and had an immediate impact upon the more familiar canonical writers of the period as they sought to re-write his work in order to both draw upon his popular successes, but also, as in the case of Dickens, to combat his politics. His success in outflanking Dickens (and as we have seen, Thackeray) in the periodicals market provides a strong argument for Reynolds as an innovator in the profession, a notion which sits uneasily alongside the more commonly reductive descriptions of him as a cheap plagiariser and shadow to the superior literary talents of the period as well as the supposedly more earnest radical voices. His innovations were born of re-appropriations and an ability to adapt and build upon the work of others and generate something which, for prolonged periods, proved to be more popular than his more 'respectable' counterparts.

If Dickens constituted a fundamental component of Reynolds's career, the opposite may also be claimed, and there is a validity to the notion that Dickens could at times be perceived as the *other* Reynolds. Paradoxically, both Dickens's and Reynolds's contradictory versions of each other contain within them some truths, even if they seem to exist at the extreme, hyperbolic edges of the reality. The intention of this thesis has not been to reconcile these contradictions, but simply to embrace each as reflective of the social, political and literary culture of the period. Examining both men in parallel has illustrated the similarities which lay concealed behind their bitter feuding, masked by their efforts to construct their

⁷ Catherine Waters, *Dickens and the Politics of Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 18-19.

rivalry. Examined in tandem, their careers are revealed as reflections of one another, rather than binary oppositions. Their rivalry thus serves to illustrate how the construction of authorial identity in the first age of mass culture throws into contradictory tension the author as a vehicle of political agency but also a commercial entity engaged in the practice of earning a living. Unpacking these constructions grants insight into the strategies developed to forge a literary and political identity in an increasingly saturated mass marketplace. The maintenance of such an identity clearly required, in some cases, a rival, whose position allowed for the better definition of one's own place in a vibrant, often bewildering field. Dickens and Reynolds recognised that the animosity they shared for one another could be cultivated in order to better define and circumscribe their own respective careers.

The importance of Reynolds to both Dickens and the period in general is, I argue, worthy of greater acknowledgement. Dickens, for example, has been described as 'culturally inclusive, politically radical, and commercially successful'.⁸ Reynolds's writing ought now to be more widely recognized as being similarly 'radical and respectable, popular and improving, didactic and entertaining, racy and high-minded, commercial and committed'.⁹ These hybrid qualities, which appear to 'defy conventional cultural, aesthetic and moral categorisation',¹⁰ have too-long been accredited to Dickens alone. What can be said of Dickens as a radical voice can equally be said of Reynolds. Dickens was a 'cultural bridge between, on the one hand, an older, eighteenth-century political conception of the People; and, on the other hand, a distinctly mid-nineteenth century, modern conception of a mass-market "populace" that had been created by the rise of the commercial newspaper press during Dickens's formative years as a

⁸ Juliet John, 'Reynolds' *Mysteries* and Popular Culture', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*. ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), p. 165.

⁹ Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 185.

¹⁰ Ibid; See also Rohan McWilliam who observed that Reynolds helped construct an audience that had "high" cultural aspirations but "low" desires at the same time'. He was, McWilliam claims, 'a leader at ease with the multitudinous forms of popular culture in Victorian Britain'. Rohan McWilliam, 'The Mysteries of G. W. M. Reynolds: Radicalism and Melodrama in Victorian Britain', in *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J. F. C. Harrison*, ed. by Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (Hampshire: Scolar, 1996), pp. 182-98 (p. 183; 182).

journalist and novelist'.¹¹ Reynolds too can be understood as acting as 'a crucially important bridge between the old radicalism and the new'.¹² His 'attacks on aristocratic privilege, bankers, clergy and economic exploitation formed a bridge between the old radicalism of Cobbett and Paine and the new socialism of Marx and Engels'.¹³ Both authors reflected 'the shifting sands of Victorian popular culture'.¹⁴ What a study of their careers in parallel has shown, is the degree to which authors of similar political and fictional affinity felt it necessary to compete within an expanding but still overcrowded literary marketplace. Both were immersed in a close-knit print culture and deemed it imperative to create a distance between their names, their writing, and ultimately their reputations and legacies in order to maximise their commercial viability and assume the role of the voice of the people. What is revealing, however, is that this required a dynamic to be forged with the very same rival they ostensibly sought distance from.

