Spring 2019

Sympathy for the Devil - The Gothic As Social Commentary in Charles Dickens' Novels

Tiara Desire-Brisard
tiara.brisard@trincoll.edu

TRINITY COLLEGE

Senior Thesis

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL: THE GOTHIC AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY IN CHARLES DICKENS' NOVELS

submitted by

TIARA DESIRE-BRISARD 2019

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for

the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

2019

Director: Dr. Livia Woods

Reader: Dr. Barbara Benedict

Reader: Dr. Chloe Wheatley

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

For Livia Woods. Thank you for all of your support, intelligence, and hard work throughout this thesis. It was a learning process for both of us but your composure helped me to remember the main goal and not become too anxious regarding due dates. Even with the constantly shifting ideas and the complete change in topic during the summer, you were truly the best advisor I could have asked for.

For the Trinity College English Department. Even though I've had to divide my time between the Public Policy & Law Department and English Department, I have always felt comfortable and at home at 115 Vernon. Thank you for all the support, the wonderful conversations with Daniel Mrozowski and David Rosen, summer research with Chloe Wheatley, guidance from Christopher Hager, and the many courses I have taken with Sarah Bilston, Barbara Benedict, Katherine Bergren and other amazing professors in the department.

For my fellow English literature thesis writers. I am incredibly thankful to be part of such a warm, funny, and intelligent group of people. Vianna Iorio, Cooper Jennings, Dan Hawkins, and Aoife MacIntyre have all helped to make this process a fun and cooperative one. You've all been incredibly supportive and our group writing sessions always left me in a good mood.

For my friends. Thank you to Tessa Reading, Becca Dedert, Brooke Williams, Clarissa Sauter, and Meg O'Reilly for listening to me complain and obsess over the tiniest aspects of Charles Dickens' writing and life.

For my family. I will always appreciate you all for helping to feed my love of literature and writing, and for helping me to grow into the person that I am today.

Introduction: Formulating the Gothic as a Literary Genre

From its beginnings as a medieval style of architecture, a literary genre associated with Edgar Allan Poe, subcultures of the late 20th century, and its common use in films – including the work of Tim Burton – the word Gothic has held many different meanings. For this thesis, the focus will be on the literary Gothic; specifically the Victorian Gothic as it was used by Charles Dickens. Before we can analyze the different forms of the Victorian Gothic Dickens' used in his texts, we must first develop an understanding of Dickens' personal history and how it led to his engagement with this genre.

Throughout his youth, Charles Dickens had a tumultuous relationship with his family. Due to his parents mismanagement of money, the Dickens family was constantly in dept cumulating in his father's 1824 imprisonment. Even after John Dickens' release, the family continued to struggle and at only twelve years old Charles Dickens was sent to work at Warren's Blacking Factory. For about ten hours a day – with the exception of Sunday – Dickens was engaged in work he found both humiliating and unworthy of his academic prowess. Since he had previously been enrolled in the Wellington House Academy, Dickens was used to a genteel setting and quickly began to resent his job, co-workers, and family for putting him in such a position. When speaking about his time at the blacking factory, Dickens states "no words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into the companionship of common men and boys" (Johnson). He was deeply saddened that he was no longer surrounded by people whom he considered his intellectual equals. Since working at the blacking factory meant that he would have less time to spend on educational endeavors, Dickens was worried that he would face the same financial situation as his parents.

After John Dickens was released from debtors prison, Charles Dickens believed he would be able to continue his education; unfortunately instead of releasing Dickens from his prison-like work, his mother decided that it would be best worked to support their family. When he was an adolescent, he became the law clerk at Ellis & Blackmore beginning his education in the Victorian legal system. It was during this time as a court stenographer and reporter that he became highly disillusioned with the Victorian state of politics. As time progressed and conditions became bleaker, a shift was seen in Dickens' legal and literary work; he began to push against the hierarchical Victorian norms and expose rampant political and legal corruption. In the work of Dickens and other prolific writers at the time, we see a shift towards class being considered a concern of society instead of the affected individual. Works such as *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* express Dickens' investment in challenging assumptions about the poor.

Throughout his literary career, Dickens engaged in many social welfare activities including his work in creating a prostitution safe house. This house followed the publication of *Oliver Twist* which had a character, Nancy, who worked as a prostitute and was abused by those around her due to this status. Although Dickens worked to aid others, his literature allowed him to engage with different readers and emphasize how Victorian anxieties of the poor, women, and criminal only caused socio-political harm. The crux of this thesis argues that Dickens used the Gothic in its many forms to elicit sympathy from his readers and challenge the prevalent ideas held by many.

Although the Gothic genre has taken on many different forms, it can be argued that the genre takes the familiar and makes it unfamiliar in an effort to elicit fear and heighten uncertainties about the readers reality. The Gothic genre prompts questions and reflections about what we fear and forces us to reevaluate our beliefs and experiences in the world. It is the

element of fear that drives readers to feel sympathy for characters and by extension, real people in similar positions. While Charles Dickens is not canonically considered a Gothic novelist, many scholars have proven that his texts contain many central themes and tropes of the genre. From his depictions of country graveyards to the dangerous streets of London, readers are faced with images of death and impending doom. The images Dickens uses coincide with the Gothic and Realist genres since his work functions as social commentary that exposes the mistreatment of groups marginalized in Victorian England. Before we can understand why Dickens used the Gothic, we must first develop a deeper understanding of the Gothic genre and its Victorian manifestations.

Fred Botting is at the center of scholarly conversation about the Gothic due to his clear definitions and analysis of what makes a text Gothic from his acclaimed book. Botting writes that the Gothic:

> Appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality. It shadows the despairing ecstasies of Romantic idealism and individualism and the uncanny dualities of the Victorian realism and decadence. Gothic atmospheres – gloomy and mysterious – have repeatedly signaled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents and evoked emotions of terror and laughter. (Botting 1)

These "uncanny dualities" allowed for Dickens to expertly use the Gothic genre to express the deep divides of the Victorian era. Reality was harsh for most Victorians, and only the upper classes were privy to the decadence and excitement of the time. This wealth disparity was prevalent in London as can be seen through the stark contrasts made in novels such as *Oliver Twist.* Throughout the novel, Oliver retains an idealistic view of the world unlike Pip from

Great Expectations which was published two decades later. The differences in their stories track the declining idealism of Dickens as well as the Victorians.

Gothic texts often deal with social and political issues that the society struggled with.[1] During the Victorian era, there was extreme social tension between different groups and a general anxiety about the future: "uncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family, and sexuality dominate Gothic fiction. They are linked to wider threats of disintegration manifested most forcefully in political revolution" (Botting 5). If we look at Dickens' commentary of the Victorians treatment of the poor, we can see why the Gothic became a clear solution. According to Fred Botting, the Gothic has clear makers allowing for readers to easily identify works in its scope. In addition to the general view of the Gothic as a genre of horror and excess, it contains features that "provide the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties" (Botting 2). The five marked tendencies of the Gothic involve primitive settings, maidens in distress, the possibility of the supernatural, and emotional experiences of terror and horror. These elements emphasize aspects of the era that filled the Victorians with dread. Dread that was made apparent through Dickens' writing since the tropes he used targeted readers emotions regarding Victorian societal norms.

The final piece of the puzzle that we need to understand is found in the sublime and the uncanny; two tropes common to the Gothic. The uncanny occurs when something familiar is

[1] At the time Dickens was writing, the entire country of England was going through a transitional age. In 1832, a Reform Bill was passed that helped to change the political and social structure of Victorian England. Voting rights extended to property owning men and in 1867, it extended to the working class as well. Even throughout this, there was a high unemployment and poverty rate leading to difficult living conditions. Alongside this was a time of prosperity and increasing stability. The strange dichotomy this created was caused by the growth of the British Empire partially due to colonization in India, Africa, and Asia.

made unfamiliar. In the case of Dickens' texts, this can take the form of class deception or simply presenting the city of London as a terrifying labyrinth. As for the sublime, it has been linked to "poetic and visionary power" as well as "excessive emotion" (Botting 4). With these two features, Dickens was able to use the Gothic to highlight what was wrong with Victorian society. Since the Gothic was generally connected to vice and violence, analyzing social anxieties was not a new use of the genre. Instead, "uncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family and sexuality dominated Gothic fiction. They are linked to wider threats of disintegration manifested most forcefully in political revolution" (Botting 5). Therefore by using the Gothic genre, Dickens was able to show insecurities and anxieties about Victorian England while also prompting sympathy from readers for those suffering from these conditions.

The need for sympathy was heightened after the implementation of the 1837 New Poor Laws[2] which regarded the cruelest policies England created regarding paupers. Anger about these amendments were heighted as workhouse conditions became increasingly more deplorable. Although the parishes that ran the workhouses claimed that everything was done for the benefit of those within, they forced paupers to live in degrading conditions that destroyed families and led to death. Unfortunately for those within, these spaces became sublime and Gothic authors, including Dickens, would transform fear and suffering into sympathy.

Andrew Smith explains in *Gothic Literature* that "[the sublime] refers to the use of language and description that excited thoughts and emotions beyond ordinary experience. Though often associated with grandeur, the sublime may also refer to the grotesque or other extraordinary experiences" (1). Grandeur, grotesque, and the extraordinary are commonly seen within the Gothic, and as it was used by Dickens and other Victorian authors, these emotions

[2] These laws were actually amendment to the Poor Laws originally passed in the 16th century.

connected emotionally charged events in novels to events that occurred within the Victorian world. While we delve deeper into the sublime, we also should develop an understanding of Freud's uncanny – especially in Dickens' Gothic literature.

The uncanny is "that class of the frightening that leads back to what is known of old and familiar." (Merriam-Webster). Dickens works often focus on the crimes of the past since an adage commonly referred to by the Victorians focused on how the sins of the father would be paid down to the second and third generations. The children who suffer in Dickens' novels are not paying for the sins of their parents but rather the wrongdoings of their society. This would have appeared uncanny to the Victorian readers who would have naturally expected the children to suffer because of their families past. In the case of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations,* Pip and Oliver are not suffering because of the wrongdoings of their parents but instead because of the lack of governmental aid that was given to these disenfranchised groups. The laws themselves were implicit in how they negatively affected the poor whereas Dickens' and others writing about social issues chose to explicitly show them both for a shock effect and to highlight the inadequacy of the law.

The central conflict of the Dickens' novels explored in this thesis are the treatment of the poor, orphaned, woman, and criminal. We can see this in how Fagin and Magwitch are treated, in how Nancy and Estella lack agency throughout their lives, and how Pip and Oliver are disregarded and used by other since their socio-economic status gives them no power. In the text *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction,* Robert Mighall writes:

> Gothic writings, it is argued, are not mere fantasies, isolated from 'reality', as perceived and represented in contemporary discourses; rather, they depend upon, engage with, and explore history and its representations. But it is also argued that the

> Gothic is principally 'historical' in its motivations and emphases, representing attitudes to the past and its influence on the present, and generally employing an element of anachronistic conflict. (xxiii)

Dickens' Victorian Gothic functions as social critique by drawing on reality and challenging harmful social norms. Often, the most significant social commentary is made by those who have suffered through the dire situations in which they are writing about. As was explored earlier in this chapter, Dickens was born into a family that struggled financially during his childhood and adolescence. Since his early years were filled with economic instability, Dickens was socially conscious and understood – although not on as extreme a scale as Oliver – the suffering of those on the fringes of society.

Many genres have overlapping characteristics with one another. The Gothic and Romantic genres are a key example of such. Many romantic authors used elements of the Gothic "to explore, at different levels of explicitness, the role that the apparently irrational could play in critiquing the quasi-rationalistic accounts of experience" (Mighall 3). Although convoluted and fantastical, the Gothic must be based in reality in order to have its desired effect on the reader. One that both leads to fear and an understanding of the darker elements of society. The Romantic genre closely engaged with strong emotions such as awe and straying away from rigid social norms. As the Romantic pulls from the Gothic, the Gothic does the same. In *Oliver Twist*, the young orphan's lamentations on death are clearly Gothic yet contain elements of Romanticism due to the close engagement with intense often unwelcome emotions.

Yet, it is through the use of the Gothic (and genres that are closely related) that Dickens was able to highlight the corrupt nature of society as a whole rather than pinpointing atrocities committed by one person. It is for this reason that I have chosen to use the novels *Oliver Twist*

and *Great Expectations*. These texts analyze how the stoic Victorian socio-political structure negatively affects those on the fringes of society, and in certain cases harms the classes it idolized. While doing so, the novels follow a case-study of particular characters and the trials they face due to the social and economic pressures. A more direct reading of the Gothic will stem from my analysis of the how Dickens depicts the city and rural landscapes as places of terror rather than places of peace. The Gothic genre helped to push Dickens' social commentary in a way that Victorian readers could not overlook. Dickens was not solely writing to earn a living. Instead, he wanted to tackle deeply rooted social issues; some of which affected him personally. Understanding the Gothic within Dickens work allows us to fully understand key social issues of the time as well as a changing literary custom.

Great Expectations and *Oliver Twist* targeted Victorian anxieties regarding class, gender, and the law.[3] *Oliver Twist* was published and takes place in 1838, not long after the New Poor laws were set into motion by the British Parliamentary system. Oliver begins his life at an orphanage and while still a child is sent to an adult workhouse where he is bullied and mistreated. This cycle continues until Oliver runs away to London and finds himself under the wing of Fagin. At first, Fagin appears to be kind to Oliver giving him and other young boys a place to live and food to eat. As time goes on, Fagin's true colors are exposed and Oliver endures more pain at the hands of Fagin and his associates. There are moments in between Oliver's awful

[3] Although Dickens novel *Bleak House* contains similar Victorian anxieties and posits the legal system the social problem, there are several reasons that I did not integrate it into this project. During the writing process, I came to realize that focusing on the characters would be a more direct way to examine how the Gothic played with sympathy rather than analyzing more abstract ideas. The narratives in *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* are focalizes on one protagonist which allows my readings of the texts to be applied in more fruitful ways. Integrating *Bleak House* into the equation would have made this project more complex than time allowed.

experiences with Fagin where he experiences kindness at the hands of Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies.

Another important character within *Oliver Twist* is Nancy the prostitute. As one of the few female voices in the novel, Nancy gives the reader much needed insight into the lives of women living in London's vast criminal underworld. Nancy is one of few characters that tries to speak up and protect Oliver from Fagin, Sikes, and other terrifying aspects of his life. Unlike Oliver, Nancy does not live to see her life improve. Dickens instead opts to have Nancy's life end realistically with her dying by the hand of her abuser. Ultimately, *Oliver Twist* has a happy ending in comparison to other Dickens novels. Oliver's lineage is revealed and he is adopted by Mr. Brownlow - one of the first people to show him true kindness and love.

Although *Great Expectations* was published thirty years after *Oliver Twist,* it explores similar issues regarding class, law, and gender. Pip's life begins similar to Oliver's as they are both orphans raised to believe that almost all of their actions are wrong. The novel begins with Pip cornered in the marsh graveyard by an ex-convict, this throws the community in disarray that appears to only last two chapters. Almost immediately this conflict is believed to be resolved, Pip is thrown into the isolating and highly Gothic world of Miss Havisham and Estella: two women who are hidden away and manipulated by societal norms due to their gender and class. The rest of the novel, which takes place in a different London than the one readers were introduced to in *Oliver Twist*, focuses on Pip's rise and fall in society while addressing the system of class mobility that affected criminal behavior in the Victorian era.

Great Expectations and *Oliver Twist* allow for readers to understand why Charles Dickens used the Gothic genre to emphasize social anxieties held by the Victorians. Within each of the chapters, I will examine why Dickens used the Gothic in different ways. The first chapter,

"Situation Dickens in Gothic Literary History" provides a deeper look into the Victorian Gothic's different modes as well as Charles Dickens' life. This chapter also examines how Dickens' different texts and style of writing style are inherently Gothic. The second chapter "Nightmarish Visions: The Gothic in *Oliver Twist*" examines the blending of the Urban Gothic and Social Problem Novel genres to create the story of Oliver Twist in all of its haunting glory. This chapter also analyzes how the blending of the two chapters allow for readers to engage more sympathetically with the characters in the novel and others who may be struggling due to similar conditions. The Victorian anxieties examined in the second chapter focus on the poor and criminal although the underlying issues deal directly with social class.

Social class is a direct anxiety examined in the third chapter, "Helping the Damned: The Gothic in *Great Expectations*". The crux of this chapter explores how Dickens used the Gothic to examine Victorian fears about social mobility and the criminal. While the Social Problem Novel takes on a large role in emphasizing elements of the Gothic in the chapter on *Oliver Twist,* this chapter instead focuses on how the uncanniness of Pip as a character and issues regarding class lead to sympathy rather than focusing on the constant mistreatment of poor orphans like Oliver. The conclusion, "The Gothic Use of Sympathy", pulls together the different ways Dickens used the Gothic to create sympathy and helps to pinpoint this central theme of the text.

Although Charles Dickens wrote novels for many reasons, the primary one that will be explored in this thesis are the ways in which his novels *Great Expectations* and *Oliver* Twist elicited sympathy from their readers for groups marginalized and demonized by the Victorians. It is through Dickens' use of the Gothic that he was able to use the idea that the middle class[4] is the moral backbone of the Victorians. The idea was that if you could reach the middle class, you

[4] The majority of Dickens' readership was from the middle class

would be able to incite social change. By prompting sympathy from readers for those suffering in England, Charles Dickens has come to be regarded as the champion of children and the poor.

Situating Dickens in Gothic Literary History

The Gothic in Charles Dickens

The Gothic novel is traditionally associated with the darker aspects of human nature. In his 1996 book *Gothic,* Fred Botting explains how the gothic was "considered a serious threat to literary and social values, anything Gothic was also discarded as an idle waste of time. Its images of dark power and mystery evoked fear and anxiety, but their absurdity also provoked ridicule and laughter" (9). Both ends of this spectrum are present in many of Charles Dickens texts especially *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. Although originally considered a Comedic Realist (and accused of sensationalism) many of Dickens' novels have roots in the Gothic tradition. This is not to say that previous critics were wrong when they categorized him as a Realist writer, or even a Sensationalist one. Instead, Dickens' texts have many pastiche qualities allowing them to fit into many genres. The two that are most important for us today are the Gothic genre and the Social Problem Novel.

In novels such as *Little Dorrit*, Charles Dickens blends these genres together in an effort to elicit sympathy from his middle class readership. When the conventions of the two genres meet, the social problem becomes an uncanny site for terror and horror. Throughout this thesis, I will argue that in *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*, Dickens presents poverty as the social problem and uses Gothic tropes and conventions to help readers seem themselves in the Other and to sympathize with them. This was only possible due to the Victorians cruel treatment of marginalized groups such as the poor. Liberal writers including Charles Dickens and Henry

Mayhew used fiction and nonfiction as a way to challenge the system that was allowing for such rampant mistreatment.

The New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was despised by Dickens and many others who found them inhumane and unethical. This act was passed in an effort to reduce spending on public welfare, particularly the Speenhamland system which provided aid for workers who earned under a certain amount. The laws were based "on a harsher philosophy that regarded pauperism among able-bodied workers as a moral failing. The new law provided no relief for the able-bodied poor except employment in the workhouse, with the object of stimulating workers to seek regular employment rather than charity" (Encyclopedia Britannica). It was the treatment of paupers within the workhouse as well as the stigmatization of the orphaned and disabled that led to extreme backlash from these laws.

In order to simultaneously keep audiences engaged and speak about social problems facing Victorian England, Charles Dickens used a style of writing and publication that was highly popular at the time – serialization. Since the Gothic relies on emotion and suspense, serialization is easily one of the best forms to get these aspects across. Moreover, serialization forces the reader to engage with the work on a different level than reading a novel as a full unit. In her article "The Gothic Heart of Victorian Serial Fiction", Julia McCord Chavez explores how the Gothic appears to thrive in a serialized format. She believes that "on the surface, the Victorian serial appears antithetical to Gothic fiction, a precise and regular form that corrects the excesses of Gothic irregularity" (Chavez 797). Although it can be argued that many Gothic texts function as precise works without the use of serialization, it does allow for a reading experience that coincides with the "excess" found in the Gothic. "The result is a wandering, meandering structure that provides a generative reading experience" (Chavez 798). Dickens audiences, in a

similar manner to audiences of a weekly television show, would have been waiting in suspense for the release of the next chapter. Their suspense for the next chapter would potentially cause them to re-read the prior chapters allowing for them to gain a better understanding of the social problems present within the work and their own cultures.

Regarding Charles Dickens, Chavez grants us a deeper understanding of how the Gothic genre functions in serialization and why Dickens may have chosen this publishing method above others. One reason for this may be that the general idea of the Gothic while Dickens was writing painted it as archaic. Fortunately, Charles Dickens' saw the Gothic in a similar way to Chavez who writes:

> Gothic fiction has been defined not by formal or thematic elements, but by the production of concern suspense, terror, and... horror, [derived] from a plot turning on what the reader is meant to perceive as supernatural. In identifying the Gothic genre based on an effective response produced in the reader. (Chavez 796)

Due to the Gothic genres reliance on the reader, the writer must take elements that the reader is accustomed to in order to successfully elicit a response. With the added element of serialization, Dickens had to ensure that his writing could function as a lucid unit while also retaining its relevance as a serial.

Serialization forces the reader to engage actively with each part of the text as a separate unit thereby elongating the narrative. This elongation is often attributed to the substantial emotional and cognitive connection readers often develop when reading serials. Chavez writes, "Dickens' tendency to craft parts that could stand as coherent units, as well as links in the chain of the ongoing narrative, set up predictable narrative patterns and reading practices" (798). What Chavez is explaining is a key element of writing a serial. If each chapter does not fit with what

comes before or after, then the author would confuse the reader and ruin any relationship they could potentially have with the text. Since "serial fiction arguably participates in technologies of discipline by putting fiction and its readers on periodic schedules, it simultaneously creates the conditions for readers to gain greater agency within the writer-reader text circuit" (Chavez 806). Dickens' readership was meant to feel a connection to the characters which in turn would allow for greater reader sympathy.

Charles Dickens explains in the preface to *Pickwick Papers* why he chose to write in a serial format stating:

> The publication of the book in monthly numbers, containing only thirty-two pages each, rendered it an object of paramount importance that, while the different incidents were linked together by a chain of interest strong enough to prevent their appearing unconnected or impossible... In short, it was necessary – or it appeared so to the author – that every number should be, to a certain extent, complete…and yet that the whole twenty numbers, when collected should form one tolerably harmonious whole, each leading to the other by a gentle and not unnatural progress of adventure. (*Pickwick Papers* ii)

Such actions allow for each section to function as a whole so the messages would not be lost in the overall story. Although this was printed in his first publication, it rings true for subsequent novels as well. Each chapter can stand alone allowing readers to see the message that Dickens desired to share both in the singular piece and in the coherent whole. The idea presented above would allow for Dickens to approach the social problems relevant in his novels while still creating coherent units readers could understand. In one section he could focus on the mistreatment of the poor by the rich, and another could focus on the mistreatment of the poor by

the state. By doing this, Dickens could ensure that readers would truly focus on the social problem he was addressing in each chapter rather than getting swept up in the story itself.

