Fall 2021

Dickens's Changing Perspective Towards Capitalism and the Bourgeoisie

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DICKENS'S CHANGING PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS CAPITALISM AND THE BOURGEOISIE

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of English

Rollins College

In Fulfillment of the Requirements for Honors in My Major

for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

November 2021

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Introduction

Whenever one thinks of literature that critiques the social conditions of the poor, the novels and stories of British author Charles Dickens figure prominently. A key idea in his work was that the current social systems are unfair and inhumane. Dickens's memorable characters and vivid imagery conveyed this idea, as well as the full breadth of England's social ills. One cannot help but scoff at Scrooge, a well-off member of the emerging Victorian upper-middleclass, when he claims that the existence of Union Workhouses, places where the poor are "housed" in exchange for labor, justifies his refusal to donate to the poor. It is hard not to empathize with brickmakers in *Bleak House*, who are "all stained with clay and mud" and live in a "damp offensive room" within "a cluster of wretched hovels in a brickfield" (Dickens 130).

Complicating this reformist bent is that Dickens's novels also highlight the superiority of middle-class values and lifestyles. In the same novels where he admonishes modern capitalism's polluting industry, he praises the middle-class lifestyle and capitalist values that are a cause and product of the new economic order. When one looks carefully at Dickens's novels, his desired world does not appear to be based on equality and liberation for the poor, but rather the expansion of middle-class values and power. This bias is seen in the narratives of Dickens's classic main characters, including Esther Summerson, Scrooge, and Pip of *Great Expectations.* All three of these characters find solace in respectable middle-class living. The stories they inhabit all center around their transformation into a social, moral, and economic middle-class norm.

When analyzing Dickens's views on the bourgeoisie and capitalism, it is essential to chart the development of these two concepts before and during Dickens's lifetime. The rise of the

middle classes and industrialized capitalism as seen in Dickens's time can be roughly traced to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* considers the rise of London and other large cities in Britain throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to be the indicators that a radically different social and economic system had taken hold. He states that "the nineteenth-century city, in Britain and elsewhere, was to be the creation of industrial capitalism" (146). It is thus no surprise that Dickens's analysis of capitalism and the middle-classes is centered around the industrial city of London.

The development of this new economic order was a culmination of developments throughout earlier centuries. Williams claims that the story of Britain's transition from feudalism to industrial capitalism "is not, taken as a whole, a story of decline from the medieval order but of vigorous, often brutally vigorous, growth" (39). This growth stemmed from various factors, including centuries of enclosures leading to the displacement of agricultural villages and the development of bourgeois landlords, and the rise of the mercantile trade (Williams 39, 146). Before this social change, towns were dependent on rural areas for their economies (Williams 48). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, London was not the "case of an industrial centre being fed by its rural hinterland. It was a case of a capital city drawing the character of an economy and a society into its extraordinary center: order and chaos both" (Williams 147).

This rise of cities like London as the dominant economic force was accompanied by an astronomical increase in population. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, London approached about half a million inhabitants. Between 1700 and 1820, this number rose to about 1.5 million (Williams 146). This increase in population and economic importance led London

and cities like it to become important centers for different trades, facilitating the rise of a new social class (Williams 147). However, this population increase also led to the development of dirty conditions within cities, as countless numbers of the working class moved into overcrowded buildings (Williams 145). These poor conditions formed a significant portion of the critiques of many social activists in the nineteenth century, including that of Dickens. The likes of Friedrich Engels and Henry Mayhew also detailed the conditions of the working poor.

When analyzing Dickens's opinions on the middle class, defining it is essential. The middle class consists of a diverse group, from the merchants in the early days of capitalism to the professional classes emerging in the new urban society. For this paper, the middle-class will encompass three sub-groups, some overlapping. At its most basic level, the Victorian middle class can be defined as a social group that experienced upward mobility towards a higher level of income than the working class but without any aristocratic origins. From its first emergence in the late medieval period in the form of the mercantile class, the middle-class was defined by its disturbance of the prevailing social order of peasant and gentry (Williams 48). This perceived disturbance of the social order would be a predominant feature of Dickens's preference for, and later disillusionment with, middle-class values (Brown 42).

This general definition was chosen because it encompasses the different subgroups of the middle class. One of these subgroups is the lower middle class. Arlene Young describes the lower middle class as consisting of "the old petite-bourgeoise of shopkeepers and small businessmen and the new and burgeoning army of urban white-collar workers who manned the expanding service sector of the Victorian economy" (484). Workers in this caste include clerks,

shopkeepers, office workers, and other forms of salaried labor (484-5, 487). Unlike the working classes or proletariat, these workers engaged in labor mostly requiring some form of literacy rather than partaking in industrial labor.

The other middle-class subgroup that will be addressed in this paper is the upper-middle class. This group is often represented through entrepreneurial or industrial businessmen. In this class, there is both tension and cooperation with the aristocracy. James M. Brown notes that "although middle-class propagandists were celebrating the imminent demise of the aristocracy, by the late 1840s the English aristocracy showed no intention of retreating from an industrial world in which it should have been an anachronism" (39). This portion of the bourgeoisie would adopt the modes and lifestyles of the aristocracy, a fact loathed by Dickens (Stuchebrukhov 147). The third group will be referred to as the professional middle class. This group consists of both the lower-middle-class and what Stuchebrukhov refers to as the "middle" middle class of doctors, lawyers, and other professional careers (147). Professions in the "middle" middle class do not confer great power or wealth but have a higher social status than the lower-middle-class.

When it comes to depictions of the capitalist social and economic order and its effects on people, few authors have been as prolific and detailed as Charles Dickens. Dickens's career occurred in the context of an increasingly commercialized, capitalist, and market-oriented world. According to Rosetta Young, "scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century novel have long argued that the genre possesses a unique ability to help its reader process how modern financial institutions have redefined individual personhood" (219). Dickens's novels explored themes related to the consequences of these new economic institutions, such as industrial pollution, the

displacement of the aristocracy, the continued rise of the bourgeoisie, and the emergence of a deprived, urban poor. Dickens's novels provided a space for readers to analyze the effects of modern life.

However, it is essential to note that Dickens's views on industrial capitalism and the bourgeoisie were not fixed and cannot be simplified. Critics still carry a variety of views on how Dickens viewed capitalism and the middle-classes. One of these views posits Dickens as primarily an advocate and a reformist. Some of these sources have noted Dickens's critiques of middle-class ideals and people. Chris. R Vanden Bossche and Emily Heady both take note of Dickens's negative view of certain bourgeois progressives within politics and how their aims did not coincide with the needs of the poor. Heady goes as far as to argue that Dickens in *Bleak House* argues specifically against progressivism (315). The most common argument supporting Dickens's status as a reformist is his harsh critiques of the current capitalist system and its effect on the poor. From his critiques of industry, seen in his description of the brickmakers and their home, to his rebuke of Malthusianism through Scrooge, Dickens does not place his trust entirely within the capitalist system.

Another one of these views considers Dickens to be a writer for the bourgeois class. This view posits that Dickens supported a system and mindset that favored the bourgeoisie despite being an alleged advocate for the poor. Olga Stuchebrukhov notes that Dickens appears to advocate for a middle-class nation in which the bourgeoisie subdues the lower classes and establishes bourgeois values as the norm (160). Other scholars have taken note of this preference for middle-class values, including John M. Brown, Rosetta Young, and John McBratney.

McBratney also notes how imperialism occupies a particular space in Dickens's writings (638). There is the sense that Dickens is more interested in establishing his middle-class value system over the poor rather than focusing on abolishing the circumstances that disadvantage the poor and richen the middle-classes.

Regarding Dickens's status as an advocate, certain academics have noted the pronounced discrepancies between Dickens's condemnation of the conditions of capitalism and his simultaneous endorsement of it. Brown notes that "the relationship of the middle-class value index and the social vision is problematic and responsible for many of the contradictions within the novels" (43). Essentially, Brown states that Dickens does not consider how his support for bourgeois values undercuts his more radical social critiques. Young agrees, stating that "Dickens aimed to show that the more barbaric side-effects of capitalism needed to be mitigated, but ended up laying bare, instead, how deeply and irrevocably the modern individual bases her identity on her possession of capital" (221). Dickens's inability to reconcile his bourgeois and reformist ideals is a consistent contradiction in his works over the years.

This thesis will synthesize these viewpoints to produce a nuanced look at Dickens's writing regarding the middle class and capitalism. This thesis argues that although Dickens would continue to believe in the benefits of bourgeois capitalism throughout his career, this belief would be consistently mired by a distaste for said capitalism, resulting in harsh critiques that often contradicted the middle-class value system of his novels. However, this paper also notes that this distaste would become more prominent over time, and more capitalist values and systems would find themselves subverted and parodied in his work. Thus, Dickens's work

reveals his contradictory beliefs, as well as his increased skepticism towards those same beliefs. This thesis will track this evolution in Dickens and the various contradictions and dissonances found in his writings.

This argument will utilize three texts from different times in Dickens's career. The first will be *A Christmas Carol*, published in 1843. This early work of Dickens reflects a more optimistic view of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. Dickens locates most of his social criticisms within Scrooge's apathy towards the poor so that he can avoid implicating the capitalist systems that are the cause of the poor's plight and fail to help them. Although Dickens critiques Malthusianism through Scrooge, he also gives him inhuman qualities, thus removing any sense of self-reflection on the part of the upper-middle classes reading this story. There is also the promotion of middle-class values by highlighting the Cratchits, a lower-middle-class family whose luck changes after being observed by the upper-middle class, Scrooge. The story is mainly about Scrooge's transformation rather than a solution to the social issues that allow for someone like Scrooge to exist or allow for the social issues pointed out in the novel to continue. This transformation itself is also related to Scrooge assimilating into bourgeois customs.

However, in contradiction with the rest of the story, Dickens makes a particularly scathing critique society regarding poor children using the ghostly children presented by the Ghost of Christmas Present, Ignorance and Want. This presents one of the first hints of harsh social criticism that will become common in his career. It should also be noted that although Dickens critiques Malthusianism through the inhuman Scrooge, this critique still shows that Dickens disapproves of unchecked capitalism. Although the blatant attacks on these views and

systems are not seen, there is still a hint of dissatisfaction with certain effects of capitalism. This dissatisfaction will soon move from the strawman of the miserly Scrooge to more diverse middle-class archetypes.

The second text this paper will look at is *Bleak House* (1852), where Dickens moves away from the individual and begins to indict specific systems within capitalism. The novel focuses on Esther Summerson, a young middle-class woman whose industriousness regarding the domestic sphere is rewarded. Her domesticity maintains Bleak House, a home owned by her guardian John Jarndyce. Esther's personal journey occurs within the backdrop of Chancery, an inheritance court known for its chaos and wastefulness. Notable is his critique against the pollution and filth within London, especially within areas inhabited by the poor. Dickens also begins seriously critiquing the bourgeoisie, something not seen too much in *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens targets the bureaucratic and professional culture the middle-class contributes to, often connecting the paper waste produced by middle-class professionals to the urban and industrial waste polluting the city of London. Certain bourgeois values, such as being hard-working, are not shown as an always positive aspect of the middle-class.

However, Dickens affirms the bourgeois viewpoint by presenting the Victorian middleclass home, itself an effect of capitalism, as a haven from the effects of capitalism. Promoting the middle-class home while attacking the system and values that allow such a home to exist makes the novel seem contradictory. Dickens does not make the connection between bourgeois domesticity and the exploitation of the working classes through capitalism. He also presents the idea that the middle-classes should dominate society. His contrasts between the

aristocracy and the rising entrepreneurial class, regardless of any possible critiques of the entrepreneurial class, portray the bourgeoisie displacing the aristocracy as a positive development. It appears as if Dickens, though tired of certain effects of capitalism, still believes in it as a system. As Dickens becomes more vocal about his distaste for capitalism, the more the contradictory nature of his view becomes apparent.

The final text being looked at is *Great Expectations* (1861), the most critical of the capitalist bourgeois narrative out of the three texts. It focuses not on an individual or segments of the system but questions the entire capitalist and middle-class ethos. The entire story of Pip is a parody of the self-made man narrative, a key value in the Victorian middle-classes. Dickens criticizes the individualism in which Pip pursues his upward ambitions. He also interrogates the nature of wealth and its connection to the exploitation of the working classes. There is also a more in-depth analysis of the effects of class and the dangers of using bourgeois values as a judge of character. Dickens also examines professional culture, how the bourgeoisie are negatively affected by their place in the capitalist system, and how they negatively impact others. Dickens notes the taint that the capitalist market has on others. The market is associated with slaughter and extraction. Dickens is also keener to analyze the superficiality of middle-class domesticity through Belinda and Matthew Pocket, the parents of Pip's good friend Herbert Pocket. The satire of *Great Expectations* demonstrates an overall pessimism with the current economic system.

