



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

Dickens, Australia and Magwitch Part I: The Colonial Context

Litvack, L. (1999). Dickens, Australia and Magwitch Part I: The Colonial Context. *The Dickensian*, 95(1), 7-33.

Published in:
The Dickensian

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.

Dickens, Australia and Magwitch

Part I: The Colonial Context¹

LEON LITVACK

AMONG THE WORKS OF DICKENS'S LATE PERIOD, *Great Expectations* stands out as a predominantly 'dark' novel, which severely scrutinizes the quality of British life. It focuses on characters who are increasingly subject to economic, social, and political forces over which they have no control, but which determine their destinies. Critics have offered various explications, based on Dickens's personal life, for the abandonment of easy resolutions and the difficulty in apportioning blame in the novelist's later work: he suffered because of his failing marriage, the relationship he developed with the actress Ellen Ternan, and the eventual separation from his wife in 1858; he also suffered from increasingly debilitating illnesses, including strained nerves, and facial neuralgia; he found it harder to write, and ideas for new work did not come to him so easily; also, after 1858 he began a strenuous programme of dramatic public readings which, while bringing him closer to his cherished public, visibly tired and even disabled him.² There are, however, other – more public – factors which contribute to the dark tone evoked by the novel, and firmly place it within a larger scheme of a quest for a readily definable individual and communal identity. Such points of reference were essential for a nation which had embarked on a conscious programme of colonial expansion, which would eventually transform Britain into a worldwide empire.

As Lionel Stevenson has pointed out, by the early 1860s, when the implications of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* were realised, the material of fiction was transformed. It was not only that the influence of religion and the religious code of morality were weakened by scepticism; much more it was the realisation that mankind had to be regarded on the same basis as all other physical phenomena, and indeed all other members of the animal kingdom. These considerations affected the understanding of the motives and actions of individuals, and the relationships of these individuals with one another – precisely the themes around which *Great Expectations* is structured.³ The narrative is symmetrically arranged around two examples of a single situation: in the cases of both Magwitch and Miss Havisham, an embittered person adopts a child and moulds its personality to be a compensation for the foster-parent's frustrations. Magwitch, the transported convict, is, perhaps, the more interesting of the two, because of his prolonged absence from the pages of the novel and his relative anonymity; by the time he returns, at the end of the second stage of Pip's expectations, the plot is moving too

quickly to allow for an adequate exploration of his motivations and personal history. He has devoted all his savings and endangered his life to make a gentleman of Pip, the crude village boy who is the only character ever to have treated him kindly; yet important aspects of Magwitch's individual constitution – particularly his experiences during his absence, and his feelings about England (the country which had forsaken him, yet to which he returns) and Australia (the country which served as his prison, yet allowed him to prosper and start a new life) – are never satisfactorily considered. Surely Magwitch's forced removal to the antipodes had a profound effect on his identity; and his return to England had equally momentous personal consequences. However, Dickens – and Pip – are strangely reticent concerning this character on whom so much of the plot depends.

Australia certainly penetrated deep into Magwitch's psyche: it is from there that he formulated the plan to make him Pip's benefactor, and set up Pip's great expectations; yet the novel has been squarely situated within the metropolitan history of British fiction. An inspection of George Worth's comprehensive *Great Expectations: An Annotated Bibliography* substantiates this claim: the subject index records very few entries under 'Australia', and many of those deal with a seemingly spurious claim that Miss Havisham was based on a woman from Sydney named Eliza Emily Donnithorne.⁴ None of the remaining ones clearly addresses the question of why the colonial and imperial experience leaves such a small impression on the novel.⁵ Recently, however, increasing critical interest in post-colonial studies has forced a re-evaluation of the significance of the British Empire to the world of Victorian fiction, and has allowed places like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and India to become sites for interesting rereadings of canonical nineteenth-century texts.⁶

In *The Mythology of Imperialism*, a study of 'novelists of empire', Jonah Raskin delineates some of the imperial characteristics of Victorian novels:

In Victorian novels the colonies are usually places to transfer burned out characters, or from which to retrieve characters.... They are especially convenient for the beginnings, turning points and endings of fiction. The plot began – or flagging interest was revived – when a character returned from abroad, and the action terminated when the characters left for the colonies. For the Victorians existence meant existence in England: it began when they returned to Southampton or Liverpool and it ended when they embarked for Australia, Canada or Nigeria. Going to India was like falling off a cliff. The Englishman coming back to London felt like a fish thrown back into the sea after flopping about on land.⁷

In this passage Raskin outlines the ways in which empire generally functions in the composition of early and mid-nineteenth-century novels: it is peripheral, a theatrical 'green room' where characters await their

cues to appear in the action, yet at the same time ‘especially convenient for the sources of incident and interest’⁸ A host of Dickens’s novels display these elements, including voyages, transportations, migrations, and magical appearances and disappearances of goods and capital.⁹ The large number of such incidents in Dickens’s work should indicate the significance of empire and foreign experiences for him and his characters. As Donald Simpson has noted, the years of Dickens’s life saw the development of Australia, the settling of New Zealand, the Durham Report, Canadian Confederation, the expansion of South Africa, the exploration of tropical Africa, and the establishment of coastal colonies; he also lived through the extension of British rule in India and the abolition of slavery.¹⁰ Nevertheless in his fiction the colonies – those places with which the majority of his readers would have had little familiarity (that is, non-European or American locations) – are not usually explored in great detail: they constitute a marginal presence, whose existence is both suggestive and significant. Implicit in Raskin’s imagery of metropolis and colony is the construction of a political and cultural discourse: by designating centre and margins, charting the limits of alien and native elements, Dickens’s novels map the boundaries between self and other, grounding each in specifically constituted



Fig. 1. Thomas Rowlandson, *Convicts Embarking for Botany Bay*, circa. 1787-8. This early sketch, produced around the time of the departure of the First Fleet, depicts transportation as an alternative to the gibbet, which can be seen in the background. Transportation to New South Wales was seen as an opportunity for Britain to rid itself of its criminal population at minimum expense; this image of a prison the size of a continent proved an ineradicable one until the mid-nineteenth century. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

locations. The far-flung outreaches of empire like Australia appear at the edges of texts like *Great Expectations*; but because of their peculiarly powerful influence, attention to them, particularly in terms of what is unsaid and occluded, is an interesting, even exciting area of exploration.

Dickens, like most of his readers, had no first-hand experience of Australia or its first colony, New South Wales. In his early years he had no other thought for the place than as Botany Bay – that ominous, oppressive depository for the outcasts of society, frequently sensationalized in the *Newgate Calendar*. Since the sailing of the First Fleet in 1787 Australia was envisioned as a prison, and the image proved an ineradicable one until the mid-nineteenth century (Fig. 1). Transportation to New South Wales was seen as an opportunity for Britain to rid itself of its criminal population at minimum expense; yet the forced exodus was not reserved for hardened, dangerous criminals: ninety per cent of those sent to Australia were despatched for committing some form of theft, ranging from burglary and breaking and entering, to sheep stealing, shoplifting and picking pockets.¹¹ Transportation did not prevent crime by deterrence; rather, it got rid of many individuals of both sexes whom society wished to identify and objectify as undesirable ‘Others’ – blights on the social landscape of Britain and Ireland which needed to be removed.

Simpson suggests that the issue of transportation made an impression on the young Dickens when he was living in Chatham,¹² which was not only the site of dockyards, but also in close proximity to the sites of the prison hulks from which convicts were taken for transportation (Fig. 2); universally condemned by prison reformers, these floating gaols, first authorized for use in 1776, are described in *Great Expectations* as ‘black’ hulks ‘lying a little way from shore, like... wicked Noah’s ark[s]’, which were ‘cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains’¹³ While there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the hulks loomed large in Dickens’s boyhood consciousness, it is clear that he grew up in what Michael Hollington calls the ‘golden age’ of transportation.¹⁴

In the early nineteenth century public opinion was swayed by an influential strain of reportage which presented Australia disparagingly as little more than a depository for convicts. For example, Sydney Smith (1771-1845) a conservative reformer who was sometimes consulted by Robert Peel on colonial matters, wrote the following in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1803:

The history of the colony [New South Wales] is at present... in its least interesting state, on account of depraved inhabitants, whose crimes and irregularities give a monotony to the narrative, which it cannot lose, till the respectable part of the community come to bear a greater proportion to the criminal.¹⁵

His opinion was unchanged in 1819, when he wrote again in the journal:

The most serious charge against the colony... is the extreme

profligacy of manners which prevails there, and the total want of reformation among the convicts... There can be but one opinion. New South Wales is a sink of wickedness, in which the great majority of convicts of both sexes become infinitely more depraved than at the period of their arrival.... It is impossible that vice should not become intense in such [a] society.¹⁶

