AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis is comprised of two articles that examine sympathy, material culture, and ownership in Victorian literature. In the first article, I explore the figure of the heiress in the Victorian literary tradition, focusing on Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. George Eliot marked the heiress figure as unsympathetic, no matter her incarnation: whether the moralist of popular fiction or madwoman of gothic fiction, she is representative of excess and indulgence—ideas that society wanted to condemn in harmony with Georges Batailles's observation that a time of indulgence will be checked by a return to conservative bourgeois ideals. The heiress is made a vessel for these cultural anxieties, representing both the desire for and reaction against material possession within the larger male imperial imaginary landscape. The heiress is a way for the male protagonist to indulge in a decadent coming-of-age narrative before being scalded by his secular desires, abandoning this dream for bourgeois security. I employ the criticism of Batailles, Laura Brown, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, etc., in order to discover how the heiress is objectified and controlled, yet, in the greater narrative structure, finds ways to act outside of the male linguistic system as an agent for change—bringing about the collapse of the fake set

and props of the material world. In the second article, I examine Charles Dickens's attempts to control his printed materials and his belief that he could coalesce the expanding literate public into a faithful readership. However, Dickens was troubled by illicit reproductions of his work by the popular presses. In order to look at Dickens's concerns not only over losing control of his product, but also having the emotional essence of his characters and stories compromised, I turn to *Bleak House* which, critics have established, is in part a treatise against unlicensed copies. I argue that the character of Lady Dedlock serves as a representation of Dickens since she, like him, relies on the popular press in order to maintain her social standing, yet she also imagines that she is above them—though, in reality, much of her "private" life is already in public hands. I focus, specifically, on an unlicensed image of Lady Dedlock (that she is unaware of) that has been reproduced in a collection that anyone can purchase. In the end, Dickens allows his fiction to speak for him, forcing the reader to process the invasive horror of unlicensed copies through the emotion they feel for the actual, authentic woman.

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The Adorned and the Adored: Issues of Sympathy and Ownership in Victorian Literature

by

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I understand that my thesis will becomes part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes the release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Emily J. Schmuhl, Author

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The Adorned and the Adored: Issues of Sympathy and Ownership in Victorian Literature

Introduction

The purpose of my analysis in "The Adorned and the Adored: Issues of Sympathy and Ownership in Victorian Literature" is to examine texts by Charles Dickens (*Great Expectations* and *Bleak House*) and Charlotte Brontë (*Jane Eyre*) in order to grapple with the growth of capitalism and expansion of material and print culture during the Victorian era. In grappling with these changes, I also seek to explore the related issues of property and ownership rights, particularly those of wealthy women and authors, which converge and diverge in interesting ways. Under the common law doctrine of coverture, married women did not have property rights. Even young women and widows, who in some cases had a modicum of independence, had subordinate legal status. It took decades of starts and stops for the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 to pass and grant wives any semblance of material control. Authors likewise faced decades-long opposition as they fought to protect their ownership rights. Thomas Noon Talfourd tirelessly pursued copyright legislation during the first half of the nineteenth century, but struggled to consolidate domestic and international copyright laws. Despite domestic copyright reforms in 1842, authors were forced to contend with international piracy; America, in particular, would not pass international copyright laws until 1891. The century was comprised of related, persistent, and extensive legislative reforms—striking due to the amount as well as the changes that ensued.

Technological reproduction, therefore, is particularly crucial to my examination since it resulted in the omnipresence of the written word during the nineteenth century—from interminable legislation to the popular novel form. Novelists were able ride the wave of literacy to great success despite copyright issues; they had access to a readership composed of members of various social classes—notably an ever-expanding working-class readership that could purchase their works alongside the panoply of other marketable objects. Many notable novelists, such as Dickens and Brontë, frequently filled their chapters with "things," pondering on their significance or their pointlessness, positing if they were markers of domestic bliss or spiritual sickness; these imaginings transmitted certain values to readers, using certain characters or tropes to suggest to them how they should engage with the text. As Rachel Ablow explains, there was a "common Victorian claim that novel reading [constituted] a way to achieve the psychic, ethical, and affective benefits also commonly associated with sympathy [...] novels could 'influence' readers and so help them resist the depraved values of the marketplace" (1). The fight for property rights on the part of women and authors, and the intentions of the novel, circulate around this concept of sympathy—of encouraging the public to think, feel, and act in a certain way, for better or worse.

I expound on sympathy in the two chapters that compose this project: firstly, I am interested in how readers react to certain characters based on recognizable types; secondly, I am interested in how sympathy plays out between authors and readers. The first chapter, "In Search of Sympathy: Victorian Heiresses and the Imperial

Imagination," endeavors to situate the Victorian heiress figure, specifically *Great Expectations*' Miss Havisham and *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason Rochester, within imperial and material value systems—and to examine how she unexpectedly resists or subverts these systems and therefore warrants our attention and our sympathy. In my second chapter, "Illicit Depictions of Dedlock and Dickens: The Fight for Copyright and 'Sublime Effusion,'" I focus on how Dickens treasures the legitimate link he forges between his author-persona and his growing readership, and how that sense of legitimacy is violated by pirated copies of his novels. Illicit reproductions, I argue, deny Dickens control of his work, but also of his public. He views his works as a way to invite greater spiritual contemplation and interaction—despite the fact that they are also commodities. Thus Dickens is concerned with the reading public directing their sympathetic energies towards him (as the author), but also towards his characters/creations with the hope that they view them as "real" enough to warrant a deep emotional responsiveness and sense of loyalty.

Women/property and authors/texts remain in conversation in additional ways: in the first chapter, the question of the heiress's right to her wealth arises, with others (potential husbands, greedy kin) eager to claim it for themselves. Similarly, Dickens's desire, as described in the second chapter, to own and publish his works on his terms is challenged by others (the American popular press, Chancery). The potential interchangeability of these circumstances encouraged me to view Dickens as more sympathetic towards his fictional women of property than critics typically acknowledge. While I explore this relationship between Dickens and *Bleak House*'s

Lady Dedlock, I hope, in the future, to use personal property as way to connect Dickens to Miss Havisham as well. In particular, I am drawn to Deborah Wynne's description of how objects became "intimately bound up in an individual's life so that they function as integral parts of a person's identity" and that for Dickens, personally, his desk ornaments were so important to him "that he carefully bequeathed them in his will" (11). Perhaps, in moving beyond *Bleak House* as a means for exploring collective ownership through Lady Dedlock, Miss Havisham further provides a way for exploring personal ownership in a way that is not simply, to use Wynne's term, "perverse" (11), but tragic in its impossibility.

One of the chief difficulties of this project was navigating the cultural contradictions. Ultimately, there is ambiguity and incongruity in the way that Dickens, as well as Brontë, imagine materiality. They are troubled by the illusion of ownership, or "the tautology faced by all property owners: one cannot retain property *at the same time* as using the monetary value locked within it" (Wynne 12). By the end of my exploration of these three novels (*Great Expectations*, *Bleak House*, and *Jane Eyre*), there is distinct switch from the world of the tangibly material, of portable property, to liquid assets. While I do not delve into this too deeply, it certainly warrants further attention as it complicates, or supplements, the idea of the imagination and how we conceive of value—an idea which is also at the heart of both articles. The great manors in all three novels which contain carefully constructed worlds come to ruin in the end, proving how unstable or fictive these worlds are, challenging our notions of gender or class—social order in general—inviting dissonance and reflection.

In writing these articles, I have come to see and appreciate how imaginative cultural representations assist us in processing "the complex way in which people experience their relationships to others on a variety of psychological levels, some of which are governed by assumptions that are not subject to questions, assumptions in many cases, never rising to conscious articulation" (Bivona and Henkle 4). It is in this space of what is not explicitly articulated, but what is assumed or shown, that reveals the psychology of the culture; from that point, sympathy can provide access to the seemingly dangerous and distant Other. *Jane Eyre's* Rochester, for example, is permitted a lengthy and detailed explanation as to why he was forced to imprison his wife, Bertha, painting himself as a moralist and her as a monster; he is allowed to plead his case. Bertha, however, *as* a sexual and racial Other, is not allowed to speak her piece, therefore reinforcing cultural biases and imaginings. Yet twentieth- and twenty-first century readers and critics have given Bertha an outpouring of sympathy, perhaps because, as Roland Barthes describes in "The Death of the Author," they "[understand] each word in its duplicity, and...in addition, [hear] the very deafness of the characters speaking in front of [them]" (148).

To continue in a Barthesian mode, the writerly and readerly personas may be imaginary or fictive constructs, yet they are still extremely significant—particularly in regards to Victorian literature. The idea of being able to construct the culture and make it accessible through textual mediums to different classes of people, in the wake of expanding literacy, places nineteenth-century writers in a powerful position: they have the ability to invite or deny this sense of sympathy in their burgeoning

readership. There are those that resisted this construct, like Wilkie Collins, who insisted on carefully designed plots over any attempt at sympathy; but writers like Dickens, or Brontë, or Eliot, or even Collins, much to his chagrin, ultimately participate in the triangulated discursive relationship (author, text, reader) that allows us to "register the complications of ideology" (Bivona and Henkle 33). The reader, even before Barthes's observation, acts as an independent subject, imagining and conceiving the novel—as though apart from the author and the text. But, as Dan Bivona and Roger Henkle state, in relation to the period, "There can be no more compelling way to involve an audience in ideological construction than to foster the impression that it is thinking on its own as a group of free subjects," thus inscribing the reader into the ideology (33).

