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Citation style: Nitka Małgorzata. (2009). "Rust and must and cobwebs" : of accumulation and circulation in Dickens's "Bleak House" W: W. Kalaga, J. Mydla (red.), "Mapping literary spaces : memory, place, locality" (s. 91-105). Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

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"RUST AND MUST AND COBWEBS" OF ACCUMULATION AND CIRCULATION IN DICKENS'S *BLEAK HOUSE*

One of the concepts "central to the scientistic social notions"[1] of the nineteenth century was, Wolfgang Schivelbusch contends, the concept of circulation, borrowed from biology to be commonly employed to organise and explain the operation of society, its structures and institutions. Although it is in the nineteenth century that circulation gains such wide application, the beginning of its career has to be traced back to the seventeenth century and William Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood, which not only redefined the body and life by putting them in a mechanical, and secular, context but also bestowed prime importance on motion as a condition determining health. The idea that the efficient circulation of blood or air within the bodily system translated into bodily health was readily appropriated by city planners who began to see in smooth mobility the key factor responsible for making urban space functional, and therefore fit. About this close correspondence between the body and urban design writes Richard Sennett in *Flesh and Stone* tracing the variations of the analogy through various ages, and seeing the eighteenth century as the moment at which the "new image of the body as a circulating system prompted […] attempts to circulate bodies freely in the city."[2]

Imagining human beings as blood corpuscles, city planners conceived streets as arteries or veins, as channels whose prime function was to ad-

[1] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey. Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Anselm Hollo (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 187.

[2] Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone. The Body and the City in Western Civilisation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 23.

vance an easy flow of traffic, and this criterion, in turn, translated into the layout of urban space. It was not only traffic that was to freely circulate but also air, water or waste; any kind of blockage, obstruction, congestion would be now conceived as detrimental to the urban organism. Several Enlightened planners based their designs on the principle of unimpeded circulation so as to create healthy urban environment: the most famous, though not exempt from certain ambiguities, due to its relation to Versailles, was Pierre L'Enfant's republican plan for Washington D.C. with its system of streets efficiently connecting different parts of the city. The most spectacular instance of the city rigorously reorganized for the sake of circulation is, of course, Paris as remade by Baron Haussmann, "artist-demolitionist,"[3] in the nineteenth century. It was the transformation dictated by the demands of circulation in the sense of modern traffic whereby there would be created a system or network of streets constituting lines of communication between various points or nodes; the streets were first and foremost "structures that convey and connect."[4] To make communication expeditious it was important not only to create connections, but also to reshape, namely to regularise or straighten streets so that they could accommodate and promote fast-flowing traffic. Haussmann's straight and broad boulevards and avenues, circulation-oriented, open up urban space, let in light and air, and so give it a neat, regular and healthy image; in opening up the city he was demolishing Paris that was "musty and close."[5] Haussmann opened up but, in another sense, sealed up the city by replicating the network above by one below: made of sewers and waterways. He himself spoke of the network he created as a "circulatory system," but his city was quite faithfully modeled on human physiology with its complex of systems: circulatory, respiratory or even excretory.

It is small wonder that the notion of circulation, originally affiliated with medicine, amplified its resonance and importance in the nineteenth century, the age of intense mobility of people and goods, increased traffic, transportation and trade; and just as in the medical context circulation connotes health, so in the economic and urban one it has accrued positive associations of vitality, efficiency, competence, and improvement. Faith which the nineteenth-century places in circulation as a value in its own right means, to cite Schivelbusch, that "whatever is part of circulation is regarded as healthy, progressive, constructive," and therefore whatever falls outside the scope of the circulatory system would be seen as "diseased."[6] This principle would

[3] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknapp Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 128.

[4] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 125.

[5] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 123.

[6] Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, p. 187.

be well illustrated by the physiology of the railway system; already places located on the extremities of the network were anaemic and undernourished, but those which were completely cut off from the realm of motion, and therefore nourishment were in danger of fatal decay: of social, cultural, and economic atrophy and death.