However, Dickens also undercuts these critiques of the entire capitalist system through his depiction of Pip's redemption as middle-class worker within Britain's capitalist empire. There is also the fact that Pip still seeks solace within a middle-class home of sorts with Herbert

and Clara Pocket, thus demonstrating that Dickens has yet to reconsider the idea of the domestic hearth as a haven from capitalism. There is also the question of Magwitch. Although Dickens uses him to reveal the injustices wrought on the poor, he also uses his transfer to Australia as a redeeming factor for Magwitch. Magwitch can prove his work ethic and his thrift in Australia, thus promoting middle-class values. There is also the implication that Dickens thought that the exile of British prisoners to Australia affected the prisoners positively. The idea of transferring prisoners to another island so that they can learn to be respectable is in line with Victorian notions of self-help and self-improvement. Dickens comes close to providing a full critique of the British economic system but prevents himself from doing so through the international dimensions of Magwitch's and Pip's narratives.

Dickens's persistent refusal to condemn capitalism in its entirety, despite consistently evolving views, demonstrates an entrenched pro-capitalist view. The contradictions in Dickens's texts between pro-bourgeoisie and radical opinions further prove that capitalist virtues were a core and unshakable part of Dickens's philosophy. The presence of unreconcilable values in these texts, and their increasing occurrence as his career progressed, shows a willingness to question and amend his core values, but only to a limited extent. However, the contradictions also indicate that Dickens was experiencing some cognitive dissonance regarding his belief system. The texts clash as if in an argument with one another, each battling for prominence, with the pro-capitalist view becoming, to varying degrees, victorious.

Dickens's inability to override his bourgeois sympathies with his increasingly reformist and critical impulses is a testament to the difficulties of imagining another system in which capitalism and private property do not dictate society. The very mechanisms by which Dickens is

conveying his views, the purchasable novel, depends upon this system. Thus, the texts' increasingly contradictory natures reflect the frustrations and cognitive dissonance of one who cannot discard his core capitalist values due to his inability to imagine a new value system with entirely different roots. Despite an increasing distaste for capitalism, Dickens's consistent promotion of it demonstrates the difficulties in imagining radical change when one's worldview and existence depend upon the status quo.

Chapter 1: *A Christmas Carol*

The first work this thesis will analyze is *A Christmas Carol*. Published in 1843, this text is Dickens's most famous early work. This work follows Ebenezer Scrooge in his personal transformation from a greedy miser to a jovial and charitable man. This change comes about with the help of three ghosts: The Ghost of Christmas Past, The Ghost of Christmas Present, and The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. As the Ghosts take him through the Christmases of his life and death, he learns to place less value on accumulating wealth.

This novella was chosen because it gives Dickens the opportunity to convey his economic opinions on Christmas. Christmas is a holiday that promotes both consumerist and capitalist values, as well as charitable goodwill. A story in which Dickens focuses on such a holiday provides important insights into how he viewed the issues of poverty and the capitalist system. This is also an early novel of Dickens, and Dickens's early novels greatly contrasted with his later ones regarding capitalism and the bourgeoisie. *A Christmas Carol* reveals Dickens's early belief that capitalist greed and bourgeoisie apathy can be cured through the utilization middle-class values.

The history of celebrating Christmas was greatly influenced by the development of the bourgeois classes. In the seventeenth century, Christmas celebrations were moving away from the communal celebrations in the halls of feudal manors to the hearth in private homes. This change was suited for the "aspirations of the bourgeoisie, growing in numbers and confidence thanks to the very historical developments reshaping Christmas" (Parker 42). By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Christmas celebrations had been considered unfashionable by aristocratic classes for about a century (Parker 119). During that time, "many fashionable people

began behaving as if the more secular customs of the festival…were anachronisms, delighted in only by the vulgar" (Parker 15). This attitude mattered little to most of Dickens bourgeois readers when Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* (Parker 158).

What made the novella unique to audiences at the time was its unabashed proclamations about the meaning of Christmas from a writer of Dickens's stature. Parker states that Dickens was "without apology, extolling the plebeian and bourgeois Christmas, celebrated around the family fireside by most English, men, women, and children" (161). *A Christmas Carol* allowed for Dickens to combine his interests in Christmas with his horror at the poverty plaguing the era (Parker 162). Originally, Dickens planned to write a pamphlet after hearing of the conditions of the poor form a report by the Children's Employment Commission. Evidently, the pamphlet turned into the narrative that many know today (162).

During this era, Dickens had fewer conflicting views on capitalism and bourgeois values. His views on these two topics were generally positive despite his reformist tendencies. John M. Brown notes that Dickens's earlier works "reflect a comparatively untroubled middle-class optimism: a belief in progress, in the direction in which the system was moving (though changes might be necessary to remove certain local abuses)" (42). However, a glaring issue with *A Christmas Carol* is that Dickens provides scathing critiques of governmental and societal institutions that abandon the poor but does not provide any systemic solutions. It is apparent that Scrooge's transformation is a vehicle that allows Dickens to locate the problems within the capitalist system on a personal level, rather than within the capitalist system itself.

I. Scrooge as Personification of Malthusian and Laissez-Faire Economics

Within the story, Scrooge is the personification of all that Dickens dislikes the most about certain capitalist ideals. The two ideals critiqued by Dickens in this text are Malthusianism and laissez-faire economics. In essence, Malthusianism states that as the population increases, a certain portion will have to die to prevent resource scarcity. Laissez-faire economics maintains that the market should regulate itself with little to no outside interference. Laissez-faire economics is necessary for Malthusianism to occur. It becomes clear in *A Christmas Carol* that Dickens holds considerable contempt for these two ideologies, especially Malthusianism. When two men ask Scrooge to donate to the poor, Scrooge first asks them if the poor cannot go to prisons or be used for forced labor in workhouses, stating that he would not want to "'make idle people merry'" (Dickens 21). The men responded that many would rather die than go to those establishments (Dickens 21). Scrooge responds by saying that "'If they would rather die…they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population'" (Dickens 24). The use of the phrase "surplus population" references Malthus's idea that there is a limited supply of food and a growing number of people.

Scrooge's replies reveal that he would prefer that the poor be out of his sight and mind. As long as they are locked away in prisons or workhouses, then they are of no concern. This detachment from the lives of the poor occurs in the context of Scrooge's detachment from everything else. Previously, Scrooge admonished his nephew for finding joy in celebrating Christmas and falling in love, and then refutes his invitation to celebrate with him (Dickens 18-

20). Scrooge's detachment also applies to the environment around him, as "external heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge" (Dickens 11). Placing Scrooge's Malthusianism within the context of Scrooge's disconnect towards anything around him, including human emotions and biological functions, implies that Malthusianism is not only cruel, but inhumane. In fact, it often appears that Scrooge is barely human at all, given that he is immune to basic bodily functions, such as feeling heat or cold. Placing well-known and popular capitalist ideals within an inhumane character allows the audience to view the full implications of what these ideals say about those who hold them. Thus, the audience can see how apathy for the poor and uncritical support of government policies that seek to place the poor away from the minds of the average bourgeois person is incompatible with being human.

The result of Scrooge being the personification of the negative ideals of capitalism, however, is that Dickens places the onus of getting rid of these terrible systems on one character, rather than on any widespread change. It is then not surprising that personal charity is the principal suggested solution to governmental and societal neglect. When Scrooge is viewing the Cratchits celebrate Christmas, he begs the Spirit to tell him that Tiny Tim will survive. The Spirit states that he may not unless something is done. After Scrooge expresses his devastation, the Spirit asks him why he should be upset, since "'If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus of the population'" (105). This reference to Scrooge's Malthusian ideals causes him to be "overcome with penitence and grief" (105). After Scrooge's transformation he helps Tiny Tim so that he does not die (158).

The fact that Tiny Tim's life is dependent on the goodwill of an upper middle-class man is not questioned by Dickens. While Dickens does question the more extreme of effects of

laissez-faire capitalism, such as the tendency to either discard the vulnerable or exploit them for economic resources, he does not attempt to subvert the dynamic that inherently places the lives of Bob Cratchit and his family at the hands of his employer. Since Dickens does not detail how Scrooge helps Tiny Tim, one can only assume that Tiny Tim was able to afford medical treatment because Scrooge raised Bob Cratchit's salary and provided money as charity (Dickens 158). While Dickens is clear that he does admire employers who pay their employees well, he does not seem to see any issue with the power that employers have.

Although a key tenet of the story is the power of vision, or seeing the circumstances of the poor, can have, the inward processes of Scrooge's transformation are not detailed. Although the reader knows that the Ghost of Christmas Present allowed Scrooge to personally connect with the Cratchits when he visited their house, Dickens does not provide any insight into how Scrooge began to sympathize with the Cratchits, only that he saw that they were hardworking and happy with their few possessions. Both traits, that of thrift and humility, were considered important values in the Victorian era. The importance of thrift and hard work originated in the capitalist values that were associated "with the middle classes in the earlier, more entrepreneurial stage of English capitalist development: self-dependence, work as vocation, industry, thrift, earnestness, perseverance, patience, duty, etc." (Brown 41).

Scrooge, as well as the middle-class audience reading this work, would immediately find the values they hold reflected in this poor, lower middle-class family and sympathize with them. This demonstrates that Scrooge's saving of Tiny Tim's life depended in large part on his sympathies for the ways in which his family conformed to capitalist ideals. Therefore, the

middle-class reader is not challenged in their view that capitalist values provide a worthy mark of character, and thus determines who can live. The idea that certain people inherently deserve more of a right to live connects back to Malthusianism. It is not likely that Scrooge would have been emotionally connected to the family had they been the so-called "'idle'" people he previously referenced.

Dickens's focus on Scrooge as an individual who represents everything wrong with capitalist excess also inherently excludes the possibilities of questioning the behavior of the average bourgeois. It is noted that Dickens's distaste for Scrooge is less about greed and more about his miserliness. Lee Erickson claims that "Dickens, in effect, correctly prescribes not so much charity to the poor as greatly increased, indeed extravagant, consumer spending as the way back to Tiny Tim's health, [and] the English economy's soundness" (51). The assertion that Dickens does not prescribe charity as the way back to Tiny Tim's health isn't true, as charitable endeavors take up an important space in the novel. However, it is true that Dickens views consumerism as a solution to poverty and an important aspect of Scrooge's transformation. Consumerism and charity in this novel are both connected with each other, and one is rarely mentioned without the other immediately making an appearance. Dickens emphasizing one does not cancel out the other.

II. Charity and Bourgeois Consumerism

Dickens connects charity and bourgeois consumerism together through the Christmas dinners of the Cratchits and Fred. The Ghost of Christmas Present allows Scrooge to view both dinner parties. Dickens takes a considerate amount of time detailing them both. For the Cratchits, Dickens writes about the Christmas goose, in all its "tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness…Eked out by the apple-sauce and mashed potatoes" (102). At Fred's party, the guests talk about how Scrooge missed a great dinner, and then proceed to play dinner party games (114). Before these two scenes, the Ghost of Christmas Present appears surrounded by an abundance and a variety food, which was "heaped up upon the floor to form a kind of throne" (Dickens 80-1). The Ghost also shows Scrooge the items in the bustling stores and shops. Dickens dedicates a significant amount of space to describing the food items for sale, such as the "pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts" and the "ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth" (88). When Scrooge wakes up on Christmas morning after the visits of the three ghosts, the first action he partakes in as a redeemed man is purchasing a Christmas Turkey for the Cratchits (Dickens 152). He then decides to go to Fred's Christmas dinner (Dickens 156-7).

The presence of food throughout *A Christmas Carol* is a direct call for increased consumerism. Towards the beginning of the story, Scrooge is so reluctant to spend any money that he eats gruel before bed (Dickens 34). When Dickens spends paragraphs describing food in the stores to demonstrate the "abundance available, even begging, to be consumed," he is counteracting Scrooge's miserly actions (Erikson 54). By describing the abundance of consumerist items, and then showing how these items can be used in family dinners, Dickens connects his desire to see family gathering with increased consumer spending. The fact that his

redemption hinges on his buying a Turkey for the Cratchits and attending his nephew's Christmas dinner indicates the importance of indulging in consumer objects when it comes to forming connections. Scrooge's charity to the Cratchits occurs in this wider context of increased consumer spending on gifts and gatherings. Dickens is trying to combat the Malthusian instinct of hoarding goods in case of a crisis by "seeking to create an atmosphere of cheerful consumption within his wealthy readers" (Erikson 55).

