

THE DICKENS SOCIETY



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Nineteenth-Century
Centre

THE 29TH ANNUAL DICKENS SOCIETY SYMPOSIUM

University of Birmingham

July 15 – 18, 2024

‘The Significance of Dickens’ Novel in the English Language Curricula in Iraq’

Mithal M. Challab Al-Bedairi

University of Kufa (Iraq)

Literature plays an important role in the English programs of non-English speaking countries. It is not only a tool for developing the skills of the students in the target language, but it also educates the whole people, by examining the moral values like those which exist in Victorian Novel. One of the prominent Victorian English artists whose writing involved in the curriculum of English department in Iraqi Universities is Charles Dickens (1812-1870). Dickens texts can improve the students' (the readers') understanding of others, since his literary world presents a full microcosm of the universal human values. In Iraqi Universities, the English language curriculum framework gives high priority to the language skills, performance, and attitudes that students would be expected to achieve at various stages of learning English literature that helps them acquire a native-like competence in English. Moreover, literature can be the major source for the authentic materials in the foreign language class and it should be incorporated in EFL / ESL curriculum. Accordingly, literary subjects constitute 25% of the English language curriculum for the undergraduate level. The goal of this study is the attempting of presenting an insight into the fields of teaching Dickens in Iraqi universities. It is meant to be a detailed study that gives an answer to the following question: "What, when, where, why and how has Dickens' novel (Hard Times) been taught in Iraqi universities/ departments of English. It focuses on the impact of Dickens' novel and its timeless lessons on the experience of teaching English Language for Iraqi students.

Professor Mithal M. Challab Al-Bedairi holds a PhD in English Literature from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Baghdad. Her research interests include, but are not limited to, Modern and Contemporary Drama, Comparative Literature, Curriculum Revision and the Victorian Novel. She has published many articles, papers, and a book that has been translated into various languages and has participated in various local and international conferences.

'Performing Authorship: The Dickens Reenactment'

Michelle Allen-Emerson

U.S. Naval Academy (USA)

On December 18, 2023, Neil Gaiman put on full Victorian dress and a fake beard to read *A Christmas Carol* before an enthusiastic audience in a midtown Manhattan theatre. Gaiman had done this before—in 2013 at the New York Public Library, reading from Dickens's prompt copy of the *Carol*, which Dickens had used during his American tour and which is now part of the Library's impressive collection of Dickens manuscripts and artifacts. The 2023 event moved from the Library to a 1,500-seat theatre; it also changed from a free event to a ticketed performance for which attendees paid up to \$750 for a VIP meet-the-author (Gaiman, not Dickens!) experience.

This paper considers the afterlife of Dickens in the form of the one-person biographical show. It takes as its starting point Gaiman's performances of *A Christmas Carol* and looks back to earlier Dickens impersonators like Emlyn Williams (whom Gaiman cites as an influence). These and other similar performances of course have their origin in Dickens's popular and lucrative public readings. Dickens's reading tours brought him gratifyingly close to his fans even though a primary motivation was making money. Gaiman probably has similar motives if the VIP fan experience is any indication. But what about the fans themselves, those who attended and attend the twentieth- and twenty-first century *reenactments* of Dickens's readings? What do the performances mean for them? Focusing on the public readings of Gaiman and Williams, I center the perspective of their audiences, exploring the appeal of, and expectations for, seeing another man dressed up as Dickens reading Dickens's works.

Michelle Allen-Emerson is Professor of English at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, where she has taught since 2003. Publications include *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London* (Ohio University Press, 2008) and the multi-volume edited collection of primary source material *Sanitary Reform in Victorian Britain* (Pickering and Chatto, 2012, 2013). She has published articles in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, *English Literature in Transition*, and *Dickens Quarterly*. A special issue of *Dickens Quarterly*, "Dickens and His Publics," co-edited with Annette Federico, is forthcoming in March 2024. She currently serves on the Society's Board of Trustees.

“Visible and Governable Things”: Perspectives of Childhood in *David Copperfield* and Ruskin’s Travel Writing?

Emily Paige Anderson

Rutgers University (USA)

In 1849, David Copperfield tells his readers that he has a theory—that many children possess observational skills unmatched in their “closeness and accuracy” (19). Later, after offering an unbelievably detailed account of his initial impression of the Pegottys’ boat-house, he characterizes his quick and thorough visual assessment as “childlike, according to [his] theory” (23). At the same time that Dickens is articulating David’s visual acuity, Ruskin is beginning work on *Stones of Venice* (1851-53) where he will assert that in their “infinite ignorance,” children possess “infinite power”: the ability to see the world with a particular kind of pleasure and the time to study it with the “minuteness” it deserves (*Stones III* 66, 39). This is the kind of observational skill upon which Ruskin builds his critical career, shrinking vast landscapes to a series of close observations as early as age eleven, in “Isteriad” (1830)—a poetic account of his trip to the Lake District—and throughout his early teen years in “A Tour On the Continent” (1833). Ruskin’s vision is clear and precise, but nonetheless displays a capacity for wonder, whimsy, and aliveness. My project places *David Copperfield*, Dickens’s first novel written in first-person, in the context of his early fictional experiments with point-of-view and considers it alongside Ruskin’s contemporary travel archive. Though critics have long recognized Dickens as a writer attuned to childish ways of seeing—what Malcolm Andrews designates as a “child’s-eye view”—few have examined this perspective outside of a developmental, historical, or social context. I examine, instead, how Dickens and Ruskin adopt child-like perspectives as formal modes designed to appreciate the world at human scale.

Emily Paige Anderson is a PhD candidate in the Rutgers University Department of Literatures in English. Her dissertation explores childhood as a phenomenological experience mediated by scale in the long-nineteenth century novel of development, considering work by Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Olive Schreiner, Rudyard Kipling, and Virginia Woolf. She co-directs the Rutgers Nineteenth-Century Group and, in October 2022, she co-organized NAVSA “Just Victorians” at Lehigh University.

“An Old Fashioned Boy”: Recontextualisation and Co-Occurrence as Verbal Strategies in Dickens’

Matthias Bauer & Angelika Zirker

Erberhard Karls University at Tübingen (Germany)

Our talk is concerned with a phenomenon that, with the help of CLiC, can be studied systematically for the first time: Dickens’s use of expressions that gain new and sometimes unexpected, ambiguous meanings in specific and unusual contexts, i.e. where there are specific co-occurrences. Paul Dombey’s being called “old-fashioned” is perhaps the best-known example of this: While the design and style of clothes and objects may be old-fashioned, as can be seen, for example, in “the old-fashioned furniture brightly rubbed and polished” (*David Copperfield*, ch. 13) or a person’s views and habits may be old-fashioned (which may metonymically extend to a person, as in “I am an old-fashioned man in an old-fashioned shop”; Solomon Gills in ch. 4 of *Dombey and Son*), Paul is old-fashioned in a different sense, which applies to his person in way that cannot be identified as style or dress or manners. The co-occurrence of “old-fashioned” with Paul Dombey makes the word unspecified, mysterious; it even contributes to endowing Paul with a sacred aura. Special as this case may seem, the technique of recontextualizing words and thus giving them a new and unusual meaning is by no means confined to the case of Paul Dombey, even though the effect is a different one in each case. We will look at such seemingly unremarkable cases as “practical” when it co-occurs with Esther Summerson and at what mysteriously happens to negation in the mouth of Jo. Our aim is to arrive at the concept(s) that lie behind these verbal strategies.

Matthias Bauer is Professor of English Philology at Eberhard Karls University Tübingen. His fields of research include Early Modern English Literature (with an emphasis on Metaphysical Poetry), 19th-century English Literature (with an emphasis on Dickens), the language of literature, and literature and religion. He chaired of the research training group, funded by the German National Research Foundation, on “Ambiguity: Production and Perception” for nine years (until 2022), and is a principal investigator in the Research Unit at Tübingen on the “De/Sacralisation of Texts”. With literary scholar Angelika Zirker he co-chairs a project on the aesthetics of co-creativity in Early Modern English Literature. He is the co-founder and editor of *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* and co-editor of *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*.

Angelika Zirker is Associate Professor of English Literatures and Cultures at Tübingen, Germany. After completing her PhD on the Lewis Carroll’s Alice-books in 2010, her second book titled *William Shakespeare and John Donne: Stages of the Soul in Early Modern English Poetry* was published in 2019 with Manchester UP. Her research interests include nineteenth century literature, with a special focus on Charles Dickens, as well as early modern poetry and drama. She is involved in various interdisciplinary research projects, including a Collaborative Research Centre on “Different Aesthetics”, funded by the German National Research Foundation. She is the co-editor of two peer-reviewed journals, *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* and *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*.

The authors of this paper work together on a book “Ambiguous Dickens” (in preparation).

‘*Dombey and Son* Out of Context: Reading Dickens Ecologically in the Capitalocene, or Why the Spectral Should Redefine What We Mean by Context’

Alexander Bove

Pacific University (USA)

Jesse Oak Taylor (one of the leading voices in Victorian ecocriticism) posits the question of “how to read in the Anthropocene” as a “methodological problem” that confronts Victorian criticism today. However, Victorian ecocriticism all too often tends to accept concepts like the Anthropocene and the ecology without actually reflecting on how they conform to our own preconceptions. Thus, Victorian eco-critics often end up seeing realism as a vehicle for, but also a limit to, the Victorians’ ecological imagination: Adam Grener, for instance, focuses on the “tension of a realist aesthetic” in *Dombey and Son*, “committed to the particularity of local environments situated within a global network,” and MacDuffie sees a similar relation between “microcosm and macrocosm” in the realist logic of *Bleak House*.

Drawing on critical theories of the uncanny and spectrality, this paper reads Dickens’ *Dombey and Son* as reformulating some of the basic coordinates that define how we understand the Anthropocene and hence how we approach ecocriticism more generally. Anthropocene critiques are predetermined by our current concepts of realism, the person, and the ecology, and thus center on realist or metonymic formulations of the ecology: “energy” or “thermodynamics” for Allen MacDuffie, for instance, or the “fog” for Jesse Oak Taylor, or the “weather” for Adam Grener, which project their own conceptual limits onto their object of study. But from a different perspective, Dickens’ fascination with the uncanny, the ghostly and the spectral, is *itself* the basis of an ecological vision.

This paper will explore a *spectral* ecocriticism to show how *Dombey and Son* links images of mourning and loss, commodification and objects, and the cultural transformations of the railway, to formulate an ecological vision better defined by the term *Capitalocene*, which avoids the Anthropocene’s link to realism and the individual in order to truly reformulate an ecological methodology.

Alexander Bove is Associate Professor of English at Pacific University, where he specializes in Victorian literature and culture, critical theory, and film theory. His publications include a recent book on Dickens and theories of character, *Spectral Dickens: The Uncanny Forms of Novelistic Characterization* (Manchester University Press 2021), and several articles, including “Gender (de)Constructions and ‘Disjunctive Montage’: Narrative Telos and Filmic Play from Dickens’ David Copperfield to Neil Jordan’s Breakfast on Pluto” (*Literature/ Film Quarterly*, Winter 2018), “What Happens When the Replicants Become Extimate? On the Uncanny Cut of the Capitalocene in Blade Runner 2049” (in *Lacanian Perspectives on Blade Runner 2049*, ed. Calum Neill. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), and “‘The Unbearable Realism of a Dream’: On the Subject of Portraits in Austen and Dickens” (*ELH: English Literary History*, Fall 2007).

‘The Dickens Portal’

Joel Brattin & Arthur Carlson

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (UK)

Worcester Polytechnic Institute is happy to announce the Dickens Portal, allowing anyone in the world with internet access the opportunity to engage with the materials held at WPI related to the life, works, and world of Charles Dickens. This portal enhances discovery and access to rare material including first editions, correspondence, original artwork, and unique manuscript items. The Dickens Portal affords scholars, students, and members of the public the opportunity to engage with these materials at no expense, with no required affiliation. The Dickens Portal is, essentially, a set of integrated platforms, utilizing the Digital WPI repository in conjunction with Spotlight. The Dickens Portal provides access to WPI’s “Project Boz,” which offers high-resolution digital surrogates of every page of every one of Dickens’s novels in the form in which they were originally published, and “Illustrating Dickens’s World,” a centralized resource for the study of the artists who collaborated with Dickens to bring his characters to life.

The Dickens Portal also provides online guides for related collections including the Fred Guida collection of screen and stage adaptations of Dickens’s work, especially *A Christmas Carol*. Plans for expanding the contents within the Dickens Portal include the addition of the “Dickens Inner Circle” albums, recently given as part of the Daniel and Alice Ryan Collection on Charles Dickens. These albums include over 300 items of correspondence, creative works, and other items associated with Dickens’s family members, friends, artists and literary figures of the Victorian era, and others in Dickens’s circle. Our presentation will give brief technical background on the tools WPI used to create the Dickens Portal, and an overview of the sorts of collections reachable through the portal. We will provide a live demonstration showing how a user might explore the riches to which the Dickens Portal provides easy access.

Joel J. Brattin, Professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), helped establish the text for the first volumes of the California Carlyle edition, and edited the Everyman Dickens Our Mutual Friend. Recent works on Dickens include *Illustrating Every-Day Life: Dickens and His Artists* (with Kathy Markees) and *Dickens and Massachusetts* (with Diana Archibald). His two-volume scholarly edition of *Nicholas Nickleby* (edited with Elizabeth James), published in January 2024, is the first novel published in the Oxford Edition of Charles Dickens. Joel is also preparing a scholarly edition of *A Tale of Two Cities* for Oxford University Press, for the same series. A past President of the Dickens Society, Joel hosted the first annual Dickens Symposium in 1996, and has contributed to each subsequent symposium. He has also published hundreds of articles and reviews about the legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix.

Arthur Larentz Carlson is the University Archivist and Assistant Director of George C. Gordon Library at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). In that role, he oversees the Institute’s institutional archives, manuscript holdings, art & object collections, as well as elements of the digital repository. He is committed to the preservation and discovery of materials that document history and culture through his work and volunteer service. He has curated numerous physical and digital exhibitions on a wide range of topics including Charles Dickens, diversity in higher education, race and propaganda in product advertising, and interactive media. As a historian, Arthur has published and presented on desegregation in the American South and mid-Atlantic colonial natural history. He is a member of the Society of American Archivists and New England Archives Association.

'Dickens and Bergson: Temporality, Memory and Coexistence'

Céleste Callen

University of Edinburgh (UK)

This paper examines the co-occurrence of memory and change, continuity and disruption, the past and the present, that is at the heart of Dickens's representation of temporal experience. Through the lens of Bergson's philosophy of *durée* and the heterogeneous roles of memory and perception, this research argues that both Dickens and Bergson reveal a modern conception of temporal experience, which is rooted in heterogeneity, a coexistence that implies both past and present, memory and re-creation, continuity and change. Dickens's fiction reveals the metaphysical aspect of our subjective experience of time that goes beyond the restrictive dualism of mind and matter and complicates the debate between the internal and external worlds. The concepts of the mechanical or social self that Bergson explores is the example of an extreme, the individual that is completely detached from subjectivity and memory, focused on social requirements and future action. The opposite would be the dreamer, who is detached from the social world of action, immersed in the world of past memories. This sheds light on the tension between the essential movement towards action and the future, combined with a necessary return to the past. Dickens's fictional worlds and characters underline the importance of this coexistence, a movement that is characterised by heterogeneity and co-occurrence, rather than a mechanical rigidity. Dickens and Bergson go beyond the dualism of mind and matter by exploring the role of memory as a creative force, rather than a static archive, showing that the mind and the world are continuously interpenetrating in a heterogeneous double movement. I will discuss three of Dickens's Christmas books, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes* and *The Haunted Man*, as well as two first-person narratives, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*.

Céleste Callen is currently completing her PhD at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests revolve around time, memory and subjective temporal experience in nineteenth-century fiction. She holds a BA in English Literature from King's College London and an MSc in Enlightenment, Romantic and Victorian Literature from the University of Edinburgh. Her doctoral thesis explores the representation of subjective temporal experience in Dickens's fiction through the lens of Henri Bergson's philosophy of *durée*. She is the Co-Editor of the Dickens Society Blog alongside Dr Katie Bell. You can hear more about her research on the *Charles Dickens: A Brain on Fire* podcast with Dominic Gerrard.

'Dickens's Idiomatic Contexts'

Peter J. Capuano

University of Nebraska-Lincoln (USA)

This paper utilizes a hybrid digital (quantitative) and analogue (close reading) methodology to contextualize Dickens's reliance on what I call his "idiomatic imagination" in his most mature and iconic novels. Dickens was, of course, famously drawn to the vernacular language of London's streets, but I argue that he systematically employed idiomatic phrases that embody actions, ideas, and social relations for specific narrative and thematic purposes. Focusing on the mid- to late career novels *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*, and *Our Mutual Friend*, I demonstrate how Dickens came to relish using common idioms in uncommon ways and the possibilities they opened up for artistic expression. The paper contextualizes a unique framework within the social history of language alteration in nineteenth-century Britain in order to rethink Dickens's literary trajectory and its impact on the vocabularies of generations of novelists, critics, and speakers of English.

