

Dickens and Sleep

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Introduction

“Dreams usually play an important part in fiction, but rarely, I think, in real life” (Eliot 309). George Eliot thus responded to John Blackwood when he urged her to use dreams in her short story “Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story.” As Catherine A. Bernard demonstrates, Victorian realist novelists “viewed dreams as suitable material for Gothic romances,” but not for their own writing, and Eliot’s remark concisely sums up their stance (206). One exception to this rule is Charles Dickens. It has often been noted that Dickens was very much interested in dreams and described them in his novels. Critics have explored his use of dreams in his novels as well as the way in which the things he saw in his dreams influenced his writing. Philip Collins argues, “Dickens was always interested in dreams, about which he read and theorized with enthusiasm,” demonstrating how he elaborately describes Jonas Chuzzlewit’s fearful dreams in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (278). Examining how the novelist’s own dreams affected his works, Charles Kligerman tries to understand two rather puzzling features of Dickens’s life: why Dickens, the supremely successful writer, should have experienced an unhappy love life, and why in later years he increasingly turned from writing to public readings, which undoubtedly hastened his death (783).

Although literary critics have thus often discussed Dickens and dreams, their studies are insufficient for two reasons. One reason is that, except for a few instances, most of their studies focus solely on the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams described in his novels.¹ It may be true that these studies enhance our understanding of Dickens and his works. He had many medical books on sleeping and dreaming in his library, and clearly he was familiar with pre-Freudian dream theories. It is well-known that he was a friend of John Elliotson, a famous scholar who advocated mesmerism, a therapeutic technique involving hypnotism, and there is little doubt that Dickens gained not only specialized knowledge of mesmerism but also that of sleeping and dreaming from this eminent scholar. It is therefore not surprising that the novelist has sometimes been regarded as having anticipated Freudian dream theory.² However, Dickens is a novelist, not a theorist. Besides, analysing his works from a fixed viewpoint will inevitably deter, rather than further, the understanding of his works.

The other insufficiency in these critics' approaches is that they

¹ Many critics have examined Dickens's novels using a psychoanalytical approach, among them Steven Marcus, *Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey* (1965); Taylor Stoehr, *Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance* (1965); Robert Newsom, *Dickens: On the Romantic Side of Familiar Things: Bleak House and the Novel Tradition* (1977).

² Indeed, it is even said that Dickens tried to cure a patient by psychoanalysis about forty years before Freud invented the method. In the mid-1840s, Dickens several times mesmerised his friend Madame de la Rue to relieve her hysterical symptoms. Simon Callow argues that what he practiced on the patient was not "boulevard demonstrations of freakish behavior" but "a course of psychoanalysis" (153).

have not fully investigated the descriptions of sleep in Dickens's novels. As John Cosnett states, Dickens was interested not only in dreams, but also in sleep, and he very often described it in an impressive manner in his novels ("Observer" 264-67). His deep interest in sleep is typically shown in the description of Joe, "a wonderfully fat boy" (732),³ in his first novel *The Pickwick Papers*. This boy often troubles his master Mr Wardle and fascinates the reader by his abnormal appetite and strong tendency to sleep in the daytime. Especially his erratic sleeping habit is emphasized, and when he goes on an errand on one occasion, he is even asked by his master not to leave off knocking loudly till the people in the house open the door, "for fear [he] should go to sleep" (732). Though at a glance he seems to be a mere comic character, thanks to the medical research of C. Sidney Burwell and others, it became clear in 1956 that Joe is suffering from what they call "a Pickwickian Syndrome," a kind of sleep apnea-syndrome.⁴ Dickens first described Joe's strange sleeping habit in May 1836, which means that he had unwittingly been aware of the existence of such a sleep disorder through careful observation more than one century before the existence of the disease was medically ascertained. In addition to the Pickwickian Syndrome, Dickens described many peculiar features of sleep, which later proved to be accurate portrayals of

³ All references to *The Pickwick Papers* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1998).

⁴ Reviewing the descriptions of Joe from a clinical viewpoint, Burwell examined the association of obesity, somnolence, polycythemia, and excessive appetite. (811-18).

sleep-disorders, as Cosnett demonstrates.⁵

While scientists have paid special attention to the descriptions of sleep in Dickens's novels, literary critics have not. This subject, however, is very significant. We must note that Dickens had described the fat boy's peculiar sleeping habit before he gained most of his later professional knowledge of sleeping and dreaming. According to Rosemarie Bodenheimer, it was Robert Macnish's book *The Philosophy of Sleep* that most profoundly affected Dickens's view of sleeping and dreaming, and indeed, he had the book in his library (12-13). However, circumstantial evidence indicates that when he invented Joe in 1836, he probably had not read the book.⁶ Moreover, Fred Kaplan notes that the friendship between Elliotson and Dickens began around the time when Dickens saw Elliotson's experiment for the first time in January 1838 (28), which was also after he wrote about Joe's sleeping habit. These facts present the possibility that Dickens was interested in sleeping and dreaming from a very early stage of his career. Moreover, considering that he described characters' sleep and dreams in remarkable ways in most of his novels, including his last novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*,

⁵ As examples of sleep disorders that Dickens anticipated, Cosnett refers to sleep automatism, obstructive sleep apnea, and hypersomnia ("Observer" 266-67).

⁶ According to the list of medical books in Dickens's library compiled by Joanne Eysell, Dickens possessed the 1840 edition of Macnish's book (241), and it is doubtful that he had read it before he created Joe in 1836. Possibly he may have read an earlier edition of the book in the middle of 1837, as David Paroissien points out (101). Even so, it is more than probable that he created Joe before reading most of those professional books on sleeping and dreaming.

we can reasonably say that his interest extended throughout his life as a novelist. My aim in this dissertation is to analyze Dickens's use of sleeping and dreaming in his works so as to clarify how his deep interest in these phenomena affected his writings.

Before examining the descriptions of sleep in Dickens's novels, however, we must sort several things out. In the first place, what is sleep? This is an apparently simple but actually formidable question, and nobody can answer it definitely even in this twenty-first century. Almost all of us know what sleep is through experience, but we cannot put it into words. Sleeping and dreaming are universal but mysterious phenomena, and since ancient times they have attracted the attention of many scholars and men of letters. Among those well-known philosophers, it was Aristotle who first examined sleep with interest. In his essay on sleep and sleeplessness, he defined sleep as "an incapacity due to an excess of being awake" (254). Galen is another important figure who is supposed to have declared, "Sleep is the natural return of the soul from the end to the beginning" (Schiller 377).⁷ The theories made by these sages were so influential that some of them were still believed in the nineteenth century.⁸

In the world of English literature, William Shakespeare was one of the most famous writers to utilize sleeping and dreaming in his works.

⁷ As Schiller admits, it is not exactly certain whether Galen himself formulated this definition of sleep.

⁸ For more on this, as well as on the history of the definition of sleep, see Schiller (377-82).

In many of his major plays we see references to sleeping and dreaming which are worthy of notice. Some important examples are as follows. In his famous soliloquy, Hamlet ponders, “To die, to sleep – / No more; [. . .] to die, to sleep – / To sleep, perchance to dream, ay there’s the rub” (3.1.60-65). Macbeth tells his wife,

Methought, I heard a voice cry, “Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murmur Sleep,” – the innocent Sleep;
Sleep, that knits up the ravell’d sleeve of care,
The death of each day’s life, sore labour’s bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature’s second course,
Chief nourisher in life’s feast; – (2.2.34-39)

Prospero remarks in *The Tempest*, “We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep” (4.1.156-58).

What is very interesting is that before the twentieth century, even medical scientists regarded these references to sleeping and dreaming made by men of letters as very important, and tended to cite them in their medical books. For instance, quoting *The Tempest*, Robert Macnish, one of the leading sleep researchers in the nineteenth century, states that life “is rounded by a sleep” (5). In his *Sleep and Dreams*, John Addington Symonds cites Macbeth’s famous soliloquy quoted above, regarding it as “a passage [. . .] that sums up all the benign and healthful influences of sleep” (46). Two interesting facts can be deduced from this tendency. One is that, like Dickens, Shakespeare’s observations on sleep

and dreams were very accurate.⁹ The other is that scientific techniques for understanding sleep were lacking in the nineteenth century. Most tools that can be used to decipher or deeply analyze the patterns, characteristics, and roles of sleep, like electroencephalography and polysomnography, were invented in the twentieth century,¹⁰ and before that the methods of sleep research were somewhat primitive. The sleep researchers of the nineteenth century often referred to literary works not merely because they gave insight into sleeping and dreaming but also because they could not rely on anything else.

Despite the lack of modern technology in the sleep research of the nineteenth century, researchers were trying to scientifically solve the mysteries of sleeping and dreaming. Generally speaking, in the nineteenth century interpreters of sleeping and dreaming can be divided into two groups: one tried to ascribe them to supernatural causes, the other to natural causes. Mrs. Blair, Catherine Crowe, and many such writers belonged to the former group, while John Abercrombie, Robert Macnish, John Elliotson, and John Addington Symonds to the latter, and Dickens possessed many of their books in his library. In the Victorian era, the trend of sleep researchers was gradually changing from the supernatural to the scientific, and the latter group gained a slight lead

⁹ Yury Furman, a specialist in sleep medicine, demonstrates how Shakespeare's descriptions of sleeping and dreaming tally with those of sleep disorders (1171-72). Henry D. Janowitz also explores the sleep disorders described in *Macbeth* (87-88).

¹⁰ The first human electroencephalography was recorded by Hans Berger in 1924 (Haas 9).

over the former. Nevertheless, the lack of technology prevented them from analyzing sleeping and dreaming from the viewpoint of pure science, and their researches were mainly based on their personal experiences. For instance, in order to advance his hypothesis about dreams, John Abercrombie says, “The following example occurred to a particular friend of mine, and may be relied upon in its most minute particulars” (203). Thus, though the trend of sleep research was on the side of science, the foundation of their scientific approach was flimsy. It was against such a background that Dickens took an interest in sleeping and dreaming and utilized them in his novels.

Although it is true that Dickens possessed many books on sleep and dreams in his library, it is not clear how well he knew the theories of sleeping and dreaming of the period. Considering that some books were complimentary copies, it is even possible that Dickens did not read them at all, as Leonard Manheim suggests (71). However, we must pay attention to the fact that Dickens rather boldly advised Dr. Stone, a contributor to *The Household Words*, to rewrite his article on dreams, saying that he had “read something on the subject” (*Letters* 6: 276).¹¹ This confident remark to the doctor indicates that he really read some professional books on sleeping and dreaming. Broadly speaking, Dickens tried to solve the mysteries of sleep and dreams from the viewpoint of science, and on one occasion attacked Catherine Crowe, the supernaturalist, in his review of her book *The Night Side of Nature* (82).

¹¹ All references to *The Letters of Charles Dickens* are to the Pilgrim Edition.

This does not mean, however, that he completely agreed with the views of famous medical scientists. In the aforementioned letter to Dr. Stone, he not only opposed the doctor's opinion but openly denied the theories widely accepted by others (*Letters* 6: 276, 278). We may say, then, that Dickens possessed an original view on sleeping and dreaming.

In this thesis, I would like to illustrate how Dickens's interest in sleeping and dreaming is reflected in his descriptions of them in his major works. In the following chapters, I shall examine Dickens's descriptions of sleeping, dreaming, and sleep-waking in his novels and reveal their importance to his imaginative creativity. In Chapter 1, I will deal with the descriptions of sleep in *Oliver Twist* and demonstrate that Dickens makes good use of characters' sleep and sleeplessness to emphasize the main theme of the novel. In Chapter 2, I will discuss Little Nell's sleep and sleeplessness in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and show how deeper analysis of this important theme gives us a deeper insight into Dickens's secret desire for Mary Hogarth, as well as his aspiration to atone for her death behind the novel. In Chapter 3, I will examine the structural descriptions of sleep and sleeplessness in *Barnaby Rudge* and demonstrate that those descriptions play an important role in emphasizing his view that history repeats itself. In Chapter 4, after reviewing the descriptions of sleeping and dreaming in the works Dickens wrote after *Barnaby Rudge*, I will show that Dickens underscores the imprisoned state of characters through the tactful use of night dreams and daydreams in *Little Dorrit*. In Chapter 5, I will probe Dickens's descriptions of the intermediate state between sleeping and dreaming in

his novels and present the possibility that they have a special bearing on his own creative imagination.

Chapter 1.

Sleep in *Oliver Twist*

1-1. Why *Oliver*?

Dickens took great interest in sleeping and dreaming, and described many scenes related to them in his fiction. He created many characters whose sleeping or dreaming is very peculiar, the earliest example being Joe, the fat boy, as noted in the Introduction. This fact clearly tells us that Dickens cherished a special interest in sleep from an early stage in his career as a writer. However, it does not necessarily mean that *The Pickwick Papers* is particularly important with respect to Dickens's use of sleeping and dreaming, even though it contains Joe. To study his usage of sleeping and dreaming in his novels, then, which work should we address first? The following table will give us a useful clue to answer the question: ¹²

¹² To collect the following data, I utilized *A Hyper Concordance to the Works of Charles Dickens* compiled by Mitsuharu Matsuoka, <<http://victorian.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/concordance/dickens/>>. All statistical data in this paper are gathered through this concordance.

Table 1.

Title of the Novel	Total Number of Sleep-related Words	Frequency of Sleep-related Words
<i>The Pickwick Papers</i>	190	1,628.0
<i>Oliver Twist</i>	123	1,313.6
<i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>	193	1,704.6
<i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i>	313	710.1
<i>Barnaby Rudge</i>	274	943.8
<i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i>	209	1,646.4
<i>Dombey and Son</i>	237	1,510.1
<i>David Copperfield</i>	251	1,445.8
<i>Bleak House</i>	170	2,125.0
<i>Hard Times</i>	47	2,247.0
<i>Little Dorrit</i>	214	1,608.6
<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	85	1,625.3
<i>Great Expectations</i>	93	2,034.1
<i>Our Mutual Friend</i>	121	2,758.6
<i>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</i>	57	1,683.2
Average	172	1,518.8

The table shows how often Dickens uses what I call “sleep-related words” such as *sleep*, *slumber*, *doze*, *nap*, and *dream* in each novel. In this study,

the word *frequency* means in what intervals those sleep-related words occur. For example, the table tells us that in *The Pickwick Papers*, those words appear every 1,628 words, while in *Oliver Twist*, they occur every 1,313.6, and from these data, we can say that those words occur more frequently in the latter novel. In a word, the smaller the number in the frequency column is, the more frequently those words appear. In the frequency of those words, *The Pickwick Papers* ranks eighth among the fifteen major novels, which means that it is not so conspicuous in terms of sleep. Of course these figures are by no means conclusive, but they are useful indications, for we might reasonably expect that the more descriptions of sleep appear in a novel, the more likely we will be to observe sleeping and dreaming described in it. Moreover, one must note that while the words related to sleep are used 190 times in *The Pickwick Papers*, many of them refer to the erratic sleeping habit of Joe. Though its descriptions are important from the perspective of medicine, it is difficult to extract much literary meaning from them, as they do not play very important roles in relation to the main plot of the novel. Several critics, however, do try to grasp the meaning of sleep in the novel. J. Hillis Miller, for instance, argues that the novel consists of “unrelated adventures separated from one another by a vacancy of sleep and forgetting” (*The World* 21). Building on this argument, Ayako Nakawa tries to demonstrate how Mr Pickwick’s sleep in the prison marks a turning point in his adventure (29-30). Though Miller’s theory is intriguing, we can find many counter examples, which renders these arguments unconvincing. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one

has sufficient data, and it does not seem to be a fruitful task to investigate the usage of sleeping and dreaming in Dickens's first novel.

Contrary to *The Pickwick Papers*, however, sleep is described in a more systematic and meaningful way in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens's second novel, which takes the third place in the frequency of sleep-related words in the above table. On Dickens's use of sleep in this novel, Peter Ackroyd, one of Dickens's major biographers, interestingly argues that the untimely death of Mary Hogarth, Dickens's dear sister-in-law, greatly affected the writing of *Oliver Twist*:

This is not to suggest that such chapters or passages are uniquely determined by Dickens's experience of Mary Hogarth's death [. . .] but rather that certain aspects of Dickens's creative imagination were thereby strengthened or aroused. That is why there now develops in *Oliver Twist* a constant sense of the need for sleep, for forgetfulness, for that blessed slumber "which ease from recent suffering alone imparts." (243)

According to Ackroyd, Dickens was so greatly shocked by Mary's sudden death that he focused on the importance of sleep in *Oliver Twist*. Ackroyd's remark is noteworthy because there are actually many scenes which closely relate to sleep in the novel, as shown in the above table. Considering how terrible a sorrow Dickens experienced, naturally Mary's sudden death influenced his writings in a strange and strong way. However, it is rather hasty to conclude that Dickens often depicted

characters' sleep mainly because of Mary's sudden death. In this chapter, I will examine Dickens's use of sleep in *Oliver Twist* and reveal two things: that there exists a pattern behind the descriptions of sleep and sleeplessness, and that sleep and sleeplessness play an important role in emphasizing the main theme of the novel.

1-2. Oliver's Sleep

Oliver Twist is rich in attractive and memorable characters, and their sleep often occurs in an impressive manner. Among them, it is Oliver Twist, the boy protagonist, who most frequently falls asleep. Various terms related to sleep are used 123 times in the novel, and they are used fifty-seven times in reference to Oliver's sleep. Considering that the second largest figure is Bill Sikes's eighteen times, we see that the number of Oliver's sleeping scenes is outstanding in the novel.

A close examination of his sleeping scenes reveals the reason why Oliver sleeps so often. As the story progresses, he frequently changes where he lives, and whenever he moves, he falls asleep. I will demonstrate the existence of the pattern here. In the beginning of the novel, just after he moves from Mrs Mann's farm to the workhouse, his sleep is depicted for the first time:

Oliver bowed low by the direction of the beadle, and was then hurried away to a large ward: where, on a rough, hard bed, he sobbed himself to sleep. What a noble illustration of the tender

laws of England! They let the paupers go to sleep! (11-12)¹³

He thus falls asleep when he experiences the first change of his living place. On leaving Mrs Man's farm, he feels "a sense of his loneliness in the great wide world" (10) for the first time. In addition, he is greatly shocked by the officers of the workhouse, who look down on him as an orphan. Since his sleep is described soon after these shocking events, we naturally feel that Oliver's timely sleep enables him to heal his wound caused by the change. What Ackroyd calls "the need for sleep, for forgetfulness" is already described here.

A similar scene occurs when he moves from the workhouse to Mr Sowerberry's shop as an apprentice. Mrs Sowerberry's explanation about his sleeping place is noteworthy:

"[Y]our bed's under the counter. You don't mind sleeping among the coffins, I suppose? But it doesn't much matter whether you do or don't, for you can't sleep anywhere else. Come; don't keep me here all night!" (30)

The fact that he is ordered to sleep among the coffins attracts the reader's attention. At that time, many parish apprentices really slept on the floor, amid filth and stench, and they were often terribly abused

¹³ All references to *Oliver Twist* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1994). The chapter numbers I refer to in this paper are based on this text (the Charles Dickens Edition of 1867).

(Paroissien 72-73).¹⁴ From the scene, the reader can easily foresee the boy's terrible life in the place and the threat of imminent death. Depressed as he is by the "dismal feelings" (30) produced by the place and his loneliness, however, he can sleep in such a place. Like his first sleep in the workhouse, his sleep in Mr Sowerberry's shop allows him to escape from the harsh reality of his life.

Another sleeping scene occurs when he is forced to leave the undertaker's office, due to the trouble with Noah Claypole, the senior assistant in the shop, and begins his long journey to London. "[H]e was cold and hungry, and more alone than he had ever felt before. Being very tired with his walk, however, he soon fell asleep and forgot his troubles" (51). The passage emphasizes the power of sleep to relieve him from "troubles," or terrible fatigue, cold, hunger, and loneliness.

Thus, already from the first eight chapters of the book, we see that Oliver's sleep is described whenever he moves from one place to another, and we are impressed with the fact that Oliver recovers his strength thanks to sleep that timely befalls him. Indeed, that a character falls asleep after he or she travels is quite normal. Since Oliver is only a nine-year-old boy, it may seem a matter of course that he often feels terribly tired due to travels or changes in his circumstances and falls asleep. From the pattern of his sleep, however, we sense something peculiar, and may even infer that Dickens invented his sleeping scenes

¹⁴ Minutely examining the maltreatment apprentice children experienced at that time, Ruth Richardson also demonstrates how precise Dickens's descriptions of their conditions were (203-05).

for a purpose. A good example can be found in Chapter 8, in which he reaches London and meets Fagin, the gang leader also known as “the merry old gentleman” (58). His sleep in Fagin’s den is worthy of note:

Oliver ate his share, and the Jew then mixed him a glass of hot gin and water: telling him he must drink it off directly, because another gentleman wanted the tumbler. Oliver did as he was desired. Immediately afterwards he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks; and then he sunk into a *deep* sleep. (58, italics mine)

Notice that Oliver’s sleep is here described as “a deep sleep.” It is the first time that such an adjective as *deep* referring to the good quality of sleep is attached to the description of his sleep.

The following examples of Oliver’s sleep show that the use of such adjectives carries a significant meaning. When he comes to be taken care of by Mr Brownlow, his deep sleep occurs again:

The darkness and the deep stillness of the room were very solemn; as they brought into the boy’s mind the thought that death had been hovering there, for many days and nights, and might yet fill it with the gloom and dread of his awful presence, he turned his face upon the pillow, and fervently prayed to Heaven.

Gradually, he fell into that *deep tranquil* sleep which ease from recent suffering alone imparts; that calm and peaceful rest which it is pain to wake from [. . .].

It had been bright day, for hours, when Oliver opened his eyes; he felt cheerful and happy. The crisis of the disease was safely past. He belonged to the world again. (78-79, italics mine)

Feeling that the room is filled with death, Oliver passionately prays to God. However, when he falls asleep and awakes from “that deep tranquil sleep,” he feels “cheerful and happy.” His condition enormously improves after this deep sleep, and we are strongly impressed with the restoring power of sleep. The last phrase “He belonged to the world again” especially underlines the fact that he survives the situation thanks to this sleep.

Similarly, when he is caught by Fagin’s gang again, his deep sleep is described as follows:

Master Bates [. . .] led Oliver into an adjacent kitchen, where there were two or three of the beds on which he had slept before; and here, with many uncontrollable bursts of laughter, he produced the identical old suit of clothes which Oliver had so much congratulated himself upon leaving off at Mr Brownlow’s [. . .]. But he was sick and weary; and he soon fell *sound* asleep. (117, italics mine)

Greatly shocked by the sudden change of his situation, he soon begins to sleep soundly. It is surmisable from the scene that this sleep enables him to restore his lost energy, just as it does in Mr Brownlow’s house.

Finally, after he is shot by Mrs Maylie’s servant, he again falls

into a deep sleep:

Stepping before [Mrs Maylie and Rose], [Mr Losberne] looked into the room. Motioning them to advance, he closed the door when they had entered; and gently drew back the curtains of the bed. Upon it, in lieu of the dogged, black-visaged ruffian they had expected to behold, there lay a mere child: worn with pain and exhaustion, and sunk into a *deep* sleep. (209, italics mine)

The cause and effect of this sleep is evident: because he is “worn with pain and exhaustion,” he sleeps, and thanks to this deep sleep, he heals himself and gets the strength to go on living.

