

CHARLES DICKENS AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Charles Dickens has long been a familiar figure in the realm of children; his name has been associated with Christmas, Santa-Claus, and the warmth of the family hearth. A few years ago, a student surprised me by stating that she had not realized that Dickens wrote novels besides children's books until she attended a course in the English novel. As a child, she said, she had read *A Christmas Carol*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *The Death of Little Nell*. The title of the last book, as well as what other things she told me, made it obvious that those books she mentioned were versions of Dickens' novels retold and adapted for Japanese children.

Although it is not an aim of this essay to discuss these retold versions of Dickens, still it may be worth while to trace the chronology of how Dickens was introduced to Japanese children. According to a book on Japanese translations of English and American children's books,⁽¹⁾ the first introduction was in 1893 when a translation of *A Christmas Carol* by Mrs. Shizuko Wakamatsu appeared in the *Zyogaku Zasshi* (*Journal for High School Girls*). In 1902 another translation of the same book by another translator was published in book form. Extracts from *Oliver Twist* and the earlier chapters of *David Copperfield* were then published respectively in a newspaper and in book form. In 1921 we find an extract from *A Child's History of England* among stories in *Akai Tori* (*The Red*

(1) Masako Shimizu & Noriko Yagita (ed.), *A Chronology of English and American Children's Books and Their Japanese Translations*, Tokyo, Kenkyusha, 1980. (『英米児童文学年表・翻訳年表』)

Bird), then a popular monthly for children of middle-class families. Though we lose track of retold stories of Dickens as we get closer to the present, it is not because there have been fewer such retold stories, but because there have been too many.

Needless to say, there are numerous retold versions for English and American children. Here again it would be a study of some interest to compare such English versions with Japanese ones in order to see which novels of Dickens have most frequently been retold in each country.

However, in spite of such abundance of retold versions, both in Japanese and in English, which seems to testify to the popularity of Dickens among children readers, mention is relatively scarce of this great novelist in books on children's literature in England. It is true that, except for a few occasions, Dickens did not intend his books primarily for children. However such books as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* were not intended for children, either. Though written for adults, these books have been admitted into children's book-shelves and welcomed there, making a deep impression on children's literature. In fact, in books on children's literature, more pages are devoted to such books than to any book of Dickens.

It is true that there are some references to Dickens. In his *Children's Books in England*, a classic in this field, Harvey Darton discusses *Holiday Romance*, which Dickens wrote for an American juvenile magazine.⁽²⁾ Gillian Avery refers to "Frauds on the Fairies," the essay in which Dickens makes a defence of fairy tales, criticizing Cruikshank's way of exploiting them as a means of propagandism.⁽³⁾ The same author elsewhere remarks that Dickens'

(2) Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England*, London, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966 (First Published in 1932), pp. 299-300.

(3) Gillian Avery, *Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories 1780-1900*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1965, p. 43.

Paul Dombey and Little Nell were partly responsible for the cult of childish innocence in the nineteenth century.⁽⁴⁾ However, such references are, on the whole, references made in passing, and by no means do they allude to the sum total of Dickens' influence on English children's literature. Has Dickens been unduly neglected, or is the scarcity of such references due to some intrinsic qualities of Dickens' books which do not entirely fit with in the framework of children's reading?

There is also another kind of omission in this regard. Although Dickens wrote two books for children, such books have been almost totally ignored, or at best treated perfunctorily, in biographies and critical works of Dickens. Even in such a book as Harry Stone's recently published *Dickens and the Invisible World*, in which the author argues that the fairy story forms the substructure of many of the Dickens' novels, no mention is made, say, of *The Magic Fishbone*,⁽⁵⁾ which Dickens wrote as a fairy story. Certainly such a short story may be "an offshoot of his topical journalism"⁽⁶⁾ as Stone puts it. Yet if, as Stone insists throughout his book, the fairy story is the force which integrates "social, psychological, symbolic and mythic truth,"⁽⁷⁾ then why was Dickens not enthusiastic enough to create something more than "an offshoot" when he had a chance to write a fairy story? With such a question in mind, I would like, in this essay, to attempt to evaluate, through considering his *Holiday Romance* and his ghost stories, the extent of Dickens' contribution to children's literature.