In general, the Gothic genre is characterized by horror, gloom, fear, and its connections with Romantic elements such as individuality and emotions like suspense. This typically means that Gothic literature centers around topics that are against the norm – especially norms from the Western world. The High Gothic in particular was associated with conservative values primarily stemming from societal fears of the Other. In relation to Victorian Gothic literature, Wolfrey's states that the "Gothic suggested a more adversarial, antagonistic relation to the imperial civilization - a militant anti-classicism. By the second half of the eighteenth-century it has gained an ambiguous valence that was political as well as aesthetic" (21). What we generally think of as Gothic today, at least in the literary sense, stems from its original form as work that pushes against societal expectations. Through blending the Gothic genre with the Social Problem Novel, Dickens was able to humanize and create sympathy for marginalized groups who act as the Other in his texts *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations.*

The Relevance of Gothic Literature

The Gothic genre is a highly versatile one as it can fit into different modes and manifests itself in a myriad of ways if used properly. Dickens was able to use the Gothic genre to convert "traditional Gothic tropes and props into modern realist terms, not to evacuate the Gothic or to strip it of its power, but to interject it into the institutions and the situations pervasive throughout England. In this way the Gothic becomes more realistic, but the real also becomes more like a Gothic nightmare" (Killeen 2009). This aided Dickens in his texts as he examined elements of society that were detrimental to the lives of marginalized people. In *Oliver Twist,* there are

scenes in which the ordinary is turned into uncanny: one example being when Fagin is wondering through the streets. Although walking is a universal action, the image Dickens paints while describing Fagin's movements throughout the city brings light to the danger he poses and dangers inherent in the city. This scene and others brought "keynotes of realist narrative - secrecy, alienation, and monstrosity...delivered via the Gothic" (Smith 7). The interplay between the realism of the Social Problem Novel and the aversions found in Gothic tropes emphasize the drastic nature of the suffering of marginalized Victorians.

The Social Problem Novel and Gothic genre work in tandem with one another as "realist writers drew on the Gothic…because that mode offered the opportunity to illuminate invisible relations between characters, and between things, that realism could not do without breaking the generic boundaries of the real" (Smith & Hughes 7). In the context of *Oliver Twist*, Bill Sikes and Fagin are classic Gothic villains placed in a realistic setting. The twisted criminal nature of Fagin and the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes were written in such a way that would not have fit in the mode of a realist novel:

> She staggered and fell: nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead; but raising herself, with difficulty, on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief – Rose Maylie's own – and holding it up, in her folded hands, as high towards Heaven as her feeble strength would allow, breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker. It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down. (*Great Expectations* 300)

This passage stands out as Gothic not only due to supernatural elements and extreme darkness, but instead due to the language used by Dickens. The images in the scene starkly contrast one

another. The blood raining down Nancy's face contrasts the white handkerchief that she pulls from her bosom; the color scheme supplying the reader with emotionally charged images. Bill Sikes stands in contrast with God as Nancy begs mercy from "her Maker" and Bill – her pimp. As Bill attempts to block the image of Nancy's corpse from his view, the guilt he experiences becomes palpable and is well deserved. The Gothic in this scene is explicit and may cause the reader to sympathize with Nancy as she dies for trying to save her attacker.

As can be seen in the prior passage and subsequent ones, there is a lack of stability in the lives of characters in Gothic novels. Ultimately, this instability is a fearful experience for the reader which Wolfreys' explains stating, "the gothic becomes truly haunting in that it can never be pinned down as a single identity, while it returns through various apparitions and manifestations, seemingly everywhere" (25). This helps Dickens to highlight the lack of stability within the Victorian political and social systems. Socially liberal and legally aware Victorians knew that the legal system was incredibly difficult for the poorer population as bureaucracy and long-lasting court cases required financial stability.

The blending of Gothic tropes within Dickens' Social Problem Novels were prevalent in his depictions of characters as well. The tropes allowed for Dickens to emphasize key elements such as secrecy, alienation, and monstrosity. Although mainly regarded as a realist, Dickens used many Gothic elements since "that mode offered the opportunity to illuminate invisible relations between characters, and between things, that realism could not do without breaking the generic boundaries of the real" (Wolfreys 7). Realism as a genre is limited by its convention of mirroring our own world. Elements that do not fit into a realist text such as hauntings and coming back from the dead would feel highly unrealistic and rather stylized on the part of the author. Using unrealistic descriptions and actions repeatedly in a realist novel would have led to the text being

regarded as sensationalist. Such claims angered writers like Dickens because they believed that classification would take away from the importance of their work. Although the Social Problem Novel has roots in Realism, by connecting it to the Gothic it has further emotional power that would emphasize the need for sympathy and for change.

Criticisms of Dickens

Sensationalist fiction was looked down upon as a genre since many deemed it a woman's genre. Primarily this is due to the interplay between the Gothic and the Romantic, two genres with waning popularity and a slight sense of triviality. Scholars such as John Bowen argued that Dickens disliked being thought of as a sensationalist writer even though there are clear elements that connect Sensationalism to the Gothic. According to Matthew Sweet, sensationalist writers created stories that were regarded as abstract allegories allowing for them to display the social anxieties of the era. "The loss of identity is seen in many sensation fiction stories because this was a common social anxiety; in Britain, there was an increased use of record keeping and therefore people questioned the meaning and permanence of identity" (Sweet). Although agitating to Dickens, his texts such as *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* have a very similar connection to many Sensation texts of the time such as *Lady Audley's Secret*. In fact, when *Oliver Twist* was published in 1838, it was regarded as a sensationalist piece of fiction subsequently angering Dickens. While part of his anger stemmed from the association with a feminine genre, Dickens had also experienced many different claims of exaggeration thus harming his texts ability to create sympathy.

In addition to being criticized for aspects of sensationalism in his writing, Dickens was also criticized for creating unbelievable plots and characters. In the Bantam Classics introduction

of *Great Expectations,* John Irving answers the questions about Dickens plot believability writing:

> Just accept as a fact that everyone of any emotional importance to you is related to everyone else of any emotional importance to you...In a novel by Charles Dickens, such people really *are* related – sometimes, even, by blood; almost always by circumstances, by coincidence; and most of all by plot. (xxiv-xxv)

Dickens was criticized throughout his entire writing career by many writers who may not have understood the cyclical nature of his texts where every action committed by one person influences the actions of another. Instead of focusing on the social problem aspect of his work, this focus on believability hurts the main aspect of Dickens writing which is to focus on the mistreatment of certain groups.

Contemporaries directed anger and disapproval towards Charles Dickens primarily due to the type of characters he had. Dickens chose to write about prostitutes, orphans, and violent criminals. His response to such critics is explored in the introduction to *Oliver Twist* written by Edwin Percy Whipple:

> Dickens, in his preface to 'Oliver Twist,' replied with some heat to those 'refined and delicate people' who had objected to his introduction of such creatures as Fagin and Sikes and Nancy into the book, as equally offensive to good morals and good taste. After justifying his selection of such persons for romantic treatment, he bluntly tells his censors that he has no respect for their opinion, does not covet their approval, and does not write for their amusement. (9)

The claims that reading *Oliver Twist* would corrupt one's morals justifiably angered Dickens since it went against his intentions for writing this text. Instead of focusing on the unfair

treatment of individuals who have found themselves in these situations, critics and newspapers were focusing on the actions of the characters. This essentially limited Dickens ability to elicit sympathy from his readers as his texts were presented solely as a form of amusement and not a way to speak about the ills of society.

Gaining Sympathy Through The Gothic

In the early days of the Gothic, the genre was used to expose social unrest; therefore when Dickens began writing, it was not difficult for him to integrate sympathetic feelings. Kirkpatrick writes, "Dickens the social critic is seen as the way he converts the Gothic lesson of horror into telling criticism of social abuses. Dickens the humanitarian is revealed in character creations that transcend the narrow Gothic formula to embrace a larger view of man in his boundless variety" (24). The "Gothic lesson of horror" Kirkpatrick refers to stems from the High Gothic of the late eighteenth century. High Gothic novels, such as *The Castle of Otranto,* take familiar landscapes and make them unfamiliar through the input of the supernatural. This creation of the uncanny is present in Dickens' novels specifically through the mistreatment of marginalized groups.

Through the uncanny, Dickens' characters are easily sympathized with; despite the fact that they are often from the lower echelons of society – criminals and orphans being the most common. Dickens humanizes his characters and slowly chips away at the preconceived notions held by many Victorian readers. Although many of the criminals and paupers within his novels acted as criminals, most of Dickens' characters were written in a three-dimensional light allowing the reader the potential to understand the reason for characters actions. In *Oliver Twist,* the first act of kindness to occur to Oliver in London, comes in the form of Fagin, a collector of

stolen goods. Although it is one of Fagin's prodigies who offers lodging, Oliver's thanks rapidly falls onto the older man:

> This unexpected offer of shelter was too tempting to be resisted; especially as it was immediately followed up, by the assurance that the old gentleman referred to, would doubtless provide Oliver with a comfortable place, without loss of time. This led to more friendly and confidential dialogue. (*Oliver Twist* 54)

Before this moment, Oliver has been surrounded by people who repeatedly show they could not care less about his existence. Although Fagin proves to be one of the central Gothic villains, the shelter, food, and promise of a familial-esque structure stands in stark contrast to the cruelty of the undertaker Mr. Sowerberry or the beadle Mr. Bumble. As Oliver begins to realize the true evil Fagin harbors, it elicits deeper sympathy from the reader as his life becomes increasingly dire.[5]

In order to gain sympathy from his readers, Dickens had to present characters deserving of sympathy as well as characters like the reader. It is clear that while readers are primarily meant to sympathize with Oliver and the suffering he endures, readers are meant to see *themselves* in Pip – a character that must learn to sympathize with others.

Although Pip was born into the working class, the time he spent with Miss Havisham and Estella led him to form elitist ideas that only change when Magwitch, a criminal, reveals to Pip that he is his benefactor:

---

[5] I am not attempting to say that every reader would feel sympathy or even pity for Oliver. Instead I am saying that readers who did feel either emotion could come to understand Oliver isn't solely suffering due to the mistreatment of the adults around him, but also due to Victorian politics and economics which continued to fail those who were in marginalized groups such as workhouse orphans.

> Nothing was needed but this; the wretched man, after loading me with his wretched gold and silver chains for years, had risked his life to come to me, and I held it there in my keeping! If I had loved him instead of abhorring him, if I had been attracted to him by the strongest admiration and affection, instead of shrinking from him with the strongest repugnance, it could have been no worse. (*Great Expectations* 343).

It is difficult for Pip to bring himself to feel thankful towards Magwitch as this realization has debased his expectations. He hasn't earned his place in society through Miss Havisham, nor is he meant to marry Estella. Instead his station in life was given to him through the tainted hands of a criminal.

Oliver Twist ends with Pip coming to terms with his life and the unfairly tumultuous ideas of social class and social mobility held by Victorians. The chapter in which Magwitch tells Pip is his benefactor ends with the lines; "I awoke without having parted in my sleep with the perception of my wretchedness, the clocks of the eastward churches were striking five, the candles were wasted out, the fire was dead, and the wind and rain intensified the thick black darkness" (*Great Expectations* 345). This deeply rooted shame Pip experiences correlates directly the ideas Victorians held about criminals and the poor. His newly reinstated association with a criminal will not only ruin his reputation if exposed but also take away any sense of agency he developed. The "thick black darkness" encapsulating Pip's mind is one of many Gothic images Dickens creates to explain the emotional turmoil at the criminal connection realization. Since the majority of people who read Dickens were from the middle class, it would be difficult for many of them to feel empathy as they did not live the same experiences as Oliver or Pip. Instead, by aiming for sympathy, the reader and others would potentially understand that

situations are often dependent on the society in which they live rather than their individual flaws. This

Dickens as a Gothic Author

Once we begin to understand the Gothic genre and the qualifications to be considered a Gothic text, it becomes clear that Charles Dickens is a Gothic author. The sprawling landscapes explored in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) are reinterpreted by Dickens in his descriptions of London and the English countryside. The monsters in novels such as *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897) are instead represented by those who wield power. In order for a genre to reach legitimacy it must have clear conventions yet remain flexible enough to remain relevant and fit into changing times. In Andrew Smith's *Gothic Radicalism* (2000), this idea is elaborated upon.

Smith argues that following the period of High Gothic literature, new forms of Gothic emerged that challenged the conservatism of the High Gothic. Although some of the ideas Dickens explores in his text are incredibly liberal, he can be thought of as a member of the Radical Gothic.[6] This form of the Gothic takes direct steps away from the explicitly supernatural to create the sublime and uncanny instead choosing to use more realistic features to examine the personal, political, social, and economic struggles people lived through. Smith argues that "this idea of a struggle at the center of the Gothic is…subsequently replicated in the experience of the uncanny where the subject feels this struggle as the defining characteristic of modern identity"

[6] Although Smith does not state that the Urban Gothic is the same as the Radical Gothic, the ways in which the Radical Gothic is explained is almost the same was the Urban Gothic. Therefore for the function of this thesis, the Urban Gothic will fall under the umbrella of the Radical Gothic.

(Smith 5). The Victorian Era struggled to find a singular identity as the industrial revolution and rise of the middle class uprooted tradition. Through this struggle, as well as the personal financial struggles Charles Dickens faced in his own life, he was able to write about real societal issues through the Gothic genre allowing for him to remain relevant in Victorian literary culture. The Radical Gothic emerged as a way to use traditional Gothic tropes to elicit sympathy from their readers about marginalized groups of people.

Although generally sticking to Radical Gothic characteristics, Dickens conforms to many of the conventions solely found in the High Gothic. Typically, High Gothic characters reject the current trajectory of their lives instead choosing to connect themselves to the spiritual or emotional world. We can see this in *Great Expectations* when Pip rejects the working class world he was born into and becomes engulfed in the idea of being a gentleman. The protagonist in High Gothic novels usually experiences a transition with the aid of a terrifying supernatural element. Pip undergoes this transition twice in the novel. The first is when he ventures to Satis House to meet Miss Havisham and Estella, the other being the revelation that Magwitch is his true benefactor.

Although Dickens shifted the supernatural Gothic element to a realistic one, the same amount of dread is obtained. The beauty and flexibility of the Gothic stems from the authorial ability to shift the direction of fear. While reading Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), the reader has an external locus of fear that is directed towards the threat of the Other. Dickens shifts this fear of the Other into a fear of society and a fear for the Other. Rather than questioning the safety of the

outside world, the fear is directed towards the Victorian perception of criminals as a subhuman group.[7]

In *Great Expectations,* a central issue of the plot stems from Pip's extended relationship to the ex-convict Magwitch. Based on Victorian perception, Magwitch should be the central villain of the text like Fagin in *Oliver Twist.* Yet if Magwitch were truly evil he would not have sent the money he earned to Pip and would have acted more like Compeyson, the true villain. Many of Dickens critics found issue with the characters he chose to write about as their behavior often stood in contrast with general societal beliefs. Characters such as Magwitch bring uncanny elements into the novel since traditionally criminals were regarded as "primitive"[8] which is why they could commit evil acts. Magwitch complicates this idea since we learn that he is not the true villain but instead it is middle class Compeyson who causes most of the issues of the novel. The supernatural element is typically represented by a character who has already shifted from the rational and realistic world to one that is regarded as primitive. Magwitch is already considered to be someone with a primitive mind who cannot function in the same way as the rest of society.

As opposed to serving as a warning against the supernatural element that causes dread, Dickens' characterization of Magwitch examines the idea that it is not the person that is evil but instead the society as a whole. This does not take away any of the personal responsibility of the characters. In the case of Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations* and Nancy from *Oliver Twist,* the two characters acknowledge their guilt and place the blame on themselves yet since Dickens supplies ample social context, the reader can understand that the choices of these characters stems from the place they hold in society. Towards the end of *Great Expectations*, Miss

[7] Subhuman here being anything that does not fit into the Victorian ideal, especially criminals and the impoverished.
[8] The primitive in this sense being anything that does not fit into the Victorian ideal.

Havisham apologizes to Pip for her treatment of him and Estella acknowledging that it is her fault that they are emotionally scarred. Although the reader understands that Miss Havisham wants Estella to hurt men because of her she was harmed by Compeyson, her ability to acknowledge the role she plays in the cycle of trauma allows her to become more of a sympathetic character to the reader.

In addition to examining societal fears of the Other, the Gothic was also used to explore fears of becoming the Other. The clearest instantiation of this fear is seen in the 1886 novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Lewis Stevenson. As a representation of both the human and the monster, the fear of becoming the Other is personified through Dr. Jekyll and his alter-ego Mr. Hyde. Although Dickens predates Stevenson, they both turn the High Gothic onto its head by challenging the loci of Victorian fears; instead of being afraid of the Other, readers would fear for the Other. In the case of Dickens this would be the impoverished and other disenfranchised groups. Dickens blends the Gothic genre with the Social Problem Novel[9] which takes a prevalent problem facing the society of the novel and examines how it affects characters of different social strata. The most common social problem within Dickens texts is poverty although he does speak about the mistreatment of women, orphans, and criminals – in short the Other. Combining this to Gothic tropes allows for readers to connect fear of the unknown to sympathy for the disenfranchised. This connection is meant to force readers to open their eyes to the societal mistreatment of others and hopefully force them to take this fear and turn it into action.

[9] Also known as the Social Protest Novel

Societal Implications of the Gothic

Dickens connects themes of the Social Problem Novel and the Gothic to examine and make dire the issues facing Victorian society. As stated in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Dickens work and characters showcase "an essential aspect of the Gothic form of the periods: undecidability" (1). The Victorian Gothic emulated undecidability primarily due to the lack of stability during the era. While there were many who were financially and socially stable during the time, there were underlying issues such as the push for Women's Rights causing feelings of socio-political instability.

The blending of the Gothic with other genres aided Dickens as he created characters who lacked stability in nearly every aspect of their lives. Pip from *Great Expectations* achieves his desire to be a gentleman yet since he cannot truly escape his working class past feels the need to overcompensate by keeping up with the fashions of London and looking down upon Jo – his family. Ian Duncan, author of *Modern Romance and the Transformations of the Novel* writes that "Dickens learnt from [Sir Walter] Scott the narrative techniques of a mixed polyphonic representation of a society totality, involving a dialogical interplay of styles and genres with a complexity of plot fusing the real world with its romance transfigurations" (Duncan 15). Although it can be argued that readers would have felt sympathy if Dickens only used realism in his texts, the additional Gothic elements bring forth a more intense emotional response from readers.

When one reads a Realist text, they expect the text to function as a mirror that does not conflict with the sensibility their world. This is different from the expectations of the Gothic genre which places reality through a funhouse mirror highlighting imperfections and creating a new reality. Reading Dickens as Gothic allows us to experience these dire situations on a more

personal level. A realist reading of the Dickens' novels would be more likely to present the mistreatment of the poor and criminal as obvious rather than uncanny, as something that happens to others as opposed to a threat that might move inside the readers themselves.

On the other hand, a Gothic reading of the text connects us sympathetically to the struggles of the characters, enabling us to see them as undeserved and systemic rather than the fault of the individual. Since the Gothic genre emphasizes fears that the reader has, when characters are placed in realistic awful conditions, which are then connected to Gothic elements, the readers fear has the ability to turn into sympathy for both the characters and real people in those situations. In the Victorian era, poverty was regarded as the fault of the individual rather than a societal one. Dickens humanized the poor, downtrodden, and criminal in his works as a way to show that the individual should not be held liable for the shortcomings of society.

If "the novel could offer a panoramic and historical imitation of the life of the people, and something more: a criticism of that life" then the way Dickens used the Gothic in *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* allowed for the readers to understand issues affecting Victorian society. (Duncan 2) Dickens therefore uses the Gothic genre as a way to show how the Other – people or things that do not fit into society's idea of what is normal and expected – are deserving of the same respect and compassion that we grant ourselves. Since the Other is usually in reference to anything that does not come from the West, it is usually associated with the primal, animalistic, and irrational – all descriptions that the Victorians used when describing the impoverished and criminal.

Moreover, by using the Gothic genre, Dickens was able to control – to some extent – the emotions of his reader by creating sympathetic characters in situations whose real life counterparts were looked down upon by the general population. This caused many readers to

rethink their views on poverty leading to Dickens' title as champion of the poor. Yet although he does present a less conservative view of the poor than what was usually seen in the High Gothic, Dickens continues to remain inside class lines. One clear example is from *Great Expectations* where Pip remains under the impression that he can never be with Estella until he is worthy; in short until he is a member of the middle class. This can also be seen in Dickens 1859 novel *A Tale of Two Cities*; Lucie Manette can never be with Sydney Carton due to their different class cultures. Yet, Charles Darnay, a member of the French aristocracy, is the perfect spouse for her because they come from the same class. Although Dickens portrays this in a way that resembles true love, it is also a return to the High Gothic's conservative elements. Instead of allowing for characters to easily cross the boundaries of class, characters have to struggle throughout their lives and even after achieving their newfound status, they continue to struggle.

By making it difficult for characters to easily cross class boundaries, Dickens is further emphasizing the societal issues plaguing the poor and marginalized groups. These struggles are presented in uncanny and sublime ways not only connecting them to the Gothic but also bringing forth sympathy for different characters and their real-life counterparts.

The Sublime and the Uncanny

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, "The Gothic Flame of Charles Dickens" by Larry Kirkpatrick is a quintessential text for understanding Dickens' usage of the Gothic – specifically his use of surrealism and the uncanny. The surrealism and the uncanny in Dickens are significant because they contribute to the readers sense of the sublime[10] by making what readers are accustomed to appear strange and awe-ful. The sublime, in turn, matters to my

[10] an overwhelming feeling of awe that can be positive or negative

interest in the Gothic and its power to facilitate sympathy. As one reads about the plight of marginalized people in sublime or uncanny representations, readers are presented with distorted images drawing attention and emotion to what could otherwise be easily overlooked.

The surreal and uncanny are highlighted best when it comes to Dickens use of the Urban Gothic. In *Oliver Twist,* London is depicted as a surreal place through the city and characters movement throughout it. This is easily seen through Dickens' descriptions of the criminal Fagin wandering through the street:

> The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to touch…As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved…he kept his course, through many winding and narrow ways…turning suddenly to the left, he soon became involved in a maze of the mean and dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter. (*Oliver Twist* 118-119)

London would either have been a familiar sight, or scene from a postcard or book, for many. Yet, the way that Dickens describes Fagin's journey through London makes it appear as a haunting space. The surreal depiction de-familiarizes the reader with the landscape further emphasizing Fagin's Gothic nature. Unlike the use of the uncanny when describing Oliver's childhood, the uncanniness of Fagin's London prompts readers to fear him rather than sympathize for him.

The sublimity Dickens adds to novels is often found in the darker emotions expressed by character; usually overpowering guilt and fear. These emotions can easily blend into the world of the supernatural making scenes increasingly more haunting. Pip spends his early life in what he calls "marsh country" which lies on the outskirts of London. The first few chapters focus on Pip

meeting Magwitch – referred to as "my convict" at this point – and the powerful feelings connected to this experience. After being cornered by Magwitch, Pip has to steal from his own house prompting the following scene:

> The mist was heavier still when I got out upon the marshes, so that instead of my running at everything, everything seemed to run at me. This was very disagreeable to a guilty mind. The gates and dikes and banks came bursting at me through the mist, as if they cried as plainly as could be, 'A boy with somebody else's pork pie! Stop him!' The cattle came upon me with like suddenness, staring out of their eyes, and streaming out of their nostrils. (*Oliver Twist* 15)

Pip shifts his guilt outward prompting a hallucinatory walk through the marshes, a scene that seems startlingly familiar to Fagin walking through the streets of London. According to Larry Kirkpatrick, "Dickens' own technique of contrasting the city and the countryside relates to surrealism in that nightmare and tranquility, vice and virtue are thereby placed in juxtaposition" (20). The vice of Pip in the aforementioned text is juxtaposed to the projected purity of the landscape around him. While in the more rural settings, although placed in more danger, Pip is essentially the best version of himself. He goes out of his way to help other characters, even if it is because he has a crush on Estella. While in the city, Pip openly rejects those who cared about him when he was younger due to his improved status.

