

Doctoral Dissertation

Orality and Writing in Dickens and Neo-Victorian Fiction

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## Introduction

The illustration of Queen Victoria and her daughter at home, “A Glimpse of the Queen’s Home Life” (Fig.1) in *Illustrated London News*, published on 26 January, 1901, four days after her death, epitomises a typical reading scene of a Victorian family; a member reads something aloud for the others. Here a daughter reads a newspaper aloud for her mother; the picture is a legacy of the Victorian “respectable” family, of which the Queen dedicated herself to create the image through newspapers and magazines during her reign.

As the papers piled on the table on the right side of the Queen show, there were a lot of written and printed materials in a Victorian home: letters, diaries, cheap pamphlets, books for entertainment, scientific and academic treatises, various kinds of magazines and newspapers. Yet, in the symbolical picture of the Queen, published just after her death, what is striking is that she listens to what the princess reads aloud for her. Listening to someone’s reading around the hearth symbolises a happy circle of a family among all the Victorian people ranging from the Queen to the common people. Reading aloud and listening to a reading voice were deeply rooted in the Victorian culture.

## Orality, Literacy and Writing

Reading aloud is a practice in oral culture and the utterance of



A GLIMPSE OF THE QUEEN'S HOME LIFE: THE QUEEN AND PRINCESS HENRY OF BATTENBERG.

Fig. 1.



words by a performer can be defined as orality. Walter Ong suggests that there is a fundamental difference between oral and written words. In *Orality and Literacy* he observes how, from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the culture based on oral words (orality) shifted to a culture formed by the development of the technology of writing and the importance of the ability to read and write (literacy). What make the written words distinguished from the sound are the faculties by which the body perceives them. The former is received by sight and the latter by hearing: “Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer” (Ong 71). Sound penetrates deeply into a person’s consciousness, the inside of his/her body, through hearing it.

Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups.” (Ong 74)

Sound is conveyed from an individual to the other through a voice, creating at the same time a community among people.

The significance of the community in a pre-literate culture can be seen in oral transmission made through storytelling and vocalized narratives and in a direct relationship between performers or storytellers and listeners. Adam Fox, studying popular verses in the early seventeenth century, suggests that, when reading a printed text aloud is shared by individuals in a community to convey information and entertainment, it offers the site of “an interaction between text and readers or hearers of a

kind which is not often retrievable at this social level” (127). Before silent and individual reading of the printed text became common practice, oral reading connected all villagers, including literate readers and illiterate listeners in a common sphere, the public space. This situation of verse reading is fundamentally reflected in the scene where Queen Victoria’s daughter reads a newspaper aloud to the mother.

On the other hand, the written word (literacy) is fixed on the human sight which perceives the surface of a thing (Ong 71). Because of this “tyrannical” characteristic, it is “a particularly pre-emptive and imperialist activity that tends to assimilate other things to itself” (Ong 12). Written words have a feature that they absorb and integrate a minor culture into a wider society or culture. This assumption is significant for the discussion of neo-Victorian fiction because the composition of these works depends on the denial of making an aspect of a thing fixed. They attempt to represent the difference between the present and the Victorian past which have been fixed in printed texts, blurring the boundary. The dissertation will examine how the boundary of the past, fixed text is blurred in neo-Victorian fiction although, paradoxically, the authors present this blurring in printed texts.

The year 1837, when the Queen was crowned, can be marked as a key point in the history of literacy. The historical processes in the literary industry are reflected on *Oliver Twist* as we will be discussed in the first chapter. Before the publication of the novel, *The Pickwick Papers* had the impact on the Victorian literary scene due to its serial publication (Shillingsburg 32) and promoted “the emergence of ‘cheap literature’



industry” (Brantlinger 12). Patrick Brantlinger observes that an increasing number of cheap literature brought heated arguments over its legitimacy among middle-class people. According to him, they were proud of their respectable taste in literature, but “by the 1840s and 1850s, successful middle-class novelists were enjoying enormous popularity and profits” (12-13). They incorporated in their works the elements of popular literature such as criminal stories published in newspapers and magazines. The tendency led to the superiority and rise of literacy in the Victorian period.