Peter J. Capuano is an Associate Professor and Director of Literary and Cultural Studies in the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he is also a Faculty Fellow in the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH) at Nebraska. His books include *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Body* (University of Michigan Press, 2015) and *Dickens's Idiomatic Imagination: The Inimitable and Victorian Body Language* (Cornell University Press, 2023), which was supported by a two-year grant in *Digital Textual Studies from the National Humanities Center*. He has co-edited, with Sue Zemka, *Victorian Hands: The Manual Turn in Nineteenth-Century Body Studies* (Ohio State University Press, 2020) and is co-editor, with Michelle Allen-Emerson, of *Approaches to Teaching Dickens's Great Expectations*, forthcoming in 2025 from Modern Language Association Publications.

‘Australia and the British Empire: from Dickens’s *Great Expectations* to Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs*’

Caterina Colomba

University of Salento (Italy)

In his 1997 novel *Jack Maggs*, the Australian author Peter Carey retells the story of Magwitch, the transported convict who, grown rich in Australia, becomes the protagonist’s mysterious benefactor in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*. In his novel, Carey revisits the nineteenth-century writer’s portrayal of Australia as England’s antipodean other with the aim of redressing what he defines Dickens’ “unfair” treatment of the convict (Boldtype 1998) and thus redeeming his “ancestor” (Koval 1997) from ignominy.

While in others of his works Dickens depicted Australia as a New World Arcadia, a place where his characters are successful in beginning new lives (see for instance Mr Micawber, Mr Peggotty and Emily in *David Copperfield*), in *Great Expectations* it is reduced to “the invisible penal colony, to which convicts are sentenced for life” (Thieme 2001). Starting from Dickens’s ambivalent constructions of Australia, this paper invites comparative readings of the figure of the outcast – Magwitch/Jack Maggs – focusing specifically on how and why Carey provides for him a new life and a new beginning *down under* in contrast with the conventional convict’s fate and ending in *Great Expectations* where he is left no option other than to die. The different, yet connected, representations of the convict (and of the British colony) will be here examined in line with the most recent studies in the field of postcolonialism and neo-Victorianism by tracing the way in which the nineteenth-century fictional characters are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through fresh starts and new beginnings in contemporary novels.

Caterina Colomba is an Assistant Professor in English Literature at the University of Salento (Italy). She was a visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York, for the academic year 2015-16. She holds a PhD in postcolonial studies (2007) and has been the recipient of several awards, including an Australia-Europe scholarship for pursuing academic research in Australia. She has published essays and articles on English literature/s and, in particular, on Australian literature and culture. Her research interests include neo-Victorianism, women writing, postcolonial theories and translations studies. She has recently translated into Italian M. Oliphant et al., *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria’s Reign: A Book of Appreciation* (Romanziere del regno della regina Vittoria. Un libro di apprezzamenti, Mimesis, 2021). She is currently writing a book on Victorian outcasts in postcolonial rewritings [under contract with Peter Lang].

‘Dickens’s Painful Recollections of Mrs. Beadnell’s Welsh Ambitions in *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*’

Lydia Craig

Lake Land College (USA)

Why Charles Dickens seems to have been rejected by Maria Beadnell in 1833 after a courtship beginning in May 1830 not only relates to the couple’s uneven socioeconomic dynamic, as previously discussed by scholars, but is best discussed in the context of their ethnic difference. The family of her father, George Beadnell, originated in northern English counties like Yorkshire and Northumbria, while his Welsh wife, Maria Jones, descended from the Lloyds, a well-connected family in Montgomeryshire, Powys, Cymru (Wales). Compared to Dickens, a Londoner born in Portsmouth, Hampshire and raised in Kent and the city, the Beadnells – Maria Jones in particular – should have been comparative cultural outsiders in the metropolis, but their close relationships with the Welsh mercantile community in London unpleasantly reversed this expectation.

This project reveals Maria Jones’s central role in gradually elevating her husband George Beadnell’s social position from mere bank clerk to gentry status in Wales by the late 1830s through acquiring and renting Montgomeryshire properties. Additionally, she orchestrated a critical 1831 marriage alliance between her eldest daughter Margaret and her affluent first cousin, the famous tea merchant David Lloyd of what would become Lloyd & Co., that regrafted the Beadnell line back onto the ancestral tree, intensifying her maternal ambition for the charming Maria Beadnell to make a similarly impressive match. To discourage Dickens from his pursuit of her youngest daughter, Mrs. Beadnell may have recounted the families’ pedigrees at length, torturing him with the unsaid implications of their class and ethnic differences, as suggested in *Bleak House* (1853) by Mrs. Woodcourt’s incessant nocturnal confidences to the ‘uncomfortable’ orphan Esther Summerson, which boast of descent from the fictional Welsh rebel ‘Morgan ap-Kerrig’.

In conclusion, it will be posited that, not only in *Bleak House*, but also in *Great Expectations* (1861), Dickens later revisited the psychological trauma of being othered and denigrated as a young man with ‘nothing to “come into”’ by Mrs. Beadnell, who was otherwise a generous hostess and social sponsor to him on all matters unrelated to his undesirable courtship of Maria.

Lydia Craig is an instructor of English at Lake Land College, an associate editor of The Charles Dickens Letters Project, and copy editor of *The Dickensian*, journal of the Dickens Fellowship. She is also Treasurer of The Dickens Society and co-editor and developer, with Dr Emily Bell, of the open-access Omeka database Dickens Search (2021-). In fall of 2024, she and Bell will publish *The Verse of Charles Dickens*, a volume featuring ‘new’ Dickens poems and research, with Edinburgh University Press. She has contributed chapters and articles on Dickens, textual studies, and digital research to *The Dickensian*, *Dickens Quarterly*, *Dickens Studies Annual*, *The Theological Dickens* (2021) and *Dickens and Women Re-observed* (2020).

'Editors (up) in Arms: Dickens's *All the Year Round* and Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine*

Mark Cronin

Saint Anselm College (USA)

It has become something of a commonplace to assert that Dickens's series of essays, collected as the *Uncommercial Traveler*, serves, in part, as a response to William Makepeace Thackeray's own essays, *Roundabout Papers*, written in Thackeray's role as the editor of *The Cornhill Magazine*. This should come as no great revelation: Dickens and Thackeray were sometimes friends, and certainly long-time rivals over the course of their careers. Their literary intersections and relationship began when Thackeray applied to become the illustrator of *The Pickwick Papers* and continued through competing novels, the "Dignity of Literature Controversy," which first ruptured their friendship, and then the 1858 Garrick Club Affair. For these reasons, the prevailing narrative has been that Dickens' and Thackeray's relationship in their final years was solely characterized by mistrust, bitterness, and acrimony. To be sure, there is evidence to support this view, and, in fact, post 1858, Dickens and Thackeray do not speak again until a couple of weeks before Thackeray's death. Yet, I think there is evidence to suggest an unexamined counter narrative: as editors of competing magazines, Dickens and Thackeray continued to engage with one another, but in the more neutral ground of their literary productions and with a good deal less hostility.

This paper will argue that as editors, Dickens and Thackeray were writing essays, procuring novelists, and contributing their own fiction with the other (occasionally) in mind. This paper will examine this connection, and consider whether an extended literary conversation takes place between Dickens and Thackeray in the pages of their respective magazines, one that begins with Thackeray's first *Roundabout Paper*, "On a Lazy Idle Boy" and concludes when Dickens writes the 1864 obituary for Thackeray in *The Cornhill Magazine*.

Mark Cronin is the Academic Dean and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Saint Anselm College, in Manchester, New Hampshire. His general areas of interest include Dickensian adaptations and Dickens's literary relationships with other Victorian authors. He has published articles on Dickens in *Dickens Studies Annual* and the *Dickens Quarterly*. He is a regular attendee at the annual Dickens symposium. In July 2011, Mark and his wife Meaghan hosted the Symposium in Manchester, New Hampshire.

'Dickens's American Children: the Darley Illustrations in the *Dickens's Little Folks Series*'

Meaghan Cronin

Saint Anselm College (USA)

The prolific American illustrator F.O.C. Darley created images for the American "Household" edition of Dickens' works (1861-65). He also contributed plates for later editions of Dickens' works and created a large-scale portfolio of *Character Sketches from Dickens* (1892). My paper will present Darley's illustrations in the little-known *Dickens's Little Folks* series as "co-occurring" depictions of Dickens's characters in a new context: an American children's series of abridged Dickens' novels.

The *Dickens's Little Folks* are twelve volumes about Dickens's young characters—such as *Little Nell* and *Florence Dombey*—each composed of excerpts from the original novels aimed at bringing "these famous stories from the library to the nursery." First published by J.S. Redfield (1855-56) and by at least four other publishers, the series included individual frontispieces by Darley. The Clark & Maynard series (1861-62) added a title page illustration by Darley. These drawings/engravings have not been presented or discussed in any exhibit or scholarship about Darley's art, to my knowledge.

My paper will examine these drawings in the context of American children's books. Though the *Little Folks* are excerpts rather than retellings of Dickens' works, I argue that they "adapt" Dickens by isolating a character in a narrowed version of the story. The accompanying Darley illustrations magnify the characters' virtuous qualities and interactions with others. Additional new context is created by the unsigned editor's prefaces, which direct young readers to notice characters' pious, humble behavior and their judicious or immature choices. Darley's illustrations recast Dickens novels in the context of the juvenile series—a model designed to provide moral guidance, advance middle-class social mores, and rely on the popularity of Dickens to promote education and ensure sales.

Dr. Meaghan Cronin is Professor of English and the Director of College Writing at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire. She teaches Romantic and Victorian literature and advanced writing courses. Her research focuses on girls and religion—broadly, the notion of "good" girls—in nineteenth-century British fiction. Essays on these topics and others have appeared in *Victorians Institute Journal*, *Essays in Criticism*, and elsewhere, including in collections on *Fathers in Victorian Fiction* and *Catholicism in Contemporary Literature*. She currently finds herself working on two Dickens projects: one about sexual assault in Dickens novels and the second about the American series of abridgements for children, the *Dickens's Little Folks*.

“Tell the Wind and the Fire where to stop; not me!”: Hysteria and Incendiarism in *A Tale of Two Cities*

Ahmed Diaa Dardir

Institute for De-Colonising Theory (Egypt)

Since the French Revolution and throughout the revolutionary upheavals of the 19th century, crowds and insurrection have been imagined through the gendered tropes of hysteria and incendiarism. This reached its peak in 1871 when, in the aftermath of the Paris Commune, counterrevolution invented the figure of the Petroleuse, or the female incendiary. Tethered to the figure of the Petroleuse was a discourse on how women were more prone to this hysteria of mass arson. In this discourse, ultimately a discourse on masculinity as rationality and the State as the embodiment of the masculine, rational, order, women and forces of nature stand together as the metonyms for the revolutionary crowd. In *A Tale of Two Cities* two forms of fire punctuate the text, standing for two modes of being and two types of femininity. On one side there is tamed fire, fire that is domesticated in lamps and the hearth, and finds its expression in Lucie (Light) Manette. The other is incendiary: the fire that consumes the Chateaux of the Marquis, fire as a running metaphor for the French Revolution, fire personified in the fiery character of Madame Defarge, and the misfire of her gun that ends her life.

My paper reads these instances side by side with the occurrence of fire in the counterrevolutionary archive, and against a theoretical framework that attempts to make sense of this hystericization of fire, the crowd, revolution, and women. *A Tale of Two Cities* is not a mere example of such discourse. Madame Defarge popularized the revolutionary female incendiary as a literary type and a figure of counterrevolution to the extent that we cannot think of the Petroleuses of 1871 without thinking of her.

Ahmed Diaa Dardir is the co-founder of the Institute for De-Colonising Theory (IDCtheory). His research deals with questions of power and subjectivity, especially in colonial/anticolonial and revolutionary /counterrevolutionary contexts. He holds a PhD in Middle East Studies from Columbia University. His forthcoming book is tentatively titled *Licentious Topographies: Global Counterrevolution and Bad Subjectivity in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt*.

‘A Sheep Without a Flock? Dickens’ Religious Contexts’

Christian Dickinson

Brewton-Parker College (USA)

At the end of his great work of popular theology, *Mere Christianity*, fantasy author and Apologist C. S. Lewis compares Christian belief to a great hallway. In this analogy, the various doors leading to the rooms attached to the hallway are the various religious sects popular during Lewis’s and our own time. The point which Lewis wishes to make is this: As long as someone is in the hallway, we should not judge the based on which room they may enter. That is, as long as someone has accepted the essential components of Christian doctrine and belief, then the particular sect to which that creed is attached is of no great concern. My question for this paper is a simple one: were Charles Dickens to somehow find himself in such a hallway, which room would he enter? The allure of religious studies in Dickens centers around this problem: his core beliefs seem to be that of traditional Anglicanism, though he practiced Unitarianism for many years of his adult life. His disdain for Evangelical missions and cant is well known, though some of his most passionate convictions were championed simultaneously by Evangelicals (such as the cause of abolition of the slave trade). He seemed to promote a gospel of works, but did not at all shy away from the divine aspects of Christ’s nature. By looking at biographical accounts of Dickens’s life, as well as tracing his personal correspondence, we will perhaps arrive at a more conclusive categorical understanding of Dickens’s religious vision.

Dr. Christian Dickinson serves as an Assistant Professor of English Literature at Brewton-Parker college in Mount Vernon, Georgia. He grew up in Jacksonville, Florida earning his Undergraduate degree at the University of North Florida. After teaching in the public education system for three years, he was accepted into the Master’s program at Florida State. After completing his Master’s and teaching for one year at a community college in Tallahassee, he was accepted into Baylor University, where he specialized in the religious culture of the nineteenth century. Dr. Dickinson has published both academically and creatively. His latest work, *Sonnets from the Psalms*, is a series of poetic adaptations of the Biblical book of Psalms.

‘Dickens and Disguise: from Datchery to Dedlock’

Leah Dillon-Sloan

Queens University, Belfast (UK)

The fascination with hidden identity and disguise is a device familiar to Dickens, and one that he revisits often in his fiction. This paper will examine disguise from a Dickensian perspective in *Bleak House*, *Edmund Drood*, *Great Expectations*, and *Little Dorrit*, to determine how and why he uses this device in his works. Rather than being merely exigencies of plot, the author’s introduction of disguises are instead a response to a more substantial dialogue about the manufacturability of self, and are evidence of an emerging commercial aesthetic industry in the 19th century, prompted by the enhanced significance of visibility for supervision, surveillance, and social inspection particularly through such means as photography, gas and electric light, and even cosmetics. Dickens interacted with these discourses and technologies to manufacture his celebrity and promote a version of himself to his audiences. He understood the need for social mask-making and familiarised himself with its modes and praxis. He too had things to hide, and he successfully disguised his private self from public eyes and imaginations. He engineered the narrative surrounding the separation from his wife Catherine, and managed to suppress details of his love affair with Ellen Ternan; despite whiffs of scandal, he remained one of the most popular celebrities and influential writers of the nineteenth century. This paper will interrogate whether disguises and hidden identity are used to enhance narratorial performability and theatrical flair, or to alter and reframe unappealing socio-economic or non-physical aspects of self.

Leah Dillon-Sloan is a first-year PhD candidate in English literature focusing on Dickens and disguised identity in the school of Arts, English and Languages at Queen’s University Belfast. She studied as an undergraduate at Queen’s and a postgraduate at the University of Kent in Canterbury where she discovered a love of all things Victorian. Leah’s general research interests are on the nineteenth century individual and the creation of identity – public and personal – in Victorian literature.

“The “great origin and purpose” of Baptism in *Dombey and Son*

Rebecca Easler

Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)

At the end of the christening scene in Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), the narrator intrudes into the story and suggests that Mr. Dombey would benefit from thinking less of his own dignity and more ‘of the great origin and purpose of the ceremony in which he took so formal and so stiff a part...His arrogance contrasted strangely with its history.’ While much of the research on the christening scene focuses on its funeral tone, my research focuses on the context of the service in relation to the narrator’s curious suggestion. This paper therefore examines the service of infant baptism, as outlined in *The Book of Common Prayer*, and argues that this service is a point of context for Dombey’s near-suicide at the end of the novel. According to *The Book of Common Prayer*, in the ritual of baptism, the child becomes ‘dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death, may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin.’ Baptism thus is an exorcism, an exchange in which the ‘old man’ born into Adam’s sin is revoked and then restored as the new-born child of a redeeming Christ. While the service is performed for little Paul, this language offers new meaning when Dombey undergoes his redemption. As he contemplates suicide, his old, monstrous self that he sees in the mirror is ‘exorcised’ and replaced with a new, redeemed version of his self. This exchange is also possible because of his daughter’s love for him, as she returns to him from the sea at this pivotal moment to stop his suicidal thoughts. Ultimately, this paper positions the ‘origin and purpose’ of the baptismal service as a significant contextual reference in the relationship between Dombey, his son, and his own identity.

Rebecca Easler is a PhD candidate at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. Her thesis researches the intersections between nineteenth century death culture, identity, and constructions of childhood in the dead and dying child characters of Charles Dickens’s novels. She completed her MSc in Enlightenment, Romantic, and Victorian Literature at the University of Edinburgh in 2017, her final thesis researching the ‘theology’ of childlikeness in George MacDonald’s fairy tales.

