

# Introduction

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[W]e have a long way to travel before we get back to what Dickens meant: and the passage is along a rambling English road, a twisting road such as Mr. Pickwick travelled. But this at least is part of what he meant; that comradeship and serious joy are not interludes in our travel; but that rather our travels are interludes in comradeship and joy, which through God shall endure for ever. The inn does not point to the road; the road points to the inn. And all roads point at last to an ultimate inn, where we shall meet Dickens and all his characters: and when we drink again it shall be from the great flagons in the tavern at the end of the world.

(G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens*)

In 1906, G. K. Chesterton published a detailed analysis of Charles Dickens, ending his groundbreaking study with 'A Note on the Future of Dickens'. Chesterton closes this religiously infused final chapter with the enigmatic promise that readers will meet Dickens, and his characters, in 'the tavern at the end of the world' (150). At a threshold moment for Dickens studies, Chesterton is not only looking back to find Dickens; he is also looking forward. The passage above is wonderfully evocative in its temporal confusion: we are both returning (to drink again) and also travelling *forward*, to the end of the world. It is also, significantly, to get *back* to what Dickens meant: Dickens is both ahead

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of us and behind us in this formulation. The Dickens we return to as readers, as the chapters in this volume will show through a complex interweaving of methodologies, approaches, and sources, is changed by the journey we have travelled since. This journey is personal, generational, political, social: it is the journey travelled since Dickens began the serialisation of any particular text, or since the first book was published; the journey his works and characters have travelled since his death; the journey of any society or culture in which Dickens is read; and our own journey, perhaps since a last reading of the text, or since a significant moment in a reader's life.

Chesterton was writing against a wave of critical opinion at the turn of the 20th century that had concluded that Dickens was inferior to the great realists of the century before. It is easy to imagine that, to Chesterton, it felt that Dickens was being lost to a past that had failed to appreciate him; the author's reputation had fluctuated since his death, though his popularity among the wider reading public had hardly wavered (John Gardiner has shown this by using the example of a randomly selected day in the 1920s at a Newcastle library: 53 out of 75 Dickens novels in the collection were on loan on that day [164]). In positioning Dickens as an epitome of English values and predicting that he would ultimately stand above his contemporaries (a position that we might now take for granted), Chesterton was nailing his colours to the mast. Of course, Chesterton was right in many ways, and Dickens has remained a singularly popular author, though it would take decades before his reputation would recover and academic study of Dickens would become legitimised.<sup>1</sup> This ongoing popularity is not limited to Britain; Dickens is the 25th most translated author globally (Regenia Gagnier 111). The *Unesco Index Translationum: World Bibliography of Translation 1978-Present* places him second only to Arthur Conan Doyle among Victorian writers, and he is the 'ninth most translated author in China' and 'fourth in Egypt' (Gagnier 111).

The reasons for Dickens's singular popularity have been much discussed. There are few authors who have maintained such a steady presence in the mind of the reading public; in this, Dickens is second only to William Shakespeare. Jane Austen, who has been compared to Shakespeare in a new volume that explores their shared and diverging reception (*Jane Austen and William Shakespeare: A Love Affair in Literature, Film and Performance*, 2019), is another writer who might compete with Dickens for sheer volume of adaptations and the infusion of nostalgia that accompanies them. This comparison is significant because of the focus on their powers of social observation and their use of humour, and there are passionate Austen 'fans,' much as there are Dickens ones – perhaps to an even greater extent in some areas, such as groups that dress up as Austen's characters. However, unlike Dickens, it was the shaping of Austen's posthumous reputation that created an intense interest in the author that far outpaced her popularity as a living writer. Other 19th-century writers have not captured the public imagination in quite the same way: Lucasta Miller's detailed examination of *The Brontë Myth* (2004) is suggestive in

thinking about Dickens, showing the ambivalence inherent in the ambitious desire for fame and the need to protect a reputation, but the commemorative activities around the bicentenaries of the Brontë sisters in 2016, 2018, and 2020 have not been as wide-ranging as those of Dickens.