Whereas Ong makes a division between orality and literacy when he discusses the chronological shift of cultures, the dissertation attempts to discuss another aspect of language: the physical act of writing. The problematic of the physical act of writing has been examined by Roland Barthes. In “The Death of the Author,” Barthes has affirmed the difference between the ages in which the Author lived and “the modern scripter” is living. Whereas it is thought that the Author and a text stand in a relation of “a *before* and an *after*,” a modern text “is eternally written here and now” (145). Writing

designates exactly what linguists . . . call a performative, a rare verbal form . . . in which the enunciation has no other content . . . than the act by which it is uttered something like the *I declare* of kings or the *I sing* of very ancient poets (146).

Since a person who writes and what s/he writes are separated, a text becomes “a tissue of signs” (Barthes 315). Then, the reader has no longer a relation with the book’s history so that one “holds together . . . all the

traces by which the written text is constituted” (Barthes 316). For both a reader and a writer, “the written text” and “writing” are divided as Barthes states in his earlier paper.<sup>1</sup>

According to Susan Sontag, Barthes considers writing as a verb. The physical act of writing, then, is a practice of freedom: “excessive, playful, intricate, subtle, sensuous” (Sontag 75). In *Empire of Signs*,<sup>2</sup> he states that writing “creates *an emptiness of language* which constitutes writing” (4). For him, the emptiness, nothingness, is a significant key word, with which he finds a desirable space. Many examples, which he observes in his empire, conform to the very act of writing because they create the meaningless, therefore enjoyable spaces.<sup>3</sup> Jürgen Pieters discusses Barthes’s last stage, tracing his notions of writing: the act of writing finally turns towards “[breaking] loose from himself” in his last stage of life (125). “[T]o write is to embark upon a process of what I would call a metempsychosis that does not involve soul . . . but it is a process that involves a transfer of energy that Barthes would label linguistic . . . .” (Pieters 125). For Barthes, writing does not produce any meaning but an act of transferring energy. Both orality and the physical act of writing connect a performer with receivers. These communications based on voices and writing are close to each other in this regard.

Oral culture has ceased to have impact on society in Europe including England by the mid-twentieth century. However, the scholarly debate of traditional oral culture in primitive cultures has continued. Particularly, the leading anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, has attempted to compare the primitive countries in the heart of Brazil with

the academic world of Europe and has admired the natural way of living in those countries. For instance, in the chapter entitled “A Writing Lesson” in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), he visited a village, Nambikwara, where oral culture is dominant, and attempted to introduce pens into the primitive village. He found that the technology of writing gave authority and prestige to an individual, the chief (296-98). On the other hand, in Nambikwara, maintaining its oral culture, they “[relied] . . . on the generosity of the other side” when they constructed any relationship with others (302-03). In oral culture, the villagers “know about writing, and make use of it . . . but they do so from the outside, as if it were a foreign mediatory agent that they communicate with by oral methods” (Lévi-Strauss 298). So it can be concluded that one of the characteristics of orality and literacy is that the former is rooted in the inside of a group or an individual and the latter is brought from the outside.

For him, the European technology of writing is a procedure that intrudes upon the community dominated by oral culture. On the other hand, the major benefit of literacy lies in the fact that we can develop a consciousness of a spatial expanse and crossing of the boundaries of different times. In the novels which the dissertation will discuss, there are spaces and moments in which we go across geological and temporal boundaries and cross cultures of orality and literacy. We will explore how this notion of crossing borders is reflected in each neo-Victorian novelist’s representation of orality and writing.

### **Neo-Victorian Fiction**

Today neo-Victorian fiction is so flourishing that it can be considered as a sub-genre of English literature. A lot of novels in the genre have been published since the late 1960s and are now popular both in bookstores and literary studies. The most notable neo-Victorian text, A. S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance*, won The Man Booker Prize in 1990. Before it, Peter Carey was awarded the prize with *Oscar and Lucinda* in 1988. These achievements have led to the growth of subsequent works: Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997), Charles Palliser's *The Quincunx* (1989), Michele Roberts's *In the Red Kitchen* (1990), Sarah Waters' three Neo-Victorian novels, *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999) and *Fingersmith* (2002), and Wesley Stace's *Misfortune* (2005). Neo-Victorianism occupies a prominent position in English literature. In this section, the academic history of neo-Victorian studies will be outlined.

