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Dickens's Dream and the Conception of Character

LEON LITVACK

IN THE CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM there hangs an unfinished watercolour which came to be known as *Dickens's Dream* (1875, fig. 1). The artist, Robert William Buss (1804-75) had illustrated Dickens's 'A Little Talk about Spring and the Sweeps' in 1836,¹ and was recommended to Chapman and Hall as a replacement illustrator for *Pickwick Papers* when the original artist, Robert Seymour (?1798-1836) committed suicide. Buss's plates appeared in the third monthly number;² but the publishers believed that the illustrations were not up to standard, and so fired Buss, and replaced him with Phiz (Hablot K. Browne).³ Buss was distressed and outraged – especially when new illustrations were substituted for his originals, and his name omitted from the first volume edition of *Pickwick* (1837). Nevertheless he kept his indignation to himself for almost thirty-five years, only writing to John Forster after the appearance of a brief but slighting reference in the first volume of *The Life of Charles Dickens*.⁴ Soon afterwards Buss became more expansive, committing the details of the affair to paper in a private statement, penned in March 1872 and intended for his children; it was finally published by Dexter and Ley in 1936 as 'My Connexion with *The Pickwick Papers*'.⁵ Given these circumstances, which clearly agitated Buss greatly and threatened to overshadow his career, it is interesting that he continued to admire Dickens's humour and moral vision throughout his life,⁶ and that, elderly and ailing, he decided to paint this large, detailed *capriccio* image of Dickens surrounded by his characters.

The watercolour raises interesting issues concerning the mode of representation of one of most famous public figures in nineteenth-century Britain. First, given the title of the picture, it would be useful to consider whether a reading or viewing public's idea of how Dickens wrote accords with the author's own pronouncements on the matter. The work should then be seen in relation to prevailing ideas about the iconography of creation – literary or otherwise. The constituent elements of the painting must also be considered, in terms of artistic precedents and other contemporary depictions of Dickens. Finally, it is important to examine what the work tells us about Buss's own views on the novelist, and about the artist's legacy for posterity.

The state in which the picture was left at Buss's death gives the characters a numinous quality: they seem to be circulating in a cloud that emanates from Dickens's vicinity and fills the room. The cloud motif is interesting – particularly since the object he is holding in his



Fig 1. R. W. Buss, *Dickens's Dream* (1875). By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

right hand is a lit cigar, thus suggesting that the swirling characters emanate from a cloud of smoke. Dickens seems to be in a kind of trance or mesmeric state, with his eyes open.⁷ If the picture is meant as a tribute to the writer's imagination, then conceiving of – or communing with – characters seems here to be a curious combination of activity and passivity: Dickens is in the library at Gad's Hill, but not writing; indeed the characters span the whole of his novelistic career, extending from *Pickwick Papers* to *Edwin Drood*, thus suggesting that the business of writing has been completed. He appears comfortable, shod in slippers, sitting in his famous chair with his feet on a low footrest. It is notable that he is not animated by the presence of his creations, who drift about him, as Malcolm Andrews notes, 'like ectoplasm'.⁸ They have, in fact, become independent of their creator, and have acquired an autonomous existence. It is difficult to know if this painting is an attempt to sum up Dickens's creative processes, in which his characters emanate from a kind of reverie, or whether it tries to depict, posthumously, his overall achievement, showing the viewer that 'bound volumes' could never contain all that 'tumultuous activity'.⁹

How Dickens wrote was the subject of a well documented article by Richard Lettis, in which he analysed the novelist's writing schedule, his moods, the locations in which he wrote, the way he conceived of ideas, and, most interestingly, the metaphors through which Dickens described the process of composition: childbirth and its pains, as well as making broth, working like a steam engine, hammering, grinding, and so on.¹⁰ Lettis also briefly recalls some personal accounts and critical analyses which are pertinent to this discussion of the conception of character. For example, the novelist's daughter Mamie described her father at work (most probably on *Hard Times*) at Tavistock House in the 1850s:

When at work my father was almost always alone, so that, with rare exceptions, save as we could see the effect of the adventures of his characters upon him in his daily moods, we knew but little of his manner of work. Absolute quiet under these circumstances was essential, the slightest sound making an interruption fatal to the success of his labors. . . . I was lying on the sofa endeavouring to keep perfectly quiet, while my father wrote busily and rapidly at his desk, when he suddenly jumped from his chair and rushed to a mirror which hung near, and in which I could see the reflection of some extraordinary facial contortions which he was making. He returned rapidly to his desk, wrote furiously for a few moments, and then went again to the mirror. The facial pantomime was resumed, and then turning toward, but evidently not seeing, me, he began talking rapidly in a low voice. Ceasing this soon, however, he returned once more to his desk, where he remained silently

writing until luncheon time. It was a most curious experience for me, and one of which, I did not until later years, fully appreciate the purport. Then I knew that with his natural intensity he had thrown himself completely into the character that he was creating, and that for the time being he had not only lost sight of his surroundings, but had actually become in action, as in imagination, the creature of his pen.¹¹

This reminiscence, which has been much quoted in Dickens biography and criticism, emphasises intensity, activity, and passionate involvement with his creations. Other members of his family preserved similar recollections. Henry Fielding Dickens, for example, pinpointed his father's 'intense belief in the reality of his own creations'; he recalled what Dickens once said to a young author:

If you want your public to believe in what you do, you must believe in it yourself. So much is this the case with me that when I am describing a scene I can as distinctly see the people I am describing as I can see you now.¹²

Charley Dickens also recalled his father's intense relationship with his characters:

He lived, I am sure, two lives, one with us and one with his fictitious people, and I am equally certain that the children of his brain were much more real to him at times than we were. I have, often and often, heard him complain that he could *not* get the people of his imagination to do what he wanted, and that they would insist on working out their histories in *their* way and not *his*. I can *very* well remember his describing their flocking-round his table in the quiet hours of a summer morning when he was – an unusual circumstance with him – at work very early, each one of them claiming and demanding instant personal attention. . . . Many a mile have I walked with him thus – he striding along with his regular four-miles-an-hour swing; his eyes looking straight before him, his lips slightly working, as they generally did when he sat thinking and writing; almost unconscious of companionship.¹³

These comments, by those who could confirm on an almost daily basis the energetic, vibrant, and dynamic state through which Dickens communed with his characters, confirm John Forster's pronouncement concerning how Dickens's theatrical tendencies influenced his writing:

There was no character created by him into which life and reality were not thrown with such vividness, that to his readers the thing

written did not seem the thing actually done, whether the form of disguise put on by the enchanter was Mrs. Gamp, Tom Pinch, Mr. Squeers, or Fagin the Jew. He had the power of projecting himself into shapes and suggestions of his fancy which is one of the marvels of creative imagination, and what he desired to express he became.¹⁴

The link with the theatre and popular entertainment is extremely important to the 'realization' of character; this alliance is considered by Martin Meisel, who describes the shared structures in narrative, pictorial and theatrical arts in nineteenth-century Britain. He traces the rise of the popular audience of picture and print consumers, explaining how novelists like Dickens, Thackeray, and Ainsworth used the visual arts and drama to develop a comprehensible vocabulary and syntax for their work.¹⁵ Calling Dickens the 'great Victorian performer of stories', Meisel notes how in serialised fiction the material collaboration of picture and words 'includes a predisposition to an expansive elaboration of a pictorially conceived central event in the textual unit, somewhat analogous to the pictorial dramaturgy which substituted situation for action as the constituent unit for the play'. He continues, emphasising the extent to which the visual character of texts affects verbal conception:

The collaboration of picture and text in the art of the novel is ... ultimately an attribute of style, operating as a presence and influence in the language as well as in the narrative organization. The habit of picturing as one reads apparently varies greatly from person to person, and perhaps from era to era, as does vividness of response to the visual element in ordinary language. But such considerations aside, visuality can make itself felt in a style in a variety of ways; for example, by a frequent recourse to the "word-picture" while the narrative halts, a hoary poetic and rhetorical device. The collaboration of narrative and picture could be much more subtle of course; but the "word-picture" was the concept most available to novelists as the century began, and it affected their practice.¹⁶

Meisel makes clear throughout his study that the act of picturing does not simply refer to the ways in which George Cruikshank, Phiz and others complemented Dickens's words; rather the term embodies a broad spectrum of techniques used to enrich narrative. Indeed Meisel asserts that 'character is subsumed in the term "picture";¹⁷ this inclusion is useful in considering how Dickens brought his fictional figures to life.

