

The Periodical and Journalistic writings of Dickens, “special correspondent for posterity”¹

John M. L. Drew

The hard times through which we are living at this point in the second decade of the twenty-first century provide, I hope, sufficient excuse for this paper’s focus on the journalistic career of an artist and novelist of Dickens’s stature. For there is little doubt that the Press, whether in print or digital format, and the practice and profession of journalism, as a living and as a calling, are currently under threat in ways that simply did not obtain fifty or a hundred years ago. Today, a great journalist, a reporter whose words can reverberate in the corridors of power, is as much to be valued in our culture—I would suggest—as a great novelist, and, to be sure, will run greater risks in uttering them. The “special correspondent for posterity” is the subtitle of my paper, but before explaining its origin in more detail, it is worth reminding ourselves briefly of the great cavalcade of novels, fifteen of them, which gave Charles Dickens, even during his own lifetime, such extraordinary international renown. We begin of course, with *Pickwick* and run through the others like a familiar scale of notes.

Indeed, hardly has one pronounced the first words of each title on a public occasion such as this than a well-informed audience will unfailingly be able to complete the rest, in a literary equivalent of musical call-and-response. There is no other nineteenth-century novelist, and few other writers in English other than Shakespeare with whom the experiment can be attempted. The first half dozen—*Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41), *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44)—are, in orthodox linear accounts of Dickens’s artistic development, usually firmly tied to his initial, carefree comic phase, where picaresque inventiveness is to the fore and such niceties as unity of theme and plot rather to the aft, but successive re-visitations by twentieth-century critics of numerous theoretical schools have revealed a baroque profusion of internal and external architecture, and of chiaroscuro shading, in all these early novels. Even a cursory reading of *Martin Chuzzlewit* will reveal the *leitmotif* of selfishness running through it, in every chapter and monthly part,² and even visible in the Hablot Knight Browne’s illustrations, which were carefully overseen by Dickens.

From *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), through the uncannily autobiographical *David Copperfield* (1849-50), to *Bleak House* (1852-53) and *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens sheds his “Boz” pseudonym like Henry V abandoning the jovial company of his youth, and enters the high Victorian era firmly on the side of those mature critics, satirists and sages who were debating Carlyle’s “condition of England question” with both brio and bitterness: the imperial sparkle of the Crystal Palace dimmed by Chancery fog and Coketown smoke.

Though there is some overlap between phases, with *Little Dorrit* (1856-57) Dickens is held to have passed fully into his distinctive “dark period,” with meditations on death and resurrection, the prison and the river, forming systemic undercurrents in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860-61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65), the last completed novel. Careful planning, painstaking composition and the leaving of proleptic clues are all characteristic of the dark period too, adding value to the hypothesis that Dickens, along with his friend and protégé Wilkie Collins, uncovered the bones of detective fiction and left them for Conan Doyle to discover.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood is a case in point, as on June 9, 1870, it was left unfinished and subject to sustained and unending forensic investigation when its author died of a stroke even as he worked on a paragraph of what would become only the sixth monthly instalment of a planned dozen.³ Thus ends the roll call of novels known not only by their titles but also for their distinctive characters and voices, and for an unconventional narrative style which has delighted and grated on critical nerves in almost equal measure, sentimental and grotesque by turns, realist and expressionist by turns, hilarious and solemn. Yet this Dickensian cavalcade is far from complete, as every schoolboy knows that Dickens's ghost stories form a seminal part of his work: and these range from stories which feature "actual" ghosts and hauntings to stories of "Christmas spirit", of Christian sentiment, and human mortality, memory and commemoration. They were also, in their way, intensely responsive to their immediate political atmosphere. Throughout the decade later dubbed the "hungry forties", he published five exquisitely-designed and relatively inexpensive "Christmas books" to compete with the expensive seasonal annuals that were sold by subscription to the well-to-do: there were *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846) and *The Haunted Man* (1848) and they are a reminder of Dickens's expertise in the design and narration of short stories, as well as of his consummate ability to respond not so much to something as superficial as public taste, but something more like national hunger.