(4) Gillian Avery, *Childhood's Pattern: A Study of the Heroes and Heroines of Children's Fiction*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1975, p. 146.

(5) The second of the four stories which make up *Holiday Romance*.

(6) Harry Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making*, London, Macmillan, 1979, p. 142.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 146.

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Let me begin with *Holiday Romance*, which was serialized in *Our Young Folks*, an American juvenile magazine (and simultaneously in *All the Year Round*) in 1868. The four installments are each independent stories told by four alleged child narrators, who intend their stories, in some way or other, as a protest against adults who very badly understand children.

In the first story, the eight-year-old narrator tells about a mockwedding of himself and his six-and-a-half-year-old bride, a mock Court-Martial in which he is tried, and their final yielding to the relentless power of adults who will not let them indulge in such make-believe. When they have finally chosen to yield, one of the four children makes the following proposal:

“Let us, in these next Holidays now going to begin, throw our thoughts into something educational for the grown-up people, hinting to them how things ought to be. Let us veil our meaning under a mask of romance. . . .⁽⁸⁾”

There then follow three pieces of holiday romance.

Except for the second story, which hides its purpose more completely “under a mask of romance,” the stories are rather direct expression of children’s desire to usurp adults’ privileges or even to be revenged upon them. The third story, for instance, is a tale of a child’s revenge upon his Latin-Grammar-Master. The hero and narrator is a Captain of pirates, though he is not yet ten. He seizes the Latin-Grammar-Master’s ship, but instead of killing him, turns him adrift in a small boat, which reaches the island of cannibals. Although the child-captain rescues the master from the cannibals just in time, later he is compelled to hang him at the yard-arm because the master, far from repenting his sins, betrays the captain and tries to give him up to his family. The fourth story is about

(8) *All the Year Round*, January 25, 1868, p. 159.

a country where children are adults, and the adults children, and so the adults have to obey the children. The 'adults' impose strict rules of conduct on the 'children', punish them if they are not obedient, and, regardless of the feeling of the 'children', send them away to school when they are nuisances.

No doubt most children would share the feelings depicted in these stories—their innocent love, their hatred of teachers, and their resentment against grown-up-people's tyranny. They would also enjoy, as do even we grown-ups, some of the author's delightful devices, like the anthem sung by cannibals or such topsy-turvy things as adults not being allowed to sit up to supper except on their birthdays. But, on the whole, the stories are told, as Harvey Darton puts it, "with a voice and mind like those of Charles Dickens being playful in his fifty-sixth years"⁽⁹⁾ instead of the real voices of children. Grown-ups are ridiculed not through children's eyes but through grown ups'; anything like the blindness of childish emotions, and children's inability to locate and relate, is lacking from the narrators.

It is not that Dickens was unable to realize and represent children's feelings, their joy, fear, resentment, and sorrow. We have only to recall the childhood chapters of *David Copperfield* and *Paul Dombey*. There the author vividly represents the world as seen through a child's eyes and felt by a child's senses. What Dickens does at the same time in these novels, however, is to locate childhood as something past, something distant, and something lost. In the novels this does not affect their values in any way. The stories supposedly told by children, however, quite frequently jar as a result of this double viewpoint.

In the first story, for example, an eight-year-old boy says:

Nettie Ashford is my Bride. We were married in the right-hand closet in the corner of the dancing school where first we

(9) Darton, p. 297.

met, with a ring (a green one) from Wilkingwater's toyshop. I owed for it out of my pocket-money. When the rapturous ceremony was over, we all four went up the lane and let off a cannon (brought loaded in Bob Redforth's waistcoat-pocket) to announce our Nuptials.⁽¹⁰⁾

Such a ring and such a cannon might well accompany a childish ceremony, but to say that the ring is from Wilkingwater's shop or to add in parentheses that the cannon was carried in a waistcoat-pocket is to insinuate a sort of childishness which only an adult could define. It seems to me that the dullness of most of *Holiday Romance* is due to such insinuation.