Oliver thus repeatedly sleeps deeply after he comes to Fagin’s den. With these four examples of his deep sleep, the following interpretation may be most plausible: “deep sleep” corresponds with a big change in his situation. In such scenes, just as his sleep is deep, so the change in his living place is big: he as it were changes his living world. As Arnold Kettle maintains, the novel consists of “the contrasted relation of two worlds – the underworld of the workhouse, the funeral, the thieves’ kitchen, and the comfortable world of the Brownlows and Maylies,” and the story progresses as Oliver moves from one world to the other (130). In these four cases, his change is not merely a physical one in his dwelling

place, but a symbolic one in his living world.¹⁵ When he sleeps deeply for the first time in Fagin's den, he enters the world of Evil governed by Fagin, and his adventure among evil people begins. His deep sleep in Mr Brownlow's house signifies the transition from the world of Evil to that of Good.

Indeed, there is one special example of Oliver's sleep that supports my hypothesis. During his captivity, he is once forced to move from Fagin's den to Sikes's house, and on this occasion, his sleep is not described as deep sleep, but the narrator merely says that he "[falls] asleep" (148). Here, his deep sleep is not described probably because this move does not include the change of his living worlds. We may say his deep sleep always indicates the turning point of his progress.

This pattern is directly connected with the main theme of *Oliver Twist*. With regard to its theme, Dickens notes in his preface to the third edition of the novel: "I wished to show, in little Oliver, the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last" (xxxviii). In a word, the theme of the novel is to show the contrast between Good and Evil and the final victory of the former. Considering that Oliver is created as a representative of Good, Dickens can fulfill his aim only by making the boy survive adverse situations brought about by evil characters, and in order to do so, he uses sleep as a healer of Oliver in each description of his sleep. The pattern of Oliver's sleep plays an

¹⁵ Takao Saijo also gives a similar opinion, but he only deals with the scene in Mr Brownlow's house, and does not examine other scenes that include deep sleep (88-89).

indispensable role in the total design of the novel.

1-3. Sikes's Sleep and Sleeplessness

With respect to sleep, Sikes and Fagin, the villains of *Oliver Twist*, are also noteworthy. As mentioned earlier, such words as *sleep*, *slumber*, and *nap* are used eighteen times to refer to Sikes's sleep, and this is the second largest figure in the novel. However, it is rash to infer from this data that he has a good sleep, because those words are mostly used to describe his sleepless condition rather than his sleeping state. In fact, we may even state that while sleep helps Oliver survive adversities, sleeplessness entails Sikes's death.

I shall first clarify when and how Sikes's sleep is portrayed. After he fortuitously catches Oliver and takes him into Fagin's house, he makes a plan for the next robbery with Fagin, and finally reaches an agreement that he should get Oliver to work for them as a member of the gang. Satisfied with the prospect that their plan will work well, Sikes "proceeded to drink brandy at a furious rate" until "he fell over the box upon the floor, and went to sleep where he fell" (140). Soon after the scene, he declares, "[L]et's have some supper, and get a snooze before starting" (147), and really eats and sleeps according to his own words. Moreover, when Sikes and Oliver come to the secret house of villains where they meet Toby Crackit and Barney, other members of the gang, he tries to get "a short nap" (155). These scenes indicate that Dickens describes Sikes as a man who seems to sleep pleasantly.

The next example is of more interest. When he reappears in the novel after their burglary fails, we are told, “Mr William Sikes, awakening from his nap, drowsily growled forth an inquiry what time of night it was” (277). The passage clearly shows that he has been sleeping. Soon, it is explained that after the failure of their robbery attempt, he has been nursed by Nancy in a secret den. Furthermore, when Nancy goes out with Fagin, he, meanwhile, stays home, “flinging himself on the bed, and composing himself to sleep away the time until the young lady’s return” (283). His sleep is once interrupted when Nancy returns home: on this occasion, after confirming that she has got the money, he “uttered a growl of satisfaction,” and “resumed the slumbers which her arrival had interrupted” (286). In short, Sikes is repeatedly depicted as sleeping in order to recover his strength. He is in bad shape at this time, and he even tells Nancy that he is “[a]s weak as water” (278). Later, however, he is in so perfect a health that he feels it a pity “that there’s none quite ready to be done” (325). Viewing these passages, we feel that Sikes, like Oliver, seems to restore his lost energy by repeated sleep.

However, the fact is that Oliver’s sleep and Sikes’s are totally different. While Oliver’s sleep is almost always described as “sleep,” Sikes’s sleep is only once described as “sleep” (and that is when it feels more like a drunken stupor) and mostly as “nap,” “slumber,” and “snooze.” This difference is important because Dickens carefully chooses sleep-related words in his novels. This can be deduced from the comparison between Dickens and other novelists, particularly George Eliot. Aside from the word *sleep*, there are various sorts of sleep-related

words, *slumber*, *doze*, *nap*, *dormant*, *snooze*, and so on. When Eliot describes sleeping characters, she almost always uses the word *sleep* or its inflections, and she very rarely uses other words to refer to their sleeping states.¹⁶ For Eliot, who believed that sleep and dreams were unimportant in realistic novels, sleep was almost always only *sleep*. On the other hand, for Dickens, sleep is much more complicated: he uses all of the above words in his works. In addition, he sometimes uses sleep-related words which can rarely be found in the works of other major Victorian novelists.¹⁷ These facts strongly suggest that when he uses sleep-related words other than *sleep*, there must be some important meanings. In the case of Sikes's sleep, he uses "snooze," "nap," and "slumber," all of which indicate light sleep. That is to say, the quality of Sikes's sleep is inferior to that of Oliver's.¹⁸ This makes Sikes's "deep and heavy sleep" (288), which occurs later, more worthy of note:

Sikes, locking her hand in his, fell back upon the pillow: turning his eyes upon her face. They closed; opened again; closed once

¹⁶ For example, Eliot uses the word *slumber* only fourteen times in her seven major novels, while Dickens uses it 145 times in his fifteen. We can say the same thing with such words as *doze*, *nap*, and *drowsy*.

¹⁷ For instance, Dickens uses the word *dreamless* three times in his fifteen novels, while other famous Victorian novelists, such as Charlotte and Emily Brontës, Eliot, and Thackeray, never use it in theirs. A similar thing can be said with the word *snooze*. Among them, only Dickens and Thackeray use it in their works.

¹⁸ According to the second edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, *nap* is "a short or light sleep"; *slumber* "a light or short sleep"; and *snooze* "a nap."

more; again opened. He shifted his position restlessly; and, after dozing again, and again, [. . .] was suddenly stricken, as it were, while in the very attitude of rising, into a *deep and heavy* sleep. (288, italics mine)

For the first time, the adjectives “deep and heavy” are used in reference to his sleep. The important point of the scene is that his “deep and heavy sleep” is caused by the laudanum secretly administered by Nancy without his knowing it. To be more precise, Sikes cannot control his own sleep, or sleep betrays him. The fact foreshadows a big change in his situation. Later, mistakenly believing that Nancy has turned informer on him, he murders her mercilessly, then becomes sleepless and finally dies. Like Oliver’s, his deep sleep marks a turning point in his life, but their ends are quite opposite.

Once he kills Nancy, Sikes’s sleepless condition is repeatedly portrayed. In his escape journey away from London, “he laid himself down under a hedge, and slept. *Soon* he was up again, and away” (349-50, italics mine). The word *soon* emphasizes the brevity of his sleep. Such a short sleep can rest neither his body nor his mind. Although he is in no condition to go out, he walks many miles, and finally creeps into a small public house in a quiet village. There, he “had almost dropped asleep, when he was half wakened by the noisy entrance of a newcomer” (351). To make matters worse for him, the man, who has disturbed his light sleep, begins to advertise his stain remover, picks up Sikes’s hat, and announces to the spectators that he will remove the stain of the hat

“[w]hether it is a wine-stain, fruit-stain, beer-stain, water-stain, paint-stain, pitch-stain, mud-stain, or blood-stain” (352). Outraged and scared by his words and deeds, Sikes turns the table over, snatches the hat, and leaves. Here, the phrase “blood-stain” reminds him of the murder he has just committed, and the fear comes back. Contrary to Oliver, who can forget dismal things and heal his mind easily by good sleep, Sikes can neither sleep nor forget the terrible incident. In addition, from the expression “almost dropped asleep, when,” we would infer that if the man were not there, he could have slept and recovered his physical and mental strength. The timely appearance of the man is an embodiment of Dickens’s design to deprive Sikes of good sleep.

After the above scene, Sikes gets only “a long, but broken and uneasy sleep” (355). Though long, “broken and uneasy sleep” cannot rest him. In such a state, he takes “the desperate resolution of going back to London” (355), is found by the people gathered to catch him, and accidentally dies. It is not impossible to infer from the expression “the desperate resolution” that his sleeplessness disturbs his mind and impairs his judgment. We might even say that his death is indirectly caused by his sleeplessness, which is quite contrastive to Oliver’s progress.

In other passages than these, Sikes’s sleeplessness is also underlined. When he begins to be haunted by Nancy’s eyes, we read the following passage: “Let no man talk of murderers escaping justice, and hint that Providence must sleep. There were twenty score of violent deaths in one long minute of that agony of fear” (353). This is Dickens’s

diatribe against Sikes, the foul murderer. Notice that the word *sleep* is used metaphorically and purposefully in the above passage, which reminds the reader of his sleeplessness. The frequent references to *Macbeth* also emphasize his sleepless condition as well as sufferings. As David Paroissien indicates, the latter half of the passage resembles Macbeth's words, which he utters when he sees Banquo's ghost: "but now, they rise again, / With twenty mortal murders on their crowns" (3.4.79-80; 264). Additionally, when Sikes tries to forget his terrors by fighting a fire, we are told, "he bore a charmed life" (355), which reminds us of Macbeth's words, "I bear a charmed life" (5.8.12). These frequent references to *Macbeth* inevitably evoke the famous phrase, "Macbeth does murder Sleep" (2.2.35) and impress the reader with his sleepless condition.

Furthermore, we must notice that in these passages that refer to Sikes's sleeplessness, Dickens uses the word *sleep* or *asleep*. As we have seen, Sikes's sleep before the murder is much less often called "sleep" than "slumber" or "nap," so it is a remarkable change. By using the word *sleep* and denying it soon after its use, Dickens tries to underscore Sikes's unhealthy sleepless condition.

Indeed, in Dickens's works, it is not rare to see that a murderer like Sikes suffers from sleeplessness and finally dies. The pattern can be applied to three other murderers: Barnaby Rudge, a murderer of Geoffrey Haredale, his master, in *Barnaby Rudge*; Jonas Chuzzlewit, a murderer of Montague Tigg, his blackmailer, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*; and Bradley Headstone, who attempts to murder Eugene Wrayburn, his rival

in love, in *Our Mutual Friend*. However, there is a great difference between Sikes and these three sleepless murderers: unlike Sikes, the other murderers are almost always sleepless and cannot benefit from sleep even before they commit a crime. Rudge from the very beginning cannot gain sleep, and we are told that he has “nothing in common with the slumbering world around, not even sleep, Heaven’s gift to all its creatures” (140).¹⁹ In the case of Jonas, it is true that he once has a dream, which foresees his murder of Tigg. However, he calls himself “a light sleeper” (560),²⁰ and is never described as a good sleeper, and the reader does not feel that he is deprived of sleep due to the murder he has committed. Headstone’s case is a bit more complicated. Like Sikes, his sleep comes to be described as “scanty sleep” (841) in Book 4 Chapter 15 where he is ridden with guilt due to the attempted murder he has committed.²¹ Unlike Sikes, however, he cannot get restoring sleep even before the crime: in Book 3 Chapter 11, we are told that “[t]here was no sleep for Bradley Headstone” (581). In addition, his sleep is described only twice in the novel, and those scenes occur both before and after the attempted murder. In Book 4 Chapter 1, asked by Riderhood what he is going to do, Headstone notes, “How can I plan anything, if I haven’t sleep?” and falls asleep. Seeing his state, Riderhood even states, “He sleeps

¹⁹ All references to *Barnaby Rudge* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1996).

²⁰ All references to *Martin Chuzzlewit* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1994).

²¹ All references to *Our Mutual Friend* are to the Everyman paperback edition (2000).

sound” (682). Then in Book 4 Chapter 7, just after the attempted murder, he is “very sound asleep” (749). In this manner, Headstone’s sleep and sleeplessness do not accord with his crime. Hence, Sikes is the only Dickensian murderer who experiences a transition from the state in which he enjoys refreshing sleep to that in which he does not, and this transition makes his downfall more explicit. His sleep and sleeplessness are good examples to show that Dickens utilizes character’s sleep and sleeplessness to emphasize the main theme of the novel.

1-4: Fagin’s Sleeplessness

Unlike Sikes, Fagin plays the role of mastermind and controls the other gangsters. For Fagin, Sikes is merely one of his instruments for attaining his goal, and on one occasion he boasts that he is a man “who with six words, can strangle Sikes as surely as if I [Fagin] had his bull’s throat between my [his] fingers now” (183). This is not an empty threat, as is evidenced by the scene where Barney “[exchanges] a remarkable look with Fagin, who raised his eyes for an instant” (103-04) before giving Sikes another drink, which implies that Fagin could have easily poisoned Sikes. Indeed, his evil far exceeds Dickens’s own expectations. When he tried to finish *Oliver Twist*, he told John Forster that Fagin was “such an out and outer that I [Dickens] don’t know what to make of him” (Forster 1: 100). Fagin’s villainy far exceeds that of Sikes, and he can be called a representative of Evil in the novel, as opposed to Oliver’s Good.

The sleep of such an evil character is totally different from that of

others: in a word, he is thoroughly sleepless. This, I hasten to add, does not mean that he is literally suffering from sleeplessness like the guilty Sikes. What I am suggesting is that his sleep is never described in the novel, and Dickens emphasizes the fact by repeatedly arranging sleeping characters and sleepless Fagin together in the same scene: Fagin and sleeping Sikes in Chapter 19; Fagin and sleeping boys in Chapter 26; and Fagin and the sleeping town and sleeping Noah in Chapter 47. Moreover, the scrutiny of these scenes will reveal one vital characteristic common to them all: Fagin always takes advantage of other characters' sleep. For instance, in Chapter 19, when Sikes drinks himself to sleep, Fagin secretly bestows "a sly kick upon the prostrate form of Mr Sikes" (141) and to some extent pays off his grudge against the man. In Chapter 26, Fagin tries to make a secret conference with Monks in his den to talk about Oliver. On this occasion, fortunately for him, "Toby Crackit [is] asleep in the back-room below, and [. . .] the boys [are] in the front one" (186). Thanks to their sleep, Fagin can carry out a confidential talk with Monks. A far more impressive example can be found in Chapter 47:

It was nearly two hours before day-break; that time which in the autumn of the year, may be truly called the dead of night; when the streets are silent and deserted; when even sounds appear to slumber, and profligacy and riot have staggered home to dream; it was at this still and silent hour, that Fagin sat watching in his old lair, with face so distorted and pale, and eyes so red and bloodshot,

that he looked less like a man, than like some hideous phantom, moist from the grave, and worried by an evil spirit. (342)

Fagin, hearing that Nancy has informed against him, is studying how to cope with her betrayal. Although the time is “the dead of night,” and many people have gone home to sleep (and “even sounds appear to slumber, and profligacy and riot have staggered home to dream”), he is not asleep but wide awake. The metaphorical use of the word *slumber* contrasts the sleeping city with the waking Fagin, and the narrator’s comparison of Fagin to “some hideous phantom” highlights his diabolic image.

Soon after this, Fagin conveys the information regarding Nancy’s betrayals to Sikes through Noah Claypole’s words and tries to persuade the villain to do away with her.

“A gentleman and a lady that she had gone to of her own accord before, who asked her to give up all her pals, and Monks first, which she did – and to describe him, which she did – and to tell her what house it was that we meet at, and go to, which she did – and where it could be best watched from, which she did – and what time the people went there, which she did. She did all this. She told it all every word without a threat, without a murmur – she did – did she not?” cried Fagin, half mad with fury. (345-46)

Since Noah sleepily confirms, “That’s just what it was!” (346), Sikes,

enraged, rushes off to kill her. What Fagin says here and what Nancy has really done are totally different, however. While Fagin asserts that she is asked to give up all her friends, the fact is that Mr Brownlow only says, “[P]ut Monks into my hands, and leave him to me to deal with” (339), and though she complies with this request, she tenaciously refuses to give up Fagin, saying “I will not do it! I will never do it!” (338). Therefore, Fagin’s words that she has betrayed them “without a murmur” are obviously untrue. As a result of the misapprehension, Sikes murders Nancy without realizing her real intention. Such a misunderstanding arises because Fagin deliberately falsifies the facts to attain his goal. He intends to get rid of both the betrayer and the troublesome villain at once, and to fulfill his aim, it is necessary for him to induce Sikes to kill Nancy by infuriating him. By using Noah Claypole, who has eavesdropped on what Nancy has said, Fagin can increase the reliability of his information. However, as Noah knows the truth, if Fagin lets him speak freely, he may talk about the fact that Nancy has tried to shield Sikes and Fagin, in which case it may be difficult to arouse Sikes’s anger so much. To secretly ask Noah to speak ill of Nancy is dangerous, because there is a great possibility that he will use that against Fagin in the future. Cunning Fagin must have realized that Noah is untrustworthy. In fact, at the end of the novel, Fagin is hanged because Noah betrays him and exaggeratedly testifies against him.²² To prevent

²² In the eye of the law, what Fagin does in the scene will be regarded as the incitement to murder at most. Though terrible, it was not a sort of crime that merited the death penalty in the nineteenth century Britain. Nevertheless, he is

such a catastrophe for him, he manipulates “sleepy” Noah. Since he is sleepy, his brain does not work well, and there is a chance for Fagin to falsify the fact. In the above scene, it is Fagin that talks about what Nancy has done, and Noah does nothing but confirm Fagin’s biased words. Seeing things from this viewpoint, we may say that Noah’s sleeping state enables Fagin to distort the information and to make Sikes kill Nancy just as he wishes. We will agree with Laurence Senelick when he asserts that Fagin and Iago are very similar in their inflammatory oratory (98), but there is this significant difference: while Iago just utilizes his eloquence to achieve his goal, Fagin makes good use of both his cunning way of talking and Noah’s sleep to fulfill his aim.

Thus, Fagin utilizes others’ sleep to accomplish evil deeds. As I have noted, however, Dickens’s ultimate goal in the novel is to describe the victory of Good over Evil, and *sleepless* Fagin must be defeated by *sleepful* Oliver. The idea is symbolically shown in two very famous scenes in which Oliver, the good sleeper, and Fagin, the sleepless devil, appear in the same place. The first scene occurs when Oliver sleeps in Fagin’s den for the first time. In Chapter 9, we are told that he is in “a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking” (59). Mistakenly believing that Oliver is sleeping, Fagin feasts his eyes on his precious treasures. As on other occasions, he tries to utilize Oliver’s sleep, though here his strategy does not work very well. Since Oliver is not completely asleep,

sentenced to death. Confronting this puzzle, John Sutherland convincingly argues that Fagin is hanged probably because Noah Claypole “has perjured himself” (“Why is Fagin hanged” 58).

he can see what Fagin is doing. When he realizes that the boy is watching him, Fagin threateningly demands an explanation with a knife: “What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy!” (60). He fears two things. One is that Oliver may have realized his real character and will report his pelf to the authorities. The other is that the boy might innocently disclose the presence of the secret treasure box to other thieves, especially to Sikes. If he did so, Fagin would possibly lose both his life and treasures. Thus, Oliver in this half sleeping state grasps the information which has the potential to ruin Fagin. The scene foreshadows his final victory over Evil.

A similar thing can be said with the other scene that occurs in the latter half of the novel. In Mrs Maylie’s summer house, Oliver falls into the similar intermediate state between sleeping and waking:

Oliver sat at this window, intent upon his books [. . .] gradually and by slow degrees, he fell asleep.

There is a kind of sleep that steals upon us sometimes, which, while it holds the body prisoner, does not free the mind from a sense of things about it, and enable it to ramble at its pleasure. So far as an overpowering heaviness, a prostration of strength, and an utter inability to control our thoughts or power of motion, can be called sleep, this is it; and yet, we have a consciousness of all that is going on about us [. . .]. (246-47)²³

²³ Connecting this scene with that of Oliver’s sleep-waking in Chapter 9, Steven Marcus argues that these scenes reflect Dickens’s famous trauma of having been

In this condition, he sees Fagin and Monks through the window, as the men are secretly visiting Mrs Maylie's country house "for the purpose of identifying him" (381). As Oliver perceives their presence and cries for help, however, they are temporarily placed in danger of arrest. Besides, Oliver here realizes for the first time that Fagin is a confederate of the strange man (Monks). In both these scenes, Fagin tries to utilize Oliver's sleep for his own sake in vain, and is put in a dangerous situation. Fagin's defeat is thus symbolically suggested in the scenes that describe Oliver's intermediate state between sleeping and waking.

Furthermore, Dickens makes good use of sleep in the dramatic end of Fagin. In Chapter 52, put into prison and sentenced to death, Fagin

forced to work at Warren's blacking factory when he was a child (369-78). J. Hillis Miller notes that the scene represents "the total insecurity of Oliver's present happy state" (*The World* 73). Quoting the scene, John Cosnett states, "Dickens was aware of the phenomenon of sleep paralysis." He goes on to point out that sleep paralysis was first described by Weir Mitchell in 1878, nearly 40 years after the publication of *Oliver Twist* ("Observer" 265). John Sutherland argues that Dickens wrote the episode on the basis of a mesmeric experiment. He surmises that Dickens changed the original plan after he had ordered the illustration based on the former plan, and to cope with such an adversity, he "suddenly realized that he could elegantly write himself out of the dilemma by means of the 'mesmeric enigma' device, using material gathered at the O'Key demonstration" ("Is Oliver dreaming" 35-45). O'Key was a test subject of the mesmeric experiment, and it is said that Dickens had seen the experiment before he wrote the scene. Showing that the scene is based on Robert Macnish's *Philosophy of Sleep*, David McAllister argues that Dickens turned to Macnish's book in an attempt to understand his own nightly dreams of Mary Hogarth, his sister-in-law (14-15).

suffers from the fear of approaching death. In such a situation, Mr Brownlow visits the prison with Oliver to acquire important information. Here, Fagin urges Oliver, “Say I’ve gone to sleep – they’ll believe *you*. You can get me out, if you take me so. Now then, now then!” (394) However, it is obvious that they cannot get out of the prison even if Oliver does as Fagin wishes. Although it may appear that Fagin’s seemingly nonsensical words are there simply to emphasize his madness, they imply much more than this. In the scene, Fagin refers to his own sleep for the first time in the novel, and it is because Fagin’s sleep has never been described that the scene instantly attracts the reader’s attention. Soon after this, Fagin is easily caught by the turnkeys, and we read:

[Fagin] struggled with the power of desperation, for an instant; and, then sent up cry upon cry that penetrated even those massive walls, and rang in their ears until they reached the open yard (395).