Still, however, there is more: like the restless spirits of his Christmas books Dickens indulged his own relish for voyages and travels away from his London base and settled status, first by touring North America with his wife for six months in 1842, and then uprooting his young family for over a year, and taking them to northern Italy in 1844-45, purposefully sending long letters home to correspondents in Britain recounting his impressions, from which he later worked up the unevenly brilliant travel books *American Notes* (1842) and *Pictures from Italy* (1846). In so far as these consist of a series of sharply-observed sketches of cultural idiosyncrasies, they build in technique from the first published portfolio of Dickens's drawings from the life, the volumes of newspaper and magazine work collected in 1836 and 1837 as *Sketches by Boz*. His first major biographer, John Forster, described these as "the first sprightly runnings of his genius", and in this sesquicentennial year of Dickens's birth, they have been republished for the first time in a full-dress scholarly edition as the flagship volumes of the new "Oxford Edition of Charles Dickens": a superbly heavyweight treatment of the light journalistic work of an unknown twenty-something reporter, very fresh-faced but at the same time, surprisingly mature in his experience of the startling variety and exuberance of metropolitan life.⁴

Speaking of Dickens's face, it is worth pointing out that the portrait of the author that is most relevant to the theme of this paper is not the most widely reproduced, the one we have been accustomed to carrying in our wallets and exchanging for goods—that is to say, his familiar image as seen on the former £10 note, the image of a thoughtful somewhat careworn, if not worn-out, older man, acidly described by the novelist Elizabeth Bowen in the first part of *Eva Trout* as that "confused, pouched, violent, raddled-looking face in its hirsute bedding, artistically distraught".⁵ Rather, it is the face of an as-yet unfinished youth, with a luminous, penetrating gaze, such as we see it in this recently-rediscovered portrait in oil by Margaret Gillies, lost until rescued from a tray of bric-à-brac put up for sale in a South African auction in 2018 (See figs. 1 & 2).⁶ This shows us Dickens in his late twenties, a young man who had, in the more sympathetic words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning who first met him at exactly this period, "the dust and mud of humanity about him, notwithstanding those eagle eyes". Thus we have in front of us a different Dickens icon: a knowing and observant young man, brought up "by hand", educated in the gutter but one of those who is gazing at the stars, and who, before anything, and certainly before becoming an Author with a capital "A", is a reporter and a journalist, London's "special correspondent for posterity".



Fig. 1. The Charles Dickens £10 note. Issued 04.29.1992; withdrawn 07.31.2003. Image courtesy of Rajeev Prasad.



Fig. 2. Margaret Gillies RWS (1803-1887), Portrait of Charles Dickens. Image courtesy of Philip Mould & Company, 18-19 Pall Mall, London.

Finally, then, to my subtitle. This finely perspicacious phrase comes from a lengthy review written in 1858 of a new edition of Dickens's collected works by the businessman, critic, essayist and founder of *The Economist*, Walter Bagehot, in which he fleetingly develops a brilliant semiotic parallel between the columns of a newspaper and the grid of a city map (see figs. 3 & 4), with Dickens as the compositor:

Nevertheless, it may be said that Mr. Dickens's genius is especially suited to the delineation of city life. London is like a newspaper. Everything is there, and everything is disconnected. There is every kind of person in some houses; but there is no more connection between the houses than between the neighbours in the lists of "births, marriages, and deaths." As we change from the broad leader to the squalid police-report, we pass a corner and we are in a changed world. This is advantageous to Mr. Dickens's genius. His memory is full of instances of old buildings and curious people, and he does not care to piece them together. On the contrary, each scene, to his mind, is a separate scene, each street a separate street. He has, too, the peculiar alertness of observation that is observable in those who live by it. He describes London like a special correspondent for posterity.⁷

This analogy, and the dynamic four-part *combinatoire* it proposes between Dickens, London, newsprint, and our ideas of the past is essential to my theme, but it is curious that Bagehot, writing this in 1858 about a man he knew to be a successful middle-class novelist, had very little knowledge of the fundamental importance in Dickens's early career of his journalistic training, nor of his links with the radical British press, nor of his self-education in one of the fundamental arts of reporting: stenography.