So why is Dickens so perennially interesting? Many arguments have been made about his humour, his importance in representing and shaping attitudes to social issues of his day, and the resonances of his characters (although this too has changed over time; a discussion of Dickens's best novel in 1904 excluded not only *David Copperfield* but also *The Pickwick Papers*, to avoid limiting the scope of the discussion,<sup>2</sup> while today you would be hard pressed to find a reader that would place *Pickwick* so far above the rest). Since his death, he has become increasingly bound up with the 'Victorian', so much so that 'Dickensian' and 'Victorian' are often used more or less interchangeably. Although there is excellent work on the afterlives of other Victorian authors, including Amber K. Regis and Deborah Wynne's *Charlotte Brontë: Legacies and Afterlives* (2017), it is that stubborn undercurrent of popular interest that makes Dickens stand out: even when critical opinion is uncertain of him, he is not there to be rediscovered. He is ever present. This constant presence means that nostalgia for the Dickensian remains at both a societal and individual level; for some he is representative of a sort of golden age of fiction or a paragon of Victorian values, but he is also a writer we (in the UK at least) have read as children, whom our parents and grandparents read, whose name we have lived with in the media in some form for generations. It is no wonder, then, that Dickens representations in the media often take on the gloss of nostalgia in presenting 'the romantic side of familiar things' (*Bleak House* 6), to borrow Dickens's own words. His cultural importance, whether lazily employed as a cultural touchstone or more deeply questioned as part of understanding our own heritage, merits a close attention to its creation, maintenance, and transformations.

It is difficult to imagine now, when beleaguered schoolchildren seem to see Dickens as an inescapable literary institution, that Dickens could have been considered a lowbrow writer. While it is not possible to trace and attribute this shift to any specific historical moment, the 20th century is filled with many such moments that demonstrate Dickens's further entrenchment in the public consciousness, such as the calls for small, cheap editions of Dickens's works to be sent to the front lines in the First World War, which certainly contributed to a binding of Dickens with Englishness and patriotism (Cordery; see also Gardiner 165 and Curtis 164). Other critics have viewed the 1940s as a turning point in Dickens studies, with the publication of Edmund Wilson's 'The Two Scrooges' and George Orwell's 'Charles Dickens' in 1940, two foundational essays in literary criticism that independently re-evaluated Dickens (Slater 110; Collins, 143; Ella Westland, 'The Making of Dickens: Conflicts in Criticism 1940–1970'). Michael Slater concedes that 'the Twenties and the Thirties will never loom large in any history of Dickens criticism', but nevertheless argues that Dickens 'probably cut more of a figure in the press of the period than he

had done at any time since 1870' (142). What the first three chapters in this volume show, through analysis of Dickens's invocation in the newspapers in the name of the disappearing Jacob's Island, exploration of Dickens's influence in Norway, and attention to the pervasive resonances of Dickens with William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932), respectively, is that Dickens's influence was still being felt in surprising ways during this supposedly low ebb. Where analyses of Dickens's reputation have elided the 1870–1930 period into one of low interest, the opening chapters of this volume challenge us to reassess how Dickens's legacy was expressed during these formative years.

And, if critical interest in Dickens had hit a low in its early decades, by the mid-20th century the floodgates had opened. The rise of neo-Victorian fiction in the 1960s further deepened the public interest in the author, and the establishment of the Dickens Society in 1970 represented another formal, international recognition of the value of academic study of Dickens. The 20th century would also see two societies set up to commemorate Dickens in contrasting ways: the Boz Club, established by Percy Fitzgerald, a contributor to Dickens's journals, in 1900, and the Dickens Fellowship, established in 1902 with a broader membership.<sup>3</sup> Dickens's early reputation owes much to the efforts of these two societies, which not only met for their own communal acts of remembrance but also engaged in public events and literary debates about Dickens. In a 1919 book review, Virginia Woolf commented, 'Perhaps no one has suffered more than Dickens from the enthusiasm of his admirers, by which he has been made to appear not so much a great writer as an intolerable institution' (163). This act of institutionalising started as an act of remembrance, and, as the early foundations for this institutionalisation recede into the past, many of the associations that we have with Dickens stemming from them are lost. The following chapters begin the work of recovering some of those connections and associations.