Both Dickens's and Reynolds's ability to produce popular fiction achieved a heterogeneity of readership which, in itself, is suggestive of 'the utility of the populist label, and the dangers of ascribing clear-cut geographic and socio-economic designations to the different strands of popular politics'.¹⁵ Dickens and Reynolds were able to successfully negotiate the vicissitudes of an emerging marketplace operating across class boundaries in a manner which provided a blueprint for aspiring authors. Indeed, although her novel *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) would garner greater success and play a significant role in the ushering in, and defining of, the sensation novel, it is Mary Elizabeth Braddon's lesser known debut novel, *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860), which exists as the earliest example of an author producing fiction according to the popular adage of the period, 'write character like Dickens and plot like

¹¹ Sally Ledger, 'From Queen Caroline to Lady Dedlock: Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32 (2004), 575-600, (p. 576).

¹² Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 66.

¹³ Louis James, *The Victorian Novel* (Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2006), p. 59.

¹⁴ Stephen Carver, 'The Man who wasn't Dickens: A Profile of G. W. M. Reynolds (1818-1879)', *Ainsworth and Friends: Essays on 19th Century Literature and the Gothic* (2013), para 5. <https://ainsworthandfriends.wordpress.com/2013/02/13/the-man-who-wasnt-dickens/> [accessed 28 January 2017].

¹⁵ Joyce, p. 66.

Reynolds'.¹⁶ Braddon's novel was produced according to a strategy devised by a Yorkshire printer named C. H. Thompson, as an amalgam, or composite of Dickens's and Reynolds's fiction.¹⁷ Thompson had 'read and admired Braddon's work' and 'what he sensed particularly, perhaps, was her burgeoning affinity with literary formula, for he encouraged her to write in more or less blatant imitation of the popular, plot-based fictions of Dickens and G. W. M. Reynolds'.¹⁸

While Braddon's success in synthesising elements of Dickens's and Reynolds's writing provides an interesting angle of further study, a more pertinent line of enquiry, relative to the approach and findings of this thesis, concerns the use of dual-author, or comparative studies. Just as Lillian Nayder's study *Unequal Partners* provides a new perspective on Dickens's relationship with Wilkie Collins and the former's allegedly controlling nature, exposing the extent of Dickens's efforts to manage and often elide the radical character of any writing which fell under his purview as the 'Conductor' of *Household Words*, this thesis has similarly utilized a dual-author study in order to reveal a novel interpretation on a key, yet under-examined factor in the development of Dickens's career. Examining Dickens through the lens of a lesser-considered rival has revealed the degree to which Dickens consciously participated in the construction of his dynamic with his contemporaries. Initially fuelled by a genuine animosity towards a figure he never forgave for his acts of plagiarism, as he perceived it, Dickens then developed with Reynolds a seemingly tacit reciprocity by which they installed and then denigrated the other as the enemy and in turn promoted themselves as the hero. Equally, examining Reynolds's career in tandem with Dickens's has contributed to the notion that the former's 'readership was wider than his "respectable" readers would admit' and, importantly, that 'his novels had an unacknowledged influence

¹⁶ Anne Humpherys, 'An Introduction to G. W. M. Reynolds's "Encyclopedia of Tales"', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 123-133 (p. 123).

¹⁷ Braddon was tasked with writing a novel which combined 'the humour of Dickens with the dramatic quality of G. W. M. Reynolds'. M. Sadleir, *Things Past* (London: Constable, 1944), p. 72.

¹⁸ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *The Trail of the Serpent*, ed. by Chris Willis (The Modern Library, 2003), p. xvi; For a further discussion on Braddon's first novel see her essay, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, 'My first novel: The Trail of the Serpent', *Idler Magazine*, 3 (1983), 19-30.

on Dickens and Thackeray'.¹⁹ The nature and scope of this influence contributes to the ongoing revision of Reynolds's work, helping to draw him out from the shadows of his cultural effacement by acknowledging his significance to both the literary culture of the mid-nineteenth century and his particular impact upon the period's most celebrated author.