If circulation conveys light, air, cleanliness, and vitality, the isolation from it, inevitably tends to generate darkness, stuffiness, filth, and stupor. The common denominator, the master idea would be here that of stagnation which in the urban environment becomes often illustrated through the image of slack trade. The blatant evidence of economic ineptitude is, however, not an understocked forlorn shop interior, emptied of wares, but its very opposite: a space of excess in which commodities grow rank, take over space through frustrated accumulation. Such congested interiors, denoting no-go businesses, figure large in nineteenth-century literature but it is specifically in Charles Dickens's novels where they constitute usually peripheral yet always evocative elements of the metropolitan map. Spatially they belong to the margins of the urban system, but they also belong to a different time; their moribund character is a consequence of the conspiracy of isolation and anachronism. "Competition, competition — new invention, new invention — alteration, alteration — the world's gone past me,"[7] is how Solomon Gill explains his lack of custom. The lack of custom is ironically counterweighed by the superfluity of commodities that do not turn over; it is negative overabundance that, unlike the clutter of the Victorian domestic interior or the plenitude of the 1851 Great Exhibition, does not spell prosperity but failure and deterioration.

If the absence of circulation is unhealthy, so must be the kind of accretion that Dickens keeps taking stock of; accumulation entails congestion and the loss of space in which air and light could circulate. Dickens has earned the name of the chronicler of urban transformation, and the London he explores is said to be "in transition" and "in constant motion,"[8] but in his fascination with flux and change he does not disregard the study of *stasis* attendant on accumulation, no matter whether grown out of abortive business venture, miserly avarice or the collector's obsessiveness.

A peculiar interplay of circulation and impasse, deadlock indeed, informs *Bleak House*, ostentatiously a novel concerned with change, connection, and circulation, in which there happens quite a lot of mobility bound with work, curiosity, exploration, homelessness, restlessness, evasion, search, pursuit, and detection. Still, these episodes of mobility are overshadowed by the spells and images of accumulated stagnation: waste, torpid-

[7] Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 32.

[8] Murray Baumgarten, "Fictions of the City," in: *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. John O. Jordan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 112.

ity, languor, and staleness. Stagnation seems to be the common property of various locations — socially and materially as diverse as the slums of Tom-all-Alone's and the aristocratic Dedlocks' mansion of Chesney Wold — all of which are enshrouded in thick and sticky oppressive air, miasmic humidity suggestive of pollution and decay.

The juxtaposition of movement and obstruction, or actually their convergence, makes its first appearance in the opening chapter, much dominated by the elemental imagery of fog and mud, smoke and drizzle which pervade and define, at the same time, the metropolis. This introduction into London is an introduction into its streets, which is to say into motion. One has the sense of the multitude of foot passengers busily treading the pavements but it is motion which is deficient in efficiency since characterized by "slipping," "sliding," and ill-tempered jostling, and whose effect is not progress but mere amassment of mud: "[…] adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking […] tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest."[9] From the mud, the reader's gaze is next directed above, only to encounter a thick pall of fog, which has colonised the sky and, more than that, rolled its way into every void, every nook and cranny of the urban territory enveloping them in premature darkness. Two complementary images, two dense paragraphs suffice to thicken narration at the moment of its inception to the point at which it seems stillborn and thus usher in the dominant motifs of futility and foulness, dreariness, and obscurity. But through this imagery Dickens also marks a path of his resistance as he deliberately moves against the current of the convention which would start off with congestion to emphasize miscellaneity, and variety, as a distinctive metropolitan aspect; he apparently reaches for an alternative option which is that of intense mobility but immediately subverts it and turns the metropolis into a space of oppressiveness. Motion is there but it is hampered, heavy, muddled motion, motion which is incapacitated and which incapacitates advance.

That progress must not be expected from the kind of circulation that belongs to London is intimated in the very first sentence of the novel that may slip the reader's attention absorbed by the extensive symbolic weather report that spills over the space of the opening paragraphs, but it is, of course, a sentence that sets the scene: spells out the time, place, and action: "London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall" (p. 17). The first verb which sets the plot in motion is, paradoxically, one denotative of immobility, namely "sitting;" and, again, several meanings are accumulated in the word: such as "presiding over," "occupy-

[9] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (New York: Sygnet Classics, 1964), p. 17. All subsequent references are to this edition and are given in the main text in parentheses.

