

DICKENS' SELF-CREATED LITERARY BRAND IN NOVELS AND ADAPTATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

Because Charles Dickens' literature has become a part of popular culture, Lyn Pykett wrote that modern critics must contend with "the Dickens industry." This industry includes Dickens's original canon, his novels, adaptations, plagiarisms, and works similar to his, which are referred to as "Dickensian." The adjective "Dickensian" now describes the author's literary brand, which includes Dickens' texts, his image and likeness, as well as the persona he used in his prefaces, letters, and public appearances. While Pykett mentions the modern Dickens industry, this dissertation primarily focuses on Dickens' works during his lifetime, when Dickens had to contend with other people, such as theatre adapters, publishers, and pirates, for control over the Dickens industry in the nineteenth century. In this dissertation, I argue that Dickens intentionally constructed the Dickensian literary brand to confront plagiarists of his works and control his texts in several media. My overarching question is: to what extent and in what way did Dickens control his literary brand? To answer this question, I outline five key strategies that Dickens used to gain control over his brand: first, he sought to defeat plagiarists of his literature in head-on confrontations, which did not work well for Dickens; second, Dickens sought to build a connection with readers, to make them feel as though he was their friend; third, he sought to dominate his publishers and negotiate contracts so that they would increasingly favour himself; fourth, Dickens rebranded himself in hopes of elevating his literary reputation; and, fifth, Dickens self-adapted his works for his Public Readings, using elements of his previous four strategies in the process. Each chapter in this dissertation, except the sixth, focuses on one of the aforementioned five strategies. The sixth chapter and conclusion consider Dickens' literary brand after his death, along with the broader implications of his efforts and others' attempts to replicate his successes. Throughout the dissertation, I demonstrate that Dickens was obsessed with control, especially when it came to his literature. Dickens was a pioneer in constructing a literary brand, and his strategies earned him this sought-after control of his literature while he lived.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter Lucia Jane Epp, who wasn't yet born when I started my doctoral studies but encouraged me to reach the finish line: you are worth all the sleepless nights since your smiles make my days so much better.

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## Introduction

From the outset of his career as a novelist, Charles Dickens demonstrated a need to control his literary position. After writing *Sketches by Boz* (1833-6), a series of short pieces based on people he saw in and around London, Dickens was asked by the publisher Chapman & Hall to provide words for Robert Seymour's illustrations in a monthly serial. In the original proposal, Seymour's art would dictate Dickens' contributions to this project. Dickens was interested in the money that Chapman & Hall offered him, but he rejected the notion of creating fiction based on whatever Seymour drew. As biographer Edgar Johnson writes, Dickens would only agree to the terms if "instead of *his* illustrating Seymour, as had been proposed, Seymour should illustrate *him*" (117). Dickens' confidence impressed William Hall, and he was hired to write the text for *The Pickwick Papers*. Seymour, however, was frustrated by Dickens assuming larger control of the serialization, and the illustrator and author clashed during a meeting with one another on April 17, 1836 (Johnson 137). Three days later, Seymour committed suicide, ending any future friction between the two. A new illustrator, Robert William Buss, was hired for the third issue of *Pickwick*, but his artwork was deemed inadequate, and Dickens formed a relationship with the third illustrator, Hablot Knight Browne, or Phiz, that Dickens found satisfactory, both in terms of the art produced and Dickens' ability to dictate what should be illustrated. Moreover, after Browne's hiring, *Pickwick* became a publishing sensation with the introduction of the character Sam Weller in the fourth issue, and its success grew from that point onward. In his first work as a serial writer, Dickens gained the control he desired despite his lack of literary clout, and he would slowly attain further financial and literary autonomy of his fiction as his career progressed.

Dickens would encounter more challenges to his autonomy over his literature. More difficult to deal with than Seymour for Dickens were international copyright laws and pirated adaptations of his works. Dickens could not copyright his books outside of the United Kingdom, which meant he missed potential profits, and his attempts to change copyright laws failed, as has been well documented.<sup>1</sup> The absence of strong domestic copyright laws in Britain also permitted playwrights to create stage adaptations of Dickens' serialized novels, even during the middle of serialization. In particular, Dickens' earliest novels, such as *Pickwick* and *Nicholas Nickleby*,

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1. K. J. Fielding, in "Dickens and International Copyright," details Dickens' copyright issues, while, more recently, Andrew Burke has analyzed Dickens' response to American copyright resistance in "Purloined Pleasures."

were adapted with impunity, much to Dickens' consternation. He watched a production of *Oliver Twist* in 1838 that, according to his friend John Forster, was so bad that "in the middle of the first scene [Dickens] laid himself down upon the floor in a corner of the box and never rose from it until the drop-scene fell" (1.100). These adaptations were other people's attempts to capitalize on Dickens' popularity and wrest control of the stories away from him, and Dickens responded to these pirated adaptations more aggressively and successfully than international copyright laws. In the May, 1839 issue of *Nickleby*, he uses the protagonist as a mouthpiece and attacks playwrights directly, for example, and Dickens later sanctioned official stage adaptations of his Christmas stories; in 1858, Dickens combated his pirates more radically with his famous Public Readings of his works, in effect self-adapting his literature, and taking further control of his literary brand.

In this dissertation, I study Dickens' methods and strategies for establishing his literary brand. My overarching question is: to what extent and in what way did Dickens control his literary brand? As arguably the most famous and successful English writer in the nineteenth century, Dickens has attained a literary stature and lasting appeal reserved for only a few authors, such as Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton. Consequently, part of analyzing Dickens' fiction involves confronting this imposing legacy. Lyn Pykett wrote in 2002 that modern Dickens critics "must inevitably engage with that complex historical phenomenon, the Dickens industry" (2). A century and a half after Dickens' death in 1870, his works have evolved from the monthly and weekly serializations they began as; novels such as *Pickwick* were published as single-volume books, and many of his texts, including *A Christmas Carol*, were adapted for the stage, made into musicals and later films, and inspired artists, shaping the multimedia Dickens industry, as Pykett calls it, which is often identified by the adjective "Dickensian." The industry has grown in scope beyond the control of any individual since Dickens' death, but during his life, he maintained a surprising degree of control over his works. In addition to permitting official stage adaptations, he had unusual financial autonomy for an author, edited his own periodical magazines, and performed Public Readings of his work. These methods, and his varying degrees of success in implementing them, form the basis of my discussion. Before I pursue Dickens' strategies in more detail, however, this introduction explains key terms I use, outlines Dickens' literary precedents, and discusses earlier critics' research on this topic. The introduction concludes with summaries of the dissertation's chapters.

In this dissertation, I use the terms "celebrity," "literary brand," "persona," "literary reputation," "rebranding," "Dickensian," "Comedic Dickensian," and "Social Dickensian." To start, Dickens was what we would now call a celebrity, and I should elaborate what I mean when I refer to him as such, since it relates to how he established a literary brand. Chris Rojek, in *Celebrity*, describes celebrity "as the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere" (10). Rojek's definition matches its current usage, and it applies to Dickens, who certainly attained public adulation, if not glamour as well.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the word's modern connotations began around the time Dickens was born. Prior to Dickens and some of his early predecessors, such as Lord Byron and Walter Scott, people were not seen as celebrities as we understand the word today. Instead, well-known people were referred to as "famous," as the editors of *Constructing Charisma* detail, and only a select few individuals in privileged positions, such as kings and other nobles, could attain enough widespread renown to become famous. The creation of new media and rising literacy made it possible for people from ordinary origins to gain fame. As Leo Braudy writes, "It is difficult to conceive of how any of the persons, places, and things that usually fit under those categories could have existed without the great expansion of media that began in the early nineteenth century" (165). Media such as newspapers, more efficient printing presses, and later photographs and film enabled knowledge of individuals to spread to wide audiences, enabling a situation in which anyone could gain glamour or notoriety in the public sphere. Dickens, furthermore, popularized new media, and he initially gained popularity through his monthly serializations. Celebrity is often seen as a lesser form of fame, but the two words are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as well-known figures such as Dickens are referred to as both famous and a celebrity.

Dickens became a celebrity shortly after people could become celebrities, according to the modern understanding of the word, so he represents a unique case of celebrity intersecting with literature. Tom Mole, in *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, outlines his definition of a celebrity culture, consisting of a triad: "an industry, an individual and an audience" (3). According to Mole, the industry is what produces the materials—literary texts, in this instance—and distributes them; the individual is the celebrity, or Dickens in this case; the audience refers to the consumers of the celebrity, or Dickens' readers. Mole's presentation of this culture aligns with

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2. I would not describe Dickens' celebrity as glamorous, unlike Byron's, although Dickens was considered handsome in his youth. As Johnson notes, "numerous young ladies" in America wanted "locks of his hair" (369).

my research, as his triad includes each key aspect of Dickens' celebrity, and observing how these three parts interact with one another helps account for Dickens' success. For example, Dickens, unlike many writers before or after him, blurred the lines between industry and individual. The industry in literature is usually the publisher, as it prints the texts and distributes them to the audience. Later in his career, Dickens controlled the production of his texts since he serialized his novels in his own magazines, such as *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, so he became both the industry and the individual within this triad. Additionally, he diminished the distance between individual and audience through his reading tours, delivering his stories directly to listeners while transforming his body into the industry itself. Interestingly, Mole notes that the individual, or celebrity, becomes trapped in a feedback loop that affects his or her self-perception, "so that neither self nor celebrity can be conceptually quarantined from the other" (3). This notion supports my presentation of Dickens as someone intentionally guiding his path as a celebrity, as his growing fame and celebrity affected his fiction.

As a result of his celebrity, Dickens' name became a marketable commodity, which is how he attained a literary brand, the next term I define. A brand refers to any product that consumers can identify from its name. Using a brand can be highly effective, as each sale increases consumer familiarity, in turn increasing the viability of the brand's status and its sales. A literary brand, then, applies to the works of fictions, as well as their authors, that consumers can easily identify from names—either the title of the text or the author's name. Dickens' literary brand includes his name, and products related to his works, as well as those based on the author's physical likeness. I also argue that Dickens' literary brand includes his persona, the version of himself that he presented to the public in his prefaces, letters, formal events and other public appearances, such as his Public Readings. As I argue later, Dickens used his carefully constructed persona to market himself and defend his works, and people associated the persona with him and his literature, which is why I consider it part of his literary brand.

I would not say that all authors have literary brands; authors create literary brands once consumers will buy their books because they have their name, or belong to a particular series of books. An author's celebrity status can lead to the author becoming branded, but an author possessing a literary brand is not necessarily a celebrity. In this distinction, I agree with Judith Yaross Lee, whose research has focused on Mark Twain's brand management and discussed

branding.<sup>3</sup> The terms "celebrity" and "literary brand" differ because the former is what an author accumulates by gaining fame, while the latter is the commercialization of an author's name or pedigree, where it is used intentionally to boost sales of literature. The two are linked in that the brand can be a product of celebrity and the consumer familiarity associated with a celebrity's name. The two ideas can be more easily separated when looking at anonymous authors, since unnamed writers, or those writing under pseudonyms, can become branded. Walter Scott published anonymously, for instance, so his publishers marketed his novels after *Waverley* by stressing that they were by the same author, and the term "Author of *Waverley*" became the brand while Scott avoided the public fame of being a celebrity until his identity as the author was revealed.

In contrast to a literary brand, a literary reputation refers to the perception others have of authors and their brands. As Dickens' example illustrates, it is harder for authors to change their literary reputation than their brand. Dickens wrote the literature that makes up most of his brand, and he later published these works, so he gained considerable control over his brand; on the other hand, he could not always predict, much less affect, what people thought about him or his writing. Readers and literary scholars, not Dickens, have determined his literary reputation, and Dickens cared deeply about how others perceived both him and his literature. Consequently, literary reputation also relates to Dickens' legacy, how he has been perceived after his passing; this notion of legacy is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 6 and the conclusion. The distinction between literary brand and literary reputation is useful in illustrating what literary rebranding is. Rebranding occurs when a company or creator deliberately changes a product in some manner, such as creating a new logo or altering an advertising slogan, in order to attract a new market. In Dickens' case, he sought to make his brand more dignified and professional in order to attract more prestigious audiences. His efforts to change his brand from Boz to Dickens succeeded to an astonishing extent, considering how frequently people referred to him as Boz at the start of his career and how modern readers may not even know him by any name other than Charles Dickens. However, while Dickens' rebranding changed the name of his literary brand, it had less of an impact on his literary reputation, since readers still associated him with his older Boz works, which they already liked or did not.

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3. Lee writes that brands have three functions: "*denotation*, by naming a good or service or image; *differentiation*, by distinguishing one from another; and, *connotation*, by symbolizing a set of associated ideas" (28).

Nonetheless, Dickens' literary brand grew famous enough that people now use the adjective "Dickensian" in association with his works and works resembling his. This adjective requires further consideration, as "Dickensian" has become the catchword for Dickens' literary brand. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes "Dickensian" as something "pertaining to Dickens or his style; marked by conditions or features resembling those described by Dickens," and the *OED* attributes the first use of the word to William Lewer in 1881, after Dickens' death. "Dickensian" was preceded by similar adjectives used in Dickens' lifetime, such as "Dickenesque" in 1856 and "Dickensy" in 1855,<sup>4</sup> but "Dickensian" has emerged as the primary adjective used to describe textual similarities to Dickens' works and style. The definition of "Dickensian," however, fails to recognize the complexity of the adjective, since Dickens' large body of works conveys multiple meanings. Accordingly, a work can be Dickensian for more than one reason. For instance, John Gardiner, in an article discussing the term "Dickensian," reflects on the word's complications, and he notes how it can take on light-hearted aspects or refer to the darker sides of society which Dickens depicted in his novels (230). Gardiner traces how the darker connotations of "Dickensian" have dominated both recent perceptions of the term and popular adaptations of Dickens' novels. I agree with the trends that Gardiner identifies and his observations that the term is complicated, but I prefer to identify the two major aspects of Dickens' writing as "Comedic Dickensian" and "Social Dickensian." "Comedic Dickensian" refers to the light-hearted elements in his writing, such as his narratives' often-contrived happy endings, and humorous prose. "Social Dickensian," on the other hand, pertains to Dickens' criticism of the darker, flawed aspects of society, seen in his more complicated later novels such as *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*.

Dickens was not the first author famous enough to gain an adjective that refers to his literary works, nor the first to develop a literary brand. In his lifetime, two clear precedents of authorial celebrity were set by Lord Byron and Walter Scott. The two authors knew each other and have been the subjects of multiple comparisons, due to their contrasting personalities. Byron's and Scott's responses to their celebrity, similarly, reflect these contrasts. Byron embraced his fame, while Scott published most of his novels anonymously. Byron died in 1824, and Scott in 1832, so neither wrote contemporaneously with Dickens. Dickens thus filled in a vacuum of British

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4. The *OED* attributes the first use of "Dickensesque" to an 1856 London newspaper review and "Dickensy" to an 1855 review in a Virginia newspaper.

literary celebrity when he emerged with *Pickwick* in the mid-1830s. Dickens did not use either Byron or Scott as a clear model of celebrity, instead developing a new form of literary branding, along with new techniques for advancing his career. Nonetheless, Dickens mimicked aspects of both Byron and Scott as celebrities.

Byron is frequently cited as one of the first modern celebrities, and he is known both for his scandalous behaviour and blurring the distinction between author and fiction. Early in his career, Byron gained notoriety for his scandals, which Clara Tuite discusses in depth in *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity*. She describes scandalous celebrity as "a new form of fame that mediates between notoriety and older forms of heroic fame within Regency public culture" (xiv-xv). As Rojek notes, notoriety leads to celebrity, similar to how glamour does, but Byron obtained both traditional and scandalous fame, Tuite argues, because of his good looks and popular poetry in addition to his notorious behaviour. His beauty and notoriety formed a dangerous combination which added to his poetry's appeal, since his poems feature speakers that can be interpreted as substitutes for Byron. Scholars often quote Byron for saying, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous" (qtd. in Tuite 8). His description of his newfound fame makes it sound happenstance, but Stephen Minta argues it was deliberate. He writes that Byron's fame was "a result that had been both carefully prepared and tantalizingly manipulated" (124). I agree, and other critics echo this sentiment. Mole writes, "Byron was cannily complicit in propagating his own image" (81). He let engravers spread his image, and his poetry invites the readers to imagine that they can learn more about him through his verse, as many critics observe. Byron became a celebrity, leading people to want to know more about him, and he wrote poetry which seemed to enable them to fulfill that desire. In this sense, Byron cultivated himself, his appearance as much as his name, into a brand. Similar to "Dickensian," the adjective "Byronic" refers to something, usually a hero, that resembles Byron or his poetry. The word "Byronic" is a testament to how Byron created consumer interest in himself as a celebrity by writing poetry that built on people's existing curiosity of him.

Scott's celebrity as a writer, especially as a novelist, contrasts Byron's, since Scott published his novels anonymously and used literary branding for more explicitly mercantile reasons. The two authors' respective responses to their celebrity are unsurprising, since Byron and Scott's personalities were studies in contrasts. A. O. J. Cockshut observes, "Scott was genial, kindly, modest in life, where Byron was rude, reckless, unpredictable" (28). Scott's modesty may be one

reason he published his novels anonymously, or he may have done so to avoid tarnishing his name as a poet since his poetry was widely celebrated before he became a novelist. Scott's novels were wildly popular when they were first published, and many of his novels were adapted into plays, as Dickens' novels were years later. However, the popularity of Scott's texts did not rely as heavily on public interest in their author as Byron's poems did, and Scott's supposed anonymity created intrigue. Cockshut writes, "Some people knew and many guessed that Scott was the author, but there was always enough mystery and speculation to keep public interest in the question alive" (18). The mystique of "the author of *Waverley*" had an appeal of its own, akin to the appeal of getting closer to Byron through reading his poems; reading Scott's anonymous works would have given his first readers a sense that they were getting closer to the identity of their author. At the same time, publishing anonymously emphasized the pains that Scott took to avoid scandal, unlike Byron. Scott, for his part, showed initiative in his monetary pursuits and ability to take advantage of his literary status. His lack of financial resources, however, dictated his later literary decisions. As Scott wrote in his journal on April 17, 1829, "My poverty but not my will consents."<sup>5</sup> Although his works were popular, he spent his money poorly, so he needed to take advantage of his fame, even if he did not wish to. Most importantly, Scott demonstrated how literary works could create a celebrity, regardless of whether or not the author was known in the public sphere. Scott was an early example of an author attempting to make use of this celebrity to sell novels, but his ability to parlay his fame into income would be later outclassed by Dickens.

Dickens, as I mentioned, developed a different form of celebrity than these two predecessors. His immense popularity made him famous like Byron, but Dickens' novels did not function as gateways into learning more about their author to the same extent. While *David Copperfield* reflects Dickens' early childhood, his reading audience was unaware of this connection at the time of serialization. Instead, Dickens increasingly used his prefaces as a means to communicate directly to his readers, and he kept his literature relatively detached from his private life, unlike Byron. Additionally, Dickens did not develop a scandalous celebrity, instead presenting himself more like an embodiment of the domestic values that his works praised. After his separation from his wife Catherine in 1858, Dickens was in danger of scandal, as much for separating as for his apparent hypocrisy, but he attempted to mitigate it by publishing the rationale for his

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5. This entry appears in Volume 2 of his journals.

separation. His statement possibly generated further scandal, but his most ardent supporters disregarded his personal problems, arguably because Dickens' personal life had little to do with why they read his novels. In this sense, Dickens differed from Byron, as the latter's personal life had a more substantial impact on the reception of his literature.

Like Scott, Dickens began as an anonymous novelist, since he used the pseudonym Boz, but Dickens abandoned pretences of anonymity much earlier into his career as a novelist, publishing the complete volume of *Pickwick* and every novel after *Oliver Twist* under his birth name. Dickens' air of respectability, although later tarnished by his separation from his wife, echoes the respectability Scott projected. Dickens was highly concerned with his finances, as was Scott, but Dickens controlled his brand more directly than Scott did by establishing his own magazines and performing the Public Readings, the latter of which would have likely been unimaginable for Scott, due to such practices being frowned upon at the time. In contrast to Scott, Dickens managed his finances well and was not forced to write for money at the end of his life. For these and other reasons, such as a growing literary audience, Dickens earned more money than Scott as an author and had more control over his brand. He combined the public fame that Byron possessed with Scott's respectability, but he surpassed both of them in terms of controlling his literary brand.

Studies such as Berenson and Giloi's *Constructing Charisma* focus on Byron and other nineteenth-century authors and neglect discussing the sensational fame surrounding Dickens. My dissertation builds on previous research on Byron's and Scott's celebrity by considering Dickens from a similar context. In addition, I build on several key studies on Dickens, in particular, to decipher the Dickensian brand and its impact on modern media. I examine Dickens' celebrity and his understanding of it, which he used to develop his literary brand, and I break away from other research by focusing on his methods of controlling his literary brand. For example, my dissertation furthers ideas introduced by John in *Dickens and Mass Culture*, where she argues that Dickens achieved celebrity due to his understanding of himself as a producer of mass art; her book discusses Dickens' presence in mass culture broadly and does not focus on the impact of his self-adaptations. Other scholars, most notably Philip Collins, have studied Dickens' roles as an adapter and public speaker, but they do not put his Public Readings or control of adaptations into the context of Dickens and mass culture that John discusses. Another key researcher I rely on is

Robert L. Patten, whose *Charles Dickens and His Publishers*<sup>6</sup> covers Dickens' financial state and publisher relations extensively. *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves*, by Malcolm Andrews, is a key text on Dickens' Public Readings, which I build on by analyzing Dickens' performances in the context of mass culture and his literary brand. At times, Dickens' importance as a celebrity and famous author, which were instrumental in his development into a literary brand, has been understated by scholars. This dissertation shows how Dickens innovatively combined his self-understanding in mass culture, his control of his literary brand through adaptations, and his celebrity status to establish the Dickens industry.

In the dissertation, I consider five key strategies that Dickens used to cultivate and strengthen his literary brand. First, he sought to prevent literary theft of his literature in head-on confrontations, which did not work well for Dickens. Second, Dickens sought to build a connection with readers, to make them feel as though he was their friend. Third, he sought to dominate his publishers and negotiate contracts so that they would increasingly favour himself. Fourth, Dickens rebranded himself in hopes of boosting his literary reputation. And, fifth, Dickens self-adapted his works for his Public Readings, using elements of his previous four strategies in the process. To analyze how Dickens created and managed his literary brand, this dissertation's chapters develop an overview of Dickens' methods in roughly chronological order; moreover, each chapter, except the sixth, focuses on one of the five strategies I outlined above.

The first chapter focuses on how Dickens established his celebrity at the start of his career and how he responded to his earliest pirates, who made unlicensed adaptations of his works. At this stage in his career, he lacked the clout to do little other than complain, and the efforts he made could not stop the literary theft. Nonetheless, the onset of Dickens' popularity is a crucial period in his writing career, as it set precedents for his future decisions. The chapter analyzes early play adaptations by William Thomas Moncrieff and Edward Stirling, and it examines Dickens' reactions to these plays in biographies and his letters. Next, the chapter briefly examines *Pickwick* and *Oliver Twist* before focusing on *Nickleby*, as Dickens used *Nickleby* to attack playwrights who wrote adaptations of his serializations prior to their completion. Besides featuring the attack on adapters, *Nickleby* depicts dilemmas that result from other characters' jealousy of Nicholas's popularity, which reflects Dickens' personal troubles at the time. This stage of Dickens' life provides context concerning the adaptations he reacted against, and this

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6. Unless specified otherwise, all references to Patten in this dissertation are to this text.

chapter explains why he wanted greater control of his intellectual property based on his early career difficulties.

Next, the second chapter examines how Dickens further secured control of his work in the 1840s by inculcating a relationship with his readers and sanctioning official adaptations of his literature. To start, this chapter considers why Dickens' Master Humphrey persona, along with his *Master Humphrey's Clock* serial, failed while his first-person narrator in *A Christmas Carol* succeeded at creating a bond with readers. Then, I examine how, in response to the unofficial productions that irritated him, Dickens authorized adaptations of his works, beginning with Edward Stirling's production of the *Carol* in 1844. Later, Dickens went a step further by providing advance copies of his Christmas stories to theatres prior to their publication. This phase of Dickens' career demonstrates how he built connections with readers and parlayed his popularity into greater control over his name's market shares.

The dissertation's third chapter focuses on Dickens' relationships with publishers and eventual transformation into one, himself. I analyze the fallout of Dickens' failure to sue a plagiarist for copyright infringement, along with some other financial issues, which prompted Dickens to switch publishers to Bradbury & Evans. He agreed to terms with the new publisher that guaranteed him a larger percentage of his novels' profits, and he subsequently dominated Bradbury & Evans in all of his negotiations. This chapter also analyzes *Dombey and Son*, the first book that Bradbury & Evans published and which generated considerable money for Dickens. The novel's themes and content, such as Mr. Dombey's attempt to secure the future of his firm, echo Dickens' struggles to secure his literary brand. Dickens was more successful than his fictional character, however, due to the combination of traditional and innovative strategies he used to construct his brand. His new financial security demonstrates his growing control of his brand and enabled him to take more daring actions in the 1850s, such as the creation of his personal periodical, *Household Words*.

The fourth chapter covers the period from 1849, when Dickens' semi-autobiographical novel *David Copperfield* began serialization, to 1858, when Dickens gave his first Public Reading for profit. During these years, Dickens attempted a major rebranding to improve his literary reputation. He discreetly revised his earlier works for new editions, sought to reframe his literary history in the prefaces to these editions, and, most significantly, created the semiautobiographical novel *David Copperfield*. This chapter focuses primarily on *David Copperfield* and the

consequences of its idealized version of Dickens' life, which has dominated academic discourse of the novel since Forster revealed the connection between Dickens and David. The novel and Dickens' feelings of shame from working in a factory inform the type of literary reputation Dickens desired, and explain the rationale behind his rebranding.

In the fifth chapter, I analyze the most important stage of Dickens' efforts to manage his literary brand: the Public Readings that began in 1858 and continued until shortly before his death. This chapter relies extensively on Philip Collins' *The Public Readings* and Andrews' *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves*, and I build on their research by examining the Public Readings in the context of Dickens' literary brand. In these readings, Dickens exerted himself extensively to adapt his own works and rehearse them for public performance, gaining considerable control of his texts while shortening his life. The Readings were both highly successful and influential. For this chapter, I analyze the Public Readings as the culmination of Dickens' various strategies to control his literary brand and illustrate the lessons he learned from the events I discuss in the previous chapters.

While Dickens died in 1870, the Dickens industry lived on, and the sixth chapter examines what happened to his literary brand after he lost control of it. In this chapter, I consider Dickens' legacy, using his unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, as my prime example. Then, I look at two modern adaptations of Dickens' works, *Oliver!* and *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, to show how other creators have affected his brand since he died. Additionally, I analyze Dickens' influence on subsequent authors' brand construction, using George Bernard Shaw and *Pygmalion* as my prime example; the chapter ends by connecting the significance of Dickens' cultivation of a literary brand to modern attempts of brand control.

Lastly, a brief conclusion further discusses Dickens' influence, summarizes my findings, and discusses other implications of my research. The conclusion returns to the issue of what the word "Dickensian" means in a modern context, and it considers the value of Dickens' efforts to control his literary brand. Dickens began his Public Readings, in part, to combat blatant copyright infringement of his work, and his struggles against theft parallel those seen today in various media. Dickens' works were not the first to be copied or adapted without permission, but his efforts to control his intellectual property and, moreover, succeed to the extent that he did, established a precedent for brand cultivation that future authors followed in the twentieth century.

Overall, this dissertation aims to show how Dickens' increasing involvement in adaptations of his work in his lifetime gave him unprecedented control over his literary brand while he lived and created the Dickens industry. It connects the intricacies of celebrity, literary branding, and adaptation. In doing so, I seek to not only explain how Dickens and future authors cultivate literary brands, but provide another lens through which several of Dickens' major novels can be interpreted. His preoccupation with his literary status influenced his fictional works as he was transforming himself into a self-sustaining commercial enterprise. Hence, I seek to interpret the implications of the successful creation of a literary brand on Dickens' literature.

## Chapter 1: Dickens' Early Career and His Struggles with Literary Theft

From the outset of his career, Dickens demonstrated an awareness of his literary brand. As a middle-class citizen, Dickens wrote for money, unlike many of his aristocratic predecessors, so Dickens initially agreed to more writing assignments than he could complete since he needed more income. He left multiple contracts unfulfilled after *The Pickwick Papers* brought him more money than could have been anticipated. As a result, Dickens' early contracts were generally unfavorable to him, relative to his literary value, and his publishers dictated his early career more than he wished. Simultaneously, the phenomenal success of *Pickwick*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Nicholas Nickleby* spawned imitations, plagiarisms, unlicensed merchandise based on his work, unsanctioned reprintings across the Atlantic and in England, and pirated stage adaptations. Dickens was helpless to prevent any of the aforementioned literary theft due to weak copyright laws, although he could rage about the theft in private and, later, in public as well. While Dickens was making a name for himself as Boz and endearing himself to his earliest readers, he had little control over his literary brand throughout the 1830s. However, he took major steps to control it prior to *Nickleby's* serialization, which allowed him take more remarkable measures to secure control of the Dickens industry in the future.

In this chapter's three sections, I discuss Dickens' earliest attempts to build his literary brand, focusing on his battles with plagiarists and pirates. First, I examine Dickens' early awareness of his brand's worth, beginning with his *Sketches*, before considering his attempts to ward off the proliferation of imitators with *Pickwick* and *Twist*. The second section analyzes an unsanctioned stage adaptation of Dickens' works to establish what Dickens fought against and demonstrate his initially weak control over his literary brand. Finally, I focus on *Nickleby* since, starting with Boz's proclamation of its upcoming release, the novel best represents Dickens' response to his early struggles; it was his first overt effort to combat literary theft directly, although he could not stop it. Therefore, *Nickleby* can be read as Dickens' commentary on celebrity culture due to his concentrated attack against his imitators, and this commentary reveals his fixations on literary theft and ensuring his brand's lasting impact.

### 1.1. Dickens' Literary Brand at the Start of his Career

The traditional path to literary success was not open to Dickens in the 1830s because of his family's status as relatively poor middle-class citizens. Earlier famous novelists, such as Scott, did not release short works in newspapers, as Dickens did with his first publication, "A Dinner at

Poplar Walk" (later renamed "Mr. Minns and His Cousin"); the more prestigious format of publication was the three-volume novel. Novelists did not begin, as Dickens describes submitting his first work in his 1847 Preface to *Pickwick*, by dropping their writing in stealth at night (884). Dickens, however, lacked time to write a completed novel, since he had to work for a living as a political journalist and needed money immediately, in order to support his many siblings and debt-ridden father in the early 1830s and secure an income so he could marry in the mid-1830s. The shorter publications better suited his need for quick payment. Consequently, Dickens' background and financial situation limited his ability to obtain an elite literary brand, as all he initially possessed was his skill at literary voices, although he used this skill to great effect in his *Sketches*.

The subjects for the initial *Sketches*, which Dickens became renowned for, also derived from what he knew: London and its inhabitants. Throughout his life, Dickens was a passionate walker, and he routinely walked the streets of London after writing.<sup>7</sup> Prior to becoming a celebrity, he developed an enthusiasm for walking around London, and this knowledge manifests in *Sketches*. In "Poplar Walk," the character Budden gives directions to arrive at the dinner: "the coach goes from the Flower-pot, in Bishopsgate-street, every half hour. When the coach stops at the Swan, you'll see, immediately opposite you, a white house" (366). This passage demonstrates intimate details about London, naming specific streets and using a colour to indicate a particular, unnamed house. George Lear, one of Dickens' colleagues, noted, "having been in London two years, I thought I knew something of town, but after a little talk with Dickens I found that I knew nothing. He knew it all from Bow to Brentford" (qtd. in Slater 28). Dickens' city descriptions in *Sketches* and his more famous novels were not without controversy,<sup>8</sup> but the descriptions also support Lear's claim and contributed to Dickens' early success.

Another reason Dickens had success is his skill at mimicry, as seen in his ability to recreate London's varied inhabitants' language and vocal idiosyncrasies in his writing. Dickens' colleague Lear reported that Dickens "could imitate, in a manner that I have never heard equalled, the low population of the streets of London in all their varieties" (qtd. in Slater 28). Dickens used this talent to amuse his coworkers at his first occupations, and it reappeared in his writing. In "Poplar

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7. Johnson notes that Dickens went on walks in the 1830s to clear his head (209) and that the author struggled to write *Dombey and Son* in the 1840s while away from his familiar streets of London (602).

8. *Oliver Twist*'s descriptions of London's criminal underworld were especially criticized. I discuss Dickens' response to one such criticism by Thackeray in Chapter 4 (102).

Walk," for example, Budden is defined by his speech: "He always spoke at the top of his voice, and always said the same thing half-a-dozen times" (364). This tendency towards repetition later appears to humorous effect when Budden says, "'Pon my life" or the variant "'Pon my soul," multiple times. A few years later, *Pickwick* became a sensation in part due to Sam Weller's particular speech patterns, but Dickens exhibited this talent from the start, and it can be traced to his familiarity with London and its people. In turn, this knowledge produced the trademark literary voices he used as Boz, which led to his initial success as a writer.

After he had cemented his fame and celebrity, Dickens downplayed the positive impact that his initial writings, or *Sketches*, had on his career, but Lyn Pykett is correct when she states, "it is important to remember that it was the *Sketches* rather than *Pickwick Papers* which shot Dickens to fame" (25). He would not have received his offer from Chapman and Hall if *Sketches* had failed. He had to rely on his publishers to distribute the literary materials he created, and while Dickens' popularity with readers was ever-growing, his relationship with his audience was not yet as close as it would become. To use Tom Mole's triad of literary celebrity, Dickens filled only the role of the individual author at this stage, in contrast to later in his career when he also fulfilled the industry component. However, Dickens laid the foundations for his later self-branding through his creation of the pseudonym "Boz" near the end of 1833.

His desire to establish a literary brand became clear with the publication of "The Boarding-House" in May 1834, as it is the first work he signed as "Boz" (Slater 40-1); the use of the pseudonym, rather than his given name, indicates Dickens' early mindfulness of constructing a literary brand and his anxiety that he might fail. The story of Dickens choosing Boz from his brother Augustus's nickname is well-known and related in the 1847 Preface to *Pickwick*:

"Boz," my signature in the Morning Chronicle, appended to the monthly cover of this book, and retained long afterwards, was the nickname of a pet child, a younger brother, whom I had dubbed Moses, in honour of the Vicar of Wakefield; which being facetiously pronounced through the nose, became Boses, and being shortened, became Boz. "Boz" was a very familiar household word to me, long before I was an author, and so I came to adopt it. (886)

Dickens' account of this name's origin stresses the familial significance of the name, relating the narrative to the themes common in his literature, but this preface downplays how the pseudonym distanced Dickens from his initial works. If his writing career were to be a failure, Dickens did

not want his reputation associated with an unsuccessful literary brand; moreover, Dickens feared his literary star falling so much that he registered as a law student as a financial safety net in 1839, after he had already established himself with four successful books (Slater 139). In 1834, when he adopted the pseudonym, his economic and social footings were far less secure, which accounts for his initial reluctance to use his name, and once Boz's works were successful, Dickens quickly stated his preference for his birth name.

His lack of financial security in the middle of the 1830s, however, made Dickens quick to accept contracts that would later prove unfavourable and limited his autonomy. Dickens' early lack of brand control occurred in spite of his savvy business decisions and careful self-management. His ability to construct an identity is demonstrated by more than his choice to publish under the pseudonym "Boz."<sup>9</sup> For instance, Pykett's assessment of his early career stresses that "Boz/Dickens was in the process of *constructing himself* as an author, but one who described himself not as a novelist, but rather as 'the periodical essayist, the Author of these pages'" (51, emphasis added). Pykett's analysis draws attention to Dickens' calculated persona and his affectation. One of Dickens' letters to his early publisher John Macrone, in January 1836, shows how the writer considered his reputation when choosing the title *Sketches by Boz*: "the only reason that induces me to favor the present title at all, is that it is both unaffected and unassuming — two requisites which it is very desirable for a young author [not] to lose sight of" (*Letters* 1.115). Dickens was aware that he lacked clout early in his career, and he viewed avoiding pretension as important, a trait that the Cheeryble brothers later demonstrate in *Nickleby*. Additionally, Dickens recognized that oversaturating the market with his presence could have a detrimental effect on his reception. When Macrone copied the *Pickwick* format and republished *Sketches* in a monthly serialization, Dickens wrote to John Forster, "the fact of my name being before the town, attached to three publications at the same time, must prove seriously prejudicial to my reputation" (*Letters* 1.270). From the beginning, Dickens was mindful of how his reputation might affect his literary brand. His early problems had little to do with his conduct or calculations—the issue was that other people could plagiarize, pirate, and reprint his works for their profit and suffer no repercussions.

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9. Whitney Helms, in "Performing Authorship," and Timothy Spurgin, in "Modern Celebrity and Early Dickens," make arguments similar to mine about Dickens' early constructed identity.

If *Sketches* established Dickens on London's 1830s literary scene, *The Pickwick Papers* is the work that made him a household name and celebrity, and its success altered his circumstances dramatically. As Paul Schlicke writes in *Dickens and Popular Entertainment*, "*Pickwick* became the publishing sensation of the nineteenth century" (4). By itself, *Pickwick* could have made Dickens famous for the rest of his life, but it was only the first of many popular serializations. However, Dickens and his publishers did not know of his future lucrative career in 1836; also, *Pickwick* began as a disappointment, by most accounts, with a modest circulation of 400 issues for the first number, and the work was initially less popular than the author's *Sketches* (Johnson 135). But, after Sam Weller's introduction, the serialization became an unprecedented success, eventually selling 40,000 copies per number, a hundred times that of the first issue. Dickens' celebrity in 1836 and 1837, even with the simultaneous publication of the now more famous *Oliver Twist*, was as Boz, the "editor" of *Pickwick*. The public fell in love with the serialization's characters, to the extent that starting a new story with new characters for *Nickleby* was a risk on Dickens' part, even if the latter serialization turned out more profitable than *Pickwick*.<sup>10</sup> At this stage, the Boz literary brand had considerable selling power, as Dickens received applause from a sold-out theatre when he appeared on stage as Boz (Johnson 154). Strong as the Boz name was, the *Pickwick* literary brand, comprised of Dickens' writing but also the piracies, other authors' sequels, reprintings, and, unlicensed merchandise, was stronger. Given that so much of the Pickwickian brand was created by hands other than his, Dickens had little control over the phenomenon he started, in addition to receiving only a fraction of the profits generated by it.<sup>11</sup>

With *Pickwick*'s reduced popularity in the present, along with current Dickens studies often focusing on his later novels, it is easy to forget how much of a sensation *Pickwick* was, and few scholars have examined the merchandise and ancillary products produced in response to the publication. The text itself was well-suited for merchandising; Andy Williams discusses how Dickens' published numbers had advertisements at the start and some of these branded goods appeared in the author's text: "Either way, the presence of these branded goods further shows how the advertising signifier was woven into the realist textual fabric of *The Pickwick Papers*" (331). Moreover, this merchandising went both ways since the text received numerous external advertisements in the form of products based on Pickwick, Sam Weller, and the other characters.

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10. Slater notes that *Nickleby* sold around 50,000 per number, about 10,000 more than *Pickwick* (119).

11. It should be observed that Dickens received far more money for *Pickwick* than the pirates did, however.

Brian Maidment, for example, examines Pickwick's appearance on pots and ceramics, although these memorabilia were less popular than other *Pickwick* merchandise. Edgar Johnson writes that these characters

had become a mania. Nothing like it had ever happened before. There were Pickwick chintzes, Pickwick cigars, Pickwick hats, Pickwick canes with tassels, Pickwick coats of a peculiar cut and color; and there were Weller corduroys and Boz cabs. . . . There were innumerable plagiarisms, parodies, and sequels . . . not to mention all the stage piracies and adaptations. (156)

Boz was beloved for creating these characters, but the products based on Pickwick and Weller outnumbered those based on Dickens' appearance, which was not well-known at this time since it had not been mass-produced. Consequently, Pickwick and Weller were more well-known than Dickens, in 1836, as it was more so the characters' names than Boz or Dickens that initially sold these products.

Regardless, all these Pickwick products contributed to Dickens' literary brand because they added to his celebrity by making his literature more popular, but the weak copyright laws meant that he could not profit from *Pickwick* merchandise or sue plagiarists. His letters do not feature negotiations with cigar or cane sellers, for example, nor do any letters survive from the 1830s in which he complains about this unsanctioned merchandise, specifically. The matter was not one he even entertained, apparently.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, Dickens, as a theatre enthusiast, could not help but notice the stage adaptations and piracies. The serial format of *Pickwick* was copied, and at least six different adaptations of *Pickwick* were written prior its conclusion,<sup>13</sup> and perhaps as many as 50,000 hack derivations of his works were sold each month (Schlicke 33). Schlicke describes how these imitations demonstrate Dickens' impact on the literary market: "The speed and persistence of this proliferation testify to Dickens's popular appeal: not only could he command a huge readership for work produced under the imprint of his own publishers, but inferior imitations by hands other than his own had enormous selling power as well" (33). Besides indicating Dickens' and his characters' popularity, these derivatives show how *Pickwick* became a literary brand, as simply adding the word "Pickwick" to a product, play, or text made it

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12. There are some letters where he thanks people for giving him products based on his works, though. For instance, he thanks someone for sending him "Nickleby furniture" (*Letters* 3.359).

13. H. Philip Bolton's *Dickens Dramatized* catalogues these *Pickwick* adaptations and provides details about their premieres and production staff (77-80). Some, like Moncrieff's *Sam Weller* were especially popular and staged multiple times prior to the end of Dickens' *Pickwick* in November, 1837.

profitable. Adam Abraham, in "Plagiarizing *Pickwick*," adds that the texts based on *Pickwick* were not strictly plagiarisms, as they ranged from "sequels" to "songbooks" and "jest books" (5). The sequels, in particular, indicate that readers from 1837 to 1842, the time period Abraham analyzes, desired more *Pickwick* than Dickens could or chose to provide, which partly explains why the intellectual property slipped so far out of his control in the 1830s.

While the *Pickwick* brand exploded beyond his expectations, Dickens could still harness its popularity to fortify his literary brand. Similar to how Scott's identity as "the Author of *Waverley*" sold novels, Dickens' Boz pseudonym, with its association to *Pickwick*, was a valuable commodity. Dickens comments on the Boz name's worth in a letter to Richard Bentley:

The terms I leave to you to propose. I need not enlarge on the rapidly increasing value of my time and writings to myself, *or on the assistance "Boz's" name just now*, would prove to the circulation, because I am persuaded that no one is better able to form a correct estimate on both points, than you are. (*Letters* 1:190, emphasis added)

He recognized his pseudonym's power and would later use it to secure better contracts with publishers. *Pickwick* made Dickens into a celebrity, but it was his cleverness and self-awareness of his worth, as seen in this letter, that shaped his early literary brand. Whitney Helms reaches a conclusion similar to my own: "While Dickens became a beloved author with the publication of his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836-37, his public identity was not developed solely by virtue of the novel's popularity. In fact, it can be traced directly to the strategic choices Dickens made in the midst of *Pickwick's* twenty-month serialization" (119). Some of Dickens' "strategic choices," according to Helms, include his decision to say *Pickwick* is "edited," rather than written, by Boz. This stylistic choice presented the serialization as if Boz were relating incidents he saw instead of inventing them, which invited readers to form a friendship with the writer, a strategy Dickens would expand on.

Dickens' self-awareness of his growing celebrity appears in *Pickwick's* fifteenth chapter, featuring Mrs. Leo Hunter, and he uses his celebrity to connect to his readers. This chapter was published in August 1836, a month after the serial exploded in popularity after the fifth number. Notably, Dickens commented on literary celebrity almost as soon as his popularity exponentially increased. In the chapter, Pickwick and his friends are invited to a party hosted by Mrs. Hunter, whom her husband says "is proud to number among her acquaintance, all those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works and talents" (215). Mr. Hunter continues, "Permit

me, Sir, to place in a conspicuous part of the list, the name of Mr. Pickwick, and his brother members of the club that derives its name from him" (215). The episode is comical in that Mrs. Hunter's gathering is ridiculous, but the metafictional commentary enhances its humour; while the fictional Pickwick has his questionable literary merits celebrated by an incompetent poetess, the serialization *Pickwick* was being celebrated en masse in London. Dickens had become lionized, but he mocks this process in the chapter:

there were half a dozen lions from London—authors, real authors, who had written whole books, and printed them afterwards—and here you might see 'em, walking about, like ordinary men, smiling, and talking—aye, and talking pretty considerable nonsense too, no doubt with the benign intention of rendering themselves intelligible to the common people about them. (221)

For Dickens' readers in 1836, scenes like these solidified a persona of Boz being above the "lions from London" that he lampoons; these figures are unintelligible and conceited, but Dickens, by satirizing them, states that he is not like them, which his readers could understand by identifying his humour in this passage. Dickens creates a persona of himself through inversion, or describing what he is not, and it was this type of prose that won over so many contemporary readers. Mrs. Hunter's lionization of Pickwick instead of Boz, furthermore, adequately captures the state of his brand during the early serialization of *Pickwick*: the character, more so than "Boz," was the brand selling issues, which made it easier for other writers to use the character to sell their own products or stories based on Dickens' creation.

Dickens' problems with other writers copying his stories increased during the serialization of *Oliver Twist*, and Dickens had little success stopping them. I generally refer to those who engaged in literary theft as imitators, and Dickens' imitators can be divided into two categories: pirates and plagiarists. In the context of intellectual copyright, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines piracy as "The unauthorized reproduction or use of an invention or work of another, as a book, recording, computer software, intellectual property, etc., esp. as constituting an infringement of patent or copyright; plagiarism; an instance of this." The *OED* uses the word "plagiarism" as part of its definition of piracy; it defines plagiarism as "The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft." By the *OED*'s definitions, plagiarism can be understood as a particular form of piracy. Dickens, for his part, made no distinction between the two, and, in his published letters, he exclusively uses the

word "pirate" to refer to anyone who stole, copied, or reprinted his works. However, in this dissertation, I use both "pirates" and "plagiarists" to distinguish the two major kinds of copyright infringement that Dickens suffered: reprintings and imitations, respectively.

The reprintings, in addition to the stage adaptations, are piracy, since they do little or nothing to alter Dickens' texts, yet they still acknowledge Dickens as the author. Reprinting occurred when other publishers released Dickens' texts as they are without his permission, often taking business away from him by releasing them at reduced prices. Reprinting was especially problematic in the United States, due to the absence of international copyright laws. Dickens could do almost nothing to respond to the reprintings, and he seldom refers to the issue in his letters in the 1830s. During his tour of America in 1842, he mentioned that international copyright laws denied him earnings from his book sales outside of the United Kingdom, but he suffered instant backlash from the American newspaper industry, which was owned by publishers who profited from unlicensed printings of his stories.<sup>14</sup> The most Dickens could do was sell the rights to his books to the Philadelphia publisher Carey, Lea, & Blanchard, so they could officially release his completed books in the United States, although reprintings of his serialized numbers diminished the demand for these authorial editions. The many stage adapters who made unlicensed theatrical productions of Dickens' works were also pirates, since they made few changes to the text when adapting his serializations, and they capitalized on Dickens' name to market their productions. I discuss these adapters in more detail in this chapter's next section.

I define the imitators, in contrast, as plagiarists since they stole from Dickens' literature without acknowledging him as the author. For example, the works done by hack authors such as "Bos" are plagiarisms. "Bos" is commonly believed to be Thomas Peckett Prest, who plagiarized Dickens' works as they were serialized; Prest's plagiarisms stole Dickens' characters and plots while renaming the characters to avoid lawsuits. Prest wrote *Oliver Twiss* and *Nickelas Nickelbery*, somehow releasing the first number of *Nickelbery* on the same day as the first number of Dickens' *Nickleby*. In contrast to pirated imitations of his works, Dickens could fight plagiarists in court and did, on one disastrous occasion, as I recount in Chapter 2. However, successfully proving that a plagiarized imitation was plagiarism was difficult, during Dickens' literary career, since the British court's definition of plagiarism in the nineteenth century was

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14. K.J Fielding discusses this issue in "Dickens and International Copyright."

much different from the modern understanding of the offence; a written work needed to meet multiple requirements to be considered plagiarized in Dickens' lifetime. According to Tilar Mazzeo, only "culpable plagiarism," could be legally prosecuted in the Romantic period, and this plagiarism was defined as "borrowings that were *simultaneously* unacknowledged, unimproved, unfamiliar, and conscious. In the absence of any one of these elements, culpable plagiarism could not be said to have occurred" (2). These views were still held up until the 1840s, when Dickens filed a lawsuit against a plagiarism of *A Christmas Carol*.

Dickens disliked both the pirates and plagiarists, and he arguably began attacking them in earnest during *Twist's* serialization. Previously, he took offence to someone plagiarizing *Pickwick* during its serialization, and wrote to Forster: "Well; if the *Pickwick* has been the means of putting a few shillings in the vermin-eaten pockets of so miserable a creature, and has saved him from a workhouse or a jail, let him empty out his little pot of filth and welcome" (*Letters* 1.304). Dickens was aware he could not stop this plagiarist, so he resorted to denouncing the writer. A similar sense of injustice is expressed in a letter Dickens wrote to his publisher Bentley while working on *Twist*: "I inclose you the commencing number of *two* imitations of Oliver 'by different hands'. The vagabonds have stuck placards on the walls — each to say that *theirs* is the only true Edition. They will follow us through the book, of course" (350). Based on this letter, he was angered by the two competing *Oliver Twiss* publications, but could only acknowledge that the hack writers would plagiarize his work throughout his serialization.

Monica F. Cohen interprets Fagin's portrayal in *Twist* as Dickens' response to plagiarism in a well-reasoned argument, but, assuming she is correct, the subtle attacks on Dickens' part did not stop the plagiarists or advance his literary brand. Cohen views Fagin as an author "not merely in the sense of he or she who invents a story, but in the sense of the person who feigns the manufacture of a story by stealing and controlling the circulation of information" (44). Cohen argues that Fagin represents a plagiarist, but, given his status as a receiver of stolen goods, I add that he can be viewed as a publisher of plagiarized literature as well. Fagin sells the items that his boys steal for him and rarely commits the thefts himself, so Fagin functions as a distributor, or publisher, for the boys, who function as plagiarists. Cohen connects Fagin to the plagiarists through the character's theft of handkerchiefs, as Dickens used a handkerchief as a metaphor for his stolen intellectual property in a letter to an editor about "The Bloomsbury Christening," one of his *Sketches*, being adapted to the stage. Dickens writes, "It is very little consolation to me to

know, when my handkerchief is gone, that I may see it flaunting with renovated beauty in Field-lane" (*Letters* 1.42). Field-lane, as Cohen observes, is where Fagin sells his stolen handkerchiefs (49-50).

Although Cohen makes a good argument about how Dickens may have used Fagin as a subtle protest against plagiarism, I do not view *Twist* as Dickens' strongest attack against literary theft for two reasons: first, *Twist*'s narrative demonstrates a lack of carefully considered design throughout, and, second and more importantly, Dickens uses no subtlety when he attacks his imitators in *Nickleby*. His targets are generally obvious in the rest of his fiction, in contrast to the possible response to plagiarism in *Twist*, so whether Dickens meant for Fagin to stand in for plagiarism is debatable. Using Fagin to attack plagiarists was ineffectual, if Dickens did so, because his adversaries either did not understand the attack or ignored it as they continued to steal from him throughout the novel's serialization.

### 1.2. Unofficial Stage Adaptations of Dickens' Early Serials

If plagiarists who sold penny-copies of his work angered Dickens, he hated pirates who made unofficial theatrical adaptations far more. First of all, he did not receive profits from the gate receipts of these plays, although they derived from his work, and Dickens took offence every time he felt he was cheated out of money. Additionally, he loved the theatre and frequently watched performances, including these adaptations of his works, and the quantity of plays based on his work meant that several were of low quality; Forster's account of Dickens hanging his head in dismay, never to lift it for the duration of the play, while watching George Almar's 1838 production of *Twist* is well-documented and has been cited by Johnson (224) and Slater (121), among others. Next, he hated how they adapted the works prior to the conclusion of their serializations. As a result, Dickens was angered by these adapters because they represented the greatest threats to his literary brand at the start of his career. His opposing reactions to two script writers demonstrate how Dickens accepted adapters who did not threaten his brand and rejected those who did. Edward Stirling wrote the stage adaptation *Nicholas Nickleby. A Farce—In Two Acts* for Frederick Yates, the manager of the Adelphi Theatre, in 1838, and Dickens approved of the play. William Thomas Moncrieff, however, angered Dickens by writing numerous adaptations of Dickens' works, including the highly popular *Sam Weller! or, the Pickwickians* in 1837 and *Nicholas Nickleby and Poor Smike; or, The Victims of the Yorkshire School* in 1839, the latter of which guessed some of Dickens' plot twists. Thus, Moncrieff infuriated Dickens

because he represented a legitimate threat to Dickens' brand in the 1830s. This section briefly examines Stirling's *Nickleby* farce before focusing on Moncrieff's *Sam Weller* to indicate how these plays affected Dickens' early literary brand.

