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Dickens scholars are like Mrs Gamp, for they seem to rejoice equally in the anniversary of a lying-in or of a funeral. Thus over the years, in 1912, 1970, and, most recently, in 2012, they have pooled their resources to publish collections of essays, the best of which offer a lasting contribution to our understanding of the artistry of the author whose birth and death they commemorate, and some of which at best become reference points for future generations concerning the reception of Dickens and his works at a particular place and point in time. Into the latter category might fall the *Dickens Souvenir of 1912*, with its gorgeous illustrations, poems by Bret Harte and Algernon Swinburne, and its eulogistic essays, anecdotal and factual by turns. Into the former, it is now reasonable to claim, fall some of the pieces in *Dickens' Centennial Essays* edited by Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius and many of those in *Dickens 1970*, edited by Michael Slater. It is naturally too early to predict into which of these categories the present volume will fall but it would not be rash to claim that it is set fair to fulfill both sets of criteria. Certainly, if one compares it for a moment to two other volumes of collected essays occasioned by the bicentenary celebrations of Dickens's birth, one can say that it is simultaneously more wide-ranging in scope than the twenty-two pieces presented in Hazel Mackenzie and Ben Winyard's *Charles Dickens and the Mid-Victorian Press, 1850–1870* and yet more focused and less diffuse than the nine lengthy items commissioned by Juliet John for the English Association's special edition of *Essays and Studies* for 2012, *Dickens and Modernity*.¹ In almost every one of the fourteen compact and pithy essays in *Dickens in Japan*, there is, as Philip Larkin says in praise of Hardy's poems, 'a little spinal cord of thought and each has a [...] tune of its own.'² Fourteen is perhaps a significant total, stopping modestly short of the number that might have suggested an ambition to embrace the whole of Dickens's output as a novelist, but indicative of the aspiration.

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The arrangement of the essays is logical: the first eight examine major works, taken in roughly chronological order, and the final six suggest and explore themes and motifs selectively across the Dickens canon, and include forays into the journalism and Dickens's achievements as a theatrical impresario. Taking the last of the essays in the first section first (for no other reason than that the work it discusses, *Edwin Drood*, is currently the subject of an interesting new online project, www.droodinquiry.com) we can observe how Fumie Tamai carefully aligns a reading of violence, class, race and education in the novel with the media response (including that of *All the Year Round*) to the stormy, long delayed passage of the Representation of the People Act of 1867. This involves working on inferences and hints in the text, as *Drood* is rightly described as depicting a 'curiously static world' (105), but Tamai is able to demonstrate in her discussion of the relationship between Durdles and the inimitable Deputy that the novel raises 'the possibility of containing working class violence and maintaining social order through education' even as, more ambivalently, it draws on an elements of xenophobia and racial stereotyping detectable in national life and public debate in the 1860s to show how people 'can unite beyond class boundaries' in response to a perceived threat from outside. This firmly historicist reading is interesting for the additional light it sheds on the controversy over the dating of the action of the novel, which scholarly debate has tended to settle as occurring in the early 1840s: here it is presented, without doubt, as reflective of and constituted by the ideology of the late 1860s.

Having begun *in media res*, let us work backwards rather than forwards. The nucleus of Akiko Takei's essay on *Great Expectations* and its distinctive contribution to study of that novel is its focus on the childhood and marriage of Joe, and his status—usefully placed here in parallel with that of Pip—as victim of various forms of abuse and as a sufferer from trauma. The question then becomes one of the extent to which both he and Pip are able to resist the perpetuation of a pathological mentality, either as victims or abusers themselves, in adulthood. 'The attitude of Joe and Pip towards Mrs Joe and Estella' respectively, Takei suggests, in the light of current psychological thinking, 'might be characterized as "feminine"' (91). This is linked with the way in which each passively tolerates the violent and coercive behaviour of others, and represses such tendencies in themselves, even if Pip—by virtue of his narratorial role—is able to articulate his anger (93, 97). Here the discussion steers towards territory covered by Douglas Brooks in his fine chapter on the novel in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, which, if engaged with, might have resulted in an interesting correlation of the essay's