The present flourishing of the genre can be traced back to the beginning of Victorian studies. After the Queen's death, Victorianism quickly became something very distant, one to be looked back on by academic scholars. Lytton Strachey, for instance, regarded the Victorians as strangers; they have to be retrieved from "far depths" in *Eminent Victorians* (1918). From the early twentieth century onwards, the Victorians became more and more estranged as if they had lived in a sphere far removed from the modern world.

Then, the 1960s saw the changes in the field of Victorian studies brought about by such works as Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958) and Steven Marcus's *The Other Victorians* (1966). The complexity

and variety of Victorian culture, including popular culture such as Penny Dreadfuls and broadside ballads on the street, have come to form the image of the age still in use today. In the same decade, a new genre of literature came into being: neo-Victorian fiction.

A new trend came into being in the 1960s when scholars began exposing little known aspects behind the established image of the past. It led to the production of “revisionary” fiction set in the Victorian era. The word “revision” was first employed by Adrienne Rich in her paper of 1971 from the feminist point of view: it was defined as “the act of looking back of seeing with fresh eyes, entering an old text from a new critical direction” (90). This assumption enabled the modern writers to revisit the past narrative.

In the long history of mankind, it is only recently that a self-conscious attitude towards the past has emerged. According to David Lowenthal, “the past is a foreign country” for us after the late eighteenth century. Nostalgic emotion has been commercially exploited, so heritages have attracted a lot of people. However, what he emphasises is that “we cannot help but view and celebrate [the past] through present-day lenses” (xvi). For him, the act of revising and narrating the past is to “create a new past” (209). The production of neo-Victorian fiction shares this notion.

The project of neo-Victorian fiction is integrated into that of intertextuality.<sup>4</sup> The term intertextuality was introduced to its study under the influence of Julia Kristeva. In “The Bounded Text” (1969), she refers to intertextuality as “a permutation of texts” (37). Approaching

some historiographic metafiction, whose formation of narrative highly conforms to that of the neo-Victorian, Linda Hutcheon attempts to explain the postmodern textual problem of intertextuality: “Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context” (118). John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, published in 1969, created a textual space in an imaginative way. The representation of the woods of Ware Commons above the Undercliff, “the mile-long slope caused by the erosion of the ancient vertical cliff-face,” epitomises the textual space (71). In the Undercliff, strata bearing fossils are deposited. The cliff symbolizes the Victorian discoveries about the theory of evolution in Darwinian terms and the sense of betrayal of the belief in the order established by the God.<sup>5</sup> Lyme Regis, the town under the forest, is represented as “a picturesque congeries of some dozen or so houses and a small boatyard” (10), where different elements from the past texts are jumbled together. Ware Commons is more mysterious than the town. It is a place where the Victorian past, in which Charles lives, is mixed with the present, from which Sarah, or at least her personality, seems to have travelled back in time.

After Fowles’s work, the number of novels categorised as neo-Victorian fiction has increased. In 1997, Dana Shiller identified the neo-Victorian novel as “a subset of the historical novel” in “The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel” (538). She discusses how the representation of the past in the neo-Victorian novel has effects on us and how we can peer into the past from a distance away (552). One of her

purposes in her argument is to “disrupt and complicate” Frederick Jameson’s criticism of postmodern novels as pastiche (558). In *Postmodernism*, describing these novels as “the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past” (18), he criticises them because the postmodern scepticism about actually knowing the past makes the artists reconstruct and reshape the reality in the past as they think fit. According to him, the works of historical pastiche are made by “the insensible colonization of the present by the nostalgia mode” (20).

The nostalgia about the past is an important aspect in studying neo-Victorian fiction. According to Christian Gutleben (2001), these novels are merely nostalgic pastiche or parody, which copy and reproduce Victorian texts. Although the motive of postmodernists is to overturn the canonical tradition, Gutleben states that such novels are written in a conservative way. As he blames them, they are just trying to return to the past in the modern text: “the paradoxical form of wistful revisionism eventually leads to an aesthetic and ideological deadlock” (10). The connection of the Victorian past with the present is, however, not so simple as just allowing nostalgia in neo-Victorian fiction.