ing the place of authority" when applied to the Lord High Chancellor, but it is also synecdochically used, with reference to the Court of Chancery; "holding session" or "carrying out business." Dickens's as much idiosyncratic as irritating technique is one of reiteration, and he will repeat the verb "sit" with the insistence almost equal to that with which he keeps repeating the word "fog" to bring the two together for the true location of the Lord Chancellor turns out to be the fog, by now transparently metaphorical: "[…] at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery" (p. 18). Ensconced in the thick of things, he is a solid body, a pivotal figure of fixity around whom all legal circulation is organised, but once again it has the form of a constrained, floundering activity which is a fiction of progress. Coming full circle, to render the spirit of ineffectuality, chronic awkwardness and obfuscation that haunts the High Court of Chancery, Dickens returns to the imagery of human traffic circulating along the fog-and-mud-bound streets and metaphorises solicitors as "*mistily* engaged in one of the ten thousand stages of an endless cause, *tripping one another up* on *slippery* precedents, *groping knee-deep in technicalities*, running their goat-hair and horsehair warded heads against walls of words and making a pretence of equity with serious faces, as players might" (p. 18, emphasis mine).

Obstructed and confused motion, in a counterproductive manner, generates more muddle by introducing into circulation so much paper: "bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, master's reports, mountains of costly nonsense piled before them" (p. 18). Once again the analogy becomes amplified through the image of the manufacture of legal matter: the relentless churning of papers by so many hands is a business just as mucky as the churning of mud by so many feet that trample metropolitan pavements. Urban "geological formation,"[10] to borrow the phrase used in *Our Mutual Friend*, is mud, whereas legal make-up is layer upon layer of documents written, copied, and multiplied *ad infinitum*. It is this excess of paper that defines the diseased condition of the legal system so impossibly clotted that threatening failure, but this imminence of a crisis also provokes the question of recovery, which is the question of how the organism negotiates this deleterious overproduction. For the economy of circulation demands the closed system be ventilated, detoxified, disencumbered of the accumulated stationary/stationery matter which must be occasionally removed, re-used or re-circulated, if only to create space for new deposits of litter.

Dickens persistently adheres to the imagery of begrimed urban locomotion to use it as an extended parallel with the legal system, afflicted by kin-

[10] Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1997), p. 24.

dred ineffectuality, waste production, and waste management. He binds the connection making a respectable, influential lawyer Tulkinghorn walk to the unrespectable neighbourhood in which there lodges an obscure law-writer; he depicts the concourse of clerks, "counsel and attorneys," "plaintiffs and defendants and suitors" as well as "the general crowd" who having finished working their way through professional obstacles now negotiate the way home against more material yet no less puzzling obstruction, "the street mud, which is made of nobody knows what and collects about us nobody knows whence or how — we only knowing in general that when there is too much of it we find it necessary to shovel it away" (p. 149). Shovelling away, indeed, seems to be a simple and obvious solution to the problem of accretion, relevant for streets and courts alike. Thus when legal substance, in the shape of bagfuls of "heavy charges of papers" (p. 23) which has collected about lawsuits, those in the throes of "progress" and those that have already died their death, "nobody knows whence or how" reaches a critical state when "there is too much of it" (p. 149) it too need be cleared away.

Around the urgency of clearing things away, prompted by the "horror of waste,"[11] there developed in the Victorian Age a serious debate in which a principal voice was that of Edwin Chadwick. Chadwick saw the key problem of London in the accumulation of organic waste whose decomposition, along with damp and filth, contaminated the air thus posing a considerable health hazard, and worked out a plan for not just the removal but also reclamation of waste. Behind his plan of reform, it has to be said, was a humanitarian concern as well as an economic rationale: appalling hygiene conditions translated into sicknesses which, preventing labour, threatened in turn production and national prosperity. Campaigning for improved drainage, sewage, and ventilation, Chadwick recognised the sanitary and economic value of circulation which he saw as the most effective prophylactic against and remedy for all kinds of pestilential factors conducive to the spread of diseases among the working classes. So did another reformer, F.O. Ward, who at the Sanitary Congress held in Brussels in 1856 delivered a speech entitled "Circulation or Stagnation. Arterial and Venous System for the Sanitation of Towns" — a covert, though authorised exposition of Chadwick's idea — in which he opposed the putrefactive effect of accumulation to the purifying one of continuous circulation.