As Pip and Oliver travel from the countryside to the city, they are simultaneously travelling from their youth to adulthood. Compared to the energetic and anxious Pip that we are introduced to, when he goes to London in hopes of becoming a true gentleman, he becomes increasingly blasé regarding the outside world:

> When we had shaken hands and he was gone, I opened the staircase window and had nearly beheaded myself, for the lines had rotted away, and it came down on my head like a guillotine...After this escape, I was content to take a foggy view of the Inn through the window's encrusting dirt, and to stand dolefully looking out, saying to myself that London was decidedly overrated. (*Great Expectations* 182)

The emotions expressed by Pip here are stand in stark contrast to the meandering and apprehensive personality of his youth. Although there are moments – such as when Magwitch reveals himself as his benefactor – when Pip reverts to his youthful anxiety, we can see a clear progression from youth to adulthood mirrored in his transition from the country to the city, from poverty to wealth.

Along with feelings of dread and guilty, the sublime can manifest itself in apathy and isolation. In both *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*, the sublime explores extreme bouts of isolation in cities – primarily London. Andrew Smith the author of *Gothic Literature* writes "the irony is that [the] urban possesses a mysterious quality, one which accords with a more fully developed notion of the sublime" (113). As characters traverse through the streets of the city, they often find themselves feeling overwhelmed or as though they are wandering through a maze.

A clear moment of the urban sublime in *Oliver Twist* comes from the unity of the city-dwellers which contrasts the feelings of isolation and betrayal experienced by Oliver. As the community around Oliver believe that he is a pickpocket, they quickly turn against him:

> 'Stop thief! Stop thief!' There is magic in the sound. The tradesman leaves his counter, and the car-man his waggon; the butcher throws down his tray; the baker his basket; the milkman his pail; the errand-boy his parcels; the school-boy his marbles; the pavious his

> pickaxe; the child his battledore. Away they run, pell-mell, helter-skelter, slap-dash; tearing, yelling, screaming, knocking down the passengers as they turn the corners, rousing up the dogs, and astonishing the fowls; and streets, squares, and court, re-echo with the sound." (*Oliver Twist* 63)

The sublime in this scene stems from the community created by the workers against the falsely accused Oliver. As we read this passage with its rapid punctuation, we as readers are meant to sympathize for Oliver while simultaneously fearing for his safety. Additionally, the grammar choices Dickens makes emphasize the anxiety Oliver experiences while being chased. Each semicolon draws the reader's attention to the specific person and their actions upon hearing the illustrious sound of "stop thief!". As the workers and onlookers stop their tasks in pursuit of Oliver, he is reminded of how truly alone he is in the world. Since this scene follows in rapid succession to when Oliver first enters Fagin's hideout and believes he has finally found a welcoming place. The sublime emotions Oliver experiences during this scene would have prompted readers to sympathize with Oliver after his betrayal and public vilification.

The Progression of the Gothic Genre

Using the sublime and uncanny in the Urban Gothic to elicit sympathy for characters is a ploy used by many writers besides Charles Dickens. Predating Dickens writing, in the 1818 Gothic text *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, there are multiple scenes in which the reader is prompted to feel compassion for the monster – even as he acts upon his murderous tendencies. While readers primarily feel sympathy for characters like Dr. Manette from *A Tale of Two Cities,* readers primarily feel pity for Frankenstein's creation. This difference primarily stems from the fact that readers may have found it difficult to sympathize with a monster creates for scientific

advancement whereas we have all be children who may have suffered in different ways. Regardless, the emotions of sympathy of pity are closely linked and the Gothic roots of both texts are undeniable.

When the monster speaks to his creator Dr. Frankenstein, he does so in a highly educated yet depressing way:

> I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? You, my creator, would tear me to pieces and triumph; remember that, and tell me why I should pity man more than he pities me? You would not call it murder if you could precipitate me into one of those ice-rifts and destroy my frame, the work of your own hands…Yet mine shall not be the submission of abject slavery. I will revenge my injuries; if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear, and chiefly towards you my archenemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. (Shelley 174)

The monster is attempting to iterate the immense psychological torture he is under due to societal shunning. Hs is painfully aware that due to his appearance, which he cannot control, those who see him (including Victor Frankenstein) desire to kill him. In lieu of this, the monster still desires to better himself so that he can find companionship, someone to look past the physical and into his rich internal world.

Since the monster is not asking for anything other than a friend, the reader finds it easy to pity or even sympathize with him regardless of his past actions. As the novel progresses it becomes clear that the monster only acts violently when he is threated or when Frankenstein goes back on his word. While on the search for companionship, the monster enters the cottage of an old blind man and begins to believe that he has found a friend. Yet, this brief moment of bliss is quickly ripped away from him in the subsequent scene:

> At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted, and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung, in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. I saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish, I quit the cottage, and in the general tumult escape unperceived to my hovel." (Shelley 161)

Shelley and Dickens use similar tactics in their novels by using the Gothic to elicit sympathy from their readers. In her novel, Shelley explores the relationship the reader has to the Other and attempts to break down the idea that there are extreme differences between different people. Repeatedly throughout the novel, it its clear to the reader that if the monster had been presented with kindness rather than hatred and fear, he may not have become vengeful; instead he would have treated others with the same respect he desired.

Dickens' contemporary Charlotte Bronte used Gothic elements to examine the mistreatment of women who, in the Victorian era, were highly visible yet highly marginalized. *Jane Eyre* (1847) follows the story of orphaned Jane as she is steadily abused and manipulated by the adults in her life. Mrs. Reed, Jane's aunt, is the primary antagonist for most of the novel as she maintains the traditional Victorian mindset that poverty is the fault of the individual and not society which prompts her to mistreat Jane due to her parents perceived failings.

Like Oliver, it is Jane's independent, strong, and empathetic nature that enables her to survive the tough situations she experiences in life. It is her mentality that leads her to one of the most famous passages within *Jane Eyre:*

> 'Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? - a machine without feelings? And can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart!...it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, - as we are! (Bronte 482)

Jane's exclamation stems from her – and most women's desires – not only to be seen as an equal to their male counterparts, but simply to be seen as a person. Being seen as a person is especially difficult for Jane as without money and "beauty", Jane struggles to find people who will grant her true autonomy. Instead, she is degraded for her socio-economic status and until she becomes wealthy lacks agency.

Moreover, Bertha Mason – the "madwoman" locked away in Rochester's attic – is an extreme yet realistic representation of the lack of autonomy that women held at this time. Regardless of her accused madness and violent tendencies, Bertha should not have been left to suffer alone in a windowless room far away from society and her family. Bertha plunges the novel into High Gothic conventions that rapidly disturb the peace Jane believes she has found:

> Then my own thoughts worried me. What crime was this that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?—what mystery, that broke out now in fire and now in blood, at the deadest hours of night? What

creature was it, that, masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey? (Bronte 399-400)

The fears Jane describes are closely aligned with those of High Gothic protagonists such as Mina and Jonathan Harker in Bram Stoker's *Dracula.*

As Charlotte Bronte and Charles Dickens wrote fictionalized accounts on the mistreatment of marginalized groups such as the impoverished and women, Henry Mayhew published a series of nonfiction pamphlets titled "London Labor and the London Poor". Mayhew's text postdates *Oliver Twist* by twenty years yet influenced *Great Expectations* which was published ten years after. After understanding the effect Mayhew's work had on Victorian society[11] the shift in tone and subject between *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* becomes more direct. Oliver learns that he comes from money, that while still an orphan he does have living family, and is even adopted by Mr. Brownlow. Pip on the other hand lives his entire life under false pretenses and once they are revealed to him has to learn how to be a good person and disregard judgements he has made about others based on their class. Mayhew's work led his readers understand the extent of abuse endured by the poor, orphaned, and elderly. Although nonfiction, the language and images used by Mayhew draws him into the Gothic tradition. Both Mayhew and Dickens use the Gothic to elicit fear and awe-ful emotions from their readers.

One of the first images of the poor youth that we are presented with is the coster-lad or young street seller. The coster-lad that we are introduced to appears to apathetic about his station in life yet excited to have his story told:

[11] Although many people were aware of the awful conditions the poor lived in, the interviews and personal details Mayhew published brought new insight into the abject poverty and inhumane conditions many were forced to live and work in.

> He was a tall stout boy, about sixteen years old, with a face utterly vacant. His two heavy lead-coloured eyes stared unmeaningly at me, and, beyond a constant anxiety to keep his front lock curled on his cheek, he did not exhibit the slightest trace of feeling. He sank to his seat heavily and of a heap, and when once settled down he remained motionless, with his mouth open and his hands on his knees - almost as if paralyzed. He was dressed in all the slang beauty of his class, with a bright red handkerchief and unexceptional boots. (Mayhew 40)

The physical descriptions of the coster-boy mirror the description Dickens gives of Magwitch's attire during his trial in *Great Expectations.* While Magwitch is wearing tattered, dirty clothing, Compeyson is dressed impeccably and is not covered in dirt and grime. The "slang beauty" of Magwitch's class was seen in the way that his class rendered him unable to present himself in a way that would cause the judge and jury to see him in any positive light. Additionally, the style that of clothing Compeyson chose shows his education and class, making those in court believe that he was dragged into criminal behavior by Magwitch which is the opposite of the truth.

The actors in Mayhew's work mirror another of one of Dickens texts, *Oliver Twist,* and the relationship that Nancy and Bill have with one another. As Mayhew describes the coster-girls and the abuse they endure, it mirrors elements of Nancy's relationship with Bill Sikes:

> The men generally behave very cruelly to the girls they live with. They are as faithful to them as if they were married, but they are jealous in the extreme. To see a man talking to their girl is sufficient to ensure the poor thing a beating...nevertheless the girls say they cannot help loving them still, and continue working for them. (Mayhew 47)

While Nancy knew Fagin and Bill were using and abusing her, she continues to return to them. Even as Bill is trying to kill her, Nancy pleads with him; asking him to run away with her and save both of their lives in the process.

In 1892, forty years after the publication of *Oliver Twist* and twenty years after Dickens' death, Charlotte Perkins Gilman published *The Yellow Wallpaper.* Although an American Female Gothic text, it is easy to see the connections to Dickens' work and his usage of the Gothic genre to speak about social issues. Even though Gilman's work comes from a different country and a different time period, it is important to understand the text as it shows the future of the Gothic legacy found in Dickens as there are clear aspects of the New and Radical Gothic.

Throughout *The Yellow Wallpaper,* Gilman's narrator is tortured by her mind and society due to the lack of autonomy women endured. As the story progresses, the unnamed narrator has a Gothic style breakdown in her room where she cannot seem to tell reality from fiction:

> I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin. It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a distance they suddenly commit suicide – plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions. The color is repellant, almost revolting; a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly Sulphur in others. No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long. There comes John, and I must put this away, - he hates to have me write a word. (648-649)

The wallpaper serves as a representation of the narrator's mental state; as she is locked in the room, alone and extremely bored, the narrator must find ways of bringing herself pleasure – in this case writing. The extreme detail in the description of the wallpaper is meant to remind the reader of the extreme boredom that the narrator is experiencing, the insanity that slowly creeps up and begins to take over is palpable.

As can be seen in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the treatment of women at the time was detrimental to their physical and mental health. The story ends with the narrator "creeping" all over the room and peeling the wallpaper off. As her husband opens the door and finds her in this state of psychosis, he faints. The ending makes the reader question the reality of the text as well as the stability of the narrator. Since she is trapped in a Gothic space, the reader sympathizes with her while also questioning the society that has locked her away. A common trope in the Gothic was the utilization of the Other and attempts to humanize them while bringing their plight to light. In this text, Gilman is depicting women as the Other in an effort to help women in these situations to have a voice.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Gothic was used both to elicit feelings of fear for the reader but also to prompt sympathy for the characters. Dickens sowed the seeds for how the Gothic could be used as a social commentary while retaining many of its central features. *The Yellow Wallpaper* may have been written decades after Dickens, but Gilman used similar tropes and motifs to speak about the plight of minority and marginalized classes. Although the majority of Dickens work centers around the societal treatment of the poor, images of confinement can often be found when speaking about women. Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations* is a prime example of this as she is left to rot alone in her room with an old wedding cake and stopped clocks.

Dickens as Gothic

For years, scholars have argued over including Dickens as a Gothic writer. Many, such as Larry Kirkpatrick, were successful in their arguments yet Charles Dickens' novels are consistently placed in realistic, historical, and sensationalist fiction areas. Although, Dickens does fall under these genres, his true message can be better understood through his work's use of the Gothic genre. We should take Dickens seriously as a Gothic author because of the way that he skillfully weaves between different genres while retaining their key elements. Without the aid of the Gothic genre, Dickens would have successfully created well-rounded characters and an in-depth social commentary. Yet, the Gothic plays an integral role in heightening the emotions of the characters and by extension the reader prompting sympathy for the suffering.

Nightmarish Visions: The Gothic in *Oliver Twist*

Oliver Twist and The New Poor Laws

According to historian Peter Mandler, the New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was regarded as one of the most polarizing law's in England's history. Workhouses became central to the rehabilitation of the poor while politicians cut costs on poor relief in an effort to discourage what they perceived as laziness. Due to their increase in importance and the conditions within, workhouses were also the main point of contention many reformers had with the system. While they were meant to supply paupers with aid, they usually led to more abuse and starvation. Essentially, the workhouse was an alternative to living on the street or being placed in prison for poverty and those in the workhouse were put to work in various capacities and were provided with minimal amounts of food and lodgings. Yet, even with the promise of room and board, many paupers would rather live on the streets than be used by a parish that does not truly care.

Henry Mayhew in *London Labor and the London Poor* writes about the workhouse stating that it was doing more harm than and was driving " people to beg rather than apply for parish relief" (55). This was primarily due to the mistreatment that paupers endured while in the parish system: "we must either go to the workhouse or starve. If we go to the workhouse, they'll give us a piece of dry bread, and abuse us worse than dogs" (Mayhew 55). Throughout almost every section of Mayhew's text, those he interviews state that they would rather beg or die than go into a workhouse, even "old men and women, crippled by disease or accident, who in their dread of a workhouse life, linger on with the few pence they can earn by street-selling" (Mayhew 145).

The workhouse as presented by Dickens and Mayhew leaves very little to the modern imagination as the suffering paupers is palpable to readers. One coster-boy in London's East End stated "I was took into the workhouse...I can't say they treated me bad, but they certainly didn't use me well" (Mayhew 332). The New Poor Laws, especially the conditions of workhouses, were contested by Dickens and others who truly believed that they were awful places regardless of what the parish claimed their intent was. After the success of *The Pickwick Papers*, Charles Dickens became more vocal about social issues he disagreed with. Over the course of his career, Dickens would write openly about the plight of the poor and the mistreatment of prostitutes and other members of the forgotten classes. His most famous account regarding the plight of the poor was *Oliver Twist* which began its serialization between 1837 through 1839.[12] Throughout the novel, Oliver Twist has numerous negative encounters that begin with his birth outside of an orphanage and do not end until he is adopted in London by an aristocrat. *Oliver Twist* is clearly a Social Problem Novel as it is a commentary on how the poor and orphaned are mistreated and most do not find their way to a better situation. Yet, the novel has Gothic elements that are mainly seen through Dickens depictions of Oliver's harrowing journey - as well as the lives of other characters - in grave detail through a bleak and distorted lens.

Avril Horner states that "Dickens uses Gothic effects (doubling, ghosting, secrets, excess of violence)…in order to render disturbing what he sees as modern barbarities: the suffering of the urban poor; the violence that results from that suffering; the corruption and misuse of the law" (119). The doubling of characters can be seen through the foil Fagin plays to Mr. Brownlow; while Fagin is cruel and uses children for his own gain, Mr. Brownlow overlooks what people are saying about Oliver, choosing instead to take him under his wing. Hidden

[12] In 1839, the chapters were published together in a full novel.

identities become incredibly important at the end of the novel when Mr. Brownlow, and several other characters realize that Oliver is an aristocrat raised as a workhouse orphan. As for the warrantless violence, both Bill Sikes and Fagin are the main culprits leaving death and misery in their wake.

By placing Gothic elements in the Social Problem Novel of *Oliver Twist***,** Dickens was able to emphasize the inequalities faced by the underprivileged members of Victorian society – as well as those who were rejected by society altogether. Moreover, when Dickens delves into the Urban Gothic, he is able to examine London and its inhabitants in ways that may not have carried the same weight without the perceived excess of the Gothic. The Gothic in its urban form "[makes] vivid and sustain[s] an important dialogue concerning the nature of freedom and equality in modern urban society, a dialogue in which the uncanny and the abject are used to interrogate the social and political realities of the time" (Horner 121). Through the Urban Gothic and its aid in characterizing Oliver, the reader is meant to feel sympathy as we see him suffer in nearly every scene. From his starvation in the workhouse, the physical abuse he endures with the undertaker, and his harrowing journey through London that result in two near-death experiences, the reader should sympathize with Oliver as he is mistreated by nearly every person that crosses his path.

Oliver Twist provides readers with a realistic depiction of poverty and criminal activity that was often swept under the rug in Victorian England. In fact, Charles Dickens was angered when he found out that his novel was seen as a romanticization of crime and poverty; one critic went as far as to write that "these fictions glamorized the exploits of notorious criminals and [Dickens was] accused of encouraging vice" (Wood). This aggravated Dickens who, for the preface of the 1839 edition, stated that he wanted to highlight the issues that were plaguing "the

most criminal and degraded in London's population" (*Oliver Twist* ii). Instead of subscribing to the idea that those who were suffering deserved their fate, Dickens and others showed that society was truly at fault for the misery of many. This includes those who, in order to survive, had to engage in criminal activity:

> It appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associations in crime as really did exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid misery of their lives…forever skulking uneasily around the dirtiest paths of life…would be to attempt a something that was needed and which would be a service to society. (*Oliver Twist* vi)

Dickens presents the consequences and truth of poverty to his readers in an effort to create sympathy and change societal norms (Wood). Although Dickens used many elements of the Gothic in order to emphasize the truth, he remained honest in his depictions of poverty and suffering so that his readers could understand what they were causally overlooking and taking for granted.

Without the addition of Gothic elements, *Oliver Twist* would retain some of its meaning yet potentially lead to less sympathy from readers regarding the harrowing situations characters have found themselves in. Although there were many newspaper articles, essays, and pamphlets written about the problem of poverty and crime, few fictional novels focused on the impoverished and placed them into the role of the hero. When the reader feels fear for Oliver, they potentially feel fear for those who had to endure such suffering in real life. As Woods explains, a key element of the Gothic is that it "functions as the mirror of eighteenth-century mores and values: a reconstruction of the past as the inverted, mirror image of the present, its darkness allows the reason and virtue of the present a brighter reflection." Since Oliver is

suffering due to the conservative values that are shown in the High Gothic, and in the New Poor Laws, the happy ending he receives is a way to show that there is a way out of poverty and criminal activity. Rather than regulating people to suffer because of their status at birth, if we treat people with kindness and give economic support where needed, then there is less of a chance of more people becoming like Fagin.

While depicting a mirror image of Victorian poverty to his readers, Charles Dickens utilized the uncanny attributes of urban spaces and the characters that inhabit them. The Gothic "served a double purpose for [Dickens]: use of the sensational and the uncanny enthralled newly literate readers…while the suffering of the urban poor touched the consciences of the middle and upper classes…thereby advancing the cause of progressive liberalism" (Horner 109). For the newly literate reader it was exciting to read about Oliver as he escaped awful situations and found his way into the upper middle class. On the other hand, the middle class – Dickens target audience – were meant to feel the most amount of sympathy since they were regarded as the most morally upstanding class.[13] By targeting the middle class, it would be easier to change societal views as the middle class had the largest growing population during the Victorian era.

As for the upper class, there is the possibility to feel sympathy for the poorer classes but instead they were mainly targeted for their ability to provide economic support for the poor. Throughout the novel, Dickens often slips into his own voice allowing for the reader to experience his aggravation at the Victorian treatment of disenfranchised groups:

[13] The middle class was regarded as the moral and physical backbone of Victorian society. Since they were the largest class, the were meant to keep the rich in line and aid the poor. Additionally, the novel itself is associated with the middle class as one cannot make a living as a novelist/writer until there is a literate middle class with expendable income and leisure time. While the upper class has both leisure time and expendable outcome, they are too small a section of society to create an audience.

> I wish some well-fed philosopher, whose meat and drink turn to gall within him; and whose blood ice, whose heart is iron; could have seen Oliver Twist clutching at the dainty viands that the dog had neglected. I wish he could have witnessed the horrible avidity with which Oliver tore the bits asunder with all the ferocity of famine. There is only one thing I should like better; and that would be to see the Philosopher making the same sort of meal himself, with the same relish. (*Oliver Twist* 32)

The philosophers referenced above are political scientists and policy makers that wrote or voted for the New Poor Laws of 1823 to be enacted. Under Malthusian theory, the poor were to blame for their own suffering therefore those who were doing well shouldn't be responsible to help ye,? The children that *Oliver Twist* is based on suffered due to the inadequacy and indifference of Victorian society, a society that believes the poor were lazy individuals who were on the street or in the workhouse due to a moral failing.

The call for revenge Dickens' narrator is making comes in multiple waves. The first wave is the admonishment of philosophers stating that they are malicious, cold, and unfeeling. Then, in an attempt to gain the slightest bit of emotion from the philosopher, the narrator wants them to be forced to watch a starving Oliver eat the dog's leftovers. Hopefully they would finally understand that their greed was leading to the destruction of many. The final call for revenge may be the strongest as the narrator calls for a role reversal placing the philosophers in the awful conditions they are forcing onto others. Although Dickens' narrator may appear to be extreme, the conditions experienced by people in conditions similar to Oliver's were being disregarded by those in power. Without strong language, it would have been more difficult to emphasize all that was wrong.

This chapter is meant to examine how Charles Dickens used the Gothic genre to help strengthen the Social Problem Novel aspects in *Oliver Twist.* Poverty is the social problem; when the conventions of the Social Problem Novel meet the conventions of the Gothic novel, poverty becomes an uncanny site of terror and horror. Depicting the social problem of poverty as a Gothic uncanny helps readers to see themselves in the poor Other and to sympathize with them.

The Urban Gothic

Urban Gothic literature tends to center around the newly industrial city, primarily during the Victorian *fin de siècle.* Where the High Gothic tends to focus on those with money and status, the Urban Gothic explores the moral, social, and physical confinement of the poor and lower middle classes.

Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novel, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* is paradigmatic of this genre. This novel, and others that followed in its footsteps, were intrigued by the idea that the respectable London openly acknowledged had a hidden underbelly, a Hyde to the city's Jekyll. In Urban Gothic literature, this concealed city is where the criminal and darker elements of society would reside and be made obvious by the genre's uncanny power. *Oliver Twist* anticipates this Urban Gothic through its depictions of the corrupted urban landscape beginning with the workhouse. Published in 1837, *Oliver Twist* predates the *fin de siècle* but utilizes literary conventions that later coheres to the Urban Gothic. Charles Dickens used these elements to make it possible for readers to recognize and sympathize with the mistreatment rampant in the workhouses and among the urban poor.

According to Henry Mayhew in his nonfiction text *London Labor and the London Poor*, a workhouse is an institution where the impoverished, elderly, or sick work in return for room

and board. Although on the surface the workhouse appears to be a benevolent idea, they were influenced by Malthusian theory which led to the cruel conditions depicted by both Mayhew and Dickens. The workhouse was a perfect Gothic landscape for Dickens to use as it brought forth images of misery and suffering while simultaneously allowing for satirical elements:

> The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men; and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once…the poor people liked it. It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes...With this vire, they…issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays. They made a great many other wise and humane regulations" (*Oliver Twist* 18).