Shiller suggests that these novels are giving new interpretations to and enriching the present based on the past, discussing Byatt’s *Possession* and Peter Ackroyd’s *Chatterton*. These neo-Victorian works can be considered as the very centre in the postmodern academic arguments over writing history. Suzy Anger also asserts the “positive accounts of knowledge” of the past (10) in her discussion of neo-Victorian novels. Following Shiller and Anger, the dissertation will suggest that these



authors attempt to find something new and fresh beyond the phenomena that the established accounts of history have absorbed and integrated the minor ones into them and have ignored them.

Two academic collections of papers, *Rethinking Victorian Culture* and *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, published in 2000, attempted to look at the Victorian culture from a fresh point of view and to reconsider the stereotypical studies and views of the period. During the twentieth century, some prevailing Victorian images were established: anti-Victorianism by modernists after the death of the Queen which continued until around the 1930s (M Taylor, 6) and a diligent and hard-working image promulgated by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s (Joyce 3). They emphasise that the significance of the Victorian period lies in the changes in culture: the era begun with the advent of popular culture and then accepted the dynamic power of mass culture. Literature, which had been given privilege by official, public or high cultures, permeated among ordinary people, formed apart from popular culture in the reign of Queen Victoria. These scholars including Taylor and Joyce endeavour to construct an image that diverges from these stereotypes by digging up the Victorian past.

In 2006, Peter Widdowson named the act performed by these novels as “writing back” to canonical texts from the English tradition. These texts show “a challenge to any writing that purports to be ‘telling things as they really are’” (Widdowson 491-501). Cora Kaplan called them a part of Victoriana in 2007:

Today ‘Victoriana’ might usefully embrace the whole

phenomenon, the astonishing range of representations and reproductions for which the Victorian – whether as the origin of late twentieth century modernity, its antithesis, or both at once – is the common referent. (3)

Kaplan, who deals with the fictions of the 1960s and the 1970s, argues that Victoriana “override[s] both modernism’s critique of the hollowness of that purpose and postmodernism’s default cynicism” (95). The genre of neo-Victorianism is one of the literary movements that are to open a future after the age of postmodernism.

In 2008, a journal specialising in this area, *Neo-Victorian Studies*, was inaugurated. The “Introduction” of the journal states that “over the last two decades, the production of neo-Victorian artefacts, fictions, and fantasies has become too prolific to be contained as a ghost in the corner of the Victorian Studies parlour . . . ” (Kohlke 1). Similarly, *Literature Interpretation Theory* issued a special number of neo-Victorian study, with an introduction titled “Engaging the Victorians,” in 2009. There, Rebecca Munford and Paul Young assert that the Victorian characteristics have been already established as a “consensus” (4). Neo-Victorianism itself is required to re-estimate the past (Munford and Young 4) beyond the boundaries established by the development of twentieth-century Victorian studies.

In 2010, three studies headed “neo-Victorian” were published in succession: Louisa Hadley’s *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative*, Kate Mitchell’s *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction*, and Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn’s *Neo-Victorianism*. This

trend is driven by a desire to solve the problem why Victorian culture is continued to be looked back on and reproduced in the modern context. The neo-Victorian writing always incorporates a huge amount of cultural, literary and theoretical resources from the nineteenth century onwards, so we can rationally and intelligently survey the general outline of the history in the writings. These critics all seem to feel that they no longer have a distorted way of thinking about the Victorian past such as modernists and postmodernists had done. These studies are grounded on the premise that we can acknowledge our present position through an awareness of the past by reading these novels. While these critics cited above discuss neo-Victorianism and its significance for the present authors and readers, the occult and spiritualism are highlighted in *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Possessing the Past*, a collection of essays edited by Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham (2010). The editors suggest that the Victorian engagement with spectral ideas and items inform ambiguity of division between the past and the present.

It should be noted that there has been no leading discussion about neo-Victorian fiction in terms of orality and writing. The trust that we implicitly place on a text is always problematic in most of these novels because one of the motives for neo-Victorians is to revise, reproduce, and reconstruct Victorian realism. The radical basis underlying the contemporary texts is that a narrative of history and historical literature is unreliable whether it is a factual document or a fictional narration. In this point, the ambiguousness of orality and the dominant force of fixity of literacy can be applied in the argument of neo-Victorian fiction.