The system of shorthand that Dickens learned was that of the Gurney family, better known as "brachygraphy" in the days before the development of the rather different system known as Pitman's, which would eclipse it towards the end of the 1830s. In 1827 or so, looking for exit routes from lowly clerical work in a firm of lawyers, Dickens acquired—possibly from his own father—the fifteenth edition of the official Gurney manual, and set himself to study its rules, tables, and systems. It would take him some seven years to tame the "savage stenographic mystery", as he later dubbed it, in the narrative recollections of his alter-ego, David Copperfield (you will doubtless have noted already that David's initials are those of Dickens himself in reverse). An extraordinary dexterity leading to a total mastery and customisation of Gurney's Brachygraphy, a notoriously complex system to learn—it was said to be the equivalent to learning three foreign languages—is what brought Dickens, by a series of acrobatic leaps, and in a relatively short time, to the innermost circles of London and Westminster society, to a vantage point in the reporters' gallery from where he could look down on the MPs debating at centre of British imperial power. For the young sketchwriter, it was not an edifying spectacle. Nevertheless, although this apprenticeship in shorthand came at the very start of his career, the intellectual habits and perhaps even the neurological patterns formed in his young mind by the Gurney system would last until the end of his life. According to pioneering research by linguist Hugo Bowles, repeated exposure to the transcription methods required by the Gurney system to allow a shorthand writer to recreate complete texts of speech and narrative from their own notes, encouraged certain synaptic connections to develop in Dickens's mind that contributed to the distinctive range of verbal tricks and idiomatic collocations, more or less inimitable in their voicings, that critics recognise as characteristically "Dickensian."⁸