'*Oliver Twist* and the Survival of the (a)Cutest

Kamilla Elliott

Lancaster University (UK)

This paper reads Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* in its own contexts and through studies of facial neoteny to ask why and how the helpless, passive, stupefied Oliver survives and thrives in the social order whilst the resourceful, active, acutely intelligent Artful Dodger is exiled from it. From 1731, "cute," a contraction of "acute," meant "sharp and quick-witted," characterised persons like the Dodger; in 1834, the word was beginning to connote "attractive, pretty, charming" (*OED*); the only meaning offered by the *Cambridge Dictionary* today is "(especially of someone small or young) pleasant and attractive." Although Dickens never used the word in that sense, *Oliver Twist* pits the cute (pleasant, attractive, small, young) Oliver against the acute Dodger (who is Oliver's age) to propose a new model of social formation for middle-class males against prevailing performative models. Cognitive scientists argue that facial neoteny (the retention of juvenile features) confers a survival advantage based in nurture rather than nature or social performance: infants with more mature features receive less care than infants with more neotenous features (Keating 2003); women are more likely to protect younger-looking than older-looking children of the same age from a beating (Alley 1983); in simulated court trials, baby-faced defendants are deemed more credible than mature-faced defendants (Masip 2003). That these studies *replicate* episodes in *Oliver Twist* and that Cruikshank's illustrations of Oliver and the Dodger prefigure scientific drawings of neotenous and mature faces in the 1990s (Coss and Showengerdt 1998) suggests the dynamics are culturally produced. Cultural Cuteness Studies examines the role of cuteness in commodity consumption, where it inspires "proprietary desire" figured as "moral sentiment" protecting the cute from "exposure in the public sphere" by "resituating it within ... a familial context" assimilating consumption into the logic of adoption" (Merish 1996: 186-88). Cruikshank had the same idea.

Kamilla Elliott is Professor of Literature and Media in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. Her research interests lie in relations between British literature of the long nineteenth century and other media (painting, illustration, theatre, photography, film, television, and new media). Author of *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge, 2003), *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction: The Rise of Picture Identification, 1764-1835* (Johns Hopkins, 2012), and *Theorizing Adaptation* (Oxford, 2020), she is writing a sequel to her 2012 monograph, continuing the study of British literature's role in the rise of picture identification practices to 1920.

'Fellow Travelers: Dickens, Orwell, Wilson, Trilling'

Annette Federico

James Madison University (USA)

Graham Greene begins his 1950 essay on *Oliver Twist*, "A critic must try to avoid being a prisoner of his time." Easier said than done. To some left-leaning writers in the middle of the last century, the present time had an unignorable grasp on their critical sensibility—even the civilized practice of thinking about Victorian literature seemed to be infected by a collective sense of dread generated by worldwide economic depression, the rise of Fascism, and a global conflict that involved monstrous violence against many human beings. Strangely enough, Dickens felt suddenly, frighteningly relevant to modern culture. His later novels, especially, seemed to address widespread disillusionment, the waning of ideals—"lulling us with the music of despair," as Greene writes. For Lionel Trilling, "The modern self, like Little Dorrit, was born in a prison." *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, claims Edmund Wilson, has behind it "bitter judgments and desperate emotions." The context of current events, intellectual trends, and individual temperament all bleed into these critics' reconsiderations of Dickens's fiction. How could they not? What interests me, though, is not necessarily what these writers saw or wanted to see in Dickens—a genius driven by inner demons, an angry radical—but the humanist assumptions that motivated their criticism. These were people who believed that a writer, even a mere literary critic, has an obligation to report on the human situation as it plays out in front of his eyes. They were moral critics, and Dickens's novels presented them above all with the moral drama of personal responsibility, the (Orwellian?) struggle for spiritual survival. Seventy years later, entrapped in my own moment on the timeline, reading these essays adds another contextual layer to my own anxiously hopeful reading of Dickens in our own fraught times.

Annette Federico is Professor of English at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA. She is the author of six books including *Charles Dickens: But for you, dear stranger* (2022) and *Reading the Victorian Novel* (2024). She has also edited two collections of critical essays, *Gilbert and Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic After Thirty Years* (2009) and *My Victorian Novel: Critical Essays in the Personal Voice* (2020), and recently was guest editor, with Michelle Allen-Emerson, of a special issue of *Dickens Quarterly* on "Dickens and His Publics."

‘Context and Intertextuality in *Our Mutual Friend*’

Anita Fernandez

Independent Scholar

Further to my paper presented at Lowell in 2012, I would like to explore in greater depth the educational contexts of *Our Mutual Friend*, in the context of the Bloomsbury development of University College and in particular the expression ‘The Schoolmaster is abroad’ arising out of the foundation of the University College School and the political conflict between Lord Brougham and the Duke of Wellington. This popular expression came from Brougham’s speech in January 1828 and the phrase crops up in Eugene Wrayburn’s reflections on Bradley Headstone in Book III Chapter X. According to Rosemary Ashton in *Victorian Bloomsbury* (2012) this phrase was linked in the popular mind with W T Moncrieff’s poem ‘The March of Intellect’, perhaps because of an article in the *Morning Post* which quoted Brougham under that very title. At the time of the speech John Dickens had become a Parliamentary reporter, and his son Charles was starting work at Blackstone’s as a junior clerk. He would certainly have been aware of the relationship of Brougham to the movement for improvements in education which was firmly on the political agenda. ‘The schoolmaster is abroad’ was repeated in Punch until long after Brougham coined the phrase. Was it accidentally used, and repeated, in Chapter X, Book III? Mrs Wilfer’s failed School for Young Ladies echoes Mrs Dickens’s similar attempt in 1823, coincidentally near to the site of the new University College. The duality of the ‘Literary Dustman’ in another poem by W T Moncrieff, as both the Golden Dustman and the Literary Man with a Wooden Leg, is a typical Dickens trope of duality, but there are many more in *Our Mutual Friend* and they both reflect Dickens’s youth and his mature reflections in his final completed work.

Anita Fernandez Young is a retired academic. She has been reading, researching and writing about Dickens for many years and is currently performing costumed readings of Dickens and other 19th Century writers at venues throughout England. She is Chairman of the Nottingham Branch of the Dickens Fellowship and Secretary of the Alliance of Literary Societies.

‘Contextualising Body Meaning: Dickensian Body Expressiveness and the Case of *Great Expectations*’

Léa Fourure-Reynaud

Aix-Marseille University (France)

In the past few years, the analysis of body meaning has increasingly attracted interest in Dickensian studies and beyond. Barbara Korte acknowledged “body language” as “an important signifying system in the literary text” as such (1997, 4); her approach is representative of regarding the body as a singular meaning-maker more generally (Goffman, 1981; Csordas, 2002). Even more recently, corpus linguistics has suggested to read the body in terms of “meanings beyond the word” that are set in precise textual contexts (Mahlberg, Wiegand and Hennessey, 2020). In the field of Dickens studies in particular, academic contributions on Dickensian faces and hands (Hollington, 2019; Capuano, 2015) have shown body meaning to be the object of several cultural reconfigurations. In the wake of those studies, this project yet wishes to go further by analysing the co-occurrence and articulation of body and meaning in Dickens’s novels from the second half of his career, with a focus on *Great Expectations*. The body produces energy which is originally neutral (Stern, 2010), and only subsequently labelled with varied meanings. Against this background, the notion of expressiveness—instead of expression—becomes a key element in understanding the link between body and meaning in Dickens. Charles Bell, for instance, mentions in *Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression* that “the expressions, attitudes and movements of the human figure are the characters of [body] language, adapted to [...] give the most striking and lively indications of intellectual power and energy.” (2, 1847).

This paper will look at the way expressiveness plays out in *Great Expectations*, particularly through numerous disconnections between body and meaning, such as Pip’s own shock hearing Estella claim he has “coarse hands”. This talk will consider the ambiguous and complex implications of such processes in terms of bodily expressiveness and what they reveal of Dickens’s masterful understanding of body language.

Léa Fourure-Reynaud is a second-year PhD student, working under the shared supervision of Professor Nathalie Vanfasse (Aix-Marseille University) and Professor Angelika Zirker (Tübingen University). Her research is concerned with the dynamics of body expressiveness, drawing on body energy and the rhetorical devices of *Energeia* and *Enargeia* in Dickens’s later novels. She analyses the textual mechanisms at work as well as the interdiscursivity between Dickens’s texts and a variety of Victorian sources that deal with the body, ranging from sociology to philosophy and from psychology to medicine.

'Keywords in Context: Liberty and Oppression in Charles Dickens's Novels'

Eleanora Gallitelli

Roma Tre University (Italy)

What was Charles Dickens's idea of liberty? What was his position towards the oppressed? Is it possible to detect what attitude he took to the "depressing institutions of that British empire" (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 16)? This paper seeks to address these questions, drawing strictly on material from Dickens's own texts. With the help of the web application CLiC, developed to support the analysis of discourse in narrative fiction, the author considers occurrences in all Dickens's novels of the words "liberty" (the liberty to do something, personal liberty, liberty of speech or action, but also in the sense of "taking liberties"), "oppress" (used as a wildcard, so including "oppressive", "oppressed", "oppressor", "oppressively") and "empire". Analysis of these occurrences provides insight not only into the positions his characters assume towards the moral value of liberty and its violation, but also into the stylistic strategies Dickens deploys to tackle these issues. What emerges is how wary Dickens was of magniloquence, often employed by his villains to conceal their misbehaviour, and how he addressed his satire to the deceitful language of such characters. Finally, although it will make no sense to search for an expression like "human rights" in the fiction of the mid-19th century, the article discusses Dickens's treatment of the concept of "human beings", a phrase occurring 32 times in his novels, and puts it in relation with the 54 occurrences of the word "war" and the 93 occurrences of the word "slave".

Eleonora Gallitelli holds a PhD in Translation Studies (IULM University, Milan). Her thesis was published as *Il ruolo delle traduzioni letterarie dall'inglese in Italia dall'Unità alla globalizzazione* (2016). She was awarded the Dickens Society's 2022 Robert Partlow Prize and the 2021 ESSE Bursary for the project "Isaac Newton's Principia and its Eighteenth-Century English Commentaries". She is a research fellow in English Language and Translation at Roma Tre University, where she is involved in the project CREST, which is part of the PNRR-funded partnership CHANGES (Cultural Heritage Active Innovation of Nex-Gen Sustainable Society).

‘*A Christmas Carol*’s Sci-Fi Theatrical Reboot’

Marty Gould

University of South Florida (USA)

Through a steady stream of adaptations on stages and screen, *A Christmas Carol* has made “Dickensian” the hallmark of the holiday season. In the nineteenth century, however, the *Carol* was not the seasonal theatrical staple it has become. After an initial blossoming of dramatic interest in the story in the 1840s, the *Carol* was largely ignored by dramatists. Theatrical records show there were a few dramatizations in the 1850s, even fewer in the 1870s, and but one in the 1880s. Having shared the stage with *Faust* at Edinburgh’s Albert Theatre in 1886, Scrooge and Marley more or less vanished from the stage until the early years of the twentieth century. So why did *A Christmas Carol*, which had been relatively unpopular with Victorian playwrights suddenly, at the dawn of the twentieth century, become such fertile and favored material for theatrical—and cinematic—appropriation? My paper proposes that it was Richard Ganthony’s *A Message from Mars* (1899) that provided the *Carol* with a necessary, and timely, update. The play includes the core ingredients the *Carol*: a miserable, selfish man; an otherworldly being carrying a moral message; a profound personal transformation. Following the *Carol*’s decade-and-a-half hiatus from the stage, Ganthony’s play initiated a revival of theatrical interest in the Dickensian holiday vision of redemption via spiritual intervention. The success of Ganthony’s inventive interpretation, which updated the *Carol* to reflect contemporary interest in interplanetary communication, demonstrated that Dickens’s story was adaptable not only to other media—stage and, later, screen—but other genres (from fantasy to science fiction), thereby paving the way for the revisionary multimedial manifestations of the *Carol* in the later twentieth century. *A Message from Mars* initiated a new era, not only of dramatizations of the *Carol* but of imaginative, innovative, revisionary reimaginations of Dickens’s Christmas tale.

Marty Gould is Associate Professor of English at the University of South Florida. He is the author of *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter* (Routledge, 2011). His current research investigates adaptations of Dickens’s work on both stage and screen. Recent essays appear in *The Cambridge Companion to Melodrama* (ed. by Carolyn Williams) and *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*. His essay on “Dickens and Global Cinema,” in the forthcoming volume *Charles Dickens and the Arts*, edited by Claire Wood and Juliet John, is due out later this year.

“More of gravy than of grave”: Dickens’s Corporal Ghosts

Jennifer Heine

University of Southern California (USA)

This paper will take as its starting point an often-quoted but — I argue — under-analyzed line from Charles Dickens’s 1943 novella *A Christmas Carol* — in reply to the ghost Jacob Marley’s observation that his old friend and business partner Ebenezer Scrooge does not believe him to be real, asking “Why do you doubt your senses?”, Scrooge replies:

“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!” (11).

Although many adaptations wring humor from the line, particularly the quintessentially Dickensian pun “more of gravy than of grave,” there has been relatively less scholarship on how Dickens’s ghosts, both in *A Christmas Carol* and beyond, seem to take on greater physical presence than those in other Victorian ghost stories. By suggesting that Marley’s apparition is the result of indigestion, rather than any spectral presence, Scrooge locates the supernatural firmly within his own body and bodily functions, blurring the divide between the paranormal and the scientific in ways that reflect contemporary cultural interests in what today we might call pseudoscience, such as mesmerism and spiritualism.

The paper will then take up some of Dickens’s other ghosts in conversation with Marley’s, including the railway signal-man of the eponymous story (1866), and Doctor Manette’s return to life in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). Ultimately, I will explore the Dickensian ghost in the context of Victorian popular science and pseudoscience, considering how it comes to be constituted as a physical presence.

Jennifer Heine received a BA from Boston College in 2016, where she majored in English and Hispanic Studies, and an MA from the University of Chicago in 2017, where she studied Comparative Literature. She is a PhD candidate in the Department of English at the University of Southern California, where she is currently working on a dissertation project on narrative gaps and character embodiment in the Victorian, and especially Dickensian, novel.

‘Bridging Epochs: Exploring the Confluence of Dickensian Creativity and Artificial Intelligence
in a Techno-Literary Landscape’

Dean J. Hill

University of Birmingham (UK)

This paper examines the contextual and thematic intricacies within Dickens’ works and their intersection with the contemporary landscape of artificial intelligence. Beginning with an analysis of Dickensian contexts, the paper explores the impact of industrialisation on characters and societal dynamics – notably *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* – and seeks to establish parallels between the depicted industrial age in Dickens’ narratives and the transformative effects observed within contemporary AI-driven contexts. Ethical considerations subsequently provide a conceptual framework to evaluate moral landscapes, exemplified by characters like Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* and Pip in *Great Expectations*; this paper shall strive to scrutinise the co-occurrence of ethical quandaries, drawing explicit connections between Dickens’ narratives and the ethical dimensions inherent in modern AI algorithms. Moreover, the convergence of technology and creativity allows for debate surrounding the intersection of technology with Dickensian creativity, scrutinising the applications of artificial intelligence in literary realms; for example, generating text, refining prose, crafting plot outlines and aiding character development. Human-AI collaborations extend the exploration into efforts between creators and artificial intelligence systems to draw explicit parallels with historical collaborations between Dickens and illustrators; the aim will be to not only provide a nuanced understanding of the evolving landscape of creative alliances in literature through the lens of artificial intelligence but to signify the co-occurrence of human creativity and AI contributions.

This paper endeavours to weave a literary analysis which draws parallels to Dickensian themes of societal shifts and the evolving context of work in today’s age of AI; beyond a mere juxtaposition, it unravels the nuanced connections and co-occurrences that illuminate the intersections and symbiotic relationship between Dickensian storytelling and technology studies, inviting further exploration into the intricate associations between artificial intelligence and literature.

Dean Hill is a graduate of Birmingham City University. With a keen interest in exploring the intersection of literature and technology, they are set to embark on a research degree in English Literature at the University of Birmingham, delving into the nuanced relationship between Orwell’s literary legacy and the contemporary landscape of artificial intelligence. In addition to their academic pursuits, Dean is actively engaged in fostering the next generation’s enthusiasm for literature and critical thinking via the National Literacy Trust and through supporting judging of the 2024 Orwell Youth Prize. Their work at the university has included editorial coordination of a human rights publication with interest from academics in the UK and US, students, the Birmingham Poet Laureate and MPs. Dean brings a passion for literature and forward-looking approach to the evolving landscape of literary studies.

‘The Swiss Context of *Dombey and Son*’

Michael Hollington

Independent Scholar

Dickens spent four extended periods abroad in the 1840s: in America, Italy, Switzerland and France. He wrote books about the first two of these, but little else. In Lausanne and Paris, by contrast, he laboured *intensively* on a major novel. As a result, there is a tendency perhaps to underplay the significance of these, with the period in Switzerland – about the same length as that in America – suffering particular neglect. Thus the excellent Pilgrim edition of the Letters, commenting on Dickens’s intention to acquire ‘some Mountain knowledge’ there, asserts that he did not use it until the later period of *Little Dorrit*. I don’t believe this is true, at least at the level of metaphor: *Dombey and Son* is full of mountain language. The most striking instance is the very precise comparison of Paul Dombey’s death to an avalanche bringing other catastrophes with it. Dickens had never used this word in his fiction before, and was only later to do so again in *David Copperfield* and *No Thoroughfare*. He could not have done so without the experience of Switzerland. Likewise, Captain Cuttles eyebrows are compared to dark clouds over mountains, and the relationship between Edith and Florence is described in terms of precipices and chasms – words that he uses literally in describing Swiss landscape. But my paper will not only explore this emphasis on verticality in *Dombey and Son*. It will also examine Dickens’s significant exposure to political revolution and constitutional reform in the Switzerland of the 1840s – seen at the time, in the words of the historian Christopher Clarke, as the opening chapter of the revolutions of 1848 – and the extent to which the novel reflects his growing sympathy with radical causes in Europe.