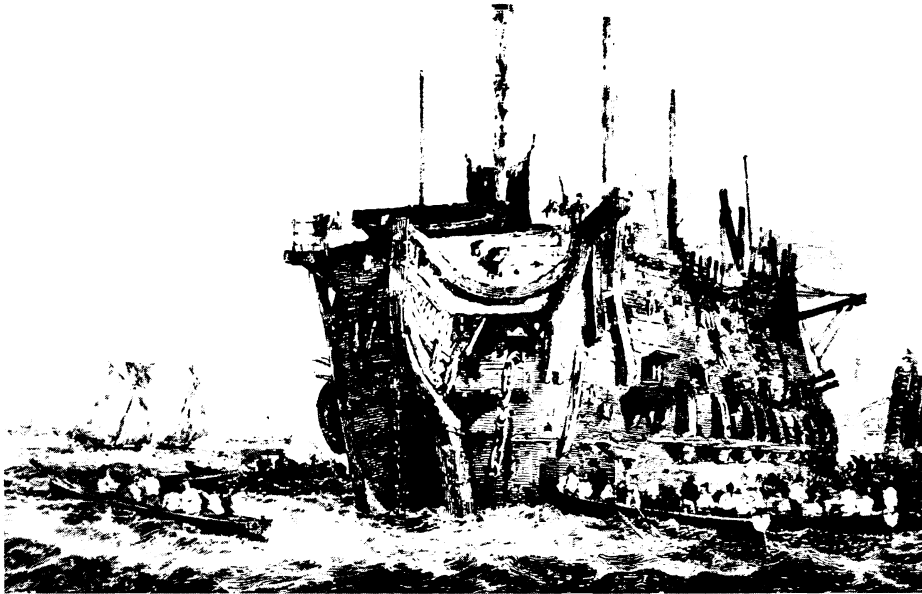


Fig. 2. George Cooke, *Prison Ship at Deptford*, 1826. The Thames and the southern naval ports of England were dotted with these old, theoretically habitable troop transports and men-o-war, rotting at anchor, their masts and rigging removed, and covered with deckhouses and lean-tos, protruding at all angles from the original hulls. The illustration is a fair representation of what Magwitch would have encountered in his incarceration in the hulk in 1812. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

Many of those who thought and wrote about Australia in this manner had never been there themselves, and so depended on information gleaned from the sensationalised *Newgate Calendar* about the characters of individuals sent to the antipodes,¹⁷ and on various accounts of life and conditions in the colony published in Britain.¹⁸ In these early years of the century there were free settlers who experienced the hardships of the voyage, the privations of early colonial life, and the peculiarities of a country whose culture, history and economy were profoundly shaped by the preponderance of present and former prisoners of the Crown, in an attempt to transform New South Wales from what Hughes terms ‘a land-based hulk the size of a continent’,¹⁹ into a viable commercial entity, providing opportunities for trade with and free emigration from the mother country: but even they recognized the immense difficulties involved. James Macarthur, who belonged to a family which advocated free settlement and professed membership of a pastoral élite, presented a report to Parliament which established clear lines of demarcation between free settlers on the one hand, and convicts and ex-convicts on the other:

The erroneous manner in which a Penal Settlement and a Free Colony have been combined in New South Wales, by the unequal admixture of two conflicting principles, – the bad preponderating over the good, – has led to the formation of a Society differing from every other, and which may be truly termed a social and political anomaly.²⁰

Macarthur's assessment included a plea to Westminster to investigate 'the most effectual means' of developing the colony's resources, and 'elevating the character of its inhabitants by the judicious encouragement of VOLUNTARY EMIGRATION'²¹ The Colonial Office did adopt this course of action, but only gradually, because it recognized the practical difficulties involved in transforming the supply of labour from convicts to immigrants. However, what is important to note is the emergence and maintenance of a distinction between those who were affected by transportation and those who were free from its stigma.

By the late 1830s the government still provided only meagre resources for free settlement; but there was more information available concerning the conditions under which convicts were transported and under which they laboured on arrival. The details were unveiled by a Select Committee on Transportation, under the chairmanship of Sir William Molesworth, MP for East Cornwall. Between its first convocation in April 1837 and its last in August 1838, the committee held thirty-eight meetings and examined twenty-three witnesses, including James Macarthur, George Arthur (Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, 1824-1836) and William Ullathorne (Roman Catholic Vicar-Apostolic for New South Wales from 1834). When presented to the Commons in 1838 it contained a sensationalised catalogue of antipodean horrors, including brutal mistreatment of government chain-gangs by overseers, and of assignees by masters, as well as evidence of sodomy (referred to as 'unnatural crime'), rape, murder, and even cannibalism on the part of the convicts. Of the early history of the colony the report stated:

In New South Wales... the community was composed of the very dregs of society; of men proved by experience to be unfit to be at large in any society, and who were sent from the British gaols, and turned loose to mix with one another in the desert, together with a few taskmasters, who were to set them to work in the open wilderness; and with the military, who were to keep them from revolt.²²

By the time the report was published the free population outnumbered the convicts (28,000 vs. 18,000);²³ yet the committee claimed that violent crime was far more pervasive in the colony than it was at home:

In proportion to the respective population of the two countries, the number of convictions for highway robbery (including bushranging) in New South Wales, exceeds the total number of convictions for all

offences in England; that rapes, murders, and attempts at murders are as common in the former, as petty larcenies in the latter country.²⁴

The committee claimed to have interviewed the 'best informed witnesses' and 'most unquestionable authorities' in order to consolidate its findings.²⁵ Their ultimate goal was to increase the flow of free settlers to New South Wales, and to replace transportation with hard labour and incarceration in penitentiaries for convicts. The language used to describe conditions in the colony was, however, sensationalized, and again clearly distinguished between prisoners and ex-prisoners of the Crown, and those who came to the colony voluntarily. As Hughes notes, the report ignored the fact that scores of thousands of emancipated convicts had gone on to build happy, productive, and law-abiding lives in Australia, and that the place 'was not entirely a sink of atheism and inherited propensities to crime'²⁶ When Molesworth's text reached Sydney it evoked a furious response from colonists, who saw the report as a libellous affront to their morals; they feared it would have the effect of dissuading people from coming to Australia, and would reduce the colony to a state where it would have neither assigned convicts nor free settlers to support its burgeoning economy. While transportation to New South Wales did eventually end in November 1840, emigration continued. Nevertheless, the Molesworth report revealed that in the late 1830s stereotypical attitudes towards convicts were deeply entrenched, and even a parliamentary select committee which advocated the dismantling of the transportation system could simultaneously sustain segregationist attitudes towards the subjects under discussion.

If the publications cited above evoke pervasive British attitudes to Australia, then it is not surprising that in Dickens's work of the 1830s and even the 1840s, Australia is portrayed as little more than a depository for convicts, and consequently a place of exile and despair. In chapter 6 of the *Pickwick Papers*, 'The Convict's Return' (a tale told to the guests at Dingley Dell by the parish clergyman) presents John Edmunds, son of a brutal, drunken father and a doting mother, who commits armed robbery and is sent to Australia for fourteen years. He returns to England, and feels that the suffering undergone during his time in the colony has been to no avail. The narrator notes:

And such was the return to which he had looked through the weary perspective of many years, and for which he had undergone so much suffering! No face of welcome, no look of forgiveness, no house to receive, no hand to help him.... What was his loneliness in the wild thick woods, where man was never seen, to this!

He felt that in the distant land of his bondage and infamy, he had thought of his native place as it was when he left it; not as it would be when he returned. The sad reality struck coldly at his heart, and his spirit sank within him.²⁷

The brief depiction of Australia, while ominous, is entirely two-

dimensional, and lacks precise delineation;²⁸ on arrival John is sent ‘up the country’, where he experiences the isolation of the ‘wild thick woods’ He returns to England ‘contrite, penitent, and humbled’ and dies three years later while in the clergyman’s service. The description of his colonial experience is cursory at best and stereotypical; also, it provides little useful information for the reader.

Dickens’s views on Australia remained unaltered in *Oliver Twist*, where the Artful Dodger is reported by Charley Bates to have been convicted of theft and ‘lagged’, that is, sentenced to transportation for life. Fagin joins Charley in hagiographical homage to the Dodger, and remarks: ‘They’ll all know what a clever fellow he was; He’ll shew it himself, and not disgrace his old pals and teachers. Think how young he is too! What a distinction, Charley, to be lagged at his time of life!’²⁹ The judgement is received by the Dodger with bravado, and, while this scene in chapter 43 displays elements of extreme irony and the picaresque, it confirms Dickens’s attitude towards transportation as stereotypical: New South Wales was an appropriate depository for such an incorrigible as Jack Dawkins.