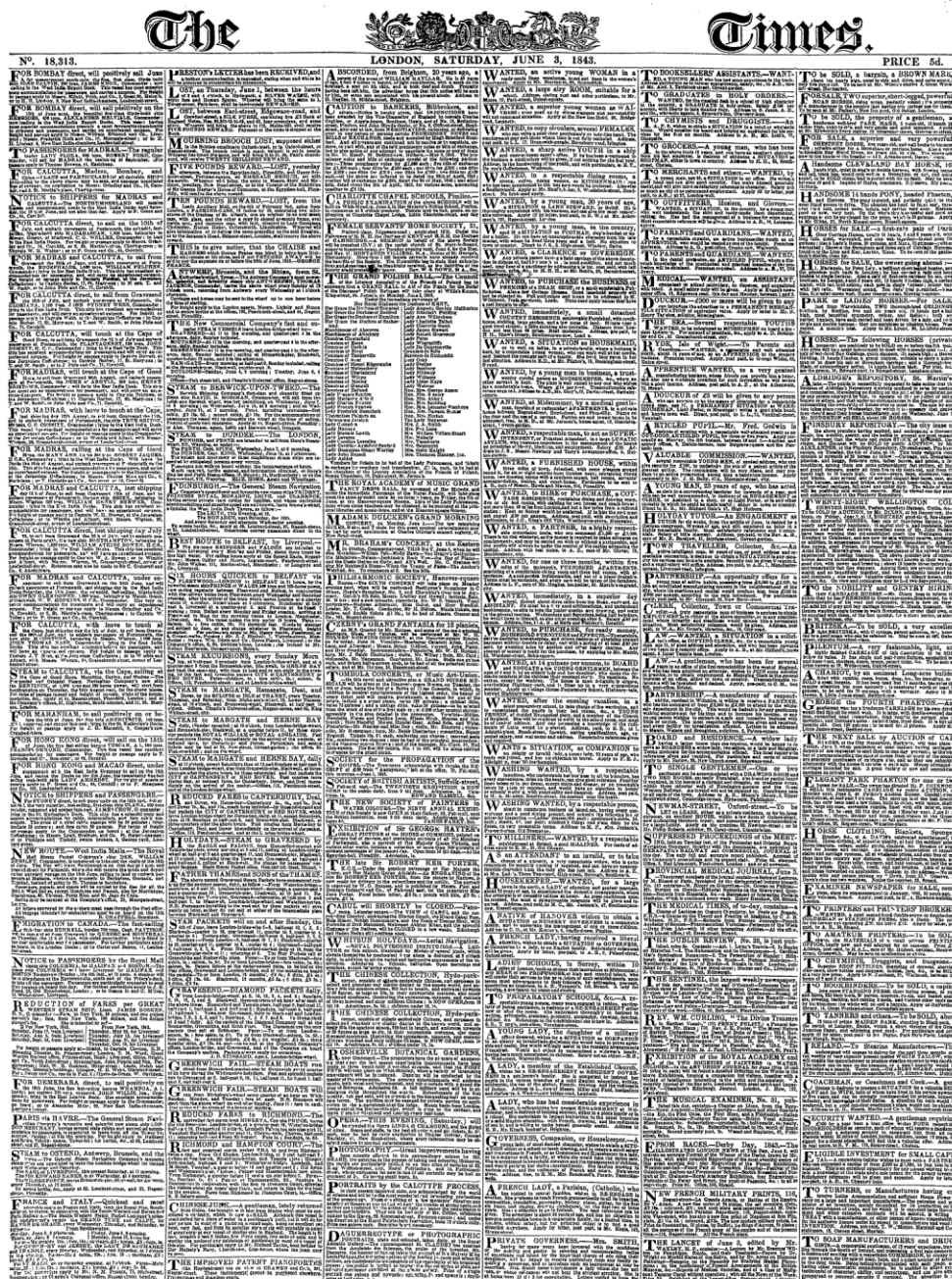


Fig. 3. Front page of *The Times*, London, June 3, 1843. Image courtesy of Dr. Bob Nicholson.



Fig. 4. Detail from Cross's *London Guide* of 1844. Image courtesy of David Hale/ MAPCO Map and Plan Collection Online <https://mapco.net>

It is one of the abiding paradoxes of style that the young stenographer who signed himself “the inimitable” for several years at the start of his literary career, first distinguished himself in a series of minor law courts known as “Doctors’ Commons” and then laboured for his maternal uncle as one of a roster of reporters reporting the proceedings in both houses of parliament for a voluminous verbatim record of the debates known as *The Mirror of Parliament*, and then did the same for the radical morning paper *The Morning Chronicle*: the measure of success being how well he could reproduce not his own voice but rather the speech patterns of others.⁹ The opportunity to strike out on his own came during the long parliamentary recesses, when the paper and its second edition, *The Evening Chronicle* lacked content for their broadsheet columns, and Dickens began supplying his own “Sketches of London”, celebrating the kind of lives and localities of the city that even after the supposed watershed of the Great Reform Act the formal reporting of the paper almost wholly overlooked, unless in the police reports.¹⁰ To describe them he used the same voice of editorial authority and elevated tone that were used for the debates, interspersed with their “actual” voices, so readers could enjoy the humorous possibilities and double-edged ironies of this intentional discordance.

For this kind of humour to take effect, long, hypotactically complex sentences are typically required, and throughout his career Dickens wielded these with evident gusto. A couple of examples may be helpful. The first comes from an after-dinner speech Dickens gave to The Newspaper Press Fund, a charitable body which still celebrates the connection,¹¹ and which was itself transcribed for the papers, and here he outlines his pride in and nostalgia for his early roots in journalism:

I have often transcribed for the printer from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, all through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter, I strolled into the Castle Yard there to identify, for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once “took”, as we used to call it, an election speech of my noble friend Lord John Russell, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the county, and under such a pelting rain, that I remember two good-natured colleagues, who chanced to be at leisure, held a pocket-handkerchief over my notebook after the manner of a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession.¹²

The jokes, it will be noted (“the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour”; “a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession”), typically arrive at the end of these long and elegantly-sustained arcs of narrative, as a kind of bathos, given the accumulated weight and colour of language that has preceded them, like the tail of a turning kite. Bathos is hardly the right word, as there is no lowering of tone, if anything a self-effacing uplift as the narrator gently mocks the seriousness of his own recollections of past time. It is the voice of Pip in *Great Expectations*.

The second example comes from a report, lost from view until relatively recently, for the *Morning Chronicle*, whose editor had selected Dickens as his Special Correspondent, to “take” the political speeches at a splendid banquet being organised in Edinburgh in September 1834. The event was known as “The Grey Festival”, as it was held by the loyal supporters of the Whig cause who wished to honour Lord Grey for his role as major architect of the passage of the Great Reform Act, passed under the latter’s premiership in 1832. Accordingly, Dickens was poised there with his notebook, in a huge marquee with places set for 3,000, waiting for the speakers to arrive:

It had been announced that the dinner would take place at five o'clock precisely, but Earl Grey, and the other principal visitors, as might have been expected, did not arrive until shortly after six. Previous to their arrival, some slight confusion, and much merriment, was excited by the following circumstance: A gentleman who, we presume, had entered with one of the first sections, having sat with exemplary patience for some time in the immediate vicinity of cold fowls, roast beef, lobsters and other tempting delicacies (for the dinner was a cold one), appeared to think that the best thing he could possibly do, would be to eat his dinner, while there was anything to eat. He accordingly laid about him with right good-will; the example was contagious, and the clatter of knives and forks became general. Hereupon, several gentlemen, who were not hungry, cried out "Shame!" and looked very indignant; and several gentlemen who were hungry cried "Shame!" too, eating nevertheless, all the while as fast as they possibly could. In this dilemma, one of the stewards mounted a bench and feelingly represented to the delinquents the enormity of their conduct, imploring them for decency's sake, to defer the process of mastication until the arrival of Earl Grey. This address was loudly cheered but totally unheeded; and this is, perhaps, one of the few instances on record of a dinner having been virtually concluded before it began.¹³

The gradual unfolding of the breach of protocol, the tension between rules-based and unruly behaviour, is perfectly re-enacted in the sequencing of sentences, and captured according to the conventions of parliamentary reporting ("Hereupon, several gentlemen, who were not hungry, cried out 'Shame!'"), except that Dickens knows perfectly well that he is capturing a transitional moment between private and public life before the reporting is supposed to have started. By the same token, much of Dickens's most successful fiction consists of focusing the same newsgathering principles that a morning paper might adopt to a series of happenings amongst those still not enfranchised by parliamentary reform, to the delight of readers of similar status, who find themselves—or their alter egos—suddenly "in the papers".

From the *Morning Chronicle*, where his "BOZ" signature was only visible at the foot of the columns of intermittently published items, Dickens progressed to editorship of a series of periodical publications where "Edited by BOZ" acted as an enticement on the titlepage. These included *Bentley's Miscellany* (1837-39) in which *Oliver Twist* appeared in instalments, *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41), of which Dickens was both editor and sole contributor, and *The Daily News* (1845-6), of which he was launch editor, responsible for hiring the entire newsgathering team, including appointing his father to manage the despatch of the Parliamentary and Legal reporters' copy to the compositors. In spite of a famously short-lived tenure of the editor's chair—he resigned seventeen days after the first issue of the *Daily News* was published—Dickens still believed that in the stirring world of Victorian journalism "[i]t would be a great thing to found something".¹⁴

And found something he did, in March 1850, while yet in the midst of writing the monthly instalments of *David Copperfield*. This was a new weekly miscellany of 24 pages, without illustrations but with 1,000 words of print packed tightly in double columns on every page, and at tuppence a copy, selling for considerably less than a stamped daily paper. At an average circulation of 40,000 an issue, it outsold most stamped daily papers too, with each copy read by multiple readers, who could also acquire it in a monthly format or six-monthly bound volumes; the "extra" Christmas numbers would eventually sell nearly 300,000 copies. The editing, supervising and promoting of this surprisingly little-known publication would occupy Dickens's time and energies for the next twenty years, and represents the apex of his journalistic endeavours and influence. It was known as *Household Words*, a somewhat anodyne name perhaps, though it carried a significant subtext as we shall see; after nine years of continuous publication it was merged into an even more successful title, *All the Year Round*, with a slightly less crusading agenda on social issues but a greater emphasis on serialised

sensation fiction. In both cases, Dickens represented himself on the cover page and on the running heads of each spread not as “Editor” but as “Conductor”, the metaphor drawn from the world of music, or the electric telegraph, rather than the omnibus.¹⁵