Michael Hollington is a retired Professor of English and Comparative Literature who held Chairs in Australia and France, and has taught on every continent. He is the author of *Dickens and the Grotesque* and several other books on Dickens, and of numerous essays and articles on him in books and journals, as well as editor of two major collections: *Charles Dickens: Critical Assessments* (4 vols), and *The Reception of Charles Dickens in Europe* (2 vols). In addition, he has written widely both on British and European writers, including books on Shakespeare, George Eliot and Günther Grass, and, further afield, on Walt Whitman and Katherine Mansfield. He is a Life Member of Clare Hall, Cambridge University.

'Dickens and the 14th Earl of Derby in the Context of Victorian Politics'

Jeanie Grant Moore

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (USA)

In February of 1833, Edward George Smith-Stanley, later Lord Stanley and the 14th Earl of Derby, gave a six-hour speech in Parliament that was partly recorded and transcribed by the young cub reporter, Charles Dickens. When the speech appeared in *The Daily Mirror* the following day, only those parts that had been done by Dickens were accurate. Stanley invited Dickens to his home in London, where he recreated the speech in its entirety, dictating it as Dickens recorded it. Thus began an acquaintance that had an influence on Dickens's work, specifically *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in which, for example, the circumstances of the eponymous main character's travels bear a striking resemblance to those of Stanley's American trip in 1824-25. Further, a study of Dickens's references to Stanley in his works, his shifting attitudes toward him, and the intersection and differences in their views illuminate aspects of both men in the larger context of Victorian politics. Many questions call for further exploration: after an initial friendly relationship, why did Dickens later seem to turn against Stanley and harshly satirize him personally? Was it because their opinions diverged on several issues: for one instance, Dickens's ambiguous views of slavery differed from those of Stanley, who submitted the bill for the abolition of slavery. Was it because Stanley became a Tory after most of his life as a Whig? Was it because of Dickens's growing dislike of Parliament in general? Untangling the politics of the day will be a challenging problem to undertake but will ultimately provide a contextual framework for my future work on this paper.

Dr. Jeanie Grant Moore, Professor Emerita of English from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and recently retired from the English department at the University of San Diego, received her undergraduate degree at UCLA, her Masters at San Diego State University, and her PhD at the University of California, Riverside. She has taught a variety of courses at both institutions, and she has led students on study tours to the UK, as well as semesters abroad at Cambridge University. In 2018 she received the Faculty Award for Outstanding Teaching at USD. She gave a series of lectures at Oxford University in 2019 for the Living, Learning Community based at the University of Virginia, and for the Osher Program at the University of California San Diego in the spring of 2024. Her publications include articles on British literature of various periods, and she has delivered papers at regional, national, and international conferences.

“Now you’re going *full Dickens* on me?” *Spirited* (2022 and *A Christmas Carol*: Meta-textual Adaptation and the Exploitation of Intellectual Property’

Rob Jacklosky

University of Mount Saint Vincent (USA)

How do changing theatrical and filmic contexts change adaptations of Charles Dickens’s work? How does the film as a commodity (with its own market requirements) change the source material? The broad question will be narrowed by a consideration of *Spirited* (2022), a lightweight, musical adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. *Spirited* is a self-referential and meta-textual mélange that references many Christmas-themed movies but depends on *A Christmas Carol* for its spine. Much has been written about the Dickens industry, Dickens adaptations, and Dickens filtered through different mediums (readings, theatre, movies, re-writings) and how this contributes to a move away from Dickens and toward Dickensiana. *Spirited* is an entry into this world. When you are watching *Spirited* you recall other movies influenced by *A Christmas Carol* (*Scrooged*). We can’t forget it’s a Will Ferrell and Ryan Reynolds’s vehicle and production. You are watching it through the prism of *Elf* and other Ferrell and Reynolds’s movies. There are “call back” jokes and reference to these movies and to our awareness of them. But *Spirited* is also indebted to the context of recent television shows like *My Crazy-Ex-Girlfriend* and *Schmigadoon*, with their winking, ironically abrupt shifts into musical numbers. *Spirited* is *A Christmas Carol* adaptation that dips into Victorian England and introduces Scrooge, but is also rooted in its modern social-media moment, exploring the dangers of viral exposure and the synergies of stars and brands which is both a subject of the movie and a necessary ingredient of any modern movie. It takes as its villains celebrity Influencers, and its treatment of social media as a new evil are thoroughly modern, unimaginable even 20 years ago. The movie is a product of this context, and also mocking it. *Spirited* is a re-contextualizing Dickens in a world of post-modern meta-textual reference. But it’s also an example of the exploitation and durability of Dickens as “intellectual property” with future lives. The dance numbers even seem to look forward to a Broadway incarnation--- a thoroughly different context and commodification, promising a Ghost of Dickens Yet-to-Come.

Rob Jacklosky is a professor of English and Director of the Core Curriculum at the University of Mount Saint Vincent in the Bronx. He wrote the 2022 year in review essay in *Dickens Studies Annual*. He co-wrote, with Matthew Kaiser, a chapter on Dickens and shame in volume five of Bloomsbury’s *A Cultural History of Comedy in the Age of Empire*, edited by Matthew Kaiser and Andrew Stott (Bloomsbury 2020). He co-wrote, with Matthew Leporati, an essay for the collection *Isn’t it Ironic: Irony in Contemporary Popular Culture*, edited by Ian Kinane (Routledge 2021), and contributed an essay on Dickens’s influence on Donna Tartt’s *The Goldfinch* to Emily Bell’s collection, *Dickens After Dickens* (White Rose University Press 2020). His publications include essays on Matthew Arnold and Frank Sinatra, short stories in various journals and comic essays in McSweeney’s Internet Tendency.

'Dickens Reset'

Sophia C. Jochem

Freie Universität Berlin (Germany)

This paper explores how setting may be harnessed as a heuristic for 'undisciplining' Dickens scholarship. In line with basic conceptions of 'setting' as the place of the action, Dickens's novels are generally supposed to be set in England (rather than, for instance, India, Africa, or the Caribbean), discouraging a broad critical engagement with empire and race. My paper puts conceptual pressure on setting in order to reroute lines of enquiry to the unexplored places of Dickens's fiction, which range from *Martin Chuzzlewit*'s Bengal and *Little Dorrit*'s China to *Our Mutual Friend*'s South Africa and *Edwin Drood*'s Sri Lanka. Specifically, I will offer a case study of *Dombey and Son* and its textual investment in Barbados. With the novel's shown action never in fact getting to Barbados, I bring into focus the Perch family's nagging questions about a promised gift of preserved ginger as the text's primary way of putting the island on its map. I recontextualise the Perchs' reminders within the history of Black resistance in Barbados, which was inextricably entangled with the specific vegetable ways of *Zingiber officinale*. Barbadian ginger, grown by Black people on 'house spots' and traded through an informal marketing system run by Blacks, constituted one of the very few exports of an informal Black economy—and was widely believed to fund rebellions and other projects of Black resistance on the island. The Perchs' yearning for this particular plant product, I argue, puts Barbados on the novel's map as a historically and geographically specific place. Neither 'forgotten' nor 'fugitive' in any way, this engagement with the island setting of Barbados emphasises our responsibility as scholars and teachers to contextualise Dickens's writing in (trans)imperial histories, and demonstrates how setting may be conceptually remade to advance this agenda.

Sophia Jochem completed her Ph.D. at Freie Universität Berlin in October 2021. Her current book project interrogates the critical concept of minor characters as a discursive category, re-evaluating the margins of Dickens's novels from the point of view of feminist methodology. She is also working on a new project, provisionally entitled "Writing with Vegetables, 1722-1870" which brings an ecocolonial approach to bear on literary London. An initial paper on this topic, entitled "Fungi and the City," won the Dickens Society's Robert B. Partlow, Jr. Prize and appeared in the March 2022 issue of *Dickens Quarterly*.

‘The Shadow of Dickens: The Influence of Dickens in Disney’s Theme Parks’

Megumi Kumagai

Rikkyo University (Japan)

As seen in films such as Mickey’s Christmas Carol (1983), featuring Donald Duck’s uncle Scrooge McDuck, and Oliver & Company (1988), which tells the story of Oliver the Cat and his friends in New York City, Charles Dickens’ influence on the Walt Disney Company’s films is relatively straightforward and has been the subject of academic research. However, Dickens’ influence on theme parks, another essential aspect of Disney, has received little attention and needs to be the subject of sufficient academic research. This presentation will consider the possibility that Disney theme parks function as sites of Dickens’ literary adaptation, even if not as a direct influence. I explore the influence of Dickens, which functions in diverse ways across time and cultures, by taking up “Disney Story Beyond”, an event set in the Haunted Mansion, which has been running at Tokyo Disney Land for a limited time since 2023.

Megumi Kumagai is an independent researcher in Tokyo, Japan. She finished her PhD course at Rikkyo University (Tokyo) in 2022 and is currently writing her PhD thesis on the genealogy of the lazy and melancholy gentleman in Dickens’s novels. Her research also focuses on Victorian representations in Japanese subcultures, mainly Victorian literature and writers. Her main job is as a company employee, but she also teaches English Reading at Meiji University as a part-time lecturer and is a Research Associate at Rikkyo University. At the 2023 Dickens Society symposium, at the Decolonizing Dickens roundtable, she presented “The Reception and Representation of Charles Dickens and Western Literature in Japanese Subculture”.

‘Emily’s Dickens: Engagement and Reuse’

Christian Lehmann

Bard High School & Early-College (USA)

Emily Dickinson was very much a Dickens-son. She was six years old when Charles Dickens’ *The Pickwick Papers* began its serialization and by the time she was twelve, her family’s personal library held annotated copies of *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *American Notes*. The influential *Harper’s Weekly* and other American magazines serialized Dickens’ works and she had ready access to them. It is clear that Emily and her siblings, the elder brother William Austin and younger sister Lavinia Norcross, were raised on a steady diet of literature, and references to their shared reading experience are a recurring feature in their adult correspondence. While there has been some attention given to Dickinson’s use of Dickens in her poetry and to a lesser extent her letters, I want to return to the subject and expand it. Thus, this talk offers an introduction to these materials in a way that emphasizes the co-occurrence of Dickens and Dickinson and through a limited focus on *David Copperfield*. I discuss the way she codes references to her brother’s romantic entanglements by comparing herself to Julia Mills (L45) and then offer a close reading of her poem *Trudging to Eden* where the speaker meets a boy who “lisp[ed] me ‘Trotwood.’” What we will find is an Emily Dickinson who lived and breathed Charles Dickens’ novels in her daily life and in her written work in a way that let her use Dickens as a model upon which to craft her own literary development and as an interlocutor when she was met with silence from her own correspondents. She establishes a world in which her literary personae can interact with Dickens’ characters and texts in an astonishingly creative manner.

Christian Lehmann teaches Literature at Bard High-School, Early-College in Cleveland, Ohio. Although formally trained as a classicist, his passion for Dickens keeps him rooted in the 19th century. He has published on Dickens’ running headers and the erasure of racial difference in Dickens’ illustrators. He has served in the past on the Dickens Society Communications Team and as a Trustee. He recently finished his first monograph, *Dickens and the Classics*. He is also a certified CrossFit coach.

‘From Mutual Aid to Solidarity Economics: Charles Dickens’s Premonitory Economic Insights’

Georges Letissier

University of Nantes (France)

The current crisis of capitalism encourages local forms of resistance movements and alternative initiatives to mitigate the devastating effects of growing inequalities. This calls for a new economic epistemology. It is probably not far-fetched to draw parallels between the world depicted in Charles Dickens’s novels and the current realities of emerging countries, (Salman Rushdie, Danny Boyle). The parallel could be pushed further by spotting forms of economic solidarity, or mutual aid, in Dickens’s fiction writing. In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), the Russian anarchist Piotr Kropotkin describes Anthony Ashley Cooper’s (7th Earl of Shaftesbury) introduction of ‘micro credit’ to raise funds for the ‘Flowers and Watercress Girls’. Shaftesbury was close to Dickens, and the philanthropy they practised cannot be reduced to what is dismissed today as mere paternalistic, condescending benevolence (Duffo 2012).

A historical contextualisation of the concept of ‘solidarity’ (from Adam Smith’s ‘moral sentiments’ to Charles Darwin’s ‘moral sympathy’) invites us to re-read Dickens’s oeuvre to consider how altruistic relationships, counterpointing predatory individualistic comportments, are represented in his fiction. A range of examples from *Dombey and Son*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend* will be analysed as propounding practical solutions to concrete problems, driven by a spirit of solidarity. In hindsight, they seem to adumbrate some of the tenets and principles which make up the epistemological foundations of a fast-developing trend in contemporary economics. Ultimately, this raises the question of Dickens’s ideological stance, whether this incipient economy of solidarity was solely meant to alleviate the excesses of wild capitalism or underpinned by a more radical, seditious vision.

This proposal is based on a common research project on Dickens through the prism of contemporary economic paradigms, involving Prof. Nathalie Vanfasse (Aix-Marseille Université) and Prof. Emmanuel Petit (Université de Bordeaux).

Georges Letissier, Emeritus Professor, University of Nantes. From his studies on neo Victorian rewritings, he has branched out to investigate contemporary responses to specific Victorian canonical figures, chiefly Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Keeping up an interest in contemporary British fiction, he authored an article on the Anglo-Sri-Lankan writer Guy Gunaratne, ‘Crisis of the ‘Event’, Guy Gunaratne’s *In Our Mad and Furious City* (2018)’, in *Études britanniques contemporaines*, 63/2022 and delivered a paper on Nadifa Mohamed’s *The Fortune Men* (October 2022). Last publications to date include a monograph titled *The Higher Inward Life. George Eliot’s Middlemarch* (Presse Paris Nanterre, coll. Intercalaires, 2020) and a two-volume study *Enduring Presence: The Afterlives of William Hogarth* (2021), co-edited with Caroline Patey and Cynthia Roman. In 2023 he published two articles “‘The prismatic hues of memory: Visual story-telling and chromatic showmanship in Charles Dickens’s David Copperfield”, for *Connotations, A Journal of Critical Debate* and “Queering the canon in Middlemarch the series” in *Theory Now*. He also gave a paper at the 2023 BAVS conference in Guilford titled “George Eliot through the prism of Cynthia Ozick”.

'Lens Affect-ing Cells: Embodied Response and Critical Surcharge in Christine Edzard's Film
Adaptation of Dickens's *Little Dorrit*'

Melanie Lewis

Independent Scholar

In 1983, a set designer for opera, ballet, and film called Christine Edzard began pre-production of what Joss March calls a "gargantuan cinematic oddity" at her cottage-industry studio in Rotherhithe, London. The six-hour, two-part film interpretation of Dickens's novel *Little Dorrit*, entitled "Nobody's Fault" and "Little Dorrit's Story," which Edzard co-designed, wrote, and directed, was released in 1987. The film's restrained proscenium-centred camera work, what Grahame Smith called its "flat ... lighting" of "an endlessly two-dimensional surface," the transparent artifice of its studio-concocted scrims and bowers, elicited rebarbative criticism: Not all viewers recognized either the somatic rewards of its inverting critique of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, its Verdian score, and its folded, "circumlocuting" narrative movement; or the critical payload of its social theatre of affect. Elaborating on the work of Georges Letissier, Rachel Greenwald Smith, Joss March, Michael Bartram, Ruth Leys, and Pierre-Louis Patoine, my footage-illustrated presentation demonstrates the ways Edzard's cinematic art echoes the novel's tropes of imprisonment by constraining viewers in a series of cross-hatched, skylless diorama-sets while mimetically exposing the self-conscious theatricality of the Dorrit family's begging. At the same time, the viewer's sense of confinement gets relieved through embodied, almost trance-like response to the film's aural rhythm and visual poetics, which foreground discontinuity, non-linear temporality, close-hewed repetition, and obsessive, "affectionate" attention to surface detail. Eliding the mustachioed Rigaud/Blandois, Edzard's film duology shortens the path to denouement traversed by Dickens's novel. However, so far from repressing (melo-)drama, it multifariously elicits what Patoine calls "points of feeling," complicating affective-critical connections among characters, bodies, and socius through its echoing cellular frames.