It is possible to imagine the Dodger, on his arrival in Australia, as being assigned to a master in order to serve out his sentence, and perhaps thereafter making enough money for himself to begin life anew as an emancipist. It is impossible, however, to contemplate such a compassionate fate for Wackford Squeers at the close of *Nicholas Nickleby*. As retributive justice for the oppressive regime which this brutal and illiterate schoolmaster exercised at Dotheboys Hall, he might be imagined as ending up on a government chain gang, building roads in the colony, or at Moreton Bay or Norfolk Island, where flogging was practised with much ferocity (Fig. 3). While the destinies of these two characters in the colony are never clearly enunciated by Dickens, their potentially different fates point to an enlarged range of possibility for the novelist to envision divergent types of experience for convicts in the antipodes. He was, however, concerned that transportation should not be regarded by prospective criminals as a free passport from misery to potential prosperity (as was possible under the assignment system), but rather as a punishment (as was the case on the roads and in the penal settlements). He was certainly interested in Norfolk Island, the ‘place of ultimate terror for the incorrigibles of the System’,³⁰ as well as other notorious places of punishment, and expressed a wish to distinguish between the appearance and reality of conditions there for readers back in Britain. On 3 July 1840 he wrote to the Marquis of Normanby, the then Home (and former Colonial) Secretary, noting that the criminal class in Britain has only a ‘dim idea’ about convict life in Australia, that is, that ‘the transport-ships are rather close, and the climates to which they go, very bright and hot’; he believed that the whole experience of transportation ‘is shorn of its impressiveness’ by the fact that ‘people do not know and do not suspect’ the potential for severe punishment which the system embodies. To correct this situation he offered to write a ‘vivid description of the terrors of Norfolk Island and such-like places, told in a

homely Narrative with a great appearance of truth and reality and circulated in some very cheap and easy form' Dickens ended the letter by boldly proclaiming confidence in his ability to complete the project, and his desire to ensure that the document reached its intended audience:

I am ready, and should be very glad, to undertake this task and to place the best description I could produce in your hands, to be used as you think best, *but I would have it on the pillow of every prisoner in England.*

Thus while Dickens was clearly aware of the assignment system, with its potential benefits for both the convict and the colony's economy, he was more concerned that potential criminals should view transportation with terror; in this way he hoped to make a practical contribution to deterrence, 'inspiring in all *rising* convicts... a tremendous fear of the higher penalties of the law.'³¹



Fig. 3. A convict being flogged with a cat-o'-nine-tails at Moreton Bay; frontispiece to William Ross's *The Fell Tyrant, or the Suffering Convict*, 1836. Ross was incarcerated while Captain Patrick Logan, the 'Beast of Brisbane' (who had a fearful reputation for cruelty) was commandant. In this illustration Logan (on the right) is depicted as overseeing a flogging; he is calling out the number of lashes, and has reached '298' Dickens seems to suggest that such punishment was the fate of Wackford Squeers, the brutal and illiterate schoolmaster in *Nicholas Nickleby*, who is despatched to New South Wales. Magwitch, on the other hand, was assigned on his arrival in the colony, and from textual evidence in *Great Expectations* it appears that he was not subjected to such brutal treatment. Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

While the letter to Normanby attests to Dickens's continued association of Australia with transportation, he experienced a revolution in attitude during the later 1840s and the 1850s. Circumstances such as the increased force of industrial labour, coupled with bourgeois apprehension over the poor, the unemployed, and dissident workers combined to inspire – among novelists as well as reformers – a popular advocacy of emigration as an acceptable panacea for social ills.

Dickens's involvement, from May 1846 onwards, in the Urania Cottage project has been well documented by Philip Collins,³² Kenneth Fielding,³³ and by Dickens himself.³⁴ He developed, with the philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts, a plan for establishing a home for fallen women, which should have the practical aim of preparing them for emigration, arranging their passage to the colonies, and organizing their reception. As he proclaimed in the *Household Words* lead article which elucidated the scheme, 'there could be little or no hope in this country' for those who entered Urania Cottage; therefore the home only received 'those who distinctly accepted this condition: That they came there to be ultimately sent abroad'³⁵ Dickens expended a good deal of effort in establishing the house – writing the appeal for support, obtaining the house, hiring staff, and planning the administration. By 1853, fifty-six women had been through the home. Of this number, 30 had done well, principally in Australia, seven having found husbands; seven left before the period of their probation had ended; ten were sent away for misconduct in the home; seven ran away; three emigrated and relapsed on the passage out. Of those who succeeded, Dickens declared that they 'entered into good service, acquired a good character, and have done so well ever since as to establish a strong prepossession in favour of others sent out from the same quarter.'³⁶

Concurrent with his interest in the reclamation and conveyance of fallen women was a growing concern with assisted emigration on a large scale.³⁷ He acquired information about Australia from a variety of printed sources, including the *Colonization Circulars* issued annually by the Emigration Board, which included full details of the length and cost of voyages, as well as wages, prices, and the demand for labour in each of the British colonies.³⁸ Such documentary evidence, however, paled by comparison with the effect produced by the animated and widely circulated work of Samuel Sidney (1813-83), a polemical journalist who, assisted by his bushman brother John, published *Sidney's Australian Hand-Book* in 1848.³⁹ This 126-page guide promoted a vision of Australia as the solution to the perceived social distress plaguing England; Sidney advocated that 'the sooner the man who cannot make both ends meet commits voluntary transportation, the better for his body and soul'⁴⁰ His nostalgia for the arcadian past of rural England influenced his language, as well as the lifestyle he advocated. The following passage is typical:

The poor peasant girl, the straw-plaiter of Buckinghamshire, the dairymaid of Devonshire, the Scotch shepherdess, and all the crowd of girls who from time to time are compelled to resort to great cities in search of subsistence, and who, struggling amid a crowd of competitors for bread, find beauty or even common comeliness their bane, would, in Australia – married, full fed, and happy – wean the rude bushmen from their barbarous ways, and bring them back to the English style of their forefathers.⁴¹

A CAROL ON CAROLINE CHISHOLM.



COME, all you British females of wealth and high degree,
Bestowing all your charity on lands beyond the sea,
I'll point you out a pattern which a better plan will teach
Than that of sending Missioners to Tombuctoo to preach.
Converting of the Heathen 's a very proper view,
By preaching true religion to Pagan and to Jew,
And bringing over Gumbals to Christian meat and bread,
Unless they catch your Farson first and eat him up instead.

But what's more edifying to see, a pretty deal,
Is hearty British labourers partaking of a meal,
With wives, and lots of children about their knees that climb,
And having tucked their platefuls in, get helped another time.
Beyond the roaring ocean: beneath the soil we tread
You're English men and women, well housed and clothed
and fed,
Who but for help and guidance to leave our crowded shores,
Would now be stealing, begging, or lie starving at our doors.
Who taught them self-reliance, and stirred them to combine,
And club their means together to get across the brine,
Instead of strikes, and mischief, and breaking of the law,
And wasting time in hearing necessaries jaw?
Who led their expeditious? and under whose command
Through dangers and through hardships sought they the
promised land?
A second Moses, surely, it was who did it all,
It was a second Moses in bonnet and in shawl.
By means of one good lady were all these wonders wrought,
By CAROLINE CHISHOLM'S energy, benevolence and thought,
Instead of making here and there a convent of a Nook,
She has made idle multitudes turn fruitfully to work.
The ragged pauper crawling towards a parish grave
She roused - directed to a home beyond the western wave;
She smoothed his weary passage across the troubled deep,
With food, and air, and care, and deceptions of ship-room and of sleep.
There's many a wife and mother will bless that lady's name,
Embracing a fat infant—who might else have drowned the
same,
A mother, yet no wife, compelled by poverty to sin,
And die in goal or hospital of misery and gin.
The REVEREND BENEZER I'D not deny his dues,
For saving Patagonians, and Boshemen, and Zooloos;
But Mrs. CHISHOLM'S mission is what I far prefer;
For saving British natives I'd give the palm to her.
And now that a subscription is opened and begun,
In order to acknowledge the good that she has done
Among that sort of natives—the most important tribe—
Come down like handsome people, and handsomely subscribe.

Fig. 4. A Carol on Caroline Chisholm, *Punch* 25 (1853), p. 71. Caroline Chisholm (1808-77) established the Family Colonization Loan Society; she is thought to have provided Dickens with the original conception for Mrs Jellyby in *Bleak House*. Mrs Chisholm is depicted here as advising a couple with a young child (who look to her for guidance) to head for the emigrant ships in the background. The poem describes her as a 'second MOSES in bonnet and in shawl', who is the acknowledged saviour of her charges; it ends with an exhortation to readers to assist in the Society's work by taking out a subscription

Sidney encouraged the development of colonial values, which would parallel those in the mother country, while taking into account the new environment. Even those who chose life in the bush (which required ‘a combination of imagination and wild animal spirits’)⁴² were not exempt from his programme:

The Australian stockman, though of rude appearance and coarse manners, “full of strange oaths and bearded like a pard”, has the germ of many sterling virtues, which only need cultivation to ripen into all that we most admire in our old Saxon yeomanry. He is hospitable as the Indian or Highlander of romance; frugal and industrious, courageous and untiring, jealous of his master’s rights and name, and needs but opportunity and example to cast aside the barbarous skin he wears.⁴³

It is interesting to note how Sidney, while upholding what he considers the values of Saxon yeomanry, objectifies the stockman, and turns him into an antipodean Other, a ‘noble savage’, similar to the Indian or Highlander; he is subject to the will of a master, and can be defined and described authoritatively by the English writer, who had never even been to Australia himself.⁴⁴

Dickens was impressed by the *Hand-book*, and by its successor, *Sidney’s Emigrant’s Journal and Traveller’s Magazine* (1848-50),⁴⁵ as appropriate instruments for advocating emigration. He wished to capitalise on Sidney’s popularity and avowed expertise by having him contribute to *Household Words* on the subject.⁴⁶ A series of articles by Sidney appeared from 1850 onwards, documenting the history of the colony and the adventures of bushmen, as well as providing practical advice for intending emigrants. At about the same time Dickens came into contact with another potential contributor on Australia: Caroline Chisholm (1808-77; Fig. 4), founder of the Family Colonization Loan Society. The wife of an army officer, she lived in New South Wales from 1838-46, establishing a Female Immigrants’ Home in Sydney, and conducting groups of newcomers into the interior to find suitable situations. By combining compassion with common sense, she developed a scheme whereby English families could be lent money for their passage to Australia and repay it when they had established themselves in the colony. She collaborated with both Dickens and R. H. Horne to produce articles for *Household Words*,⁴⁷ and her ethos influenced the tone of many Australian contributions to Dickens’s journal.⁴⁸

According to Coral Lansbury, British writers of the 1840s and 1850s generally adopted one of three distinct tendencies when depicting the colony and its inhabitants.⁴⁹ First there was the image of the stockrider in the outback, who tended sheep, herded cattle, and generally enjoyed the pleasures of the arcadian landscape while satisfying the taste for adventure. Then there was the working-class settler, who exchanged the deprivation and hardship of industrialised Britain for the rural values of an agricultural existence in Australia. Finally there was the portrayal of

the convict – principally imagined as an emancipist, who had attempted to transcend (but never forgot) the living and working conditions of an assignee or worker on a chain gang, and had emerged from misfortune to be granted a second chance – but only on the understanding that a return to Britain was out of the question. All of these depictions may be found in the pages of *Household Words*, and each had an effect on Dickens's conception of Australia during this period.