Dickens's and Brontë's narratives invite us to scrape away the gilded layers to reveal that the "rich scenes" are actually deceptive and false. We are directed away, at least for a time, from sympathizing with or even recognizing the human body (Miss Havisham, Bertha, Lady Dedlock) in favor of evaluating the worth of and rejecting the commodified objects. Yet in the end, they *do* show us the bodies: Miss Havisham's, withered and burned; Bertha's, corpulent and smashed; both Pip and Rochester's burns and injuries; Lady Dedlock's, prone and bedraggled. Our excesses, as readers, become emotional or sentimental instead of material; we finally move from the surface into sympathy. The lines are blurred between author and reader, object and subject, life and death—and most notably, the imaginary and the real. As these constructs collapse, we are able to see those representations, or figures, who have been

caught in liminal spaces. We have the opportunity, then, to discover the ways in which they resist and complicate, instead of remain complicit, to bounded or binary-like frameworks—frameworks that are products of cultural imaginings that can be upset by identifying sympathetic connections.

In part I hope, in undertaking this project, to further interest in heiresses as a figure, especially as they function in lesser-known literary works. In particular I think of Maria Abdy, Walter Besant, L.T. Meade, and others whose texts are rich with connections to the ideas I have aggregated. I also hope to encourage further communication between Dickens and his female characters that goes beyond the labels "angel of the house" or "fallen woman"—in other words, communication in the service of undermining established binaries. While this may not be in the "Death of the Author"-spirit, these women possess complexities and nurture concerns that warrant different modes of access in order to grant them full articulation.

Chapter One

In Search of Sympathy: Victorian Heiresses and the Imperial Imagination

Over the past few years, the heiress has emerged as an important figure to the understanding and criticism of Victorian literature. In her role as the romantic foil in the traditional marriage plot, the heiress stands at the intersection of erotic and economic anxieties of the period, both illuminated and complicated by the cultural context of the Woman Question. Critics such as Tim Dolin and Elsie B. Michie, whose respective works have been essential to renewing interest in the heiress figure, explore the heiress's tenuous hold on independence in a society threatened by moneyed women. Michie surmises this anxiety over women in possession of capital resulted from a conservative backlash against a cultural shift that "enabled the father to leave possessions to his descendents," meaning that daughters could inherit "in default of sons," opening up the possibility for a family's wealth to transfer from the heiress to her husband and his family ("Rich Woman, Poor Woman" 426). Exogamy threatened to supplant endogamy: while, in Austenian mode[1], the male heir is lauded for selecting a partner of modest means, the heiress, in the words of Jeremy Taylor, a cleric whose works were widely read during the period, "[is] to pleasure her own family rather than strangers"—or, in other words, is expected to preserve her family's wealth within her social class (389).

While correlations between the historical heiress and her fictional counterpart

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[1] See Michie's "Social Distinction in Jane Austen."

illuminate nineteenth-century pecuniary mentalities, the heiress's significance in literature expands far beyond this territory. In her treatise against romantic and sensation fiction, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," George Eliot pinpoints the heiress as the moral epicenter of lowbrow fiction, a figure who discourages sympathy, "the subtlest essence of culture," partly due to the rapacious materiality of her fantastical "life"—a life defined by weeping into "embroidered pocket handkerchiefs [and...fainting] on the very best upholstery" (139; 127-8). Yet Eliot herself is unable to resist the heiress's allure, incorporating the figure into her novels—as the heiress figure is likewise incorporated by innumerable other writers: *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction*, a detailed though not complete representation of the literature of the era, lists nearly fifty entries for *heiress*—from Sabine Baring-Gould to Anthony Trollope; from Dinah Murlock to Robert Louis Stevenson. Anonymous authors of the Victorian era frequently published stories with titles such as "The Heiress of Wellwood" or "Grace Barton, Heiress of Smithills Hall" in popular periodicals (Law 160; 68). These examples range from dilettante serials to juvenile novels to penny dreadfuls; yet, all told, the heiress remains forcibly unsympathetic as either the moralist of popular fiction or the madwoman of literary fiction.

As Eliot implies, the heiress remains morally suspect as she flits from guise to guise due to her consistent affiliation with material excess. Though there are numerous philosophical frameworks dedicated to materiality, Georges Bataille's interest in recursive social performance highlights a range of sordid activities he associates with the unproductive expenditure—or "activities...which have no end beyond

themselves"—of the upper-class: luxury, mourning, war, games, spectacles, the arts, and "perverse sexual activity" (169). In Bataille's vision, history moves through narrative-like cycles[2] of expenditure: a paganistic participation in these unproductive activities by the wealthy, followed by a period of censure and condemnation by the conservative bourgeois (i.e. the pagan/Christian binary) that course-corrects cultural prerogatives (175). If the excess is akin to a dramatic performance, the heiress becomes the figure upon whom transgression and indulgence are projected. She, much like an actress of the period, participates in the imaginative drama, where the male protagonist can "make or mar her according as she yields or resists to his will and pleasure" (qtd. in Powell 64). But as soon as something better comes along—i.e. the virtuous woman of modest means—she is discarded by her male love interest. The heiress, as we see from the plethora of genres and writers who deploy her, speaks to the Victorian ability/inability to socially, sexually, and even racially conceive of the Other. Therefore, I am interested in the heiress's crucial role as an actress in, or agent of, the Victorian masculine, material, and imperial imagination (hereafter imperial imagination): she serves as a means for the male to come of age through hedonistic excess, but the spectacle of imagination, or the desire to entertain materiality, is eventually undercut as fantasy—and the heiress is expunged and replaced by conservative, bourgeois stability. While many texts could serve my purposes, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* contain two of the

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[2] Though born at the *end* of the nineteenth century, this cyclical representation of history (in various contexts) had already been established by George Sand, Friedrich Engels, Friedrich Nietzsche, and many others.

most notorious and noteworthy heiress figures, Miss Havisham and Bertha Mason Rochester, and also contain two of the most imaginative male protagonists, Pip Pirrip and Edward Rochester.

In situating the heiress as a tableau for material and imperial concerns, I follow the example of Laura Brown, who succeeds in merging similar ideas in *Ends of Empire*: "[R]esistance [is] implied in using female difference as a link to more threatening categories of difference, such as the slave or the native. Through commodification or through difference women can disturb the coherence of mercantile capitalist ideology either way they come to it, in part because they are so essential to its self-representation" (21). By weaving together the two primary classifications of the Other, gender and race, within the imperial imagination, Brown demonstrates how the material-inundated woman operates as an ideological intersection. Though Brown is writing about early eighteenth-century literature, her description of the adorned female body as a symbol of imperial dominion that invites both admiration and ridicule, is relevant to nineteenth-century literary depictions of the heiress. If we consider imperialism and materialism the products of mercantile capitalism, in Brown's view, "Women wear the products of accumulation, and thus by metonymy they are made to bear responsibility for the system by which they are adorned. The activities and motives of male mercantilists and the systematic, bureaucratic, piratical, or mercenary dimensions of imperial expansion disappear behind the figure of the woman" (118). In the words of John Hobson, who also saw imperialism as a product of capitalism, the actual accumulation was of "quite clearly conceived pieces of

political power, personal prestige, and trading profits" (qtd. in Claeys 457). Hobson acknowledges that the entirety of the system was based on political and economic gain—even though he sounds as if he is implying imperialism has clear, excusable objectives—resulting in the displacement of these power-seeking energies onto the "straw man" of satisfying the cultural (female) demand for luxury items.

British writer William Hone wrote in 1833 that there comes a time, in post-enlightenment mode, "when earthly objects have ceased to terrify, [and as a result] men have conjured up phantoms for their mind's excitation," indicating a reliance on the monsters of the fantastical gothic as manifestations of cultural anxieties (343). Yet this rational thinking is obviously problematic since—specifically in the imperial conception of reality—the imaginary threat is associated with or transferred to the person of the Other. With regard to the heiress, the commodity-crammed domestic space in which she is installed becomes associated with the "threat" of the imperial Other. Objects are reconfigured with connotations of Otherness stronger than the difference between animate/inanimate: that of moral/immoral. Ironically, the imperial male cannot (will not) terminate the production of objects due to the dictates of mercantilism, but he engages in a fantasy of doing so, thus safely removing himself from the un-Christian realm of the Other, by morphing the heiress and all she represents into a monstrous personification of immoral energies and desires—a flesh-and-blood form that can be terminated.

This imaginative tendency is highly present in Pip, the narrator of *Great*

Expectations, who from the beginning is interested in associating the corporeal with the material:

> As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, “Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,” I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. (1)

While this could be read unremarkably as Pip “imagining his father to be male and his mother to be female,” along stereotypical lines, it is the connotations he assigns the “character and turn of the inscriptions” that is worth mentioning. He is engaging his childish imaginative faculties to turn his parents from stone into flesh. Reading Philip and Georgiana Pirrip in relation to the material representations in front of him accords Pip power over their narrative; he can control the story in his mind in a way he cannot in his troubled home life. But this shifts when Pip first encounters Miss Havisham. After blindly following Estella, Miss Havisham’s adopted daughter, through the dark passageways of Satis House, he enters the latter’s rooms and the materiality overwhelms him: gilded mirrors and ornate furniture of “forms and uses then quite unknown to [him]” (58). In retrospect, he is uncertain why he was drawn to the beautiful dressing-table draped in finery when he had no cue—no “fine lady sitting at it” to indicate its use (59). Miss Havisham is sitting *alongside* the table in an armchair, her elbow resting on it—as though claiming it as her own—but she makes no use of its accoutrements, such as its mirrors, leaving Pip to presume its purpose (59). His odd, anxious confession that the usefulness of the objects eluded him is the irony of

"Enough" House: it is the first time Pip has encountered material excess where the functionality of the household objects is unclear, if not fully absent. Instead, it is pure possession that indicates power to Pip; the notion takes hold of him, and his perusal of the aged heiress's person, despite his youth and her deterioration, suggests a new, highly-charged desire to possess. He moves through his description of the lady, leaving out no detail: "She was dressed in rich materials,—satins, and lace, and silks,—all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white" (59). Despite her whiteness of hair, a first clue of something uncanny, all Pip is able to see is the initial opulence of the scene.