Since drama, the dominant form of entertainment in the nineteenth century, was considered a lower art form, below novels and poetry, the many unlicensed adaptations of Dickens' works were problematic for the author. Dickens participated in amateur theatricals for the rest of his life due to his love of the theatre, but he never pursued acting as a profession because working for the stage would have lowered his status as a professional writer and weakened his brand. Dickens' connection with the theatre meant that his works employed theatrical conventions and melodrama. These theatrical elements, along with his popularity, made Dickens' texts popular choices for adaptation. Although Dickens' serials appealed to a growing reader base, as literacy increased throughout the nineteenth century, the Victorian stage could and did attract much wider audiences than Dickens did. Consequently, many English people in Dickens' era encountered his works on the stage rather than in print. Deborah Vlock writes, "The popular [stage] renditions will affect readings of Dickens' story, adding a certain kind of resonance whether or not the renditions were 'good' ones, or received as such by the viewer-reader" (192). I agree, and this possibility posed problems for Dickens' literary brand, especially for people who watched a poor adaptation that altered Dickens' version significantly. These cases lessened Dickens' control over his literature while giving the public an inferior impression of his work, in his view and mine.

Dickens' problems with unwanted stage adaptations began before *Pickwick*, as theatrical versions of his *Sketches* were produced to the author's chagrin. At this point in his career, he lacked any means to combat his adapters. In Dickens' complaint of the play based on "The Bloomsbury Christening," he compares the adapted *Sketch* to a kidnapped child:

I celebrated a christening a few months ago in the *Monthly*, and I find that Mr. Buckstone has officiated as self-elected godfather, and carried off my child to the Adelphi, for the purpose, probably, of fulfilling one of his sponsorial duties, viz., of teaching it the vulgar tongue. (*Letters* 1.42)

He asked Holland to criticize Buckstone in the magazine, as no legal laws existed through which Dickens could prosecute Buckstone. Evidently, asking his editor to give negative reviews did not

dissuade potential adapters, since theatre producers continued to adapt not only *Sketches* but also his novels against his will.

The adaptations of unfinished serializations frustrated him more than those of his *Sketches*, since his earliest writings were self-contained narratives, at least. *Pickwick* is mostly a series of self-contained episodes, but Dickens' serializations became more complex, starting with *Twist*. The author underestimated the demand for stage adaptations for his novels. In response to Yates' desire to adapt *Twist* for the stage, Dickens writes,

I don't see the possibility of any other house doing it before your next opening night. If they do, it must be done in a very extraordinary manner, as the story (unlike that of *Pickwick*) is an involved and complicated one. I am quite satisfied that nobody can have heard what I mean to do with the different characters in the end, inasmuch as at present I don't quite know, myself; so we are tolerably safe on that head. (*Letters* 1.388)

However, as the editors of his letters observe in a footnote, five unofficial productions of *Twist* were staged before Yates could produce one, and Yates ultimately did not produce a *Twist* adaptation. Dickens' letter suggests that he assumed not knowing the resolution of the plot would prohibit playwrights, but he was mistaken. If his stories were incomplete, the adapters were content to complete them for him. As Marvin Rosenberg says, the pirates attempted "to outguess the author as to smash endings" (6), and the absence of conclusions, I add, possibly made adapting his unfinished serializations more appealing; these playwrights could use Dickens' name to sell seats while creatively filling in the narrative's missing elements.

These alterations threatened Dickens' literary brand, and this problem forms the core of his complaint against the pirates. In a later letter to Yates, concerning Stirling's adaptation of *Nickleby*, Dickens writes,

My general objection to the adaptation of any unfinished work of mine simply is, that being badly done and worse acted it tends to vulgarize the characters, to destroy or weaken in the minds of those who see them the impressions I have endeavoured to create, and consequently to lessen the after-interest in their progress. (*Letters* 1.463)

By this time, Dickens was writing *Nickleby* and aware of the pirate adapters' lack of restraint.<sup>15</sup> He had probably already seen Almar's adaptation of *Twist*, so he was familiar with how bad these

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15. Bolton dates the first performance of Almar's adaptation at 19 Nov. 1838 (110), and the editors of Dickens' letters estimate that the letter to Yates was written around 29 Nov. 1838, ten days later. It is reasonable to conclude that Dickens could have seen one of the first performances of the Almar adaptation.

productions could be. This letter stresses how adaptations damage Dickens' literary brand; he emphasizes that poor productions "vulgarize" his characters and "destroy or weaken" the impressions he sought to create. His explanation that it hampers what he "endeavoured to create" draws attention to how the adaptations reduced his control over his literary works. Most importantly, the end of this excerpt mentions how bad adaptations "lessen the after-interest" of his ongoing work. Dickens' serializations were his primary source of revenue in the 1830s, and Dickens viewed adaptations as hazards that could steal public interest from his serializations by providing an alternate source for them in popular stage adaptations.

Despite raising these complaints to Yates, Dickens accepted Stirling's *Nickleby* adaptation. In the previously-cited letter, Dickens continues, "No such objection can exist for a moment where the thing is so admirably done in every respect as you have done it in this instance" (*Letters* 1.463). He defends Stirling's adaptation on the grounds of its good quality, and Dickens need not have been lying to Yates. Dialogue and faithfulness to the source are not the only qualities that matter in an adaptation, as the actors and their performances constitute a significant part of a play's appeal. Stirling's adaptation is, however, inferior to Dickens' *Nickleby*. Dianne F. Sadoff notes that the early stage adaptations of Dickens' works generally "expunged Boz's humor and blunted his observation" (31), and the Stirling *Nickleby* is no exception to Sadoff's criticism. Stirling wrote his *Nickleby* only eight numbers into the serialization, so he had about 40 percent of the finished product to work with and was forced to invent new dialogue for the ending, although the rest of the script is relatively faithful to its source. Stirling excises a number of characters to condense the narrative, and these changes weaken the effectiveness of Dickens' lines and dialogue.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, Dickens recognized the impossibility of a word-for-word adaptation, and the play could not have perfectly told a complete story based on the incomplete source material available to Stirling.

I argue that Stirling's adaptation was palatable to Dickens, because Stirling's version of *Nickleby* could not have threatened interest in Dickens' ongoing serial, and Stirling's ending is far removed from the resolutions Dickens later wrote for *Nickleby*. Stirling interpolates new dialogue for Ralph, which heightens his villainy and states his desire for Smike's death, as in Act 1, Scene 2 (7). These lines are added because the adaptation ends with Smike inheriting a fortune

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16. Missing characters include Miss La Creevy and the Kenwigs family, and Stirling does not attempt to include the Crummles troupe, who had recently appeared in the serialization when his adaptation was first performed.

that requires a will made by Smike's father in Ralph's possession, which would transfer the money to Ralph in the event that Smike dies. This adaptation's ending radically departs from Dickens' conclusion, where Ralph is revealed to be Smike's father. Whether Dickens knew of Smike's parentage when he saw Yates' production is debatable; clear hints of Ralph's past do not appear until Chapter 44 of *Nickleby*, published in April 1839, months after this adaptation was staged, and Dickens' mems, or working notes, prior to *Martin Chuzzlewit* were notoriously vague and sparsely detailed, if he used any.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, Stirling's resolution was implausible, based on the chapters he adapted from, none of which feature Ralph harbouring particular resentment to Smike. I doubt Dickens felt threatened that his conclusion was revealed by this adaptation.<sup>18</sup> If Dickens could not stop stage adaptations of his unfinished novels, he could tolerate ones that did not challenge his brand, produced by men like Yates who respected him as an author.

Moncrieff, in contrast, deliberately disrespected Dickens, and Moncrieff's combative attitude intensified the danger he imposed to Dickens' brand. In Moncrieff's 1839 *Poor Smike*, the playwright realized Dickens' fears by guessing Smike's paternal parentage. Moreover, he boasted about his accomplishment in a letter: "Let Mr. Dickens—and he had five months before him—set his wits to work again and finish his 'Nicholas Nickleby' *better than I have done*, and I shall sink into the primitive mire, from which I have, for the moment, attempted to emerge by catching at the hem of his garment" (qtd. in Laird 79). Moncrieff not only tried to diminish Dickens' readership, but he also exulted in his adaptation, calling it better than the author's. Moncrieff realized the existence of a market for the Boz genre and saw himself as Dickens' competitor. In Moncrieff's Advertisement section to his *Pickwick* adaptation, *Sam Weller! or, the Pickwickians*, produced in 1837, he defends the production on the grounds of its supposed superiority to Dickens' original and its popularity among the public. Moncrieff writes,

I knew well their author had never contemplated the production of [the Papers] in a dramatic shape, or he would have formed a regular plot, and given a continuity to his work, which alone is wanting, to rank it with the finest comic fictions of any age or country. The success of my undertaking has justified my judgment. (iii-iv)

Moncrieff's justification must have infuriated Dickens for many reasons. First, Moncrieff observes a deficiency in Dickens' work, its absence of "regular plot," which Moncrieff claims to

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17. As far as I am aware, Dickens had no working notes for *Nickleby*.

18. Bolton, commenting on the ending, writes that "Smike inherits a fortune so improbably that no playgoer could have mistaken this solution as Dickens's own" (157).

fix in his *Pickwick*. Second, he emphasizes his production's success as evidence that his alterations improved *Pickwick* and made his version a worthwhile endeavour. For added measure, Moncrieff defends adapting the serialization prior to its conclusion:

Some apology is due to Mr. Dickens, for the liberty taken with him, in finishing his work before its time; but the great increase of popularity, which it must have received, from my putting it on the stage, will, I think, more than excuse a step, to which I was urged, rather by circumstances than desire. (iv)

Moncrieff claims that his adaptation increased *Pickwick's* popularity, which it may have, although doubtfully to a "great" extent, given that Moncrieff's production capitalized on the serial's existing popularity. Additionally, Moncrieff says that he only adapted it so soon due to the circumstances, effectively blaming Dickens for serializing the story instead of publishing it all at once. This Advertisement not only justifies *Sam Weller* from Moncrieff's perspective, but it taunts Dickens and challenges his authority as the master of Dickensian or "Pickwickian" writing.

In spite of the playwright's defence, Moncrieff's adaptations do not meet Dickens' standards; Moncrieff's audiences received a diminished Dickensian product. For example, Moncrieff's *Sam Weller* adjusts *Pickwick* to meet the demands of the early-Victorian stage, so that the adaptation features a number of songs to allow the actors and actresses to flex their versatile acting and singing skills. Moncrieff addresses *Pickwick's* absence of a "regular plot" and "continuity" (iii), identified in his Advertisement, primarily by reducing the narrative's number of characters. Minor characters Isabella and Emily are elevated in importance and given numerous songs to sing. To Moncrieff's credit, the simplification of the cast enables him to solve problems with *Pickwick's* lack of unity, a failing Dickens himself acknowledges in his 1847 preface to the book,<sup>19</sup> but Moncrieff's rearrangement of scenes and dialogue is not always effective since the playwright is more concerned with retaining *Pickwick's* best lines or moments than creating a unified narrative. For instance, Moncrieff retains the comical "valentine" scene (107-10), in which Tony Weller tells his son how to write a Valentine's letter to Mary. This scene relates to the plot in that Sam marries Mary at the play's conclusion, but Moncrieff excludes almost all

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19. Dickens writes, "Although, on one of these points, experience and study have since taught me something, and I could perhaps wish now that these chapters were strung together on a stronger thread of general interest, still, what they are they were designed to be" (883).

scenes featuring interactions between Sam and Mary, so their relationship is even less developed in his adaptation than it is in the serial.

In particular, Moncrieff's *Sam Weller* features famous lines out of context, weakening their impact. For example, in Dickens' original, during the trial, Sam is asked by the judge whether he spells his last name with a "V" or "W" and answers, "That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my Lord . . . I never had occasion to spell it more than once or twice in my life, but I spells it with a 'V'" (530). Sam's response, along with his father's approval, flusters the judge and is part of Dickens' mockery of the British court system. In Moncrieff's *Sam Weller*, Sam repeats this line when asked how he spells his name by Mayor Nupkins: "That depends on the taste and fancy of the speller—I never had occasion to spell it more nor vonce or twice, in my life, but I spell'd it with a *We!*" (123). Moncrieff's version is almost word-for-word identical, although he reinforces Sam's idiosyncratic speech and works in Tony Weller's later pronunciation of "V" as "We," but the dialogue's occurrence outside the trial, in addition to Nupkins calmly accepting Sam's oddness, means the legal commentary is lost, along with much of the dialogue's humour. The trial, for that matter, is an opportunity the adaptation misses, as that highpoint of the serialization is reduced to a summary narrated by Sam, partly in song (133-5). Moncrieff's decision to keep the line without the trial betrays his desire to give audiences their favourite lines from *Boz*, which contradicts his supposed interest in adding unity.

Furthermore, Moncrieff fundamentally alters the original novel's most important character development: Pickwick's change in heart during his imprisonment in the Fleet. In Dickens' version, Pickwick steadfastly refuses to pay the £750 he owes to the lawyers Dodson and Fogg following the trial, not relenting even after being sent to the Fleet, a debtors' prison. Pickwick yields only after Dodson and Fogg arrange for Mrs. Bardell to be sent to the Fleet as well, since she cannot pay their legal fees without the money Pickwick is legally bound to give her for the lawsuit. Pickwick's lawyer tells him that freeing Mrs. Bardell would be the "magnanimous revenge" of "releasing this woman from a scene of misery and debauchery, to which no man should ever be consigned . . . but the infliction of which, on any female, is frightful and barbarous" (726). Pickwick consents, and he leaves the Fleet a different character than the one who entered it, one who is more benevolent and less farcical than the Pickwick at the start of the serialization. Robert L. Patten, in "Boz, Phiz, and Pickwick in the Pound," identifies this moment as crucial in both Pickwick's development as a person and in the story's narrative unity: "Mr.

Pickwick's power to rescue others from their prisons, and to know himself and the world well enough to protect the idyllic communities and relationships from disruption by 'worldly' invaders, is essential to the comic resolution" (58). Pickwick's growth, I add, strengthens the overarching narrative.

This transformative moment is considerably weakened in Moncrieff's adaptation, where Pickwick escapes the Fleet because Jingle reveals to Sam that he is involved in a conspiracy with Dodson, Fogg, and Mrs. Bardell. Jingle says, "Dodson and Fogg—damn'd scoundrels—Mother Bardell—old hag!—my wife!—" (146). Since Jingle marries Mrs. Bardell in this adaptation, the lawsuit, which convicted Pickwick of breaking an engagement vow, is invalidated, and Pickwick leaves the Fleet in the play without paying money or maturing as a person. The social commentary of the original, in which Pickwick cannot defeat the lawyers and must witness debtors' suffering, is lost. Consequently, the play's narrative unity suffers from this change; Moncrieff's conspiracy twist is not justified within the context of his adaptation and makes little sense due to the absence of foreshadowing, as Jingle gives no hints that he has married Mrs. Bardell prior to his confession.

Moncrieff's *Sam Weller*, while popular in the 1830s, embodies the problems Dickens feared about his characters being distorted and a potential loss of interest in his ongoing narratives, and the play shows how these adaptations threatened Dickens' literary brand. In the late 1830s, theatrical adaptations of Dickens' works were stronger alternatives to his serializations than they now appear, since these adaptations relied on Dickens' melodramatic and theatrical conventions which have fallen out of current public favour. Hence, contemporary challenges to Dickens' literary brand, such as Moncrieff's, aggravated Dickens, as his aforementioned letters demonstrate. I am uncertain if Dickens read the Advertisement to *Sam Weller*, as I have not found records of Dickens' responding to it, but H. Philip Bolton notes that Dickens saw and objected to Moncrieff's *Sam Weller* (79) and *Poor Smike* (161), which prompted Moncrieff's defence. In response, Dickens targets Moncrieff specifically in *Nickleby*, and Dickens' anger at Moncrieff and the other pirates is undeniable, as his powerlessness to stop their profiting from his success embittered him and tarnished his literary brand.

### 1.3. Dickens Attacks the Imitators with *Nicholas Nickleby*

*Nicholas Nickleby* is Dickens' first concentrated attempt to comment on and attack literary

theft.<sup>20</sup> Dickens began *Nickleby* already aware of his countless imitators and his growing celebrity, and he uses his text to respond to the previously-mentioned circumstances that aggravated him. Dickens addressed his imitators, whom he referred to as pirates, directly prior to his first number in *The Nickleby Proclamation*, an advertisement for the upcoming work that doubled as a warning. In it, after announcing the date of the serialization's first number, Dickens refers to himself as "the only true and lawful 'BOZ'" (780). The proclamation, as it establishes on its first page, is arguably more concerned with distinguishing Dickens' literary brand from the imitations than it is with announcing the upcoming work. Dickens attacks the imitators, calling them "dishonest dullards" (780) who produce "cheap and wretched imitations of our delectable Works" (781). He claims these "kennel pirates are not worth the powder and shot of the law, inasmuch as whatever damages they may commit, they are in no condition to pay any" (780).<sup>21</sup> Dickens' claim warrants attention, as it recontextualizes his legal position to understate how little control he had of his intellectual property. He knew that he could not sue the imitators for plagiarism—he would have done so if he could, instead of issuing the proclamation—so he reasserts his authority by observing that his imitators lack money, implying that the true Boz is far wealthier in both monetary capital and imagination.

Showing the imitators are foremost in his thoughts, Dickens addresses them first in his notice, before he shifts to the public. He writes,

FIRSTLY,

TO PIRATES.

THAT we have at length devised a mode of execution for them, so summary and terrible, that if any gang or gangs thereof presume to hoist but one shred of the colours of the good ship NICKLEBY, we will hang them on gibbets so lofty and enduring, that their remains shall be a monument of our just vengeance to all succeeding ages; and it shall not lie in the power of any Lord High Admiral, on earth, to cause them to be taken down again. (781)

Despite his tone, Dickens' threats in this notice were empty; Bos released his penny-serial the same day that Dickens' *Nickleby* began while Moncrieff, Stirling, and many others adapted the

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20. Monica F. Cohen argues that Dickens possibly attacked plagiarists through Fagin, but her claim is debatable. In contrast, Nicholas's denouncement of pirates in *Nickleby* unquestionably attacks the pirate adaptations.

21. Ironically, Dickens later successfully sued someone who plagiarized *A Christmas Carol*, but the plagiarist escaped punishment by declaring bankruptcy, as I discuss in the next chapter.

narrative for the stage months before its conclusion, as Bolton's documentation of *Nickleby* adaptations attests (156-86). If stopping literary theft was Dickens' objective, he failed. The proclamation is interesting, since it represents one of Dickens' earliest efforts to deliberately control his literary brand through a print persona. Within these threats, Dickens acknowledges his imitators while simultaneously positioning himself above them and mocking their theft. He draws attention to the plagiarists as well, lest anyone should have been fooled by a cover with "Bos" in place of "Boz," and he emphasizes the value of his upcoming serialization. As Cohen writes, "what better way to recommend a piece of fiction than to suggest that it is worth stealing the first place! Thus piracy might in the end pay, but in more ways than one" (52). Like Cohen, I view *The Nickleby Proclamation* as a calculated advertisement, designed to confront the people who infuriated Dickens while elevating his literary brand.

This type of calculated writing continues in the novel the proclamation advertises, *Nicholas Nickleby*. The novel is the culmination of Dickens' earliest efforts, starting with *Sketches*, to establish a persona of himself as an author, and it is his response to his imitators, continuing the tone set in the proclamation. Since *Nickleby* was his fourth serialized project, Dickens' confidence as an author was at its highest point thus far, and he felt strong enough as an author to confront publishers and imitators alike. If he had two years earlier found it necessary for a young author to appear "unaffected and unassuming" (*Letters* 1.115), Dickens apparently no longer viewed himself a young author while writing *Nickleby*, as neither the proclamation nor the serialization suggests an "unaffected" writer. He lacked control over the external products based on his literary brand, such as the aforementioned adaptations, but he identified his literature as a means to affect society and assert his brand in *Nickleby*. After commenting wryly on literary lions in *Pickwick*, Dickens depicts a more nuanced criticism of fame, and the jealousy that results with it, in *Nickleby*, and his awareness of branding appears throughout the text. Thus, *Nickleby* is Dickens' greatest effort to criticize literary theft through his writing.

In spite of its haphazard narrative construction,<sup>22</sup> Dickens' *Nickleby* reflects his understanding of celebrity and branding. *Nickleby* is the product of a man in the process of becoming a novelist, and sudden shifts in the plot demonstrate Dickens' lack of planning. Therefore, as Schlicke observes in *Dickens and Popular Entertainment*, "In so loosely coherent a work as *Nickleby* any threads which help to provide unity should not be overlooked" (68). Schlicke examines the

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22. Others have noticed the novel's weak plotting. For example, Pykett refers to its structure as incoherent (52).

Crummles episodes, which he argues help link characters, as a unifying device, and, more recently, Timothy Gilmore has examined the novel as a sustained critique of nineteenth-century economics. Gilmore claims in his abstract that the novel can be "best understood as a kind of allegory of capital detailing the deleterious effects of reification upon social and personal life" (85). Instead of analyzing *Nickleby* in terms of entertainment or capital, I focus on the effects and manipulation of fame in the text. Similar to Gilmore, I divide the novel into three loose sections based on Nicholas' employment (87): first, his time spent as a teaching assistant for Squeers at Dotheboys Hall (chapters 1-16); second, his career as a hack playwright and actor for the Crummles troupe (chapters 17-33); and, finally, his respectable occupation as a clerk for the Cheeryble brothers, which lasts the longest of the three (chapters 34-65).<sup>23</sup> *Nickleby*'s tone and subject matter change dramatically from one section to the next. The first is a polemic against the Yorkshire schools, the second is picaresque, and the final builds to a traditional heroic resolution for Nicholas. In spite of these changes, the text retains thematic unity as fame and reputation, along with the jealousy from others that these ideals produce, are important in all three sections. Whereas Gilmore argues that "the effects of the capitalist mode of production" (87) progress throughout these sections, I contend that Nicholas's progression towards social respectability occurs simultaneously. Moreover, Nicholas's growth demonstrates Dickens' response to literary theft, as I elaborate.

In the first part of *Nickleby*, villains manipulate public perception for unethical ends. In these early chapters, branding is not the problem so much as the act of deliberate misrepresentation is. *Nickleby* is often described as Dickens' most theatrical text, and critics such as Pykett have observed how the characters seem to play theatrical roles (52). It is fitting, therefore, that the characters who play roles in order to fool others and profit from deception are the novel's villains, and these villains include Ralph Nickleby, Squeers, and the politician Gregsby in *Nickleby*'s first section. While all three demonstrate negative forms of branding, I focus on Mr. Gregsby's political lies, since Gregsby involves the newspaper reporters in his schemes. Gregsby's political reputation differs from Dickens' positive literary reputation, and Gregsby ultimately resembles the plagiarists who appropriated Dickens' literary brand.

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23. I provide somewhat arbitrary ranges for these sections. My divisions suggest a simpler structure than what is found in the novel, as there are chapters in which Nicholas is unemployed, and one where he works as a tutor for the Kenwigs family. My divisions reflect times when Nicholas decides to move to another place, often after challenging his uncle Ralph, rather than when he starts or finishes one of his jobs.

The association between Gregsbury and plagiarists becomes apparent shortly after he is introduced in *Nickleby*. Gregsbury is first seen being confronted by reporters over lies he made during his political campaign. He has crafted a public persona of himself which his actions and words belie. He responds to the reporters by first ignoring them and then saying, "I deny everything" (193). When confronted about his lies, he strategically pretends he has never been duplicitous. In this regard, Gregsbury continues the example previously set by Ralph and Squeers, and the politician's conversation with Nicholas connects Gregsbury to Dickens' issues with publishers and writers who steal his works.

Dickens creates this connection by stressing Gregsbury's preoccupation with printed stories of himself and with authors' intellectual property rights. The character initially believes Nicholas is another reporter, so Gregsbury ascertains the protagonist has no relation to the newspapers: "You have no connexion with any of those rascally papers, have you? . . . You didn't get into the room to hear what was going forward, and put it in print, eh?" (195). As expected of a public figure, Gregsbury is fixated on how he appears in the press. More importantly, Gregsbury associates himself with Dickens' literary enemies when he refers to copyright laws. Gregsbury says,

For instance, if any preposterous bill were brought forward for giving poor grubbing devils of authors a right to their own property, I should like to say, that I for one would never consent to opposing an insurmountable bar to the diffusion of literature among *the people*,—you understand?—that the creations of the pocket, being man's, might belong to one man, or one family; but that the creations of the brain, being God's, ought as a matter of course to belong to the people at large—and if I was pleasantly disposed, I should like to make a joke about posterity, and say that those who wrote for posterity, should be content to be rewarded by the approbation *of* posterity. . . (197)

This passage pointedly references Dickens' problems with the lack of regulation for intellectual property. The dishonest politician opposes authors possessing legal copyright of their works, aligning himself with the plagiarists. He defends his position by arguing that he works in favour of the people, since allowing plagiarists to operate will supposedly spread literature among said people. Yet Gregsbury's disposition to advance the good of the people is undermined by his campaign lies and the pitiful salary he offers Nicholas for a demanding job (fifteen shillings a week). While not a plagiarist, Gregsbury represents the political system that enabled the hack writers to plagiarize the author's texts without repercussion. Both the plagiarists and Gregsbury

disregard the good work and names of honest people. Thus, Gregsby's depiction equates him to the plagiarists of Dickens and is part of Dickens' response to his imitators in *Nickleby*.

In addition to attacking the political legislators who enable plagiarism, Dickens reveals one of his growing concerns in Gregsby's aforementioned speech: posterity. Gregsby mocks writers, saying those who write for posterity can be satisfied with the "approbation of posterity" (197), or the approval of others, although Dickens arguably aimed for both critical and commercial success from the start of his career. By this point in writing *Nickleby*, Dickens' financial situation had improved considerably, so the reference to posterity in a passage that focuses on his personal struggles with copyright laws indicates that lasting success had become a growing concern for Dickens. Certainly, posterity and social standing are important to Nicholas, in addition to the author, and the protagonist's subsequent occupations both earn him greater salaries and bolster his reputation more than being Gregsby's assistant would have. Hence, Gregsby represents a negative example of branding so that Nicholas can reject him and aim towards respectability in subsequent parts of the novel.

*Nickleby*'s second part, by introducing Crummles, suggests people who rely on branding are not necessarily villains, unlike Gregsby. Crummles shrewdly manipulates appearances and is a master advertiser. His branding is best exemplified by his daughter Ninetta, often referred to as the "infant phenomenon." Crummles says his daughter is "Not a day" over ten, although the narration makes it clear that she has been ten "for five good years" (283). He and his wife try to prevent her from growing so that they can pretend she is a talented child, although the actor Mr. Folair says her skill is less than average and that Crummles' constant promotion of the infant phenomenon is costing the troupe money (284). Regardless of the strategy's lack of success, Crummles' handling of his daughter as a performer demonstrates his understanding of branding's role in advertising, and his marketing of his troupe is effective when it does not involve his daughter, such as when he advertises "Positively the last appearance of Mr Vincent Crummles of Provincial Celebrity!!!" (592) later in *Nickleby*. However, Crummles differs from Gregsby in that acting is part of the former's occupation, and his branding benefits him and the other troupe members when it does not involve the infant phenomenon. Schlicke writes that "Crummles is a showman through and through" (66), and his showmanship is honest and designed to entertain people, which contrasts Ralph, who actively harms other people, including his son Smike. Nicholas's contrasting responses to the two men indicate Crummles' and Ralph's respective

moralties: Nicholas frequently explodes with anger at Ralph's deceitfulness, but he witnesses the problem of the infant phenomenon "with a smile" (284). Of course, Nicholas views work as an actor beneath him as a gentleman, and Crummles' theatrical and "public farewell," upon the protagonist's exit from the troupe, is to Nicholas's "most profound annoyance" (381). Nicholas's irritation demonstrates the flaws of public attention, and *Nickleby's* second part reveals the problems with celebrity stem primarily from the jealousy it produces; moreover, this commentary applies to Dickens' imitators, whom he saw as jealous of his success.

Nicholas encounters professional jealousy while working for the Crummles troupe, and the actors' desperation for fame resembles that of Dickens' imitators. Jealousy and envy are major concerns that troupe managers must deal with, and the Crummles troupe is not exempt from this issue. The actor Folair draws attention to this problem while pretending to praise the infant phenomenon for Crummles' sake: "she ought to be in one of the large houses in London, or nowhere; and I tell you more, without mincing the matter, that if it wasn't for envy and jealousy in some quarter that you know of, she would be" (283). He invents the envy and jealousy others feel for Ninetta, as his confession to Nicholas about her absence of phenomenal skill reveals, but the problem itself is common in the entertainment industry. Dickens, as a celebrated author, knew of professional jealousy, and he integrates his knowledge into the troupe's feelings, as demonstrated in Folair's comments. Performers earn income based on public admiration, so actors who receive more praise and become celebrities are resented by less successful performers whose livelihood is threatened by their more famous counterparts. The same applies to authors, and Dickens, as one of the most popular writers, threatened the prospects of his less successful contemporaries.

Nicholas, upon becoming a popular actor, suffers from the other actors' professional jealousy. The actor Lenville has Folair deliver an insulting invitation to Nicholas, in which Lenville states his intention of pulling Nicholas's nose "in the presence of the company" (360). Likely, Lenville wishes to publicly humiliate Nicholas to reduce the latter man's popularity. Timothy Spurgin observes that of Dickens' insights in this novel, "the keenest may be his recognition of the close connection between celebrity and humiliation" (47). In this instance, Lenville intends to gain celebrity at Nicholas's expense, although the former is also willing to debase himself to gain this attention. To add to Spurgin's argument, I stress that jealousy prompts Lenville's actions. Folair says, "Since you [Nicholas] came here, Lenville has done nothing but second business, and,

instead of having a reception every night as he used to have, they have let him come on as if he was nobody" (362). Lenville is jealous of Nicholas's success, and the lesser actor craves the attention the protagonist earns, but Nicholas's celebrity threatens Lenville's career, prompting the latter's desperation. Folair adds that Mr. Lenville considered stabbing Nicholas during a staging of *Romeo and Juliet*, explaining "Notoriety, notoriety, is the thing" (362). Dickens, judging from Folair, understands the power of negative publicity, and Lenville calculates how much money his infamy will earn him. According to Folair, if Lenville had stabbed Nicholas,

it would have been worth—ah, it would have been worth eight or ten shillings a week to him. All the town would have come to see the actor who nearly killed a man by mistake; I shouldn't wonder if it had got him an engagement in London. However, he was obliged to try some other mode of getting popular, and this one occurred to him. It's a clever idea, really. If you had shown the white feather, and let him pull your nose, he'd have got it into the paper; if you had sworn the peace against him, it would have been in the paper too, and he'd have been just as much talked about as you—don't you see? (362)

Folair praises Lenville for his ingenuity, as he too is jealous of Nicholas and is as preoccupied with fame as the other actors. This passage, in particular, emphasizes the actors' fixation on popularity; they are willing to threaten the lives of others to obtain any measure of celebrity, even if only through scandal. Folair especially admires Lenville's threat to pull Nicholas's nose, since the threat creates a situation in which Lenville will receive attention from the press, regardless of the outcome.

Lenville's criminal fantasies connect him to Dickens' imitators, who stole from Dickens to receive their small scandalous celebrity, so Nicholas's departure from the acting troupe places him above the petty celebrity that actors fight for. To Folair and Lenville's surprise, Nicholas is short-tempered, and he publicly forces Lenville to yield in humiliating fashion. Nicholas's actions prevent Lenville from gaining celebrity, positive or scandalous, and Nicholas delivers the worst punishment possible to the actor, which the other jealous troupe members notice, as seen in the fear behind their sudden deferential behaviour to Nicholas (365). However, Nicholas debases himself while punishing Lenville, since his means of humiliating Lenville have the same outcome, obtaining notoriety, as the actor's plan to stab Nicholas. This incident demonstrates how Nicholas, who has masked his identity with the pseudonym "Mr. Johnson," engages in the same type of celebrity-seeking behaviour as the other actors. For a gentleman, this pursuit of

celebrity is problematic, and Spurgin argues that the novel indicates Dickens' suspicion that "celebrity will rob him of his dignity and self-respect" (47). I add that celebrity gained from acting, based on Nicholas's confrontation with Lenville, reduces the protagonist's self-respect. Spurgin argues that in *Nickleby*, "Dickens is striving for something grander, something more permanent and more respectable, than mere celebrity" (51). Nicholas, after knocking down Lenville, also aims for fame above celebrity, and the protagonist announces his intention to leave the troupe shortly after the incident, as if he realizes how continuing on this path will diminish his person, as Dickens' imitators diminished themselves by copying the famous author.

In this manner, *Nickleby*'s second part demonstrates that branding is not necessarily wrong, as Dickens himself used it as a strategy to further his career, but these scenes stress that people's reasons for desiring fame and their reactions to people who gain popularity determine whether celebrity is worth having. In a letter to Bentley, Dickens refers to the jealousy he endures, which is reminiscent of what Nicholas experiences:

I kept very quiet, purposely. Since I have been a successful author, I have seen how much ill-will and jealousy there is afloat, and have acquired an excellent character as a quiet, modest fellow. I like to assume a virtue, though I have it not; it has served me with a subject more than once. (*Letters* 1.207)

Dickens differentiates himself from the negativity his celebrity provoked by attributing it to his "excellent character." He mentions that he uses his experiences as material for his writing, and Nicholas's sister Kate, like Dickens, rises above the jealousy she suffers with her virtue, hiding her "bitter tears" from Miss Knag (225). Nicholas, on the other hand, is not a "quiet, modest fellow" as Dickens describes his reputation. Nicholas assumes a virtue, however, when laughing at Crummles' excessive farewell, since he recognizes that it is "as well to put a good face upon the matter" (383). Nicholas realizes that the correct social response to Crummles in the situation, despite his annoyance, is to laugh along with their spectators, but he hurries to abandon Crummles. The problem with the jealous troupe members is that their desperation for quick celebrity is little different from the imitators that Dickens detested. Lenville considers causing a serious injury because he could profit from it. His underhanded means echo those used by Dickens' imitators, who copied the author's work for easy profit rather than creating their own artistic work; for them, Dickens was a shortcut to a momentary celebrity—momentary, in that

Bos, Moncrieff, and others have essentially become forgotten, in contrast to Dickens whose fame continues unabated.

In the third part of *Nickleby*, since minor celebrity is not a worthy objective for him, Nicholas gains an occupation as a secretary for the Cheeryble brothers which is more respectable, if not as glamorous, than his acting life. The Cheeryble brothers, Dickens' idealized businessmen, are models of respectable behaviour, in stark contrast to Gregsbury and Crummles. As a result, the third part shows the importance of respectability, a quality that Dickens believed his imitators lacked. Additionally, Nicholas's rant at the hack playwright reveals Dickens' concern with obtaining fame the correct way. Nicholas's uncharacteristic anger in the scene reveals Dickens' own feelings, and it connects the troupe to the pirate adapters while showing Dickens' response to their jeopardizing of his brand: assuming moral superiority.

Nicholas obtains an occupation worthy of a middle-class gentleman in *Nickleby's* third part, and the Cheeryble brothers are the epitome of good branding, as they develop their names through impeccable conduct. The brothers' kindness is scarcely believable, but Dickens claims to base them on real people in *Nickleby's* preface, while simultaneously stating the good qualities they embody: "their liberal charity, their singleness of heart, their noble nature, and their unbounded benevolence, are no creations of the Author's brain" (4). The Cheerybles demonstrate their goodness almost immediately. Charles Cheeryble impresses Nicholas with a generous donation for a man collecting money for a widow. Charles says, "My brother Ned is a good fellow, and you're a good fellow too, Trimmers . . . Put me down for another twenty—or—stop a minute, stop a minute. We mustn't look ostentatious; put me down ten pound, and Tim Linkinwater ten pound" (431). This scene establishes the brothers as generous, but it also shows their concern with how others perceive them, similar to most of the novel's characters, since Charles wishes to not be seen as ostentatious. However, Charles avoids this problem by boosting the reputation of his employee Linkinwater, and this additional kindness makes the gesture doubly impressive to Nicholas. *Nickleby's* characters cannot speak highly enough of the brothers, indicating the value of the two brothers' name. For instance, their nephew Frank Cheeryble shares Nicholas's enthusiasm for the brothers and says, "I don't usually call myself the nephew of the firm . . . but of the two excellent individuals who compose it, I am proud to say I *am* the nephew" (528). Frank's proud reply shows his respect for his uncles while stressing that their good names are strongly associated with the firm as a brand, after Nicholas refers to them as

Cheeryble Brothers. The brothers' good conduct, which extends even to Ralph, whom the brothers wish not to see "disgraced and punished" (729), elevates them above all the other brands in the novel. The brothers' brand is ideal since they are not ostentatious like Crummles, and their morals are good, unlike those of Ralph or Squeers, so the Cheerybles are not like the imitators whom Dickens hated and criticized so often.

Dickens' hatred of his imitators is expressed at length through Nicholas in *Nickleby's* third section, and Nicholas's good conduct and social standing upon joining the Cheerybles enables the protagonist to look down upon a particular pirate. Nicholas's denouncement of the pirate playwright Snittle Timberry, the proxy for Moncrieff, seems to be out of character for Nicholas, as he acts as a cipher for Dickens' opinion, but it is in the spirit of the protagonist's growing respectability after joining the Cheerybles. In Chapter 48, Nicholas visits the Crummles troupe and denounces Timberry, and this scene confirms that the protagonist has risen in stature by leaving the troupe, and he has avoided becoming a disreputable person akin to Timberry. The scene shows Nicholas's rise while simultaneously criticizing Dickens' imitators. Timberry is associated with Moncrieff when he says, "When I dramatise a book, sir . . . *that's* fame—for its author" (597). The fictional playwright's justification, where he claims to make the original author more famous, is precisely what Moncrieff argues in the playwright's previously discussed Advertisement for *Sam Weller*. By hiring Timberry, Crummles and his troupe are associated with the pirate adapters whom Dickens reviled. Hence, Nicholas asserts his moral superiority when he speaks on his author's behalf:

For instance, you take the uncompleted books of living authors, fresh from their hands, wet from the press, cut, hack, and carve them to the powers and capacities of your actors, and the capability of your theatres, finish unfinished works, hastily and crudely vamp up ideas not yet worked out by their original projector, but which have doubtless cost him many thoughtful days and sleepless nights; by a comparison of incidents and dialogue, down to the very last word he may have written a fortnight before, do your utmost to anticipate his plot—all this without his permission, and against his will . . . Now, show me the distinction between such pilfering as this, and picking a man's pocket in the street. . . (598)

This attack is perhaps the least subtle and most personal that Dickens levels against anyone in his fictional works, and Nicholas has no reason to feel so passionate against these hack adapters.

Nicholas's rant is, at least, defensible on Dickens' part when viewing *Nickleby* as a commentary on constructing a literary brand and Nicholas's character as someone progressively developing a respectable public reputation as he improves his station. Timberry, as a stand-in for Moncrieff, represents Dickens' notion of the lowest form of branding since Timberry copies others to obtain a small, momentary amount of celebrity, a practice beneath both Dickens and Nicholas. Discussing this scene, Spurgin writes, "with this speech, Dickens offers not only a denunciation of piracy and plagiarism, but also an assertion of his own claim to something grander than mere celebrity, something that might eventually place him in the same 'magic circle' as Shakespeare" (58). I agree with Spurgin and add that, in terms of brand construction, Dickens asserts that he is above men like Timberry and Moncrieff by speaking through Nicholas; consequently, Dickens tells his readers that his literary writing is better than faulty imitations, and, lacking legal recourse against plagiarism, Dickens' best response to them to control his brand at this time was through his product. To expand further on Spurgin's view, this speech also situates the fictional Nicholas above fame seekers such as Timberry, and his higher place in society is later confirmed by his conduct towards Ralph and Gride.

The novel's conclusion, additionally, establishes that Nicholas has made a respectable brand for himself. Whereas Ralph loses money and social standing, Nicholas becomes wealthy and part of a brand of his own. Dickens writes,

The money which Nicholas acquired in right of his wife he invested in the firm of Cheeryble Brothers, in which Frank had become a partner. Before many years elapsed, the business began to be carried on in the names of 'Cheeryble and Nickleby,' so that Mrs Nickleby's prophetic anticipations were realised at last. (774)

The serialization's previous numbers identify the Cheerybles' firm as the finest in *Nickleby* since their brand is built on goodwill. Nicholas imitates their behaviour and acts less hot-blooded, and his progression becomes complete symbolically when he joins his name to the firm along with Frank. Because Nickleby is added to the firm's name, Nicholas becomes a part of their brand. The ending hints that Nicholas will obtain, if not fame, a joy that surpasses the celebrity offered by the Crummles troupe. The ending emphasizes the Cheeryble brothers' happiness after they retire: "Who needs to be told that *they* were happy? They were surrounded by happiness of their own creation, and lived but to increase it" (774). Notably, Dickens describes this happiness as their "creation," meaning the Cheerybles obtained it autonomously, similar to how Dickens

wished to obtain his fame. While this passage does not mention the brothers in terms of fame or celebrity, it prioritizes control, and the lasting success of the Cheerybles is secured by their nephew and Nicholas. Any celebrity the Crummles troupe has by *Nickleby's* final chapter is undermined by Dickens not referring to them after Nicholas sees Crummles for the last time; their absence implies that they lacked sufficient celebrity to warrant a reference. Nicholas, in leaving the Crummles' troupe for the Cheerybles, has made the correct decision in terms of lasting fame, since he works for a firm that will continue longer and over which he will have more control.

Consequently, the last section of *Nickleby* shows Dickens' preoccupation with both his brand and enduring legacy, because they offered him means to defeat his imitators. According to *Nickleby*, establishing a literary brand by any means is insufficient, since the esteem of others and a positive legacy are more important. Nicholas escapes his job for Squeers, because the schoolmaster's conduct is brutal and disgraceful, making the job shameful for Nicholas, and he leaves Crummles because the theatre is home to petty jealousy and cannot lead to an enduring legacy. Although Ralph is wealthy, he is punished for his immorality and literally destroys his legacy by contributing to his son's death, whereas the Cheeryble brothers arrange marriages and prepare their businesses for their departure. Dickens' imitators threatened his legacy, so it is appropriate that Nicholas becomes a proper gentleman again, regains his father's home, and vanquishes a hack playwright, as Dickens intends to do in the *Nickleby Proclamation*. I agree with Spurgin that Dickens aims for "something grander" (51) than ordinary fame, and his goal manifests itself in the narrative through the elevation of legacy, seen when Nicholas perpetuates the Cheerybles' successful firm, and this legacy represents a long-term victory over the pirates and plagiarists. If Dickens could not stop them during his life, he could create literary works that will be remembered long after his imitators are forgotten. Certainly, history has favoured Dickens in this regard. Dickens is a well-known author, long after his death, but few know who Bos or Moncrieff were.

In each of *Nickleby's* three parts, Dickens uses his writing to combat literary theft and create his literary brand. Dickens' efforts against his imitators were ineffectual at this time, in that plagiarists and pirates alike copied him without remorse, but he created a literary brand through his initial works, including *Pickwick*, *Twist*, and *Nickleby*. Moncrieff's *Sam Weller* was one of many unlicensed adaptations that provided nineteenth-century audiences with an inferior brand

of Dickensian content. Dickens unsubtly attacked Moncrieff and other pirates in *Nickleby*, which did not stop them but expressed his anger to readers; consequently, Dickens' combative attitude was visible and became part of his literary brand. Additionally, the published completed version of *Nickleby* contained a new tool Dickens used to add to his literary brand: the Maclise portrait. Daniel Maclise's portrait of Dickens appeared as a frontispiece to the bound book, and its depiction of a young, handsome Dickens, reposing in a chair, added to the author's popularity. In a letter to J. P. Harley, Dickens writes, "Maclise has made another face of me, which all people say is astonishing" (*Letters* 1.558). The editors of his letters, in a footnote, observe that so "great was public demand for proofs and prints of the engraved portrait, that the original plate deteriorated" (*Letters* 1.599). The Maclise portrait served as the public's primary source of Dickens' appearance for approximately the next twenty years. Moreover, the Maclise portrait solidifies another one of *Nickleby*'s effects on Dickens' career, which is that the author surpassed his fictional characters in terms of popularity and became a celebrity the public could identify and whose serializations would sell based on Dickens' name. While *Nickleby* shows Dickens' growing skill in creating a literary brand through his literature, the Maclise portrait provided a means through which readers could connect with Dickens, and the portrait introduced the strategy Dickens would further develop in the next stage of his career: crafting an intimate relationship with his readers.

## Chapter 2: Author-Reader Intimacy and Authorized Adaptations

The ambitious *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens' project after *Nicholas Nickleby*, continues his efforts against his imitators. However, this weekly miscellany, which ran in 1840 and 1841, was not the success Dickens envisioned; within three months, it became no more than an elaborate framework for his next two novels, first *The Old Curiosity Shop* and second the long-gestating *Barnaby Rudge*. Although the concept of the weekly miscellany failed, *Master Humphrey's Clock* increased Dickens' popularity and readership, as his *Curiosity Shop* boosted sales of the magazine to 100,000 a week, making it his best-selling serialization, even though it was not his most profitable.<sup>24</sup> While *Nickleby* reveals Dickens' reservations about celebrity, he nonetheless craved intimacy with his readers and audiences, and *Curiosity Shop's* popularity helped fulfill this need. However, the awkward execution of *Master Humphrey's Clock* limited Dickens' ability to connect with his fans. Instead, Dickens would not craft a persona closely intimate with his readers until he published *A Christmas Carol* in 1843. Dickens cultivates this intimacy in the *Carol* in two significant ways: first, through the novella's first-person narrator who speaks directly to the reader as a friend, and, second, by writing a story well-suited for reading aloud. This second technique helped make the *Carol* Dickens' most-adapted story and later enabled him to use the text, after a few modifications, for his Public Readings. At this stage in his career, Dickens used a literary persona akin to Byron's to endear himself to readers; Dickens differs from Byron, however, in that he emphasizes the stories rather than himself, and Dickens' persona desires a reciprocal friendship with his readers. In addition to these efforts to cultivate intimacy, Dickens exerted further influence over his works by authorizing stage adaptations of the *Carol* and his other Christmas stories, especially *The Cricket on the Hearth*. Therefore, in this chapter, I examine how Dickens' *Master Humphrey* strategies failed to secure his brand, in contrast to his better strategies in the *Carol*, since the latter prepared his audiences for his Public Readings by building his intimacy with readers and redirecting them to adaptations of his choice.

### 2.1. The Failed Miscellany

*Master Humphrey's Clock* indicates the difficulty Dickens had securing his brand through a miscellany, but it taught him lessons about managing his literary brand that he applied to the

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24. The weekly serial had a higher production cost than his monthly counterparts, which limited profits, and Dickens paid a considerable expense to free himself from Bentley and had to borrow over £700 from Chapman & Hall (Slater 154).

*Carol* and subsequent texts. In particular, Dickens' attempt to defeat his plagiarists through *Master Humphrey's Clock*, the miscellany's semi-autobiographical first-person narrator, Master Humphrey, and the connection to his readers that he developed with *The Old Curiosity Shop* influenced how Dickens shaped his persona in the *Carol*. *Curiosity Shop* strengthened Dickens' brand during his lifetime and earned him many readers, although the serial has since been mocked by the likes of Oscar Wilde as one of Dickens' weaker texts. With *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens failed to use a new publishing format to defeat his plagiarists and control his brand, but the experiment was not a total loss since he succeeded at gaining readers through the phenomenal success of *Curiosity Shop*.

Dickens began the miscellany with some of his most ambitious intentions, indicating he thought it would improve the selling power of his brand considerably. Prior to the first issue, Dickens wrote to Forster about his plans and stipulations for *Master Humphrey's Clock*:

Nobody but myself would ever pursue *these ideas*, but I must have assistance of course, and there must be some contents of a different kind. Their general nature might be agreed upon beforehand, but I should stipulate that this assistance is chosen solely by me, and that the contents of every number are as much under my own control, and subject to as little interference, as those of a number of *Pickwick* or *Nickleby*. (*Letters* 1.564)

This passage reveals much about Dickens' plans for his brand in 1840. First, his misguided insistence that no one else would entertain his ideas indicates he believed literary innovation would hinder plagiarists; this notion was fundamentally flawed, as it disregards the purpose of plagiarism, which is to steal innovation. Furthermore, Dickens' weekly miscellany was inspired by publications from the previous century, such as the *Tatler*, so the idea was less original than he suggests. Dickens' stipulation that he must have as much control over the project as possible demonstrates his growing ability to impose his will on his publishers. In this case, he sought to develop his brand with the miscellany by limiting both his imitators and Chapman & Hall. Crucially, Dickens viewed the originality of ideas and publication as most beneficial to his literary brand, a marked contrast to his approach once the Public Readings began and he profited from readers' nostalgia for his older works.

Literary theft and its impact on his brand still concerned Dickens after *Nickleby*, which influenced his decision to publish weekly rather than monthly. His object of combating the plagiarists is made pointedly in a letter to George Cattermole: "Instead of being published in

*monthly* parts at a *shilling* each, only, it will be published in *weekly* parts at three pence *and* monthly parts at a shilling—my object being to baffle the imitators and make it as novel as possible" (*Letters* 2.7). His monthly stories had been frequently plagiarized, so Dickens hoped that imitators could not keep pace with a weekly serialization, and he abandoned the monthly format in part to prevent plagiarism from tarnishing his brand. However, the new publication method did not deter the plagiarists; in "Dickens, 'Dickensian', and the Pseudo-Dickens Industry," Adam Abraham notes that Bos copied the form and narrative with *Mister Humphries' Clock*, and George Reynolds did likewise with *Master Timothy's Book-Case*, while the serial received multiple unsanctioned dramatizations (766). Dickens' strategies to stop plagiarism failed, which was one of the earliest signs that his miscellany was not meeting his expectations.

Worse for Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock* was losing readers after its first issue due to the miscellaneous, weekly format intended to baffle the plagiarists. The initially poor sales are well-documented; for example, Lyn Pykett notes that the miscellany was one of Dickens' few failures (58), and Robert Tracy writes that "sales fell off dramatically when readers discovered that the new work was not a sustained novel by Charles Dickens but a miscellany of grotesque tales written for one another by a group of eccentrics" (26). Dickens' literary brand up to this point, aside from *Sketches*, was built on serial narratives, and the miscellany departs from what made him popular; his audience, in turn, rejected the project. In "Dickens and the Evolution of *The Old Curiosity Shop*," Paul Schlicke writes that Dickens' plan for *Master Humphrey's Clock* "represented a radical redirection of the perspective which had been instrumental to his success" (3). By changing his publication method and literature so drastically, Dickens responded to potential changes in the literary market before they happened, and his contemporary readership's response to the miscellany indicates Dickens was being unnecessarily cautious. De Saint Victor argues that Dickens may have feared losing readers with monthly installments and that he thought writing monthly serials would exhaust him (576). If so, Dickens learned that writing weekly issues was more tiring since he needed to write more pages each month, overall, than he did for the monthly serials (Slater 150). Assuming de Saint Victor is correct, Dickens took measures to secure his brand with *Master Humphrey's Clock* by keeping his readers interested with a new type of publication, but the attempt had the opposite effect and lost readers' attention since they preferred his older style. The new weekly format was supposed to gain readers and deter pirates, and its success at neither can be attributed to Dickens' departure from his brand.