As might be expected, Samuel Sidney figured prominently as the source of both factual detail and pervading mood for other writers interested in Australia during this period. He admired the work of Caroline Chisholm, and quoted extensively from her own collection of emigrants' letters in his writings. His *Hand-book* served as an important source for the Australian portions of Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Caxtons* (1848-9), where bush life functions as a revitalizing force for the protagonist Pisistratus, and the wealth amassed in the colony through sheep farming is used in the novel's conclusion to restore the Caxton family property in Cumberland. Referred to as 'beautiful land' and 'Canaan of the exiles',⁵⁰ Australia serves as a location where young men, who were divided by distrust and contrary interests in England, can become loyal comrades or 'mates' when social, political, and financial strictures are relaxed. By the time of his departure from Australia for England in part 17, Pisistratus believes he has broken down some of the barriers between free settler and emancipist. In bidding farewell to his employees – some of whom had been convicts – the young man muses:

The meanest man in my employ had grown a friend; and when those hard hands grasped mine, and from many a breast that once had waged fierce war with the world, came the soft blessing to the Homeward-bound – with a tender thought for the Old England, that had been but a harsh step-mother to them – I felt a choking sensation, which I suspect is little known to the friendships of Mayfair and St. James's.⁵¹

The views expressed indicate that while class barriers had been breached, allowing Caxton to become 'mates' with these men – an occurrence impossible to contemplate in London – there is a lingering reverence for England (acknowledged to be the 'holy mother-country')⁵² on the part of those who were once the victims of her transportation policy. Thus Lytton employed some of the tropes formulated by Sidney and others, such as the romantic stockman and the convict made good; yet he maintains the perceived distance between home and abroad in both personalities and allowable codes of behaviour. Pisistratus Caxton is able to partake of bush life because, as he notes, he has prepared for his adventure by following Sidney's advice 'to bivouac for three months on Salisbury Plain' before departure.⁵³ He has benefited materially from the experience, but because his English sensibilities have remained intact, he is allowed to return to the metropolitan centre.

This essential idea of Englishness was to become an important

vantage point for Dickens in his depiction of Australia in *David Copperfield* (1849-50). As Hollington notes, 'the Australian theme is firmly attached to wider patterns of the novel that concern radical cancellations of the past and the redirection and rehabilitation of the self'.⁵⁴ On one level this affects David's progress: his travels, rites of passage, emotional trials, and final recognition of his own identity and destiny. More overtly, the colony is the final depository for the Micawbers, Martha Endell, the Peggottys, and Mrs Gummidge. Mr Micawber, labelled by Lansbury as 'the most unemployable character in English literature',⁵⁵ is unable to function in English society, and so is sent to Australia, where he undergoes a metamorphosis: after an interval spent in the bush, 'perspiring in the sun'⁵⁶ he becomes a highly respected magistrate in Port Middlebay (Dickens's fictional appellation for Brisbane), and a leading contributor to the town's newspaper. Martha Endell also emigrates, thus allowing her to eradicate the stigma of the prostitute; she marries a farm labourer, and leads a productive life in the bush. She clearly conforms to the mould fashioned by Dickens and Angela Burdett-Coutts in their conception of Urania Cottage, and serves as a fictional testament to the success of the project.

It is interesting to note that neither the Micawbers nor Martha return to report on the fate of the emigrants; this task is left to Daniel Peggotty, who conforms to the image of the successful working-class settler. He proudly proclaims to David: 'What with sheep-farming, and what with stock-farming, and what with one thing and what with t'other, we are as well to do, as well could be. Their's been kiender a blessing fall upon us... and we've done nowt but prosper.'⁵⁷ Because he has not been tainted by crime, debt, or misfortune, he is able to make a return visit to England to report to David (who chooses to stay in England to deal with the prejudices of English society through his books)⁵⁸ on the fortunes of the other emigrants. Dickens's intentions are clear: the Micawbers and Martha must be dispatched to foreign shores, where their various taints can be obscured or removed, and they can begin life anew. Peggotty, though encouraged to emigrate to protect Emily's reputation, serves as the epitome of the proletarian colonist lauded by Samuel Sidney and Mrs Chisholm, who (despite his seafaring background) takes to the bush, and acquires consummate skill in agricultural pursuits.

While there is a significant build-up to the departure of characters for Australia in *David Copperfield*,⁵⁹ there is relatively little detail about conditions and personalities in the colony. Such reticence is understandable, partly because of the necessity of employing shorthand or telescoping to bring the novel to a close, and partly because of Dickens's reliance upon reportage – principally Sidney's *Hand-Book* – to inform his own writing; in addition, Australia served as a stock repository for characters, and thus did not require clarification. Detailed explication is left to the pages of *Household Words*, which, during the 1850s, published a series of articles designed to provide fuller information about the colony.⁶⁰ As editor, Dickens could build on Sidney's success, and direct his contributors' portrayal of Australia to

conform to his own views of the country. Sidney himself, motivated by Dickens's enthusiasm, contributed a series of articles which depicted social conditions in the towns, on the farms, and in the bush. In each case he focused on particular characters who could serve as types of larger social groups. In 'Letters of Introduction to Sydney', for example, he presents a newly arrived emigrant in conversation with a banker, who advises the new settler to exercise caution in choosing his associates, as Australian society is no different from its English antecedent in its obsession with class. The banker identifies three distinct classes in Australian society: free settlers, emancipists, and convicts. He explains:

We are divided into at least three sets, but you only have to do with two, the Free Colonists, and the Emancipists. Many of the latter are wealthy, educated, and personally respectable, but if you mean to associate with the other party, you must avoid the Emancipists (freed convicts), except in mere trade transactions, in the same way as you would avoid a black bear in New York.⁶¹

While Sidney is careful to note that the young settler 'did not take his advice', the article is interesting for its presentation of a divided society, but one where social status was far less firmly established than in England; in Australia, individual status (such as that of Magwitch) could change very quickly, because of the constant flow of men and women, in Hughes's words, 'from servitude into citizenship and responsibility, from bitter poverty to new-found wealth.' The result was the creation of a social minefield, where awareness of origins was paramount, and where individual sensibilities could be deeply affected by perceived adherence to a particular class.⁶²

Some emigrants tried in vain to uphold old-world semblances of social status and occupation; an interesting case is that of the periodical contributor and journalist Richard Henry (or Hengist) Horne (1802-84), whom Dickens had known since 1840. Best known as the author of *Orion* (1843), Horne contributed (at Dickens's invitation) to *Bentley's Miscellany* and the *Daily News*, before joining the staff of *Household Words* in 1850. In his capacity as assistant editor he worked closely with Caroline Chisholm, and also came into contact with Samuel Sidney; his association with these two proponents of Australian emigration might have affected his decision to emigrate in 1852. As Kenneth Fielding has demonstrated in his assessment of Horne's Australian years (1852-69), he went with the idea of profiting from the gold rush, but was unable to adapt himself to a new life in spite of the most determined efforts.⁶³ After arrival he continued to contribute to various English periodicals (including *Household Words* and *The Cornhill Magazine*), but the remunerations constituted nothing like a regular income; he also worked for a time as a civil servant, but was made redundant. By the late 1850s he thought of producing literary works for an Australian market, but as he noted in a letter of 1861, 'There is no field here for literature, but political, and the newspapers have their regular staffs, and are themselves

in no very flourishing state at this time'⁶⁴; he had also tried lecture tours, but to no avail. His correspondence reveals the state to which he had been reduced: he survived on oatmeal and water, and gradually sold off his possessions. An appeal was made on his behalf to the Royal Literary Fund in 1862, supported by former friends and acquaintances, including George Henry Lewes and Charles Knight.⁶⁵ Dickens also wrote a testimonial – and this despite his disapproval of Horne's neglect of his wife, who remained in England, and his failure to repay money which he owed to Dickens; nevertheless he provided a laudatory commendation, as did the others. As a result Horne received £80 in 1862, and (after a further application) he was granted an additional sum of £60 in 1863.