Dickensian characters are often identified through external manifestations, not all of which are taken from illustrations. For

example, Paul Schlicke, in discussing Dickens's fascination with the circus, notes that on playbills advertising equestrian adaptations of *Pickwick Papers* characters were identified by distinctive mannerisms.¹⁸ Robert Patten, who also considers *Pickwick*, notes that as a result of his early theatrical experiences Dickens inherited a system of 'characterological signs' through which somatotype could indicate temperament; stance and movement could convey attitude; and clothing could signify class, vocation, and characteristic habits.¹⁹ These associations provided the original illustrator Robert Seymour with his 'types', which were sufficient for farce and melodrama, anecdote and short scenes, but were, 'cripplingly limited as premises for a six-hundred page novel'. Patten argues that Dickens wished to 'write his way out of these fixities',²⁰ which were derived from the psychological humors that 'bound characters', according to Northrop Frye, to an 'invariable ritual habit'.²¹ Dickens's method was to loosen the connection between character and sign by making language – particularly speech – an index of character. Theatrical types such as Jingle and Sam Weller, Patten observes, are cases in point, because their characters are expressed through distinctive speech; in the case of Mr Pickwick, however, Dickens wrote against the fixed type of sign-system, forcing a 'decided change' in him in the course of the novel, and thus creating a new potentiality.²² Patten concludes that Pickwick's growth raises interesting questions about the nature of character:

Do people change, or do we get to know them better? If they do change, is that a flaw in the novel, or a merit? Is character essential, and fixed, or perceived, and fluid, dependent on the person, on the observer, and on the medium of exchange (feature, clothing, language)?²³

The two theories of character discussed by Patten (that is, character as innate, and character with heightened potentiality) help to explain the different patterns which Victorian texts could adopt; but the analysis does not fully account for the immediacy and vitality of Dickens's characters and the extraordinary energy evident in Buss's representation. For this it is useful to recall the pronouncements of George Henry Lewes (1817-78),²⁴ who, in 1872, published 'Dickens in Relation to Criticism' in the *Fortnightly Review*. In many ways it was a disparaging piece, characterising Dickens as having an 'animal intelligence' which did little for readers of cultivated taste beyond 'stirring their emotions'. He called Dickens a 'seer of visions', and noted his 'vividness of imagination approaching so closely to hallucination'. Lewes's purpose was to reconcile Dickens's immense popularity with what he perceived as 'critical contempt' for the novelist's work.²⁵ Some of the phrases the critic used annoyed Forster, who believed that the comments downgraded Dickens to the level of

‘stagy sentimentalist and clever caricaturist’.²⁶ Nevertheless the insight provided by Lewes (who had a lifelong interest in mental phenomena) is noteworthy: given the scheme of Buss’s painting, Dickens’s work did offer ‘effective suggestiveness’ to his readers: his characters were indeed ‘brought within the range of the reader’s interests’, so that his ‘types established themselves in the public mind’.²⁷ The affirmation that Dickens ‘distinctly *heard*’ every word spoken by his characters may be an overstatement; yet the way in which he is depicted visually by Buss, as inhabiting the same space as his creations, points to an awareness, in Lewes’s words, that Dickens’s ‘types established themselves in the public mind like personal experiences, with which one could vividly associate and commune.’²⁸ He explains:

To [Dickens], *created* images have the coercive force of realities, excluding all control, all contradiction. What seems preposterous, impossible to us, seemed to him a simple fact of observation. When he imagined a street, a house, a room, a figure, he saw it not in the vague schematic way of ordinary imagination, but in the sharp definition of actual perception, all the salient details obtruding themselves on his attention. He, seeing it thus vividly, made us also see it.²⁹

The idea of Dickens’s vividly seeing what he was composing is substantiated by Forster. In October 1841, when Dickens was working on *Barnaby Rudge*, he was troubled by the painful effects of a fistula and by the deaths of Catherine Dickens’s younger brother and grandmother; he wrote to Forster:

Of my distress I will say no more than that it has borne a terrible, frightful, horrible proportion to the quickness of the gifts you remind me of. But may I not be forgiven for thinking it a wonderful testimony to my being made for my art, that when, in the midst of this trouble and pain, I sit down to my book, some beneficent power shows it all to me, and tempts me to be interested, and I don’t invent it – really do not – *but see it*, and write it down.³⁰

Forster quotes the letter in response to Lewes’s explanation that the vividness and power of Dickens’s imagination lay in the ‘phenomena of hallucination’;³¹ but Forster quickly adds: ‘All writers of genius to whom their art has become as a second nature, will be found capable of doing upon occasion what the vulgar may think to be “hallucination,” but hallucination will never account for’.³²

Perhaps another way of thinking about the wellspring of Dickens’s imagination is to consider what he says about the dream state, which is perceived to be the subject of Buss’s painting. Dreams appear in his fiction, for example in *Barnaby Rudge*, *Oliver Twist*, *The Chimes*, and

in his journalism, such as in 'A Child's Dream of a Star' (*Household Words*, 6 April 1850) or 'Railway Dreaming' (*Household Words*, 10 May 1856).³³ In these cases, however, Dickens's use of the dream motif, while often linked to his personal experience, is to a greater or lesser extent mediated for public consumption. A more reliable index of his personal, unadulterated views on dreams may be found in his correspondence. The word is often used by Dickens in his letters, in various ways. For example, he uses it casually as a verb to mean think or imagine, as in the phrase 'never dreamt of such a thing'.³⁴ He also speaks of dreams as the repository of emotions associated with sublime or haunting settings, such as Glencoe in Scotland.³⁵ Dreams are often associated with travel; for example, he uses the word to express anticipation about visiting the United States.³⁶ When in Dublin in 1867, Dickens believed the threat of Fenian risings to be like an 'incomprehensible dream'.³⁷ Italy (which he visited in 1844-5) constituted a particular dream experience for Dickens,³⁸ and while there he often used the word 'dreamy' to mean pleasant or exquisite;³⁹ the same is true of his visit to Switzerland.⁴⁰ He particularly applied the language of dreams to Venice, of which he writes to Forster, 'The gorgeous and wonderful reality of Venice is beyond the fancy of the wildest dreamer. Opium couldn't build such a place, and enchantment couldn't shadow it forth in a vision';⁴¹ indeed *Pictures from Italy* features a section on Venice entitled 'An Italian Dream'.