In the 21st century, the 'Dickens industry' is still in full flow: the bicentenary of Dickens's birth in 2012 was characterised by an effluence of new works and criticism that sought particularly to try to understand what Dickens means to the modern world. This is not a trivial question, nor simply a hunt for academic 'impact' on the general public. Literary and historical studies are increasingly facing questions about their value in the modern world, and also being asked to tackle, head on, the ramifications of the colonial and imperial heritage that has shaped the very idea of the literary canon and what exactly the museums and institutions that engage in preserving this literary heritage should be doing. To answer the question of what it means to read Dickens today is to consider how we continue to relate to that past, and how we might use it to write a more inclusive literary future. In this light, we can re-evaluate Dickens's work for social reform, but also his racial politics and his problematic portrayals of women. Although neo-Victorian Dickensian fiction has taken up the thread of Dickens's women most strongly, as discussed in Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 10, as early as the 1860s writers such as the Norwegian novelist Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

(as discussed in Chapter 2) were revising and rewriting Dickens's women into powerful critiques of patriarchal society.

Studies of Dickens's reputation fall, broadly, into two camps: wide-angle approaches that attempt to condense nearly two centuries of Dickens's own myth-making and subsequent attempts to shape his legacy, or narrowly focused analyses of specific characters and texts. Several wide-ranging studies of Dickens's cultural legacy have appeared since the 1990s, including Laurence W. Mazzeno's survey of *The Dickens Industry: Critical Perspectives 1836–2005* (2008), Juliet John's *Dickens and Mass Culture* (2010), and more focused cultural histories, such as those by Paul Davis (1990) and Mary Hammond (2016), which maintain a compelling argument through remaining more tightly focused (on the character of Scrooge and on *Great Expectations*, respectively). Jay Clayton's *Charles Dickens in Cyberspace: The Afterlife of the Nineteenth Century in Postmodern Culture* (2003) was one of the first to explore Dickens's popular consumption online as well as offline, a topic which has also been analysed more recently by Juliet John (2018), who suggests that Dickens's online life, unlike his stubborn 'lowbrow' popularity in the early 20th century, is a top-down rather than grass-roots movement. Essentially, Dickens's novels have been tweeted and blogged, but primarily led by academics.<sup>4</sup> This more conservative presence online is surprising, given Dickens's radical potential.

*Dickens After Dickens* offers a new approach to Dickens's cultural legacy, presenting a series of case studies that highlight Dickens's diverse adaptability and translatability across forms and across time. It comes at another threshold moment for Dickens studies as, hard on the heels of the 2012 bicentenary, we prepare to commemorate the 150th anniversary of his death in 2020. Between these two key dates, our understanding of Dickens and adaptation has expanded dramatically to include Dickens in video games, Dickens online, and his cultural legacy in various forms, from apps that lead you on a walk of Dickens's London to a new web series of *David Copperfield* (Quip Modest Productions, 2019). As Linda Hutcheon notes in her foundational work on adaptation, 'Adaptation has run amok. That's why we can't understand its appeal and even its nature if we only consider novels and films' (Hutcheon xiii). As such, the present volume problematises an easy understanding of what adapting Dickens means, and of what Dickens himself means in these various contexts. It does so through, for example, analysis of previously overlooked biofictional material, or discussion of the challenges of adapting Dickens and the uneasy relation between the reader as voyeur of gendered violence, or Dickens in new contexts – whether in urban planning, as discussed in Chapter 1, in another country, as discussed in Chapter 2 by Kathy Rees and Chapter 3 by Katie Bell, or on TV, as discussed in Chapter 8 by Laurena Tsudama. It furthers work on authorial afterlives by its subtle and wide-ranging understanding of influence, and offers reflections on 150 years of post-Dickens Dickens.

Taken as a whole, the collection attempts to revise not only our sense of Dickens's afterlives but also ideas of authenticity, adaptation, and nostalgia.