Dickens took advantage of the miscellany's serialization, however, and soon worked to salvage his brand with two strategies: focusing *Master Humphrey's Clock* on a single narrative and bringing back old characters. He introduced the first chapter of *Curiosity Shop* in the fourth number and quickly expanded the narrative into a novel. By the twelfth number, the serialization focused entirely on *Curiosity Shop*, and the gambit worked. The shift in focus was not Dickens' only attempt to regain his readers; in the fifth number, he tried to create interest in the Master Humphrey frame narrative by adding Mr. Pickwick and the Wellers to Humphrey's club, the only time in Dickens' career that old characters appeared in a new serialization. Pickwick's return is relevant to my argument, as it demonstrates Dickens' ongoing preoccupation with his plagiarists' attacks on his brand during *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Humphrey and Pickwick know of each other through print prior to their meeting, and Humphrey's comments allude to plagiarized versions of *The Pickwick Papers*: "As I thought it a good opportunity of advertising to the circumstances, I condoled with him upon the various libels on his character which had found their way to print" (51). Dickens' *Pickwick* is presented here as the legitimate version of the narrative, while the plagiarisms by Bos and others are libel against the character and the author, by extension.<sup>25</sup> While *Curiosity Shop* succeeded, the insertion of Pickwick and the Wellers failed since the characters depart too much from their *Pickwick* iterations. Pickwick interacts with Humphrey in the miscellany rather than London society, as he does in *Pickwick*, and this change dulls his comedic impact. Although Dickens uses Pickwick to mock his imitators, the author's reliance on the pre-existing character is little better than the plagiarists who wrote sequels to *Pickwick*, and is far from the novelty he imagined when conceiving *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

Ultimately, Pickwick and the Wellers failed since they could not fix a key flaw in the miscellany's frame narrative: its first-person narrator Humphrey. While the character contains aspects of Dickens and indicates his desire to endear himself to his readers, Master Humphrey's execution undermines these efforts since he falters as a literary persona for Dickens. For instance, the character's first words in *Master Humphrey's Clock* are "The reader must not expect to know where I live" (1). It is not clear that a fictional character is addressing the audience, which invites readers to imagine Dickens is speaking to them directly through a persona. This

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25. Adam Abraham examines this scene as well in "Pseudo-Dickens Industry" and elaborates on the significance of Pickwick referring to Cervantes while discussing the libels against his character: "These 'libels' are publications that wrested Samuel Pickwick into imitative narratives or allographic sequels. Cervantes also suffered the theft of his literary property" (765). Moncrieff quotes Cervantes in his Advertisement for *Sam Weller!* (i), making the reference even more apt in *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

address treats the reader as Dickens' friend, encouraging intimacy. A distinction between Dickens and Humphrey is not made until Humphrey refers to himself as a "mis-shapen, deformed, old man" (3),<sup>26</sup> which Dickens was not. Humphrey's presence, afterwards, is decidedly not Dickens', and this distance between reader and author reduces the character's ability to bridge the gap between the two. K. A. Chittick argues that Humphrey is flawed because of his separation from the author. She claims that Dickens' "artistic error was in constructing a narrator whose character was unequal to his own narrative talents" (163). While I would not say that Humphrey is necessarily unequal to Dickens' talents, it is true that Dickens unceremoniously and boldly removes Humphrey as the novel's narrator in the eighth number of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, and the character disappears almost entirely from the miscellany for the rest of its publication.<sup>27</sup> After Dickens realized the character's detrimental effect on his brand, his response was swift and decisive, and it speaks poorly of Humphrey that Dickens' solution is to effectively replace the character's narration with his own.

Although the miscellaneous nature of *Master Humphrey's Clock* failed to fulfill Dickens' ambitions, his ability to maintain interest in his brand through *Curiosity Shop* and expand his readership during the 1840s should not be understated. Although Oscar Wilde is often quoted for saying "one must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing" (qtd. in Giffone 102) and mocks the work as overly sentimental, the serial was a phenomenal critical and commercial success during publication. Edgar Allen Poe, for instance, writes, "It is scarcely possible to speak of it too well. It is in all respects a tale which will secure for its author the enthusiastic admiration of every man of genius" (24). Dickens' efforts to restore his literary brand with *Curiosity Shop* succeeded among his contemporary audience. Edgar Johnson argues that *Curiosity Shop* triumphed due to Dickens' "deliberate design. Dickens knew his position depended on his readers, who could not be argued or battered into liking what they did not like" (304). The discrepancy between contemporary and more recent assessments might exist because it is difficult to experience the novel as its original readers did, as modern readers encounter the story as a completed novel rather than a weekly serialization. When viewed as a finished novel, the flaws in the narrative, which prompted Pykett to describe *Curiosity Shop* as a "miscellany

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26. A note on my editions: I used digital facsimiles of *Master Humphrey's Clock* by the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, since they represent what Dickens' contemporary audience encountered. References to other material relating to *The Old Curiosity Shop*, such as Dickens' preface and Advertisement, are from the Clarendon edition.

27. Dickens reveals that Humphrey is Grandfather Trell's brother, so Humphrey is not as absent from the story as he seems. However, this revelation is illogical and criticized by scholars such as Mundhenk (655).

among miscellany" (60), are easier to notice, whereas its strengths as a serial are harder to discern. In "Dickens' Contrapuntal Artistry," Jerome Meckier discusses how Dickens built suspense in *Curiosity Shop* through the process of serialization. For instance, Meckier observes that Dickens forced his audience to wait nine weeks to find out if Little Nell dies, which explains why American dock workers kept asking about her fate (199). These serialization techniques engaged Dickens' contemporary readers and fulfilled their desire for his serialized literary brand after the brief wane it suffered during the first issues of *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

*Curiosity Shop's* success brought Dickens closer to his fans, even if Humphrey, as a narrator and persona for Dickens, failed to win the author new readers in the short term. In Forster's view, the novel did "more than any other of his works to make the bond between himself and his readers one of personal attachment" (1.117). This aspect of the novel applies less to Dickens' relationship with later readers, as Wilde's criticism indicates, but Forster illustrates *Curiosity Shop's* immediate impact. Besides affecting the author's relationship with readers, the novel boosted Dickens' popularity and expanded his readership to new levels; he never equalled, much less surpassed, *Curiosity Shop's* sales of 100,000 per issue with any of his other serials, including *Rudge*, the next novel in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. However, Dickens' popularity in 1840-1841 went beyond these sales since each issue was often shared and read aloud in large groups. Richard Altick estimates that each sold issue represented about fifteen people who read or heard the story, suggesting that over a million people may have followed *Curiosity Shop's* serialization at its peak (71). Hence, Dickens likely had a larger audience than the sales numbers suggest. Dickens' abandonment of Humphrey as the narrator of *Curiosity Shop* is significant in terms of cultivating intimacy with readers because Dickens switched Humphrey's narration for his usual third-person narration prior to the miscellany's rise in popularity. As Schlicke observes, this change means that readers received "the authoritative voice of 'Charles Dickens'" instead of Humphrey (10). I add that this change likely heightened the intimacy Dickens felt between himself and his readers, since they preferred his authoritative voice over Humphrey's. In this sense, Forster is correct about the novel's influence on Dickens' relationship with readers.

Following the triumph of *Curiosity Shop*, *Rudge* was a relative failure and *Master Humphrey's Clock* finished its serialization in December, 1841. *Rudge* was less successful than *Curiosity Shop*, both commercially and critically, and Dickens' first historical novel failed to capture public interest the same way any of his previous serializations had. *Rudge* has generally

been neglected by readers and critics, neither praised nor criticized, and Pykett refers to it as Dickens' least-read book (68). In my view, the novel suffered commercially since it is derived from an earlier form of novel writing, the three-volume historical novel that Scott popularized, and was not initially intended for serialization. Dickens' letters indicate that his struggles with Bentley negatively affected his writing of *Rudge*, once he finally began the project.<sup>28</sup> Regardless, Dickens' response to *Master Humphrey's Clock's* second decline, which not even an ongoing novel could reverse, was calculated to preserve his literary brand: end the weekly experiment and return to monthly serializations.

After concluding *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens suppressed the frame narrative that originally enveloped *Curiosity Shop* and *Rudge*. Dickens' erasure of *Master Humphrey's Clock* is one of the first times he tried revising his literary brand. Initially, *Master Humphrey's Clock* was published in three volumes in its entirety, including the frame narrative, miscellaneous stories, and two novels, but Dickens later released *Curiosity Shop* or *Rudge* as individual texts without the miscellany. Dickens comments on his editorial decision in the Advertisement for the stand-alone *Curiosity Shop* first published in 1841: "This tale is now reprinted, for the reader's greater convenience, from the stereotype plates of 'Master Humphrey's Clock,' where it was occasionally interrupted by other matter, which is expunged from this Edition" (2). In this statement, he dismisses the framing material and miscellaneous stories as "other matter" that functions only as interruptions. In the 1848 Cheap Edition Preface, he further degrades *Master Humphrey's Clock* and says that, by the fourth number of the serial, "I had already been made uneasy by the desultory character of that work, and when, I believe, my readers had thoroughly participated in the feeling" (609). The Master Humphrey persona was a threat to his brand due to its association with the "desultory character" of the miscellany, so Dickens distanced himself the Humphrey persona by adopting his authorial voice in *Curiosity Shop's* third chapter. Dickens uses this reasoning to justify allowing the weekly serial, "as originally constructed," to become "one of the lost books of the earth" (609). To secure his brand after the serial's conclusion, Dickens eliminated the miscellaneous elements of *Master Humphrey's Clock* since they tarnished his brand, and he emphasized the success of *Curiosity Shop*. These later editions of the novel evade the problem of Dickens' lack of design when conceiving the story. Slater observes that Dickens

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28. In a letter to Forster, he confesses to making no progress with *Rudge*: "I didn't stir out yesterday, but sat and thought all day; not writing a line" (198). This lack of productivity was unusual for Dickens early in his career.

inserted paragraphs near the start of future editions "to present the *Shop* as a far more consciously and deliberately crafted work than the actual history of its writing shows it to have been" (165). The decision to alter the completed novel and excise the miscellaneous material reflects Dickens' awareness of his readers' whims. He rejected *Master Humphrey* in 1840-1841 because his readers did so first.

Dickens began *Master Humphrey's Clock* with lofty ambitions; he wanted to give himself a break, defeat plagiarists, gain further literary renown, become closer to his readers, and outsell his previous works. Although he realized some of these goals, he viewed approximately half of the miscellany as a failure since it did not reach his high expectations, and the partial success of cultivating intimacy with his audience is especially critical to his brand's development. In his preface to the first volume of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens prioritizes his relationship with readers as one his primary goals: "Secondly. To produce these Tales in weekly numbers; hoping that to shorten the intervals of communication between himself and his readers, would be to knit more closely the pleasant relations they had held, for Forty Months" (606).<sup>29</sup> His success was mixed due the experimentation's conflict with his established brand as a serial writer, which lowered sales of the serial. However, *Curiosity Shop* increased his readership, so *Master Humphrey's Clock* was far from a complete failure. Slater notes that Dickens' "sense of his relationship with his public, and the peculiar power over it that he exercised, had deepened" due to the experiment (171). I doubt Dickens got as close to readers with the weekly serial as he would have liked, considering that the beginning numbers and *Rudge* disappointed him, yet he would build on his connection with readers through *A Christmas Carol*.

## 2.2. Narrator Intimacy in *A Christmas Carol*

In "Creative Ambivalence," Rosemary Mundhenk argues that Dickens learned lessons from what failed in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, such as being more deliberate with outlining his plots and themes, and choosing narrators (657). From the miscellany, I add, Dickens discovered better ways to become closer to his readers, which he demonstrated in *A Christmas Carol*. In 1843, cultivating intimacy with his readers was not Dickens' only objective in writing the *Carol*. As Kathleen Tillotson notes, Dickens wanted to respond to Victorian social problems, such as child labour in coal mines (166). Tillotson also observes that the ghost story enabled him to revisit his

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29. The first goal of the miscellany was to publish different ideas he had under one publication, and the third was to gain as much "regard" for the accomplishment of this task as the weekly schedule would permit (606).

past, a literary fixation that would preoccupy him in his future writing (167). Additionally, Dickens' finances, due to his family obligations, concerned him in spite of his novels' commercial success. According to Slater, Dickens' bank account held only £20 at the end of 1842 (215). Dickens grew as a writer during *Martin Chuzzlewit's* serialization in 1843-1844, but its sales were disappointing and exacerbated Dickens' financial worries. In turn, Dickens lost trust in Chapman & Hall, and he sought additional revenue through the *Carol* so that he could leave his publishing partners for new ones. Besides these motives, Dickens enjoyed the festivity of Christmas and associated Twelfth Night with the birth of his first son Charley, as Philip Collins notes in "The Reception and Status of the *Carol*" (170), and he wanted to express his thoughts on the holiday. It worked, and the *Carol* heightened Dickens' connection to his readers and permanently associated him with Christmas, turning the holiday into a crucial part of his literary brand. The *Carol* began as a side project, and Dickens had high expectations for its profits that it did not initially meet; nonetheless, it provided Dickens with a better means of strengthening his brand.

Unlike *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the *Carol* has been popular since its publication near Christmas in 1843. Collins, in "Reception," notes the immediacy of the work's success with contemporary critics (171). Paul Davis, furthermore, says that two versions of the story exist as a result of these adaptations: a text, which is what Dickens wrote, and a culture text, an ever-changing story that exists in the public conscious and is formed by the retellings (4). The culture text has significant implications for Dickens' brand, but I focus on the original text in this chapter, since it is what readers experienced in the 1840s. In particular, Dickens' unnamed first-person narrator of the *Carol* is an evolution of Master Humphrey as a persona and encourages further author-reader intimacy, and the text's prose is especially suited for oral reading, which added to its popularity and made it a good text for Dickens' career as a public reader.

The *Carol's* narrator departs from Master Humphrey in a few critical ways that enhance the former's ability to connect with readers. Whereas Humphrey is an old man, the *Carol's* narrator is an unknown person. The *Carol's* narrator distracts from Scrooge's story less than Humphrey does from Nell's while simultaneously offering no personal details to suggest anyone other than Dickens is addressing the reader. In terms of narrative intimacy, this difference means that the *Carol's* narrator, unlike Master Humphrey, does not separate the reader from Dickens. Hence, Chittick's complaint about Humphrey not matching Dickens' powers as a narrator does not apply

to the *Carol's* narrator. Additionally, the *Carol's* narrator speaks to the reader more directly than Humphrey, and the former's entreaties for friendship make him more accessible than Humphrey, who is seen as a social outsider and presides over an exclusive reading club. *Curiosity Shop's* popularity increased the connection Dickens felt with his readers, and the *Carol* reflects the closer intimacy Dickens felt through his prose. By making this connection part of the literature, Dickens makes his relationship with readers a part of his literary brand.

The intimacy with which the *Carol's* narrator addresses the reader happens immediately, and it creates the sense that Dickens is in the same room as his readers, telling his story to them. For instance, the narrator interrupts the story in its third paragraph:

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the dearest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail. (9)

The *Carol's* narrator uses the first-person frequently in this passage, and he uses the second person to speak directly to reader. The scene also reads like it is being conveyed to a nearby listener, as the unimportant details come across as an aside. As a result, the narrator becomes a strong presence in the narrative, and he establishes the friendly tone with which Dickens addresses the reader throughout the *Carol*. The narrator primarily interrupts for trivial reasons, such as discussing the deadness of door nails, that are unrelated to the narrative of Scrooge's redemption; the narrator avoids interjecting in more powerful scenes so as not to weaken their effect. Passages such as this one make the author's persona visible to readers, and Dickens' tone treats the audience as his friends, as if he is sharing his personal views on the deadness of door nails.

Later examples in the novella reinforce the connection between narrator and reader. For example, the narrator assumes familiarity and shared knowledge with the reader:

If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot—say Saint Paul's Churchyard for instance—literally to astonish his son's weak mind. (9)

In this case, the narrator invites intimacy by using "we" instead of "I," adding to the impression that he is in the same room as the reader. He cultivates intimacy by assuming his audience, like him, is familiar with both *Hamlet* and Saint Paul's Cathedral. The comment on the specific church in London is offhand, within a dash, but it functions as an aside from a storyteller and assumes the reader is familiar with London. This sense of nearness between narrator and reader is best illustrated when Dickens writes, "Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in *the spirit at your elbow*" (28, italics added). Dickens' narrator stresses his closeness to the reader by equating Scrooge's nearness to the first spirit to the narrator's closeness to the reader. Notably, the narrator acknowledges that he is not physically standing at the reader's elbow but is instead present in spirit only. While this acknowledgement draws attention to the reality that the narrator is not a storyteller in the same room as the reader, it suggests that he would like to be since he imagines himself by the reader's side.

Consequently, Dickens' narrator articulates the author's desire to foster friendship with his readers. For example, the narrator invites readers to explain the *Carol's* supernatural phenomena: "let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change—not a knocker, but Marley's face" (17). The narrator does not explicitly ask for friendship, but his desire to meet someone who can account for the ghost suggests that he would welcome that reader as a friend. This desire is expressed more explicitly when the narrator describes Scrooge's nephew Fred: "If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance" (56). This passage is characteristic of the earlier examples, in that it contains the first-person and addresses the reader, and it further emphasizes the narrator's desire to befriend readers. What the earlier instances suggest of the narrator's closeness to readers, this passage confirms. Moreover, it assumes that a level of intimacy has already been achieved between the *Carol's* narrator and the current reader, since the former asks for an introduction from the latter; the narrator and reader must already be on familiar terms in order for the reader to introduce the narrator. Thus, this passage shows how Dickens' narrator wants to form bonds with not only existing readers but future ones as well.

As a result, the *Carol* makes Dickens' connection with readers a part of his literary brand. Appropriately, the final lines of the *Carol* stress the friendship that has been established between the narrator and the reader. Dickens writes that Scrooge

had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One! (83)

Whereas many of the narrator's earlier interruptions use "I" or "you," the ending assumes a connection between the author and reader by using "us" instead. The use of "us" in this context conveys Dickens' hope that he and the readers learn the same lesson from Scrooge's story and celebrate Christmas in joyous fashion. Dickens, through his narrator, reveals his desire to make this story a communal experience.

Dickens' letters following the novella's publication indicate that he took particular satisfaction from readers and friends who responded to this aspect of his brand, and the letters indicate that he viewed the story as a communal experience from the start. Dickens regularly thanked people for praising his works, but his appreciation of those who enjoyed the *Carol* was both greater and more frequent. One of Dickens' letters to Thomas Mitton shows how the former wanted emotional responses to the *Carol*: "I am extremely glad you *feel* the Carol. For I knew I meant a good thing. And when I see the effect of such a little *whole* as that, on those for whom I care, I have a strong sense of the immense effect I could produce with an entire book. I am quite certain of that" (*Letters* 3.605). In this case, business, emotion, and intimacy are intertwined in Dickens' view; his extreme gladness at Mitton's response indicates his pleasure at connecting with his friend, yet he also recognizes the benefits this type of response will have on his brand, granting him future financial success. In a letter to Laman Blanchard, Dickens' appreciation of praise is particularly enthusiastic. He wrote,

I cannot thank you enough for the beautiful manner, and the true spirit of friendship, in which you have noticed my Carol. But I *must* thank you, because you have filled my heart up to the brim, and it is running over.

You meant to give me great pleasure, my dear fellow, and you have done it. The tone of your elegant and fervent praise has touched me in the tenderest place. (*Letters* 4.13)

If the previous letter shows Dickens' consideration of commercial benefits, Dickens' heartfelt appreciation to Blanchard in this letter emphasizes how crucial the bond between author and readers was to Dickens.<sup>30</sup> While Dickens built his brand throughout his career with smart business decisions, his comment that Blanchard's praise reached his "tenderest place" suggests that Dickens actively sought these connections for his own pleasure. This aspect of his personality should not be ignored, as Dickens' need to connect with readers went beyond his financial and business concerns. If his desire to cultivate intimacy with readers was not so strong, he would not have later used the *Carol* in his Public Readings, a risky undertaking which could have severely damaged his literary reputation.

Its narrator is not the only means through which the *Carol* connected Dickens to readers; the *Carol's* power as an oral text enhances the text's ability to cultivate intimacy. According to Davis, "Rather than beginning as an oral story that was later written down, the *Carol* was written to be retold" (3). The truth of Davis' claim is attested by the story's many adaptations. Part of this success in retellings, I believe, can be attributed to the *Carol's* structure, specifically Dickens' decision to centre the narrative on three ghosts representing the past, present, and future of Christmas. The three ghosts provide the novella with a simple three-act structure, making the text predictable to those who have never encountered the *Carol*, rare as they are. For instance, it is obvious that the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come will visit Scrooge after he sees ghosts representing the past and present. This pattern of three visits from ghosts makes it easy to adapt the *Carol* to other media, since it can be repeated in two hours, as in a film, or five minutes, as in a December, 2017 *Saturday Night Live* sketch.<sup>31</sup> The ease in which the story can be retold extends to people spreading the story in person, as it surely was after publication in Dickens' life. This capacity for retelling assists in cultivating intimacy between the reader and Dickens, since it spreads the *Carol's* reach across other media.

Another reason the *Carol* has succeeded as an oral text is its prose, which works effectively when read aloud, as scholars argue. Michael Hancher notes that the story is made to be heard (25). Marvin Rosenberg writes, "Anyone who has not heard Dickens read aloud has probably never savored the novels to the full" (11), and this assertion applies to the *Carol*. A number of textual examples demonstrate why the text benefits from hearing an oral performance. In the first

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30. This appreciation is present in other letters. For example, Dickens also wrote letters to Arthur Ryland (*Letters* 4.29) and Cornelius Mathews (*Letters* 4.60), thanking them for praising *A Christmas Carol*.

31. The story has also been retold through Bugs Bunny (1979) and on *Doctor Who* (2010), among many others.

stave, for instance, Dickens describes Scrooge, "Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!" (10). The punctuation, with its exclamation marks, functions like instructions for reading aloud, and besides the alliteration in the adjectives describing Scrooge, the words' syllables create an audible rhythm. Slater, discussing Dickens' punctuation shift that begins with *Chuzzlewit*, says,

This punctuation is rhetorical rather than grammatical in nature, as though Dickens were *telling* rather than writing his story, and contributes towards a further strengthening of that peculiarly personal intimacy with his readers already established as the hallmark of the writer Charles Dickens. (211)

I agree with personal intimacy being one of Dickens' hallmarks, as well as part of his brand, and the *Carol*, similar to Dickens' works after *Chuzzlewit*, contains this punctuation but heightens its effectiveness by pairing it with a first-person narrator.

The use of the narrator and orality affects Dickens' brand by creating a literary persona of Dickens that readers can relate to. In this respect, Dickens' use of a persona closely resembles Byron's. Byron's poems, especially while he was alive, have generated the reader's interest by creating a sense that reading them allows one to know their author better. Stephen Minta notes that Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* "appeared to speak directly to its readers," which is how its author's fame was "a result that had been both carefully prepared and tantalizingly manipulated" (124). In doing so, Byron gained "public intimacy," as Minta describes (123). Dickens uses similar techniques. Like Byron, Dickens speaks directly to readers in the *Carol*, and without giving that story's narrator a name, as he does for Master Humphrey, and Dickens deliberately aimed for public intimacy. While Dickens does not make the *Carol*'s narrator the protagonist of the narrative, the narrator adds a sense of intimacy to the text. Even when Dickens creates a semi-autobiographical first-person narrator in *David Copperfield*, his autobiographical persona does not invite the reader to draw connections between author and narrator as obviously as the aforementioned Byronic heroes do. Instead, Dickens diverges from Byron by constructing his persona around himself as a storyteller. Intimacy with readers is part of Dickens' "hallmark" as Slater says (211), yet Dickens' hallmark is based on endearing himself to readers through his stories rather than narrators. Commercially, this persona had a positive effect on Dickens' brand, since it fostered loyalty from his readers, who remained his fans after his scandalous separation

from his wife, and it prepared them to receive Dickens' Public Readings, although Dickens had not planned that far ahead in 1844.

### 2.3. Authorizing Adaptations Against the Pirates

In addition to establishing his literary brand with the novella's narrator, Dickens took other measures to secure his brand after the *Carol's* publication. He sought to externally control his brand in this time period in two ways: first, he aimed to halt his imitators by using the British court and suing a publisher for plagiarizing the *Carol*; and, second, he commodified his literary brand by authorizing an adaptation of the *Carol* and other texts. Ultimately, the first method of using legal means failed while the second was more successful, yet both demonstrate how Dickens consistently attempted to control his brand in order to profit from his celebrity.

Prior to 1844, Dickens did not pursue legal action against his imitators, as much as they irritated him, since he knew winning a lawsuit would be unlikely. It is, therefore, unsurprising that he leaped at an opportunity to sue when it presented itself in January, 1844. According to Michael Hancher, after Dickens' *Carol* was published in late 1843, the London printers Richard Egan Lee and John Haddock hired the hack writer Henry Hewitt to write *A Christmas Ghost Story* for their magazine *Parley's Illuminated Library* (814-5). Lee and Haddock's magazine specialized in plagiarizing famous authors, and the publishers had copied *Master Humphrey's Clock* prior to their *Carol* plagiarism. Lee and Haddock called their imitations "re-originated" works, which Hancher describes as "a nicely original word for the process of piracy" (815). Unlike Bos's imitations, Hewitt's *Ghost Story* was sufficiently similar to Dickens' *Carol* for Dickens to attempt a lawsuit. Dickens was confident in his case, and Slater observes that Dickens began 1844 "determined to stop the blatant piracy of his books by Grub Street" (221). Dickens wrote to Mitton, "I have not the least doubt that if these Vagabonds can be stopped, they must be. So let us go to work in such terrible earnest that everything must tumble down before it" (*Letters* 4.16). He never forgot nor forgave his imitators, and he knew stopping one publisher could dissuade his other imitators. Punishing Lee and Haddock in a manner similar to his *Nickleby Proclamation* threat would have protected his literary brand and been a major victory.

In fact, Dickens won his case against Lee, Haddock, and Hewitt, but only at considerable financial cost. Dickens took appropriate measures, such as giving Mitton examples of overly similar names and language in Hewitt's plagiarized version (*Letters* 4.17), but he underestimated the bureaucracy of the British legal system. Hence, Dickens celebrated prematurely to Forster:

The pirates are beaten flat. They are bruised, bloody, battered, smashed, squelched, and utterly undone. ... Of course I will stand by what we have agreed as to the only terms of compromise with the printers. I am determined that I will have an apology for their affidavits. The other men may pay their costs and get out of it, but I will stick to my friend the author. (*Letters* 4.24)

Lee, Haddock, and Hewitt were defeated, as Dickens states, since the author's evidence was upheld in court. However, in his single-minded determination to stop Lee and Haddock, Dickens failed to understand the legal loopholes the publishers would abuse. As Slater writes, Dickens "plunged himself into a world of injunctions, motions for dissolution, affidavits, vice-chancellors, and other such intricate and costly legalities" by pursuing the pirates, yet "the 'vagabond' pirates escaped scot-free by declaring themselves bankrupt" (221). Dickens' wealth worked against him, since it afforded him the means to hire lawyers and prosecute the publishers as legal bills mounted; eventually, he was the only party in the lawsuit who could pay the Chancery fees. Instead of protecting his brand from theft, Dickens learned that taking legal action against plagiarists would cost him money for no benefit.

Dickens stopped a second installment of Hewitt's *Ghost Story*, yet this victory was short-lived since it failed to prevent future piracies. Hewitt's plagiarized story ends abruptly without finishing the narrative, and the final sentence in *Ghost Story* is, "Every apportioned seat at the table was in an instant occupied, Tiny Tim being mounted on a high chair near his father; all was eager anticipation;" (qtd. in Hancher 820). The passage, ending with a semicolon, strongly hints at a future continuation. Hancher observes that while the sudden court injunction halted a second issue, Lee and Haddock mocked Dickens with a story entitled *A Genuine Christmas Story*. (*Not by Charles Dickens.*), but the publishers were not so brazen as to plagiarize Dickens in the midst of legal difficulties, so this text plagiarizes a story by William Gilmore Simms, not Dickens (819-21).<sup>32</sup> Lee and Haddock never resumed Hewitt's *Ghost Story*, even if they avoided legal consequences. Evidently, Dickens saw the emptiness of his victory, and he told Thomas Talfourd he had given up: "I have dropped—dropped!—the action and the Chancery Suit against the Bankrupt Pirates" (*Letters* 4.119). The letter contrasts his celebratory letter to Forster, and it shows that Dickens recognized it would be better to avoid legal confrontations with plagiarists.

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32. According to Hancher, the story in question is titled "'Murder Will Out': A Genuine Ghost Story of the Old School" (821).

Lee and Haddock gave up on Dickens' *Carol*, while Bos had ceased copying each Dickens serial after *Mister Humfries' Clock* in 1840, yet other plagiarists hounded Dickens for the rest of his life. His later Christmas stories were imitated by others, Renton Nicholson published *Dombey and Daughter* in 1847 (Kitton 398), and a parody of *Hard Times* was written by "Charles Diggins" in 1856 (Kitton 400). Furthermore, pirated stage adaptations were performed throughout his life. However, the number of imitations decreased after the *Humphrey* experiment, so Dickens' lawsuit may have had some effect on the market for literary theft of his novels. I hesitate to attribute this decrease to Dickens' costly victory, since Dickens' earliest works were the most popular in his lifetime; likely, fewer imitators stole from *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for instance, because it was less popular than Dickens' early novels.

Regardless, the expensive Chancery suit impacted Dickens' literary brand. It famously influenced him to write one of his greatest novels, *Bleak House*,<sup>33</sup> which criticizes the British legal system and ends with only the court benefitting from the *Jarndyce v Jarndyce* suit. In this sense, Dickens' experience with Chancery positively affected his legacy, as *Bleak House* has received considerable critical attention.<sup>34</sup> In Dickens' life, the experience both embittered him to the British court and taught him the futility of asserting his legal copyrights in court. Dickens did not aggressively pursue any future plagiarisms of his work through the law, so legal attempts at controlling his brand ended when he dropped the Chancery suit. Later, Dickens summarized the experience to Forster,

it is better to suffer a great wrong than to have recourse to the much greater wrong of the law. I shall not easily forget the expense, and anxiety, and horrible injustice of the *Carol* case, wherein, in asserting the plainest right on earth, I was really treated as if I were the robber instead of the robbed. (*Letters* 4.651)

True to his word, Dickens did not rely on Chancery again, since he learned that he would have to control his literary brand through independent means if he wanted to uphold the integrity of his literature.

Consequently, Dickens' subsequent efforts to gain control demonstrate his increasing independence from publishers and stage adapters. The best example of this independence occurs

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33. Slater, for example, notes how Dickens' "bitter remembrance of his own experience" (221) with British law influences the first chapter of *Bleak House*.

34. Pykett notes that *Bleak House* was initially dismissed, but "the novel is now more likely to be read as a comment on the nineteenth-century construction of a (feminine) gendered self rather than merely a reproduction of it" (135). The novel's complexity encourages such analysis.

in 1844: Dickens' first authorized adaptation of one of his literary works. Previously, Dickens proposed an authorial stage adaptation of *Oliver Twist* to Frederick Yates in 1838: "Any way, I am quite sure that your name as the Jew and mine as the author would knock any other attempts quite out of the field" (*Letters* 1.388-9). As early as 1838, Dickens recognized the impossibility of preventing adaptations, so he considered writing his own to profit from the market, and he thought his name would give his version an advantage. Yet the alliance with Yates never occurred, and Dickens waited six years before trying to adapt his own works again. During this time, Yates died in 1842, so Dickens requested the assistance of Thomas Gladstone, the new manager of the Adelphi, in bringing the *Carol* to the stage (Cohen 134). Edward Stirling, the man responsible for an unofficial *Nickleby* adaptation, wrote the script for the first official production of a Dickens text.

This strategy demonstrates Dickens' business savvy. The copyright laws offered Dickens no compensation for adaptations of his works, regardless of how popular they might be, so he needed to establish leverage over his adapters to gain the respect that William Moncrieff certainly did not have for Dickens. Marc Cohen, in "How Dickens Co-opted the British Theatrical Adaptation Industry in 1844," gives an impressive overview of the situation. Cohen describes Dickens' brilliance in gaining power over the theatres: Dickens' "solution was to create a commodity—authorized adaptations—that he could grant like a royal patent to agreeable managers, actors and playwrights in exchange for productions arranged and produced more in keeping with his wishes" (133). Dickens' novels, due to the weak copyright laws, were an insufficient commodity in this respect, since playwrights could borrow from them without repercussion. Dickens' permission, on the other hand, could not be gained as easily, so he created a commodity from nothing. Dickens hated seeing his works distorted in adaptations, and the opportunity to affect the script benefitted his brand because theatregoers would be more likely to watch an adaptation he approved of. His permission also benefitted the Adelphi managers, who could use Dickens' name prominently in playbills advertising the production. Their playbill for the *Carol* adaptation states his name both in the first sentence, "by Permission of Charles Dickens, Esq." and when it emphasizes that the play is "Founded on the Celebrated Work of the same name, now attracting universal attention, by Charles Dickens" (qtd. in Cohen 133). Stirling's name is absent, since it lacked the draw of Dickens'. The playbill shows and advertises the power of Dickens' brand encouraging people to read the author's works. The strategy's other

advantage, besides those cited by Cohen, is that it pre-empted the unauthorized adapters. According to Bolton, the Stirling adaptation was the first to be performed (237). Dickens' chosen production had the advantage of time and brand name; his stage version of the story made the first impression on audiences. This strategy's advantages aided Dickens' efforts in gaining control over a share of a market which should have been entirely uncontrollable given the existing laws.

Although Cohen praises Dickens' ability to co-opt the Victorian theatre to his will, Dickens' authorized adaptations did not initially dominate British theatres. Dickens' authorized *Carol* adaptation shows his independence and innovation, but it was not initially the most popular *Carol* production in theatres. Bolton writes, "At the nearly profitless eye of this hurricane of dramatizing of his own novels, Dickens made league with one dramatizer because he could not defeat them all; but he failed again to take any lion's share of theatrical profit" (234). Because Dickens hated adaptations he perceived as low-quality, I add, profiting through working with Stirling on the *Carol* adaptation was likely not Dickens' primary concern, considering the theatre management was under no obligation to pay him any portion of gate receipts.<sup>35</sup> He would not have been happy that Charles Webb's unauthorized production, as Bolton records, "made much more money than did Boz and his partners at the Adelphi" (234). Even if the Stirling *Carol* adaptation should not be seen as a complete victory over Dickens' theatrical pirates, as Cohen's article may indicate, authorizing adaptations was a significant step forward for Dickens in terms of controlling his brand,

While the Webb adaptation had a longer opening run, Stirling's *Carol* had a long-term success that worked in favour of Dickens' brand. According to Bolton, known productions of Webb's *Carol* ceased after December, 1844,<sup>36</sup> while Stirling's version enjoyed a renewed popularity throughout the 1850s and was staged as late as January, 1871 (239-40).<sup>37</sup> The long-term success of Stirling's adaptation is a testament to the power of Dickens' authorial approval. Since both Webb and Stirling wrote popular adaptations, the decision of later theatre managers to favour Stirling's version can be attributed to the approval that Dickens gave it. Webb and Stirling proved their *Carol* plays could draw audiences, but only the latter had Dickens' permission

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35. According to Patten, Dickens received £100 from the Adelphi Theatre managers for the right to adapt the *Haunted Man* (154). Dickens was remunerated for authorizing his works, but the earnings were small compared to the profits he received from his serializations and Christmas books.

36. Possibly, later productions of Webb's adaptation occurred after this point that I am unaware of.

37. Stirling's version was staged in 1845, 1851, 1854, 1855, 1859, in addition to 1871, as Bolton observes (240). It was likely performed more often than these years, but these are the specific years that Bolton provides.

included with its advertisements; theatre managers in the 1850s and beyond could take advantage of this endorsement and include it in their playbills, which was an incentive for them stage Stirling's *Carol* over Webb's. Even if many theatregoers at first chose to watch the version Dickens had not endorsed, the majority of *Carol* productions during Dickens' lifetime after 1844 conformed to his authorized script, meaning later audiences saw Dickens' preferred adaptation. His decision to authorize the *Carol* led to an outcome he desired, in that it likely affected later adaptations of the novella.

Furthermore, while Stirling's *Carol* may not have been as immediately successful as Dickens and the Adelphi management wished, Dickens refined his strategy of granting permission to adapters and achieved greater success with *Chuzzlewit* and subsequent Christmas stories. Unlike Dickens' previous novels, *Chuzzlewit* was not adapted by the major British theatres during its serialization; as Bolton notes, the adapters' consideration "was probably not due to Dickens's success at inhibiting theft of his imaginative labors, but rather to a diminished interest that the general public felt in *Martin Chuzzlewit* as compared to *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, or even *The Old Curiosity Shop*" (222). As a result, the first theatrical adaptation of *Chuzzlewit* was staged six months after the *Carol*'s first, even though *Chuzzlewit* began serialization a year before the *Carol*'s publication. Again, Dickens gave Stirling permission to write an adaptation, and this time Stirling's version drew more crowds than Webb's adaptation, with Stirling's production running for 105 performances, 30 more than Webb's (Bolton 222-4).

The authorized adaptation of Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth* was much more successful, as were other productions of the novella. The authorized version by playwright Albert Smith premiered the same day the printed version was published, which means, as Bolton notes, that "The distinguished Keeleys and Albert Smith of the Lyceum evidently got proof-sheets from a cooperative Boz to assist them in launching a 'Cricket' on 20th Dec., 1845" (273). Considering how closely he worked with the Lyceum staff, Dickens likely wrote *Cricket* with adaptation in mind. An anonymous review by *The Times* from December 22, 1845, comments on how Dickens' text and the authorized adaptation complement one another: "The story falls so exceedingly well into the drama, that it is evident there has been adapting on both sides; and that if the dramatist has read the Book with the view of dramatizing, the romancer has written it with the view of its being dramatized" (qtd. in Bolton 275). Dickens' strategy of authorizing adaptations peaked with *Cricket*, as his next two Christmas stories were received with less

enthusiasm on stage and in print. Regardless, his success with *Cricket* was remarkable. His authorized version was the most popular adaptation, according to Bolton (273), and it enhanced the reputation of both his literary text and Smith's adapted play. Although *Cricket* has fallen in popularity since 1845, this adaptation best demonstrates how Dickens co-opted the theatre to quickly produce a profitable adaptation he approved of.

Nonetheless, these adaptations generally lacked a critical component of Dickens' literary achievements: his prose narration. Theatre is a different medium from print, so concessions had to be made, and one such concession was invariably Dickens' narration, which does not lend itself to the stage. This loss means that Dickens' narrator in the *Carol*, for instance, disappears in adaptations, along with the narrator's role in cultivating intimacy with readers. Dickens somewhat connected with his fans by guiding them towards authorized adaptations, but these theatrical versions increased the distance between Dickens and readers, even if he gave permission and proofs to select theatres, since the audiences went to see another man's version of Dickens' stories.

His solution to this issue was to take advantage of his narratives' oral strengths and read them to an audience directly; part of this process can be traced to *The Chimes*. Even though his *Carol* is more celebrated and became his first choice for his Public Readings, Dickens did not read it aloud to his friends, possibly due to his troubled financial situation and busier schedule at the time.<sup>38</sup> The next year, 1844, he famously went to London, despite being on a sabbatical in Italy, and read *The Chimes* first to the actor William Macready on December 1 and then to a select group of friends on December 3. The reading to Macready was particularly effective, prompting Dickens to write to his wife: "If you had seen Macready last night—undisguisedly sobbing, and crying on the sofa, as I read—you would have felt (as I did) what a thing it is to have Power" (*Letters* 4.235). This reading provided the intimacy Dickens craved, as he could see the emotional impact of his literature on Macready's face. The reading to a group of friends at Forster's residence went similarly well and gave Dickens a taste for public reading, as Slater observes (231). Dickens' comment in the letter on having power over the audience is especially insightful, as it shows his recognition that he could gain total control over his literature and audience through reading his texts directly to listeners.

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38. Dickens was still writing *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and he was beginning to dispute with Chapman & Hall.

After reading *The Chimes* to his friends, Dickens was ready to further cultivate intimacy with his readers by performing his texts publically. He had established a powerful bond with his readers, and he knew that the more involved he was with an adaptation, the more autonomy he would gain over his literary brand. In the mid-1840s, however, neither his brand nor financial independence was strong enough to justify pursuing such a risky endeavour. When Dickens first broached the topic of performing Public Readings for profit in 1846, Forster dissuaded him since it would not be suitable for a gentleman of his standing to sell himself on stage. Thus, Dickens did not read publically until over ten years after the *Carol* was published, even though he considered taking his career in that direction much sooner; he needed to further secure his brand before he could risk tarnishing it with the Public Readings. Most pressingly, he needed more financial control over his literature and independence from his publishers, which he would gain through *Dombey and Son*. What he did not lack was a loyal audience who would flock to watch him read his own stories. After *Curiosity Shop* and the *Carol*, Dickens had already successfully cultivated an intimacy with his readers that would remain for the rest of his life.

### Chapter 3: Dickens' Control of his Brand in the *Dombey* Era

*A Christmas Carol* was a publishing risk for Dickens. Previously, he had relied on his various publishers, John Macrone, Richard Bentley, and Chapman & Hall, to cover production expenses and assume all financial risks, should Dickens' works prove unsuccessful. His working relationships with these publishers fell apart in all three instances, and Dickens' role in literary production was no different from that of other authors prior to the *Carol*, in spite of his greater stardom and sales. He was in the process of parting from Chapman & Hall while writing the *Carol*, so he approached its publication differently than he had before. For example, he published the *Carol*, in addition to the other Christmas novellas, as a complete text rather than serializing it. As a publication, the *Carol* significantly departs from Dickens' serial fiction since he wrote it on commission for Chapman & Hall and personally paid for all production costs (Slater 220). This gamble meant that Dickens owned full copyright of the *Carol* and was entitled to a larger share of its profits. He needed the additional income since sales of *Martin Chuzzlewit* were disappointing, and large sales of the *Carol* would help Dickens pay off his debts to Chapman & Hall, making it easier for him to leave the publisher. If the *Carol* sold well, Dickens would gain newfound independence from his publishers and further control over his literary brand.

His plan failed, however. The *Carol's* first printing netted Dickens fewer profits than he anticipated. Robert L. Patten observes that Dickens expected to earn approximately £1,000 from the *Carol*, but he received £100 (113). The disappointing return occurred despite the novella's sales, which were high and had surprising longevity, because the book's price was too cheap for its cost of production. As Patten writes, "Nothing but a lavish format would satisfy" Dickens for the *Carol*, and this lavishness was his undoing (110). Richard Gimbel describes the *Carol's* elaborate production:

The fancy binding was to be of a delicate rose color, blind-stamped, with gilding on the spine and front cover. Not only the top, but all three edges of the leaves were ordered gilded. Four full-page etchings were to be colored by hand and the half title and title leaves printed in colors, the Christmas colors, of course, bright red and green. For end papers to complement the title-page, it became necessary to purchase white stock and have it, like the illustrations, colored by hand so as to get the exact shade of green that Dickens desired. (83)

In particular, the colouring by hand slowed printing and added to its expense. Despite this

ornamentation, Dickens was adamant the *Carol* should cost no more than five shillings (Slater 220). Dickens profited more from *The Chimes*, released one year later, due to the later Christmas book's cheaper production expenses (Patten 122). Regardless, Dickens chose to blame the *Carol's* low profits on Chapman & Hall's negligence, which gave him an excuse to leave the publisher. Dickens subsequently signed a contract with Bradbury & Evans, who agreed to terms that would secure Dickens' financial future.

This chapter focuses on Dickens' relationships with his various publishers, especially his fruitful union with Bradbury & Evans, and his novel *Dombey and Son*, since it reveals how Dickens used his growing literary powers to further his literary brand. At first, Dickens needed to write almost ceaselessly to cover his growing living expenses, and this need posed a danger to Dickens' literary reputation; consequently, the financial security he possessed after *Dombey's* commercial success enabled him to achieve new heights since he could afford to write less. This chapter is comprised of three parts. In the first, I discuss his background with his publishers in more detail, and the circumstances that led to his contract with Bradbury & Evans. In the second, I focus on *Dombey* and how the novel benefits from the time to plan that Dickens' agreement with his publishers enabled. The final part examines how the novel reflects Dickens' traditionalism and innovation, two opposing forces that factored into his literary brand in 1846-1848, and I conclude by analyzing the impact of Dickens' growing power as a publisher in his own right, which resulted in his periodicals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. With these magazines, Dickens broke down the barriers between authors and publishers and created new methods through which he could promote and expand upon his literary brand.

### 3.1. Dickens' Dealings with Publishers

As a result of his financial difficulties and concerns about public perception of his character, Dickens feuded at some point with all of his publishers. Due to Dickens' ambition and need to control as much of his life as possible, these feuds were inevitable. Publishers represent the industry that distributes the work of a literary celebrity, according to Tom Mole (3), and Dickens disliked the power his publishers possessed over the dissemination of his literature. He strove to gain control over his novels' publication and distribution; his growing independence came at the cost of his business relations with most of his publishers. By the end of 1848, Dickens had remarkable financial and publication autonomy, which enabled him to launch the periodical

*Household Words* three years later in 1851, and this section explains how he reached that position and why he believed he needed to.

First, Dickens' difficult personality, and its impact on his dealings with publishers, should be addressed, because his versions of events make the publishers appear worse than they were. While he was justifiably frustrated that his publishers, especially early in his career, made more money than he did from his books, Dickens frequently worsened relations with his publishers by accepting additional projects and arguing over perceived slights; usually, his publishers gave in to Dickens' demands, yet yielding to his wishes could not always keep him happy. His negative views of publishers are expressed in one of his letters: "My objection is, to addressing myself to any Publisher on such a subject. I have found my own negotiations with that class of gentlemen quite sufficient to keep me in genially warm water, from my toes to the crown of my head" (*Letters* 4.149). These remarks were written in 1844 after he severed ties with Macrone and Bentley and was in the process of parting from Chapman & Hall. Dickens' account fails to mention the troubles he created for publishers, such as breaking agreements with Macrone and Bentley; similarly, he does not refer to his publishers' positive gestures, such as the raises he received from Chapman & Hall. Many of Dickens' disputes occurred because he wanted to publish books in the manner he preferred while being paid more than his contemporaries. Macrone could not afford to pay Dickens enough, whereas Bentley merely wanted the author to fulfill his contractual obligations. Chapman & Hall conceded to most of Dickens' demands and still had to tolerate his impulsiveness. Moreover, Dickens used his stubbornness as leverage to win contract negotiations. His personality was a problem for publishers, and Dickens used their knowledge of his stubbornness to his advantage. As Patten writes, Dickens knew that "It was not altogether inconvenient to have the examples of Macrone and Bentley" in his arguments against his publishers (66). They knew that his threats to leave were valid, based on his past actions. In most of his disputes with publishers, Dickens was in the wrong in some manner, yet his force of personality allowed him to have his way.

Despite how quick Dickens was to part from those who did not heed his wishes, he had cause to be angry with his publishers, especially Macrone and Bentley. His first publishing contracts were unfavourable, and these contracts led to Dickens' particularly troubled financial position prior to the publication of *Dombey and Son*. Dickens' monetary difficulties in the early 1840s resulted from short-sighted agreements he had signed with Macrone and Bentley, in particular.

Dickens' interactions with Macrone, his first significant publisher, established a pattern that reoccurred with the author's future publishers: Dickens and the publisher enjoyed a happy relationship until Dickens became upset over money and broke away.<sup>39</sup>

Macrone took a chance on Dickens when the former offered the author £100 for copyright of Dickens' existing sketches in 1835 (Patten 22), and the two became good friends, to the point where the author invited Macrone to be his best man (Slater 67).<sup>40</sup> Likely, Dickens appreciated the opportunity that Macrone gave him, yet this appreciation did not preclude Dickens from listening to offers from other publishers who were willing to give him more money than Macrone. By the end of 1836, Dickens was writing for Chapman & Hall, in addition to Bentley, all of whom were more experienced publishers than Macrone. The growing demand for Dickens' writing, along with his constant search for more income, hastened the end of Dickens' and Macrone's working relationship. According to Patten, Dickens accepted £200 in exchange for writing a novel, *Gabriel Vardon*, for Macrone (24); one month after this agreement, Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* became a sensation, and the sum agreed upon for his upcoming novel could no longer satisfy the author, which is why he decided to write the novel for Bentley. The old contract soon caused a disagreement, which Dickens describes in a letter to Thomas Mitton:

A dispute arose between myself and Mr. Macrone whether an agreement for a novel, which we had together, was not understood to be cancelled between us. As it was not actually cancelled and he had the legal power of enforcing it, or claiming damages against me, . . . I gave up to Mr. Macrone the copyright of both series of Sketches on getting back the novel agreement. (*Letters* 1.50)

The dispute was not resolved peacefully. Dickens complained to Forster in June, 1837, about Macrone republishing *Sketches* in the same format as *Pickwick* (*Letters* 1.269-70). Dickens solved this problem by buying the copyright to *Sketches* for £2,250 (Slater 103), far more than what Macrone had initially given Dickens for his short stories, and the two never reconciled since the publisher died a few months later in September, 1837.

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39. The pattern differs with Bradbury & Evans: Dickens became upset with the publisher for not publishing his reasoning for separating from his wife in 1858 (Slater 455). Later, Dickens and the publisher disputed the rights to *Household Words* after their partnership ended. Patten discusses how Dickens used subterfuge to regain *Household Words* from his old publishers at half price (202).

40. Macrone did not end up serving as best man, but Johnson discusses the friendly early relations between Dickens and Macrone, stating that "the two husbands often dined at each other's residences" (183).

This pattern continued with Bentley when the publisher and author soured on one another after a contractual disagreement. In early 1837, when *Oliver Twist* first appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany*, Dickens was contracted to provide Bentley with two novels, one of which was *Barnaby Rudge*. This agreement became unbearable to Dickens after he believed Bentley was exploiting him (Slater 104). In June 1837, he wrote to Forster, "I have looked at some memoranda I made at the time, and I *fear* he [Bentley] has my second novel on the same terms, under the same agreement. This is a bad look-out, but n'importe — we will mend it" (*Letters* 1.271). He mended the problem, as he saw it, by realizing that *Twist* could constitute one of the novels promised to Bentley. Dickens first proposed this idea to Bentley in a July 14, 1837 letter, in which the author refers to the serialization as a novel:

That for permission to publish the same number of copies of my second Novel *Oliver Twist* you should give me £700, deducting from that amount all that may have been paid to me for the appearance of different portions of it, in the *Miscellany* up to the time of my furnishing the whole MS which I propose, at the very latest, shall be Midsummer next. (*Letters* 1.284)

Moreover, Dickens started adding the aforementioned overarching narrative devices to the novel immediately after this proposal, as *Twist's* Chapter 12 was published in August, 1837. Slater observes that Bentley objected to this proposal for understandable reasons (104), but the publisher had no choice but to concede to Dickens' terms on September 28 that year. After all, Dickens could stop writing for Bentley, which he demonstrated by delaying the seventeenth installment of *Twist* in September 1837, shortly before Bentley's concession. Bentley did not want to lose his star writer, but the publisher needed the author more than Dickens needed him, as Dickens could turn to Chapman & Hall and other publishers to distribute his work. Dickens had leverage over Bentley, which the author exercised to the utmost.

The situation with Bentley marks a significant moment in Dickens' growing literary autonomy. The title of novelist carried literary significance, connecting Dickens to his most famous predecessor, Scott, and Dickens used this title to develop his literary brand. Once he became a novelist, Dickens became dissatisfied with his pseudonym, and, in November 1838, he sent a request to Bentley: "If you will alter your advertisements according to what the title page is to be, you will oblige me greatly. The substitution of 'Charles Dickens' for 'Boz', is the extent of the alteration I wish in them" (*Letters* 1.453). Bentley obliged. Slater notes that this change

signals Dickens' new perception of himself as a major author, with which I agree (126).

However, Boz still possessed selling power as a brand name, and Dickens continued to use his pseudonym in his monthly serializations until *Dombey and Son* in 1847. Dickens freed himself from Bentley, but he remained beholden to other publishers, such as Chapman & Hall, and Dickens' contracts would not favour him for another ten years.

His most frequent collaborator, Chapman & Hall, handled Dickens far better than Bentley, although Dickens eventually found fault with his third publisher. The relationship between Dickens and this publisher succeeded because Chapman & Hall frequently worked to appease him. For instance, the publisher was not legally bound to give Dickens additional remuneration for *Pickwick*, but Chapman & Hall raised his pay from £14. 3s .6d. per number to £100 in August, 1837 (Patten 53). The bond between author and Chapman & Hall remained strong until the mid-1840s, when money became a primary issue between the two parties. From Bentley, Dickens was forced to purchase the copyrights for his novels, *Oliver Twist* and *Barnaby Rudge*, in order to control the distribution of his literature, and the rights for *Twist* and *Rudge* ended up costing Dickens approximately £6,000. Dickens erased most of the *Rudge* loan quickly since Chapman & Hall took payment for it from his *Humphrey* salary. However, Dickens took another loan from Chapman & Hall to pay for his famous tour of the United States. Chapman & Hall was kind enough to give him without the expectation of interest. On the other hand, in response to *Chuzzlewit*'s relatively poor sales, Hall invoked a clause in Dickens' contract that enabled the publisher to reduce the author's salary for each number and put it towards his debt, one of the few instances where Chapman & Hall went against Dickens' wishes (Patten 104). This decision infuriated Dickens and prompted him to sever his connection with the publisher. Additionally, in 1844, Dickens raged to Mitton about Chapman & Hall not advertising the *Carol*: "Can you believe that with the exception of Blackwood's, *the Carol is not advertized in One of the Magazines!*" (*Letters* 3.604-5). Although the bigger mistake with the *Carol* was his expensive production demands, Dickens latched onto the lack of advertising as an excuse to abandon Chapman & Hall.