insightful Joe/Pip parallel with the famous narrative and aesthetic problem of how to end the novel. Here different kinds of closure, in terms of literary and trauma theory, converge. Takei ventures that the so-called Piccadilly ending ‘much better illustrates Dickens’s intention of bringing to an end the cycle of childhood abuse’ (102). The inference is that married Pip, the narrating voice of the final version of the novel, is unhappy because the cycle has not been interrupted, and remains prone to acts of passive aggression. This speculation—assisted, if I am not mistaken, by Pip’s remarkable assertion that ‘years after[]’ the dinner at Jaggers’ he made a ‘dreadful likeness’ of the murdereress Molly by forcing a woman (Estella?) with ‘flowing hair, to pass behind a bowl of flaming spirits in a dark room’—deserves to be pursued further.

The pursuit of speculations and investigation of hypotheses is at the heart of the best literary criticism. It is also what detectives do when exploring a crime scene, where the smallest pieces of evidence can help piece together the hidden shape and structure of a major puzzle. Toru Sasaki’s expert unpicking of ‘The Connective in *Dombey and Son*,’ while appearing initially to present two rather disconnected phases of discussion, is alive to the richness of such analogies, and suggests that Dickens is also. However, in Dickens, the argument runs, detection is an uncovering of human connectedness which must be made in company: its tendencies are gregarious and social, rather than solitary and hermeneutic (84). To demonstrate how the two sections of the essay may be grafted into a successful whole, one of the smallest admissible pieces of evidence—the word ‘and’ as it features in the novel’s title and elsewhere—is wittily pursued at the level of both plot and semantic field, to the point where we concede with surprise how frequently in *Dombey and Son* ‘the linguistic act of conjunction plays out the drama of making social connections’ (86). This permits a new interpretation of Walter’s toast to ‘Dombey—and Son—and Daughter!’ in Chapter 4 as a proleptic revelation of the outcome of his own ‘Whittingtonian dream’ (88), the discovery of which brings critic and reader into sly Dickensian communion.

Essays by David Chandler and Yumiko Hirono engage significantly with *A Christmas Carol* and for efficiency can be considered together, though to do so poses the same kind of problems concerning the protean nature of so seminal a text that Chandler’s analysis intelligently exposes: the two essays are not necessarily addressing the same *Carol*. Chandler’s is specifically concerned with the translation or adaptation of Dickens’s first Christmas book into works of musical theatre, whether for stage or the small screen. Aware, perhaps, that, as James Naremore astutely asserts, ‘the very subject of adaptation has constituted one of the most jejune areas of scholarly writing,’³ Chandler turns to

Jacques Attali's insightful distinction between the 'economy of representation' giving rise to the individual performance of an adapted work, and that which he claims has succeeded it, the 'economy of repetition,' associated with modern mass production. This allows Chandler to navigate us through an account, brimming with new information, of 'four musical *Carols* that represent significant moments in the evolution of the genre' between 1936 and 1963 (63, 65). I must confess I am unsure whether Attali's placing of reproduction and repetition into linear, periodized progression is quite sufficient to the complexities of commercial and artistic imperative at work during the twentieth century, where each seems to subsume the other in something more like the kind of cyclical model proposed by art historians. Perhaps a glance at Walter Benjamin's equally classic account of 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936) would allow us to invoke the magical aura of the original text, or at least ask what remains of it during 'one of the most commercialized chapters in Dickens's cultural afterlife'?

Time and authenticity seem to be at stake here, and these are exactly what preoccupy Yumiko Hirono in her close reading of the handling of duration in the original *Carol*, and discrepancies which both reader and Scrooge himself observe in the amount of time he has slept. These are carefully tracked through each of the stages of Scrooge's dream, with Hirono pointing out the various ways in which they can be rationalized with reference to ideas concerning dream experience and time travel posited by Dostoyevsky, H. W. Wells and Dickens himself, who—as Tomoya Watanabe elaborates later in the volume—was a keen observer of the relationship between these different forms of consciousness (160). It is indicative of the kinds of creative dialectic that the chapters of *Dickens in Japan* provoke that one would wish to synthesise Watanabe's 'sleep-waking' and Hirono's 'lucid dream' with respect to Scrooge's experience. What is clear from the essay, however, is that Dickens's elasticizing of time in the *Carol* and his placing of it in correlation with memory and duration playfully anticipates some of the serious work on these topics later carried out by Henri Bergson and, specifically in the field of narrative discourse, by Gérard Genette. Hirono's conclusion that the end of the tale 'can be regarded as a bold counterargument against fatalistic views' (59) dovetails neatly with the implication of Bergson's *Time and Free Will* (1889).