The fact that the hoarding of wealth can also come in the form of extravagant spending, even if one occasionally gives to charity, cannot be examined in this story because the criticism is centered around Scrooge and his own personal failures. These critiques imply that the only people who contribute to the overall poverty within England are those greedy, miserable men who don't care to spend any money on their friends, family, or themselves. The question on how consumerism and thus capitalism can lead to wealth hoarding amongst the middle-classes is unaddressed. The question of why such plentiful food cannot be distributed so the hungry can eat is only addressed once, when the bakeries give out food to the poor (Dickens 91). Even that example is yet again a call for charity rather than a critique of the abundance that exists in the face of poverty.

III. Scrooge and Capital

Greater than emphasizes consumer spending is Dickens's encouragement of investing in social capital. Scrooge's transformation also relies on his ability to perform a respectable

middleclass existence, with all its forms of capital, rather than on any desire to change a broken system.

According to Rosetta Young, "rather than serving as a universal social type, a negative example of avarice or greed, Scrooge is the mistaken *nouveau riche* who thinks that money alone signals wealth" (228). Therefore, Dickens not only encourages increased consumer spending in *A Christmas Carol,* but also any attempts to increase level of social recognition that comes with attending these gatherings and consuming these objects. When it comes to the dinner parties, it should also be noted that Dickens hints at the pregnancy of Fred's wife (Young 228). Despite Fred and his wife existing comfortably within the middle-class, an inheritance from Scrooge would place them in the upper-middle class, thus making Scrooge's rejection of Fred's invitation, as well as his general estrangement, particularly troubling (Young 228). Placing his nephew in a higher social class would give Scrooge and his family more social capital. His rejection of said capital marks his failure to perform middle-class values.

The fact that capital is inherently tied to the character of Scrooge and to the other characters also presents a problematic aspect within the story. If Dickens wants to condemn any extreme capitalist excess and rejects the notion that the poor need to make themselves useful in union workhouses rather than be "idle," it should be expected that he rejects the notion that a person's capital, and thus a person's class standing and performance within the capitalist system, defines who they are as a human. However, Dickens instead communicates and defines his characters by their class and capital, taking note of how they invest in their social or cultural

capital (Young 219). This demonstrates that Dickens has no intention of viewing the world in a way that is not defined by people's relationships to their capital and their consumer objects. Young states that "the class between the novel's anti-poverty narrative and its use of multiform capital to render its characters reveals Dicken's endorsement of the existing social hierarchy" (221). Any criticism of poverty circles back to Scrooge and his uncharitable nature and occasionally certain government laws. The very nature of Scrooge's existence as a being defined by his ability to acquire the appropriate middle-class capital is considered a necessary moral judgement.

IV. Societal Criticism through "Ignorance" and "Want"

However, there is one moment in which Dickens spends significant time on locating the problems of poverty outside of Scrooge's personal decisions. Before the Ghost of Christmas Present leaves Scrooge, he presents to him two hideous children, one boy and one girl. When Scrooge asks if those children are the Spirit's, he responds that "'they are man's'"(123). He goes on further, stating that "'this boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom…Deny it!'" (123) When Scrooge asks the Ghost if there is not refuge for them, the Spirit cites his previous statement, asking if there are no prisons or workhouses (124).

This scene is striking as it is the only time, other than in his reference to union workhouses and prisons in the beginning of the novel, in which Dickens attempts to locate a systemic problem not within the individual, but within society. Although the Spirit's quoting of Scrooge's previous line still shows that Dickens is prioritizing Scrooge's personal transformation, the Spirit's claim that they are "'man's'" children indicts the society around Scrooge. The hideous children, with their ragged clothing, represent children in poverty. In this case, Dickens is not just accusing Scrooge or those like him of neglect, he is accusing the entirety of Victorian society and institutions. This neglect creates what he refers to as "monsters" (123). The comparison of the children to monstruous beings and the statement that they are all of humanity's children, implies that these children are immortal spirits themselves. They exist beyond the lifespan of Scrooge and of Dickens's then audience. The consequences of Malthusian apathy curse the poor to a degrading state for generations. Referencing the immortal nature of the problem is another way in which Dickens locates the problem beyond something individuals can

fix.

The names of the children are significant in determining the consequences of poverty that Dickens is concerned about. The girl "'Want'" represents the needs of the poor being neglected. This neglect is seen throughout the story, most explicitly within Tiny Tim's arc. However, what really needs to be looked at is the boy named "Ignorance." The Ghost states that the boy should be especially watched out for, for on his forehead is written "Doom." "Ignorance," when presented in the context of *A Christmas Carol,* represents two things. The first is the ignorance of those like Scrooge and Parliament towards the plight of the destitute. This interpretation

places the blame on Scrooge and those who have withheld their wealth from the poor. This is different from Dickens's other condemnations of Scrooge's miserliness, as it centers giving to the poor out of necessity rather than encouraging consumption. It's condemnation of wider society, instead of just Scrooge, also implies that charity isn't enough to solve this problem. While the government is not mentioned, the references to the union workhouses and prisons suggests a call for government reform in that regard. This call for reform will come into play in Dickens's later works.

The second thing the name "Ignorance" represents is the "ignorance" of the poor under the conditions of the prisons and workhouses. It is unlikely that the poor, especially the children, are receiving the adequate resources that allows them to be educated in how to conduct themselves in a society. The degradation of the states of these children is referenced by other writers who spoke about England in this time. Engels notes the moral degradation of the working classes, as he talks about how workers even from a young age are often tempted into alcohol due to their poor educational backgrounds and miserable lives (114). Henry Mayhew, who wrote extensively about the working classes of England, wrote about how young orphans were often tempted to become thieves and how within the "wandering classes," which included the homeless and destitute who wander from place to place, "there is a greater development of the animal than of the intellectual or moral nature" (7, 542). The societal apathy towards the poor, destitute, and young, according to Engels and Mayhew, was raising a mass of people who were uneducated in morals or restraint.

The word "'Doom'" written on the boy's forehead represents the eventual societal decline that ignorance will bring about. The symbolism of "Ignorance" can be interpreted as the ignorance brought about from lack of education. In the months before publishing *A Christmas Carol,* Dickens visited a school for poor children, becoming shocked at the conditions of the children. Dickens, in a letter to a funder of the school, described his fears "'that in the prodigious misery and ignorance of the swarming masses of mankind in England, the seeds of its certain ruin are sown'" (qtd. in Parker 172). He emphasized that although he had seen the children in the jails, the children in the schools disturbed him more because "'they have not arrived there yet, but are as plainly and certainly travelling there, as they are to their Grave'" (qtd. in Parker 172). The ignorance and poverty brought about by neglecting the education of poor children is depicted in these letters with a similar level of despair as in *A Christmas Carol.*

The word "Doom" represents not only the future of the children as prisoners and other ostracized members of society, but also the future of British society. Dickens's fears that "masses" of ignorant and needy people and the apathy of those like Scrooge will bring about an irreversible societal decline. Although the specifics of this decline are not made, the vague threats of the Spirit, that Scrooge should "beware" of childhood poverty and neglect, demonstrate that middle-class apathy will affect the wealthy. Dickens wanted to transfer the sense of horror and urgency he experienced to his bourgeois readership, and thus create more urgency among the bourgeoisie to mediate these issues.

What should be noted about this metaphor is that despite its indictment of those in privileged classes, it is the poor who are depicted as monstrous beings that will bring about

destruction. While Scrooge is also represented in an inhuman-like way, it does not compare to the descriptions given to the children, who are described as "wretched, abject, frightful, hideous miserable" (121). Dickens further states that "no change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity…has monsters half so horrible and dread" (123). He depicted the destitute in this way to inspire urgency in readers. However, the implied danger the monstruous figures pose to the bourgeoisie centers the wealthy as those who are being corrupted by the poor. The fact that "doom" is written on the boy's face seems to locate the problem on the poor and cause an association of violence and degradation with the poor rather than the upper classes.

The association of the poor with moral corruption of the other classes is the opposite of what Engels depicts. Dickens's accusation against society can be compared to how Engels indicts the English bourgeois with the social murder of the working classes. Engels states that when a society "deprives thousands of the necessaries of life…and yet permits these conditions to remain, its deed is murder just as surely as the deed of the single individual" (106). However, Engels is primarily concerned with how the institutions that prop up the bourgeoisie also oppress the poor. He firmly believes that the oppression of what he refers to as the "Proletariat" are dependent on the system that allows for a class of people to accumulate privilege through property ownership. He states that the "English middle class... is enriched directly by means of the poverty of the workers" (31). Unlike Dickens, Engels does not see any value in the morals of the Victorian middle-classes and does not see them as separate from the old aristocracy, because "before the privilege of property all other privileges vanish" (218).

The contrast between Dickens and Engels in how they view Victorian poverty demonstrates the limited scope of Dickens's societal critiques in *A Christmas Carol,* in that he both indicts the wider middle-class society, and yet also does not try to specifically question all the ways in which society allows for such neglect towards the poor to fester. At this point in Dickens's career, the connection between the status of the bourgeois class itself and the exploitation of the poor is not made. Instead, a call to action is made to the bourgeoise to save the children and wider society from their doom. While the symbolism involving "Want" and "Ignorance" provides one example where Dickens does not limit his critiques to Scrooge, it fails to account for the forces of capitalism that cause poverty and degradation amongst the poor while it benefits those of Scrooge's class.

V. Dickens's Focus on the Middle-Classes

The sidelining of poorer characters to center Scrooge is a consistent occurrence throughout *A Christmas Carol.* In some cases, the descriptions of the lives of the poor produces vaguer social criticisms than even that of Tiny Tim and the two children. As the Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to different households celebrating Christmas around England, he stops at the mines at Cornwall. The mines are described as desolate areas, where "monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about" (Dickens 109). The coal miners and their children, who are also coal miners, are shown in a small hut surrounded by a fire, hearing the voice of an old man whose voice "seldom rose above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste" singing a Christmas song (109-12). Scrooge and the Ghost do not spend too much time in this place, as the Spirit must take him to the rest of the households.

While Dickens's depictions of the barren areas where the miners live is striking and memorable, it is not certain what he wanted his middle-class audience to take from it. One could argue that this was a way of placing in criticism of child labor and general living conditions at the mines. This interpretation is supported by the presence of the metaphor of the two children and Scrooge's charity towards Tiny Tim. Engels notes how "a mass of children work the whole week…and therefore cannot attend school" (121). If the boy Ignorance represents in part the ignorance of the poor, then it is not unlikely that Dickens might be showing the desolate conditions of the mines, as well as referencing the children who live there, to criticize the living and working conditions of these children.

One issue with the previous interpretation, however, is the context in which this scene occurs. The Ghost of Christmas Present is taking Scrooge on a journey throughout different areas of England to show how many people with less means than Scrooge are celebrating Christmas. It is likely that Dickens only showed the mines to demonstrate how people with much less than the audience can keep the Christmas spirit alive. Other people mentioned include shopworkers, lighthouse workers, and the poor who eat free food from the bakeries (Dickens 112-13). In this interpretation, the poor are yet again another tool that Dickens uses to help Scrooge, the middleclass character, in his redemption arc. Even if one sees the children of the mines in the same way as one is supposed to see Tiny Tim, then the interpretation is that one should be charitable to the children of the mines instead of trying to improve their condition.

Either way, it is impossible to know what the purpose of the scene with the coal miners is. The reader is not allowed time to absorb any of the settings in which the less fortunate are a part of, except for Tiny Tim, as the scenes switch to get Scrooge to go through his transformation. All the dramatic effects and visuals are not dedicated to the poor, but to Scrooge. The book's purpose is not a tract on how the poor are treated, and how these problems are caused by systemic injustice, but how "the modern middle-class individual—the Scrooge—is shaped by the most minute changes and fluctuations in both his multiform capital and his consciousness of that capital" (Young 221). Essentially, Dickens is more concerned about how the change in the way Scrooge views capital affects his character. It is focused on his transformation from someone who only hoarded capital to someone who invested in it appropriately. The existence of the coal miners was, regardless of Dickens's true attempts, ultimately served to help Scrooge divest from his miserly habits and open more to investing the capital he can afford. After all, if the poor in the mines can afford Christmas parties, so can a man like Scrooge.