He is earnestly trying to cheat the turnkeys and get out of the prison by pretending to have “gone to sleep,” but the failure in his final attempt to escape drives him to despair. The very fact that Fagin, the sleepless devil, turns to sleep as the last resort to escape death, symbolically shows his ultimate defeat against Oliver, the sleeping good boy.

As I have shown, by making good use of characters’ sleep and sleeplessness, Dickens succeeds in vividly portraying the victory of Good over Evil. Critics such as Ackroyd and McAllister have argued that the

descriptions of sleeping and dreaming that frequently occur in *Oliver Twist* are closely related to the fact that Dickens lost his sister-in-law Mary Hogarth while writing the novel. My investigations have disclosed, however, that Oliver's sleeping scenes occur according to a certain pattern which has nothing to do with Mary Hogarth. Moreover, the first sleeping scene of Oliver is described in Chapter 2, which was written before Mary died. The descriptions of sleep in *Oliver Twist* are thus more than a representation of his love for Mary Hogarth and rather play a vital role in developing its main theme.

Nevertheless, it is not my intention to say that Mary has no connection with the descriptions of sleep in Dickens's works. In fact, we sense his secret love for her from the descriptions of character's sleep in another novel, which we shall examine in the next chapter.

Chapter 2.

The Quest for Sleep in *The Old Curiosity Shop*

2-1. The Novel Obsessed with Sleep

The Old Curiosity Shop, the fourth novel by Dickens, has been rated as “both the best and the worst of Dickens’s novels” (Davis 348). Such a divided assessment of the work is due to its overt sentimentality, which has elicited strong reactions for good or ill from readers. For instance, contemporary readers in America gathered on the pier in New York to ask “Is Little Nell Dead?” when the ship arrived with the next serial instalment.²⁴ Realizing that Nell was going to die, Daniel O’Connell, the Irish politician, threw the book out of the window of the train. Oscar Wilde is said to have quipped, “One must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing” (H. Pearson 208). Aldous Huxley, regarding the novel as a prime example of “vulgarity in literature,” states, “Mentally drowned and blinded by the sticky

²⁴ Several critics have doubted the veracity of this episode. For example, on the basis of careful research, the editors of the Pilgrim Edition of Dickens’s Letters discount such legends (House ix). However, the existence of such a legend itself attests to the book’s overwhelming popularity in the nineteenth century.

overflowings of his heart, Dickens was incapable, when moved, of re-creating, in terms of art, the reality which had moved him” (159). As Wilde’s sarcastic comment indicates, Nell’s deathbed scene is most noteworthy in respect of sentimentality:

For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest.
The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free
from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature
fresh from the hand of God, [. . .]. (554)²⁵

It tries to be too touching, and on this point, we may agree with the harsh criticisms. Few readers today would enjoy it, and indeed, in the middle of the twentieth century, famous critics like Edmund Wilson and Steven Marcus also regarded the novel as unimportant, and it has not fully recovered its former reputation.²⁶

We can still find something interesting in this sort of novel, however. Notice that Nell’s death is compared to sleep here, which plays an important role in sentimentalizing her death. Aside from the above scene, sleep appears in many parts of the novel and intensifies its

²⁵ All references to *The Old Curiosity Shop* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1995).

²⁶ Wilson almost ignores the novel, only stating that it is “simply an impromptu yarn” (18), and Marcus calls the work “Dickens’s least successful novel” (129).

sentimentality. For example, when the schoolmaster's pupil dies in front of Nell, Dickens writes:

The two old friends and companions – for such they were – though they were man and child – held each other in a long embrace, and then the little scholar turned his face towards the wall, and fell *asleep*. (199, italics mine)

It is the first time that Dickens compares a character's death to sleep in the novel, and this comparison anticipates Nell's own forthcoming sleep-like death and makes it much more impressive.

However, sleep is not merely used to emphasize sentimentality and thereby capture the reader's heart. As shown in Table 1 presented in the previous chapter, words related to sleep and dreams are used 313 times and every 710.6 words in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. These figures indicate that among his fifteen major novels, *The Old Curiosity Shop* ranks first in both the total number and frequency of sleep-related words. More importantly, in this respect the book probably stands unrivalled among other Victorian novels, among which Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* occupies the first place with respect to the frequency of sleep-related words. However, the frequency of those words in *Villette* is far less than that in *The Old Curiosity Shop*.²⁷ Dickens's novel so conspicuously

²⁷ In *Villette*, sleep-related words are used 196 times and occur every 1,006.6 words. In this research, other than Dickens's fifteen novels, I have investigated the following works written in nineteenth-century Britain: *Scenes of Clerical Life*,

stands out among other Victorian works that we might even feel that it is strangely obsessed with the descriptions of sleep. I suggest that to decipher the meaning of this obsession is indispensable to understanding the relationship between Dickens's creativity and sleep. In this chapter, I will show that *The Old Curiosity Shop* can be read as Nell's quest for sleep, and then, paying particular attention to Dickens's relationship with Mary Hogarth, I will address the question of why he highlights the quest for sleep.

2-2. Nell's Quest for Sleep

The Old Curiosity Shop centres around the escape journey of Little Nell, the heroine, and sleep is closely related to it. It is she whose sleep is most often referred to, and indeed, as mentioned earlier, her sleep arrests our attention even in the beginning chapter of the novel. The first reference to her sleep is made in the vivid imagination of Master

Adam Bede, The Mill of the Floss, Silas Marner, Romola, Felix Holt, Middlemarch, and *Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot; *Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette,* and *The Professor* by Charlotte Brontë; *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë; *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë; *Mary Barton, Ruth, Cranford, North and South, A Dark Night's Work,* and *Wives and Daughters* by Elizabeth Gaskell; *Basil, The Woman in White, No Name, Armadale, The Moonstone, Man and Wife, The Law and the Lady, The Fallen Leaves, Jezebel's Daughter, The Evil Genius,* and *After Dark* by Wilkie Collins; *Barry Lyndon, Vanity Fair, Pendennis,* and *Henry Esmond* by William Makepeace Thackeray; *Barchester Towers* and *The Way We Live Now* by Anthony Trollope; and *Far from the Madding Crowd, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* and *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy.

Humphrey, the first-person narrator of the first three chapters. One night, he happens to get acquainted with Little Nell, and her figure so strongly impresses him that he later cannot help envisaging the girl sleeping peacefully in the shop surrounded by hideous antiques:

I [Master Humphrey] sat down in my easy-chair, and falling back upon its ample cushions, pictured to myself the child in her bed: alone, unwatched, uncared for, (save by angels,) yet sleeping peacefully. So very young, so spiritual, so slight and fairy-like a creature passing the long dull nights in such an uncongenial place! I could not dismiss it from my thoughts [. . .].

But, all that night, waking or in my sleep, the same thoughts recurred, and the same images retained possession of my brain. [. . .] alone in the midst of all this lumber and decay and ugly age, the beautiful child in her gentle slumber, smiling through her light and sunny dreams. (15-16)

The famous illustration by Samuel Williams has made the scene even more memorable for the reader. What we first notice in the scene is a clear contrast between Nell and the grotesque curiosities around her. As the narrator uses the phrase “uncongenial place,” innocent Nell stands out among ugly things. As the proverb says, she is a jewel in a dunghill. Some have said that the scene represents the main structure of the whole story: Nell is always surrounded and tortured by grotesque people, such as Quilp and her grandfather, a gambling maniac. The image

establishes the principle of contrast that pervades the novel.²⁸ However, what is more important here is that Nell is sleeping peacefully and smilingly in such a place. When she realizes that her grandfather is trying hard to do something (although unaware it is gambling) to earn money, she remonstrates with him, definitely stating “I am very happy as I am, grandfather” (11). From her words as well as her peaceful sleep, we understand that she is happy and does not want to change her life, though she is in a strange situation.

Due to the gambling of her grandfather, however, her situation and hence her sleep drastically change for the worse. She comes to fear that he might kill himself while she is asleep, and imagines how “his blood [comes] creeping, creeping, on the ground to her bed-room door” (74). Moreover, even when she sleeps, her sleep is not what it used to be. We are told that she often starts up at night “to listen for the bell and to respond to the imaginary summons which had roused her from her slumber” (75). Significantly, the narrator uses the word *slumber* instead of *sleep* in this passage. As noted previously, Dickens distinguishes between the words *sleep* and *slumber*, and his use of the latter here indicates that she can no longer gain good-quality sleep. She finally suggests to her grandfather that they should be beggars and be happy:

²⁸ Paul Davis points out the contrast between “[y]outh and age, innocence and experience, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, passivity and violence, female and male” (349). Paul Schlicke states, “*The Old Curiosity Shop* is concerned with the contrast between city and country, with youth and age, with innocence and wickedness, and above all with life and death” (426).

“Let us walk through country places, and *sleep* in fields and under trees, and never think of money again, or anything that can make you sad, but *rest at nights*, and have the sun and wind upon our faces in the day, and thank God together!” (76, italics mine)

In explaining what they should do as happy beggars, she twice refers to their sleep. It may be true that the usages of the words here are simply idiomatic rather than connotative, but considering that she cannot rest at night in her current predicament and that the fact is clearly shown just before this passage, it is not too much to state that good sleep is closely connected with her happiness and that she is yearning for it.

Nell's wish is not fulfilled at this time, however, and finally they have their property seized by Quilp, a cruel usurer. He is a vital character, especially in relation to Nell, because he plays the role of her unwelcome suitor as well as persecutor. He describes her as “[s]uch a fresh, blooming, modest little bud” (77), and when she comes to him, he boldly says, “Has she come to sit upon Quilp's knee?” (91). He goes as far as to ask, “How should you like to be my number two, Nelly?” (48). It is evident that he feels sexual desire for her. Furthermore, seeing the comfortable atmosphere of Nell's room, he notes, “The bedstead is much about my size. I think I shall make it *my* little room” (91), and deprives her of her own little room and bed. Evidently, the deprivation of her bed has sexual implications, and we may say that she loses her good sleep because of Quilp's overt sexuality.

Seeking to be “cheerful and happy” (98), Nell and her grandfather run away from their house, leaving “the sleeping town” (101). During her escape journey, descriptions of her sleep and sleeplessness repeatedly occur, and exhibit the following pattern. As is the case with *Oliver Twist*, whenever she changes her living place, her sleep is described. Sleep, however, is almost always banished for some reason or other, and once she loses it, she moves to a different place and tries to sleep again. In the metaphorical sense, therefore, her journey can be called her quest for good sleep.

A close examination of her journey will reveal the significance of the pattern. After they sleep on the first night at a small cottage where beds are let to travellers, they meet the family of a kind farmer. Though he advises them to stay at a good travellers’ lodging and points out that Nell needs rest, they resume their travel painfully, as her grandfather tenaciously urges her to go. Like Quilp, he sometimes deprives her of sleep. However, thanks to the kind driver of the cart asked by the above farmer to help them, they can rest on the wagon, and “Nell had scarcely settled herself on a little heap of straw in one corner, when she fell asleep, for the first time that day” (126).

Codlin and Short, whom they meet next, deprive Nell of her good sleep. At first, she can sleep while they are near her grandfather, but no sooner does she learn that they are trying to part her from him than her condition changes. The most significant thing about this episode is that her fear of Codlin and Short derives from the fact that they see her through lustful eyes. Her forthcoming crisis is already implied when

they meet for the first time. In the scene, seeing the poor condition of their doll, Codlin notes, "Look here; here's all this Judy's clothes falling to pieces again. You haven't got a needle and thread I suppose?" (129). This remark is made toward his partner Short, but seeing their predicament, Nell volunteers to fix the doll, and her act makes Codlin "[look] at her with an interest" (130). Codlin and Short are the performers of a Punch and Judy show, and since the play always involves Punch brutally beating his wife Judy to death, it is no wonder that their Judy doll is in a terrible condition. However, the phrase "Judy's clothes falling to pieces," may imply sexual violence on the part of these two men. By making the connection between Nell and this doll, Dickens here suggests that Nell becomes the target of these two sexually brutal men. Indeed, they gradually reveal their true characters and threaten Nell. When she is going to bed at the inn, Codlin suddenly comes to her room and says in a somewhat mysterious way, "Codlin's the friend, not Short" (151). Soon after this, Short comes to her room to bid her good night. Their curious words and manners puzzle her so much that she feels "some uneasiness at the anxiety of these men" (151). Codlin behaves strangely again on the next day, and makes her "more watchful and suspicious" (152). Although she fears that they are plotting to separate her from her grandfather, we must also note that her fear of them is intensified by their mysterious behaviour, which arises from their desire for her. Later in the novel, when the single gentleman, who pursues Nell and her grandfather, finds these two men out, Codlin confides to Short, "Did I always say that that 'ere blessed child was the most interesting I ever

see? Did I always say I loved her, and doated on her? Pretty creetur” (289). His words suggest that he has taken a fancy to Nell. Codlin loves her in a way that recalls Quilp, which terrifies her.

This will be confirmed by her totally different reactions to the kind people whom she meets after Codlin and Short. The schoolmaster, whom Nell meets next, gives her food, drink, and a place to sleep, and thanks to his kindness, she can enjoy “a sound night’s rest” (192). Mrs Jarley, the proprietor of a travelling waxworks whom she encounters after the schoolmaster, also plays the role of her benefactor. She patronizes the girl, hires her and her grandfather as assistants, and allows her “to sleep in Mrs Jarley’s own travelling-carriage, as a signal mark of that lady’s favour and confidence” (213). It is important to note that she sleeps peacefully in the presence of these characters.

The sudden encounter with Quilp that occurs soon after this renders her once again sleepless:

[S]he could get none but broken sleep by fits and starts all night, for fear of Quilp, who throughout her uneasy dreams was somehow connected with the wax-work, or was wax-work himself, or was Mrs Jarley and wax-work too, or was himself, Mrs Jarley, wax-work, and a barrel organ all in one, and yet not exactly any of them either. (215)

The latter half of the passage represents her bewildered mind as well as her deep fear of Quilp. The image of Quilp haunts her as “a perpetual

night-mare” (224), and in her sleeping room where the wax-work figures are placed, she cannot help “imagining a resemblance, in some one or other of their death-like faces, to the dwarf” (224).

It is interesting to note that while she terribly suffers from the fear of Quilp, her grandfather is “sleeping soundly” (215) and does not even realize that his arch-enemy has been near him. Unlike Nell, once out of London, he never fears or remembers him until the end. Naturally, since he does not know that Quilp has been near him on this occasion, he cannot feel any fear at all. However, what I want to stress is the remarkable fact that while Dickens makes Nell see Quilp and become sleepless, he spares her obtuse grandfather the fear and describes him as “sleeping soundly.” The difference between them shows that only Nell’s sleep is designed to be affected by Quilp.

Viewed in this light, the use of the word *nightmare* cited above also becomes noteworthy. It is used only three times in the whole novel, all in reference to Quilp: on two occasions the nightmare of Quilp haunts Nell, and on one occasion it torments Mrs Quilp. In connection with the latter case, we have a memorable scene in which Quilp deprives his wife of sleep: in Chapter 4, smoking heavily, he orders her, “[S]it where you are, if you please, in case I want you” (39), and she is forced to stay awake all night by his side. The scene implies sexual intercourse. Gabriel Pearson calls the scene “the closest we get to downright copulation in early-Victorian fiction” (84). Under this interpretation, we can say that the deprivation of sleep by Quilp is closely related to his sexual desire, which confirms the view, proposed above, that Nell becomes sleepless

whenever she becomes the target of others' sexual desire.

Another frightful calamity that befalls later supports this reading. Nell's grandfather begins gambling again, and it makes her terribly agitated. When they have to spend a night in a small inn due to his gambling, she feels uncomfortable because the men in the place are "very ill-looking" (235). At this point, her fear is not so strong as to prevent her from falling asleep. However, when deeper sleep finally befalls her, someone sneaks into her room and rouses her:

At last, sleep gradually stole upon her – a broken, fitful sleep, troubled by dreams of falling from high towers, and waking with a start and in great terror. A deeper slumber followed this – and then – What! That figure in the room. (235)

It is not difficult for the reader to infer that the robber is her grandfather, but innocent Nell does not suspect him, and even fears that he might have been hurt by the robber. However, visiting his room, she sees him greedily "counting the money of which his hands had robbed her" (237). Due to the shock, she becomes sleepless, and even when she at last falls "asleep," she is "quickly roused by the girl who had shown her up to bed" (238) and cannot get enough sleep. On the other hand, when she sees her grandfather again, he is "[f]ast asleep" (238), and the contrast between them all the more emphasizes her restless sleeplessness and his obtuse selfishness.

We cannot help but notice the sexual implication in the scene.

The situation here involves a man sneaking into the room where a defenceless girl is sleeping alone. The narrator describes her intense fear as follows: “She had no voice to cry for help, no power to move, but lay still, watching [the figure]” (235). It is natural to infer that she fears sexual violence from the sneaking man. Many critics have viewed the scene from this perspective. In particular, Robert Newsom argues that this is “a scene that reads as much like a rape as a theft” (*Revisited* 89). Catherine Waters also speaks of “Dickens’s use of Nell’s limited point of view to register the invasion of her room as a threat of sexual violation while she remains paralyzed by fear” (127).

In order fully to understand the sexual connotation of the scene, we must also observe Dickens’s wording of Nell’s thought. When she realizes that the robber is none other than her grandfather, we read:

She had no fear of the dear *old grandfather*, in whose love for her this disease of the brain had been engendered; but *the man* she had seen that night, wrapt in the game of chance, lurking in her room, [. . .] seemed like another creature in his shape [. . .].
(237-38, italics mine)

While the adjective *old* is used in reference to the grandfather she loves, the sneaking man she fears is merely called “the man,” which suggests that the latter is not so old as the former. Remember her first encounter with Master Humphrey, another *old* man in Chapter 1. Asked by him why she was not afraid of him, she answers, “you are such a very old

gentleman" (5). Her fear of the man is closely related to his age. She has so far feared Quilp, Codlin, and Short, men who have not grown old and who see her lustfully, and her grandfather in the above scene as "the man" can be classified in this group.

The grandfather's first reaction to the gambling men, which fills Nell with "astonishment and alarm" (228), is also remarkable:

[H]is whole appearance had undergone a complete change. His face was flushed and eager, his eyes were strained, his teeth set, his breath came short and thick, and the hand he laid upon her arm trembled so vigorously that she shook beneath its grasp. (228)

This description of his reaction strongly suggests sexual arousal. Gareth Cordery goes so far as to say, "gambling is a symbolic substitute for sexual activity" (48) and that the ensuing theft of Nell's money is a "symbolic rape" (43). It may be said that she fears him because she instinctively senses male sexuality from his strange vigour.

Another interesting event in connection with Nell's sleep occurs when she and her grandfather are forced to leave "the sleeping town" (330). They resume their journey, and upon a bank by some water, "they slept side by side" (331). However, they are soon roused by the voices of men, one of whom is "[a] man of very uncouth and rough appearance" (331). In order to elude the pursuit of the gamblers, they decide to go with these men. On the boat, while her grandfather "lay sleeping safely

at her side" (334), she is ceaselessly asked by them to sing songs, and has to keep them in good humour all night by singing to them. These men thus prevent her from sleeping, and we again recognize the sexual implication in the scene. Urging her to sing a song, one of them says to her, "You've got a very pretty voice, a very soft eye" (335), and regards her not as a child but as a grown woman. In addition, note that only Nell is deprived of sleep and that her callous grandfather can sleep soundly among these noisy men. From these things, it may be concluded that they rob her of sleep by viewing her as a woman.

After leaving them, Nell seeks a place where she and her grandfather can sleep: "we should find some good old tree, stretching out his green arms as if he loved us, and nodding and rustling as if he would have us fall asleep" (339). It is important that Nell seeks a good old tree, a substance without sexual element, to get some sleep. Instead, they meet a kind labourer, who gives them a shelter by a factory furnace. Thanks to his kindness, she can sleep there, and especially after talking with him, she "slept as peacefully as if the room had been a palace chamber, and the bed, a bed of down" (344). She can attain peaceful sleep in this man's presence because he plays the role of her protector, regarding her as a little child. Unlike the men she has seen just before, this man calls her "poor child" (343) and does not see her as a grown woman. Here we may note that throughout the story, the narrator mainly uses three words, *Nell*, *the child* and *she* in reference to Nell. While *the child* does not contain sexual implications, *Nell*, being a woman's name, indicates her female gender, and its frequent usage

implies that she is viewed as a woman by people around her. On the boat, *Nell* is used twelve times and *the child* six. On the other hand, in the labourer's place, *the child* is used sixteen times and *Nell* six.

A similar thing is inferable from her re-encounter with the kind schoolmaster. Seeing her destitute state, the schoolmaster brings both her grandfather and her to the nearby inn, where she gains "a refreshing sleep" (354). Like the labourer, the schoolmaster regards her as a child, and this is one reason why she can sleep near him without any fear. In addition, we cannot fail to notice that the landlady, a sagacious *woman* who does not threaten her sexually, plays an important role in taking care of her and making her sleep.

That she is now happy and free from sexual fear is further attested by the description of her journey with the schoolmaster in the stage-waggon:

What a soothing, luxurious, drowsy way of travelling, to lie inside that slowly-moving mountain, listening to the tinkling of the horses' bells, the occasional smacking of the carter's whip, [. . .] all made pleasantly indistinct by the thick awning, which seemed made for lazy listening under, till one fell asleep! [. . .] What a delicious journey was that journey in the waggon. (357-58)

Notice that an image of good sleep is closely related to this travel. Although the passage refers not to Nell's journey but to the stage-wagon journey in general, we naturally infer that Nell also enjoys the travel in

the stage-waggon, and that she may probably fall asleep in it.

When they reach the farthest village and see the very old house where she is going to live, Nell is deeply inspired by its solemnity and mutters, "A quiet, happy place – a place to live and learn to die in!" (398). The scene causes the reader to sense that this is the final destination of her long journey. Before going to bed at night, she feels "an involuntary chill – a momentary feeling akin to fear – but vanishing directly, and leaving no alarm behind" (402). The sensation here is of course connected with death, and we feel that she now accepts her forthcoming death without fear. Her sleep that follows suggests the same thing:

Again, too, dreams of the little scholar; of the roof opening, and a column of bright faces, rising far away into the sky, as she had seen in some old scriptural picture once, and looking down on her, asleep. It was a sweet and happy dream. The quiet spot, outside, seemed to remain the same, saving that there was music in the air, and a sound of angels' wings. After a time the sisters came there, hand in hand, and stood among the graves. And then the dream grew dim, and faded. (402)

Dreams of the little scholar appear again, and in combination with other visions, fill her with happiness. Such things as the dead little scholar, an "old scriptural picture," and "angels' wings" evoke an image of heaven, and we understand that her death is near, but that she does not fear it. The reader will also notice here that what she sees in her dream are only

a child (the little scholar) and women (sisters), and that men do not appear at all. The fact again demonstrates the close relationship between her good sleep and her freedom from the fear of sexuality.