Horne's case provided Dickens with proof not only of the dangers posed by the gold rush (of which he disapproved), but also of the importance of adjusting one's sensibilities to conditions and expectations in the colony. As he noted in his letter of support for Horne:

He would probably have remained in association with my Journal [*Household Words*] to this day, if he had not, in the time of the Gold Fever, been seized with visions of Emigration. They have failed in his case, as in many others; and I have heard of his trying many ways of life in the new world without success.⁶⁶

Horne had not only tried publishing and lecturing, but he also attempted to found the 'Melbourne Garrick Club' and sought a position as Professor of English Literature at Melbourne University. He constantly blamed the weather – which he characterized as a series of floods and droughts – for his misfortunes, and complained about the 'raw-minded community' of an 'extraordinary colony' While the source of his difficulties cannot be accurately pinpointed, it is clear that he continually felt out of place, and that the skills he possessed represented 'not at all a marketable commodity in Australia'⁶⁷

Horne might have fared better had he paid greater attention to Sidney's perceptions of the social dynamics of Australian society. In the 1850s the economy of the colony still largely depended upon the labours of convicts and ex-convicts, and Sidney made some attempts to describe the individual sensibilities of assignees and emancipists, in an effort to demonstrate not only their significance for Australian society, but also the process of reform they underwent as a result of their experiences. In 'An Australian Ploughman's Story', the narrator, a newly-arrived settler – who has preconceived notions about the character of convicts – begins his exploration of the colony cautiously, noting that in the bush 'there is not the same distance between a master and well-behaved man, although a prisoner, as in towns' and so he seizes the opportunity to get to know Jem Carden (the 'Ploughman' of the title). In recounting his history this assignee describes how he suffered on the long voyage to the antipodes; but with a good character reference from the ship's surgeon,⁶⁸ he is assigned as a husbandman, is fairly treated, and looks forward to receiving his ticket-of-leave:

I began to have some hope when I found that, with good luck, I might have my “ticket”, that would give liberty in the colony, in seven years, and when I saw so many who had been prisoners riding about in their carriages, or driving teams of their own, as good as the ‘Squire’s [back in England].

Carden describes one of the three ways in which convicts could be released from their sentences: a ticket of leave, a conditional pardon, or an absolute pardon. The ticket-of-leave was the most common: if the convict was an assignee, the ticket freed the individual from working for a master; if the person was in forced government labour (building roads, for example), the ticket provided release from this obligation. Sidney stresses the fact that the ticket was craved by every convict in the colony; most, in fact, regarded it as a natural right, and a goal to which all were eventually entitled. Hughes notes that this system played an immense role in the moral economy of colonial life; the worst thing a master could do to a convict was to withhold the ticket-of-leave.⁶⁹

The narrator learns that Carden and his wife (who is given permission to travel out from England to join him) eventually prosper, and are the owners of a station and farm. Their new-found success provides an interesting parallel with that of the Micawbers and of Magwitch:

They are growing rich, as all such industrious people do in Australia, but they have not forgotten that they were once poor. If you need a subscription for a church, a school, or a sick emigrant, you might go to Mr. Carden, safe of a generous answer. It is Mr. Carden now; and perhaps that fine little boy [Jem’s son] may sit a native representative in an Australian Parliament.⁷⁰

Similar sentiments are expressed in another of Sidney’s contributions, ‘Three Colonial Epochs’:

Prisoners on arrival were assigned to settlers, who had to support them. But every prisoner knew that, if well conducted, he would obtain a liberty, a grant of land, and, perhaps, in the end, become a magistrate, and dine with the Governor!⁷¹

Thus Carden and others like him are depicted as rising to a level of respectability unimaginable in England; moreover, the author notes, by the succeeding generation the social stigma of a convict past is eradicated, and a new social order allowed to flourish in the colony.

As part of his attempt to portray the system of values upheld by former convicts, Sidney ventured beyond the relative safety of the farm into the bush, in ‘An Exploring Adventure’ There the narrator encounters ‘Bald-faced Dick’, who, despite outward appearances, possesses an egalitarian character which is the epitome of bush life:

He was a “first-fleeter”, that is, he came over with Governor Phillips

in the first fleet; had seen everything in the colony, both good and bad; had, it was whispered, in early years fled from a flogging master and lived, some said, with the blacks; others averred with a party of Gully-rakers (cattle-stealers); he swore horribly, was dangerous when he had drunk too much rum, but was a thorough Bushman.... With all his coarseness, he was generous and good-natured, and when well-paid, and fairly and strictly treated, stood upon "Bush honour" and could be thoroughly depended on.⁷²

As in his other contributions, Sidney here concentrates on ostensible differences between his narrator – a new arrival in the colony who has little experience of life there – and the Bushman, who has adapted his manners and codes of behaviour to life in the outback. The fact that Dick upholds 'Bush honour' is significant, because it points to a code of morality which casual observers might think to be absent from such objectified individuals. This idea of 'mateship' provides Dick and the others like him with 'respectability', and a code of behaviour to uphold in the bush; while the values are not those of England, they nevertheless contribute a semblance of order to life in such potentially unwelcoming circumstances.

Hughes links the origins of mateship with the strong tribal loyalties of the criminal class. Citing the example of *Oliver Twist*, he recalls Fagin's exhortation to Noah Claypole (now Morris Bolter) in chapter 43:

The more you value your number one, the more careful you must be of mine... [A] regard for number one holds us all together, and must do so, unless we would all go to pieces in company.⁷³

This peculiar ethos demonstrates not only what Dickens calls Fagin's 'wily genius', but also points to a more widespread loyalty among thieves, and adds to the psychological complexity of such characters.⁷⁴ In a former first fleeter such as Bald-faced Dick, the ties he feels to his mates motivated his heroic repulsion of an Aboriginal attack. For 'Two-Handed Dick' (another of Sidney's creations) the need to defend his fellow Bushmen strengthens his resolve to kill a maddened bull (Fig. 5).⁷⁵ Sidney's highlighting the convict background in these depictions contributes to Hughes's thesis concerning the origins of mateship: he believes that among the meagre cultural baggage brought by many convicts to the antipodes were such attributes as fatalism, harsh humour, opportunism, survivors' disdain for introspection, and an attitude to authority in which private resentment mingled with ostensible resignation. When combined, these characteristics engendered a contemptuous resistance to everyone and everything outside one's own small group, which formed the basis of Australian mateship.⁷⁶ These ideas are potentially relevant to Dickens's presentation of Magwitch, who counts stock-breeding among his occupations in Australia (*GE*. 315).

Other writers completed the picture of the colony for readers of

Household Words. For example, William Howitt (1792-1879), a valued contributor, described a terrible bush fire in a piece entitled 'Black Thursday'. The ominous atmosphere is, however, relieved by some light-hearted and fanciful descriptions of bush life. The protagonist, Robert Patterson, is portrayed thus:

A fallen log supplied him with a convenient seat, a fire was quickly lit from the dead boughs which lay plentifully around and his quart pot, replenished at the creek, was soon hissing and bubbling with its side thrust into the side of the glowing fire. He had a good store of kangaroo-sandwiches, and there he sat with his cup of strong bush-tea; looking alternately at the grazing cattle, and into the solemn, gloomy, and soundless woods, in which even the laughing jackass failed to shout his clamorous adieu to the falling day.⁷⁷



Page 77.

Fig. 5. 'Two-Handed Dick the Stockman', frontispiece to Samuel Sidney's *Gallops and Gossips in the Bush of Australia* (1854), a collection (dedicated to Dickens) of sixteen articles on Australia which originally appeared in *Household Words*. The illustration presents Two-Handed Dick wrestling bare-handed with a bull, while the inexperienced narrator/settler looks on; the depiction points to the potential for adventure in the Australian bush, but more importantly (bearing in mind Magwitch's occupations in Australia) to the clear distinction between the pastoralist settler and the objectified, stereotyped stockman.

More poignant, however, were the descriptions of convict life in such locations as Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land, which (unlike New South Wales) continued to receive convicts after 1840.⁷⁸ It is easy to understand why Sidney assiduously avoided such depictions: his aim (like that of Mrs Chisholm) was to encourage emigration, and to present conditions (particularly in New South Wales) in a favourable light. It was left to others, therefore, to document suffering and hardship, but to concentrate on locations which were physically removed from Sydney and its environs. To this end the journalist William Moy Thomas (1828-1910) published 'Transported for Life', an account, in two parts, based

on the case of William Henry Barber (never named in the article), who was wrongly convicted of fraud and forgery in 1844, then transported to Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land, and eventually pardoned in 1848.⁷⁹ Thomas's work was valued by Dickens for its social judgments, and this account, told in the first person, is presented as having been 'taken down from the lips of the narrator, whose sufferings are described, with the object of showing what Transportation, at the present time, really is' The piece follows the victim from Newgate, to Millbank (where the solitary system is enforced), to Woolwich, where he boards a convict ship, whose dormitory is described as 'a large room filled with pauper coffins with the lids off' Though the protagonist experiences isolation and humiliation on account of his wrongful imprisonment, the on-board conditions he describes represent a significant improvement on those of thirty years before (Fig. 6).