The contract he subsequently signed with William Bradbury and Frederick Evans is one of Dickens' strongest personal victories over his publishers. Bradbury & Evans was reluctant to publish for Dickens since the pair worked primarily as printers, yet the pair was won over by Dickens' will and became his most obliging publisher thus far. Prior to the split from Chapman &

Hall, Bradbury & Evans had printed Dickens' books to his satisfaction and was his first choice to replace Chapman & Hall. In 1843, Dickens sent Forster to probe whether Bradbury & Evans would consider publishing for him, yet, as Patten writes, the pair gave Dickens "such an unenthusiastic response" that the author decided to stay with Chapman & Hall for the time being (104). Following the *Carol* dispute, Dickens tried Bradbury & Evans a second time, and the two printers agreed to become his publisher on April 25, 1844 (Patten 116).

The contract Dickens signed with Bradbury & Evans was his most advantageous yet. Part of the contract involved Bradbury & Evans assuming his debt to Chapman & Hall, which Dickens would pay back in four ways: reissuing the *Carol* and writing a new book similar to it for Bradbury & Evans for the next Christmas; publishing a magazine or journal; writing new serializations; and reworking his existing copyrights under the Bradbury & Evans label (Patten 116-7). As Patten observes, this agreement highly favoured Dickens since it was not a loan; payments to Bradbury & Evans would derive from future profits and no interest was applied to the money owing (118). Patten describes Dickens' negotiations for *Chuzzlewit*: "Dickens was certainly using his reputation as if it were money" (95). For the Bradbury & Evans contract, though, Dickens used his reputation even further, taking advantage of his fame to awe his reluctant publishers into submission. Upon writing for Bradbury & Evans, Dickens would receive three-quarters of the profits and copyright, and he ensured that no novels would be demanded immediately so that he could work at his leisure (Patten 118). Patten summarizes the new situation from Dickens' perspective: "Once again, the generosity of the new publishers contrasted sharply with the supposed miserliness of the old. And for the first time, Dickens's future was not heavily mortgaged" (118). Bradbury & Evans appeared generous to Dickens, but its generosity, I add, was hardly the publisher's choice, considering the pair yielded to Dickens' demands in order to publish for him, lest he find someone else; in Dickens' defence, his commercial success, owing to his brand's power, was so guaranteed that he could make these stipulations and expect publishers to accept them.

While Dickens' first three publishers held positions of power over him, Dickens dictated his relationship with Bradbury & Evans. The contractual terms that Dickens negotiated meant that any smash novel he wrote would quickly eradicate the debt he had accumulated while working for Chapman & Hall, and *Dombey* proved commercially successful enough to pay off the debt and more. Dickens subsequently praised his new publisher in a letter to Mitton: "Think of the

difference too, in the appearance and production of the two books—and I think you will agree with me that Bradbury and Evans are the Men for me to work with" (*Letters* 4.296).

Dickens describes the relationship as one where he is working with Bradbury & Evans, but he was likely most pleased with them because they adhered to his demands. In letters to Macrone, Dickens is respectful and aware that he is a new author,<sup>41</sup> but his letters to Bradbury & Evans show him in control. One example, a letter written to Evans, shows Dickens' tyranny after a printing error: "I don't know what the Devil is the matter with your people, in connexion with my Manuscript, but nothing between folio 10 and folio 24 of the last No. is returned. Will you get the missing portion for me, and relieve my mind by blowing up somebody?" (*Letters* 5.577). After the mistake, he wanted his publishers to let his anger be known. Besides the dictatorial tone in these letters, Dickens shows a lack of respect for Bradbury & Evans. Macrone, Bentley, Chapman, and Hall, in the early years, are referred to as "Dear Sir" in Dickens' letters, or "Sir" when he is angry at them, whereas Bradbury and Evans are addressed informally by their surnames. Dickens used "Sir" in his letters to indicate a difference in social status between him and his addressee, or when he was not intimate with the addressee. Bradbury and Evans were Dickens' friends when they were on good terms with one another, but Dickens' adoption of their surnames in his addresses indicates that he no longer viewed his publishers as his superiors.

Moreover, Dickens may have manipulated Bradbury & Evans to encourage them to be more obedient to him. He expressed misgivings about the inexperienced publisher and told Forster to let Bradbury & Evans know his feelings:

I am very anxious that you should put to Bradbury and Evans a doubt which is strongly present to my mind—and that is, whether it would not be better—whether it is not positively necessary as matters stand—for them to arrange with Chapman and Hall, for Chapman and Hall being the publishers of the new book in monthly numbers. (*Letters* 4.571)

Considering how thoroughly Dickens cut ties with partners who displeased him, it is unlikely he wanted to return to Chapman & Hall so soon.<sup>42</sup> Patten suggests that Dickens' letter to Forster was part of the author's business strategy: "Indeed, one suspects that Dickens's true motive in writing

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41. In late October, 1835, he wrote to Macrone, "It would be an insult to suppose it worth your while to walk or Cab so far East, for Scotch Whiskey and Cigars — would it not?" (*Letters* 1.84). Besides addressing Macrone politely as "Dear Sir," Dickens is careful to avoid offending Macrone. Dickens' friendship with Macrone likely contributed to Dickens' politeness as well.

42. He would not return to Chapman & Hall until over ten years later in 1858.

thus to Forster was to redirect Bradbury and Evans's attention to his new work, and that he may not have expected, or even wanted, them to concur in making the transfer to Chapman and Hall" (132). If this theory is correct, Dickens' plan succeeded, as Bradbury & Evans worked hard to ensure *Dombey's* success through an extensive advertising campaign. Furthermore, if Dickens manipulated the publisher, as I argue he did, his mastery over his brand and publishers had reached a new level, since he used the threat of working with other publishers to his advantage.

Dickens' increasing dominance over Bradbury & Evans is significant, overall, because it represents a victory over publishers. Patten summarizes Dickens' contracts in terms of their benefits to the author: "the history of his contracts is a history of agreements ever more favourable to Dickens, giving him increasing authority over all aspects of the issuing of his books, and an ever greater share of the profits" (13). While the *Chuzzlewit* agreement also gave Dickens a large share of the profits, I view his contract with Bradbury & Evans as especially important, since it led to Dickens' financial freedom. As a result, he gained considerable power over publishers for the rest of his life, which meant he could make authorial decisions for most of his literature's content and publication, as well as choose not to write for extended periods of time. Consequently, he improved the quality of his writing while gaining control over his works' distribution due to his successful negotiations with Bradbury & Evans.

### 3.2. Planning the Brand in *Dombey and Son*

Dickens' publishing debts in the 1830s and 1840s affected his literary brand since they forced him to write constantly early in his career in order to pay for his expenses. As Patten notes, the pressing need for immediate money hampered the careers of many writers before Dickens, because it caused his predecessors to get advance payment "often at a considerable discount" (18), similar to how Dickens signed contracts in 1836 that later became unfavourable. By 1841, Dickens was concerned about the quality of his writing, along with his literary brand, suffering due to overwork. As Michael Slater notes, Dickens wanted to avoid "writing himself to death in a desperate effort to keep up the sale of his works" in the same manner as Walter Scott (169). In August, 1841, Dickens wrote to Mitton about his decision to rest: "I remembered that Scott failed in the sale of his very best works, and never recovered his old circulation (though he wrote fifty times better than at first) *because he never left off*" (*Letters* 2.365). Later in the same letter, he explains that not stopping would be a mistake since it would devalue his writing: "I am doing what every other successful man has done. I am making myself too cheap" (*Letters* 2.365).

Dickens believed that resting would benefit him since he could release a traditional, three-volume novel during a gap between serializations, and he could sell the copyright to this prospective novel for thousands of pounds, without relying on a serial's unstable circulation numbers. He never completed a non-serialized novel, yet he did begin taking the time off from writing, although the advantages of this rest would not manifest until *Dombey and Son*. While Dickens' contemporary readers enjoyed his early novels, their lack of unity was problematic. Writing continuously affected the quality of Dickens' writing, since works such as *The Old Curiosity Shop* were rushed to meet deadlines and demonstrated little planning on Dickens' part. With *Dombey*, Dickens was finally able to use his break from serialization to carefully plan and construct a narrative.

Planning the narrative was not easy, as Dickens wrote *Dombey* under considerable pressure. He had secured a favourable contract with Bradbury & Evans, but he wanted to write a book that would restore his literary brand and, most of all, generate large profits. In 1846, prior to the first number of *Dombey*, it had been several years since *Curiosity Shop* was a major commercial hit. *Barnaby Rudge* and, especially, *Martin Chuzzlewit* had disappointed him, so Dickens' career as a serial novelist in the mid-1840s appeared less certain, even though *A Christmas Carol* had received rave reviews. Patten observes that the disappointing *Chuzzlewit* sales of 20,000 per number are not that poor due to a literary recession during its publication, so Dickens' earnings of £4,000 for *Chuzzlewit* are quite high, given the circumstances (103). Nonetheless, Dickens had his debt to Chapman & Hall, and his cost of living was higher than most authors, so earning more than the average author was not enough to satisfy Dickens. Fortunately for him, as he wrote to Forster, "The *Dombey* success is BRILLIANT!" (*Letters* 4.631). *Dombey* averaged over 30,000 subscribers per number, and Dickens earned around £9,100 from *Dombey*'s serialization, a substantial increase from before.<sup>43</sup>

As a result, the Dickensian brand reached new heights during *Dombey*. His post-*Copperfield* novels typically fared poorly with his contemporary critics,<sup>44</sup> yet all of them, aside from *David Copperfield*, regularly sold well, regardless of their critical reception. After *Dombey*, Dickens had unquestionably attained brand status. As Patten writes, Dickens' serials in the second half of

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43. I calculated these figures from the *Dombey and Son* profits listed in Appendix A of Patten's *Dickens and His Publishers* (331). The *Dombey* profits are more than double those that Dickens earned for *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

44. Collins' *Dickens: Critical Heritage* covers these novels' reception. *A Tale of Two Cities* received a typical response for Dickens' later work, according to Collins, and was first "reviewed coolly and without much acumen" (421). *Great Expectations* is an exception, as contemporary reviewers such as Edwin Whipple enjoyed it (428).

his career "sold by themselves, without extravagant advertising campaigns" (168). In other words, brand recognition, in the form of Dickens' name on a book cover, was enough to attract consumers. *Dombey*, aside from being a significant literary achievement in its own right, is a major Dickensian text because it is the first novel, as far as we know, that Dickens planned extensively. Therefore, my discussion of *Dombey* begins with an analysis of how Dickens took advantage of the extra time he was given to create a more elaborate, layered narrative than any he had previously written.

Dickens had good reasons to spend time away from his writing desk, besides the additional time it afforded him to plan *Dombey*. The break before *Dombey* possibly reinvigorated sales of the novel through creating a public desire for Dickens' writing. As Slater writes, Dickens "wanted to give the public time to miss him" (220), and they did by the time he published *Dombey*. Over two years passed between the end of *Chuzzlewit*, in July 1844, and the publication of the first number of *Dombey*, in October 1846, which was the longest the public had gone without a Dickens serialization since *The Pickwick Papers* began in 1836. During this time, Dickens travelled around Europe with his family, and, for perhaps a year, Dickens made no attempts at fiction writing since he was determined to avoid the overexertion which ruined Scott. Dickens explains his conviction that rest was paramount to his success in a letter he wrote to Forster: "That I feel my power now, more than I ever did. That I have a greater confidence in myself than I ever had. That I *know*, if I have health, I could sustain my place in the minds of thinking men, though fifty writers started up to-morrow" (*Letters* 3.590).<sup>45</sup> It is difficult to say how much rest Dickens gained from his tour of Europe, considering that he wrote *Pictures*, *The Chimes*, and *The Cricket on the Hearth* and worked as an editor of the *Daily News* for several months; however, his decision to go to Europe positively affected his novel-writing, as he developed new strategies to write more complicated narratives.

Before writing *Dombey*, Dickens decided to improve his ability to construct narratives with grander designs and more cohesive themes than those found in *Pickwick* and *Curiosity Shop*. He was acutely aware of this issue, which is why he referred to it directly in his 1847 Preface to *Pickwick*. After *Curiosity Shop*, Dickens knew that an absence of thematic unity could negatively impact his writing, even in successful serializations. *Rudge* had required little additional plotting

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45. Dickens mentions Scott in this letter as well: "What would poor Scott have given to have gone abroad, of his own free will, a young man, instead of creeping there, a driveller, in his miserable decay!" (*Letters* 3.590).

on Dickens' part, since he had been planning to write the novel for years, so *Chuzzlewit* was his first attempt at a new and more intricate narrative. The execution of these plans in *Chuzzlewit* was imperfect, as Martin's American digression was prompted by Dickens' concerns over poor monthly sales.<sup>46</sup>

Dickens refined his planning technique in *Dombey and Son* by implementing number plans, or "mems," as he referred to them. The editors of the Clarendon *Dombey* describe the mems as

The Number Plans, 19 leaves, the last with an extension of some two thirds of a sheet pasted to it. Each leaf is folded at right angles to its longer side and the right-hand half-sheet headed with the title of the novel and the number of the instalment, followed originally by a list of chapter numbers. (xlirii)

The left-hand side of the leaves were typically written before Dickens composed the chapters, while the summaries on the right-hand side were often written after the numbers and used for Dickens' future reference, as Alan Horsman notes in his commentary for the Oxford World's Classics edition of *Dombey* (921). These notes had obvious benefits for Dickens, since they made it easier for him to remember his large cast of characters, and they arguably had more subtle advantages, such as allowing Dickens to build on the novel's themes and images more concretely. Almost certainly, the number plans account for why *Dombey* is Dickens' most complex novel up to that point in his career. However, it should be noted that Dickens began creating novel outlines prior to *Dombey*. In "Creative Ambivalence," Rosemary Mundhenk observes that Dickens wrote plans for Chapters 61-72 of *Curiosity Shop* (657); additionally, manuscripts of plans exist for the early numbers of *Chuzzlewit*, and it is less certain why number plans do not exist for later installments of the novel.<sup>47</sup> Regardless, as Tillotson notes in her preface to the Clarendon edition, *Dombey* is "the earliest novel in [Dickens'] career which was planned in some detail, and on paper, some months before publication began" (vii). As a result, *Dombey* best illustrates his growth as a writer and shows how he changed his narrative construction to boost his literary brand.

The impact of the number plans can be seen in *Dombey's* narrative, which benefits from Dickens' more elaborate outlining. Unlike in *Chuzzlewit*, Dickens faithfully stays the course with his overall design in *Dombey*. Paul Dombey's death as a child in *Dombey* is the best example of

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46. Patten calculates that 20,000 *Martin Chuzzlewit* numbers were sold each month, a decrease for Dickens (101).

47. Either Dickens did not write plans for later *Martin Chuzzlewit* chapters, or he did but the plans have not survived. The plans that exist are included in the Clarendon *Chuzzlewit* (833-6); most of them are only lists.

Dickens adhering to designs that he planned well in advance. His plan for the first number notes that Paul is "born, to die" (835), four numbers before the installment in which the character dies. A letter to Forster in July, 1846 indicates that Dickens planned the character's death from the outset: "I shall certainly have a great surprise for people at the end of the fourth number; and I think there is a new and peculiar sort of interest, involving the necessity of a little bit of delicate treatment whereof I will expound my idea to you by and by" (*Letters* 4.579). In a later letter to Forster, Dickens expresses his intentions more explicitly: "Paul, I shall slaughter at the end of number five" (*Letters* 4.676). As Paul Herring writes, this comment on slaughtering Paul and the author's use of mems provide "significant evidence for Dickens's growing awareness of the necessity for skillful craftsmanship in the planning and composition of his novels" (151). I agree with Herring on Dickens' recognition of this necessity, and I add that Dickens considered it important to plan his novels more thoroughly so that his literary brand would improve, leading to both more esteem and higher sales.

In contrast to his planning of earlier novels, Dickens' construction of *Dombey's* narrative is deliberate, which is unsurprising given how much more planned *Dombey* is than his previous novels. *Dombey's* Chapter 17, the first after Paul's death, focuses on Captain Cuttle, a comical character, and provides levity after the heavy melodrama that ends the fifth number while building suspense towards the Dombey family's reaction to the loss of Paul. However, of central importance to the sixth number and Dickens' plans is Chapter 18, "Father and Daughter." The chapter's title reflects the design that Dickens mentions in his number plan "to throw the interest of Paul, at once on Florence" (840). Previously, the novel emphasizes Dombey's relationship with his son, but this chapter, as the mem confirms, reveals the novel's greater interest in the connection between father and daughter. As Herring observes, the number plans and the text indicate that Dickens' intention was to focus on Florence and the injustice of Dombey's treatment of her from the beginning (186-7). For example, Dickens demonstrates Dombey's injustice in the novel's first chapter when she is described as issue not "worth mentioning" because "what was a girl to Dombey and Son!" (3). The mem for number four stresses the growing divide between father and daughter, as Dickens reminds himself to include "Paul's gradually increasing coldness to his father, and closer and closer inclining to wards his sister" (838). The novel's conflict involves Dombey's jealousy of Florence since others love her more than him, and Dickens prepares for the exacerbation of this conflict in the fourth number. In the sixth number,

Dombey's mistreatment of Florence increases, and Dickens' narrator admonishes him for rejecting her love: "Let him remember it in that room, years to come!" (272). This admonishment not only builds on the conflict planned earlier but shows that Dickens was already considering much later events. Dickens follows his design and returns to Dombey's mistake in the novel's final double-number, when Dombey is ruined and abandoned by everyone, including his daughter, and recalls Florence's kindness: "He did remember it. It was heavy on his mind now; heavier than all the rest" (795). The sixth number demonstrates Dickens' consideration of how to continue his story after Paul's death and much further into the narrative.

Although Dickens planned *Dombey's* narrative more extensively than his previous novels, he occasionally diverged from his plans or altered his plans for certain characters. For example, Dickens originally planned to kill Paul at the end of the fourth number rather than the fifth, according to the aforementioned letter he sent to Forster in July, 1846. In this case, Dickens did not alter the outcome of the story, as Paul still dies; instead, Dickens altered the events leading up to the death, possibly because he initially had difficulty with writing the correct number of pages for his monthly installments (Patten 138).<sup>48</sup> Dickens also changed his plans relating to Walter Gay, who was originally intended to become corrupted. However, the number plans do not indicate Dickens' intentions for Walter, aside from an ambiguous note for the third number that simply states, "Walter?" (837). Probably, Dickens was already considering how to proceed with Walter when he wrote this note, since he accepted Forster's advice to abandon the plot concerning Walter's fall in November, 1847, while writing the third number: "I see it will be best as you advise, to give that idea up; and indeed I don't feel it would be reasonable to carry it out now. I am far from sure it could be wholesomely done, after the interest [Walter] has acquired" (*Letters* 4.659). Dickens decided that the positive reception Walter received was sufficient reason to alter the character's outcome. This change in Walter's fate has little effect on the story, as Walter is sent to the West Indies and is thereafter mostly absent from the novel, while Dickens retains the idea of a young man becoming corrupted through Rob the Grinder.

The discrepancies between plans and the text are worth noting. As Herring writes, "What is important to remember when studying the number plans is that the deviations from the general

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48. Dickens' letters indicate some of his struggles about organizing the earlier chapters. For instance, he wrote to Forster, "It is a great question with me, now, whether I had not better take this last chapter bodily out, and make it the last chapter of the second number; writing some other new one to close the first number. I think it would be impossible to take out six pages without great pangs" (*Letters* 4.599).

pattern are often just as revealing as the pattern itself" (152). Frequently, Dickens altered the course of the story to produce what he believed would be a better narrative. For instance, Dickens pursued an inverted Maid's Tragedy with Edith so that he could write a "tremendous scene of her undeceiving Carker, and giving him to know that she never meant" to be his mistress (*Letters* 5.212). Additionally, these divergences from the original plans seldom affect Dickens' grander designs for *Dombey*; the most significant deviations from the original plans do not involve the three central Dombeyes, the father, son, and daughter, whose fates and resolutions closely follow the number plans. Dickens used mems to his advantage, but he did not forget the advantage of publishing serially, which is that he could quickly adjust the story to create a more desirable product for his readers. Moreover, Dickens did not merely cater to his readers, as he proceeded with his plans to kill Paul, despite that character's popularity, and that decision likely harmed *Dombey's* contemporary reception to some degree, as Philip Collins observes in *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*: "Disappointment set in, however, after No. V; many readers felt that Dickens had shot his bolt too early, and that Dombey, his second wife, and Carker proved a poor substitute for the former interest centring on children" (212). These contemporary complaints were a legitimate concern for Dickens during *Dombey's* serialization, even if they were not reflected by the novel's consistent sales.

However, *Dombey's* shift towards a more deliberate narrative positively affected Dickens' literary brand more than it harmed it. First and foremost, Dickens improved his sales after taking more care with his narrative's construction, and the money he gained, as a result, allowed him to write even more elaborate narratives, such as *Bleak House*. In doing so, he reduced concerns that his novels lacked unity. In place of complaints about disorganized plots, Dickens would later be criticized for a lack of humour, but this absence of levity is a complaint raised more frequently against *A Tale of Two Cities*, for example, than *Dombey*.<sup>49</sup> Even if some contemporary readers were disappointed after the fifth number, Dickens' critical and commercial reputations were among their highest points in his life during *Dombey's* serialization. Above all, *Dombey* departs from Dickens' previous works in terms of planning. As Herring writes, it is "equally important to realize that when there are few mems and few or no summaries (the case for Number VIII), Dickens is in firm control of the narrative" (152). In other words, Dickens used his mems to aid

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49. In his biography, Forster describes *A Tale of Two Cities* by saying that "there was probably never a book by a great humorist . . . with so little humour and so few rememberable figures" (2.283).

himself when he felt less certain about the story or worried about forgetting key details, so he did not use them when he was especially confident in his abilities. Consequently, number plans suited Dickens well as a serial author, since they kept his narratives focused towards a specific path without restricting him to certain plot threads. He liked the number plans well enough that the only major novels he wrote without mems after *Dombey* were *Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*. After finishing *Dombey*, Dickens wrote to Forster: "I have a strong belief, that, if any of my books are read years hence, *Dombey* will be remembered as among the best of them" (*Letters* 5.611). Dickens' conviction of the text's legacy has been validated thus far by its status among later critics.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, Dickens' current literary brand, which associates him with complex, layered social novels, owes much to his work in *Dombey*, which would not have been possible without the number plans.

### 3.3. Traditionalism and Innovation in *Dombey and Son*

Given that the novel's full title is *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son: Wholesale, Retail and for Exportation*, it is unsurprising that branding and public reputation feature more prominently as themes in *Dombey* than Dickens' other novels. The novel's ostensible focus, according to the title, is on a business firm, for which public reputation matters since it affects the firm's ability to conduct its business. Paul Dombey Sr. is obsessed with developing an heir to take up the mantle of "Son" because he believes a son will secure his firm's future. Dombey's plans collapse, however, when his son dies. Furthermore, his firm's reputation suffers when Dombey becomes bankrupt. Part of the firm's fall can be attributed to Dombey's flaws as a man, but I am more concerned with the competing forces underlying the novel's narrative. *Dombey* depicts a competition between traditionalism, what is conservative and old, and innovation, what is progressive and new. For Dombey, both tradition and innovation work against him. In the first case, tradition fails him when Paul dies, since his firm can no longer be passed from father to son. In the second, innovation ruins Dombey in the form of his manager, Carker, who envies his employer and sabotages Dombey's reputation in an attempt to take everything from his superior. The firm, as a whole, possesses elements of both traditionalism and innovation; the firm is conservative because Dombey rigidly continues the tradition established by his father, but it is also new since Dombey belongs to a family and firm that has become wealthy relatively recently and is not aristocratic. At the end of the novel, innovation gains new importance to the firm,

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50. Lynn Pykett, for example, notes that recent critics view *Dombey and Son* as "a literary landmark" (99).

since it is saved after tradition is broken and it can continue through a grandson rather than a son. When examining Dickens' brand, traditionalism and innovation are both important, and aspects of Dickens are reflected in both *Dombey* and *Carker*; furthermore, *Dombey's* solution to recover his failed plans, combining the old with the new, is the same as Dickens' strategy to develop his literary brand. In this section, I examine both traditionalism, as embodied in *Dombey*, and innovation, as seen in *Carker*, in order to comment directly on the importance Dickens placed on balancing the old with the new. Dickens' ability to combine traditional and innovative ideas is crucial to his literary brand and explains how *Dombey* became a commercial success and secured Dickens' status as an authorial power.

If the novel marks a commercial turning point in Dickens' career, *Dombey* also demonstrates a new level of literary complexity for Dickens, which is apparent in the text's ambiguity towards the value of either tradition or innovation in relation to posterity. For example, *Dombey's* examination of branding through the main character's firm is more sophisticated than Dickens' undisguised attacks against Moncrieff and other pirates in *Nicholas Nickleby*; *Dombey* integrates its analysis of branding and posterity into a larger commentary on Victorian society, economics, domestic relations, and anxiety towards the progress of industrialization. This opposition between tradition and innovation appears multiple times in *Dombey* and has been identified by several critics of the text. Part of what makes the competition between these forces in the text compelling is the uncertainty of whether or not innovative change is positive if tradition must be sacrificed in the process. This ambiguity extends to *Dombey* and *Carker*, since *Dombey's* cruelty to Florence and *Carker's* unusual depth for a Dickens villain create further uncertainty over which force should win out. As Anne Humpherys writes, "the less *Dombey* seems a 'hero,' the less *Carker* will seem a 'villain'" (409). Consequently, *Dombey* expresses ambiguity towards these opposing forces through both place and characters. Andrew Elfenbein argues that the novel is not "a passive product of ideological uncertainty" but "an active producer of ambiguity" (364). I agree with his assessment since it implies that Dickens deliberately created this uncertainty. For Sebastian Mitchell, "the central achievement of *Dombey and Son*" is "that it vividly and compellingly displays in the same moment both the radical and conservative forces which shaped its own age" (184). Lastly, Robert Clark, when discussing the battle of these forces through its characters, writes, "The twinning in opposition of *Dombey* and *Carker* seems to express an antagonism that one could easily locate in the capitalism of Dickens' own writing

activities" (79-80). Of these views, I am most interested in Clark's interpretation, since he relates the opposition between tradition and innovation to Dickens' business interests. This idea is worth developing further in terms of how Dombey and Carker reflect Dickens' literary brand due to the traits he shares with both characters.

Various characters and places in *Dombey* are traditionalists, but Paul and Dombey are the most old-fashioned characters in the novel, and Dombey best demonstrates the flaws associated with leaning too far into this extreme. Relying on tradition is not necessarily negative in the novel, yet Dombey's mistake is relying solely on his family's traditional view of passing the business from father to son. Dombey allows his firm's brand as a father-son business to dictate his action, which becomes a significant business error on his part because he cannot adapt the firm to new circumstances after Paul dies. Dombey fixates on the notion that the "earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light" (2). Due to his obsession, Dombey needs his firm to embody this aspect of its brand in reality, which it has not for "nearly twenty years" prior to Paul's birth (2). He sees his son as an investment that will result in future glory for the firm, but Dombey is so invested in Paul that he cannot maintain the firm after his son's death. Michael Ginsburg discusses Dombey's resistance to change: "Dombey is not primarily interested in change (which he may or may not understand requires effort and labor). Rather, he is mostly interested in the maintenance and reproduction of the same which, in his view, does not require labor or care" (60). For this reason, Dombey exemplifies traditionalism, since his refusal to break from tradition means that he avoids innovation.

The obvious solution to the calamity of Paul's death, which Dombey cannot see until the end, is for the Dombey family to continue through Florence. However, prior to his ruin, Dombey sees her as a "base coin that couldn't be invested—a bad Boy—nothing more" (3). As a girl, Florence cannot continue his name if she marries and is not a son, so Dombey devalues her. In response to Dombey's lack of recognition, Perera argues, "Dombey's fatal error is his early miscalculation of Florence's worth" (614). The novel's ending confirms Perera's argument, as Dombey is ultimately saved through Florence's kindness. Dombey responds to the failure of his firm's brand, Dombey and Son, by trying futilely to obtain a new son through his fruitless marriage to Edith, yet the ending suggests he would have been more successful if he rebranded the firm. Dombey and Son can survive by morphing into Gay and Son or Dombey and Grandson, while retaining the

tradition of passing from one generation to the next, yet Dombey's stubbornness prevents him from envisioning such possibilities before his fall in society.

Although Dickens possessed the flexibility sorely absent in *Dombey*, parallels between the author's and character's traditionalism exist which are pertinent to Dickens' brand construction. By the time Dickens published *Dombey*, his contemporary readers had developed expectations of what Dickens' novels would provide, such as humour and distinctive characters, and how his novels would appear. Hence, the publishing format and appearance of the serials were part of Dickens' literary brand by the time he began *Dombey*, and Dickens maintained many of them with the novel. For example, the monthly installments the text was published in followed the format Dickens' readers expected in the 1840s. The serials had green wrappers, illustrations by Browne, and the final number was a double-issue. When Dickens went away from this format in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, he encountered disappointment, so he knew the danger of releasing an unfamiliar product. On the other hand, he was not nearly as rigid as his character Dombey, considering that he wrote three of his next seven novels in a weekly format again; however, Dickens never strayed away from serialization, aside from for his Christmas novellas. Notably, Dickens returned to the older, familiar format when he desperately wanted *Dombey* to sell well.

Furthermore, *Dombey* expresses traditional patriarchal values; while Dickens possessed some progressive social ideas, he was unwilling to break from some crucial narrative conventions, especially those relating to the domestic sphere. This aspect of Dickens' traditionalism is evident in the characters' fates in *Dombey*. For example, Alice Marwood is a fallen woman who redeems herself by relenting in her need for her vengeance, but she dies at the end of Chapter 58 (768), as was expected of narratives written in the Victorian era.<sup>51</sup> Edith, in comparison, does not actually fall and only pretends to elope so she can humiliate both Dombey and Carker, yet she is effectively exiled for her actions, even if she avoids death. Taher Badinjki, referring to Dickens' fight against his society's ostracization of fallen women, notes that the author likely wanted to garner sympathy for Edith, as "a victim of a social practice which he was trying to condemn" (210). However, Dickens' efforts only seek to make her sympathetic, since Edith does not escape punishment. Dombey, despite abusing both Edith and Florence, receives a much happier ending than either Alice or Edith. In the final chapter, Dickens writes, "Mr. Dombey is a white-haired

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51. Alice is not alone among Dickens' fallen women, most of whom suffer a poor fate. One of the most notable among other examples is the prostitute Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, who is murdered. Dickens also uses Little Em'ly in *David Copperfield* to show why such women deserve sympathy, but she has to escape to Australia, nonetheless.

gentleman, whose face bears heavy marks of care and suffering; but they are traces of a storm that has passed on for ever, and left a clear evening in its track" (829). Dombey does not achieve financial triumph or restore his reputation, yet he is allowed to enjoy a quiet family life, and the "clear evening" suggests that the rest of his life will continue in this peaceful fashion.

Additionally, the Dombey domestic sphere retains a traditional patriarchy through Walter and his son. Both the monthly format and family values of *Dombey* demonstrate Dickens' traditionalism because they were designed to appeal to Dickens' contemporary audience, who expected these values and format from *Dombey* as part of Dickens' brand they paid for.

Dickens also shared with Dombey a desire to obtain wealth and a positive reputation, which are associations the author may not have wanted his readers to make between him and the character. Perhaps Dickens recognized this connection between himself and his character, as Dombey functions as a warning for pursuing money and status for their own sakes. Certainly, Dickens cared about his finances, since he spent thousands of pounds to recover his copyrights to prevent publishers from printing them without consent, and he frequently boasted of his financial success and sought new ways to gain money. For instance, Dickens speculated in a letter to Forster that "a great deal of money might possibly be made (if it were not *infra dig*) by one's having Readings of one's own books" (*Letters* 4.631). This constant pursuit of capital resembles Dombey's, as critics have observed. Byrne, for example, argues that this similarity undermines the critical portrayal of Dombey and connects character to author as well: "The whole process is however complicated by Dickens's own complicity in the capitalism he criticises. As one of the most popular and successful authors of his time, or indeed of any time, Dickens is perhaps the Mr Dombey of the literary world" (12). For this reason, Dickens may have presented Dombey's follies in softer terms. Mr. Morfin tells Harriet Carker that "vices are sometimes only virtues carried to excess! [Dombey's] pride shows well in this" (778).<sup>52</sup> The difference then between Dombey and Dickens is that the former carries the latter's virtues to excess and suffers the consequences for it, as I doubt Dickens considered ambition, which he had in abundance, to be a vice. Both the character and author managed brands, Dombey with his firm and Dickens his literature, yet the character fails in ways Dickens did not since Dombey is overly rigid, unwilling to part from tradition until it is too late.

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52. Morfin praises Dombey highly in this scene, for choosing to pay off his debts rather than try to escape them.

Dickens, while traditional, also embraced innovation, the other social force in *Dombey* seen primarily in the railway and Carker. If Dombey's depiction raises questions about the value of being too traditional, Dickens depicts the pursuit of technological innovation with similar ambiguity. The novel's narrator is uncertain whether industrialism and the spread of trains are positive changes, since their benefits come at the price of old traditions. Carker, similarly, is a problematic figure due to textual ambiguity and his abilities which are superior to Dombey's. Humpherys observes that Carker is possibly the most sympathetic villain in Dickens' novels, such that readers may experience "a complicated response in which the gratification we feel for the villain's forthcoming punishment is balanced by the desire to see a character we unexpectedly identify with win his race and escape his nemesis, Dombey" (397-8). This complication arises because Carker possesses virtues that Dombey lacks. Helene Moglen, for instance, argues that "Carker functions in the text to decenter the middle-class Dombey: to unveil Dombey's autonomy as dependence, his virility as impotence, his plenitude as absence" (166). Consequently, Carker reveals Dombey's flaws by being radical when Dombey is conservative, and flexible when the latter is rigid.

Carker is both compelling and effective as a villain because he is better at running the firm than his superior. Dickens describes Carker's intelligence when the character is at his office:

It was the face of a man who studied his play, warily: who made himself master of all the strong and weak points of the game: who registered the cards in his mind as they fell about him, knew exactly what was on them, what they missed, and what they made: who was crafty to find out what the other players held, and who never betrayed his own hand.  
(292)

This passage contributes to Carker's ambiguity since it stresses his abilities while suggesting that he views interacting people as a game in which he can manipulate proceedings to his advantage. Dickens later contrasts Dombey and Carker's playing skills. Dombey says that Carker plays all games and "plays them well" (367), whereas Dombey avoids playing altogether. This contrast matches Susan Nipper's report of the manager; she tells Florence that Carker "was at the head of all your Pa's affairs in the City, and managed the whole, and that your Pa minded him more than anybody" (384). Between the two men, Carker runs the firm while Dombey seemingly does little at all, except when telling Carker what to do for him. While his competence is admirable, Carker is too extreme in his innovation and embodies the disregard innovation has for tradition. Early in

the novel, Dombey notes that Carker respects nothing, which the narrator says is a "dangerous quality, if real; and perhaps a not less dangerous one, if feigned" (174). The danger of Carker's disrespect is realized when Dombey's firm collapses following the loss of reputation incurred by Carker's elopement with Edith. While Dombey suffers for his traditionalism, Carker is punished for his underhanded means and lack of respect for traditions. In his attempt to ruin Dombey, Carker disregards deeply-ingrained traditions, such as marriage and social hierarchy, so it is fitting that he is killed by a train, the novel's symbol of innovation.

Dickens' innovation, in contrast to Carker's, mostly only affected his literary brand positively, since it meant that he could adapt to new situations and explore opportunities that other authors did not yet dare. Like Carker, Dickens excelled by working hard, generating money for his employers—his publishers—and by breaking traditions that did not suit him or other authors. For instance, Dickens is known for fighting for international copyright laws.<sup>53</sup> He wrote to his German publisher J.G. Flügel, "I have never lost, nor shall I ever lose, any occasion of calling the attention of literary men to the defective and shameful state of the law of copyright as between different countries" (*Letters* 5.292). Dickens did not win this issue, but his stance was consistently radical regarding international copyright laws. Where Carker endangers the established hierarchy of a trading firm in *Dombey*, Dickens threatened and eventually weakened the hierarchy of his publishers by maximizing his earnings from serial sales. Moreover, Dickens took pride in his victory over publishers. He wrote to Thackeray, "I am always possessed with the hope of leaving the position of literary men in England, something better and more independent than I found it" (*Letters* 5.227). I would argue that Dickens succeeded. By negotiating with his publishers so aggressively, Dickens not only earned far more money for himself than he would have otherwise; his efforts afforded him financial security that enabled him to become a public reader and gain a better literary brand.

While I noted traditional elements in Dickens' literary brand, he is arguably more famous and noted for his innovative social views. Besides his work with the heiress Angela Burdett- Coutts to aid former prostitutes, Dickens demonstrates these social views, by Victorian standards, in several of his novels, including *Dombey*. The best known of these views, as discussed by several critics, is the notion that society and its institutions, rather than the individuals who comprise them, produce social evils. Elisabeth Gitter, for instance, locates *Dombey* as the first novel in

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53. K.J. Fielding provides an overview of Dickens' copyright battles in "Dickens and International Copyright."

which Dickens shifts the source of conflict from villains to social structure (113). Later Dickens novels develop this concept further; Jennifer Conary observes that unlike other Victorian social novels, "*Bleak House* invokes a sense of social problems as resulting from deeply rooted flaws in the structure of society rather than in widespread individual defects" (213). Since Dickens depicts social ills as stemming from the flaws in society, Jerome Meckier argues in "Dickens and Tocqueville" that Dickens believed that societies showed their merits in their treatment of the unfortunate and impoverished (119). Hence, in *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge redeems himself by becoming generous to the poor, while Dombey softens by finally relenting towards his daughter. In *Dombey*, Dombey's and Carker's greed is encouraged by the firm's capitalist interests, while industrialization produces much of the anxiety in *Dombey*, as seen in Staggs's Gardens. Consequently, Carker contrasts earlier irredeemable Dickens villains, such as Squeers and Daniel Quilp, since Carker's villainy is outmatched by the power of the locomotive that runs him over. Carker's death by social progress illustrates Dickens' progressive concept of social flaws creating evils.

In general, Dickens was unlike Dombey and Carker since he used the two characters' positive traits in his literary brand and avoided their mistakes. Each of these characters is too extreme in his leaning towards one of the novel's social forces. Dombey fails because he cannot adapt to the changes thrust upon his firm by his son's death, while Carker fails because he tries too hard to force change. In contrast, Dickens succeeded since he could find an appropriate balance between the two forces, and his literary brand emphasizes the importance of balance. In *Dombey*, for example, Carker and Dombey are examples of virtues exceeded into vices, and the counterexample to their mistakes is the new firm established by Walter, which will be continued through his son with Florence. Mr. Toots, quoting his wife, states that Walter's firm "is gradually rising, perhaps to equal, perhaps excel, that of which [Dombey] was once the head" (832). This new firm is potentially better than Dombey and Son because it strikes a balance between the old, through the Dombey line, and the new, through Walter; it uses both traditions and innovative ideas to its advantage. Thus, the new firm's brand is akin to Dickens'.

Dickens had reason to be critical of extreme traditionalism and innovation, since he managed a successful career prior to *Dombey* by using a balance of both in his brand. His earlier texts feature traditional family values and seldom broke significant literary norms, yet they also include innovative depictions of children, such as *Oliver Twist*'s life on the streets and the

emphasis on Paul's perspective in *Dombey's* early numbers. Dickens enticed his early audiences with new, original formats, but he retained thousands of loyal readers by transforming the monthly, and then weekly, publishing methods into familiar products. Having experienced commercial success from both traditional and innovative ideas in his texts, Dickens likely saw value in both social forces, which can account for the ambiguity towards Carker and Dombey. Literary brands become more successful, familiar, and ubiquitous if they apply to multiple social groups, so Dickens could gain a wider audience by being ambiguous about his political opinions and not alienating readers with different political perspectives. To illustrate this notion, Dickens started losing some acclaim when he became more vocal about social problems in novels after *Dombey*.<sup>54</sup> However, Dickens and his brand achieved an excellent balance between social extremes in *Dombey*, and the result was a bestseller that met all of the author's short-term financial goals and, arguably, his long-term goals regarding his literary reputation.

Following *Dombey and Son*, traditionalism and innovation continued to factor into Dickens' literary brand. He explored more new social ideas in *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Little Dorrit*, yet he was also preoccupied with the past in *David Copperfield* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. His contemporary reviewers did not always enjoy his social commentary, but Dickens' serials still sold well. Furthermore, in his later years, Dickens was seen by younger writers, such as Henry James, as old-fashioned and a symbol of Victorian tradition. James, in his review of *Our Mutual Friend*, writes, "For the last ten years it has seemed to us that Mr. Dickens has been unmistakably forcing himself. *Bleak House* was forced; *Little Dorrit* was laboured; the present work is dug out as with a spade and pickaxe" (48). However, James' comments do not reflect how Dickens never stopped innovating in terms of publishing and conveying his literature to audiences. By the time James wrote his review, Dickens had already been touring as a public reader for seven years. The Public Readings are simultaneously the most old-fashioned of Dickens' works, since he mostly read from his older works, but they are his most innovative performances, due to how he presented them to audiences.

Moreover, Dickens broke from the traditional role of authors through the periodic magazines he edited and published, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. If *Dombey* represents a

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54. I referred earlier in a footnote to Fitzjames Stephen's critical review of *Little Dorrit*, but the initial reception to *Hard Times* best illustrates how his contemporary readers rejected strong social commentary from Dickens. As Collins notes in *Dickens: Critical Heritage*, F. G. Kitton, in 1900, dismissed *Hard Times* as one of Dickens' minor writings, which matches the low opinion the initial readers had of the novel (300).

significant step Dickens took towards independence from publishers, these magazines, especially the novels that he published in them, show Dickens attaining almost total freedom. Dickens, therefore, became both industry and individual of his celebrity culture, to refer back to Tom Mole's triad (3). Dickens had almost as much control over his celebrity, along with his brand, as is possible for an author—he could not become the only part of the triad he did not own, the audience, yet he had immense influence over it. In particular, *Household Words* was designed to spread Dickens' brand to the masses. Dickens did not personally write most of the articles or content for the magazine, aside from *Hard Times*, "A Preliminary Word," and "Amusements for the People," among others, but each issue stated that it was "conducted by Charles Dickens." Additionally, while most of the content was written by anonymous writers, a major exception was Dickens. For example, he identifies himself as the author of *Hard Times*, so no one could think the novel was written by anyone else.

The anonymity of the magazine's authors emphasized Dickens' role in their creation, giving the impression to readers that he was responsible for every word and that all of the articles were Dickensian material. Any readers with this impression would not have been incorrect, either, as Dickens edited the magazine closely so that articles matched his opinions and his standards for writing. The magazine was a vehicle for not only Dickens' occasional writing and ideas but also for spreading his brand of writing; Dickens published articles about the ineffectiveness of English bureaucracy in *Household Words* before criticizing it as the Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit*, as Edgar Johnson observes (896). *All the Year Round*, similarly, conveyed Dickens' ideas, but its writers were not anonymous. Nonetheless, the second magazine added to the Dickensian brand since Dickens published major writings in it, including *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, and his "Uncommercial Traveller" essays, while still editing many of the other writers' contribution. Elizabeth Gaskell, one of *Household Words*' contributors, described *All the Year Round* as a "Dickensy periodical" (34). Above all, the magazines demonstrate Dickens' highest level of control over his publications, since he had no one to answer to when deciding the contents of his own writing, while also gaining control over the other writers. Additionally, he earned a significant portion of any profits from the literature he published in both magazines.

Sales of *Dombey* and his subsequent magazines and novels ensured Dickens' financial security, enabling him to work at his leisure and produce more tightly-constructed narratives, but

Dickens did not accomplish all of his goals with *Dombey*. He also desired critical praise and posterity, as his letters and other records indicate. Consequently, before, during, and after *Dombey*, Dickens shifted his focus towards creating a brand with greater critical appeal. In doing so, he hoped to achieve a stronger literary reputation. Hence, the next phase in Dickens' career that I examine is one in which he actively and deliberately revised his personal history and literature, which functioned to rebrand him and prepare audiences for the extensively constructed and revised presentation of himself he would display on his reading tour. It is unsurprising, then, that *David Copperfield*, his first major novel after *Dombey*, is more autobiographical than Dickens' earlier serializations, but *Copperfield* is only one of the ways he rebranded himself in this period.

Regardless, *Dombey's* positive impact on Dickens' financial situation, along with its role in his decision to rebrand himself, should not be ignored. *Dombey* demonstrated that Dickens had control over his financial destiny, as his earnings during and after the novel's serialization were astounding by nineteenth-century standards. Patten's description of Dickens' contract negotiations for *Our Mutual Friend* demonstrates how far Dickens eventually came after his initial struggles: "Dickens controlled his last twenty-part novel to an unprecedented extent. So certain was he of his power to make an agreement with any publisher that his offer to Chapman was very much on a 'take it or leave it' basis" (227). The price he received from Chapman & Hall for half-copyright, £6,000 pounds,<sup>55</sup> was so extortionate that *Our Mutual Friend* is the only serialized Dickens novel that resulted in a financial loss for the publisher, because the novel sold less than average, by Dickens' standards. However, Chapman & Hall lacked leverage over Dickens in 1864, so, as Patten indicates, they had no choice but to accept Dickens' terms. Since Dickens controlled his financial status for every novel starting with *Dombey*, he may have believed he could control the public's perception of him as an author. At the very least, Dickens had obtained enough readers' trust in his ability to write worthwhile novels through *Dombey* that he could best improve his brand by securing their opinion of him. While *Dombey* did not win universal claim from Dickens' contemporary audience, the novel freed him from his publishers so that he could achieve greater artistic accomplishments.

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55. As Patten notes, Dickens received £300 for the copyright of each number of *Our Mutual Friend* (227).

#### Chapter 4: Dickens' Rebranding in New Editions, Prefaces, and *David Copperfield*

For *Dombey and Son*, Dickens used the switch in publishers from Chapman & Hall to Bradbury & Evans as an opportunity to finish a literary rebranding he began in the 1830s: abandoning his "Boz" pseudonym and publishing exclusively under his birth name, Charles Dickens. The value of the "Boz" pseudonym at the start of Dickens' career cannot be overstated, and his decision to discard it was a risk. Dickens recognized the value of Boz, as he indicated in his letters (*Letters* 1.190). Dickens knew that placing his pseudonym on the cover of products would increase their sales and that more people recognized the Boz name than his birth name at this point in his career. The name Boz was useful before Dickens became famous, as it meant his birth name would remain untarnished if he failed, and the pseudonym was distinctive and linked the miscellaneous stories that Dickens initially produced under a common name. Nonetheless, Dickens wished to rebrand himself almost as soon as his stardom rose; when he saw advertisements for *Oliver Twist's* first complete edition in 1838, he asked Bentley to substitute "Charles Dickens" for "Boz" (*Letters* 1.453).

Changing his name would not be simple for Dickens, due to the power of the Boz brand. His earliest fans had fallen in love with Boz, not Charles Dickens, and they filled the St. James's Theatre and called for Boz on the opening night of Dickens' operatic burletta *The Village Coquettes* in 1836 (Slater 88). On his American tour, Dickens went to a play titled *Boz! A Masque Phrenologic* (Slater 180), which demonstrates the pseudonym's omnipresence in the early 1840s. While his novels were published under the Charles Dickens name in volume form, Dickens' serializations were credited to Boz as late as *Martin Chuzzlewit*. *Dombey*, which began eight years after his request to Bentley, was Dickens' first novel that did not mention his pseudonym. In spite of this change, many still knew Dickens as Boz; according to Edgar Johnson, famous French literary figures in the mid-1850s referred to Dickens as "ce cher Boz" (851). It would be decades before the Charles Dickens name subsumed Boz, but eventually each new edition of his novels came to bear his preferred name on their covers.

Initially, Dickens had two competing brands, the Bozzian and the Dickensian, and he wanted the latter to prevail. A few critical assessments of Dickens' literary career recognize and reinforce this peculiarity. Dianne F. Sadoff refers to Boz and Dickens as if they were separate writers: "In sketches of trendy urban entertainments, Boz encounters—or invents—Dickens's first scenarios" (27). This distinction may seem necessary when comparing the earliest Boz *Sketches* to later

Dickens novels, such as *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*, as they almost seem to be written by different authors, but Dickens retains a common, if evolving, literary style throughout each of these works. Dickens did not personally think highly of his first short stories by the time he published the first Cheap Edition of *Sketches* in 1850,<sup>56</sup> so when he began writing *David Copperfield* in 1849, if not sooner, having his literary brand competing with itself was not in his interests. Robert L. Patten, in "Whitewashing the Blacking Factory," discusses Dickens' complicated relationship with his Boz pseudonym: "Dickens knew that his pseudonymic rival challenged his identity and reputation and constrained his freedom to undertake new projects, directions, subjects, and tones" (17). Dickens' readers expected an emphasis on humour and satire from Boz, the type exemplified by *The Pickwick Papers*, yet Dickens wanted to move in other literary directions with *Dombey* and *Copperfield*. Moreover, his attempt to revive characters from *Pickwick* in *Master Humphrey's Clock* failed, so Dickens had reason to doubt the value of maintaining his Boz persona. Whitney Helms states that "the abandonment of his pseudonym not only allowed [Dickens] to present himself publically by name but also gave him the means to associate with that authorial name a distinct *personality*" (120). In this chapter, I add to Patten's and Helms' analyses that this name change also brought an elevation of stature to Dickens' literary brand, and showed his attempt to alter his literary reputation.

If the Boz brand emphasizes a satiric humour that frequently attacked social authorities, the Dickensian brand stresses friendship with readers and authorial dignity, and Dickens certainly hoped the persona he projected would have enduring popularity and prestige. His efforts at rebranding indicate that Dickens cared not only about sales but how he was perceived, since he might have earned more money publishing solely as Boz. He wanted to fight contemporary perceptions of the serial's low worth; for example, an anonymous reviewer of *Copperfield* wrote that the serial "is probably the lowest artistic form yet invented; that, namely, which affords the greatest excuse for unlimited departures from dignity, propriety, consistency, completeness, and proportion" (264).<sup>57</sup> Dickens worked as a serial author for nineteen years after this review's publication, and he combated such views through his rebranding—if he wrote literary

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56. Slater notes that in Dickens' preface to *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens describes the stories "as though his first book was now a source of some embarrassment to him" (316).

57. This review compares *David Copperfield* to Thackeray's *Pendennis* and appears in Collins' *Dickens: Critical Heritage*, 264-69, and originally appeared in the *Prospective Review* in July, 1851.

masterpieces in spite of the serial's deficits, he thought he could improve the literary reputations of serials, in general.

Dickens' rebranding went beyond a name change, as he also revised his earlier texts and presented them to readers in his own terms through new prefaces. I discuss these aspects of his rebranding to situate the context for my analysis of *Copperfield*, which is Dickens' strongest effort to rebrand himself in the late 1840s and early 1850s, since the novel presents a Dickensian figure, David, who is distinctively unlike the Boz persona, as Slater observes (317); moreover, I argue that Dickens' rebranding of his past in *Copperfield* ultimately separated Dickens from Boz. This chapter's first section examines the circumstances that prompted Dickens to release new editions of his older novels, beginning in 1847, and what they say about the brand he tried to create. The second section looks at the prefaces Dickens wrote for these new editions, which not only defend his works but reflect his changing literary brand; at times, Dickens deliberately misrepresents the past to further his aims and revise his literary origins. In the third section, I focus on the autobiographical fragment in Forster's *Life of Dickens* and Dickens' semi-autobiographical *Copperfield*, which uses parts of his life for inspiration while functioning as a flawed mirror into its author's inner self. The novel is frequently read to gain insights into Dickens' life, occasionally to misguided conclusions, but I analyze the text's invitation to compare the character to the author in terms of its effect on Dickens' literary brand. Consequently, even if the novel cannot be viewed as authentic autobiography, *Copperfield* dramatically changed how Dickens was perceived by mythologizing him through David, and Dickens achieved the rebranding he desired through this novel.