Many critics of neo-Victorian fiction have attempted to interpret them applying modern literary theories. They prefer to situate their novels in the style and concept by means of which twentieth-century critics have interpreted the cultural legacy: postcolonial invasion in the colonial world (in *Jack Maggs*), homosexual relationships (in Sarah Water's novels), a form of transgender identity (of the protagonist in *Misfortune*), the disclosure of the history of class and sexual discrimination (in *Fanny by Gaslight* and *In the Red Kitchen*), obsessional neurosis (in the narrative of religious repression and colonial discourse in *Oscar and Lucinda*). These novelists design their narratives self-consciously in accordance with twentieth-century theories and Victorian styles and conventions. These theoretical contexts have been formed as an academic discipline and evoked as a sort of a strategy for interpreting the Victorians. However, there is something beyond the strategy of reading the Victorian legacy through modern theories in the neo-Victorian novels focused on in the dissertation. The echoes of oral popular culture such as street ballads and the novelists' instinctive, ingrained desire for writing will provide a site on which the constructed system of modern interpretations is underlined.

### **Postcolonialism**

Lévi-Strauss's travels and his anthropological studies gave an impact on postcolonialists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Their works manage to override the typical images of and the notions about colonial countries established by imperialists and

colonialists in Europe by offering a language for decolonising the conquered people. Particularly, Bhabha's concept of an in-between border of cultures is worth discussing. To explain "the articulation of cultural differences" (2), he refers to "newness" (10), which is on the border of culture. He suggests that the border between two cultures "renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present" (10). The place produces "hybridity" of two different cultures. For neo-Victorianism, the other culture is the past, the Victorian era. Bhabha's postcolonial notion of hybridity has an influence on a number of neo-Victorian novels.

There is a lot of neo-Victorian fiction composed from the postcolonial viewpoints. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), one of the earlier neo-Victorian novels, replaces Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* with Antoinette Cosway, set in the background of political, social and cultural incompatibility between England and the Caribbean. The novel reveals that Antoinette, a Creole woman, is replaced in the position of a wife of an English gentleman, by an English woman, Jane Eyre. In Jane's narrative, Bertha loses her faculty of speech like a monkey with black skin (Tomiyama 190-94).<sup>6</sup> Rhys's novel gives her own voice, which is suppressed by Jane, to her in order to demonstrate how her inner self has been formed from her childhood in her native country as a Creole woman.

As Bertha's wild voice and its rewriting in *Wide Sargasso Sea* associate neo-Victorianism with postcolonialism, the problem of orality and literacy has also been argued in the political and cultural conflict

between the West and others in historical studies. For instance, Donald F. McKenzie analyses how the treaty of Waitangi written in English, which was signed in 1840 in New Zealand, was different from the Maori version for the native inhabitants. Before reading and writing were taught in the 1830s and printing was brought in 1840 by Europeans, they had been completely illiterate (McKenzie 163). They applied English spellings to the sounds of their oral words and enacted the Maori version of the treaty. As McKenzie states, the treaty was recognised by “the status of oral culture and spoken consensus” for the Maori (189): “the treaty in Maori is a sacred covenant, . . . above the law, whereas the English version distorts its effect and remains caught in the mesh of documentary history and juridical process” because it has the spirit formed by their own oral words (189). For the Maori, while oral words demonstrate their own spirit, literacy and printing are in the unknown world of “a social and political document of power and purpose” (McKenzie 190). In New Zealand, orality was deeply rooted in the nation’s culture, yet literacy was strange to the people.

As Edward Said observes, when one writes history, the writer cannot help forming it from one side, the side which has power.<sup>7</sup> The Eastern culture has been prejudiced by the West partly because of the ruling power of historical and fictional volumes written by Europeans. Making historical accounts by writing, one always confronts this problem of the dominant power in the world of literacy. European literacy has established control over the indigenous languages, which have been spoken in other areas. In using postcolonial terms, the power of literacy

enables one to intrude upon the inside of the other and assimilate a minority culture into oneself. Compared with it, orality is fragile because it is rooted and settled in the inside of a culture. The dissertation will argue how orality and the physical act of writing cripple the power of literacy.