So, just as Hirono's essay permits the reader to wonder whether Dickens read Bergson, Yasuhiko Matsumoto begins his with the arresting claim that '[b]eyond any doubt, Dickens had read Freud' (31). Or at least, that the 'textual and thematic resemblance[s]' between Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and episodes in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Our Mutual Friend* are 'striking' (31), because 'all three address the

same object—death’ (45). In the first novel, the ‘slowness of [Nell’s] death enables her to die in the most desirable manner,’ and at a place and time of her own choosing, rather than succumbing to perils that might bring that aim too soon, by what Freud calls ‘a kind of short-circuit’ (37), whereas in the later work, Betty Higden can be seen controlling the timing of her own peaceful demise, ‘with the dignity of an independent woman’ (39). Here is fatalism with a vengeance, yet somehow it is not inconsistent with the principles of life and desire found at the close of the *Christmas Carol*; Matsumoto shows how such contrary impulses are contained in the Freudian account of the ‘fort-da’ game, in which the throw and recall of a reel on a string are interpreted ‘as the child’s symbolic mastery over a disturbing situation’ during the absence of its mother (38). However, patterns of this kind are of such a singular or binary nature that it would be hard for many stories not to map to them, and it is perhaps when there is a density of semantic patterning reinforcing the thematic one that structuralist arguments of this kind hold greatest force. Matsumoto comes closest to doing this when he quotes tellingly Dickens’s grim pun on ‘The End’ from the final lines of *Our Mutual Friend* (46); perhaps the fact these are placed in a passage oddly entitled ‘Postscript in Lieu of a Preface’ has significance in Freudian and fort-da terms?

Readers of Midori Niino’s exploration of Dickensian realism in *Oliver Twist* will already have encountered the Freudian death wish in the passage quoted from that novel which describes Oliver’s desire that ‘he could be laid in a calm and lasting sleep in the churchyard ground’: this is before he has encountered the multiplicity of ‘ways of living’ in the vast city of London, a microcosm of life itself. Niino is interested in the indeed fascinating ‘process by which Dickens gropes for realism’ in this transitional novel of a transitional decade in the development of the English novel (17, 16).⁴ Part of Dickens’s art, it would seem, involves both drawing lines (drawing lines of demarcation between areas of his fictional world) and smudging them (blurring and ironizing such clear cut distinctions). Next, Niino calls our attention to the way in which Dickensian characters on both sides of a simple boundary like ‘good’ and ‘evil’ can be seen equally to project multiple personae: both Fagin and Nancy are adept at role play, and are conscious of their own melodramatic propensities. The novel abounds in episodes of spying, voyeurism and the power of others’ eyes—what the film critics call scopophilia—and this is accordingly related to the various ways in which both characters and author are, through the action of the plot, importantly engaged in trying to probe and penetrate the realities of human identity. Niino is perhaps charitable but nonetheless accurate in claiming that in the writing of the novel, the author can be seen ‘struggl[ing] forever to demarcate the borders’

of integrated identity (24) and remains fundamentally ‘ambivalent’ about characterization. This is put down to the young author’s only gradual realization of the ‘indefinable’ and ‘unknowable’ energy which is the source of ‘human vigour’ (28, 29): an anticipation, Niino concludes, of his own later, ‘darker novels’ but also presumably of Conradian inscrutability, no less than of Freudian principles.