#### 4.1. Rebranding in Dickens' New Editions

Dickens had multiple goals with the new editions of his novels, and this section examines three of his main objectives. His first goal was straightforward: he paid a considerable sum for the copyrights to *Oliver Twist* and *Barnaby Rudge*, and he wanted to reprint his works to profit from this investment. Dickens' second goal was to give readers his preferred versions of his older texts that more closely resembled his current writing, so he revised his novels and *Sketches* to update their punctuation and some of their content in order for his literature to have a more uniform style. His last objective was to elevate his literary standing by targeting specific audiences and improving the appearance of his works by printing them in more elaborate and

expensive volumes. His prefaces also contribute to improving his brand's history, as I elaborate in this chapter's second section.

To achieve his first objective, Dickens released multiple editions of his works so he could derive further profits from them. Patten describes the numerous audiences Dickens tried to attract: "During Dickens's lifetime his writings appeared in a bewildering variety of editions, each designed to attract its own class of customers, to work its special segment of the market" (245). Besides the initial serializations and first bound editions, Dickens released four major editions: the Cheap Editions (1847), the Library Editions (1858), the People's Editions (1865), and the Charles Dickens Editions (1867).<sup>58</sup> Each of the four major rereleases targeted specific markets. The Cheap Editions were mass-produced and intended for readers with lower incomes who could possibly not afford to buy the serials. The People's Editions, or railway editions, were similarly inexpensive and placed at railway stations to capitalize on middle-class people's desire to read a book while waiting for trains (Patten 225). The Library Editions aimed to elevate Dickens' literary brand by publishing his works with higher production values, so only libraries and wealthy, high-class readers could afford them, and this series did not sell well. The Charles Dickens Editions, on the other hand, sold much better; this last series combined the reasonable prices of the Cheap Editions with the production values of the Library Editions, and the series received extensive advertising and targeted a wider variety of readers (Patten 234-5).

Dickens understood that making his works widely available would maximize his profits and boost his brand, and this thinking was ahead of its time. When Dickens signed with Bradbury & Evans, he promised to repay the publisher through "The best working of the copyrights in existence" (*Letters* 4.121). This promise hinted at the Cheap Editions, and Dickens' working of the copyrights extended past his relationship with Bradbury & Evans since it was easy money for both him and his publisher. According to Patten, the Cheap series' initial printings generated few profits due to production expenses, but subsequent printings were highly profitable (150). Dickens identified this new market in a letter he wrote to Forster: "There is really no edition of the great British novelists in a handy nice form, and would it not be a likely move to do it with some attractive feature that could not be given to it by the Teggs and such people?" (*Letters* 5.158). He was thinking of Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Laurence Sterne<sup>59</sup> while writing

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58. He also published editions based on his public readings, which sold poorly.

59. Dickens names these authors later in this letter.

this letter, although Richard Bentley had already started selling cheaper editions of other classic novelists. Dickens, similarly, identified new, proper editions as a desirable market commodity and made sure to avoid the fates his predecessors suffered. Patten observes that these series "anticipated a new development in publishing" (144), and they became a source of steady income for Dickens, even if they never generated as much profits as his current serializations.<sup>60</sup>

Besides their immediate monetary benefits, the new editions maintained Dickens' literary brand in the market. By the time Dickens published the Charles Dickens Editions in the mid-1860s, his career had spanned thirty years, and his readership had changed; his original readers had grown older or died while many new readers had not yet been born when *The Pickwick Papers* began. Most of his readers followed him through his serializations, and copies of his old numbers did not survive long. The original monthly numbers were not easily passed on to others after a few decades since they were cheap, fragile documents, so the new editions were necessary for new followers who missed *Pickwick* or any of his popular classics. In turn, newcomers who bought the Cheap Editions, for example, would possibly start subscribing to Dickens' current serialization. Since serialization is a medium that relies heavily on current popularity, any new editions that boosted Dickens' presence in the literary market could have a positive influence on his other written products. Dickens' publishers documented the earnings produced by these various editions, and we can see these figures thanks to research by scholars such as Patten, but these editions' impact on Dickens' serials cannot be measured.

Dickens' second objective of revising his texts was to correct flaws, as he perceived them, although he understates the number of revisions he made in his prefaces. In the preface for the Cheap Edition of *Sketches*, he states, "But as this collection is not originated now, and was very leniently and favourably received when it was first made, I have not felt it right either to remodel or expunge, beyond a few words and phrases here and there" (11). Slater describes Dickens' claim that he only modified a few words as "deliberately misrepresenting the extent to which he had been so meticulously revising and polishing" his older works (317). A side-by-side comparison of the Cheap Edition of *Sketches* to editions published in the 1830s confirms Slater's assessment. While the revisions to the texts are generally minor and have little effect on the narrative, it is disingenuous to say that only a few were made. In "Mr. Minns and his Cousin,"

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60. Patten does not acknowledge Bentley. Dickens' Cheap Editions cost 1.5*d* per issue (Patten 144), or 2*s* 6*d* for all 20 parts of a novel, whereas Bentley's novels cost 6*s* (Wallins 43), so Dickens charged less for his old works.

for example, Dickens alters the dialogue. In the first versions of *Sketches*, Mr. Minns is angered by the appearance of Octavius Budden and says, "Budden, ... what the deuce can bring that vulgar fellow here!" (364).<sup>61</sup> Dickens revises this passage in the 1850 Cheap Edition to "Budden! ... what can bring that vulgar man here!" (193). This example shows two of the most common alterations to the *Sketches*: different punctuation and the removal of crude language. Dickens adds an exclamation mark after Budden and removes the phrase "what the deuce." In the preface, Dickens describes the *Sketches* as "extremely crude and ill-considered" works he wrote while still "a very young man" (11), and this revision shows how Dickens addressed what he viewed as *Sketches*' flaws. Slater writes that Dickens acts as though *Sketches* became "a source of some embarrassment to him" (316), so he revised his short stories to preserve his brand and make the stories conform more closely to his later writings that he was evidently more proud of. Dickens repeatedly delayed the publication of the book's Cheap Edition to give himself more time to revise it,<sup>62</sup> and he pretends in his preface that he only revised *Sketches* slightly, as admitting the extent of his revisions would amount to denigrating *Sketches* and, by extension, Dickens' writing ability.

The Charles Dickens Editions, along with the earlier Library series, illustrate the third of Dickens' objectives for his reprintings: elevating Dickens' literary brand. Previously, Dickens changed his writing style in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Dombey and Son* in order to boost the quality of his literature, and his revisions and alterations to older works are designed to reflect his growth as a literary figure. These revisions, such as the removal of crude language in *Sketches*, are generally subtle. In contrast, the Library Editions' expensive production is an unmistakable, visible difference from the original serials, and these high-quality volumes were intended to represent Dickens as an important author. Likewise, the Charles Dickens Editions were of noticeably higher quality, and the descriptive headlines, present on every other page, are difficult to avoid seeing; the headlines' authorship is attributed to Dickens and usually only describe two pages in three to five words, frequently in a sarcastic or mocking tone. To an extent, all of the complete editions of his novels have an appearance of higher literature than his serialized numbers, which were printed in fragile pamphlets, although the Cheap Editions, by virtue of

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61. This citation is from the Penguin edition of *Sketches by Boz*, edited by Dennis Walder and published in 1995. Walder uses an 1839 printing of *Sketches*, since it was not later censored by Dickens.

62. Dickens wrote to Chapman to delay the publication of *Sketches*: "It is clear to me that we must go on, in the cheap Edition, with the Stories, and not take in the Sketches yet" (*Letters* 5.247). Slater notes that Dickens published *Sketches* last because he feared its inferior quality would harm sales of his other novels (316).

their name and lack of production quality, lack pedigree next to Scott's novels and other three-volume works. The Library and Charles Dickens Editions rectified this image problem in Dickens' printed products. Besides being bound in leather and printed with more durable paper than the original serial numbers, these higher-quality editions made Dickens' literary brand appear stronger by virtue of their presentation alone, since they mirrored the quality of other esteemed authors' novels.

One of Dickens' 1857 letters to Evans clearly states his objective to make his brand more appealing to upper-class readers through the Library Edition series. Dickens wrote,

Forster has a strong impression that my copyrights are not turned to anything like the account that the time demands; and he sets particular store by the fact that there is no good edition of them for the better class of readers who would buy them for well-furnished bookshelves. I did not at first take his view of the matter when he propounded it to me, but I have gradually come to the conclusion that he is right; and not only that there is money to be made, but that good is to be done, to the place and station (so to speak) of my writings . . . It should be handsome to look at, and easy to read. (*Letters* 8.436)

Dickens specifies in this letter that he wanted to provide an edition for "the better class of readers," or the class whose approval would most improve his literary reputation. His stipulations that this edition must look good and be easily read demonstrate his recognition of visible qualities seen in other esteemed editions.<sup>63</sup> Additional money was not Dickens' only consideration with this edition; Dickens learned through *A Christmas Carol* that lavish versions of his books would not sell or generate as much profits, and the Library Editions did not sell nearly as well as the less expensive Cheap and Charles Dickens Editions. He was likely more concerned about his literary brand's status than sales when he published the Library Editions. As Patten writes, Dickens "began to fear for the survival of his artistic vitality" (177) in the mid-1850s and realized "that publishing his novels in a dignified and handsome edition might elevate their place" (191). It is unlikely that these better editions changed any critical opinions on his literature's value, as most of Dickens' contemporary critics reviewed his works as they were serialized. Whether or not Dickens' current status as a preeminent Victorian author owes much to

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63. By "easy to read," Dickens likely means that the text should have larger font and appear in single columns. The Cheap Editions, in contrast, were double-columned and had small font, which made the costs of printing less expensive.

these dignified editions is also debatable, although the mass production of his novels maintained his presence on bookshelves and in the public eye. However, these higher-quality editions, such as the Library series, demonstrate how Dickens actively attempted to improve the status of his literary brand in any way he could.

With the new editions of his novels, Dickens arguably achieved each of the three objectives I discussed, even if the success of the last goal likely had little to do with new editions printed in his lifetime. The new editions, especially the Cheap series, generated profits that less-successful authors would have envied, and they represented only a fraction of Dickens' total earnings.<sup>64</sup> The revisions to the older texts, which make his writing style appear more consistent throughout his career, are often retained in new editions of Dickens' novels, such as the Oxford World's Classics series. Similarly, scholarly editions, such as the Clarendon series, reflect and perpetuate the elevated literary status that Dickens attained long after his death. Moreover, while the Library Editions may not have heightened his literary reputation in critical circles, Dickens' ability to sell his novels in so many editions demonstrates the high status he desired and arguably attained. As Slater observes of the initial Cheap Editions, "It was, too, a remarkable tribute to Dickens's status as a writer that his works were being collected, not towards the end of his career as in Scott's case but when he had only just turned thirty-four" (265). The many editions highlight Dickens' progressive thinking in regard to markets he could exploit, as well as his need to be viewed as one of the best authors of his time, a notion that his new prefaces reinforce.

#### 4.2. Dickens' Reconstructed Brand in His Prefaces

In addition to improving his income, the new editions gave Dickens an opportunity to speak directly to his audiences through new prefaces. This section analyzes these and earlier prefaces since they illustrate Dickens' literary persona at various points in his career. Dickens originally conceived the prefaces as additional features that could improve sales,<sup>65</sup> yet he realized that he could do more with them before the Cheap Editions came out. Accordingly, Dickens is one of the earliest British authors to construct his brand through his novels' paratextual apparatuses, such as his prefaces, advertisements, and *The Nickleby Proclamation*. His prefaces present the Dickensian brand he desires since they are understood to be his personal thoughts and beliefs

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64. According to Patten, Dickens earned £462.13s.7d. from the Cheap Editions' first year in 1847 (151).

65. Dickens discussed the potential of the prefaces in an 1844 letter to Bradbury & Evans: "This Edition I should propose to embrace new prefaces, and here and there a note, by me; and in short anything I could think of, to increase its interest" (*Letters* 4.122).

that he intentionally shares with readers, but, unlike the *Proclamation*, the prefaces were seldom advertisements for his literature. The novels' prefaces were written for the final numbers of Dickens' serials, so his contemporary readers often encountered the prefaces after they had finished his novels. With some being written years after the novels' original serializations, the prefaces often include Dickens' reactions to literary criticism and his worries about his artistic validity. Dickens' goals in the prefaces include cultivating his relationship with readers and elevating his literary standing. This section focuses on how he accomplished the latter objective by performing a persona in the prefaces. I then analyze how Dickens' prefatory performances enabled him to respond to criticisms against his literature and revise his literary origins. His defence of his artistic worth and his revisions of his past in the prefaces show Dickens' attempts to rebrand himself as a dignified literary figure, as opposed to a mercantile writer of periodic fiction.

To begin, the prefaces are ostensibly a space for Dickens to speak honestly to his readers, which means he performs a particular persona within the prefaces. Two important studies have analyzed this aspect of Dickens' prefaces. The first is Mario Ortiz-Robles' "Dickens Performs Dickens," in which he argues that Dickens' "prefaces offer the first modern instance of a literary space solely devoted to the performance of public authorship" (457). This claim aligns with my dissertation's argument that Dickens deliberately constructed his literary brand throughout his career. Ortiz-Robles identifies five personae that Dickens performs in his prefaces: the "Friend," who actively cultivates intimacy with readers (465); the "Truth Teller," who relates Dickens' versions of his stories, such as how he became an author (466); the "Advocate," who advances social causes, such as an end to Yorkshire schools (466-7); the "Professional Writer," when Dickens wants to stress his commercial success and his literature's worth (467-8); and the "Famous Author," who discusses his growing fame and celebrity (468-9). These personae, as Ortiz-Robles explains, "construct Dickens as 'Dickens'" (470). Dickens differs from many of his predecessors, I add, because of how intentional this construction is. The second important study is by Geraldo Magela Cáffaro, whose research focuses on prefaces.<sup>66</sup> Cáffaro contends that "prefaces do more than simply present the works they antecede; they also produce aesthetic effects, promote images of their writers, and exert influence in the public sphere" (15). Cáffaro's research identifies Dickens' strategies for promoting his image in his prefaces, which include

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66. In his study, Cáffaro compares Dickens' prefaces to Nathaniel Hawthorne's and Henry James's.

intimate and theatrical metaphors. The intimate metaphors build on Dickens' connections with readers, while Dickens directly references his theatricality by calling himself the stage manager of *Pickwick* in the preface to *Pickwick's* tenth number, for example (Cáffaro 178). Consequently, these two studies agree that Dickens' genuine self does not appear in the prefaces; instead, he presents his readers with an idealized persona. For this reason, the prefaces are not useful autobiographical sources, since Dickens often lies in them, but they provide valuable examples of how the author wished he had a more dignified literary brand.

When Dickens seeks to elevate his literary brand in his prefaces, he performs as the "Truth Teller" to address other people's criticisms of his works. While the prefaces for the new editions may have been conceived to attract new consumers, Dickens also knew that he could use them to defend his literary decisions. His preface to *Oliver Twist's* third edition responds directly to criticism of the novel's depictions of thieves and prostitutes. Thackeray, for instance, has described the prostitute Nancy as "the most unreal fantastical personage possible; no more like a thief's mistress than one of Gesner's shepherdesses resembles a young country wench" (46). In his preface, Dickens implies that readers such as Thackeray misinterpreted his text:

I embrace the present opportunity of saying a few words in explanation of my aim and object in [*Oliver Twist's*] production. It is in some sort a duty with me to do so, in gratitude to those who sympathised with me and divined my purpose at the time, and who, perhaps, will not be sorry to have their impression confirmed under my own hand.  
(lxi)

Dickens' justification that he is required to do so because of his fans shows how he cultivated intimacy with readers in the process of defending himself; he assures those readers that they are right while thanking them for their support. Later, he directly responds to Thackeray's critique of Nancy: "It is useless to discuss whether the conduct and character of the girl seems natural or unnatural, probable or improbable, right or wrong. IT IS TRUE" (lxv). Dickens counters Thackeray's accusation that Nancy is unrealistic by stressing the character's authenticity and claiming no words in the story are "exaggerated or over-wrought" (lxv). Dickens' defence, supported by his firsthand observations of prostitutes, is not convincing, nor is his claim that no part of *Twist* is exaggerated. Nonetheless, he presents an authorial view of his novel's artistic merits, and some of his readers, if not Thackeray, may have believed his "Truth Teller" persona.

As the previous example suggests, Dickens' prefatory defences do not always hold up to scrutiny, since his efforts to build a persona regularly bend or disregard the truth. David Parker, in "*Pickwick* and Reform: Origins," advises that "It is unwise to trust Dickens's prefaces too much" (3). Too many of them contain falsehoods or misleading statements. For example, in his *Bleak House* preface, Dickens justifies the realism of spontaneous combustion (xix), despite this phenomenon's dubious scientific reality. Dickens is also disingenuous about his novels' sales, as he demonstrates in the original preface for *Little Dorrit*: "In the Preface to *Bleak House* I remarked that I had never had so many readers. In the Preface to its next successor, *Little Dorrit*, I have still to repeat the same words" (lx). Slater notes that this claim of high readership "seems a little odd" since *The Old Curiosity Shop* had a much higher circulation than *Dorrit* (360).<sup>67</sup> Collins, in *Dickens: Critical Heritage*, theorizes that this preface is Dickens' response to the negative criticism *Dorrit* received for its lack of humour (356). Hence, Dickens counters negative views of the novel by pointing to the high number of people who apparently enjoyed *Dorrit*. I agree with Collins' interpretation and theorize that Dickens likely used the *Dorrit* preface as a means to emphasize his financial success. Sales figures of his novels were not available to the general public in 1857, so Dickens knew that his readers could only take him for his word.

Readers knew little about Dickens' history, which is why he could so effectively revise his literary origins in his prefaces. This historical revisionism occurs most prominently in his prefaces for the *Pickwick Papers*, in which Dickens creates a semi-fictional autobiographical account of the beginning of his career. In this dissertation's introduction, I refer to how Chapman & Hall hired Dickens to provide text for illustrations by Robert Seymour. Seymour's illustrations were intended to be the main attraction of the *Pickwick* project, but Dickens characteristically usurped control of the serial and quickly changed its focus to his written words. Subsequently, Seymour committed suicide, and Dickens became a popular English novelist for authoring *Pickwick* and other classics; this version of the story has been recognized since the nineteenth century, and Dickens participated in the telling of this narrative in multiple prefaces to *Pickwick*. However, starting in 1849 and continuing into the 1860s, Seymour's widow Jane and her son challenged Dickens' authority in their accounts of the illustrator's role in the creation of *Pickwick*,

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67. Slater observes that while sales of *Little Dorrit* were consistently above 31,500 per number, the novel's sales were considerably less than the 70,000 issues that *The Old Curiosity Shop* sold each week.

so Dickens felt compelled to further alter his account of his origins in the 1867 *Pickwick* Preface for the Charles Dickens Edition (Slater 550).

Dickens' changes to his prefaces indicate that he wanted to stress his control over *Pickwick's* creation and his personal success as a young man. Examining the various *Pickwick* prefaces is useful since the first and last were written thirty years apart, and Dickens substantially changed the story of his literary beginnings over time. These prefaces also demonstrate that elevating his literary standing became increasingly important to Dickens, which is why he responded to the Seymour family's claims so vehemently. Parker, in "The *Pickwick* Prefaces," gives a good account of the differences between the prefaces, yet some of Dickens' decisions are worth analyzing further. For example, in each new preface Dickens increased his involvement in creating the concept of the *Pickwick* project. In the 1837 Preface, Dickens writes that he deferred "to the judgment of others in the outset of the undertaking" and "adopted the machinery of the club, which was suggested as that best adapted to his purpose" (xcix). He states that he gradually abandoned the club, which the novel's narrative confirms, but Dickens attributes part of his writing process to "the judgment of others" which acknowledges Seymour's idea for a story involving a club. Most likely, this account is the most honest found in Dickens' three prefaces. The 1847 Preface shifts the story slightly to emphasize Dickens' part in the novel's inception. In this preface, Dickens claims he told his publishers and Seymour that

I should like to take my own way, with a freer range of English scenes and people, and was afraid I should ultimately do so in any case, whatever course I might prescribe to myself at starting. *My views being deferred to*, I thought of Mr. Pickwick, and wrote the first number. (885, emphasis added)

Parts of this story are accurate, according to biographers Johnson and Slater,<sup>68</sup> and Dickens did argue that the novel should revolve around his text rather than Seymour's illustrations.<sup>69</sup>

However, Dickens' account in 1847 no longer acknowledges deferring to others at any point and instead notes people deferring to him.

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68. Johnson discusses Dickens' relationship with Seymour in the fourth chapter of his biography's second part (135-156), while Slater focuses on the first year of *Pickwick* in his fourth chapter (59-83).

69. One of Dickens' letters to Seymour indicates the author was asserting control over the project: "I think [your illustration] extremely good, but still, it is not quite my idea; and as I feel so very solicitous to have it as complete as possible, I shall feel personally obliged, if you will make another drawing" (*Letters* 1.146). Dickens' criticism demonstrates how he wanted the drawings to reflect his writing, rather than vice versa, almost immediately.

The 1867 Preface was written after Seymour's son claimed his father was responsible for the premise of *Pickwick*. As Parker notes in "The *Pickwick* Prefaces," "Dickens felt driven to protect his reputation against claims made on behalf of Robert Seymour" (69). Dickens viewed this allegation as a threat to his literary brand and responded by further revising his origins. In his 1867 *Pickwick* Preface, Dickens addresses Seymour's son's version of *Pickwick*'s origins:

It is with great unwillingness that I notice some intangible and incoherent assertions which have been made, professedly on behalf of MR. SEYMOUR, to the effect that he had some share in the invention of this book, or of anything in it, not faithfully described in the foregoing paragraph. (886)

Dickens dismisses the assertions as "intangible and incoherent." Possibly, he was doubly upset since he had helped Seymour's widow financially in the 1840s (Parker 71). Dickens proceeds to deny Seymour's involvement in *Pickwick*'s writing, stating the facts are

That, MR. SEYMOUR never originated or suggested an incident, a phrase, or a word, to be found in this book. That, MR. SEYMOUR died when only twenty-four pages of this book were published, and when assuredly not forty-eight were written. That, I believe I never saw MR. SEYMOUR'S hand-writing in my life. That, I never saw MR. SEYMOUR but once in my life, and that was on the night but one before his death, when he certainly offered no suggestion whatsoever. (886)

It is true that Seymour died before 48 pages were written, but the claim that Seymour made no suggestions is false and contradicts Dickens' 1837 Preface, where he said that he deferred to others' judgment. Arguably, Dickens' objective was not to put the "facts" on "record" (886), as he says in the 1867 Preface, but to protect the origin story he fashioned within the preface, and the Seymour family's claims threatened that aspect of his brand. In Dickens' defence, the Seymours' allegations were not true, either, as Dickens was most responsible for *Pickwick*'s popularity, but the lengths he went to counter Seymour's widow reveal how obsessed the author was with protecting his brand from any perceived threats.

Minimizing Robert Seymour's role in the novel's creation was not the only way Dickens alters his origins in the *Pickwick* prefaces, since he also uses them to present the novel as a product of youthful inexperience. Although *Pickwick* was popular in Dickens' lifetime, he did not view the novel with the same enthusiasm as his readers. As I discuss in Chapter 1, Dickens laments in the 1847 Preface that *Pickwick* was not constructed with "a stronger thread of general interest" (883).

Dickens did not remove this criticism in his 1867 Preface, but he did revise the age at which he began writing the novel. Historically, Dickens was 24 years old when Chapman & Hall approached him to write *Pickwick* in 1836, but Dickens says he was "a young man of three-and-twenty" in the 1847 Preface (883). In the 1867 Preface, he says he was "a young man of two or three-and-twenty" (883), suggesting he was even younger. In "*Pickwick* Prefaces," Parker interprets these alterations as Dickens viewing *Pickwick* as an apprenticeship and emphasizing "the talent of the apprentice" (72). I agree with Parker's analysis, yet I believe Dickens wanted to do more than advertise his talent as a youth, which was well known in the Victorian era; this revision also subtly elevates Dickens' later novels by suggesting the problems with *Pickwick* can be attributed to the author's ever-younger age. Dickens' unspoken assertion when he attributes *Pickwick's* weaknesses to serving the "apprenticeship to Life" (884) is that he attained mastery from this task, which he applied to his following works. In this manner, Dickens explains away *Pickwick's* flaws while stressing his growth as an author.

Simultaneously, Dickens emphasizes the literary value of *Pickwick* and his other serials in his prefatory statements by omitting references to the cheap, low origins of his career. Parker, in "*Pickwick* Prefaces," discusses how Dickens' objectives in the prefaces changed over time: "Come 1858, and Dickens wanted to impress readers, not with the cheapness of his books, but with their standing as works of narrative art. Come 1867, and he wanted to impress readers with the durability of his reputation. There is no more talk of cheapness in the prefaces" (72). Dickens eliminates phrases from his 1847 Cheap Edition preface that hint at the work's cheap origin. In 1847, he says, "My friends told me [writing *Pickwick*] was a low, cheap form of publication, by which I should ruin all my rising hopes; and how right my friends turned out to be, everybody now knows" (885-6). This passage, which stresses that *Pickwick* is not cheap and Dickens knew better than his friends, is excised in the 1867 Preface, since Dickens no longer wanted anyone to conceive of his novels as cheap, as Parker argues. By 1867, Dickens was even more famous, and he desired for his literary brand to match the high value attached to other successful writers, so his new preface does not even acknowledge the possibility that his career began as an author of cheap literature, even if it means omitting that detail from his origin story.

Hence, Dickens' prefaces are part of a literary space where Dickens constructed his literary brand; moreover, Dickens rebranded himself multiple times through his prefatory comments. The first preface to *Pickwick* in 1837, where Dickens acknowledges deferring to others at the

novel's outset and refers to himself in the third person, appears far less authorial than the preface issued in 1867, by which time Dickens had become a famous literary icon and reacted negatively to any attacks against his reputation.<sup>70</sup> The new prefaces enabled Dickens to reflect on his literary brand and present himself in a dignified manner. The prefaces are some of his best writings to examine in order to understand how he shaped his literary persona; the Public Readings are arguably the only space in which Dickens had more control over how he presented himself as a literary figure. However, while Dickens' copy texts for the Public Readings are available, records of his tours are limited to secondhand accounts and descriptions. In contrast to the Public Readings, the original printings of Dickens' prefaces have survived, and they record the evolution of his understanding of his celebrity and ability to control his brand. Above all, the prefaces demonstrate his efforts to refashion his origins and elevate his works, a task that Dickens viewed as important throughout his literary career.

#### 4.3. *David Copperfield*: Rebranding through Fictional Autobiography

In the prefaces, Dickens frequently refers to his literary triumphs and prefers to bring up failures only when they occurred early in his career and, more often, to explain how they were not failures, in his opinion. Cáffaro describes Dickens' prefaces as a "self-celebration" of the author's life and work (182); I agree, as Dickens' prefaces and other writing indicate that he glorified his triumphs, such as the high sales of his serials, and suppressed word of his mistakes when possible. In the case of *Sketches*, Dickens could not pretend he never wrote the stories, since his contemporary audience came to know him through *Sketches*, but he could dismiss any flaws in the stories as the errors of a young, unpractised author. The frame narrative of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, in contrast, was not essential to the two novels serialized in the weekly periodical, so Dickens excised the failed parts of the experiment when he published later editions of *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*. These decisions indicate Dickens' pride in his successes and his desire for his brand to reflect his achievements.

Thus, when he felt compelled to write his own life, Dickens encountered a dilemma due to his shameful experiences as a common labourer, and he could not omit his experience at Warren's Blacking Factory if he were to write an authentic autobiography. Consequently, Dickens' efforts at retelling his life in the prefaces are not his most extensive or elaborate revising of his history,

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70. As Patten writes: "The new prefaces, issued with the final numbers, gave Dickens an opportunity to reflect on his career and the fortunes and receptions of his works, while the new setting of text allowed revisions" (147).

since he attempted a much more complicated form of life-writing in his novel *David Copperfield*. The novel began as a memoir that Dickens started in the mid-1840s but was unable to finish because of his pride and his preoccupation with how others viewed him. The knowledge of *Copperfield's* beginnings as a memoir derives from Forster's secondhand account in his biography, *The Life of Charles Dickens*. Forster observes how thoroughly *Copperfield* borrows from Dickens' autobiographical fragment:

It had all been written, as fact, before he thought of any other use for it; and it was not until several months later, when the fancy of *David Copperfield*, itself suggested by what he had so written of his early troubles, began to take shape in his mind, that he abandoned his first intention of writing his own life. (1.20)

Dickens' motivations for concealing the information in this fragment, primarily his father's incarceration in the Marshalsea debtors' prison and his own employment at a blacking factory, are complicated yet likely connected to the shame he felt from this experience. As Dickens writes in the fragment, "No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship" (1.22). While his hardship would perhaps have garnered sympathy from his readers, Dickens did not want his literary brand affected by this part of his past, at least while he lived, yet he felt compelled to write about his past despite his inability to write a memoir.

His solution was to write a fictionalized version, instead, which was typical of Victorian authors. Ira Bruce Nadel discusses the Victorians' need to fictionalize or defend the confessional aspect of autobiography due to "social resistance to personalizing experience" (189). Nadel writes that for Victorian authors, "Fiction was a safer form of self-revelation because few would mistake (so they thought) the fictive with the real" (193). Dickens, as Nadel acknowledges, exemplifies this mindset, although Nadel does not closely examine Dickens' fictionalization of his life in terms of how it affected his literary brand or reputation. *Copperfield's* autobiographical elements have been noted by critics of the novel since Forster published the first volume of his biography in 1872, and I examine the effect of his autobiographical rebranding in the novel in this section. First, I look at how Dickens revises his past in *Copperfield* by altering David's familial relationships, courtships, and his writing career, and I analyze how these divergences between Dickens' and David's lives were designed to shift Dickens' brand away from its Bozzian origins. Second, I consider the ramifications of Dickens' *Copperfield* rebranding and its impact on his literary brand and reputation.

Before discussing how Dickens used *Copperfield* to affect his brand, I need to argue that the novel was intended for this purpose, since it is debatable whether he meant for people to connect the story's autobiographical elements to his personal life. While *Copperfield's* autobiographical elements are well known now, to the extent that trade paperback editions advertise the novel as loosely based on Dickens' life, the novel was not widely recognized as semi-autobiographical, at first. Dickens' secretive method of revealing details about his life in *Copperfield* is problematic when viewing the novel as a form of rebranding Dickens' origins, but I contend that the way he retells his life in the novel is deliberately chosen to reshape his brand for a few reasons. First, *Copperfield* is unquestionably based on parts of Dickens' life, with some details of Dickens' and David's respective stories being almost identical. Slater describes the author's writing process in *Copperfield*: "Dickens has here an opportunity to do something he seems always to have taken a special delight in, namely to share his most intimate secrets with his readers but in some coded fashion, to be understood only by himself" (424).<sup>71</sup> Even if these secrets are not confessed directly, Dickens was aware of them. Second, David represents a version of Dickens' model author, and the character's depiction matches what Dickens sought to achieve with his literary brand. Carolyn Oulton has discussed how Dickens uses "mythologizing practices" to turn David into an ideal writer (122), and this mythologizing suggests that Dickens was prepared for people to associate him with David, because any connections readers make between the fictional character and the author favour Dickens' brand. Third, I also think the novel was deliberately written to rebrand Dickens' past because he gave his autobiographical fragment to Forster, his literary adviser. Dickens may have hidden his shameful work in the factory from his wife, children, and most everyone else, but the author shared that history with the person most likely to publish that information after his death, ensuring that future readers could identify the subtext and perceive the text as a semi-autobiography. For these reasons, I view *Copperfield* as a deliberate attempt at rebranding, even if the earliest readers were not fully aware of how the novel revised Dickens' past.

These revisions, where David's life diverges from Dickens', are numerous in the semi-autobiographical *Copperfield*, and they often occur when Dickens retells his most shameful memories. As Johnson writes, "Only in the disguised form of *David Copperfield*, with many

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71. Slater adds that "Forster and perhaps Catherine" would be exceptions (424). Of course, Dickens' parents and siblings could have connected David's experiences in the factory to the author's.

changes and omissions which are as significant as what he tells, could he make confessional to the world" (659). These alterations have influenced how people perceive Dickens since Forster published his biography. Slater has speculated that Dickens would have been happy with the results of the autobiographical fragment's publication (622), and I argue that part of the reason why *Copperfield* and the fragment have improved the author's brand is due to Dickens' selecting which personal details to share. Similar to Dickens' prefatory "self-celebration" that Cáffaro identified (182), Dickens discreetly shares private information in *Copperfield* that enhances his accomplishments and minimizes his failures, a combination which mythologizes David as an ideal Dickensian literary figure. The most significant revisions involve David's familial relationships, his relationships with women, and those which distinguish David's writing career from Dickens' initial stardom as Boz.

Dickens felt ashamed of his father's debt, so it is unsurprising that his parents appear only in a revised form that reflects better on Dickens' past. Moreover, most of Dickens' family members do not have counterparts in the novel; the author had several siblings, whereas David has a lone half-brother who dies in infancy. However, numerous characters in *Copperfield's* diverse cast resemble Dickens' parents, and identifying them can be difficult since Dickens distances them from David. Often, the closer a character is related to David, the less he or she resembles one of Dickens' parents. The parallels to Dickens' mother best illustrate this principle. One of David's happiest memories is of an afternoon he spends alone with his mother and half-brother: "I wish I had died. I wish I had died then, with that feeling in my heart! I should have been more fit for Heaven than I ever have been since" (125). Whereas David idealizes his mother in this memory, Dickens did not idealize his mother, Elizabeth Dickens, and Clara has little in common with Elizabeth. Even Clara's slow wits make her unlike Dickens' mother, who was a competent teacher, according to Dickens.<sup>72</sup> The cruel Miss Murdstone, David's step-aunt, on the other hand, shares a dark connection to Elizabeth, since both Miss Murdstone and Dickens' mother supported David and Charles, respectively, being sent to work in factories. As the autobiographical fragment suggests, Dickens' mother's role in his childhood shame deeply affected him: "I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back [to the factory]" (1.32). He changes David's circumstances so that the character does not suffer a similar

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72. Slater observes that Dickens praised his mother's teaching despite mocking her attempt to open a school in his autobiographical fragment and Mrs. Micawber's similar attempt to open a school (19).

betrayal from Clara, who dies before David's employment, and instead Miss Murdstone approves of the boy going to a factory.<sup>73</sup> The closest resemblance to Elizabeth Dickens in *Copperfield* is Mrs. Micawber, whom David lives with while employed at the factory, and she has no familial ties to David. Her husband Mr. Micawber is a proxy for John Dickens, Charles' father, and he, too, is distanced from David. As a result, the closest fictional parallels to Dickens' parents have no familial connections to the novel's narrator.

The familial separation between the Micawbers and David emphasizes David's successes while simultaneously making the character's actions more socially acceptable, changes which improve Dickens' literary brand when he is associated with David. As an orphan at a young age, David's unwilling employment at the factory is more challenging than what Dickens experienced, since the author, at least, remained with his immediate family, even if he felt neglected by them. As a boarder with the Micawbers, David undergoes the same tribulations of pawning household possessions and doing menial labour that Dickens did, yet Dickens did not have to flee across country by himself like David. Being orphaned not only makes David's experiences match what Dickens felt as an abandoned son, but it also enables the character to free himself from his labour in dramatic fashion. The absence of his parents, along with David having one of the cruellest stepfathers in Victorian literature, means that David's situation is more pitiful than Dickens', which heightens the sympathetic presentation of David as a young factory worker. This sympathy is crucial to David's depiction, since he becomes a temporary vagrant after his escape from the factory. Andrew Willson, in "Vagrancy and Unproductive Writing," argues that David abstains from productive labour, making the character's depiction problematic by Victorian standards since Victorians would not normally approve of workers abandoning their occupations (195). The sympathy that David invokes and Murdstone's cruelty, I argue, both help reduce David's social infraction by making his desire to flee more understandable. Furthermore, as an orphaned factory worker, David has less social responsibility to his family than Dickens did. During his employment, David feels responsible for the Micawbers, but he maintains his reputation by waiting until the Micawbers leave before escaping to Betsey Trotwood. Dickens could not have left his post without forfeiting wages that his family

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73. Miss Murdstone plays less of a role in David's employment than Elizabeth Dickens did in her son's. Mr. Murdstone tells David he is being sent to work in Chapter 10 of *Copperfield*, and Miss Murdstone does not object, although she interrupts her brother to say that she is making certain David does not spend too much on his laundry (131). Miss Murdstone's emphasis on lowering costs is reminiscent of Dickens' mother, who did not want to lose the money her son was making at the factory.

desperately needed; in contrast, David is free to run away because he does not need to provide for destitute parents. David's conduct throughout his stay at the factory is less reproachable than if he had living parents, and this presentation of events affects Dickens' brand positively when his past is associated with David's.

This presentation works because *Copperfield* emphasizes David's plight as a child. For example, when David speaks of his pain during these early chapters, sympathy is directed almost exclusively to him:

The deep remembrance of the sense I had, of being utterly without hope now; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that day by day what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, would pass away from me, little by little, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. (133)

This passage voices Dickens' feelings about his time at the blacking factory and is almost identical to a passage in his unfinished memoir.<sup>74</sup> However, the fictional account's context is altered to stress the pain that only David, and Dickens by extension, suffered as a child labourer. Consequently, when people read *Copperfield* with the knowledge of Dickens' employment at the factory, the novel's presentation directs them to focus on the author's struggles rather than his family's. *Copperfield* has become known as an autobiographical narrative, and Dickens' refashioning of his family's life means that people remember Dickens' adversity through what David overcomes. This association has changed the perception of Dickens' accomplishments, so that they are remembered more sympathetically and as greater than they were.

Meanwhile, the differences between Dickens' and David's respective romantic relationships also protect the author's brand by minimizing his mistakes. Dickens famously loved yet failed to court Maria Beadnell, and the character Dora Spenlow is based on Maria. Like Dickens, David falls in love, but, unlike Dickens, David marries his lover. Dickens possibly felt more ashamed of his failed courtship of Maria than his employment in the blacking factory; he could not bear reliving the shame of his failed romance when he attempted his memoir. Johnson describes how Dickens gave up on his memoir when he could not write about Maria: "He tried to write it down

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74. In the autobiographical fragment from Forster's biography, Dickens writes, "The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written" (1.22).

when he attempted his autobiography, but that part of his story he could not bear to show even to his closest friend, could not bear even to have anyone read after he was dead; he lost courage and burned it" (83). Assuming that Johnson is correct, I believe Dickens was more ashamed of his youthful romance because it represented a personal failure; he could blame his time in the factory on his father's debt and his mother's coldness, but Dickens mostly blamed himself for not winning over Maria, even if her father forbade the relationship.

Accordingly, Dickens avoids recreating his relationship's shameful conclusion by having David marry Dora, Maria's counterpart. David's description of his behaviour upon falling in love with Dora suggests Dickens' embarrassment over the courtship. David narrates, "Within the first week of my passion, I bought four sumptuous waistcoats—not for myself; *I* had no pride in them; for Dora—and took to wearing straw-colored kid gloves in the streets, and laid the foundations of all the corns I have ever had" (339-40). David becomes a dandy and displays his affection superficially, and he criticizes himself as a "wretched cripple" in his acts of "homage to Dora" (340). These passages of David transforming himself in Dora's name are reminiscent of Dickens' relationship with Maria, yet David avoids the author's humiliation since Dora never rejects him. Rather than being prevented by Dora's father, as Dickens was by Maria's, David successfully marries Dora because Mr. Spenlow conveniently dies shortly after forbidding David from interacting with Dora. While readers can connect David to Dickens, they will not learn of Dickens' greatest romantic failure from *Copperfield*. Although his brand could have benefitted from the public learning of his shameful ordeal at the factory, Dickens sought to avoid linking his misbegotten courtship to his literary brand. The truth of the connection between Dora and Maria did not stay hidden, yet Dickens evidently did not want that aspect of his history to become part of his brand.

David's marriage to Agnes, in contrast, intentionally constructs David as an ideal, patriarchal figure, which Dickens, because of his marital difficulties, was not. The author and character's similarities, however, suggest that Dickens was as an ideal Victorian father. No historical model among the women in Dickens' life provides the basis for Agnes. Instead, Agnes possesses the virtues of previous Dickensian women, such as domestic expertise, patience, beauty, a self-sacrificing nature, and subservience to patriarchal figures, previously seen in Kate Nickleby, Little Nell, and Florence, among others. Whereas David has qualities that Dickens wanted his audience to perceive in him, Agnes is the ideal housewife that Dickens wanted but never had. As

a result, David's marriage with Agnes enables him to become an idealized patriarch. Near the end of *Copperfield*, David describes his home life before Mr. Peggotty visits him:

I had advanced in fame and fortune, my domestic joy was perfect, I had been married ten happy years. Agnes and I were sitting by the fire, in our house in London, one night in spring, and three of our children were playing in the room, when I was told that a stranger wished to see me. (741)

David says his domestic life is "perfect," and this passage reveals that he has "fame and fortune" and has produced at least three offspring. David's financial and domestic successes are particularly idealized, since David's role as the provider matches Dickens' belief that men should support their families.<sup>75</sup> Besides idealizing David's domestic joys, this scene draws natural comparisons between David and Dickens, which readers could recognize before Forster's biography was published. Like Dickens, David achieves fame as an author and produces many children. However, while aspects of David's life in these chapters can be likened to Dickens', David's "domestic joy" is distinctly unlike Dickens' marriage to Catherine, which ended in separation a few years after *Copperfield's* completion. David's happy ending suggests that Dickens' home life was better than it was. In retrospect, this change has probably been one of the least effective ways that the author reshapes his life story in *Copperfield*, since Dickens' separation from Catherine was widely publicized in 1858, revealing the flaws in the author's domestic life.

One of the problems with Dickens' revisions of his familial and romantic relationships is that the rebranding only affects his literary brand if readers identify the author in David, and Dickens most clearly reveals his association with David when the latter grows into a popular author. Previously, I cited Slater, who observes that Dickens seemed to delight in sharing personal information in coded fashion, to be understood only by himself (424), but David's success as an author breaks this code and invites readers to identify other parts of *Copperfield* as autobiography. The moment in the novel that best uncovers David's connection to Dickens is the character's description of submitting his first story for publication. David narrates, "I have come out in another way. I have taken with fear and trembling to authorship. I wrote a little something, in secret, and sent it to a magazine, and it was published in the magazine" (535). This description

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75. The best evidence of this belief is the financial support Dickens gave to his own family. He not only provided for his immediate family, but also his siblings' children, as Patten discusses (272).

echoes what Dickens wrote less than three years earlier in his 1847 Preface to *The Pickwick Papers*, in which he refers to submitting his first work of fiction to a magazine "stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court in Fleet Street" (884). Dickens uses the phrase "fear and trembling" in both passages, while describing similar circumstances. Like Dickens, David works as a law reporter prior to taking up authorship, a connection that close acquaintances of the author could detect, and both the character and Dickens make names for themselves as novelists, a similarity that anyone could observe. These unsubtle connections strengthen the effect of the less subtle revisions because Dickens prompts readers to see him in David, inviting further comparisons between the two to be made, but Dickens does not clearly indicate in the novel how closely David's history and personality align with his own. Consequently, readers might identify false connections between David and Dickens. Since Dickens makes significant changes to David's life, as I previously described, these encouraged comparisons that would benefit Dickens' brand.

The new brand that Dickens constructs through *Copperfield* departs from his Bozzian literary brand, as he ensures that David is an un-Bozzian author whose views on authorship mirror Dickens' own. Critics frequently mention how *Copperfield* features scant details on David's life as an author or the types of fiction he writes.<sup>76</sup> This vagueness plays into the invitation to view David and Dickens as one author; there is no need to mention David's novels if they are presumed to be Dickens' classics such as *Pickwick* or *Curiosity Shop*. Furthermore, the lack of information on David's fiction protects Dickens' literary standing, since readers are not shown David's potentially inferior writing. For his part, David gives almost no descriptions of his writing process, and he excuses himself from referring to his written works because "It is not my purpose, in this record, though in all other essentials it is my written memory, to pursue the history of my own fictions. They express themselves, and I leave them to themselves. When I refer to them, incidentally, it is only as a part of my progress" (588-9). In this passage, David voices Dickens' stance on authorship, which is that authors should say little about their works. In a letter to G. H. Lewis, Dickens wrote: "if readers cannot detect the point of a passage without having their attention called to it by the writer, I would much rather they lost it and looked out

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76. For example, Slater writes: "From beginning to end of this first-person narrative whose composer becomes a famous and successful novelist we hear very little indeed about his work" (295-6). Edwards describes references to David's writing as "jokey throwaways" (337).

for something else" (*Letters* 1.403). Both David and Dickens want their works to speak for themselves, which indicates that David is written to share Dickens' ideals.

The emphasis on Dickensian, rather than Bozzian, ideals in *Copperfield* links the novel to Dickens' revisions of *Sketches* and his Cheap Edition prefaces: all three distance the author from his old Boz brand. By the time Dickens was writing *Copperfield*, he had most separated himself from his earliest writings. The crudeness and inexperience of Boz's prose cited by Dickens in his *Sketches* preface are absent in David's prose, and David lacks Boz's abrasiveness and sharp, satiric wit. Simon Edwards contrasts David's anxieties with those Dickens suffered as Boz, as Boz fretted over "the manic scramble to meet deadlines; bullying and playing off one publisher against another; the expansion and consolidation of his markets and his social and financial status; the campaigning to change the copyright laws to get hold of his American royalties" (338). These concerns are not recreated in *Copperfield*, as David suffers anxiety over Emily's affair with Steerforth and Heep's takeover of Mr. Wickfield's business; after his fearful beginnings, David seems to encounter no difficulties in his authorial career.

Moreover, whereas Boz aggressively challenged publishers and asserted his will, David is too gentlemanly to say whether he behaved similarly; his passivity manifests when he participates minimally in the unmasking of Heep's villainy and allows Steerforth to dominate him. After one of David's most embarrassing moments, appearing drunk before Agnes, he quickly corrects his behaviour. While Boz's ambition is missing in David, the latter arguably retains his creator's concern for his reputation. Slater calls David "the very model of the kind of novelists held highest in contemporary esteem" (317), and this description attests to both the character's and Dickens' abilities to judge how others want to see them: David makes no errors in his self-representation, and he succeeds in this endeavour because of how Dickens chooses to depict the narrator. Additionally, although the analogues to Dickens' parents and lovers protect his brand should readers see the author in David, the analogue between David and Dickens is hinted strongly by the author and encourages readers to separate Dickens from the Boz brand he had cultivated twenty years earlier and sought to abandon by 1850.

Dickens' rebranding in *Copperfield* extends beyond Dickens' revisionism of his past and the presentation of David as an ideal author; the transformation from Boz to Charles Dickens was also accompanied by Dickens' growth as an author. In this respect, *Copperfield* continues the author's efforts at unifying narrative and theme in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and especially *Dombey and*

*Son*; *Copperfield* also heralds the melancholic and serious tone of his subsequent novels. Dickens removed vulgar language from the revised *Sketches*, so it is unsurprising that *Copperfield* lacks similar vulgarities while possessing arguably Dickens' most intricately-planned narrative thus far. Furthermore, the decision to make David a first-person narrator attests to Dickens' willingness to challenge himself as a writer. While *A Christmas Carol* also had a first-person narrator, the novella's narrator is not central to the text; David is a much more complex creation, someone who sounds like Dickens and revises the author's history while being a separate, fictional character. The novel's achievement was soon recognized, and, according to Collins in *Dickens: Critical Heritage*, "there was widespread agreement that *Copperfield* was [Dickens'] masterpiece" (242). *Copperfield*, thus, elevated Dickens' literary brand, which Dickens likely realized, considering how proud he was of the novel as his "favourite child" (752) in spite of its poor sales relative to his previous novel.<sup>77</sup> *Dombey* marked another step in Dickens' departure from Boz, since he finally discarded the pseudonym and managed to write a more cohesive novel, and *Copperfield* signified Dickens' further removal from the Boz name, as the text is of a higher quality and enhanced Dickens' literary reputation. Consequently, *Copperfield* succeeds at more than rebranding Dickens as an author; it changes the meaning of "Dickensian."

Considering how little information the author gave about his earliest years, aside from his *Pickwick* Prefaces, Dickens shares a surprising amount of personal details in *Copperfield*, which encourages readers to connect Dickens to David. While more informed scholars will see the differences separating Dickens from David, as I do in this dissertation, Dickens' retelling of his past in *Copperfield* has influenced how readers perceived him. It was not apparent to the novel's first readers which parts of the novel are confessional, although modern biographies of Dickens have eliminated some of this mystery. Whether or not these first readers knew how he was changing his authorial origins is not the most important aspect of this case, since these alterations have affected how Dickens has been perceived since he died. Part of *Copperfield's* legacy on Dickens' brand has been the novel's mythologizing effect on the author.

Dickens' re-creation of his youth has become integral to the author's current mythology. The image of David in domestic tranquility has been less convincing to twentieth and twenty-first-century readers in large part due to Dickens' behaviour after the novel's completion; Johnson's

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77. According to Patten, *David Copperfield* averaged around 22,000 sales per number, around 10,000 less than *Dombey and Son* had sold (157).

biography, for example, discusses the author's unhappiness in his marriage at length,<sup>78</sup> but a Dickens biography is not needed to realize his marriage was worse than David's because the author's separation has become common knowledge. Alan Shelston has described *Copperfield* as both a "mythic" and "personal" novel (17), while Oulton writes that Dickens' representation of David uses "mythologizing practices to create a type of the ideal writer" (122). These practices best succeed, I add, when the historical record and Dickens' fiction do not contradict one another. For example, Dickens' employment at Warren's Blacking Warehouse has become mythical because of how powerfully he expresses the event's impact on his life in the autobiographical fragment, and in its corresponding recreation in *Copperfield*, and these texts are the only major sources concerning the author's painful employment.

Patten, in "Whitewashing," and Slater, in his biography, recognize the problems caused by our need to rely on an account of events that the author supposedly told Forster two decades after they occurred.<sup>79</sup> Slater stresses that the success Dickens experienced after his youthful employment affects the author's perspective: "It is from the standpoint of an established and much-acclaimed literary prodigy, a man in his own words 'famous and caressed and happy', that he looks back in anger, grief and pity, as well as something close to incredulity, at what was done to him in his eleventh and twelfth years" (16). Accordingly, Dickens' view on the period is less than objective, which creates issues when trying to objectively document his life between 1822 and 1824.<sup>80</sup> One consequence of Dickens being the primary source of information on his employment in the factory is that readers are motivated to accept his version as fact. Dickens' remembrance of the employment depicts him as a gifted child neglected to the point of cruelty.<sup>81</sup> The legend surrounding Dickens that arose from this narrative states that he achieved success by overcoming the odds and adversity through hard work, both at the factory and, eventually, as an author.

The endurance of the myth of Dickens' employment at the factory attests to the novel's impact on his literary brand. While David's marriage to Agnes is not based on Dickens' relationship with

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78. In *Tragedy and Triumph*, Johnson discusses Dickens' separation in the chapter "Breaking Point" (904-26).

79. Slater identifies the "problematic nature of attempting any sort of objective account of Dickens's life during 1822-24" (15).

80. Even determining how long the experience lasted for Dickens is imprecise. Slater mentions that the "latest research" estimates "thirteen or fourteen months" (24), and research and discussion on this topic will certainly continue in the foreseeable future.

81. I quote Dickens' memory as it appears in the autobiographical fragment published by Forster (1.22) and the similar version in *Copperfield* (133) on page 112 of this dissertation.

Catherine, David's courting of Dora matches Dickens' fruitless pursuit of Maria, lending to the novel's semi-autobiographical authenticity, and Dickens' decision for David to become a popular novelist makes it challenging for readers to separate the character from the author. The unmistakable similarities are crucial to *Copperfield*'s ability to revise Dickens' past and mythologize the author in David's form. In this regard, Dickens' methods resemble Byron's in his poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. In *Childe Harold*, Byron creates an ambiguity between author and character, fact and fiction, and Dickens mythologizes himself in *Copperfield* in a similar manner. If *Copperfield* can be identified as autobiography, readers are encouraged to see the David persona as the author. Dickens constructs David carefully, so that most of these conflations of fact and fiction reflect on his brand positively. Moreover, as his decision to give the autobiographical to Forster suggests, Dickens ensured that *Copperfield* is one of the rare examples his readers could use to learn more about his history.