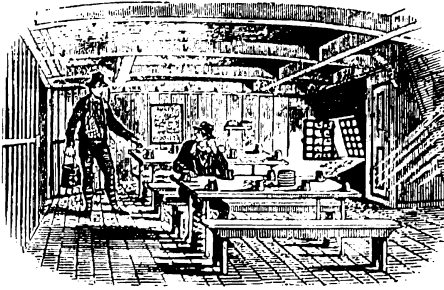
He arrives at Norfolk Island ('the Ocean Hell') and proceeds to describe conditions there. While he continually refers to the collective of prisoners as 'we' and 'us', there is a simultaneous distinction drawn between himself (an innocent man who, as he exclaims, had 'never offended against the laws of my country') and the other convicts, referred to as 'ruffians', who have committed offences 'of the worst character' They are clearly another 'class', whose 'instincts' dictate their 'thievish propensities' While some individual sketches are introduced, the general impression created is that the lines of demarcation between the protagonist and the 'Others' are firmly fixed; no measure of individual or collective benevolence (such as the prisoners' clubbing together to provide him with articles of clothing on his release) can change the fact that he is blameless, and they are guilty – and generally incorrigible.⁸⁰

While Thomas's narrative contained a modicum of individuation, the same was not true of the essay entitled 'Norfolk Island', a collaborative effort by Henry Morley (the most prolific contributor to *Household Words*) and a writer identified only by the surname Irwin.⁸¹ In this piece the most assiduous distinctions are drawn between the various classes of inhabitants:

The good society or first rank of Norfolk Island is composed of the civil commandant, the officers of the garrison, the engineers and commissariat, the two clergymen, – one Protestant, the other Roman Catholic – and a medical officer or two. Superintendents and overseers of convicts make a second rank. Common soldiers are a third rank; and the convicts are, of course, the least respectable.

Though the ultimate aim is to show how prison administration has become more efficient and humane on the island, the article makes no attempt to delineate individual sensibilities: the authors note that were they to describe the characters of the prisoners, it would consist of no more than a 'Newgate calendar of details', 'black and repulsive in the mass'

THE CONVICT SYSTEM.—ECONOMY OF THE HULKS.



CONVICT WARD.



GALLERY.

The subject of prison discipline, but more especially of secondary punishment, is now so widely known...

The discipline and employment of the Convicts may be thus briefly defined. On board each hulk, a book is kept by the Governor...

The convicts, after they are classed, are kept in separate compartments on board the hulks...

The stations at which hulks are maintained in England are, Dartmouth, Devonport, Liverpool, Chatham, Woolwich, and Deptford.

There are, in each hulk, three decks, or lower, called the upper, middle, and lower decks.

The main hatchways are all 4 feet 6 inches square. The fore-hatchway, upper deck, is 4 feet 6 inches by 3 feet 6 inches.

The middle part of the upper deck is 84 feet long by 8 feet 6 inches wide and is divided into two lateral portions by a central passage.

Next the bow of the vessel are two small rooms appropriated to the sick, and an open space for the locker and hatchways.

The prison on the middle deck is 18 feet 6 inches long, by 45 feet wide. There are seven ports on each side, four heads, and, in all, ten doors.

The small points are set apart as follows: they have two ports, and four lower hatches, and open into the space forward.

It is worth noting that the hulk is divided into two lateral portions by a central passage, consisting of iron bars reaching the full height of the deck.

There are also called cadgers, and we have engrained one line of them. Each track is subdivided by three transverse bulkheads of wood, forming eight classes, but not creating the passage.

By the lower deck is the hold, a large, and almost unenclosed space, divided into store rooms, divided by a passage. The openings from the hold are...

1. The Main-hatch. 2. The Fore-hatch. 3. The After-hatch. 4. A small passage in one of the classes.

On board each hulk, a book is kept by the Governor, in which are entered the names of all convicts...

The convicts, after they are classed, are kept in separate compartments on board the hulks...

The stations at which hulks are maintained in England are, Dartmouth, Devonport, Liverpool, Chatham, Woolwich, and Deptford.

There are, in each hulk, three decks, or lower, called the upper, middle, and lower decks.

The main hatchways are all 4 feet 6 inches square. The fore-hatchway, upper deck, is 4 feet 6 inches by 3 feet 6 inches.

The middle part of the upper deck is 84 feet long by 8 feet 6 inches wide and is divided into two lateral portions by a central passage.

Next the bow of the vessel are two small rooms appropriated to the sick, and an open space for the locker and hatchways.

The prison on the middle deck is 18 feet 6 inches long, by 45 feet wide. There are seven ports on each side, four heads, and, in all, ten doors.

The small points are set apart as follows: they have two ports, and four lower hatches, and open into the space forward.

It is worth noting that the hulk is divided into two lateral portions by a central passage, consisting of iron bars reaching the full height of the deck.

There are also called cadgers, and we have engrained one line of them. Each track is subdivided by three transverse bulkheads of wood, forming eight classes, but not creating the passage.

By the lower deck is the hold, a large, and almost unenclosed space, divided into store rooms, divided by a passage. The openings from the hold are...

to convicts who have passed two years of their sentence, and not misconducted themselves.

In cases of sickness, malady, mild and permanent nature of correction are first tried; if such fail, the punishments are reduction of allowance of provisions, or confinement in a dark cell with no other food than bread and water...

The convicts, after they are classed, are kept in separate compartments on board the hulks...

The stations at which hulks are maintained in England are, Dartmouth, Devonport, Liverpool, Chatham, Woolwich, and Deptford.

There are, in each hulk, three decks, or lower, called the upper, middle, and lower decks.

The main hatchways are all 4 feet 6 inches square. The fore-hatchway, upper deck, is 4 feet 6 inches by 3 feet 6 inches.

The middle part of the upper deck is 84 feet long by 8 feet 6 inches wide and is divided into two lateral portions by a central passage.

Next the bow of the vessel are two small rooms appropriated to the sick, and an open space for the locker and hatchways.

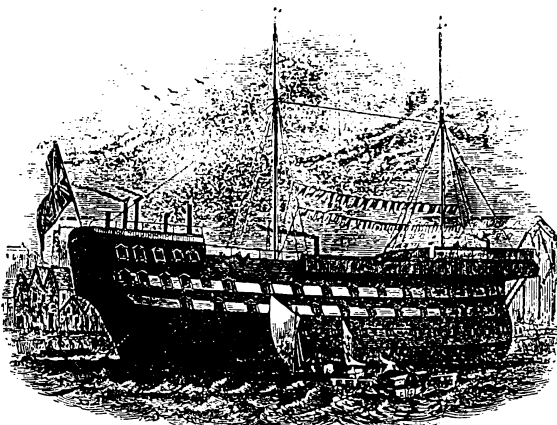
The prison on the middle deck is 18 feet 6 inches long, by 45 feet wide. There are seven ports on each side, four heads, and, in all, ten doors.

The small points are set apart as follows: they have two ports, and four lower hatches, and open into the space forward.

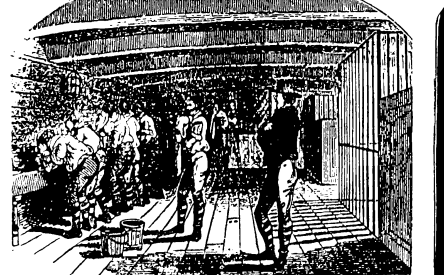
It is worth noting that the hulk is divided into two lateral portions by a central passage, consisting of iron bars reaching the full height of the deck.

There are also called cadgers, and we have engrained one line of them. Each track is subdivided by three transverse bulkheads of wood, forming eight classes, but not creating the passage.

By the lower deck is the hold, a large, and almost unenclosed space, divided into store rooms, divided by a passage. The openings from the hold are...



THE 'WARRIOR' CONVICT-HULK, WOOLWICH.



WASHING-ROOM.



THE CHAPEL.

Fig. 6. 'The Convict System - Economy of the Hulks', Illustrated London News, 21 February 1846, p. 125. This illustrated article depicts the improved conditions on the hulks, in an attempt to convince readers of 'the economy of this penal system'...

It is interesting to compare these impressions of the convict experience in *Household Words* – which combine factual account with sensation and romance – with those Dickens himself contributed to the journal. In December 1853 he published ‘The Long Voyage’, a series of reminiscences from ‘books of voyage and travel’ which, he admits, ‘had a strong fascination for my mind from earliest childhood’ Among them is the gruesome tale of Alexander Pearce (1790-1824), the cannibal convict who was imprisoned at Macquarie Harbour in Van Diemen’s Land. Dickens identifies his source as ‘that uncompromising narrator of such stories, a parliamentary blue-book’⁸² – clearly the Molesworth Report, in which John Barnes, Surgeon at Macquarie Harbour, presents evidence to the Select Committee concerning the man from County Monaghan who had been transported for stealing six pairs of shoes. As part of his account Barnes describes Pearce’s second escape attempt in November 1823, in the company of Thomas Cox, a newly arrived convict who entreated Pearce to take him along:

He had murdered Cox, and lived upon his body for three days, although at the time he gave himself up to the officer at Macquarie Harbour, he had some pork and bread in his pocket, and consequently he would not have done it for hunger; but, however, he lived upon the heart and liver for two days; he dressed the body very nicely, washed and cleaned it, and suspended the trunk to a tree. The head and some other parts of the body were missing, and supposed to have been thrown into the river. For that crime he was tried at Hobart Town, by the Supreme Court, and sentenced to death, and was executed.⁸³

The Appendix to the Report adds several other relevant details. After Pearce had confessed his deed to the authorities, a search party was sent to recover the body:

The body was found and brought to the settlement in a dreadfully mangled state, being cut right in two at the middle, the head off, the privates torn off, all the flesh off the calves of the legs, back of the thighs and loins, also off the thick part of the arms, which the inhuman wretch declared was the most delicious food; none of the intestines were found; he said he threw them behind a tree, after having roasted and devoured the heart and a part of the liver.⁸⁴

In his version Dickens maintains the sensational tone of the Molesworth Report, but alters the facts to indicate that it was Pearce who enticed Cox; he also highlights the convict’s insatiable appetite for human flesh:

He tempts one other prisoner away, seizes another boat, and flies once more – necessarily in the old hopeless direction, for he can take no other. He is soon cut off, and met by the pursuing party, face to face, upon the beach. He is alone. In his former journey he acquired an inappeasable relish for his dreadful food. He urged the new man

away, expressly to kill him and eat him. In the pockets on one side of his coarse convict-dress, are portions of the man's body, on which he is regaling; in the pockets on the other side is an untouched store of salted pork (stolen before he left the island) for which he has no appetite. He is taken back, and he is hanged. But I shall never see that sea-beach on the wall or in the fire, without him, solitary monster, eating as he prowls along, while the sea rages and rises at him.⁸⁵

It is possible that the case of Pearce contributed imaginatively to the conception of Magwitch, who, in his first encounter with Pip, is presented as a brutalised, stereotyped figure, and warns the boy, 'You fail, or you go from my words in any partickler, no matter how small it is, and your heart and liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate' (*GE*, 6).

The image which emerges from the treatment of Australia in *Household Words* is multivalent, encompassing farming life, bush life, and convict life. It is depicted as a fluid, dynamic society, where 'mateship' governed social allegiances and codes of behaviour, and where English class barriers could be bridged. Given its penal origins (which could not be easily forgotten), the image of the convict loomed large in the colonial psyche, both as a physical feature of the landscape and as a governing principle of the social structure. What is particularly important as far as *Great Expectations* is concerned is the way in which the convict could be represented as an antipodean 'Other', who had committed transportable crimes, and therefore needed to undergo a process of expiation, either as an assignee or as a government worker. Once this procedure was complete, release could be effected by means of a ticket-of-leave; a new life as an emancipist could then begin, with material success as the ultimate reward. The only condition – imposed by law until 1834 and by literary tradition thereafter – was that this 'Other' should never return to Britain.⁸⁶

The evidence assembled thus far clearly indicates that there was a good deal of information about Australia available to Dickens by the time he came to write *Great Expectations*. It is also evident from reading the novel, however, that New South Wales is not its primary focus: it lies at the periphery, functioning as an established literary depository, with recognizable – albeit stereotypical – features. Dickens did draw on this storehouse in depicting his most clearly delineated character to emerge from the antipodes -- Magwitch. Part II of this study will investigate the extent to which Australia is embodied in that most enigmatic figure in the complex drama which is *Great Expectations*.

(Part II of this article will appear in the Summer 1999 issue)

¹I would like to thank the following for their assistance in preparing this article for publication: Prof Philip Collins; Prof K. J. Fielding; Prof Anny Sadrin; Prof Michael Slater; Jennifer Broomhead, State Library of New South Wales; Beryl Knight and Julia Sutherland, National Library of Australia; Martyn Boyd, Queen's University of Belfast; and the English Department of Katholieke Universiteit Leuven where a version of this paper was first presented.

²See, for example, Lionel Stevenson, 'Dickens's Dark Novels, 1851-7', *Sewanee Review* 51 (Summer 1943), pp. 398-409, and Philip Collins, 'A Tale of Two Novels: A Tale of Two Cities and Great Expectations in Dickens's Career', *Dickens Studies Annual* 2 (1972), pp. 336-51.

³Lionel Stevenson, 'Realism Dominant (1860-1870)', *The English Novel: A Panorama* (London: Constable & Co., 1960), p. 348.

⁴George J. Worth, *Great Expectations: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1986).

⁵Dan Jacobson does, in fact, ask this question, but weakly concludes that Dickens does not expand upon Magwitch's Australian adventures because he wishes to demonstrate that Pip did not want to know the truth about just where, and how, and by whom his fortune was made ('Out of Empire', *New Statesman* 69, 29 January 1965, pp. 153-4).

⁶See, for example, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).

⁷Jonah Raskin, *The Mythology of Imperialism: Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, and Joyce Cary* (New York: Random House, 1971), pp. 17-18.

⁸For further information see the introductory chapter to Suvendrini Perera's *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991), pp. 1-14.

⁹An appeal to foreign destinations is included in, for example, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Martin and Mark Tapley go off to America – a device intended to revive Dickens's floundering sales); *Dombey and Son* (Alice Marwood is transported to Australia, and returns to seek revenge on Carker); *David Copperfield* (Micawber and his family go off to Australia, as do the Peggotty family and the prostitute Martha Endell); *Little Dorrit* (Arthur Clennam returns from China, where he has been running a branch of the family firm); *Great Expectations* (Magwitch is transported to and then returns from Botany Bay, and Pip goes to Egypt to work for Clarriker's); and *Our Mutual Friend* (John Harmon returns from South Africa to claim his father's fortune, thereby initiating the chain of events which constitutes the action of the novel).

¹⁰D. H. Simpson, 'Charles Dickens and the Empire', *Library Notes* (Royal Commonwealth Society, London) 162-3 (June-July 1970), p. 1.

¹¹A. G. L. Shaw, *Convicts and the Colonies: A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain and Ireland* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1977), p. 153.

¹²'Charles Dickens and the Empire', p. 1.

¹³Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. Margaret Cardwell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 41. The Clarendon text is based on the three-volume 1861 edition, in which each book conforms to a stage in Pip's expectations; thus the chapter numbers extend from 1-19 in vol. 1, 1-20 in vol. 2, and 1-20 in vol. 3. In single-volume editions with continuous numbering of chapters, the correspondence is as follows: vol. 1 chaps. 1-19; vol. 2, chaps. 20-39, vol. 3 chaps. 40-59. All subsequent references to *Great Expectations* will be from this edition, and will appear in the text.

¹⁴Michael Hollington. 'Dickens and Australia', *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens* 33 (April 1991), p. 17.

¹⁵Sydney Smith, 'Australia', *The Works of the Reverend Sydney Smith*, 4 vols. (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839) 1, p. 44. The essay in the *Edinburgh Review* was a review of David Collins's *Account of the English Colony of New South Wales* (1798). Smith, who was also Canon of St Paul's in London, was instrumental in founding the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802.

¹⁶[Sydney Smith], 'Botany Bay', *Edinburgh Review* 32 (July 1819), pp. 45-6.

¹⁷Lansbury notes that in the early nineteenth century Australia was 'little more than an appendage to the *Newgate Calendar*' (Coral Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*, Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1970, p. 29).

¹⁸It should be noted that virtually none of these early reports were written by convicts or ex-convicts.

¹⁹Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of Transportation of Convicts to Australia 1787-1868* (London: Pan Books, 1988), p. 109.

²⁰[James Macarthur]. *New South Wales; its Present State and Future Prospects: Being a Statement, with Documentary Evidence, Submitted in Support of Petitions to His Majesty and Parliament* (London: D. Walther. 1837). p. 19. Macarthur's father John (1767-1834) was the largest sheep-owner in New South Wales; this manifestation of enormous material success, coupled with a segregationist policy, earned members of this self-designated pastoral elite the derogatory appellation 'pure Merino' in colonial slang (see Hughes, p. 328).

²¹Macarthur, p. 14.

²²*Report from the Select Committee on Transportation; together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index*. Parliamentary Sessional Papers 22 (1837-8), p. iv (hereafter cited as 'Molesworth Report').

²³Molesworth Report, p. xxiv.

²⁴Molesworth Report, p. xxvii.

²⁵Molesworth Report, p. xxxiii.

²⁶*The Fatal Shore*, p. 495.

²⁷Charles Dickens, *Pickwick Papers* (Oxford Illustrated Dickens, London: Oxford UP, 1947), p. 80.

²⁸Hollington attributes Dickens's reticence to his being 'not yet sure enough of his ground to fill it in' ('Dickens and Australia', p. 21). Yet there is no need for the novelist to provide precise details of Edmunds's experiences if he is drawing on 'stock' images in order to construct a stereotypical impression of pervasive suffering and abuse.

²⁹Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Oxford World's Classics, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982), p. 278.

³⁰Hughes, p. 455.

³¹Letter from Dickens to the Marquis of Normanby, 3 July 1840. from 1 Devonshire Terrace, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*. The Pilgrim Edition. 7. ed. Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Angus Easson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 817-8; hereafter 'Pilgrim Letters'

³²Philip Collins, 'The Marks System'. *Dickens and Crime* (London: Macmillan, 1962). pp. 164-173. The plan Dickens proposed for Urania Cottage was an adaptation of the scheme instituted by Alexander Maconochie (in the wake of the Molesworth Report) at Norfolk Island in 1840, with the aim of shifting the focus of penology from punishment to reform. See Hughes, pp. 489-521, and Shaw, pp. 290-4.

³³K. J. Fielding, 'A Great Friendship (Miss Burdett-Coutts)', *The Dickensian* 49 (June 1953), pp. 102-7; 'Dickens's Novels and Miss Burdett-Coutts', *The Dickensian* 57 (December 1954) pp. 30-4; 'Dickens and Miss Burdett-Coutts: The Last Phase', *The Dickensian* 57 (May 1961), pp. 97-105.