A distinct sexual tension pervades the moment: Pip, like a young suitor, has come to Miss Havisham's chambers to be dazzled by the wealth of the "bride-to-be." Physical tension has been acknowledged by critics like Richard Witt, who specifically focuses on the suggestive cut of Miss Havisham's gown and how "the mention of jewels 'on' (not 'at') [Miss Havisham's] neck not only rules out a high collar but suggests a dress in shallow décolletage, an impression strengthened by the phrase 'lace for her bosom,' more appropriate to a low-cut bodice than to the throat..." (152). But to imagine Pip's gaze targeting Miss Havisham's body and gleaning some kind of prepubescent sexual charge is misguided: he relates those first physical details, but does not actually describe much of Miss Havisham's appearance outside of her material surroundings. Her skeletal, sunken shape is revealed surprisingly slowly, as Pip takes the time to describe the clutter of objects and the details of the wedding

dress. We, like Pip, do not see the woman lost between the folds right away. He marks human absence, such as the lack of a lady sitting in place in front of the dressing table, before he marks presence: the woman sitting off to the side.

However, Miss Havisham exhibits a sense of control over her material surroundings that often goes unacknowledged. As Laura Brown suggests, the conflation of materialism and imperialism in the female body can signify resistance by creating “new forms of articulation” (102), which is especially pertinent for Miss Havisham since she continues to have no linguistic, or narrative, control. Susan Walsh points out that Miss Havisham “refuses to sponsor her male relatives [and so keeps] her financial capital from circulating within the proper channels of investment and trade, thus rendering [her family’s fortune and property] economically barren” (717). Miss Havisham recognizes that she, as the heiress to her family fortune, can act as an agent: she does not feel compelled to attempt to marry again; she does not feel compelled to provide for her greedy relatives, whom she pictures gathered around her corpse laid out on the dining table, eager to feast on her fortunes (88, 93). Besides controlling her liquid assets, Miss Havisham’s most startling decision is to remain clothed in her bridal wear, sitting in the midst of her scattered and lavish trousseau and her elaborate wedding feast, indefinitely. Rumors of this decision lead almost everyone in the novel to view her as insane: who would stand idly by while fine food rots, fine furniture gathers dust, and fine dresses fade? Who would be so wasteful? Yet Miss Havisham stands against wastefulness. She is exercising her power in the service of denial and decay, refusing to be productive in the way that society expects,

allowing nature to reclaim all of her belongings—as well as her body. Even as Pip convinces her near the end of the novel to part with some of her liquid assets in the name of her family, she persists in her vow to let the excess of her life representing her failure at marriage, motherhood, and other expected female roles wear away to nothing.

Miss Havisham's most significant act of material control is certainly more aggressive, as she prepares Estella to exact vengeance on mankind through her coldness and beauty. With Pip as her scapegoat, Miss Havisham proves conscious of all his wide-eyed reactions to her material fortune as she dangles her jewels in front of him, "[directing his] attention to Estella's beauty, [making him] notice it the more by trying her jewels on Estella's breast and hair" (93). Such acts conflate in his mind material privilege and the female body, making him yearn to possess both. When Estella is discharged into society, she enacts this role to the same effect, alluring and rejecting suitors to the pleasure of her adoptive mother.

Caught up in the imperialist dream of excess, the jewels obscuring and merging with Estella's form, Pip again fills the absence with his own imaginings—but this time the content is frightening and supernatural. When a stranger slips him "two fat sweltering one-pound notes" they become "a nightmare to me, many and many a night and day." His sleep that night is disturbed with violent thoughts, and when he attempts to "[coax] himself to sleep by thinking of Miss Havisham's" he imagines a convict breaking into his room to murder him and he screams himself awake (82). According to the dictates of his conscience, Pip believes the money does not belong to

him, but that concern blends with his attempt to idealize Satis House—his idea that that *should* belong to him—culminating in a horrific nightmare which casts aspersions on the latter as much as the former. Much later, after receiving his good fortune, Pip goes to bed thinking of Estella and “miserably dreamed that my expectations were all cancelled, and that I had to give my hand in marriage to Herbert’s Clara, *or* play Hamlet to Miss Havisham’s Ghost, before twenty thousand people, without knowing twenty words of it” (273, my italics). Besides calling attention to the way Pip’s relationship with Miss Havisham remains in the realm of fiction, as though they are characters sharing the stage, it also confirms her as an actress in his imaginary production who, as the ghost, is cast as the instigator of tragedy—the catalyst that pushes the protagonist toward madness and self-destruction. Estella’s beauty and decadence are deeply stimulating to Pip, yet his conscious imaginings of possessing her fall away in his dreams where he has the choice to act alongside Miss Havisham, a continuation of his current, unhappy state, or to give way to the archetypal marriage plot and find happiness with a simple, moral girl of no means—in this case, played by Clara, Herbert Pocket’s fiancée. It is presented as an either-or situation, a Bataille-like shift from spectacle to sobriety, and foreshadows his eventual renunciation of his privilege and his decision to return home and marry Biddy, the poor schoolmistress (though he is too late).

Fittingly, the person who is able to offer Pip coherent narrative control of Miss Havisham is Herbert, one of Miss Havisham’s slighted relatives. Their conversation is framed by Herbert schooling Pip on correct table manners. As Herbert relates the tale,

he is constantly breaking his narrative to inform Pip, for example, that "society as a body does not expect one to be so strictly conscientious in emptying one's glass, as to turn it bottom upwards with the rim on one's nose" (189). Herbert is insisting, under the heading of social decorum, that Pip exercise control over the superflux of strange dinnerware in front of him—unlike Miss Havisham, who, in Pip's imagination, is overwhelmed by an excess of luxurious material possessions without making them "useful." Pip learns to control the objects in front of him, thus the threat is disarmed—both that of his ghostly heiress and the upper classes. As soon as Pip learns to make use of the materials in front of him, they become unremarkable. He becomes conscious of "the great terror of [his] illusion" as he processes the mournfulness of Miss Havisham's aged manor, and he is compelled to go and check on the heiress of the house (426). He sees her sitting near the fire, but chooses not to enter the room; the moment he withdraws, "a great flaming light [springs] up," catching Miss Havisham's dress, and she runs toward him, crying out amidst the blaze (426). Pip describes the violent collision of their bodies:

> I had a double-caped great-coat on, and over my arm another thick coat. That I got them off, closed with her, threw her down, and got them over her; that I dragged the great cloth from the table for the same purpose, and with it dragged down the heap of rottenness in the midst, and all the ugly things that sheltered there; that we were on the ground struggling like desperate enemies, and that the closer I covered her, the more wildly she shrieked and tried to free herself,—that this occurred I knew through the result, but not through anything I felt, or thought, or knew I did. I knew nothing until I knew that we were on the floor by the great table, and that patches of tinder yet alight were floating in the smoky air, which, a moment ago, had been her faded bridal dress [...] I still held her forcibly down with all my strength, like a prisoner who might escape; and I doubt if I even knew who she was, or why we had struggled, or that she had been in flames, or that the flames were out,

> until I saw the patches of tinder that had been her garments no longer alight but falling in a black shower around us. (426-7)

In this, one of the most powerful and disturbing passages of the entire novel, Pip finally comes into direct physical contact with Miss Havisham. Sara Thornton reads the scene as Pip struggling with Miss Havisham in a sexual embrace "which suggests a fusion of murder and fornication rather than a saving of life" (108). Susan Walsh points out there are clear "overtones of assault and rape" (718). Troublingly Pip has mastered the material in this scene, making use of his coats to try and put out the flames, while Miss Havisham's faded finery is useless in protecting her; it goes up in flames until it is mere "patches of tinder...falling in a black shower around us," as though she is now fully exposed to him. Pip's violence can be read as him stifling at last his antagonist, the human representative of all his misguided material desires—yet this violence is not initiated until he outright turns away from her room, which once held him spellbound. Pip's hands are badly burned following the encounter: the wounds serve as marks of shame upon him for entertaining such rich fantasies.

The heiress figure functions similarly in *Jane Eyre*, though we more clearly see the consequence of entertaining imperial imaginings long past youth and into adulthood through Mr. Rochester—who will pay more dearly than Pip for his transgressions. As Miss Havisham enacts her revenge by proxy (Estella) while allowing herself to be swallowed up in material rot, stagnancy and action-by-proxy also characterizes the heiress in *Jane Eyre*. However, in this context, Bertha, the heiress figure, "performs" Jane's work for her by physically acting out against the materialistic grandiosity of both Thornfield and its master, Rochester. Like Miss

Havisham, Bertha represents a former indulgence in materiality and excess which, according to Rochester, the chief author of her narrative, drives her to madness[3]. As punishment for her sins (which is how Brontë viewed it[4]) Bertha is locked in the attic, but throughout the novel attempts to obliterate the Rochesterian fantasy of imperialistic male entitlement, which eventually reveals the truth of the situation to Jane.

In a footnote to her article "Sobriety and Propriety," Deborah Anna Logan expresses a common critique of Rochester—that he is "duplicitous and resists sexual accountability"—in relation to Adele, his ward, who is possibly his illegitimate daughter by his former French mistress, Celine Varens (147). This critique, of course, is leveled at him due to his revulsion over Bertha's moral questionability, expressing the traditional double-standard regarding fidelity and chastity. Yet Logan follows up her observation with an interesting question: "[Adele's] presence at Thornfield Hall is

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[3] Perhaps the chief connective tissue between Miss Havisham and Bertha. Their respective failures to assimilate into the marriage economy coupled with accusations or implications or immoral behavior fit them for punishment: descent into madness and isolation.

