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Disability in Adaptations of Dickens

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Abstract

This thesis explores the potential for ethical exploration in response to the discourse of disability in the BBC adaptations of *Bleak House* (Chadwick and White, 2005), *Little Dorrit* (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008) and *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998). Any text that features disability has the potential to invoke ethical questioning if the reader/viewer allows it, and is aware of the issues that Disability Studies explores; as Hall points out: “Disability perspectives can transform understandings of structure, genre and narrative form” (Hall, 2016, p. 1). However, exploring longer, more sophisticated adaptations of Dickens where disability is represented (with a focus on the discourse of that disability) offers an increased potential for this ethical response to be invoked. Despite their reputation as immersive texts, the particular richness of examining disability in Dickens adaptations is, in part, due to their potential to focus on the marginal, thus prompting us to rethink our assumptions around normalcy and otherness. This thesis applies close reading and attention to affect, alongside Disability Studies perspectives, to show that, in Hall’s words, “[t]hese perspectives can destabilise established theoretical paradigms in literary criticism and provide a fresh, often provocative approach to analysing all literary texts” (Hall, 2016, p. 1).

Keywords

Dickens; adaptation; disability; precarity; grievability; dependency.

Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Introduction | p.3 |
| Chapter One: Staring and 'Face' in <i>Bleak House</i> | |
| Introduction | p. 13 |
| Smallweed | p. 17 |
| Esther | p. 29 |
| Additions and Omissions | p. 41 |
| Chapter Two: Precarity, Grievability and Dependency in <i>Little Dorrit</i> and <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> | |
| Introduction | p. 49 |
| Silas Wegg | p. 52 |
| Mrs Clennam | p. 58 |
| Jenny Wren | p. 63 |
| Maggy (and Sloppy too) | p. 70 |
| In Conclusion | p. 77 |
| Bibliography | p. 80 |
| Figures | p. 85 |
| Word Count – 24,940 | |

Introduction

There is a scene in the BBC's 1979 production of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Amyes, 1979) where Little Nell, the daughter of the eponymous shop's owner, has come reluctantly to deliver a letter to the universally hated Quilp, a usurer to whom Nell's grandfather is in heavy debt (Amyes, 1979, Ep. 1, 17:04). In this scene, Quilp, despite having a living wife, takes the opportunity to ask Little Nell to be the second Mrs Quilp. The adapted scene mirrors the corresponding scene in the novel with precision, in terms of narrative and dialogue, with Quilp biting "the nails of all his ten fingers with extreme voracity" (Dickens, 2001, p. 43) and asking Nell to be his "cherry-cheeked, red-lipped wife" just as he does in the novel. The adaptation makes full use of all of its non-linguistic capabilities to reinforce that Quilp, described by Dickens' biographer Ackroyd as a "rebarbative dwarf" (Ackroyd, 1990, p. 176), has earned his place in the Dickensian world of adult males with disabilities that Stoddard Holmes proposes "is peopled by a host of terrifying, leering old men with avarice, deception, and a smoggy sexuality hovering about them" (Stoddard Holmes, 2010, p. 95). The



Figure 1

daylight that makes its way into Quilp's grim quarters falls only onto Nell, emphasising her light-coloured costume with its delicate fabrics, in contrast to Quilp whose dense black suit and coarse dark hair is emphasised by the shadow in which he is filmed. Little Nell's stillness throughout the scene, set against Quilp's sudden movements towards and around her, emphasise her sense of being

captured, while the inter-dialogue silences in an otherwise heavily-orchestrated adaptation prompts us, as viewers, to hold our breath to see how Nell will counter this powerful villain. However, even here, where it would seem that goodness and badness could not be more unequivocally drawn, there are moments of disruption. A clear sense of hesitation and uncertainty passes across Quilp's face as he initiates his proposal with, "Would you give me an honest answer Nell?" (Amyes, 1979, Ep. 1, 18:13), and this uncertainty seems to descend into desperation as he stoops lower and lower as he moves around Nell until the posture is almost one of genuflection as seen in Figure 1.

Temporarily, there is enough discomfort for us to fall away from sole allegiance towards Nell, arguably the most sympathetic of all Dickens' characters for whom "the world wept" (Bloom, 2011, p. 219) when she died. Even if it is for a moment, Quilp is no longer the most grotesque of the "wild and grotesque companions around Little Nell" (Ackroyd, 1990, p. 184). The centre that is represented by Little Nell falls away to the margins represented by Quilp. The viewer finds themselves in a space where they might wonder about the social and psychological repercussions of living a life where one is hailed directly as "the ugliest dwarf that can be seen anywhere for a penny" (Amyes, 1979, Ep. 1, 20:21). We are faced with a response to a portrayal of disability that is not straightforward; rather, it simultaneously includes both empathy and antipathy, both drawing towards and turning away. Through experiences like this, because of a rupture in the discourse of normate (or that considered to be normal) and other, we have the opportunity to engage with a disruption of what we consider to be central and marginal and to challenge our assumptions around our conception of normalcy.

If the above adaptation, with its limited budget and, to our 21st century aesthetic, basic production values, has the potential for self-disruption, then it raises the question that more recent, more lengthy adaptations of Dickens, with exponentially bigger budgets, might have an even greater potential to disrupt and challenge our concepts of the central and the marginal and our allegiances to them. This thesis takes this question and applies it to three major, post-1998 BBC adaptations of

Dickens: *Bleak House* (Chadwick and White, 2005), *Little Dorrit* (Lawrence, Smith and Walsh, 2008) and *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998), all of which feature disability as part of their discourse. The following analysis reveals where and how this disruption and shift of focus occurs within these televisual texts.

Disability Studies is a relative newcomer to the world of critical humanities and so its terminology continues to change as it finds its place in this interdisciplinary area. Alongside this, the definitions around disability employed in the legal world, other academic disciplines and in wider cultural settings continually shift in relation to each other. This being the case, before turning to discuss approaching disability in terms of centrality and marginality, it is essential to discuss the frame of reference for what is meant by disability in this thesis. Critical Disability Studies experts, Alice Hall (2016) and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1997), both use the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as the basis for a workable understanding of the term, with Hall summarising the act's definition, saying that "[d]isability is understood in the act as an impairment that limits at least one life activity, or is perceived as doing so" (Hall, 2016, p. 5). The concept of having an impairment is a useful one when understood at a straightforward, pragmatic level, as Sunaura Taylor explains when she gives an example of her understanding of her own impairment in Astrid Taylor's video documentary of Sunaura's walk with Judith Butler: "For instance, there's a plum tree in my back yard and I can't pick the plums off of it. I have to wait for them to drop. And so there's that, there's that unique embodiment" (Taylor, 2009, p. 195). There are however two issues with using the term impairment without further unpacking it. Firstly, it needs to be acknowledged that the term has negative connotations in terms of general usage in the context of its dictionary definition of "the state of being impaired" (Merriam Webster, 2016) with Merriam Webster further defining 'impaired' as "being in a less than perfect or whole condition" (Merriam Webster, 2016). Secondly, attention needs to be given to the fact that by using the root 'impair' in its noun and adjectival forms in 'impairment' and 'impaired' respectively, we limit its implications to describing a state that we

attribute to a 'disabled' person. This is important because when we do this, we also run the risk of thinking of 'disability' and 'disabled' in terms of a person's state or a quality; we run the risk of overlooking the root verb 'disable'. This unpacking is not just a question of abstract semantics; rather, it is a question of the political because, when we reconsider the word 'disabled' as a reflexive version of a verb, we must consider the fact that a 'doer' outside of the disabled body is 'doing' the disabling. The related term of 'impediment' which is sometimes used as an alternative to the term 'disability' is an interesting one, because its accepted definition of "something that makes it difficult to do or complete something: something that interferes with movement or progress" (Merriam Webster, 2016) suggests a relationship with an 'impeding' force, something that acts to "interfere with or slow the progress of" (Merriam Webster, 2016). Like Alice Hall's work (2016), this thesis will still use the terms disabled and disability, having pointed out that they are problematic, because they are part of common parlance. However, it is useful to have explored the idea of somebody being 'disabled' as synonymous with them being 'impeded' when it comes to exploring areas of Dickens adaptations where impairment is a feature. Using this perspective helps us to think about what Judith Butler describes when she explores the idea of what a "body *can* do" in her conversation with Sunaura Taylor (Taylor, 2009, p. 191 (my italics)). Through Butler's destabilisation of the word 'can', highlighting its alternative meaning of 'is permitted to' rather than 'is functionally capable of', Butler reminds us that being disabled is a question of context and relationship rather than a straightforward evaluation of physical state.

The question of context and relationship is essential to unpacking the ideas of centrality and marginality in relationship to disability, whether (in this case) it is in the context of adaptations of Dickens' novels, or in other cultural contexts. Even if we are aware of the fact that the disablement of a person comes about in the context of their particular impairment being accommodated or integrated within their social and cultural setting, we still perceive of disability as a marginal state. As queer theorist Robert McRuer attests that, "able-bodiedness [...] still largely masquerades as non-

identity, as the natural order of things” (2006, p. 13). Here, the implication is that we see ‘disable-bodiedness’ as the unnatural order of things; we perceive it as being on the ‘wrong’ side of the binary divide. Particularly if we see ourselves as inhabiting the able-bodied side of this perceived binary, we will find discomfort when the firmness of that binary is challenged or disrupted. Despite our desire for certainty however, the fragility of the distinction between able-bodiedness and disability, as well as the definition of disability itself, is increasingly exposed as the cultural context of disability changes and as disciplines like Disability Studies and the Medical Humanities create new dialogue. For instance, there is an increasing overlap between the perception of chronic illness and of disability caused by a congenital condition or a specific pathological event (like an accident). This makes disability a far more movable concept in terms of its parameters and in terms of to whom it might apply; as Hall says:

[D]isability is fluid: a person can become disabled suddenly, temporarily, and at any time in their lives. Disabilities can be invisible and most disabilities are acquired over the course of a lifetime rather than from birth. If we all occupy a position on a multidimensional gradient of ability, some of the linguistic distinctions between ‘disabled’ and ‘non-disabled’ become less certain. (Hall, 2016, p. 6)

With this decrease in certainty comes the opportunity for increased awareness of the arbitrary nature of our othering, of the idea that “being disabled, or having the potential to become disabled, is an aspect of identity and embodiment that all human beings share” (Hall, 2016, p. 6). Through destabilising the concept of disability as a medical fact or attribute, we are more likely to see its more valid cultural and political function to, in Garland-Thomson’s terms “move disability from the realm of medicine into that of political minorities, to recast it from a form of pathology to a form of ethnicity” (1997, p. 6). By seeing ourselves (or others, if we identify as being disabled) as ‘normal’, we privilege a culturally constructed term; as Lennard Davis points out “normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person” (Davis, 2009, p. 1).

Interestingly, McRuer's proposition is also suggestive of the previously explored idea that the marginal can become central. By pointing out the non-identity of able-bodiedness, McRuer implies an 'identity' of its perceived opposite, however fragile the construction of that opposite is. This matters in relation to the narrative qualities of literary texts where disability is featured. In our process of interpretation we are drawn to that which feels 'identified' in order to make sense of what we encounter. In this way, the positive identification of perceived disability (however unfavourable or imbalanced the perception is) brings disability to the fore, leaving able-bodiedness unnoticed. It brings the margins to the centre. Arguably, this is particularly liable to happen in even lengthy adaptations of Dickens, where the length of the original novel necessitates compression and elision in all aspects, including those of portraying disability.

Any text that features disability has the potential to produce the kind of questioning resulting from destabilisation discussed here, if the reader/viewer allows it and is aware of the issues that Disability Studies explore; as Hall points out: "Disability perspectives can transform understandings of structure, genre and narrative form" (Hall, 2016, p. 1). Exploring longer, more sophisticated adaptations of Dickens through the lens of a focus on disability offers an increased potential for this transformation to happen, despite their reputation as immersive texts, and to allow the recognition that "[t]hese perspectives can destabilise established theoretical paradigms in literary criticism and provide a fresh, often provocative approach to analysing all literary texts" (Hall, 2016, p. 1). The particular richness of examining disability in Dickens adaptations is, in part, due to their potential to centralise the marginal as discussed earlier, but also due to the manner in which disability is contextualised in Dickens and in related adaptations.

In contemporary society, part of marking disability as being 'not' able-bodiedness is accentuated and crystallised by the emphasis given to diagnosis and to 'naming' a perceived impairment. This naming is largely lacking in Dickens and in related adaptations: we do not know with what conditions

Smallweed from *Bleak House* (Dickens, 1985), Maggy from *Little Dorrit* (Dickens, 2003) or Jenny Wren from *Our Mutual Friend* (Dickens, 1971) would be labelled. This non-naming of ailments has an unsettling potential for the modern reader/viewer. We might search for a label or diagnosis and find none or more than one, as we might well with Smallweed or Maggy; alternatively, we might arrive at something credible, such as a diagnosis of spina bifida for Jenny Wren. In either case, because the texts we are engaging with express themselves without the need for labels or diagnoses, we are challenged to ask ourselves why it is so important to us to pin down, and so further 'other', the portrayal of disability with which we are presented.

A parallel proposition can be applied to the fact that any Dickens adaptation will be perceived to some degree as historical in that we expect and accept that a specific sense of period (in this case, Victorian) is being evoked. This is important in relation to the idea of context and of the significance of shifting from the dominant perspective to being aware that a person who possesses an impairment is 'disabled' by their societal and environmental context. For instance, if we see Smallweed being carried through cobbled streets or Mrs Clennam isolated at the top of three rickety flights of stairs, we are perhaps more likely to see those streets or stairs as 'disabling' because of our specific understanding of the historicised setting. We are more likely to see (if we think of ourselves as able-bodied) that, as Butler says, "maybe we have a false idea that the able-bodied person is somehow radically self-sufficient" (Taylor, 2009, p. 187), and that although "disabled people are perceived as more dependent [...] in actuality we are all interdependent, that is, dependent on different structures and on each other" (Taylor, 2009, p. 187). Although this thesis focuses on what Dickens' adaptations have the potential to *do* in terms of their potential for viewer engagement rather than exploring their representation of a particular historical context, it does acknowledge that context. It is important to recognise when a sense of period or historical knowledge is likely to alter or contribute to our understanding of a text and, where this is the case, this thesis seeks to recognise the value of historical context.