Dickens's binding with the 'Victorian' has blurred the lines between fiction and history, not only in literary or media adaptations of Dickens but also in how London itself is shaped and remembered, as discussed in Chapter 1, which traces a process of Dickens-as-research and Dickens-as-reference that culminates in nostalgia for a part of London previously deemed unsanitary and unsafe. Resonances can be found across the chapters in their interest in Dickens's women, the concept of the 'Dickensian', and what it means to read Dickens, but there is also the ongoing fascination with mysteries and incompleteness, most obviously in Pete Orford's discussion of completions and solutions to the unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) in Chapter 5 but also in the need to provide Miss Havisham's story, discussed by Claire O'Callaghan in Chapter 4, or the pragmatic discussion of the edits and cuts needed to bring the same story to the stage in Michael Eaton's discussion in Chapter 9. The chapters offer more historically grounded approaches, close reading of specific passages and characters, and detailed analysis of adaptations and neo-Victorian rewritings, ranging across a diverse body of materials, not only in terms of the Dickens texts under discussion but also a wide range of cultural, literary, and social contexts.

The question of what Dickens *means*, then, is still not a straightforward one in the public imagination, nor in the chapters that follow. This is most clearly evident in the word 'Dickensian' itself. Take, for example, this comment from the *London Review of Books* website following the exciting discovery by Jeremy Parrott of annotated names in 10 volumes of Dickens's journal *All The Year Round* in 2015 (in which articles had been, on the whole, published anonymously):<sup>5</sup>

The word 'Dickensian' has such a depth of smothering colour to those many of us who view the great man as a mere journalist, and whose fictional porter cocktail has too much ingredient of cockney fantasy; that this incunabulaic find brings into question this prejudice. ... It seems then that there is an epidemic truth running through his oeuvre, gestated in the need to produce copy. So the value of Dickens is in its variety – I adjust my view accordingly. (*LRB Blog* n.pag.)

Where to begin? The phrase 'a depth of smothering colour' is wonderfully and weirdly evocative, but most importantly demonstrates that even now the idea of the 'Dickensian' is being shaped and changed, whether by discoveries like this, or new representations of Dickens's works such as the recent *Dickensian* TV series written by *Eastenders*' Tony Jordan (BBC, 2015–2016), which placed many of Dickens's best-known characters (and a few lesser-known ones) on one street, playing out new stories or building up to the narratives Dickens had plotted for them, discussed in more detail in Claire O'Callaghan's analysis of Miss Havisham's afterlives in Chapter 4. The very idea of the 'Dickensian' is in a constant process of adaptation and revision. On the one hand, the value

of Dickens is in its variety – not *his* variety, but the variety of the work. On the other hand, Dickensian London is intended to conjure a shared image, perhaps coloured by ‘[f]og everywhere’ (*BH* 12), peopled with orphans like Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, and Esther Summerson. Dickensian London is a place for Dickens’s characters, but also for the author himself to live: *Dickensian* London is a way of imagining *Victorian* London. In the same way, a Dickensian child such as Oliver or David might share characteristics with Dickens himself as a child. The border between Dickens’s life and his characters is inherently blurred in the term ‘Dickensian’, just as it is in biographies and biofictions, as I discuss in Chapter 10.

Then again, if I were to ask what Stephen Crabb as Secretary of State for Wales had meant in 2015 when he berated the ‘Dickensian’ way that Labour ‘paint a picture of low pay, of unstable and short-term work, of repressive and irresponsible bosses running abusive workplaces’ there might be some more diverse answers (Nick Servini n.pag.). He tells us he is complaining about the way Labour paint that picture – should we then expect to find something of Dickens’s prose in Labour’s rhetoric? Or is a concern with low pay and unstable work in line with Dickens’s character and concerns in his fiction? Has he simply misplaced the adjective? In many ways, the idea of the ‘Dickensian’ is not something to pause over, or probe too deeply. This volume, then, aims to push back against this, and encourages the reader to pause. The chapters thus probe the meaning of this term in contrasting ways, particularly the role of humour in the characteristically Dickensian, as discussed by Rob Jacklosky in Chapter 6.