Melanie Lewis is an independent scholar. She has a PhD in Critical Theory awarded by the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. Her thesis presents critical essays on major interpreters of Sophocles' *Antigone*, including Hegel, Heidegger, Jacobs, and Derrida. Melanie taught Religious Symbolism and the History of Christian Thought at the University of Regina; and she tutored and taught courses in World Religion at the University of Manitoba as well as a course in Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Winnipeg. Her interests include the aesthetics of melancholia and body history. She presented papers on the work of Heidegger and Derrida in at academic conferences in Winnipeg, Manitoba and in London, UK. In 2019 Melanie presented a paper called "Mourning Photography" at the Dickens Society Symposium in Salt Lake City, and in 2021 a paper entitled "A Theatre of Hands". Today she is delighted to give the presentation "LENS AFFECT-ING CELLS: EMBODIED RESPONSE AND CRITICAL SURCHARGE IN CHRISTINE EDZARD'S FILM ADAPTATION OF DICKENS'S *LITTLE DORRIT*."

“Christmas, Class, and Welfare on Film: or, Adaptations of *A Christmas Carol* and the Rise and Fall of the Welfare State’

Michael D. Lewis

Washington and Jefferson College (USA)

At last summer’s symposium, I located a nascent argument for the welfare state in *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens’s argument builds from representing urban poverty and from using a discourse of “common welfare.” In this paper, I consider how Dickens’ argument fares in adaptations of the *Carol*, especially in the context of the welfare state’s development. I use 1938, 1984, and 1999 films as case studies. The first two adaptations bookend the welfare state’s golden age. The 1938 *Carol* appeared as social programs expanded, responding to the mass immiseration of the Great Depression, while the 1984 *Carol* hit the small screen amidst the Thatcher / Reagan revolution and cuts to those very programs. These adaptations’ relationship to Dickens’s politics are similar and similarly mixed. They maintain his welfare rhetoric, but their visual depictions suggest that poverty is genteel, not lethal, that classed community is harmonious, not contentious. We see clean children and intact, not threadbare, clothes; and street crowds where songs and snowballs, not suffering, define the demos. The films thus offer Dickens’s solution to a problem they don’t depict. The 1999 *Carol* contains much less Dickens. Televised after Blair and Clinton moved their parties away from social democracy, it drops the Dickensian baton no less than the PM and president. It offers accurate visual representations, while taming Dickens’s dialogue, relinquishing welfare rhetoric. More disturbing is its representation of urban space. If earlier versions depicted happy streets, this one offers empty ones! Throughout, it often situates us with the country not city, with gentility not poverty, with privacy not the public. Dickens’s original pushes forcefully against the status quo. The 1938 and 1984 adaptations, amidst vital contests over the state, push similarly, if timidly. The 1999 version accepts the status quo, its neoliberal narrowing of public space, political discourse, political possibility, betraying Dickens’s vision.

Michael Lewis is an associate professor of English at Washington and Jefferson College, where he also coordinates the program in queer studies. He has published articles on democracy and violence in the industrial novel, friendship in Austen’s *Persuasion*, and queer erotics in Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend*.

‘Reviewing the Situation: Dickens, *Dodger*, and Transforming *Oliver Twist* for Children’s TV’

Chris Louttit

Radboud University (Netherlands)

Written by Rhys Thomas and Lucy Montgomery, *Dodger* is a family-friendly prequel to *Oliver Twist* which aired on CBBC and later BBC1 early in 2022. Thomas and Montgomery, both known for their work in comedy rather than drama, claim they wanted to bring food poverty to the fore at a time when use of food banks is rising and children in twenty-first century Britain are going hungry. The series also feels very much of its moment in the way it expands and updates the Dickensian universe in the vein of *Dickensian* (BBC, 2015) and Steven Knight’s recent and controversial adaptations of *A Christmas Carol* (BBC/FX, 2019) and *Great Expectations* (BBC/FX, 2023). My paper situates *Dodger* alongside this contemporary political and cultural context, but also argues that this *Oliver Twist* prequel needs to be viewed in relation to much longer trends in the adaptation history of the Dickensian culture text. These go back at least to the influence of David Lean’s *Oliver Twist* (1948) and Lionel Bart and Carol Reed’s musical *Oliver!* (1968) which both streamlined the Maylie plot and focused more centrally on the criminal underworld in London. As Marc Napolitano has noted, the influence of *Oliver!* in particular ‘can be detected in the family-oriented approach’ evident in numerous films and television series that have followed in the wake of the musical, and is perhaps most obvious in the 1997 Disney Channel adaptation with Richard Dreyfuss as Fagin and in 1988’s animated *Oliver & Company*. Like *Oliver!*, and the many interpretations of *Oliver Twist* it has influenced, *Dodger* presents Fagin’s criminal gang as a comically dysfunctional, if loving, family of choice, situating it playfully and knowingly in relation to a critical and surprisingly accurate account of Victorian social history aimed at its young audience.

Chris Louttit is Assistant Professor of English Literature at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. His research focuses on the mid-Victorian novel and its multimedia afterlives, and he has published a number of articles on these topics in venues such as *Adaptation*, *Book History*, *Gothic Studies*, and *Women’s Writing*. His current work on Dickens deals primarily with adaptation and illustration; in 2023 he published on an LGBTQIA+-positive *David Copperfield* web series in *Adaptation*, and other forthcoming publications include a chapter on the uses of Dickens in the work of a New Yorker cartoonist in *Adaptation and Illustration: Towards a Front-Line Approach* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). He remains Editor-in-Chief of *English Studies*, currently serves as the President of the Dickens Society, and this year’s conference somehow marks the twentieth anniversary of the first time he attended the Dickens Symposium as a PhD candidate.

‘Dis-Union Across the Atlantic: *Our Mutual Friend* and the American Civil War’

Jennifer MacLure

Kent State University (USA)

This paper investigates Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* in the context of American Civil War, during which it was written. Following Daniel Hack’s model of transatlantic “close reading at a distant,” I ask how this co-occurrence on the other side of the Atlantic amplifies themes in the novel in new ways. I focus on how the transatlantic view sheds light on two issues: (1) anxiety about the purchasing and fungibility of human bodies and (2) anxiety around marriage and the concept of permanent union. From the opening scene forward, *Our Mutual Friend* is chock full of human bodies being put into commerce and turned into profit. Corpses in the Thames become Lizzie’s “meat and drink”; Venus traffics in the “human wariou”; even the hapless Boffins accidentally find themselves trafficking in “orphan-stock.” The novel is also steeped in and fueled by anxiety around the union of marriage. Marriage can only enter the scene of possibility as a secret word, mumbled by a dying Eugene and deciphered by Jenny Wren; it can only be realized under false names and financial deception, after faked or near deaths or near deaths. This is not, I argue, the conventional pattern of individual misunderstandings and deferred reconciliations that propels the traditional marriage plot novel. It is, rather, a deep-seated, almost compulsive anxiety around the marriage bond itself that continues to undermine the stability of the novel’s marriages even after they are realized.

In this paper, I argue that these anxieties are inextricably bound up with those at stake in the American Civil War—about what it means to sell a human body and what it means to enter into a union. Reading the novel with an eye to transatlantic co-occurrence thus helps to illuminate how anxieties around race and slavery underwrite even the most apparently domestic of Victorian concerns.

Dr. Jennifer MacLure is an Assistant Professor of English at Kent State University in Ohio. She is the author of *The Feeling of Letting Die: Necroeconomics and Victorian Fiction* (Ohio State UP, 2023), which investigates how Victorian novels negotiate the emotional demands of economic systems that instrumentalize debility and death. Other recent publications include articles on disease in *Bleak House* (in *Dickens Studies Annual*) and, outside of Victorian studies, on memoirs by survivors of the Holmesburg Prison medical experiments (in the *Journal of Medical Humanities*).

“‘‘tied to a stake and innocent’’: Dickens’s Martyrdrom’

Sara Malton

Saint Mary’s University (Canada)

In *Edwin Drood*, Neville Landless indeed finds it “a little hard” to be “tied to a stake” despite his proclaimed innocence regarding Drood’s disappearance. The novel’s foregrounding of Cloisterham’s medieval past provides a fitting atmosphere of violence and bloodshed for Dickens’s mystery, but it often especially dwells on England’s history of martyrdom. Rochester Cathedral, the model for Cloisterham Cathedral, was itself built by England’s first Catholic King, St. Ethelbert, in 604 and was later home to English cardinal, bishop, and martyr St John Fisher, who would be executed by Henry VIII in 1535.

Edwin Drood thus situates its depiction of violence and apparent injustice amidst such a history of sacrifice and persecution. Yet martyrdom is a subject that attracts Dickens’s attention throughout his writing. As it has often been noted, Stephen Blackpool of *Hard Times* is seemingly modeled on St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who was stoned to death in c. 36 AD. Although her end is a much happier one, Sissy (Cecilia) Jupe serves to a degree as Stephen’s counterpart, invoking St. Cecilia, one of the earliest Roman martyrs and patron saint of music. Beyond this, Dickens revisits Christ’s preeminent sacrifice in *The Life of Our Lord* and, with an albeit more skeptical eye, the martyrdom of Joan of Arc in his *A Child’s History of England*.

Considering these and other works, this paper shall explore just what is truly at “stake” in Dickens’s treatment of martyrdom, considering its connection to his ongoing engagement with matters of justice, allegiance, and testimony in his writing.

Sara Malton is Professor of English and Associate Dean of Arts at Saint Mary’s University in Halifax, Canada. Her book *Forgery in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture* was published by Palgrave-Macmillan, and her work has appeared in such journals as *Studies in the Novel*, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, and *European Romantic Review*, *Religion and the Arts* and in a range of essay collections. From 2018—2021 she was Secretary of The Dickens Society, and she is currently co-authoring (with Sean Grass) a volume on Dickens for the Routledge “Literature Today” Series. She is also continuing to work on a project that examines the cultural representation of the nineteenth-century “fasting girl” in both secular and religious contexts.

'Dickens, *paterfamilias* – Responses to Fatherhood in *The Chimes*'

Jo Marshall-Collins

University of Buckingham (UK)

This paper will examine the role of fatherhood in *The Chimes*, relating it to Dickens's own experience and context during its inception. When Dickens was writing in Genoa at the end of 1844, he was father to five young children. All had accompanied Dickens and Catherine on the 11-month sojourn to Italy. Their combined presence in the Palazzo Peschiere was necessarily one element of many in the unique creative environment informing the second of the Christmas books. In subsequent criticism *The Chimes* has often been analysed in terms of its angry socio-political satire on behalf of society's most vulnerable, or, qualitatively, as merely a lesser follow-up to the famous Carol. Fatherhood, however, is the context I wish to explore here and its representations in the work are many. Within the text itself fathers are not only literal, but surrogate, structural, rhetorical, political, and metaphorical. Outside the narrative frame the physical book is itself the progeny of a man hyper-aware of the economics of fatherhood, his own father being kept at arm's length, and, co-incidentally, writing in the birthplace of one of the fathers of the modern Italian state. However, the starting point for this paper is Dickens's main embodiment of fatherhood in *The Chimes*, his creation Trotty Veck. Trotty is an old man; he is a ticket porter; he is a poor man, an uneducated, yet thinking man, but ultimately a powerless one – all these definitions are vital to our understanding of him and his story. But the overarching feature of Trotty Veck as a character who might touch us emotionally, and therefore through whom Dickens aims for an affective response, is that, at all times, and as described by his creator, 'he had a father's heart within him.'

Jo Marshall-Collins is a PhD candidate at the University of Buckingham with a Master of Arts in Dickens Studies By Research. Her M.A. thesis examined the collaborative and homosocial relationship of Dickens with the Irish artist Daniel Maclise during the early 1840s. Her current research is on the multi-modal and re-mediation potential of *The Chimes*, focusing on Dickens's manipulation of sensory triggers in the work and how he uses these across a variety of areas of affective response.

'Reviewing the Situation: Examining Dickens Through the Context of Musical Theatre'

Michael Mazur

North Texas Performing Arts Academy (USA)

In his essay "Charles Dickens and his Impact on Victorian Society" (Ballan, 2023), Danny Ballan asserts that Dickens' "compelling characters, evocative descriptions and gripping narratives brought the streets of (Victorian) London to life, spotlighting the social conditions, institutional flaws and societal norms of the period." Contemporary theatre critic Lawrence Maslon, in his essay "Elements of the Musical", (Maslon, 2004) states that "The musical is as powerful an image maker of 20th Century America as Hollywood has been." While the eras of the Dickensian novel and the contemporary Musical barely overlap, they share several key elements. Looking at the works of Dickens through the context of Musical Theatre will enable the musical creators of today to draw on the rich tapestry of Dicken's stories to reach contemporary audiences. While inspired by the great Victorian operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan and their contemporaries, the American musical follows the lives of the working class - or even marginalized - people. This is evidenced early in its development through the bi-racial characters portrayed in what many consider to be the first American-style musical, 1927's *Showboat*. One can easily see the comparison to the working class characters who inhabit the Mississippi riverfront in that show to the merchants of Cheapside, London in *A Christmas Carol*. This is but one of many examples that demonstrate why the Victorian-era writings of Charles Dickens prove so adaptable to the current form of the Musical. Further examination of such musicals as the Tony Award winning *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the Tony- and Oscar-winning *Oliver!* and the Oscar Nominated *Scrooge: The Musical* prove that the writings of Dickens can and should continue to be adapted to the Musical form.

Michael Mazur has worked as a theatrical director, writer, choreographer, and education since earning his Bachelor's in English and Drama Education from Bowling Green State University in Ohio, USA. Since graduating, Mike has taught theatre at the High School, Community College, and University level and earned a Master's in Musical Theatre Writing from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. He is currently the head of school of the North Texas Performing Arts Academy in Texas, USA.

‘The Lady: the Lens, and the Layer: Dickens and Gender Contexts’

Natalie McKnight

Boston University (USA)

This presentation will analyze the protean changes in Dickens’s female protagonists in context of his own evolving relationships to women and also in the context of my own evolving understandings of gender. Dickens’s characterizations of female protagonists clearly become more complicated over the course of his career, and numerous scholars have explored that trajectory, from Michael Slater, to Patricia Ingham, to Steven Marcus, Holly Furneaux, and many others. Similarly my own understandings of gender, of how it is constructed and the purposes that are served by gender expectations, have evolved over the course of my career. How do my changing perspectives shape my readings of Dickens’s female characters? Do my evolving understandings tease out nuances in Dickens’s female protagonists, or do they layer on interpretations that reflect my own thoughts more than his? Or is that an impossible question to answer? All readings are complex intertwinings of minds; all are shaped by what the reader brings to the interpretive dance and by the broader social context of both the moment of composition and the moment of reading. All readings, no matter how astute, are both a lens and a layer. My approach here will be a hybrid of traditional scholarship and personal reflection, focusing on scenes that highlight Little Nell, Florence Dombey, Esther Summerson, and Bella Wilfer. I will take issue with some of my own earlier pronouncements about these characters and will therefore be in dialogue with myself and (hopefully) with Dickens at different moments of his career. I will call on the work of the scholars mentioned above to employ their lenses and their layers.

Natalie McKnight is Professor Humanities and Dean of the College of General Studies at Boston University. Her publications include *Idiots, Madmen, and Other Prisoners in Dickens*; *Suffering Mothers in Mid-Victorian Novels*; and *Fathers in Victorian Fiction*. She is a co-editor of Dickens Studies Annual.

‘Suspended Circulation and Affective Economies in the Pawnbroker’s Shop and the Debtor’s
Prison’

Ben Moore

University of Amsterdam (Netherlands)

This talk brings together two contexts prominent in Dickens’s work where the economic circulation of things and people is suspended: the pawnbroker’s shop and the debtor’s prison. Reading these two settings together, I suggest, allows us to recognise a homology in the way things (in the case of the former) and people (in the case of the latter) are withdrawn from circulation, their existence equated to money in both cases. In a strange modification of Marx’s circuit of capitalist profit, the commodity character of both people and things (i.e. their embodiment of exchange-value) is highlighted precisely when they cease to circulate. At the same time, I suggest, in writings such as ‘The Pawnbroker’s Shop’ (1835) and *Little Dorrit* (1855-7), affective and symbolic economies continue to operate in the place of inactive or hindered economic ones, as people and objects come to stand in for or allegorically refer to each other even as they are prevented from working or being used. Combining Sara Ahmed’s work on affective economies with Walter Benjamin’s understanding of allegory, and drawing on earlier accounts of money’s entanglement with materiality by Jacques Derrida, Marc Shell and others, I argue that these two contexts in Dickens’s writing should be read as allegorically referring to one another. I also make the wider suggestion that the specific spaces in which money operates (or fails to operate) in the nineteenth century shape its cultural and affective entanglements more deeply and thoroughly than has previously been recognised. Dickens’s work, with its interest in how things and people are linked together through space and time, provides a particularly telling case study for exploring these economic and spatial entanglements.

Ben Moore is Assistant Professor in English Literature at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of *Invisible Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Literature: Rethinking Urban Modernity* (2024) and *Human Tissue in the Realist Novel, 1850-1895* (2023) as well as various articles and book chapters on Dickens and other nineteenth-century writers. He is Co-Editor of the *Gaskell Journal* and a Trustee of the Dickens Society.