Adaptations have their own relationship with centrality and marginality, with normate and otherness, that makes them interesting candidates for examination, particularly when part of what they explore through adapting is centrality and marginality itself: in this case disability and able-bodiedness. In the case of adaptations this is not about social or medical marginality, as it is with disability, but about marginality in relation to priority (from a chronological point of view) and primariness (in the sense of importance). Both of these aspects of minority are alluded to by Rachel Carroll when she proposes that “[a]ll adaptations express or address a desire to return to an ‘original’ textual encounter” (Carroll, 2009, p.1). This statement recognises the implied centrality of the adapted work, both its chronological centrality as something prior that is being ‘returned’ to, and its canonical status of centrality by virtue of being the ‘original’. However, Carroll goes on to point out that “every ‘return’ is inevitably transformative of its object” (Carroll, 2009, p.1), thus endowing the adaption with a new centrality; it is no longer the slave to a revered original, but a conjurer producing the rabbit of the adapted work from her adapting hat. Carroll also challenges the very assumption that there is an automatic case to be made for an original text with a directly dependent adaptation, pointing out the relational fragility between that which is adapted and that which adapts by describing an intertextual context which is more of a many-centred web than a two-way relationship:

[A]ny screen adaptation is available to be viewed by someone with no prior knowledge of the literary text. It is also important to note that screen adaptations do not work in a cultural vacuum; the film or television version dramatises the literary text in intertextual relation to other, prior adaptations of the same or similar texts. (Carroll, 2009, p. 5)

What is important about this, particularly with regard to exploring the effect and affect of the treatment of disability in Dickens adaptations is that it infers that there is a limited value to producing a straightforward comparison of the novel and the adapted text, and particularly of treating the ‘original’ novel as a base with the authority that originality implies. Linda Hutcheon

speaks about her seminal work, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Hutcheon, 2006), in an interview for the television programme 'Books on Film' (Hutcheon, 2011). In this interview, Hutcheon extends Carroll's argument against the hierarchical assumptions around adaptations to say that, for her, the disruption of that hierarchy results in a sense of palimpsestuous ambivalence:

It's like watching a palimpsest. There's sort of two things going on, and what's happening for me is that I'm oscillating between them. [...] I've always got that nicely doubled experience where there are two layers happening at once. (Hutcheon, 2011, 1:51)

One of the central tenets of this thesis is that there is great potential for engagement where there is potential for ambivalence in the discourse of disability, so the idea that there is an innate quality of palimpsestuous ambivalence in an adaptation is important. It is also important to acknowledge that viewers' experience of what Hutcheon calls 'layers' will differ from viewer to viewer and, from an intertextual point of view, will be dependent on their overall cultural experience and expectations. However, in the case of an adapted novel, the form that these 'layers' takes will depend on the viewer's knowledge or lack of knowledge of the adapted novel; for instance, one viewer may know *Bleak House* (Dickens, 1985) intimately while another may not know it at all. In the case of Dickens however, because of the prevalence of adaptations of his work, and because there is a generalised sense of the 'Dickensian', all viewers will have the sense of a 'novelistic' and neo-Victorian 'layer', which will exist for them alongside their experience of the adaptation, thus providing a sense of duality whatever the viewer's knowledge of the 'primary' text.

A range of critical material alongside close reading is applied to the examined texts in order to explore the discourse of the normalcy and otherness in relation to disability in the adaptations discussed. Alongside conventional close reading of how the televisual narrative is discoursed, the notion of 'affect' is applied to explore where there are instances of intensity and altered or ambivalent dynamic. Although the application of affect theory is growing and being used within critical theory in increasingly sophisticated and specific ways, affect here is used in its simplest sense,

as set out by Shouse in his paper 'Feeling, Emotion, Affect' (Shouse, 2005), to refer to experience that is non-linguistic or pre-linguistic. Citing the power of affect is, of course, particularly relevant when exploring a televisual text, with its implicit features of sound, vision and the kinetic. In Chapter One, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's concept of 'staring' at those we consider other is utilised, together with Judith Butler's appropriation of Levinas' notion of the 'face' of the other to apply to the particularly visceral and visual treatment of disability in *Bleak House* (Chadwick and White, 2005). In Chapter Two, Butler's concepts of 'precarity', 'grievability' and 'interdependency' (concepts to which she relates that of 'face'), together with Eva Feder Kittay's thought around dependency and care, are used to apply to the discourse of the disabled characters in *Little Dorrit* (Lawrence, Smith and Walsh, 2008) and *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998). The intention of this critical approach is to harness ideas that usefully address the concepts of normalcy and otherness in order to see what these adaptations *do* with regard to disrupting the central and the marginal, and what *happens* when that disruption occurs. If that can be identified, then we can demonstrate the potential for a mainstream adaptation of a canonical work (despite its susceptibility to shore up dominant assumptions around the centrality of able-bodiedness and the marginality of disability) to challenge the place and portrayal of disability and, in so doing, to challenge our assumptions and ethical stance around disability.

Chapter One: Staring and 'Face' in *Bleak House*

Introduction

That we *watch* a televisual adaptation goes without saying. It feels almost too mundane to mention; yet, the fact that a visual text provides the opportunity for looking, and in particular for staring, is crucial when it comes to the treatment of disability, and to the potential resulting challenge to the marginality of disability in an adaptation. This chapter takes what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson would call the 'starability' of the 2005 BBC's adaptation of *Bleak House* (Chadwick and White, 2005) as the starting point to discuss its particular potential to engage with the marginal. Although visibility is foregrounded in this chapter, as it is in the adaptation itself, the argument for the effectiveness of the visual extends to include the auditory and the kinetic in their companion cry of 'look at me' when it comes to marginality. What is important is that in this production of *Bleak House*, we are brought face-to-face with aspects of impediment in a vivid and visceral way. Because of this, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's treatise on staring (Garland-Thomson, 2009), considered together with Judith Butler's take on Levinas' thought on the implications of encountering the 'face' of another (Butler, 2004) are an appropriate and productive place to begin.

It is Garland-Thomson's work that proposes that the act of staring can be an act of visual curiosity that is productive and that has the potential for self-reflection. Referring to bodies that might be considered disabled or disfigured as 'extraordinary', in the sense that they are culturally non-ordinary, Garland-Thomson argues that engaging with an encounter with a body that we perceive as different can begin with actively engaging with the impulse to stare:

We stare when ordinary seeing fails, when we want to know more. So staring is an interrogative gesture that asks what's going on and demands the story. The eyes hang on, working to recognize what seems illegible, order what seems unruly, know what seems

strange. Staring begins as an impulse that curiosity can carry forward into engagement.

(Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 3)

This idea of the 'interrogative', Garland-Thomson argues, needs to be coupled with an intentional intensity to separate staring from ordinary looking: "Staring is a more forceful form of looking than glancing, glimpsing, scanning, and other forms of casual looking. Staring is profligate interest, stunned wonder, obsessive ocularity [...]" (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 13). Garland-Thomson further defines staring by distinguishing it from the Lacanian concept of the gaze which, although it shares staring's intensity, does not share staring's sense of marginality and difference in its fixing on the 'other': "We may gaze at what we desire, but we stare at what astonishes us" (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 13). If our seeing of the unexpected other is propelled by curiosity to go beyond cursory looking, and if what we see does not resonate with our sense of lack (which would prompt us to engage in the Lacanian 'gaze' of desire), then recognising and engaging with the act of staring, whether the stare is at a physical body or a representation of one, can become a deliberate (and ethical) act of connection.

Engaging with an encounter with the face or body of another is an important aspect of Butler's reading of Levinas' concept of 'face' (Butler, 2006, p. xviii). Briefly, according to Butler, Levinas sees an encounter with the face (or body) of another as a reminder both of our capacity for violence towards another and of our ethical tendency to recognise the vulnerability of the other and not to act violently. With regard to the applicability to the discourse of disability of Butler's take on Levinas, it is important to stress that the term 'face' extends to an engagement with the immediate and bodily sense of another's vulnerability; we must be aware that "[t]he Levinasian face is not precisely or exclusively a human face, although it communicates what is human, what is precarious, what is injurable" (Butler, 2004, p. xviii). According to Levinas, we need to be reminded of the potential to kill, implicit in the biblical command 'Thou shalt not kill', in order to recognise our obligation to another. Butler develops this idea to propose, like Garland-Thomson, that the direct

encounter with the other can bring us up short in a productive way precisely because it may be difficult for us to interpret:

The “face” of the other cannot be read for a secret meaning, and the imperative it delivers is not immediately translatable into a prescription that might be linguistically formulated and followed. (Butler, 2004, p. 131)

Despite, indeed because of, the non-linguistic or pre-linguistic nature of this direct encounter, there is space to recognise and to consider our ethical impulse towards another: “It seems to be that the “face” of what he calls the “Other” makes an ethical demand upon me, and yet we do not know which demand it makes” (Butler, 2004, p. 131). This returns us to Garland-Thomson’s idea of the productive nature of engaged curiosity. Allowing ourselves to stare and, just as importantly, recognising the affects and stories that accompany our impulse to stare, allows us to interrogate and respond to our assumptions about what we perceive as marginal to ourselves. We begin to question, and so dissolve, the boundaries that keep us central and the other marginal when, “[t]riggered by the sight of someone who seems unlike us, staring can begin an exploratory expedition into ourselves and outward into new worlds” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 6). Garland-Thomson goes on to argue that this ‘outward expedition’ can result in our re-assessing ourselves in the light of what we believed to be other: “[W]e are offer[ed] an occasion to rethink the status quo. Who we are can shift into focus by staring at who we think we are not” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 6). Although using the differing concepts of encountering the ‘face’ of another and ‘staring’ at another, both Butler and Garland-Thomson propose that engagement with the face or body of another (even the fictionally discourses face or body of another), if that engagement is visceral and deliberate, has the capacity to result in an ethical response to that other.

Of all the adaptations considered in this thesis, *Bleak House* (Chadwick and White, 2005) is the most visually self-conscious, arguably the most visually commanding, and thus, in Garland-Thomson’s terms, the most ‘starable’ (Garland-Thomson, 2009). The BBC’s 2005 version of *Bleak House*,

directed by Justin Chadwick and Susanna White with screenplay by Andrew Davies, was the first television drama to be shot in high definition format (Giddings, 2006). Exploiting the clarity of this format has evoked the disapproval of critics such as Jefferson Hunter, author of *English Filming English Writing* (Hunter, 2010). Hunter champions the foregrounded foggy exteriors of the 1985 BBC adaptation of *Bleak House* (Hopcraft, 1985), echoed by the “gauzily illuminated” interiors (Hunter, 2010, p. 178). He bemoans the lack of fog in the 2005 adaptation, claiming that “any adaptor would” (Hunter, 2010, p. 171) want to include it to reflect “the fog of Chancery, spreading out through all classes of society like a miasma, a disease of obfuscation and delay” (Hunter, 2010, p. 172). What Hunter sees as the 2005 adaptation’s loss, Giddings sees as its gain. Telling us that “[t]here wasn’t much fog. But there was so very much more” (Giddings, 2006, p. 65), and referring to the fog of the 1985 adaptation as “yellowish murk” (Giddings, 2006, p. 65), Giddings defends the clarity given by the use of high definition that “gave us very effective use of close-ups, allowing the actors to make full and subtle use of facial expression” and that made “[t]he clinging dampness of Chesney Wold [...] almost palpable” (Giddings, 2006, p. 66). Giddings also draws attention to another of the 2005 adaptation’s features by citing the “liquidity of the narrative” achieved despite, or alongside, what he terms the “whiz-bang-clump jumpcutting as we moved locations” (Giddings, 2006, p. 67). This foregrounding of a change of camera shot, often accompanied by an audible, non-diegetic ‘clunk’ in the adaptation is not limited to changes between scenes. It is utilised heavily within scenes, jumping in perspective through long, mid and close-up shots as well as jumping from one angle to another. This self-reflexive use of the camera not only reminds us that it is the use of the camera that offers us different perspectives; it also reminds us that we are viewers. By prompting us in a candid way that we are onlookers through the lens that we are offered, this adaptation of *Bleak House* helps to facilitate us to be starers, especially when presented with the ‘face’ of those that we experience as marginal,

Smallweed

Smallweed, the debt collector and moneylender in *Bleak House* is reportedly Andrew Davies' favourite character (Carroll, 2009, p. 117), which is reflected in the relish with which he is represented. In Smallweed, we see an example of an embodiment that commands our attention, as well as one that commands and demands attention within the adapted narrative itself.

Visually and kinaesthetically, Smallweed is rendered in a highly starable way, with Giddings hailing Phil Davis' performance as "gloriously hideous" (Giddings, 2006, p. 68). Away from the bright, clear mid-tones of *Bleak House* and the rural exteriors, the palette for this adaptation could be described as 'Rembrandtian', with its dense ochres, creams, maroons and tobacco browns. It is this colour scheme that supplies the dense opacity (symbolised by the original novel's "foggy glory" (Dickens, 1985, p. 21)) to chancery, Tulkinghorn's offices, the Dedlocks' homes and Krook's premises in particular, all of which are locations that, in their own way, hold secrets and hinder transparency. If *Bleak House* can be described in terms of an oil painting then, for the depiction of Smallweed,



Figure 2

the paint is still gleaming. His rendition emphasises the bodily, with close-ups that emphasise his wild hair, spittle-covered yellow teeth and visible perspiration. Adding further visual emphasis, he is

often lit by a light-source that is not logically produced by the interior environment in which he is shown. For instance, in Krook's shop, after Krook's infamous death from internal combustion, Smallweed sorts through letters in an interior that is shown as having daylight coming through a small window to the fore of him and a candle behind and to the left of him (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.12, 6:12). The focused lighting that comes from above and to the right of him does not make sense of the interior; rather, it makes Smallweed's face all the more starable, emphasising the redness of his face, discoloured teeth and sneering grin (Figure 2). By being, on the face of it, so viscerally remarkable in comparison to other characters in the adaptation and to ourselves, Smallweed's starability has the capacity to engage us long enough to remind us that there might be a dichotomy in seeing teeth that yellow, skin that reddens and limbs that fail, and judging them to be other.

Another aspect of Smallweed's portrayal and his ensuing starability is that, in the scenes where he plays a major part, he is often presented in close up and with his face straight to the camera. This is



Figure 3

unusual in the context of the characters that we see as negative. Both the reptilian lawyer

Tulkinghorn, played by Charles Dance in a performance described by a New York Times review as “elegantly malevolent” (Stanley, 2005), and the virtue-free Krook (Johnny Vegas) are shown for the most part in three-quarter or profile shots. Smallweed, however, is often seen from the point of view of his interlocutor. As seen in Figure 3, he stares at us accusingly, making us conscious that we are staring at him and prompting a sense of what Garland-Thomson would call the “interrogative” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 3). We find ourselves unnerved by this direct encounter, at once intimidated, repulsed and curious, caught between the impulse to keep staring and to break the tension by looking away.

Kinaesthetically, Smallweed is drawn in an often rapid and vigorous way. Our first encounter with him is his being carried through the streets by his sedan-bearers (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 5, 14:10). The scene jumps from long shots, which emphasise the distance over which Smallweed is being carried at speed, to mid shots, all with juddering hand-held camera work reflecting his jolted journey over the cobbles. His entry is from right to left, interrupting the natural inclination of our (Western) eye to read from left to right, thus inducing a visceral unease in us as viewers. Although he is seemingly immobile from the waist down, Smallweed’s movements are sharp and quick, whether he is pointing an accusing arthritic finger or searching for letters with which to blackmail people. The co-existence of the vigorous and the physically compromised within one person is also present in the novel’s representation of Smallweed (Dickens, 1985, p. 253); however, in the novel, the adaptation’s sense of kinaesthetic ambivalence is presented as a lifelessness that is occasionally driven by malice into liveliness which then subsides:

This tends to the discomfiture of Mr. Smallweed, who finds it so difficult to resume his object, whatever it may be, that he becomes exasperated and secretly claws the air with an impotent vindictiveness expressive of an intense desire to tear and rend the visage of Mr. George. As the excellent old gentleman's nails are long and leaden, and his hands lean and veinous, and his eyes green and watery; and, over and above this, as he continues, while he

claws, to slide down in his chair and to collapse into a shapeless bundle, he becomes such a ghastly spectacle [...] (Dickens, 1985, p. 329)

The ambivalence of the adaptation's treatment of Smallweed's bodily power, combined with the attention that he commands overall, force us to engage with what this ambivalence might mean to us. Of course, what it means will mean different things to different viewers but, if we see ourselves as central and if we associate centrality with bodily vigour, then being presented concurrently with weakness and strength in a package that we view as otherness will be problematic and arresting.