He applies a variety of adjectives to dreams, including 'splendid',⁴² 'preposterous',⁴³ and 'ugly'.⁴⁴ They can constitute a state of contemplation about something he has read,⁴⁵ and can refer to fading memories or vague ideas.⁴⁶ One visit to the theatre left him in 'a kind of dream of passion and pathos and art and power'.⁴⁷ He asks others about their dreams; for example, he inquired of a prisoner in solitary confinement in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania whether or not he dreamed, and received a whispered 'No' as the reply.⁴⁸ He also asks friends to share their dreams with him,⁴⁹ and he himself dreams about them; for example, he dreams that the Hon. Richard Watson 'had gone mad, and was perpetually pursuing [*sic*] me, with a Revolver'.⁵⁰ He also described his relationship with Maria Beadnell as a 'Dream' when he became reacquainted with her in 1855.⁵¹ He dreamed of Ellen Ternan in the guise of a Miss Napier.⁵² He is, however, categorical in his denial that he ever dreamt about Madame de la Rue, his mesmeric subject; he writes to her husband, 'it is remarkable that I don't dream of her, in the ordinary sense; but merely have an anxiety about her, and a sense of her being somehow a part of me, as I have when I am awake'.⁵³

There was a more substantial incident of a persistent dream he had of Mary Hogarth. In a letter to his wife from Greta Bridge in 1838 he writes:

Is it not extraordinary that the same dreams which have constantly

visited me since poor Mary died, follow me everywhere? After all the change of scene and fatigue, I have dreamt of her ever since I left home, and no doubt shall 'till I return. I should be sorry to lose such visions for they are very happy ones — if it be only the seeing her in one's sleep — I would fain believe too, sometimes, that her spirit may have some influence over them, but their perpetual repetition is extraordinary.⁵⁴

This is a recurring, pleasant dream which, by his own acknowledgement, is deeply affecting. It establishes a connection with the spiritual world, and prolongs the pleasure of the company of Mary that he had enjoyed while she was still alive.⁵⁵ Interestingly, the result of his telling Catherine of the dreams was that they stopped completely — a circumstance which seemed to him so remarkable that he mentioned it to George Henry Lewes.⁵⁶ In 1844, however, while in Italy, he had another dream in which Mary's spirit appeared to him, dressed like the Madonna, and asked him to make a wish. Dickens asked for an alleviation of Mrs Hogarth's 'great distresses', and he took the opportunity to ask the spirit 'What is the True religion?' Dickens told Forster that during the experience he was 'as real, animated, and full of passion as Macready (God bless him!) in the last scene of *Macbeth*'.⁵⁷

When it comes to dreams affecting his writing, they worked upon him in very specific ways. He dreams of incidents in his books, and of monthly numbers.⁵⁸ In a long, detailed letter to Dr Thomas Stone (a surgeon and one of the foremost antagonists of phrenology, who contributed an article on 'Dreams' to *Household Words* in 1851) Dickens revealed his views on the topic, and made particular reference to how dreams affected his writing. He said that the subjects of dreams relate to the waking mind in a 'sort of allegorical manner', and gives the following illustration:

If I have been perplexed during the day, in bringing out the incidents of a story as I wish, I find that I dream at night — never by any chance, of the story itself — but perhaps of trying to shut a door that *will* fly open — or to screw something tight that *will* be loose — or to drive a horse on some very important journey, who unaccountably becomes a dog, and can't be urged along — or to find my way out of a series of chambers that appears to have no end. I sometimes think that the origin of all fable and Allegory — the very first conception of such fictions — may be referable to this class of dreams.⁵⁹

In the published article Stone refers to several writers for whom sleeping and dreaming had a beneficial effect on their work; they include Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, Voltaire, and Coleridge.⁶⁰

In another letter Dickens uses the image of the series of chambers to describe his work on *The Battle of Life*.⁶¹ In this case, the dream is useful in resolving difficulties in composition. Later in the letter to Stone Dickens comments on how sleep can refresh the intellect, resulting in the head being ‘full of words’; from this he concludes that language – that essential building block for the novelist – ‘has a great part in dreams’.⁶² While working on *Dombey and Son* in 1847, he speaks of falling into a ‘dream of work’.⁶³ Dickens explicitly says, however, that he does not dream about his characters; he wrote thus to Cornelius Felton:

Apropos of dreams, is it not a strange thing if writers of fiction never dream of their own creations: recollecting I suppose, even in their dreams, that they have no real existence? I never dreamed of any of my own characters and I feel it so impossible, that I would wager Scott never did of his, real as they are.⁶⁴

It is not known whether Walter Scott dreamed of his characters; but it would seem, given what has already been said concerning Dickens’s conception of character, that while he knows they do not have a ‘real existence’, and feels it impossible to dream of them, he nevertheless sees them vividly in his waking state, where he has full control of his faculties.⁶⁵ This idea confirms the notion of character portraiture through an ‘observing eye for externals’, emphasised by R. H. Horne in his 1844 assessment of Dickens for *A New Spirit of the Age*. Acknowledging the novelist’s ‘graphic powers’, he observes that Dickens

never developes [*sic*] a character from within, but commences by showing how the nature of the individual has *been* developed externally by his whole life in the world. To this effect, he first paints his portrait at full-length; sometimes his dress before his face, and most commonly his dress and demeanour. When he has done this to his satisfaction, he *feels in* the man, and the first words the man utters are the key-note of the character, and all that he subsequently says or does. The author’s hand never wavers, never becomes untrue to his creations.⁶⁶

These comments accord with what was observed above about external manifestations and the notion of picturing. Horne also believed that Dickens possessed a ‘nervous system that *lives* in the characters’;⁶⁷ this observation suggests that there was no dreamy separation between him and his creations. It is appropriate, therefore, that in Buss’s painting Dickens is clearly portrayed with his eyes open, in full possession of his faculties.

Dickens’s Dream, with the author surrounded by his creations, is

not an accurate designation for the process by which the author's characters are generated; likewise it is not a satisfactory depiction of the way in which he communed with them. It is, however, a common trope in Victorian painting and illustration. In his lifetime, Dickens became a 'mass-marketed, abstract and symbolic image' which, as Gerard Curtis notes, 'tied into the promotion of his texts, echoing his lifelong interest not only in changing the status of authorship but also in acting'.⁶⁸ Public portraits were used as trademarks, with an individual's face becoming a form of signature. The particular kind of image that Buss conceives had precedents stretching back to the Renaissance. Originally these images emerged from a religious context, portraying the author at the moment of divine inspiration, capable, in turn, of inspiring others by labour for God. This image of the holy status of the writer was adapted for secular contexts, while still maintaining the overtones of a 'metaphysical creative impulse and transmission'.⁶⁹



Fig. 2. Gustave Doré, frontispiece to Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (London: Edward Moxon and Co., 1868). Tennyson's image, in a roundel, is surrounded by characters from the poem.

There were many other examples of public figures who were given treatments similar to that which Buss applied to Dickens. Tennyson, for example, was immortalised in a frontispiece to Gustave Doré's illustrated edition of *Idylls of the King* (fig. 2). Here Tennyson appears

as a sculptured figure in a roundel, surrounded by characters from the poem. It is a romantic image, catering to the reading public's desire to see 'authorial voice' as embodied in visual form.⁷⁰ It reveals the 'mortality of the text' and carried a 'subtext of immortal temporal capture', entirely appropriate for *Idylls of the King* because the work was dedicated to the memory of Prince Albert. The image of Tennyson represents, in Curtis's words, a 'conquering of death via corporeality held in image stasis'.⁷¹

The idea of conquering death was also an impulse behind the depiction of Hans Christian Andersen in 1875 by Lorenz Frølich (1820-1908), one of the two great Danish illustrators of Andersen during his lifetime.⁷² The image (fig. 3) was published as part of a journal supplement shortly after Andersen's death. At the bottom of the image there are representations of Andersen's death on the left, and birth on the right. The upper half of the picture is filled with images from the illustrated editions which Andersen's reading public would have known well. In order to appreciate the memorial image fully, it is necessary to be familiar with the individual illustrations, such as 'The Little Mermaid' in the upper left, just above Anderson's head, together with 'The Shepherdess and the Sweep', 'The Brave Tin Soldier', 'Thumbelina', and 'The Red Shoes'. On the right-hand side there are other familiar images, such as 'Farmyard Cock and Weather Cock', 'Little Claus and Big Claus', 'The Ugly Duckling', and 'The Wild Swans'.



Fig. 3. Lorenz Frølich, Hans Christian Andersen, in *Illustreret Tidende*, 15 August 1875. This image was part of a supplement published shortly after Andersen's death (on 4 August 1875).