So the idea of the ‘Dickensian’ is plural, and does not seem to need a basis in the author’s life or writings. How did it get there? Not all authors become adjectives. We may describe things as ‘Shakespearean’ and ‘Kafkaesque’, for example, but rarely is anything described as ‘Thackerayean’, and certainly not outside of academia. Dickens’s reputation and legacy, and consequently the values we associate with him, have undergone a complicated process of mediation, as explored in detail in John’s book *Dickens and Mass Culture* (2010). The articles in this volume continue this conversation, showing the diverse ways in which Dickens has lived on in fiction of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, but also in film, television, video games, and even architecture.

Remembering Dickens has never been a purely literary project, though Dickens’s famous stipulation in his will that his friends ‘on no account ... make me the subject of any monument, memorial or testimonial whatsoever’ (John Forster 859) has made other kinds of commemoration difficult. Each category (monument, memorial, testimonial) is distinct, but each can be interpreted in different ways. Monuments can be commemorative effigies, but also tombs: Dickens’s instruction to have only ‘Charles Dickens’, without any title, on his gravestone would suggest that he intended both senses. Later, his son, Henry Dickens, would refer to the will in discussing the establishment of the Dickens Fellowship, arguing his father ‘neither desired, nor does he need, material monuments’, but that the Fellowship was somehow a different, more acceptable

kind of monument (speech on the 92nd anniversary 367). A memorial can be a festival, observance or commemorative event; something to assist memory; a charitable donation; or even a memoir or reminiscence. In Dickens's fiction, *David Copperfield's* Mr Dick is writing a memorial into which Charles the First keeps intruding, but it is comically unclear which kind of memorial it is. David asks,

'Is it a Memorial about his own history that he is writing, aunt?'

'Yes, child,' said my aunt, rubbing her nose again. 'He is memorialising the Lord Chancellor, or the Lord Somebody or other – one of those people, at all events, who are paid to *be* memorialized – about his affairs. I suppose it will go in, one of these days. He hasn't been able to draw it up yet, without introducing that mode of expressing himself; but it don't signify; it keeps him employed.' (175)

Betsey Trotwood's answer plays on the sense of a memorial as a petition, as a personal record of a life, and as an object to be given. This ambivalence is present in Dickens's own life: Gladys Storey records that Katey Dickens insisted her father 'put no value on possessions' so was going to throw away his reading desk; nevertheless, he was 'pleased that she had asked for it and wanted to possess it' (Dickens Museum, Storey Papers, Milkman's Account Book, entry 8 February 1925). A testimonial can be an account given by way of evidence, a will, or an attestation of qualifications and character. With such a wide range of possible interpretations, it is unsurprising that this request has often been ignored, especially in the 20th and 21st centuries: in 1912, the *Daily News* reported that Madame Tussaud's was creating a Dickens waxwork ('Charles Dickens – An Unconventional Portrait', 7 February 1912), while, 202 years after his birth, a statue was erected in his birthplace, Portsmouth (Claire Wood 166). We should not be surprised, then, to find him used as a reference in the reshaping of London itself, as described in Chapter 1.

The chapters in this volume are drawn from the 'After Dickens' conference, held at York on 2–3 December 2016, which sought to continue this work to 'find' Dickens and recapture the characteristically Dickensian, bringing together new research into Dickens's afterlife and legacy, from his influence on Victorian literature, social reform, and literary criticism to biographies, reminiscences, and reimaginings in the 20th century and beyond. As such, they take a wide range of approaches to the question of Dickens's afterlife, but all ask what it means to *read* Dickens, whether as a literary critic (Chapter 11), a novelist (Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson in Chapter 2, William Faulkner in Chapter 3, Donna Tartt in Chapter 6, and Neal Stephenson in Chapter 7), adaptors of various kinds (Chapters 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10), or even urban developers and sanitary reformers (Chapter 1).