To work with his collaborators—the other musicians in his orchestra—and to sell their performances direct to the public, he leased a four-storey building in the heart of London, on Wellington-street, a few hundred yards from The Strand and Waterloo Bridge. At that time, as Mary Shannon has shown us, Wellington Street was the centre of an important press and cultural network, with newspaper and magazine offices for outlets as ideologically distinct as *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, the *Examiner*, *Punch*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Spectator* and the *Morning Post*, all located in the same few terraces of houses.¹⁶ As for the rest of the orchestra, given that *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* followed the protocol of anonymous publication which still held sway at mid-century, the identities of the players is still only gradually coming to light. Aside from a handful of contracted staff writers and a sub-editor, Dickens worked with a group of only a couple of dozen regular contributors—those who could be relied upon either to send in series of readily publishable items or write them on commission—but also with an army of around six hundred contributors most of whom sent in unsolicited offerings that were rendered fit for publication after extensive copy-editing.¹⁷ Short stories, reportage, curiosities of history, popular science, sketches, personal confessions, poems both short and long, travel narratives—whatever the offering was, if it possessed the requisite elements of human interest, it could prove suitable raw material for the literary manufactory that Dickens oversaw. The “regulars” were an interesting bunch, among them Dickens’s trusty sub-editor William Henry Wills; his brilliant young rival Wilkie Collins; Wilkie’s talented painter brother, Charles; and the prolific doctor-turned-journalist, Henry Morley. Then there was a group of admirers and “Dickensy” imitators (the term is Elizabeth Gaskell’s) whom Dickens more or less encouraged and mentored, dubbed by the critics “Mr Dickens’s Young Men”—George Augustus Sala, Percy Fitzgerald, Edmund Yates, John Hollingshead, Walter Thornbury and Andrew Halliday among them. All wrote and sketched with facility, showed something of the facetiousness, the occasional extravagance, together with the social conscience of their “Chief”, and to judge by the surviving photographs, all sported tremendous moustaches and beards.

Compared with other magazine editors, Dickens paid his contributors well, and (almost more important) promptly, and offered regular contributors a promising future, because no copyright in their work was claimed and they could freely republish under their own names anything that had first appeared under Dickens’s. Fame and modest fortune thus beckoned for the successful. In this context, therefore, the title *Household Words* achieved directly for its writers, and tangentially for its upwardly mobile readers—those who aspired to better themselves through knowledge of literary and world affairs—its fullest significance. Its Shakespearean echo would resonate, coming as it does from Act Four Scene III of *Henry V*, at the point where the King passes through his anxious camp before the battle of Agincourt, trying to rouse the fearful spirits of the handful of troops who accompany him, assuring them of a secure future in which any of their descendants will look back on their deeds with pride and honour: “Then shall our names, /Familiar in his mouth as household words, / Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter, / Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester, /Be in their flowing cups freshly remember’d.” For Dickens, working with his tiny team of fellow writers, combating the myriad forces of *laissez faire* Conservatism, struggling against naysayers, rabble-rousers, the degenerates of the gutter press and worse—the po-faced evangelists who didn’t know how to laugh—the battle of journalism had something romantic at its core. His opening leader on the first page of *Household Words* touched on the fundamentals of this manifesto:

No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities, will give a harsh tone to our *Household Words*. In the bosoms of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished. To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out:—to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding—is one main object of our *Household Words*.

Numerous critics of the novels, studied in isolation, have found in the phrasing of this journalistic mission-statement that many of their hard-won insights are already articulated here.

What, one may well ask, was the end result of Dickens's lifelong experiment in publishing entrepreneurship? What did his contemporaries make of what had been achieved? In 1868, during his second visit to the United States, some two hundred American journalists invited Dickens to a gala dinner held in his honour in New York, as though he were for them an icon of Earl Grey's status, and there the editor and essayist George W. Curtis delivered a eulogy recognising that nowhere could his audience "study the fidelity, the industry, the conscience, the care, and the enthusiasm which are essential to success in our profession more fitly than in the example of the editor of *All the Year Round*." And as for the so-called power of the Press, Curtis proceeded,

let us remember that the foundations of its power as a truly civilizing influence are, first, purity, then honesty, then sagacity and industry.... It is impossible to determine the limits or the merits of individual agency, but there is no doubt that among the most vigorous forces in the elevation of the character of the Weekly Press ha[ve] been *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*; and since the beginning of the publication of *Household Words*, the periodical literature of England has been born again.¹⁸

Some forty years after Dickens's death, Lord Northcliffe, millionaire proprietor of the *Daily Mail* still considered him "the greatest magazine editor either of his own, or any other, age."¹⁹ And when the first scholarly edition of the majority of Dickens's own identified journalism, from the "Boz" sketches through to his final leaders for *All the Year Round*, concluded publication in four volumes at the turn of the last century, reviewer Philip Hensher declared in *The Spectator* that there "has never been a greater novelist than Dickens, and it seems entirely unfair that he should so unarguably, so effortlessly, have acquired the mantle of the greatest journalist along the way."²⁰ Hyperbole, perhaps, and such Leavisite judgements of "greatness" are beginning to sound more than a little dated; writers don't compete, after all, in quite the way that athletes do—but if linguistic brio, imagination, the sanity and truth-seeking qualities of texts, the seriousness of their engagement with their medium and with matters of abiding human interest, are to be considered as markers of value, then Dickens's journalism categorically demands our attention. The majority of it—that is to say, the entirety of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* as conducted by the inimitable Charles Dickens—can be read in open access digital facsimile at www.djo.org.uk.