Fig 4. Albert Mendelssohn, 'In Remembrance of Sir Edwin Landseer'. This image, accompanied by John Templeton Lucas's memorial verses, was published as pamphlet on flimsy green paper in October 1873, just after the artist's death. Beginning at top left, and reading downward, the works included are *The Naughty Child*, *Laying Down the Law*, the falconer from *Bolton Abbey*, *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner*, one of the lions in Trafalgar Square, and *The Sleeping Bloodhound*. In the middle of the picture, above Landseer, the paintings represented, from top to bottom, are *Suspense*, *Spaniel and Pheasant*, *A Jack in the Office*, *The Challenge*, *Low Life*, *The Stag at Bay*, *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society*, *Shoeing*, *Alexander and Diogenes*, and *The Shepherd's Grave*. On the right, from top to bottom, Mendelssohn includes *Red Riding Hood*, *Dignity and Impudence*, *High Life*, the forester's daughter from *Bolton Abbey*, *Not Caught Yet*, and *Outside the Kennel*. The portrait of Queen Victoria is an imaginative addition, but acknowledges that Landseer occupied an important position at court.

The artistic depiction of dreaming was well established in the Romantic and Victorian periods. John Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1782-91) was a popular work, as was John Anster Fitzgerald's *The Artist's Dream* (1857). Both these works delve into the subconscious and explore sexual desire. Fuseli uses an incubus and a horse to focus attention on a vulnerable woman;⁷³ Fitzgerald superimposes fantasy on reality, uses wispy goblins to represent the artist dreaming about painting a beautiful young fairy princess instead of the old lady whose portrait sits on his easel.⁷⁴ Dreamers were popular subjects for Victorian fairy painters — particularly Fitzgerald, in his series of dream paintings of the 1850, which are thought to have been influenced by his employment as a theatrical scene painter and his imputed laudanum addiction.⁷⁵ The artist as dreamer is also the subject of Albert Mendelssohn's image of Sir Edwin Landseer (fig. 4), which was accompanied by memorial verses dedicated to the man who had been the most famous English artist of his generation, and was mourned throughout the nation.⁷⁶ Landseer is depicted with eyes closed, dreaming about his individual works, while engaged in painting a portrait of Queen Victoria (though this is an imaginative addition on the part of Mendelssohn: no portrait of the Queen in such a pose is known to exist). By including this portrait the image does acknowledge Landseer's relationship with the Royal Family (which extended from 1836-72);⁷⁷ yet the pictures about which the artist dreams do not, interestingly, include any of his forty royal commissions. They are mostly his animal and hunting pictures, and acknowledge his identification with the spirit of the Highlands, which became more pronounced as he grew older.⁷⁸ It is a subjective view of the painter, and satisfies a desire to see the ultimate point of view that is the face of the creator of the work.

The fact that the tribute images to Dickens, Andersen, and Landseer all feature their subjects communing with – or at least occupying the same space as – their creations is significant. They point to a particular kind of public visibility, facilitated in all three cases by the fact that the illustrations or paintings were well known to the public. In Dickens's case they confirmed what he confided to Forster concerning the vividness of composition, 'I don't invent it. . . *but see it, and write it down.*'⁷⁹ Curtis notes that there was a reciprocal effect in which readers did not accept an invented world of fiction without the reassuring image of a nonfictional person who writes it down. He observes that images of Dickens (of which there were 250 different ones circulating in the nineteenth century) produced 'the effect of a physical voice and point of view operating both within the text and outside it' in a marketplace where 'realism', 'seeing' and authenticity were verified through one's image.⁸⁰ Dickens was the visible embodiment of authorship; his highly individuated and visualised characters were confirmation of his legacy. Many of the images of



Fig. 5. Fred Barnard, 'Charles Dickens's Legacy to England', in *Fun*, 25 June 1870. The figure of Dickens, with pen in hand, was drawn from the photograph by Jeremiah Gurney & Son (1867). In both illustration and photograph Dickens holds a pen, rather than the quill with which he wrote throughout his career. *Fun*, which ran from 1861 to 1901, was the most successful rival to *Punch* in the later nineteenth century. By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

Dickens, such as the one by Fred Barnard (fig. 5) which appeared in *Fun* shortly after Dickens's death, were based on photographs. Barnard's was drawn from the Gurney photo of Dickens at his desk, pen in hand, and surrounded by books. Here Dickens adopts a practical and businesslike air, and is seriously engaged in his craft; his characters, largely from the early and mid-period novels, are recognisable from existing illustrations, and emerge from the inkpot. Though it appears in the Gurney image, the pen with which Barnard has Dickens write is inaccurate, as Dickens wrote with a quill; he is thus transformed into a producer of literary output who is visibly in touch with his times.



Fig 6. W. O. Gray, 'Dickens with his Characters'. The central portrait of Dickens is based on a photograph by Herbert Watkins (1861, fig. 10). The titles of the novels from which the images are taken are included for easy reference. By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

A different photograph, by Herbert Watkins, served as the basis for an image by W. O. Gray in the Dickens Museum collection (fig. 6) in which the novelist's characters are depicted as emanations from his lit cigar. The smoke provides a comfortable, dreamy air, and may be suggesting that without the physical presence of the author, the characters could dissipate like the smoke from which they originated. The lit cigar also helps to confirm that images of this type were a male preserve. Part of the reason for this is that the texts of many of the mainstream women novelists were not illustrated: visual realisations of their characters were virtually unknown. Also, only limited

attention was paid to women as professional writers in the nineteenth century. Indeed Elizabeth Gaskell refused to allow her portrait to be used as a promotional tool during her lifetime.⁸¹ *Fraser's Magazine* did run images of Harriet Martineau in 1833; but she was featured in a domestic pose, brewing tea. Self-advertising, it seems, was a rarity for Dickens's female contemporaries; the male image dominated the public's imagination.



Fig 7. Luke Fildes, *The Empty Chair*. The image first appeared in *The Graphic* on 25 December 1870. The setting for Buss's painting is based on that of Fildes. An earlier image of an empty chair, by Walter Brown and John Tenniel, appeared in *Judy* (Fig. 8).
By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

Dickens's Dream, measuring 70 cm high by 89 cm wide, was begun in about 1872, and remained unfinished at the time of Buss's death in 1875; it was bequeathed to the Dickens Museum (then Dickens House) in 1928 by the Rev Francis Fleetwood Buss, grandson of the artist,⁸² to whom it was given by the R.W. Buss's daughter, Frances Mary Buss.⁸³ Buss would have been aware of the posthumous representations of Dickens already noted,⁸⁴ which may have influenced him. There are, however, several images which are obvious sources. First there is Luke Fildes's *The Empty Chair* (1870, fig. 7), which featured Dickens's library, desk and chair at Gad's Hill. This famous lithograph differs from those already considered: here the author and the hand that writes become signifiers by their absence. This is different from the personal absence of Dickens, because he had effectively 'transcended that persona and had been absorbed into his place of labour'. It echoes a tradition of representing the absent king by the vacant throne.⁸⁵

Fildes's image was in fact preceded by one which appeared in *Judy* in June 1870, by Walter Brown (Phiz's second son) and John Tenniel (fig. 8). In that illustration the characters adopt their characteristic poses from their original illustrations by Cruikshank and Phiz, while the pen and paper lie abandoned on the desk.



Fig. 8. Walter Brown and John Tenniel, 'The Empty Chair', *Judy* 7 (22 June 1870), between pp. 90-91. At the foot of the desk are copies of some of Dickens's novels, with the names of Phiz and Cruikshank prominent on the title pages. This image was a published as a two-page spread, accompanied by memorial verses, which included the lines 'He made a world, and peopled it with those/Who live in our remembrances and our heart'. By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.



Fig. 9. George Cruikshank, *The Triumph of Cupid: A Reverie*, in William Blanchard Jerrold, *The Life of George Cruikshank* (2 vols., London: Chatto and Windus, 1882), vol. 2, facing p. 34. This image, depicting Cruikshank sitting in the front parlour of his home, in front of a blazing fire, surrounded by a procession of characters from his work, is a striking precedent for Buss's painting.