Although here the text does not call for revenge against the Malthusian political scientists, it does refer to a lack of moral code. When Dickens mentions that ordinary people would not have believed that the poor enjoyed their time in workhouses, he is highlighting to the reader the ways in which those who engage with the poor are able to understand that poverty is not a moral failing but a failing of the system. Additionally, ordinary people in this context most likely refer to the middle-class which was regarded as the moral backbone of Victorian society. This is essentially the premise to why Dickens chose serialization in popular magazines as opposed to the more expensive format of a novel.

The passage continues to highlight the ways in which the creators of the workhouse mistreated those who required its "aid". The lack of simple resources such as food and water were not wise and humane regulations as Dickens refers to them on this passage. Instead, he is taking on the more satirical tone used often in Social Problem Novels. A socially educated reader would be able to understand the true horror Dickens was referring to; workhouses were full of

abuse and neglect and in many documented cases, people would rather live on the street than enter a workhouse. In the final line of the scene, Dickens shifts from a satirical tone to a realistic one writing: "so they established the rule that all poor people should have the alternative...of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it" (*Oliver Twist* 18). A major factor in both Gothic texts and poverty is the lack of choices that individuals have when it comes to making decisions. As will be discussed later in this chapter Oliver and Nancy - the two characters who suffer the most - have very little autonomy in their lives, primarily due to their respective roles as an orphan and a prostitute.

Since *Oliver Twist* was written in response to the unfair New Poor Laws of 1834, it is important for us to understand the role of the workhouse as seen by Charles Dickens:

> The workhouse system was hated, and people did everything they could to avoid becoming subject to it, so those who ended up there were either the most vulnerable, or the most hardened and brazen...workhouse inmates were often people whose medical conditions were regarded as hopeless at the time, and whose social status debarred them from other kinds of help. (Richardson).

This is reflected both in *Oliver Twist* and the short story by Dickens "A Walk in a Workhouse" (1850). In the latter, Dickens takes on a journalistic tone that is found several years later in Henry Mayhew's *London Labor and the London Poor*.

Dickens presents the reader with images of the workhouse that would elicit sympathy from the reader writing:

> groves of babies in arms; groves of mothers and other sick women in bed; groves of lunatics, groves of men in stone-paved down-stairs day-rooms, waiting for their dinners; longer and longer groves of old people, in up-stairs Infirmary wards, wearing out life,

> God knows how — this was the scenery through which the walk lay, for two hours. ("A Walk in a Workhouse").

The importance of this excerpt is most seen in the diction Dickens uses to describe the residents of the workhouse. He repeats "groves" throughout the passage which emphasizes to the reader the sheer amount of people who have found themselves suffering within the workhouse. A grove refers to a small wood, orchard, or group of trees (Merriam-Webster), yet the connotation the word has in relation to people is a negative one especially when it comes to government aid.

Dickens' depiction of the workhouse in "A Walk in a Workhouse" is very similar to the one he describes in *Oliver Twist.* In both texts, Dickens describes the atrocities that are occurring within this space writing:

> Boys have general excelled appetites. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing...hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next to him. (*Oliver Twist* 19)

The children in this workhouse are starving to the point that cannibalism appears to be their only way for survival. This possibility prompts readers to experience uncanny feelings as cannibalism takes what we deemed as humane and normal and twists it into something we find horrible and cruel evoking sublime horror. This image in particular causes a visceral reaction in the reader because it involves children, a group of individuals who society deems pure and undeserving of cruel treatment – unless they are poor orphans. Regardless of their class, it is clear that the suffering occurring within the workhouse is an inhumane one; the depiction of this suffering is

one that prompts us as readers to sympathize with other's in situations similar to Oliver's and to see the system that created such spaces as problematic, as in fact terrible and horrible, as Gothic.

In an effort to escape the abuse of the workhouse and its apprentice system, Oliver runs away to London. Yet, London presents itself as both dangerous and elusive providing very little help to the already struggling child. Dickens presents the reader with London as an Urban Gothic landscape through the characterization of the city and its inhabitants. Mighall writes, "this is not just a Gothic in the city, it is a Gothic *of* the city. Its terrors derive from situations peculiar to, and firmly located within, the urban experience" (42). London itself is not a Gothic city but instead it is the experience of being in a strange urban setting that bring forth elements of the Urban Gothic. It is through the use of the Urban Gothic that "the mid-night streets of London, rather than banditti infested Italian forests – are in themselves, horrific and can be considered Gothic properties" (Mighall 43). Without the addition of the Gothic, readers may not have sympathized with Oliver or Nancy in the same way; they may have instead pitied the characters instead of recognizing the social evils that led to their lifelong struggles.

Urban Wealth and Urban Poverty

The dichotomy of the city is one of the central reasons that the Urban Gothic functions so well in *Oliver Twist.* In writing this novel, Dickens presents the reader with multiple iterations of a single city. One of the main distinctions is reflected through the juxtaposition of extreme wealth to abhorrent poverty. Wolfreys states "everything in the two self-advertising and defensive, bombastic expositions relies on polarization, extremes of the urban figure in the popular imagination. There is criminal life *and* a world of opulence, one of poverty *and* also one of the social elite" (xvii). The world of poverty is closely related to the world of excess in

Victorian England. Due to the ways in which wealth was distributed – it remained in the hands of the wealthy – a system was perpetuated the already existing system of poverty.

This system was further aided by the growth of industrialization which successfully brought forth jobs but also worked in such a way that continued the already existing cycle of abuse. In the novel *Oliver Twist,* Charles Dickens explored the deaths sentence that was poverty through the eyes of a young orphan child to highlight the cruelty rampant in these areas. Upon reaching London, Oliver finds himself being led through the seedy underbelly of London:

> Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader…a dirtier more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours…covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth. (*Oliver Twist* 54)

Even as a workhouse orphan, Oliver is stuck by how filthy the city is as well as those who are living in filth. Even if unfamiliar with the sights of poverty, readers would easily be able to recognize that these were not normal conditions. Instead, Dickens may have been attempting to imply that the city itself is designed to polarize and separate classes which, for the reader, serves to emphasize the social issues in London.

Throughout the novel, the reader is presented with two distinct versions of London. One that is overflowing with Gothic tropes and images and the other which barely reads as a Social Problem Novel. The London that Oliver experiences while with Mr. Brownlow is one of excess and adoration, a very drastic shift from the abuse in the workhouse and the filth of Fagin's hideout. After being chased through the streets of London and accused of being a thief, Oliver is

taken care of by Mr. Brownlow. During this time Oliver experiences many firsts, one of which is his visit to Mr. Brownlow's study:

> [Oliver] found himself in a little back room, quite full of books, with a window, looking into some pleasant little gardens. There was a table drawn up before the window, at which Mr. Brownlow was seated reading…Oliver complied; marveling where the people could be found to read such a great number of books as seemed to be written to make the world wiser. Which is still a marvel to more experienced people than Oliver Twist, everyday of their lives. (*Oliver Twist* 87)

Oliver - and the narrator's - excitement over the volume of books present in Mr. Brownlow's library has a double meaning. The study allows the reader to better understand Mr. Brownlow as a character; he is intelligent and desires to learn more about the world. At the same time, Mr. Brownlow is able to have a study because of his wealth and the access it provides to education. The excitement Oliver experiences upon seeing the study exemplifies the idea that even though the wealthy have more access to education, those who are poor also hold a desire to learn. Even today it is clear that education is one of the main ways – and sometimes the only way – to get out of poverty. This idea would stand in stark contrast to typically Victorian views that regarded the poor (and criminal) as lazy and deserving of suffering.

In addition to challenging pervasive social norms, *Oliver Twist* was used to "form and [defend] a new Gothic, a new way to depict horrors, stripped of disguises and redundant stage properties" (Mighall 42). Using the Gothic allowed for Dickens to ensure that his readers would feel a personal connection to the characters. This "forced" sympathy would hopefully make the reader find the actions of those who were in power abhorrent and not something they could gloss over since it did not affect them directly.

It is through the Urban Gothic that Dickens is able to elicit such a response from his readers. The subgenre made it easier for Dickens to connect the Gothic aspects of *Oliver Twist* to the Social Problem Novel genre. Once entwined, the genres emphasize the evils of a society that does not take proper care of its underprivileged citizens. Even though the protagonist of the novel is an impoverished orphan, Dickens does not present the lower classes as martyrs nor does he portray those with wealth as cruel and unyielding. Each character, regardless of their class, is written in such a way that allows the reader to form a personalized opinion rather than relying on stereotypes. The portrait painted of Oliver is a sympathetic one; not only due to his poverty but due to his character. On the other hand, Fagin and Bill Sikes live in poverty yet are not sympathetic because they use others as pawns for their own gain. This same duality is seen with the upper class characters as well. From his introduction, Mr. Brownlow is presented as a kind and giving character, the only person who believes that Oliver is telling the truth, and the only character who treats Oliver as a living child. On the other hand, Mr. Bumble the parish beadle consistently acts as though he despises the people who are in the workhouse, and lashes out at Oliver choosing to believe others over him.

Oliver Twist focuses on the cruel ways in which Victorian society treats the lower classes, which, as Dickens wrote about in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) was one of the main causes of the French Revolution. Historian Ruth Glancy, states that "Dickens '[was] struck by the similarities in attitude between the members of the *ancient régime* in France and the ruling classes of nineteenth-century England', both impervious to the suffering of the urban poor" (Horner 118). In *Oliver Twist*, poverty is presented to readers as a norm of life, a norm that is consistently being reinforced by a city that physically and socially separates the poor from the rich.

Although Dickens used the Gothic to examine both the pain that Oliver feels at the hands of society and the extreme wealth that certain characters have; when Oliver interacts with the upper class characters, there is a lack of Gothic tropes. I believe that Dickens chose to reject the Gothic while presenting the reader with the upper class version of London in an effort to emphasize the mistreatment of the poor. If Gothic tropes were added in scenes involving the upper class, it would be easier for readers to claim that all of London was suffering, that it was the city itself that had these Gothic and social dangers rather than something primarily experienced by the poor and other marginalized groups.

After being chased through the street for a crime he was wrongly accused of - an incredibly sublime experience for Oliver - he is saved by Mr. Brownlow, an upper class man who has never met him before:

> The coach rattled away, over nearly the same ground as that which Oliver had traversed when he first entered London in the company of the Dodger; and, turning a different way when it reached the Angel at the Islington, stopped at length before a neat house, in a quiet shady street near Pentonville. Here, a bed was prepared, without loss of time, in which Mr. Brownlow saw his young charge carefully and comfortably deposited; and here, he was tended with a kindness and solicitude that knew no bound. (*Oliver Twist* 71)

Unlike at the workhouse where Oliver was starved or the undertaker's where he was violently beaten, Mr. Brownlow creates a safe haven for Oliver. The lack of Gothic elements in this passage allows for us to understand the difference between the world of the poor and the world of the wealthy. Where the poor are mistreated and live in constant fear and dread, the rich are undeniably living in better conditions providing them with the stability and happiness they need to live a non-Gothicized life.

In comparison, one of the purest versions of the Urban Gothic comes in the form of Fagin's hideout. If we were to place this step of Oliver's journey in accordance to the High Gothic's trajectory, Oliver's entrance into Fagin's hideout would be his entrance into the world of the "primitive".[14] As I've noted, literature in the tradition of the High Gothic is marked by certain generic tendencies, including the tendency to locate terror, horror, and emotional excess in pre-mature, pre-modern, pre-socialized, inhuman, "primitive" spaces. In the High Gothic this generally means into the world of the supernatural whereas in *Oliver Twist* it means into the world of criminals. In the case of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), the protagonist enters the world of the primitive when he gives into lust and has numerous sexual experiences that are violent and deviate from the Western Christian norm. In *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897), characters enter the world of the primitive multiple times. The first being when they enter Transylvania, such as when Jonathan Harker hears about the dangers of his journey; and again when they enter the house of Dracula in an effort to destroy his inhumanity.

For our understanding, Oliver's journey into the primitive is one that is connected to Victorian ideas of criminals, which stemmed from the idea that criminal behavior was the fault of the individual and primarily found in the poorer classes. While the use of primitive in this manner may be problematic, for the sake of understanding how *Oliver Twist* uses the Gothic genre to highlight the problems within society, and for the sake of understanding Victorian ideology, the criminal world is synonymous with the primitive world.

---

[14] Although the vocabulary of the primitive is clearly problematic due to the racist overtones, the use of primitive in this thesis refers only to the Victorian Gothic critical tradition of placing certain characters and people in the role of the Other. Unfortunately, the Other was generally someone of a different race, culture, or social status which furthers the problematic elements of the words use. Additionally, primitive as used here mirrors the use it would have in the 18th and 19th century Gothic texts being referenced in this paper as it allowed for there to be the creation of the Other as would follow in the Victorian mindset. The words use here simply follows as the Victorians would have used it rather than a description of a person of character as being lesser than.

Fagin's hideout is both "primitive" and uncanny to Oliver and the reader. As he travels through the streets of London towards Fagin's hideout, he is presented with images of poverty that are not different from what he experienced while at the workhouse and with the undertaker. Yet, once he reaches the hideout he finds himself in unfamiliar territory:

> Oliver, groping his way with one hand, and having the other firmly grasped by his companion, ascended with much difficulty the dark and broken stairs: which his conductor mounted with an ease an expedition that showed he was well acquainted with them. He threw open the door of a back-room, and drew Oliver in after him. The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt" (*Oliver Twist* 55).

Although we were presented with images of filth and destitution before this scene, the destroyed steps, blackened walls, and lack of light function as markers of the economic status those living within the house have. Oliver's guide presents Fagin as a domestic father figure that will take care of the poor souls that stumble across him. Yet, there are clear differences between the domestic roles that Fagin plays towards Oliver and the role Mr. Brownlow plays.[15] Mr. Brownlow clearly has funds to properly take care of a small child and (although not connected to his wealth) acts kindly towards others regardless of their status in society. Fagin on the other hands appears as impoverished as all the children he "employs" even though he is a collector of stolen goods – a crime that usually left the actor with wealth.

The description of Fagin's entrance is highly Gothic in nature as it is separated from the rest of the world – they must climb a dark staircase to enter – which is something that isn't

[15] Oliver meets Fagin before he meets Mr. Brownlow. The interactions are out of order here to highlight the differences in their treatment of Oliver and the role of the Gothic in depicting poverty versus wealth.

present in the interactions between Mr. Brownlow and Oliver. The gothicness of Fagin's hideout becomes even more apparent when Oliver first sees those who are in the hideout:

> Seated round the table were four or five boys, no older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes, and drinking spirits with the air of middle-ages men. These all crowded about their associate as he whispered a few words to the Jew [Fagin]; and then turned round and grinned at Oliver. So did the Jew himself, toasting-fork in hand. (*Oliver Twist* 55)

Although Dickens simply writes that Fagin and Dawkins[16] grin at Oliver, the grins themselves are presented in a way that feels superficial. The following line emphasizes this, "'This is him Fagin,' said Jack Dawkins; 'my friend Oliver Twist.'" (*Oliver Twist* 55) Although Oliver and the reader does not see it right away, the grins of Jack and Fagin are not as kind as they may initially appear to be. By this point in the novel, Oliver has been abused by those society placed in charge of his aid. These men were all from the middle or upper class prompting them to look down upon the workhouse orphan. When Oliver has finally had enough, he finds a group of people in a similar socio-economic status as him which in turn makes him believe that they will actually take care of him. Since they have probably suffered in similar ways, it makes sense that they would take care of a small child that may bring back memories of their own youth.

Dawkins may believe that he is doing something kind for Oliver but Fagin sees Oliver as a prize, as another young boy to corrupt for his own gain. The youth of the boys in the hideout emphasize Dickens' commentary on the cyclical nature of poverty and criminal activity. The scene presented to the reader, one of a young boy entering the criminal underbelly of London, was realistic for many young boys in Oliver's shoes. Non-fiction writers of the time including

---

[16] Jack Dawkins is known as the "Artful Dodger" due to his work as a pick-pocket and he is the guide that led Oliver through the streets of London to Fagin's hideout.

Henry Mayhew have spoken about how many of the young men in these situations are solely involved out of survival.

Dickens charting of a new Gothic terrain goes as far as to identify the very streets through which Oliver, Fagin, and Sikes pass. And yet despite this emphasis on the recognizable and the proximate he still emphasized distance and defamiliarization" (Mighall 43). Dickens initial audience would most likely have been aware of the places that were mentioned in *Oliver Twist* as Dickens did not stray from the truth while depicting the city of London. By sticking to reality while using Gothic tropes, Dickens was able to make a familiar city appear uncanny and terrifying; from the rundown building that hosts Fagin's hideout to the streets lined with beggars and paupers, Dickens took images that were common to London yet easily overlooked and makes them the focal point of Oliver's journey.

Much later on in the novel, Oliver manages to escape from Fagin for a short time before he is kidnapped and locked away in an attic room. This Gothic prison juxtaposes the room that Oliver is in to the rooms in Mr. Brownlow's house – as was explored earlier in this chapter – the differences in wealth become even more apparent. Additionally, the presentation of Fagin's hideout in this light brings the reader back into the idea of there being a concealed city within London:

> Spiders had built their webs in the angles of the walls and ceilings; and sometimes, when Oliver walked softly into a room, the mice would scamper across the floor, and run back terrified to their holes. With these exceptions, there was neither sight nor sound of any living thing; and often, when it grew dark, and he was tired of wandering from room to room. He would crouch in the corner of the passage by the streetdoor, to be as near living

> people as he could; and would remain there, listening and counting the hours, until the Jew or the boys returned. (*Oliver Twist* 113)

As an Urban Gothic setting, there are clear sublime elements to this small attic room that are highly important to our understanding of the Gothic in Dickens. The only other living beings in the room are spiders and mice who hide from Oliver leaving him alone in the darkness. From his youth, Oliver has realized that he is alone, there are few people who are actually there for him, and most who are there are using him for their own personal gain. Even though he is aware he is being used, Oliver still desires to have his jailers return so that he is not alone. The sublimity of the Gothic is clear in the loneliness Oliver is experiencing in this moment as he starves in his small attic room waiting for even the slightest hint of human company.

This scene is vastly different from the ones shown before of Oliver's time in Mr. Brownlow's manor. Rather than being locked away from humanity, Oliver was nursed back to health and allowed free reign in the manor. In the scene that we examined, Oliver was not only awestruck by the books around him but also by the kindness that was shown to him by Brownlow and those in his manor. Although it can be argued that Fagin and the members of his crew are cruel because they are criminals, the other poor people that Oliver was surrounded by at a young age did not show any difference in their treatment to him. Instead, the reason that Mr. Brownlow is able to be kind to Oliver is because he has the money and the means to do so. The form of poverty that Oliver depicts is not the only one present. Instead, Dickens chooses to integrate evil criminal characters into his work and juxtapose them against the impoverished and sometimes criminal youth who are primarily engaging in these activities for survival.

As depicted by Dickens in *Oliver Twist,* the wealth disparity encountered in London is important as it explains why the treatment of characters by those around them. The primary

Victorian view regarding the English wealth divide was seen as an issue of the individual; something that is easily avoided simply through hard work. Yet, Dickens and others knew that the wealth gap was due to laws enacted by the state instead of personal failings on behalf of individuals. Even though the predominate idea regarding the poor was that they were deserving of their fate, works such as *Oliver Twist* aided in shifting the Victorian mindset towards on more accepting and honest.

Workhouse as a Gothic Space

From early on in the novel, Charles Dickens uses the Gothic themes of power and constraint for many major plot points. At the workhouse, Oliver and the other inhabitants are constantly abused and starved and those who are in power do not seem to care. Long before Oliver leaves the orphanage for the workhouse, he is aware that the workhouse is a place where he will suffer:

> It was no difficult matter for the boy to call tears to his eyes. Hunger and recent ill-usage are great assistants if you want to cry; and Oliver cried very naturally indeed. Mrs. Mann gave him a thousand embraces, and what Oliver wanted a great deal more, a piece of bread and butter, lest he should seem too hungry when he got to the workhouse (*Oliver Twist* 16)

The reader, even without the aid of Gothic elements, would feel sympathy for Oliver as he sobs due to hunger and fear. Mrs. Mann, one of the few people who treat Oliver kindly is doing all she can to make him feel better about this harsh transition yet all he truly wants is some food.

In stark contrast to Mrs. Mann are the rich old men staring at Oliver in disbelief: "'What are you crying for?' inquired the gentleman in the white waistcoat. And to be sure it was

extraordinary. What *could* the boy be crying for?'" (*Oliver Twist* 17). Although *Oliver Twist* attempted to combat stereotypes of the rich and poor, the gentleman in this scene is a stereotype of a wealthy and ignorant man. Rather than understanding that there are others who are suffering, or that people did not willingly choose to be in such dire conditions, the gentleman believes that the workhouses is a favor to Oliver. He cannot grasp the fact that Oliver, and many like him, are likely to be emotionally and physically abused in the name of law. At its core, *Oliver Twist* is a Social Problem Novel that uses Gothic elements to elicit sympathy from its readers. The aforementioned scene functions as a connection between the two genres as it allows for the readers to see how those who have excess are unable to understand the suffering of others while simultaneously feeling sympathy for a small suffering child.

Oliver's lack of power does not begin when he is sent to the workhouse but instead it begins the day that he is born:

> The fact is, there was considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of respiration...There being nobody by, however, but a pauper old woman, who was rendered rather misty by an unwonted allowance of beer; and a parish surgeon who did such matters by contract; Oliver and Nature fought out the point between them" (*Oliver Twist* 11)

The lack of agency Oliver would have that stemmed from Victorian social ideals and political acts is heightened in his natural fight for survival. A birth scene which may not have been uncanny to the reader in a realistic novel is made uncanny due to the location and nature of Oliver's delivery. In many other Victorian novels, including those that are considered Gothic, birth is seen as dirty yet natural. Here, Oliver's birth is uncanny not only because he has been

born on the street outside of a workhouse, but also because of those who are helping him in this time.

Tradition would have called for midwives, a group of familiar women, and family members if they were available. Unfortunately, Oliver's mother is not granted any of these and dies on the street. Oliver only survives with the aid of a drunk old pauper woman and a surgeon who is only helping him because he is legally obligated to do so. Moreover, it is revealed through cruel Mr. Bumble that births like Oliver's are common enough for him to have created a comprehensive naming system:

> We name our foundlings in alphabetical order. The last was a S, - Swubble I named him. This was a T, - Twist, I named *him*. The next one comes will be Unwin, and the next Vilkins. I have got names ready to make to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again when we come to Z. (*Oliver Twist* 16)

Mr. Bumble presents this idea in a matter-of-fact way showing how the nature of his job has led to emotional affect and an inability on his part to understand that these "foundlings" are children who deserve love and care.

One of the most referenced scenes from *Oliver Twist* examines the harsh treatment of the poor by those whose are contractually obligated to help them.[17] The starvation of the workhouse eventually gets to Oliver, and with added peer pressure he brings himself to say:

> 'Please, sir, I want some more.' The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralyzed with wonder; the boys with

[17] The apprentice program that sends Oliver to work with the undertaker would have been a contractual one that gave the undertaker a sum of money in exchange of helping the needy.

> fear...The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arm; and shrieked in solemn conclave," (*Oliver Twist* 19 – 20)

Earlier Dickens explains that parish offers workhouse residents three meals of thin gruel a day, a slice of bread at dinner, and for the adults some beer. This diet would have led to starvation and death regardless of age or the physical labor workhouses usually required. Since this is a Gothic novel, this scene is highly uncanny for the reader. Even if the reader were from a financially insecure family, they would feel sympathy for Oliver as he is berated and beaten simply for asking for more food.