### **The Framework of the Dissertation**

The dissertation will explore these issues focusing on four topics: firstly, orality, literacy and writing in the Victorian culture through discussions of Charles Dickens's novels; secondly, the modern recognition of putting voices into writing and of the act of writing in two neo-Victorian novels inspired by Dickens's life and work; thirdly, orality embedded in the modern colonial worlds in two neo-Victorian novels derived from *Great Expectations*; and the regeneration of orality in England in neo-Victorian novels with Victorian backgrounds.

The first chapter focuses on the novels of Charles Dickens that present the problems of orality, literacy and writing in fictional works. The earlier novels, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Master Humphrey's Clock* reflect the nineteenth-century change of the mainstream mass culture from orality to literacy. Drawing on Steven Marcus's argument on Dickens, who managed to record voices and speech in his works,<sup>8</sup> Ivan Kreilkamp admires Dickens's technique of introducing voices into his novel: "*The Pickwick Papers* inaugurated the phonographic history of Victorian fiction in a vocal explosion that presents itself as an escape from an oppressive print history" (77). The



fictional purpose in the novel is to collect outdated folklore and tales, which have been handed down in the provinces in England. The nostalgic taste of storytelling in the countryside and a satire on scientific documentation of the gentlemen's club get intertwined in the novel and in another work, *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

Dickens's concern with the cultural change from oral communication to the dominance of literacy will be discussed focusing on *Oliver Twist*. Set in the cultural background of domination of literacy, Oliver struggles over the fixity of his identity determined by others. Most of them are represented as writers of his life, providing him with written materials. Texts such as magazines, newspapers, and letters become external causes that form his identity regardless of his intention. On the contrary, ballads, reading aloud, and physical acts of writing seem to be represented in Dickens's works to create a distance from the dominance of literacy.

Chapter Two will argue how Dickens's anxiety about the cultural supremacy of literacy and his creation of physical acts of writing which disrupts the fixity of written words are transformed into the modern environment in Frederick Busch's *The Mutual Friend* (1978) and Sue Rue's *Estella: Her Expectations* (1982). *The Mutual Friend*, fictionalising Dickens's reading tours in his last years, attempts to express some unexpected voices that have been excluded from Dickens's texts. These animated voices expose the haughty and arrogant behaviour of Dickens and reveal that he is not "the spirit of household and hearthside" (62) at all. Because the main narrator, George Dolby, dictates other voices to a

non-Western ward orderly called Moon, the characters' voices are given an air of orientalism by the narrator although they are all Victorians. The novel brings oral words into the colonial world, separated from Dickens's England. Furthermore, the Victorian anxiety about written words is reflected in the modern novel's anxiety about writing voices on papers. In the modern fiction, writing is an act of stealing other's inwards and allowing any deviation from truth. In *Estella* as well, writing a plot is problematic. There, using *haiku*, a Japanese character encourages the modern Estella to write the story of Miss Havisham, who is imprisoned in the world of the past created by Dickens.

Dickens's recognition of oral culture as a legacy of old English culture is restructured in the colonial worlds in Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2007). The third chapter will treat these two neo-Victorian novels set in the former colonies, Australia and New Zealand. For them, the sound of oral communication is echoed in the foreign countries in contrast to the world of literacy in England. Being conscious of the fundamental difference between vocal and printed words, they challenge the premise that a past story has been completed and immured in a canonical book and can no longer be changed. The bildungsroman of a convict from Australia, Magwitch, otherwise Jack Maggs, is incarnated by an English writer, Oates, in *Jack Maggs* and Mr Dickens remains a barefoot white man for a girl of a local island even after she has undertaken an academic study of Dickens's novels in England in *Mister Pip*. These writers try to continue narratives derived from *Great Expectations* established by Dickens as well as from the pages

of the book, that is, confined spaces within printed words. Exploiting orality in the colonial countries, these neo-Victorian works reveal cracks when they are compared to the apparently fixed surface of Victorian fiction.

The last chapter focuses on Wesley Stace's *Misfortune* (2005) and its representation of ballads. A ballad was "the earliest form of popular literature . . . as part-song, part-text" and created a space where "any clear boundaries between oral and literate culture would have been blurred" (Barry 82). This chapter will explain the history of ballads as a part of oral culture and examine how they are retained and are regenerated consciously in neo-Victorian fiction. In *Misfortune* unlike in *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip*, the material of oral culture is represented in England after the main character's conflicts, which have been experienced home and abroad. The use of ballads in literary works seems to make orality and literacy, colonised nations and England, and the Victorian past and the present, coexist.