Buss also drew on a much earlier image: George Cruikshank's *Triumph of Cupid* (1848, fig. 9), which was originally the frontispiece to *George Cruikshank's Table Talk*, and features Cruikshank sitting in the front parlour of his home, wearing slippers and an embroidered dressing gown and smoking a meerschaum pipe in front of a blazing fire, with his wife's pet spaniel on his knee. He gazes abstractedly, dreaming of the triumphs of Cupid, imagined in a cloud of smoke as a procession of characters from his work: Grimaldi the clown, Harlequin, sweeps, soldiers, sailors, imps, pirates, jockeys, Greenwich pensioners, a Fagin-like old clothes dealer, flunkies and others. They are chained to the wheels of a wedding cake state coach in which Cupid sits triumphant, pulled by subdued lions and tigers. Running beside Cupid are kings and princes, bishops and generals, lawyers, drummers, and jack-tars. Running before Cupid are cherubic acolytes and banner-bearers, together with a stream of enamoured women. All of them are proceeding to the altar of Hymen, established on the table at left. Another Cupid sits on Cruikshank's foot, toasting a heart at the fire. The cherubs at the bottom are shown aiding the poor, freeing a black slave, pulling a lamplighter from his ladder, and defeating a



Fig. 10: Herbert Watkins, photograph of Charles Dickens (circa. 1861). The pose in this famous image is very similar to that in the Buss painting, and in the engraving by W. O. Gray (fig. 6). By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

turbaned Muslim. Cruikshank's little *alter ego* stands on a milking stool, capturing the artist's likeness. Interestingly, all the furniture is strangely vitalized: masks laugh round the border of the tablecloth; the markings of the mantelpiece resolve themselves into rows of madly-racing figures; the tongs leer in a degagé and cavalier way at the artist, the shovel and poker grin in sympathy. There are faces in the smoke and in the fire; even the fender round the fireplace features fantastic creatures. It is a self-congratulatory image for Cruikshank, emphasising both the power of love and the extent of the artist's own achievement.

The figure of Dickens is one of the few completed elements in Buss's painting. It was modelled on a photograph by Herbert Watkins (circa. 1861, fig. 10), and depicts a confident, professional man, in a pose of serious thought, ostensibly about his art. Dickens appears with his eyes open, experiencing a daydream or waking reverie; all the characters who appear in the painting are diminutive – partly, of course, to fit within the frame, but also perhaps to indicate something about the relationship between the creator and his creations: Dickens is in a dominant position, controlling and arranging his inventions in a logical sequence. On his knee sits Little Nell; above his right arm are the figures of Paul Dombey sitting in his chair, and Little Nell on her deathbed (all of these figures are in colour). At the upper left of the picture there are untinted sketches of characters drawn from earlier novels: Mr Pickwick; Sam and Tony Weller; Oliver Twist; Mr Bumble; Smike; Quilp; Fagin and Sikes; as well as Maclise's design for the frontispiece to *The Chimes*. Below these are images of Mr and Mrs Squeers and Nicholas Nickleby in Dotheboys Hall; Ralph Nickleby with Mrs Nickleby and Kate; Mr Mantalini; young Barnaby Rudge with Grip the raven; Dolly Varden; Nell and her grandfather, together with the Codlins' Punch and Judy dolls; Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness; Paul Dombey and Florence; Mr Dombey; Edith Dombey and Carker; and Captain Cuttle. On the side of the desk, next to the wastepaper bin, is a sketch of Jenny Wren and Riah. Reading downward from the top in the middle of the painting, Buss includes Mr Pecksniff, Tom Pinch, and Mrs Gamp; Scrooge and Marley; David Copperfield and Dora; Steerforth and the shipwreck; Ham and Daniel Peggotty in front of their house; Mr Micawber and Uriah Heep; Betsey Trotwood; John Jarndyce, Esther Summerson, and Sir Leicester Dedlock; Mr Crook with his cat; Lady Dedlock; Jo the crossing sweeper; Little Dorrit; Mrs Clennam and Mr Flintwinch; Maggy; Blandois/Rigaud; William Dorrit; Miss Havisham, Pip, and Joe; Joe and Orlick; and Mr Boffin at the dust heap. On the right-hand side of the picture, reading downward from the top, there are images of Lucie Manette and her father; Durdles and Mr Sapsea; John Jasper and Rosa Bud (both scenes from *Drood* in colour, directly above Dickens's head); John Jasper sleeping off the effects of opium (in colour); and

Rosa and Mr Grewgious (in colour, in front of Dickens's face).

The picture includes elements of the Dickens illustrations to the novels and Christmas Books by Cruikshank, Phiz, George Cattermole, Daniel Maclise, John Leech, Marcus Stone, and Luke Fildes. They are amalgamated into a unified whole: no attempt is made to segregate or organise the images according to artist or style. The viewer is particularly drawn to the figures of Little Nell on Dickens's knee, and, above her, Paul Dombey. Both appear in colour – a circumstance which may be accidental, given the work is unfinished; yet these two child characters, who die young in their respective works, occupied an exalted position in the minds of Dickens's contemporary readers,⁸⁶ and perhaps also in the mind of Buss. The rest of the scheme is reasonably chronological: the artist imagines the early works as being, for the most part, physically and imaginatively distant. The later works are, on the other hand, in closer proximity to Dickens – especially *Edwin Drood*, on which the novelist was working when he died.



Fig. 11. R. W. Buss, Self portrait (1837). Photo by kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

The question of why Buss (fig. 11) painted this picture cannot be answered simply or authoritatively. Though he had spoken so warmly about Dickens in the statement published by Dexter and Ley, it seems, judging from two pieces of evidence, that in the 1870s Buss did not

know Dickens's work well. The first is a rough draft of individual characters (now in the archives of the North London Collegiate School) which Buss drew for the painting: it was accompanied by titles of several Dickens novels, and shelfmarks from early editions of the works in the British Library (fig. 12).⁸⁷ This sketch seems to



Fig. 12. R. W. Buss, Sketches of Florence and Paul Dombey, and Captain Cuttle, for *Dickens's Dream*. The British Museum shelfmarks for copies of Dickens's works appear on the right-hand side of the sketch. By kind permission of the North London Collegiate School.

indicate that Buss did not own editions of the novels in parts or early editions of the Christmas books, and so had to consult them in order to produce his own copies of the illustrations. The second piece of evidence is a scheme, in Buss's hand, of the placement of Dickens's characters in the painting (Fig. 13). Buss is rather vague about the names of characters; for example, in the lower left of the scheme, he places 'The old Jew & dolls' dressmaker', identifying neither Riah nor Jenny Wren by name. More telling is the reference, on the right, to 'Two Cities, Dr ____ & Lucy'. He misspells several other names, including 'Miss Flight', Miss Moucher', 'Peggodey', and 'Swiveler'. The key would seem to indicate that Buss was not intimately familiar with Dickens's works, but reacquainted himself with them before embarking on the watercolour.⁸⁸



Fig. 13. R. W. Buss, Key to *Dickens's Dream*, in the artist's own hand, in the Buss Scrapbook. By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

Several recent studies have considered Buss's painting. Curtis ties the work into a tradition of authors sequestered alone in their studies, tempted by characters from their own imagination, who motivate them to the process of writing. He notes that the source for this view of an internal voice may have been borrowed from Christian writings, and from classical sources.⁸⁹ He notes that the image evokes an interplay

between the imaginative and the real, and extends to the labour of the creative act the impact of Romanticism's primacy of the imagination and the visionary state. Such imagery, he adds, supports the Victorian view that great fiction writers like Dickens were possessed of dual lives, one external, the other internal. The image of the writer both dreaming and working, able to combine a duality of existence, served to mythologise his labour, and separate it from direct association with industrialism and the business of publishing.⁹⁰

Malcolm Andrews adds that the painting suggests a process of creation akin to spontaneous generation. He sees the author as a passive host, indicated by his chair being pushed some way back from his desk. This view confirms Dickens's statement that 'some beneficent power' shows it all to him, and he writes it down: Dickens saw his newly forming fictional world 'without any inventive effort on his part' – particularly when he was tired and under stress.⁹¹ Andrews recalls how Dickens, in November 1865, was wearied by the composition of *Our Mutual Friend*, but had to find an idea for his annual Christmas story. He created Sophy, the little adopted daughter of Dr Marigold in an inspirational moment; as he told Forster: 'Suddenly, the little character that you will see, and all belonging to it, came flashing up in the most cheerful manner, and I had only to look on and leisurely describe it'.⁹² Here the strong visual presence of his spontaneously generated character is emphasised.