[4] To quote Charlotte Brontë from a letter to William Smith Williams in which she addresses critical reaction to Bertha's character in *Jane Eyre*: "[The] character is shocking, but I know that it is but too natural. There is a phase of insanity which may be called moral madness, in which that which is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind and a fiend-nature replaces it. The sole aim and desire of the being thus possessed is to exasperate, to molest, to destroy...The aspect in such cases, assimilates with the disposition; all seems demonized. It is true that profound pity ought to be the only sentiment elicited by the view of such degradation, and equally true is it that I have not sufficiently dwelt on that feeling; I have erred in making horror too predominant. Mrs. Rochester indeed lived a sinful life before she was insane..." (*The Letters of Charlotte Brontë,* 3).

curious: Why does he not send her away to school? Similarly, why not eliminate Bertha's threatening presence by sending her away?" (147). Logan, in a different context, points to Rochester's "seraglio-on-the-moors," or his proclivity for surrounding himself with women, taking census of how "Bertha is in the attic, Adele is in the nursery, Jane and Blanche Ingram are in the parlor..." (154). The term *seraglio* most notably surfaces in the text in relation to Jane and Rochester's sexually charged courtship:

> He chuckled; he rubbed his hands, "Oh it is rich to see and hear her!" he exclaimed. . . . I would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk's whole seraglio—gazelle-eyes, houri forms, and all!"
>
> The Eastern allusion bit me again. "I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio," I said; "so don't consider me an equivalent for one. If you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul, without delay, and lay out in extensive slave-purchases some of that spare cash. . . ."
>
> "And what will you do, Janet, while I am bargaining for so many tons of flesh and such an assortment of black eyes?" (269)

Rochester, looking to ruffle Jane in order to perpetuate their playful combativeness, imagines himself in an exotic market bargaining for flesh and dark eyes, placing the slave-woman on par with commodities; and yet this is less an oriental fantasy than it is a reality: it is semantically revelatory regarding his character and intentions. He already has more than he bargained for—as a would-be bigamist—in terms of excess eyes and flesh: often Blanche Ingram's dark eyes, dark hair, and "dark as a Spaniard" complexion are mentioned, as well as her body, "molded like a Dian": tall and fleshy (173; 172). Her anatomical double is certainly Bertha, who is described as also tall and ample, "bloated features," dark eyes, and "a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane" (293). Elsie B. Michie notes that "the fat body" is equated with materiality

when it comes to the heiress; she quotes Joseph Litvak, who describes how "heavy bodies constitute both an affront to the imperative of 'self-discipline' and an obstacle in the way of the smooth course of the marriage plot" (*The Vulgar Question* 61). The body, therefore, is conflated with material excess expressly in terms of the heiress who stands in the way of the love-match, who is more delicate and angelic in build and demeanor. And though Jane is clearly the fragile opposite of Bertha or Blanche, as she becomes more content and eager to be "nearer to Mr. Rochester's presence," she describes herself as having "more colour and more flesh, more life, more vivacity, because I had brighter hopes and keener enjoyments" (158; 157). Rochester may insist—in a pseudo-moral fashion—that he is looking for the "antipodes of the Creole" (311) in his mistresses, and, eventually, in a wife—thus the counter, in every aspect, to his "exotic" and well-endowed (physically and monetarily) Bertha—yet he is eager to act out further imperial fantasies with Blanche, but also with Jane and even Adele, where the female body is controlled, and even physically altered, through material adornment—a fetishization of the bedecked woman in an attempt to ultimately assert male financial superiority.

Women, then, serve as signs of Rochester's class standing, as representative objects of his wealth. This is illustrated as Rochester and his dinner party guests play a game of charades, silently observed by Jane. As Bataille delineates, games and spectacles are integral to material expression, and Rochester takes it further by elaborately dressing up a marriage ceremony and Bible stories as though mocking the two things, according to the conservative perspective, that he does not have due to his

election to marry for money: a decent marriage and morality. His vision of both are deluded, as portrayed through the second *tableau vivant* when Blanche advances "attired in oriental fashion: a crimson scarf tied sash-like round the waist: an embroidered handkerchief knotted about her temples; her beautifully molded arms bare, one of them upraised in the act of supporting a pitcher, poised gracefully on her head," the very image of an "Israelitish princess." Rochester approaches and "from the bosom of his robe he...produced a casket, opened it and showed magnificent bracelets and earrings; she acted astonishment and admiration; kneeling, he laid the treasure at her feet...the stranger fastened the bracelets on her arms and the rings in her ears" (183). Jane surmises they are reenacting the Biblical tale of Rebecca and Eliezar, when the servant comes to claim her as Isaac's bride. The tale, as depicted by Rochester and Blanche, highlights the attempt to claim or control women by ornamenting them; it is, by nature, a *charade*: marriage is alluded to only through dumb show and decadence. Like Pip, Rochester's grandiose imagination ends up rendering him speechless before an audience with the equally silent heiress in full and spectacular display at his side.

Rochester has become complacent in his imaginary world, allowing it to once more seep into his reality after he and Jane decide to marry. He determines this marriage will necessitate pouring jewels into her lap, "for every privilege, every attention shall be yours that I would accord a peer's daughter, if about to marry her" (258-9). In this, he grants Jane heiress status—as though she was of his class, the wealthy daughter of one of his "equals"—and imagines he will "attire [her] in satin and lace, and she shall have roses in her hair; and I will cover the head I love best with

a priceless veil"; he further declares, "I will myself put the diamond chain around your neck, and the circlet on your forehead,—which it will become: for nature, at least, has stamped her patent of nobility on this brow, Jane; and I will clasp the bracelets on these fine wrists, and load these fairy-like fingers with rings" (259). As Brown, attending to a passage from *Gulliver's Travels*, describes, "there is no woman left [...] The female body is displaced by the materials with which it is adorned" (177). Indeed, the imagery is suffocating: Jane is weighed down with fineries, including chain-like necklaces and rings "clasped" around her by Rochester as though she is his slave. Additionally, in his depiction, she is also veiled: unseen, faceless—relegated to the status of a beautiful object that he owns and can display to visitors come to Thornfield.

There is a curious moment, rich with multifarious connotations, in which Jane decides to create a portrait of herself and pencil an image of Blanche on an ivory tablet in order to remind herself of both her class status and her lack of physical beauty—all as a means to combat her romantic feelings for Rochester. In her depiction of Blanche, she "omit[s] neither diamond ring nor gold bracelet; portray[s] faithfully the attire, aerial lace and glistening satin, graceful scarf and golden rose...[of] 'Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank'" (161). Our attention is drawn, again, to the weighed down Blanche—but this is Jane's creation: how she constructs, literally, a woman of substance. From Rochester's narrative, we know that he, like Pip, was dazzled by the excess and glamour of Bertha when he first met her in the West Indies, the heiress to a wealthy merchant. The first thing hears about her—her narrative as created by outsiders—is that she is known as "the boast of Spanish Town for her beauty" (305);

this parallels Jane listening to Mrs. Fairfax gossip about Blanche and her inability to focus on much more than her lavish appearance. The reactions of both Jane and Rochester are colored by these verbal descriptors, predisposing them to believe what they see—to believe in the material representations in front of them.

Rochester reacts strongly, feeling “stimulated: [his] senses...excited” (305); he describes how he “went through rich scenes!” (292) which alludes to both the opulence that surrounded him and the performative nature of his courtship. When these “scenes”—or charades—do not play out as he imagined, he feels angry and “cheated.” Brown explains:

> [The] trope of dressing naturalizes the enterprise of mercantile capitalism, so that all of nature seems to cooperate in decorating the female figure, and the notion of an acquisitive agent whose motive is self-interest and whose aim is accumulation is deferred, repressed, or deflected into an attack on female vanity or even female character. (178)

Though Brown well articulates something akin to Rochester’s indulgence and aversion as it relates to Bertha’s exorbitant dress and appearance, I am more interested in her phrase “all of nature...cooperates in decorating the female figure.” Except in Rochester’s memories, Bertha exists in the present as the antithesis of a well-adorned, well-groomed Blanche—and even in contrast to Jane’s physical and material condition (prior to the revelation of her predecessor’s existence). The Bertha we are presented with is a “beast...seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing” (293). As mentioned earlier, she has long dark hair that hides “its head and face” (293). Her primal nature comes into conflict with adornment or apparel, as Jane appears surprised that this scampering

figure (who no longer qualifies, in her mind, as a "she") should be covered. Similarly, Bertha's prison in the third story of the manor is hidden behind walls of august tapestries: she is trapped within these folds of material; and it is a terrifyingly unsettling, unnatural "scene."

Nevertheless, Bertha exhibits surprising control, breaking out of the cloth prison intermittently and marshaling an actual, natural force: fire. She slips into Rochester's room and sets his bed ablaze while he sleeps. Jane saves him, and the image obviously connotes the Rochesters' failed marriage; perhaps less obvious is association between the material and the sexual and Bertha's impulse to destroy her captor. Rochester has stripped her of her former wealth both literally and figuratively. Thus it becomes Bertha's objective to destroy symbols not just of Rochester's infidelity, but of his material indulgences. Jane may banter with him and protest his aim to adorn her in finery, but Bertha is the one who takes Jane's wedding veil from her elaborate trousseau and tears it apart in protest. And, as the novel's climactic act, after Jane has run away, Bertha burns down Thornfield, starting with the tapestries that hang outside of her room. In her final moments, she climbs to the roof of the house, standing and yelling unintelligibly before jumping to her death (428).