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Dickens uses Scrooge's personal transformation to ignore the inherent contradictions in assigning individual responsibility and goodwill of the bourgeois as a solution to problems that are caused by the capitalist system. This system is the same one that created the bourgeois. He also uses it to ignore questions about system issues like child labor. Instead of spending more time on systemic issues, Dickens spends the bulk of the story locating problems within Scrooge and providing solutions. This novella is essentially prioritizing looking at individual actions

rather than widespread change. Although *A Christmas Carol* shows Dickens with a positive outlook on capitalism, it still shows that even then he attempted to reconcile his desire to praise capitalism with his distaste for what capitalism has resulted.

Chapter 2: *Bleak House*

Dickens's *Bleak House*, published in 1853, differs in scope regarding his critiques of societal issues. Unlike within *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens does not locate societal problems within one individual but within a whole system of people, professions, and industries. Although Dickens focuses on Esther, her development, and how she attempts to alleviate social problems, he spends a significant amount of time detailing problems that do not have an easy answer. Another way *Bleak House* differs from *A Christmas Carol* is in Dickens's view of the middleclass. In this novel, he presents some of the flaws inherent to that social group. He criticizes the pitfalls of middle-class work culture and industrial development. However, there is an apparent contradiction to be seen in *Bleak House*. While Dickens locates problems within the capitalist system and the bourgeoisie, he avoids implicating the system by idealizing the very values he criticizes. He advocates for a systemic reform that does not radically change the system's inherent ideology.

The prevailing opinion of many scholars is that *Bleak House* is both an indictment of British Victorian society, particularly its industrial and aristocratic aspects, and a celebration of middle-class Victorian values. Scholars like Stuchebrukhov, Brown, and Bigelow argue that Dickens presents a bourgeois solution to societal ills, emphasizing Dickens's belief in Victorian domesticity as a haven for capitalist excesses. Other scholars, such as Heady, believe that Dickens argues against middle-class progressivism by highlighting capitalism's industrial and bureaucratic waste. This chapter synthesizes both views, arguing that Dickens locates serious problems within bourgeois values and systems while also advocating for these same values and systems as solutions.

Two systemic problems Dickens focuses his critiques on are bureaucracy and waste. Dickens ties the two seemingly disparate themes together by drawing links between bureaucratic excesses and the professional culture that causes it and the water and pollution that plagues London. Within the topic of waste, Dickens attacks industrial excesses, though not directly. However, despite Dickens's belief that capitalist industry and bureaucracy lead to contamination and waste, he still promotes capitalist ideology through his solutions. Dickens's solution to capitalist excess is the Victorian home, an institution inseparable from the middle-class and capitalism. Also noted are his perceptions of the entrepreneurial class that directly contributed to the problems of capitalist excess. This chapter will detail these different positions and their contradictory nature.

I. Bureaucratic and Industrial Waste

Emily Heady explores Dickens's critiques of bureaucracy and waste. Heady suggests that Dickens's *Bleak House* does not advocate for a particular viewpoint but criticizes certain reformist and progressive ideals that entrench capitalist norms. Although Brown disputes the idea that Dickens is skeptical of middle-class reform, he emphasizes that Dickens views the economic and industrial systems as interconnected with all other facets of life. The problem of pollution and bureaucracy, Brown notes, is central to the theme of *Bleak House*. This theme is the interconnectedness of systems. This section will use the interconnectedness of bureaucracy and professional culture with waste and pollution to demonstrate Dickens's critiques against the capitalist and bourgeois systems.

Dickens criticizes bourgeois society for promoting professional or work culture. The British capitalist society of Dickens's time placed a high value on work for work's sake. Dickens manifests his distaste for this culture by describing the piles of waste that working culture produces. In *Bleak House*'s first chapter, Dickens attacks Chancery, noting its massive waste production despite its negligible value as an institution. One of the recurring motifs within the novel is the corruption and inefficiency of the old system of Chancery, an inheritance court that consumes years and decades from people. In this book, the court case Dickens depicts, called Jarndyce and Jarndyce, has seen "innumerable children…born into the cause" (Dickens 16). Within Chancery lie piles of papers, including "bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, masters' reports, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them" (Dickens 14). This pile of bureaucratic waste emphasizes the inefficiency of

Chancery. This waste takes up space and does little to advance the lawsuit. To Dickens, useless waste is a mark of inefficiency.

Although Chancery predates British industrial capitalism, the system of Chancery has irrevocably become subsumed into capitalism and the work culture that it encourages. Although the suit revolves around inheritance, an older way of managing money than industrial capitalism, the professional, clerical culture, the mass production of materials and waste, and the use of people as economic assets grant Chancery a contemporary capitalist nature. Brown states, "On the one hand, Chancery is seen as a cruelly indifferent and inhuman machine, an external thing grinding up the individuals it should serve. On the other hand, it is portrayed as a business firm, dealing profitably in people as economic assets" (60). The view of people as economic assets adds another dimension of greed to the suit. This greed allows for the mass production of papers keeping this suit alive. The inefficiency of the pre-industrial world combines with the dehumanizing and wasteful economy of the post-industrial world.

The waste produced by capitalism's professional culture is emphasized by Krook's shop. Near the Court of Chancery, the shop sells papers, empty ink bottles, and other supplies used by the Court of Chancery. Krook's shop is not just attached to the Court physically but represents the Court itself. Miss Flite, an older woman Esther befriends, claims that Krook is referred to as Lord Chancellor by the neighbors and his shop as the Court of Chancery (Dickens 69). Krook states that he received this moniker because of the excess amounts of papers and parchments "wasting away and going to rack and ruin" (Dickens 70). Indeed, Dickens describes the shop as having "heaps of old crackled parchment scrolls, and discolored and dog's-eared law-papers"

(Dickens 68). Dickens suggests that capitalist production makes it easier for these old and inefficient systems to operate instead of doing away with them. The greed felt by those who've adopted professional culture, such as the lower-middle-class Krook, feed into the fog and clutter that is Chancery.

The issue of middle-class productivity is also viewed in areas not immediately connected with Chancery. Despite not being immediately connected, these areas are still intertwined with the societal issues Dickens addresses. The waste and clutter of paper and the middle-class professional values are further attacked with Mrs. Jellyby. Mrs. Jellyby is a middle-class woman whose charitable pursuits focus on Africa, specifically on educating the people there on planting coffee (Dickens 53). Although Dickens shows that he values middle-class charity in *A Christmas Carol*, he clarifies in *Bleak House* that he dislikes the "telescopic philanthropy" that places a narrow focus on solving the alleged problems of remote areas while ignoring problems within one's home. Mrs. Jellyby is so focused on trying to help Africans that she allows papers and waste to accumulate. She also neglects her children. One child, Peepee, is described by Esther as "one of the dirtiest little unfortunates I ever saw" (Dickens 51, 53). Again, papers and waste are associated with working culture's adverse effects.

It should also be pointed out that Mrs. Jellyby's charitable enterprise appears to be a colony. She believes that the best way to "help" the people of Borrioboola-Gha is to settle a couple of hundred families there to cultivate coffee and educate the natives (Dickens 53). Mr. Kenge demonstrates that the so-called "educating" of the natives is an afterthought, stating the Mrs. Jellyby is "devoted to the subject of Africa; with a view to the general cultivation of the

coffee berry—and the natives—and the happy settlement…of our superabundant home population" (Dickens 49-50). The late addition of "natives" shows that the wellbeing of the Africans Mrs. Jellyby wants to educate is secondary to the economic and evangelical effects of the colony. Dickens demonstrates how this type of public, philanthropic work, often endorsed by other middle-class individuals like Jarndyce and Kenge, produces waste in one's immediate surroundings (50).

This farsighted philanthropy leads the middle class to neglect the people and space around them, thus accumulating waste within their living spaces. The paper waste around Mrs. Jellyby's home demonstrates how her focus on this colonial enterprise leads her to disregard the wellbeing of those around her. The waste emphasizes the productivity of her work while also highlighting its harmful effects. The paper waste in Mrs. Jellyby's home shows that these philanthropic endeavors are nothing more than capitalist enterprises in the same way businesses like Krook's are. While it is not sure that Mrs. Jellyby receives any economic capital for her efforts, these capitalist enterprises increase her cultural capital. Her missionary work raises her status as someone who does her middle-class, Christian duty and can produce profits for the British Empire.

Dickens's criticisms of the waste produced by industrial capitalism are intertwined with his critiques of bureaucratic waste. He makes pronounced criticisms of capitalist waste and how bourgeois values are often unhelpful in alleviating social issues. The novel speaks of the "smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes" (Dickens 13). He also describes a fog permeating through the city. This

fog, an accumulation of the air pollution produced by industrial production, is centered not around an industrial building or a factory but the Court of Chancery (Dickens 13). The fog causes the pensioners to wheeze and obscures the views of those on the bridges (Dickens 13). Dickens states that the "dense fog is the densest…near that leaden-headed old obstruction…Temple Bar" (14). He equates the wasted paper from Chancery with the fog-waste from industry. This comparison is intriguing to note. It compares a system from an older period within England, that of the Court of Chancery, to a more recent one: industrial capitalism.

Dickens compares Chancery to industrial capitalism to show that he does not show complete idealistic attachment to past or present systems. The waste and harm produced by both industries reflect Dickens's distaste for capitalist and traditional production modes. This idea might seem contradictory at first, as efficiency is a value of industrial capitalism. Dickens has a very negative view of Chancery's inefficiency, thus showing that he values efficiency. Chancery also carries an association with aristocratic elitism (Stuchebrukhov 149). While one can interpret Dickens's criticism of the ancient institution of Chancery as welcoming the emerging industrial class and lifestyle, the opening descriptions of London pollution cast doubt into this notion. Emily Heady states that the "focus on Dickens's reformist impulses tends to elide the tensions that drive the novel's first paragraph—tensions that in large part, suggest that progress itself is the problem" (315). Indeed, much of the novel describes the waste produced by urbanization brought about by industrial capitalism and the desperate conditions that said waste created for the poor.

Most of Dickens's criticisms of industry were directed towards the unsanitary conditions they frequently produced. For the industrialization of Britain to occur, there needed to be a steady wave of employees operating the machinery necessary to mass-produce products. Engels speaks of this transformation of lower-class life, stating that "the rapid extension of manufacture demanded hands, wages rose, and troops of workmen migrated from the agricultural districts to the towns…Thus arose the great manufacturing and commercial cities of the British Empire" (29). At the time Engels wrote this, the vastness of England's manufacturing cities was unique and unprecedented within Europe, with him noting that the country went from being "a country like any other, with small towns, few and simple industries, and a thin but proportionally large agricultural population" (28). With large populations living in proximity to sites of manufacturing and industry comes a greater propensity for pollution.

Although Engels uses some science that may appear sketchy to modern eyes, he is correct to note that the concentration of 2 million people into a relatively smaller space presented challenges to air quality and sanitation that England had not considered (107). He notes that in the small space provided by the city, certain things like dung-heaps, which would be innocuous in a rural setting, feel unbearable in a place where it is "among closely built lanes and courts that shut out all movement of the atmosphere" (Engels 108). Engels writes that "all putrefying vegetable and animal substances give off gasses decidedly injurious to health" and that the poor are "relegated to districts which, by reason of the method of construction, are worse ventilated than any others" (108). All kinds of waste are dumped into the streets, including "all offal and garbage, all dirty water, often all disgusting drainage and excrement…without other means of disposing of them" (Engels 108).

All these contaminating elements would not be so unbearable in a rural or sparse setting, as Engels states; however, the large number of workers packed into a small amount of space for industrial needs creates an excess of waste that is inconceivable. Engels speaks of how "if the population of great cities is too dense in general, it is they in particular who are packed into the least space" (108). The poor often live with multiple people in small dwellings that do not insulate well from the elements. With all these factors, certain diseases are inevitably rampant. The ones Engels notes the most are consumption, or Tuberculosis, Typhus, and Scarlet Fever. Although Engels's assertion that the "bad air" directly causes infections has been refuted by modern science, it is undoubtedly true that poor air quality and living conditions allow diseases to fester (109).

The negative effects of urbanization and industrialization are further explored in the living conditions of the poor. The connection between industry and sanitation, though not explicit, is routinely addressed in *Bleak House*. The unique situation industrial capitalism has created in cities like London cannot be separated from the destitute situation of the poor that Dickens criticizes. Like many in his time, Dickens documents the horrifying state of the dwellings of the working classes. When Mr. Snagsby enters Tom-All-Alone's, a slum which was once the land that was debated by the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit in Chancery, he "passes along the middle of a villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water…and reeking with such smells and sights that he, who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses" (Dickens 358).