'Dickens and the "Curse of Limpness": *Our Mutual Friend* and *The Gad's Hill Gazette* in the Context of Filial Resemblance'

Lillian Nayder

Bates College (USA)

In 1867, Dickens scanned his dining room table, where several of his sons were seated, and failed to see himself reflected in them. They were their mother's children, not his own, he suggested to Wills: "You don't know what it is to look round the table and see reflected from every seat...some horribly well remembered expression of inadaptability to anything" (Letters 11:377). Plagued with the "curse of limpness," his sons were unduly feminized, he thought. Dickens first broached this theme in 1854, telling Miss Coutts that Charley wasn't "aspiring, or imaginative in his own behalf," having inherited "an indescribably lassitude of character" from Catherine (Letters 7:245). The lack of resemblance between fathers and sons is a central theme in *Our Mutual Friend*, which he was composing as he grappled with his sons' alleged "inadaptability" and "limpness," and considered how to make them "proper" men: father/son pairings include Gaffer and Charley Hexam; Eugene Wrayburn and his "respected father"; and Old Harmon and his son John. Yet in the novel, filial dissimilarity can work to the advantage of sons, who lack the ignorance, detachment, or cruelty of their fathers, and at times benefit from defining themselves against patriarchs. Approached in the context of Dickens's judgements of his sons and his struggle to see himself reflected in them, his fictional handling of the theme suggests that he recognized his paternal limitations, and illuminates the role he played in his sons' literary endeavors: *The Gad's Hill Gazette*, the journal they launched in 1862-1863. My paper reads that journal and its aims in conjunction with *Our Mutual Friend*, in the context of filial resemblance and its problematics in the 1860s. My paper reveals how Dickens sought to "author" the journal and those contributing to it, making them his own in the course of its publication.

Lillian Nayder is the Charles A. Dana Professor of English at Bates College, where she teaches courses on nineteenth-century British fiction. Her articles and essays on Dickens have appeared in dozens of journals and collections, and her books include *Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship* (2002) and *The Other Dickens: A Life of Catherine Hogarth* (2011). She edited the collection *Dickens, Sexuality and Gender* (2012), and served as guest curator of the exhibit "Discovering Catherine" at the Charles Dickens Museum in London in 2016. Her twelve-part video series, *London in the Time of Dickens*, was released by The Great Courses (Wondrium) in November 2023, and is also available on Audible. She is currently writing a group biography, *Charles Dickens: A Fraternal Life*, as well as *Corporeal Dickens*, a history of Dickens's body and its impact on his life and writing.

“[G]liding noiselessly about and whispering”: Preternatural Blacks and the Spectre of Slavery in *American Notes*

Jude V. Nixon

Salem State University (USA)

Humanitarian as he was, Dickens showed an early abhorrence of slavery, nowhere more profound as in *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), Dickens’s six months’ travel narrative. But *American Notes* is a mixed bag. Dickens was excited about the journey, but he could not fully comprehend slavery, liking it to the average “brutality” one finds “in the common street and public places of London.” He would go on to excoriate Andrew Bell for embellishing black abuse. Dickens simply felt that to acclimatize oneself “to the New World” requires that one “utterly forget, and put out of sight the Old one and bring none of its customs or observances into the comparison.” It was in New York, his amanuensis, the American Philip Hone, recalled, that “it was first suspected that . . . Dickens would not be likely to approve American slavery.” In a February 1842 letter to Forster about slavery in Baltimore, Dickens wrote, “It exists there, in its least shocking and most mitigated form; but there it is . . . and all through the South, there is a dull gloomy cloud on which the very word seems written.” Dickens is clearly troubled by the inhumanity of slavery, of the black mind more so than the black body in chains, the “darkness—not of skin, but mind—which meets the stranger’s eye at every turn; the brutalizing and blotting out of all fairer characters traced by Nature’s hand.” Despite its abhorrence of slavery and keen observations of its brutality, *American Notes* show little moral outrage. Often, Dickens is content to be a mere spectator of the scourge of slavery. Blacks are conspicuously invisible, spectral apparitions in *American Notes*, eerily “gliding noiselessly about, and whispering.” They remain nameless, voiceless, objects of intrigue, and of an unempathetic artist’s gaze.

Jude V. Nixon is Professor of English at Salem State University. His areas of scholarship are Victorian literature and culture and Anglophone Caribbean literature. President of the William Morris Society, he has published widely on the Victorians, among them Hopkins, Newman, Carlyle, Dickens, and Eliot, appearing in journals such as *Victorian Poetry*, *Victorian Studies*, *the Carlyle Studies Annual*, *the Dickens Studies Annual*, *the Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, *Modern Philology*, and *the Hopkins Quarterly*. His most recent publications are *The Sermons and Spiritual Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 5. The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 8 vols. (Oxford, 2018), *Becoming Home: Diaspora and the Anglophone Transnational* (2021), and “[T]he perfect love which cherishes me’: Lewes, Casaubon, and the Making of Middlemarch,” in *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies* (2023). Professor Nixon serves on several editorial boards, among them *Victorian Poetry*, *The Hopkins Quarterly*, and *the Dickens Studies Annual*.

“Playing in the Dark”: Reading Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* in the Context of Steven Knight’s *BBC Great Expectations* TV Series’

Jude Chudi Okpala

University of Texas at San Antonio (USA)

Prevailing discourse on Charles Dickens’ representations or position on race is filled with various arguments that expose both Dickens’ rapacious denigration of black race, his apparent silence and ambiguity about black identity, and his vaunted recognition of the plight of imperialism. Focusing on the *American Notes* (1850) and “Noble Savage”(1853), some of these arguments exonerate Dickens from racism. I raise anew the question of racism in Charles Dickens and do so by engaging the protocols of representation in *Great Expectations*, raising the following questions: why and how does Dickens choose the characters he uses in the text? From where does he get the idea of the characters? Why does he not use Black people as characters? Why does adaptation of the text choose to adopt black characters as in the case of Steven Knight’s *BBC Great Expectations* TV Series (2023)? I argue that the absence/presence of black people as characters in the novel is a reconciliation with his position on “Noble Savage,” that black people are something “to avoid”; the exclusion, also, is a systemic approval of British 19th century political economy on race. Accordingly, I argue that the absence/presence of blackness in the novel structures Dickens’ imagination, a world from which black people “are sentenced to disappear.” In this connection, Knight’s adaptation functions as a corrective measure to expose, on the one hand, the forgetful memories engendered by the novel and, on the other hand, fill-in the gaps on which *Great Expectations* thrives.

Jude Chudi Okpala is Professor of Instruction in the department of Philosophy, Classics, and Humanities at University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas, USA and International faculty at Rochester Institute of technology-Beijing Jiaotong University, Weihai, China. He works in Victorian literature, African Literature, African Diaspora Literature, Logic, and Film Studies. His works show the interface of Philosophy and Literature. He is currently working on *Nollywood Films on Netflix and African Philosophy in Contemporary Diaspora Nigerian Literature*.

‘Charles Dickens and Vesuvius: the Sublime Tourist and the “kolossal” Spectator’

Francesca Orestano

University of Milan

When Dickens composed *Pictures from Italy*, his visit to Naples had to include a must: Vesuvius. Between 1774 and 1822 the volcano had been intermittently erupting to the delight of many visitors.

Dickens’s account of the volcano came on the shoulders of John Chetwode Eustace’s *A Classical Tour through Italy* (1812) and Joseph Forsyth’s *Remarks During an Excursion in Italy* (1813). Dickens’s letters to Thomas Mitton, of February described the ascent with plenty of detail: the passages included in his travelogue rest within the literary tradition of mountain tourism. What makes these pages memorable is the focus on the dead cities that lay below the cone of Vesuvius, destroyed by the eruption, yet full of visible testimonials of human life, human frailty, and human doom. In Dickens’s times, a rich visual tradition enhanced the effect he wanted to draw from the scene – an effect already suggested by the frontispiece of *Pictures from Italy*, where an engraving by Samuel Palmer showed “The Street of the Tombs: Pompeii.” Even more touching were the magic lantern slides representing the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum. He saw the bodies of the dead, impressed on the ashes, an impressive reminder of the terrific force of the volcano. Dickens imagined the mouths, eyes, skulls filled with ashes and the “terrible hail” that “rained new ruin into them.” The mountain is the sublime genius of the scene, soon to become the main actor of the so-called “kolossal movies.” Out of Dickens’s impressions, as well as from the plot of Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), the new art would concoct memorable movies deploying the visual sublime of the eruption as a “kolossal” effect.

Francesca Orestano taught English Literature at the University of Milan. She authored books on John Neal, on William Gilpin, on visual culture and nineteenth-century literature. She edited *Dickens and Italy* (2009); *History and Narration* (2011); *New Bearings in Dickens Criticism* (2012); *Not Just Porridge. English Literati at Table* (2017); *Some Keywords in Dickens* (2021); *Lady Gardeners: Seeds, Roots, Propagation from England to the Wider World* (2023). She works on landscape and garden studies; Hogarth and Dickens; John Ruskin; Walter Pater; Virginia Woolf; Dada in England; Tomasi di Lampedusa; Etruscans in modern art; neo-Decadence and Dickensian aftermaths.

‘The Plays of Charles Dickens’

Peter Orford & Joanna Hofer-Robinson

University of Buckingham / University of Warwick (UK)

In a pioneering critical edition of *The Plays of Charles Dickens* (forthcoming Edinburgh UP 2025), Hofer-Robinson and Orford will forge new routes into Dickens’s lifelong engagement with drama via his least regarded writing. Arguing that Dickens was an accomplished writer for the popular Victorian stage, even if his professional playwrighting career was brief, the paper will situate *The Strange Gentleman* within the repertoire of the St James’s Theatre in the 1830s. Building on Jacky Bratton and Jim Davis’s work in *Dickensian Dramas*, moreover, it assesses how his collaboration with stage personnel – particularly the actor J. P. Harley – contributed to his development as a dramatist, before considering the role which actresses played in shaping the script and performance. The paper will then compare these findings with *The Frozen Deep*, a play conceived by Dickens, written by Wilkie Collins then edited by Dickens for performance. Once again an actress proves surprisingly influential – not Ellen Ternan, but Mrs Wills, for whom Dickens created the part of Nurse Esther and who performed the role in its original staging. Together these plays show Dickens’s creative process shaped and informed by the context of his theatre and company.

Pete Orford is a senior lecturer at the University of Buckingham and the course director of the Charles Dickens MA. Recent publications include *The Life of the Author: Charles Dickens* (Wiley Blackwell: 2023) and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood: Charles Dickens’ unfinished novel and our endless attempts to end it* (Pen & Sword: 2018), in addition to chapter contributions to *The Oxford Handbook of Charles Dickens* (2018) and *Dickens and the Arts* (2024).

Joanna Hofer-Robinson is an assistant professor in nineteenth-century literature and theatre at the University of Warwick. Her recent publications include the monograph *Dickens and Demolition* (Edinburgh UP, 2018) and *Sensation Drama, 1860—1880: An Anthology* (Edinburgh UP, 2019; co-edited with Beth Palmer), as well as articles on various aspects of nineteenth-century drama and Dickens studies.

‘Repression and Revelation: Lewd Naming in Dickens’

Jeremy Parrott

University of Buckingham (UK)

Drawing on a range of character names from *Pickwick* to *Copperfield*, this paper will argue that Dickens deliberately and provocatively employed anthroponyms which, had they been introduced into the body of the text as vocabulary items, would have been proscribed and quite possibly censored. I will analyse up to 10 names, including Dick, Crupp, Tupman and Bagstock, considering whether they were found or purpose-made by Dickens, as well as looking at the history of the contentious elements qua vocabulary words. I will then consider this practise in the context of laws governing obscenity in the early Victorian period and why Dickens was never taken to task, let alone to court, over this matter. Finally, I will discuss some of the implications for building up a psychological profile of Charles Dickens, writer and man.

Jeremy Parrott is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Buckingham and Associate Editor of the Charles Dickens Letters Project. His most recent book is *The Collected Dickens: A bibliography of the lifetime U.K. editions of Charles Dickens's works* (Kakapo Press 2020). His comprehensive guide to the First Series of *All the Year Round* (OUP) and a major study of *David Copperfield* are both scheduled for publication in 2024. He is the host of the YouTube channel Dickens & Co.

'Plundering the City: Orhan Pamuk and London's Greatest Author'

Gillian Piggot

American University of Afghanistan (Afghanistan)

This paper traces and develops affinities and connections between the work of contemporary Turkish author, Orhan Pamuk and 19th century British writer, Charles Dickens. Taking *The Red-Haired Woman* (in translation, 2017) and *David Copperfield* (1849-50) as the main basis of a comparative discussion - while alluding to other works by both authors - the study looks at corresponding areas of interest such as treatment of character, the delineation of Istanbul and London, the depiction of capitalism and the poetics of narrative voice, and urban disruption and change. Other ideas around elements of comedy, mystery, crime and detective fiction will also be examined. How the respective authors create the idea of the 'self', and its development through encounters with memory, Oedipal struggles and urban history is also a point of contact. More broadly, the geo-political worlds of both authors are complex and steeped in colonial struggles and war. How empire (both historically and contemporaneously) plays into the fictional worlds is crucial. Pamuk's public standing as a Nobel Laureate does not shield him from controversy and criticism within the political context of his home country of Turkey. In Europe he often appears to be a national icon, the conscience of a modern Istanbul intelligentsia, who chronicles the dialectics of tradition and modern life. His position as a popular public author can be examined in relation to Dickens, who was similarly hugely popular and feted in some quarters but pilloried in others. The question to be asked is: how has the role of the popular author developed and what are the politics involved? Can a comparative framework help us view the two authors more rigorously?

Dr Gillian Piggott is an Associate Professor of English and the Humanities. She trained in Philosophy and Literature at the Universities of Warwick and Sussex in the UK. For 15 years she has taught English literature, theatre studies and film studies at overseas universities as well as at universities in Britain – her latest assignment was Assoc Prof at the American University of Afghanistan (AUA) (Jan 2019-Jul 2023).

Her expertise is in 19th Century British literature, specifically in Dickens and his afterlives in popular culture. She has researched and published on this area: her book *Dickens and Benjamin* (Routledge, 2012 & 2015), reads Dickens within the context of modernity and Europe. She is also interested in the British Empire and the contractions and tensions of teaching Dickens in former colonies. Her article 'Dickens in Arabia' (written about her teaching at Balamand University, Lebanon) and her current editorship of a collection of essays entitled 'Decolonizing Dickens' attests to that. She is also jointly editing a collection of essays, 'Thinking and the 'Fall' of Kabul' about the thoughts and ideas of intellectuals and students who experienced the pull out of the US administration in Kabul, in August 2021. In May she begins a new monograph on Dickens and Charles Chaplin.

'Dickens's Defensive Theory in Context: the Victorian Affiliation to the Legacy of Defences of Poetry'

Dana Pines

Bar Ilan University

Dickens's apologetic debate in *Hard Times* illuminates his stance concerning the reformative quality of the realist novel. In "Charles Dickens & Sir Philip Sidney: *Hard Times*, An Equine Defence for the Novel" (2023), I trace how the defensive theory Dickens enacts through *Hard Times* invokes that of Sir Philip Sidney in his 16th-century celebrated *Defence of Poetry* (1580-3). Evoking the equine trope Sidney actuates in the exordium, Dickens soothes life into Sidney's rhetorical move through Sleary's troupe, the Horsemen, who express poetic freedom. Thus, Dickens re-contextualizes Sidney's *Defence* to his Victorian needs and effectively responds to his critics, such as James Fitzjames Stephen and George Henry Lewes. The defensive theory Dickens formulates through *Hard Times*, however, also illuminates and stresses the role Dickens took in the Victorian debate concerning the value of the novel, the new "poesy" of his time. This paper extends my previous argument by tracing the larger phenomenon of defences for the Novel, which evolved throughout the centuries and communicated the wish of authors to defend their right to write. By looking at the larger picture, I will contextualize Dickens's proclamation that he purposely dwells on "the romantic side of familiar things" (*Bleak House*, 6) as an apologetic shibboleth that affiliates him with the legacy of defences of poetry, where he historically plays a prominent, active role in furnishing the Victorian defensive theory.

Dana Pines is a PhD candidate and presidential fellow at Bar Ilan University. Her research interests focus on the legacy of English defences of poetry from the 16th to the 19th century.

‘Mapping the Relevance of Dickens to Hindi Cinema – A Study of the Indian Cinematic
Adaptation of *Great Expectations*’

M.G. Prasuna

BITS Pilani (India)

This paper explores the continuing influence of Dickens and his works on creative minds across India. Dickens’ works have been translated widely into many Indian regional languages as early as the 19th century. Dickens is extremely readable, even in translated Indian versions. The scope of his imagination makes it interesting to convert his works into other areas of art, like films. His descriptions of characters and setting renders a distinct visual quality which makes for convincing cinematic adaptation. Hence he continues to influence and inspire film makers across the world.

In recent years, his works are freely available in podcast versions as well as in vernacular you tube channels, which establishes the fact that Dickens is still popular and sought after by young and old alike.

The various cinematic adaptations, from time to time, of the novel ‘Great Expectations’ are available on the Internet. The novel has also been one of the most popular and well-read works of Dickens across the globe. A successful Hindi cinematic adaptation of ‘Great Expectations’, with the name ‘Fitoor’ (Obsession), was released in 2016, starring popular Bollywood actors. It will be interesting to study if ‘Fitoor’ faithfully captures the essence of the original work in its Indian avatar. This paper attempts to identify the influence of Dickens and examine patterns of divergence and convergence in the adapted Indian film version. Are these patterns compatible? Is the interpretation relevant? Is the backdrop of the Indian setting convincing?