The description of Nell's sleep and sleeplessness culminates with her death. When Kit and others, who pursue Nell, arrive at her house, her grandfather appears and repeatedly states that she is sleeping: "She is asleep" (549); "She is still asleep" (550); "She is sleeping soundly" (550); "Sleep has left me, [. . .] It is all with her!" (551); "She has slept so very long. [. . .] It is a good and happy sleep – eh?" (551-52); and "she was still asleep, but that he thought she had moved. [. . .] He had known her do that, before now, though in the deepest sleep the while" (552). At this stage, we readers do not know that Nell is already dead, but since references to her sleep are so frequently made, we will naturally wonder whether she is really sleeping or not. Moreover, as the grandfather appears to lose confidence in his own words the more he talks, our suspicion deepens. It is soon discovered that she is already dead as we have suspected:

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death. (554)

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, her death is compared to sleep, thereby emphasizing the sentimentality of the scene. Dickens wants the

reader to feel that her death has not caused her much suffering, but instead, brought her a great relief. Soon after the above passage, it is noted that “the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues” are “[a]ll gone” (554-55). She is sleeping peacefully, happily, and eternally. In the end of her journey, she gains the sleep which she had sought since her good sleep in the old curiosity shop was lost. Significantly, there is a close resemblance between the description of her first sleep and that of her last sleep, or death. In the former, she sleeps peacefully and smilingly surrounded by the curiosities, while in the latter, she is in an eternal sleep in the old solemn room, exposed to the curious gazes of many characters. The illustrations by Samuel Williams and George Cattermole also emphasize the similarity between these two scenes, suggesting that she has returned to the starting point in the end of the novel.²⁹ To be more precise, what Nell has sought all along is nothing but her former quiet sleep in the curiosity shop. We must remember here that she has said to her grandfather in the beginning of the story, “I am very happy as I am, grandfather” (11). Her words mean for one thing that she is very happy in that situation, but they suggest at the same time that she wants to have such a life as well as sleep for ever.

In order to sleep that ideal sleep forever, Nell must die a virgin, as is revealed by another important passage about her grandfather, which occurs before her death. In the village, the grandfather at last realizes there has been a change in her. Perceiving the shadow of death on her

²⁹ The similarity between her first sleep and the last is suggested by several critics like Angus Wilson (143) and Susumu Onodera (52-53).

face, he notes, “She needs rest, [. . .] too pale – too pale. She is not like what she was” (420). He tries to convince himself, saying, “she grew stronger every day, and would be *a woman*, soon” (422, italics mine). His words indicate that she is still a child and has not grown up to be a woman. She dies as an innocent child, and by so doing, she completely flees from the sexual desire of men as well as from her own female sexuality.

In this manner, *The Old Curiosity Shop* can be read as a story of Nell’s journey in search of the ideal sleep. Her ideal sleep is the one she has had in former days in the old curiosity shop, and is closely connected with her remaining an innocent child. In her journey, when she is alone with her grandfather, or with the kind driver, or the schoolmaster, or Mrs Jarley, or the distinguished landlady, she can sleep soundly. However, peaceful sleep is easily banished by such male characters as Quilp, Codlin, her gambling-addicted grandfather, and the noisy men on the boat. Nell cannot sleep whenever a male character sees her as a sexual being, or regards her as a woman. Her quest for sleep can thus be interpreted as a flight from sexuality. Some critics, like Michael Steig, have already pointed out that Quilp threatens her sexually, and that she tries to flee from him (163-70). As I have argued, however, not only Quilp, but many male characters deprive her of sleep by subjecting her to their erotic gazes, and thus the source of her fear of sexuality is not restricted to Quilp. In order to keep her innocence, she cannot but fall into an eternal sleep.

2-3. Sleep and Mary Hogarth

In the previous section, I have demonstrated that Nell's journey is a quest for ideal sleep, which relates closely to her remaining innocent. From my arguments, two questions naturally arise: why does Dickens portray Little Nell as deeply afraid of sexuality; and why does he employ the image of sleep (or the sleeping figure) to represent innocence? In other words, over the commonplace association of sleep and innocence, what deeper link did Dickens discern between the two states that led him to employ sleep as a maker of innocence?

The clue for solving these problems lies in the model for Little Nell. Many critics have maintained that Dickens created Little Nell not purely from his imagination but from the image of his sister-in-law Mary Hogarth. Four years younger than Dickens's wife Catherine, Mary was a pretty, lively girl who moved into the Dickens's household in 1836, shortly after their marriage. She absolutely adored his great talent, and he was very fond of her.³⁰ On 6 May 1837, however, she suddenly took ill, and died the next day in Dickens's arms. Her death gave him so great a shock that he missed the deadlines of both *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* for the first time. For her tombstone, he inscribed the following lines:

Young Beautiful And Good

God In His Mercy

³⁰ For further details about her adoration of her brother-in-law, see *Letters* (1: 689-91).

Numbered Her With His Angels
 At The Early Age Of
 Seventeen. (*Letters* 1: 259)

Three years later, when he was writing the scenes of Nell's demise, he remembered the terrible death of Mary again, and wrote a famous letter to John Forster: "Old wounds bleed afresh when I only think of the way of doing it: [. . .] Dear Mary died yesterday, when I think of this sad story" (Forster 1: 139). Moreover, when he writes the death of Little Nell in the novel, he describes her as "so young, so beautiful, so good" (558-59), which strongly reminds us of the inscription on Mary's tombstone.

While these pieces of circumstantial evidence exist, some critics oppose the view that Mary is the model for Little Nell. For example, Michael Slater argues that Dickens merely tried to describe a very sad scene of Nell's death by reproducing the deep sorrow he felt when Mary died (*Women* 95-96). The editors of the Pilgrim Edition of Dickens's Letters also state that the surviving letters "provide no evidence that his thoughts, during the first 70 chapters, ever turned to his dead sister-in-law" (House xii).

There are counterarguments against these opinions. Particularly against the latter, Norman Page convincingly argues as follows:

[T]he letters that Dickens (or anyone else) writes do not necessarily offer a comprehensive picture of his varying moods

and emotions, and the memory of Mary may have been creatively present at some level of his conscious or unconscious being. (xvii)

I agree with Page, and to support his view, I wish to submit one more piece of evidence: sleep. As we have seen in Table 1 in the previous chapter, Dickens describes characters' sleep and sleeplessness most frequently in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and as my argument suggests, Nell is the character who has the closest connection with the image of sleep in all his novels. Crucially, Mary Hogarth also has a close connection with sleep. Dickens met her in his dream almost every day for about nine months after her death:

After she died, I dreamed of her every night for many months – I think for the better part of a year – sometimes as a spirit, sometimes as a living creature, never with any of the bitterness of my real sorrow, but always with a kind of quiet happiness, which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back in one shape or other. And so it did. (*Letters* 3: 483-84)

So he wrote in a letter to Mrs Hogarth, Mary's mother. As it clearly shows, at that time Dickens was very pleased to go to sleep, for he knew he would see Mary. For Dickens, she became as it were a woman in sleep. Moreover, he slipped her ring off her finger and put it on his throughout his life. He even kept her clothes and sometimes took them

out to look at them (Ackroyd 238-39). Like a drowning man clutching at straws, he was trying to secure a link with her, no matter how small it was. Under such a situation, finding that she appeared in his sleep every night, he naturally thought about the close link between Mary and sleep and became more interested in sleep in order to secure her in his sleep.

The important thing is that as soon as he told his wife of the secret reunion with Mary, she ceased to appear in his dream.³¹ The above letter to Mary's mother continues as follows:

I went down into Yorkshire, and finding it [the dream of Mary] still present to me, in a strange scene and a strange bed, I could not help mentioning the circumstance in a note I wrote home to Kate. From that moment I have never dreamed of her once, though she is so much in my thoughts at all times [. . .] that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is.
(*Letters* 3: 484)

Though he does not admit it, the reason why the dream of Mary disappeared is obvious: in the bottom of his heart Dickens felt guilty about his illicit love for his sister-in-law. Jack Lindsay aptly summarizes Dickens's psychology:

³¹ Strictly speaking, he dreamed of her again seven years later in 1844, when he was travelling in Italy. About the meaning of this dream, see Kligerman (783-99).

[W]hen she died, the whole machinery of taboo-fear was set into action. Her relationship with Charles became the utterly forbidden thing, and she was snatched away by omnipotent authority. At the same time, [. . .] he had to face the unconscious conviction of himself as her murderer. (135)

According to Lindsay, Dickens even felt that he was responsible for her sudden death, fearing that he caused it. Peter Ackroyd also claims that Mary's death seemed to Dickens "some form of retribution for his unannounced sexual desire" (239). Considering his unusual attitudes toward her death, these theories cannot be dismissed as extraordinary. As the words inscribed on her tombstone suggest, Mary was an embodiment of innocent beauty for Dickens. Indeed, in the letter to Thomas Beard on 17 May, 1837, Dickens warmly praised her: "I solemnly believe that so perfect a creature never breathed. I knew her inmost heart, and her real worth and value. She had not a fault" (*Letters* 1: 259). Under such a circumstance, it was natural for him to feel that his illicit love destroyed innocent Mary. By creating Nell based on Mary Hogarth and describing her as a perfectly innocent character, he tried to make amends for her death. Burdened with guilt, Dickens could not consummate his love for Mary in imagination by providing Nell a fiancé, who would represent Dickens himself. John Forster notes in regard to *The Old Curiosity Shop*, "I was responsible for its tragic ending" (1: 140). He had suggested to Dickens that he should have her die in the end of the

story, a suggestion with which Dickens complied immediately. However, it is unclear why Dickens so easily took Forster's suggestion. Certainly, Forster was Dickens's closest friend as well as an astute adviser, and many biographers of Dickens, especially Claire Tomalin, note the importance of Forster in the creation of Dickens the great novelist.³² At the same time, however, it is probable that Dickens had a covert compelling reason to describe Nell's death and that Forster's suggestion merely worked as a trigger for the decision. To attain his goal, he had to keep her at a distance from sexuality, describe her as a representative of innocence, and preserve her innocence for ever by giving her eternal sleep or death. We may conclude that Nell's absolute fear of sexuality represents the author's strong craving to assuage the guilt over his forbidden love.

In this chapter, I have explored sleep in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Nell enjoys a good sleep in the opening pages of the novel. Once her peace is destroyed by her grandfather's gambling and Quilp the erotically driven dwarf, however, she can no longer sleep soundly, and leaves her shop, seeking a place in which to attain a good sleep. On her journey, she sometimes gains such sleep, but whenever a male character who regards her not as a child but as a woman appears, she becomes sleepless.

³² After spending almost the whole of Chapter 6 (73-88) of her biography to illustrate the intimacy between Dickens and Forster, Tomalin calls Forster "an essential component of Dickens's working life" (89). Simon Callow also acknowledges the importance of Forster and states, "[N]o one had a greater influence on it [Dickens's work] [. . .] than John Forster (78).

Some critics have noted that her journey is a flight from Quilp's sexual power. My investigation, however, reveals that not only Quilp, but many male characters threaten her sexually. Finally, she reaches the old village, where no one regards her as a sexual being. There, she gains a peaceful eternal sleep, and dies.

The main reason why Nell fears sexuality so much is that Mary Hogarth, Dickens's sister-in-law, is her model. As the words inscribed on her tombstone show, Dickens regarded her as a representative of innocent beauty. At the same time, however, he harboured a secret illicit love for her and felt responsible for her sudden death. In order to make amends to her, he had to create a perfectly innocent character, who avoids sexuality throughout the novel, and Little Nell is created out of such psychological circumstances.

Some critics have pointed out the close connection between Dickens and Quilp.³³ Particularly, John Carey, regarding Quilp as "an embodiment of [Dickens's] violence who could also express his black and anarchic laughter" (24-25), argues that he is "Dickens himself, as seen through his mother-in-law's disapproving eyes" (27). Quilp in the end dies accidentally and violently. This character seems to reflect Dickens's illicit love and his desire to punish himself for harbouring such a feeling. However, we must remember that Quilp is not the only grotesque figure who threatens Nell sexually. Though his violence and lust stand out among those of other characters, he is merely one such

³³ In addition to Carey, the following critics have pointed out the close link between Dickens and Quilp: Lindsay (193), Marcus (154-55), and A. E. Dyson (26-31).

threatening characters, as my analysis has shown. One might even claim that the novel is filled with depictions of the sexual desire of many male characters, all representing that of the author.

Chapter 3.

Sleep and Sleep Deprivation in *Barnaby Rudge*

3-1. Dickens's First Historical Novel

One of the principal characteristics of Dickens's early works is the fact that the innocent protagonist's journey forms the centre of each novel. *The Pickwick Papers* chiefly concerns the adventures of innocent Pickwick among the cunning creatures like Jingle. *Oliver Twist* shows how Oliver the innocent boy survives through adversities and gains happiness at last, as its original sub-title "The Parish Boy's Progress" indicates. *Nicholas Nickleby* focuses on a chivalrous but naive boy Nicholas and his adventures. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Nell's journey of escape commands the reader's full attention. Dickens's fifth novel *Barnaby Rudge* is, however, totally different from these four novels. The central point of the novel is not the protagonist's journey but the Gordon Riots, and Dickens here aimed to write a historical novel.

Barnaby Rudge can be called Dickens's first long-projected novel. Originally, he intended to publish it with the publisher Macrone at the end of May 1836, when Mr Pickwick terminated his adventures. However, mainly due to a quarrel with the publishers, its publication was

delayed, and it was not until February 1841 that his new novel finally began to appear in the weekly magazine *Master Humphrey's Clock*.³⁴ It took five years to publish the novel. The noteworthy fact is that even though he had to wait so long, experiencing conflicts with several publishers, he persisted in his original plan for the tale of the Riots of the 1780s. He declares, in the preface to the first edition, that

No account of the Gordon Riots having been to my knowledge introduced into any Work of Fiction and the subject presenting very extraordinary and remarkable features, I was led to project this Tale. (xxxiii)

It is clear that he tried to make it the first historical novel based on the remarkable historical occurrence.³⁵ As John Bowen explains, many writers tried to write historical novels in the 1830s, observing the great success of Sir Walter Scott in that field (“Historical Novel” 244-45), and Dickens can be named among them.

One interesting characteristic of *Barnaby Rudge*, totally

³⁴ According to Paul Schlicke, there were as many as eleven separate agreements bearing directly or indirectly on the novel (30).

³⁵ Dickens was incorrect in stating that no other novel had dealt with the Gordon Riots, because, as Kathleen Tillotson notes, Thomas Gaspey's *The Mystery; or Forty Years Ago*, published in 1820, concerned them (77). It was not clear whether he knew the work or not, but as far as we understand from the preface, he believed the Riots to be ideal material for fiction, and his intention to write a historical novel is evident.

neglected by critics, is that it is replete with descriptions of sleep and sleeplessness. As Table 1 in the first chapter shows, sleep-related words occur 274 times in the novel, and the frequency of those words in the novel is second only to that of its predecessor *The Old Curiosity Shop*.³⁶ However, as mentioned above, *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* are completely different sorts of novels, and they differ regarding sleep as well. Contrary to *The Old Curiosity Shop*, whose numerous descriptions of sleep and sleeplessness are due to the death of Mary Hogarth, her death does not seem to affect the contents of *Barnaby Rudge*. *Barnaby Rudge* contains frequent references to one's sleep and sleeplessness for a different reason from that of its predecessor.

My aim in this chapter is to reveal that Dickens's determination to write a historical novel has much bearing on the numerous descriptions of sleep and sleeplessness in *Barnaby Rudge*. First, I would like to show how Dickens establishes a certain pattern of sleep and sleeplessness in the novel, and then to argue that by this pattern he tries to convey to the reader his view of history.

3-2. "Sleep, heaven's gift to all its creatures"

Barnaby Rudge opens with the description of the Maypole, "a house of public entertainment" (3) at the time of 1775, and it is accompanied by sleep-imagery:

³⁶ In *Barnaby Rudge*, sleep-related words occur every 943 words, while in *The Old Curiosity Shop* they appear every 710.

[T]he monotonous cooing, which never ceased to be raised by some among [the pigeons] all day long, suited [the Maypole] exactly, and seemed to lull it to rest. With its overhanging stories, drowsy little panes of glass, and front bulging out and projecting over the pathway, the old house looked as if it were nodding in its sleep. Indeed it needed no very great stretch of fancy to detect in it other resemblances to humanity. (4)

In addition to sprinkling the paragraph with words and phrases related to sleep, Dickens compares the Maypole inn to a sleeping old man. After this, Dickens introduces many characters' sleeping scenes, and a detailed examination of them will reveal two important things: first, the descriptions of characters' sleep occur one after another and leave the reader with a strong impression; and second, the descriptions of characters' sleep reflect their respective characteristics and therefore deeply attract the reader's attention.

I would like to begin with John Willet, the landlord of the Maypole who appears just after the above quotation. He is a particularly slow-witted old man who has to take "a pause of two or three minutes for consideration" (8) before answering a very simple question, and because of his extreme slowness, he even strikes the reader as being a perpetual sleeper. It is not a strained interpretation, and his slowness and sleep are directly connected in several scenes. For example, when he is slow in receiving guests, the narrator calls him "drowsy father" (152).

Moreover, he looks the same, either asleep or awake. As he has perfectly acquired “the art of smoking in his sleep” and “as his breathing [is] pretty much the same, awake or asleep” (251), even his close friends do not know whether he is awake or asleep. In conjunction with his usual slowness, this gives us the impression that he is always sleeping.³⁷

Willet’s slowness takes the form of “profound obstinacy” (5). He is so slow that he cannot catch up with the moving world, and therefore he is very old-fashioned and detests any form of change.³⁸ This is shown, in particular, through his bitter attitude toward his son Joe. He does not acknowledge his son’s growth, still regarding him as “a little boy” (8), even though Joe is actually “a broad-shouldered strapping young fellow of twenty” (8), and when he runs away from the Maypole, Willet persists in “describing his son as a ‘young boy’; and furthermore as being from eighteen inches to a couple of feet shorter than he really [is]” (252) in the advertisement.³⁹ Significantly, the description of Willet’s peculiar sleeping habit most clearly portrays his dislike of change and movement:

³⁷ From the medical viewpoint as well, his sleep and slowness may be connected. John Cosnett, for instance, suggests that Willet suffers from sleep-apnea syndrome. After explaining this sleep disorder as “the ultimate result of chronic lack of oxygen supply to the brain during sleep,” he states, “Mr Willet’s ‘slowness of apprehension’ could have been an early sign of such affliction” (“Sleep Disorders” 201).

³⁸ For Willet’s resistance to change, see Steven Marcus (187-90) and John P. McGowan (34).

³⁹ Steven Marcus ascribes Willet’s ill-treatment of his son to his fear that “his son’s manhood will someday bring about the loss of his own” (188).

He made a point of going to sleep at the coach's time. He despised gadding about; he looked upon coaches as things that ought to be indicted; as disturbers of the peace of mankind; as restless, bustling, busy, horn-blowing contrivances, quite beneath the dignity of men [. . .]. (198-99)

Here he tries to ignore the coach by making good use of sleep, a state of inaction. Since words such as *gadding*, *restless*, *bustling*, and *busy* show his negative view of the coach, he evidently detests it for its active movement. Considering that the coach constantly moves from one place to another, we may say that he regards it as a representative of movement and change, which is why he hates it.⁴⁰ His sleep, then, is related to his antipathy toward change and evokes stagnation.

After introducing John Willet, the first sleeper, in Chapter 1, in the next chapter Dickens acquaints us with another, Gabriel Varden, the locksmith of London. When he first appears, we are told that Varden is “a round, red-faced, sturdy yeoman with a double chin, and a voice husky with good living, good *sleeping*, good humour, and good health” (21, italics mine). Both the repetition of “good” and the somewhat peculiar use of the word *sleeping* here rouse our curiosity. An episode concerning his sleep is soon told. On his way back to London, due to “his dog sleep,” he “mixed up the turnpike man with his mother-in-law who had been dead

⁴⁰ Kuichi Saito also connects the scene with Willet's dislike of change, rightly deducing that his dislike of the coach has something to do with his neglect of Joe's growth (17).

twenty years” (28). When he reaches home late at night, hearing that his nagging wife is asleep, he states, “I’m very thankful. Sleep’s a blessing – no doubt about it” (35). He thinks that he is very lucky because his wife is asleep and cannot scold him for returning home late. Moreover, even when his sleep is interrupted by the “uncertain temper” (56) of his wife, he is soon able to “[doze] again – not the less pleasantly, perhaps, for his hearty temper” (61). These references to his sleep indicate his good character.

Barnaby Rudge, the protagonist of the novel, also impresses the reader with his strange sleep and dreams. Responding to the locksmith’s question, “I thought you had been asleep” (50), Barnaby notes:

“So I *have* been asleep,” he rejoined, with widely-opened eyes. “There have been great faces coming and going – close to my face, and then a mile away – low places to creep through, whether I would or no – high churches to fall down from – strange creatures crowded up together neck and heels, to sit upon the bed – that’s sleep, eh?” [. . .].

“I dreamed just now that something – it was in the shape of a man – followed me – came softly after me – wouldn’t let me be – but was always hiding and crouching, like a cat in dark corners, waiting till I should pass; when it crept out and came softly after me.” (50-51)

The descriptions of his sleep and dreams are extraordinary, and in combination with the repeated references to characters' sleep so far, they direct the reader's attention to sleep imagery in the novel. Since Barnaby is an idiot, these lines emphasize his idiocy, but when we consider the reason why he is an idiot by nature, we sense something different. He is born an idiot because of his father's terrible crime. Barnaby Rudge, senior, murdered his master Ruben Haredale twenty-two years ago, and Barnaby was born on that very night, with a blood-like smear on his wrist. Although the existence of the smear sounds artificial, the narrative connection between the father's crime and his son's idiocy is obvious, and we may say that his haunted sleep and dreams reflect his father's sin.

The sleep of Hugh, the ostler of the Maypole, is more frequently described in the novel than that of any other character. When he appears for the first time in Chapter 10, John Willet explains Hugh's laziness as follows: "[H]e sleeps so desperate hard [. . .] if you were to fire off cannonballs into his ears, it wouldn't wake him" (79). In the next chapter, his sleep is portrayed in detail:

The light that fell upon this slumbering form, showed it in all its muscular and handsome proportions. It was that of a young man, of a hale athletic figure, and a giant's strength, whose sunburnt face and swarthy throat, overgrown with jet black hair, might have served a painter for a model. Loosely attired, [. . .] he had fallen asleep in a posture as careless as his dress. The

negligence and disorder of the whole man, with something fierce and sullen in his features, gave him a picturesque appearance, that attracted the regards even of the Maypole customers who knew him well [. . .]. (88-89)

The scene is memorable. In addition, the illustration of sleeping Hugh by Hablot Knight Browne excites our curiosity. His sleeping figure reveals his dangerous character, and we cannot help feeling some anxiety from the scene. Eiichi Hara argues that it is not difficult to sense his diabolical vitality from his sleeping figure (143). Indeed, Phil Parkes, one of the regular customers of the Maypole, observes that “Hugh looked more like a poaching rascal to-night than ever he had seen him yet” (89). Dolly Varden later dreads that “his ferocious nature, once roused, would stop at nothing” (164). Juliet McMaster is surely right when she states that many people are afraid of his “being roused” (6-7) to action. Our fear for the violent power latent in him will be actualized when the Gordon Riots rouse him.

Thus, before the Riots break out, Dickens particularizes several characters’ sleep, the descriptions of which mirror their own characteristics. However, except for the description of Gabriel Varden’s good sleep, those of other characters’ sleep represent their somewhat disquieting features, such as hatred for change and latent violent energy. Besides, even though Varden generally enjoys good sleep, we must remember that his sleep is interrupted by his wife. His house is controlled by her, which Dickens appears to deem a problem. Angus

Wilson notes, “Female domination of the home is clearly in Dickens’s view one sign of general social dissolution” (148). By describing sleepers with problems, Dickens, I submit, suggests that their society has problems, which result in the terrible Gordon Riots.