It is interesting to consider the critical consensus that reads Dickens’s works as becoming progressively darker, in the light of Yasuki Kihara’s opening essay on the novel with which Dickens began, *The Pickwick Papers*. The latter of course commences, as the notes remind us, with a parody of a creation myth, and accordingly Kihara’s perceptive discussion combines forms of myth-based, structuralist criticism with an elucidation of the aesthetic—grotesque, Gothic, ‘metropolitan picaresque’ as different commentators would have it—at work in Dickens’s descriptions of the underworld in this groundbreaking novel. The result is an interesting challenge to the Late Dickens=Dark Dickens orthodoxy. Kihara focuses on two kinds of tour guide presented in the novel: narrators of interpolated tales, and lowlife companions, who are residents of ‘the chaotic world of darkness’, the so-called ‘Hermes world’ of the novel, which abounds in tricksters, rogues and fools (2) and those who inhabit and transgress the threshold between dark and light (12). Kihara’s account of liminality here prefigures Niino’s identification of an ‘ambivalence’ and blurring of boundaries in Dickensian fiction, all the more valuable because it draws our attention to the fundamental difficulty for the literary artist in canvassing both Christian parallels and Classical allegories in the same work, however parodically. Some conflicts in perspective and shading—a conflicted chiaroscuro—are bound to ensue.

It would be natural, in passing now to consider the second, thematically-organised section of *Dickens in Japan*, to maintain the pictorial and aesthetic theme with an account of Nanako Konoshima’s persuasive call for renewed consideration of the interrelationship between Dickens and genre painting. However, before doing so, I hope I will be granted leeway to give pride of place to Takao Saijo’s compilation of and commentary on Dickens’s amateur theatricals, for the entirely subjective but perfectly cogent reason that I have already found reason to consult its contents for a piece of research (into Dickens’s editing of *Household Words* during 1850–51). Few facets of the writer’s life illustrate Chesterton’s dictum that ‘all who love Dickens have a strange sense that he is really inexhaustible’⁵ better than his involvement with the theatre, on both sides of the curtain. Yet the differing exigencies of both literary criticism and literary biography, which mean we come across Dickens’s dramatic work tangentially, have hitherto made it difficult to

assess that engagement whole. For this reason, Saijo's central schedule of Dickens's amateur theatricals (145–50) is of considerable value to any scholar seeking either to trace the overall contours of Dickens's activities as impresario and actor-manager, or to one with an interest in a specific production and its convection currents. And given that the scripts and librettos themselves represent a body of texts with which the writer engaged at a level well beyond mere reading, those interested in questions of literary influence and what might be called the Dickens imaginary, may do well to take note of the corpus, however heterogeneous it may appear. This useful listing thus finishes with a note of the editions, so far as can be ascertained, of the pieces performed by Dickens and his associates, with the character(s) he played, and notes concerning any surviving acting copies.

We may return now to Dickens and genre painting, and Konoshima's convincing case that more critical weight needs to be given to the contribution of 'genre' (as opposed to 'narrative') painting to the development of Dickens's visual imagination, and hence his methodology in various important passages of his writings. This is another facet, clearly, of Chesterton's inexhaustible artist, and one which is outlined here with considerable tact and expertise. It is interesting to see how the Dutch influence (particularly that of the Van Ostades, Adriaen and Isaak) comes into Dickens refracted through David Wilkie, on the one hand, and through the vision of illustrators such as 'Phiz' on the other, particularly where Konoshima is able to suggest a more radical use on the writer's part than on that of the graphic artists, of the everyday situations depicted (131–35). One wonders how Dickens's consciously ekphrastic description of the 'Quaint Dutch tiles' surrounding Scrooge's fireplace like the images on Achilles' shield, quoted by Hirono (51), can be aligned with Konoshima's broader thesis.

Dickens's realism and the Dickens aesthetic are inexorably brought into conversation by *Dickens in Japan*, and after numerous examples of critics commenting on how his descriptions of characters' states of altered consciousness contribute to a complex but distinctive artistic vision, we come to Tomoya Watanabe's summative analysis of how in Dickens 'sleep-waking states enable us to see things which contain vital information' because he fundamentally connects such states 'with his own creative method' (165). At its centre is a fascinating reading of R. W. Buss's much-reproduced picture, 'Dickens's Dream,' connected through a careful selection of contemporary accounts of the writer's working practices, showing how he sought to compose his fictions in a kind of 'dreamland' (Charley Dickens's phrase). 'For Dickens,' Watanabe concludes, 'understanding sleep-waking meant understanding himself' (171): a process no doubt

necessitating a form of out-of-body projection such as that alluded to in the late ‘Uncommercial’ essay, titled ‘A Fly-Leaf in a Life,’ where the narrator confesses that he is ‘accustomed to observe myself as curiously as though I were another man.’⁶