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We conclude, as is surely fitting, with the observations of a certain G. K. Chesterton on Dickens's periodical and journalistic writings. Chesterton was more than a mere critic of Dickens: he was a kind of interpreter and expositor-in-chief. He didn't so much analyse his author, as reveal him. And revealed him sometimes, to be sure, rather in his own image;

nevertheless, nothing he claimed for Dickens is worthy of anything less than close attention, and particularly not in this sesquicentennial year of Dickens's death. Here, in his 1911 collection of prefaces *Criticisms and Appreciations* he is commenting on a small anthology of Dickens's journalistic output that had first been reprinted in 1858—the selection is random and not particularly discriminating—but even here, in between the leaves, Chesterton found something extraordinary and replenishing:

And about these additional, miscellaneous, and even inferior works of Dickens there is, moreover, another use and fascination which all Dickensians will understand; which, after a manner, is not for the profane. All who love Dickens have a strange sense that he is really inexhaustible. It is this fantastic infinity that divides him even from the strongest and healthiest romantic artists of a later day—from Stevenson, for example. I have read *Treasure Island* twenty times; nevertheless I know it. But I do not really feel as if I knew all *Pickwick*; I have not so much read it twenty times as read in it a million times; and it almost seemed as if I always read something new. We of the true faith look at each other and understand; yes, our master was a magician. I believe the books are alive; I believe that leaves still grow in them, as leaves grow on the trees. I believe that this fairy library flourishes and increases like a fairy forest: but the world is listening to us, and we will put our hand upon our mouth.²¹

Acceptance statement

From: Dermot A Quinn <Dermot.Quinn@shu.edu>
Sent: 14 November 2020 21:21
To: John Drew <john.drew@buckingham.ac.uk>
Cc: Gloria Garafulich-Grabois <Gloria.Garafulich-Grabois@shu.edu>
Subject: Re: The Chesterton Review

Hello John.

You have written a really delightful article and I thank and congratulate you on it. It will make a splendid addition to the Review. I am especially conscious that you wrote it during term time and with a heavy burden of other responsibilities and so my debt of gratitude to you is all the deeper. The piece is full of human and scholarly interest (maybe I should rephrase that distinction, being somewhat injurious to the reputation of scholars) while also being a real pleasure to read. Bravo, sir. And thanks for giving GKC a final bow.

I may make a few light editorial changes but so small that you'd need to squint to see them.

You'll like the issue when it comes out, John. We've gathered together some fine pieces and (to my proprietorial eye at least) they talk eloquently to each other.

More later. And thanks again.