Jane observes and bemoans the waste, and an old butler, who relates the story to her, describes it as "a dreadful calamity! such an immense quantity of valuable property destroyed: hardly any of the furniture could be saved" (426). Our focus is turned to all the valuables that Rochester lost as a result of Bertha's actions, including his loss of sight and one of his hands—much like Pip, who also receives damage to his

hands for trying to grab hold of a material fantasy. Describing the depiction of Africans in eighteenth century travel narratives, Brown explains that "the point at which Africans briefly acquire human status—albeit of a negative sort—occurs in their relationship to...vast supplies of gold with which they are surrounded. They are considered fools for not knowing its worth; and fools are considered human" (163). In Rochester's case, his blindness—his inability to see any longer the accumulation or representations of his wealth—results in penance: he seems sad and foolish and broken, therefore he is worthy, now, of Jane's redemptive love. Bertha, however, is denied this human status: even though she is an antagonist, her antagonism is fueled by violent rage against not only the man who has trapped her, but the physical trappings which represent both Rochester's claim of her and the precariousness of her personal wealth. *Jane Eyre* ends on a happily-ever-after note, with Jane and Rochester safe in middle-class bliss at Ferndean. However, Bertha can be credited with purging the sick system by taking control of the material excesses and imperial fantasies of Thornfield in a way that Rochester would not, and Jane could not.

The heiress is met with death when she makes subversive or destructive use of her materials. Yet in acting out against her material surroundings—in *acting* contrary to her assigned role as the materialistic and immoral antagonist in the male imperial imagination—she undermines language, which, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (as well as other feminist critics) insist, is a masculine system[5]. By her unwillingness to

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[5] See the opening of "The Queen's Looking Glass: Female Creativity, Male Images of Women, and the Metaphor of Literary Paternity" in *The Madwoman in the Attic* for an exposition on the penile "pen" and the patriarchal theory of literature.

participate in a productive capitalistic system, allowing her wealth to decay, Miss Havisham maintains control that others would deny her as they shape and color her narrative. Besides the obvious example of Herbert, Pip also, by virtue of his visions and nightmares, creates and articulates a Miss Havisham based on fantasy and spectacle. Rochester does much the same, insisting on Bertha as a spoiled (both in monetary and moral terms), wild "beast" in his lengthy recollection of his married life to Jane, while leading a life himself of material indulgence conflated with sexual profligacy; while Jane runs away, expressing her pains (verbally—rendered in text), Bertha acts to burn down Rochester's *seraglio*—her prison. Jane's narration characterizes Bertha as having gone even beyond speech, making "snarling, canine noise[s]" (210) and emitting chilling groans; though Bertha's primal return arguably intensifies her monstrosity or moral madness[6], it also illuminates her rejection of language, which can be used to deceive and control. Rochester's narrative cannot contain her, and after many attempts to destroy the material representations of his wrongs (their marriage bed; Jane's wedding veil), she succeeds in demolishing all of Thornfield, thus finding an elusive alternative mode of articulation.

On the other hand, this aversion toward materiality is a result of the culture trying to course correct—moving, as Bataille suggests, into a phase of bourgeois repression. Derogatory language is therefore leveled at the heiress in an attempt to subject her to laws and consequences; she a recipient of wealth through wills, contracts, laws, and other documents that in words spell out the terms of her

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[6] See footnote on page 11.

inheritance—she is bound by language. As Kathleen A. Washington states, Rochester's alliance with Bertha is a quintessential "socioeconomic marriage contract" that has been "arranged by their fathers for dynastic and economic reasons" (31). Despite her initial entitlement to her father's wealth, written language binds Bertha to Rochester through the designs of their fathers. Likewise, Miss Havisham discovers her faithless fiancé, Compeyson, has abandoned her by letter. Invoking a sense of claustrophobia and paranoia, even the seemingly impervious, emotionless Estella elaborates on how text is used to control: "They watch you, misrepresent you, write letters about you (anonymous sometimes), and you are the torment and the occupation of their lives. You can scarcely realize to yourself the hatred those people feel for you" (283). In Pip's Shakespearean dream, one of the greatest horrors is his loss of the ability to speak—to be rendered mute in the face of thousands of spectators. And yet the heiresses of these novels remain stage decorations as the words of Pip and Rochester—and even Jane—circle around and incriminate them. And when they become tired of the company of the heiresses, the set conveniently burns down and they rise from the ashes as new, humble, moral men.

On a larger scale, to return to Eliot, the heiress remains misunderstood as she appears to contradict herself across literature, both highbrow and lowbrow, as both subject/object; controller/controlled; actress/acted upon; heroine/villainess. Yet the one quality Eliot denies her, "sympathy," is accessible by parsing her paradoxical role as various texts quibble to define her. Eliot's narrator in *Daniel Deronda* confirms this, as the heiress is nothing but a series of opposites from start to finish:

> Heiresses vary, and persons interested in one of them beforehand are prepared to find that she is too yellow or too red, tall and toppling or short and square, violent and capricious or moony and insipid; but in every case it is taken for granted that she will consider herself an appendage to her fortune, and marry where others think her fortune ought to go. (196-7)

Yet the only way for the heiress to transcend these binaries is to be, by nature, none of those things—absence instead of presence. The heiress becomes an extension of her sought-after fortune (Miss Havisham) or a manifestation of the interior conflicts and concerns of the narrator (Bertha)—a metaphorical idea to overcome. And she is overcome: both Pip and Rochester experience a baptism by fire where their materialist desires result in physical wounds—reminiscent of flagellant Christian penance—but these desires also conveniently as well as literally go up in smoke (both in the destruction of Thornfield and Satis House—and the termination of the heiresses). But in the wake of this destructive, dehumanizing process, the heiress does not go gently into the good night: she initiates the collapse of the system long before the male protagonists awaken from their imperial dreams. As a literary figure, she might be expected to play a variety of roles, but she is more than the passive, vain creature weeping into her embroidered handkerchief or the raging, voiceless temptress: she is an indispensable catalyst for social upheaval.

Chapter Two

Illicit Depictions in Dedlock and Dickens: The Fight for Copyright and "Sublime Effusion"

Charles Dickens was a master self-promoter. He took pleasure in cultivating his readers' affection for him (*The Selected Letters* viii). Moreover, Dickens intuitively understood the nature of his relationship to the public: he recognized that his successes were reliant, in part, on his aggressive salesmanship and strict maintenance of his public image as he attempted to negotiate a legitimate market and cultural space for popular art. Therefore, most of what Dickens wrote was intended to be seen, as the rest he was quick to burn[1] for fear of it being used to taint the brand he had built—this, of course, included burning letters from his mistress, Ellen Ternan. To understand how many strings Dickens was pulling in order to control his image, one has only to revisit the infamous "Violated Letter" incident: after declaring his intentions to divorce his wife, Catherine, amidst (legitimate) rumors of his infidelity, Dickens wrote a letter to his readings manager, Arthur Smith. The letter begins: "My dear Arthur,—You have not only my full permission to show this, but I beg you to show, to any one who wishes to do me right, or to any one who may have been misled into doing me wrong" (qtd. in Slater 373). A detailed account of the situation follows.

[1] In a letter to Samuel Hole dated December 20, 1864, Dickens wrote: "A year or two ago, shocked by the misuse of the 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 Selected Letters* 388).

Naturally, the text was passed around, yet Dickens acted “shocked and distressed” over this infringement on his privacy (Waters 10). Critics have come to the consensus that Dickens had crafted a situation in which he could regain public sympathy by writing a series of pieces in his defense (and to censure the use of this “private” document) which appeared in his own publication, *Household Words*, and many other newspapers. In order for him to create the “Dickens Industry” that he might, in his words, “lay the foundation of an endurable retrospect” (qtd. in John 76) he had to make a show of controlling the output of his printed materials: anything that could be replicated by other presses. He channeled this energy into tirelessly fighting for copyright laws by insisting on the legitimacy of his own, authorized reproductions

Dickens deeply desired to marry the “affectionate regard of my fellow men” with “heaps and mines of gold” (*The Speeches of Charles Dickens* 36)—in other words, a deeper human connection and abundant success from selling his works. As he further explains, “[t]he two things are not incompatible. They cannot be, for nothing good is incompatible with justice” (36). This attitude frustrated his relationship with the commodification of texts; it was not quite as clear to others that he should have his cake and eat it too, so to speak. The aforementioned excerpt is drawn from a speech Dickens gave in Boston addressing copyright issues, and the sense of justice he mentions refers to the copying of his novels without permission—which, of course, was an invasion of privacy more heinous to Dickens than the prying eyes of the society pages.

However, he was part of a new unprecedented age of technological

reproduction. Walter Benjamin confirms this: "[T]he work of art has always been reproducible" in some fashion, but massive-scale technological reproduction would become the norm by 1900 ("The Work of Art" 252-3). In relation to text, specifically, Ian P. Watt explains that even though eighteenth-century observers claimed "their age was one of remarkable and increasing popular interest in reading," movements for mass-literacy, especially with the lower-classes in mind, exploded in the nineteenth-century (35)—leading to the mass-production of text (licensed or unlicensed) in order to keep up with demand. Anthony Trollope shrewdly writes in his obituary of Dickens:

> In England [Dickens's] novels are found in every house in which books are kept; but in America his circulation is much more extended than it is in England, because the houses in which books exist are much more numerous. I remember another novelist saying to me of Dickens,—my friend and his friend, Charles Lever,—that Dickens knew 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. Consequently the sale of his books has been hitherto so far from ephemeral,—their circulation has been so different from that which is expected from ordinary novels,—that it has resembled in its nature the sales of legs of mutton or of loaves of bread. (371-2)

While some of his cultural impact was due to timing, Dickens certainly consciously provided the lower classes with cheap serial fiction in order to take advantage of growing literacy rates. As Sarah Winter suggests, the Dickens celebrity juggernaut was due in part to the "multiplicity of early readers [beginning] to carry around his novels' words inside their heads" (86). His works became so "ephemeral" that "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" or "God bless Us, Every One!" was a code that anyone could gain access to for only a few pennies; his works became, therefore,

in Trollope's view, as common as "legs of mutton or loaves of bread" in English-speaking homes. This was a savvy, contemporary understanding on Trollope's part of the way texts had evolved into commodities (and, as Dickens would hope, even necessities) in the wake of technological reproduction.