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Of the four stories composing *Holiday Romance*, the second story is most genuinely a fairy tale and the most enjoyable. Probably for that reason, it was published separately under the title of *The Magic Fishbone*.

The story unfolds around the familiar theme of a wish-fulfilling device. Princess Alicia, the eldest daughter of a big royal family, is given by Fairy Grandmarina a magic fishbone which brings her whatever she wishes for, "provided she wishes for it at the right time." The King, her father, who is "under government" is always short of money and can hardly wait for a Quarter Day. The Queen, her mother, falls ill. Her little brothers cause no end of trouble by falling under the grate or down the stairs or by putting their hands through a pane of glass. Princess Alicia does her best to cope with each predicament with her loving heart and untiring diligence, although the King reminds her of the magic fishbone and even suggests she should ask for its help.

Fairy story though it is, *The Magic Fishbone* reads like a parody

(10) *All the Year Round*, p. 156.

of a fairy story. The royal couple are more like a Victorian lower-middle-class couple with a large family and a limited income than a King and Queen living in a magnificent palace. On his way to his office, for example, the King stops at a fishmonger's "to buy a pound and a half of salmon not too near the tail." He yearns for Quarter Day, for his children are growing out of their clothes. Princess Alicia, in her turn, wearing a big coarse apron, undertakes all the family drudgery by herself, nursing her sick mother and taking care of her brothers and sisters.

Gradually Princess Alicia realizes what the fairy meant by "the right time" when a wish is to be made to the magic fishbone. It is the time when one has done one's "very very best" and finds that even that is not enough. Therefore, when the King tells her he is at his wit's end about getting money, she thinks the right time has come and wishes it were quarter-day.

Immediately the King's salary comes rattling down the chimney. However, the Fairy Grandmarina makes an appearance as well. She scolds the King for having made his daughter apply to the fishbone so easily without following the example of his admirable daughter and trying harder. Thus, the theme of *Holiday Romance*, that of the moral superiority of children to adults, is formulated. At the same time, as with most of the fairy tales of the time, the story conveys a moral: the importance of doing one's very best.

The story ends with the happy wedding of Princess Alicia and Prince Certainpersonio. The Fairy Grandmarina transforms the princess and the things around her with her magic:

...the fairy tapped the Princess Alicia with her fan: and the smothering coarse apron flew away, and she appeared exquisitely dressed, like a little bride, with a wreath of orange-flowers and a silver veil. After that, the kitchen dresser changed of itself into a wardrobe, made of beautiful woods and gold and looking-glass, which was full of dresses of all sorts, all for her and all

exactly fitting her.⁽¹¹⁾

This scene echoes the Cinderella theme of the scullery maid transfigured into a princess. The curious thing is that in this story Princess Alicia does not need to be transfigured at all, for she *is* a princess from the beginning. The King and the Queen likened to a poor, lower-middle-class couple, and the princess to a maid toiling through drudgery, and then the elevation of the whole family to a blessed state by the tapping of a fairy's fan — all these are fairy-tale situations reduced to the prosaic workaday world, followed by a restoration to a fairy-world order. This curious process seems to me to be suggestive of a certain quality of Dickens' imagination. It is the sort of imagination that is inspired primarily by what is actual, what is visible and tangible in the everyday world, however fantastically he distorts it in the process of working on it. In other words, Dickens must have been not very comfortable with conventional fairies, princesses, kings and queens in the make-believe world of fairy tales.

In discussing Dickens' attitude to the fairy story, we should not forget that, for the long period since the end of the eighteenth century, there had been a general denunciation of the fairy tale as something injurious to children, the dominant trend in children's books being toward didactic tales. Although, as the appearance of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865 denotes, such a denunciation was on the wane, *The Magic Fishbone* retains some effect of this disapproval. The author is somehow self-conscious in introducing a fairy into his story; he stops, though for just a moment, to remind his readers that fairies are a quite different sort of creature from men:

“Listen. You are going to the office,” said the old lady.