Dickens further emphasizes the harmful nature of modern cities by highlighting contamination. In Tom-All-Alone's, Dickens states that "these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery….these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever" (257). In this quote, Dickens uses the language of disease and pestilence. The use of "maggots" harkens to dead carcasses, which can be a form of waste. Dickens connects the poor state of urban sanitation with industrial capitalism through its association with the Court of Chancery. It is another example of a property going to waste due to bourgeois selfishness. Tom-All-Alone's is also where Jo, an orphaned and homeless street-sweeper, lives (Dickens 256). In this place, Jo catches an unspecified illness and spreads it to Esther and Charley (Dickens 730). Within Tom-All-Alone's is the heart of a pestilence that threatens everyone in London, just as Chancery is the heart of the fog.

The mass production of papers that Krook repurposes from the Court and its excess waste also mirrors the industrial mass production that blinds the citizens of London in a fog. Further compounding Chancery's association with industry is the sign of paper mill on Krook's shop (Dickens 67). After the link is established between paper waste, and Chancery, to the fog, one can see how Mrs. Jellyby's enactment of the bourgeois values of thrift and hard work contribute to the harm enacted by industry. The ideal of work and production, according to Dickens, should not mean that work and production carry an inherent value, nor does it mean they should be valued above all else. It is clearly seen here that Dickens notes the connection that the bourgeoisie has with the poor's exploitation and degradation. This degradation has consequences for the rest of England in terms of pestilence and disease.

When Esther and Ada visit the brickmakers' dwellings, they see the direct consequences of industrialization and mass production for the first time. The brickmaker family that they are visiting live in "one of a cluster of wretched hovels in a brickfield, with pigsties close to the broken windows, and miserable little gardens before the doors, growing nothing but stagnant pools" (Dickens 129). Esther herself states that it would have been impossible to be clean in a place like that, despite Mrs. Pardiggle's claims that the people were lazy and could not keep their homes clean (Dickens 130). When they come into the brickmaker's home, Mrs. Pardiggle states that she will not be driven away by the father, that she loves "hard work" (Dickens 132). The man then states that Mrs. Pardiggle is wasting her time preaching to him and leaving Christian pamphlets because it is impossible to maintain a proper lifestyle in such an environment, and he is illiterate (Dickens 132). The man also states that he gave his wife her black eye (Dickens 132).

The brickmaker's monologue conveys the central issue with Mrs. Pardiggle's proposed solutions and the state of industry in Britain. The man does not state what caused him to punch his wife. However, this statement comes after the speech towards Mrs. Pardiggle about their circumstances. Thus, one can conclude that all the misery from being in such conditions, the infant mortality, the illiteracy, the poor drinking water, the little money provided for food, and the lack of cleanliness all culminate into the cycle of domestic violence portrayed here. In this scene, the domestic space is violated by industry. This violation leading to the degradation of sanitation causes ill health and unpleasant conditions in a household. The man says that his home is "nat'rally dirty, and it is nat'rally onwholesome; and we have had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much better for them" (Dickens 132). Thus, Dickens

conveys that one's domestic surroundings influence one's propensity to thrive in society. When people are surrounded by industry and have their wages at the mercy of people who want to increase mass production, one's wellbeing will always suffer. This suffering is generational and happens from birth. It is an inevitable consequence of the meager subsistence from these industrial families. This contradicts Mrs. Pardiggle's insistence that her preaching middle-class values to this family will help them. This scene demonstrates how charitable middle-class people are often ill-equipped to solve specific systemic issues.

Mrs. Pardiggle does not understand that her values of hard work and thrift are useless in the face of industrial excess and degradation. She does not understand that her middle-class values do not help the family but only strengthen her ego. Unlike in *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens does not use a hard-working lower-middle-class family like the Cratchits to inspire sympathy in his upper-middle-class audience. Instead, he uses a working-class family who lives the reality that most of the poor in England must live amid industrialization. He depicts the degradation that these people live in, including the pollution, which ties back to the idea of waste. Dickens uses waste to demonstrate the flaws of middle-class professional values. Instead of locating the issue within one bourgeois individual, he indicts fundamental aspects of the bourgeoisie and the system that allows them to continue in that way.

II. Solace in Domesticity

Despite clearly articulated critiques against professional culture and industry that derive from the bourgeoisie and capitalism, Dickens advocates for solutions that derive from and uphold the capitalist system he criticizes. One of these solutions posits domesticity as a refuge against the horrors of capitalism. Regarding domesticity, Stuchebrukhov and Bigelow emphasize Dickens's belief that the Victorian home is a haven against the negative influences of capitalism. Stuchebrukhov also speaks of the ways Dickens manages to associate specific entrepreneurial industry figures with domesticity. Brown notes the hypocrisy of Dickens's support for Victorian domestic values while railing against other bourgeois values in the rest of *Bleak House*.

Bleak House ends with Esther Summerson and Dr. Allan Woodcourt establishing a household in Yorkshire, with Dr. Woodcourt aiding the poorer townspeople and Esther maintaining the household (Dickens 985-8). The household, which is named Bleak House, is an escape from the waste of the wider society. It is a reincarnation of John Jarndyce's Bleak House, which served the same purpose (Dickens 963). One difference is that John Jarndyce's original Bleak House constantly had the East Wind blowing through it whenever John Jarndyce experienced any uncertainty (Dickens 100). This suggests that the domesticity provided in the outskirts of London was insufficient in guarding against contamination from London.

Throughout the novel, the theme of domesticity permeates. Most of the positive characters in this novel, such as Jarndyce and Esther, create a decent middle-class home. Jarndyce's Bleak House attempts to insulate his three wards from the waste of capitalism of Chancery, telling Esther that it is best to not think of the suit, as thinking about it could lead to their ruin (Dickens 118-9). According to Stuchebrukhov, "John Jarndyce's main function in the

novel is to offer a middle-class alternative to Chancery's way of guardianship. As a guardian, he is trying to instill his wards with the middle-class moral values of reason, self-dependence, industry, thrift, earnestness, patience, and duty" (150). John Jarndyce is also responsible for turning Bleak House from a home whose master abandoned its preservation to Chancery to a haven away from that waste of paper that Chancery makes up (Dickens 120). Both homes being away from the pollution of industrial London marks their safety away from the corrupt aspects of capitalism. The home in Yorkshire being away from the East Wind indicates its safety compared to the old location (Dickens 988).

Dickens believes that the solution to societal ills is to reject professional and bourgeois values that waste-driven enterprises inspire and instead accept values of the domestic sphere, which is away from the industrial and bureaucratic core. Gordon Bigelow states that according to Dickens, "if the masculine world of the market represents a circulation without end, then feminine domesticity represents the fantasy of the circuit's closure" (600-1). Essentially, the domestic sphere is a salve against the corruption and waste of the market. When one considers that the myth of the Victorian hearth is one of the "chief myths of the bourgeoisie" and that Dickens's criticisms are aimed mainly at the bourgeoisie and the culture they reproduce and benefit from, this solution feels incomplete (Brown 43). This demonstrates that while Dickens notes the connection between the bourgeoisie and pestilence by connecting bureaucratic waste to industrial waste, he does not appear to believe that the values of the said bourgeoisie are the inherent problem.

The systemic view he has taken to societal issues did not lead to his considering discarding this same exploitative system in the first place. Dickens believes that though the system that upholds the bourgeoisie and capitalism has some inherent and drastic flaws, it can be used in non-exploitative fashion. Changing what aspects of the professional middle-class to emphasize does not change that the bricks used to build Bleak House were produced by those same exploited brickmakers. This view seems to skirt the issue of the connection between middle-class professional culture and increased industrialization. A large part of the wealth of Britain comes from its manufacturing power, fueled by capitalism and colonialism. As recounted earlier by Engels, the industrial revolution necessitated the urbanization of English cities. This urbanization causes the conditions for working people mentioned earlier. Without these dense cities, Britain would not be able to acquire its wealth, and thus the middle-classes would not exist in the status of that time.

Domesticity as Dickens's solution to capitalist excess also does not challenge the middleclass hierarchy that places so many resources into the hands of the bourgeoisie. Dickens idealizes a Victorian middle-class home that reinforces a hierarchy that upholds the middle-class's supremacy over the working poor. For example, Esther states that she knows that Woodcourt every day has "alleviated pain, and soothed some fellow-creature in the time of need," and that the townspeople praise her as "the Doctor's wife" (Dickens 988-9). Woodcourt's profession also allows Dickens to convey his belief that the poor needing to be saved by the middle-classes. Stuchebrukhov states that Woodcourt being a doctor, "provides him with the middle-class disciplining function of subduing the lower classes…by the middle-class expectations of physical and moral normalcy" (160). The belief that the poor need to be subdued

by the middle classes indicates a paternalism that resembles that of Mrs. Pardiggle. The key difference is that Dr. Woodcourt caters to the actual needs of the poor while Mrs. Pardiggle does not. Although Dickens challenges the ways in which the bourgeois can save the poor, the idea that the poor need to be under the dominion of the middle-class for their own good is not challenged.

The truth is, the only way Woodcourt and Esther can own their idyllic home in the countryside and bask in the admiration of the locals is because Woodcourt's inherited the home from John Jarndyce (Dicken 965). Dickens is upholding Woodcourt's help for the poor completely underskirts the way he benefits from Jarndyce's money earned through exploitation. Having the fate of the country rest on the middle-class and their values does not account for the broader systemic issues that Dickens brings up. The solace found in middle-class professionalism and domesticity is like Mrs. Pardiggle's and Mrs. Jellyby's belief that solid Christian morals and hard work are the way to solve societal issues. Essentially, Dickens does not discard the ideologies he criticizes but seeks to make them more local and domestic. However, this is not possible since in a capitalistic society, all bourgeois values, and systems, including those that are not feeling the immediate effects, benefit from capitalist systems of production and labor. Within Dickens's preferred vision of the middle-class, he upholds the very values that have led to the waste and suffering he critiques. Achieving Dickens's dream middleclass utopia is impossible without maintaining the oppressive structures Dickens criticizes.

There is also a notable absence of harsh critiques regarding Mr. Rouncewell and the actual manufacturing magnates themselves. This dichotomy is possible since Dickens critiques the London industry, whereas Rouncewell lives in Northern England (951). However, the choice to highlight an industrial magnate far from London, where Dickens criticizes the industry's effects, is likely deliberate. Dickens dedicates a decent portion of the novel to how the aristocracy, represented by Sir Leicester Dedlock, is phasing out of political power by an emerging bourgeoisie, represented by Mr. Rouncewell. The fall of the Dedlock family is alluded to throughout the novel, most prominently when Dickens describes how Sir Leicester, who is without a male heir, is dying of gout. Dickens describes how his limbs are in a literal deadlock, as he is dying from gout, an illness associated with the wealthy (255). The novel's end also shows the Dedlock estate in a state of decay. The property seems to belong to "an old family of echoings and thunderings which start out of their hundred graves at every sound," thus emphasizing the death of the Dedlock family line (Dickens 985). The Dedlock home of Chesney Wold has "abandoned itself to darkness and vacancy…passion and pride, even to the stranger's eye, have died away from the place in Lincolnshire and yielded it to dull repose" (Dickens 985). Thus, the Dedlock family line and legacy have died. The death of the Dedlock legacy is an inevitable consequence of their inability to change their stagnant ways.

The decaying and old nature of Chesney Wold contrasts with the youthful vibrancy of Mr. Rouncewell's home. Unlike in the rest of the novel, Dickens has a more positive spin on industry. He describes the machinery as having "distant furnaces of it glowing and bubbling in its youth" (Dickens 952). This vibrancy is further highlighted by the positive social capital that the Rouncewell family has. When George visits Mr. Rouncewell, his brother, he notes the

"graces and accomplishments of his nieces" as well as the "affectionate salutations of these young ladies" (Dickens 954). George is also "sorely taken aback by the dutiful behavior of nephew," which causes him to feel guilty about his disloyalty towards his mother (954). Mr. Rouncewell even refuses to allow George to give up his place on his mother's will, insisting that their mother would be devastated if he was scratched out (Dickens 955-6). George, despite being an industrial magnate, possesses all the bourgeois values that Dickens views as positive.