This habit of curious observation, inward and outward, and the varying kinds of reaction it provokes—from pity to disgust—is a key Dickensian donnée, informing his depiction of the kinds of deviance from Victorian social norms considered in the three ambitiously wide-ranging essays which conclude *Dickens in Japan*. First, Mitsuha Matsuoka considers the ‘mechanisms of memory, love and madness’ as they feature in Dickens’s fiction, early and late; this is ultimately, in spite of the title, less of an exploration of Blakean contraries, than an assured exposition of how, time and again, ‘[m]emory of their childhood is the master key that opens the doors to the hearts of emotionally imprisoned adults’ in Dickens (180). This much is carried, but space precludes examination of the kinds of question that tend to spring from this discovery as they also do from the best analyses of that most Dickensian of twentieth-century narratives, *Citizen Kane*: how is the ‘Rosebud’ of childhood memory to be integrated into the teleology of ‘solutions’ that the novel or film as vehicle of social criticism so powerfully projects? Next, Aya Yatsugi boldly undertakes to examine how Dickens ‘uneasily and unsettlingly connects women and violent resistance throughout his novels’ (191), in ways that repeatedly challenge the powerful Victorian enshrinement of patriarchal codes. The unease and the unsettling come across as much as deficiencies as strengths in the writing, much as Niino detected a struggling and a groping in Dickens’s search for satisfactory forms of realism in *Oliver Twist*: only here, Yatsugi is by no means confident that Dickens overcomes, even by the end of his writing career, certain inherent contradictions in his representation of female characters confronted by contemporary social pressures. Just as these characters (Agnes, Rosa, Esther, Miss Wade, Miss Havisham, Mrs. Joe, and others) are psychologically split between their obsession with marriage and the realities of their social position,’ Yatsugi considers, ‘Dickens seems to be conflicted as well’ (202).

As with madmen, lovers and women, so too with the homeless, tramping folk: Dickens’s life-drawing and his powers of identification seem inexhaustible, but the quality of the ‘inexhaustion’ (to coin another name for perpetual motion) is ambivalent, because opposing forces are continuously in play. Takanobu Tanaka’s closing contribution to the volume interestingly aligns Dickens’s artistic outlook with contradictions in Victorian society itself, which in its reactions to tramps and vagrants, evinced ‘both pity and a desire to control’ (207). Traversing an impressive range of late Victorian texts, both fictional

and journalistic, Dickensian and otherwise, Tanaka explores how the figure of the tramp in literature came to embody, in sublimated form, a number of social anxieties over homosexuality, race, employability and so forth. Vagrants became ‘mirrors reflecting the desires of those bound to permanent settlement,’ and carried a multifaceted image that eventually ‘transitioned toward its final apotheosis in the new medium of the screen’ (218): becoming Citizen Chaplin, as it were, rather than Citizen Kane.

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Taken as a group the fourteen papers collected in the present volume certainly realize the editors’ ‘hope [...] to demonstrate the high standard of Dickens studies in Japan.’ In or out of sequence, the essays achieve this individually, but cumulatively, they do considerably more, through their capacity to reinforce and interrogate each other, as the best scholarship does. The advanced reader will find not only answers here to their preliminary questions, but a whole series of further questions advanced in the gaps between answers. The volume itself is very handsomely produced, well indexed, and generously illustrated with high-definition images: a list of these, indeed, for later reference, would have proved useful.

Notes

- 1 Buckingham: University of Buckingham Press, 2013; Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012.
- 2 Philip Larkin, ‘The Poetry of Hardy,’ in *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955–1982* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), pp. 175–176.
- 3 James Naremore, ed., *Film Adaptation* (London: Athlone Press, 2000), Introduction, p. 1.
- 4 A similar line of enquiry underwrites J. Hillis Miller’s ‘The Fiction of Realism: *Sketches by Boz*, *Oliver Twist*, and Cruikshank’s Illustrations’ in Dickens’ *Centennial Essays*, mentioned above, pp. 85–153.
- 5 *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens* (London: J. M. Dent, 1911), p. xx.
- 6 ‘New Uncommercial Samples. By Charles Dickens. A Fly-Leaf in a Life,’ *All the Year Round* NS I (22 May 1869), p. 589.