3-3. “Sleep had scarcely been thought of all night”

As we have seen, in the first half of the novel, Dickens carefully describes many characters’ sleep so as to mirror their characteristics. However, the outbreak of the Riots works as a turning point, and the descriptions of sleep change entirely after that as Dickens begins to emphasize people’s sleeplessness.

The sleep of Gabriel Varden, the good sleeper, is most greatly affected by the rioters. After the first disturbances break out, Varden waits up in the dead of night for the return of his former apprentice Simon Tappertit, as he has heard that Tappertit has taken part in them. He waits up till “the clock had struck two” (389). The descriptions of Mrs Varden and her companion Miggs are also significant. As these women wait for Tappertit with Varden, Mrs Varden is “too sleepy to speak” (388). Miggs’s sleepiness is shown through the descriptions of such symptoms as “constant rubbing and tweaking of her nose” and “a perpetual change of position” (388).⁴¹ Their sleepiness underscores the

⁴¹ Here as well, Dickens shows his great insight into man’s sleep. Examining Miggs’s behaviours from the medical viewpoint, John Cosnett maintains that they

fact that Tappertit's folly has deprived them of sleep.

When Tappertit returns, Varden tries in vain to persuade him to flee London, and tells Mrs Varden, who has begged his forgiveness for her former deeds:

“Get you to bed, Martha. I shall take down the shutters and go to work.”

“So early!” said his wife.

“Ay,” replied the locksmith cheerily, “so early. Come when they may, they shall not find us skulking and hiding as if we feared to take our portion of the light of day, and left it all to them. So pleasant dreams to you, my dear, and cheerful sleep!”

(395)

That he prays for the good sleep of his wife in such an extreme circumstance indicates his goodness. However, the most important thing here is that while he urges his wife to go to bed, he himself tries to open the shop without having any sleep at all. As his wife cries out, “So early!”, it is very early and is not yet time to go to work. Considering that he has waited up for Tappertit's return, it is evident that he does not sleep all night, which suggests that the Riots thoroughly deprive him of his sleep. Although before the Riots he can sleep cheerfully even after he quarrels with his wife, which indicates that he is a very good sleeper

are “signs and symptoms of sleep onset that are now well recognized” (“Observer” 264).

with a good heart, once the Riots begin, his sleep ceases to be described.

John Willet is also deprived of his sleep. As we have seen, his sleep represents his aversion to change and movement and gives us a sluggish impression. The rioters come to wake him up and destroy his calm but stagnant world. When the customers of the Maypole decide to go to London to see the state of affairs, Willet stoutly opposes them and remains in the Maypole, even stating that no riot is occurring. Considering that he naturally dislikes change or movement, we may say that the scene also reflects his hostility to change. It is evident that his nature remains unchanged.

Such changelessness does not last long, however. Soon after his friends depart the Maypole, Willet laughs inwardly at their folly, and falls into a long sleep:

[H]e sat himself comfortably with his back to the house, put his legs upon the bench, then his apron over his face, and fell sound asleep.

How long he slept, matters not; but it was for no brief space, for when he awoke, the rich light had faded, the sombre hues of night were falling fast upon the landscape, and a few bright stars were already twinkling over-head. (413)

Just as he tries to ignore the coach by sleeping, so he both literally and figuratively closes his eyes to his friends. Notice that something sinister can be sensed in the latter half of the passage. Although he sleeps as if

to ignore his friends' betrayal, the first thing he realizes after waking up is the complete *change* of scene from the evening filled with "the rich light" to "the sombre" night. The passage suggests that his sleep can no longer enable him to turn a blind eye to change. In addition, the combination of such words as *faded*, *sombre*, and *falling* sounds somewhat ominous, and we might even feel that Willet's empire is falling in.

Just after the above passage, the rioters come to the Maypole. Willet is thrown into a terrible panic for the first time: he "in consternation uttered but one word, and called that up the stairs in a stentorian voice, six distinct times" (413). He is at last roused to the reality that the terrible riot is really happening, that his Maypole is being attacked, and that the world has changed. He cannot escape into the world of sleep this time, and must witness the destruction of his own Maypole.

Sleep deprivation afflicts other people in the novel as well. Dickens first portrays the sufferings of ordinary citizens through the description of William Langdale, a good old vintner who helps Mr Haredale. At first, we are told that he has "no thoughts of going to bed himself, for he had received several threatening warnings from the rioters" (508). At this point, he can get a light sleep, for he "[dozes] a little now and then" (508). When the situation becomes more serious, however, we see that his sleeplessness worsens, and he becomes "unable even to doze" (511). As in the case of Sikes's sleep and sleeplessness in *Oliver Twist*, the fact that he has once dozed a little all the more emphasizes his later complete sleeplessness.

Langdale's sleeplessness foreshadows that of other ordinary citizens, and when the Gordon Riots reach their culmination, the city is described as follows:

Sleep had scarcely been thought of all night. The general alarm was so apparent in the faces of the inhabitants, and its expression was so aggravated by want of rest (few persons, with any property to lose, having dared to go to bed since Monday), that a stranger coming into the streets would have supposed some mortal pest or plague to have been raging. (511)

Pay particular attention to the comparison of the sleepless city to the streets contaminated with the mortal pest or plague. The passage pointedly illustrates the atrocious nature of the rioters' deeds through the danger of sleep deprivation. The narrator notes, "night, in its rest and quiet, and softened light, never could look upon the earth again" (525), further suggesting the deprivation of sleep caused by the rioters.

It is both interesting and important that the rioters who deprive others of sleep, also lose their own sleep. Hugh and Barnaby, the leaders of the rioters, are good examples. On the first day of the Riots, we are told that they are "fast asleep upon the benches," but "Gashford's entrance rouse[s] them" (383), and they are urged to cause serious disturbances. As the riots become more violent, we are told that they "[seek] the repose they so much needed in the shelter of their old den" (460) but in vain, and since then the narrator ceases to describe their

sleep.

Gashford's words also clarify the connection between sleeplessness and the Riots. Seeing that Hugh and Barnaby have been asleep, he notes, "to sit still and wear it [the blue ribbon, a symbol of the Gordon supporters], or fall asleep and wear it, or run away and wear it, is a mockery" (383). Obviously, he tries to make sarcastic remarks about their inactiveness, but at the same time, if we take his words literally, we may perceive that sleep and the riots are incompatible. Curiously, Gashford's exhortation appears in Chapter 50, and the scene in which the Vardens wait for Tappertit occurs in the very next chapter, Chapter 51. To put it plainly, soon after he makes the above remark, its aptness is verified by the sleeplessness of Varden.

The most interesting thing is that Gashford, who incites the rioters to violent actions, also comes to be sleepless because of the Riots. As Hugh promises him to burn Mr Haredale's house, Gashford becomes increasingly anxious to see it. At night, after making "many futile efforts to [. . .] go to sleep" (409), he vainly tries to see the fire from the top of his house, and his sleep is never described. The scene hints that the Riots not only deprive ordinary citizens of sleep, but also rob the rioters of it. As I have already quoted, during the climax of the Riots Dickens writes, "night, in its rest and quiet, and softened light, never could look upon the earth again" (525). From the descriptions of the sleepless city and characters, we might be tempted to say that Dickens demonstrates how the Riots rob the world of sleep.

Some might deem it a matter of course that riotous activities

deprive people of good sleep. However, the comparison between *Barnaby Rudge* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, another historical novel by Dickens, will show that it is not so. In *A Tale of Two Cities* as well, Dickens describes characters' sleep before the Revolution. For example, in Book 1 Chapter 3, Jarvis Lorry, on the coach, dreams of a man who has been buried for eighteen years (14-16).⁴² In Chapters 4 and 5, we are told that Sydney Carton sleeps in an impressive manner until ten o'clock in the morning (85-87). Unlike *Barnaby Rudge*, however, when the Revolution starts, sleep is not completely banished from the city, and we are even told in Book 3 Chapter 1 that "Happily, however, there was sleep in Beauvais that night" (252). It is only in *Barnaby Rudge* that Dickens tries to make explicit the link between sleep deprivation and the riotous activities.

3-4. "Sleep was doubly welcomed"

As the outbreak of the Gordon Riots marks the turning point of the descriptions of sleep in the novel, so does their termination, and in this section, I would like to reveal that Dickens describes how people regain sleep when the Riots are put down.

Let us begin with a very notable example of the rioters' sleep. Wounded in a battle, Hugh is led by Barnaby to a quiet place, where they take a rest. There, the descriptions of their sleep occur again after a

⁴² All references to *A Tale of Two Cities* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1994).

long interval: Barnaby falls “asleep,” and Hugh and Rudge “[sleep] in the hut” (528). Hugh’s sleep is particularly emphasized, and in reference to his condition, the narrator even states, “nothing would rouse Hugh” (528). However, no sooner do they wake up from sleep than the soldiers arrest them because Dennis has betrayed their whereabouts. On his way to the prison, Hugh feels the end of the Riots as well as that of his own life:

For himself, he buoyed up his courage as he rode along, with the assurance that the mob would force his jail wherever it might be, and set him at liberty. But when they got into London, and more especially into Fleet Market, lately the stronghold of the rioters where the military were rooting out the last remnant of the crowd, he saw that this hope was gone, and felt that he was riding to his death. (535-36)

Just as he foresees, the rioters are completely suppressed soon after this. The novel thus shows the connection between the end of the Riots and sleep restoration.

The same connection can be sensed more clearly from the descriptions of sleeping citizens. When the disturbances are entirely quelled, we read:

On that warm, balmy night in June, there were glad faces and light hearts in all quarters of the town, and sleep, banished by the late horrors, was doubly welcomed. On that night, families

made merry in their houses, and greeted each other on the common danger they had escaped; and those who had been denounced, ventured into the streets; and those who had been plundered, got good shelter. (565)

Dickens shows that peace and order are restored to the affrighted city, using such expressions as “glad faces,” “light hearts” and “made merry.” The peaceful passage distinctly contrasts with the earlier passage during the Riots in which the horror-stricken city is compared to an infected area. Dickens here points out that recovering sleep is closely connected with regaining peace and happiness. Later, we are again told that “the city slumbered,” and that “[i]n the brief interval of darkness and repose which feverish towns enjoy, all busy sounds were hushed” (588). People can thus enjoy both good night’s rest and quietude after the Riots. Recall also that during the Riots people fear that “night, in its rest and quiet” (525) would never come back. The sharp contrast between these two scenes underscores that people now have their sleep back.

Dickens further foregrounds the resurrection of sleep, describing how the main characters regain it. When the disturbances are thoroughly quelled and everything turns out well for him, Gabriel Varden contentedly falls asleep, as follows:

That afternoon, when he had slept off his fatigue; had shaved, and washed, and dressed, and freshened himself from top to toe; when he had dined, comforted himself with a pipe, an extra Toby,

a nap in the great arm-chair, and a quiet chat with Mrs Varden on everything that had happened, was happening, or about to happen, [. . .] the locksmith sat himself down at the tea-table in the little back-parlour: the rosiest, cosiest merriest, heartiest, best-contented old buck, in Great Britain or out of it. (612-13)

That Varden has “slept off his fatigue” caused by the Riots, and has become very happy upon waking, demonstrates that he has had a very good sleep. In reference to Varden’s contentment, Dickens uses five superlative adjectives, which emphasize not only his happiness but also the good quality of his sleep.

On the other hand, John Willet, whose sleep had represented his slowness and hatred for change, regains sleep, or more precisely his sleep-like state. The destruction of the Maypole shocks him so greatly that he has a mental breakdown:

John Willet [. . .] continued to sit staring about him; awake as to his eyes, certainly, but with all his powers of reason and reflection in a sound and dreamless sleep. [. . .] So far as he was personally concerned, old Time lay snoring, and the world stood still. (418-19)

It is noteworthy that Dickens uses many words related to sleep to describe Willet’s pathetic condition: due to the shock, his mind is in a sleeping state, though he is not really asleep. Some critics have noted

this condition. Fred Kaplan regards his state as “the temporary loss of self for self-protection” (146). Kuichi Saito also suggests that Willet instinctively tries to soften the great shock by utilizing sleep here (17). Certainly, though bound in the chair, he “felt no more indignation or discomfort in his bonds than if they had been robes of honour” (419). Besides, he does not evince any irresistible grief or anguish. Apparently, as these critics note, thanks to such a sleeping mind, he can avoid being terribly shocked by the destruction of his inn, or by the great change. It may seem natural to think that Willet’s sleep here also represents his antipathy toward change and is similar to the one he had before the Riots.

The case here is totally different, however. Before the Riots, as the example of his sleep during the coach’s time illustrates, he deliberately falls asleep to disregard change and can of course wake up when the coaches are gone. After the destruction of the Maypole, however, he is always caught in his sleep-like state. When he is further shocked by Joe’s marriage, his condition worsens: he “fell into a lethargy of wonder, and could no more rouse himself than an enchanted sleeper in the first year of his fairy lease, a century long” (603). The phrase “could no more rouse himself” indicates that though he wants to wake from that sleeping state, he cannot. This condition continues, and we read at the end of the novel that “He never recovered from the surprise the Rioters had given him” (633). The character of Willet’s sleep has undergone a considerable change.

The leaders of the rioters also regain their sleep, as mentioned earlier. Among them, Hugh’s sleep is the most remarkable. When he

appears in the prison, he is sleeping again. Dickens uses various kinds of sleep-related phrases, such as “[he] fell fast asleep,” “the slumbering figure” (569) and “he slept so long and so soundly” (570), seven times in a scene to indicate his deep sleep. Dennis even thinks that “he might sleep on until the turnkey visited them” (570). On a superficial level, he is merely sleeping profoundly, but so many references to one’s sleep in one scene evoke the scene in *The Old Curiosity Shop* where the grandfather repeatedly notes, “Nell is asleep” while she is actually dead, and we may feel that Hugh is already dead. Though he later wakes up and dispels our suspicion, his following statement suggests that the character of his sleep has changed:

“[I]t will soon be all over with you and me; and I’d as soon die as live, or live as die. Why should I trouble myself to have revenge on you? To eat, and drink, and go to sleep, as long as I stay here, is all I care for.” (571)

Hugh utters these words to Dennis when the frightened hangman beseeches him not to do violence to him, for he accepts his fate with resignation. He refers to his frequent sleep in his cell as one of the things for which he now cares. Unlike the pattern of his sleep before the Riots, however, his sleeping figure evokes nothing but passivity. Though he regains sleep after the Riots, the character of his sleep is not the same as before, and the above prison scene reveals that the spark of his life is burning out.

Barnaby's sleep is also worthy of note. Like Hugh, he sleeps in prison after he parts with his mother: "he sang and crooned himself asleep" (562), and on the night before the day of his execution, "he turned away himself, like one who walked in his sleep; and, without any sense of fear or sorrow, lay down on his pallet" (588). Though he has been sentenced to death, he falls asleep without any fear or sorrow, and his attitude reminds us of his being an idiot. However, when he is rescued by Varden and becomes free, his sleep changes. We are told that he "fall[s] into a deep sleep" (611) beside his mother and sleeps away the fatigue of the long-time imprisonment. The careful reader must realize here that it is the first time that the adjective *deep*, which indicates a good quality of sleep, describes Barnaby's sleep. So far, most instances of his sleep have been related to his father's sin, and cannot be called good sleep but "phantom-haunted dreams" (61). The usage of the adjective *deep* here at least suggests that the quality of his sleep changes for the better, and considering that his father paid for his sin with his own life, perhaps Barnaby at last breaks the spell of his father and, like Gabriel Varden, regains far better sleep.

3-5. People Will Be *Roused* Again

In this chapter, I have examined Dickens's use of sleep in *Barnaby Rudge* and revealed that an interesting pattern can be found in the descriptions of characters' sleep: those characters who sleep in curious manners before the Riots are deprived of their sleep during them, and

finally regain it after them. In particular, by first describing characters' sleep vividly and then banishing it, Dickens underscores the sleeplessness caused by the Riots, and we might even say that his focus in the novel was on sleep deprivation rather than on sleep. John Cosnett hypothesizes that the reason why Dickens came to be interested in sleep was his own sleeplessness ("Sleep Disorders" 200).⁴³ Although this is a disputable interpretation, it points to the strong possibility that Dickens was interested not only in sleep and dreams, but also in sleeplessness and sleep deprivation. Indeed, as we have seen so far, while Dickens invented many such characters as Joe the fat boy and Oliver Twist, who sleep frequently in their novels, he also created many characters who lose sleep in curious manners, like Sikes and Little Nell. The existence of these examples at least supports the theory that Dickens's interest in sleeplessness and sleep deprivation was also great.

What, then, is the meaning of emphasizing the connection between the Riots and sleep deprivation in this historical novel? This question is closely related to Dickens's definition of sleep deprivation.

⁴³ Cosnett bases his theory on Dickens's famous essay "Night Walks" in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, where he introduces his experience: "a temporary inability to sleep [. . .] caused me to walk about the streets all night, for a series of several nights" (182). It is true that Dickens sometimes suffered from sleeplessness in the latter half of his life, as this essay indicates. However, it is not clear when Dickens's "periodic insomnia" ("Sleep Disorders" 200) began, and Cosnett does not (or cannot) specify the date. Although his interest in sleeplessness was without doubt considerable, the question of whether his own sleeplessness fostered his interest in sleep and its disorders needs further study.

To understand its significance, we must first ask why we sleep. This is an open question even in the twenty-first century. In order to solve the mystery of sleep, scientists have conversely tried to reveal what will happen if we are deprived of sleep. In the 1980s, a research group led by Allan Rechtschaffen proved that sleep deprivation causes death in living beings, on the basis of the experiments on rats (182-84). Their empirical research proved the importance of sleep in sustaining our lives as well as the terrible risk of sleep deprivation, and seen from this perspective, sleep deprivation can reasonably be called a violence that can bring death to us.

It is true that scientists obtained actual proof for the danger of sleep deprivation in the 1980s, or about one hundred years after Dickens died, but in the nineteenth century scientists had already argued that sleep was important in supporting our lives. For example, John Addington Symonds, one of the leading psychologists in the nineteenth century, demonstrated the importance of sleep, calling it a “merciful state” (44). Regarding sleep as “*elixir vitae*,” Robert Macnish maintained that obtaining sleep was vital for our lives (46). As previously mentioned, Dickens possessed many medical books on sleeping and dreaming, including Macnish’s two books, and was familiar with the nineteenth century view of sleep. In addition, in Dickens’s works, most characters who experience sleep deprivation die in the end. Sleep deprivation, in Dickens’s view, is a terrible violence, and the fact that he associates the Gordon Riots with it in the novel represents his adverse opinion of them.

At first sight, his stance on the Gordon Riots seems to be

somewhat inconsistent. For example, on the one hand, he severely attacks the Riots, calling these historical occurrences “those shameful tumults” (xxxiii) in the preface and the rioters “the very scum and refuse of London” (375) in Chapter 49. On the other hand, he states rather excitedly in a letter to John Forster, which was written when he was writing the fall of the Newgate, “I have just burnt into Newgate, and am going in the next number to tear the prisoners out by the hair of their heads” (*Letters 2: 377*), and “I have let all the prisoners out of Newgate, burnt down Lord Mansfield’s, and played the very devil” (*Letters 2: 385*). Seemingly, he enjoyed writing such destructive scenes. However, considering his negative view of sleep deprivation and the fact that he links the Riots with it in the novel, it is clear that he was fundamentally averse to violent revolution.

We can find further roles of sleep deprivation in *Barnaby Rudge* through the examination of Dickens’s motive for writing it. As noted previously, the principal driving force was Dickens’s desire to write a historical novel. In the preface to *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens himself declares his intention to write about the historical incident. Furthermore, Kathleen Tillotson demonstrates how accurate his descriptions of historical events are (85), which also indicates his aim in writing the novel. Nevertheless, Dickens was not merely writing about the past. As many critics have rightly pointed out, Dickens’s account of the Gordon Riots in the novel draws implicit parallels between historical and contemporary events, and its condemnation of mob action can be taken as a warning against physical force Chartism. Edmund Wilson

deduces Dickens's psychology when he chose the Gordon Riots as the subject of the novel:

[W]hat is obviously in Dickens's mind is the Chartist agitation for universal suffrage and working-class representation in Parliament which, as a result of the industrial depression of those years, came to a crisis in 1840. (18)

Similarly, Steven Marcus argues that Dickens was "deliberately suggesting a likeness between the rabble of the Gordon riots and the members of the Chartist agitation in the late 1830s" (172). Peter Ackroyd also points out the similarities between the 1780s and the late 1830s (326), and Andrew Sanders even states that "the prospect of history repeating itself" greatly shocked Dickens at that time (72). It is possible to surmise, as Aya Yatsugi does, that Dickens strongly felt the circular nature of history and tried to express his fear about the forthcoming terrible riots (3-14).

It is to fulfill this aim that Dickens adroitly utilizes descriptions of sleep and sleep deprivation in the novel. Notice that the descriptions of sleep deprivation in *Barnaby Rudge* are different from those in other early novels in two respects. First, various sorts of people are deprived of their sleep at once. As demonstrated so far, in *Barnaby Rudge*, many people are deprived of sleep, while in other early novels, characters who

are deprived of their sleep are limited; we can name only Sikes, Ralph,⁴⁴ and Little Nell, and even when they are suffering from sleeplessness, other characters are not, as when Nell's grandfather often sleeps peacefully while she is sleepless. On the other hand, in *Barnaby Rudge*, many characters as well as ordinary citizens lose their sleep during the Riots, and since a wide variety of people are deprived of sleep, sleep appears to be banished from the world.

The other and perhaps more interesting point is that Dickens in this novel tries to associate the descriptions of sleep deprivation with the meaning of arousal, or awakening. For example, Gashford "rouse[s]" (383) the rioters from sleep and drives them to perform subversive activities without sleep; due to the excitement of the riots, Gashford is roused from bed to see the rioters' work from the top of his house; John Willet "[awakes]" (413) to find that the rioters are going to attack the Maypole; and Hugh, who has been feared by Dolly that he would do a terrible thing "once roused" (164), is actually roused and leads the rioters,

⁴⁴ I have already demonstrated the sleeplessness of Sikes and that of Little Nell in the previous two chapters, so let me briefly illustrate that of Ralph Nickleby here. In Chapter 59 of *Nicholas Nickleby*, sensing that something is wrong with him, he says to himself, "Night after night comes and goes, and I have no rest [. . .] I must have rest. One night's unbroken rest, and I should be a man again" (703). He cannot take any rest at all, however, and after hearing that Smike, whom he has hunted down to death, is his own son, he commits suicide. Furthermore, before he dies, he meets Squeers, and Dickens writes how contentedly this rascal sleeps in front of sleepless Ralph. From the scene, we infer that Dickens tries to impress the reader with Ralph's sleepless condition, using the contrast between the sleepless villain and the sleeping rascal.

but finally falls into a sleep from which “nothing would rouse [him]” (528).⁴⁵

The word *rouse* or *being roused* is often used in a metaphorical sense in Dickens’s novels. Among many examples, perhaps the most famous one occurs in the humorous statement of Mr Bumble in *Oliver Twist*: “I am a very determined officer, with very uncommon strength, if I’m once *roused*. I only want a little *rousing*; that’s all” (272, italics mine). As this example shows, the word *rouse* is connotative of violence, to which it is closely related in its historical background. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, *rouse* can be defined as follows: “To cause to start up from slumber or repose; to awaken from sleep, meditation, etc.” However, that is the fourth definition of the word, which was originally “a technical term in hawking and hunting,” meaning, “to cause (game) to rise or issue from cover or lair.” In a word, from the viewpoint of its origin, the word *rouse* connotes something violent, and it is very apt for Dickens to use it in referring to sleep deprivation as a terrible violence.