Dickens also connects the efficient domesticity of Mrs. Rouncewell, Mr. Rouncewell's mother, to the possible leadership Mr. Rouncewell and those like him could provide for the country. When the country's government shuts down, Mrs. Rouncewell, as the housekeeper to the Dedlock's estate Chesney Wold, "takes over the management of moving the nation forward" (Dickens 66). Dickens "assures us that it is Mrs. Rouncewell's son, the ironmaster, who has been invited to go to Parliament" (Lynch 66). Since Dickens believes that domesticity is the model upon which a new middle-class nation should be built, it makes sense that the son of a domestic worker represents the future leader. The vibrancy and youth associated with Mr. Rouncewell and his manufacturing and political success demonstrate his emergence during the decline of the aristocracy.

Dickens giving Mr. Rouncewell the trait of selflessness and domestic bliss contrasts with his disdain for the anguish at how industrial capitalism has ruined the homes and lives of the poor. Mr. Rouncewell being a family man within the confines of the industrial contradicts Dickens's aims to portray industrial corruption and waste stemming as in conflict with the domestic values he wants to promote. It appears as if Dickens demonstrates his admiration for

specific industrial values and tries to show that they do not contradict his desire for cleanliness away from industrial capitalism.

It is easy to see why this would be assumed, as Dickens's overriding beliefs favor the local, rural, and domestic rather than the industrial and cosmopolitan. However, some believe that Dickens takes a negative view of Mr. Rouncewell. Stuchebrukhov maintains that Dickens contrasts the vanity and ambitious nature of the Rouncewells with the humility and selflessness of Esther (154). She believes that Mr. Rouncewell, especially regarding his daughters, picking up on aristocratic habits such as traveling to Europe for education, is "expressing differential regard for aristocratic customs and social habits" (Stuchebrukhov 154). She states that "within Mr. Rouncewell's character, Dickens criticizes those segments of the middle-classes that aspire to become England's new aristocracy and thus betray the 'heroic' ethos of earlier capitalism" (Stuchebrukhov 154).

However, this idea ignores Rouncewell's connection with domesticity and Dickens positively associating him with what he considers positive middle-class values. The association of the domestic "rule" of Mrs. Rouncewell that Mr. Rouncewell carries by being her son implies that Dickens views a country run by the likes of Rouncewell as a desirable one. The positive domestic space within the Rouncewell home also contrasts with the negative middle-class characters in the story, such as Mr. Krook and Mrs. Jellyby. Throughout the novel, there is also the implication that the more industrial areas up north in England carry a positive connotation. The positive depiction of the two households in the north of England, Rouncewell's and Esther's, shows this bias. This association with domesticity cements Mr. Rouncewell as a positive

middleclass character. Mr. Rouncewell does not betray the earlier ethos of capitalism but continues to exemplify it.

Although Dickens believes that adopting specific middle-class values and abandoning others can provide a solution to society's ills, the middle-class home is inextricably tied with capitalist exploitation, and the middle-class values Dickens admires in Mr. Rouncewell differ little from the desire for industrial efficiency that leads to the low circumstances of the poor in the first place. Dickens does not consider that lifestyles such as that of Esther, Jarndyce, and Woodcourt would not be possible without the capitalist corruption and values of Mrs. Pardiggle, Mr. Krook, and Mrs. Jellyby. He appears to pick and choose which aspects of middle-class work culture he finds palatable. Much like Dickens relying on Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* led to an unsatisfying conclusion, so does his reliance on the very values that he critiques.

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In all, Dickens has broadened his scope from the personal to the systemic when it comes to how he has changed the way he depicts societal problems. The only issue is that his critiques of these systems and values do not produce any desire to uproot the entire capitalist society. He still believes that these systems and values are sound and have only been corrupted as people have moved away from domesticity and the local community. However, he does not consider that this idyllic vision will still depend on capitalist exploitation and the system that places work and middle-class values above all else. He believes that the very things he lampoons can solve

these pertinent issues; thus, his reformist attitudes do not come close to the radical overhaul that would stop the pitfalls of capitalism.

Chapter 3: *Great Expectations*

In the novel *Great Expectations* (1860), Charles Dickens attacks the excesses of bourgeois and capitalist culture and its foundations. According to Dickens, the problem is not just within specific individuals or aspects of the system but from the systems themselves. In the novel, Dickens points out the inherent flaws in several fundamental tenets of the middle-class value system and the capitalist system in general. Contrary to *Bleak House*, Dickens depicts the entire capitalist system and its values as corrupt. Rather than focus on an individual's selfishness, such as Scrooge, or the destructiveness of an aspect of the system, like Chancery and industry,

Dickens focuses on the shallow veneer of the whole middle-class value system. Dickens uses the personal journey of Pip and those around him to demonstrate the inherent corruption of the system.

Great Expectations is told through Pip's point of view in the first person. The story centers around Pip and his experiences in gaining and losing wealth and status. At the beginning of the novel, Pip is a working-class orphan who lives with his sister and her husband, Joe Gargery, a blacksmith and Pip's father figure. Despite his love for Joe, Pip is ashamed of his working-class roots and his destiny as a blacksmith's apprentice; the shame resulted from being acquainted with the upper-middle-class Estella and her mother, Miss Havisham, at their estate in Satis House. However, after Pip receives an inheritance from an unknown benefactor, he comes into contact with many of the trappings of middle-class wealth, including debt. He views how the middle-class characters deal with the dehumanizing effects of capitalism. Pip's fortune changes when Magwitch, a prisoner Pip once helped on the marsh next to his house, returns from exile in Australia at the risk of arrest and reveals himself to Pip as his benefactor. Magwitch is eventually arrested and sentenced to death, although he dies before the execution could be carried out. Pip loses his inheritance and settles, living a middle-class life as a clerk in Egypt working for his friend Herbert.

Scholarly opinion on *Great Expectations* generally considers it a satirical work that mocks the Victorian self-made man ideal. Different scholars emphasize different aspects of Dickens's critiques. John Kucich, Susan Walsh, and James M. Brown focus on the negative portrayal of upward mobility and middle-class ambition. Sean Grass details how Dickens

depicts the capitalist economic system as a contaminating and dehumanizing force. However, scholars also point out how Dickens contradicts himself by promoting the same values that he chastised. Brown and Grass both touch on this contradiction. Meanwhile, McBratney details how Dickens depicts Pip and Magwitch as cosmopolitans not tied to a specific place. He details Magwitch's redemption, as well as Dickens's attitude towards Australian prisoners.

While the stories of Scrooge and Esther noted a positive change in circumstances using middle-class values, Pip's story is more complicated. Pip's newfound wealth allows him to assimilate within other upper-middle-class members, such as the family of his friend Herbert Pocket. However, the desire to assimilate into middle-class norms does not give Pip the satisfaction he wants, whether financially or spiritually. Dickens also criticizes other fundamental middle-class values, such as the ideals of Victorian domesticity and the professional culture of Britain. However, Dickens undercuts these messages through his presentation of Pip and Magwitch finding solace within British imperial capitalism. Ironically, Pip and Magwitch find solace and success in the same values Dickens parodies.

I. Pip’s Ambitions and the Self-Made Man Ideal

One of the most common critiques of bourgeois values Dickens levels is the critique against the idea of the Victorian self-made man. This ideal combines the aspects of entrepreneurial capitalism, thrift, personal responsibility, and success through hard work and moral values. This concept of self-help was most famously explained in Samuel Smiles's book

Self Help (1859), though these ideas were present in the middle-classes long before that time (Brown 44). Smiles states that" 'what some men are, all without difficulty might be…[it] is not eminent talent that is required to insure success in any pursuit…but the will to labour energetically and perseveringly'" (qtd. in Brown 45). It is considered the mark of a British middle-class man to raise one's fortunes through one's moral decency and hard work. The value of "self-help" features significantly in Dickens's novels. Examples of characters promoting the "self-help" ideal include Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* or the titular character in *David Copperfield* (Brown 45). Many of Dickens's characters have raised themselves to a higher level of social or economic capital through improvements in behavior and work ethic, including the previously discussed Esther Summerson and Ebenezer Scrooge.

In *Great Expectations*, Dickens uses the narratives of Pip and Magwitch to undermine that entire ideal. Pip's journey to upward mobility is tormented with heartbreak, debt, and disconnection from family. He gets himself into large amounts of debt due to his inability to control himself and his desire for markers of wealth (Dickens 272-3). He also feels guilty over his disconnection from his brother-in-law Joe and his friend Biddy due to his pride (Dickens 272). This unease climaxes to Magwitch's reveal that he funded Pip's transition to a gentleman, stating that "it was a recompense to me…to know in secret I was creating a gentleman" (Dickens 321). Magwitch funded this transition using money earned in Australia after being sent as a prisoner (Dickens 319-21). Magwitch states that he does this because he could not stop thinking about Pip after he, as a child, helped him by giving him food (Dickens 320). After this, one of Pip's few hopes, that Miss Havisham was his benefactor and had wanted him to marry Estella, was ruined (Dickens 323).

Pip and Magwitch's narrative is a satire of many rags-to-riches stories, including ones Dickens has written. Unlike the arcs of characters like Esther and the Cratchits, Pip's rise in status worsened his life, and his desire to acquire objects he considered upper class, such as Estella and his association with a gentlemen's club, "are seen as a perverse source of frustration" (Brown 46). Despite Smiles's claims, Dickens does not associate a rise to success with hard work but rather gross entitlement and dissatisfaction. Pip admits that his exposure to the elite life of Estella and Miss Havisham made the simple life he had with Joe at the forge and the life he could have with the compassionate Biddy seem plain and ordinary (Dickens 107, 132-2). The social pressure of obtaining a higher status leads Pip to actively disregard positive aspects of his former life, such as Biddy and Joe, and participate in activities that served no purpose but to place him in debt, such as joining the gentlemen's club. The difficulties that these shallow markers of upper-middle-class wealth bring Pip contrasts with Smiles' claims that hard work is the only thing standing in the way of success. In truth, the markers of success are often the result not of hard work but from unearned wealth and entitlement. This entitlement leads to Pip's unhappiness, as he cannot see the unsatisfactory nature of the lifestyle he craves.

The nature of Pip's expectations provides the final blow to Pip's view of his rise to an upper-class life. He laments the nature of his wealth, stating, "O, that he had never come! That he had left me at the forge—far from contented, yet, by comparison, happy!" (Dickens 321). Pip admits outright that he would have been better off had he not risen in status. Towards the end of the novel, Pip is a lower-middle-class clerk, a considerably lower social class than expected. Rather than continue to aspire for better, Pip instead says that he "lived happily with Herbert and

his wife, and lived frugally, and paid my debts, and maintained a constant correspondence with Biddy and Joe" (Dickens 480). In contrast with previous novels, Dickens does not associate positive traits with the desire for and achievement of upward mobility that had marked previous characters. Instead, Dickens consistently points out how upward mobility isolates Pip from positive influences.

One poignant example of this isolation occurs when Pip leaves for London for the first time. The night before he leaves his old house, Pip tells Joe that he wants to walk to his carriage alone. Looking back on this event as a narrator, Pip fears that this decision "originated in my sense of the contrast there would be between me and Joe" (Dickens 159). Shortly after Pip told his father not to walk with him, he began to regret the decision (159). That night he had nightmares of coaches "going to wrong places instead of to London…having in the traces, now dogs, now cats, now pigs, now men—never horses. Fantastic failures of journeys occupied me until the day dawned" (159). These dreams not only foreshadow Pip's own fantastical failure of a journey but also associate this failure with Pip's separation between him and Joe. In Pip's narrative, he places these dreams right after he admits his impulse "to go down again and entreat Joe to walk with me in the morning" (159). The desire to be seen as a member of the upper classes leads to Pip denying his father figure's guiding hand and his past. This denial leaves Pip without any guide or humbling influence, leaving him as detached from reality as his dreams were.

Pip's fear that his decision to walk alone was due to his shame in being associated with Joe is confirmed with Pip's reaction to Biddy and Joe throwing an old shoe towards Pip, a

custom to give the person good luck. Pip states that he was more sure of his decision to walk alone, as "it would never have done to have an old shoe thrown after the coach, in sight of all the High-street" (Dickens 160). The contrast between the shoe, which in this context represents good luck, and the carriage, which was the site of his previous nightmares about his journey, demonstrates that Pip's path from his old traditions and associates to his new life was doomed from the start. Younger Pip's anxiety that these two items contradict themselves is brought upon by pressure to conform to his new upper-middle-class identity. Conforming to specific identity markers is crucial in acquiring social and class status in England, as Dickens demonstrates throughout the novels presented. Pip's lofty goals, which he acquired ever since he met Estella and Miss Havisham, place him away from the safety of his social connections with Joe and Biddy and into the uncertain territory of his journey.