The arresting and discomfiting affect of Smallweed extends to the auditory. Like the kinaesthetic rendering, the auditory representation is dynamic and forceful. We actually hear Smallweed's voice before we first see him. His thunderous tones invade the final moments of a scene of John Jarndyce's silent reflection in his growlery before the visual editing takes us to the street scene in which we meet Smallweed (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 5, 14:25). We are loudly reminded that we are not in charge of our engagement with Smallweed; he hijacks our ears without our permission or will. In terms of music and non-diegetic instrumental sound, *Bleak House* is fairly lightly orchestrated in comparison with *Little Dorrit* (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008) and *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998). The main composed musical elements of the soundtrack come, as is typical for period dramas, from the title theme and from themes reserved for major and 'good' characters, such as the sweet-toned theme that accompanies Richard and Ada's blossoming romance (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 5, 14:58). In keeping with this auditory trend for *Bleak House*, non-diegetic sound that does not fall into the category of title music is not used extensively either. The sound of a bowed gong is used sparingly to accompany situations of tension or danger and, up until our introduction to Smallweed is used exclusively for Tulkinghorn, arguably the most dangerous and powerful character in the novel. Notably, this orchestral trope is used in several of Smallweed's scenes to evoke his menace. Played slowly and dissonantly, the sound reflects a sense of the unknown and, through its musical ambivalence, produces an affective uncertainty in us as

viewer/listeners. Because of its evocative properties, the sound of a bowed gong is often used to denote malevolent characters in film and television and so, in itself, its use cannot be argued as being particularly significant in relation to Smallweed. Nevertheless, the unusual length of time for which the sound of the instrument is sustained, together with the connotative association that the sound has with the evil Tulkinghorn, combine to amplify the sense of tension and are worth noting. Diegetically, and perhaps most importantly, we hear the sound of the “alarming spinal creakings” (Giddings, 2006, p. 68) of Smallweed’s body when he is shaken up by Judy. We are reminded that we are in the presence of a being, albeit a fictional one, in skeletal disrepair and chronic pain. Even if it is for a moment, we are forced to engage with Smallweed’s distress, and to empathise with his repeated cry of “Oh my bones!” with empathy rather than deflection. Through affective engagement, we are faced with the strange ambivalence of the concurrent foregrounding and diminishing (due to the pantomimic aspects of its display) of Smallweed’s physical pain. Smallweed’s continued exclamations of pain, when they are accompanied by the sound (and facial expressions) of a body in pain force us to forego the severance of fellow-feeling because pain, as Elaine Scarry explains, has the unique potential to “bestow[...] visibility on the structure and enormity of what is usually private and incommunicable” (Scarry, 1985, p. 26). By hearing Smallweed’s body, even if we are unwilling to engage with the idea of him as a relatable person, we become aware of the sense of a bodily adjacency that can give rise to an ethical response, that Butler, in *Frames of War* would call “unwilled [...]proximity” (Butler, 2009, p. 30).

Although affect is often understood as being associated with the pre-linguistic or non-linguistic, Smallweed’s dialogue is highly commanding and very affective. Smallweed’s language in the adaptation is based closely on that of the novel (Dickens, 1985), including his catch phrases “Beelzebub beast” and, of course, “Shake me up Judy!” (Chadwick and White, 2005). So much of Smallweed’s language relates to bodily violence that it is easy to see its potential to produce visceral discomfort in the viewer. In the scene where Smallweed is talking to Tulkinghorn of Sergeant

George's debts, Smallweed's vehement desire to "tear his head off", "smash him to pieces", "tear him limb from limb" and "squeeze [the money] out of him like blood out of an orange" (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 6, 7:05) is affectively palpable. These sustained and frantic phrases, that infer that bodies are fragile and can be compared to inanimate matter or objects, are contrasted in this scene with Tulkinghorn's cool-toned and measured replies, which only amplifies their affective resonance. Auditory, visual and kinaesthetic aspects of Smallweed have already been broadly discussed in relation to his affect, but it is worth returning to them in discussing Phil Davis' delivery of Smallweed's speech. Smallweed's East End London accent is delivered in low, gruff and urgent tones that are never far away from shouting. Close-ups of faces are frequently used in *Bleak House*, but extreme close-ups are reserved for Smallweed in full verbal flow (Figure 4). They give a vivid power to his speech when we can see the urgency of his stare and literally see Davis spit forth his



Figure 4

rough and colourful lines. While this language and delivery forces our attention to Smallweed, its violence also invokes a simultaneous impulse to turn away from him, marking him as a fear-inducing other. The language used of and to Smallweed by others complicates this. He is variously described as 'that beast', a 'blood-sucker' or 'that devil' by Tulkinghorn, Sergeant George, and Gridley (Chadwick and White, 2005), but it is perhaps the passage where he is intimidated by the pragmatic

policeman, Bucket into giving up the newly-found Jarndyce and Jarndyce will that is the most discomfiting. Bucket moves close to Smallweed's face, a gesture made more intimidating by his leaning in from his standing position (unachievable by Smallweed) to glower over him. Bucket then reminds Smallweed of a moral tale of a pig who came to a bad end "on account of his having too much cheek" (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 12, 12:22). This segment is brief, but is nevertheless remarkable for the intensity of dialogue from the usually more prosaic Bucket, and also because it is not taken from the novel. In this specific and deliberate addition to Dickens' dialogue, through Bucket's sudden and uncharacteristic act of verbal aggression, we may be brought up short to recognise our own visceral aggression towards Smallweed, driven in part by uneasiness at his otherness.

To adapt a Dickens novel, even for a lengthier adaption such as *Bleak House*, requires transformation in the form of conflation and omission with regard to the narrative. In the case of Smallweed, together with his sidekick niece Judy, he is the conflation of a family of four in the novel (Dickens, 1985, p. 253). Bart Smallweed, the grandson of 'Grandfather Smallweed' (known simply as Smallweed in the adaptation) and his grandmother, whose main role in the novel is to throw cushions at and be punched by Grandfather Smallweed, are omitted entirely. No mention is made of the grandmother, and necessary narrative parts of Bart's role (which includes introducing Richard Carstone to the joys of London and to lobster and lettuce (Dickens, 1985, p. 240)), are given to the feckless and lovelorn law-writer's clerk, Guppy. That Smallweed the moneylender is the primary survivor of the original narrative nods to his increased status in the adapted one. Smallweed's narrative conflation is accompanied by an increase in his physical size and presence in the BBC adaptation of *Bleak House*. In the novel, and in keeping with the glorious apposition of Dickens' naming of character, Smallweed is both small and weedy, "like a broken puppet" with "spindle legs" (Dickens, 1985, p. 255). Book illustrations are adaptations of their own from the original text and, interestingly, most illustrations for the novel exaggerate rather than oppose the diminutive nature of

Dickens' Smallweed. The most famous and most contemporary of Dickens' illustrators, Phiz, dwarfs Smallweed by drawing him in a huge porter's chair (Phiz, 1852a) and by surrounding him by taller, standing characters (Figure 5), while the more contemporary Mervyn Peake physically diminishes



Figure 5



Figure 6

Smallweed by crumpling him into an even more huge chair (Peake, 1948), with only his head and 'spindle legs' visible (Figure 6). In the BBC's *Smallweed*, we have an altogether bigger and more vigorous figure. Although there is an opacity to his bodily form below the neck (we cannot see the shape or form of his trunk or legs beneath his layers of rugs and wrappings), Smallweed's 'smallness' is not transferred into this adaptation. Smallweed's undiminished body actually becomes inflated by its transposition in the adapted narrative, both through his paraphernalia and his retinue; he is almost always shown in a sedan chair or large wooden armchair, and is always carried by two people which, especially in mid-shots as shown in Figure 7, gives him a three-headed quality (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 5, 14:30). Alongside this, Smallweed is often accompanied by his granddaughter, Judy, who is by far the most engaging and the most effective of his augmentations. In the adaptation, we never see Judy appear in her own right, and do not even hear her speak until one of

the final scenes that she shares with her grandfather, when they are looking through Krook's letters in search of Lady Dedlock's love letters (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.12, 6:12). Beyond Smallweed's introduction of Judy as his granddaughter we see nothing of her life and history,



Figure 7

whereas, in the novel, despite the fact that she is drawn in a largely cross and unlikable way, we do learn that Judy “never owned a doll, never heard of Cinderella, never played at any game” (Dickens, 1985, p. 255). Because of this one-dimensional link with Smallweed, it is easy to see Judy as an extension of (as well as for) him. Delight and glee, even at unpleasant triumphs are not readily communicable by Smallweed's sneering and pain-worn face, but they are by Judy's mobile and open one. In scenes where Judy's face is presented adjacent to Smallweed's through consecutive editing, or where her face appears above Smallweed's in the same shot (shots of the act of 'shaking up' are a prime example here) then Judy's expressions act as a conduit to Smallweed's emotional display. Despite the potential to see Smallweed and Judy as a pantomimic pair (even Judy's name has the intertextual connection with the puppet villain Punch), Judy augments Smallweed's character and nature leading to his being complex and more ambivalent. Finally, with regard to conflation, Smallweed's presence is augmented by what intertextuality scholar, Mary Orr, would call “discursive intertext” (Orr, 2003, p. 43). Phil Davis is a seasoned actor, well known for parts in films critically considered to be ahead of their time, including his part as Chalky in *Quadrophenia* (Roddam, 1979)

and as Cyril in Mike Leigh's *High Hopes* (Leigh, 1988). Even (or especially) if it is subliminal, our association of these roles (if we do know of them) with our experience of Smallweed will detract from any sense of the pantomimic by adding a sense of grittiness and modernity.

Smallweed's mobility is a feature of his transformation in the adaptation that provides us with challenges to how we more generally view mobility and immobility in those we see as able-bodied and disabled. An important omission in the BBC's *Bleak House* is that of the Smallweeds' home (Dickens, 1985, p. 253). In the novel, the family home of the Smallweeds is the main site of the activity of Grandfather Smallweed (Smallweed in the adaptation), with his debtors coming to him and with most of his plotting and machinations happening at his hearthside. On first consideration, it would seem that depriving Smallweed of his home might be an act of straightforward dispossession. As Danahay discusses in the context of Esther's role as housekeeper in his article 'Housekeeping and Hegemony in *Bleak House*', the metaphor of the home as one of stability in *Bleak House* is central to the novel (Danahay, 1991, p. 416). This metaphor is central, too, to the BBC's adaptation, with emphasis being given to the instability of the security of one's home if one is less socially stable; Miss Flite's eviction for late payment of rent, with her precious birds being dumped in the alley, is treated with pathos, as is Sergeant George's threatened eviction and Mr Gridley's actual one for non-payment of debts (Chadwick and White, 2005). However, although Smallweed is instrumental in two of these three cases and although we do not ever see him at home (indeed perhaps because of this), we never associate his peripatetic behaviour with a lack of stable place. Despite being unable to walk, or seemingly move at all below the shoulders, Smallweed's mobility is fast and forceful. He goes wherever he likes and makes a fast and forceful entry, exemplified by his introduction to us when he enters Tulkinghorn's offices (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 5, 14:30) and his boisterous entry into the inquest into Krook's death (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 23:35). Although Smallweed is discoursed in a way that makes us sympathise with those who would prefer him not to enter into shared space with them, the BBC's Smallweed does not go anywhere

that he ought not to have a right to go, which makes Butler's thoughts on the freedom of assembly relevant (Butler, 2006). Referring to the difficulties of assembly for those considered to be minority groups, she asks, "If you saw me on such a protest line, would you wonder how a postmodernist was able to muster the necessary "agency" to get there today? I doubt it. You would assume that I had walked or taken the subway!" (Butler, 2006, p. 48). Although Butler is talking about political activism (which description could not be extended to Smallweed's motivation), her point is that although we might have a theoretical right of assembly in public places, that our ability to engage with public spaces can differ. In an interview with the LA Review of Books (Butler, 2015 b), Butler makes the point that, far from being an abstract concept, assembly "requires bodies to come together" and that the act of assembly "presupposes mobility" (Butler, 2015 b, 2:06). If we consider this we cannot help but give credit to Smallweed's determination to bring his presence to places where cobbled streets, steep stairs and narrow doorways present him with physical obstacles. That we might give credit to Smallweed's tenacity does not mean that we admire the quality or like his person. Indeed, as part of her discussion of Levinasian ethics in her lecture, 'Precarious Life: The Obligations of Proximity' for the Nobel Museum (Butler, 2011), Butler observes that we have ethical obligations and are capable of making a positive ethical response to "people we don't know and *might not like*" (Butler, 2011, 5:55, my italics). This concept brings a new and interesting perspective, particularly when considered in the light of Smallweed's non-likability. We are prompted to consider that, if we are open to the presence or proximity of another (any other) that we can respond with compassion to somebody for whom we feel no social or emotional bond. We are led to the conclusion that, not only do we not need to feel sympathy in order to empathise, but that we might be able to respond empathically in the face of antipathy.

As with his overall presence in the narrative of the BBC's Bleak House, Smallweed's effect in terms of the mechanics of the plot is, at times, amplified in comparison to the novel. As well as his overall presence being conflated by his mobility, his agency is inflated by some plot changes made by Davies. Most notable of these is the adaptation's direct confrontation by Smallweed of Sir Lester

Dedlock with his wife's lover's letters (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.12, 16:43). This scene, highly affective in its depiction of Sir Lester being visibly made ill to the sound of dissonant orchestral strings, shows Smallweed and Judy at their avaricious and merciless worst. Not only, however, does this show Smallweed at his worst, it also, by giving him direct agency where in the novel Bucket acts as a middleman (Dickens, 1985, p. 681), makes Smallweed the direct cause of a tragic chain of events. Smallweed's blackmail precipitates both Sir Lester's having a massive stroke, and to Lady Dedlock fleeing only to die beside the unmarked grave of her former lover, leaving Esther orphaned once again. An interesting part of the representation that functions to reduce narrative inflation is the lack of a marked ending to Smallweed's discourse. Curiously, Dickens with his tendency to over-tie loose ends leaves Smallweed neither redeemed nor punished after Bucket has obtained the final Jarndyce will from him (Dickens, 1985, p. 751), which is where we also leave Smallweed in the narrative of the adaptation (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.12, 6:12). Most notable though in terms of the adaptation's discourse is the exclusion of Smallweed from the final wedding scene (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 15, 27:30). This scene, the equivalent of a closing chapter in a Dickens novel, sees all the major (and significant minor) characters together in a kind of dramatised curtain call, which includes the despicable Skimpole, making this adaptational decision a specific (and seemingly deliberate) marginalisation of Smallweed.

Overall, Smallweed is louder, bigger, more visible, and more affective and effective as a result of the transformation, conflation and inflation of his bodily presence and narrative influence. Despite the pantomimic aspects of his adaptation, Smallweed is a character that (especially for the non-disabled viewer) prompts us to consider that disabled characters in a fictional text need to be considered, in Hall's words, "not as easy metaphors, tragic victims or medical case studies, but as complex, active and embodied [...] figures" (Hall, 2015, p. 2).

Esther

Although the permanent scarring caused by Esther's smallpox would not be automatically classed as a disability, it is, nevertheless, a physical feature that represents an impediment in her life. Of course, our consideration of the implications of Esther's condition requires that we take into account the temporal context of Dickens and *Bleak House* (Dickens, 1985). The novel was written at a time when science was advanced enough to understand that smallpox was airborne and therefore highly contagious, but over a century before the development of vaccinations which led to the prevention of the thousands of deaths per year experienced by Victorian England (Stanley, 2007, p. 14). In this context we can understand that the illness and subsequent death of Joe the crossing sweeper boy, as well as Esther's contraction of smallpox as a result of her tending to him, are not overstated melodrama but a very real representation of the times. Returning to the idea of disability as impediment, we can also understand that (particularly in the context in which she is discourses), Esther is impeded by her impairment. Even when the danger of death and the lingering fatigue from a severe illness have subsided, she is left in a condition that affects her choices, her ability to interact socially and her sense of self.