These two peculiar characteristics of sleep deprivation in *Barnaby Rudge* play an important role in highlighting the repetitive nature of history. Dickens first describes how main characters exhibit peculiar sleep before the Riots. Then, once the Riots occur, he emphasizes how their sleep is destroyed, and after the Riots, he portrays

⁴⁵ It is true that the word *rouse* is often used in *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* as well, but Dickens repeatedly utilizes it in important moments of *Barnaby Rudge* in the context of sleep-deprivation.

how they regain sleep. In addition, he associates the descriptions of sleep deprivation with rousing. Since it is not a single character but many people that gain sleep or lose sleep, we feel as if the whole society is either in a sleeping or waking state. From this viewpoint, we can divide the novel into three parts; the first sleep phase, the sleepless phase, and the second sleep phase. Importantly, these phases change with time. In order to write a historical novel, Dickens often specifies a lapse of time at important points in the story. For example, in the opening paragraph, the narrator expressly states, “In the year 1775” (3), and Solomon Daisy particularizes the date of the murder, “The crime was committed this day two-and-twenty years – on the nineteenth of March, one thousand seven hundred and fifty-three” (17); in Chapter 4, the narrator talks about the change of Clerkenwell, emphasizing the phrase, “only six-and-sixty years ago” (32); in the middle of the novel, the narrator says, “One wintry evening, early in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty” (249); in Chapter 47, or just before the first outbreak occurs, the narrator notes, “at seven in the forenoon of Friday the second of June, one thousand seven hundred and eighty” (364); and when the Riots are completely quelled, we are told that “A month has elapsed” (573). As we read on, we are thus impressed with the lapse of time, and since the novel consists of a sleep-phase and a sleepless-phase, we feel that these two phases alternately occur as time passes. This pattern might remind us of man’s sleep-wake cycle. Perhaps, by adopting a motif of sleep-wake cycle to the framework of the novel, Dickens is trying to emphasize the repetitive nature of history. That the novel both begins and ends with

the phases of sleep highlights the repetition.⁴⁶

Viewing the novel in this light, the reader will find thought-provoking the fact that the novel ends with the second sleep-phase. Just as we invariably wake up from sleep every day, so will people inevitably be roused again, and terrible riots will certainly occur in the future. We may say that to Dickens's eyes, the terrible riots were occurring in the form of Chartism. Through the skillful use of the descriptions of sleep and those of sleep deprivation, Dickens not only criticizes the terrible riots, but also tries to describe the circular nature of history.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that Dickens possessed a very pessimistic view of history. Note that the descriptions of sleep after the Riots indicate a change for the better. Gabriel Varden evidently gains a far better sleep than before. Barnaby Rudge has a *deep* sleep for the first time, which suggests that he at length breaks the curse of his father. Hugh's sleep implies his resigned state and we no longer feel any danger from him. Though John Willet's sleep-like state evokes our pity, it is undeniable that it enables his long-neglected son Joe to open the new Maypole and become independent. Dickens believed that the world was gradually changing for the better, even though it appeared to be the same

⁴⁶ Critics refer to the repetition of things described in the novel. Regarding the ending of the novel, James R. Kincaid states that "when Joe reopens the Maypole Inn, it is just as if he were reopening the novel" (131). John Bowen maintains that "in this novel, history is a repetitive and strangely doubled business. Instead of safely progressing, here things repeat and repeat" ("introduction" xvi).

as before.

Dickens often utilized the descriptions of sleep and sleeplessness, or sleep deprivation in his novels. Unlike his earlier works, Dickens here describes both sleep and sleeplessness of many characters at once, and by making good use of them, he tries not merely to emphasize the atrocity of the Riots, but also to convey to the reader his view of history. Dividing Dickens's career into six parts, Angus Wilson argues that Dickens began his fourth stage with writing *Barnaby Rudge* (145). We might be tempted to say that the brilliant conception about sleep and sleeplessness as it were roused him into a new stage as a novelist.

Chapter 4.

Dreams in *Little Dorrit*

4-1. Sleep and Dreams in Later Novels

I have shown in the previous chapters that Dickens used sleep and dreams to great effect in his early novels. We can find interesting scenes related to these phenomena in the novels he wrote in the middle of his career as well, in particular, some intriguing descriptions of characters' dreams. I here would like to examine three such examples and demonstrate how they differ from those in his earlier works.

Among them, perhaps the most noteworthy instance is Montague Tigg's strange dream in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In the middle of the novel, when Tigg and Jonas Chuzzlewit are travelling together, they occupy adjoining rooms in a hotel, and Tigg has a fearful dream:

He dreamed that a dreadful secret was connected with [the door][. . .]. Incoherently entwined with this dream was another, which represented it as the hiding-place of an enemy, a shadow, a phantom; and made it the business of his life to keep the terrible creature closed up, and prevent it from forcing its way in upon him.

With this view Nadgett, and he, and a strange man with a bloody smear upon his head [. . .] worked with iron plates and nails to make the door secure; but though they worked never so hard, it was all in vain, for the nails broke, or changed to soft twigs, or what was worse, to worms, between their fingers; the wood of the door splintered and crumbled, so that even nails would not remain in it; and the iron plates curled up like hot paper. All this time the creature on the other side – whether it was in the shape of man, or beast, he neither knew nor sought to know – was gaining on them. (615)

This passage emphasizes three main things: the presence of a door between two rooms; their futile efforts to reinforce the door; and the approach of “the creature on the other side” and their fear of it. At this stage, we have already been told that Tigg secretly fears Jonas, although it is he who blackmails the other. It is therefore not difficult to deduce that Tigg will be killed by Jonas in the near future; the murder is actually committed only five chapters later. The scene thus prepares for his forthcoming murder.

The second interesting example occurs in *Bleak House*. In Chapter 35, the heroine Esther becomes terribly ill and has a nightmare. In her dream, she first vainly tries to climb up colossal staircases and cries out, “O more of these never-ending stairs, Charley – more and more

– piled up to the sky, I think!” (444).⁴⁷ She then experiences the following vision:

Dare I hint at that worse time when, strung together somewhere in great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which I was one of the beads! And when my only prayer was to be taken off from the rest, and when it was such inexplicable agony and misery to be a part of the dreadful thing? (444)

Critics greatly differ in the interpretation of the ominous necklace in her dream. Takao Saijo maintains that it symbolizes the hypocrisy and irresponsibility of the Dedlocks, from which Esther tries to escape (217-18). Susan Shatto argues that the reference to the necklace derives from Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (220-21).⁴⁸ Boldly stating that “no one is really sure what it means,” John Gordon submits that the flaming necklace is part of what he calls the “Medusa theme” of the novel (131, 133).⁴⁹ These critics seem to pay too much attention to the necklace itself, when the most important thing

⁴⁷ All references to *Bleak House* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1994).

⁴⁸ Strictly speaking, De Quincey quotes the passage from Wordsworth’s *The Excursion* to illustrate one of the images he frequently saw in sleep, as Shatto explains (221).

⁴⁹ According to Gordon, “the Medusa theme” of the novel is: “what you most desire to approach, behold, touch, kiss, and so on, is ipso facto too destructive to face” (127).

in the scene is not the necklace but the image of circulation it creates. Esther paraphrases the word *necklace* as “ring” or “starry circle,” and combined with her former words, “never-ending stairs,” the necklace in her dream works as an emblem of eternity or endlessness. At the centre of this novel is Jarndyce and Jarndyce, or the seemingly endless futile lawsuit, and the story is filled with eternal sufferings of people both inside and outside the court. Esther’s dream is a striking example of this central imagery.

The third example occurs in the description of Stephen Blackpool’s life in *Hard Times*. In Book 1 Chapter 13, he “dream[s] a long, troubled dream” (81).⁵⁰ In the dream, he marries a woman but is very much surprised to find that she is not Rachel, the woman he loves. Then the scene changes:

They stood in the daylight before a crowd [. . .] and they all abhorred him, and there was not one pitying or friendly eye among the millions that were fastened on his face. He stood on a raised stage, under his own loom; and, looking up at the shape the loom took, and hearing the burial service distinctly read, he knew that he was there to suffer death. In an instant what he stood on fell below him, and he was gone. (81)

Focusing on the fact that he experiences the fall in the end of the dream,

⁵⁰ All references to *Hard Times* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1994).

Margaret Simpson states that the reference to his falling is based on Dickens's idea that everyone has dreams that contain common elements, such as falling from high places (141). Though he undoubtedly possessed such a view, the above dream signifies much more than this. First of all, in the dream, he is "abhorred" by others, while in reality he will be "shunned" (135) by all his coworkers due to his refusal to take part in the walkout. Secondly, he finds himself "on a raised stage" in the dream, while he will be on "the platform" (135) when he talks in front of the other workers. Thirdly, he is "*looking up* at the shape" over the head here, while we are later told that he "is *lookin up* yonder" to "[gaze] at a star" (254) before he dies. Finally, at the end of the dream, "what he stood on *fell* below him" and "he was *gone*," while he will later "[*fall*] into th' pit," and we are finally told that "he had *gone* to his Redeemer's rest" (256, all italics mine). Thus, the descriptions of his dream here are very similar to those of the incidents that will later take place in his life, and we may say that as in the case of Tigg's dream in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Stephen's dream here plays the role of foretelling his future.⁵¹

In this manner, we can find several interesting examples of characters' dreaming in his later novels. However, contrary to some of his earlier works, where the descriptions of sleep and dreams occur frequently and are closely related to their main themes, they are isolated

⁵¹ Neil McEwan also notes the similarity between this dream and the later scene where Stephen stands before his fellow-workers, but he does not try to find further similarities between the descriptions of his dream and those of his later experiences (27).

instances in his later books. They therefore do not draw our attention very much, and we may feel that the descriptions of sleep and dreams as a whole are not so significant here.

The sleeping and dreaming of characters in the novels written in the latter half of Dickens's career, however, are worthy of notice. Take the descriptions of dreams in *Little Dorrit*, for instance. Table 2 on the next page shows how many words related to dreams are used and how often they occur in each work.⁵² Among all his novels, *Little Dorrit* ranks first in the number of such words and second in their frequency.

In addition, the descriptions of dreams appear not sporadically but concentratedly in certain chapters and leave the reader with a strong impression. For example, the first reference to dreams in the novel occurs in the end of Book 1 Chapter 3, in which Arthur Clennam's tendency to dream is explained. The next chapter is titled "Mrs Flintwinch has a Dream," and her dream is minutely described. Similarly, in Book 1 Chapter 13, Arthur's habit of dreaming is portrayed again, and Chapter 15 is titled "Mrs Flintwinch has another dream," which again deals with Mrs Flintwinch's dream. In Book 2 Chapter 9, Mrs Tickit has a bizarre experience connected with a dream-like state. The next chapter is "The Dreams of Mrs Flintwinch thicken," which again centres around her dreamy experience. Then Chapter 11 concerns Little Dorrit's letter to Arthur, in which she tells him about her recent dreams.

⁵² I examined the following dream-related words and their inflexions: *dream*, *daydream*, *dreamer* and *nightmare*.

Table 2.

Title of the Novel	Total Number of Dream-related Words	Frequency of Dream-related Words
<i>The Pickwick Papers</i>	16	19,332.9
<i>Oliver Twist</i>	14	11,540.6
<i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>	48	6,854.1
<i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i>	79	2,778.1
<i>Barnaby Rudge</i>	57	4,536.8
<i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i>	71	4,846.5
<i>Dombey and Son</i>	79	4,530.3
<i>David Copperfield</i>	82	4,425.5
<i>Bleak House</i>	36	10,034.6
<i>Hard Times</i>	14	7,543.4
<i>Little Dorrit</i>	94	3,662.1
<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	13	10,627.0
<i>Great Expectations</i>	18	10,509.8
<i>Our Mutual Friend</i>	18	18,543.6
<i>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</i>	19	5,049.7
Average	43.9	5,947.9

In this manner, the arrangements of each chapter and event suggest that Dickens tries to impress the reader with dreams, and in this chapter I

would like to examine how the descriptions of dreams work in the novel and then to clarify their meanings.

4-2. Dreams in *Little Dorrit*

I shall begin with a consideration of the meanings of the word *dream*. Unlike the word *sleep*, *dream* has two implications: one is “A train of thoughts, images, or fancies passing through the mind during sleep; a vision during sleep”; and the other is “A vision of the fancy voluntarily or consciously indulged in when awake; a visionary anticipation, reverie, castle-in-the-air.”⁵³ Roughly speaking, we can paraphrase these two kinds of dream as a vision in sleep and as a vision in wakefulness. Dickens describes both these types of dream in his works, but he rarely uses the word in the latter meaning. In his fifteen novels, Dickens uses the word *dream* and its inflections 578 times, but most of their usages are in the former meaning: while he utilizes them in reference to one’s vision during sleep 488 times, he uses them to indicate one’s vision when awake only ninety times. Of the three examples of characters’ dreams in the former section, all of them refer to the visions they have while asleep. In *Little Dorrit*, however, the case is different. Here Dickens explores both these areas of meaning and the way in which they intersect. By so doing, he creates a network of *dreams* that covers the whole novel, which underscores how some people are completely

⁵³ These definitions of the word are from *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

imprisoned in dreams. As Lionel Trilling and J. Hillis Miller note in their classic essays on the novel, “the theme of incarceration” or imprisonment is in its centre (Trilling vi; *The World* 228), and dreams play a significant part in emphasizing this theme. The following argument will demonstrate from a new angle the validity of their reading.

As mentioned previously, the first reference to characters’ dreams occurs when Arthur Clennam returns to London in Book 1 Chapter 3. Arthur lives in his own fantasy world, ignoring reality, and the narrator uses the word *dreamer* to illustrate this:

Little more than a week ago at Marseilles, the face of the pretty girl from whom he had parted with regret, had had an unusual interest for him, and a tender hold upon him, because of some resemblance, real or imagined, to this first face that had soared out of his gloomy life into the bright glories of fancy. He leaned upon the sill of the long low window [. . .] began to dream. For, it had been the uniform tendency of this man’s life – so much was wanting in it to think about, so much that might have been better directed and happier to speculate upon – to make him a dreamer, after all. (45)⁵⁴

“[T]o dream” has been “the uniform tendency” of his life, and abandoning his love for Pet Meagles, a charming girl whom he has met in France, he

⁵⁴ All references to *Little Dorrit* are to the Everyman paperback edition (1999).

tries to live in his own dream-world.

Similarly, when he meets Flora Finching, his old sweetheart, after a long separation, we are impressed with his dreamy nature. He is bitterly disappointed to find that she has become a fat, chatty middle-aged woman. Though her appearance has greatly altered, her heart experiences no change, and she still blindly loves him. Harry Stone is quite right when he states that Flora “lives in her own waking dream” (408). However, we must notice that Arthur himself has also been living in his dream. He has “kept the old fancy of the Past unchanged, in its old sacred place” (153), and seeing that she still loves him, he notes, “I am happy [. . .] in finding that, *like me*, you have not forgotten the old foolish dreams” (156, italics mine). As he uses the phrase “like me,” it is obvious that not only Flora but also Arthur has been dreaming. After their reunion, the narrator again calls him “a dreamer” (168), underscoring his trait.

Arthur’s propensity for dreaming takes another form. He suspects that his parents have a guilty secret, and when he sees Little Dorrit working as his mother’s servant, he intuitively links her with the suppressed secret and undertakes to learn her story. Realizing that she and her father are in the Marshalsea Prison, he even tries to rescue them. This reckless deed itself reflects his dreamy nature, and Little Dorrit tries to “[warn] him away from the sunken wreck he had a *dream* of raising” (102, italics mine). Though it is a commonplace metaphor, the word *dream* here necessarily underlines his dreamy nature. In this way, through the repetition of the word *dream* and *dreamer*, we understand

that he tends to live in his own dreamland.

A dreamer can be found elsewhere as well. Just after the first reference to Arthur's dreaming in Chapter 3, in the beginning of the next chapter we encounter the dream of Affery Flintwinch, Mrs Clennam's female servant:

When Mrs Flintwinch dreamed, she usually dreamed, unlike the son of her old mistress, with her eyes shut. She had a curiously vivid dream that night, and before she had left the son of her old mistress many hours. In fact it was not at all like a dream, it was so very real in every respect. (45-46)

The phrase "unlike the son of her old mistress" clearly shows that her dream is meant to contrast with Arthur's. Since he harbours his dream in wakefulness, Affery's dream can naturally be interpreted as the one she has during sleep. Dickens thus attracts our attention by contrasting two different sorts of dreams. However, Affery's dream is much more complicated than it first appears to be, and as we read on, we begin to wonder whether she is actually having a dream or not. In what the narrator calls her dream, she first sees that Mr Flintwinch and a person who very much resembles him are in the same room. She then sees that he looks "astonished" (48) to find her there, and starts threatening her:

"What have you been dreaming of? Wake up, wake up! [. . .] You have been getting out of bed in your sleep, my dear! I come up,

after having fallen asleep myself, below, and find you in your wrapper here, with the nightmare. Affery, woman,” said Mr Flintwinch, with a friendly grin on his expressive countenance, “if you ever have a dream of this sort again, it’ll be a sign of your being in want of physic. And I’ll give you such a dose, old woman – such a dose!” (48)

His astonishment and his threatening remarks suggest he is guilty of something, and provoke our suspicion. At this stage, we cannot be certain about the whole situation, but we will afterwards understand that she is induced to take reality for a dream.

Similarly, in Book 1 Chapter 15, where she comes upon a mysterious meeting between Mrs Clennam and Mr Flintwinch, the narrator again repeatedly refers to her dream: “Mrs Flintwinch [. . .] dreamed this dream” (184); “Mrs Flintwinch dreamed that she stood behind the door” (184); “Mistress Affery dreamed that the figure of her lord here began walking up and down the room” (187); and “Mrs Flintwinch dreamed that, for the space of a minute or two, they remained looking at each other with the candle between them” (188). The narrator’s repeated references to her dream have two functions. One is to arouse the reader’s suspicion about her dream. Recall the scene in *The Old Curiosity Shop* where the old man repeatedly states that Little Nell is sleeping, while she is actually dead. By the same token, Dickens here hints that she is not having a dream while asleep. The other function is to indicate her strong conviction that she is dreaming. In the

end of this chapter, she confides to her husband, "I have been a-dreaming!" (189), and begins to cover her head with her apron, "lest she should see something" (191) in her nightmare.

The same holds true with her dream described in Book 1 Chapter 29, when the narrator repeatedly notes that she is dreaming. He calls her "dreaming Affery" (349); when she sees Mrs Clennam kiss Little Dorrit, we are told that "[i]n all the dreams Mistress Affery had been piling up since she first became devoted to the pursuit, she had dreamed nothing more astonishing than this" (349); and when Blandois comes to the house, she sees him in "her dreamy state" (361). Though the appearance of Blandois is a part of reality, she stubbornly thinks that she is dreaming, and we will see that the things that are actually happening around her are described as her dreams.

A different but significant pattern can be found in the descriptions of William Dorrit. Though he is in the Marshalsea Prison, living on the money given by other prisoners and outsiders, he calls them "testimonials" and refuses to acknowledge that he survives by depending on others. He cannot face up to reality and tries to live in his own fantasy as "the father of the Marshalsea" (62), and in this respect he may be called another dreamer. A noteworthy scene occurs when he is forced to face reality. When Chivery, the gatekeeper, behaves coldly to him on one occasion, William Dorrit understands his real situation. He acknowledges that "[i]f I was to lose the support and recognition of Chivery and his brother officers, I might starve to death here" (231), and even grumbles to his faithful daughter Little Dorrit, "What am I worth to any one? A poor

prisoner, fed on alms and broken victuals; a squalid, disgraced wretch!” (232). His understanding of the situation here is quite correct. Consoled by her, however, he begins “dozing” (235), and when he appears next time, he is again the same father of the Marshalsea as if nothing had occurred to make him face reality. Just as Oliver repeatedly sleeps in the critical moments of his life, so William Dorrit takes shelter in sleep and forgets realities. The scene seems to suggest that he not only lives in a dream-world while awake, but also tries to retreat to dreams during sleep. More examples of this sort are found in the latter half of the novel.

At the end of Book 1, the Dorrit family have gained a tremendous sum of money, and they travel abroad to Italy to enjoy their wealth. Apparently they are very happy, but in truth Mr Dorrit secretly dreads lest others should know of his past in the prison. He has so far almost always lived in his own safe fantasy in the Marshalsea, but once he gets out of it the fantasy vanishes and his prison past begins to haunt him as a terrible reality. Mr Dorrit’s attitude toward his servant vividly portrays his fear. When Mr Tinkler, the domestic attendant, pauses for an instant before obeying his order, Mr Dorrit, “seeing the whole Marshalsea and all its Testimonials in the pause, instantly flew at him with, ‘How dare you, sir? What do you mean?’” (610-11). In order to cope with the terror, he chooses to conjure up another dream. He first endeavours to

immerse himself in the fantasy of Venice.⁵⁵ As this is not enough, he further tries to obliterate the past by building a castle in the air. Through his elder daughter Fanny's marriage to Edmund Sparkler, he gets acquainted with Mr Merdle, a famous financier of the day, and becomes increasingly elated that her marriage has moved him ahead in the world.

It was *a rapturous dream* to Mr Dorrit, to find himself set aloft in this public car of triumph, making a magnificent progress to that befitting destination, the golden Street of the Lombards.

There, Mr Merdle insisted on alighting and going his way afoot, and leaving his poor equipage at Mr Dorrit's disposition. So, the *dream increased in rapture* when Mr Dorrit came out of the bank alone, and people looked at him in default of Mr Merdle [. . .]. So the *dream increased in rapture* every hour, as Mr Dorrit felt *increasingly* sensible that this connection had brought him forward indeed. (627-28, italics mine)

Through the repeated use of such words as *dream*, *rapture*, and *increase*, we are made to feel that he is vigorously trying to efface the past by envisioning a new dream.