Andrews's comments point to an interesting paradox within Dickens's character. On the one hand, the novelist continually recalls the passive/receptive mode of creation: characters suddenly appear before him, and he acts as a reporter, recording what he sees as it is presented to him in vivid detail; on the other, he manifests an almost obsessive love of control, in both his personal and professional life. There are many recorded instances of his desire to monitor and regulate. For example Mamie Dickens noted how her father visited every room in the house each morning to make sure that nothing was out of place;⁹³ he even inspected his daughters' bureau drawers, leaving notes 'to reprimand any untidiness'.⁹⁴ In his conduct of *Household Words* he took great care with details, balance, and appropriateness; he displayed stringency in editorial methods and attitudes, at one point issuing W. H. Wills a 'solemn and continual Conductorial Injunction'.⁹⁵ Harry Stone observes that through his 'suggestions, ideas, and orders, Dickens shaped *Household Words* into a quickly responsive instrument of his will'.⁹⁶

Dickens's desire for control was especially evident to friends, family, and the public at large in his attitude towards performance. Charley Dickens (who described his father's 'relentless' level of activity) recalls, with a mixture of admiration and regret, how Dickens took over the production of a play for the boy's toy theatre. He also records how in later years Dickens was intimately involved in the

theatrical arrangements at Tavistock House:

He revised and adapted the plays, selected and arranged the music, chose and altered the costumes, wrote the new incidental songs, invented all the stage business, taught everybody his or her part, and was in fact, everywhere and everything at once.

The perfection for which Dickens constantly strived is captured in Charley's observation that during rehearsals Dickens was constantly 'ready' to shout 'that fatal cry of "stop!"' if he came across the 'smallest mistake' in the proceedings.⁹⁷ The control Dickens exercised over all aspects of performance is confirmed by Forster: 'Such a chaos of dirt, confusion, and noise, as the little theatre was the day we entered it, and such a cosmos as he made it of cleanliness, order, and silence, before the rehearsals were over!'⁹⁸

The dramatic arena which allowed Dickens even greater control than that which he exercised over a production company was, of course, the public readings. While the characters were originally conceived through the kind of passive-receptive mode which has already been described, the readings represented an opportunity for him to take charge of his creations, and generate on the platform a crowd of vividly realised characters. The process was described first-hand by Charles Kent:

We knew that he alone was there all the time before us, reading, or, to speak more accurately, re-creating for us, one and all – while his lips were articulating the familiar words his hand had written so many years previously – the most renowned of the imaginary creatures peopling his books. Watching him, hearkening to him, while he stood there unmistakably before his audience, on the raised platform. . . his individuality, so to express it, altogether disappeared, and we saw before us instead, just as the case might happen to be, Mr. Pickwick, or Mrs. Gamp, or Dr. Marigold, or little Paul Dombey, or Mr. Squeers, or Sam Weller, or Mr. Peggotty.⁹⁹

The kind of control Dickens exercised over his material – and indeed his listeners – is captured in Herbert Watkins's photograph of Dickens in the guise of reader (1858; fig. 14). Here he appears as a serious performer, looking directly at the viewer and holding a book (the source text from which the characters emanate) at a comfortable height, with his left arm resting on his now famous reading desk. In his right hand he holds his ivory paper knife, which he used as a prop to assist in directing his audience's attention in a performance over which he had ultimate control. He gives the appearance of a musical conductor, who must know all the sound sequences produced by all the



Fig. 14. Herbert Watkins, photograph of Dickens (1858). By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum. The photo was taken in the same year that the novelist undertook his first public readings for profit. The desk at which Dickens stands was specially made for the public readings; it is in the Museum's collection, as is the ivory paper knife he holds in his right hand.

performers under his direction; through his 'power of projecting himself',¹⁰⁰ he could visualise each character's traits, and knew how every one would behave in performing before the audience. Just as the conductor takes the first bow at the conclusion of a concert, Dickens receives adulation from the crowd for his ability to govern and direct his material, in order to cement what he calls 'that peculiar relation (personally affectionate, and like no other man's) which subsists between me and the public'.¹⁰¹

While the readings derive their effect from Dickens's ability to animate and engage with those characters which his audience had come to know textually, Buss's picture draws on familiarity with the illustrations which had become fixed in the public imagination. The accumulation of over seventy-five characters in a single painting was a tribute to the fertility of the novelist's imagination and a testament to the esteem in which Buss held those graphic artists who had more

successful, longer lasting associations with Dickens – something that Buss himself clearly missed. In his letter to Forster, referred to above, Phiz's work was particularly praised:

For Mr. Hablot Browne I have the greatest regard as an artist and illustrator of our great novelist. He has entirely entered into the feeling of Dickens in his admirable designs for his works. The outward bodily form of Dickens's characters is stamped upon the public mind. . . . You, I believe, are the only author of memoirs of Dickens who pays proper attention to the very great share Mr. Browne had in the immense popularity of Dickens.¹⁰²

Buss makes an important point here about the reasons for Dickens's popularity, and the particular form of the literary output: together novelist and illustrator constituted a marque or brand name that was easily recognised; integration of the visual and the textual often produced thematic unity in the projects on which author and artist collaborated.¹⁰³

Buss's painting clearly recognises the achievement of the novelist, together with that of the artists who were chosen over him to illustrate Dickens's serial publications. As there is no record of its having been commissioned, it seems that *Dickens's Dream* was a personal work, representing Buss's last chance to create and engage with Dickensian subjects; Jane Rabb Cohen observes that a suitable subtitle for the work would be 'Buss's Dream', for now, at last, she notes, 'he had illustrated many of the author's major characters'.¹⁰⁴ Indeed the painting can also be read as a completion of Dickens's work: aside from Paul Dombey and Little Nell, the other characters who appear in colour all come from *Edwin Drood*; perhaps, by deciding to complete these first, Buss conveyed a sense of fulfilment of Dickens's work. It is a souvenir, a remembrance, a work of homage, which reveals a great deal about what Buss thought of Dickens, and confirms how the recognition of pervasive Dickensian images provides visual pleasure. It makes us ponder on how a writer thinks about or conceives of character, and confirms for us that the art of picturing goes well beyond simple illustration. Its unfinished state makes it more – not less – interesting, and makes it a fit object of contemplation in the museum dedicated to the most versatile and imaginative writer of the nineteenth century.

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¹This piece appeared in Chapman & Hall's *Library of Fiction*.

²The published plates by Buss, etched into steel, were 'The Cricket Match' and 'The Fat Boy Awake'. He also sketched two designs for the fourth number, and another for a title page of a future volume edition of *Pickwick*. Interestingly, it was Buss's illustration of the cricket match that was printed on the back of the Bank of England £10 note, to complement the portrait of Dickens on the front.

³See Alfred G. Buss, 'R.W. Buss', *Notes and Queries* 5th ser, 3 (1875), pp. 330-1, 455, and Jane R. Cohen, *Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 1980), pp. 50-6. The extent to which Dickens (who never met Buss) might have been involved in the decision to replace the artist is unclear.

⁴John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. J.W.T. Ley (London: Cecil Palmer, 1928), p. 77. For Buss's letter see J.W.T. Ley, 'Buss's *Pickwick* Pictures: An Important Letter', *Dickensian* 32 (1936), pp. 101-4. Ley notes that Forster wrote back to Buss, declaring that he had no intention of slighting the artist, and promising to put matters right in subsequent editions; Forster did not, however, live long enough to do this (Ley, 101).