Rachel Carroll discusses the role of the visibility of Esther's smallpox scars in her article 'Queer Beauty: Illness, Illegitimacy and Visibility in Dickens's *Bleak House* and its 2005 BBC adaptation' (Carroll, 2009). Carroll explores the passage from being unknown as illegitimate to being marked by it, drawing a parallel between Esther becoming marked by her smallpox scars. Carroll credits the visuality of the BBC's adaptation of *Bleak House* for its capacity to emphasise this passage (where the novel is less successful) through its capacity for what she terms "visual economy" (Carroll, 2009, p. 3), or the ability to render succinct meaning through the visual. Although Esther's illegitimacy is not the focus of this thesis, Carroll's analysis of the visual treatment, unachievable in a novel, of Esther's being 'marked' is highly relevant to a discussion of Esther's starability and of the visceral sense of adjacency rendered by the televisual adaptation of her illness and its aftermath. One of

Carroll's main arguments regarding the effect of a televisual representation of Esther's smallpox is that it cannot diminish the reality of her scarring, as the novel does, to a point where it ceases to matter. Despite Ada's and Jarndyce's contending, as they do in the novel, that she remains "our same dear Esther" (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.7, 3:55), we are presented with an affective rendering of her being quite altered on many levels in terms of face-to-face engagement. The social and emotional effects of Esther's disfigurement are also unflinchingly presented in terms of the narrative focus of the adaptation.

The starability of Esther's scars are first made known to us by proxy when Esther's maid Charley, at Esther's request, first draws the curtains to allow daylight to enter the room after Esther's fever has subsided (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 15:10). This daylight partially floods the room showing the concern in Charley's face in a shot that represents Esther's point of view. Until this point we have only seen Esther (Anna Maxwell-Martin) turned away from us, and a shadowed view of her fresh scars. Although we can see that her marks are extensive, it is only when Esther, despite Charley's protestations, requests a mirror (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 16:15), that we fully see the change to Esther's face in what Carroll calls Esther's "moment in the mirror" (Carroll, 2009, p. 3). Orchestally, multiple strings, played assonantly and building steadily to a soft crescendo, accompany the build-up to this 'moment'. On an auditory level, this engages our affective attention because, as discussed with reference to Smallweed's orchestration, *Bleak House* is fairly lightly orchestrated generally, and because Esther (unlike BBC Dickens' heroines like Little Dorrit (Claire Foy) and Bella Wilfer (Anna Friel)), does not have a musical theme of her own, any orchestration associated with Esther is foregrounded. In contrast to the dissonant bowed gong orchestration that we associate with Smallweed, the assonant harmonies that accompany Esther's mirror encounter invoke the pathos and sadness that we culturally associate with stringed instruments like the violin. As the crescendo peaks, we come face-to-face with Esther's face (now fully lit) in the mirror. Again, we have a point of view shot, this time from the point of view of Esther looking at herself, and her

moment in the mirror becomes ours. We are at once, in Garland-Thomson's terms, 'starer' and 'staree' (Garland-Thomson, 2009), experiencing the act of staring and being stared at simultaneously. By experiencing a concurrent sense of otherness and sameness, the fragility of our conception is, literally, reflected back to us. After Esther's 'moment' and its associated ambivalence



Figure 8

of a sense of self and otherness, the affective treatment of Esther's scarring continues to demand our attention. As in the case of *Smallweed*, Esther's face is sometimes lit in a way that is incongruent with the 'natural' light being discoursed in a scene. For instance, in the remainder of the scene discussed above, after Esther first sees herself in the mirror, her face is lit from above and to her left (when the only 'natural' light is coming from the right and level with Charley and Esther's faces) accentuating the most prominent scars on Esther's left cheek and her forehead. At other times, Esther is placed in congruent light that emphasises her scarring. For instance, in the dining room at Bleak house for breakfast scenes (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep: 8, 15:49) and in the strongly-lit countryside interiors of Boythorne's manor (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 8, 21:32), Esther is lit from the left, emphasising the most scarred side of her face, showing the pox in convincing relief and drawing our attention further. The beginning of the healing process of Esther's scars is, also, convincingly visually discoursed. We see Esther's pockmarks go from a livid, wounded-

looking red when she first revives from her fever, to bright and strongly raised lesions at the subsequent scenes at Bleak House and Boythorne's manor, to becoming paler, drier, less angry, but still very noticeable marks when she feels more able to go about in public, such as the time when she visits Guppy (Burn Gorman) at his home to ask him not to pursue the hunt for Lady Dedlock's love letters (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.10, 7:45). Because this process is progressed carefully, and with close attention to detail, as viewers we will begin to notice our sustained attention to a facial surface that we see as other. In a way, Esther's skin begins to return our stare and we might be led to question why we are devoting attention to, and placing aesthetic importance on a marking that is, figuratively as well as literally, skin deep.

Esther's aforementioned visit to Guppy (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.10, 7:45) is perhaps one of the most interesting examples, in terms of the act of staring, of the interaction of a fellow character



Figure 9

with Esther's changed condition. In this scene, Guppy mistakenly assumes that Esther has come to accept his earlier (and firmly refused by Esther) proposal of marriage. Esther lifts her veil once inside the house and Guppy is immediately and visibly flummoxed, compelled alternately to look at her and to avert his eyes. As Garland-Thomson points out, this is a common reaction, driven by natural

curiosity combined with the pull to adhere to social norms: “[E]ager stares often quickly shift to uncomfortable looking away. Our ocular id, in other words, jerks our eyes toward a stimulating sight and our ocular super-ego guiltily retracts them” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 79). Our attention in this scene is evenly split, in terms of close-up shots between Esther and Guppy as they discuss Guppy’s previous proposal and Lady Dedlock’s letters, with these close-up shots being interspersed with long shots that show the whole of both of them, separated by a table (Figure 9). The absolute symmetry of camerawork, coupled by the symmetry of the composition of the intervening shot is unusual and therefore accentuated; through it we are made aware of the simultaneous engagement and distance of the pair as they face each other, taking turns to speak, as though engaged in a game of chess. If this were a game of chess then the checkmate would be Esther’s. She makes a formidable opponent, countering each of Guppy’s blustering ‘moves’ with a crisp, clear and measured response. More important than winning the dialectical argument, Esther emerges as the stronger starrer. Aside from a brief casting down of her eyes as she initially gathers herself, Esther looks directly at Guppy throughout. In an unexpected switch between the staring role of the supposed normate and the staree role of the supposed other, Esther becomes the starrer at the spectacle of Guppy’s visible embarrassment, while Guppy is held by Esther as her staree.

The adapted Esther’s determination to look in the eye, as equals, all those whom she encounters is in sharp contrast to the novel and its original illustrations. As Carroll points out, the novel gives emphasis to Esther’s lengthy period of staying away from public places (Carroll, 2015, p. 5), whereas in the adaptation, although the actual passage of time is not made clear, Esther’s passage from private recovery to public interaction happens within the space of half an episode (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.8). Phiz, arguably Dicken’s original adaptor, like Dickens accentuates Esther’s newly emphasised modesty. In both of the illustrations that feature Esther after her smallpox, her face is completely hidden. In the illustration entitled ‘Light’ (Phiz, 1852 b), where Esther visits Ada after she has just married Richard, Esther is shown deeply bonneted and veiled in contrast to Ada and

Richard's full-faced illustration, while in 'The Magnanimous Conduct of Mr Guppy' (Phiz, 1852 c), Esther appears with her back to us and her head bowed (Figures 10 and 11). A sense of shame is conveyed both in the novel and in Phiz's illustrations with regard to Esther's perceived disfigurement



Figure 10



Figure 11

that only features occasionally (if poignantly) in the visuality of the adaptation in scenes such as that where she meets Allan Woodcourt (Richard Harrington) unexpectedly and shows an unambiguous reluctance to lift her veil (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep: 11, 7:18). Overall, however, the affective performance of the adaptation's Esther feels measured and assured, leaving critics such as Giddings decrying the "sacrificing [of] the powerful, almost divine, qualities of Dickens's beloved heroine in favour of a kind of nurselike worthiness" as "a mistake" (Giddings, 2006, p. 68). In relation to this

adaptational decision that involves both performance and player, Anna Maxwell-Martin's casting, like that of Phil Davis, is interesting from an intertextual perspective. Although a relative unknown when *Bleak House* was first aired in 2005, Maxwell-Martin has gone on to play major roles in significant television productions. These include the part of Susan Gray, a practical and insightful code-breaker in ITV's *The Bletchley Circle* (Emmony, Harding and Payne, 2012-2014) and as a refreshingly level-headed Elizabeth Darcy in the BBC's adaptation (Percival, 2013) of P. D. James' sequel to *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 2008), *Death Comes to Pemberley* (James, 2013). In a reversal of Smallweed's intertextuality, already discussed based on Davis' roles prior to *Bleak House*, Maxwell-Martin's assertive portrayal of Esther and her deportment around her disfigurement seems to have influenced her being cast subsequently in other roles, where there being more to a part 'than meets the eye' is crucial.

Despite Maxwell-Martin's assertive playing of Esther and the affective foregrounding of this side of her, the adaptation would have to veer too far from fidelity to the novel if it did not portray the significance of Esther's social diminishment as a result of her smallpox scarring. This is represented through the reaction of others to Esther's illness and scarring, through the changes to Esther's choices implied in the narration, and through Esther's (sometimes cruel) verbal assessment of herself. When the news of Esther's smallpox breaks, the most damning comments come from outside of the family with Lady Dedlock's housekeeper, Mrs Rouncewell (Anne Reid) proclaiming that she is "like to die, poor thing" (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 5:01) and the odious Skimpole (Nathaniel Parker) remarking that "If she does live, which is unlikely, she'll be so horribly disfigured that any person of a sensitive disposition, such as myself, will find her too distressing a sight to bear" (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 3:32). However odious we find Smallweed, and although smallpox has largely been eradicated in our lifetimes, we as viewers are not immune to feeling fearful in the face of the depiction of a condition that will prove to be life altering. Here in the twenty-first century, although the context is different, we are aware that a life where we were

continually marked out as visually different in a way considered undesirable would be difficult to tolerate; as Garland-Thomson says:

To be suddenly confronted with a person extraordinary enough to provoke our most baroque stares withers our ready curiosity and we turn away, snuffing out the possibility for mutual recognition. (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 79)

The historical context in which Esther is depicted does mean that the effects of her illness leave her less marriageable. Carroll, in discussing the implications of Esther's illegitimacy and its being amplified and compounded by her facial scarring, argues that the combined effect of these on Esther's marriage prospects are damning (Carroll, 2009). Despite her open and resolute affective presentation of her person, Esther's dialogue reveals her concerns in comments such as "I never thought that my face would be my fortune, and now I am quite sure of it" (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 17:20) and the more poignant "I shouldn't think there's a man in the world who would want to marry a pock-marked nobody like me" (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 8, 5:03). The latter of these comments is a response to Ada's gentle teasing about the now absent Allan Woodcourt's romantic interest in Esther, and is quickly followed in the adaptation by John Jarndyce making a marriage proposal to her. After this, Esther has another 'moment' in the mirror at her dressing table, where she gazes at herself after having found the dried posy (given to her by Woodcourt) in a drawer (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 10, 10:40). Like the initial 'moment' in the mirror, this shot is lingering, lit to emphasise Esther's scars in a way that is not congruent with the portrayed candlelight in the room and, like that moment, is accompanied by harmonic string orchestral music. Immediately following this, Esther, who is not given to hastiness or suddenness, quickly throws the posy away and, just as suddenly, is shown entering John Jarndyce's growlery and accepting his proposal (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 10, 11:12). Through the narration we are left with no doubt that, overall, no amount of love or moral fibre can negate the impediment to her social choices produced by Esther's impairment.

Esther is unique, in the context of this thesis, by the fact that she *becomes* impeded by an acquired condition during the course of the narrative. This makes her of particular ethical interest in terms of being able to note our changing response to her changed face. There is a palimpsestuous and slightly uncanny quality in the way that Esther's condition and its implications unfold. With respect to the discourse of Esther's illegitimacy, Carroll observantly draws attention the fact that there is a moral implication for the viewer in the way that Esther's secrets are implicit but not explicitly revealed for the larger part of the adaptation, saying that, "[t]he viewer's gaze is implicated in this unknowing seeing" (Carroll, 2009, p. 8). She goes on to remark that this layered treatment could be seen as "palimpsestuous" (Carroll, 2009, p. 8), which is an apt concept to apply, too, to the discourse of Esther's journey from her pre-smallpox to post-smallpox state. Because Esther's smallpox happens almost half way through the adaptation, we are very used to seeing her with clear skin. This is perceptually important from a diachronic point of view because, after having smallpox, we will see Esther as somebody whose complexion is layered with smallpox scars, rather than somebody innately scarred. In the adaptation, this idea is most fully demonstrated in a third mirror 'moment'



Figure 12

when Esther is looking at herself in her inn room having just unexpectedly re-encountered Allan

Woodcourt (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 11, 10:08). The glass of the mirror is layered with a heavy patina, through which we see Esther's face, which carries its own patina (Figure 12). We are reminded of Esther's having to come to terms with and respond to her ever-changing layers of experience; as Emens explains: "The changed body pulls along the inner self, shaping and recreating that self in ways before unimagined" (Emens, 2007, p. 124). We too, as viewers, are reminded of the challenge of being faced by, or keeping up with, the representation of change. Garland-Thomson explains that when that happens, if we are unwilling to proactively engage in returning the look of the other, then "the expected elasticity of human connection that mutual looking offers" can "become[...] brittle" (Garland-Thomson, 2005, p. 79). Linked to the idea of the palimpsestuous in relation to impairment and disability is the concept of 'passing' discussed by G. Thomas Couser in *Disability, Life Narrative and Representation* (Couser, 2013, p. 457), which refers to the process by which those with a disability, whether deliberately or unintentionally, 'pass' as non-disabled. Carroll discusses this concept in relation to Esther's illegitimacy, which is known to her and her immediate family (albeit that her family is a constructed one), but is not public. This leads to her living a layered life, where the private knowledge of her illegitimacy exists alongside public ignorance of it, with the increasing threat of that knowledge becoming public heightening its significance in the narrative. After her smallpox, Esther is encouraged to use (and does use) a veil whenever she is outside in public. This repetitive visual foregrounding of a physical device adds to the insistence of the conveying of a broader theme of the hidden and the opaque in the novel which, interestingly, is conveyed elsewhere using the metaphor of a veil when both Lady Dedlock (Gillian Anderson) and her maid Hortense (Lilo Baur) use a veil to 'pass' as something they are not (Chadwick and White, 2005). Likewise, when Esther goes about in public or into public spaces such as the inn where she and Ada are to meet Richard (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 11, 8:03), by wearing a veil Esther 'passes' as non-disfigured until she chooses to (or until it is socially proper to) lift her veil. When she does lift her veil, we see the instant surprise and simultaneous urge to stare and to look away, as previously discussed in the scene where she visits Guppy (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.10, 7:45).

We are reminded that faces are a particular kind of “consequential texts that we read attentively” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 99) and that how we read them will depend on the degree to which and the manner with which we engage with them.

It is Esther’s happy ending in the adaptation that is perhaps the most telling feature of this adaptation of *Bleak House* in terms of how we might continue to view the binary perspective of the impaired and the non-impaired along with our view that non-impairment is the favoured and favourable side of this binary. Dickens is consummate in the art of tying ends, and any adaptation is faced with the challenge of how to translate this into televisual language. In *Bleak House*, this redemptive finale comes in the form of the highly visually and musically orchestrated wedding scene



Figure 13

of Esther and Allan Woodcourt. In the novel, written with roughly every fourth chapter being written in the first person from Esther’s perspective, the final chapter (Dickens, 1985, p. 785) is Esther’s, told some time after the events of the previous two chapters, where the Jarndyce case is finally resolved and where Richard Carstone dies as a result of the cumulative stress of the case and its devastating outcome of all the fortune being absorbed by its enormous costs (Dickens, 1985, p.