This conflation of David and Dickens has also affected the literary reputation of *Copperfield*, emphasizing Dickens' role in this rebranding. Slater observes that *Copperfield*, "Inevitably...would be—and was—widely read as being, at least to some extent, autobiographical" (292), which aptly describes critical assessments of the novel. In fact, Edwards suggests that *Copperfield* has received "the wrong kind of critical attention" (335) due to the emphasis literary scholars have placed on the novel's autobiographical nature. I view the critical attention towards *Copperfield*'s autobiographical elements as illuminating, since the difficulty critics occasionally have in separating the character from author means that *Copperfield* has become Dickens' central novel in informing his biography. Tyson Stolte, for instance, notes how closely David's voice matches his author's: "it almost goes without saying that David, in insisting on his inherited gifts, sounds very much like his author. But sound like Dickens he does" (55). Since David's voice is supplied by Dickens, this link is unsurprising, and, retrospectively, it makes it easier to view Dickens and David as different permutations of the same individual. Jennifer Ruth is compelled to link the two characters when she examines the character's and author's youthful employments in factories: "what outrages David (and Dickens) is less that a *child* has been forced into wage labor than that *he*, David Copperfield, a child who might qualify for higher pursuits, is 'thrown away'" (306). In "Oppression of Remembrance," Rosemary Mundhenk observes similarities between Dickens and David (335), while in "Performing Suffering: From Dickens to David," Nina Auerbach emphasizes the differences between the two,

as they have become so intertwined in analyses of *Copperfield* and biographies of Dickens (19). Lyn Pykett, in her overview of *Copperfield* criticism, describes the novel as "authorial self-justification" (109), which encapsulates the centrality of the novel's autobiographical nature. In my analysis, this emphasis on autobiography in studies on *Copperfield* may not have occurred had Dickens not given his autobiographical fragment to Forster. Consequently, Dickens actively participated in mythologizing his past by writing a fictionalized narrative and giving the non-fictional account to someone who would publish the connections between the author and his fictional stand-in.

Dickens' self-mythologizing in *Copperfield* did not work in isolation, since his efforts in his prefaces and the new editions contributed to the literary brand of the dignified author that he constructed. His 1867 Preface for the Charles Dickens Edition of *Copperfield* stresses how important the novel was to him, personally. Dickens writes,

Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is DAVID COPPERFIELD. (752)

This favouritism of *Copperfield* has been oft-cited and is consistent with his high opinion of the novel expressed in his letters. *Copperfield's* elevation in this preface further emphasizes the connection between Dickens and David in retrospect; readers now know more about the novel's autobiographical elements and can assume that part of the reason *Copperfield* is Dickens' favourite is because of his personal connection to David. The favouritism draws attention to this connection, yet it also strongly encourages his audience to read the novel, and Dickens' reimagining of his past, if they have not already. While I examined the effectiveness of Dickens' autobiographical revisions in the novel, I should note that *Copperfield* sold relatively poorly in its initial serialization, which limited the novel's capacity to rebrand Dickens during its original serialization.<sup>82</sup> The later editions of the novel have improved Dickens' success at rebranding in *Copperfield*, since the novel has been one of the biggest beneficiaries, in terms of sales, from new printings, both during and after the author's life. The aforementioned 1867 Preface is often included in editions published since then, and some paperbacks prominently feature Dickens' description of the novel as a "favourite child." The back of the 2012 Penguin English Library

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82. According to Patten, *Copperfield* sold between 22,000-25,000 issues per number, well below *Dombey* (157).

edition, for example, states that *Copperfield* is "based, in part, on [Dickens'] own boyhood," spreading awareness of Dickens' re-creation of his authorial origins while advertising the novel's semi-autobiographical nature. This awareness has turned David into a mythological version of the author. Consequently, Dickens' comments in his preface perpetuate his rebranding in these new editions, further mythologizing the fictionalized autobiography for new readers.

Dickens also improved *Copperfield's* legacy by telling a modified version of the narrative for his Public Readings in the 1860s, first reading from the novel in October, 1861. In his editorial notes for *The Public Readings*, Collins observes that Dickens favoured reading the story to audiences, much as he favoured the novel (216).<sup>83</sup> The revisions that I discuss in this chapter, such as David's work at the factory and his growth as a writer, foreshadow the new, dramatic alterations that Dickens would make to his stories for the Public Readings. *Copperfield*, in particular, received the most extensive revisions of any novels he adapted for and performed on his tour. Moreover, the absence of scenes with David in the factory does not suggest that Dickens' literary brand became less important to him in the late 1850s and 1860s. For his Public Readings, he had no need to tell his audiences how they should view him because he was on stage where they could physically see him; Dickens controlled his literary brand on his tours through his appearance and the act of performing, and the sight and sound of him trumped the written words themselves. He had already rebranded himself as a dignified author before he began his tours. With the Public Readings, his objective was to live up to the revised literary brand he had constructed in *Copperfield*, his prefaces, and the Library Editions of his novels. My next chapter discusses whether or not Dickens achieved this objective.

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83. Dickens included his *Copperfield* adaptation on his tour more than any other excerpts from his novels, ultimately reading it 71 times, according to Collins (xxvii).

## Chapter 5: Dickens' Brand as a Public Reader

Major upheavals in Dickens' personal life came after his rebranding in the early 1850s. The year 1858 was especially tumultuous for him, as he altered his life and created a new circle of friends and contacts. The most well known change in 1858 is his separation from Catherine Dickens, which is connected to Dickens' well-known affair with Ellen Ternan that began in 1857. While Dickens had been unhappy with Catherine for years, his new love for Ternan led him to break ties with his wife; Dickens went as far to block the doorway between his and Catherine's bedrooms in Tavistock House prior to his official separation from her in June, 1858 (Johnson 911). The marital breakdown impacted Dickens' life beyond his domestic arrangements. It tested his friendships with Forster, who had a strong bond with Catherine,<sup>84</sup> and with the heiress Angela Burdett-Coutts, who, like Forster, disapproved of the separation.<sup>85</sup> Dickens broke away from other friends, such as Mark Lemon, if he thought they continued to support Catherine. Similarly, he severed his relationship with Bradbury & Evans after the publisher did not cooperate with Dickens' desire to publish his reasons for separating from Catherine.<sup>86</sup> After returning to Chapman & Hall for his future publications, Dickens engaged in a legal battle with Bradbury & Evans over the rights to *Household Words*, which prompted the author to start the weekly periodical *All the Year Round* in 1859.

Moreover, at this time, other friendships and partnerships changed for reasons not owing to Dickens' marital strife. He spent more time with younger, upcoming authors, the most famous being Wilkie Collins, while Dickens' long, fruitful collaboration with Hablot K. Browne concluded with *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dickens even permanently changed his residence from Tavistock House to Gad's Hill, and he spent less time in England, frequently staying in Paris for months at a time when he was not touring the United Kingdom for his Public Readings (*Letters* X.xii). Between 1856 and 1870, Dickens' personal life arguably changed more than it had during any other time during his career as an author, yet his literary brand remained strong and mostly unaffected despite this personal upheaval. However, while retaining his popularity, Dickens substantially altered his relationship with his readers and drastically changed his literary output

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84. Forster struggles to recount the separation in his biography in a chapter entitled "What Happened at This Time" (2.193-206).

85. Graham Storey, in a preface to the letters, observes that letters to Burdett-Coutts were "rare" after the separation (*Letters* 10.xi).

86. Patten writes that the "break with Bradbury and Evans was ultimately caused by two different understandings of the relation between a popular author's public and private life" (254). Dickens' enmity ran deep; he chose not to attend his son Charley's wedding to Bessie because the bride was Frederick Evans' daughter (Slater 501).

in 1858 when he started the Public Readings. In the process, Dickens revolutionized how authors interacted with readers as public figures.

Dickens was not the first public reader in the nineteenth century, since two of his contemporaries, Thomas Carlyle and William M. Thackeray, established a precedent for public speaking before Dickens turned professional. Nonetheless, Dickens innovated as a public reader by making his literary works the subjects of his Public Readings. Carlyle was a philosopher, and his public speaking involved giving lectures. His *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, published in 1841, derives from Carlyle's lectures on heroism given in 1840. Thackeray, in contrast to Carlyle, was a serial novelist like Dickens, yet, in 1849, Thackeray became a lecturer, since the novelist did not want to tarnish his reputation by performing his literary works on tour. Dickens, therefore, broke from conventional decorum by reading his Christmas stories, and later excerpts from his novels, on stage. Forster advised Dickens against the Public Readings,<sup>87</sup> since it was seen as beneath gentlemen to sell their works through public speaking in Victorian society. Lectures were an acceptable compromise for authors, since lectures could be justified on their educational merits, and Dickens tested the viability of becoming a professional reader by giving readings for charity, which were far less risky to his literary reputation because he derived no profit from them. The charity readings proved popular and encouraged Dickens to turn professional and pursue his new career as a public reader.

Prior to the charity readings, he regularly recited his works, including his Christmas stories and individual serial numbers, in front of friends. Dickens enjoyed the power he felt when his reading of *The Chimes* brought the actor William Macready to tears, but Philip Collins contends that Dickens did not get the idea to read publically for money until he read the first number of *Dombey and Son* to a group of friends in Lausanne, Switzerland on September 12, 1846 (xix).<sup>88</sup> By October in 1846, the idea had taken hold of Dickens, and he wrote to Forster, "I was thinking the other day that in these days of lecturings and readings, a great deal of money might possibly be made (if it were not infra dig) by one's having Readings of one's own books. It would be an *odd* thing. I think it would take immensely" (*Letters* 4.631). Forster did not take the notion seriously at first and, as mentioned, staunchly opposed the notion after Dickens went forward

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87. In response to Forster's advice not to tour for profit, Dickens wrote, "Your view of the reading matter I still think is unconsciously taken from your own particular point" (*Letters* 8.534). Dickens went on to cite two ladies he had spoken to, saying neither considered the idea of Public Readings "derogatory" (*Letters* 8.535).

88. All citations to Philip Collins in this chapter refer to his editorial work in *The Public Readings*, unless specified otherwise.

with this plan. However, the charity readings were such a success that Forster could not dissuade Dickens from giving his first professional performance on April 29, 1858, in London (Collins xxii). Dickens had four major tours of paid readings: first, from 1858 to 1860, second, from 1861 to 1863, third, from 1866 to 1868, and, finally, his tours in 1869 and 1870.

The Public Readings improved Dickens' relations with the public, although the impact on his career was not strictly positive, as this new occupation damaged his physical health. Initially, the Readings offered Dickens an escape from his personal troubles in the late 1850s. According to Forster, "To the full extent [Dickens] perhaps did not himself know, how much his eager present wish to become a public reader was but the outcome of the restless domestic discontents of the last four years" (2.200). Additionally, the Readings presented Dickens with an opportunity to fulfill his dramatic aspirations, and, by the end of his life, he was addicted to reading before crowds and quit only after his health failed. Because of their connections to drama, Forster called the Public Readings "a substitution of lower for higher aims; a change to commonplace from more elevated pursuits" (2.200). Despite Forster's misgivings, Dickens succeeded in surmounting public perceptions against dramatic performances to a remarkable extent.

The Public Readings have been the subject of studies by Collins, Malcolm Andrews, Juliet John, and Susan Ferguson, all of which have affected my research. Collins' work, especially his editorial work for the Clarendon edition of the Public Readings, was instrumental in drawing further attention to the importance of these performances. Andrews' *Dickens and His Performing Selves* examines Dickens as a performer and, in particular, how he prepared for his Public Readings, while John devotes a chapter of *Dickens and Mass Culture* to the Public Readings and situates Dickens' performances in the context of mass culture. Ferguson, meanwhile, discusses how Dickens shaped his "public persona" (729) in the Public Readings. I expand on these scholars' work by arguing that Dickens advanced his literary brand through his Public Readings, and this chapter focuses on why the Readings were so successful and how they are the culmination of Dickens' previous efforts to control his brand.

To explain this critical period in Dickens' career, I have divided this chapter into five sections. First, I describe how Dickens triumphed over his would-be imitators as a public reader, since his theatrical background and celebrity allowed him to create inimitable performances. In the second section, I analyze how personally adapting his stories and performing before his fans gave Dickens the close intimacy with readers that he had coveted for decades. Third, I examine how

becoming a public reader strengthened Dickens' independence from publishers, and I discuss how the Readings exemplify Dickens' combination of traditionalism and innovation previously exhibited in *Dombey and Son*. Fourth, I look at the adaptations themselves more closely and Dickens' revisions. In the final section, I survey the broader implications that the Public Readings had on Dickens' literary career. Overall, Dickens used the Public Readings to combine the roles of creator and distributor, enhancing his celebrity while granting him more control over his literary brand.

### 5.1. Defeating Imitators with Inimitable Performances

Although Dickens stopped criticizing his imitators directly in his novels after *Nicholas Nickleby*, he never ceased to be frustrated by the lack of copyright laws that allowed plagiarists to steal from his works. He gave up on suing plagiarists in 1844 after he lost money in his attempt to prosecute Richard Egan Lee and John Haddock for publishing *A Christmas Ghost Story*, a blatant *Christmas Carol* counterfeit. Dickens also conceded that he likely would not live to see any international copyright laws enacted, but he profited from his international stardom by licensing official translations in France and Germany, as well as by giving early proofs of his serials to a specialized American publisher. However, copyright infringement and pirated adaptations continued to irritate Dickens, and his Public Readings were a new weapon to circumvent his pirates, due to the Readings' unique qualities—no one else could appear on stage as Dickens, so he could genuinely live up to his nickname, the Inimitable. Dickens' background and participation in amateur theatre qualified him for public speaking and enabled Dickens to create a medium of literature that his imitators could not hope to copy, even if he did not realize how effective the Readings were against literary theft.

Despite abandoning acting for writing, Dickens never lost his love of drama. Long before Dickens considered reading in public, he dabbled in amateur theatrics as a playwright, actor, and avid theatregoer. In particular, Dickens admired Charles Mathews, and Mathews' performances influenced Dickens' Public Readings and growth as an actor. Inspired by Mathews, Dickens became a skilled mimic as well, and his skill at mimicry prepared him to adapt his novels into Public Readings. Prior to Dickens' breakthrough as a serial writer, he also considered becoming an actor and managed to secure an audition. However, a cold led him to cancel his tryout (Johnson 61), and he soon forgot professional acting after *Sketches by Boz* began publication. He never left acting all together and regularly threw himself into roles and managed productions

performed by him, his friends, and his family. Dickens' contributions to the Victorian theatre were not solely amateur, as he wrote several plays, including *The Frozen Deep* and *No Thoroughfare* in collaboration with Wilkie Collins, which were performed by professional companies. As an actor, Dickens is not heralded as a lead performer in accounts of those who saw him, at least not to the same level as a professional actor, but he was praised for his ability to play secondary, comical characters. According to Leigh Woods, Dickens favoured playing ridiculous old men, since such roles did not require much in the way of physical acting (92). Philip Collins, in addition, summarizes Dickens' strengths and limitations, "He had a good voice, able to command auditoria holding three or four thousand people, though it was not especially powerful and some desirable vocal effects were beyond him" (liv). Hence, Dickens performed in mid-sized venues where his weaknesses would be less noticeable. Two of Dickens' greatest talents, memory and mimicry, did not lend themselves well to dominant acting performances akin to those by Macready. However, these talents proved useful in his Public Readings, making them popular with audiences and presenting a challenge to imitators.

As a result, Dickens' new career as a reader could not easily be imitated by the imitators who continued to aggravate him. While Dickens avoided responding publically to literary theft, he never forgot their transgressions up to the last year of his life. As John writes, "Dickens was only too aware of the continued pirating of his works in the States" (153), and this pirating was not restricted to the United States. His novels as late as *Bleak House* were still being adapted in London before their serializations concluded (Bolton 349), even if Dickens' later novels did not receive nearly as many hack adaptations as *The Pickwick Papers* and *Nicholas Nickleby*.<sup>89</sup> That is not to say that Dickens stopped encountering copyright troubles abroad. When the *Eastern Province Herald*, a South African newspaper, published *Great Expectations* in 1861 without Dickens' permission, he wrote to them:

I have a special reason for protecting my property, on principle, while I am alive, derived from the Court of Chancery. ... I heard it gravely argued that because I had submitted to be pirated before, I had lost my remedy in equity. I was so far edified by the discussion as to resolve that I assuredly never would submit to be pirated again if I knew it, and to this resolution I always adhere. (*Letters* 9.503)

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89. In "Adapting the Seduction Plot," Laird writes, "Indeed, by 1849, Dickens had come to expect with certainty that pirated versions of his work would be staged without his authorization and despite his protestations" (194).

As this letter indicates, Dickens only stopped fighting his imitators since he could not take successful legal action. During his visit to America for his Readings in 1867-68, more hack adaptations raised his ire. In the middle of his tour, he wrote to Charles Fechter about the countless subpar productions based on his works:

wherever I go, the theatres (with my name in big letters) instantly begin playing versions of my books ... Now, I have enquired into the law, and am extremely doubtful whether I *could* have prevented this. Why should they pay for the piece as you act it, when they have no actors, and when all they want is my name, and they can get that for nothing? (*Letters* 12.57)

Again, Dickens emphasizes his legal helplessness, and he despairs over the hack writers' ability to profit from his name, which they can use in promotions at no cost. While his brand was tarnished by pirates using his name, Dickens believed it would harm his reputation to fight back this late into his career. In 1870, he wrote to his American friend James Field about the consequences of retaliation: "I cannot overcome my instinctive feeling that it would be a very unseemly thing for me to engage in any single combats with the Pirates" (*Letters* 12.464). Whereas the older Dickens did not lose the disdain for imitators that he displayed in *Nickleby*, he valued preserving his reputation more than the infuriating loss of profits he associated with the hack adaptations.

By 1870, as his works continued to be copied, Dickens had beaten the imitators through adapting his works as Public Readings. Exact figures for how much money unlicensed adaptations earned are difficult to find, but Dickens certainly profited more from his Public Readings than any individual had from pirate or licensed adaptations of his works. Robert L. Patten estimates that Dickens earned approximately £45,000 from the Readings, almost half of his estate at the time of his death (244).<sup>90</sup> This figure dwarfs the earnings of most nineteenth-century actors, and the earnings of hack dramatists. Moreover, Collins says that Dickens earned more from a single reading than Macready "could command at the peak of his career" (xxviii). The Readings were profitable not only because people enjoyed hearing his stories,<sup>91</sup> but also because it was so challenging for would-be pirate adapters to copy Dickens' performances. The pirates could not possibly match the primary draw of the Readings, which was seeing Dickens in

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90. Patten notes that Dickens' full estate was worth about £93,000 when he died (244).

91. Forster relates an anecdote of an old woman who followed all of Dickens' serials by listening to public recitals of them in a pub (1.454).

person, so Dickens performed in a market without any competitors when he took the stage as a public reader.

Dickens took advantage of his popularity as a public figure to draw crowds to his Public Readings. As Ferguson writes, "his fame as an author was crucial to his success as a public performer" (739). If he had not already been well known, the interest in him would have been understandably lower. According to Collins, when Dickens began his tours, "there was (as was maintained at the time) a new cult of literary personality which made the public eager to see as well as read their favourite authors" (lii). Dickens, of course, was arguably the public's favourite author. Andrews adds that Dickens "himself arrived on the public platform as yet another reciter of his works, as far as huge numbers of his readers were concerned: but of course he was also *the Reader*" (20). Listening to Dickens read held a special appeal to audiences, unsurprisingly. Dickens' skill at speaking, which the glowing reviews of the Readings attest to (Collins lvii), account for the author's consistency in drawing crowds and made him more than a passing fad, yet it was the novelty of seeing the famous author read his own works which no imitator has matched before or since Dickens.

Nonetheless, some people attempted to capitalize on Dickens' tours by publishing the scripts to his Public Readings. Dickens tried selling his prompt copies of the Public Readings, but, as Patten observes, the sales "never amounted to much" (255). The reason behind their failure is simple: the Readings are incomplete and diminished when separated from their reader. To a large extent, the Readings' success depended on their medium, Dickens himself. In spite of the low sales of Dickens' prompt copies, pirates in Boston, near the start of Dickens' American tour in December 1867, sought to profit from printing transcripts of his Readings. Dickens had an answer for them. In *Charles Dickens as I Knew Him*, George Dolby discusses how these pirates were defeated:

Before the announcement of the Readings in Boston, an intimation had reached me that the "pirates" had decided in sending shorthand writers to the Readings to "take them down" as they progressed, with a view to their reproduction and sale—an intimation which was conveyed to Messrs. Ticknor and Fields; and they promptly anticipated such a proceeding by at once issuing the Readings (taken from Mr. Dickens's own reading books) in small volumes, and selling them at their store at such a price as made it impossible for the "pirates" to get anything out of their publication. (177)

Although print versions of the Public Readings were inferior to Dickens' live performances and sold poorly, Dickens found it worthwhile to print copies in order to defend his literary brand, even if he knew from past sales in Britain that these printings would sell poorly. On stage, imitators did not try to compete with Dickens, as his histrionic abilities and celebrity presence could not be duplicated. For example, Dickens wrote to his sister-in-law that Chicago newspapers claimed that a Dickens impersonator would perform Public Readings in Chicago after the original declined to extend his tour there, but James Edward Murdoch, the man cited as the impersonator, denied any plans to copy Dickens' act, according to the editors of Dickens' letters (*Letters* 12.70). In this case, either Murdoch realized the difficulty of replicating Dickens' act or the Chicago news writers invented the impersonation scheme.

The Readings were also difficult to replicate since Dickens' performances were more complicated than taking a book and reading pages from it before an audience. In concept, he simply took passages from his novels and stories and read them aloud in a three-hour block. At first, for his charity readings, he used only his Christmas books, and the initial performances of *A Christmas Carol*, for example, took the full three hours. When he began reading as a professional, he reduced the length, and he continuously abbreviated any text he worked with; he cut the *Carol* from three hours to two (Collins xxx) and then to an hour, forty-five minutes (Collins xxxi). Most Readings would include one longer text, taking about two hours, followed by a brief intermission, and then a reading from one of his shorter selections, such as *The Trial*. In execution, Dickens revised his texts considerably and often improvised during the Readings, so no two performances were exactly the same. As a result, Andrews writes, Dickens' "performances crossed back and forth over the borderlines between reading, recitation, spontaneous storytelling, and acting" (50-1). In effect, Dickens' Readings represented a new medium of literature, requiring skill at literary composition and oration to a degree few people possess. Even if imitators could have copied Dickens' method of delivery, their improvisations would lack the authority of Dickens' impromptu changes.

Moreover, Dickens' memorization of his Readings disguised the difficulty of his performances. For example, Mark Twain saw Dickens read and underestimated his English counterpart. Twain said, "I supposed it would only be necessary to do like Dickens—get up on the platform and read from the book. I did that and made a botch of it" (qtd. in Ferguson 734). Twain failed to recreate Dickens' success when he imitated the latter since few people in history

have had Dickens' combination of literary success, power of public speaking, and dedication to spend hundreds of hours practicing for a public reading.<sup>92</sup> The seeming ease with which Dickens performed a Reading belied the hard work he put into preparations. Andrews claims that by "the late 1860s Dickens had learned all his Readings by heart and his books had become props" (136). During his *Sikes and Nancy* Reading, Dickens would fling aside the prompt copy of his book at the height of dramatic tension, indicating how unimportant his prompt copies eventually became. I am less certain that Dickens perfectly memorized his other Readings; he may have occasionally improvised text because he forgot his original phrasing.<sup>93</sup> The delivery of such readings required expertise in multiple areas beyond the normal range of entertainers, aside from playwrights who acted in productions of their own plays. These playwrights did not generally perform alone, unless they were Mathews, so Dickens' performances were more difficult than typical dramas because he needed to engage audiences' attentions by himself and memorize longer scripts.<sup>94</sup>

While I cited letters in which Dickens refers to his continued annoyance at literary theft, he did not seem to recognize the victory against imitators that his Public Readings represented. Even in the letters he wrote during his United States tour about mediocre American theatrical adaptations of his novels or the Chicago impersonator, Dickens does not rejoice that no one could hope to surpass him in reading his works on stage; he did not see this connection. Instead, he laments that others took advantage of the enthusiasm for his works by adapting them without permission, rather than celebrating that he drew bigger crowds and earned more money than his unlicensed adapters. The distinction between his Public Readings and drama is perhaps responsible for Dickens' inability to notice this triumph over the imitators, his longstanding enemies. Lauren Holm, for example, views the Public Readings as a retreat from a theatrical career rather than a move into theatricality (244). Dickens, a noted participant and lover of theatre, thought like Holm and did not equate his public speaking with traditional drama. Moreover, his Readings, aside from *Sikes and Nancy*, were far less melodramatic and performative than Victorian drama, so he had reason not to view them as dramatic works in their own right.

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92. In "Dickens' Public Readings: The Performer and the Novelist," Collins writes, "No English author before or since (it seems safe to guess) has combined such splendid talents as a performer with such genius as a writer" (129).

93. Dickens did not regularly perform all of his texts he read, and I doubt he had memorized *The Cricket on the Hearth*, for example, which he performed only four times near the start of his speaking career (Collins xxviii).

94. Andrews comments on the unique difficulties of the soloist performer: "The problems for the soloist come not so much from managing either the narration or the impersonation of the character parts, but in controlling the transition between them, and judging the appropriate level of immersion in the character part" (197).

However, the Public Readings fused aspects of the theatre with his works, and, more importantly, whatever Dickens thought, the Readings allowed him to wrest some control of his brand away from plagiarists and pirates. Whitney Helms describes the Public Readings as "an enterprise that allowed [Dickens] simultaneously to bolster his celebrity and limit the degree to which he was commodified" (128). The Public Readings were one of Dickens' new commodities, and their inimitability meant that no one else could commodify them for their benefit. As a result, the Readings were a tantalizing commodity that Dickens used to profit from his American fans, in particular. John speculates on the author's thinking towards his Public Readings before touring the United States: "If America will not pay for my works, [Dickens] appeared to imply, then it will have to pay to see me" (153). In this sense, Dickens succeeded against his imitators because the American crowds paid in large numbers to see performances that the American pirates could not hope to copy in terms of Dickens' virtuoso display or his draw. Thus, I consider the Readings a victory over imitators that Dickens took for granted because it was obvious to him that no one else could be him or read his stories in the same way.

Overall, I view Dickens' unique combination of talents and cultural resonance as instrumental to his success as a public reader, since others could not duplicate these skills. Few of his predecessors were willing to try public speaking in any capacity, and no one else, as far as I know, dared to take their own literature to their stage unless they were playwrights. As Twain's failed attempt at public speaking suggests, the difficulty of Dickens' performances was high even without trying to copy Dickens' Readings, specifically. It is rare for authors to be gifted at both speaking and writing, let alone for them to possess memories comparable to Dickens'. Consequently, even after Dickens helped lower the prejudice against writers reading their works in public for monetary benefit, no one since has caused a sensation with public reading, although authors now draw crowds for book signings and readings, as I discuss in the next chapter. Dickens' willingness to challenge his society's views of public reading and his talent in this endeavour were unique, which meant his literary pirates could not reproduce the Readings and profit from imitations.

## 5.2. Dickens' Intimate Connection with His Audiences

Dickens did not write for sales or critical approbation alone, since he wanted to be loved by readers from all classes, and he could feel the general affection from his legion of readers even when reviewers criticized works such as *Little Dorrit*. The Public Readings were a natural

extension of this desire for intimacy, since they placed him in direct contact with his many admirers. Fittingly, Dickens chose *A Christmas Carol* for his first charity reading, and the novella was performed regularly and frequently after he went professional. Considering that the Public Readings brought Dickens into close proximity with tens of thousands of fans, they represent his best effort to cultivate intimacy with his large reading public. This section analyzes the importance of this intimacy to Dickens during his reading tours. Furthermore, personally adapting and performing his own works increased Dickens' control over the spread of his literature, even if becoming closer to his readers put him in a vulnerable position.

The Readings gave Dickens an opportunity to interact with his fans in a more intimate and close environment, and he relished being a public reader, as a result. John observes that Dickens undertook his Public Readings since he wanted to "reaffirm what he called 'the personal (I may say almost affectionate) relations' that he believed existed between himself and 'the public', and partly to make money" (131). His need to engage with his readers directly, which arguably surpassed his desire to earn money, is one of the most notable aspects of his career as a reader. Andrews adds that Dickens' relationship with readers "was an almost instinctive driving force behind the whole of Dickens's career as a writer and journalist, and then as a public Reader" (209). John's and Andrews' assessments accurately describe Dickens' thrill in seeing audiences' reactions to his stories. In his letters, Dickens often emphasizes his listeners' reactions to his Public Readings. For example, he wrote to his sister-in-law Georgina about a Belfast crowd in 1858 and their responses to *Little Dombey* and *Mrs. Gamp*:

I have never seen *men* go in to cry so undisguisedly as they did at that reading [of *Little Dombey*] yesterday afternoon. They made no attempt whatever to hide it, and certainly cried more than the women. As to the Boots at night — and Mrs. Gamp too — it was just one roar with me and them. For they made me laugh so, that sometimes I *could not* compose my face to go on. (*Letters* 8.643)

This physical proximity was gratifying to him since it fostered a kinship with his audiences, prompting him to join in their laughter. As a result, the Public Readings granted Dickens the intimacy his narrator alludes to in the *Carol*, as well as the connections with readers that he speaks of in his novels' prefaces. The Readings reduced the pretence of an assumed, written bond because they formed a connection between author and reader in reality.

The intimacy with readers was integral to Dickens' performance during Public Readings, as he needed to feel connected with his audiences in order to read at his best. According to Collins, Dickens' "successive performances of the same item would vary considerably, according to his health and spirits and the degree of his rapport with his audience" (lv). If the crowds did not feel involved in any given Reading, Dickens would lose enthusiasm and his performance would suffer. His desperation to cultivate intimacy was so apparent that astute audience members noticed it. For example, David Christie Murray, one audience member, said after seeing multiple Public Readings that Dickens

depended, as I remember...in a most extraordinary degree upon the temper of his audience. I have heard him read downright flatly and badly to an unresponsive house, and I have seen him vivified and quickened to the most extraordinary display of genius by an audience of the opposite kind. (qtd. in Collins lvi)

Considering that most reviews of the Readings were positive, Dickens likely did not struggle often to develop his needed rapport, although it is fair to say, as Andrews does, that Dickens developed a "dependency" (71) on responsive crowds. Dickens recognized his dependence on receptive audiences and took measures to engage himself with colder crowds; in one instance, Dickens locked onto one responsive member in an audience, the playwright Herman Charles Merivale, to motivate himself.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, prior to commencing a Reading, Dickens would encourage his audiences to laugh and cry and show their emotions since he knew that he enjoyed sharing these emotions with listeners and performed better, as the previously-cited letter suggests. The sheer joy Dickens derived from seeing his audiences' happiness attests to the value he placed on cultivating intimacy with his fans.

Outside of the reading halls, Dickens took measures to ensure that he could develop this intimacy with the largest crowds possible. For his Public Readings, Dickens lowered his potential earnings by setting the cost of tickets well below market value, allowing his audiences to be comprised of listeners from all social classes. In the United States, for example, Dickens initially charged \$2.00 per ticket, even though speculators resold tickets for far more (John 141). Dolby describes how he had to convince Dickens, who "disapproved," to raise ticket prices to \$5.00 for his Washington Readings (216). Given how much more money Dickens could have

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95. Merivale laughed wholeheartedly at one scene. Dickens noticed Merivale's reaction and focused his performance at the latter until he gained enough enthusiasm to win the entire audience over (Andrews 214-5).

earned had he charged more, his desired price for the tickets for the Public Readings makes sense when considering his need to read to as many people as possible. As John writes, "If we fail to register the fundamental and complex importance to Dickens of gathering crowds for the public readings, and the bigger the crowd the better, then aspects of the management of the reading tours are rendered inexplicable" (144). These low prices were designed to guarantee sold-out halls and prevent Dickens from seeing any empty seats, which would dampen his enthusiasm to perform. While this tactic lowered his earnings, Dickens earned incredible sums in spite of offering cheap tickets. The final result was a positive scenario for all involved, as Dickens got the large crowds and money he wished for, while the audiences, except for those who bought tickets from speculators, got to see Dickens for a reasonable price.

In addition to elevating Dickens' performances, seeing positive responses from large crowds gave Dickens a sense of validation of the critical value of his works. John also observes the value Dickens placed on critical validation: "the visible evidence of masses of people at Dickens's readings seemed to him to confirm both his reputation as a serious author and his importance to 'the people'—money could not offer him both reassurances" (144). One of Dickens' 1858 letters to his *Household Words* editor, W. H. Wills, demonstrates an example of Dickens earning critical validation through a Public Reading:

There was certainly in Edinburgh, a coldness, beforehand, about the Readings. I mention it, to let you know that I consider the triumph there, by far the greatest I have made. The City was taken by storm, and carried. . . . On the two last nights, the crowd was immense, and the turn-away enormous. Everywhere, nothing was to be heard but praises—nowhere more than at Blackwood's shop, where there certainly was no predisposition to praise. It was a brilliant victory, and could have been represented in no mere money whatever.

(*Letters* 8.674)

As the editors of his letters note, the Edinburgh literary society in Blackwood had written negative reviews of Dickens' literature, so it gratified him to win over crowds from that area, in particular.<sup>96</sup> One reason Dickens seemed to desire intimacy was to see and hear praise from his fans, and this incident indicated that he could win the approval of people not normally disposed to grant it to him through his Public Readings.

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96. The editors' comment appears in a footnote on the same page (*Letters* 8.674).

This need for approval may have inspired him to create the *Sikes and Nancy* reading. Dickens wanted a sensation in 1868 even though his previous Readings had been almost universally successful, both commercially and critically. In this letter to the Mr. and Mrs. Fields, Dickens relishes the spell he placed on an audience while performing *Sikes and Nancy*:

I don't think a hand moved while I was doing it last night, or an eye looked away. And there was a fixed expression of horror of me, all over the Theatre which could not have been surpassed if I had been going to be hanged to that red velvet table. It is quite a new sensation to be execrated with that unanimity—and I hope it will remain so! (*Letters* 12.312)

In particular, Dickens expresses joy at the audience's execration, as he realized the dramatic effect of the Reading was a testament to his Reading's power; at the same time, their reaction indicated their intimacy with Dickens during the performance, as they watched him intently with "unanimity." Dolby claims that Dickens' final Public Readings required no sensation due to the public's "desire to hear Mr. Dickens read for the *last time*" (380), which would draw crowds no matter which text Dickens performed. Nonetheless, Dickens insisted upon reading *Sikes and Nancy* since he could form a particularly intimate connection to audiences with his most sensational Public Reading.

Each Reading, not only *Sikes and Nancy*, cultivated intimacy between Dickens and his listeners because the author personally adapted and performed them. Since the audience interacted directly with Dickens, either motivating him or freezing him depending on their responsiveness, and since this effect could be noticed by audience members such as David Christie Murray, Dickens' readers were in a highly intimate setting with the author when they attended his Public Readings. Andrews notes that the Readings altered, "or at least supplemented" the "quasi-epistolary relationship" that readers had with Dickens (69). One of the new aspects of this relationship, I add, relates to the audience's ability to affect Dickens. Another change is that audiences of the Readings were privy to unique, authorial interpretations of the text due to Dickens' improvisations. Audience members for a Reading could feel that they witnessed what Slater describes as a "unique new, one-night-only, text" (467). These one-of-a-kind texts were especially intimate if Dickens' improvisations were influenced by his audience's reactions. Kate Field, an attendee of many Readings, remembers how well Dickens performed Toots in *The Story of Little Dombey* (71-2). Collins adds that Dickens took advantage of Toots'

comical nature for improvisation, increasing the number of times Toots asks "How do you do?" (128). If the audience laughed each time, he would be more inspired to have Toots repeat the question. This type of interaction demonstrates how Dickens formed personalized connections with each of his audiences, creating a personalized Public Reading designed for them, which no one else could witness.

The intimacy was further enhanced by Dickens creating an experience for listeners in which he replicated the writing process before their eyes. The most well-known account of Dickens' writing process comes from his daughter Mamie, who once saw him perform a pantomime in front of a mirror and heard him speaking dialogue aloud. She later wrote, "He had thrown himself completely into the character he was creating and [...] for the time being he had not only lost sight of his surroundings, but had actually become in action, as in imagination, the creature of his pen" (qtd. in Andrews 103). Andrews draws the natural comparison between Mamie's memory and Dickens' rehearsals for his Public Readings (104), while Slater observes that this memory illustrates the "continuity between Dickens the writer and Dickens the public reader" (468). I agree with Andrews' and Slater's observations and stress that this continuity reveals the intimate nature of the Public Readings. Mamie's story occurred in Dickens' home and shows a side of the author that he normally hid from his own family; the Public Readings were rehearsed and deliberately performative, yet Dickens showcased this aspect of his creative process to thousands of people when he went on stage and improvised additions to the text, creating new versions of his stories. Audiences saw a side of Dickens he normally kept hidden at his home, which made the Public Readings, therefore, unusually intimate.

The Public Readings' venues were also carefully crafted to cultivate a connection between the author and his fans. Dickens normally read in halls large enough to seat approximately 2,000, which was an impressive feat, considering his acoustic limitations.<sup>97</sup> Dickens avoided the largest venues of his time,<sup>98</sup> as they would have slightly decreased the personal nature of the performances and lowered demand for tickets. Of particular concern to Dickens was the acoustics of any given hall since his performance revolved around his elocution and skill at mimicry. He wanted every audience member to hear him clearly. Dolby recounts an experience

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97. Dolby estimates one hall in Washington as seating 1,750 to 1,800 people, which was one of the smaller venues Dickens performed in (216). This estimate seems to contradict Dolby's earlier claim that Dickens never performed before "less than two thousand persons at a time" (81).

98. The largest theatres in London could seat approximately 3,500 audience members, according to Malheiro.

where Dickens inspected the acoustics of Steinway Hall in New York, which initially seemed too spacious to effectively carry sound, yet, "to Mr. Dickens's amazement, [the sound] was found to be *perfect*" upon testing (182). Since Dickens was the attraction, his staging apparatus, including the props, lighting, and backgrounds, was intentionally simple to emphasize the speaker. His primary props included his reading desk, the prompt copy he brought on stage with him, and a paper knife. Due to its associations with writing, this staging apparatus reminded audiences of his fame as an author.<sup>99</sup> Andrews notes that the reading desk helped disguise the shaking of Dickens' legs (135), yet it also created the illusion that Dickens was reading his stories directly from his writing desk. In turn, this illusion increased the intimacy of the Readings by making it appear that Dickens was writing before his audiences' eyes. Additionally, gaslights made it easier to see Dickens, and the lighting was aided by a fifteen by seven foot backscreen which the author used to set up his platform (Andrews 138). As a result, the environment was cultivated so that audiences could see and hear him, which added to the intimacy, but Dickens also took care that they never forgot he was the famed author.

By personally adapting his works and crafting an intimate yet public environment of his design, Dickens succeeded in exerting a new level of control over his relationship with his reading public. Many accounts and assessments of the Public Readings comment on this control. Dolby, for example, writes that Dickens "felt that he had his public . . . completely under control, so that the Reading was never in any sense a labour" (81). While the Readings created a more intimate setting, Dickens was at the centre of this relationship. As Andrews observes, in a Public Reading, Dickens "was author, publisher, and adaptor: he had absolute power over the transmission of his own material" (28). I add that the Public Readings are an evolution of Dickens' authorization of others' adaptations of his Christmas stories. Dickens had more control of the Public Readings than others' adaptations since he kept the rights to his own works and chose how his stories would be reinterpreted for the reading platform.

This lack of an intermediary acting on his behalf had clear advantages for Dickens. For one, he personally created the adaptations, and he could try to address any potential problems in his next performance. Moreover, as I elaborate in the next section, Dickens retained more of the profits by adapting his own works rather than authorizing others to do so for him. As Holm notes, "the public readings allowed him some control over the dissemination of his works" (245).

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99. To this end, Andrews notes that Dickens also ensured that no one sat behind him while he was reading (128).

Acting as distributor, Dickens not only controlled the revenue but also the interpretation of his works. Helms says of Dickens' influence on interpretation: "By performing the texts as the authorial personality, Dickens altered the nature of the public's interpretations of these special editions, especially if their first reading of them took place during Dickens's own recital" (147). I argue that neither his control nor influence took away from the intimate nature of the Public Readings, however, since Dickens formed a bond with audiences by sharing his view of his works with his reading public.

Lastly, while Dickens gained control over the distribution and reception of his literature, the Public Readings allowed Dickens to present a vulnerable side to listeners, which enhanced the intimacy. John discusses the reciprocal nature of Dickens' relationship with his audiences: "he personalizes and individualizes his audiences, just as they scrutinize him. The one-to-one relationship works both ways, rendering him powerful and/or vulnerable" (151). As John indicates, all eyes were on Dickens while he read his stories behind his desk, and their attention affected him, given that his performance strengthened or weakened depending on his audiences' responsiveness. In this respect, the audience could control Dickens depending on their rapport with him. Furthermore, while Dickens presented his interpretation of his texts in his Readings, audience members were under no obligation to accept the author's version as definitive. Dolby, for example, mentions an American patron who rejected Dickens' interpretation of *The Trial* and said, "Wall, all I've to say about it then is, that he knows no more about Sam Weller 'n a cow does of pleatin' a shirt, at all events that ain't *my* idea of Sam Weller, anyhow" (176). Readers had pre-conceived notions of Dickens' characters and did not necessarily appreciate the author's take, authoritative or not, and Dickens risked this type of rejection by presenting his interpretation.

This vulnerability was worth the risk for Dickens, since he gained so much personal delight from the increased intimacy with his readers. Besides, the vulnerability made the Readings more intimate, since audiences could potentially see a weaker side of Dickens if he did not feed off their affection, even if such poor performances rarely happened. The legacy of this intimacy, of course, has been reduced by the lack of recordings of the Readings. However, as Collins says, "Dickens's performances were so widely reported and lovingly remembered that many of them can be reconstructed in some detail" (lxix). Thankfully, the positive memories described in the reports have also preserved the intimacy Dickens cultivated with those who saw him. However,

only audiences who attended them could fully appreciate this connection, since no one else has had the opportunity to listen to Dickens in the intimate setting of the Public Readings.

### 5.3. Dickens' Publishing Independence as a Public Reader

In his account of the Public Readings, Dolby claims that "No one cared less for the actual possession of money than [Dickens] did" (334). This declaration goes against most accounts and the author's frequent gloating over his earnings in his letters; according to Patten, money for Dickens during his second American tour "was practically an obsession" (236). While Dolby may not have wanted to depict his employer as a mercenary, John explains Dolby's opinion by arguing that Dickens gained little "pleasure from spending his money" (139). He was obsessed with accumulating a vast wealth to provide for the rest of his family, especially his unproductive sons. Moreover, as I argue throughout this dissertation, Dickens placed a great value on his independent literary production, if partly to ensure that he received the majority of his works' revenue. The Public Readings, as Dickens' personal adaptations, gave him this necessary independence in addition to an intimate connection with his reading public. Since publishers had little involvement in the Public Readings, Dickens had notably more control over his texts as a public reader than as a novelist. In this section, I argue first that Dickens' independence as a literary creator peaked during his career as a reader, and second that this independence allowed him to fully showcase the traditional and innovative aspects of his literary brand.

Although Dickens gained near-unprecedented control when he forayed into publication with *Household Words*, he outdid himself by removing the need for publishers or printers in his Public Readings. As a reader, Dickens became an independent producer of his stories. Andrews views four components of publishing, the "author, the publisher, the book, the readership" as "coordinates in the production and consumption of Dickens's work" (209). In the Public Readings, Andrews says, these coordinates changed dynamically as "Book and publisher were sidelined, author was foregrounded" (209). Initially, Dickens relied on publishers to print his prompt copies, yet his performances departed further from the printed copies as his career progressed; first, Dickens marked up his prompt copies extensively, deleting many passages, and, later, had no practical need for the prompts because he had memorized their contents. I have regularly referred to Mole's pillars of celebrity culture: "an industry, an individual and an audience" (3). When he became a public reader, Dickens fused industry and individual to an even greater extent than he had as editor of his own magazine. Moreover, when he read on stage,

Dickens closed the gap between author and audience, allowing them to interact with the celebrity. Through serialization, Dickens developed an intimacy with readers since he could adapt stories to better please readers in the next number, as he famously did by transforming *Master Humphrey's Clock* from a miscellany into *The Old Curiosity Shop*. As the industry producing his works as a public reader, Dickens could respond to his audiences even quicker on stage, adjusting his stories ever so slightly on the spot to meet their approval, should all go well in a performance. Dickens' celebrity as a reader not only combined producer and author, but placed him in exceptionally close proximity to the audience, so he came as close as is possible to dominating all three pillars of literary celebrity during his tours. Consequently, Dickens had tremendous independence over his literary brand on the stage.

Despite Dickens' independence on stage, it would be misleading to suggest that he worked alone during his tours. He relied not only on his audiences' positive feedback but also on the staff he hired to assist him during his tours. John observes that "In the 1860s, Dickens's consciousness of himself as a brand in a marketplace was highly developed to the extent that he had to take professional steps to protect that brand" (135). For the Readings, protecting the brand meant hiring people to manage the business aspect of the enterprise for him. In particular, Dickens relied on his stage managers, who were his greatest source of help on tour. From 1858 to 1870, Dickens had three managers: first, Arthur Smith, who died unexpectedly and was replaced with the disappointing Thomas Headland, and finally the aforementioned Dolby, who served in this role until Dickens' final Reading. These men were indispensable to Dickens since they secured travel arrangements for him and dealt with the owners of theatre halls to schedule the Readings, saving the author the trouble and allowing him to devote his energies to performing.

Among Dickens' managers, Dolby best exemplifies how the author's staff protected his literary brand. The loyal manager exerted considerable effort to make life easier for Dickens, going as far as to scout the prospects of a tour in the United States for the author. At least twice, Dolby was poisoned on tour (*Letters* 12.10), and he took the abuse from unhappy crowds when there were not enough tickets to meet demand. Dickens recognized these efforts and summarized Dolby's roles in a letter to his son Charley: "If Dolby holds out well to the last it will be a triumph, for he has to see everybody, drink with everybody, sell all the tickets, take all the blame, and go beforehand to all the places on the list" (*Letters* 12.16). Dolby's willingness to "take all the blame" worked in favour of Dickens' brand, since it directed the negativity

surrounding the limited number of tickets to Dolby and not Dickens. Thus, Dickens wrote to Georgina that "Dolby continues to be the most unpopular man in America (mainly because he can't get four thousand people into a room that holds two thousand), and is reviled in print daily" (*Letters* 11.513). Whereas the newspapers "reviled" Dolby, the same newspapers generally acclaimed Dickens' performances. In turn, Dolby's willing sacrifice helped preserve the high regard with which the masses held Dickens.

While Dolby and the other staff assisted the author, Dickens possessed the most independence of anyone involved with the Public Readings and, unsurprisingly, profited the most from the enterprise. First, Dickens decided how to revise the stories for adaptation, which is the subject of this chapter's next section. Additionally, Dickens chose which stories he would read and where he would perform; Forster recommended against travelling to America, yet the author could not be dissuaded from going.<sup>100</sup> According to Andrews, the Public Readings allowed Dickens to live his dream of having complete control over a dramatic production: "The public Readings, as he devised the whole enterprise, fulfilled this dream by ensuring that he would have at his command a large cast of characters but no acting personnel to shepherd and bring up to scratch" (28). Unlike the amateur productions he was involved in, Dickens was solely responsible for the performance of each Reading. Performing alone had financial benefits, too; Dickens earned a far higher percentage of the Readings' profits because he was the only actor, director, writer, and adapter. Collins compares the revenue generated by Henry Irving in 1888 to Dickens' final Reading in Boston in 1869 (xxix); Irving made \$4,582 to Dickens' \$3,456, but since Irving needed to pay a large cast and other staff, in contrast to Dickens' small group of helpers, Collins says, "it is obvious who profited the more" (xxix). Dolby calculates that Dickens made approximately £19,000 from his American tour alone (332), which accounts for nearly half the £45,000 that Dickens earned from his Readings (Patten 244). Dickens benefitted substantially from his independence, as the biggest earner from the Public Readings aside from himself was the stage manager. Arthur Smith, Dickens' first manager, received 10 percent of the cut (Andrews 147); the rest mostly went to Dickens.<sup>101</sup> The financial stability of Dickens the Reader

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100. According to Dolby, Forster believed that "Mr. Dickens's desire to increase his property in such a short space of time, and in such a way [by touring in America], was unworthy of him, or, in fact, of any man of genius, as the business of *reading* was a degrading one" (137).

101. Dolby may have earned more than Smith, as Dolby received £2,888 for the American tour (Andrews 150).

differed considerably from Dickens the Author at the onset of his writing career, when the majority of his literature's revenue went to publishers.

Besides profiting from the independence afforded him by the Public Readings, Dickens used his control over the performances to further develop both the traditional and innovative aspects of his literary brand. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I discuss how the traditional and innovative forces in conflict with one another in *Dombey and Son* represent two sides of the Dickensian brand, and the Public Readings utilized the old and the new to an even greater extent than Dickens' published novels. In *Dickens and Popular Entertainment*, Paul Schlicke writes, the Public Readings were "a highly personal accommodation of the old traditions with the new" (228). Dickens' performances were traditional in that he mostly read from his earlier works, yet new, or innovative, in the sense that no one else had staged novels in the same fashion. The flexibility of being traditional and innovative, as it did for his career as a novelist, is a key component of both Dickens' commercial and critical success as a Public Reader.

The Public Readings were traditional in that they followed the oral tradition of reciting stories in public and featured Dickens' earlier stories prominently. Dickens is far from the first person to recite literature in public, and Collins identifies several of the traditions that the author built on as a public reader: "that of the versatile show-off monopolyloguist, that of the actor or elocutionist giving Shakespearean or other literary selections, and that of the author giving lectures or readings from his own work" (li). Of these traditions, Dickens owed much to Mathews' precedent as a soloist performer. As Andrews observes, Dickens had planned to perform a piece from Mathews' "At Home" for his theatrical audition that never occurred (111). Schlicke, moreover, stresses the continuity between Mathews' "At Home" and Dickens' Public Readings: "Impersonation of character, then, was the essence of performance by both Mathews and Dickens" (239). This connection materialized in the Public Readings when Dickens created a unique voice for every character in a story, in addition to his regular, measured voice for the narrator. The idea of reading from popular novels was not new, either, as Penny Readings, where listeners paid a penny to hear selections from famous works in a town hall, began in the 1850s (Andrews 51), and Collins notes that Penny Readings of Dickens' novels existed by at least 1859 (li).

To Dickens' audiences, the Public Readings were unmistakably traditional Dickens since the author rarely read from his newer works. As Collins writes, "Besides the prominence of

Christmas writings, the other most striking feature of the repertoire is that it over-represents the earlier fiction" (lxv). Indeed, the most frequently-read stories were the *Carol* and *The Trial*, both from the first half of the author's career, while he read from no novel newer than *David Copperfield*.<sup>102</sup> Collins adds that the reason why Dickens focused on his earlier fiction is not explained by the author himself (lxv), but I believe the greater popularity of *The Pickwick Papers* and other old works had over his newer texts accounts for Dickens' choice. Certainly, Dickens sometimes chose texts to perform based on what he liked the most, as he regularly read *Copperfield*, his favourite novel. Simultaneously, he wanted to read what his audiences liked, and Dickens' contemporary readers favoured *Pickwick*, *Nickleby*, and the *Carol*, so Dickens made these favourites an integral part of his Public Readings.

But, while the material of the Readings was traditional Dickens, the performances were undeniably innovative. The medium was new, despite its debt to classic traditions, and the texts themselves were presented with significant changes. One London critic described the Readings' originality by claiming that "Mr. Dickens has invented a new medium for amusing an English audience, and merits the gratitude of an intelligent public" (qtd. in Collins xlvi). Charles Kent, similarly, views the Readings "in their aggregate a wholly unexampled incident in the history of literature."<sup>103</sup> The Readings warranted such claims because Dickens took aspects of serial fiction, drama, oral traditions, and his celebrity and combined them in unprecedented manner. In "Dickens' Public Readings," Collins says that part of the reason why no one else preceded Dickens is because "at no time before the Victorian age were there the conditions of publicity and transportation which could enable such a combination of qualities to be so fully exploited" (129). Dickens not only took advantage of these recent technologies, but developed new technology of his own, like a lighting rig for his tours (Andrews 144). Furthermore, as mentioned, Dickens challenged the social norms of his time, which stipulated that he should avoid presenting himself in public for financial gain. As Melissa Gregory writes, "Dickens was famously dogged by and defensive about his self-made status in a world where Victorian professional men were expected to reject commercial self-interest with a gentlemanly contempt even as they actively pursued vocations" (222). Dickens, however, disregarded the old prejudices against gentlemen making money and performed their texts on stage.