⁵In Walter Dexter and J.W.T. Ley, *The Origin of Pickwick: New Facts now First Published in the Year of the Centenary* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1936), pp. 109-39; the original document has been lost. Buss characterised his relations with Chapman and Hall as a 'misfortune'; he was 'disgusted' with their 'ungentlemanly' — indeed 'brutal' — treatment of him (pp. 126, 134, 130). There is no full-length biography of Buss; however in the archives of the North London Collegiate School there are a variety of unpublished documents relating to Buss's life, including a book of notes compiled by a grandson, Francis Fleetwood Buss, drawn from his father Septimus's private journal (also in the school archives). See also J.W.T. Ley, 'Robert William Buss; Tribute to an Unlucky Artist', *Dickensian* 6 (1910), pp. 33-37, 71-5; *Our Living Painters: Their Lives and Works* (London: James Blackwood, 1859), pp. 11-19; and Robert L. Patten's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. There were obituaries in the *St Pancras and Holborn Guardian*, *St Pancras Reporter*, *North Londoner*, *Marylebone Mercury*, *Manchester Examiner*, *The Standard*, and *Islington Gazette*. There is also a fascinating scrapbook (now in the Charles Dickens Museum) begun by Buss himself, then enlarged by his son and his grandson. This eclectic collection began as a series of Buss's etchings, assembled for his son; to these were added material relating to *Dickens's Dream* and to the *Pickwick* illustrations, including a copy of Buss's statement in Septimus's hand. It also contains notices of the artist's life and other biographical material. The scrapbook was given in 1949 to J.W.T. Ley, who, F.F. Buss wrote, 'always stood up for my grandfather R.W. Buss'.

⁶See Dexter and Ley, p. 109. See also R.W. Buss, *English Graphic Satire*, (London: Virtue & co for the author, 1874), where Dickens is referred to as 'an eminent moralist and judge of character' in the vein of William Hogarth, and a 'great master of humour' (pp. 82, 171).

⁷Many critics erroneously believe that Dickens is asleep in the painting; see, for example, Gerard Curtis, *Visual Words: Art and the Material Book in Victorian England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 184.

⁸Malcolm Andrews, 'Performing Character', in *Charles Dickens Studies*, ed. John Bowen and Robert L. Patten (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 69.

⁹Andrews, p. 71.

¹⁰"How I Work": Dickens in the Writer's Chair', *Dickensian* 89 (1993): 5-24

¹¹*My Father as I Recall Him* (London: Roxburghe Press, 1896), pp. 46-9.

¹²Henry Fielding Dickens, 'The Social Influence of Dickens', *Dickensian* 1 (1905): 63.

¹³Charles Dickens, Jr., 'Reminiscences of my Father', *Windsor Magazine* 79 (1934, Christmas Supplement): 25.

¹⁴Forster, p. 381.

¹⁵*Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), pp. 10-11, 52-3.

¹⁶*Realizations*, pp. 71, 56.

¹⁷*Realizations*, p. 56.

¹⁸Paul Schlicke, 'Dickens in the Circus', *Theatre Notebook* 47 (1993), p. 9.

¹⁹"I thought of Mr. Pickwick, and wrote the first number": Dickens and the Evolution of Character', *Dickens Quarterly* 3.2 (1986), p. 19.

²⁰p. 21.

²¹'Dickens and the Comedy of Humors', in *Experience in the Novel*, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (New York: Columbia UP, 1968), p. 56.

²²Charles Dickens, preface to *The Pickwick Papers*, ed. Malcolm Andrews (London: J.M. Dent, 1998), p. xli.

²³Patten, p. 24.

²⁴Lewes had performed alongside Dickens in *Every Man in His Humour* in 1847, and later had a public disagreement with the novelist over the presentation of spontaneous combustion in *Bleak House*.

²⁵'Dickens in Relation to Criticism', *Fortnightly Review* 11 (1872), pp. 150, 154, 144, 143.

²⁶Forster, p. 716.

²⁷Lewes, pp. 147, 148, 146.

²⁸Lewes, pp. 149, 146.

²⁹Lewes, p. 145.

³⁰*Letters of Charles Dickens*, The Pilgrim Edition, 2, ed. Madeline House and Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 411 (hereafter 'Pilgrim Letters'). The letter is quoted in Forster, p. 720.

³¹Lewes, p. 149.

³²Forster, p. 720.

³³Dickens also published an article by Dr Thomas Stone entitled 'Dreams' on 8 March 1851. He had written to Stone on 2 February 1851, giving details of his dream of Mary Hogarth in the guise of the Madonna (see *Pilgrim Letters* 4, p. 196). See below for discussion of Stone.

³⁴See *Pilgrim Letters* 1, p. 550; see also 3; p. 555; 4, p. 396; 4, p. 546; 4, p. 554; 5, p. 84; 5, p. 507; 6, p. 188; 6, p. 238; 6, p. 254; 6, p. 298; 6, p. 470; 7, p. 741; 8, p. 86; 8, p. 295; 8, p. 724; 10, p. 54; 11, p. 145; 11, p. 251.

³⁵*Pilgrim Letters* 2, p. 324.

³⁶*Pilgrim Letters* 2, p. 394; 8, p. 566; 8, p. 589.

³⁷*Pilgrim Letters* 11, p. 336.

³⁸*Pilgrim Letters* 4, p. 3; 4, p. 217; 7, p. 171; 10, p. 260; 10, p. 279.

³⁹*Pilgrim Letters* 4, p. 169; 4, p. 220.

⁴⁰*Pilgrim Letters* 4, p. 568.

⁴¹*Pilgrim Letters* 4, p. 217; see also 4, p. 226; 4, p. 237; and 4, p. 280.

⁴²*Pilgrim Letters* 4, p. 280.

⁴³*Pilgrim Letters* 4, p. 351.

⁴⁴*Pilgrim Letters* 3, p. 564.

⁴⁵*Pilgrim Letters* 3, p. 596.

⁴⁶*Pilgrim Letters* 5, pp. 378, 466.

⁴⁷*Pilgrim Letters* 10, p. 63. Dickens went to see Charles Fechter as Ruy Blas, in Victor

Hugo's play at the Princess's Theatre in April 1862.

⁴⁸Pilgrim Letters 3, p. 181.

⁴⁹Pilgrim Letters 4, p. 84; the friend was Thomas James Thompson (1812-81).

⁵⁰Pilgrim Letters 6, p. 666; see also 8, p. 347

⁵¹Pilgrim Letters 7, p. 539.

⁵²Pilgrim Letters 10, p. 256: 'On Thursday night in last week, being at the office here, I dreamed that I saw a lady in a red shawl with her back towards me (whom I supposed to be E.). On her turning round I found that I didn't know her, and she said "I am Miss Napier." All the time I was dressing next morning, I thought—What a preposterous thing to have so very distinct a dream about nothing!' (to Forster, 30 May 1863).

⁵³Pilgrim Letters 4, p. 264.

⁵⁴Pilgrim Letters 1, p. 366.

⁵⁵See also Dickens's letter to a potential contributor to *Bentley's Miscellany*, in which he observes 'our spirits commonly hold intercourse with those of the beloved dead in waking thoughts and dreams in which we see them (knowing them to be no longer in this world) without fear or pain' (Pilgrim Letters 1, p. 486).

⁵⁶ee Lewes, p. 141.

⁵⁷Pilgrim Letters 4, p. 196. Forster explains that this dream of Mary Hogarth was evidence of Dickens's troubled reflections on religion, and that, 'In such disturbing fancies during the next year or two . . . the book which helped him most' was Arthur Stanley's *Life of Dr Arnold* (Forster, p. 350).

⁵⁸Pilgrim Letters 2, p. 383.

⁵⁹Pilgrim Letters 6, p. 276,

⁶⁰[Thomas Stone], 'Dreams', *Household Words* 2 (8 March 1851), p. 569. For further information on Stone see Anne Lohrli, *Household Words: Table of Contents, List of Contributors and their Contributions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 439-40.

⁶¹Pilgrim Letters 4, p. 638.

⁶²Pilgrim Letters 6, pp. 277-8.

⁶³Pilgrim Letters 5, p. 41; see also 5, p. 44.