773). Esther's closing chapter has all the redemptive detail we could ask for in Esther's 'happy ever after' with her happy marriage to Allan Woodcourt, and with her starting her own family. We also learn of Ada's healed grief, brought about by her baby, by Esther's ministrations and by the security offered by John Jarndyce, as well as being assured of the happiness of all the major 'good' characters, such as Caddy, Miss Flite and Sergeant George. The final scene of a satisfying televisual adaptation needs to supply the same sense of redemption and narrative fulfilment without the same degree of narrative detail, which it does through the joyful scene of a summer wedding (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 15, 27:30), accompanied by a sympathetically joyful musical composition. This composition is carefully written and orchestrated to reflect the sense of the scene of sunny resolution that it accompanies. With its major key call taken by high and 'feminine' violins and the response played by the lower, but still mellow sounds of it on french horn and violas, this waltz, with its defined 'oom-pah-pah' is warm and uplifting, and leaves us with all the sense of genial resolution that we could wish for. What we might easily miss in our elation, and what is curious given the attention to detail given to Esther's scars throughout her post-smallpox phase, is that Esther's scars are completely absent (Figure 13). Of course, we know from the fact that Ada has had her baby that perhaps eighteen months of narrative time has passed, but we also know that the best prognosis ever offered to Esther through the adaptation's dialogue is that her scars will fade. This adaptational decision is both curious and understandable. The fact that the scene makes for immersive and contradiction-free watching (unless we are extremely eagle-eyed or rewatch the scene several times) despite this anomaly points to our learned assumption that able-bodiedness or lack of perceived impairment does "masquerade as [...]the natural order of things" (McRuer, 2006, p. 13). Despite its over-redemptive and incongruent resolution, the treatment of Esther's smallpox is provocative in its starability overall. We are forced to engage with the advent and the aftermath of a medical event that results in impairment. Through that engagement, we have the opportunity to investigate our affective response to disfigurement, which has implications that extend far beyond the fictional bounds of Bleak House and its adaptation.

Additions and Omissions

As discussed already in the introductory chapter and with reference to *Smallweed*, omissions, additions and changes to the narrative of a novel are a main source of insight as to the transformative choices made in an adaptation. Due to the extent of their presence and their narrative impact, this chapter has focussed on the discourse of *Smallweed* and *Esther*. However, in relation to disability, there are further adaptational choices in *Bleak House* that warrant attention and exploration.

In terms of omission, the impairment of one character, Baby Turveydrop is omitted entirely. In the novel, after the fever suffered both by the baby and by her mother Caddy Turveydrop (Natalie Press), Caddy's baby remains weak and tiny for some time and, as we hear from *Esther*, later becomes permanently deaf:

[S]he is not such a mite now, but she is deaf and dumb. I believe there never was a better mother than Caddy, who learns, in her scanty intervals of leisure, innumerable deaf and dumb arts to soften the affliction of her child. (Dickens, 1985, 786)

Rather than reproducing this element of the narrative, the BBC's *Bleak House* shows Caddy very soon after the fever, happy with her baby who is plump and well, as seen in Figure 14, and not discoursed as being deaf (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.10, 10:18). This adaptational decision is a curious one. Although not obviously connected with starability, we are presented with a visibly well child who, had she been presented as tiny and weak and as remaining impaired, might have exceeded the bounds of our willing engagement. In terms of centrality and marginality this decision is also a decision in favour of the central; the altered discourse leaves *Esther* and *Allan Woodcourt* as the main protagonists, having been instrumental in bringing Caddy and the baby into full health. Caddy (who incidentally is omitted entirely from the BBC's 1985 adaptation (Hopcraft, 1985) has been sensitively and fully adapted until this point. Whatever the reasoning behind omitting Caddy's bringing up a deaf child and of her working hard in her 'scanty intervals' to

integrate the experience of that child into day to day life, an opportunity to keep Caddy away from



Figure 14

the margins and to engage with the difficult issue of a permanently impaired or starable child is circumvented here.

Another example of circumvention in the adaptation of *Bleak House* is the adaptation of Phil Squod (Michael Smiley). In the novel (despite it not being a directly visual medium), as Carroll points out,



Figure 15

“social marginalisation is made spectacularly visible in the marked face and body of Phil Squod”

(Carroll, 2009, 7). The novel’s discourse of Squod is indeed visually, and viscerally, spectacular:

On the speckled side of his face he has no eyebrow, and on the other side he has a bushy black one, which want of uniformity gives him a very singular and rather sinister appearance. Everything seems to have happened to his hands that could possibly take place consistently with the retention of all the fingers, for they are notched, and seamed, and crumpled all over. (Dickens, 1985, p. 268)

As is the case with Smallweed, the marginality of Squod’s appearance is amplified in Phiz’s original visual adaptations of Squod (Phiz, 1852d) in the form of his illustration (Figure 15). In this illustration, although we cannot see his face and hands because of the scale of the drawing, we see Squod’s marginality re-presented through his being very small in comparison to the other characters and, although starable to us, is further marginalised in his setting by being shown on the edge of the scene, with others present either having their back to him or looking at Sergeant George instead of him. In the adaptation, Squod (as can be seen in Figure 16) is not adapted to conform to Dicken’s representation. He is unremarkable in appearance, only being diminished in size or perceived strength by Sergeant George’s (Hugo Spear) markedly tall and robust stature.

The avoidance of mirroring the novel’s starability of Squod is quite easily justified by the potential for reproducing Dickens’ pantomimic othering by being more faithful to the text. It is in Squod’s kinetic properties in the novel where there is, perhaps, an opportunity to engage with difficult starability that is missed. In the novel, Squod’s movement is a pronounced and highly visceral part of how he is depicted:

He has a curious way of limping round the gallery with his shoulder against the wall and tacking off at objects he wants to lay hold of instead of going straight to them, which has left a smear all round the four walls, conventionally called “Phil’s mark”. [...] Phil cannot even go

straight to bed, but finds it necessary to shoulder round two sides of the gallery and then tack off at his mattress. (Dickens, 1985, p. 268)

This description of a person with an impairment using objects and surfaces differently to achieve their engagement with the physical world resonates strongly with Sunaura Taylor's conversation with Judith Butler (Taylor, 2009, p. 201) about her continuing need to renegotiate a world designed for normate use. Taylor talks about specific, smaller physical negotiations of the world (such as carrying a cup with her mouth). She also talks (which is relevant to Squod's adaptation) about whole body movement and negotiation when she talks about being able to travel (but without a conventional 'walk') without the use of a wheelchair as a child, with other children describing her as "walking like a monkey" (Taylor, 2009, p. 205). As well as hinting at the non or sub-human associations that can occur when a body is perceived as different (discussed further in the following chapter in connection with grievability), this anecdote highlights the idea that it is not always the difficulty (in terms of a normate view) of movement that is the problem for disabled people; rather, the problem lies in the difficulty of the non-disabled to be confronted with kinetic otherness. As an example of this, Taylor introduces us to the idea that wheelchairs, widely considered an aid purely for the benefit of the disabled person, might also enable the non-disabled person to sidestep anxiety:

[Wheelchairs] are actually tools to keep my body in a certain acceptable space because I'm not moving. [...] Without my wheelchair, I would be walking, but in a very different way than you walk. I'd be scooting. [...] My transgressive movements would freak people out. (Taylor, 2009, 198)

This description of scooting instead of normate walking is reminiscent of the idea of Squod's 'tacking'. Read without Dickens omniscient and derisive overtones, the novel's Squod has found perfectly good ways to move around, using walls more than floors, and getting where he needs to go. In the adaptation however, Squod's difficulty of movement is diminished and underplayed. For instance, in the scene where Mr Gridley comes looking for Sergeant George's help (Chadwick and

White, 2005, Ep. 5, 15:02:45), Squod is shown standing at the top of a short flight of stairs (Figure 16). Throughout all the cuts to Squod we see his body in medium close-up, in shadows and with



Figure 16

little movement, which is typical of Squod's treatment throughout. If we pay close attention, we can see that Squod leans on the banister in this scene, and moves slowly in the scenes where he does move, but this is not pronounced. Again, there is an argument to say that to render Squod's movement as non-normate would compound an undesirable sense of othering and of the pantomimic. However, given that this adaptation has tackled starability directly and boldly through its discourse of Esther and of Smallweed, it seems that to have eschewed the re-presentation of Squod's kinaesthetic qualities is to have eschewed an opportunity for engaging with productive starability.

The final character portrayed as having a disability in this adaptation of *Bleak House* comes in the form of an addition to the novel. Like Tulkinghorn's humourless clerk Clamb (Tom Georgeson), Harriet (Lisa Hammond), a servant at John Jarndyce's house is an addition to the narrative. Harriet is played by an actress who has dwarfism and, while this aspect of her physicality is not verbally or specifically marked as part of the narrative, it is viscerally marked by the adaptation's visual

treatment of her body. In shots where Harriet appears in dialogue with somebody, the camera remains at the eye level of the person with whom she is in dialogue, often emphasised as it is in Figure 17 when she is talking to John Jarndyce (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.7, 15:07) with the camera shot being from behind the person that she is talking to, exaggerating both the height



Figure 17

differential and giving a sense of 'being looked down upon'. This sense of differential is most marked This sense of differential is most marked when the household are lined up to be given news of Esther's smallpox (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 15:22). In a long shot, reminiscent of Victorian group portraiture, Harriet's height is the most marked (and thus starable) aspect of the scene. The potential of this section to merely other Harriet is disrupted by alternating this long shot with close-ups of Harriet's face in the only shots we see of her where the camera is aligned with her eyelevel. Thus in this scene, we are prompted through a visual discourse that alternates a sense of distant otherness with a sense of intimacy and equanimity, to engage with the ambivalence that our staring experience has produced.

The discourse of Harriet, although admirable in spirit, is not entirely successful, and this is due for

the most part to her performance. *Bleak House*'s cast, like many Dickens' adaptations is brimming with well-known actors who give highly accomplished performances, but the acting from unknown or lesser known actors in small parts is, also, almost all of an impressive quality that never challenges our credulity in the character, with the impeccable performance of Charley (Katie Angelou) being a prime example. Hunter argues the need to consider the quality of performance as just as important as camera work, editing and soundtrack when assessing the success of an adaptation, saying that "[p]erformance is, obviously, the means of putting an author's text into dramatized form. It furnishes an interpretation of that text" (Hunter, 2010, p. 168). Carroll too alludes to the importance of performance in the specific context of integrated casting, in her article 'Black Britain and the Classic Adaptation: Integrated Casting in Television Adaptations of *Oliver Twist* and *Little Dorrit*' (Carroll, 2014). In this piece, Carroll explores the integrated casting of black actors in the roles of the BBC's *Oliver Twist*'s (Gledroy, 2008) Nancy (Sophie Okonedo) and *Little Dorrit*'s (Lawrence, Smith and Walsh, 2008) Tattycoram (Freema Agyeman). As Carroll points out, this casting of black actors in non-racially marked roles marks a "significant departure from [a] problematic precedent" (Carroll, 2014, p. 17), and it follows that the casting of disabled characters in roles that are not marked as disabled is an equally significant departure (even if that role is invented for the adaptation. However, Carroll also argues that Okonedo's and Agyeman's casting is testament not only to the adaptation's progressive choices, but also to the merits of their acting, affirming that "integrated casting is simple and meritocratic" (Carroll, 2014, p. 17), and that it is based on giving the best available actor the role regardless of how they are societally marked or not marked. Unfortunately, Harriet, whose delivery is stilted and unsubtle, stands out as the poorest actor in *Bleak House*. If we take the extended application of 'staring' to include all intense visceral engagement, we find ourselves staring at the incongruence of Harriet's performance quality. Despite being given a non-marked role in terms of disability, and in spite of the starability generated around her adaptation, Harriet is an example of where there is the impetus to stare but with little opportunity for engagement, making her the least successful of the starable characters with

disabilities in *Bleak House*.

Chapter Two: Precarity, Grievability and Dependency in *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*

Introduction

As discussed in the main introduction, Judith Butler's concepts of precarity and grievability are pertinent to examining the discourse of disability in the adaptations of *Little Dorrit* (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008) and *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998), as is Eva Feder Kittay's exploration of dependency and dignity. The characters explored in this chapter are Silas Wegg, Jenny Wren and Sloppy from *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998) and Mrs Clennam and Maggy from *Little Dorrit* (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008), all of whom are presented as having an impairment. Each of their discourses displays a different combination and balance of the themes of precarity, grievability (and grief) and dependency, allowing the exploration of these concepts in relation to the discourse of disability.

Precarity, which Butler uses interchangeably with 'precariousness' (Butler, 2004), refers to the state of vulnerability, the "understanding of how easily human life is annulled" (Butler, 2004, xvii), that we perceive in others and (as a result of that perceiving) are reminded of in ourselves. Beginning with Levinas, as she does with her exploration of the 'face' of the other, Butler says that Levinas' notion of precariousness depends on encountering the other, and recognising their precarity in a "conception of ethics that rests upon an apprehension of the precariousness of life, one *that begins with the precarious life of the Other*" (Butler, 2004, xvii (my italics)). Although Butler primarily uses the idea of precarity to explore the diminution of the other in the context of war, the twin notions of precarity paired with otherness make it easy to see the wider application for any discourse of the other, including that of disability. Butler goes on to say that in encounters where we perceive an encountered life as being other, and if we are not open to fully acknowledging its precarity, then our engagement will be both diminished and bypassed: "[T]hose lives remain unnameable and ungrievable, if they do not appear in their precariousness and their destruction, we will not be

moved” (Butler, 2004, p. 150). Here, Butler makes the important causal link between precariousness and grievability, implying that, without the recognition of precarity of another, that other cannot be grieved and does not even count as another. As with her understanding of ‘face’, Butler reminds us that, when we are presented with the opportunity of an encounter (discoursed or otherwise) with another, there is a requirement for affective engagement if an ethical response to precarity and grievability is to be evoked: “One would need to hear the face as it speaks in something other than language to know the precariousness of life that is at stake” (Butler, 2004, p. 151). Both precarity and grievability have a connection to grief itself. Precarity carries the implication that our lives are fragile and vulnerable to being lost, while grievability, in its assumption that there are lives worth mourning, anticipates the grief that will accompany the loss of that life. Of course, precarity and grievability are not limited in their application to a single, whole human life. Just as the concepts can be applied to a population or sector of the community (which application Butler makes in *Frames of War* (Butler, 2009), they can be applied to part of a human life or to a particular human function, which makes these ideas highly applicable to impairment or loss of function.

Eva Feder Kittay’s ideas on dependency and dignity have strong parallels with Butler’s on precarity and grievability, with those ideas being specifically applied to disability, and to cognitive disability in particular. In her paper ‘The Ethics of Care, Dependency and Disability’ (Feder Kittay, 2011), Feder Kittay’s attention to precarity comes through her foregrounding the ethical importance of care, challenging aspects of the social model of disability, which she says, despite leading to important progress in disability rights, is in danger of side-lining the moral significance of the concept of care. Those who purely take their lead from the social model of care, says Feder Kittay, are in danger of conceiving of care as a “sort of prosthesis that permits one to be independent” (Feder Kittay, 2011, p. 50), with the emphasis on an ideal of non-dependence. Feder Kittay argues that, whilst it is important to demand assistance and rights for those for whom the playing field could be levelled in a way that would result in their independence, that it is also important to recognise that (for some

people) dependence will always be a part (and not necessarily a negative part) of their lives. Like Butler, Feder Kittay also points out that part of our resistance to engaging with those in need of care, in other words engaging with precarity, comes from a resistance to engage with the idea of dependence. If we engage with the knowledge that being cared for and being dependent is not a state that can be relegated to association with the other then we have to reconcile ourselves with difficult ideas. If we are truly in the position of being free of needing care (which is arguably unlikely) then, faced with precarity, we have to reconcile with the idea that it will not be a permanent state for us. On the other hand, if engaging with the precarity of another makes us aware that we are indeed dependent in respects that we had not considered, then we are forced to reconsider our association of dependency with otherness:

If we conceive of all persons as moving in and out of relationships of dependence through different life-stages and conditions of health and functionings, the fact that the disabled person requires the assistance of a caregiver is not the exception, the special case. (Feder Kittay, 2011, p. 54)

The idea that to some extent we all receive and require care, gives rise to a concept that is important in both Feder Kittay's and Butler's work, that of interdependence. In *Precarious Life* (Butler, 2004), Butler affirms the ethical significance of interdependence as a concept, arguing that if we acknowledge precarity and dependence as facts of our lives then we have access to "another way of imagining community" which "affirms relationality [...] as an ongoing normative dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence" (Butler, 2004, p. 26). Feder Kittay, too, stresses the ethical centrality of the giving and receiving of care, arguing that it is a prerequisite for dignity:

[C]are is an indispensable, and even a central good—one without which a life of dignity is impossible and which is itself an expression of a person's dignity. [...] [T]he ability of a being to give and receive care is a source of dignity for humans no less than the capacity for reason. (Feder Kittay, 2011, p. 54)

The idea that dependency and dignity can co-exist is an important one because it reveals as problematic the association of independence and dignity that is culturally dominant. To accept that dignity and dependency are not opposing sides of a coin has the potential, particularly in relation to disability and its discourse, to prompt us to rethink and re-feel the assumptions and affects that we experience when we engage with dependency.