Explaining the technicalities of the system in which towns and the country were to be connected by "means of an immense tubular organisation consisting of two divisions, the one the urban drainage, the other the rural distribution; and these two divisions are again subdivided into

[11] S.E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (London, 1952), p. 3. Quoted in: Alexander Welsh, *The City of Dickens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 27.

two distinct parts, the one arterial, the other venous. Thus, we construct in a town two systems of pipes, the one bringing in pure water, the other carrying off this water enriched by fertilising matter,"[12] he acknowledged the sanitary movement's debt to Harvey whose discovery of "the circulation which goes on in the individual body has prepared us for the reception of the strictly analogous and fruitful discovery of the circulation in the social body."[13] The objective of the physiology-inspired reform was the creation of a self-contained system in which circulation was in one sense a means of removing waste, and in another a means of reclaiming it. Thus the "horror of waste" which the biographer ascribes to Chadwick's motivation entails not just the fear of pestilence bred as a result of the putrefaction of accumulated waste, but also the fear of wasting, failing to recognise and exploit the potential productivity of what has been discarded.

Apprised of the contemporary sanitary debate, Dickens does not sanitise his fictitious urban landscapes not only because he scrupulously registers the existence of rubbish and refuse but also because he, almost literally, takes the problem of waste further by tracing its after-life, that is its possible profitable ulterior uses or, at least, its further address after it has been apparently removed. Removal means relocation rather than destruction, and in the case of legal matter what is withdrawn from circulation, as Dickens demonstrates it in *Bleak House*, becomes simply put in storage, or, more properly, into an archive. The archive, from Greek *archeia* meaning public records, is a place of accumulating and preserving, a repository of documents, and an institution affiliated to political power, as again etymology indicates: *arkheios*, i.e. governmental. Chancery, though, does not set store by its "immense masses of papers of all shapes and no shapes" (p. 867) which acquire the status of detritus even before the causes they have accrued around are done away with. The duty of archiving falls then into private hands. These can be the hands of individual litigants such as Miss Flite, "a little mad old woman," who unwittingly parodies the circulation of legal papers as she turns herself into a walking archive by always carrying "some small litter in a reticule which she calls her documents" (p. 19) or a ruined suitor from Shropshire whose room is "covered with a litter of papers" (p. 221). The litigants are conscientious since interested archivists but it is their own files alone that they keep. Their scattered community forms a dispersed, decentralized or anarchic archive, very different from the equally

[12] Edwin Chadwick, "Circulation or Stagnation: Being a Translation of a Paper by F.O. Ward read at the Sanitary Congress held in Brussels in 1856, on the arterial and venous system for the sanitation of towns"; at: 15 March 2006 <http://www.victoriantimes.org/ixbin/hixclient.exe?_IXSESSION_=70EnHxm5I6A&_IXACTION_=file&_IXFILE_=lse/lsemaster.html.>

[13] Chadwick, "Circulation or Stagnation."

unofficial but far more voluminous and powerful repository contained in Krook's rag-and-bottle shop.

The shop, though located outside the walls of Lincoln's Inn within a more private neighbourhood, constitutes another site of excess and stagnancy; ostensibly peripheral to the legal system, it is one of its extremities or termini, and Dickens, it has already been noted, keeps pointing at the kinship of what seems to be in so many different ways apart. After all, the question which persists in this tangled novel is that of possible yet undiscovered but discoverable connections, and this question he pointedly asks early on: "What connexion can there be between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabout of Jo the outlaw with the broom […]? What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world who from opposite sides of great gulfs have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!" (p. 232).

The gradual emergence, and consolidation, of inevitable connections out of initial apparent randomness, whereby "unknown and unacknowledged relationships, profound and decisive connections, definite and committing recognitions and avowals are as it were forced into consciousness,"[14] Raymond Williams identifies as a regular feature of Dickens's fiction. That the plot cannot but evolve towards exposing these originally unthought-of or unthinkable relationships goes without saying, another matter is by what means these connections become intimated and realised. Early on, the novel points to the fog and vitiated urban air as means which give unwholesome integrity to society, and thus connectivity has both an unexpected and pestilential aspect. In developing this idea Dickens draws on the anxiety permeating contemporary sanitary reports which, deploring urban pollution as they did, referred to the contaminated air as a "subtle, sickly, deadly *medium*."[15] Breathed in by the rich and poor alike, it perforce implicated them in an odious and fatal commonwealth as one would discover oneself to be connected to those from whom one believed oneself to be so very remote, socially, and otherwise.