It instantly flashed upon the king that she must be a fairy,

(11) Charles Dickens, *The Magic Fishbone*, London, Frederick Warne, n. d. unpagged.

or how could she know that?

Thackerday was likewise apologetic about the make-believe of a fairy tale in his delightful *The Rose and the Ring* (1855):

...but, you know, he was a Prince of a fairy tale, and they always have these wonderful things.⁽¹²⁾

Even the very earnestness of Kingsley's defense of fairies in *The Water-Babies* (1863)⁽¹³⁾ somehow reflects the force of a denunciation which must still have been strong.

It seems to me, however, that, for all this contemporary attitude toward fairy tales, Dickens' reluctance to use authentic fairy-tale figures was also due to his personality as a novelist. In order to confirm this view, I would like to survey his ghost stories. I choose the ghost stories because, like fairies, ghosts are supernatural beings; therefore, the way Dickens deals with them might offer some clues to our present problem.

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As we all know, Dickens popularized ghost stories through offering them as Christmas entertainments; he wrote them either as Christmas books or for Christmas issues of *All the Year Round*. Even in the first of the Dickensian Christmas festivities, that at Dingley Dell in *The Pickwick Papers*, we have an inset ghost story called "The Story of the Goblin Who Stole a Sexton." Grub, the sexton in this story, is the prototype of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, perhaps the most popular of Dickens' ghost stories.

One of the features of Dickens' ghost stories is the elaborate frames constructed round them, which enable us readers to take the

(12) William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Rose and the Ring* (*Christmas Books*. London, Oxford Univ. Press, n. d. p. 440).

(13) Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies*, New York, Garland Publishing, 1976, pp. 69-70.

stories in two ways. We can read them as stories of mystery in which some supernatural power is at work, but at the same time we can attribute the mystery or the visitation of supernatural beings to dreams, illusion, intoxication, or some unusual state of mind of the characters who see ghosts. In "The Bagman's Story," another short story incorporated in *The Pickwick Papers*, for example, the mysterious change of an old chair into an old man which takes place at midnight in Tom's bedroom is told ingeniously enough to wrap readers in a bizzare atmosphere of fantasy. However, in the end of the story the author makes the bagman, the narrator of the story, state that there were some who did not believe the story:

'Some of 'em said Tom invented it altogether; and others said he was drunk, and fancied it, and got hold of the wrong trousers by mistake before he went to bed.'⁽¹⁴⁾

There is even a hint that all the story was concocted by Tom and the bagman's uncle to conceal some truth which otherwise would have embarrassed the people involved:

'Tom said it all true?'

'Every word.'

'And your uncle?'

'Every letter.'

'They must have been very nice men, both of 'em;' said the dirty-faced man.

'Yes, they were,' replied the bagman; 'very nice men indeed.'⁽¹⁵⁾

In the same way, the apparition of Marley in *A Christmas Carol* and the spirits of the bells in *The Chimes* are attributable, respectively, to Scrooge's dream and Trotty's dream. Thus, as Harry

(14) Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1971, p. 191.

(15) *Ibid.*

Stone says in his discussion of *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens "attempts to rationalize or segregate the out-and-out supernatural."⁽¹⁶⁾

Dickens' own comments on ghosts are interesting in this regard. In his essay "A Christmas Tree," he says:

There is no end to the old houses, with resounding galleries, and dismal state-bedchambers, and haunted wings shut up for many years, through which we may ramble, with an agreeable creeping up our back, and encounter any number of ghosts, but (it is worthy of remark perhaps) reducible to a very few general types and classes; for, ghosts have little originality, and "walk" in a beaten track.⁽¹⁷⁾