Of course, there were disadvantages to mass technological reproduction as much as there were advantages. While Dickens was the unabashed master of disseminating his own texts—selling himself, his novels, and his legacy with remarkable flair—he spent his entire authorial life fighting against unauthorized copies of his work; if we examine the rare and questionable documentation of sales figures that managed to survive, Dickens's readership appears much larger than his personal profits suggest (Patten, *Charles Dickens and his Publishers* 234-5). Robert L. Patten describes Dickens's sensitivity over receiving credit early in his career, concluding the "Preface to the First Series" of *Sketches by Boz* "with repetitive iterations of *his* authorship" (*Charles Dickens and 'Boz'* 75). Dickens did not want his work irrevocably merged with that of artist George Cruikshank, who did the cuts for the compilation. But Dickens soon experienced greater problems in the form of copyright laws: mass culture worked against rather than with him. He "wast[ed] many hundreds of pounds pursuing vain [Chancery] suits against a group of publishers and printers who had pirated *A Christmas Carol*" (Hancher 813). The unlicensed copies were void of what Benjamin calls an art object's *aura*: but it is not so much the authenticity that is compromised in this case, but the "authority of the object" as the "historical testimony is affected" (254). Dickens is not troubled by a mass existence

replacing a “unique” existence, as in Benjamin’s model (254), but the idea that his texts can be produced or altered, and “actualized” in the hands of the reader despite his (the author’s) relative absence from the process. While the *Christmas Carol* incident was only the beginning of Dickens’s copyright battles, his scathing treatment of Chancery in *Bleak House* arguably stems from this significant challenge to his ownership. While many Dickensian characters are said to have been made in the image of their creator[2], Lady Honoria Dedlock in *Bleak House* operates as a representative of Dickens’s concerns over unauthorized copies; in this sense, she can be read as a “copy” of the author himself. A great deal of scholarship has engaged this dynamic character, often locating her in the pantheon of Dickens’s fallen women, yet the cause of her downfall—the threat of exposure and violation via unauthorized reproductions—has not been evaluated in conjunction with Dickens’s identical fears.

It is not surprising that *Bleak House*’s preface vaguely refers—right away—to one of Dickens’s personal experiences in court:

> A few months ago, on a public occasion, a Chancery Judge had the kindness to inform me, as one of a company of some hundred and fifty men and women not laboring under any suspicions of lunacy, that the Court of Chancery, though the shining subject of much popular prejudice (at which point I thought the Judge’s eye had cast in my direction), was almost immaculate. There had been, he admitted, a trivial blemish or so in its rate of progress, but this was exaggerated, and had been entirely owing to the “parsimony of the public”; which guilty public, it appeared, had been until lately bent in the most determined manner on by no means enlarging the number of Chancery Judges appointed [...] (*BH* 55)

[2] Much has been made over David Copperfield, especially; but many “Dickens children” are considered “self-images.” See Linda M. Shires, “Literary careers, death, and the body,” *Dickens Refigured: Bodies, Desires, and Other Histories*, 121.

The language of unity permeates this passage. Dickens places himself in the midst of a public gathering of men and women wise to the faults of Chancery, yet treated with pedantry by the ignorant judge. Dickens is one of them, and he further indicates that he is their representative—their "voice" as he airs their concerns in omnipresent print. He, in turn, must endure the scrutiny of those who desire to undermine his efforts, as he imagines the judge singling him out for attempting to disrupt the system. Further, he casts the judge's view of the public being parsimonious as indicative of their "guilt," rather than their wisdom, in desiring to check the out-of-control Chancery machine: the poor, practical public (of which Dickens is both member and leader) is fighting against the privileged judge who would wrest away their control in order to perpetuate a sick system, expediting the "production" of more judges (which will distinctly not be in the interest of the public).

Dickens ends the preface by marveling over how many readers (i.e. reader characters) are peppered throughout the novel; it is as though his work mirrors the trajectory of the public's literacy. And Dickens was certainly eager to coalesce his beloved public into a mass readership conscious of literacy as their bonding agent. Lauren Berlant carefully examines the idea of the intimate public in what she labels "women's culture," but her general descriptions align well with Dickens's idealized public. She explains that intimacy becomes increasingly important as "a space of attachment and identification that is not saturated merely by ideological or cognitive content but is also a [...] sustainer of people's desires for reciprocity in the world" (x-xi). The sense of the intimate public therefore "engender[s] kinds of insider

recognition and cultural self-development [...that] provide an experience of social belonging in proximity to the technologies that make the nation itself a site of affective investment and emotional identification" (xi). A line can be drawn from Berlant's ideas to Peter Ackroyd's well-known comment, "London created Dickens, just as Dickens created London" (7). Dickens diligently worked to create a space via his public readings in which his readers could come together; he insists on the sense of spiritual renewal both he and the crowd experience during his readings when he can control the setting, tone, and their reactions:

> When I first entered on this interpretation of myself (then quite strange to the public ear), I was sustained by the hope that I could drop into some hearts, some new expression of the meaning of my books, that would touch them in a new way. To this hour that purpose is so strong in me, and so real are my fictions to myself, that, after hundreds of nights, I come with a feeling of perfect freshness to that little red table, and laugh and cry with my hearers, as if I had never stood there before. (*The Selected Letters* 407)

Another time, Dickens describes a reading where the audience was composed mainly of "working-people's":

> [A] more delicately observant audience...is impossible to imagine. They lost nothing, misinterpreted nothing, and followed everything closely, laughed and cried with the most delightful earnestness, and animated me to that extent that I felt as if we were all bodily going up into the clouds together. (*The Selected Letters* 272-3)

For Dickens, these gatherings were a gateway to emotional, even ecstatic, transcendence. The exchange between author and reader was a way to achieve the sense of reciprocity that Berlant describes. Each time he successfully unites the audience, the stories are validated and take on new life.

As John Plotz argues, "novel[s] lay at a crux point where dual conceptions of

value collided in the Victorian era" where they functioned as both "saleable commodities" and "sublime effusions"—or transmitters of greater spiritual truths—that resisted commodification (xv). Instead of being at war with one another in Dickens's mind, the two were inextricable. He does not want to take a passive role in the production of his texts, but rather, as G.K. Chesterton suggests, he wants to "[stamp] his mind" on the places (qtd. in Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire" 41) and also the people he encounters, encouraging his readers to rally around the sublime mode rather than in what Benjamin describes as the mindless longing for commodities based solely on their omnipresence ("The Paris of the Second Empire" 32). As Dickens writes to Frederick Yates regarding unlicensed theatrical adaptations of his unfinished serials: "[B]eing badly done and worse acted [the plays tend] to vulgarize the characters, to destroy or weaken in the minds of those who see them the impressions I have endeavored to create, and consequently to lessen the after-interest in their progress" (*The Selected Letters* 47). This is reminiscent of a passage in *Great Expectations* where the hapless Wopsle reenacts a murder reported in a local newspaper, turning it into a farcical Shakespearean drama and omitting key details, inviting Mr. Jaggers to angrily inform him he must return to the text (141-3); his poor representation obscures and perverts the content of the actual narrative. Dickens is not only concerned about the way texts can be changed without consent, but the way in which the public's interest deviates or fractures based on these inferior reproductions: when Wopsle misrepresents the story, the audience buys into it and only become critically engaged following Jaggers's rebuke. Thus poor reproductions compromise

the salability *and* the sublime effusiveness.

The twin ideals of financial and moral enrichment are likewise threatened by the inferior or illicit reproductions that circulate in *Bleak House*. Dickens's distaste for copies is acknowledged in the mindless, disengaged way the Chancery copy clerks have "copied tens of thousands of Chancery folio-pages [...but] no man's nature has been made better by it. In trickery, evasion, procrastination, spoliation, botheration, under false pretences of all sorts, there are influences that can never come to good" (*BH* 65). This description may be read as a larger commentary on the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit and Chancery's questionable morals, but it pointedly follows a comment on the useless, wasteful task of copying and recopying. Other would-be copiers are depicted as incompetent, like Charley, Esther Summerson's maid, who struggles to copy text, since "in [her] hand every pen appeared to become perversely animated, and to go wrong and crooked, and to stop, and splash, and sidle into corners like a saddle-donkey" (*BH* 401). Charley, however, is an innocent in the context of the narrative, and her inability to perform this task does not reflect poorly on her. Caddy Jellyby also resents her role as copyist of her mother's out-of-touch philanthropic bloviations, and celebrates her freedom from that line of work when she marries Prince Turveydrop. Conversely, the decrepit, grotesque Mr. Krook, proprietor of the rag and bottle shop, can copy from memory despite being illiterate. This suggests, again, that copying is a mindless, soulless task that even the most wretched man can do. In the hands of this copier fall many important documents, including the much-sought love letters of Lady Dedlock and Captain "Nemo" Hawdon. Krook wallows in a well of such documents,

like "waste-paper" all over his floor (*BH* 107), eager to figure out how to bolster his skills in the interest of monetary gain. In the meantime, he copies—in an attitude of mockery, as Esther testifies—the contents of these private documents all over his walls where anyone can see.