Connections are effected thus by the impure offensive air which carries pestilence, but there exist also other agents of ugly connectivity. The first chapter, in which the fog makes inroads into the Court of Chancery, or rather Chancery is revealed as "the very heart of the fog" (p. 18), leaves no doubt as to the one being the analogon of the other, and the shared property must not be limited to that of obfuscation. The impure thick air of the fog, it has already been stated, does more than just bedim one's vision, slow

[14] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1993), p. 155.

[15] Lemuel Shattuck et al, *Report of the Sanitary Commission of Massachusetts 1850* (Boston, 1850), p. 103, emphasis mine, at: 22 January 2007 <http://www.deltaomega.org/shattuck.pdf.>

down one's motion, or impair one's sense of direction; insidiously and deviously, it creates fatal links and so does, analogously, Chancery, which indiscriminately and relentlessly spreads its legal contagion creating or revealing all kinds of unsuspected connections. It constitutes a focal point or a node where so many lines converge and cross, and from which so many lines spread outward, encompassing more and more parties. Dickens begins with identifying the focus to then split the action and shift it to a number of different locations, and so keep expanding the boundaries of the legal universe. This concurs with placing more and more lives within the litiginous ambit while entangling them in a network of alliances, enmities, kinships, and dependencies.

Krook's store is one of these many incidental and episodic locations to which stray both the narrative and the characters, already given the contaminated appellation of "the wards in Jarndyce" (p. 48). Only just initiated into the lawsuit, they have already caught the infection of confusion and ineffectuality. Space- and time-wise beyond the court, they remain within its vicious circle as Richard Carstone acknowledges an unplanned near return to the legal quarter of the day before: "We are never to get out of Chancery! We have come by another way to our place of meeting yesterday," which sense of reiteration is reinforced by the sight of Miss Flite, met only the day before in Chancery: "[…] here's the old lady again!" (p. 63). The impression of circularity, and of the uncanny attachment to the court, seems removed as they are deflected from their path into what is to be the domestic private environment, i.e. Miss Flite's lodging, to become then again turned out of their path by Krook's, her landlord's, shop.

Strictly speaking, though initially referred to as a shop, the place advertises itself as a warehouse dealing in all kinds of used-up matter: bones, old clothes, old iron, kitchen-stuff; this empire of refuse is a one-way emporium where, as Esther Summerson is quick to observe, "everything [seems — M.N.] to be bought and nothing to be sold" (p. 65). It is yet another place whose "organising" principle is accumulation and growth. Filled to the utmost capacity with objects withdrawn from circulation, since expended, it accepts them in their exhausted status and does not subject them to re-invention, which would put them back into the system of exchange.

In that it differs from another Victorian institution of accumulation which it otherwise resembles, i.e. the rubbish heap or dust mound, an important landscape feature in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, a novel whose principal theme is that of recovery, retrieval, and reconstruction. Dust meant not only cinders but all kind of rubbish, things "done with at last"[16]; collected from

[16] Clara L. Mateaux, *The Wonderland of Work* (1883), quoted in: Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 49.

households, dust was carted away and piled up into eminences in suburban yards. There things "done with at last" would turn out not to be "done with at last" at all, because the heaps were the site of not so much refuse but reclamation: raked and searched, sorted and sifted. Dust would not be allowed to settle. Whatever could be retrieved from it — ashes, bones, shells, rags or pottery (and all these things can be found in Krook's shop) — would be sold on, remade into new commodities, and in a new, modified form commodified, put back into circulation, often to return to from where they were discarded. Economy but followed the law of nature which is "ever working in a circle and reproducing in the same ratio as she destroys,"[17] Mayhew remarked. Emerson's earlier observation was that "Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use. When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for an ulterior service."[18]