Silas Wegg

We first meet Silas Wegg (Kenneth Cranham) in *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998) when he is approached by Mr Boffin (Peter Vaughan), who wants to engage the services of Wegg as a reader to him and Mrs Boffin. In the context of the introduction of minor or pantomimic characters, this scene is produced with unusual sensitivity. We are made affectively aware of Wegg's impairment of being one-legged as he struggles to manoeuvre himself onto the stool at his manuscript stall (Farino, 1998, Ep.1, 34:28) before Mr Boffin propositions him. In the novel, the conversation that follows (Dickens, 1971, p. 42) is a lengthy exchange, which is rewritten in the adaptation to be far shorter. The necessity to elide characters, plot details and dialogue in an adaptation is quite usual and has already been discussed, but it is the leanness of dialogue, coupled with a slowness of delivery that is remarkable in this scene, with both Boffin and Wegg delivering their lines unhurriedly and deliberately and with long pauses. This gives the scene a gravitas (often reserved for more major characters) as well as a sense of melancholy, both of which serve to affectively imbue the introduction to Wegg with a sense of import and sadness that is not present in the novel.

The sense of sadness around Wegg develops into a sense of mourning throughout his next scene (Farino, 1998, Ep.1, 38:22) where he visits the establishment of Mr Venus, the (gloriously-titled) 'articulator of bones' in the hope of being reunited with his lost leg. He approaches the shop to the sound of a slow waltz, played by a chamber orchestra, with the mournful lead being taken by low oboes. Once inside the shop (Farino, 1998, Ep. 1, 38:58), the musical pace is echoed by the dialogue

between Wegg and Venus (Timothy Spall), which is as slow as that of the previous scene, and which is made mournful by both the poignancy of Wegg's mission and by Spall's laconic delivery of Venus' lines. There is something Beckettian about the dialogue of this scene, with lines such as, "You were one of a various lot" (Farino, 1998, Ep. 1, 40:38), and "...bones [...] I would arrange them all in a manner that would surprise and delight you" (Farino, 1998, Ep. 1, 41:40) bringing a sense of the absurd to the scene. The sense of the Beckettian is amplified by the visual composition of the image of two down-at-heel, middle-aged men (Farino, 1998, Ep. 1, 41:01) who, replaced at a roadside, would remind us still more of Vladimir and Estragon from *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett, 2006). Ato Quayson discusses the relationship of the absurdity of Beckett to disability in *Aesthetic Nervousness* (Quayson, 2007). Quayson defines aesthetic nervousness as being seen when "the dominant protocols of representation within the literary text are short-circuited in relation to disability" (Quayson, 2013, p. 202) or, in other words, when elements of a discourse shift the position of the disabled from the margins to the centre, thus causing conceptual ambivalence. With particular relation to Beckett, Quayson argues that empathic engagement in the face of disability coupled with the absurd is only possible if we, as viewers or readers, make the link between disability and pain: "[O]nce we take the status of pain to be equivalent to that of impairment and disability in the texts, it serves to short-circuit the process by which the absurdity is maintained" (Quayson, 2007, p. 55). Although Quayson focuses on physical pain, when it is arguable that his reasoning extends to emotional forms of pain such as shame, his argument is relevant to Wegg. His slow hop, supported by crutches, to Venus' shop (Farino, 1998, Ep.1, 34:28) seems laboured and painful, with the camera's long shot and the musical lament previously discussed amplifying the sense of prolonged discomfort. Once inside the shop (Farino, 1998, Ep.1, 38:22), Wegg finds difficulty in negotiating a chair designed for a two-legged person. This, paired with the tension in his face, especially when contrasted with the laconic, looseness of Spall's Venus' face, is an affective testament to Wegg's pain, and transforms our experience of the absurd from humour at a distance to an affective ambivalence. The narrative discourse of the scene sustains the sense of the absurd as

Venus lays the carefully wrapped bones of Wegg's leg before him on the table (only to retain them for further bargaining). Here though, the sense of absurdity is made ambivalent by this (very affective) reminder that we are in the discourses presence of a person who has suffered a loss, and that however much they try to reverse that loss, it is irrevocable. There is a particular ambivalence, too, to the experience (or the projected experience) of the loss of a limb itself. Although related to the specific experience of phantom limb, Merleau Ponty's view that "[t]he phantom arm is not the representation of the arm, but the ambivalent presence of the arm" (Merleau Ponty, 2002, p. 430-31) makes sense of the ambivalence of Wegg's experience of having a missing leg that he believes ought to be there. Floris Tomasini's report, 'Exploring the Experiences of Amputees with Phantom Limb' emphasises the ambivalence of limbleness:

[T]he amputee avows two contradictory realities simultaneously: the reality of a living limb and the reality of its destruction. These two 'limbs' occupy the same space and time, one the ghostly double of the other's absence. (Tomasini, 2004, p. 7)

What is interesting about Tomasini's work with relation to affect is that he continues, in subsequent work, to extend this argument to the potential experience of those who possess a limb projecting its loss in his paper, 'The Case of Self-demand Amputees: A Dilemma for Professional Ethics?' (Tomasini, 2010), where he reverses the concept of a missing limb's ambivalence to apply it to that of an existing one. This idea, despite the potentially controversial nature of its application, is useful from an affective point of view because it explains the affect that a fully-limbed person might experience, however other their experience may be cognitively, when engaging with somebody who has undergone an amputation. Through Wegg, we are reminded that we might all live with a loss that we deny; that, in Butler's words, "[t]o lose and to mourn requires giving up what we might think we possessed, which means giving up the fantasy that possession staves off transience" (Butler, 2015 a, p. 34). Through the strength of the sense of mourning, and the affect produced by the ambivalence, we are uncomfortably reminded, if we have all of our limbs, that those limbs are only separated by time from being bare bone.

The relative subtlety with which Wegg is initially drawn by the adaptation becomes disrupted by its need to treat Wegg's place in the novel's narrative with fidelity. Once the careful and sensitive introduction to Wegg has taken place, and once he has read for Mr Boffin and his wife from time to time, Wegg is asked to stop reading by Boffin and, instead, given Boffin's old home at the dust mountains (Farino, 1998, Ep. 1, 1:04:15). Although there is a tenuous implication that Mr Boffin is scorning Wegg and relegating him to the dirt, this is neither substantiated nor made clear, and we are left bewildered when Wegg becomes a vengeful villain, out to ruin Mr Boffin at any cost. What follows is a series of vignettes where we see Wegg and his fellow avenger Venus, spying on Mr Boffin while they try to beat him to finding a buried will. Scenes such as one in the dust mountains where Wegg and Venus hide behind one of the mountains (Farino, 1998, Ep. 3, 13:20), popping their heads over to spy on Boffin and to chuckle about his impending demise, have the cursory feel of a crime comedy caper, and detract from any sense of pathos that we have built around either Wegg or Venus. The comedic and pantomimic treatment of Venus peaks when he is shown on the lawn



Figure 18

outside the Boffins' house at night, watching the happy family inside (Farino, 1998, Ep. 3, 01:12:10).

Lit by moonlight, with the gothic feel completed by the loud sound of a hooting owl, Wegg, directing his venom now directly toward Mrs Boffin, promises that he will “have your Boffin, I’m going to turn him upside down and grind him down” (Farino, 1998, Ep. 3, 1:12:22). The sense of the pantomimic gothic reaches a crescendo as Wegg breaks into uncontrollable demonic laughter and twirls in the moonlight on his one leg, with his crutches akimbo making the shape of a bat or predatory bird (Figure 18). This progressive diminishment of any subtlety relating to Wegg’s adaptive treatment also diminishes our sense of his humanness and makes him less grievable. Although she is discussing the evil of life, rather than its fictional portrayal, Butler’s comment on the affect of the representation of evil is pertinent here:

Those who remain faceless or whose faces are presented to us as so many symbols of evil, authorize us to become senseless before those lives we have eradicated, and whose grievability is indefinitely postponed. (Butler, 2004, xvii)

If we engage with the narrative treatment of Wegg we can see that, because of the narrative treatment, we have lost sight of any sense of his precarity alongside our decreasing sense of his grievability and the increasing sense of his ‘badness’.

The sense of precarity and grievability in Wegg is disrupted once more in one of the final scenes of *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 59:54). Here, Wegg comes to blackmail Mr Boffin with the unfavourable will that he has unearthed. Thinking that he is meeting with only Mr Boffin, he is confronted by the whole household, as well as his supposed accomplice, Venus. Even here, the affective sense of one man being outnumbered by so many is viscerally and morally uncomfortable, and is made more uncomfortable by our awareness of his impairment. Uncomfortable too, is the ensuing anger shown towards Wegg by Mr Boffin, especially when compared to the apparent easy forgiveness of Venus who was complicit with Wegg, and who only switched allegiance when more money was to be gained by working with Mr Boffin. This scene culminates in John Harman (Steven Macintosh) physically and vehemently attacking Wegg (Farino, Ep. 4, 1:03:30). From a narrative

point of view, we are expected to reconcile with Wegg's treatment as a righteous and redemptive resolution. However, because of the affectiveness of the physical violence, necessitated by the process of adaptation, reconciliation is more difficult. We are forced to consider what, even in the fictional context given, gives rise to a discourse where it is seen that violence against particular bodies is permissible; that, in Butler's words "[t]here are ways of distributing vulnerability, differential forms of allocation that make some populations more subject to arbitrary violence than others" (Butler, 2004, p. 7). After having seen Wegg discoursed as a caricature for some time, it is the affective treatment of his experience of Harman's violence that brings us up short. In a prolonged, close-up shot (Figure 19), we see Wegg broken and weeping (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 1:05:00). Through this disruption, we are returned to the sense of precarity in Wegg, through being



Figure 19

prompted to acknowledge the diminution of his grievability in the adaptation. Due to the sense of ambivalence brought about by the contradictions in the discourse (which will, to some extent, mirror our own), we are also left to consider the ethical imperative that we do not need to like somebody, nor approve of their conduct, to acknowledge and respect the humanness of the other.

Mrs Clennam

While Wegg's adapted discourse foregrounds precarity in relation to grievability, that of Mrs Clennam in *Little Dorrit* (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008) foregrounds precarity in relation to dependency. We are introduced to Mrs Clennam (Judy Parfitt), not by seeing her whole person, but by seeing her walking stick being banged on the floor (Figure 20), accompanied by her educated accent loudly summoning her servant, Flintwinch (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 1, 2:25).



Figure 20

There is a metonymic quality of the use of the stick here. In the same way that a symbol of a wheelchair might precede our encounter with a disabled person so that the two are inextricably bound in our consciousness, Mrs Clennam becomes symbolised by the stick that precedes the introduction of her whole bodily self. As a narrative device, coupled with the urgent vocal summoning to fulfil an errand that necessitates going downstairs, this metonymic use of the stick, because we are culturally used to such metonyms, gives us the shorthand information that Mrs Clennam's mobility is limited and that she is dependent on others for her care.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Smallweed's presence is amplified by his being a conflation of several members of a family in the original novel. So, Mrs Clennam's amplification, as well as the

amplification of the sense of her dependency is forged by further metonymic association, this time with her surrounding architecture and by her household members. With regard to architecture, in the novel itself, Mrs Clennam's house is personified as someone disabled to echo the disability of its owner:

It was a double house, with long, narrow, heavily-framed windows. Many years ago, it had had it in its mind to slide down sideways; it had been propped up, however, and was leaning on some half-dozen gigantic crutches: which gymnasium for the neighbouring cats, weather-stained, smoke-blackened, and overgrown with weeds, appeared in these latter days to be no very sure reliance. (Dickens, 2003, p. 21)

In the adaptation, this description of an unstable and visibly lopsided house is not translated literally in the construction of its set. Instead, the instability is inferred by unusual and alternating high and low camera shots when the interior of the house (particularly the stairs) is shown when characters are moving about within it. The fragility of the house's structure is also emphasised whenever a door is opened and closed, and causes plaster dust to rain down from the ceilings. Although her controlled demeanour, coupled with the fact that she is in charge of her household in a financial and social sense belie an immediate sense of precarity in Mrs Clennam's person, the affect produced by her architectural surroundings confirm it. Also, as we engage with the affect created, we begin to realise that the (financially dependent) members of Mrs Clennam's household confirm, rather than negate, the association of her with a sense of vulnerability. Flintwinch (Alun Armstrong) is played with a recalcitrant menace, displaying an overt sense that he will only carry out the orders that he sees fit, thus reducing Mrs Clennam's sense of agency and increasing her air of vulnerability. Conversely, the housekeeper Affery (Sue Johnston) is in a perpetual, and affectively contagious, state of near-hysterical terror, which supplies us with the physical sense of fear that we presume that Mrs Clennam, despite not displaying it, must be feeling in her situation of being tied to a dangerous house, served by a dangerous household.

If, as discussed in the previous chapter, *Bleak House* (Chadwick and White, 2005) is a Rembrandtian oil painting in its adaptive palette, then *Little Dorrit* is largely an Italian watercolour, with its pretty, refined palette of misty and cool blues and greys. Mrs Clennam and her quarters, however, are not in keeping with this palette and so are not conferred with its association with openness and light. The palette of Mrs Clennam's rooms is dark and opaque, with the untouched and dusty furniture adding to the impression of gloomy fixity. This translation is in keeping with the novel (Dickens, 2004, p. 25) where Mrs Clennam's furniture is described in terms of paralysis, with Medical Humanities scholar Erika Wright commenting of the description that, "[i]t is as if Mrs Clennam has infected the furniture; objects that are by design immobile become even more so when imagined as extensions of her will" (Wright, 2016, p. 100).