The vulgar way in which the illiterate Krook and the heedless law copyists go about their work parallels the way in which the American press churned out imperfect copies of Dickens's novels. Widespread piracy in America captured Dickens's attention early in his career, but came to the forefront in the 1840s and remained a bugbear for the duration of his life. As Lawrence Houtchens relates, there was a "literary craze [in America] which enabled certain unscrupulous journalists to earn a large income [by means of literary piracy]" (22). Many periodicals lived on reproducing pirated texts, printing supplementary issues "containing whole novels in very fine print and selling for as little as ten cents a copy" (Houtchens 23). Naturally, Dickens never profited from these periodicals' publications. He had to be actively persuaded by his friends and associates to temper his copyright activism after the American press raked him across the coals; one *New World* writer lashed out at him, stating, "you over-estimated your own importance, and overshot the mark of proper conduct" (qtd. in Houtchens 27). A heartsick, bitter Dickens writes in response to the hubbub:

> I have never in my life been so shocked and disgusted, or made so sick and sore at heart as I have been by the treatment I have received...in reference to the International Copyright question. I,—the greatest loser by the existing Law, alive,— say in perfect good humor and disinterestedness (for God knows that I have little hope of its ever

> being changed in my time[3]) that I hope the day will come when Writers will be justly treated; and straightway there fall upon me scores of [American] newspapers; imputing motives to me, the very suggestion of which turns my blood to gall; and attacking me in such terms of vagabond scurrility as they would denounce no murderer with. (*The Selected Letters* 96)

In this letter, Dickens's anxiety over the dual nature of the popular press surfaces—and the dualities of his calling in general. The cost of being a public man was, in Dickens's own words, becoming public property (*The Selected Letters* 385). Even so, nothing prepared him for having the ownership of his works compromised and his public persona defamed; simultaneously, hordes of people turned up for Dickens's readings, elating and validating him during his U.S. tours, but causing him to complain that "half the population takes it ill if I do go where I am asked; and the other half take it ill if I don't" (*The Selected Letters* 96). Running up against the conflicting American ideologies surrounding freedom of the press and property rights, and celebrity worship and ridicule, Dickens becomes "worn out in mind and body" (*TSL* 96). Similarly, in *Bleak House*, a worn out Captain "Nemo" Hawdon, yet another copyist, expires in poverty despite "authoring" a host of texts. We do not know his actual identity as Lady Dedlock's lost lover until late in the novel, thus his character, and his work, is marked by the mysterious moniker Nemo, or "no one" in Latin (appropriate amidst all the legalese). He is essentially a silent presence in the book, despite the fact that many of the events of the novel are triggered by the documents "no one" pens (at various intervals, they pass through the hands of Lady Dedlock,

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[3] Dickens's prediction came true: international copyright laws were not enforced in America until more than twenty years after his death.

Tulkinghorn, Krook, Snagsby, George, etc.). In dealing with the American press, and his inability to re-harness their powers to serve and protect his interests, a distressed Dickens felt his legacy was likewise being obfuscated by the excess of such "authorless," unlicensed copies. As indicated by the angry *New World* reporter, many people did not seem to care who Dickens was, particularly if he jeopardized their literary marketplace and corresponding profit margins.

This sense of paranoia and exposure is similarly crucial to the narrative of Lady Dedlock, who operates as another stand-in for Dickens as he further interrogates unauthorized copies. When we first encounter Lady Dedlock, her fashionable world is provocatively described:

> It is not a large world. Relatively even to this world of ours, which has its limits too [...] it is a very little speck... But the evil of it is, that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun. It is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air. (*BH* 67)

She comes from a world padded in cotton and other materials that block out happenings in the "larger worlds"—perhaps the present and future worlds that have no place for old aristocratic names and lifestyles. Interestingly, the use of materials, such as cotton, to block in and soundproof the Dedlockian realm gestures towards the history of paper as much as textiles. In an 1894[4] *All the Year Round* article entitled "Paper," readers are reminded that paper was made from cotton, linen, hemp, and other materials, but in present times, only Bank of England notes "are made from the

[4] Though this article was printed long after Dickens' demise and referring to it is somewhat indulgent, the context and content render it valuable.

best linen" and *editions de luxe* of pricey, high-class tomes are made from rags ("Paper" 442). Money, then, is made from quality material, while everything else, even "high-class tomes" are composed from "anything that can be pounded to a pulp." The violence of the language suggests concern over the mass market, where making money is more precious than the means of manufacturing the product—a recurring theme in *Bleak House*, especially in the way that Chancery allows the documentation to pile up along with the money of the persons involved in the various suits. This commentary functions as a framework for examining the way cheap and illicit reproductions are doled out without discrimination. As the narrative lens draws closer to Lady Dedlock, trees are being silently felled by woodsman and the view from her window "is alternately a lead-colored view, a view in Indian ink" (*BH* 67). Her perspective, then, is not-so-subtly connected to textual production, as the imagery reinforces a sense of silent violence and creeping coverture: she is smothered in paper and doused in ink.

This is the life Lady Dedlock has chosen, yet, accordingly, such a life relies heavily on the whims of the press which move from irritatingly harmless to massively exploitative. By setting her up as constantly bombarded by the fashionable intelligence, Dickens takes us into the fishbowl of celebrity, creating a dichotomy between the isolated Nemo, who makes little money from his work and is relegated to the fringe of society, and the popular Lady Dedlock, whose success obliges her to forfeit her happiness in order to maintain societal control. Often in the chapters devoted to Lady Dedlock, the narrator adopts the voice of the reporter for the society

pages, taking pains to trace her comings and goings from Lincolnshire to Paris, for to "know things otherwise, were to be unfashionable" (*BH* 67). Even as she is "hotly pursued by the fashionable intelligence" with "five thousand pairs of fashionable eyes on her, in distrustful vigilance" at all times, her "beauty, pride, ambition, insolent resolve, and sense [...] floated her upward" (69; 382). The hungry, hounding press may be omnipresent, but she set out, purposely, to conquer this cotton-smothered, paper-saturated world; fatigue and dissatisfaction may be her "trophies" (69), but she is hell-bent on protecting her name and her reputation as she, like Dickens, fought her way from "[having] not even family" to being "at the top of the fashionable tree" (68-9). Lady Dedlock and the fashionable intelligence are symbiotic, as Dickens's success also depended on the popular press.

The tragedy of Lady Dedlock's situation, and where she diverges from her creator, is that she believes her image to be impervious and inscrutable. In the face of the fashionable intelligence, Lady Dedlock imagines that she is "quite out of the reach and ken of ordinary mortals"; when she "[sees] herself in her glass," she thinks her reflection is private—her likeness is under her explicit control (*BH* 70). Yet, as the narrator ominously informs us, "every dim little star revolving about her, from her maid to the manager of the Italian Opera, knows her weaknesses, prejudices, follies, haughtinesses, and caprices; and lives upon as accurate a calculation and as nice a measure of her moral nature, as her dress-maker takes of her physical proportions" (70). Lady Dedlock believes, in her goddess-like state, that she can maintain strict control over the public channel of access: the fashionable intelligence will only

receive what she chooses to give them; she remains naive to the fact that they are already on the inside and can read in every glance and motion some new secret.

When Guppy, the bumbling law clerk, is shown Lady Dedlock's portrait during a tour of Chesney Wold, the Dedlock manor, her image baffles him; and while we come to learn that Guppy sees the resemblance between Lady Dedlock and Esther, he does not realize this right away. He initially asks the maid if the image has ever been engraved—that is, mass-produced and sold to the public—but she insists that Sir Leicester Dedlock refused; it is the "perfect likeness" of his Lady and "the work of the master"—not *a* master, but *the* master—and therefore must be kept safe (*BH* 133). Dickens, the master behind this text, has also created perfect and legitimate likenesses in the form of his authorized reproductions; but as his will escape his control, so Guppy realizes that he has encountered the image somewhere before. Later, Guppy helps his friend Weevle decorate his new room above Krook's shop. Weevle posses a collection of copper impressions of beautiful, fashionable women taken from the *Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty*. These reproductions are described as "[...] fashion in every variety of smirk that art, combined with capital, is capable of producing" (*BH* 291). The tone, diction, and further descriptions suggest how we should feel toward these impressions: they are vulgar and exploitative. The crown jewel of this collection, hanging over the mantle in Weevle's room, is a "portrait of Lady Dedlock [...] in which she is represented on a terrace, with a pedestal upon the terrace, and a vase upon the pedestal, and her shawl upon the vase, and a prodigious piece of fur upon the shawl, and her arm on the prodigious piece of fur, and a bracelet on her arm" (*BH*

418). The description is brief, yet it has an exotic, fetishistic quality. Weevle believes he is staying in touch with high society by paying homage to these fashionable women, yet he "reverts from this intelligence to the Galaxy portraits implicated, and seems to know the originals, and to known of them" (*BH* 291). The masturbatory quality of the images covering Weevle's walls suggests a mindless engagement with them; they are present to provide him with base pleasure, but nothing more profound, thus acting against the Dickensian desire for "sublime effusion" and in line with the Benjaminian model of desiring the reproduction simply because it exists. Even after Guppy speculates that the mantel image is Lady Dedlock, it makes no difference to Weevle: it functions the same as the other copper-plate impressions and has no distinct identity of its own. Knowing the name of the woman (Lady Dedlock) is inconsequential. It is fitting that after would-be exploitative copyist Krook spontaneously combusts, his remains ooze and trickle down the walls of his entire building, presumably staining the collection of copied impressions adorning them.

The origin of the Lady Dedlock copper-plate impression is mysterious, as the Chesney Wold painting was (reportedly) never replicated, certainly suggesting this is a different image. It is not clear if Lady Dedlock knows or does not know about the circulating image, but regardless of the circumstance, her striving to preserve her image (the painting; her reflection) proves impossible. Again, this is one of the most shocking tragedies of the novel: even though Dickens elects, in the end, to keep the private love letters of Lady Dedlock and Nemo out of the hands of the press or public, she has already been copied and distributed without her knowledge. Instead, she is

wholly absorbed in evading Tulkinghorn and his obsession with her letters. The possibility of the letters titillates the reader as well; the reader becomes a member the fashionable intelligence in this respect, in "distrustful vigilance" following Lady Dedlock through the novel. Dickens knows it is in our nature to want them in order to be granted access to her sordid secrets. It is a didactic move on his part rather than chivalrous to point out our hypocrisy: while we understand and revile Weevle's masturbatory intent regarding the copies of Lady Dedlock that have been produced against her will, we crave access to the Dedlock/Hawdon love story and anticipate the climax and catharsis of exposure . We are further frustrated when Esther does not copy down the contents of Lady Dedlock's letter confirming her true parentage, despite the fact that Lady Dedlock begged the letter be kept secret. By pointing out this discrepancy, Dickens demonstrates the horror of having one's likeness "stolen" and replicated without consent, which aligns with both his anxiety over the private being aired for public consumption as well as his position on copyright in general: to not have control of your textual, or pictorial, self is to be enfolded into the basest form of representation, perverting the original character or content.