As ever

Dermot

- ¹ This article is a translation by the author of “El periodismo de Charles Dickens: ‘corresponsal especial para la posteridad’”, a paper read in February 2020 at the Congreso Internacional Charles Dickens hosted by San Pablo and Francisco de Vitoria universities, Madrid, in recognition of the 150th anniversary of Dickens’s death in 1870.
- ² The publication ranges given for Dickens’s works are of the original monthly or weekly serialisation, this being the primary mode of publication for all of his major works, with the exception of *American Notes*. As Claire Pettit has recently demonstrated persuasively in a major new study of early nineteenth-century politics and culture, we must think about “seriality ... as not just a literary, but also as a political, historical and social category. [It] is the defining form of modernity”; *Serial Forms: The Unfinished Project of Modernity, 1815-1848* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2020), p. 2.
- ³ For a comprehensive analysis of the subsequent investigations, forensic and otherwise, See Pete Orford’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood: Charles Dickens’ Unfinished Novel and Our Endless Attempts to End It* (Pen and Sword: Barnsley, UK, 2018).
- ⁴ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* 3 vols (Chapman and Hall: London, 1872-74), Vol. I, p. 92. The new Oxford edition of *Sketches by Boz* (2 vols; published 12 November 2020), brilliantly edited by Paul Schlicke, returns to the original printings of the newspapers and magazines in which the sketches first appeared, restoring contemporary references, oaths and innuendo later cut when Dickens himself revised and self-censored the pieces for later volume publications.
- ⁵ *Eva Trout: or, Changing Scenes* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1968), p. 119.
- ⁶ As Mark Brown reports, “A man paid the equivalent of £27 for a cardboard tray containing a metal lobster, an old recorder, a brass plate and a small painting which was so covered with mould that the face could barely be made out”, “Lost portrait of Charles Dickens turns up at auction in South Africa” *The Guardian* (November 21, 2018) available at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/21/lost-portrait-charles-dickens-turns-up-auction-south-africa-margaret-gillies>.
- ⁷ Walter Bagehot, “Charles Dickens” (a review of the “Cheap Edition” of his novels, 1857-58) in *The National Review* Vol. VII (October 1858), pp. 458-86, rpt. in Michael Hollington ed., *Charles Dickens: Critical Assessments* 4 vols. (East Sussex, UK: Helm Information, 1995), Vol. I, pp. 167-92; p. 176.
- ⁸ Hugo Bowles, *Dickens and the Stenographic Mind* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2019).
- ⁹ For a rare and innovative attempt to distinguish various new passages of parliamentary reporting “authored” by Dickens, see chap. 5 of Nikki Hessell’s *Literary Authors, Parliamentary Reporters* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2012). The paradox can be best framed in Bakhtinian terms, if we consider that Dickens rendered himself inimitable through the purity of his own imitation of multiple forms of established public and conventional discourse, reprocessed into his own distinctive “heteroglossia”, a rich stylistic cocktail, apparently subscribing to established norms while equally mocking them all. See M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited and translated by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (University of Texas Press: Austin, 1981), esp. pp. 309-13.
- ¹⁰ The best analysis of this breakthrough is given in Richard C. Maxwell, “Dickens, the Two *Chronicles*, and the Publication of *Sketches by Boz*”, *Dickens Studies Annual* 9 (1981), 21-32.
- ¹¹ See <https://journalistscharity.org.uk/about-us/the-charity/>. I am indebted to Dr Tony Williams, Associate Editor of *The Dickensian*, for this choice of extracts.
- ¹² See *The Speeches of Charles Dickens. Complete Edition*, edited by K. J. Fielding (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), p. 347.
- ¹³ “Report of the Edinburgh Dinner to Lord Grey, 15 September 1834”, *Morning Chronicle* (September 18, 1834) rpt. in *The Amusements of the People and other Papers: Reports, Essays and Reviews, 1834-51* “The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens’ Journalism” 4 vols. edited by Michael Slater (J. M. Dent: London, 1996) vol. II, pp. 5-8; p. 7.
- ¹⁴ *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 vols., edited by Kathleen Tillotson *et al.* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1977) vol. 4, p. 660.
- ¹⁵ For further exploration of the metaphor see John Drew, “Dickens and the Middle-class Weekly,” in *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* edited by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2017), pp. 301-16; 307-8. For a knowledgeable discussion of ways in which this figuring of the editorial role was shadowed by more troublesome subtexts, see Jonathan V. Farina, “‘A Certain Shadow’: Personified Abstractions and the Form of Household Words,” *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 42, no. 4 (2009), 392-415.
- ¹⁶ Mary L. Shannon, *Dickens, Reynolds, and Mayhew on Wellington Street. The Print Culture of a Victorian Street* “The Nineteenth Century Series” (Ashgate: Farnham UK, 2015).
- ¹⁷ Of these, more than 150 were women, as were several of the regular contributors, so that while there was never proportional representation nor could one say that editorial team actively strove for gender equality, by the standards of the day, significant space was given to women’s writing and women’s voices in Dickens’s journals.
- ¹⁸ Cited in Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States, from 1690 to 1872* (Harper & Brothers: New York, 1873), p. 664.
- ¹⁹ Cited in Arthur Bartlett Maurice, “Dickens as an Editor”, *Bookman* vol. 30 (1909), 111-14; p. 111.
- ²⁰ “A genius at his best and worst”, *The Spectator* (December 9, 2000), 40-41; p. 41.
- ²¹ G. K. Chesterton, *Criticisms & Appreciations of the Works of Charles Dickens* (J. M. Dent: London, 1933 [1911]), p. xx.