In connection with the aforementioned parallel with painting, there is an association with Mrs Clennam's adaptation and portraiture. This is of particular interest, with regard to Mrs Clennam's disability, when considered in the context of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's exploration of disability and portraiture. In a lecture entitled 'Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature' at Villanova University, Garland-Thomson argues that combining the tropes of portraiture with the portrayal of disability allows us to "re-narrate disability in new ways" (Garland-Thomson, 2012, 11:30). She also argues that portraiture counters a perception of disability as marginal, through altering its implied status as other:

[Portrait artists], by achieving a recognisable likeness, of their subjects as people with disabilities, portraits [...] make it possible for viewers to understand disabled people as citizens, worthy of public recognition and hence of inclusion in the civic arena. (Garland-Thomson, 2012, 11:48)

The adapted Mrs Clennam is stiffly costumed in anachronistically old-fashioned garb, even in its early Victorian context. Her dress is made of stiff fabric and she wears a high ruff on her neck, reminiscent of conventional eighteenth century portraiture dress. She is also often shown in three

quarter profile (highly conventional in portraiture). This is true of both close-up shots of her face and of longer shots where her wheelchair is readily visible (Figure 21), making sense of the idea that Mrs Clennam is discourses with presence and dignity alongside of her impairment, and that it is largely due to her affective treatment, rather than merely to her narrated social status. This



Figure 21

discursive treatment is important as it also associates Mrs Clennam with being afforded dignity. Although it is not discussed as part of the exploration of Silas Wegg's treatment in *Our Mutual Friend*, there is a section, after his confrontation at the Boffin's house, where he is unceremoniously dumped on a dustcart and driven off while he lies on his back with his wooden leg awkwardly in the air (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 1:06:24). Wegg's unsettling and undignified exit at the hands of others reminds us of Feder Kittay's proposing an intrinsic link of care with dignity, saying that she is "invested in the idea that care is an indispensable, and even a central good — one without which a life of dignity is impossible and which is itself an expression of a person's dignity (Feder Kittay, 2011, p. 52). This connection of care with dignity is not unnatural to us, but nor is it automatically considered a symbiotic one in our culture. It is interesting then, that this idea of dignity being coupled with care or of indignity being coupled with lack of it, comes through in *Little Dorrit* as well as *Our Mutual Friend*, with Mrs Clennam's most dignified and calm depiction (in part due to their

being modelled on the composition of portraiture) being in scenes where she is accompanied by the unremittingly caring Little Dorrit (Claire Foy), such as the one depicted above (Figure 21).

As with the discourse of Silas Wegg, ambivalence plays a part in the challenge for the viewer of engaging with Mrs Clennam's discourse. In the case of Wegg, as discussed, this ambivalence comes about as a result of the less than successful demands of juggling character development and narrative progression whereas, in the case of Mrs Clennam, the ambivalence is presented with more elegance and subtlety. The dichotomy between Mrs Clennam's social status as the financial head of the household and her being physically challenged and thus precarious has already been alluded to. This dichotomy is developed throughout, with aspects such as her inexplicably vicious treatment of her son, Arthur (Matthew Macfadyen) emphasising her sense of matriarchal power, and with incidents such as the diabolical Rigaud's effortlessly scaling a drainpipe to arrive in her bedroom (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008), Ep. 7, 1:05) emphasising her precarity. This ambivalence of power is echoed by an emotional ambivalence, subtly and credibly played by Parfitt. The occasional tightening of the jaw, clenching of a fist and over-hurried dismissal of visitors and servants all hint at painful emotional repression, and are all testament to the quality of the acting and directing around Mrs Clennam's discourse. A major, and perhaps unresolvable part of Mrs Clennam's narrative is whether or not she has really been unable to walk for the previous twelve years, due to the almost biblical episode, portrayed in the novel, as well as the adaptation, where Mrs Clennam suddenly finds her feet and goes off in search of Dorrit (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 14, 37:04). There are too few clues in the novel and still fewer in the adaptation to resolve this point and, even if there were, from a performative point of view, Mrs Clennam has been 'being' impeded for twelve years, whatever the aetiology of her state of being. What is more interesting, and what is less than ambivalent in *Little Dorrit's* adaptation of Mrs Clennam is her death. In the adaptation, when she returns to her home after finding Little Dorrit, she is faced by the prompt collapse of her house before her eyes. We see her being tended to by Little Dorrit and learn in the next scene that she has

died (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 14, 43:16). In the novel, however, she does not die immediately:

There, Mrs Clennam dropped upon the stones; and she never from that hour moved so much as a finger again, or had the power to speak one word. For upwards of three years she reclined in a wheeled chair, looking attentively at those about her and appearing to understand what they said; but the rigid silence she had so long held was evermore enforced upon her, and except that she could move her eyes and faintly express a negative and affirmative with her head, she lived and died a statue. (Dickens, 2003, p. 751)

It is curious that Dickens, already cited in this thesis as a consummate tier of loose ends, chooses to extend Mrs Clennam's life, where the adaptation does not. Given the severe tone of the above passage, it is reasonable to suggest that having Mrs Clennam die quickly is more humane as well as being narratively tidy. However, there could have been a tidiness in a discourse that included the newly united Arthur and Little Dorrit caring for the now severely impaired Mrs Clennam in her final years, thus exploring and affirming what Butler calls "the obligations of proximity" (Butler, 2011, 6:13). This questioning of a scripting decision is not a plea for fidelity, rather it is a questioning of the choice not to discourse a life that we might consider to be less than human, a life that in Butler's terms might not qualify as "a subject of recognition" (Butler, 2013, 5:37). Even taking into account the need for omission and conflation and the right to depart from conservative principles of fidelity, and without detracting from the sensitivity and subtlety of the work as a whole, the final treatment of Mrs Clennam begs questions around the engagement of *Little Dorrit* with grievability and humanness in regard to this particular adaptational choice.

Jenny Wren

Counter to Mrs Clennam's introduction with implicit reference to her state of dependency, *Our Mutual Friend*'s Jenny Wren (Katy Murphy) introduces herself as fiercely independent. We first meet her, when the odious Bradley Headstone (David Morrissey) comes to visit Lizzie Hexham

(Keeley Hawes), who is lodging with Jenny (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 17:14). As with our introduction to both Wegg and Mrs Clennam, Jenny's auditory introduction precedes her visible one, as it does in the novel (Dickens, 1971, p. 192) through her announcement, "I can't get up because my back's bad, and my legs are queer" (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 17:14). This is followed by a cut to Jenny, seated and sewing, as she tells Headstone, "I'm the person of the house" (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 17:21). Our first encounter with Jenny then, through its announcement of impairment alongside being in charge of a household, challenges from the start any assumptions that we might hold around the automatic equivalence of precarity and dependency.

Jenny Wren is an important example of overt independence, displaying her autonomy through being in charge of the material world of her premises and her work as well as, arguably, being in charge of the microcosmic world of her dolls. With regard to the centrality and the marginality of normalcy, Lizzie and Jenny could be construed as inhabiting these spheres respectively, with Lizzie being the normate heroine and Jenny being the non-normate marginal character. In such a relationship, and especially in a Dickens' narrative, our expectation is for the relationship of dependency to be one-directional, either with the normate character caring for the non-normate character or the non-normate character serving the normate. Unusually, especially in the context of a Dickensian adaptation, the relationship between Lizzie and Jenny is discourses, as it is in the novel, as being symbiotic and egalitarian. Schor comments on the rarity of this representational balance in *Dickens and the Daughter of the House*, where she points out that "Jenny Wren's difference is her complete inclusion into the text's daughterly plots" (Schor, 2000, p. 204). This idea of the 'daughterly' in the novel explains the affective resonance of scenes where Lizzie and Jenny are alone together, such as the one where Lizzie brushes Jenny's hair while they discuss Lizzie's suitors (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 1:10:40). The soft focus of the shot (Figure 22) and the candle-lit tones, together with the composition of the two women's absorbed faces side by side, bring a sense of intimacy as well as sisterly equality. From the perspective of adaptational intertext, this scene is strongly reminiscent of

scenes in Jane Austen adaptations wherein characters share their inner lives in private moments, such as those discoursing the eldest Bennett sisters in Joe Wright's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (Wright, 2005) or the Dashwood sisters in Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* (Lee, 1995). The



Figure 22

intertextual weight given to Jenny and Lizzie's relationship is important, not just because it establishes their intimacy, but also because it draws attention to the wider implications of interdependency. Judith Butler, urges us to consider interdependency as an ethical ideal:

This way of imagining community affirms relationality not only as a descriptive or historical fact of our formation, but also as an ongoing normative dimension of our social and political lives, one in which we are compelled to take stock of our interdependence. (Butler, 2004, p. 27)

By advocating the acknowledgement of interdependence, Butler is asking us to question the cultural norm of favouring an ideal of imagined independence. Through the sensitive adaptation of Lizzie and Jenny's friendship, together with its disruptive treatment of the cultural assumptions around normalcy, *Our Mutual Friend* also advocates the ethics of interdependence.

Jenny Wren's interdependence, as well as being demonstrated through the co-dependence already

discussed, is also shown through the alternation of dependence and of independent agency. Although Lizzie is lodging at Jenny's premises, there is an inferred sense that Jenny's wellbeing and safety is supported by Lizzie's being there, when Lizzie describes her as "a poor ailing creature surrounded by drunken people from the cradle" (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 19:10). The implication is that Jenny needs familial support that is not provided by her real family, and this implication is reinforced when Eugene Wrayburn (Paul McGann) includes Jenny in the arrangement when he organises tuition for Lizzie (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 32:55). Despite the marginality of her social, narrative and bodily status, Jenny Wren has a surprisingly high degree of agency with respect to her presence and influence at key junctures in the plot. The most notable examples of this are her tending presence at Eugene Wrayburn's bedside when he is close to death (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 25:01), and her sending Mortimer Lightwood (Dominic Matham) to fetch Lizzie so that she and Wrayburn can be married (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 30:20), which proves to be the turning point of Wrayburn's recovery. There is an alternation in the visual discourse of Jenny Wren that echoes the alternation of her dependency and agency in the novel. Jenny is described as a child in the novel (Dickens, 1971, p. 192), which primarily seems to be an allusion to her diminutive stature. Although portrayed unambiguously as an adult woman by Murphy, Jenny Wren's diminutive stature is emphasised in the adaptation by often showing her seated and by usually using raised camera angles for her. As a counterpoint to these representational choices, and in keeping with the inflation of her narrative agency, Jenny Wren's visual treatment is sometimes grand in flavour. In a scene where she is looking for her drunken father (who we later discover is already dead), she is shown moving down a long jetty, weeping and predicting his death (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 1:34). The treatment of this scene, with its long shot of a tiny woman at the edge of a wide expanse of water in stormy weather, wailing and lamenting the impending loss of her father, has an epic, almost mythical feel to it, and belies any assumptions that we might hold around the marginality of Jenny Wren's status. In the marriage scene at the ailing Wrayburn's bedside, Lizzie, Mortimer Lightwood, a minister, Bella Wilfer (Anna Friel) and Jenny Wren surround the ailing Wrayburn. With its formal and symmetrical composition

of two central characters, flanked on each side by two standing characters, and with the prominent



Figure 23

crucifix on the wall, this scene has the overtones and the quality of a Christian religious painting (Figure 23). Jenny Wren, although her back is turned to camera, occupies the left foreground of the scene, interestingly a position reserved for Mary Magdalen in religious paintings of the crucifixion, thus associating her role with both importance and virtue. The alternation of dependence and agency and of narrative prominence and marginality provide us with a sense of discomfort; as Stoddard Holmes says in her critique of Jenny Wren's societal discourse: "Jenny inhabits a version of the twin structure that is all the more memorable for its fragmentary and inconclusive use of melodrama. We do not know how to feel about Jenny Wren" (Stoddard Holmes, 2010, p. 58). It is true that we do not 'know how to feel' about Jenny Wren, but the emphasis and subtlety with which her conflicting aspects are drawn mean that we do feel when we engage with her portrayal. The fact that we may have alternating and conflicting feelings around Jenny Wren's agency and lack of it points to a powerful ambivalence around the discourse of her precarity that has the potential to prompt us to engage with our own.

Another aspect of Jenny Wren's adaptation that relates to the ambivalence of how she is discoursed,

as well as the potential ambivalence in our response to her, is the level of unequivocal anger that she shows. When Wrayburn asks her an innocuous question about whether or not buying a doll would be bad, she snaps, “What do you mean? Bad for your back and your legs?” (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 30:42). We, like Wrayburn, are viscerally startled by the unexpectedness and the ferocity of Jenny Wren’s outburst and wonder if we have misread her nature so far. As our engagement with Jenny develops and we allow the undulation of the ambiguity and ambivalence with which she is discoursed, we begin to comprehend that anger could be a likely companion to the experience of the grief of impairment and the experience of being ungrievable to much of the world. We can see that Jenny Wren’s history of total neglect, terrible pain (discussed more fully later) and restrictive impairment must inevitably give rise to an immense sense of loss. As Judith Butler argues in relation to grief in her talk at the PEN World Voices Festival, it seems impossible to “stay with [...] unbearable loss without converting it into destruction” (Butler, 2014, 2:02). In the face of loss that seems unbearable, she says, anger seems the only foil to abject grief: “Rage carries sorrow and covers it over” (Butler, 2014, 0:20). This rage can only abate, says Butler, when something happens that triggers us to engage with our sorrow and surrender to it through mourning, as “[m]ourning has to do with yielding to an unwanted transformation” (Butler, 2014, 05:55). This treatise on anger and loss makes sense of the discourse of Jenny Wren’s anger, and its abatement when her father’s death finally forces her to break down on the jetty (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 11:05) to mourn his lack of love for her, alongside her other griefs.

A particular area where Jenny Wren demonstrates anger, as well as her distress is in connection with her experience of pain, which is a dimension of the experience of bodily precarity. If we have not deduced from Jenny Wren’s avoidance of moving and standing (or from her clear difficulty when she does move) that she is in pain, then we learn about it explicitly from Lizzie, commenting to her brother Charley (Paul Bailey), that “[s]he has such courage but I fear she’s always in such pain” (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 19:10). However, it is the affective resonance of the portrayal of Jenny Wren’s

experience of her unbearable pain that conveys the near-impossibility of living with the pain of her impairment. In a touching but unsentimental scene where Jenny Wren is alone with Lizzie and is in great pain, she weeps steadily and asks to be taken to bed and rocked to sleep (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 1:12:30). In this scene, it is Jenny's agonised face and Lizzie's distress at attempting to respond to an experience of which she cannot understand the depths, that communicate the singular affect of the discourse of pain. We can see the capability of an adaptation to relay what a novel cannot, that pain lies beyond language. As Elaine Scarry explains in relation to the ultimate incommunicability of pain:

To acknowledge the radical subjectivity of pain is to acknowledge the simple and absolute incompatibility of pain and the world. The survival of each depends on its separation from the other. To bring them together, to bring pain into the world by objectifying it in language, is to destroy one of them. (Scarry, 1985, p. 50)

This idea, that pain is the ultimate experience of separation, because pain and fear of pain are part of a sense of vulnerability, sheds some light on the reasons that we find precarity and vulnerability difficult to engage with. It makes sense of the affective impact and the affective difficulty of the pain, as well as the ambivalence, found in the representation of Jenny Wren.

In this adaptation of the novel's narrative, it is the inclusion of the pairing of Jenny Wren and the Boffins' ward Sloppy (Martin Hancock) that is perhaps the strongest testament to the success of the overall sense of ambivalence around Jenny Wren. Sloppy, a foundling with a cognitive disability, has had no contact with Jenny Wren in the narrative until the final scenes where he is sent by the Boffins to her shop to order a doll (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 1:11:58). In this scene we see Sloppy, played in a more conventionally adult way than the remainder of the adaptation, and Jenny Wren, played in an uncharacteristically soft and girlish way. Mostly because Jenny Wren has been discourses thus far in such a nuanced way, this blossoming romance is neither redemptive nor credible, however satisfactory a resolution this might seem in the novel (Dickens, 1971, p. 698). Although we are

invited to take immersive refuge in a neat (if unlikely) ending for Jenny, we might find that despite our natural resistance we would rather engage with her ambivalence and the sense of precarity that accompanies it.