The idea of copies is complicated by Lady Dedlock's masquerade as her French maid, Hortense—a guise she adopts in order to determine what has happened to Nemo. But even Jo, who is also illiterate and generally ignorant, is able to "read" her when she comes to him for information and comprehend that she is actually a lady of rank. In one sense, this compounds the idea that Lady Dedlock's attempts to protect or preserve her image are futile; but it also suggests that the original shines through—

as though there is something undeniably beautiful, even moral, about the “real” version. Jo subsequently recognizes an inferior copy of the Lady Dedlock when Tulkinghorn and Bucket produce Hortense dressed in the same clothes and ask him to identify her. Jo exclaims, “It is her and it an’t her” (*BH* 315); on the outside, she looks like Lady Dedlock but her voice—her language—reveals her to be a fraud (*BH* 315). This scene could be read many ways, such as how linguistically, or textually, speaking, illiterate Jo can designate a licensed version from a fake (which may link to the idea of sublime effusion emanating from the authorized incarnation); yet one of the most significant aspects is Hortense’s foreignness and fraudulence. Jo sees Hortense as an imperfect reproduction since she lacks the content of Lady Dedlock’s character. Something has been lost in the translation of Lady Dedlock to Hortense: the xenophobic treatment of the maid recalls the poor copies of Dickens’s work circulating beyond England. But her exaggerated exoticism also marks her as a dangerous, though stock or parodied, femme fatale of the sensational penny weekly-type. Lady Dedlock, who is worthy of treatment by the “master” painter, is, arguably, the superior materialization as she invokes sympathy and feeling and higher art—both in the physical and narrative sense. And though Tulkinghorn is viewed as a villain in the piece, the inferior copy (Hortense) ends up murdering him—terminating the legal representation of the Dedlocks. He was the man who possessed control of the “rights” to disseminate a disparaged version of Lady Dedlock’s pristine “image,” yet until right before his demise, his interest was in tracing her alternative narrative but not producing it. Tulkinghorn’s position as Lady Dedlock’s (albeit insidious) legal

representative, protecting her secrets in his lockbox, proves fruitless as flawed versions of her story are already being circulated by others outside of their control. In this sense, Dickens is decrying the faults of the legal system and its inability to function properly, but he is also expressing a desire to have it work in his interest as opposed to being abolished altogether. He understood that shielding his work from illicit distribution was somewhat possible, as copyright legislation passed in England in 1842. It was the international copyright—the foreign copies—that remained beyond his jurisdiction and, in his way of thinking, made a mockery of the legal system as Hortense makes a mockery of Tulkinghorn.

Something could be said about the fact that Esther Summerson, as Lady Dedlock's daughter—the product of the physical and written love affair—is, ironically, the only "legitimate" copy of her mother. Using maternal metaphors to refer to the writing process is certainly common amongst male writers (one has only to turn to psychoanalysis and Melanie Klein for more). Dickens blatantly did so, stating after a day's work on *Martin Chuzzlewit*: "I have been all day in *Chuzzlewit* agonies—conceiving only. I hope to bring forth tomorrow" (qtd. in Forster 189). Gail Turley Houston argues that since Dickens's "fictional alter egos" include many female characters—prominently Esther, his only first-person female narrator—he "felt some emotional kinship to the heroine's psychological task" (51). For Dickens—who, as formerly established, viewed his creations as his children—the idea of a child (Esther), the true copy, being lost to her mother (Lady Dedlock), while other lesser copies circulate is devastating and despicable, and this perspective elevates the narrative

beyond a typical "fallen woman" story. The stage is set for forgiveness of any moral transgression on Lady Dedlock's part, as both Esther and Sir Leicester's drive to protect her overcomes any desire to reject her. But in the end, Lady Dedlock is haunted by the idea that "her name is in these many mouths [...] her shame will be published—may be spreading while she thinks about it" (*BH* 659). She imagines herself shamefully "represented" as a suspected murderess and as casting off her beloved maidservant, Rosa; thus she elects to abandon her station at the first concrete indication that she has lost all control. When Inspector Bucket and Esther at last find Lady Dedlock lying dead near the graveyard, she is in such a disheveled state that they mistake her for another woman—the impoverished Jenny—before Esther turns her face and realizes it is her mother. Lying in the gutter, the likeness becomes indistinguishable from the rest of London's detritus—the fine lady is no different from the poor one. Far from being an egalitarian stance, Dickens wants us to feel grief, horror, and shock to find Lady Dedlock in this state; there is something fatalistic about the end of her story, as though he is acknowledging that loss of control is inevitable.

Dickens's choice, in Lady Dedlock's final moment, to return to her face, so meticulously painted by "the master" and so carelessly published in *Galaxy Gallery*, is significant. Kathy Psomiades argues that the face, especially the female face, is a standard of value as "'face' or 'figure' might refer to the face of a coin, a series of numbers" (105). We can read Lady Dedlock as becoming "alienated from [her] body, the properties of which have to be subordinated to their status as objects of circulation" (Psomiades 105). Literally, in this case, she is alienated from her body

through death, but up until this point, the reader has also been alienated from the whole of Lady Dedlock by the excess of inferior, or other, Lady Dedlocks permeating the text. Almost everywhere a new version surfaces that obstructs or confuses our view (one might say an excess of Indian ink clouds our view) of the actual one until even it is no longer distinguishable from the others. By bringing to bear all the copies in the form of the single, hunted woman, the reader understands how the text has rendered her more and more vulnerable until all that is left is a face: the face which has been produced and sold and resold without thought. Lady Dedlock ends, in some ways, where Nemo began: as an unidentifiable "no one"—her copies, like his actual copywriting, being all that remains. The idea that Lady Dedlock, like Nemo, ends as "no one" connects with Catherine Gallagher's idea "that the story [that] was nobody's made it entirely the author's; that is was nobody's also left it open to the reader's sentimental appropriation" (175). The line between Dickens and Dedlock is clear, but the "ownership" of the story also falls back on the reader as responsible to supply sympathy and enact mourning in order to validate the fallen woman—the authentic, physical woman—in a way the text does not.

Dickens endeavors to deny us any emotional engagement with the scene, other than the initial shock, and has Esther assert that she will now "proceed to other passages of my narrative [...] I will not dwell upon my sorrow" (*BH* 701). Why does Dickens not allow the reader, let alone Esther, to grieve? There is more text devoted to the deaths of Jo, Richard, and even Tulkinghorn and Krook, than to Lady Dedlock. Many arguments have been made concerning Esther's reluctance to reveal her

personal thoughts and feelings, much like her mother, as well as her selective editing of her narrative overall (such as omitting almost all of her romance with Woodcourt). Returning again to the idea of sublime effusion, or that texts possess some greater spiritual value, the imperfect editing of pirating publishers marred Dickens's texts in a way that deeply disturbed him (particularly returning to the *Christmas Carol* incident) and denied the reader the whole of the narrative—and, by extension, the full emotional experience. That is arguably the point of Dickens's exercise in omission: the reader expects Esther to share her grief, and when it does not happen, the absence of it is startlingly apparent; a true member of the Dickensian community expects to be included in the pathos-ridden whole of his vision. The idea of the alienated reader who functions as an observer rather than a participant irritated Dickens (*The Selected Letters* 294); so in forcing the reader to confront ambivalence or passivity in the narrative—and claim Lady Dedlock—speaks to his desire for none of his works to be treated or seen in such a way. When dealing with the fraudulent, unauthorized versions of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens demonstrated how upsetting it was to see his text made "wretched, meagre, [and] miserable" yet still be "hawked about with my title and my name—with my characters, my incidents, and whole design" (qtd. in Hancher 815). This disrespect toward not only the product, but the content, was infuriating; and if we view the *Christmas Carol* affair and the American tour as leading up or contributing to *Bleak House*, we can see how Dickens uses his fiction as a medium to express his copyright anxieties as he opts, in this instance, *not* to "dwell on the romantic side of familiar things" (*BH* 56), opting instead for serious social criticism over emotional

engagement and entertainment.

Bleak House, despite its standing as a tome-length treatise against unlicensed copies and its high (legitimate) sales, did not significantly discourage illicit reproductions. Still, it did operate as a way for Dickens to safely but forcefully impart his opinions without losing the affection of his reading public. For as the most popular author of the nineteenth century, Dickens's "likenesses" were irrevocably ubiquitous; he understood that by integrating himself so fully in the print world meant he as well as his writings would be made over as commodities. He put pressure on himself and his publications, such as *Household Words*, to provide both instruction and entertainment "responsibly and imaginatively" (*The Letters of Charles Dickens* viii) in an honest attempt to assert control over his medium and maintain that enigmatic sense of "sublime effusion." The penny weeklies that were able to churn out content quickly and cheaply, at times by means of reprinting texts without permission, were, in his words, "the prodigious heaps of nonsense and worse that nonsense, which suffocate [readers'] better sense" (viii). Ideally, Dickens desired to unite his readers in a quasi-religious model, presiding over their ventures into his texts in an effort to appeal to deeper spiritual feelings. Yet his works were designed to take advantage of mechanical reproduction and reach a widespread audience, which meant, by default, many hands had to handle them. Lady Dedlock may come to a tragic end, unaware that the copier's "unwholesome hand" (*BH* 65) had long ago engraved her image despite all her deluded efforts to preserve its integrity; but perhaps Dickens, as conscious as he is of her naiveté, also envies her imagined invincibility. Lady Dedlock imagines every

lesser star to be securely in orbit and within her sight, while Dickens recognizes that eventually you lose control of your creations as they become public, independent entities, multiplying and replenishing at will.

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