Obviously, to Dickens, ghosts were creatures segregated from the ordinary workaday world and moulded into several set patterns whose role is to give us an "agreeable creeping up our back." While he was by no means half-hearted in creating the mysterious and the bizzare, ghosts are used, in many cases, as mere machinery to unfold his story effectively and ingeniously; it is hard to believe from such a passage as above that Dickens seriously believed in ghosts, or even gave a thought to any life after death. In his short story "The Haunted House," he identifies the stillness of night with that of death. The impassive state of sleep, he says, is "anticipative of that mysterious condition to which we are all tending":

... the stopped life, the broken threads of yesterday, the deserted seat, the closed book, the unfinished but abandoned occupation, all are images of Death.⁽¹⁸⁾

Such a statement leads us to assume that, to Dickens, there was only one real world, the world that is awake, with people bustling

(16) Stone, p. 90.

(17) Charles Dickens, *Christmas Stories*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1971, p. 14.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 229.

and jostling. It was necessary for him, we might say, to build elaborate frames around ghosts so that their appearance might not impair the sense of reality of such a world.

(5)

Although Dickens says ghosts have little originality, some of his ghosts are rather unusual in one respect: they appear *beforehand* instead of *behindhand*. In conventional ghost stories, ghosts, the spirits of dead persons, haunt the living for some particular motive, out of spite, jealousy, love or even gratitude. Not so the ghosts in stories like "The Signalman" or "To Be Read at Dusk." Here spectres haunt a signalman and an English lady to give them foreknowledge of an awful fate which lies in wait of them. The characters are terrified, but, finding no escape, finally fall victim to the fate. Since such a spectre is not the spirit of a dead person, it is not even a ghost in the strict sense of the word. Indeed, as a character in "To Be Read at Duck" remarks, "There's no ghost in that but something full as strange."⁽¹⁹⁾

The ghost that haunts Redlaw, the protagonist of *The Haunted Man*, is not an authentic ghost, either. It is Redlaw's other self, his *doppergänger*. We are also reminded of the episode of Jonas Chuzzlewit's murder of Tigg Montague in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for, here again, the protagonist is tormented not by the vision of the man he murdered, but by the vision of his own room, where he ought to have been at that time, and of himself, who ought to have been there.⁽²⁰⁾ It is true that the story is not intended as a ghost story and that instead of any "agreeable creeping," an intense, overwhelming fear is conveyed to us. Yet the word "ghost"

(19) Charles Dickens, *Selected Short Fiction*, Penguin Books, 1979, p. 68.

(20) Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1968, p. 727.

as used in such a realistic texture of the novel, seems to suggest the nature of those ghosts of Dickens that are endowed with more "originality." They are fantasies, it seems to me, born out of the intensity of the author's senses. The overwhelming force of presentiment which we often see depicted in his novels, and the theme of divided self, the final expression of which is John Jasper, might well crystallize in the mysterious warning spirits and *doppergängers*.

The impulse which calls for such crystallization seems to be at work throughout his novels in various ways, letting swarm spirits which are not exactly ghosts but something born out of the author's own intense emotions. Trees, building, furniture, and animals are all animated by such spirits; they feel and think like human beings. Thus, when he tells how old elm-trees "fell into a violent flurry, tossing their wild arms about, as if their late confidences were really too wicked for their peace of mind,"⁽²¹⁾ or how a dog suddenly got up "as if he had just remembered an appointment, and was off, at a round trot, to keep it,"⁽²²⁾ or how a nose of a lady "tended downwards towards her face, as in an invincible determination never to turn up at anything,"⁽²³⁾ what the author is doing is not evoking spirits inherent in things, but squeezing the exuberant energy of his own emotions into inanimate things. This is how the fantastic atmosphere that reigns through the Dickens world is created.

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A third feature detectable in Dickens' ghosts or, to be more

(21) Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1974, p. 5.

(22) Charles Dickens, *The Cricket on the Hearth* (*Christmas Books*, p. 165).

(23) Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1970, p. 7.

exact, in Dickens' concept of ghosts, is the gruesome imagery in which the dead are clothed. Unlike the other features I have examined thus far, this feature is something we can sense between the lines rather than illustrate explicitly by passages in which Dickens describes ghosts.