Maggy (and Sloppy too)

Like Jenny Wren and Mrs Clennam, the adaptation of Maggy (Eve Myles), Little Dorrit's companion in *Little Dorrit* (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008), offers the opportunity to explore the notion of dependency and dignity, this time in relation to cognitive disability. As is the case for many of the characters in this thesis, we are not supplied with (nor can we derive) a specific diagnosis for Maggy's impairment in twenty-first century terms. We hear from Little Dorrit (Claire Foy), as we do in the novel (Dickens, 2003, p. 67), that she "had a bad fever and has never grown any older ever since" (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 2, 6:05). Immediately after this, if we had any assumptions about Maggy's physical or financial dependency on Little Dorrit or on the infrastructure of the Marshalsea, we learn that Maggy lives outside of the prison and that she "supports herself entirely" (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 2, 6:16). Although this section centres on Maggy, there are comparisons to be made around *Our Mutual Friend's* (Farino, 1998) treatment of the foundling Sloppy (Martin Hancock), who is also portrayed as having a cognitive disability. The representation of Sloppy is, in general, less transformed than Maggy's and his presence in the adaptation is slighter than Maggy's. Nevertheless, his adapted presence represents challenges, both for the adaptation itself and for the viewer, so comparison offers useful insights in the case of both characters.

In relation to both dependency and to the particular challenges posed by engaging with cognitive disability, Eva Feder Kittay says that it is important to question our assumptions and beliefs:

Are those with cognitive disabilities due the same respect and justice due to those who have no significant cognitive impairment? Are the grounds of our moral obligation different when

a human being may lack certain cognitive faculties that are often understood as the basis for moral personhood? Are those with significant cognitive impairment moral persons? (Feder Kittay, 2010, p. 1)

However mindful our outlook, cultural beliefs and norms still shape our thinking and are problematic, even (or especially) in the context of a reading of texts that includes ideas related to more general Disability Studies. Kirsten Stalker, a specialist in the study of learning difficulties, suggests that Disability Studies as a discipline often overlooks the area of cognitive disability, and that “a broader definition of impairment might [...] lead to a richer understanding of disability” (Stalker, 2012, p. 123). This is a challenging thought, which, in particular, challenges the social model of theorising disablement. Due to the fact that this model fights for the right of disabled people to live ‘normal lives’, argues Stalker, there is a problematic assumption about what ‘normal’ is that includes cognitive function, leading to a “discursive othering” (Stalker, 2012, p. 122) of those with cognitive disabilities. This is a provocative idea and, even in the context of the physically disabled characters discussed so far might elucidate aspects of discomfort that we might have felt in our discursive construction of them with relation to their cognitive capacity. For instance, if we have found a site of affective or cognitive engagement in encountering Jenny Wren’s quick wit, Smallweed’s astuteness or Mrs Clennam’s measured and sophisticated speech, then, if we concede to Stalker’s argument, we are in danger of ‘discursive othering’ when we engage with those who have a cognitive disability. This is an area that continues to cause contention and rethinking in the field of Disability Studies, and cannot be treated with full justice in this short section. Nevertheless, the fact that, above all, the adapted Maggy is a shaker of assumptions means that engaging with her discourse raises important questions, even (or especially) if they are questions to which we do not have answers.

The novel’s discourse of Maggy is perhaps the one that differs most from its adaptation, with Dickens describing her in the following way:

She was about eight-and-twenty, with large bones, large features, large feet and hands, large eyes and no hair. Her large eyes were limpid and almost colourless; they seemed to be very little affected by light, and to stand unnaturally still. There was also that attentive listening expression in her face, which is seen in the faces of the blind; but she was not blind, having one tolerably serviceable eye. Her face was not exceedingly ugly, though it was only redeemed from being so by a smile; a good-humoured smile, and pleasant in itself, but rendered pitiable by being constantly there. (Dickens, 2003, p. 67)

This unforgiving description of Maggy is a harsh but telling example of the relating of a being of whom we are invited to think as being less than human, as being ungrievable. Dickens' Maggy is announced as a spectacle that bears little relation to personhood. We are reminded by Butler that such a discourse can lead not only to our perception of another as non-human, but also results in the diminution of the life of that other:

[S]pecific lives cannot be apprehended as injured or lost if they are not first apprehended as living. If certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense. (Butler, 2009, p. 1)

There is then, great ethical onus on the adaptation of Maggy in *Little Dorrit* if her ungrievability is to be countered, which begins with our introduction to her. Our first encounter with Maggy is when Little Dorrit and Arthur Clennam are having a coffee in a grand London coffee house (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 2, 6:16). Little Dorrit is clearly ill at ease to be in a social situation that is at odds with either her normal surroundings at the Marshalsea prison or her place as servant in Mrs Clennam's home. Maggy clearly feels no such unease when she sees Little Dorrit through the window, pressing her face to the glass and banging loudly (Figure 24). Maggy's pressing herself against the glass, and thus our screen as viewers, provides an immediate and affective sense of Maggy's personhood from the beginning. This, compared with our introduction to Sloppy who is turning a mangle in the background at Betty Higden's home, leaves an opening for a continued and

involved sense of engagement with Maggy as her discourse unfolds.



Figure 24

As discussed in relation to Smallweed in the previous chapter, Maggy defies any sense of societal marginality by exhibiting a sense of entitlement in her surroundings, as she does when she raps on the coffee house window, demanding that Arthur and Little Dorrit meet her outside. Like Smallweed, we see Maggy in a series of locations where she seems happy to be and where she exhibits a sense of entitlement, such as the next scene where she appears at the Dorrits' quarters at Bleeding Heart Yard and she expects to (and does) share the family's food, pointing at her mouth and asking "Is it a good supper Mr Dorrit?" (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 3, 4:50). The most extended, and telling of Maggy's scenes is the one where she goes to Arthur Clennam's lodgings with Little Dorrit for the purpose of Little Dorrit's thanking Arthur for clearing her brother's debt. In a previous scene, where Arthur is shown settling into his lodgings alone (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 3, 8:01), the quiet and misty tones of *Little Dorrit's* palette are used to emphasise the stillness and dustiness of his quarters, as he sits in them in quiet contemplation. On the entrance of Little Dorrit and Maggy however (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 3, 9:55), the

affective tone of the space completely changes, and this is due to Maggy's presence rather than Little Dorrit's. Maggy moves into the room quickly and with relish, touching furniture and holding her hands to the fire, which is suddenly in sharper focus and is shown as being brighter; through the discourse of the scene, Maggy's presence brings affective liveliness and warmth to it. Here too, Maggy's sense of entitlement to space and social belonging is contrasted with Little Dorrit's deferment to her own sense of lower social standing. While Little Dorrit sits demurely by the fire, politely speaking when she is spoken to, and only directing the conversation to ask Arthur to allow her to sew a shirt button on for him, Maggy is visibly and vigorously making herself at home. In a comical, but still thought-provoking section, while Little Dorrit busies herself with Arthur's shirt button, Maggy goes from sitting on Arthur's bed to getting right into it, covering herself up and going to sleep (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 3, 10:25). In its context, and because of Little Dorrit's careful adherence to the situation's social expectations of her, we may be taken aback by Maggy's behaviour, but, because of Maggy's straightforward and affective relish, we are prompted to re-examine whether there is good reason for us to be so surprised by someone allowing themselves to engage with their physical surroundings and to respond for a bodily need to rest. Maggy's bodily engagement with the world is also partly conveyed in the adaptation through her relationship with and connection with food. The first scene in which we see her, she is carrying potatoes, which she drops, picks up and tosses between people with gusto (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 2, 6:20). Maggy also remembers places and people by their association with food, such as the hospital where she had her fever, which she describes by it having lemonade and chicken (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 2, 6:31) and Arthur Clennam who she refers to as "him with the cake" (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 6, 12:40). While referring to food (which we associate with taste and the act of eating), increases the sense of Maggy's affect, perhaps the most important part of its emphasis in relation to Maggy's desire and need for food is to re-assert her humanness and her right to bodily needs, re-affirming her absolute ungrievability. Interestingly, Sloppy is also discoursed with reference to food. A verbal motif used in the discourse of Sloppy is his

being given “meat one, beer two, vegetables three, and along comes pudding, four” (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 25:25) by his adoptive family, the Boffins. The difference here, despite sharing Maggy’s delighted and visceral connection with food, is that the point of the surrounding narrative is that Sloppy is fed by others. Because of this, instead of inferring agency and ungrievability as it does with Maggy, Sloppy’s discourse around food only serves to emphasise his dependency and precarity.

Like Jenny Wren’s, Maggy’s presence brings the concept of healthy interdependence to the adaptation. Little Dorrit’s function in the narrative, as is the case with many Dickensian heroines, is one of self-sacrifice. Most of her energy goes into fending for her wayward brother, her spoilt sister and needy and deluded father. Maggy, despite her being presented in some respects as other, is presented not only as Little Dorrit’s loyal companion, but as an equal one too, with them often being shown arm in arm, looking warmly at each other with their faces occupying the same camera shot (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008). That Maggy is Little Dorrit’s main source of emotional sustenance and intimacy is seen in a key scene of the adaptation (which is also key in the novel (Dickens, 2003, p. 194)) where Little Dorrit tells Maggy the story of the ‘Tiny Woman’ (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, Ep. 6, 13:42). This story of a woman whose love for the shadow of a man to whom she cannot even speak, despite being politically problematic, is a transparent but touching allegory of Little Dorrit’s own inner life. The story is told in hushed tones to a minor-tuned melody played music-box-like on a glockenspiel, with the viola counter melody taking over and building the affective sense of pathos. Maggy’s incongruent interjections about the age of the woman and (of course) food, together with her unconcealed dissatisfaction at the Tiny Woman’s never seeing the man again, not only add humour and pathos to the scene but also contribute to a sense of intimacy (like the hair brushing scene with Lizzie and Jenny Wren) between the two women, which neither of them experience elsewhere. Once more, the comparison with Sloppy emphasises the sophistication of Maggy’s adaptive treatment. Interestingly, Sloppy is shown as being depended upon as well as being in a state of dependence, both through his insistence on continuing to mangle for Betty

Hidgen and through working for the Boffins to spy on Silas Wegg (Farino, 1998). However, when examined, these are instances of a series of contracts in which one party is dependent on, or served by, another. What are discoursed here are relationships of mutual service, which do not carry the sense of affective and emotional connection that true interdependence does, and which is shown in Maggy and Little Dorrit.

Overall, Maggy is a rich and affective part of *Little Dorrit's* adaptation, perhaps the richest and most affective. Through her, we are challenged to reflect on our ethical assumptions around precarity, grievability and dependence through the affective display of robustness, non-grievability and interdependence offered by Maggy's discourse. Unlike Sloppy, and crucially, unlike every one of the other characters examined in this thesis (with the possible exception of Esther), Maggy never evokes pity. Bill Hughes, in his paper 'Fear, Pity and Disgust: Emotions and the Non-disabled Imaginary' (Hughes, 2012), points out the dangers of pity in relation to the discourse of disabled otherness and to our assumptions around the central and the marginal, saying "Pity is a hierarchizing emotion in which superiority is at work in those who feel it and inferiority is the projected status of those who are its target" (Hughes, 2012, p. 71). Maggy, because she resists pity, resists even our subconscious urge to apply hierarchical values to her person. She disrupts, and keeps disrupting (even if only for moments), our assumptions around the concept of the relationship between centrality and marginality.

In Conclusion

Through its exploration of Dickens' adaptations, this thesis has sought to support Hall's proposition that "the commitment to thinking, writing, theorising and imagining disability is essential" (Hall, 2015, p. 8) in the context of literary studies. Close reading of these televisual texts, together with attention to their affect has demonstrated the richness of this approach with regard to the discourse of disability. Applying this method to Dickens' adaptations in particular has shown that even texts that are generally considered to be traditional, mainstream and immersive have much to offer in terms of the representation of the marginality of disability.

In Chapter One, combining Garland-Thomson's ideas on staring (Garland-Thomson, 2009) and Butler's particular concept of face (Butler, 2004) provided a way of investigating the particular viscerality and visuality of *Bleak House* (Chadwick and White, 2005), enabling us to see where engaged looking at another whom we perceive as different can disrupt our sense of normalcy and otherness. In particular, the use of these ideas, combined with the examination of affect, has demonstrated the value of including attention to affect as part of a close textual reading.

In Chapter Two, taking Butler's related concepts of precarity, grievability and interdependence (applied by her primarily to the situation of otherness in the situation of war) proved to be a valuable approach to the experience of otherness in the situation of being disabled. These inter-related concepts have been used to examine their combined application to a number of separate, and varied, discourses of disability in *Little Dorrit* (Lawrence, Smith and Walsh, 2008) and *Our Mutual Friend* (Farino, 1998). Through this application, the inter-relation of precarity, grievability and interdependence has been affirmed, while its applicability to Disability Studies has been confirmed. Through linking them directly with the concept of interdependence, Feder Kittay's notions of dependency and dignity have further (through their direct applicability to disability) affirmed the

usefulness of considering both Butler's and Feder Kittay's work in combination in order to apply it in a Disability Studies context. Although its particular reference is to cognitive disability, Feder Kittay's work has also been useful to identify that the notion of dependency is sometimes used to diminish a sense of personhood, not only in the cognitively disabled other but in the physically disabled other too.

Perhaps the most important of Feder Kittay's approaches is her advocacy of dignity in relation to care and dependency. The work of this thesis shows that, through deliberate visceral engagement with, and through specific attention to the vulnerability of those that we consider other in terms of disability, our own sense of normalcy is challenged. Once this sense of normate centrality has been disrupted, then it is difficult for either an attitude of judgemental othering or benevolent pity to remain unchecked. Whether it is caused by an encounter with a real or a discourses other, if this disruption is to develop into an ethical impulse, then it requires that we engage fully with the affect, as well as the analytical thought that arises; as Feder Kittay attests: "Moral deliberation requires not reason alone, but also empathy, emotional responsiveness, and perceptual attentiveness" (Feder Kittay, 2011, p. 53). Literary and cultural texts are, by their nature, sites of engagement. Through working, using an approach that includes concepts such as (but not restricted to) those used in this thesis, there is an ongoing opportunity to explore the ethics of representation in relation to the texts that we examine. This ethical imperative is particularly important with regard to Disability Studies, where the fast-growing and, in part, disparate nature of the field requires more ethical attention and homogeneity. As Feder Kittay proposes:

Disability is in search of an ethics that will both articulate the harms faced by people with disabilities—discrimination that threatens dignity as well as well-being—and offer moral resources for redress. (Feder Kittay, 2011, p. 49)

With regard to our engagement with the marginality of disability, and beginning with ourselves as readers and scholars, we can apply the principles of affective and ethical engagement to our study of

texts where disability is discoursed. If we do this, then we apply our own 'moral resources for redress' in working towards an ethics around textual encounters with disability. This will in turn speak to an ethics around disability itself.

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Figures

Figure 1: (Amyes, 1979, Ep. 1, 18:13)

Figure 2: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.12, 6:12).

Figure 3: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 6, 7:05)

Figure 4: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.12, 8:11)

Figure 5: (Phiz, 1852a)

Figure 6: (Peake, 1948)

Figure 7: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 5, 14:30).

Figure 8: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 7, 16:15)

Figure 9: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.10, 9:41)

Figure 10: (Phiz, 1852b)

Figure 11: (Phiz, 1852c)

Figure 12: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 11, 10:08)

Figure 13: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 15, 27:30)

Figure 14: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.10, 10:18).

Figure 15: (Phiz, 1852d)

Figure 16: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep. 5, 15:02:45)

Figure 17: (Chadwick and White, 2005, Ep.7, 15:07)

Figure 18: (Farino, 1998, Ep. 3, 1:12:35)

Figure 19: (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 1:05:00)

Figure 20: (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 1, 2:25)

Figure 21: (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 6, 24:31)

Figure 22: (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 1, 2:25)

Figure 23: (Farino, 1998, Ep. 2, 1:10:40)

Figure 24: (Farino, 1998, Ep. 4, 1:34)

Figure 25: (Smith, Lawrence and Walsh, 2008, Ep. 2, 7:56)