In Chapter 1, "Once upon a time would not prove to be All-time or even a long time." From Sanitary Reform to Cultural Memory: The Case of Jacob's Island; Joanna Hofer-Robinson provides an analysis of the instrumentality of



Dickens's writing in the context of mid-19th-century urban redevelopment, revealing how fiction takes on the sheen of history through a case study focused on Jacob's Island and the afterlife with which it was imbued by *Oliver Twist* (1837–39). Her chapter demonstrates the novel's invocation in sanitary reform in the 19th century and the use of Dickens's description in arguing for the demolition of the area in the 20th century. This is innovative work that crosses from print culture to the built environment, pushing Dickens's 'afterlives' beyond the usual suspects of theatrical and filmic adaptation. This thread of social reform is taken up in Chapter 7, 'Little Nell in the Cyber Age', in which Francesca Arnavas explores Neal Stephenson's novel *The Diamond Age* (1995) and how Stephenson uses the neo-Victorian mode to critique Dickens's restricted perspective on reading and education, proposing alternative solutions that foster individuality, particularly for women, and in Chapter 2, 'Nordic Dickens: Dickensian Resonances in the Work of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson', in which Kathy Rees outlines the significance of Dickens for Norwegian identity formation. While much attention has been given to Dickens's reception in Germany, France, and Italy, his influence upon Scandinavian literary traditions is less well known and Rees addresses this gap, while also providing the single example of his 'translatability' for this volume. Rees highlights the commonalities between Bjørnson and Dickens, but argues that the Norwegian writer's intertextual engagement emphasises a Norwegian feminist ideology found to be lacking in Dickens. The analysis of Dickens's resonances in a new national context speak well to the discussion in Chapter 3 of Dickens's presence in the literature of the American South in the post-Civil War decades. In addition, the topic of Dickens and women brings together several chapters in this volume, whether showing how neo-Victorian adaptations represent gendered violence, as in Chapter 4's exploration of the afterlives of Miss Havisham, and in Pete Orford's analysis of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood's* (1870) Rosa Bud in Chapter 5, which shows how completions of Dickens's last, unfinished novel have sought to emulate or move away from the 'Dickensian' through their treatment of her. Orford writes in Chapter 5 about the 'completions' and 'solutions' of Dickens's unfinished novel as a peculiar form of afterlife that demonstrates the ways in which Dickens's writing is refashioned to suit contemporary needs and desires. O'Callaghan's discussion encompasses the uncomfortable underside of nostalgia for the 'Dickensian', and forces the reader to confront the uneasy voyeurism of reading endless rewritings of Miss Havisham's tragedy.

Defining the Dickensian is a central concern of Chapters 6, "'The Thing and Not the Thing": The Contemporary Dickensian Novel and Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch* (2013)', and Chapter 8, 'Dickensian Realism in *The Wire*', which variously consider the role of humour and realism in capturing the Dickensian. Jacklosky probes the easy alignment of Tartt's novel *The Goldfinch* (2013) with the Dickensian in reviews of the novel, providing a detailed discussion of the text that probes its debt to Dickens, shedding new light on how we consider Dickens's literary inheritors and their relationship with nostalgia that speaks well to the

analysis of Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932) in Chapter 3, and Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* (1995) in Chapter 7, which highlights the dangers of nostalgia for the Victorian. Chapter 8's exploration of Dickensian realism in the TV series *The Wire* (2002–2008) not only argues for recognition of the debt that the American crime drama owes to Dickens but also pushes back against the idea that Dickens and realism are antithetical, which took root at the end of the 19th century, by showing the strategies employed by Dickens to highlight the realities of social inequality. This chapter conducts an intermedial analysis between fiction and television, broadening the volume's scope beyond print culture.

In Chapter 9, dramatist Michael Eaton reflects on what it means to adapt Dickens, providing a frank and insightful exploration of what is lost in adaptation, what the visual can bring to the textual, and how decisions might be made, from early illustrators of *Great Expectations* (1861) through Dickens's own reading text, which removed Estella entirely, to W. S. Gilbert's stage production of 1871, which excised Miss Havisham from the plot, to Eaton's own production for the West Yorkshire Playhouse, staged in 2016, offering a practical consideration of putting Dickens on the stage, and reflections that bring together the performance history of the text and Eaton's own thought processes. In Chapter 10, 'Fictional Dickens', this question of adaptation is applied to Dickens as a fictional character, exploring examples of biofiction ranging from the earliest example published in 1849 to more recent appearances in the video game *Assassins Creed: Syndicate* (2015) and the controversial play *A Very Very Dark Matter* (2018). The chapter considers what has changed and what has remained the same in the 150 years since Dickens's death, showing how biographical discourse and fictional representations worked in reciprocal ways to shape and critique Dickens's legacy.