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102. By Collins' count, Dickens read *The Trial* and *The Carol* 164 and 127 times, respectively (xxvii). *The Trial* was short and comedic, so Dickens favoured reading it to conclude a performance.

103. From Kent's *Charles Dickens as a Reader*.

Dickens also demonstrated his innovation by consistently challenging himself to restructure and better his performances. It would have been easy for Dickens to settle on a script after he had sufficiently shortened his Readings to fill a three-hour block. Instead, Dickens constantly altered his selections and did more than improvise passages. For instance, Dickens showed off his skill at mimicry and eventually used individual voices for every character in the Readings; by the mid-1860s, impersonations had become a dominant feature of his performances (Andrews 193). In particular, the dramatic, performative nature of *Sikes and Nancy* is a testament to Dickens' desire to evolve the Public Readings.<sup>104</sup> Dickens, writing to Percy Fitzgerald, identifies the unique nature of the Reading he usually referred to as the Murder: "When the Murder was done in London, the people were frozen while it went on, but came to life when it was over and rose to boiling-point. I have now told Dolby that henceforth it must be set apart from all our other effects, and judged by no other 'Reading' standard" (*Letters* 12.274-5). *Sikes and Nancy* was the final selection that Dickens prepared and performed, yet it shows his innovation because no other Reading was as original in execution or surprised audiences more. The impact of Dickens' need to innovate himself with each new tour on his success as a public reader should not be underestimated. The improvisations, revisions, new voices, and spectacle of *Sikes and Nancy* ensured that each performance was a noteworthy event, unlike what audiences had seen before. The traditional familiarity of the Public Readings initially drew crowds to Dickens' performance, but his innovations brought audiences back to watch him again.

Like his serializations, Dickens' Public Readings indicate how he benefitted from incorporating both the traditional and innovative into his literary brand. The Readings were not only the culmination of the independence Dickens sought as a writer and theatrical performer but also an enormous commercial and critical success. Helms argues that the Public Readings eased Dickens' late-career worries about his diminishing effectiveness as a storyteller:

As someone who had worried about his literary powers waning after the completion of *Bleak House* in 1853, Dickens mitigated this anxiety by revitalizing the market value of his past literary labor, a strategy that ultimately renewed and increased his cultural and economic capital on the market. (148)

His use of old labour, his traditional works, had a powerful effect on his capital, as Helms notes,

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104. According to Andrews, besides being more dramatic than previous performances, *Sikes and Nancy* also added two large, brand-new "maroon side screens to the set, like stage 'wings'" (143).

but I stress that the Public Readings went beyond repurposing past efforts since Dickens modernized his classics for audiences. The implementation of traditional and innovative elements would not have been possible without the remarkable literary independence Dickens attained through his commercial success and business savvy. I view the Public Readings as Dickens' literature in the least filtered form possible, considering how much power he exerted over the performances.<sup>105</sup> Consequently, the freedom of creation, as well as control over the performances, seen in the Readings demonstrates the peak of Dickens' independence over his literary brand.

#### 5.4. Dickens' Revisions in the Public Readings

This section elaborates on Dickens' innovative edits to his Public Readings, and it begins with a brief overview of how Dickens prepared and revised his Readings for their new medium. Next, I examine these changes as revisions to the author's literary brand. To narrow this analysis, I focus on Dickens' changes to *A Christmas Carol* and *David Copperfield*, as these two Readings cover Dickens' primary editing strategies, deletion and re-arrangement, respectively. Then, I discuss the effectiveness of these revisions in terms of how they affected Dickens' literary brand, both negatively and positively.

Before discussing specific modification and revisions to the stories, a description of Dickens' preparation process is in order. Generally, Dickens spoke more often of gate receipts and his crowds' reactions to his Readings than he did of his rehearsing, but he put considerable effort into preparing each selection before performing it. In a letter to Forster, Dickens makes it seem as though his work on stage was simple because his staff took care of so many duties for him: "As to the readings, all I have to do is, to take in my book and read, at the appointed place and hour, and come out again" (*Letters* 11.170). Collins notes how reading was easier for Dickens in the 1850s and 1860s than writing a new novel (xxviii), yet Dickens' accounts of his preparations for the Public Readings indicate that he put a lot of hard work into each text he performed. The following excerpt from a letter to Forster details Dickens' labours:

You have no idea how I have worked at them. Finding it necessary; as their reputation widened, that they should be better than at first, I have *learnt them all*, so as to have no mechanical drawback in looking after the words. I have tested all the serious passion in

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105. Andrews agrees with this assessment, saying that Dickens' Readings "established his presence as a public storyteller unmediated by any publishing industry" (25).

them by everything I know; made the humorous points much more humorous; corrected my utterance of certain words; cultivated a self-possession not to be disturbed; and made myself master of the situation. Finishing with *Dombey* (which I had not read for a long time) I learnt that, like the rest; and did it to myself, often twice a day, with exactly the same pains as at night, over and over and over again. (*Letters* 11.366-7)

Johnson, in his biography, observes that Dickens must have practiced each Reading "hundreds of times in his study" (937), and I add that these hundreds of rehearsals went beyond rote memorization. In this letter, Dickens stresses his active engagement with each text while rehearsing, as well as his commitment to improving the story by adding humour and making each sentence sound better. Audience members such as Twain were fooled into believing Dickens did no more than read his texts (Ferguson 734). However, the ease Dickens showed on stage belied the extensive revisions he made, as well as his many hours of practice off the stage.

The *Carol* was the first text chosen by Dickens for a Public Reading, and Dickens' revisions of the *Carol* set the groundwork for his later adaptations. On a textual level, most of Dickens' revisions for his prompt copy of the *Carol* are, as Collins says, a "matter of abbreviation" and slight adjustments to bridge sections after cuts (xxx). Dickens shortened the text so that it could be read in less than two hours, and his other Readings required similar deletions. Collins compares these abbreviations to what "any competent and painstaking recitalist would do" (xxxiii). Dickens deleted information that became unnecessary when the text was read aloud, such as descriptions of who speaks in the narration; for example, Scrooge is named before he says "Humbug!" the first time in the prompt copy (7), but descriptions in the manner of "said Scrooge" are crossed out thereafter.<sup>106</sup> Since Dickens impersonated voices for the characters, these descriptions served no purpose in the Public Readings. Other times, Dickens removes long sections of narration that are not needed to follow the *Carol's* story, most notably its social commentary, as many critics have noted. In particular, Dickens removes the passages with the two children, Ignorance and Want, when the Spirit of Christmas Present visits, and wrote an emphatic, underlined note, "cut over twice" (117), on the prompt copy to remind himself to skip over the next two pages and go to the end of Stave Three. I agree with Collins when he writes that Dickens "evidently judged that public readings were not the occasion for social criticism"

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106. For references to Dickens' prompt copy of *A Christmas Carol*, I am using the Levensger Press's facsimile and not Collins' edited version in *The Public Readings*. References to the *Copperfield* Reading are taken from Collins' edition of *The Public Readings*.

(lxii). Slater has noted that Dickens focused more on the Cratchit family instead of social commentary (464). Indeed, the Cratchit family's Christmas dinner in Stave Three of the prompt copy (92-5) contains few deletions and is almost identical to the corresponding scene in the printed version of the *Carol*.

The other notable widespread deletion in the *Carol* is the removal of Dickens' first-person narrator. In Chapter 2, I claim the printed *Carol*'s first-person narrator is crucial to Dickens' intimacy with his readers. Yet the prompt copy of the *Carol* deletes the entire second paragraph, where Dickens comments on the deadness of door nails (1-2), and similar first-person interjections are excised throughout the Reading version of the *Carol*. As Ferguson writes, Dickens "went to some effort to distance himself from the part most readily assumed to be his—that of the authorial narrator" (738). For instance, Dickens retains a substantial part of the memory of Fezziwig's party, yet he deletes the sentence where the narrator says, "If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it" (61). Dickens could have used the first-person narration to address his audience directly in the Readings, but he consistently removes such opportunities from the prompt copy's text. While he needed to construct a persona intimately interact with readers in the novella, this type of narration became irrelevant on stage. Dickens, as a public reader, was already close to audiences when they came to hear him read his stories. While the original *Carol*'s narrator says he is standing "in the spirit at your elbow" (28), the corresponding passage is removed from the prompt copy (42). Since Dickens literally stood before his audiences, he achieved the intimacy alluded to in the published text, and he had no need to create the illusion of close proximity to the reader.<sup>107</sup>

On a textual level, Dickens hardly added to the Public Reading versions of his stories, but that does not mean he added nothing in his performances; besides his improvisations, Dickens enhanced the *Carol* and other Public Readings through performative techniques, such as vocalization and gesturing. As mentioned, Dickens eventually used special voices for every character in his Readings. Also, by adjusting his tone and speaking speed, Dickens could adjust the length of certain passages for dramatic effect; in particular, Dickens drew out *Sikes and Nancy*, a Reading which would take ten minutes to read at a normal pace but took Dickens forty minutes to perform (Andrews 232). Although Dickens generally stayed behind his desk, except

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107. On this subject, Andrews says, "His presence on the Reading platform in this hybrid combination of acting and reciting gave literal physical immediacy to that 'voice' and that 'presence' that, as the invisible author, he had already made such a hallmark in his novels" (29). This hallmark, therefore, was not needed on the platform.

when reading the theatrical *Sikes and Nancy*, his hands could become active and enliven scenes through gesture. According to one reviewer, "What Dickens *does* is frequently infinitely better than anything he says or the way he says it" (qtd. in Collins lv). For example, Dickens simulated a dance performed with all ten fingers during Fezziwig's party in the *Carol*. Field described how Dickens fingers "actually perform upon the table, as if it were the floor of Fezziwig's room, and every finger were a leg belonging to one of the Fezziwig family" (31). Dickens' presence, voice, and actions were the main additions to the Public Readings, and these have been lost, outside of contemporary accounts such as Field's. These gestures centered audiences' attention to Dickens' physical presence during his performances.

The Public Reading of *Copperfield*, like the other performances, contained similar additions through Dickens' speaking skills, but its textual revisions were far more extensive than the *Carol*'s. *Copperfield* is a lengthy novel, so a two-hour Reading adapted from its text required more than frequent deletions in order to be coherent. Consequently, Dickens needed to be selective when choosing key scenes in order to rearrange chapters and construct a shorter narrative. In this respect, *Copperfield* follows in the wake of *The Story of Little Dombey*, Dickens' first adaptation from one of his long novels. *Little Dombey* shortens the novel by excising most of the novel's supporting characters and restricting the narrative to the life of the younger, ill-fated Paul Dombey; Collins observes that Dickens' decision to base a Reading on Paul is "very understandable" since the episode was considered among Dickens' best writing at the time, and Paul's story ends one quarter into the novel, making it simpler to adapt (125). The *Copperfield* Public Reading goes further in re-arranging its source text, as it combines two unrelated plots from the novel, the tragedy of Little Em'ly and David's romance with Dora. Of the two plots, the Reading focuses on Little Em'ly and her elopement with Steerforth, culminating in the tempest episode, while only two of the six chapters feature David and Dora. The chapters about David and Dora were included to add comedy to the performance and lessen the melancholy of Em'ly's fall from virtue. Aside from David, Dora, Em'ly, Steerforth, and the Peggotty family, most of the characters are absent in the Reading version, and the two plots come from chapters spread far across the original narrative.<sup>108</sup> Hence, the *Copperfield* adaptation

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108. In a summary of the *Copperfield* Reading, Collins notes which chapters from the novel the performance is based on, and the earliest is Chapter 3 and the latest, Chapter 55 (215).

was far more complicated than *Little Dombey*, which was based on fewer chapters from a smaller section from its source novel.

The complicated arrangement of the *Copperfield* Reading was not without its problems, indicating why Dickens may have generally favoured shorter, self-contained comedy scenes from his novels. Collins describes the Reading version of *Copperfield* as "awkward" for two reasons (215). First, the emotions are "sometimes over-rapid, through compression" (216), while, second, the housekeeping scenes with Dora are "irrelevant to the Emily-Steerforth-Peggotty story" (216). The transition from Em'ly's story to David's infatuation with Dora is abrupt. Chapter 2 ends with the Peggotty family learning of Em'ly's departure, finishing with David's sadness: "*My overcharged heart found the same relief as his, and I cried too*" (228). Chapter 3 begins, "At this period of my life I lived in my top set of chambers in Buckingham Street, Strand, Em'ly to Dora appears especially misplaced, as the start of Chapter 4 resumes the Peggotty narrative as if Chapter 3 never occurred (236).

In addition to the problems identified by Collins, the *Copperfield* Reading relies on Dickens' audiences' pre-existing familiarity with the novel's characters, as not all of them are introduced within the adapted narrative. While Steerforth receives a new description prior to his first appearance (220), Dora does not have her initial description or introduction transplanted into the Reading, and neither do the Micawbers or Traddles. Granted, these characters are not so complicated that the abridged version is incomprehensible, and the nineteenth-century public was so familiar with Dickens' works that most audiences were already familiar with *Copperfield* and its characters. The *Copperfield* Public Reading lacks the flow of its source, since the insertion of the Micawber and Dora episodes makes the Reading a motley collection of a few of the novel's best scenes.

Dickens' letters indicate his awareness of the problems resulting from abridging *Copperfield* so extensively. He noted the difficulty of transforming the novel into a shorter Reading in an 1855 letter to Arthur Ryland, written six years prior to his first performance of *Copperfield*:

I have been poring over *Copperfield* (which is my favorite), with the idea of getting a reading out of it . . . But there is still the huge difficulty that I constructed the whole with immense pains, and have so woven it up and blended it together that I cannot yet so separate the parts as to tell the story of David's married life with Dora, and the story of Mr. Peggotty's search for his Niece, within the time. (*Letters* 7.515)

Due to this difficulty, Dickens finished the *Copperfield* adaptation in 1861, three years after he became a professional reader. The completed *Copperfield* follows Dickens' initial idea closely, although his attempt to separate the stories of Dora and Em'ly is not entirely successful. In a letter to Rev. Brookfield in 1859, Dickens lamented the need to choose select passages for his Public Readings, as he did for *The Trial* and *Mrs. Gamp*: "You cannot feel the fragmentary nature of a broken reading without a continuous story, more than I do. I detest it. But the Public always like it, occasionally, and therefore I give it them" (*Letters* 9.80). Here, he uses "the Public" and their love for the fragmented Readings to justify their existence. Possibly, Dickens did not consider the *Copperfield* Reading in the same category as *Mrs. Gamp*, as it has more of a "continuous story" than *The Trial* and other shorter performances, but *Copperfield* was similarly fragmentary, and most audiences liked it.

Even if the Public Reading of *Copperfield* lacks the cohesiveness of its source, I would not say that its textual structure mattered to the Reading's power or Dickens' brand. No prompt copy matches the original exactly, and Dickens did not follow his prompt copies to the word while performing. The performances fared well or poorly based on Dickens' rapport with his audience, as most already liked his written works, and the awkward structure of *Copperfield* possibly heightened the importance of this rapport. According to Collins, *Copperfield's* "success depended much more than that of any of the other Readings upon the auditorium, the audience, and [Dickens'] own strength and spirits" (216). The sharp transitions from the Peggotty family to Dora could occasionally lose audiences, and with them Dickens, as Field observed in one performance (Collins 216). When he had his desired rapport, *Copperfield* produced some of Dickens' best performances. In particular, the reading of the storm scene captivated his listeners when all went well (Collins 217). Kent said of Dickens' reading of the storm: "There, in truth, the success achieved was more than an elocutionary triumph—it was the realisation to his hearers, by one who had the soul of a poet, and the gifts of an orator, and the genius of a great and imaginative author" (qtd. in Collins 217). Kent was impressed by Dickens' speaking skills, and it was Dickens' ability to perform, rather than the text he read, that made each Public Reading work; Dickens' oratory helped rectify the aforementioned awkwardness of *Copperfield's* structure.

Furthermore, since Dickens' brand had expanded to include him as a performer, his scripts' written words mattered less than how they were spoken. Dickens' novels and characters, such as

Pickwick, Oliver Twist, and Little Nell, were famous in the nineteenth century. Dickens' success as a public reader suggests that he, as the author, became more famous than any of these characters by the 1860s, if he had not already become so. Ferguson comments on how the Public Readings embodied more than their source texts: "Dickens's performances were not simply of his *characters*, but of *himself*, or, more accurately, of his public persona as the author of the novels from which the characters came" (731). The audiences came to see and hear this public persona, which I argue was a greater draw than any particular text for a given Reading. His manager, Dolby, recognized his star's drawing power, which is why he argued that it did not matter which story was read for Dickens' farewell tour (380).

That is not say that the text was irrelevant for the Public Readings, since a major appeal of the performances was hearing Dickens read *his* stories, and his revisions made his performances a delight for the author and his audiences. The Public Readings were special because the revisions combined his written works with the literary persona suggested in them. Andrews discusses how the written works and author blend together especially in his *Copperfield* performances:

Unlike with *Great Expectations*, the world had long suspected that *Copperfield* had some thinly disguised material from Dickens's own life history. Now, in 1861, Dickens the international celebrity was launching in public a Reading of a text in which the 'I' was audibly and visibly both David the narrator and Dickens the professional Author-Reader. (91)

Andrews argues that this merging of David and Dickens gave a "special resonance" (91) to this performance, both to listeners and Dickens, since it created a sense of confidentiality in the reading hall. In addition to this resonance, I believe it made Dickens, the person, a brand as much as his novels were, since people paid to hear him in addition to paying to read him, and it created a market for performances of a similar nature; these accomplishments would not have been possible without Dickens' strenuous preparations and editing.

### 5.5. The Impact of the Public Readings

Although creating a market for a new genre was impressive, the effect of Dickens' Public Readings on his literary brand and reputation has been mixed. I will start with the negatives. The most oft-cited problem with the Public Readings is that they ended Dickens' life early, leading to the unfinished state of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and potential additions to his brand thereafter never being written. Two primary health incidents hampered the author. First, while

touring America, Dickens developed what he called his "American catarrh," a persistent cough that plagued him until he returned to England,<sup>109</sup> although he did eventually recover from it. Second, Dickens damaged his health with his exuberant performances of *Sikes and Nancy*. Dolby recalls angering his boss by recommending that Dickens read one of his other stories instead due to its ill effects on his health (385), and the latter eventually conceded, according to Dolby, when doctors cancelled some Public Readings from his farewell tour (413). Graham Storey, in his preface to the final volume of Dickens' letters, says of *Sikes and Nancy* that "There can be little doubt of its effect on his health" (*Letters* 12.xvi). In his biography, Slater goes further and evaluates this Reading's effect on Dickens' career: "It was not only Nancy that Sikes was killing every night but Dickens's own writing self" (595). However, while Dickens' pulse was measured to rise considerably during *Sikes and Nancy*, Storey refers to the surgeon W. H. Bowen, who "weighs the medical evidence for and against the view that the readings hastened his death and convincingly gives his own view that there was no certain evidence that they did" (*Letters* 12.xvii-xviii). I side with Bowen on this matter, as Dickens' refusal to accept that he might have gout, insisting he had "neuralgia" (*Letters* 12.xvii), meant that he did not responsibly handle his doctors' recommendations and stubbornly continued to overwork himself despite a host of health issues.<sup>110</sup> I believe he would have pushed himself too far even without becoming a public reader, based on his lifelong history of overwork. Regardless of whether *Sikes and Nancy* ruined his health and led to a premature death, the perception exists that the Public Readings caused him to die sooner, as the aforementioned Slater quotation indicates. In this sense, the Public Readings had a negative impact on his literary reputation, even if it is unknown whether or not Dickens would have finished more novels had he not gone on tour.

Next, Dickens has been criticized for his decision not to focus on social commentary in his Public Readings. The removal of social commentary and emphasis on the Cratchits has likely influenced later adaptations of the *Carol*, which makes this deletion problematic for his brand. This decision did not harm Dickens' brand while he was touring, judging from his popularity, but it has affected his literary reputation, as recent critics have noticed the effect these omissions have on the *Carol's* meaning. Andrews, like Slater and Collins, notes that the novella has less

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109. The catarrh was first mentioned in a letter to Mamie, written on January 13, 1868 (*Letters* 12.12), and Dickens referred to it in countless letters thereafter.

110. Storey cites renal colic, chronic kidney disease, and light strokes as some of the medical problems Dickens suffered in the last years of his life (*Letters* 12.xviii).

social criticism in adaptations, and Andrews claims that Dickens is "complicit with this evolution" (84) because his Public Reading adaptation is one of the first to remove the scene with Ignorance and Want. In this respect, the Readings have weakened his literary reputation.

While I agree that the removal of some social commentary lessens the artistry of the *Carol*, I would not say that Dickens' decision to focus on the Cratchit family and Scrooge has affected his reputation as severely as Andrews suggests, since this revision does not drastically alter the novella's message. The *Carol*'s primary social critique that the rich should give to the poor is retained in the Reading version through the Cratchit family, who are the poor people that the rich Scrooge should be more generous towards; the vision of Tiny Tim's death during the final spirit's visit, which Dickens on the reading platform emphasized with a long silence after Mrs. Cratchit says "The colour hurt my eyes" (142), represents the consequences of the excessive greed.<sup>111</sup> The Public Reading focuses this message by narrowing the focus onto the characters Dickens designed to be sympathetic and relatable, so the personifications of social ills, Ignorance and Want, could be expended without losing sight of the social problem characterized by Scrooge. The reduction of overt social commentary in the Reading version of the *Carol* favours the commercial side of the Dickensian brand, yet it does not entirely neglect the critical side of his literary reputation.

However, the *Carol* is not the only text which avoids this commentary in the Public Reading adaptation. *Little Dombey*, for instance, focuses on the tragedy of Paul's death, rather than the institutional problems that feature prominently in the source novel, and Dickens did not adapt his social novels of the 1850s (Collins xxxvi). If Dickens viewed social criticism as inappropriate for his Public Readings (Collins lxxv), I suspect his need to see emotional responses from audiences factored into Dickens' choice to focus on Christmas stories, comedic episodes, and the sensational *Sikes and Nancy*. As John argues, Dickens had a "need to amass people" (144), so he chose to read from stories that would both draw crowds and provoke either laughter or tears; the relatively-subtle satire of *Little Dorrit*, for example, likely would not have succeeded as comedy or attract audiences in the same manner as *The Trial* did. Since Dickens abandoned his *Tale of Two Cities* Reading,<sup>112</sup> he possibly concluded that this social commentary would not be as

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111. Collins, in the *The Public Readings*, notes varying reactions to this silence; Kate Field, thought it was overly dramatic, while Kent thought it showed restraint in contrast to the novella's deathbed scene (29).

112. This Public Reading was called *The Bastille Prisoner* and a prompt copy survived and can be read in Collins' edition (279-94), but Dickens never performed this Reading.

effective after being adapted into Public Readings; he struggled to adapt two tangentially-related stories from *Copperfield*, a novel with a narrative far simpler than *Bleak House*'s. The wide-ranging social commentary in *Bleak House* requires a scope greater than the two hours Dickens used to perform a Reading. Another disincentive with these social novels for Dickens is that he specialized in character impersonations, a skill that lends itself more towards dialogue, and much of his social criticism occurs in his descriptive prose. Nonetheless, Dickens can be criticized for not trying to adapt his social commentary to his reading platform and for actively removing existing commentary from texts like the *Carol*.

The absence of Readings based on the social novels is disappointing but ultimately not that harmful to Dickens' literary reputation, past and present. It is important to remember, as Collins does, that during Dickens' lifetime, "the earlier novels were also more esteemed, as well as more loved" (lxvi). Forster, for example, writes that his friend's "leading quality was Humour" (2.272), and Forster regularly criticizes Dickens' later serials for not being funny enough.<sup>113</sup> Given that Forster was not alone in this view, Dickens likely believed he was giving his audiences both what they wanted and selections of his best work, as his frequent performances from his favoured *Copperfield* suggests. Dickens could hardly have predicted how dramatically critical tastes of his work would shift, or that his choice of stories for his Public Readings would be seen as safe by future scholars such as myself. In contrast, his contemporaries viewed becoming a public reader and performing the sensational *Sikes and Nancy* as risks to his reputation. Consequently, I do not believe that avoiding social commentary harmed Dickens' literary reputation, despite some criticism for this decision by scholars such as Slater and Andrews, because the Public Readings enhanced Dickens' standing with his contemporary fans and brought him closer to them, achieving his desired goal. Additionally, and more importantly, the Public Readings are not how people currently experience Dickens. His performances were ephemeral, so people have been unable to see him read since his final Public Reading; Patten notes that Dickens' tours led to increased sales of his original serials, whereas the prompt copies of his Readings never sold as well (255), and the novels are what he is better remembered for and most scholarly criticism on Dickens focuses on these texts. At the same time, the Public

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113. Forster also says that humour was Dickens' "highest faculty; and it accounts for his magnificent successes, as well as for his not infrequent failures of character delineation" (2.272).

Readings' decreasing importance to Dickens' literary legacy means they have not contributed as much to his present reputation, which undermines the Readings' larger importance to his legacy.

Regardless, in terms of Dickens' literary brand, I consider the impact of the Public Readings to be positive, since the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. Foremost, the Readings raised contemporary public interest in Dickens according to his terms. Although the performances were ethereal and the written versions of his works have had more enduring popularity, the positive impact of the Readings during Dickens' life was considerable. Helms discusses the Readings' effect on Dickens' brand: "Dickens maximized the visibility of his authorial brand not only by transforming his novels into public performances but also by turning these performances into saleable books" (144). This increase in visibility, since most reviews of his performances were positive, had a tremendous benefit on the general public's awareness of Dickens in his lifetime, which, in turn, promoted his texts.<sup>114</sup> As Helms notes, positivity around the Readings drove interest in Dickens' printed works, and I add that his published works increased interest in the Public Readings, so that both products of Dickens' imagination encouraged public consumption of the other, creating a positive feedback loop that boosted the popularity of Dickens' brand. John argues that Dickens set low ticket prices to "confirm both his reputation as a serious author and his importance to 'the people'" (144), and I believe this strategy and the demand for seats at his Readings also had the effect of heightening attention on Dickens and increasing his public visibility. Dickens set the terms for his Readings, choosing where to tour, when, how often, and for how much. John adds that though Dickens "no longer seemed to believe in his own ability to control the market, he wanted to limit the extent to which the market controlled him" (143). I argue that he succeeded in limiting this extent, and the resulting public interest in the performances validated his decision and gave him some control over the market.

Even if the tours limited the amount of time Dickens had to write, he enjoyed his new occupation, which enabled him to write great novels between 1858 and 1870 that eventually enhanced his brand. Dickens happily refers to his audiences' positive reactions often in his letters. This letter to Mamie shows his usual joy in his effect on his crowds:

They were a very fine audience, and took enthusiastically every point in "Copperfield" and the "Trial." They made the reading a quarter of an hour longer than usual. One man advertised in the morning paper that he would give thirty shillings (double) for three

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114. Patten, like Helms, notes that the Readings increased sales of Dickens' novels (255).

stalls, but nobody would sell, and he didn't get in. (*Letters* 11.184)

As a lifelong lover of the performing arts, Dickens thrilled in standing on stage and watching people react to him; judging from this letter, he would willingly extend his time on the reading platform if the audience was sufficiently enthusiastic. Arguably, Dickens enjoyed reading publically more than writing at this time since he struggled to begin *Our Mutual Friend* in 1862 (Slater 507). If Dickens' alternative was to force himself to write in the midst of his struggles, I believe Dickens chose well to spend so much time on his reading tours, since such laboured writing would have harmed Dickens' legacy because the quality of his works would have suffered. All four of the novels released during the Public Readings sold well. While *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Our Mutual Friend*, were not well received at first, *Great Expectations* was seen as a return to form and *Drood* also earned positive reviews.<sup>115</sup> However, following Dickens' death, these novels have held up far better than their contemporary reviews indicate, becoming classics in their own right.<sup>116</sup> Due to Dickens' joy as a reader and the eventual acclaim for his novels during this period, I conclude that putting his efforts into the Public Readings was a more fruitful exercise for Dickens and his brand than working solely as a novelist would have been.

Another advantage of Dickens' Public Readings is that he used them to lower the prejudice against authors reading their stories before audiences. Dickens protected his reputation from this prejudice by making his texts the focus of the Readings, presenting himself as a gentleman, and avoiding excessive theatrics until later in his career as a performer. While Dickens ensured that audiences could see and hear him, Collins observes that the author "concentrated the audience's attention upon the texts and not upon himself" while reading on stage (lxii). Collins adds that Dickens "would stride rapidly on to the platform, and go straight into his text, without any commentary or reminders that the reader was all the illustrious author" (lxii). Each Reading's success depended heavily on Dickens' elocutional skills, but he restrained himself and avoided overt theatrical strategies that would distract from his Readings. Andrews emphasizes how Dickens wanted to be perceived as a gentleman, rather than an actor, on stage: "He wanted to come across as a gentleman in an evening dress reading to a group of friends, thereby preserving

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115. I am relying on Collins' collection of reviews in *Dickens: Critical Heritage* to estimate how Dickens' contemporaries received these novels. In particular, Collins writes that *Great Expectations* was "noticed and welcomed with vociferous relief" (427), while he suspects that critics "had shot all their best bolts" in obituaries prior to *Edwin Drood's* final number.

116. In *Dickens and His Readers*, George Ford theorizes that contemporary reviewers of Dickens were unusually harsh because his highbrow readers grew tired of him and ready to "abandon the successfully established artist for pastures new" (110).

as much of the drawing-room manner as was consistent with his being on a public stage before an audience of a thousand or two" (47). One of Dickens' letters to Wills, written after he decided not to perform additional Readings in France, demonstrates how important dignity was to Dickens as a public reader: "Of course if I had gone on, I could have made a great deal of money. But I thought the dignified course was to stop. I could not reconcile myself to the notion of making the charitable help, the stepping stone. So, for the present while, I have done here" (*Letters* 10.211). As much as Dickens enjoyed the adulation and money he received from these performances, he remembered his literary reputation, which, in this case, was more important to him than financial incentive. This perception of being a gentleman was crucial to his reputation, and Dickens only blurred the distinction between reading aloud and theatrics with *Sikes and Nancy* in 1869, over ten years after this phase of his career started. By then, Dickens' previous steps to protect his reputation ensured that audiences saw Dickens the Reader as a celebrity author, not an actor.

The immediate influence of these changed perceptions is apparent in the number of other authors who followed his example and became public readers. Collins lists examples of these authors: "Authors who had lately taken to the boards included Edmund Yates, George Augustus Sala and 'Arthur Sketchley' (the Reverend George Rose); Henry Mayhew had tried it, very briefly; Mark Lemon, the editor of *Punch*, was soon to join in as a professional" (xlviii). With his foray into public speaking, Dickens lessened the stigma attached to authors performing, although I should note that he did not completely eliminate this prejudice. As Collins observes, these examples were "second- or third-raters of literature" (xlviii), aside from Dickens and Thackeray, and I add that these second-rate authors were lesser performers than Dickens, too. Most of the best and most successful authors did not perform because they did not need the money, retained the view that gentlemen should not perform, or they were women (Collins xlviii). As the social view at the time was much more opposed to women performing on stage, Dickens did not set a precedent for female authors reading their works in public.<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, Dickens demonstrated that dignified authors could become public figures on stage without a loss in reputation, and his example inspired others. While those who initially followed him as public

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117. While female authors did not read their novels like Dickens did, women, such as Scottish-born Frances Wright and several members of the suffrage movement in the United States, gave public lectures in the nineteenth century, so the social stigma against women performing did not extend as strongly to all types of public speaking. Connors discusses Wright in more detail in "Frances Wright: First Female Civic Rhetor in America."

readers were not the most esteemed writers, Dickens contributed to the current practice where authors are now expected to read excerpts on signing tours.

Because he excelled so much as a public reader, Dickens secured his power over his literary brand for the rest of his life. At the time of his death, he was famous not only as a popular author but also as a skilled performer. He had impressed audiences with his public speaking. The fame as a performer fulfilled Dickens' theatrical dreams and, his frequent references to Macready's praise of his *Sikes and Nancy* Reading suggest, must have been especially gratifying for him. Seeing people laugh and cry during Public Readings satisfied Dickens' cravings for intimacy with his fans and validated the power of his writing. Moreover, he attained unprecedented control over his literature while on stage and gained enough money to leave his children well provided, as he desired. The Public Readings were so successful and satisfied so many of Dickens' desires that it is not surprising that he only gave them up after suffering serious health problems. For the reasons explained in this chapter, I consider the Readings the peak of Dickens' efforts to control his literary market, and they continue to influence modern readers' responses to his literary works. Dickens gave his final Reading of the *Carol* on March 15, 1870 (Collins xxvi), and he died less than three months later from a stroke on June 9. These performances, along with the unfinished *Drood*, mark the end of his life and Dickens' final opportunity to directly affect the Dickensian brand. After his death, the state of the Dickensian brand was fundamentally altered, since the author could no longer control it. Therefore, in the dissertation's final chapter, I discuss how Dickens' brand has grown without his direct involvement.

## Chapter 6: The Post-mortem Dickensian Brand

As John Glavin observes, "we all come to Dickens only *after Dickens*" (2).<sup>118</sup> This statement has been true for everyone born following Dickens' death. For Glavin, the distance between the present and the end of Dickens' life presents problems in adapting Dickens' works, and Glavin argues that adapters need to move past Dickens' words and focus on creating radically original interpretations. Dickens' death on June 9, 1870, represents the moment when his direct control over his literary brand ceased. Dickens' last grasp for control appeared in a few stipulations in his will concerning *All the Year Round* and his request that *The Life of Our Lord* remain unpublished while any of his children lived. This request was granted and ownership of his magazine passed to his son, but Dickens did not control these proceedings. The author's passing meant that he could not influence his brand as before, as the aforementioned requests depended on others respecting his wishes; he could not have imposed his way if the requests had been disregarded. Moreover, since his death, Dickens could not as readily influence how others saw him and respond to new developments in his literature's reception; he could not write new novels in response to feedback or edit his older works. Consequently, Dickens' brand has been affected by others' hands since 1870. Dickens' literary works are edited and published without his input, and the Dickens industry has sprung up around his literature and grown considerably in the past 150 years. Dickens' efforts to gain literary autonomy, however, continue to influence our perception of him, so his current brand has been affected by his actions while alive, and my objective in this final chapter is to measure the legacy and influence of his literary brand.

For my examination of Dickens' brand in its posthumous existence, I have divided this chapter into three sections. In the first, I evaluate Dickens' legacy in terms of his children and literature, and discuss how his literary presence affects those who follow in his name; in particular, I examine *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, since countless followers have assumed the task of finishing the novel for Dickens. In the second section, I turn to two Dickens adaptations, *Oliver!* and *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, which have reshaped Dickens' literary brand because many modern viewers encounter Dickens through these films rather than print. Finally, in the third section, I shift focus to Dickens' influence on others, in terms of copyright control and brand construction, and examine how post-Dickensian authors have emulated his strategies of

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118. Glavin makes this statement in his book *After Dickens: Reading, Adaptation, and Performance*.

building a brand. I conclude that the Dickensian brand currently resembles what Dickens created, but it has transformed into a new industry beyond what he could have imagined.

### 6.1. Dickens' Legacy

For much of his career, Dickens cared about both his legacy as a novelist and earning enough money to secure his financial independence. His reputation as a writer was established well before the final decade of his life, and he earned a fortune after *Dombey and Son*. Towards the end of his life, especially during and after his second visit to America, Dickens became increasingly preoccupied with his children's futures and generating enough income to support them once he was gone. His reading tours earned enough to provide for them, but his children subsequently squandered most of their inheritance. Dickens' children sold his copyrights, and his literature fell under the control of publishers and eventually passed into the public domain. As a result, control over the Dickensian literary brand seems to vanish once the copyrights expired, as no person or group currently owns the rights to his works. However, Dickens' presence as a famed author has loomed large over those who have followed him, especially would-be continuers of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. In this section, I focus on Dickens' material legacy, which passed to his family, and his literature's legacy following his death. The struggles of Dickens' children to keep anything their father left them were an early sign that no one could control the Dickensian brand after his death. Meanwhile, Dickens' literary legacy can be measured by both the enduring popularity of his books and literary appraisals of these books. In particular, Dickens' final novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, demonstrates the power of Dickens' literary legacy, which is protected by people's memories of Dickens and the power of his name.

As part of his legacy, Dickens left behind a fortune to his family, in addition to his literary copyrights. Because of financial ineptitude leading to debt or the need to provide for their families, each of his children needed money immediately, so they elected to sell the copyrights. In the long term, this decision cost them. Robert L. Patten writes, "By cashing out the copyrights the Dickens family gained comparatively little from the author's posthumous sales, though his name and reputation continued to sell, not only books but all sorts of mementoes as well as shows and books about him or his characters" (292-3). The Dickens brand remained strong and grew; according to Patten, sales of Dickens' works in 1891 were quadruple what they were in 1868, as literacy rates increased and cheap versions of his books became available (261). The

money the Dickens children received was surely less than the profits they would have gained by retaining the copyrights. Robert Gottlieb says, "Alas for the heirs, particularly Charley's eight needy offspring, copyright law was not then what it is today, or the Dickens family would have been benefitting (hugely) from his writings until well into the twentieth century" (135). Chapman & Hall, in contrast, kept its share of the copyrights and profited immensely until they expired near the start of the twentieth century. The children sold their right to have any say about the copyrights, so the publishers who owned the rights dictated matters and chose to print the thousands of copies needed to meet the growing demand for Dickens' works.

The fate of Dickens' copyrights suggests that his brand has gone out of anyone's control, but his commercial popularity has never waned since he died. The financial success of his works is difficult to deny. After the boom in sales following his death, sales of Dickens' books continue to rank highly in English-speaking regions in the world. His works are frequently adapted, as I discuss in the next section, and his literature is commonly used in school curricula. Patten concludes that "excepting religious publications, Dickens must rank among the most widely merchandized of writers" (292). Unfortunately, reliable figures that state the total sales of his works are difficult to find, since numerous publishers have released editions of his novels after they entered the public domain, but sales of Dickensian works such as *A Christmas Carol* and *A Tale of Two Cities* likely rank among the best in history. Dickens has ceased to be arguably the most popular English novelist, yet his works remain in print and sell well. Commercially, Dickens' legacy has been and will continue to be secure for the foreseeable future.

In contrast to his enduring commercial appeal, Dickens' critical status has taken longer to rise following his death. Dickens' reputation among critics has oscillated back and forth since the start of his career, but I would not say he has ever achieved the widespread appreciation that he sought. In his life, during the 1850s, in particular, some of his contemporary critics, such as Virginia Woolf's uncle James Stephen, were dismissive of his novels.<sup>119</sup> According to Ford in *Dickens and his Readers*, critics in the 1850s favoured other authors, such as George Eliot and George Meredith, over Dickens as the best novelist of the time (180). From his death until the 1930s, approximately, Dickens' literary reputation trended downward, even as sales of his works increased. He had some defenders, including G. K. Chesterton and George Bernard Shaw, yet Dickens' novels exemplified the Victorian sentimentality that the Modernist twentieth-century

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119. Sir James Fitzjames Stephen not only criticizes *A Tale of Two Cities* but its illustrations as well (46).

authors wished to depart from. For instance, Aldous Huxley continues Oscar Wilde's disparagement of *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Nell, saying her death "is distressing in its ineptitude and vulgar sentimentality" (155). While Virginia Woolf enjoyed reading Dickens and *David Copperfield*, in particular, her acknowledgement of Dickens' impact is dismissive: "he lacks charm and idiosyncrasy, is everybody's writer and no one's in particular, is an institution, a monument, a public thoroughfare trodden dusty by a million feet" (620). A shift in how Dickens' craft was viewed occurred as the twentieth century passed, however, when scholars found new depths in Dickens' works. For instance, in "Dickens: The Two Scrooges," Edmund Wilson declares that "Of all the great English writers, Charles Dickens has received in his own country the scantiest serious attention from either biographers, scholars, or critics" (1). Wilson defends his claim by explaining how Dickens' novels reflect his mental state at the time of writing. The impact of Wilson's essay is acknowledged by Ford and Lane in *The Dickens Critics* (180-1), and Wilson's psychoanalytic approach to Dickens inspired other critics, such as J. Hillis Miller, to approach Dickens from new angles, and Dickens' literary worth received a critical re-evaluation.<sup>120</sup> For the past seventy years, Dickens scholarship has continued to grow, and Dickens is regarded as a top Victorian author by many. By most standards, Dickens' lasting success with literary scholars is undeniable, yet Dickens would likely not be pleased, since I suspect he would have wanted more unqualified success. Even though Dickens interests modern critics, we acknowledge and expose his flaws in the process of analyzing his literature. We have recognized novels like *Bleak House* more than Dickens' contemporaries did, and these novels continue to interest us, critically.

Dickens' legacy can be measured by more than his commercial and critical success, and the most pressing void in Dickens' literary legacy following his death was *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, his half-completed final novel. Due to his passing, the fate and conclusion of the novel left his control, and others have discussed Dickens' intentions or assumed his role as author and attempted to write the conclusion he could not finish. Immediately after Dickens' death, three of the twelve planned numbers had been published, while he had written all of the fourth and fifth numbers and most of the sixth number, save for, according to the editors of the Clarendon

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120. See Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*, originally written in 1958. Of *Dombey and Son*, Miller praises its structure and unity: "The novel is really not so much a continuous curve as a series of short, nearly straight lines, each of which advances the action a little way. Seen from a distance as we view the totality of the novel these lines organize themselves into a single curve" (143).

*Drood*, "some six or seven pages" (xxix). Dickens' publishers decided to print what they could of *Drood* and accounted for the missing pages by restoring some deletions Dickens had made to the fifth number and moving parts of that number to the final issue. While these decisions resolved the matter of the novel's narrative for another three months, people were curious how the novel was supposed to end. Two sources close to Dickens, Forster and Charley, both indicate that the narrative was to focus on an uncle, Jasper, killing his nephew, Drood. In his biography of Dickens, Forster claims that Dickens told him the general progression of *Drood*'s plot:

The story, I learnt immediately afterward, was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle; the originality of which was to consist in the review of the murderer's career by himself at the close, when its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted. (2.366)

The plot outlined by Forster is intriguing; if he went through with that plan, Dickens would have produced a novel with ideas later pursued by Robert Louis Stevenson in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. As Margaret Cardwell says in her introduction to *Drood*, it is unclear how accurate Forster's account is, so what Dickens planned "can never be known to everyone's satisfaction" (xiv). Moreover, I add, *Drood* was a serialization, which means Dickens could have veered from his plans, much as he did with the ending for *Great Expectations*. Regardless, the mystery of what happens to Drood, who vanishes at the end of the novel's fourteenth chapter (131), is not much of a mystery. Many, including Charley, have speculated that Drood is murdered, and Charley reported that his father confirmed as much when he asked the elder Dickens about Drood's fate (Cardwell xxvii).

But speculating about what Dickens intended is fruitless, and many readers wanted a finished narrative of *Drood*. Consequently, Dickens' death has prompted others to complete it. As Cardwell writes in Appendix G of the Clarendon edition, "When it was known that Dickens had died leaving the novel unfinished, there was naturally much speculation as to the possibility of its completion by another hand" (249). No official continuations were published by Chapman & Hall or authorized by Dickens' children, but decorum did not stop other hands from resuming the story.<sup>121</sup> In 1871 and 1872, *John Jasper's Secret* was published anonymously in parts in the United States; Cardwell observes that the publishers attempted to gain authenticity by claiming

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121. For instance, the same year that Dickens died, in 1870, an American, Robert Henry Newell, wrote and published a burlesque continuation that also functioned as a parody of *Drood* (Cardwell 255).

that the continuation was written by English authors, yet later installments are credited to the Americans Henry Morford and his wife (254). In 1898, publishers of *Jasper's Secret* ascribed the continuation to Wilkie Collins and Charley Dickens (Cardwell 255), both of whom were dead by this point and could not deny the false claim.

Most infamously, Thomas Power James published a continuation of *Drood* which he claimed was written with the assistance of Dickens' ghost, channelled through James, giving new meaning to the term ghost-written (Cardwell 255).<sup>122</sup> His ploy fascinates me due to his attempted appropriation of Dickens' literary authority. I believe that Dickens' long period of success can partly be attributed to people's familiarity with the brand he created, and one reason why the *Drood* continuations have lacked the longevity of Dickens' finished works or even the incomplete *Drood* is that they lack Dickens' authorial stamp. James's hoax, surprisingly enough, drew readers' attention and succeeded more than most *Drood* continuations. According to Romeo Vitelli, James's continuation was a "bestseller" in America and popular there for decades. While British audiences generally dismissed it, Vitelli adds that Arthur Conan Doyle, a spiritualist himself, accepted James's continuation as the work from a genuine medium. The value of James's text in comparison to other continuations and Dickens' half of *Drood* is debatable, yet James successfully took advantage of Dickens' brand by pretending to have communicated with the author's ghost.

Figuratively, Dickens' legacy hangs over other continuations of *Drood*, which is how the author's unfinished *Drood* has remained the definitive version of the novel long after his death. When the idea of someone finishing the story was first conceived, Collins, as a collaborator with Dickens on some plays, was quickly rumoured to be a candidate to write *Drood*'s second half. Chapman & Hall denied the rumour less than two weeks after Dickens' death (Cardwell 249), and Charley issued a similar statement: "Of course there is no such book. Neither the 'Dickens family' nor Wilkie Collins would have entertained such an idea for a moment" (qtd. in Cardwell 250). I speculate that Collins realized how difficult it would be to write any continuation that would measure up to Dickens' legacy, so the younger man wanted nothing to do with finishing the novel for Dickens. Since the story was originally Dickens', continuing *Drood*, even if done well, would be unlikely to add to Collins' fame, whereas it could easily have diminished Collins' literary reputation, if done poorly.

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122. James includes two prefaces in his edition, one written by him and the other by Dickens' "ghost."

Thus far, no continuation has overtaken Dickens' fragmented last novel as the definitive version. Many continuations, such as *Jasper's Secret*, have been dismissed by the likes of Collins and Charley Dickens for their lack of quality in comparison to Dickens' writing (Cardwell 250). Natalie McKnight even argues that "Dickens's death at 58 was in fact the ultimate act of authorship and self-command for a man increasingly aware of the limitations of all authority, particularly authority over one's own self" (137). She goes further to claim that *Drood* is, in fact, a better mystery novel due to its unanswerable questions, which "a slew of scholars and neo-Dickensian novelists have been trying to answer ever since, with new theories and fictions emerging every year" (148).<sup>123</sup> I am not convinced that Dickens' *Drood* has been enhanced by its fragmentary nature, since Dickens could have potentially ended the novel well, if Forster's outline is true, but McKnight's argument helps explain why no one can replace Dickens and write a version of *Drood* that everyone would accept. The scholars and would-be Dickensian novelists who attempt to solve *Drood*'s mysteries invariably fail because they are acceding to Dickens' literary authority when trying to answer the author's last riddle. As a result, no answer can satisfy completely, since Dickens' approval, as the authority over *Drood*, is needed to confirm the veracity of anyone's answers, and this approval can no longer be obtained. Because Dickens' verdict is needed for *Drood* to receive an authoritative conclusion, none will likely ever be written.

Since Dickens' copyrights expired, no one has had legal control over *Drood* or his other literature, which means anyone can print editions of his novels. Dickens' brand has gone out of control, as a result. Individuals are free to edit his works, but, thus far, no major edits have been adopted by the majority of his publishers since he died. For instance, George Bernard Shaw published *Great Expectations* with its original ending in 1937, yet Shaw was unable to influence other publishers to follow his precedent. Publishers of Dickens, like the author's children and writers who continue *Drood*, need to contend with the immense presence of Dickens' legacy, and most publishers elect to preserve his intentions for his books, as far as we understand them. For example, Cardwell, in her edition of *Drood*, gave priority to "manuscript authority" (xxxiii) when emending the text. Due to similar editing decisions, the current available editions of Dickens' novels, including the cheaper and scholarly editions, are not too different from Dickens'

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123. In her article, McKnight also suggests that Dickens willed himself to die to guarantee *Drood* would never be finished (149). While I have argued in favour of Dickens' ability to control his literary properties, I doubt he would have deliberately allowed himself to die to do so.

own Cheap and Charles Dickens Editions, printings which he had much influence over. Consequently, Dickens' children, his followers, and subsequent publishers each have come into contact with the legacy of the famous author. Dickens' legacy does not control his brand as Dickens the living author did, but it continues to affect how people read and understand him.

## 6.2. Dickens' Brand, Adapted

Dickens struggled with controlling his brand in the face of unlicensed adaptations during his lifetime, occasionally choosing to promote an adaptation to hinder adapters. Unsurprisingly, adapters of Dickensian works have been less troubled by the author since he died, especially after his works entered the public domain. However, all of Dickens' adapters need to contend with Dickens' legacy, in spite of his absence, since one question arises when bringing his stories to a new medium: how faithful should the adaptation be to its original source? For some adapters, the answer is not all, while others attempt to recreate his novels as closely as possible. This question of faithfulness to the source has not weakened Dickens' impact on his brand, since it has resulted in critics of his adaptations frequently going back to Dickens' original works in their assessments of the adaptations. Instead, the potentially greater threat to fundamentally alter the Dickensian brand is the rare adaptation that becomes popular enough to supplant Dickens' version in popular culture, since these popular adaptations become part of the Dickensian tradition and affect future iterations of his stories. In this section, I begin by briefly examining the history of Dickensian adaptations after his death. Then, I look at two popular films based on his works, *Oliver!* and *The Muppet Christmas Carol*. Finally, I discuss how Dickens' brand has been affected by people encountering his works through modern adaptations.

After he died, Dickens' works remained a regular presence on the Victorian stage. According to H. Philip Bolton, if anything, Dickens' death led to an era where adapting his works was more popular than ever: "But Dickens's death altered everything. A fourth epoch arose during the early 1870s, when almost nothing restrained the dramatic adapters, and the greatest burst of theatrical enthusiasm for Dickens occurred" (4). This increase resembles the boost in sales of his novels that followed his passing. While it was common for adapters to focus on Dickens' latest serialization during his life, theatres in the late nineteenth century favoured his older classics, such as *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Bolton 4-5), since they were the most popular Dickens novels at the time. Dramatic adaptations of his works declined in popularity from this peak but continued to be staged with regularity until the twentieth century.

Bolton notes that stage adaptations decreased considerably by the middle of the twentieth century until Lionel Bart's musical production *Oliver!* became one of the most successful Dickensian productions on stage (6).

The decrease in stage adaptations of Dickens' works owes more to the rise of film than it does to a decline in the author's popularity, however. After silent film was invented, many Dickensian adaptors migrated from the stage to the screen, where Dickens has been a popular resource for filmmakers ever since. Juliet John claims that "Dickens's works have spawned more film adaptations than those of any other author" (187), although this claim is debatable; Shakespeare definitely surpasses Dickens in the number of adaptations and if film and television adaptations are considered.<sup>124</sup> John, in *Dickens and Mass Culture*, and Glavin, in his introduction to the anthology *Dickens Adapted*, both observe how popular Dickens was among early silent filmmakers. John emphasizes that silent films relied on adaptations in the medium's infancy, and Dickens' popularity as a novelist made him a common presence on the screen (188-9). Glavin, on the other hand, notes that Dickens' "plots don't depend on dialogue, which means they are not merely dramatic, they are also, and more tellingly, cinematic" (xx). Together, these aspects of Dickens' works made audiences predisposed towards films based on the popular author's stories and such adaptations were relatively easy to make. In the early twentieth century, Dickens distinguished himself among the great Victorian novelists through his works' cinematic appeal, and this appeal has carried over to newer film media. The countless film and television adaptations of his novels have maintained Dickens' presence in popular culture. Patten describes how, in terms of adaptations, after 1970, "Dickens explodes" to the point that "it would be perfectly possible for people to believe they 'know' Dickens from a cartoon or stage version of the story, without having ever read or heard the original" (288). In this sense, the Dickensian brand has gone beyond Dickens' control and is influenced by adapters, since modern readers are less likely to read Dickens' original prose.

This loss of control has changed the state of Dickens' brand considerably since his death. While Dickens could often do little to prevent dramatists from staging adaptations, especially adapters outside the United Kingdom, he could license his works, give advance proofs, and later adapted them himself. If his wishes were not respected, he was, at least, the authority with

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124. As of April, 2021, *The Internet Movie Database*, which includes film and television writing credits, has Shakespeare listed as the writer of 1,585 adaptations, whereas Dickens has only 439 credits, in comparison.

respect to his literature, and his novels were the definitive versions of his stories. Dickens, when alive, could denounce adaptations for lacking quality, and he lost this ability to directly respond to adapters once he died. His Public Readings, for instance, were not only authoritative adaptations but also a response to subpar stage productions of his works. Despite the definitive nature of the novels and the Public Readings, as John says, people are now more likely to see than read Dickens "partly because more people today watch television and films than read Victorian (or any) literature, but it is also because of Dickens's dominant influence on the history and evolution of film" (188). This decrease in reading Dickens presents a significant challenge to Dickens' version of his literary brand. Most posthumous adapters of his works have hardly matched Dickens in terms of popularity; one exception is *Oliver!*, which is so popular that it has overtaken Dickens' original novel in the public consciousness and reshaped the Dickensian brand.