It can be sensed, for example, in a passage relating the childhood of David Copperfield:

There is something of a doleful air about that room to me, for Peggotty has told me . . . about my father's funeral, and the company having their black cloaks put on. One Sunday night my mother reads to Peggotty and me in there, how Lazarus was raised up from the dead. And I am so frightened that they are afterwards obliged to take me out of bed, and show me the quiet churchyard out of the bedroom window, with the dead all lying in their graves at rest, below the solemn moon.⁽²⁴⁾

Since the Lazarus referred to in the above passage is obviously the Lazarus who is the brother of Mary and Martha and whom Jesus raised from the dead, there is nothing particularly frightening in the Bible passage itself. If David is so frightened when the passage is read to him, his fear is probably mainly attributable to some association with the dead provoked in David, and such an association must have been part of the popular culture shared by the common people, including Dickens himself. Indeed, stories of "resurrectionists" engaged in digging up the dead from their graves in order to sell the bodies to anatomists were rampant in cheap periodicals of the time.⁽²⁵⁾ Obviously David was frightened because he imagined his father, now dead and buried in the churchyard, might be raised like Lazarus and might then return to the parlour

(24) *David Copperfield*, p. 14.

(25) For example, cf. George W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*. About the actual crimes of resurrectionists, cf. Richard D. Altick, *Victorian Studies in Scarlet*.

where they were, not as he was when he was alive, but as some repulsive figure already half-rotten in the grave.

In the same way, David is scared when, after his mother's marriage with Murdstone, he is told he has now got a papa:

“What do you think? You have got a Pa!”

I trembled, and turned white. Something — I don't know what, or how — connected with the grave in the churchyard, and the raising of the dead, seemed to strike me like an unwholesome wind.⁽²⁶⁾

Here again, David turns white, thinking of the coming back of his dead father in some repulsive form, instead of the arrival of a new father.

To take one more example, in “A Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second,” a short story originally incorporated in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, the climax is the scene in which two bloodhounds sniff at the patch of ground where a murdered boy is buried. The officer and his brother force away the murderer from the chair which he purposely placed upon the patch so that it might not in any way be disturbed:

After a struggle they got me quietly between them, and then, my God! I saw the angry dogs tearing at the earth and throwing it up into the air like water.⁽²⁷⁾

As in the extracts from *David Copperfield* above, Dickens is here writing with restraint, and refrains from inviting his readers to watch the more lurid scene which might possibly have followed. For all that, there is a lurking sense of luridness, drawing our attention not so much to the spirits of the dead as to their physical state.

(26) *David Copperfield*, p. 42.

(27) Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1966, p. 47.

Thus, after our survey of his ghost stories, we are impressed afresh by what we might call Dickens' sense of reality; we are led to assume that, to him, the visible, tangible world he lives in is the only real world, that to him pictures of bodily corruption are the first things that come to his mind when he thinks of the dead, and that the conception of any invisible world where spirits of the dead are stealthily living their own lives after their bodily death is something very alien to his sense of reality.

(7)

Most people would agree that it is in the region of fantasy that English children's literature has excelled. And since words like "fantasy" and "fairy tale" are frequently associated with the works of Dickens, it would not be amiss to consider them in connection with the fantastic trend in English children's literature.

The choice is rather arbitrary, but let us take *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as an example. The world of Alice and that of Dickens, it seems to me, have much in common, beyond sharing, of course, the cultural background of chap-books where such a story as *Captain Murderer*⁽²⁶⁾ must have been much favoured by children; apparently there is a link between the swelling of the captain's body and the helpless opening out of Alice's limbs. There are other similarities, too. Just as, in the Alice world, things are all topsy-turvey, deprived of their meanings in our everyday world, so Dickens, in his very efforts to represent such a world as he sees, smells, and touches, transfigures its surface details with the intensity of his senses, with the exuberant energy of his emotions, and with the magic of his language, as we have seen before. Besides, there is the same kind of nonsensical play on words in Dickens as we find abundantly in *Alice*. When we read in a Dickens' story

(28) Charles Dickens, "Nurse's Stories," *The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1973.

about a nurse who has "a mechanical power of reproducing scraps of current conversation for the delectation of the baby, with all the sense struck out of them, and all the nouns changed into the plural number,"⁽²⁹⁾ we feel as if we were reading *Alice*.