⁶⁴Pilgrim Letters 3, p. 550.

⁶⁵James T. Fields recalls that Dickens, in response to a question about whether he dreams of his characters, said 'Never; and I am convinced that no writer (judging from my own experience, which cannot be altogether singular, but must be a type of the experience of others) has ever dreamed of the creatures of his own imagination. It would. . . be like a man's dreaming of meeting himself, which is clearly an impossibility'. Fields also confirms the vividness with which Dickens saw his characters: 'Sometimes he would pull the arm of his companion and whisper, "Let us avoid Mr. Pumblechook, who is crossing the street to meet us"; or "Mr. Micawber is coming; let us turn down this alley to get out of his way" ('Some Memories of Charles Dickens', *Atlantic Monthly* 26 [1870], p. 238).

⁶⁶'Charles Dickens', in *A New Spirit of the Age* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1844), pp. 4, 51, 25.

⁶⁷Horne, p. 63.

⁶⁸*Visual Words*, p. 131.

⁶⁹Curtis, p. 180.

⁷⁰Curtis, p. 133.

⁷¹Curtis, p. 133.

⁷²The other illustrator was Vilhelm Pedersen (1820-59). Pederson illustrated the 1849 edition of Andersen's work; Frølich served as illustrator from 1867 to 1874.

⁷³See Raymond Lister, *British Romantic Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989),

image 17.

⁷⁴See Jeremy Maas et al, *Victorian Fairy Painting* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1997), pp. 114-5.

⁷⁵See Maas, pp. 18-19. Other dream paintings by Fitzgerald include *The Nightmare* (1857-8) and *The Stuff that Dreams Are Made of* (1858). For an extended discussion of Fitzgerald and fairy painting, particularly in relation to Hieronymus Bosch and William Henry Hunt, see Nicola Bown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), pp. 110-40

⁷⁶Richard Ormond, *Sir Edwin Landseer* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), p. 22.

⁷⁷Landseer's position at court is the aspect of his work most stressed today. He painted a succession of royal pets (including more than a dozen royal dogs), and undertook major portrait commissions, including the great unfinished equestrian picture of *Queen Victoria on Horseback* (1838-72), the conversation piece *Windsor Castle in Modern Times* (1841-5) and the portrait of Victoria and Albert in fancy dress (*Queen Victoria and Prince Albert* [1842-6]). Other famous royal pictures include *Royal Sports on Hill and Loch* (1850-72, his single largest royal commission, intended as a glorification of the Royal Family in the Highlands), *Prince Albert at Balmoral in 1860*, also called *Sunshine*, and *Her Majesty at Osborne in 1866*, also called *Sorrow* (both 1865-7). See Ormond, 14.

⁷⁸Interestingly, Landseer's most famous animal picture, *Monarch of the Glen*, is not included in Mendelsohn's image.

⁷⁹*Pilgrim Letters* 2, p. 411; quoted in Forster, p. 720.

⁸⁰Curtis, p. 134.

⁸¹Gaskell declared, "Other women may not object to having their portraits taken for the public, and sold indiscriminately, but I feel a strong insurmountable objection to it" (quoted in David Piper, *The English Face*, ed. Malcolm Rogers [London: National Portrait Gallery, 1992] p. 276).

⁸²See the Buss scrapbook for correspondence concerning this accession. At the head of a letter from the Dickens Fellowship to F.F. Buss, dated March 1828, the artist's grandson had written that the picture had been in the Buss family for '56 years'

⁸³See F. Fleetwood Buss, '*Dickens's Dream: The Last Picture of R.W. Buss*', *Dickensian* 28 (1932), p. 266. The picture was finally transferred to the Museum in September 1931. In his notebook (now in the archives of the North London Collegiate School) F.F. Buss recalls having seen the painting in his grandfather's studio in Camden Town. Frances Mary Buss (1827-94) had a distinguished career as an educator; she established North London Collegiate School for Ladies in April 1850, in a house beside the family home in Camden Street. She was assisted in running the school by her father (who gave lessons in drawing and painting), and her brother Septimus (1836-1914). By the time of R.W. Buss's death in 1875 the school had an enrolment of over 700 pupils. The school moved to its present site, Canons in Edgware, in 1939.

⁸⁴The images that may also have inspired Buss include the engraving by Poulton for *The Hornet*, 15 June 1870; the engraving by W. Brown and John Tenniel for *Judy*, 22 June 1870; and the engraving in *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, 25 June 1870. There are many other images of Dickens surrounded by his characters; these may be found in the photographic archive of the Charles Dickens Museum. The more interesting ones include Edmond Morin, 'Dickens et ses oeuvres', in *Le Monde Illustré*, 25 June 1870; W.H. Beard, *Dickens Receiving His Characters* (1874); Alfred Bryan, 'A Christmas Celebrity – Charles Dickens' (1888); J.R. Brown, 'Dickens Surrounded by his Characters' (1890); and 'G.P.', 'Dickens Enjoys a Friendly Pipe with Some of His Creations' (1898).

⁸⁵Curtis, pp. 191, 190.

⁸⁶See Priscilla Schlicke and Paul Schlicke, *The Old Curiosity Shop: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), pp. 35-82, and Leon Litvack, *Dombey and Son: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: AMS Press, 1999), pp. 99-120.

⁸⁷Other sketches feature Tom Pinch and Mr. Pecksniff, Mrs Gamp; Mr Pickwick and Sam Weller; Dolly Varden; and Lucie Manette and her father (R.W. Buss Sketchbook 2,

folios 48 & 49, North London Collegiate School).

⁸⁸There is a curious involvement with Catherine Dickens on the part of the Buss family: she visited the boarding department of North London Collegiate on 26 March 1867 (Septimus Buss Diary, 1867-76, in North London Collegiate Archives). In the 1860s Catherine spent much of her time with her youngest sister Helen, who eventually taught music at the Ladies College in Cheltenham. Before that, Helen had private pupils in London. Catherine was friendly with a number of women who were interested in education for girls, including such people as the novelist Annie Hall Thomas (Mrs. Pendler Cudlip, 1838-1918). Her charitable activities at this time were private: for example, helping a former female servant to find employment. I am grateful to Lillian Nayder for this information.

⁸⁹Curtis, pp. 184, 201.

⁹⁰Curtis, p. 184.

⁹¹Andrews, p. 71.

⁹²Pilgrim *Letters* 11, p. 105.

⁹³*My Father as I Recall Him*, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁴Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), vol. 2, p. 751.

⁹⁵Pilgrim *Letters* 7, p. 200

⁹⁶'Dickens "Conducts" *Household Words*', *Dickensian* 64 (1968), p. 79. Stone expanded this article into his introduction to *Charles Dickens: Uncollected Writings from Household Words, 1850-1859* (2 vols., Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1968).

⁹⁷'Reminiscences of my Father', pp. 11, 19-20.

⁹⁸*The Life of Charles Dickens*, p. 383; these comments relate to a performance of *Every Man in His Humour*. Forster adds: 'greatly as his acting contributed to the success of the night, this was nothing to the service he had rendered as manager. . . . He was the life and soul of the entire affair. I never seemed till then to have known his business capabilities. He took everything on himself, and did the whole of it without an effort. He was stage-director, very often stage-carpenter, scene-arranger, property-man, prompter, and bandmaster. . . . For all he had useful suggestions, and the dullest of clays under his potter's hand were transformed into little bits of porcelain. He adjusted scenes, assisted carpenters, invented costumes, devised playbills, wrote out calls, and enforced as well as exhibited in his proper person everything of which he urged the necessity on others.'

⁹⁹*Charles Dickens as a Reader* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872) p. 32.

¹⁰⁰Forster, p. 381.

¹⁰¹Pilgrim *Letters* 8, p. 539.

¹⁰²Ley, 'Buss's *Pickwick* Pictures: An Important Letter', p. 104.

¹⁰³See Michael Steig, *Dickens and Phiz* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978), pp. 1-23.

¹⁰⁴*Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators*, p. 58.