Considering Dickens's emphasis on the safety of family connections, it is no surprise that Pip's salvation from his experiences comes in the form of him living with Herbert and Clara Pocket and working in the same business (480). In this paragraph, the reader sees a change in Pip's desires, noting a contrast between the eagerness to leave behind simple, family life for a higher status before his trip to London and his embrace of that simpler life and rejection of ambition after his expectations fall apart. Pip's emphasis has shifted from upward social ambitions to living a simple life with other honest people. Pip's shift in perspective requires him to sacrifice his selfish urges and rely on others. Pip states that his previous negative opinions on Herbert's inability to become successful were based on projection, showing that Pip has learned to accept his inadequacies and be content with trusting others (480). Pip distancing himself from the entitlement that plagued his early life relies upon his acceptance of fraternal bonds.

According to John Kucich, Pip's character arc centers around the "growing ascendance of interdependence over social ambition" (480). With Pip's narrative, Dickens demonstrates the folly of the bourgeois encouragement of social ambition and the desire or "self-improvement" regarding middle-class status.

II. Magwitch and the Bourgeoisie

Dickens's criticisms of the middle-class value system is prominent in Magwitch's narrative. Unlike the middle-class benefactors of John Jarndyce and Ebenezer Scrooge, Magwitch does not embody bourgeois values. He spent most of his life as a thief and revealed a crude boastfulness when he talked about showing off towards the wealthy Australian colonists (Dickens 321, 347). Magwitch also earns his wealth in Australia, a place associated with criminals and social rejects. Instead of representing the moral nature of the bourgeoisie like other benefactors in past Dickens novels, Magwitch exposes the shallow nature of these values and the inherently exploitative nature of the bourgeoisie. Magwitch's past with his former partner, Compeyson, reveals the shallowness of Victorian bourgeois society. Compeyson fits the figure of an upper-middle-class gentleman regarding the description of his characteristics. He is welleducated, well-spoken, and has no criminal record (351).

However, Compeyson would swindle people and let others do the dirty work for him. Magwitch explains that "'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'"

(Dickens 348). Magwitch was one of the men whom Compeyson had used to conduct his criminal business. Magwitch explains that he was the one who was manipulated by Compeyson, emphasizing that he was approached when he had just come out of jail (Dickens 347-8). Compeyson was dominant over Magwitch, with Magwitch claiming that "'I was always in debt to him, always under his thumb, always a working, always a getting into danger. He was younger than me, but he'd got craft, and he'd got learning, and he overmatched me five hundred times told and no mercy'" (Dickens 450).

Compeyson's exploitation of Magwitch did not prevent the courts from believing that Compeyson had been manipulated and giving him a lighter punishment than Magwitch (Dickens 351). All that Compeyson's lawyer had to do was to point out the class disparities between the two. Compeyson had no criminal record, was well-educated, and performed traits of middleclass humility, such as crying into his handkerchief. Magwitch, meanwhile, had a consistent criminal record since childhood, had no formal education, and was unable to perform any kind of respectable middle-class traits. Thus, Compeyson received half the sentence Magwitch did (351). Compeyson's ability to exploit Magwitch and avoid harsher consequences reflects how the bourgeoisie use their "middle-class values" to set up a façade. Compeyson is a shallow figure of gentlemen whose persona was not detected by the judge. Meanwhile, Magwitch was a flawed but still somewhat principled character who was punished due to his inability to perform shallowmiddle class markers.

Dickens also uses Magwitch's story of upward mobility to demonstrate the inherently exploitative nature of the middle-class. Pip tells Magwitch that he does not want to associate

with him because "'our ways are different ways, none the less'" (Dickens 317). No doubt Pip is alluding to the fact that he feels as if he and his values embody the virtues of the middle-class gentleman. However, it turns out that the loud, crude Magwitch, a man who openly states that he "ain't a gentleman, nor ain't got no learning," is the sole reason Pip can become a gentleman in the first place. When Magwitch lays a hand on Pip's shoulder, Pip shudders and says, "for anything I knew, his hand might be stained with blood" (Dickens 322). Pip is alluding to the fact that no matter how much of a member of the bourgeois Pip considers himself to be, he will always be the inheritor of the wealth of a criminal from Australia.

The "stain" on Magwitch, which Pip fears, is like the stain on middle-class society for profiting from exploitation. Brown states that the chains of iron and gold Pip mention in the novel as a metaphor for how life events bind to create the course of a person's life link to the motif of the inextricability of middle-class wealth with the destitute. Pip's "chains of gold (the money that constitutes his expectations) are irretrievably bound up with chains of iron (and the criminal world)" (Brown 128). Thus, the association with middle-class values and upward mobility shifts to an association of crime and destitution with a rise in status. Dickens has always linked the impoverished and the criminal with excess wealth. However, in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Pip's rise to middle-class identity relying on Magwitch's criminal history implies that the journey to a higher social and class status is interlinked with capitalist exploitation. This implication is not seen in earlier examples of upwardly mobile characters like Mr. Rouncewell and the Cratchits. Dickens disregards a vital aspect of the bourgeois worldview that he once promoted. Ross Dabney states that Pip's money coming" 'from Magwitch is a discovery fertile in class ironies and in reflections on the source of unearned incomes'" (qtd. in Brown 127).

Magwitch’s story subverts the value system of the bourgeoisie and highlights its inherently corrupt in nature.

III. Jaggers, Wemmick, and Professional Culture

Dickens also places heavy criticism on professional culture and bourgeois bureaucracy. Throughout the novel, Dickens uses the presence of filth within London to show the inherent taint that work culture carries. The focus of Dickens's critiques, much like in *Bleak House*, is the legal system. Mr. Jaggers, a lawyer managing Pip's inheritance, figures prominently in these critiques (Dickens 139). Near Mr. Jaggers's office is Smithfield, a cattle market. Pip claims that "the shameful place, being all asmear with filth and fat and blood and foam, seemed to stick to me. So, I rubbed it off with all the possible speed…" (Dickens 165). Pip's reflections on the violence of the Smithfield market occur within the context of the commodification of people. This commodification is seen when Jaggers's clients gather around and are told by Jaggers to pay Wemmick, his clerk, for their lives and freedom (Dickens 167). The commonalities between Smithfield and the office emphasizes what Sean Grass refers to as the "extravagant violence of the capitalist market" (619). Jaggers's office in Little Britain "is an appropriately diminutive version of the nation, predicated economically upon a tainting contact with the business of the lower class and a grotesque tendency…to produce and reproduce versions of the self" (619). Thus, if Jaggers's office is a microcosm of Britain as a capitalist nation, then it follows that the animal market surrounding the nation represents the capitalist marketplace that surrounds Britain's wealth.

Essentially, Grass claims that the capitalist marketplace commodifies and exploits the self for gain in the same way an animal market commodifies animal parts. If they fail to pay Wemmick to get Jaggers's defense, they may end up in Newgate Prison, which is also near Little Britain and Smithfield. The fact that Newgate is next to these two entities indicates that Smithfield "serves as a microcosm of London's interest in property, commerce, and the law" (Grass 620). The legal system commodifies people's lives. They go through a market exchange where they must exchange their bodies in Newgate if they cannot offer monetary benefits to lawyers like Jaggers.

In the same way that Pip feels tainted by the market and feels the need to rub it off, Mr. Jaggers feels tainted by his profession as a lawyer making money out of the misery of others to the point where he frequently washes his hands in a sink in his office (Dickens 210). Jaggers "washed his clients off, as if he were a surgeon or a dentist…and wipe them and dry them all over his towel, whenever he came in from a police-court or dismissed a client from his room" (Dickens 210). The comparison of Jaggers to a "surgeon" or "dentist" further associates him with blood and body parts. In a similar way that middle-class wealth carries the stain of working-class exploitation, middle-class careers carry the stain of the commodification of others in the name of the market. As the cows and pigs are up for slaughter in the market, Jaggers's clients, including Pip, are prepared to be "slaughtered" at Jaggers's and Wemmick's behest. Jaggers's attempts to distance himself from work through handwashing demonstrate his awareness of the corrupting influence of such an exploitative system as well as the guilt of having the figurative blood of his victims on his hands.

Jaggers's profession taints his entire life. He carries out supposedly friendly dinners at his place in an official manner, and "his private residence in Soho is an extension of his office" (Brown 133). Dinner at Jaggers's home is marked by him observing the flaws of his companions; Pip notices that he "seemed to follow rather than originate subjects" and "wrenched the weakest part of our dispositions out of us" (Dickens 213). With Jaggers, Dickens provides an extreme example of professional culture and the collapsing of public and private spheres. When taken to its most exaggerated conclusion, professional culture infects the domestic hearth, one of the alleged safe spaces from capitalism. Thus, the continuing influence of professional culture damages one's private, domestic life.

Regarding the criticisms of professional culture, Wemmick, Jaggers's clerk, provides a fascinating take on the corrupting influence of bourgeois capitalism. Unlike Jaggers, Wemmick's home life is separate from his professional life. In his home in Walworth, Wemmick has turned his home into a castle. Pip describes the house as "a little wooden cottage in the midst of plots of garden, and the top of it was cut out and painted like a battery mounted with guns" (Dickens 206). This fanciful place contrasts significantly with the professional and sordid setting of Jaggers's office. Wemmick's construction projects on his home" 'brushes the Newgate cobwebs away" (Dickens 207). Like Jaggers, Wemmick seeks to clean himself from the stain of capitalism. The way he does this is by separating his private and professional life into two separate spheres. Wemmick emphasizes that" 'the office is one thing, and private life is another. When I go in the office, I leave the Castle behind me, and when I come into the Castle, I leave the office behind me"' (Dickens 208). This method of dealing with his profession allows

Wemmick to maintain a sense of humanity away from his profession.

There are a variety of ways to view Wemmick's complete separation of his professional and personal life. Dickens portrays Wemmick as a largely sympathetic character who is Pip's loyal companion, is willing to help him give Herbert his career (Dickens 299). This may suggest that Wemmick presents an ideal way of protecting oneself against the spoils of capitalism. Arlene Young suggests that Wemmick's castle is a "celebration of the domestic merits of hearth and home" (496). However, Dickens's positively portraying Wemmick does not necessarily suggest an endorsement of his actions. Dickens's sympathetic portrayal of Jaggers and Pip does not indicate that he approves of their actions. After all, Wemmick is doing the same work Jaggers does as his clerk, meaning he is as exposed to Little Britain and its association with exploitation.

There is also the fact that Wemmick's home can never be a complete haven away from capitalism as Wemmick will always have to go back to Little Britain for many hours a day. As Brown states, "Wemmick doesn't defeat the system, he merely makes peace with it at considerable human cost and accepts the alienation of his work situation" (132). As Wemmick neared Little Britain, Pip noticed that he "got dryer and harder as we went along, and his mouth tightened into a post-office again…when we got to his place of business…he looked as unconscious of his Walworth property as if [it]….had all been blown into space together" (Dickens 210). This metaphorical depiction of the destruction of Wemmick's haven represents the destruction of the familial self as it enters the workplace. The contrasts between Wemmick's two selves indicate that the professional lifestyle is not adequate for humans to cultivate their desired values and interests.

The contradictory nature of Wemmick's existence within his home and the professional sphere suggests that any peace and enjoyment cannot coexist with the professional culture of Little Britain and "larger" Britain. This contradiction in values and morals implies a burying of one's soul. Just as Jaggers intends to remove the stains of his profession through handwashing, Wemmick intends to brush away the stains of his profession for certain select periods. The coping mechanisms of Wemmick and Jaggers demonstrate that Dickens views the capitalist marketplace and the professional class it inspires as inherently corrupting and at odds with personal bliss.

IV. Subverting Victorian Domesticity

Dickens also directs his criticisms towards bourgeois ideals of households. Dickens depicts the Pocket home as chaotic in a subversion of the bourgeois ideal of the Victorian hearth as a solace away from the city's corruption. Pip notes how the upper-middle class Pockets, though they maintain the veneer of middle-class respectability, are barely better off for it. Mr. Pocket is a middle-class professional, which should mean that he fits the values of middle-class work culture, that of efficiency and professional competence (Dickens 191). However, Matthew Pocket exhibits neither, going from job to job until he decided to move to London for better opportunities, only to fail in his loftier ambitions and relegate himself to "the account of literary compilation and correction" (Dickens 189). Pip says that "on such means, added to some very moderate private resources, still maintained the house I saw" (Dickens 191). Mr. Pocket's

disappointing career highlights the difficulty of moving upwards. Even amongst middle-class characters, Dickens is skeptical of lofty ambitions in terms of economic progress.