No such economic viability appears to inform Krook's massive dead stock. Bought but not to be sold, consigned to this economic death and dead-end, discarded things gathered together can only form an eccentric collection. Death, or rather deadness, and collecting do go together; Jean Baudrillard defines the collector as one who seeks exclusive rights over dead objects,[19] and economic theories readily reaching for the idiom of biology, too, would place the impeded or terminated circulation of goods not far from death seeing this immobility as critical to economic health. The consumption pattern or process entails acquiring, using and discarding, whereas collecting seems pared down to acquisition and possession. What constitutes a collection is objects withdrawn from ordinary, everyday use, things liberated "from the drudgery of being useful,"[20] as Walter Benjamin put it. But there may exist a possibility that the object becomes released from usefulness not at the moment of entering a collection, but becomes collectible precisely on the grounds of its uselessness or used-upness. Krook's omnium-gatherum is made exclusively of such items; it is the condition of their exhaustion that gives them a semblance of a set of sorts.

Collection implies forming a set and this involves selection; collecting consists in assembling and choosing, but no deliberate selectiveness organizes Krook's miscellany: "[A]ll's fish that comes to my net" (p. 67), he boasts. Admitting as he does in this declaration to the lack of discrimination, he betrays the spirit of avarice typical of the collector, and, even more so typical of old age; again, one may return to Benjamin, who looks at "the need to ac-

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[17] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968), Vol. 2, pp. 159—160.

[18] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," in: Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (New York: The Library of America, 1983), p. 28.

[19] Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction*, trans. Brian Singer (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1990), p. 122.

[20] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, p. 209.

cumulate" as "one of the signs of approaching death."[21] It is as if by holding on to things one clutched at life, but also by holding on to things used up and not one's own, thus without any nostalgic value, one re-attached oneself to society from which one had been distanced, if not discarded, because of one's old age. Krook's voracious love of things, love of all things discarded, ties in with seclusion, another measure of his eccentricity. Yet this unsociability which makes Krook a hardened recluse is motivated less by rejection and more by distrust, distrust that, in turn, is an expression of possessiveness, characteristic of the collector jealously and fanatically protecting his proprietary rights over amassed objects. But possessiveness can also be combined with the inability to discard anything and thus discipline one's massive acquisitions. Krook's obsession is perhaps less collecting and more "having and hoarding": he has "so many things […] of so many kinds" and he "can't abear to part with anything [he — M.N.] once lay hold of" (p. 67).

Although at first sight the rag-and-bottle shop makes on a stray observer an impression of a confused accumulation of litter, on closer inspection this litter begins to make sense. Not merely because one sees some signs of order in the various heaps of rubbish sorted into different categories, but also because one begins to place rubbish in the context of the past as one begins to identify the former place and function of particular objects, indeed removed from "the drudgery of being useful." However eccentric or peripheral in their oddity Krook's place and its contents may be, Dickens immediately inscribes them within an urban institutional system. "The shop had in several little particulars the air of being in a legal neighbourhood and of being, as it were, a dirty hanger-on and disowned relation of the law" (p. 65). The relationship between the warehouse and Chancery is one of contiguity and continuity: they are spatially and temporally aligned. The two places belong to the same neighbourhood and whatever has been used up and discarded by the Inn finds its way into the shop in whose interior become deposited layers of disused legal matter: from ink bottles through torn-up gowns to, above all, "heaps of parchment scrolls," "shabby old volumes," and "discoloured and dog's eared law-papers." The link is plain for all to see and Richard Carstone, at this point still standing on the edge of the world of law and hence capable of playful nonchalance, does not miss a chance to crack a joke and pursue the analogy to grim limits: when spotting a pile of "bones in a corner, […] picked very clean" he envisages them to be "the bones of clients" (p. 65).