This paper examines whether the Indian cinematic adaptation lives up to its “Great Expectations”.

M. G. Prasuna is currently Professor and Former Head – Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at BITS Pilani- Hyderabad Campus. She has over 30 years of academic and administrative experience in various institutions in Hyderabad. She joined the Hyderabad campus in February, 2009. She did her doctoral thesis from Osmania University in the area of Comparative Literature. Her areas of interests include English Language Studies, Diasporic literature, Comparative Literature, translation studies, women’s writing, Mythology Studies and Indian Writing in English.

‘The Trope of the Murderous Malfunctioning Machine in *Our Mutual Friend*’

Magdalena Pypeć

University of Warsaw (Poland)

As one of the important scientific communicators of his time, Charles Dickens shared his contemporaries’ fascination with machines, engines and their consequences, and took inspiration from them. With several of his characters described as sapient machines, Dickens encouraged his readers to rethink their notions of mind, body, selfhood and what it is to be human in the machine age. The aim of the paper is to discuss Dickens’s portrayal of Bradley Headstone as a human-mechanical form of identity (the congruence of the human psyche with the mechanical) from a posthuman perspective in the context of the rapid development of mechanised industry in the 19th century. A certified new product of teacher training colleges, the schoolmaster is portrayed as an enhanced human robot with the mind as “a place of mechanical stowage” who can “do mental arithmetic mechanically, sing at sight mechanically, blow various instruments mechanically,” etc. The automatised existence keeps Headstone focused on discharging his duties and on clearly defined life goals, enhances his intellectual capabilities and enables him to raise his social status. As I would argue, the schoolmaster programmes himself as a conscious automaton, a human/machine splice to fulfil a certain pattern of behaviour, and like the *Westworld* automata he goes rouge, anticipating one of the central concerns of twentieth-century science fiction: the trope of the murderous malfunctioning machine imaginatively deployed in such works as Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot* (1950), Harlan Ellison, “I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream” (1967), Arthur C. Clarke’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) or Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982), among many others.

Magdalena Pypeć is Associate Professor in the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw. Her publications include a monograph on Tennyson’s *The Princess* (Peter Lang, 2016). She has co-edited three volumes of Texts and Contexts Studies in 18th and 19th Century British Literature and Culture series: *Literature, Music, Drama and Performance*, *Landscapes and Townscapes*, and *Travel and Otherness* (Warsaw University Press, 2019, 2021, 2022). Her most recent publications are a chapter “Opium as a Keyword in Dickens’s Novels” included in *Some Keywords in Dickens* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag 2021), and “Literary Criticism as Women’s Rights Activism in Anna Jameson’s Shakespeare’s Heroines” included in *Female Voices: Forms of Women’s Reading, Self-Education and Writing in Britain 1770–1830* (Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2022).

“You seem perfectly civilised to me”: Imperial Relations in Tanika Gupta’s *Great Expectations*?

Catherine Quirk

Edge Hill University (UK)

Great Expectations is a novel centred on relationships: the reader sees Pip evolve through his interactions with Joe, Miss Havisham, Estella, Herbert, Magwitch, his younger self, and so on, all of which leads to his eventual self-knowledge at the close of the novel. But what happens when the social context of those relationships is altered? Tanika Gupta’s 2011 stage adaptation of Dickens’ novel does just this. In relocating the action from England in the early- to mid-nineteenth century to India at the height of rule by the British Raj, Gupta draws on colonial structures to reshape Pip’s formative relationships—and Pip himself. In this paper I propose to investigate these relationships, considering how Pip’s interactions with Miss Havisham, Herbert, and Estella differ from the novel to the stage adaptation. Miss Havisham, the wealthy white daughter of an East India Company agent, exercises imperial as well as financial power over Pip, an uneducated Indian boy. Gupta’s subtle addition of colonial hierarchies to the already-fraught relationship creates an even more sinister reading of Miss Havisham’s treatment of the boy. Herbert, too, is adapted to highlight the inequalities of settler-colonialism through his seemingly flippant comments: the young white man suggests that Pip seems “perfectly civilised” (II.ii), and mentions in passing that his shipping company deals, amongst other things, in “human cargo” (II.iii). With Estella, in contrast, Gupta’s Pip has more in common than Dickens’ Pip does. As the mixed-race daughter of a Black convict, Estella, too, faces prejudice: “But the English will never accept her,” Pip tells Herbert (II.ii). While this apparent commonality does not change the outcome of the pair’s romantic relationship, by introducing it Gupta calls into question the relativity of the English colonial hierarchy.

Catherine Quirk (she/her) is an actor and Lecturer in Drama at Edge Hill University. Her current research focuses on women’s performance practices from the nineteenth century through to the present and their incorporation into narrative, particularly the memoir and the novel. In her artistic practice, she is currently investigating the affordances of social media and other digital platforms for performance. Her co-edited collection with Dr. Carolyn Ownbey, *Pandemic Play: Community in Performance, Gaming, and the Arts*, is forthcoming from Palgrave in 2024, and she has published essays in *Comparative Drama*, *Theatre Notebook*, and *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, amongst others.

‘Dickens, Scott, and the Peculiar Narrator’

Dominic Rainsford

Aarhus University (Denmark)

There have been many sporadic references, over the years, to parallels between Charles Dickens and Walter Scott (especially between *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Heart of Midlothian*). But there has been little sustained discussion. This is odd, given that these were the two foremost international stars among English-language novelists of the 19th century, and we that know that Dickens read Scott throughout his life, sympathising with the spectacular highs and lows of the earlier author’s career. This proposed contribution to a conference which takes place roughly mid-way between Dickens’s physical territory and Scott’s will seek to look further into the many ways of linking them together, in terms of subject-matter, attitudes, form, technique, and authorial self-presentation. In particular, it will look at *Master Humphrey’s Clock* (1840-41) and Scott’s *Chronicles of the Canongate* (from 1827 – the year in which Scott’s authorship of the Waverley Novels became officially known). Both the *Clock* and the *Chronicles* are highly complex structures, with many narratives-within-narratives. Both are framed by the device of an eccentric narrator, getting on in years. Even if Dickens’s Master Humphrey does not draw directly on Chrystal Croftangry (although I suspect that to some extent he does), I believe that we can learn a lot from Scott’s earlier compound text (one of his more neglected works), in relation to Dickens’s aims in his own prematurely geriatric serial, and why – perhaps – it only partially succeeds. The larger point is that there are many significant co-occurrences in Scott’s and Dickens’s writerly worlds, and that the former should be acknowledged as looming large in the intellectual and artistic context of the latter.

Dominic Rainsford is Professor of Literature in English at Aarhus University, Denmark, and General Editor of *Dickens Quarterly*. His books include *Literature, Identity and the English Channel* (Palgrave, 2002) and *Literature in English: How and Why* (2nd ed., Routledge, 2020). The most recent of his numerous articles on Dickens are ‘1827: Real, Fictional, and Mythic Time in *The Pickwick Papers*’, in *From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria*, vol. 7 (U of Warsaw P, 2021), “‘Luller-li-e-te’! Language, Personhood, and Sympathy in *Sketches by Boz*” (V&R unipress, 2021), and ‘Political Art and the Art of Politics’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Dickens and the Arts* (Edinburgh UP, 2024).

'Deaf and Mute Heroines: Collins, Dickens, and the (Un)Conventional Representation of Disabled Characters in Victorian Fiction'

Esther Reilly

Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)

Jennifer Esmail argues, 'While some forms of disability, impairment, and illness render a character an object of interest in Victorian fiction, deafness [...] is generally immune to this fictional construction.' Because deaf characters could not participate in dialogue, which novelists depended on to create an interesting character arc, they were seen as less convenient to use as main characters. Esmail argues that their relationship to spoken language 'disqualifie[d]' them 'from conventional representation in Victorian fiction.' As a result, deaf characters are far less common in nineteenth-century fiction. It is even less common to see deaf characters communicating through sign language.

This paper examines the only two deaf characters in Victorian novels who use sign language: Mary 'Madonna' in Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* (1854) and Sophy Marigold in Charles Dickens's 'Doctor Marigold' (1865). Madonna and Sophy are orphans who were exploited by a circus, rescued, and adopted into domestic homes. However, their experience with communication is quite different. While Sophy (and her adopted father) invented sign language only they can understand, Madonna communicates by using gestural sign language and writing on a slate hanging from her shoulder. Madonna and Sophy transform their disability into ability by learning to use gestural sign language, which enables them to communicate effectively and emphasises their abilities rather than their disabilities.

Unlike Sophy, who marries another student from her school, 'The Deaf and Dumb Establishment in London,' and has a hearing child, Collins does not provide a 'conventional' conclusion to his heroine's dreams of romance. Collins interrupts the typical romantic narrative by revealing that Madonna's projected lover is actually her brother, resulting in an impossible happily ever after. In this paper, I argue that Collins was less concerned with conventional endings for disabled characters compared to his literary mentor.

Esther Reilly is a PhD candidate in the School of English at Trinity College Dublin. She recently submitted her doctoral thesis in December 2023, which is currently under review by examiners. Her thesis places Wilkie Collins's work in the context of nineteenth-century debates on extreme bodily differences, ranging from physical disability to exceptional ability. Her thesis explores how Collins sensationalises the freakish body to destabilise Victorian ideas and images of normative personhood, bringing back to the surface the life stories of many real freak show performers that Collins drew on in writing his freak characters. Esther holds a Master of Philosophy in Children's Literature from Trinity College Dublin and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of Pittsburgh.

‘On Killing Dickens: Zadie Smith and the Historical novel’

Marcela Santos Brigida

Rio de Janeiro State University (Brazil)

In Zadie Smith’s novel *The Fraud*, Charles Dickens is a secondary character. Often portrayed under an unflattering light, he is as a “sometimes oppressive, sometimes irresistible, sometimes delightful, sometimes overcontrolling influence, just as he was in life” (Smith 2023). Discussing her reluctance to write historical fiction, Smith has stated that while writing Dickens into the plot proved inevitable, he resisted even her attempt to “kill him” early in the novel. It is precisely this confusion between Dickens as character and as person that this paper aims to discuss. In what she has termed the “existential turn”, Toril Moi argues that the twenty-first century novel has shifted away from the modernist and postmodernist focus on form towards character-driven fiction that not only allows the reader to engage with characters as subjectivities not unlike those of real people, but rather invites this approach. If Smith’s *The Fraud* originated from resisting a tradition personified by Dickens, the fact that the author’s take on character construction seems to be aligned with Moi’s discussion is worthy of further investigation. If, as Giorgio Agamben affirms, those who are truly contemporary “neither perfectly coincide with their times nor adjust themselves to its demands” (2009, 40), this kind of disjunction and anachronism inherent to contemporariness allows Charles Dickens to thrive under a fresh take in Smith’s *The Fraud*. Narrated from the perspective of William Harrison Ainsworth’s cousin, *The Fraud* strives to shed light over suppressed nineteenth-century narratives in a decolonial approach. Smith writes Dickens by letting him “grow out of the being of the age”, as commended by Georg Lukács, becoming his contemporary by “let[ting] him pervade my pages, in the same way he stalks through nineteenth-century London” (Smith 2023).

Marcela Santos Brigida is Professor of English Literature at the Rio de Janeiro State University. Her current research focuses on the relationship between the Victorian novel and contemporary fiction, with particular interest on adaptation and appropriation.

‘Similar in Appearance, but “not so much Alike in any Particular”’: A Trace of Carlyle in *A Tale of Two Cities*’

Aika Satori

Keio University (Japan)

Thomas Carlyle had an undeniable, but not clearly definable influence on the works of Charles Dickens. In *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), we can discern not only traces of *The French Revolution: A History* (1837), as Dickens himself acknowledges in the Preface, but also that of *Sartor Resartus* (1831). This paper will discuss how Dickens deals with Carlylean theme of surface and depth in *TTC*. In the famous first chapter, Dickens proposes the concept that even if the superficial things, such as time and place, have shifted, something essential can be found. This echoes what Carlyle presents in *Sartor Resartus*: ‘looking through the Shows or Vestures into the Things’. On the other hand, the description of characters who share name, appellation and appearance is inconsistent with this Carlylean thought. Dickens describes a bunch of unidentifiable characters in *TTC*: Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton, the plethora of Jacques, the Evrémonde twins, and the ‘citizen’ in Paris. The revolutionary process in the novel is to detect adversaries through the external information, in those who seem unidentifiable. The final goal of the revolution in the novel is the execution of Darnay, the Evrémonde heir. However, it fails because the revolutionaries cannot distinguish Darnay and Carton by their appearance. This resolution of the novel illustrates the ineffectiveness of finding someone’s essence through their external information, and challenges Carlylean philosophy of cloth.

Dickens, thus, demonstrates an ambiguous attitude towards Carlylean thought in *TTC*, which was published in 1859, the same year as *Origin of Species*. Twenty-eight years after the publication of *Sartor Resartus*, society had moved into a new dimension. Dickens’s treatment of the theme of surface and depth in *TTC* would suggest his departure from the early Victorian representation of Carlyle to the new set of later Victorian ideas.

Aika Satori is a PhD student at Keio University in Japan. She is currently taking a break from her course and staying in London to do her second MA at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research project is mainly on naming in Dickens’s later works, and she has given several talks and published some essays on the subject. Her most recent publications are ‘Who Knows Who the Veneerings are?: Gossip and Middle-Class Society in *Our Mutual Friends*’ in *The Geibun-Kenkyu*, and ‘Not to Be Philip Pirrip, but Pip: The Birth of a New Dickensian Protagonist’ in *The Japan Branch Bulletin of Dickens Fellowship*.

'Nest Making and Nest Breaking: Strategies for Survival and the Working Woman'

Clair Schwarz

University of the West of England (UK)

Writing in the piece entitled, 'Stoning the desolate' for *All the Year Round* in 1864, Dickens's (1864, p. 369) remarked on the community of women and children living "in a state of solid heavy wretchedness" near the military barracks of the Curragh of County Kildare, Ireland. These 'wrens' so called because of their makeshift 'nests' made from holes in the ground covered by peat and furze induced a compassionate and practical response from Dickens and echoes current polarised debates about migrant people and sex work. In this paper, I explore how the figure of the wren in the work of Dickens and elsewhere (especially folk traditions), allows a space for a consideration of 'unwanted' people occupying unsuitable spaces. With specific consideration of Jenny Wren of *Our Mutual Friend* and Mrs Gamp of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, I draw connections between the fictional working women and the Irish wrens and the context of working to survive and the pejorative ways in which this may be viewed. Concentrating on bird imagery, the injured body, and dependencies, I describe how the connectedness of female experience and societal disapproval can be repeated within fiction and without, and what this tells us about female solidarity and survival in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. The presentation includes a performance of *The Chime* (the collective noun for a group of wrens) which invites all to join in remembrance of the wrens and be rowdy in their protest against cruelties, past and present.

Clair Schwarz is the associate director for History, Film Studies, and Media Communications in the School of Arts, University of the West of England. She is a member of the Ways of Writing in art and design research network and the Visual Culture Research Group. The presented paper forms part of the greater research into the Wrens of Curragh.

“You May File a Strong Man’s Heart Away for a Good Many Years”, or: the Fall of the Military Mentor’

Douglas Scully

Louisiana State University (USA)

The soldier-turned-instructor is a well-worn trope, though the presentation of such has shifted with the view of war-related trauma. This section of a larger project regarding the shifting views of various military narrative tropes from the Victorian period to the current day looks in depth at the character of Mr. George from *Bleak House* and how the same character type that he fulfills is presented in a much less glowing form in more recent texts, namely the Pink Floyd albums *The Wall* and *The Final Cut*. When *Bleak House* was published from 1852-53, the view of military men was generally respected and Mr. George is a great example of a soldier-character who uses his position as role model to help various characters; however, the 1979 release of *The Wall* and the 1983 release of *The Final Cut* happened when the term PTSD was entering the public consciousness, and so the depiction of soldier-teachers in these albums as traumatized and traumatizing was more of the moment. Both the Victorian and 20th century texts discussed demonstrate how teaching of one kind or another is often seen as a refuge for veterans, but as the lingering effects of war on the mental health of soldiers became clearer, the depiction of soldier-turned-instructors soured. *Bleak House* is a novel that has been thoroughly explored and analyzed by many before me, but I will present new ideas of interest by analyzing Mr. George through the lens of more recent trauma theories and putting him in context with other figures representative of this particular evolving stereotype.

Douglas Scully is a post-doctorate instructor in English at Louisiana State University, where he received his PhD in 2023. He received his BA in English from the University of Connecticut, where he also minored in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and his MA in Victorian Literature, Art, and Culture from Royal Holloway, University of London. He previously presented papers at the 22nd, 24th, and 27th Annual Dickens Society Symposiums and most recently presented on adaptations of *A Christmas Carol* and artificial intelligence at the 45th Annual Southwest Popular/American Culture Association conference. His article, “Victorian Ghosts in the #MeToo Movement,” was published in *Literature Film Quarterly*. His research interests focus on the connection between Victorian literature and modern pop culture, as well as the representations of soldiers and war in Victorian literature.