Dickens' depiction of Mr. Bumble increases his uncanny characterization as he is referred to as "the master" and described as both fat and healthy. Not only does this create a clear power dynamic, it also emphasizes the privilege Mr. Bumble has. His status as the parish beadle makes him one of the higher ranking officials at the workhouse and this status is seen in his physical appearance. While he is fat and healthy – clearly not missing any meals or eating gruel – he becomes enraged at the idea that a small child should ask for more. Oliver's fear as he walks up to Mr. Bumble in the hopes of nourishment is palpable and when they are dashed, the reader sees Mr. Bumble as a monster and Oliver as a societal victim.

Since the other children in the workhouse are terrified of what would happen if one of them were to ask for more food, they watch Oliver with bated breath. The norm of starvation in the workhouse is something that is created by a society that actively harms its citizens due to their economic status. This passage is Gothic with the villain being a cross between the workhouse master and the society that created such an inhuman man.

Throughout the course of the novel, Oliver is mistreated in the domestic sphere due to the lack of proper laws and regulations within the political sphere. After asking the master of the workhouse for more food, Oliver finds himself in further isolation:

> He only cried bitterly all day; and, when the long, dismal night came on, spread his little hands before his eyes to shut out the darkness, and crouching in the corner, tried to sleep...and drawing himself closer and closer to the wall, as if to feel even its cold hard surface were a protection in the gloom and loneliness which surrounded him (*Oliver Twist* 21).

This isolation adds to the sublimity of the text as up to this point Oliver has felt alone and as though he has nothing. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that Oliver has felt cut off from society in his life and it will not be the last either. Instead, isolation is routinely used as a form of punishment for Oliver both by people he trusts and by those actively trying to hurt him. Isolation as a form of sublime punishment is seen in numerous bildungsroman including Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In Twain's novel, Huckleberry Finn states that he would rather die than experience that sort of overwhelming loneliness ever again.

When Oliver is finally taken to the workhouse he is sent to work with a funeral director. He has been routinely abused and begins to sob when he realizes that he is being moved once again. In fear of being publicly admonished, Oliver attempts to hide his tears:

> 'Well!' exclaimed Mr. Bumble, stopping short and darting at his little charge a look of intense malignity. 'Well! Of *all* the ungratefulest, and worst-disposed boys as ever I see, Oliver, you are the-'…'So lonely, sir! So very lonely!' cried the child. 'Everybody hates me. Oh! Sir, don't, don't pray be cross to me! The child beat his hand upon his heart; and looked in his companion's face, with tears of real agony." (Dickens 31)

The hostility with which Mr. Bumble looks upon Oliver in this scene makes little sense to modern readers. Even Victorian readers who may have believed that Dickens was sensationalizing Oliver's suffering would have found it difficult to understand Mr. Bumble's ire towards the struggling orphan. As Dickens contemporary read this scene, they hopefully would feel immense sympathy towards Oliver and disdain towards themselves and their society. The sublime feelings creep upon the reader as they read the sorrowful pleas of Oliver and think about actual children who have found themselves in similar or worse situations. Victorians would have felt a strange relationship with Mr. Bumble. He was simply following orders given to him yet he was doing so in a way that only provided Oliver with pain and suffering. The majority of Gothic villains did not stray too far from the behavior of most people which is part of what caused the immense amount of fear. If members of the parish were able to treat defenseless children with such cruelty, what was to say that the same behavior could not come from the reader.

The chapter ends with Oliver alone in a strange place once again. Along with feeling as though he has no one in the world and that those who meet him hate him, Oliver begins to lose hope in life:

> Nor were these the only dismal feelings which depressed Oliver. He was alone in a strange place; and we all know how chilled and desolate the best of us will sometimes feel in such a situation. The boy had no friends to care for, or to care for him...But his heart was heavy, notwithstanding; and he wished, as he crept into his narrow bed, that that were his coffin, and that he could be lain in a calm and lasting sleep in the churchyard ground, with the tall grass waving gently above his head, and the sound of the old deep bell to soothe him in his sleep. (*Oliver Twist* 33)

The Gothic imagery within this passage mixes perfectly with the Social Problem Novel; the only reason that Oliver lies in bed wishing he were dead is because of the mistreatment that he experiences due to society. If he were treated better by anyone in his life he may not wish he were dead but instead wish he was less hungry or had more friends. In writing *Oliver Twist* Dickens did not write a classing bildungsroman of a boy's progression out of poverty; the story in *David Copperfield* is not the same as Oliver's due to the sheer amount of suffering that Oliver endures simply to survive. The true sublimity is the lack of empathy that characters have for Oliver throughout his life.

The Working Woman's Body as a Gothic Space

Oliver is not the only character in the novel that continuously lacks power. Nancy is an interesting character to analyze as she is placed in a traditional female Gothic role while simultaneously pushing against traditional female conventions. As both a maiden in distress and a prostitute, Nancy was one of the characters that Dickens had to defend the introduction he wrote for the novels official non-serialized publication. Some readers and critics disagreed with the sympathetic portrait Dickens painted of Nancy even though she suffered in similar and greater ways that Oliver due to her gender and profession. Due to the Victorian image of a fallen woman, those in Nancy's shoes would have been blamed for their actions regardless of external circumstances.

In comparison to Oliver Nancy has more agency or at least is allowed to believe that she does. While Oliver's lack of agency can be attributed to his age or his discomfort at speaking back to those who hold power over him, Nancy tries to fight back in increasingly larger and more dangerous ways. One of the earliest scenes of Nancy grasping for power occurs when Fagin and

Sikes are plotting to kidnap Oliver from Mr. Brownlow. Although she tries to show strength, Nancy's objections are easily brushed aside: 'She'll go, Fagin,' said Sikes. 'No, she won't, Fagin,' said Nancy. 'Yes, she will, Fagin,' said Sikes. And Mr. Sikes was right. By dint of alternative threats, promises, and bribes, the lady in question was ultimately prevailed upon to undertake the commission" (*Oliver Twist* 82). Even though Nancy is still forced to work with Fagin and Sikes in their plot, the simple act of stating that she will not help them is an act of defiance. Similar to how Oliver's inquiry to Mr. Bumble for more gruel highlighted the power dynamic between Oliver and the parish, this scene emphasizes the power disparity between a fallen women[18] and the men surrounding her.

The Gothic genre had few roles for women, most of which were built on stereotypical tropes. Women could either be a temptress, witch, spinster, or damsel in distress. As a prostitute many would have thought of Nancy as a temptress or even a witch. Yet, since she is abused by the men around her and disregarded by a society that views her as evil, she clearly functions as a damsel in distress. Since women in the Victorian era were granted few rights, poor women were barely recognized as legal citizens. Although Fagin and Sikes manipulate Nancy's situation causing her physical and emotional harm, she would still have been regarded as the sole culprit for her situation. Historian Grace Moore, claims Dickens attempted to combat judgements cast upon her "by having Nancy turn on Fagin and berate him with her corruption, but critics like Thackery still maintained that Dickens had romanticized the criminal class" (Moore 207). These claims aggravated Dickens since, as stated in the official introduction, his intent was not to

[18] A fallen women was often a term used by Victorians to describe prostitutes and other women who were seen as sexually impure.

romanticize the poor but instead to examine the societal ills that led to the consistent suffering and mistreatment of the marginalized.

Readers may have been less likely to sympathize with Nancy since they would not understand her suffering. Her story is told towards the end of the novel while she is trying to help Rose Maylie and Mr. Brownlow save Oliver. She begins their conversation stating: "I am the infamous creature you have heard of, that lives among the thieves, and that never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have given me, so help me God!" (*Oliver Twist* 273). For her entire life, Nancy has been manipulated and abused due to her gender and socio-economic status. Her role as a pawn for Bill Sikes and Fagin is clear throughout the novel, as well as her trade even if Dickens does not explicitly refer to her as a prostitute. Through all of the abuse she endures at their hands Nancy remains faithful to Bill, going as far as to decline help from Mr. Brownlow and Rose Maylie stating:

> I only know that it is so, and not with me alone, but with hundreds of others as bad and wretched as myself. I must go back. Whether it is God's wrath for the wrong I have done, I do not know; but I am drawn back to him through every suffering and ill-usage: and should I be, I believe, I knew that I was to die by his hand at last." (*Oliver Twist* 274)

Even as Rose Maylie offers Nancy a way out of prostitution and the abuse doled out by Sikes and Fagin, Nancy has internalized the Victorian views of fallen women and the impoverished.

This mentality leads Nancy down a path that will only bring her pain, suffering and, as she acknowledges, death. Yet, since it is the only life that she knows, she is called back to the twisted sense of security Fagin and Sikes provide. Many of the sublimity Nancy experiences stems from prevalent issues during the Victorian era. By calling her a Gothic damsel in distress, we are

recognizing that her suffering is from the men who abuse her and a society that refuses to acknowledge her. Nancy is not the root of evil, she is not the temptress or the witch; she is simply an impoverished woman being used by the men around her.

In the preface of the official novel, Dickens wrote "it has been observed of Nancy that her devotion to the brutal house-breaker does not seem natural" (x). Bill Sikes, the brutal house-breaker, has an extremely tight hold on Nancy. When Nancy is sent to gather Oliver from Mr. Brownlow, Bill goes with her so that Fagin can ensure she does not deflect. Yet, looking into the life of a Victorian prostitute or street-walker, it is easy to see why Nancy would endure the cruelty of Bill and Fagin in the same way that Oliver endures the cruelty of the workhouse.

While conducting research for *London Labor and the London Poor*, Henry Mayhew interviewed and examined impoverished people on every spectrum. One streetwalker Mayhew interviewed explained that she "continued walking the streets for three years, sometimes making a good deal of money, sometimes none, feasting one day and starving the next" (Moore 208). While speaking with Rose Maylie, Nancy states that women like her: "Set our rotten hearts on any man, and let him fill the place that has been a blank through all our wretched lives" and that she should "pity us for having only one feeling of the woman left, and for having that turned, by a heavy judgement, from a comfort and a pride, into a new means of violence and suffering" (*Oliver Twist* 275). Even as Nancy is tormented by Sikes and Fagin, she has more stability in her life living with them than if she were to attempt and survive on her own. She, and other women in her situation, are so entrenched in their pain and societal guilt that they begin to believe that they are deserving of their own suffering.

Nancy intervenes while Fagin is beating Oliver berating him for his actions against the small child. In doing so, the reader gains some insight into Nancy's youth:

> I thieved for you when I was a child not half as old as this!' pointing to Oliver. 'I have been in the same trade, and in the same service, for twelve years since'…'it is my living; and the cold, wet, dirty streets are my home; and you're the wretch that drove me to them so long ago, and that'll keep me there, day and night, day and night, till I die.'(*Oliver Twist* 201)

Nancy's statements accentuate her lack of agency and the uncanny use of her body. We can infer that the thieving she did as a child was quickly shifted to prostitution by Fagin since one could earn more money off women and even young boys this way. The length of time that Nancy was working for Fagin reinforced the idea that Nancy has no real connection to her body. Fagin, the wretch, that will hold Nancy captive until she dies is the reason for this disconnect that she appears to have with her body. Those who purchase her services are also to blame for this as they perpetuate the cycle of prostitution and poverty.

Even after Nancy's outburst, Fagin, the boys in his care, and Bill Sikes, who arguably is the closest to Nancy, brush off her outburst and fainting to move on with their conversation. The apathy shown towards Nancy and her plight holds a mirror to the beliefs many Victorians had regarding prostitutes. Larry Wolff describes this trade writing, "runaway girls do not become 'street-sellers merely' but; they more generally fall into a course of prostitution, or sometimes may be ostensibly street-selling as a way of accosting men, and perhaps, for an attractive pretense to be depraved, that they are poor, innocent girls" (232). The idea that one can "fall into a course or prostitution" is incredibly strange, and in the case of Nancy is proven false. Often these young girls are seen as a means to make money, in the same way that Fagin sees the young pickpockets he works with. They are used not only by the people purchasing them or the people attempting to sell them, but also by a society that looks down upon them for falling into such a

course. The addition of prostitution, especially since Nancy began at such a young age, would have been a key Gothic element as readers would have felt an uncanny horror over something so common being revealed in its true despicable form.

Due to the drastic light in which Dickens paints Nancy and others in such circumstances, "there was a push for the regulation of prostitution…this led to the Contagious Diseases Act of 1860 and William Acton's *Prostitution Considered in its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects*, published in 1857" (Wolff 235). Over time, the moral stance that Victorians took on prostitution shifted but the general population continued to blame the women rather than those who were paying, those who overlooked the abuse, and a society that demonized women who sold their bodies in order to survive. Dickens himself worked with a movement:

> In the 1840s Dickens became much involved with the rehabilitation of prostitutes at Urania House, and when in 1846 he elaborated a programmatic fantasy for the disciplinary improvement of prostitute, his solution was a system of 'marks' which made the problem into one of general manners and morals. (Wolff 236)

These moral values often put some distance between the actual issue and facets that are easier to acknowledge.

Due to her duality as a character, Nancy's role in the novel helps readers to understand the different ways that working women were seen as threats and as objects, as the damsel in distress and the dangerous temptress. This characterization fed on and pushed against the problematic societal norms that led to Nancy's mistreatment and death. According to Wood, "Nancy is an imperiled heroine who navigates the labyrinthine slums of London like her more passive, innocent Gothic predecessors traversed ruined castles. Nancy has vivid premonitions of her death, Sikes is haunted by her ghost." Nancy is granted power after her death to supply some

justice to Sikes as he appears to go mad after her death. Where Fagin is hung for his misdeeds towards Oliver and others, Sikes is mentally tortured for his evil actions.

In the passage that depicts Nancy's death, the sublime and supernatural play large roles in bringing *Oliver Twist* deeper into the Gothic tradition. After killing Nancy, Bill Sikes is full of terror which is only amplified by Dickens' language: "of all the bad deeds that, under the cover of darkness, had been committed within wide London's bounds since night hung over it, that had been the worst. Of all the horrors that rose with an ill scent upon the morning air, that was the foulest and most cruel" (*Oliver Twist* 300). Dickens claims that the death of Nancy is the worst deeds to occur in London as well as the foulest and most cruel horror that occurred up to that point. By making such drastic claims, Dickens would be pulling for sympathy from his readers and challenging the ideas that she deserved her fate.

After Sikes brutally beats Nancy to death, she twitches slightly startling him out of his fear induced stupor:

> He had not moved; he had been afraid to stir. There had been a moan and motion of the hand; and, with terror added to rage, he had struck and struck again. Once he threw a rug over it; but it was worse to fancy the eyes...he had plucked it off again. And there was the body - mere flesh and blood, no more - but such flesh, and so much blood! (*Oliver Twist* 300-301)

The eyes that stare towards the ceiling, her mutilated flesh, and the blood pooling around the corpse haunt the readers imagination as well as Sikes'. Nancy's already gruesome death has a traumatic aftermath as her corpse is beaten by the man she loved and wanted to save. Even with the knowledge that Nancy was a prostitute, readers would sympathize with her along with her desire to leave the criminal underworld behind. Nancy, like Oliver, suffers not due to personal

inadequacies or evil tendencies but instead due to a society that routinely shuns, chastises, and disregards those who do not fit into a certain stoic socio-economic structure. The Gothic use of Nancy enables her to function as a more sympathetic character especially when juxtaposed against the cruelty of Sikes's actions.

Fagin

In the majority of Gothic texts, terror and horror are explored through the classic Gothic tropes of the sublime and the uncanny. In the case of *Oliver Twist*, characters and situations that use the sublime or uncanny are primarily concerned with the question of power. This form of power is usually found within the political or domestic sphere. Mr. Bumble has political power yet does not use this power for good instead allowing children to suffer at parish institutions. Fagin holds domestic power over the children he keeps in his services as a collector of stolen goods and Mr. Brownlow has domestic power as he is one of the only characters who looks out for Oliver and actively attempts to treat him as a child in need. For this section we are going to focus on inequalities that occur within the domestic sphere as "Gothic fiction depicts heroes and heroines of the domestic realm. The conflicts of Gothic fiction are played out less on the political stage, than within the intra-family sphere which is nonetheless arranged around historical and political oppositions" (Mighall 10).

Through our examination of the Gothic in *Oliver Twist*, we must leave the workhouse and travel into the strangely domestic criminal underworld of London. In his critical text *London's Underworld,* Thomas Holmes describes the type of person that one would find among those in this other world. Holmes writes, "a motley lot they are; figure and speech, complexion and dress all combine to create dismay; but they have all one common characteristic. They want

money! And are not particular about the means of getting it." The language used by Holmes is incredibly similar to the nonfiction Gothic tone taken by Mayhew in his text *London Labor and the London Poor*. Both Mayhew and Holmes are attempting to highlight the shortcomings of those in power to properly handle poverty and the criminal activity born from it. Moreover, the language used by Dickens to describe Fagin and his crew stem from the High Gothic's depiction of villains. Yet, Dickens also drew from reality taking from criminals such as Ikey Solomon who received money from stolen property and used children as pickpockets.

In one introduction to *Oliver Twist* written by Edwin Percy Whipple, Fagin is described as having a:

> Soul as yellow and shriveled as his face; he is wicked to the very core of his being; he so much delights in crime that he establishes a sort of academy to teach boys the rudiments of vice and villainy; he gloats and chuckles over the debasement of their bodies and the damnation of their souls; and he is connected with humanity only by the craven fear which makes him start and tremble even in is ecstasies of avarice and malignity. He belongs to the progeny of the devil by direct descent.

Yet, the Fagin that the reader and Oliver are first introduced to does not fit the depiction written by Whipple. Instead, the first description of Fagin comes from one of his wards while Oliver walks alone to London. While on the road, Oliver runs into a boy his age and they have a conversation regarding Fagin: "I know a 'spectable old gentleman as lives there, wot'll give you lodgings for nothink, and never ask for the change - that is, if any gentleman he knows introduces you" (*Oliver Twist* 53). The first thing that a reader will recognize from this passage is the diction used by the other boy which highlights his social status. Moreover, both the reader and Oliver initially see Fagin as someone who takes care of those who are in need or are down

on their luck. With depictions such as this, the reader initially sees Fagin as someone who lives within the domestic sphere, someone who will act as the father figure Oliver never had.

Contrasting Fagin's domestic description is the Gothic description of the hideout itself. The blackened walls, lack of light, and the High Gothic trope of entering the world of the primitive are all present within that scene. description of Fagin that the reader is given by Dickens underscores his role as the Gothic villain and the Gothic other:

> There was a deal table before the fire...and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very shriveled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare, and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and the clothes-horse. (*Oliver Twist* 55)

Fagin is both a criminal mastermind and a domestic figure. He is Gothic in his description as a villainous looking man standing over children; yet, he is also doing laundry and cooking, actions traditionally done by women in the domestic sphere of the home. The juxtaposition of a domestic villain is highly uncanny as, besides the step-mothers in fairytales, Victorians expected domestic spaces and the people who created them to be virtuous and giving. By placing a villain such as Fagin in this role, the narrative pushes against societal roles and the idea that these roles are actually followed. Mr. Bumble and Fagin, although incredibly different characters, are presented as Oliver's main caregiving options yet they both enact the most extreme physical and emotional abuses against him.

It would be wrong to write about Fagin without delving into the anti-Semitic nature of the character even if Dickens himself claimed that antisemitism wasn't his goal. In his 1865 novel *Our Mutual Friend,* Dickens attempted to fix this slight against the Jewish community with the

character Mr. Riah. Yet, the damage had already been done due to Cruikshank, Dickens usual illustrator's, image of Fagin. Maria Cristina Paganoni describes this writing:

> Cruikshank fully accepted Dickens, representation of the old crook as evil, inscribing his body with the combination of stick 'Jewish' traits enumerated in the text…he appears to combine and condense in his person the features of the utmost villainy and Jewishness, as if they were somehow inextricable. A thief, a miser, a pimp, possibly a pederast and paedophiliac, he is part of a Jewish peddling network that inhabits the London underworld. (310)

Fagin is presented as a domestic villain and due to his Jewish identity fits perfectly into the Victorian role of the Other. Due to this, he becomes both an Urban Gothic and a High Gothic villain and provides the reader with the uncanny as well as the sublime.

Moreover, the domestic elements of Fagin's character stem from the anti-Semitic idea of an "effeminate Jew". During the medieval ages ideal masculinity stemmed from knightly ideals of chivalry prompting writers and to depict Jews as "hypermasculine, representing a spectrum of male behaviors that are unacceptable for knights" (Tauber 192). The trope of the Jew-Devil that grew from this hypermasculinity shifted as capitalism became the norm and instead the trope of "the Jew-Sissy emerges to shore up a masculinity insecure about its newly 'softened' image" (Tauber 192). This idea of a "Jew-Sissy[19]" is best represented by the image of Fagin in the kitchen cooking and cleaning while the young boys and Sikes are relaxing. The apron and long curly hair also add to this feminine image.

[19] According to Tauber, "[sissy] implicitly insults men who cannot get sex with women and (therefore?) engage in homosexual acts…Biberman uses it to describe the 'weak man unable to resist sinful heterosexual acts" (192)

In the High Gothic, villains were usually from the lower classes and stood in stark contrast from the protagonists. As we examined in *Dracula*, being the foreign Other made Dracula a High Gothic villain and his role as an aristocrat added some Urban Gothic elements to his characterization. According to Hannah Ewence, "The image of 'the Jew' has remained constant in one regard – as a signifier of difference…the association between the Jewish immigrant and fears of national degradation became so ingrained with political as well as popular discourse" (215). Although not based in truth and often incredibly anti-Semitic, the depiction of Fagin in *Oliver Twist* was one that brought adds to the Urban Gothic since "the urban Jew was not only associated with speculative investments and hawking his wares, however. He also…connected with Victorian anxieties about filth and contamination" (Nord 29). These anxieties allowed for Fagin's actions to be read as cruel and unforgiving in the novel which by extension made the actions of those in the real world appear just as cruel and unforgiving. Nord also argues that Dickens did not make write Fagin in an effort to "assault the Jews but to show up the actual philosophers, especially political economist, who preach self-interest for all individuals but actually believe their own interests should take precedence over all others" (33). The wealth Fagin gains through Nancy and the group of pick-pockets is never directly seen by those doing the brunt of the work. They may be housed and fed but they are also abused and placed in danger constantly for Fagin's own goals.

Fagin does not retain a purely domestic villain visage for too long. In the chapter after the reader and Oliver meet Fagin, the true cruelty of Fagin comes through as he allows for Oliver to be chased by a mob for something that he did not due. Additionally it is revealed that Fagin only desires to keep Oliver because he is small and can easily slip in and out of certain situations. Once it is revealed that Fagin is simply using Oliver for his own desires, his true villainy is

emphasized in descriptions by Dickens. More importantly, the descriptions used by Dickens to describe Fagin after these revelations matches with High Gothic descriptions of villains:

> The mud lay thick on the stones, and black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he guided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved. (*Oliver Twist* 118-19)

The image presented by Dickens here highlights the darkness within Fagin and his cruel intentions. As he slinks throughout the street, the reader experiences uncertainty about his actions and fear regarding the location he has found himself within. As Mighall states, "this passage reinforces the strangeness of the environment and its inhabitants and establishes a distance between the respectable and the outcast, the observer and the observed" (58). Moreover, the image of Fagin as a loathsome reptile brings him back into the High Gothic with images of monsters. Dickens transforms the High Gothic into the Urban Gothic by placing Fagin within the slums of the city where the downtrodden would have been.