Significantly, Mr Dorrit apparently comes to spend much time in

⁵⁵ Dickens regarded Venice as the city of dream and unreality. When he visited the city, he was deeply impressed with its unreal character and told Forster that the city was "beyond the fancy of the wildest dreamer" (*Letters* 4: 217).

sleep as well. In Book 2 Chapter 1, where he appears for the first time after he gets out of prison, we are told that he is dozing; “the young lady’s father [Mr Dorrit], [. . .] dozed in his chair by the fire” (454), and since then, his dozing is often mentioned. In fact, words like *doze* and *slumber* occur eight times in Chapter 19, where his fear culminates. Perhaps his somnolent tendency has something to do with his ill health.⁵⁶ However, I would draw attention to the fact that the word *doze* is indicative of a state of light sleep that can cause dreams.⁵⁷ I have argued in Chapter 1 that Dickens was very careful about the use of sleep-related words, and in this novel, his use of *doze* is particularly interesting. He uses the word fourteen times, and eleven out of fourteen examples refer to either Mr Dorrit or Arthur Clennam, the dreamer, whose doze I shall examine later. Furthermore, the correlation between Dorrit’s dozing and his fear of

⁵⁶ Focussing not on the word *doze* but *fits*, which is also used in reference to his condition, Joanne Eysell argues that Dickens is here “preparing the reader for Dorrit’s final indignity” (107). She also reveals her personal conversation with John Cosnett in which he states that “the medical pattern here could be uremia or senile dementia” (107), though some features are missing. Though intriguing, as Cosnett himself admits, the description of Dorrit’s condition does not completely tally with that of the said disease, and it is possible to say that Dickens intends us to read something different here.

⁵⁷ As mentioned earlier, in the middle of the twentieth century, scientists discovered that we have two different types of sleep, REM sleep and Non-REM sleep, and that we have dreams during the former lighter sleep. Although the technology was not so well developed then, doctors in the nineteenth century also believed that a light sleep like *doze* and *slumber* induced dreaming. Calling dreaming “a state of partial slumber” (50), Robert Macnish states, “Dreams cannot take place in complete repose” (52).

reality is remarkable. While he lives in his own secure fantasy in prison, his doze is never described except for the one time when he is forced to face reality by the coldness of Chivery. He does not need much dozing probably because he is almost always in a waking dream as the father of the Marshalsea. Once he gets out of prison and begins to suffer from the haunting past, he acquires his dozing habit. Therefore, we can assume that Dickens tries to associate his dozes with his waking dream, implying that he is always dreaming.

However, his dream-world is terribly shaken when John Chivery, the son of the turnkey of the prison, reappears in front of him while he is briefly back in London. His first reaction to the shock is to return to Italy where he can live a dream:

On again by the heavy French roads for Paris. Having now quite recovered his equanimity, Mr Dorrit, in his snug corner, fell to castle-building as he rode along. It was evident that he had a very large castle in hand. All day long he was running towers up, taking towers down, adding a wing here, putting on a battlement there, looking to the walls, strengthening the defences, giving ornamental touches to the interior, making in all aspects a superb castle of it. (645)

This chapter is titled "A Castle in the Air," and we see how Mr Dorrit tries to escape from reality by building a castle in the air. But although he finally reaches Italy, even the realm of dream cannot save him this time.

We are told that “what with dozing and what with castle-building, he lost himself for a long time” (654). These are his final attempts to stay in his dreams, but in the end he suffers a stroke at a fashionable dinner party. Imagining that he is still in the Marshalsea, he welcomes the dinner guests to his abode: “Ladies and gentlemen, the duty – ha – devolves upon me of – hum – welcoming you to the Marshalsea. Welcome to the Marshalsea!” (658). He cannot escape from the Marshalsea even when he leaves its walls, and is destined to carry his prison with him wherever he goes. Dickens uses the word *dream* in the description of his collapsed state of mind: “[F]rom that hour his poor maimed spirit, only remembering the place where it had broken its wings, cancelled the dream through which it had since groped, and knew of nothing beyond the Marshalsea” (660). In order to become free from his real past, he has tried to take refuge in a dream-world, but being forced to look reality in the face, he finally dies.

Conversely, Affery chooses to do what William Dorrit fails to do: she faces up to reality and breaks the spell of her husband. In Book 2 Chapter 10, titled “The Dreams of Mrs Flintwinch Thicken,” asked by Arthur what is happening in the house, Affery replies, “Don’t ask me anything, Arthur. I’ve been in a dream for ever so long. Go away!” (558). From her words, we might infer that her condition has become worse, as the title suggests. When she appears again in Chapter 23, however, she suddenly complies with Arthur’s request and makes a conditional promise: “[T]hen do you get the better of ‘em [Mrs Clennam and Mr Flintwinch] afore my face; and then do you say to me, Affery tell

your dreams! Maybe, then I'll tell 'em!" (702). Considering that she has so far tenaciously objected to explaining anything, this change seems rather abrupt. However, a careful examination of her dream in Chapter 10 will reveal that her dream described in Book 2 is different from those we have seen in Book 1, and from this difference, we judge that she has begun to see that she has not been having a dream. What is mainly described in the later chapter is a conversation between Arthur, Mrs Clennam, and Blandois in Mrs Clennam's house, and in that much conversation takes place, it is similar to Book 1 Chapters 15 and 30. However, on this occasion, the conversation is not described as a part of Affery's dream. As demonstrated before, in Book 1 the narrator repeatedly states that "Affery is dreaming." Generally speaking, we readers tend to believe a third-person narrator's words more than the characters', and his words naturally impress us with the idea that she is really having a dream. However, in this chapter, the narrator does not say she is dreaming, and the only reference to her dream occurs in her own words toward Arthur, "I've been in a dream for ever so long" (558). Contrary to the impression we gain from the title of the chapter, we do not feel that her dream thickens. We may say that this change in the expression of the narrator to some extent reflects the fact that she is gradually getting out of her dream-world.

The next example will support this hypothesis. In Chapter 30, encouraged by Arthur's agent Pancks, she tells her dream to Mrs Clennam, Mr Flintwinch, Blandois, and Pancks. She says, "Jeremiah said they was dreams, and I'll tell 'em as such!" (784), and when Mr

Flintwinch attempts to stop her, she declares, “you married me whether I liked it or not, and you’ve led me, pretty well ever since, such a life of dreaming and frightening as never was known” (779).⁵⁸ It is obvious that underneath her remarks, there lies her strong will to face reality. In the chapter, the word *dream* and its variants are used fifteen times, but all are parts of characters’ speeches, and the narrator never uses them. We understand that she is now not dreaming at all. She has almost always been threatened by her husband, and forced to regard things she had really seen as dreams, for, as Fred Kaplan argues, to protect herself she cannot help but do so (222). In the end, however, she faces reality and becomes liberated from her husband.

It is Arthur Clennam, the dreamer, who urges Affery to face reality, and the time comes when he himself abandons his own dream-world. As previously noted, he is the kind of person who tends to live in his own fantasy, even abandoning his love for Pet. The realization of his own love for Little Dorrit is the first step to his escape from dreams. Arrested for debt, he is taken to the Marshalsea and placed in the Dorrits’ former rooms. When John Chivery tells him that Little Dorrit loves him, the description of Arthur’s reaction is remarkable:

He stood amazed; his eyes looking at John; his lips parted, and seeming now and then to form the word “Me!” without uttering it;

⁵⁸ The juxtaposition of *dreaming* and *frightening* in the context of marriage is also very important. Examining Affery’s dreams, David Suchoff argues that “dream is the acceptable social sign for repression of marital violence” (75).

his hands dropped at his sides: his whole appearance that of a man who has *been awakened from sleep*. (743; italics mine)

The metaphor of an awakened man is another example of the intersection of two different dreams, emphasizing that he has escaped from the dream-world.⁵⁹ Thanks to the experience, he for the first time ponders Little Dorrit's importance:

Dear Little Dorrit.

Looking back upon his own poor story, she was its vanishing point. Everything in its perspective led to her innocent figure. He had travelled thousands of miles towards it; previous unquiet hopes and doubts had worked themselves out before it; it was the centre of the interest of his life; it was the termination of everything that was good and pleasant in it; beyond there was nothing but mere waste and darkened sky. (747)

He acknowledges that she is everything to him. After this, however, he falls severely ill and “[begins] to doze” (768). Dickens uses the word *doze*

⁵⁹ It is interesting that John Chivery, who has forced William Dorrit to remember his real past, also urges Arthur to face up to reality in the scene. The fact that he is a son of the turnkey, or the gatekeeper of the prison, may be important in understanding his role. On both occasions, he uses the word *Lock* (644, 733), reminding the reader of his occupation as a gatekeeper. He as it were keeps not only the prison gate but also the one that divides reality and dreams.

and *dozing* three times here. As I have shown, in order to be free from reality, William Dorrit tries not only to build a castle in the air, but also to *doze*, and the similar pattern is applicable to Arthur's case. Sensing that a quiet figure (Little Dorrit) nurses him in the room, however, he wakes up and embraces her. Thanks to her, he can at last wake up not merely from his doze but also from his dream-world.

As the example of Arthur indicates, the role of Little Dorrit is remarkable. In this novel, she is the only character who consistently tries to face up to the cold, hard facts of her situation. Among her family members, she alone can fully acknowledge the fact that they are in the debtors' prison and not gentlemen at all. Therefore, when her family suddenly becomes rich, in bewilderment she cannot accept their wealthy life as real. In Venice, she perceives the dream-like quality of her situation. She feels that "recalling the old Marshalsea room, her present existence was a dream. All that she saw was new and wonderful, but it was not real" (471). For her, "only the old mean Marshalsea [is] a reality" (472), and we are even told that "Little Dorrit would wake from a *dream* of her birth-place into a whole day's *dream*" (472, italics mine). Notice that though Dickens uses the word *dream* twice in the sentence, they are not the same. While the first one signifies the vision in her sleep, we may call the second one a daydream.⁶⁰ Dickens juxtaposes the different kinds of dream in the same sentence, and we are greatly impressed with

⁶⁰ In the translated version of the novel, in order to make the difference between these two *dreams* more explicit, Shigeru Koike applies the Japanese term *Hakuchumu*, which means a daydream, to the second dream (2: 36).

the idea that Little Dorrit is suffering from dreams all day long.

Furthermore, she writes to Arthur about her dreams in a striking manner:

Do you know that since the change in our fortunes, though I appear to myself to have *dreamed* more than before, I have always *dreamed* of myself as very young indeed [. . .] I have always *dreamed* of myself as a child learning to do needlework. I have often *dreamed* of myself as back there [. . .] I have *dreamed* of going down to Mrs General, with the patches on my clothes in which I can first remember myself. I have over and over again *dreamed* of taking my place at dinner at Venice when we have had a large company, in the mourning for my poor mother which I wore when I was eight years old [. . .] I have *dreamed* that I have sat with the heart-ache at table, calculating the expenses of the dinner, and quite distracting myself with thinking how they were ever to be made good. I have never *dreamed* of the change in our fortunes itself; I have never *dreamed* of your coming back with me that memorable morning to break it; I have never even *dreamed* of you. (562-63, all italics mine)

She uses the word *dreamed* ten times in the paragraph. Among the many uses, the last sentence, “I have never even dreamed of you,” is of particular interest. Although she is only saying that she does not see

him in her sleep, it is not difficult for the attentive reader to infer that she implies her love for Arthur here. As we have seen in the example of Little Nell's sleep-like death and that of Affery's dream-like reality, repetition in Dickens's novels sometimes gives us a further insight into the things that are really occurring. Here, Little Dorrit's repeated denial that she sees him in her dream conversely indicates the fact that she dreams of him while awake, or to be more precise, she yearns for him.

Her dream is nevertheless totally different from those of the other characters. Unlike the others, who indulge in dreams in order to forget realities, she is acutely aware of her real past even when she has a dream. She is always facing up to reality, and even when she dreams, she understands that it is not real. The description of her sleep is particularly important in understanding this feature. Just before the deaths of William and Frederick Dorrit are described, we come upon an interesting passage about her sleep:

Then she sank upon her own bed, and fell into a *deep sleep*: the sleep of exhaustion and rest, though not of complete release from a pervading consciousness of affliction. Sleep, good Little Dorrit. Sleep through the night! (663, italics mine)

Here, she falls into a deep sleep for the first time in the novel, but it is not the kind of sleep that relieves her from the sufferings of the real world. Even under such a terrible circumstance, she cannot have a comforting

sleep like the one Oliver frequently gets.⁶¹ Indeed, her sleep is very rarely described in the novel, while her father's doze is often portrayed. Building on my interpretation that Dickens tries to associate two different sorts of dreams in this novel, we suppose from the scene that she does not take refuge in the world of dreams, however hard reality is. In a certain sense, we may call her a thorough realist, and she is the most appropriate person to save the dreamer Arthur Clennam.

When Arthur gets out of prison and marries Little Dorrit, we see that their future will be bright:

Went down into a modest life of usefulness and happiness. [. . .]
They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed along in sunshine and in shade, the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward and the vain, fretted, and chafed, and made their usual uproar. (838)

Because nothing is described in the ending passage but clamorous streets, some critics worry about the future of the couple. For instance, comparing the ending of *Little Dorrit* with that of *Bleak House*, H. M. Daleski argues that this ending does not allow much room for optimism

⁶¹ It is the first time that Dickens describes a deep sleep which does not relieve a character from suffering. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, Dickens often uses the phrase "deep sleep" in the important moments of the novels, but except for the case of Sikes, whose deep sleep is produced by laudanum, the phrase indicates something beneficial.

(235). Yael Halevi-Wise claims, “the ending of *Little Dorrit* lies far from the characteristic ‘happily ever after’ Dickensian ending” because there is no final reference to the radiant couple at the heart of their pretty home, surrounded by their lively offspring (192). Indeed, the combination of such adjectives as “arrogant,” “froward,” “vain,” “fretted,” and “chafed” emphasizes the cold, hard reality they are going to face, and seems to cast a dark shadow over their future. Paradoxically, however, that the above passage represents nothing but cold, hard reality testifies to their bright future. As we have seen, in *Little Dorrit* Dickens underscores how people are trapped in dreams, utilizing both meanings of *dream*, and Arthur had been a typical dreamer. However, no reference to dreams can be found in the ending passages. The lively streets embody humble reality, and this ending symbolically shows that they will live, always facing up to reality, and that their future will be free from the psychological imprisonment.

4-3. Dickens’s Dream and Its Disillusionment

I have demonstrated how Dickens utilizes dreams in *Little Dorrit* to describe characters’ psychologically imprisoned states. Sleeping and dreaming are indispensable for our lives. Although the fact that we need sleep to sustain our lives has been scientifically proved by researchers, its role is not merely to restore one’s lost physical energy during waking hours. Remember the passage in *Oliver Twist* where Oliver falls asleep on his way to London: “he was cold and hungry, and more alone than he

had ever felt before [. . .] however, he soon fell asleep and *forgot his troubles*" (51, italics mine). As the example indicates, sleep enables us to forget terrible reality and to restore our mental energy as well. We can say the same thing with daydreams. If we build a castle in the air, we can avoid seeing terrible reality. It is true that its effect is temporary at best, yet still, without such a mental safeguard, we may not live happily. At the same time, however, we must live in reality, not in dreams, for trying to live in dreams all the time is almost the same as abandoning our lives. Arthur Clennam and Affery Flintwinch, who can at last relinquish the dream-world and face up to reality, survive, while William Dorrit, who cannot renounce his dream-world, must die in the end. What Dickens does in *Little Dorrit* is to present dreaming as one form of psychological imprisonment, and by so doing, he tries to state that we must face up to reality, however hard it appears to be.

Why, then, does Dickens use dreams in the novel to emphasize the imprisoned state of characters? The key to solve this puzzle lies in the series of remarkable incidents that occurred in 1855, when Dickens began to make a plan for *Little Dorrit*. On February 2, he wrote a famous letter to John Forster: "Why is it, that as with poor David, a sense comes always crushing on me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made?" (*Letters* 7: 523). His relationship with his wife Catherine became inharmonious in the middle of the 1850s.⁶² He was feeling that

⁶² We cannot know exactly when Dickens's dissatisfaction with his marriage arose, but by the middle of the 1850s, his complaints about his wife began to come into the

his marriage was a mistake and that he lacked what he called a “friend and companion” (his wife could not play that part). In such inauspicious circumstances, he learned in February 1855 that the Gad’s Hill Place, the house where he had long wished to live, was for sale due to the death of the Rev. James Lynn, the then-owner of the house. Dickens promptly decided to purchase it, and said to W. H. Wills, “The spot and the very house are literally ‘a dream of my childhood’” (*Letters* 7: 531). He strongly felt that one of his childhood dreams would come true. In addition, one more unexpected occurrence urged him to build a larger castle in the air: he received a letter from Maria Winter née Beadnell, his old sweetheart. His former passion for the lady being rekindled, he canceled the preliminary trip to Gad’s Hill with Wills, and wrote a letter to her with enthusiasm on February 15. What is noteworthy is that he twice used the word *Dream* with a capital letter here:

[W]hen I find myself writing to you again “all to your self,” how can I forbear to let as much light in upon them as will shew you that they are there still! If the most innocent, the most ardent,

open. For example, in 1853, during the time when he was travelling on the continent, he wrote “[t]he oddest letter” (Tomalin 252) to Catherine, in which he scolded her for her former cold attitude toward his friend Augusta de la Rue and recommended her to write a friendly and sympathetic letter (*Letters* 7: 223-25). In 1854, in a letter to Angela Burdett Coutts, he blamed his wife for his son Charley’s lack of energy: “I think he has less fixed purpose and energy than I could have supposed possible in my son [. . .] from his mother, he inherits an indescribable lassitude of character” (*Letters* 7: 245).

and the most disinterested days of my life had you for their Sun – as indeed they had – and if I know that the *Dream* I lived in did me good, refined my heart, and made me patient and persevering, and if the *Dream* were all of you – as God knows it was – how can I receive a confidence from you, and return it, and make a feint of blotting all this out! (*Letters* 7: 539, italics mine)

He sometimes referred to his dreams both metaphorically and literally in his letters, but he never used the word with such zeal on other occasions. We can infer that he was again in a rapturous dream of Maria and anxious for their reunion. On this letter, Edgar Johnson astutely observes, “[W]hat rapturous, impossible dreams were swirling deliriously through his mind” (834). Considering that he had written a letter that showed his complaint about the lack of a companion just before, Dickens might have expected that Maria would fill that gap, as Michael Slater surmises (*Charles Dickens* 388). It might even be possible to suppose that he was envisioning a future in which he would spend time with her in the Gad’s Hill Place. Unfortunately for Dickens, however, Maria turned out to be a fat, chatty middle-aged woman, and he was greatly disenchanted with her.⁶³ Considering that the rapturous dream was “swirling deliriously through his mind” before the reunion, he must have suffered bitter disillusionment. It was around this time that Dickens

⁶³ After the reunion, his attitude toward her completely changed: thereafter his letters to her, which were actually very few, became short and formal in tone. For further details, see *Letters* (7: 561, 583-84, 598, and 648).

began to make a plan for the new novel *Little Dorrit*, and therefore, we may reasonably assume that Dickens created the novel, ruefully recalling his dream and its disillusionment.

Paying much attention to the satiric descriptions of the Circumlocution Office, critics have argued that *Little Dorrit* reflects Dickens's anger against the government that could not cope adequately with the Crimean War, and they have regarded the impact of Maria as merely peripheral, particularly since she was made the model for Flora Finching, a very funny but minor character. However, as Angus Easson notes, both his "public anger and personal misery" (xxiv) formed the groundwork for the novel, and the incidents concerning Maria were also important in creating it.

Viewing the novel from this angle, we may be able to understand what Dickens wanted to do. While he was writing the novel, he wrote to Forster as if to settle his problem concerning the lack of a friend and companion: "It is much better to go on and fret, than to stop and fret" (*Letters* 8: 89).⁶⁴ We may conclude that by the skillful use of night dreams and daydreams as well as the abandonment of dreams in *Little Dorrit*, Dickens tried to make a declaration of independence from his old dream.

⁶⁴ Quoting the same letter, Rosemarie Bodenheimer states, "[Dickens] had begun to understand that he would never hold the 'something' he was always reaching for" (100).

Chapter 5.

Dickens and “Sleep-Waking”

5-1. Dickens’s Interest in “Sleep-Waking”

I have so far examined Dickens’s uses of sleep, sleeplessness, and dreams in his novels. Among many variations of sleeping and dreaming, however, there is one more that Dickens paid special attention to; man’s liminal state of awareness, or what he called “sleep-waking states.”⁶⁵ In his novels, we often find characters falling into this intermediate state between consciousness and sleep. Since such descriptions can be seen in many of his works, we may infer that his interest in sleep-waking extended throughout his professional life. Indeed, some examples can be found among the novels I examined in the previous chapters. The ubiquity of the images does not necessarily mean that all of them are important, however; many of them are mere comic descriptions. I argue that only three of his characters are important in terms of sleep-waking: Oliver Twist, Affery Flintwinch, and John Jasper. Their sleep-waking scenes are closely related to the central mysteries of the novels in which

⁶⁵ Dickens utilizes the phrase twice in his novels to explain the strange uncertain state between sleeping and waking.

they appear, and in order to understand these novels completely, it is indispensable to decipher the meanings of the scenes. If we investigate the descriptions of sleep-waking in these novels, we realize that they share several structural similarities, and given that they are different sorts of novels written at completely different stages of Dickens's career, these similarities assume a special significance.

In this chapter, I will first examine the descriptions of the three characters' sleep-waking states and reveal that they share a pattern which reflects Dickens's theory of sleep-waking. Among these three, I have already referred to two in earlier chapters as important examples of characters' sleeping and dreaming. At the risk of telling twice-told tales, however, I will reiterate the main points of those scenes here. Then, referring to contemporary criticism and the painting *Dickens's Dream* by Robert William Buss, I will build the hypothesis that the author's interest in the liminal state is fundamentally connected to his own creative imagination.

5-2. What Oliver Saw: Sleep-Waking in *Oliver Twist*

Among the many sleep-waking scenes in Dickens's novels, it is the protagonist's strange drowsy state in *Oliver Twist* that leaves the strongest impression on the reader. In Chapter 9, Oliver falls into a sleep-waking state and has an extraordinary experience. In order to make its strangeness more explicit, I would like first to recapitulate the style of language that Dickens adopts elsewhere in the novel. Just

before Oliver's sleep-waking scene occurs, Fagin receives him in a kindly manner:

Oliver ate his share, and the Jew then mixed him a glass of hot gin and water: telling him he must drink it off directly, because another gentleman wanted the tumbler. Oliver did as he was desired. Immediately afterwards he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks; and then he sunk into a deep sleep. (58)

This passage typifies Dickens's style when describing Oliver's actions. Sentences begin with the word *Oliver*: "Oliver ate his share" or "Oliver did as he was desired." Critics have argued that *Oliver Twist* is a fairytale-like story,⁶⁶ and this sort of uncomplicated style affirms such an impression. However, once Dickens begins to describe Oliver's sleep-waking, his style changes drastically:

Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. There is a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapt in perfect unconsciousness. At such times, a mortal knows just enough of what his mind is

⁶⁶ For more on the fairy-tale image of *Oliver Twist*, see, for example, J. Hillis Miller, "The Dark World of *Oliver Twist*" (35).

doing, to form some glimmering conception of its mighty powers, its bounding from earth and spurning time and space, when freed from the restraint of its corporeal associate.

Oliver was precisely in this condition. He saw the Jew with his half-closed eyes. (59)

Here Dickens begins to explain the boy's state with the phrase "there is"; he then generalizes Oliver's experience by using the pronoun *you* and the word *mortal* as the subjects of his sentences. This explanatory style of writing is quite different from the simple style we find in other passages concerning Oliver. David Paroissien even argues that Dickens wrote the passage based on Robert Macnish's *Philosophy of Sleep* (101). My point here is that Dickens highlights Oliver's strange, sleep-waking condition by the sudden change of style.