Pursuing other rivalries that existed in the mid-nineteenth century would continue to raise important questions about the role of authorship and literature in Victorian Britain and its impact on the literary movements of the following decades. It is, I argue, especially important to continue to revise authors that have been largely or entirely effaced from cultural and literary histories, authors and fiction that operated at the margins, or entirely outside, of writing deemed canonical. As Reynolds's example demonstrates, these authors often had a direct impact upon the literature produced by more familiar writers. Important in its own right, fiction written by and for the working classes forms a crucial part of the context in which all fiction from the nineteenth century should be placed. Adopting a similar method as has been utilised in this study might, for example, further unpack Reynolds's relationship with fellow radicals Douglas Jerrold or Ernest Jones. Indeed, any existing accounts of Reynolds's rivalry with these figures are still largely couched in the use of Reynolds as a commercially mercenary counterpart.²⁰

Ostensibly, Reynolds's relationship with Thackeray contains many of the same trappings as his rivalry with Dickens. Souring over time, and leading to some caustic remarks concerning Thackeray's

¹⁹ Anne Humphrys and Louis James, 'Introduction', in *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, ed. by Anne Humphrys and Louis James (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 1-15 (p. 7).

²⁰ See, for example, Sally Ledger's account of Reynolds's quarrels with Ernest Jones. Jones was a fellow Chartist and the two shared a 'political commitment'. His periodical *Notes to the People* (1851-1852) was dwarfed by the sales Reynolds's properties generated. Jones's enterprise never really represented any kind of substantial commercial threat to Reynolds's readership, yet, according to Ledger, 'this did not dissuade Reynolds from driving his smaller rival out of business' through a series of unfounded accusations on the embezzlement of funds donated to Jones's publication. The allegations were ultimately proven groundless and Reynolds was duly punished by way of a libel suit. Nevertheless, the 'cash-flow problems during the court case' resulted in the closure of Jones's project. Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 167; See also Sally Ledger, 'Chartist Aesthetics in the Mid Nineteenth Century: Ernest Jones, a Novelist of the People', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 57 (2002), pp. 31-63; For work on Douglas Jerrold see Michael Slater's *Douglas Jerrold 1803-1857* (London: Duckworth, 2002).

snobbishness, the origins of this rivalry were not, however, rooted in Reynolds's opportunism. Rather, Thackeray had looked to Reynolds for a favour as an aspiring writer in Paris in the 1830s. It appears plausible that Reynolds's later objections to Thackeray may have served a similar commercial and political purpose as a convenient counterpoint to his own positioning in the market. Thackeray's silver-fork novels, such as *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) and *The Book of Snobs*, (serialised between 1846 and 1847), satirised the snobbishness 'in every rank of this mortal life',²¹ but particularly within the middle-classes in a similar manner to Dickens's deep disdain for, and mockery of, the veneer or varnish falsely lacquered onto society in order to create the illusion of respectability. Yet Reynolds constructed and projected an image of Thackeray himself as being 'as thorough a snob as ever breathed',²² much as he chastised Dickens for his supposed 'fawning' over the upper classes. A similar examination of Reynolds's rivalry with Thackeray would, therefore, shed further light on the construction of authorial identity in the mass market, especially for figures on the peripheries of mainstream culture, or who existed in staunch opposition to the dominant middle-class values of the period.

While I have elected a dual-author study in order to contribute a revisionary reading of Reynolds's legacy, and by extension Dickens's, the former's unacknowledged importance to the developments in fiction through the latter half of the 1840s clearly requires further study. The extent to which other writers sought to combat Reynolds's influence, or were influenced by his writing, is a worthwhile line of further investigation, be this for commercial purposes (as was the case for Mary Braddon's early fiction), or for political purposes. Moreover, the implications for studies of this kind are potentially more wide-ranging, with much to be gained from continued examinations of the professional links, associations, rivalries, and collaborations which comprised mid-nineteenth-century print culture. Such connections can flesh out the stories of critically neglected authors such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton and William Harrison Ainsworth, both of whom stand as examples of popular writers whose reputations

²¹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *A Legend of the Rhine. Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo. The Book of Snobs*, ed. by George Saintsbury (London: Oxford University Press, n. d), p. 261.