Thus, I have chosen to examine *Oliver!*'s effect on Dickens' brand. Carol Reed's *Oliver!* is notable among Dickens adaptations since it has attained a level of popularity comparable to what Dickens achieved with his original novel, which means its impact on the public's perceptions of both the story and Dickens has been considerable. The 1968 film is adapted from Lionel Bart's 1960 musical, which itself has been staged thousands of times,<sup>125</sup> although I will refer to the film due to the variable nature of dramatic productions. Reed's *Oliver!* is the only Dickens adaptation to win the Academy Award for Best Picture, and John cites the film as the most commercially successful of all cinematic adaptations based on his works (210). I have chosen to examine Reed's adaptation rather than David Lean's 1948 *Oliver Twist* because, as John writes, "The musical *Oliver!* . . . has affected many more people's perception of *Oliver Twist*, and of Dickens, than Lean's controversial adaptation" (212). Due to its great popularity and the dominance of film and televisions in modern culture, far more people have seen this version of *Oliver Twist* than read the novel while Dickens lived. Therefore, *Oliver!* has had both positive and negative effects on Dickens' brand. In Dickens' favour, the film has revitalized the literary work's popularity, keeping it in the public consciousness. On the other hand, *Oliver!* takes many liberties with Dickens' story, to the point that the credits appropriately say that the film is "freely adapted" by Vernon Harris, so it is uncertain if Dickens' legacy is sustained by the musical, or if

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125. Bolton lists 407 times *Oliver Twist* has been adapted to the stage between 1836 and 1985, and nearly a fifth of these productions are based on Bart's *Oliver!* (145-53). Of these approximately 80 productions, many were performed more than once, and John notes that the West End production completed 774 performances alone (209).

the musical creates its own legacy. *Oliver!* has dominated perceptions of the story so much that newer adaptations have been nearly influenced as much by the musical as Dickens' novel.

I will not list all of the film's numerous divergences in plot and character, but these alterations result in a much different experience than the novel and change the tone of Dickens' story. Of these changes, Fagin's depiction is the most notable. Dickens' Fagin is the main antagonist of the novel, whereas Oliver Reed's Sykes is the main antagonist of the film. Carol Reed's Fagin, played by Ron Moody, is more sympathetic and lovable and far less villainous than the novel's Fagin. Carol Reed and Moody recontextualized Fagin deliberately, according to Moody: "I don't want to sweeten either Shylock or Fagin. I only want to humanize them and make them understandable to people now. I want to show that what once was is no more" (qtd. in John 228). Moody's Fagin, fittingly then, escapes punishment in the musical.

Through the more sympathetic Fagin, the musical rebrands *Oliver Twist* as a lighter narrative, and many people are now more familiar with this lighter brand than Dickens'. Part of this lighter rebranding was inevitable in the process of adapting the novel into a musical. As Dianne F. Sadoff writes, "Oliver's starring role in a merry musical entertainment means core poverty loses its bite" (36). I agree with Sadoff because the spectacular production and joyous melody of the song "Consider Yourself," for example, undermine the reality of Oliver's plight in the musical. While I appreciate the film and consider its songs memorable and appealing, the film's positive qualities have altered the public's perceptions of Oliver's story. As John observes, "The symbolic implications of Dickens's original text . . . are less familiar to many than the songs of Carol Reed's musical film, *Oliver!*" (208). The two versions of *Oliver Twist*, the novel and the musical, now compete with one another in cultural importance, and it is not uncommon for the musical to supersede the novel in the public consciousness.<sup>126</sup> Accordingly, *Oliver!*'s success has come at the cost of Dickens' control over *Oliver Twist*'s dissemination in modern mass culture.

This loss of control is further seen in the influence *Oliver!* has had on the depiction of Fagin. Fagin's portrayal as a Jew has been problematic since Dickens' original serialization in the 1830s. After corresponding with Mrs. Davis, a Jewish woman, in 1863, Dickens was surprised to learn that his Fagin could be seen as anti-Semitic, so he revised the 1867 version of *Oliver Twist* by reducing the number of times Fagin is described as "the Jew," as Meyer notes (239-40). As John

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126. My sister, for example, has not read the novel but participated in a staging of *Oliver!* in elementary school. Unsurprisingly, she immediately thinks of the musical rather than the novel when she thinks of *Oliver Twist*.

observes, Fagin's original depiction presents a problem for adapters, since being faithful to Dickens' original means recreating the anti-Semitism of the novel. David Lean's adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, which features Alec Guinness as a villainous and Jewish Fagin, demonstrated this problem in 1948.<sup>127</sup> Guinness's Fagin was especially problematic since his portrayal occurred after the Holocaust, and later directors and actors, including Reed and Moody, have made their Fagins more sympathetic. Since the musical's success, many *Oliver Twist* adaptations have followed its example, especially in depicting Fagin. Roman Polanski's darker *Oliver Twist* adaptation in 2005, for instance, features a kinder Fagin, if one who is still a villain and suffers the same fate he does in the novel. It is unsurprising that newer adaptations prefer Reed and Moody's Fagin over Dickens'—their Fagin circumvents the anti-Semitism of the original by humanizing the character, as Moody said, and both the theatre and film industries have worked towards eliminating anti-Semitism before *Oliver!* was conceived as a musical. While Dickens tried to undo Fagin's Jewishness to a slight degree in 1867, he did not make Fagin sympathetic, unlike *Oliver!* and other later adaptations. *Oliver!*'s change in Fagin's depiction shows the loss of Dickens' control since he was not involved in the process.

Moreover, *Oliver!*'s influence extends beyond Fagin. For example, Marc Napolitano, in his analysis of Disney's 1988 *Oliver & Company*, says that the Disney version follows "the film traditions of *Oliver Twist*, for many of the changes made to the story are reflective of larger trends regarding film versions of Dickens's novel" (83). Napolitano observes that the Disney version borrows heavily from Reed's film by emphasizing the friendship between Oliver and Dodger while making Fagin more sympathetic and Sykes more antagonistic (83). Since Disney's *Oliver & Company* makes the same departures from the novel that the musical does, it can be seen as an adaptation of Reed's film in addition to Dickens' novel. In turn, Dickens' control over his narrative has weakened, since adapters rely heavily on previous adaptations of *Oliver Twist* rather than his novel. This reliance has affected the general perception of Oliver's story. As John writes, "Students new to the novel today, for example, are often surprised by its darkness, imagining it via the adaptation of Reed as simply a light-hearted comedy" (228). The original novel has not been forgotten after adaptations such as *Oliver!*, yet Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is not

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127. John summarizes this response to Lean's version of Fagin: "The reaction to Lean's Fagin meant that Fagin on screen has seldom subsequently been both very Jewish and very evil" (227).

always what people think of first upon hearing the names Fagin and Oliver, due to the musical's popular refashioning of the story.

Unlike *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol* has not been supplanted by adaptations since most reimaginings of the *Carol*, including the 1992 *Muppet Christmas Carol*, are relatively faithful to the source. Like *Oliver Twist*, the *Carol* has been retold endlessly to the point that many English speakers are familiar with the story, even if they have not read Dickens' novella, which is why Paul Davis calls the *Carol* a "culture text."<sup>128</sup> The cultural perception of the *Carol* is not far removed from Dickens' telling of the story, and the Muppet version, accordingly, is surprisingly faithful to Dickens'. Brian Henson, the film's director, explains his decision to adhere to Dickens' story: "Initially, the Ghosts were going to be Muppets—well-known Muppets—and it seemed like a great idea, and then, in the end, we didn't do it because it seemed to undermine the credibility of the story" (qtd. in Napolitano 90). Henson's choice to maintain fidelity to Dickens' *Carol* resulted in a script that often lifts passages directly from Dickens' narration. Michael Caine's dialogue as Scrooge, in particular, is faithful to the original story. Most of the departures from Dickens are made for the sake of abridgement or to accommodate the additions necessitated by new Muppet characters. For instance, Caine's Scrooge interacts with two Marley partners, portrayed by the heckling Muppet characters Statler and Waldorf, so Scrooge's dialogue is altered to recognize that he is interacting with two Marley ghosts. While the *Muppet Christmas Carol* also features songs like Reed's *Oliver Twist*, the Muppet adaptation follows Dickens' story and plot more closely. At the film's ending, Gonzo, who portrays a fictional Dickens, speaks to the audience, saying "If you like this, you should read the book." Because the *Muppet Christmas Carol* is so faithful to the novella, young viewers could plausibly enjoy Dickens' original version, as Napolitano claims (96), which contrasts the experience of those who read *Oliver Twist* after seeing the musical film. Due to its faithfulness, the *Muppet Christmas Carol* reinforces Dickens' brand.

Or, at least, the human side of the *Muppet Christmas Carol* does, as two brands coexist in the film: the Dickensian brand and the Muppets brand, which has a tradition of its own. Due to the two brands, the film has two narratives. The first narrative, derived from the Dickensian brand, is

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128. Davis' first chapter of *The Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge* explains why he views it a culture text (3-15). On the other hand, McCracken-Flesher argues that the narrative has been corporatized, much as Christmas has. She says that *A Christmas Carol* "has become conflated with our culture's dominant economic narrative, the Christmas narrative of corporate sales" (93).

faithful to Dickens' *Carol*, whereas the other narrative, which prominently features the Muppets brand, is a meta-commentary on adaptation. The meta-commentary has interesting implications for Dickens' adapted brand. As Hugh Davis writes, the *Muppet Christmas Carol* "is at once both a homage to the work it is adapting and a spoof of the genre of literary adaptation in film" (68). The homage is present in Caine's scenes, whereas the spoofing occurs primarily in Gonzo's scenes when he pretends to be Dickens. Due to Gonzo's presence as Dickens, viewers are not only watching the story of Ebenezer Scrooge but also Gonzo, as Dickens, telling this story. Gonzo's Dickens adds levity to the script; for instance, he accounts for his knowledge of events before they happen when he says, "Storytellers are omniscient. I know everything." The film also adds to this humour by drawing attention to the implausibility of Gonzo being Dickens when Rizzo the Rat tells Gonzo that he is not Dickens. Accordingly, as Hugh Davis says, the film is self-aware of its effect and understands its audience (74), and I add that it knows when to satirize the process of adaptation and when to play it straight, such as when Gonzo and Rizzo exit the movie during the Spirit of Christmas Future's visit. In the film, the two brands share a presence and, in my opinion, add to one another due to the satire created by the Muppets' portrayals of Dickensian characters.

Furthermore, Gonzo's performance as Dickens provides commentary on other adaptations' invocation of Dickens' authority. According to Hugh Davis, the *Muppet Christmas Carol* addresses the issue of how people's familiarity with the *Carol* has become part of the story in adaptations "by treating the text both self-reflexively and reverentially" (73). I believe the film, through Gonzo, also criticizes how other adapters use Dickens' name. It is not unprecedented for Dickensian adaptations to invoke Dickens' name as a means of increasing authenticity. Nineteenth-century playwrights would sometimes falsely claim to have Dickens' approval, and Dickens later gave his approval to select theatres. Thomas James pretended to have met Dickens' spirit to lend credence to his *Drood* continuation, as mentioned. Moreover, this appropriation has appeared in film; John notes that Frank Lloyd's 1922 adaptation of *Oliver Twist* opens with a recreation of Dickens' signature, as if to suggest that Dickens personally approved the film (217). Gonzo's Dickens, in contrast to Lloyd's signature, possesses some authenticity since his narration is derived from Dickens' prose, yet the implausibility that Gonzo is Dickens also mocks the notion of authenticity. Aside from the Victorian theatres which received Dickens' approval, none of these adaptations have been made with Dickens' consent, and their allusions to Dickens'

authenticity are as fictional as Gonzo's portrayal of the author. The *Muppet Christmas Carol* acknowledges its own duplicity and incorporates it into its humour. The filmmakers recognize that modern adaptations cannot gain Dickens' approval, and the film directs its audiences to read Dickens' books if they want the authorial version.

Reed's *Oliver!* and Henson's *Muppet Christmas Carol* are both musicals, yet they have opposing effects on the Dickensian brand. *Oliver!* draws attention away from the source and has become a "culture text" in its own right, whereas the adaptation with Muppets, in spite of the prominence of the Muppets' own brand, reinforces Dickens' literary brand and encourages viewers to read the original novella. Understanding Dickens' literary brand, in the wake of these popular adaptations and the liberties they take with their source, is challenging, but his presence retains its importance. Just as continuations of *Drood* must contend with Dickens' legacy, all adaptations of his work compete with Dickens' original versions and are inevitably compared to his writing. Glavin, in *Dickens Adapted*, observes that "adaptation studies have finally broken through the corseting, hitherto dominant, metric of fidelity" (xv). While Glavin chose essays on Dickens adaptations for their willingness to look at these adaptations "seriously in their own right" (xv), his anthology's essays cannot avoid referring back to Dickens' original versions. It does not matter if the critic favours adaptations that attempt to tell the story in a new way or remain faithful to Dickens' stories; either way, the critic praises or criticizes the source based on how it relates to what Dickens wrote. For instance, the BBC produced a remarkably faithful adaptation of *Little Dorrit* in 2008, which won multiple Primetime Emmy awards, yet its closeness to the original makes any major differences stand out. Glavin, in *After Dickens*, advocates in favour of original adaptations that depart further from the source (4). However, there is a limit to how much an adaptation can depart from the original, as adapters cannot entirely separate their works from the original author without creating an original work in the process. For example, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* departs considerably from its source, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and the film is near the limit to how much an adaptation can stray from the original without becoming an original work.

The concept of "Dickensian" has become so large and all-encompassing that it is easy for an unorthodox adaptation to still belong to the brand or expand its limits. Additionally, as the *Muppet Christmas Carol* demonstrates, the Dickensian brand can coexist with other brands and follow other traditions. The BBC has a rich tradition of producing high-quality period pieces, and

the BBC's adaptations of Victorian novels can be considered a brand in their own right, so their 2008 *Little Dorrit* series perpetuates both the BBC's and Dickens' respective brands. Rather than needing to meet a certain standard to belong to the Dickensian brand, an adaptation simply needs to borrow Dickens' name, characters, and stories. The BBC's aptly named series 2015-2016 *Dickensian* is a testament to how adapters can experiment with the idea of the Dickensian brand; *Dickensian* combines the plots and characters of multiple Dickens works to create an original narrative of its own. Since Dickens is no longer the primary creator of Dickensian fiction, adapters have greater freedom to determine what the concept of "Dickensian" means, which has resulted in films such as *Oliver!* and the *Muppets Christmas Carol*.

The Dickensian adapters' freedom to redefine Dickens' works has generally worked in his favour and seldom harmed his brand, however. John observes how Dickens has benefitted from his cinematic adaptations: "perhaps the most surprising consequence of Dickens's screen afterlife is that it has aided his upward cultural mobility" (235-6). She adds,

One of the curious effects of the mass dissemination of a culture-text like *Oliver Twist* is that criticisms of individual adaptations are so seldom visited on the author of the 'original' text, even if, as is the case with the character of Fagin, Dickens created the problem. It is as if *Oliver Twist* exists as a mythic story which boosts the general perception of Dickens's authorial greatness yet is seemingly independent from him, circulating freely in the cultural oxygen. (236)

Adaptations are often criticized for changing the story too much, but, as John says, the reverse rarely happens. A popular adaptation like *Oliver!*, which has been well received for reasons other than fidelity to the source, strengthens the Dickensian brand by association even as it weakens Dickens' control over cultural perceptions of Oliver's story. An unusual adaptation like the *Muppets Christmas Carol* reinforces Dickens' version of Scrooge with its faithfulness to the text, while the interpolated scenes with the Muppets are not seen as diminishing Dickens' legacy. Poor adaptations, meanwhile, are criticized for mishandling Dickens' works and summarily forgotten. Dickens branded himself as a writer for people of all classes and as a social critic concerned with the impoverished, and adaptations have reinforced Dickens' self-branding, either by catering towards general audiences, as in the case of *Oliver!* and the *Muppet Christmas Carol*, or by aiming for prestige, like the 2008 BBC *Little Dorrit* series. Alternatively, these adaptations can be seen as taking advantage of the pre-existing notions people have about Dickens based on the

brand he created. Either way, these adaptations continue what Dickens began and bring his brand to new media and audiences, transforming Dickens from a singular author into an industry.

### 6.3. The Influence of Dickens' Brand

Dickens' mark is seen—and occasionally ignored—in the aforementioned adaptations, but what of his effect on other authors? Dickens' broader influence on literature is difficult to deny. In 1912, Jerome K. Jerome wrote that he doubted "the possibility of any living reader not having been influenced in life and work by Dickens" (qtd. in Quinn "Shavian Metaphor" 53). George Bernard Shaw openly admitted to alluding to Dickens more than any other author in his literature.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, Thomas Hardy did not try to emulate Dickens, but he said that his novels likely "owed something unconsciously [to Dickens], since everybody's did in those days" (qtd. in Quinn "Shavian Metaphor" 53). In the hundred and more years since Jerome claimed that everyone was influenced by Dickens, English-language authors have been affected by Dickens either directly, since they read his works, or indirectly, because they have been influenced by someone who read Dickens. Hence, evaluating Dickens' overall impact on modern literature is probably an impossible task, although numerous individual comparative essays have been written. However, less research has explored Dickens' impact on how authors develop their brand,<sup>130</sup> the area this section analyzes. Dickens innovated in three key areas that relate to brand construction: author-publisher contracts, self-adaptation, and public reading. While few of Dickens' successors have copied his success or these innovations perfectly, many modern authors attempt to use at least one of Dickens' strategies.

Contracts between authors and publishers have changed considerably since Dickens emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century. When Dickens started writing in 1836, copyright was a relatively new advancement. As Leo Kirschbaum writes, "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was no such legal entity as author's copyright" (43). Further back, in the medieval period, scribes could copy any text they chose, assuming exemplars were available. Copyright law did not properly come into existence in Britain until the Statute of Anne was passed in 1710, (Baldwin 65), and the rest of the eighteenth century was dominated by the "Battle of the Booksellers," which Peter Baldwin explains was more of a battle between publishers and authors

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129. According to Quinn in "The Informing Presence," Shaw's connection to Dickens was so strong that the former's "secretary for thirty years was under the impression that Shaw had been a Dickens confidant" (144). As Gottlieb notes, Shaw was the confidant of Dickens' daughter Katey (168-71).

130. John, in *Dickens and Mass Culture*, briefly explores this topic, but she focuses primarily on Dickens' effect on mass culture through the dissemination of his works.

(56). By the time Walter Scott's career exploded in the early nineteenth century, publishing was a rapidly expanding industry, due to the industrial revolution and growing literacy rates. Scott demonstrated that considerable wealth could be obtained through writing fiction. Sam McKinsty and Marie Fletcher observe that Scott's novels earned him "an extra £10,000 or more per year" (62). Scott earned so much because he signed favourable contracts with his publishers. George Allan and William Weir, in their 1835 biography of Scott, quote the second condition of one of Scott's contracts from 1823: "That the author is to receive three thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds, for his share of the profits of the said ten thousand copies" (373). Furthermore, the sixth condition stipulated that Scott was to receive another £750 from his publisher, Constable and Co., if it printed an additional 2,000 copies (373). Notably, this contract focuses on agreed-upon, fixed sums for each printing, rather than percentages of the profits.

Dickens began his literary career as a contracted writer-for-hire, and he increasingly dominated his publishers as his stardom rose until all of his contracts involved profit sharing. This change in his contracts happened quickly in his first five years as an author, and the Clarendon Press's first volume of his letters includes several of these early agreements with his publishers. In 1836, Dickens' first contract for *The Pickwick Papers* with Chapman & Hall entitled him to nine guineas per number and came with a promise for an increased wage, should the serial sell well (*Letters* 1.648). Chapman & Hall then increased Dickens' pay, since they wanted to retain his services, and they granted Dickens one-third copyright to *Pickwick* in 1837 as a gesture of goodwill (*Letters* 1.655-8). Christine Haynes notes how much more complicated French publishing contracts became between 1829 and 1875 (99).<sup>131</sup> In comparison, Dickens' contracts took about a year to become far more complicated, as his *Nicholas Nickleby* agreement, signed less than two years after the initial *Pickwick* offer, is a much more complex contract that increased Dickens' pay to £150 per number (*Letters* 1.660) and the condition that the full copyright would revert to Dickens five years after publication (*Letters* 1.661). In 1839, before he began *Master Humphrey's Clock*, Dickens had Forster act as his agent for him, and Dickens demanded that Chapman & Hall pay him a salary and give him half of the profits: "After payment of all the above mentioned charges and the fifty pounds a number Mr. Dickens to have

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131. The 1829 contract is a two-sentence agreement that Balzac signed with his publishers H. de Latouche and U. Cane, while the 1875 contract was signed by Jules Verne and his publishers Hetzel and Company. Verne's contract, Haynes writes, is a "long and binding" agreement containing "twelve articles" (99).

one half of all profits and Chapman & Hall the other half" (*Letters* 1.681). Chapman & Hall acceded, and all of Dickens' future contracts involved a percentage of the profits.

Dickens' growing leverage over his publishers is his contribution to the increasing agency that authors gained in the nineteenth century. Laurel Brake writes that

The agency of authors in the nineteenth century is evident in the variety of ways they made the periodical press work for them, as part of their careers in print. This routine traffic between renowned authors of high culture status and the more popular culture of the press is instructive, illustrating not only the mixed literary practices of men and women of letters at the time, but the strength of the lure of the press in this period. (6)

Dickens, naturally, was the author who benefitted the most from the periodical press. His success with *Pickwick* and subsequent serials popularized serialization in England and created a new, viable medium for other writers. To start, Dickens' *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* directly published works by newer authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell and Wilkie Collins. Ralph Pite, in his biography of Thomas Hardy, observes that George Eliot, like Dickens before her, sold her novel *Romola* in 1862 for £7,000 "for its serialization rights alone" (187). Since Eliot did not sell her copyrights, according to Pite (187), her total earnings must have exceeded the £7,000. Hardy, another later-Victorian serial novelist, also came to recognize the value of owning his literature and, Pite says, eventually never signed a contract unless "future possession of copyright was guaranteed" (187). While most of the nineteenth-century novelists who followed Dickens did not match him in terms of sales, the most popular authors writing after him, such as Eliot, commanded similarly-high figures by signing agreements like Dickens'. I have not found evidence that Dickens' contracts influenced the arrangements between other authors and their publishers, so Dickens' contract arrangements may have been part of a historical trend. However, Dickens did pave the way for less popular authors to earn a living through serialization, because he popularized the format and sought out up-and-coming authors to write for his magazines.

Modern author-publisher contracts, like those Dickens signed, are usually based on sharing profits through royalties, and these contracts have benefitted from the shift to royalties that began in the nineteenth century. As Baldwin notes, modern authors have their copyrights granted to them more readily, since authors can now copyright more forms of writing, such as translations and abridgements (4-5). Baldwin concludes that "In aesthetic terms, too, American and

especially European authors have received ever greater powers over the past two centuries" (5). In general, modern authors have greater rights over their creations than Dickens did, although I would not say that most have "greater powers" than he had over their literature. The terms of author-publisher agreements have become even more complex in the decades after Dickens' death, and publishers often have a better understanding of these agreements than authors. Virginia Barber, a book agent, writes that for all books, "there is a contract. These basic business documents in their raw form naturally favor the publisher" (61). Publishers have the advantage since they often have greater bargaining power and need the author less than the author needs them, unless the author is already a well-known bestseller. As Monica McCabe writes, "well-known authors will command higher royalty rates and will receive larger advances on those royalties, whereas first-time authors will receive lower rates and possibly no advance at all" (47). In recent years, authors usually receive between 10 to 15 percent of royalties from book sales, which, for first-time authors, may not cover the advance given to them by the publisher (Barber 62).<sup>132</sup> While popular authors get higher royalty rates, I have not heard of any who got a rate higher than Dickens' 50 percent for *Master Humphrey's Clock*,<sup>133</sup> and Dickens received a monthly salary in addition to that highly favourable rate. His rate was even higher for his stories serialized in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, although Dickens did not get a salary and had to pay publishing expenses. Hence, I would argue that Dickens had greater power over publishers than modern authors, not the least because he became one himself, and Dickens contributed to the standardization of royalties as the means of paying authors.

However, modern authors have an advantage in copyright over Dickens when it comes to adaptations of their works. Baldwin says that, due to newer copyright laws, authors "may decide how their works appear, whether others may make use of them for derivative creations, and if so, under what circumstances. They can prevent changes they do not like, and in some nations they can withdraw works they no longer agree with" (5). Consequently, modern authors do not often need to contend with plagiarized publications or pirated adaptations of their works. In the last twenty years, online piracy has become a digital-age problem for content creators, especially for filmmakers and musicians and including authors, yet laws are being implemented to curb digital

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132. While Barber wrote her article in 1977, the more recent article by McCabe indicates that these royalty rates and practices have not changed in the decades since. Additionally, I will note that few contracts punish authors if they fail to generate enough sales to cover their advance.

133. If a modern author exceeded Dickens' percentage, it would be a major bestseller, such as Stephen King or J. K. Rowling. Unfortunately, modern publishers and authors seldom reveal their contractual arrangements.

piracy, while streaming services such as Netflix and Spotify have created legal platforms for digital media to curtail pirating. While piracy has not vanished completely, it has been reduced to the extent that modern serial writers, who often work on television shows now, will not see an unlicensed adaptation prior to their work's conclusion.

Few authors have copied Dickens' strategy of self-adaptation as a means of leveraging power over their intellectual property. Part of the reason why others do not self-adapt is the difficulty of writing or performing in another medium. Furthermore, the profits that partly motivated Dickens to self-adapt his novels no longer apply to novelists, who can sell the film rights to their works for a considerable amount of money; for instance, J.K. Rowling sold the film rights for her first four *Harry Potter* books for £1,000,000 in 1999, according to Sheryle Bagwell in "WiGBPd About Harry."<sup>134</sup> However, while self-adapting is hard and modern authors can more easily gain money by selling adaptation rights, authors after Dickens have attempted to bring their works to other media. As I mention in the last chapter, a number of Victorians tried their hand at public reading in the wake of Dickens' success, although none could match his box office draw. Wilkie Collins, Dickens' dramatic collaborator, adapted his novels for the theatre, sometimes to great success.<sup>135</sup> A few modern authors, such as William Goldman, are both novelists and screenwriters, and they may adapt novels for the screen, or vice versa, if they wish to transition from one medium to the other. Because the monetary incentive has decreased since Dickens' Public Readings, authors who self-adapt their works do so not for money but because they want to control their brand or the dissemination of their works.

George Bernard Shaw is the best example of an author who was both influenced by Dickens' literature and self-adapted one of his works not for money but to control the public's reception of it. Shaw admired Dickens his entire life and frequently alluded to Dickens' characters in his plays.<sup>136</sup> Edgar Johnson, in "Dickens and Shaw," says that Shaw admired Dickens and never did "waver in this judgment" (66).<sup>137</sup> Studies that examine Dickensian influence on Shaw are

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134. Like Dickens with his *Pickwick* and *Oliver Twist* contracts, Rowling likely could have sold the film rights for a much higher figure if she had waited a few more years, as the value of her works was still growing in 1999.

135. Matthew Sweet, in his edition of *The Woman in White*, notes the contemporary critical and commercial popularity of Collins' theatrical adaptation of the novel (636).

136. In "Dickens as Shavian Metaphor," Quinn claims that Dickensian allusions outnumber any other 4 to 1 in Shaw's works (44).

137. Johnson bases this claim on a conversation he had with Shaw: "As late as the summer of 1946, when I visited Shaw at Ayot St. Lawrence, we had three hours of eager conversation about Dickens, in which Shaw exhibited a vivid knowledge of Dickens's personality and the most intense appreciation of his social criticism" (66).

plentiful,<sup>138</sup> but I only want to consider Dickens' influence on Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Martin Quinn, in "The Informing Presence of Charles Dickens in Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*," sees the play as inspired by both *Pickwick* (145) and *Our Mutual Friend*, drawing comparisons between Eliza Doolittle and Lizzie Hexam (147). I see parallels between Higgins and Abel Magwitch, Pip's benefactor, which Michael Goldberg also sees in "Shaw's *Pygmalion*: The Reworking of *Great Expectations*" (115). However, these studies have not considered how Shaw's efforts to promote his preferred ending of *Pygmalion* resemble Dickens' attempts to control his literary brand. Shaw preferred that Eliza should not marry Higgins, but, in 1914, stage manager and actor Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who portrayed Higgins, produced a version of the play whose ending suggested an eventual romance between Eliza and Higgins. Supposedly, when Shaw confronted Tree, the manager told the playwright, "My ending makes money; you ought to be grateful" (qtd. in Ellis). Shaw replied, "Your ending is damnable; you ought to be shot" (qtd. in Ellis).<sup>139</sup> While Shaw's angry response may not have occurred, we know that he hated Tree's ending because Shaw wrote a sequel, or epilogue, which he published in 1916. In this sequel, Eliza marries Freddy, not Higgins, and Shaw writes, "Eliza's instinct tells her not to marry Higgins. It does not tell her to give him up. It is not in the slightest doubt as to his remaining one of the strongest personal interests in her life" (142). Shaw wrote this sequel to give his rationale for why Eliza and Higgins will not wed, and the sequel calls to my mind Dickens' strategy of using his prefaces to counter interpretations of his novels that he disagreed with. Shaw was not finished with his published editions of *Pygmalion* in 1916. As late as 1941, Shaw revised his ending yet again to emphasize that Eliza and Higgins are not meant to marry one another.<sup>140</sup>

Shaw may have felt compelled to revise his ending in 1941 because his attempt at promoting his preferred ending in the 1938 film adaptation of *Pygmalion* failed. Like Dickens, Shaw self adapted his play by contributing to this film's screenplay, and, naturally, he used his involvement as an opportunity to combat the public's preference for a Higgins-Eliza ending. The film, starring Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller, was a box office and commercial success, and Shaw earned an

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138. For other examples, Goldberg wrote "Shaw's Dickensian Quintessence" and notes that many of Shaw's supporters accept the playwright's love of Dickens "with an air of apology" (14). Additionally, Linda Herr wrote "Dickens' Jaggers and Shaw's Bohun: A Study of 'Character Lifting.'"

139. This exchange between Tree and Shaw has been oft quoted. For instance, Janine Utell also quotes it in "Adaptation and Sound in *Pygmalion*" (61). It is possible that this conversation is only a myth.

140. Derek McGovern discusses Shaw's various endings for *Pygmalion* in "From Stage to Hybrid." McGovern quotes three different versions of the ending; the 1941 version concludes with Eliza flinging away the ring given to her by Higgins (18).

Academy Award for Writing (Adapted Screenplay) for a film whose director rejected Shaw's new ending. Janine Utell observes that Shaw's ending for the adaptation was "filmed but never used" (73) and, again, would have rejected the premise of a Higgins-Eliza romance.<sup>141</sup> According to Sarah Martin, Shaw was deceived by the film's Hungarian producer, Gabriel Pascal, who promised Shaw control over the adaptation's ending but failed to follow through on his promise (39). Shaw's failure to gain control over the self-adaptation is simple to explain: Shaw never had total authority over the 1938 *Pygmalion* film adaptation. As Martin writes, "Shaw had actually little control over the film's plot and cast" (41). Ultimately, Shaw, unlike Dickens with his Public Readings, was in a position of relative weakness over the final product, and he had no say in the film's editing. Shaw's example demonstrates how difficult it is for modern authors to attain a Dickensian level of control over their film adaptations. The difference between Shaw and Dickens as self-adapters is that Shaw had to rely on other filmmakers to respect his script, whereas Dickens, as a public reader, reached a level of control where he answered only to himself. Self-adapting to gain control is far more viable when self-adapters can match or exceed the autonomy they possess in their initial medium. Most authors lack the skill to become film directors or producers, so not many modern writers adapting their literature into film have gained control over their works to the same extent Dickens did with his Public Readings.

Thus, Dickens' influence on modern brand control has been most felt on the now more commonplace practice of authors publically reading their works. The stigma surrounding authors who performed slowly began to erode following Dickens' tours, to the point that many authors regularly engage in this practice. In Dickens' time, Mark Twain was influenced and tried public reading (Ferguson 734), while Oscar Wilde continued the nineteenth-century tradition of giving public lectures in the American South in 1882.<sup>142</sup> Audio recordings of readings given by famous twentieth-century writers indicate that they followed Dickens' example. For instance, audio of T.S. Eliot reading his poetry exists,<sup>143</sup> while the University of Virginia has a collection of recordings of William Faulkner, including some of him reading his works.<sup>144</sup> The advent of

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141. Shaw's unused 1938 ending has Higgins speak with a police officer, and his dialogue indicates his acceptance of Eliza's autonomy along with their separation, according to Utell (73-4).

142. Doris Lanier provides an account of Wilde's tour in "Oscar Wilde Tours Georgia: 1882." According to her, Wilde's lectures went poorly, for the most part, except in Atlanta (338).

143. Eliot's readings of his poetry are readily available on YouTube. Jim Clark, for example, has uploaded one of Eliot's performances of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" for poetryreincarnations.

144. The project is called *Faulkner at Virginia* and is managed by Stephen Railton.

radio,<sup>145</sup> television, and the internet has made it easier than ever for readings by authors to deliver readings of their works to wide audiences.

Modern authors also go on book tours, a practice which owes much to Dickens, yet book tours often have a different purpose from Dickens' Public Readings. A crucial component of book tours involves the author reading passages from their latest work, which is a form of adaptation akin to Dickens' Public Readings but much simpler than his lengthy and rehearsed performances. Due to advancements in travelling transportation since 1870, it is easier and faster for modern authors to go on tour than it was for Dickens, and book tours can be an effective method to strengthen an author's market presence. In contrast, Dickens did not embark on his tours to establish his brand and promote his works to potential new buyers, even if his tours did increase book sales; rather, he toured to capitalize on and profit from the strength of his brand. He developed his performances into a marketable commodity. A modern book tour may intend to bring attention to both a new book and its author without being immediately profitable. In this case, the tour is an investment, where the publisher and author hope that promoting the work will lead to future, rather than immediate, sales by fostering fan loyalty. While Dickens strived to earn his readers' loyalty, his Public Readings began after he was famous, and his Readings more closely resembled plays or concerts in terms of gate receipts than modern book tours.

In an interesting reversal from Dickens' time, authors going on book tours have become a staple in publishing. Whereas Dickens broke conventional decorum by performing his Public Readings, authors today may be forced to go on tour even if they would rather not. Additionally, book tours have gained considerable prestige, and it is expected that the most famous and popular authors will go on tour, which can be quite profitable.<sup>146</sup> According to Noah Charney, publishers are not nearly as supportive of lesser-known authors, however:

in this new, more austere era, publishers only regularly pay to send authors who are compelling public speakers, authors with large established audiences who are guaranteed to sell well and therefore cover expenses (the James Pattersons, Gary Shteyngarts, J.K. Rowling, and so on), or authors with a high profile that extends beyond books (such as actors, athletes, comedians).

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145. Even Virginia Woolf once spoke on a radio show, although she did not read from one of her own novels, as Fiona Macdonald notes in a BBC article.

146. My wife went to a Neil Gaiman signing in the Philippines, where he was greeted like a rock star.

Consequently, some authors now need to fund their own tours if they want to promote themselves and meet their readers, as Erica Verillo explains in "Arranging Your Own Book Tour." In Dickens' day, Forster feared that his friend would damage his reputation because reading was unbecoming of him. In modern times, a major book tour is a mark of literary success. This change in public perception towards authors performing and touring can be traced to Dickens' Public Readings. Dickens paved the way for other authors to promote themselves, and many modern authors have taken advantage of this change in philosophy. The reality that writers need an income to survive has become accepted by many.

Lastly, authors after Dickens have benefitted from the media that emerged in the past 150 years, which modern authors have used to build their brands. Tony Perrottet, in a *New York Times* article, references several notable twentieth-century authors who have used visual and print media to manipulate their appearances. Perrottet cites examples such as Virginia Woolf going on a "shopping expedition at French couture houses in London with the magazine's fashion editor in 1925," one of several fashion shoots in the 1920s that the Bloomsbury group participated in. Later, Perrottet refers to Ernest Hemingway as the "modern gold standard for inventive self-branding," because Hemingway enhanced his masculine appearance through "photo ops from safaris, fishing trips and war zones" at various points in his life, alongside appearing in magazine beer advertisements in 1951. While the stigma against public reading has dissipated, Hemingway's beer endorsement deal is hard to defend for artistic merits, yet it shows how authors have become more cunning with their brand construction. In contrast to Hemingway, Cormac McCarthy spent decades refusing to agree to interviews or perform any type of promotion for his novels, and this complete avoidance of social media is itself another form of brand manipulation, one that suggests that the author is devoted only to the craft of writing. Unlike McCarthy and other recluses, most modern authors use at least one form of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to develop a social media presence; they can also create personal websites to advertise their books and tours, as well as make announcements about upcoming works. Whereas Dickens used his *Nickleby Proclamation* to criticize, if not necessarily deter, his imitators, an author in a similar situation now would be more likely to tweet in response to someone borrowing their ideas. In this manner, authors' usage of modern social media is reminiscent of Dickens using all the media available to him to construct his brand.

In this chapter, I discuss Dickens' legacy, his adaptations, and his influence on subsequent writers, all of which represent a part of the modern Dickensian brand. His decisions over his works were often designed to increase his control over his literary properties, and he has influenced other authors to follow suit. Modern author branding has grown significantly since Dickens' death, as authors after Dickens are more self-aware of their social presence than ever due to the growth of social media. Publishers have long since recognized the power of authors' names, and they encourage their writers to adopt pseudonyms, if they think it will make the book more marketable, and publishers design book covers to transform the names of popular authors into brands. Few authors since Dickens have had the same success he did, yet his strategies have worked for others, so long as they have sufficient media savvy to develop their literary brands. After considering how authors such as Shaw and Hemingway emulated or continued Dickens' methods of building and controlling a brand, I observe that none since Dickens have managed to simultaneously manipulate contracts, self-adapt their works, and thrive as public readers to the same extent he did to achieve the control he possessed as a publisher and entertainer. Dickens was not the first author to establish a brand through celebrity, since Lord Byron and others accomplished this feat before him, yet Dickens was the first to so successfully take advantage of and market his brand. In this regard, Dickens' achievement can be seen in the modern literary market, which continues to publish and adapt his works while being influenced by his precedent as authors use new media to create literary brands.

## Conclusion: The Present Dickensian Brand

In this dissertation's introduction, I asked: to what extent and in what way did Dickens control his literary brand? In the previous chapters, I outlined five key strategies that Dickens used to gain control over his brand: fighting literary theft directly through his literature, creating a sense of intimacy with his readers, dominating his publishers, rebranding himself, and self-adapting his works. The extent of his control was undermined by the weak copyright laws that enabled piracy and plagiarism; however, Dickens created a multimedia brand that set the framework for the current Dickens industry and continues to affect adaptations made after his death. These strategies have had long term effects on his brand, and, for this reason, I have concluded that Dickens created the type of brand he sought, even if his ambitions may have been for a higher, more unanimous literary reputation. Dickens' strategies furthered the success of his brand and benefitted authors who came after him.

Literary theft presented a continuous challenge for Dickens throughout his career, and he did not come up with any strategies that prevented plagiarisms of his works or pirated adaptations, although he tried to combat them in his writing. Dickens attempted to stop literary theft through his writing in several ways. For instance, he deplored theft in his *Nickleby Proclamation* and in *Nicholas Nickleby*, to no avail. Plagiarists could and frequently did imitate his writing, while pirate adapters could bring his works to the stage without consequence. After these efforts failed, he tried suing Richard Egan Lee and John Haddock for plagiarizing *A Christmas Carol*, which also ended in failure. Still, after Dickens' death, people continued to steal his works and, eventually, plagiarism of his literature, in the modern sense, ceased to be a legal problem when his works entered the public domain. Between his death and his literature's entry into the public domain, his novels made a lot of money for his publishers. Since he died, Dickens has both lost and won the battle against copyright infringement. He lost in the sense that, after his novels entered the public domain, adapters have had as much freedom to transform and edit his stories as they did in the 1830s; many of these adaptations are of a reasonably high quality, in my estimation, and other authors' works have been treated worse than Dickens'. From another perspective, Dickens won the battle since international copyright was standardized not long after his passing, although Dickens did not influence this standardization. The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works was held in Switzerland in 1886, and the United States government passed an International Copyright Act in 1891 (Baldwin 11). While Dickens

did not enjoy the benefits that these copyright agreements would have granted him, plagiarists no longer have such an easy time profiteering from new, popular authors. Piracy, on the other hand, has flourished with the advent of the internet.

Dickens' intimate connection to his readers, meanwhile, remains strong even if he can no longer interact with them directly. His strengths as a narrator continue to make him seem like a friend to readers, and some of the biographical details that surfaced about his life have added to his fans' bond with him. *David Copperfield*, for example, is now read as a glimpse into his youth, and modern publishers advertise the autobiographical elements in the book on book jackets, and David's portrayal makes many readers sympathetic to Dickens. This connection is strong enough that Dickens' reputation has survived the revelation of his affair with Ellen Ternan in the 1930s. As he did while alive, Dickens continues to fascinate people. For instance, the biographical film *The Man Who Invented Christmas*, which focuses on how Dickens created and wrote *A Christmas Carol*, was released in 2017. Its creation is a testament to the interest people have in Dickens, as few other Victorian writers are the subjects of cinematic biographies. Lastly, a number of communities meet or publish regularly to celebrate or discuss Dickens. For example, the magazine *Dickensian*, founded by his son Henry in 1905, has fostered an enduring community of readers and academics for over one hundred years (Gottlieb 214), while *Dickens Studies Annual* has published articles about Dickens since 1970. Additionally, the Dickens Universe annual conference in Santa Cruz, Jon Michael Varese writes, is "a perfect blend of the academic and the popular." In 2018, I visited San Francisco's annual Dickens Christmas Fair, which is an example of a Dickens-themed Christmas celebration for the public featuring re-enactments from his works and various Dickensian merchandise and food. Overall, Dickens' strategy of building a bond with his readers was highly successful, and possibly influenced modern authors who build connections with readers at book signings and through social media.

While he was alive, Dickens' methods of dominating his publishers to gain financial control over his literature were mostly effective. Some of his decisions, such as starting *Master Humphrey's Clock* as a miscellany, were not profitable, yet Dickens' aggressive negotiations with his publishers nearly always worked out in his favour. His writing, moreover, proved so popular that it has thrived during and after his life. The Dickensian brand, through the industry of books, films, and other media associated with it, continues to generate considerable revenue, even if no single person has any hope of controlling it now. The industry itself, though, has progressed in

the direction that Dickens pointed it towards. Moreover, although his financial control over his literature died alongside him, Dickens has aided subsequent authors through his precedent. Writing for a living is no easier than before, yet it is easier for the most successful authors to profit from their bestselling books; bestselling authors generally do not suffer from the unfavourable contracts that Dickens signed, as modern contracts are usually written to divide profits between author and publisher. In this case, Dickens' strategy of signing profit-based publishing contracts has benefitted both him and his successors.

Similarly, Dickens' rebranding from Boz to Charles Dickens, from comic writer to serious author, still affects his modern literary brand. Presently, his pseudonym is not nearly as well known as his birth name, and Dickens is viewed by the academic community as a major Victorian author. Dickens' novels remain in print, and his works, except for *Oliver Twist*, have not been supplanted by adaptations in the public consciousness. While many adaptations of Dickens' novels, such as Disney's *Oliver & Company*, have a tenuous relation to their sources, several other adaptations, such as those by the BBC, strive for close fidelity to Dickens' original prose. Additionally, while new information about Dickens' personal life has changed our perceptions of him, little of this new information came to us outside of his control. The two notable biographical details that emerged about him are his childhood employment at the blacking factory and his affair with Ellen Ternan. In particular, the childhood employment, along with its apparent representation in *David Copperfield*, demonstrates Dickens' continued control over his brand. Dickens kept his shameful employment a close secret, and word of it only slipped out because he chose to give Forster his autobiographical fragment. Because he withheld this information until after his death, Dickens managed to increase reader sympathy for him without needing to live with the shame of others knowing about his past. In contrast, the Ternan revelation has harmed Dickens' personal reputation, as it emphasizes his mistreatment of Catherine and undermines Dickens' family-friendly narratives. Regardless, Dickens controlled the news of his domestic relations for decades, since the truth about Ternan only emerged and became common knowledge long after his death. These revelations have not changed Dickens' brand significantly, as his popularity has remained high since the 1830s. Moreover, neither Dickens' time in the blacking warehouse nor his affair has drastically affected his reputation among scholars, although this information has given academics new angles from which to interpret his works.

The last strategy I discuss in the dissertation, when Dickens self-adapted his works into the Public Readings, was especially innovative and changed perceptions of how authors can interact with their readers. As I discuss in Chapter 6, these performances are a precursor to modern book signings and readings. Moreover, public reading has since become strongly associated with Dickens' works, and a host of readers have attempted to recreate his performances. Among the earliest performers were a few of Dickens' sons, including Charley and Henry.<sup>147</sup> More recently, other Dickens descendents have publically read his literature,<sup>148</sup> and performer John O'Connor, for example, has strived to recreate Dickens' Public Reading of *A Christmas Carol* as closely as possible.<sup>149</sup> Thus far, O'Connor has performed only the *Carol*, and while he can use one of Dickens' prompt copies, O'Connor does not replicate Dickens' improvisations. Due to the efforts of Dickens' descendants and other performers, public readings have not ceased to be a part of Dickens' brand after his death, even if the original performances were not recorded and cannot be perfectly recreated.

As a result of the general success of Dickens' strategies, the Dickensian brand remains strong. The brand's persistent strength comes from the co-existence of the Comedic Dickensian and Social Dickensian in his novels and adaptations. Near the start of the twentieth century, Chesterton and Shaw argued over why they liked Dickens; Chesterton favoured the humour in Dickens, especially *The Pickwick Papers*, whereas Shaw respected Dickens' later novels, such as *Hard Times* and *Great Expectations* for their social commentary.<sup>150</sup> Chesterton and Shaw were simultaneously right and wrong about Dickens, for the Victorian author possessed the strengths that Chesterton and Shaw saw but also the weaknesses that they recognized but dismissed. Chesterton and Shaw's argument was a precursor to the division of Dickens' brand into these two sides, one that favours comedic appeal—Chesterton's Dickens—and another that favours social criticism—Shaw's Dickens. Juliet John observes how this split departs from Dickens' time, when he tried to write humorously while criticizing society, and how the split has influenced adapters: "While in the Victorian period, Dickens may have been unique . . . in his ability to combine both strands of populism, in today's landscape, many adapters of Dickens seem to feel the need to

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147. Gottlieb discusses Charley's public readings (148) and Henry's, the latter of whose were performed "for the benefit of the Red Cross" in World War I (213).

148. For instance, according to Scott Rappaport, Gerald Dickens, one of Dickens' great-great-grandsons, performed a reading on August 6, 2013, for UC Santa Cruz's annual Dickens Universe.

149. Charles Hutchinson wrote about John O'Connor's appearance in Yorkshire for a *Carol* reading.

150. I looked at examples of Chesterton's and Shaw's views collected in Ford's *The Dickens Critics*.

choose between commercial and political Dickens" (238). John's "commercial" Dickens is akin to what I call Comedic Dickensian, while "political" is similar to what I call Social Dickensian. An adaptation like *Oliver!* is Comedic Dickensian, whereas many BBC productions, like their 2008 *Little Dorrit*, belong to the Social Dickensian brand. These two types of adaptations vary considerably, yet the word "Dickensian" refers to both of them. In effect, this division has benefitted Dickens' brand, as the split has expanded his reach and maintained his popularity with both sides.

This division in his brand returns me to another question I posed at the start of the dissertation: what does the word "Dickensian" mean in current times? The word has broadened in scope considerably since its first use in the nineteenth century. Like brand names for mass products such as Kleenex being used for other brands of tissue paper, the Dickensian brand name no longer applies solely to Dickens' literature. Originally, "Dickensian" referred primarily to Dickens and his written works, but now it can be applied to many media that may have little to do with his literature but bear some resemblance to it. "Charles Dickens" is the brand name, the original, but "Dickensian" can be applied to both him and those like him. In particular, the word "Dickensian," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, now often refers to works that are "Reminiscent of the places, situations, people, etc., portrayed in the novels of Charles Dickens; esp. (in later use) evocative of the poor social conditions in Victorian England described by Dickens." David Simon, in the fifth season of his HBO TV series *The Wire*, responds to this definition when he mocks a news editor who wants stories with a "Dickensian aspect." As John Gardiner observes, in one of the few examinations of the word, "Dickensian" is a catchword that has supplanted the meaning of "Victorian": "the Dickensian seems almost at times to come before the Victorian" (235). Since Dickens dominated his era in terms of popularity, I am uncertain if this expansion is inaccurate or misplaced. Moreover, Dickens' writing covered so many subjects, institutions, classes, and media that it is hard not to find some commonality with Dickens in any other Victorian work or, for that matter, most modern fiction. For me, what defines "Dickensian" is this ability to include all social classes and appeal to both the masses and critics, akin to how Dickens' literature often featured characters from both poor and wealthy families, or those involved in various London institutions. Unfortunately, a commonly-seen modern definition of "Dickensian," such as what Simon uses in *The Wire*, fails to capture the

nuances and intricacies of Dickens' literature, so the modern understanding of what "Dickensian" means can be far removed from the literary brand Dickens created in the Victorian era.

To return to Dickens' brand, I believe he achieved what he wanted, for the most part, considering how his literature has survived following his death. People are still familiar with his literature, although the non-academic consumer is more likely to encounter him through a film or televised adaptation than his written works. Nevertheless, he is still read regularly since his literature is frequently taught in classrooms. In terms of legacy, his novels have generally grown in literary reputation after his death. Adaptations, meanwhile, are endlessly compared to what he wrote, whether they faithfully follow his texts or not. He has had great influence, changing how book promotion was perceived, while still setting a bar that others have not been able to reach. But, above all, the word "Dickensian" is a testament to the legacy of Dickens' brand, since modern authors are still compared to him. Due to Dickens' occasionally contrived narratives, his innovation as an author is often underestimated. Within this dissertation, I strive to demonstrate that Dickens' originality expanded beyond the serialized form that he popularized with *Pickwick* in 1836. His precedent gave more autonomy over their literature and helped make it more viable for writers of all classes to make a living as authors. Even if modern authors may tend to avoid his sentimental writing methods or occasionally haphazard plotting, virtually all authors today have been influenced and benefitted from his Public Readings, since most authors have used book tours to promote their works. I believe additional research can be conducted to compare a recent author's Twitter usage to Dickens' manipulation of his serials, for example. Dickens' ability to create a multimedia empire was a century ahead of its time, and his literary brand remains relevant as other writers attempt to emulate his success. Few authors since him have been nearly as capable as Dickens at constructing their brands.

Despite Dickens' efforts at cultivating his literary brand, his success was mostly limited to his lifetime. Generally speaking, based on Dickens' example, developing a good literary brand only serves a purpose when the author is alive and can derive benefits from the brand. For Dickens, his literary brand aided in controlling the dissemination of his works and increasing his commercial success; for other authors, literary brands can offer similar benefits and, currently, a good brand is helpful for new authors who wish to establish a presence in the literary market. On the other hand, a good literary brand, along with the commercial popularity that can come with it, is not necessarily that beneficial to an author's legacy or long-term success. For example,

Walter Scott was immensely popular in the early nineteenth century while Jane Austen was initially received in relative obscurity; however, in the 200 years since Austen died, her novels have arguably become more popular than Scott's, even though Scott had a far stronger brand while both authors lived. While authors such as Dickens can create brands, they cannot predict how literary tastes will change over time. For example, Dickens wrote novels that have long-term appeal and warrant further academic examination, yet his strong brand had a relatively low impact on his literary reputation; possibly, his enduring popularity, relative to his Victorian peers, enabled Dickens' works to receive sufficient attention for critics such as Edmund Wilson to re-evaluate his novels. *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* indicate that Dickens would have been a successful author, even if he had not cultivated his literary brand, but Dickens was obsessed with control and perpetually dissatisfied with anyone or anything that went against his wishes. Creating a literary brand gave Dickens this sought-after control, or some semblance of it, while he lived, and made him such a phenomenal global success that an industry sprang up from his name. We are still affected by his calculated decisions and read him, accordingly.

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