Returning for a moment to Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* it is clear to see how Fagin's movements throughout the city can be read in the same way as Dracula's movements within his castle. Jonathan Harker is constantly met with horrifying images while in Dracula's castle, one of the most vivid being while he watches Dracula crawl out of the window:

> I did not see the face, but I knew the man by the neck and the movement of his back and arms...my feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over the dreadful abyss,

> face down with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings...I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones, worn clear of the mortar by the stress of years, and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves along a wall. (Stoker 50)

Although Stoker published *Dracula* after Dickens published *Oliver Twist*, the two rely on similar conventions to highlight the evil nature of their villains. The first being the dark locations they are placed in; Dracula in his prison castle located far from civilization and Fagin in the meandering poverty ridden streets of London.

Mighall explores the labyrinth like streets of London that Fagin and Oliver travel through stating "the image of a labyrinth provides a model for organizing a dichotomous city, and for suggesting that secrets and mysteries may lurk in its darker recesses. These darker places of the city were increasingly and almost exclusively associated with its poorer districts." (Mighall 32) Isolation and labyrinths are a commonly used trope in High Gothic literature including works by Edgar Allan Poe[20]. One of Poe's texts that uses labyrinths in a similar manner to Dickens is "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) published the same year as *Oliver Twist.* The labyrinth like mansion that Poe describes is a physical representation of the mental condition of the residents and the speaker. Since it is not a true maze, it functions more as a symbol than a functional edifice. Dickens uses the image of the labyrinth as he describes the "maze of the mean dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter" (*Oliver Twist* 120) to show potentially overwhelm the reader causing them to feel the same sublime energy for London that Poe's reader's do for Usher's mansion.

[20] Edgar Allan Poe is an American Gothic Writer who was a contemporary to Dickens. Although American, Poe and Dickens both used the Gothic to analyze society as well as individuality.

Labyrinths and mazes were a way for Gothic authors to examine the contradictions, indecisiveness, and even the emotional and mental state of their characters. When Oliver is taken back to Fagin by Nancy and Sikes, he begins to feel panicked and confined as they walk through the labyrinthian streets of London. The readers begins to feel overwhelmed in a similar way as when reading about Fagin skulking through the streets. These feelings are closely associated to Fagin and his workers causing the reader to associate meandering streets with deviousness and danger.

Yet, even with his malignant nature, Fagin takes on a similar roles as Mr. Bumble. He lectures Oliver about the dangers of being ungrateful – even though he has very little to be grateful for:

> Mr. Fagin took the opportunity of reading Oliver a long lecture on the crying sin of ingratitude: of which he clearly demonstrated he had been guilty, to no ordinary extent, in willfully absenting himself from the society of his anxious friends; and still more in endeavoring to escape from them after so much trouble and expense had been incurred in his recovery. (*Oliver Twist* 113)

The tone of this passage is reminiscent of the lectures Oliver has received in the past from Mr. Bumble. While walking to the Funeral home where Oliver was to work, Mr. Bumble chastises Oliver for crying, calling him ungrateful and rude. In both instances, Dickens is relying on the reader to understand the satire - often used in Social Problem Novels - in these lectures. Mr. Bumble and Fagin are originally presented as domestic, even paternal, when first introduced to Oliver yet later openly abuse him for their own personal gain or due to apathy. Their lectures hold no power over Oliver or the reader as they are not in a position to claim moral authority over him.

Fagin shifts from reprimanding Oliver to telling him a story of another young boy who attempted to reject or betray him:

> [Fagin] related the dismal and affecting history of a young lad whom, in his philanthropy, he had succored under parallel circumstances, but who, proving unworthy of his confidence, and evincing a desire to communicate with the police, had unfortunately come to be hanged at the Old Bailey in the morning. (*Oliver Twist* 113-4)

Once again, the actions and words of Fagin align with Mr. Bumble's early in Oliver's story. Both men attempt to put the fear of death into Oliver by claiming if he continues to act in the way that he does - which is always for survival - then he will be imprisoned and hung. Mr. Bumble and Fagin instill a sublime fear of death into Oliver while also inflicting enough pain that he finds himself yearning for it. Although Death has multiple roles in literature, the Gothic genre usually feeds on the sublime fear of death. Often, it is masked by the fear of the unknown, of what is lurking in the shadows, of the potential suffering and pain that may be lurking on the other side.

Another often present role for Death stems from the Romantic idealization of death as a way to reach peace in the midst of intense suffering. For Dickens, the second role of death is experienced by Oliver as "Dickens continues to be the Romantic in that death, like the countryside, offers final escape" (Kirkpatrick 20). While Fagin and Sikes gear up to rob the Maylie's Oliver finds himself incredibly shaken:

> He looked like death; not death as it shows in shroud and coffin, but in the guide it wears when life has just departed; when a young and gentle spirit has, but an instant, fled to Heaven, and the gross air of the world has not had the time to breathe upon the changing dust it hallowed. (*Oliver Twist* 125)

At multiple harrowing points in the novel, Oliver things about or is surrounded by images of Death. For him, these serve as an escape from the abuse and isolation he finds himself consistently thrown into. These moments are both sublime and uncanny for the reader as they engage with the idea of a young child yearning for the peaceful release of death.

A child as young as Oliver usually would not feel suicidal or desire death unless they were abused and thoroughly traumatized. Readers would feel sympathy for Oliver while he is getting abused and while he is imagining his escape from this life of pain. The claims critics made regarding sensationalism of Oliver's story along with the belief that the poor were not actually suffering due to the extreme laws set in place held less power in the public's mind than little Oliver Twist locked away in Fagin's den wishing for death so that he did not have to commit crimes.

Although different, the High Gothic and Urban Gothic have many similar characteristic that are centered on the emotions they typically evoke to readers. Both *Dracula* and *Oliver Twist* have elements of both, yet it is through Dickens merging of the Gothic with the Social Problem Novel that *Oliver Twist* directly chastises Victorian society and politics. Although Fagin is regarded as the main Gothic villain, Dickens also posits Victorian society as a villain since the actions of the characters are dependent on the society they were born into. From the cruelest of characters to ones the reader is meant to sympathize with, Dickens emphasizes that their actions are driven by the society that raised them and promptly threw them aside. It is the fault of the society, and not the individual citizen for the systemic oppression and suffering that citizens endure.

Social Class and Social Failings

As has been argued throughout this thesis, one of the main ways that the Gothic genre aided Charles Dickens as he wrote the Social Problem Novel of *Oliver Twist* is its ability to evoke sublime emotions in readers. These emotions were meant to cause readers to sympathize for the poor Other depicted in the novel. Although *Oliver Twist* is a bleak novel – but not as bleak as *Bleak House* – the novel ends on a relatively positive note. Oliver is adopted by Mr. Brownlow and realizes that he comes from a wealthy family, a family that is still mostly alive. Yet, in Victorian England class mobility was extremely rare. Technically *Oliver Twist* is not truly about class mobility as Oliver was born into wealth, he was just never aware of that fact.

Mr. Brownlow is one of the first characters to come to the realization that Oliver should not have suffered in the ways he did. This idea does not arise in his mind after the revelation that Oliver is a member of the Maylie family but instead this occurs while he is taking Oliver away from police custody. Once it is revealed that Monk is Oliver's wicked cousin, Mr. Brownlow quickly works to end Oliver's undeserved suffering. He tells Monk to "make restitution to an innocent and unoffending child, for such he is, although the offspring of a guilty and most miserable love" (*Oliver Twist* 313). Although the statement could be read in a way that places other orphan or impoverished children at fault for their conditions, it also works to emphasize any semblance of sympathy that the reader may have for Oliver.

Dickens grants Oliver a happy ending that would not have been realistic regarding the stoicism of Victorian society and politics. Thankfully, Oliver is able to embrace his newfound family prompting Dickens to write "joy and grief were mingled into the cup; but there were no bitter tears: for even grief itself arose so softened, and clothes in such sweet and tender recollections, that it became a solemn pleasure, and lost all character of pain" (*Oliver Twist* 331).

The pain and desire for peace in death that Oliver felt throughout his childhood melts away once he has found people who care about him and desire to take care of him. The social commentary explored by Dickens here is a bit strained as it appears to say that the only way to escape abuse and poverty sanctioned by the government is to be lucky enough to have a wealthy family.

On the other hand, Victorian readers would feel immense shock if an aristocratic child was starved, abused, and left for dead - all of which occurred to Oliver when he is believed to be an orphan. Even before he becomes involved with the criminal activity of Fagin, Oliver is a member of the Victorian underworld as he has nothing, not even a proper name. The only times that he is treated as a human are when evil characters are using him and when he is taken in by Mr. Brownlow and his then unknown family respectively.

If Mr. Bumble - and others who abused Oliver - were aware of his lineage, they would never have dreamed of speaking to him in the way that they do let alone physically and emotionally berating him. Unfortunately, Oliver's treatment is almost entirely dependent on his perceived socio-economic status:

> From Oliver's point of view the novel insists on the utter incompatibility between the underworld and the life of respectable society...and yet from another point of view suggests that if Fagin's den seems more human than the workhouse, the life of crime preferable to the official charity institutions of society, then the responsibility for this lies at the door of that same respectable society. (Gilmour 120)

Through Gilmour's statement, the idea that society is the main Gothic villain can be fully realized. Oliver's desire for death is presented far more often in the early chapters of the novel when he is neglected at the orphanage, starved and isolated at the workhouse, and viciously beaten and abused by the undertaker. While Fagin, Sikes, and Monk make Oliver miserable, and

their mistreatment is just as selfish as the parish, they initially do a better job at making Oliver feel welcomed and safe.

The acknowledgement on behalf of Mr. Brownlow, Charles Dickens, and most importantly the reader, that Oliver would not have been treated this way if his lineage was known further paints Victorian society in a negative light; one that is uncanny to the reader and reiterates the idea that a society that neglects its own people due to their poverty is one that is both dangerous and evil. Gilmour states, "*Oliver Twist* both makes this recognition and recoils from it, acknowledging the common humanity of Oliver and the Dodger and simultaneously vindicating the innate gentility of the hero: Oliver at the end is re-clothed and sent to school; the Dodger is transported[21]" (120). The High Gothic's trope of placing characters that can be qualified as a racial, cultural, social, or even economic Other as the primary - often only - villain is both challenged and utilized by Dickens in *Oliver Twist.* Charles Dickens does not excuse Fagin or Bill Sikes for their behavior, both pay a price that fits their crimes well. Yet, Dickens also acknowledges that Fagin and Sikes are a product of the society they are in and therefore all Victorians should re-examine privileges they have and work towards creating a better more equitable future

[21] The novel closes with three meaningful deaths that occur at different times. Nancy is the first meaningful death as she is beat by Bill Sikes while attempting to lead them both away from the criminal underworld. Bill Sikes dies after he murders Nancy; a mob hounds him in a similar manner to when Oliver was chased before meeting Mr. Brownlow. This prompts Sikes to attempt a hostage situation and hang himself in the process of attempting to escape. Finally, Fagin is captured and sent to be hanged. Although he tries to gain pity from others before his execution, it only causes the reader to see him as hypocritical and weak.

Helping the Damned: The Gothic in *Great Expectations*

Introduction to *Great Expectations*

Published thirty years after *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations* explores complex ideas about social class and mobility, criminality, and gender. In 1861, Charles Dickens began the process of writing and publishing chapters in magazines, capturing the attention of new audiences and exciting his existing fans. The story of Pip intrigued readers as Oliver's had done in the past, and continued Dickens' trend of using Urban Gothic elements to evaluate Victorian anxieties stemming from socio-economic and political ideology.

Dickens closed *Oliver Twist* with the revelation that Oliver has had wealth and a family, yet, due to criminal activity were unaware of one another. This adds a complexity to the sympathy that readers felt for Oliver. Questions arise regarding if he is more deserving of sympathy or if his suffering should hold more weight simply because he was from a wealthy and well-known family before. If the true intention of the novel was to question society's treatment of the poor and marginalized, then Oliver's suffering should hold weight regardless of his hidden social class. Although the majority of readers sympathize with Oliver regardless of this realization, there is weight behind the change.

The story Charles Dickens creates in *Great Expectations* is similar in many ways to *Oliver Twist,* yet different enough to answer the questions that arose in his earlier text. Pip, like Oliver, is an orphan but since he has been raised by his sister and her blacksmith husband Joe Gargery, he has more structure and love. Although his sister Ms. Joe Gargery "had established a great reputation with herself and the neighbours because she had brought me up 'by hand'" (*Great Expectations* 6), Pip is still given a home and affection from his family and the other adults he

interacts with through them. Pip has the added benefit of being from the lower middle or working class. This adds stability to Pip's life, stability Oliver was never able to attain.

Dickens expertly opens the novel with a disturbing High Gothic scene. While in the marsh country graveyard, Pip morbidly dreams up what his parents acted and looked like solely based on their tombstones. He is ripped away from this uncanny action by an escaped convict who we later learn to be Magwitch. This initial incident cumulates into a search party that directs the reader's attention to the intense emotions that surround criminals in the society Pip lives in. The novel continues with Pip being invited to the Gothic edifice, Satis House, where he meets Estella and Miss Havisham. It is through his interaction at this estate that his desire for social mobility is realized. The rest of the novel, which takes place in a different London than the one readers were introduced to in *Oliver Twist*, focuses on Pip's rise and fall in society while addressing the system of class mobility that affected criminal behavior in the Victorian era.

Similar to how Dickens used elements of the Social Problem Novel to bolster the Gothic aspects of *Oliver Twist*, he continues on with this tradition but chooses the anti-Silver Fork Novel for *Great Expectations*. Both genres focus on the interplay between social power, gender, and class mobility but focus on different social circles and inequalities. In the *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840*, Alison Adburgham explains how the anti-Silver Fork Novel in popularity again in the 1840s and 1850s as authors desired to expose the high society characters for their snobbish behavior. Yet, the high bred characters in *Great Expectations* – similar to Fagin in *Oliver Twist*[22] – highlight the complex duality of more

[22]Although Fagin is not a wealthy character, I am harkening back to his role as a collector of stolen goods who runs a sort of half-way house for pickpockets. His stolen wealth would not make him a character in a Silver Fork Novel, but it does allow for us to understand the complex relationship Victorians had with class and wealth as well as one of the central issues within *Great Expectations;* social mobility.

high-brow and wealthy characters. Similar to how Fagin functions as a Gothic villain and a domestic figure, the characters in *Great Expectations* also have dual natures. Pip is the protagonist of the novel that also serves as a mirror onto the reader. This role becomes difficult as the reader is exposed to more of Pip's elitist ideas that become heightened when he believes he is finally a gentleman. The characters surrounding Pip also feed into these elitist ideas especially Magwitch and Miss Havisham who use wealth – earned and stolen – as a weapon against those who have harmed them in the past. Compeyson, the primary Gothic villain uses his class and wealth as a way to manipulate those around him and those who work under him. Pip and Estella are the two main victims of the class mobility struggle. Estella is similar to Nancy as they play a dichotomous role of damsel in distress and temptress.

Through the publication of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* respectively, Dickens helped to expose the issues lurking in the conservative Victorian mindset. Where readers were meant to sympathize with Oliver's suffering, readers could potentially see themselves in Pip as he learns to sympathize with criminals and becomes less elitist. Although the majority of Dickens readers were middle class, he is able to function as a mirror due to his class progression. Growing up in marsh country[23] under the wing of his sister and Joe Gargery, a working class blacksmith, Pip is a member of the working class. His transition into the genteel middle class is part of what makes the novel so uncanny; Pip becomes a part of the class perspective that the reader is assumed to share.

Great Expectations analyzes the intricacies of Victorian class structure and mobility Victorian class structure by placing readers directly into Pip's world through the use of narration.

[23] According to modern calculations, Pip most likely was raised in Moreton-in-Marsh which is about two hours away from London. There are closer marshes but they have less of a village attached to them.

Oliver's story is told through a third-person omniscient point of view. The narrators tone which was often sarcastic or annoyed served as a guide for the reader yet created some distance between Oliver and the reader. While this did not take away from the readers ability to engage sympathetically with Oliver, the first person narrative of *Great Expectations* immediately creates a relationship between Pip and the reader. The emotions Pip feels and experiences that occur throughout the novel are delivered directly to the reader without being filtered through a narrator. The first person narration of *Great Expectations* connects readers intimately to Pip thus allowing them to fully understand the emotional journey he went through. As stated before, the uncanny as used in the Gothic blends the familiar and the strange together. Pip's narrative voice is an uncanny mirror of the middle class perspective since he has shifted class positions ultimately finding himself in the middle class.

Unlike *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield* which have more of a biographical tone, *Great Expectations* focuses on a journey that needs to be made by society as a whole and not one individual person. Although Pip is at the center of the novel and he "does achieve in the end a state of self-recognition and a measure of muted happiness, the controlling mood of the novel is one of resignation" (Gilmour 113). This is because at its core *Great Expectations* is a novel centered around the stoic class mobility of the Victorian era and the myriad of issues it causes for members of every class. Hagan eloquently describes this stating;

> In particular, [*Great Expectations*] is the story of a restless young boy from the lower classes who comes into possession of a fortune he has done nothing to earn, found a host of romantic aspirations upon it at the cost of becoming a snob, comes to be disappointed both romantically and socially, and finally, with a more mature knowledge of himself and the world, works out his regeneration." (169)

Although *Oliver Twist* also served as a commentary on Victorian society, it mainly focused on garnering sympathy for marginalized groups. By filtering the story through Pip's first person narrative journey from the working class to the middle class, *Great Expectations* is able to hold a mirror to the social failings surrounding Victorian anxieties about gender, social mobility, and criminal activity.

Social Class and Social Failings

As examined before, the opening chapter of *Great Expectations* dives directly into High Gothic imagery as Pip imagines what his parents would have been like based on their tombstones; "As I never saw my father of my mother, and never saw any likeness of them…my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones" (*Great Expectations* 1). The image of a young boy standing alone in the marsh graveyard attempting to conjure images of his parents based off graves is a highly Gothic one. The foundation of many Gothic texts, sublime images immediately instill unsettling and eerie feelings into the reader.

In many High Gothic texts, the sublime – images that evoke powerful emotions – and the uncanny – familiar aspects of life made unfamiliar – underscores the issues facing society. Horace Walpole used *The Castle of Otranto* to explore Eighteenth Century anxiety surrounding sex and violence. Anxieties regarding human nature and reputation were examined in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson while Bram Stoker examined the Victorian anxieties regarding modernity, feminine sexuality, and queerness in *Dracula*. As was examined in the previous chapter, Dickens' use of the Gothic genre allowed for readers to understand social anxieties primarily by exploring dire but realistic versions of different classes and people. In

Oliver Twist, Dickens used the Urban Gothic to explore the mistreatment of poor and marginalized groups by depicting London as a Gothic space and all fit into particular Gothic tropes. *Great Expectations* follows this legacy through the image of the marsh and the varying roles the characters play in Pip's life.

It is clear in the novel that Pip does not truly realize his own socio-economic status until he is introduced to Miss Havisham and Estella. The excitement Joe, Mrs. Joe, and Mr. Pumblechook express when Miss Havisham shows interest in Pip, and the comments made by Estella while they are playing cards emphasize his existence in a socio-economic class that requires outside help to become successful. The general image that Victorians had of the working and lower classes stemmed from the idea that "people who didn't rise in the world were assumed to be at fault. They were seen to be lazy, extravagant, or proud and therefore responsible for their own poverty" (Hughes). To explore and eventually combat this idea, Dickens uses Urban Gothic in his characterization of central characters. Where the High Gothic favored characters of high birth by painting them in positive lights while the lower classes were usually villains, in *Great Expectations,* the three genteel middle class characters Compeyson, Miss Havisham, and Estella manipulate others for their personal gain. Yet, Magwitch and Pip, members of the lower and working class aren't presented as the epitome of kindness and good moral character. Instead, each character can be read as Gothic in their own right and stands in for an anxiety the Victorians held about gender, social mobility, and class.

Magwitch & Compeyson – Criminals and Class Traitors

As we explored in *Oliver Twist*, Victorian views on criminals were often based on the problematic stereotype of the lower classes lacking the same moral and mental capacity as the

wealthy. Compeyson and Magwitch are complicated characters for the both the Victorians and modern readers. Although Magwitch is the first character besides Pip that the reader meets, his backstory is not revealed until the forty-second chapter of the novel. While attempting to explain his past to Pip, Magwitch presents Pip with his journal so that he can fully understand what he was going through. In a way by providing Pip with his journal, Magwitch is presenting him with a first-person narrative of his life which reflects what Pip's narration is doing to the reader.

Magwitch writes, "I got the name of being hardened. 'This terrible hardened one,' they say to prison visitors, picking out me…They always went on agen me about the devil. But what the devil was I to do? I must put something in my stomach, mustn't I?" (*Great Expectations* 367)[24]. From childhood, Magwitch was only able to survive by "tramping, begging, thieving, working sometimes when [he] could" (*Great Expectations* 367). In the same way that Oliver would have died on the streets if it had not been for the intervention of Fagin and Mr. Brownlow, Magwitch would have died if he did not commit criminal acts.

Magwitch's history uses the Gothic to highlight social failings by shifting the locus of horror onto the reader. Growing up in a working class community would have left Pip aware of the social injustice rampant in England and this idea was further enforced by Magwitch's story. Although this story leads Pip to pity Magwitch: "he regarded me with a look of affection that made him almost abhorrent to me again, though I had felt great pity for him" (*Great Expectations* 372), he still feeds into the Victorian attitude that poverty and criminal activity is a personal moral failing and not the fault of society.

[24] Magwitch's story is strangely reminiscent of Oliver's. Both were born into poverty and were subsequently written off by society due to their socio-economic status. Yet, Oliver is presented with far more options than

Yet, Pip's understanding of society and the ways criminals are treated has twisted beginnings. The peaceful yet macabre opening of the novel is almost immediately disturbed by Magwitch. This disruption ripples throughout Pip's community causing a strange shared feeling of fear and excitement. While the danger of two escaped convicts is clear to all in the community, the adults experience more of a thrill at the idea of a pursuit. Pip on the other hand appears to only experience fear since technically he was the one to find the escaped convict and now has personal ties to one.[25] This loans itself to feelings of sublimity for the reader; feelings that are combines with those of Pip's yet simultaneously connected to the excited adults as well.

Although the definition for the sublime refers to something "of such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe" (Merriam-Webster), the way it is described by Bowden lends itself better to our understanding:

> Sublime experiences…are excessive ones, in which we encounter the mighty, the terrible and the awesome. Gothic, it is clear, is intended to give us the experience of the sublime, to shock us out of the limits of our everyday lives with the possibility of things beyond reason and explanation, in the shape of awesome and terrifying characters, and inexplicable and profound events.

Pip feels sublime fear due to the terrifying character of Magwitch, who is referred to as "my convict", and the profound event of being targeted in a foggy graveyard. These fears are directly linked to Magwitch's criminal behavior which highlights to readers the bias already present in Pip and the communities mind regarding criminals and criminal behavior.

Since the sublime is connected with intense emotions of all kinds, Pip's connection to Magwitch is emotional and highly tumultuous. When Pip first sees Magwitch, he is described as

---

[25] Magwitch asked Pip to steal bread and a file for him.

"a fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg…who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled" (*Great Expectations* 2). Immediately, readers are aware that the social issues Dickens will be focusing on deal with class and criminality. As Pip watches Magwitch approach, his physical appearance emphasizes the tumultuous journey he has undergone. The iron on Magwitch's foot is only part of what makes him such a threatening figure. He is also described as having broken shoes, "soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars" (*Great Expectations* 2). It is abundantly clear that Magwitch[26] has endured an immense amount of pain in order to attain freedom. According to Hagan, "though less prominent as an image than the marshes, that of the grave presents much more explicitly the idea of a death-in-life state to which Magwitch and others in his predicament are condemned" (176). The way that Dickens introduces Magwitch and the general image Victorians held about criminals coalesce to the idea presented by Hagan that he is a dead man walking.