Just like in the inaugural chapter Dickens made the fog metaphor, *nomen omen*, transparent, also in this instance the correspondence between Chancery and Krook's place is made complete and explicit as Miss Flite reveals

[21] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, pp. 207—208.

that Krook "is called among neighbours the Lord Chancellor. His shop is called the Court of Chancery" as just as completely and explicitly it is explained by the Shadow Chancellor himself:

> I have so many things here […] of so many kinds, and all as the neighbours think (but they know nothing), wasting away and going to rack and ruin, that that's why they have given me and my place a christening. And I have so many old parchmnentses and papers in my stock. And I have a liking for rust and must and cobwebs. And all's fish that comes to my net. And I can't abear to part with anything I once lay hold of (and so my neighbours think, but what do they know) or to alter anything, or to have any sweeping, nor scouring, nor cleaning, nor repairing going on about me. That's the way I've got the ill name of Chancery. *I* don't mind. I go to see my noble and learned brother pretty well every day […]. There's no great odds betwixt us. We both grub on in a muddle (p. 67).

It is an exhaustively demonstrated parallel bringing to the fore the condition of stagnation, futility, waste, filth, and decay that characterises Chancery or Chancery suits; but contained here is also an allusion to a different meaning or function of Chancery, that is the office for keeping public records. Krook's obsession with having and hoarding involves also preserving, which is the business of the archive. And not parting with any of "old parchmentses and papers," keeping a greedy watch over his dusty, musty, cobwebby stock he acts as a self-appointed archivist, who has illegitimately inscribed himself within the legal system, keeping an unauthorised record of its doings, and by the same token a record of private histories. At issue, though, is more than preservation: as a proprietor, collector, and archivist Krook has under his mastery or control far more than useless since discarded waste paper; he rather has in his hands power over human lives contained in documents. Presiding as he does over his grubby replica of Chancery he, too, "grubs on in a muddle," all the more gropingly because of his virtual illiteracy, turns over heaps of documents in the belief that among all this rubbish there must be treasure, that if one sorts and sifts, one will find "papers of importance" (p. 461—462) and that meaning and money can be salvaged out of refuse in a similar manner in which waste accumulated in dust heaps can be reclaimed and capitalised (on).

If Krook's illiteracy impedes, or even precludes, such discovery as is to be made in the act of obsessive turning over masses of papers, it also works as an expedient that ensures the preservation of the amassed stock; suspicious, though unaware of the contents, and therefore the worth, of individual documents that have come to his net, he does not part with any lest he should unwittingly let something of value go. In that he resembles Tulk-

inghorn, a "rich----in-flu-en-tial!" (p. 148) lawyer, similarly greedy, cunning and reclusive, but most of all characterised by the predilection for absorbing information (spoken or written, no matter) and by the refusal to let it out so as to turn to account legally and illegally obtained "family confidences […] of which he is known to be the silent depository" (p. 26). Krook's fantastic collection of legal refuse matter makes him another "silent depository" in the space of whose spurious archive, even as waste, documents are not buried, but merely kept in abeyance, awaiting their turn to rejoin circulation. It is false economy to see accumulation as immune to circulation, just as it is false economy to see waste as useless.

Both in *Our Mutual Friend* and in *Bleak House* to the economic usefulness of the accumulated waste matter testifies their status of property, and, on the death of the owner, of legacy. It constitutes a welcome object of inheritance: not only because valuable in itself since cashable, but also because its sheer volume promises a possibility of chancing upon hidden treasure, a scenario thoroughly evidenced in Merryweather's *Lives and Anecdotes of Misers, or the Passion of Avarice Displayed*. On Krook's death by spontaneous combustion his heaps of rubbish are shaken out of shape by the Smallweeds, unexpected legatees, who take possession of the musty effects and take over the business of "rummaging and searching, digging, delving, and diving among the treasures of the late lamented" (p. 564). Their forensic search replicates the practice of the sorting and sifting of dust mounds, whereby accumulated waste, after transformation, regains substance and is put back within the circulatory system of urban economy. If the search of mounds or scavenging the streets may have biological undertones by exemplifying the principle of competitiveness enacted in a fierce struggle of "sharp eyes and sharp stomachs,"[22] the Smallweeds' search, just as predatory, comes close to a geological investigation. Here the objects of a methodical, painstaking, examination of "paper fragments, print, and manuscript" (p. 565) are less the inventorying of recyclable litter and the economic utilisation of waste and more a pursuit of some lost document which when revealed would be invaluable since acting as a piece of evidence or a missing link that would help establish both desired and undesirable connections. It is out of the heaps of rubbish that are extricated the stories of the past: the love letters of Lady Dedlock to Captain Hawdon and the will that to all appearances may help settle the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit. Connections are revealed, the circle becomes closed; connectedness turns out to be the work of not only vitiated air, that "subtle, sickly, deadly *medium*," but also that of discarded written matter that may return to circulation with a vengeance.