However, if we take a wider perspective, and look back on the history of children's literature from the viewpoint of the 1980's, it seems to me that Dickens' contribution is not necessarily to the field of fantasy. Twentieth-century English children's literature has produced more masterpieces in the field of what we call time fantasy than in any other field. Such books as Lucy Boston's *Children of Green Knowe* (1954), Phillipa Pearce's *Tom Midnight Garden* (1958), and Joan G. Robinson's *When Marnie Was There* (1967) instantly come to mind. These stories, constructed round the idea that there is a different kind of time outside the time which reigns in our daily life, in which our most precious memories are forever green and in which we can live them together with those people who share our values, are inseparable, it seems to me, from the long tradition of the English ghost story. The houses and the gardens in these stories are, in a way, haunted: Tom's midnight garden, with the spirit of the child Hatty and Tom himself: Green Knowe, with the ghosts of the children who once lived there, and the marsh in Robinson's story, with the ghost of Marnie.

However, if we ask whether Dickens, who was one of the most ingenious writers of ghost stories, contributed to the theme of time fantasy, the answer would definitely be negative, for these books are conceived, we might say, as a negation of the Dickensian sense of reality. If a gifted writer, or at least one type of gifted writer, of children's literature is a writer in whom the boundary between reality and dream remains blurred, one who can feel the existence of some invisible world beyond our visible world, then we must say, on the basis of what we have said in the previous

(29) Charles Dickens, *The Cricket on the Hearth* (*Christmas Books*, p. 168).

sections, that Dickens is not such a writer.

Dickensian qualities seem, rather, to have been successful in one writer of children's stories in quite different ways, and I want to conclude my essay by considering Leon Garfield. Those of his stories for children which are laid in eighteenth and nineteenth century England are really delightful pieces reviving Dickens in the present century. He has the same kind of animistic style as Dickens, though it is far easier to read. For instance:

Toward midnight the weather worsened; the wind rose to a tremendous pitch and every joist and plank in *The Red Lion* groaned with the effort of keeping it out. Outside the sign flew back and forth with a loud, monstrous banging, for all the world as if someone was pleading to be let in.⁽³⁰⁾

He indulges in the same kind of funny word play:

‘I don't want to shock you, Mrs Nelson,’ said Mr Stacey quietly . . . ‘and I wouldn't have you think me inhuman.’

He paused, and Mrs Nelson said encouragingly, ‘I wouldn't do that, Mr Stacey. I would call no man inhuman till he was dead, God rest his soul.’⁽³¹⁾

He offers the same kind of gruesome imagery:

Young as he was, Sam was not ignorant about hanging. Standing beside the road from London to Chichester were no less than three gibbets; and though they were mostly untenanted, he had seen once or twice, a pitiful tarred object suspended inside the iron cage, and his pa had told him what it was.

It had meant very little to him at the time as the object had looked more like an ill-treated doll than a human being; but

(30) Leon Garfield, *The Sound of Coaches*, Puffin Books, 1974, pp. 13-4.

(31) *Ibid.*, p. 93.

now, with Joe's words haunting his thoughts, the memory took on a horrible significance. What if one of them had been his other pa?⁽³²⁾

Although all the extracts above are taken from *The Sound of Coaches* (1974), *Smith* (1967) and *Devil in the Fog* (1966) are probably the most enjoyable of his books. The heritage of Dickens in English children's literature might best be understood by reading these stories.

(32) *Ibid.*, p. 40.

References

I. Works by Dickens

Here, all references are to *The Oxford Illustrated Dickens* (London, Oxford Univ. Press) unless otherwise indicated.

A. Stories:

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