³⁴[Charles Dickens], 'Home for Homeless Women', *Household Words* 7 (23 April 1853), pp. 169-175.

³⁵'Home for Homeless Women', p. 169. Dickens makes this point several times in his correspondence: see, for example, the letter to W. J. Broderip of 26 July 1850: 'We impress upon them that Emigration is an essential part of our compact' (Pilgrim Letters 6, p. 136).

³⁶'Home for Homeless Women', p. 169

³⁷See Dickens's letter to Forster, 24-25 August 1846, in Pilgrim Letters 4, p. 609.

³⁸Dickens is believed to have sent these *Circulars*, which he calls 'Australian Documents', to Angela Burdett-Coutts in December 1848. See Pilgrim Letters 5, p. 462.

³⁹For more information on Samuel and John Sidney see Anne Lohrli, *Household Words:... Table of Contents, List of Contributors and their Contributions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 428-32.

⁴⁰[Samuel Sidney and John Sidney], *Sidney's Australian Hand-book: How to Succeed in Australia: Comprising Every Information for Intending Emigrants* (2nd ed., London: Pelham Richardson, 1849), p. 9. The *Hand-book* was divided into two sections: 'How to Emigrate' and 'How to Colonize' The following list of headings will give some idea of the volume's contents: The Necessity for Emigration; the Author's Experience; Description of Australia and the Bush; Practical Steps for Promoting Emigration; Wives wanted in the Bush; Matrimonial Suggestions; Value of Children in Australia; The Strength of Australia in her Pastures; Who will fail, and who will succeed; The Share of the Working Man in

Emigration; Selfish Monopolies and Idle Schemes; General Summary of Practical Suggestions.

⁴¹*Sidney's Australian Hand-book*, p. 26.

⁴²*Sidney's Australian Hand-book*, p. 78.

⁴³*Sidney's Australian Hand-book*, p. 32

⁴⁴Samuel's brother John (b. 1821) had lived in Australia from 1838 to 1844, and was the source of the anecdotes and experiences recorded in the *Hand-book*.

⁴⁵The *Emigrant Journal* provided accounts of various emigrants to Australia (as well as New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and South Africa) who conformed to Sidney's programme by settling in rural (rather than urban) areas. It also contained regular features, such as 'Emigrants' Questions' and 'Letters from Abroad'

⁴⁶See letter to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 4 February 1850, in *Pilgrim Letters* 6, p. 27. See also appendix E in the same volume (pp. 858-60), for the text of an unpublished autograph MS entitled 'Emigration', in which Dickens provides information (presumably for Miss Coutts) about emigration, collected through W. H. Wills from the Sidney brothers, including 'everything connected with the expences [*sic*] of a vessel', which Miss Coutts evidently considered chartering. Anny Sadrin briefly treats Sidney's writings and their influence in her *Great Expectations* (Unwin Critical Library, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988) pp. 80-4.

⁴⁷See [Charles Dickens and Caroline Chisholm], 'A Bundle of Emigrants' Letters', *Household Words* 1 (30 March 1850), pp. 19-24, and [Caroline Chisholm and Richard Henry Horne], 'Pictures of Life in Australia', *Household Words* 1 (22 June 1850), pp. 307-10.

⁴⁸For more information see Margaret Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1950) and Leslie Staples, 'Dickens and Australian Emigration', *The Dickensian* 42 (1946), pp. 75-7.

⁴⁹*Arcady in Australia*, p. 74

⁵⁰Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Caxtons: A Family Picture*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1849) 3, p. 241. The novel was originally serialised anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine* from April 1848 to October 1849.

⁵¹*The Caxtons*, 3, p. 232.

⁵²*The Caxtons*, 3, p. 198.

⁵³*The Caxtons*, 2, p. 323. See *Sidney's Australian Hand-book*, p. 87.

⁵⁴'Dickens and Australia', p. 23.

⁵⁵*Arcady in Australia*, p. 94.

⁵⁶Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. Nina Burgis (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983), p. 712.

⁵⁷*David Copperfield*, p. 94.

⁵⁸David's position is also interesting because he is portrayed as classless, having acquired learning through experience: his sympathies shine through in his writing, and in his exposure of the class snobberies of the Steerforths. Dickens clearly associates with him, and he is the one character who goes to see the emigrants off.

⁵⁹See, for example, chapter 54, 'Mr Micawber's Transactions', and chapter 57, 'The Emigrants'

⁶⁰Simpson points out that of all the British colonies, Australia was given the best coverage by far in *Household Words* ('Charles Dickens and the Empire', pp. 17-18).

⁶¹'Letters of Introduction to Sydney', *Household Words* 2 (16 November 1850), p. 187.

⁶²*The Fatal Shore*, p. 321. Hughes notes that among the 'respectable' classes segregation was taken to extremes on such occasions as hunt balls, where the dancing was segregated, with Emancipists at one end of the room, and so-called Exclusives at the other, sometimes with different orchestras. The desire not to resemble convicts even affected diet (p. 343).

⁶³K. J. Fielding, 'R. H. Horne: Letters from Australia', *Meanjin* 13.2 (Winter 1954), pp. 242-3. The article is constructed around a series of Horne's letters to the Royal Literary Fund Society in London.

⁶⁴Letter to Robert Bell, 19 November 1861: quoted in Fielding, 'R. H. Horne', p. 243.

⁶⁵The Literary Fund was a charitable society, founded about 1790, 'for the protection and relief of persons of genius and learning, or their families, who shall be in want'; see Fielding, 'R. H. Horne', pp. 244-5.

⁶⁶Letter to Robert Bell, 1 February 1862, from Gad's Hill, in *Pilgrim Letters* 10, p. 29.

⁶⁷Letter to the Committee of the Royal Literary Fund, 22 September 1863; quoted in Fielding, 'R. H. Horne', p. 250.

⁶⁸The ship's surgeon was the only government official on the privately owned convict transports; any report he made about a particular convict could influence the nature of the prisoner's fate in the colony. See Hughes, pp. 150-7

⁶⁹*The Fatal Shore*, pp. 307-8.

⁷⁰Samuel Sidney, 'An Australian Ploughman's Story', *Household Words* 1 (6 April 1850), p. 43.

⁷¹[Samuel Sidney], 'Three Colonial Epochs', *Household Words* 4 (31 January 1852), p. 435. This was Sidney's most influential article: it provided concise, readable assessment of Australia's history. Later the same year Sidney extended his treatment, and published it as *The Three Colonies of Australia: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia*.

⁷²[Samuel Sidney], 'An Exploring Adventure', *Household Words* 1 (27 July 1850), p. 418.

⁷³*Oliver Twist*, p. 276.

⁷⁴Hughes likens such loyalty to Sicilian *omertà* (*The Fatal Shore*, p. 174).

⁷⁵'Two-Handed Dick the Stockman: An Adventure in the Bush', *Household Words* 1 (4 May 1850), pp. 141-4.

⁷⁶*The Fatal Shore*, pp. 174-5.

⁷⁷[William Howitt], 'Black Thursday', *Household Words*, 13 (10 May 1856) pp. 388-9.

⁷⁸Transportation eventually ended in Van Diemen's Land in 1852 and in Western Australia in 1868.

⁷⁹Lohrli notes that Dickens possessed a copy of *The Case of Mr. W. H. Barber* – a volume which, because of its sensational subject matter, went through at least six editions in 1849 (*Household Words:... Table of Contents*, p. 445).

⁸⁰William Moy Thomas, 'Transported for Life' (part 1), *Household Words* 5 (31 July 1852), pp. 455-64; 'Transported for Life' (part 2), *Household Words* 5 (7 August 1852), pp. 482-9. Certain regulations recorded in the article were no longer in force in 1852; after this was brought to the attention of Dickens or Wills, the latter wrote a corrective 'chip' entitled 'Transportation for Life' (*Household Words* 5, 28 August 1852, pp. 566-7). For further information see Lohrli, p. 446.

⁸¹'Norfolk Island', *Household Words* 5 (10 August 1852), pp. 73-7. Lohrli records that Irwin had been to Norfolk Island, and noted enigmatically about his acquaintance with the place: 'I know the place well and the people living there, convicts and all. How I came by my knowledge is a question which I am not obliged to answer; but, for the comfort of the clean-fingered, I may state that I am not legally pitch' (*Household Words:... Table of Contents*, p. 322).

⁸²Charles Dickens. 'The Long Voyage', *Household Words* 8 (31 December 1853), p. 409.

⁸³'John Barnes, Esq., called in; and Examined', Molesworth Report, Session of 15 November 1837-16 August 1838, p. 40, para. 355. Pearce's story is recounted by Hughes, pp. 219-26.

⁸⁴Molesworth Report, Session of 15 November 1837-16 August 1838, p. 316, Appendix I, no. 56(D).

⁸⁵'The Long Voyage', p. 409. See also Michael Slater's headnote in *Dickens's Journalism, Vol. 3: 'Gone Astray' and Other Papers from Household Words, 1851-1859* (London: Dent, 1998), p. 180.

⁸⁶See Jerome Meckier, 'Dating the Action in *Great Expectations*', *Dickens Studies Annual* 21 (1992), p. 180. This condition applied only to those, like Magwitch, who were transported for life.