After threatening Pip, Magwitch begins to question him about his life, family, and where he lives. Pip's sublime fear regarding the capture of the escaped convicts in the following chapter begins with the treatment he receives in these scenes. Magwitch continues to terrify Pip as he searches him for food and money; "the man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread…when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling, while he ate ravenously" (*Great Expectations* 2). Hidden beneath Pip's terror lies Magwitch's fight for survival. Although his actions are not justified, his ravenous hunger and sublime appearance

[26] Neither the reader nor Pip are aware of Magwitch's name at this point in the novel. He is referred to as "the man" and "my convict" by Pip.

emphasizes how writers would use the Gothic to emphasize social failings. Although arguments can be made for individual responsibility, the systems set in place by the Victorians essentially forced Magwitch into a life a crime.

The Victorian criminal justice system, like the one currently in place in the United States, focuses on punishment rather than rehabilitation. Due to this, once someone finds themselves at the wrong end, they are systematically placed at a disadvantage and villainized by society. In *Great Expectations,* these ideas are reinforced by the adults in marsh country as they prepare to capture the escaped convicts:

> And now, when they were all in lively anticipation of 'the two villains' being taken, and when the bellows seemed to roar for the fugitives, the fire to flare for them, the smoke to hurry away in pursuit of them, Joe to hammer and clink for them, and all the murky shadows on the wall to shake at them in menace as the blaze rose and sank, and the red-hot sparks dropped and died, the pale afternoon outside almost seemed in my pitying young fancy to have turned pale on their account, poor wretches. (*Great Expectations* 33)

Unlike the adults who are celebrating the convicts eventual capture, or Joe who is creating their chains, Pip does not understand where their "lively anticipation" is coming from. The most prevalent emotion Pip experiences in this moment is a strange mixture of pity and dread that can be easily described as sublime. The rising and sinking flames, the dying sparks, and the pale afternoon sky are physical interpretations of Pip's emotional state in regards to the ties he has with the convicts. Acknowledging that Pip fears for his own role does not erase the sympathy he feels towards Magwitch, instead it connects Pip back to the readers as a mirror to middle class sensibility and beliefs.

In many Gothic texts, the world of doubt characters live in becomes shattered by revelations of truth. For the majority of his adolescence and early adult years, Pip believes that he has a benefactor that will send him to London so that he can become an educated gentleman. He originally believes that Miss Havisham is his benefactor due to the "work" he did with her and Estella at Satis House. Pip lives lavishly as his elitist ideas are reinforced and never challenged until he and Magwitch cross paths once again. When Magwitch finds him in London, Pip panics since his social position would be diminished if he were to be connected to an ex-convict. Pip's recognition of Magwitch brings him back to the graveyard where they first met; "If the wind and rain had driven away the intervening years…had swept ups to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on such different levels, I could not have known more convict more distinctly than I knew him now" (*Great Expectations* 336). The tempest outside the window is a physical representation of the strained relationship between Pip and Magwitch, between the world of the genteel and the world of the criminal.

During their conversation Magwitch appears excited, almost as though he is reuniting with a close friend. His attitude stands in stark contrast to Pip's evident dread. Acting like a proud father, Magwitch exclaims, "you acted nobly, my boy…Noble Pip! And I have never forgot it" (*Great Expectations* 336) regarding Pip's actions in the marsh graveyard. Pip has a visceral reaction to his stating "Stay!...Keep off! If you are grateful to me for what I did when I was a little child, I hope you have shown your gratitude by mending your life…I will not repulse you; but surely you must understand-I-" (*Great Expectations* 337). The casual way in which Magwitch approaches Pip troubles him severely due to the idea that once a criminal you are inherently evil and bound to harm someone. Pip has not yet come to accept Magwitch as a person instead of a criminal. The association is entrenched in his mind due to the norms of

Victorian society that allow for the consistent mistreatment and vilification of those who engaged in criminal acts.

Before Magwitch is able to reveal that he is the one who has helped Pip become a gentleman, Pip begins to have a sinking feeling since Magwitch knows more than he should. Pip's fear come true when Magwitch tell him the true source of his money:

> I'm your second father. You're my son – more to me nor any son. I've put away money, only for you to spend…[I said] 'if I gets liberty and money, I'll make that boy a gentleman!' And I done it. Why look at you, dear boy! Look at these lodgings of yourn, fit for a lord! A lord? Ah! You shall show money with lords for wagers, and beat 'em! (*Great Expectations* 340)

Due to the elitist ideas Pip internalized from Miss Havisham, Estella, and the people he met in London, Pip begins to feel faint since his status is permanently linked to Magwitch – the ex-convict. As a mirror to the middle class, Pip's rise from the working class would have lost its meaning to him and potentially the reader once his capital became connected to Magwitch. Even with the pride Magwitch shows towards Pip, he is unable to look at his world in the same way.

The reader, and Pip, would also have realized that Magwitch has not helped Pip out of pure generosity. Rather, Magwitch directly states that he wanted to see Pip beat Lords, that he wanted to see someone rise from the bottom and teach those who looked down on him a lesson. Neither is innocent. If it Pip was exposed for having connections to Magwitch, it would not only harm his reputation but it would destroy his chances of marrying Estella and fitting into her aristocratic world. If a working class boy from the marshes was able to rise in social class with the help of an ex-convict – an identity Magwitch will never be able to escape – then the stereotypical views the wealthy had about convicts and the lower classes is fundamentally

wrong. Dickens uses *Great Expectations* in a similar manner to *Oliver Twist*; as a way to emphasize how elements of Victorian society were inherently wrong and led to the mistreatment of marginalized groups. Placing Magwitch as Pip's benefactor challenges views that were common to Victorians, ideas that portrayed criminals as primitive and the poor as deserving of suffering. Since "Magwitch is the ultimate source of all Pip's expectations…he is a grotesque parody of the uncouth but successful self-made man, determined that his son shall be a gentleman" (Gilmour 141). The excitement Magwitch feels at Pip's accomplishments only leads Pip into a deeper anxiety since he knows he has not earned any of his success and it was directly correlated to someone that has already been written off by society.

The reasons Magwitch gives for wanting to help Pip are selfish, but they ultimately stem from his desire to show that regardless of birth anyone has the ability to achieve greatness. Pip originally disregards this because Magwitch was of low birth and committed criminal acts. Regardless of the need for survival, Pip and the mainstream reader would stand firm in their beliefs that he should have found a way to change his situation. If we fast-forward to the end of the novel, Pip has learned that there are layers to situations and the actions of people are not always a reflection of their true desires or something that is caused by their class.

It is through the characterization of Pip that the reader acknowledges that their initial opinion of Magwitch was wrong. Once Magwitch reveals that he is Pip's benefactor, Pip helps him out of guilt and pity. One of the major turning points in the novel occurs when Pip learns that Estella is the daughter of Magwitch and not born into the genteel world. Revealing the truth about Estella to Magwitch would also be admitting to himself that there is nothing inherent in criminals that makes them different than other members of society besides actions from their past. Magwitch was able to turn his life around with the help of Pip, and Estella grew up to be an

genteel regardless of Magwitch's poverty and previous criminal activity. To modern readers, the idea that lineage has nothing to do with how someone turns out is not a new idea. Victorians, on the other hand, more often believed that the status and behavior of your ancestors affected who you would be.

It is strange then, that Pip would be so irrational about telling Magwitch about Estella. The only reason that Pip was able to become a gentleman was due to Magwitch's help. Additionally, he came from a working class background and was able to succeed for a while before getting arrested. Pip's twisted thinking functions as a way to highlight the irrationality of the Victorian mindset that one's life and goals are dependent on who their parents are and the wealth they came from. Pip's characterization serves as a way to emphasize the faults in Victorian views regarding the working class and criminals.

Pip waits until Magwitch is on his deathbed to reveal that Estella is his daughter, and is doing well in life. After fighting and killing Compeyson, Magwitch is taken away by officers to be tried for the various crimes he has committed throughout his life. He tells Pip, "It's best as a gentleman should be knowed to belong to me now. Only come to see me as if you come by chance…I don't ask no more" (*Great Expectations* 475). Magwitch, like Pip and the reader, acknowledges that if it were to get out that that Pip is connected to a recently arrested convict, his reputation would be destroyed. Although Magwitch used Pip as a pawn to prove elitist ideas wrong he repeatedly shows his own personal attachment to Pip; an attachment that allows Magwitch to understand why Pip originally desired to keep his distance.

Instead, Pip rejects these ideas to claim Magwitch saying "I will never stir from your side…when I am suffered to be near you. Please God, I will be as true to you as you have been to me!" (*Great Expectations* 475). Pip's words stand in stark contrast to the conversation where

Magwitch explained his role in Pip's life and socio-economic rise. He not only makes amends with Magwitch but he also fully acknowledges the major role Magwitch played in his life. By the end of the novel when Pip learns the truth about his desires to be a member of the middle and upper classes, he is finally able to recognize the humanity of those who were not powerful but used the little they had to advance him.

> Dear Magwitch, I must tell you, now at last. You understand what I say?' A gentle pressure on my hand. 'You had a child once, whom you loved and lost.' A stronger pressure on my hand. 'She lived and found powerful friends. She is living now. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!' (*Great Expectations* 490)

In giving Magwitch this specific information that will comfort him, Pip treats Magwitch as a human being that deserves his sympathy rather than his disgust. Magwitch is able to die peacefully knowing that his biological daughter and chosen son were able to live better lives – economically – than he was able to. Pip is able to give him this satisfaction rather than treating him as a criminal deserving of punishment.

Since a middle class reader would see Pip in an uncanny light – he rose from the working class to the middle class – they could potentially see their own perceptions transforming alongside his. As the reader followed Pip on his journey, they would see how he must adapt to the new situations he has found himself in:

> What Pip has to experience in the concluding third of the novel is the unweaving of the spell that has bound him hitherto; he has to learn that Magwitch is not an ogre but a human being, and a decent and generous one; that Estella, 'proud and refined', has the same blood flowing through her veins; and that the opposition he has set up between the two worlds is false. (Gilmour 141)

Pip is forced to unlearn all of the elitist and self-defeating attitudes and ideals he developed over his course of time at Satis House and in London. These qualities have only served to hurt him and distance himself from those who truly cared. While he did not feed into the manipulative tendencies of others in his social position, he allowed for these ideas to dissuade him from treating others with kindness and respect.

The manipulation of others based on social class is one of the primary reasons that Compeyson, the other escaped convict at the beginning of the novel, could be considered the main Gothic villain. Compeyson presents a different criminal identity than Magwitch; where the reader is able to sympathize with Magwitch for his criminal behavior, Compeyson has no redeemable qualities. This is partially because Magwitch committed crimes in order to survive while Compeyson functioned solely out of greed. His characterization is surprisingly more uncanny than Pip's. Although Compeyson was born into the middle class, his actions corresponded more with those associated with the "regressive" lower classes.[27] Instead of acting like an educated gentleman, Compeyson becomes involved in crime s

The reader is introduced to Compeyson through Magwitch who presents him as both a class traitor and a villain. According to socialist ideology, a class traitor was originally thought of as a member of the working or middle class that act in ways unbecoming of their class for economic benefit. Due to this, Compeyson is uncanny since as a member of the middle class he does not fit into what the readers will expect. Yet, we as modern readers must understand that the idea of a class traitor is rooted in the same problematic ideas that were central to the Victorians treatments of what it means to be criminal. If Compeyson were born onto the lower classes, it

[27] Victorians believed that criminality was inherent in the lower classes due to their lack of moral fiber.

would be less of an identifying characteristic for him to engage in criminal activity. Instead, he would simply be acting in the ways that society expected.

Great Expectations, like *Oliver Twist* takes an interesting approach when portraying their Gothic villains. Fagin and Sikes are clearly villains in Oliver's story, yet their actions pale in comparison to the harms caused by society. Similarly in this novel, Compeyson is at the root cause of many issues yet his actions and ability to remain unscathed by societal views are a direct reflection of Victorian socio-political views. Magwitch first describes Compeyson saying "he was set up fur a gentleman, this Compeyson, and he'd been to a public boarding-school and had learning" (*Great Expectations* 368). This depiction immediately places Compeyson in the middle class, a place where Pip has risen to only with the aid of Magwitch. Moreover, after reading this, it is clear to see why Magwitch acted as he did by sending Pip to school in London where he could become a gentleman like Compeyson and get a twisted form of late revenge.

While Compeyson is presented as a classic young Victorian gentleman in that scene, Magwitch's descriptions when continued present him in a far different light:

> Compeyson's business was swindling, handwriting forging, stolen bank-note passing, and such-like. All sorts of traps as Compeyson could set with his head, and keep his own legs out of and get the profits from and let another man in for, was Compeyson's business. He'd no more heart than an iron file, he was as cold as death, and he had the head of the devil afore mentioned. (*Great Expectations* 368)

The forging, swindling, and bank-note passing function as markers of Compeyson's class as well as his greed in desiring more money when he does not truly need. Additionally, referring to Compeyson a cold man with no heart and malevolent ideas deflects some of the class issues explored in the text. Rather than seeing Compeyson as an uncanny villain because he does not

act in the way expected by other members of his class, Dickens is portraying him as a villain because of his own personality. This disconnects Compeyson from all classes and instead creates an entirely new category of evil for him to exist in.

Where Magwitch engages in criminal activity as a way to survive, Compeyson is solely doing it out of greed. The final line where Magwitch refers to Compeyson as cold, heartless, and as evil as the devil accentuates the greed and cruelty that can be found in people of any class. While the Victorians believed that criminality was inherent to the lower classes, Compeyson's characterization only goes to prove that this stereotype has no actual footing in reality. This would feed on Victorian anxieties thereby adding Gothic elements to the story. As an uncanny character, Compeyson provides the readers with a direct contrast to what was believed to be the norm.

Compeyson's insidiousness is incredibly clear in the scene where he and Magwitch are on trial for their criminal activities. The trial also emphasizes the myriad of ways that Victorian society has failed those in Magwitch's position. From his youth, Magwitch was placed at a disadvantage simply because of his socio-economic status. While he originally believes that he and Compeyson will take the fall, the second that Compeyson walks onto the dock, it is clear that they will receive different treatment. Magwitch states, "I noticed first of all what a gentleman Compeyson looked, wi' his curly hair and his black clothes and his white pocket-handkercher, and what a common sort of wretch I looked" (*Great Expectations* 371). Magwitch immediately recognizes that due to the differences in their dress, he will be the one to take the fall while Compeyson gets off scot free. Victorian society placed saw appearance and class as markers of morality which led to a self-perpetuating cycle that harmed those at the bottom. Compeyson, as an educated middle class gentleman would have been aware that his clothing would portray his

class. He knew that if he came well-dressed while Magwitch was in rags, his role in their activity would immediately be disregarded.

As the case continues, Magwitch realizes that he will be the one to take the blame for their actions regardless of the fact that Compeyson was the mastermind:

> And when it come to character, warn't it Compeyson as had been to school, and warn't it his school-fellows as was in this position and in that, and warn't it him as had been know'd by witnesses in such clubs and societies, and nowt to his disadvantage? And warn't it me as had been tried afore, and as had been know'd up hill and down dale in Bridewells and Lock-ups?...And when the verdict come, warn't it Compeyson as was recommended to mercy on account of good character and bad company, and giving up all the information he could agen me, and warn't it me as got never a word but guilty...And when we're sentences, ain't it him as gets seven year, and me fourteen, and ain't it him as the judge is sorry for, because he might done so well, and ain't it me as the judge perceives to be an old offender of violent passion, likely to come to worse? (*Great Expectations* 372)

Even though the facts of the case point to their combined guilt, Compeyson is able to get away with his crimes simply because of who he knows and his education. Magwitch, on the other hand, has strikes added against him since it is believed that it is through his existence in Compeyson's life that Compeyson became engaged in criminal behavior.

Although this is not a classically Gothic passage – it does not deal with monsters or abandoned castles – readers could still understand the Urban Gothic nature of the passage. The overwhelming feeling of dread Magwitch, and other's in his position, would have felt with the knowledge that since their dress is a physical marker of their social class, it will be used against

them in the courts. Magwitch explores the ways in which he was immediately seen as guilty simply due to Compeyson's social class and physical appearance. The Urban Gothic directly comes into play as due to the social commentary being made in this scene. While this subgenre of the Gothic does center on urban settings, it also relates to prevalent societal issues plaguing different communities. It is abundantly clear that Magwitch is sent to jail primarily because of his class and the lack of resources he had in his youth while Compeyson is able to avoid punishment due to his class.

Part of this can be explained by Victorian law which established "particular limits between good and evil as taboos and prohibitions, also produces the desires that can only be manifested secretly, in the guise of another being" (Botting 142). The people who were evil were stereotyped to be from the lower classes while those who were in the upper classes were considered morally good. Due to this, readers and general Victorian society would regard him as the main villain while Compeyson was able to be get away with his awful behavior because he has the education and wealthy to present himself as a better person than he actually is. This also extends itself into the readers understanding of Miss Havisham's breakdown since Compeyson is the one who left her at the alter after attempting to steal her wealth. While this will be examined later, it is important to understand that Compeyson's actions are solely fueled by greed and the desire to manipulate others.

The greed and villainous tendencies Compeyson exhibits lead to his demise as he attempts to use Magwitch once again for his own personal gain. While Pip is trying to help Magwitch escape to safety, the two have an underlying feeling that they are being followed. Their hunch turns out to be true and they are asked to come on board for the final arrest of Magwitch. Pip figures it is best not to resist but the ensuing scene leads to violence:

> I saw that the face disclosed was the face of the other convict of long ago. Still in the same moment, I saw the face tilt backward with a white terror on it that I shall never forget, and heard a great cry on board the steamer and a loud splash in the water, and felt the boat sink from other me…Herbert was there, and Startop was there, but our boat was gone, and the two convicts were gone. (*Great Expectations* 473)

Magwitch finally receives his revenge in a way that leads to sublime terror for Compeyson and Pip. Most readers would believe that Compeyson deserves his death. Compeyson, like Sikes in *Oliver Twist*, dies while trying to enact violence (physical or socially) on someone that they harmed in the past.

This violent death was one of the only ways that Compeyson's malicious actions would be punished. Due to his class, he would never have received true punishment under the law. While his death is a Gothic one due to the violence and horror expressed by both parties, it is a deserved one that rectifies the various ways in which the Victorian system of justice fails those that are stereotypically regarded as inherently criminal. Since the Gothic as it is used by Dickens emphasizes Victorian anxieties, the death of Compeyson functions as a way of exposing what was wrong with these anxieties and putting them to a direct end.

The death of Compeyson may not solve the inequalities that were plaguing the Victorians but rather it shows that there shouldn't be any distinction between people based off class. Although Pip had been helping Magwitch to escape before Compeyson's death, it is while Magwitch breaks through the waves and is arrested that Pip finally vocalizes his feelings stating:

> For now my repugnance to him had all melted away, and in the hunted wounded shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously towards me with great

> constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe. (*Great Expectations* 475).

Pip recognizes that the expectations he had for being a gentleman made him into an ungrateful, elitist person. Although Magwitch helped Pip for selfish reasons, it does not erase the improvements it made to Pip's life. Pip recognizes that he mistreated both Joe and Magwitch simply because they weren't from a class that he desired to interact with. Even though Joe helped to raise him and was one of the main sources of kindness in his life, Pip rejected him. Comparing his relationships with Joe and Magwitch to one another shows his growth as a person as he is claiming Magwitch as family.

Although they have both committed criminal acts, Magwitch and Compeyson are incredibly different from one another. Magwitch engaged in criminal activity from a young age because he did not have the means to support himself without it, when he was able to make an honest living, he began to anonymously send money for Pip to become an educated gentleman. Meanwhile, Compeyson was born into wealth and used his education to manipulate others for his own personal gain. Rather than being someone from the lower classes who acts out of greed and malevolence, Compeyson and Magwitch provide a variation to the Victorian image of a criminal. Neither is truly innocent but their reasons for engaging in criminal activity and their actions after their initial escape highlight the ways in which Victorian anxieties about the lower classes were inherently wrong. Compeyson came from a wealthy family but due to his greed committed criminal acts and used his social status to get out of receiving punishment. Magwitch was born poor and became a criminal to survive, from a young age he was disregarded which only perpetuated this cycle. Yet, once he escaped he took odd jobs wherever he could find them and

sent his funds to Pip. The anxieties of the Victorians led to the destruction of many lives, while simultaneously allowing those in power to get away with atrocities.

Miss Havisham & Estella – Gendering the Gothic

Miss Havisham and Estella play different yet similar roles in *Great Expectations* compared to Magwitch and Compeyson. Pip perceives Compeyson and Magwitch as threats until he comes to realize the truth about their relationship. Miss Havisham and Estella on the other hand have elevated positions in Pip's mind yet only serve to disappoint him in the long run. Due to her experiences in life and getting left at the alter by Compeyson, Miss Havisham begins to manipulate Estella which in turn allows her to manipulate Pip. Her cruelty towards the two is met with a mixture of obligation, pity, and love from the two parties.

Pip believes that through Estella and Miss Havisham he will reach his goal of being a gentleman. Instead, he is manipulated and internalizes the treatment he receives and uses it as an excuse to avoid people who are closer to him. Estella herself plays a strange role in the novel as she is both a damsel in distress due to her relationship with Miss Havisham and a temptress as she manipulates Pip even when she isn't explicitly trying to. When they first meet Pip is in awe as Estella comes to represent the glory of genteel life. It is through Pip's interactions with Estella that he happens to be exposed to ideas and: a world which simultaneously attracts and humiliates – attracts because it offers a glimpse of a [then] undreamed-of elegance and refinement, and humiliates because, in the shape of Estella, this world impresses on him how profoundly unfit he is to occupy it" (Gilmour 134). The world of the upper class leads Pip into a world of hidden realities and dualities in nature. Miss Havisham is at the center of this world since her previous suffering has led to a the suffering of others

It is during his first trip to Satis House, a highly Gothic place, Pip finds himself in a courtyard questioning his life:

> I took the opportunity of being alone in the courtyard, to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favorable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages. I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call those picture-cards jacks which ought to be called knaves. I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so, too. (*Great Expectations* 63)

Pip's so called great expectations are brought to light in this scene due to the shame he feels after Estella's public remarks. In their youth, Estella consistently berates Pip for his commonality and lack of formal education. When this is combined to his sister raising him by hand, and Joe's intellectual and social shortcomings, Pip begins to feel as though he has not received the same opportunities in life as others, leading him to feel anger towards his status and how he was raised.

The more time Pip spends with Estella and Miss Havisham, the more disdain he begins to feel towards his family and their social class. Since "Dickens is concerned with the lower reached of the middle class in its most anxious phase of self-definition, struggling out of trade and domestic service and clerical work into the sunshine of respectability" (Gilmour 106). In regards to Pip, his anxieties mostly lie in how his life has very little in common with that of Estella since he sees her as the epitome of what he should be attempting to attain:

> How common Estella would consider Joe, a mere blacksmith: how thick his boots, and how coarse his hands. I thought how Joe and my sister were then sitting in the kitchen, and how I had come up to bed from the kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella

> never sat in a kitchen, but were far above the level of such common things. (*Great Expectations* 74)

From the point Pip steps foot into Satis House, he is immediately put at a disadvantage. Miss Havisham never had the intention of raising Pip's prospects and marrying him to Estella. Instead, she toys with Pip as a way to show Estella that Pip, and by extension all men, are nothing and do not deserve true kindness.

In their youth, Estella strung Pip along due to Miss Havisham's teachings. While the two are playing cards, Estella refers to Pip as a common labouring-boy sparking a class crisis within Pip. Additionally, it is the first instance in which Miss Havisham begins to show her true colors. Pip relays, "I thought I overhead Miss Havisham answer – only it seemed so unlikely, 'Well? You can break his heart.'" (*Great Expectations* 61). Due to Miss Havisham's experience with men, Compeyson in particular, she is grooming her to be cruel to men. As time goes on, Estella begins to realize how uncanny her childhood was, especially regarding her relationship to Pip.