[22] Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, p. 147.

And once discoveries of important documents and connections are made, and out of these discoveries money is made, space can be cleared. The return to the original order and health has its symbolic equivalent in the images of the accumulated waste, whether in Krook's Shadow Chancery or Chancery proper, being carted away. As the lawsuit at long last expends itself, and in a curiously circular manner the estate has got absorbed in costs, "great bundles of paper […] immense masses of papers of all shapes and no shapes" (p. 867) are carried out for good. But one must not trust these tidy endings, since removal does not mean disappearance but only dislocation. For nothing can ever be done with at last. What has been removed from Chancery and the pages of *Bleak House*, resurfaces in Dickens's next novel, *Our Mutual Friend* as "mysterious paper currency which circulates in London when the wind blows, gyrate[s] here and there and everywhere […]."[23]

[23] Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, p. 147.

Małgorzata Nitka

„Rdza, pleśń i pajęczyny" Kumulacja i cyrkulacja w *Samotni* Charlesa Dickensa

Streszczenie

Jednym z kluczowych pojęć porządkujących rzeczywistość dziewiętnastego wieku i zarazem pomocnych w rozumieniu funkcjonowania społeczeństwa, jego struktur i instytucji jest cyrkulacja (*circulation*), czyli krążenie, obieg czy też ruch, wokół którego gromadzą się pozytywne skojarzenia ze zdrowiem, sprawnością, wydajnością, energią oraz postępem. Brak ruchu oznacza stagnację sprzyjającą ciemności, duchocie, martwocie; to, co istnieje czy dzieje się poza zaklętym kręgiem obiegu traktowane jest jako chore, zagrożone atrofią: społeczną, kulturową, gospodarczą.

Samotnię Charlesa Dickensa można postrzegać jako powieść poruszającą, między innymi, tematykę zmiany i ruchu czy ruchliwości, związaną z poszukiwaniem, bezdomnością, niespokojnością itp. Równie ważne miejsce w powieści zajmują przestrzenie zdominowane przez stagnację i towarzyszącą jej kumulację, będące z jednej strony świadectwem peryferyjności i odrzucenia, z drugiej zaś — stanowiące zagrożenie dla wydajności miejskiego organizmu. Właśnie owa osobliwa symbioza cyrkulacji i impasu, w powieści Dickensa, jest przedmiotem analizy zawartej w niniejszym artykule.

Małgorzata Nitka

„Rost, Schimmel und Spinnennetz“ Kumulation und Zirkulation in der *Einöde* von Charles Dickens

Zusammenfassung

Einer der Grundbegriffe, welche die Wirklichkeit des 19.Jhs ordnen sollen und das Funktionieren der Gesellschaft, deren Strukturen und Institutionen verstehen helfen, ist Zirkulation (*circulation*), d.h. Kreislauf, Umlauf oder eine Bewegung, die mit positiven Assoziationen mit Gesundheit, Leistungsfähigkeit, Produktivität, Energie und Fortschritt verbunden wird. Die mangelnde Bewegung hat eine Stagnation zur Folge, die zur Beschränktheit und Geistesstumpfheit beiträgt. Was außerhalb des Zauberkreises des Umlaufs geschieht, wird als etwas Krankes und von sozialer, kultureller und wirtschaftlicher Atrophie Bedrohtes betrachtet.

Der Roman *Die Einöde* von Charles Dickens betrifft die Änderung und die Bewegung oder die Beweglichkeit, die mit Suchen, Obdachlosigkeit, Unruhe u. dgl. verbunden sind. Genauso wichtig sind die von der Stagnation, und von der sie begleitenden Kumulation beherrschten Gebiete, die einerseits vom Peripherischen und von der Ablehnung zeugen, und andererseits für die Produktivität des städtischen Organismus gefährlich sind. Die besondere im Dickensens Roman erscheinende Symbiose der Zirkulation und der Ausweglosigkeit wird zum Gegenstand des vorliegenden Artikels.