Mr. Pocket's failure in meeting his middle-class ambitions reflects the failure to find a good homemaker, as his wife Belinda Pocket is "perfectly helpless and useless" (Dickens 189). Thus, the household is a mess, as the children misbehave and tumble about in front of Mrs. Pocket (Dickens 186-7). The Pockets combat the idea of the middle-classes being the pinnacle of industry, thrift, and domesticity. It also questions how middle-class values are often shallow, with such values being outwardly present in profession and style of home not indicating actual professional and domestic bliss. It should be noted that while Dickens still carries an idealized view of domesticity, his depiction of it is less tied to the bourgeoisie. Dickens's criticism of the middle-classes is often based on the idea that the original middle-class values have been perverted (Brown 42). While Dickens criticized the aristocracy in his earlier novels for obsession with birth status, he soon realized that the middle-classes had reached the same level of snobbery as the aristocracy (Brown 42). As time went on, the powerful and entrepreneurial bourgeois became intertwined with the aristocracy Dickens disliked (Brown 42).

Nowhere is this tie between aristocracy and the bourgeoisie more seen than in Mrs. Pocket's obsession with rank and lineage (Dickens 189). Dickens contrasts this obsession with having domestic knowledge, with Pip stating that Mrs. Pocket's father had directed her "to be brought up from her cradle as one who in the nature of things must marry a title, and who was guarded from the acquisition of plebeian domestic knowledge" (189). Here, Dickens states that the large numbers of the middle-classes who have assimilated into the aristocracy are no longer a

model for the domesticity he admires. Here again, one can see Dickens's distaste for ambitions of upward mobility that he sees as an antithesis to the values of domesticity.

In this novel, domestic bliss is not found in any middle-class household. Susan Walsh claims that "no married couple in the novel has successfully merged domestic felicity and commercial engagement without also being dissociated from contemporary England in some way" (8). Walsh states that the two examples of domestic bliss in the novel, Joe and Biddy and Herbert and Clara, occur either outside of England, with Herbert and Clara in Egypt, or outside of the contemporary time, with Biddy and Joe representing an outdated mode of living as a household relying on craftwork (7). This further indicates that the middle-class is not only failing its pursuit of domestic harmony but is also incapable of it.

Miss Havisham's ill-fated marriage with Compeyson further demonstrates the futility of domestic idealism within a capitalist context. Miss Havisham's inheritance from the wealth of her father's brewery would attract Compeyson, who would convince her to use her wealth to buy a share of the brewery from her brother and give it to him (Dickens 181). Compeyson had promised that he would own the entire brewery after he married her, which never happened. Thus, Miss Havisham spent the rest of her life in her wedding dress, shut out from the world and leaving every object in her house exactly as it was on that fateful day (Dickens 182).

Instead of leading her to enjoy the Victorian domesticity she felt entitled to, Miss Havisham's upper-middle-class wealth led her to her ruin. Her haste in wasting her wealth on Compeyson resembles "rash speculation and reckless overtrading which, to some observers, had

led to the stock frauds, bankruptcies, and bank crashes of the middle decades" (Walsh 1). Essentially, Dickens views the relationship between Miss Havisham and Compeyson as an economic exchange on the capitalist market. Miss Havisham's unwise investment and Compeyson's underhanded swindling indicate the extent of the infiltration of the capitalist market into the realm of domesticity. Thus, the domestic home has been stained by the market, contrasting Dicken's emphasis in *Bleak House* on the bourgeois hearth as a haven.

Miss Havisham continues the cycle of relationships contaminated by the market with her deception of Pip. After Magwitch's appearance, Pip realizes Miss Havisham, in order to enact revenge on all men, fostered Pip's love for Estella so that she could break his heart. Pip laments his misfortune stating that he was only a "model with a mechanical heart to practice on when no other practice was at hand" (Dickens 323). The phrase "mechanical heart" references industrial technology and thus implies that Pip has become a commodity on which Miss Havisham acted upon. This reference to capitalist industry and machinery continues the motif of the commodification of human beings under capitalism.

While people historically did not have much agency regarding marriage, the idea of marriage as a series of investments in a market and the groom or bride as a commodity to secure value adds a sense of capitalist contamination to the practice. Grass states that "at the center of these images is the alienating power of capitalism, which forces the self to become productive and transforms it…into an object of exchange" (622). A possible marriage partner is an object to be traded, exchanged, and discarded if needed. Miss Havisham used Pip as an object to enact her revenge fantasies and then discarded him when he was no longer an object of use to her. The

market's infiltration onto the bourgeoisie affects the institution of marriage and the individuals who seek to partake in that institution. The Victorian bourgeois hearth is not the haven that it was in *Bleak House*.

V. Pip and Magwitch's Redemption Within the Empire

Although this novel criticizes core middle-class values and calls into question the entire value system of the middle-classes, Dickens undermines this message through Pip and Magwitch's relationships to Britain's colonies. Another reading of Magwitch's story is that Dickens uses colonial capitalism to demonstrate a redemption arc for Magwitch. Although Dickens never demonstrates Magwitch as a bourgeois character and ultimately uses Magwitch to subvert Pip's rags-to-riches expectations, Dickens also uses Magwitch's time in Australia to demonstrate middle-class values such as industry and charity. Pip realizes that Magwitch, despite his crude boastfulness and misguided pride leading to Pip's downfall, ultimately meant well for him. As Magwitch is about to be taken away by police, Pip states that "my repugnance to him had all but melted away... 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" (Dickens 446). With this change in their relationship, Dickens seeks to redeem Magwitch by presenting him as the generous, hard-working provider seeking the best for Pip, despite his rough situation in Australia.

However, with this narrative, Dickens feeds into the Imperial Capitalist machine by presenting Australia as the land where opportunity can be exploited by the vulnerable. By sending away their prisoners to Australia, the British were able to not only find a way to exploit the area's resources and settle colonists there, but they also rid themselves of their undesirables by giving them a chance to "redeem" themselves without helping them within the country. As Dickens uses Australia to redeem Magwitch, this novel implicitly supports this belief. John McBratney states that "Dickens's attitude toward the prisoners of New South Wales changed over the years, from a sense that they were utterly irremediable to a sense that in some cases they might achieve moral and economic redemption" (537). This quote describes Dickens's beliefs in having Magwitch earn redemption through honest though misguided labor in Australia.

When the judge sentences Magwitch, he claims that after his exile to Australia, Magwitch "would seem for a time to have become convinced of his errors, when far removed from the scenes of his old offenses, and to have lived a peaceable honest life…But in a fatal moment...he had quitted his haven of rest and repentance, and had come back to the country where he was proscribed" (Dickens 457). Dickens appears to fight against this idea, having Magwitch become a sympathetic character even after his return. However, Dickens's proving of Magwitch's character is still contingent on him earning colonial wealth in Australia and passing on that wealth to another Englishman. Dickens's criticisms of the system of professional culture do not seem to extend to the imperial periphery.

Although the novel is primarily a parody of the self-made man narrative, the ending calls into question Dickens's dedication in fighting against the notion of bourgeois culture being

shallow and not fulfilling. However, Pip's generosity towards Herbert in negotiating with Wemmick to grant him a job with a firm pays off (Dickens 299). When the firm sends Herbert and his wife Clara to Egypt, then a British colony, the couple decides to bring Pip along (Dickens 480). Pip then explains that he, Herbert, and Clara have a relatively peaceful life in Egypt, with Pip working his lower-middle-class job as a clerk there (Dickens 480). Pip explains that "…we worked for our profits, and did very well. We owed so much to Herbert's ever cheerful industry and readiness" (Dickens 480). After undermining the self-made man ideal for most of the novel, Dickens invokes it towards the end.

This novel's ending appears to be Dickens's way of giving Pip a happy ending while still maintaining the theme of parodying the self-made man ideal. Although Pip does not become wealthy or live the Victorian bourgeoisie life, he still finds solace working within a professional middle-class career that thrives off British imperial capitalism. The novel's ending in Egypt serves a similar purpose as domesticity in *Bleak House*, a way to find solace in British capitalism while harshly critiquing it. The audience does not get the self-made man story they might have expected. However, they still get a story of a man "who overcomes his capitalist nightmares and become a clerk in the great Victorian economic and imperial machine" (Grass 638). In this novel, imperialism is how Pip seeks comfort from his troubles caused by capitalism.

Dickens not associating Pip's job with the stain of market capitalism the way he does with Jaggers's profession shows that he would rather not condemn the system in total. Instead, Dickens decides to show that despite British capitalism's failure in allowing British citizens an easy path to upward mobility and ease through middle-class values, its activities in its colonies

show that capitalism can still be profitable under certain circumstances. While the entire novel lampoons middle-class values and the systems that hold them up, it attempts to rehabilitate these ideals using British colonialism.

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Dickens's novel *Great Expectations* shows a cynicism towards the middle-class and their values not seen in the other works analyzed. Magwitch's involvement in Pip's narrative subverts the idea of the self-made man who moves up in class status through his British, middle-class virtues. He also satirizes professional culture through Jaggers and the shallowness of middleclass outward values through the Pockets. However, he undermines his critiques against the entire middle-class and the capitalist systems with Magwitch's and Pip's successes in the British colonies. The idea that middle-class capitalism can be successively utilized through colonial exploitation suggests that Dickens believes that these values and systems can be helpful if done in a certain way. Dickens uses British colonies as a blank space on which to imagine bourgeoisie narratives.

Conclusion

Analyzing the three texts highlights two critical aspects of Dickens's career trajectory: an increased skepticism with capitalism and a refusal to abandon capitalist principles despite this skepticism. Within the three texts, the viewer notices social critiques against Victorian society and its economy. These critiques are limited to a personal level in *A Christmas Carol*. Within *Bleak House*, Dickens branches out into attacking problematic aspects within the capitalist system and the bourgeoisie. By the time Dickens writes *Great Expectations*, he is satirizing the capitalist system and the bourgeoisie as a whole, at times seemingly parodying his previous

works. The increasing prevalence of Dickens's critiques against capitalism demonstrates a clear evolution in views from generally pro-bourgeoisie to being hostile to their values.

However, towards the end of his texts, Dickens also consistently promotes the capitalist and bourgeois values that he criticizes. Due to its light criticism of capitalism, this contradiction is not seen clearly in *A Christmas Carol*, except for the children named Ignorance and Want. These contradictions become obvious in *Bleak House*, where Dickens criticizes the adverse effects of capitalist and bourgeois values, such as wastefulness, while promoting certain bourgeois elements, such as the Victorian home, that are only possible through those capitalist systems. Even in *Great Expectations*, Dickens undermines his satire of the bourgeoisie and capitalism by having his characters seek solace in these values while outside of Britain. These contradictory positions make it more challenging to analyze Dickens's perspective on British society.

Although these elements of Dickens's works can make any attempt to parse through Dickens's status in the realm of literature problematic, they also enlighten readers to the complexity of Dickens's works, despite their alleged simplicity. The persistent refusal to discard his bourgeois values despite increasing awareness of their flaws and the contradictions that result from this refusal reflect Dickens's cognitive dissonance. This raises the question of what prevents Dickens from condemning the entire capitalist and bourgeois system. One can find the answer in the existence of the texts themselves. The novels and their success derived from their status as products of a capitalist system.

Dickens's livelihood depending on capitalism and bourgeois values makes it difficult for him to engage in wholesale repudiations of those systems. However, there is also another factor that is occurring on a deeper level. Any close inspection of the source of these problems would indict not just his career as a writer but his entire way of viewing the world. Dickens's core belief does not change the spirited and radical critiques presented in a minuscule part of A Christmas Carol, a significant portion of Bleak House, and the near entirety of Great Expectations. However, it prevents him from imagining another reality where the capitalist and bourgeois framework is not prominent. Thus, the texts always circle back to the promotion of the bourgeoisie.

Despite the contradictions within Dickens's writings, these works were widely read, indicating that the contradictions were no hindrance to enjoyment. Although some critics, such as John Brown and Rosetta Young, note how unsatisfactory the contradictory conclusions can be, all critics acknowledged Dickens's skill in creating characters and narratives that critics and audiences alike found relatable and important. The popularity of Dickens's novels with the reading public, which was mostly made up of the bourgeoise, indicated that he tapped into a certain feeling within that class. He provided satisfactory conclusions to systemic problems that did not upend the lifestyles of the bourgeoisie. The novels were an outlet for a class that had enough compassion to hate the effects of the system but could not see how their lifestyle was irreconcilable with radical change.

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