In *Great Expectations*, there are multiple stand-in's for the societal Gothic Villain. While Compeyson is the primarily villain regarding class and criminality, Miss Havisham is a Gothic villain to Estella and therefore Pip. Due to her anxieties about being an unmarried woman, and the public embarrassment she experienced upon being left at the altar, Miss Havisham manipulates Estella's life and relationships. When Pip first meets Miss Havisham, he regards her as "the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see" (*Great Expectations* 59). The lavish satins, lace, and silks she is wearing blends into her white hair causing her to look as a specter. Unsurprisingly, the image of a ghost is nothing new to the Gothic genre. Instead ghosts, along with other supernatural figures, are a common occurrence in the genre often functioning as a way to explore the psyche of characters. Dickens used this trope when depicting Bill Sikes' guilt at

killing Nancy. He believes her spirit is haunting him for revenge against the bad deeds he enacted.

The ghost-like descriptions of Miss Havisham aid in the reader's understanding of her emotional turmoil:

> I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, has been white long ago, and had lost its luster, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flower, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose had shrink to skin and bone…Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress that had been dug out of the vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could. (*Great Expectations* 59)

When Pip first sees Miss Havisham, it is an eerie and uncanny experience. The eeriness is clear in the language that Pip uses to describe Miss Havisham; the white of her clothes and hair are reminiscent of the white death seen in skeletons and wax figures. The uncanny is also relatively clear as the image of a bride, in accordance to Victorian ideals, would have been young and vibrant; nothing like the creepy image of Miss Havisham. Pip's discomfort at the scene before him becomes apparent to the reader through his repetition:

> It's as if Pip can't let go of what he sees, and that what he sees is destined to return over and again, however hard he tries to escape it. His description resembles a strange

> incantation, suddenly punctuated by the simple words of his impossible exclamation: 'I should have cried out, if I could' ("The Gothic in Great Expectations").

When the two are first introduced, Pip is struggling to come to terms with the stark differences in the woman before him and the description he was given of Miss Havisham by the adults in his life. The high class world he believes he is entering as he crosses the threshold of Satis House is rapidly torn away as he is instead presented with the physical pain of a woman scorned and socially rejected.

It is through the palpable suffering of Miss Havisham that Satis House becomes a Gothic space emphasizng the pitfalls of Victorian genteel society. Since traditional gender dynamics claim that a woman who has not been married at a certain age is no longer viable, Miss Havisham chooses to pretend that time has not truly passed, keeping the house itself frozen in time. Pip comes to realize this when he and Estella sit to play cards; "It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago…without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the ling veil so like a shroud" (*Great Expectations* 62). Pip continues to refer to Miss Havisham using terms like "corpse-like" and stating that he has thought "that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust" (*Great Expectations* 62). Miss Havisham has become so entrenched in her negative emotions that she has begun to affect the space around her.

Yet as an unmarried woman, Miss Havisham's obsession with her death and not allowing for her space to progress past the time of her wedding makes sense in the Victorian context. In many cultures, an unmarried woman would have been both a burden and a shame to their family.

While Miss Havisham has enough money to support herself so she is not burdensome, her living relatives see her as shameful and only visit her because they want to be a part of her will. Instead of allowing herself to move on, Miss Havisham chooses to lament on how she is no longer a viable candidate to be considered a wife or a mother. Through her lamentation, Miss Havisham "[stages] herself as a bride on the threshold of her wedding arrests her in time, at the moment of traumatic revelation" (The Gothic in Great Expectations). Her attempt to hold onto the past is one way in which she claims agency in a world ready to leave her behind.

When Pip first sees Miss Havisham, she has become a hauntingly Gothic figure as she relishes in her own misery and ensnares others into stagnant world:

> Unable to let the past go, unwilling to move forward or back, she is a figure simultaneously powerful and powerless. Miss Havisham is both the victim of her abandonment and the dominant, powerful, even seductive, oppressor of Pip and Estella. Gothic, with its fascination with eroticism and death, and understanding of how deeply they are entangled together, is the perfect medium and idiom for her. ("The Gothic in Great Expectations")

It is through her emotional manipulation of Estella that Miss Havisham is able to claim more agency in the world. Although Miss Havisham later expresses regret for her treatment of the two during their youth, she also admits that she acted in this way to hold power, through Estella, over the gender that hurt her. However, Miss Havisham remains a complex character since she functions simultaneously as the Gothic villain to Estella and Pip but also as a Gothic damsel since she is clearly traumatized after Compeyson's actions.

When Pip is an adult and has become a member of the middle class, he is asked by Miss Havisham to bring Estella back to Satis House. Although she had done it many times in the past,

when Miss Havisham begins to take pride in the unrequited love Pip shows towards Estella, it takes on a more malicious tone:

> 'How does she use you, Pip, how does she use you?'…with her witch-like eagerness, even in Estella's hearing…I saw in this, wretched though it made me, and bitter the sense of dependence, even of degradation, that it awakened – I saw in this that Estella was set to wreak Miss Havisham's revenge on men…I saw in this the distinct shadow of the darkened and unhealthy house in which her life was hidden from the sun" (*Great Expectations* 323).

It is clear to Pip once they are adults that Miss Havisham's choices in raising Estella have only served to hurt her. She is unable to act in ways that would be more befitting of her since she has been trained to reject and act superior towards her suitors. Estella recognizes this as well, telling Miss Havisham that she was created to not show love and to be cold and unfeeling. Pip finds it difficult to come to terms with the idea that Miss Havisham has been grooming Estella into a weapon for her own satisfaction.

Watching an emotionally numb Estella reject Pip, and having the stories relayed back to her is a selfish and rather twisted desire for Miss Havisham. Although Miss Havisham is similar to Compeyson as she manipulates Estella, her reasoning and eventual guilt regarding her actions take away from her villainy. Pip returns to Satis House several times, and during a conversation about Estella he learns the truth about their relationship:

> Believe this: when she first came to me, I meant to save her from misery like my own. At first I meant no more…but as she grew, and promised to be very beautiful, I gradually did worse, and with my praises, and with my jewels, and with my teachings, and with this

> figure of myself always before her, a warning to back and point my lessons, I stole her heart away and put ice in its place." (*Great Expectations* 424)

Miss Havisham's initial reasoning for her treatment of Estella makes sense on the surface. Since she was hurt earlier in life, and since she is aware of the lack of female power in society, she desired to protect Estella. However since Miss Havisham was aware of the power that beauty has, especially in a society where women are secondary characters, she began to train Estella to be cruel to Pip and others who may fancy her.

Ultimately, Miss Havisham comes to a violent end after expressing her regret for her treatment of Pip and Estella. Before leaving Satis House, Pip checks in on Miss Havisham for a final time:

> I looked into the room where I had left her, and I saw her seated in the ragged chair upon the hearth close to the fire, with her back towards me. In the quiet moment which I was withdrawing my head to go quietly away, I saw a great flaming light spring up. In the same moment I saw her running at me, shrieking, with a whirl of fire blazing all about her, and soaring at least as many feet above her head as she was high." (*Great Expectations* 426).

The physical and emotional agents of Miss Havisham's death stems from her inability to let go of her past sufferings. Her worn yellowing wedding gown catches fire and rapidly spreads encapsulating her in the physical form of her own fury. Ultimately, it is the perverse desire to stop time at the moment intense emotional trauma occurred that kills her. Miss Havisham, like Compeyson, has an incredibly violent death that occurs during a cathartic time[28]. The main

[28] Miss Havisham dies after he explains to Pip why she treated Estella and has sought release from her intense guilt. After dying she tells Pip that she is so sorry and to tell Estella about her regret. Compeyson's death is cathartic for Magwitch as he finally is able to enact revenge against the man who destroyed his life and received the mildest form of repercussion that law would grant an educated middle

difference – besides one death being by water and the other by fire – stems from who receives catharsis. When Magwitch kills Compeyson he and Pip can live knowing that they are free from his ongoing malevolence. His death signifies the death of middle class elitism. Miss Havisham's death occurs after she apologizes to Pip for her manipulation of him and Estella throughout their lives. She is able to recognize that her actions were wrong and seeks to correct her mistakes

The Gothic nature of Estella and Miss Havisham ultimately stem from the societal view of women and the lack of agency they hold. Through Compeyson's actions in leaving Miss Havisham at the altar, two lives are essentially ruined. Miss Havisham becomes obsessed with time, men, and her own mortality which causes her to fixate on Estella. This fixation takes a malevolent turn when Miss Havisham comes to realize that she can achieve gendered revenge by using Estella to hurt men who desire her. Additionally, the actions of both Miss Havisham and Estella affect Pip in negative ways throughout his life. Rather than recognizing how her revenge fantasy with negatively affect Pip, Miss Havisham purposefully makes Pip fall for Estella while teaching Estella that she is better than Pip so rejecting him should feel empowering. The search for power by both Miss Havisham and Estella stems from the lack of agency Victorian women were granted and their inability to challenge the norm.

Great Expectations as a Gothic Text

The four characters analyzed in the prior section allow for the reader to understand the societal anxieties and shortcomings present in the Victorian mindset. The characters anxieties about social class, criminals, and gender dynamics lead to various levels of manipulation. Yet it

---

class man. Compeyson dies knowing his evil deeds are getting paid for while Magwitch symbolically puts an end to discrimination based on class.

is through this manipulation that Pip is able to create the worst and best versions of himself. He is granted the ability to rise from the working class and match wealth with the genteel class. He is also able to learn from others and his own past mistakes to practice forgiveness and recognize that social class has no valuable meaning when forming judgements.

The evolution of Pip's social mobility is expertly explained by Gilmour who states:

> Far from endorsing the sense of class division to justify Pip's mind, Dickens constantly undermines it; he is not concerned to justify Pip's rise in station but rather to suggest and analyze the guilt, the inhibition, the personal betrayals which this involves (116)

Although Pip was not born in the lowest class, his working class status places him at a disadvantage both financially and socially. Once he is presented with the idea of becoming a gentleman, Pip finds it difficult to be content with his the current trajectory of his life. His journey and experiences force him to understand that social class has incredibly little bearing on what a person is truly like. Pip's internal growth then connects to the readers ability to understand that certain anxieties regarding criminals and social mobility are not founded in reality.

The characterization of Magwitch, Compeyson, Miss Havisham, Estella, Pip help to accentuate the Gothic elements of the novel in order to explore the interplay of class and gender in Victorian social anxieties. Overall *Great Expectations* attempts to destroy the stereotypes that reinforced the societal anxieties plaguing the Victorian era. Through Pip, the middle class reader can see an uncanny depiction of the middle class and potentially reform their ideas. Compeyson and Magwitch provide new insight into criminals and class returning to ideas Dickens presented in *Oliver Twist*. Like Oliver, Magwitch was born poor and parentless causing him to fall into a pattern of criminal activity. The two engaged in such acts not out of greed like Compeyson but

instead as a form of survival. Another connection that can be made to Dickens' earlier text can be seen in the gendered Gothic depictions of Miss Havisham and Estella In *Oliver Twist,* Nancy is a prime example of how working class women had no agency over their lives or their bodies.

On a similar yet less extreme note Miss Havisham and Estella highlight ways in which Victorian gender norms were harmful and left even wealthy women with few choices. Through "these shifts, ideas about nature, art and subjectivity were also reassessed. 'Gothic' thus resonates us much with anxieties and fears concerning the crisis and changes in the present as with any terrors of the past" (Punter 4). The Gothic as it is being used by Dickens allows for Pip, other characters, and the reader can understand that that their anxieties about others were biased and in need of changing through characterization and the first person narrative of Pip.

Dickens uses the Urban Gothic in *Great Expectations* in the same way that it was used in *Oliver Twist*. The lives of both Pip and Oliver moves from pitying to destabilizing. The pity felt for Pip stems from his inability to truly understand his place in society. A member of the working class Pip is at a disadvantage since he does not have the same opportunities or social capital that Estella has once she is adopted by Miss Havisham: *"Great Expectations* opens with the presentation of a physical phenomenon almost as memorable as that of the fog in *Bleak House*: the marshes. More than a Gothic detail casually introduces to give the story an eerie beginning" (Hagan 175). With the High Gothic visual elements of the marshes and the Urban Gothic nature of the characters, *Great Expectations* explores the societal anxieties of the Victorian middle and upper classes by positioning powerful characters in villainous ways, exploring societal shortcomings that lead to future manipulation, and exploring the possibility of social mobility.

Conclusion: The Gothic Use of Sympathy

In both *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations,* Charles Dickens has used the Gothic genre to analyze Victorian social anxieties while eliciting sympathy from his readers for his characters. The characters readers commiserate with are often from classes vilified by Victorian society or disregarded simply due to their socio-economic status. The two novels analyzed reveal core anxieties the Victorians experienced during 19th century such as class, gender, and criminal activity. Additionally, Dickens novels depict and question the ills of society which allow for greater sympathy which is an important aspect of creating social and political change. In this thesis I have explored how through sublime scenes and uncanny representations of characters, Dickens prompts readerly sympathy towards the poor, criminal, and women who are in deplorable conditions. This means that through characterization and Gothic depictions of marginalized groups, readers could potentially change their views towards more liberal and inclusive ones.

The anxieties explored in Dickens novels were expressed in multiple ways such as class being expressed through themes such as the duality of man. This theme is present in *Great Expectations* particularly in regards to the characterization of Compeyson and Pip. The majority of Dickens readers were from the middle class, which, when combined with general Victorian beliefs, would lead the reader to assume that these characters would only act in ways befitting the stereotypes of their classes. Instead, Compeyson is one of the cruelest characters in the novel. His actions are at the center of Magwitch and Miss Havisham's struggles which are extended into their treatment of Estella and Pip. For Pip, since he has moved from the working class to the

middle class, a near impossible feat, the reader would be faced with challenging ideas about class mobility and the actions of others.

Tropes such as this shift the outer focus of the Gothic – seen in many High Gothic novels such as *Dracula* – inward. This allows for the reader to better understand the intricacies of social class while forcing them to reevaluate preconceived notions they may hold about the Victorian Other. While both novels humanize and address the anxieties common during their time of publication, the novels focus on different Gothic aspects. *Oliver Twist* is a clear Urban Gothic text with London's society functioning as the core villain. Readers are able to clearly see that those who claimed they were helping Oliver only seemed to disregard or abuse him. Even those who worked in the workhouse and criminal justice system wrote him off simply because of his socio-economic status. When the novel ends, the message is clear: poverty is not an inherent crime but instead a system perpetuated by those in power.

Great Expectations is similar to *Oliver Twist* as they both examine how Victorian anxieties about class, gender, and criminals were ill informed, yet where Oliver and the reader learn this through the structure of their governments, Pip and the reader learn this through the first-person narrative of the novel. Additionally, while Oliver primarily functions as a way to gain reader sympathy, Pip is an uncanny mirror to the reader. He was born as a working class orphan yet became a middle class gentleman due to Magwitch, an ex-convict. Pip, and by extension the reader, have to learn that their preconceived notions about people based on gender or class are very different from the truth. Pip believes that Miss Havisham is the epitome of class and does everything in his power to prove to her and Estella that he is worthy of their attention and affection. Joe and Magwitch are the two who actually care for Pip yet due to their class and past are disregarded by Pip and thought of as lesser than. It is only through Pip's own fall from

grace and learning the truth about Compeyson's actions that he learns to be less elitist and not to judge others based on superficial aspects.

The traditional view of the Gothic is that it creates horrifying visions through the use of the sublime and the uncanny for the reader that lead to intense feelings of fear and dread. In both *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*, Dickens uses the Gothic elements of the sublime and uncanny in depictions of characters and settings to evoke sympathy from his readers. The suffering of characters, even less sympathetic ones such as Miss Havisham, prompts the reader to look into the political and social causes. Moreover as Dickens engages with his readers through the Gothic description of his characters, the reader potentially questions why they engage in a society that perpetuates the marginalization and subsequent destruction of millions primarily based on characteristics outside of their control.

Ultimately, it can be clearly seen that Charles Dickens used the Gothic genre as a way to elicit sympathy and prompt socio-political change through his novels *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist.* Due to the social fears many Victorians held and the idea that the middle class would function as the conscious of society, Dickens' novels served as a way to teach a large audience about the plight of others. His wasn't only seen in the literary community. Instead, as can be seen on his epitaph, Dickens helped to change or at least bring awareness to the suffering of others. Dickens died in 1870 and was buried in London's Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner with an epitaph stating:

> To the Memory of Charles Dickens (England's most popular author) who died at his residence, Higham, near Rochester, Kent, 9 June 1870, aged 58 years. He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world.

Dickens is one of few literary authors whose work not only changed literary conventions but also helped to sway the opinions of some regarding the treatment of marginalized groups. It is through the fictional, nonfictional, and socio-political work Dickens did throughout his life that led to his well-deserved title as the champion of the poor.

Bibliography

Adburgham, Alison. *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840.* London: Constable, 1983.

Biberman, Matthew. *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism and Early Modern English Literature*. London:Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315249544

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. Routeledge, 1996.

Bowen, John. "The Gothic in Great Expectations." *The British Library*, The British Library, 26 Feb. 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-gothic-in-great-expectations.

Bowen, John. "Great Expectations and Class." *The British Library*, The British Library, 2 May 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/great-expectations-and-class.

Bowen, John. "Oliver Twist: Depicting Crime and Poverty." *The British Library*, The British Library, 3 Feb. 2015, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/oliver-twist-depicting-crime-and-poverty.

Bowen, John. "Gotic Motifs." *British Library*, 15 May 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Poor Law." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 27 Sept. 2018, www.britannica.com/event/Poor-Law.

Brontë Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Richmond, 2012.

Buzwell, Greg. "Dracula: Vampires, Perversity, and Victorian Anxieties." *The British Library*, The British Library, 26 Feb. 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/dracula.

Chavez, Julia Mccord. "American Victorian Fiction and Prose." *The Encyclopedia of Victorian Literature*, 2015, pp. 1–7. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1002/9781118405376.wbevl349.

Dickens, Charles. *Pickwick Papers.* Chapman and Hall, 1837.

Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Bentley's Miscellany, 1838.

Dickens, Charles. "A Walk in a Workhouse". Household Wares, 1850.

Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House.* Bradbury and Evans, 1853.

Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*. Chapman and Hall, 1861.

"Dickens and the Blacking Factory." *History in an Hour*, 7 Feb. 2013, www.historyinanhour.com/2012/02/29/dickens-blacking-factory/.

Duncan, Ian. *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Ewence, Hannah. "Blurring the Boundaries of Difference: *Dracula,* the Empire, and 'the Jew'". 2012. https://doi.org/10.1080/1462169X.2010.10512151.

Gates, Sarah. "Intertextual Estella: '*Great Expectations*," Gender, and Literary Tradition." *PMLA*, vol. 124, no. 2, 2009, pp. 390–405. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25614282.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952-h/1952-h.htm.

Gilmour, Robin. *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*. George Allen & Unwin, 1981.

Gove, Philip Babcock. "Grove." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged: a Merriam Webster*, Merriam-Webster, 2002.

Gove, Philip Babcock. "Sublime." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged: a Merriam Webster*, Merriam-Webster, 2002.

Gove, Philip Babcock. "Uncanny." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged: a Merriam Webster*, Merriam-Webster, 2002.

Hagan, John H. "The Poor Labyrinth: The Theme of Social Injustice in Dickens's Great Expectations." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 9, no. 3, Dec. 1954, pp. 169–178. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3044305.

Holmes, Thomas. *London's Underworld*.

Horner, Avril. "Victorian Gothic and National Identity: Cross-Channel 'Mysteries'." *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*.

Hughes, Kathryn. "The Middle Classes: Etiquette and Upward Mobility." *The British Library*, The British Library, 13 Feb. 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-middle-classes-etiquette-and-upward-mobility.

Johnson, E.D.H. "Dickens' Professional Career." *The Victorian Web*, Jan. 2000, www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/edh/1.html.

Jones, Paul Anthony. "The Real-Life Criminal Who Inspired Charles Dickens." *Mental Floss*, 30 Nov. 2015, mentalfloss.com/article/71454/real-life-criminal-who-inspired-charles-dickens.

Katsu, Alma. “What's Gothic Now?” *Tor.com*, 14 Dec. 2014, www.tor.com/2012/06/19/whats-gothic-now/.

Kirkpatrick, Larry. “The Gothic Flame of Charles Dickens.” *Victorian Newsletter*, vol. 31, 1967, pp. 20–24.

Mandler, Peter. “Tories and Paupers: Christian Political Economy and the Making of the New Poor Law.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1990, pp. 81–103. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2639392.

Mayhew, Henry. “London Labour and the London Poor: A Selected Edition.” *Dover*, vol. 3, 1861, doi:10.1093/notesj/gjr260.

Meckier, Jerome. “Apprentices and Apprenticeship in Great Expectations.” *Dickens Quatrely*, vol. 33, no. 2, June 2016, pp. 102–108., doi:http://doi.org/10.1353/dqt.2016.0020.

Mighall, Robert. *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Moore, Grace. “Beastly Criminals and Criminal Beasts: Stray Women and Stray Dogs in *Oliver Twist.*” *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture.* 2007, pp. 286-306.

Nabi, Asmat. “Gender Represented in the Gothic Novel”. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* vol 22, no 3, 2017, pp. 73-77.

Nord, Deborah Epstein. “Dickens’ ‘Jewish Question’: Pariah Capitalism and the Way Out.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2011, pp. 27–45. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41307849.

Paganoni, Maria Cristina. “From Book to Film: The Semiotics of Jewishness in Oliver Twist.” *Dickens Quarterly*, vol. 24, no 4, 2010, pp. 307-20.

Price, Donald R. “David Copperfield and Great Expectations: A Comparison of Dickens’ Bildungsromane”. Eastern Illinois University, 1990.

Picard, Liza. “The Victorian Middle Classes.” *The British Library*, The British Library, 29 Apr. 2015, www.bl.uk/victorian-britain/articles/the-victorian-middle-classes.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Best Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*. Edited by Sherwin Cody, The Modern Library, 1957.

Punter, David. *A Companion to the Gothic*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

Richardson, Ruth. “Oliver Twist and the Workhouse.” *The British Library*, The British Library, 18 Feb. 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/oliver-twist-and-the-workhouse.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein.*Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones. 1818

Smith, Andrew. *Gothic Literature*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Sweet, Matthew. "Sensation Novels." *The British Library*, The British Library, 9 Apr. 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/sensation-novels.

Tauber, Daveena. *Shofar*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2006, pp. 191–194. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42944397.

"The Importance of the Middle Classes." *Victorian England*, valmcbeath.com/victorian-era-middle-classes/#.W8-vZGJKjUo.

"Victorian Serial Novels." *University of Victoria*, www.uvic.ca/library/featured/collections/serials/VictorianSerialNovels.php.

Wiesenfarth, Joseph. *Gothic Manners and the Classic English Novel*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1988

Willis, Martin. " Victorian Realism and the Gothic: Objects of Terror Transformed." *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*.

Wolff, Larry. "'The Boys Are Pickpockets, and the Girl Is a Prostitute': Gender and Juvenile Criminality in Early Victorian England from 'Oliver Twist to London Labour.'" *New Literary History*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1996, pp. 227–249. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20057349.

Wolfreys, Julian. *Dickens's London: Perception, Subjectivity and Phenomenal Urban Multiplicty*.

Wood, Claire. "Oliver Twist: A Patchwork of Genres." *The British Library*, The British Library, 16 Apr. 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/oliver-twist-a-patchwork-of-genres.