Finally, in Chapter 11, 'Waiting, for Dickens', John Bowen explores the role of waiters in Dickens's fiction, demonstrating how elements of the characteristically Dickensian are captured in the author's fascination with the role of waiting; the close attention to the social notation of waiting delineated by Bowen can be brought into conversation with the focus on Dickens's powers of observation absent from the biofictional text *The Battle of London Life: or, Boz and His Secretary* (1849) but present throughout later biographies and novelisations of Dickens's life, as explored in Chapter 10. Bowen's analysis positions the reader of Dickens as waiting *on* and waiting *for* him, demonstrating how the act of literary critique interplays with the idea of this kind of waiting: his analysis enacts this close scrutiny as it unveils it. Bowen considers what Dickens's writing suggests about time, social dynamics and performance, opening out into a consideration of the ways in which we continue to read Dickens. The chapter relates Dickens's complex relationship to time, as also explored by many other contributions to this volume, to the reader's own experience of waiting for, returning to, and anticipating Dickens.

Many of the chapters in this volume question how we might transport ourselves to the Dickensian past, or what it would mean to inhabit a Dickensian

future. And, yet, Dickens as intertext has an elasticity which is belied by the term ‘Dickensian’ itself. Variations including ‘Dickenesque’, ‘Dickensesque’, and ‘Dickensish’ all appeared as late as the 1880s, and the uses of those terms were similarly varied: we have ‘Dickensish depths of human nature’ in *The Spectator* (20), for example. Why ‘Dickensian’ ultimately became the chosen adjective is difficult to pin down, but it might have something to do with the specificity of the word: it is more defining than the weaker sentiments of *Dickensish* or *Dickensesque*, but, paradoxically, no more static or fixed in meaning, as the following chapters will show. The afterlife of Dickens captured by the word ‘Dickensian’ holds a complex association with the biographical referent, the works, public discourse, and broader social change. As such, this volume brings together new research into Dickens’s afterlife and legacy that effectively captures the ambivalence of the Dickensian, challenging some of those associations that have become taken for granted each time a new film adaptation is advertised, or when the word itself is dropped into the news haphazardly. To borrow a critical term employed by Jacklosky in Chapter 6, this volume offers a ‘recombinative’ approach to authorial afterlives, offering old strands, and new ones, that together create a new understanding of Dickens. By challenging the assumption that readers will always know what Dickensian means, this volume offers many different roads to travel on the journey towards that final meeting with, and understanding of, Dickens, that illuminates our wider cultural interest in literary afterlives, Victorian writers, and the impulse to return.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Eminent Dickens scholars today can still tell stories of struggling to find academics willing to supervise PhD research into Dickens, prior to a resurgence in academic interest in the 1970s. The 1970 special issue of *Dickensian*, ‘Dickens and Fame 1870–1970: Essays on the Author’s Reputation’, provides an overview of the shifts of Dickens’s reputation during this period.
- <sup>2</sup> As discussed by the Boz Club; see *Boz Club Papers*, 1904, Gimbel-Dickens Collection H59. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- <sup>3</sup> For a fuller exploration of these two institutions, see Emily Bell, ‘The Dickens Family, the Boz Club and the Fellowship’, *Dickensian*, vol. 113, no. 3, 2017: pp. 219–32.
- <sup>4</sup> See Emma Curry, ‘Doing the Novel in Different Voices: Reflections on a Dickensian Twitter Experiment.’ *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, vol. 21, 2015: n.pag. <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.736>. Accessed 29 Nov. 2019.
- <sup>5</sup> See Jeremy Parrott, ‘The Annotated Set of *All the Year Round*: Questions, Answers and Conjectures’, *Dickensian*, vol. 112, no. 1, 2016: pp. 10–21.

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