²² G. W. M. Reynolds, 'Mr Thackeray The Showman of the Four Georges', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 349 (1857), 5.

declined almost immediately after their deaths and who have become marginalised figures in histories of the period. Granted greater critical circumspection, both authors could potentially contribute to a deeper understanding of nineteenth-century print culture in their own right, but also by virtue of their associations or rivalries with the canonical and non-canonical writers who informed and influenced their work.²³

The significance of working-class fiction as a force which helped to shape the direction of the more canonical authors might extend, for example, from Reynolds to working-class authors such as Thomas Martin Wheeler, whose 1848 novel *Sunshine and Shadow* engages in a similar dynamic to that of Reynolds's re-appropriations of Dickens's fiction. Indeed, Chris Vanden Bossche supposes that while Wheeler's novel 'makes no explicit allusions to Disraeli's novels, *Sunshine and Shadow* does appear to echo—and radically revise—the national narratives of *Coningsby* and *Sybil*'.²⁴ Ian Haywood then claims, in turn, that Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850) can be regarded as an answer to *Sunshine and Shadow*.²⁵ It follows that the type of mutual dependency between Reynolds and Dickens may well have appeared in other rivalries, working across the class divide in a process of re-writing, revising, and re-appropriation. Again, Reynolds appears fundamental to any such understandings, since 'Wheeler wrote for Reynolds's *Political Instructor* and helped Ernest Jones set up the *People's Paper* in 1852'.²⁶ These types of collaborations, networks and rivalries beg further questioning as to the strategies by which literary and political identities intertwined, often cutting across class lines, and how both were

²³ Much like Reynolds's use of Robert Macaire in his fiction, many of Ainsworth's more successful works were predicated on his accounts of popular figures lifted from the pages of Newgate Novels and Penny Bloods. In 1834 he published *Rockwood*, whose leading character was the notorious Highwayman Dick Turpin, followed by *Jack Sheppard* in 1839. Bulwer-Lytton, meanwhile, was on close personal terms with Dickens, famously convincing him to revise the ending to *Great Expectations*. See John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Benediction Classics, 2011), pp. 709-710.

²⁴ Chris Vanden Bossche, *Reform Acts: Chartism, Social Agency, and the Victorian Novel, 1832-1867* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 133; For a discussion on Wheeler's Chartist novel see Margaret Anne Loose, 'Literary Form and Social Reform: The Politics of Chartist Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Iowa, 2006).

²⁵ Ian Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature: Print, Politics and the People, 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 155.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

constructed against that of a rival author.²⁷

The strategy of examining authors comparatively, through their rivalries or their partnerships, offers a unique method of analysing the condition of the literary marketplace through the first age of mass culture, within which the discernibility of a single quality, be it radicalism or pure commercialism remains difficult or impossible to obtain or distil, since one necessarily bled into the other. Subject to a marketplace increasingly governed by principles of industrial capitalism, yet simultaneously demanding a type of radicalism which opposes this same system of governance, paradox must be embraced in order to derive an accurate (if complex and fluid) understanding. These conditions effectively created a level playing field, a ‘commercial free-for-all’, and it follows that if an author like Dickens ‘destabilized the familiar idea of a binary opposition between high and low culture, and subverted established cultural hierarchies’,²⁸ then Reynolds was successfully engaged in the same practice. The marketplace was ruthless, expunging writers with faltering sales figures as well as those who strayed too far adrift of cultural reading habits and the political sentiment of the day. Given these complex conditions it is, I argue, problematic to celebrate a canonical author like Dickens for his ability to be both popular and radical, yet deride and marginalize a figure like Reynolds for a similar achievement without due critical circumspection. The contrasting lenses provided by comparative studies of authors seeking to cultivate and trade off of literary networks sheds light on the strategies by which authors guarded against a capricious marketplace, constructing rivalries as a means to bolster one’s literary and political identity. This in turn reveals the need to revise the more marginalized figures of the period as fundamental to an understanding of the literary and political culture of the Victorian era.

²⁷ Haywood understands the motivation behind Wheelers novel as an ‘answer [to] counter-revolutionary misrepresentations of Chartism’s motives and aspirations. Haywood, *The Revolution in Popular Literature*, p. 156.

²⁸ Juliet John, *Dickens and Mass Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 39.

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