“My Lot has been a Very Hard One”: George Eliot and *Hard Times*

Deborah Siddoway

University of Durham (UK)

In light of the fact that 2024 will mark the 170th anniversary of the serialisation of *Hard Times*, this paper will ask whether George Eliot’s story ‘Janet’s Repentance’ from her first novel *Scenes of Clerical Life* can be seen as something of a scathing response to Charles Dickens’s portrait of a miserable marriage in *Hard Times*, specifically, the marriage of Stephen Blackpool to an alcoholic wife. Eliot began her career as a novelist when Dickens was at the height of his fame and popularity, and for that reason, he is considered the inevitable predecessor of Eliot as a novelist. This paper will place both *Hard Times* and ‘Janet’s Repentance’ within the contextual framework in which they were both written, when the law around divorce was being tested and challenged in Parliament, while also considering the challenges each author faced in relation to their own marital (or *de facto* marital) relationships. It will make the argument that in ‘Janet’s Repentance’, Janet’s history of her marriage to Dempster can be seen as an attempt by Eliot to contextualise the behaviour of the maligned and nameless Mrs Blackpool, perhaps seeking to exculpate her by investing her with a rationale for her descent into drunkenness.

Deborah Siddoway is a PhD candidate at the University of Durham and a postgraduate representative on the advisory board for the Centre for Nineteenth Century Studies. A former solicitor, she was awarded an MA by research in Dickens Studies from the University of Buckingham for her thesis entitled *The Twisting of the Ring: Dickens, Divorce and the Evolution of his Views on Marriage*. She was awarded the 2019 Partlow Prize for her paper *Misfortnet Marriages’: Discussing Divorce in Household Words*, since published in the *Dickens Quarterly* in 2022. She is also a novelist, with her debut novel, *Dark Waters of the Unlaid Ghost* due for publication in Autumn 2024.

'Decoding Social Dynamics: *Great Expectations* Unveiled through Distant Reading'

Tess Stepakoff

University of Alabama (USA)

This study discusses the societal intricacies of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* through the interdisciplinary lenses of cultural studies, distant reading, and close reading. By employing computational methods, character interactions are analyzed to unveil the portrayal of cross-class social dynamics within the novel. The research extends beyond literary boundaries to explore the intersections of culture, society, and literature, aiming to illuminate how Dickens critiques the social structures of 19th-century England.

In addition to the analysis of Dickensian London, this study incorporates a comparative dimension by examining the differences between the fictional world depicted by Dickens and the real, 1960s London. Through this comparative lens, the research seeks to highlight the evolving nature of societal dynamics and cultural values, providing insights into the changing landscape from the 19th to the 20th century.

The distant reading approach examines patterns and trends in character relationships, revealing the subtle yet powerful ways in which cultural values and class distinctions shape the narrative landscape. This exploration aims to deepen our understanding of how Dickens employs his characters as conduits for cultural commentary, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of societal interactions and the implications for broader cultural analysis.

Tess Stepakoff is an English Literature PhD Candidate from the University of Alabama. She has worked with character networks for over a decade over various degrees and studied the connection between close reading, computer studies, and communication. Her dissertation focuses on the analysis of character networks of various texts from the 1860s, specifically before the Second Reform Act.

‘Agnes Wickfield’s Temporary Entrepreneurship and the Boom of Home Schools in the Mid-Victorian Period’

Akiko Takei

Chukyo University (Japan)

This paper analyses the context of social, cultural, and educational factors in Dickens's lifetime relating to Agnes Wickfield's successful management of her own school. For Victorian middle-class women, teaching was a valuable means of earning a living without loss of respectability. Some chose to run their own schools. It was not difficult to set up a small private school. No license or training was required and the standard of teaching was not monitored by a third party. However, making a private school succeed was difficult, as shown by the Brontë sisters' failed plan to run a school. Social, financial, and personal factors also caused Dickens's fictional women's home schools to fail. It was the combination of Agnes's skill, credibility, and supportive environment that made her school so successful. Dickens did not allow Agnes to be a successful entrepreneur after her marriage. However, she was not just a modest and quiet angel of the house. As different from the cases of Dickens's other female characters, this paper focuses on Agnes's business talent, which has not been discussed in Dickens studies. It also addresses the need and desire of middle-class women to earn money in an environment where opportunities were limited.

Akiko Takei earned her PhD from the University of Aberdeen in 2004 and has been a Professor at Chukyo University in Japan since 2008. Her research interests are British literature, culture, and history, and her published papers include “Benevolence or Manipulation? The Treatment of Mr Dick” (*Dickensian*, 2005). She has been a member of the Dickens Society since 2012, and attended annual conferences in 2012, 2014–23.

“If I may say Shakespearianly express myself”: Shakespeare’s Afterlife in Dickens

Jeremy Tambling

Working from the essay 'Night Walks' (*AYR* 21 July 1860), which calls Shakespeare 'the great master who knew everything', this paper, work-in-progress, attempts to revalue what Dickens took from Shakespeare, departing from traditional approaches to this subject which record influences (e.g. Valerie L. Gager, *Shakespeare and Dickens: The Dynamics of Influence* (Cambridge 1996). Dickens caps the compliment by wondering why, when '[Shakespeare] called Sleep the death of each day's life, [he] did not call Dreams the insanity of each day's sanity'. Dreams and madness are two modes of experience coming within Dickens's sense of language, as an enlarging on Shakespeare's. In 'Night Walks', dreams and insanity are gathered under the figure of 'houselessness', a word from *King Lear* ('houseless'), developed into an abstract noun, and name for the self. 'Houselessness' gives the sense of a de-territorialised state which must be experienced beyond the conditions of the old Bleak House (its analogue, and image, being Tom-All-Alone's), and they lead in the essay to a sense of the naked, and the spectral, terms which convey something further of what Dickens takes from Shakespeare. Dickens is the writer of the houseless, a term which may be his fullest response to *King Lear*. I read Dickens as responding to Shakespeare's 'wit', that which was disparaged by Dr Johnson discussing the Metaphysical poets, saying that 'the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked together by violence together'. In this poetry, connections are made which are outside logical sequencing, as apparently rootless as Dickens's houselessness. I ask what licenses Dickens to be so Shakespearian, given that the episteme which permitted that Shakespearian poetic language has gone, replaced now by Gradgrind, who would never read poetry?

‘The Dickens We Keep Quoting: Excerpts in Changing Contexts’

Milan Terlunen

MIT School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (USA)

My paper examines the passages from Dickens's novels that are most frequently quoted by scholars, and the contexts in which these passages occur. Examining these quotations in context reveals continuities as well as developments in the portions of Dickens's novels to which scholars, through verbatim reproduction, attend most closely. In aggregate, our repeated quotation of key passages produces a phenomenon I call "textual atmosphere". I argue that, far from signalling groupthink, textual atmospheres are crucial to how we produce knowledge about literature. Dickens's textual atmospheres offer evidence of how Dickens specialists have engaged with emerging theories and methodologies like deconstruction, feminism and ecocriticism, as well as the diffusive presence of Dickens in literary scholarship on other writers and periods, and even in disciplines other than literature.

I will present data generated by running a quotation-detection algorithm I co-created on a corpus of c. 40,000 academic journal articles from JSTOR's database. In particular, I'll analyse the 3-5 most frequently quoted Dickens passages across the last 60 years of scholarship as well as the 3-5 passages whose quotation frequency has risen most substantially in recent years. I haven't yet completed this data analysis, but have a robust workflow for generating and analyzing data on textual atmospheres. As an example, I attach a data visualization of the most frequently quoted passage in *Middlemarch* (font size proportional to frequency), which I've produced for an article forthcoming in *Victorian Studies*. In recent months, I've also delivered conference presentations on the textual atmospheres of Modernist novelists (Joyce, Proust, Woolf) and literary theorists (Lukács, Barthes, Genette).

I will conclude the paper by examining which *other* authors, texts and passages Dickens quotations have repeatedly co-occurred alongside. What does this tell us about the literary and historical contexts in which scholars have wanted to place Dickens?

Milan Terlunen is a postdoctoral associate in Literature at MIT, where his project, "The Writers We Keep Quoting", uses digital methods to investigate the history of literary study, as well as humanities disciplines more broadly. By computationally detecting quotations from a range of texts across millions of academic journal articles, he studies how key passages have facilitated both the consolidation of disciplines and fields, and interdisciplinary communication. His broader interests include 19th- and early 20th-century British, French and German literature, the history of reading, theories of narrative, digital humanities and public humanities. His first book project, *The Pre-History of the Plot Twist in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, studies readers' experiences of surprise and retrospection alongside the development of the publishing and media industries. He is the host and co-creator of the podcast *How To Read*, a co-founder of the Humanities Podcast Network and a co-editor of the forthcoming *Palgrave Handbook of Humanities Podcasting*.

‘The Deeper Wrong in *Great Expectations*: Transatlantic Publication in 1861’

Carolyn Vellenga Berman

Eugene Land College (USA)

This paper probes a coincidence: the nearly simultaneous publication of *Great Expectations* (1860-1) and Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; or, *the Deeper Wrong* (Boston 1861; London 1862). Critics have noted the impact of Frederick Douglass’s narrative on Dickens’s novel, Dickens’s own surprising influence on formerly enslaved writers, and Elizabeth Gaskell’s reworking of Harriet Jacobs’s life story in *All the Year Round*. Yet we have not yet read Dickens with Jacobs, who visited England, hoping to publish her book, in 1859. What comes to the fore when we read these works together? And how does this juxtaposition alter our understanding of nineteenth-century print culture at the start of the US Civil War?

The comparison allows me to read Estella’s story along with Jacobs’s narration of her own story as a covert response to narratives of the tragic mulatto and the tragic muse. I highlight shared contexts and similarities between the two works. Dickens was mindful of the brewing war between the states as he serialized *Great Expectations* for publication in his transatlantic journal. Jacobs wrote hers while working as a nanny for Nathaniel Parker Willis, an American writer who had visited Newgate with Dickens in 1835. And both writers were annoyed by Harriet Beecher Stowe. The resulting books combine autobiographical with novelistic forms. They describe fugitivity, shame, and systems of inheritance; recount struggles to achieve literacy; probe dreams of elevation for oppressed groups; combine social commentary with satire, while mocking some uses of antislavery rhetoric; gesture at atrocities; and respond implicitly to the ‘tragic mulatta’ trope. Finally, both fail—or refuse—to end with marriage, insisting in the final pages on a sense of exile and lack of home.

Carolyn Vellenga Berman is an associate professor of literature at Eugene Lang College, The New School, in New York City. She is the author of *Dickens and Democracy in the Age of Paper: Representing the People* (Oxford University Press, 2022) and *Creole Crossings: Domestic Fiction and the Reform of Colonial Slavery* (Cornell University Press). Her current book project sounds the depths of the Black Atlantic in nineteenth-century sensational British fiction. Her articles have appeared in *Victorian Studies*, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, *Novel, Genre, and Nineteenth-Century Contexts* and collections ranging from *Just Below South* (University of Virginia) to *The Encyclopedia of Victorian Literature* (Blackwell). She became a trustee of the Dickens Society in 2022.

'Dickensian Rewriting of "The Angel in the House" and the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857'

Adrienne A. Wojcik

Northern Virginia Community College (USA)

This presentation examines how female domestic servants in Dickens's novels both fulfill and rewrite the roles of domestic angels described in Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House." First published in 1854, the poem presents the virtues of a perfect Victorian wife, who is devoted, submissive, and supportive of her husband. *Hard Times*, also published in 1854, attributes such qualities to Mrs. Sparsit, Mr. Bounderby's widowed domestic servant whose jealousy of Bounderby's legal wife, Louisa, further complicates her role in his house. Mrs. Sparsit's literary predecessor, Arthur Grime's domestic servant Peg in *Nicholas Nickleby*, also views his impending wedding to Madeline Bray as his betrayal of their domestic harmony and a threat to her position within his household. By casting unmarried women in the roles of domestic angels and highlighting their lasting devotion to male employers, Dickens rewrites Patmore's famous poem in the context outside of legal marriage. While the novelist does not advocate for common law marriages, his attribution of Patmore's angelic qualities to female servants, and his own unique relationship with his sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth who had devoted herself to his household, challenge the assumed conflation of the domestic sphere with legal marriage. As such, though Dickens's novels do not directly address the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, which legalized divorce in England, their complicated portrayal of domesticity shaped both social and legal debates leading up to the passage of Victorian divorce law.

Adrienne A. Wojcik is a practicing attorney in Washington D.C. who teaches literature and argumentative writing in Alexandria, Virginia. She holds a Ph.D. in nineteenth-century British literature from Marquette University and a law degree from Indiana University Maurer School of Law, as well as undergraduate degrees in Greek drama and opera performance. Her doctoral dissertation entitled *Theatrical Weddings and Pious Frauds: Performance and Law in Victorian Marriage Plots* discusses the connections between Victorian literature, history, culture and marriage law. It also highlights Adrienne's interest in interdisciplinary studies based on her diverse intellectual experiences as a literary scholar, writer, lawyer and artist. Adrienne's work on interdisciplinary approaches to reading and teaching literature has appeared in *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*. She is a proud member of the Victorian Society at Falls Church, Virginia, an organization devoted to promoting Victorian literature and culture.

‘Dickens and his Correspondents’

Claire Wood

University of Leicester (UK)

In October 1849, Emmely Gotschalk, a young Danish woman living in Copenhagen, penned a letter to Dickens, beginning a correspondence that would continue intermittently until 1856. The exchange appears uneven, with Gotschalk writing sixteen letters to Dickens’s nine. Nonetheless, the surviving letters, transcribed by hand in two notebooks that are now in the collections of the Charles Dickens Museum, indicate a remarkable depth to this epistolary relationship. While Gotschalk often expresses her admiration for the author and his work, her missives range beyond the remit of a traditional ‘fan’ letter, articulating a sense of existential anguish and profound reflections upon faith, family, and the position of women in society. Dickens’s replies are no less revealing, waxing and waning in intimacy, while encouraging Gotschalk to pursue ‘action, usefulness—and the determination to be of service’ as a ‘remedy’ for her depressed state of mind.¹ As the correspondence progressed, the pair exchanged gifts (a miniature statue of Hebe from Gotschalk and a signed copy of *David Copperfield* from Dickens) and met at least once in person.

The Gotschalk/Dickens correspondence is interesting in its own right, but also a fascinating example of what reading Dickens in dialogue can bring to our understanding of the author and his world. Building on approaches that decentre Dickens by recognising the input of his collaborators (Klimaszewski 2019), recover the other side of the conversation (Baumgarten 2015), and shift attention to authors as part of correspondence networks (O’Neil 2015), this paper will explore how Gotschalk’s letters specifically, and uncollected incoming correspondence to Dickens more generally, can enrich our sense of Dickens in context.

Claire Wood is Associate Professor in Victorian Literature at the University of Leicester. She is the author of *Dickens and the Business of Death* (2015) and has published on epitaphs, material culture, adaptation and Dickens’s ghost stories. She currently serves as Secretary of the Dickens Society (2021-24) and, with Hugo Bowles, led the award-winning ‘Dickens Code’ project, which explored Dickens’s undeciphered shorthand writing.

¹ Charles Dickens, ‘To Miss Emmely Gotschalk, 1 February 1850’, *The Letters of Charles Dickens: Volume Six, 1850-1852*, ed. by Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Nina Burgis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 25.

‘Dickens as a Channel Pilot: Floundering and Knocking About’

Claire Woods

Ulster University (UK)

Dickens’ Kentish upbringing meant that he grew up in close proximity to the Channel. He joked to de Cerjat that he might become ‘a Channel pilot.’ Hollington reminds the reader of Dickens’s connections with Calais as a ‘bolthole for those quick-witted and well-connected enough to avoid imprisonment – for debt, in the Marshalsea.’ Dickens’s maternal grandfather fled to the Isle of Man during financial embarrassments, but the more fashionable impecunious, such as Beau Brummell, fled to Calais and Boulogne. The ability to live a different life, hide secrets, or re-invent oneself is often featured in Dickens’s writing, and he himself used France as a means to avoid the public eye at times: fleeing the public when publishing his work; or escaping gossip pertaining to his affair with Ellen Ternan.

David Parker explained how for Dickens, ‘[t]he roots of his imagination were in England and needed feeding there, but the whole organism needed more room in which to grow and would not flourish entirely buried in its dark native soil.’ France served as a muse for Dickens’ writing and afforded an Other and new stimuli. For Dickens the act of crossing the Channel was sometimes akin to crossing the Rubicon, or like Tennyson’s Crossing the Bar, a form of necessary ritual when passing from life to death to the afterlife. In his literature, we see many characters travelling back and forth e.g. Rigaud Blandois, Mr Lorry, Lucie Manette and Charles Darnay.

In his journalism and letters, we see how the English travellers faced the many challenges of the crossing, including a propensity to queasiness, clashes with Customs and potential exploitation by the French touting for business, before finding enjoyable diversions in the small towns of northern France.

Claire Woods is the Associate Head of the School of Education at Ulster University. She received a Bachelor’s degree in English and French from Queen’s Belfast University, a Master’s degree in Education Management from The Open University and a PhD in ‘France and the French in the Novels of Charles Dickens’ from the University of Ulster. She has recently published a chapter ‘Devilishly Attractive: Dickens on Frenchwomen’ in *Dickens and Women Reobserved*. Claire has taught French and English Literature in Northern Ireland, France and Sri Lanka.