In his liminal state, Oliver sees Fagin chuckle to himself over a box full of valuable stolen goods. Realizing that the boy is watching him, Fagin changes colour, grabs a knife, and threateningly demands an explanation: "What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you *seen*? Speak out, boy!" (60; italics mine). This is the first time that Fagin betrays agitation. He fears two things: that Oliver may have realized his real character, and will report him to the authorities, and that the boy might disclose the presence of the secret treasure box to the other thieves, especially Sikes, the ruffian who would no doubt demand his share by force. Though he himself does not notice its importance, the sleep-waking Oliver grasps the information that might ruin Fagin. If he

had been “thoroughly awake,” Fagin would have killed him instantly.

Interestingly, when Oliver has another sleep-waking experience in the latter half of the novel, we find a similar pattern. In Chapter 34, Oliver falls into a sleep-waking state in Mrs Maylie’s summer house:

Oliver sat at this window, intent upon his books [. . .] gradually and by slow degrees, he fell asleep.

There is a kind of sleep that steals upon us sometimes, which, while it holds the body prisoner, does not free the mind from a sense of things about it, and enable it to ramble at its pleasure. So far as an overpowering heaviness, a prostration of strength, and an utter inability to control our thoughts or power of motion, can be called sleep, this is it; and yet, we have a consciousness of all that is going on about us [. . .].

Oliver knew, perfectly well, that he was in his own little room. (246-47)

Here, once again, Dickens begins the first sentence of the second paragraph with the phrase “there is,” and his explanatory style attracts the reader’s eye to the description of sleep-waking. In this condition, Oliver sees Fagin and Monks through the window: “It was but an instant, *a glance, a flash, before his eyes*; and they were gone. But they had recognized him, and he them” (247; italics mine). After waking up, he and Harry Maylie search extensively for the two villains, but in vain, leading people to think that Oliver was merely dreaming. As Mr

Brownlow explains later, however, Fagin and Monks have really come to Mrs Maylie's country house "for the purpose of identifying [Oliver]" (381), and they have succeeded in doing so. It appears that their plan has been successful, but since Oliver perceives their presence and loudly calls for help, they experience the danger of being hunted. In addition, this is the first time that Oliver notices a secret alliance between Fagin and the strange man (Monks). Thanks to this information and Nancy's betrayal, Mr Brownlow later captures Monks and finally succeeds in restoring Oliver's rights and ruining these villainous characters.

A comparison between these two scenes uncovers one basic similarity: in his sleep-waking state Oliver involuntarily sees something very significant. This similarity is important because a parallel pattern obtains in the sleep-waking scenes in the other novels.

5-3. Is Affery Dreaming?: Sleep-Waking in *Little Dorrit*

Affery Flintwinch in *Little Dorrit* is another character whose sleep-waking scenes are vital to a thorough understanding of the novel in which she figures. The scenes have a close connection with one of the most important mysteries in the novel – Mrs Clennam's secret. Mrs Clennam and Mr Flintwinch, her confidential clerk, have illegally suppressed the codicil of Gilbert Clennam's will, and Affery's sleep-waking is closely related to the disclosure of their crime. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Dickens emphasizes Affery's strange condition through the repeated use of the word *dream*. In Book 1

Chapter 3, Dickens first explains how Arthur Clennam, the protagonist, tends to dream rather than face reality, calling him “a dreamer” (45). Then in the next chapter, he shifts his focus from Arthur’s dreamy nature to Affery’s strange sleeping habits:

When Mrs Flintwinch dreamed, she usually dreamed, unlike the son of her old mistress, with her eyes shut. She had a curiously vivid dream that night, and before she had left the son of her old mistress many hours. In fact it was not at all like a dream, it was so very real in every respect. (45-46)

By comparing Arthur’s dreaming habit with Affery’s, Dickens gives us the impression that we will see her realistic dream in this chapter. However, a close examination of the scene reveals that she has witnessed not a dream but reality. In what the narrator repeatedly calls Affery’s dream, the woman sees that Jeremiah Flintwinch, her husband, is having a secret conference with a person who closely resembles him. Realizing that Affery is watching him, Mr Flintwinch looks “astonished” and then begins to frighten her:

“What have you been dreaming of? Wake up, wake up! [. . .] You have been getting out of bed in your sleep, my dear! I come up, after having fallen asleep myself, below, and find you in your wrapper here, with the nightmare. Affery, woman,” said Mr Flintwinch, with a friendly grin on his expressive countenance, “if

you ever have a dream of this sort again, it'll be a sign of your being in want of physic. And I'll give you such a dose, old woman – such a dose!" (48)

Mr Flintwinch, we later understand, is trying to convince Affery that the scene she witnessed was nothing but a strange dream. As she is a timid woman who fears her husband, she cannot help but think that he is telling the truth, and to cope with what she believes to be a nightmare, she begins to “[put] her apron over her head, lest she should see something” (191). Notice that the act of seeing is emphasized here. Affery is actually awake, but she is convinced that she has been dreaming, and from this perspective her condition may be classified as a liminal state. In fact, later when she becomes much more influenced by the dream, the narrator explains that she is in a “sleep-waking state” (346).

Mr Flintwinch induces his wife to believe that she has been dreaming because the things she has seen have a close connection with Mrs Clennam's secret. As mentioned earlier, Mrs Clennam and Mr Flintwinch have illegally suppressed the codicil of Gilbert Clennam's will, and the person Affery sees in her dream is Ephraim, Mr Flintwinch's twin brother, who takes the important documents abroad for safekeeping. Fearing that she might reveal the secret to others, her husband tries to convince her that she has only seen a dream. As with the scenes in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens thus allows his character to see something of vital importance in a sleep-waking state.

5-4. Murder in Sleep-Waking: Sleep-Waking in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

One more Dickens character experiences important instances of sleep-waking: John Jasper in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. At the centre of the novel is the murder of Edwin Drood committed by his uncle Jasper,⁶⁷ and his murder plan is closely connected to his sleep-waking. The novel opens with a mysterious scene:

An ancient English Cathedral Town? How can the ancient English Cathedral town be here! The well-known massive gray square tower of its old Cathedral? How can that be here! There is no spike of rusty iron in the air, between the eye and it, from any point of the real prospect. What is the spike that intervenes, and who has set it up? Maybe it is set up by the Sultan's orders for the impaling of a horde of Turkish robbers, one by one. It is so, for cymbals clash, and the Sultan goes by to his palace in long procession. Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and thrice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers.

⁶⁷ Since Dickens died without completing the novel, critics have wondered whether Edwin is really killed by Jasper. According to Forster, Dickens once told him about the story of the novel: "The story [. . .] was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle" (2: 452). Though it may be possible to argue that Dickens later changed his plan, or to state that he did not reveal the real plan to Forster, it will be more natural to think that Dickens really intended to make Jasper the murderer of his nephew.

Then, follow white elephants caparisoned in countless gorgeous colours, and infinite in number and attendants. (3)

When we first read this, we cannot understand what is happening, but as we read on, we find that a strange man (Jasper) is experiencing a vision under the influence of opium and that the passage reflects what is passing through his mind. He appears to be lost in a dream, but we need to be cautious about jumping to conclusions. Take note of the spike emphasized in the middle of the passage, which intervenes between the Cathedral and his eyes. It develops that it is actually “the rusty spike on the top of a post of an old bedstead” (3) on which he is lying, and we realize that the spike in the real world is merging into his dream. According to a long letter he wrote to Dr. Thomas Stone, Dickens particularly believed that part of the brain remained awake while one was dreaming (*Letters* 6: 279). Regarding this function of the brain as the cause of the liminal state, Warrington Winters provides detailed examples of the many such scenes in Dickens’s novels, including Jasper’s opium dream (1000-03). If we accept this interpretation, it is more accurate to state that Jasper is having a peculiar vision in a sleep-waking state than that he is having a dream. We must also notice that he is *seeing* something in the state. Indeed, soon after this scene, realizing that the hag in the den is in a similar condition, he wonders, “What visions can *she* have?” (5). His question further emphasizes the act of seeing in this state.

We may think that in the sleep-waking state created by opium,

Jasper is merely viewing the ancient English cathedral town, followed by exotic scenes. However, this would be a superficial understanding of his vision, and what he is actually seeing is much more ominous. We grasp the full meaning of his vision in Chapter 23, where he explains its contents to Puffer, the hag who presides over the opium den:

“I always made the journey first, before the changes of colours and the great landscapes and glittering processions began. They couldn’t begin till it was off my mind. I had no room till then for anything else.” (246)

“[T]he great landscapes and glittering processions” can be interpreted as the exotic scenes in the opening paragraph, as Charles Forsyte surmises (90), and considering that the word *journey* is Jasper’s euphemism for the murder, we understand that the murder is actually taking place in his vision when the story begins. Jasper also says, “I did it over and over again. I have done it hundreds of thousands of times in this room” (244). “[I]t,” we finally realize, means the visualisation, while sleep-waking, of what he would like to accomplish in the future, his nephew’s murder.

5-5. The Relationship between Dickens and “Sleep-Waking”

I have so far examined the remarkable descriptions of sleep-waking in three of Dickens’s novels and revealed the presence of a pattern: in the sleep-waking state, characters see something of great

import. This pattern suggests the existence of Dickens's belief that the intermediate state between sleeping and waking enables us to have significant visions. In fact, this sort of liminal perception is not restricted to the world of fiction, and apparently Dickens himself had a similar experience in the middle of his creative activities. His son Charley recorded in detail a remarkable incident concerning this phenomenon. One day he called upon his father while the latter was in the process of writing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Dickens displayed an interesting reaction to his son's appearance:

[Dickens] raised his head and looked at me long and fixedly. But I soon found that, although his eyes were bent upon me and he seemed to be looking at me earnestly, he did not see me, and that he was in fact, unconscious for the moment of my very existence. He was in *dreamland* with Edwin Drood, and I left him – for the last time. (“Glimpses” 138, italics mine)

It is noteworthy that Charley, the person who witnessed him at close range in his home, used the word *dreamland* here. While Dickens was physically awake, his mind was dreaming, and he was seeing scenes of the novel rather than his son in front of him. This experience resembles the one Jasper has in the opening scene of the novel, though Dickens himself does not use opium here. Critics like Edmund Wilson in his classic essay “Dickens: The Two Scrooges” have noted the remarkable similarities between Dickens and Jasper (102). I here would like to

point out one more example of the affinity between them: their liminal perception. In the intermediate state between consciousness and sleep, both of them see something that has a close connection with the things they would like to achieve. My hypothesis is that like Jasper, who has a significant sleep-waking vision concerning his murder, Dickens, in the process of writing, sometimes saw things related to his novels in a similar liminal state and thus received inspiration for their writing.

As a matter of fact, there exists a picture which portrays this possibility: *Dickens's Dream* by Robert William Buss (Figure 1).



Figure 1: R. W. Buss, *Dickens's Dream*, 1875.

By kind permission of the Charles Dickens Museum.

Buss was a graphic artist who provided *The Pickwick Papers* with two illustrations after the sudden death of his predecessor Robert Seymour. However, he was soon replaced by a young artist, Hablot Knight Browne, also known as Phiz, and his two illustrations were subsequently replaced by Browne's. It is obvious that Buss was not happy about this, but he nevertheless remained a lifelong admirer of Dickens,⁶⁸ and near the end of his life he painted this picture.

According to Gerard Curtis, the picture is based on "a tradition" which "emerged of authors sequestered alone in their studies, often tempted by characters from their own imagination, characters who motivated them to the process of writing" (184); thus, this type of painting is not unusual. However, the author's state as portrayed in *Dickens's Dream* is both peculiar and remarkable when compared with other paintings of the same genre. Because of its title, we are apt to believe that it portrays the author dreaming, and Curtis mistakenly gives the following commentary on the picture: "*Dickens's Dream* by R. W. Buss shows Dickens asleep while his characters inhabit his library and float about his head" (184). However, the fact is that Dickens in the picture is not thoroughly asleep. As shown in Figure 2, his eyes are not completely shut but rather half open, for he is in the intermediate state between sleeping and waking.

⁶⁸ For example, Buss highly praises Dickens as "an eminent moralist and judge of character" and "a great master of humour" (82, 171).



Figure 2: *Dickens's Dream*. Detail of Figure 1 showing Dickens's eyes open.

There is one more relevant point to make about the picture. Since many characters seem to be pouring out of Dickens's head, some critics have tried to connect the picture with his conception of characters.⁶⁹ However, the images that surround the sleeping Dickens would more accurately be described as scenes, because they are obviously based on the illustrations of his novels. For example, if we compare the scene drawn just above Dickens's head in the picture (Figure 3) and the

⁶⁹ See, for instance, Leon Litvack (5-36), and Malcolm Andrews (69-89). Litvack acknowledges that the picture "includes elements of the Dickens illustrations to the novels and Christmas Books" (25) but does not try to connect the fact with the idea that Buss portrays the visual contents of Dickens's imagination.

illustration of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* by Luke Fildes (Figure 4), their similarity is obvious.



Figure 3: *Dickens's Dream*. Note the close resemblance between Figure 3 and Figure 4.



Figure 4: Luke Fildes, *Jasper's Sacrifices*, 1870.

There are many examples of this sort, clearly illustrating Buss's use of the illustrations of the novels as the basis for his picture. It may seem rather strange that a professional artist such as Buss did not attempt to adjust the images created by other artists to his own style, instead of depicting them just as they appeared in Dickens's books. Perhaps he was trying to show his great respect for the other illustrators.⁷⁰ However, it is perhaps more accurate to infer that Buss tried to portray scenes rather than characters here, and that the characters floating around the author's head in the picture reflect Dickens's great visual imagination in general. In short, the picture is a product of Buss's supposition that Dickens created his novels while having visions of his works in the sleep-waking state.

An examination of contemporary commentaries on Dickens's imagination will validate this theory. It is appropriate to begin with the question of how a vision, or an act of seeing things, had a bearing on Dickens's imagination. Arthur Helps argues that the author's imaginative power came from his tendency "to see more things in less time than any other men" (529). Thomas L. Jeffers demonstrates how Dickens's powers of careful observation helped him succeed as a writer (72). I do not doubt that Dickens was very observant like Sherlock Holmes, but in addition he had visionary power: the ability to see things others cannot. In his article "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," George

⁷⁰ Indeed, in his letter to Forster, Buss particularly praises Browne: "For Mr. Hablot Browne I have the greatest regard as an artist and illustrator of our great novelist." For further details of this letter, see J. W. T. Ley (104).

Henry Lewes, ascribing the author's greatness to his "vividness of imagination approaching so closely to hallucination" (144), maintains the following:

He was a seer of visions; [. . .] When he imagined a street, a house, a room, a figure, he saw it not in the vague schematic way of ordinary imagination, but in the sharp definition of actual perception, all the salient details obtruding themselves on his attention. He, seeing it thus vividly, made us also see it; and believing in its reality however fantastic, he communicated something of his belief to us. He presented it in such relief that we ceased to think of it as a picture. So definite and insistent was the image, that even while knowing it was false we could not help, for a moment, being affected, as it were, by his hallucination. (144-45)

As his use of the word *hallucination* suggests, Lewes tried to disparage Dickens's greatness, characterizing him as having an "*animal intelligence*" (151) which did little for sophisticated readers "beyond the stirring of their emotions" (154). His comment on Dickens's "seeing [. . .] vividly" is nevertheless valuable. Dickens himself repeatedly admitted to much the same thing. His son Henry Fielding Dickens cited his father's words on his creativity:

If you want your public to believe in what you do, you must believe in it yourself. So much is this the case with me that when I am describing a scene I can as distinctly see the people I am describing as I can see you now. (63)

Dickens claimed that he could see his own creations, and there are many examples of this kind. He once said, in a letter to John Forster, “I don’t invent it – really do not – *but see it*, and write it down” (*Letters* 2: 411). When he was writing *Little Dorrit*, he complained, “[M]y head really stings with the visions of the book” (Forster 2: 225). Working on *A Tale of Two Cities*, he said that he seemed to “see the story in a wonderful glass” (*Letters* 9: 90). When struggling with the idea of Doctor Marigold, he received an inspiration and said: “Suddenly, the little character that you will see, and all belonging to it, came flashing up in the most cheerful manner, and I had only to look on and leisurely describe it” (*Letters* 11: 105). “Dickens emphasizes,” notes Malcolm Andrews, “the strong visual presence of his spontaneously generated characters” (72).

Dickens regarded himself as a visualizer rather than a mere writer, as we sense from his working notes, as well. According to John Sutherland, Dickens first envisioned a full-blown picture of the scene in his mind, and wrote the word *picture* in his notes. Later, he simply filled in the details, describing what he had seen in words (“Visualizing Dickens” 113). Although Sutherland gives only three examples of this practice, many more can be found. For example, in his notes for Chapter 11 of *Little Dorrit*, Dickens wrote “Sunrise picture” (Philpotts 123); at the

corresponding point in the novel, he wrote, “the sun had raised his full disc above the flat line of the horizon, and was striking fire out of the long muddy vista of paved road with its weary avenue of little trees” (138). In his notes for Chapter 27, he wrote “Park Lane Picture” (Philpotts 289), which he described in the novel thus: “Parasite little tenements, with the cramp in their whole frame, from the dwarf hall-door [. . .] to the squeezed window of the boudoir [. . .] made the evening doleful” (330). In Chapter 12 of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, he wrote “Night Picture of the Cathedral” in his notes (Jacobson 105), and then wrote in the novel:

[T]he moonlight strikes in at the groined windows, bare of glass, the broken frames for which cast patterns on the ground. The heavy pillars which support the roof engender masses of black shade, but between them there are lanes of light. (125)

As a novelist he first envisioned his scenes in his mind, then briefly described them in his notes as “Picture,” and finally wrote out the full scenes in detail.

The next important question to consider is when Dickens had those creative visions. A possible answer to the question is that he saw them in the intermediate state between sleeping and waking. As a matter of fact, Dickens had the idea that we could see otherwise invisible things in a sleep-waking state. In his review of the book *The Nightside of Nature*, he noted that ghosts were often seen in the imperfect state of perception “between sleeping and waking,” and after the passage, he gave

the reader a detailed explanation of the state and revealed his strong interest in it (83). Perhaps it was in this state that he witnessed his own creations, and the remarkable episode of his being “in dreamland,” which his son Charley recorded, is a typical example of the way in which his liminal visions stimulated his creativity.

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, Dickens utilized sleeping and dreaming to accomplish his aim in each novel, and in that respect, they were indispensable for his creativity. My investigation in this chapter uncovers the possibility that the role of sleep-waking was much greater. Although it cannot be said that Dickens was always in this state when he was creatively engaged, we may conceive that sleep-waking was an important part of Dickens the writer, as Buss’s picture cleverly portrays.

Conclusion

As this thesis demonstrates, then, Dickens had a great interest in sleeping, dreaming, and sleep-waking, and described many scenes of great thematic and dramatic effect connected with these states in his novels. Clearly, Dickens's interest in sleeping, dreaming, and sleep-waking significantly contributed to his creativity. In the first four chapters of my thesis, I revealed how he utilized the descriptions of those states to achieve his narrative aims in *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge*, and *Little Dorrit*. In *Oliver Twist*, Oliver repeatedly falls asleep and survives adverse circumstances, while Sikes, who had originally been able to slumber, becomes sleepless after committing murder and dies, and Fagin is described as a sleepless devil, their sleep and sleeplessness highlighting the contrast between Good and Evil and the ultimate victory of the former. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Little Nell's journey is described as her quest for peaceful sleep, of which many male characters deprive her. Nell was modeled after Mary Hogarth, the most innocent woman for Dickens, and through the descriptions of Nell's sleep, sleeplessness, and sleep-like death, Dickens tries to make amends for Mary's death as well as to punish himself for harboring an illicit love for her. In *Barnaby Rudge*, Dickens's aspiration to write a historical

novel led to his sharply criticizing the Gordon Riots via his emphatic descriptions of people's sleeplessness caused by the rioters. In addition, by associating the word *rouse* with the descriptions of sleeplessness, he connects the structure of the novel to our sleep-wake cycle and underscores his view that history repeats itself.

Dickens's interest in sleep and dreams combined with his romantic dream about Maria Beadnell and its utter destruction, led him in *Little Dorrit* to complicate his heretofore dominant depiction of dreams seen while asleep with dreams seen while awake, or daydreams. *Little Dorrit*, in fact, is the first of his novels to explore both meanings of *dream* and their intersection, Dickens thereby creating a web of dreams throughout the novel that emphasizes the psychologically imprisoned states of his characters.

In this manner, Dickens utilized sleep and dreams in the novels written in different periods of his career, which indicates his lifelong interest in them. Their descriptions as well as their roles are not the same, and as we have seen, they became more intricate with time. Especially, the great difference between the descriptions of sleeping and dreaming in *Little Dorrit* and those in *Oliver Twist* reveals how Dickens became sophisticated in handling these elements to produce a more artistic work.

Moreover, as I demonstrate in Chapter 5, sleeping and dreaming contributed to Dickens's creative activities in a more fundamental way: he probably received inspiration for his novels in the intermediate state of consciousness, or that between sleeping and waking. The scrutiny of the

memorable descriptions of sleep-waking in his novels highlights how in each case the state enables characters to see visions of great import. It is not clear exactly how Dickens wrote his novels, but my examination of contemporary sources suggests the possibility that he found creative inspiration in the intermediate state between sleeping and waking while writing, as suggested in Buss's picture *Dickens's Dream*.

Here, by way of concluding my argument, I would like to return to my theory that Dickens gained inspiration from sleep-waking. Though I claim that sleep-waking helped Dickens the writer, he was not in full control of the creative process. We must note what happens to Jasper at the end of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. In Chapter 23, Jasper and Puffer have the following conversation in the opium den :

“Wait a little. This is a vision. I shall sleep it off. It has been too short and easy. I must have a better vision than this; this is the poorest of all. No struggle, no consciousness of peril, no entreaty – and yet I never saw *that* before.” With a start.

“Saw what, deary?”

“Look at it! Look what a poor, mean, miserable thing it is!

That must be real. It's over.” (248)

Just as he does in the opening scene, so he tries to see a vision of murder in sleep-waking here. Though we cannot fully comprehend the meaning of his words, we at least infer that he cannot see what he wants to see. Considering the similarity between Dickens and Jasper, we may gather

that Jasper's inability to see an important vision mirrors Dickens's experiences when trying to see sleep-waking visions for his writing. Like Jasper in the above scene, Dickens himself could not always see what he wanted to in the state. Charley Dickens sometimes heard his father complain that "he could not get the people of his imagination to do what he wanted, and that they would insist on working out their histories in their way and not his" ("Reminiscences" 120). Naturally, he tried to learn more about sleeping and dreaming in order to rectify the situation and to control it as he wished. He gathered many medical books on sleeping and dreaming, and tried to learn about these phenomena. In addition, he studied mesmerism, which induces an intermediate state of consciousness, and actually practiced it on his wife and others (Kaplan 70). Behind these actions must have lain Dickens's strong desire to grasp the source of his imagination and to firmly control its power.

As my Introduction explains, Dickens's deep interest in sleeping and dreaming dated back to the very early stage of his career as a writer. Perhaps his fascination with them derived from the fact that they had a special bearing on his imaginative creativity. For Dickens, understanding sleeping, dreaming, and sleep-waking meant understanding himself.

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