In the Victorian period, Dickens managed to use an oral aspect of the language, to focus on the physical act of writing, and finally to communicate with his readers through his voice in his reading tours. Those manoeuvres in Dickens's novels result from a fear for the fixity and closure of identity written by words. The spaces opened by orality of ballads and reading aloud and by physical acts of writing in his novels enable him to escape from that fixity and closure. Dickens's energy shown in writing and reading aloud has been inherited by writers of neo-Victorian fiction. The neo-Victorian novels reflect postmodern

notions on one hand and try to disrupt their logical structure on the other. In order to avoid conforming to the established logical structure, the writers go on renewing and creating a fictional world that is beyond written texts. The vocal activity of reading aloud and the use of ballads in these novels make the modern writers aware of oral words uttered from one's body. The description of orality in neo-Victorian fiction emerges as a way for us to recognise new possibilities of orality. The dissertation aims to show the themes and concerns that link orality with writing in the novels written by Dickens and the neo-Victorians.

## Chapter 1

### Victorian Oral Culture and Writing in the Novels of Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was familiar with nursery rhyme in his childhood and was absorbed in public reading in his later life. While he was engaged in the business of writing as an author and an editor, he had been associated directly with oral words through voices of singing and reading. In *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves*, Malcolm Andrew states that the serial publication of the novel, which was started by Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*, had been a means of establishing relationships with individuals who received his fiction as readers or listeners; and then serialisation of novels was to be substituted by direct communication with the audience of his public readings (18-25). Dickens sought for ways of communicating with others by writing his novels in monthly and weekly instalments and reading aloud in halls and theatres throughout his life.

In the Victorian period, according to Harry Stone, "the ancient heritage of English children," that is, the materials of traditional culture such as folklore, fairy tales, and superstitions, had disappeared because of the Puritan spirit which lived in "an ordered and prosing rationalism" (18). Stone continues to state that, after the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when ballads, almanacs and broadsides were published in booklets and broadsheets, chapbooks of cheap popular literature had brought the tastes for imaginative fiction which were to be composed in

the nineteenth century: “adventure stories, didactic works, bible tales, criminal histories, jest books, pornographic works, prophecies, sensation stories, and curiosities” (21-22). While the middle-class respectable taste required the moral and rational textbook in a well-organized written structure, materials invoking fanciful imagination could be found in cheap books in popular culture.

Drawing on the background of popular literature, this chapter will discuss how these materials from oral culture are represented in the world of literacy in Dickens’s fiction. The first section will analyse the ways how *Oliver Twist* resists the domination of written materials attested by the increasing number of books and magazines in popular culture. The next part of the chapter will demonstrate how voices of reading books aloud and singing ballads evoke in the readers and listeners a nostalgia for Englishness. The representations of reading circles and the inserted pieces of ballads in *The Pickwick Papers*, *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* will be analysed, in contrast to the representations of the public and official world of business. Finally, the chapter will examine the physical acts of writing that are practiced to avoid confinement in printed words and written texts in *Bleak House*.

#### 1-1: The Domination of Literacy in the Nineteenth Century

*Oliver Twist* is concerned with the mass market of literature in the 1830s and 1840s. In *Dickens’s Villains*, Juliet John identifies the novel as a site, in which Dickens analyses “the possibility for emotion, pleasure and also drama as democratic vehicles of communication which would

prevent the divorce of intellectual from mass culture” (136). The “illegitimate” mode of low and popular culture, which was alienated by the middle-class taste, had entered into the space of the “legitimate” culture.

The novel is linked to the problem of the more complex engagement with morality and illegitimacy in popular literature. Drawing on the case of a murderer, whose madness in his crime was analysed by Foucault,<sup>9</sup> Brantlinger claims that committing crimes and “inscribing them in legible text for a literate audience” are connected with each other intimately (81). According to him, the novel itself “can lead a double life by playing both roles in a cultural game of cops and robbers, crime and punishment” (82). Indeed, Oliver is torn between “double” discourses in the novel. He is forced to follow by Fagin the typical life of a criminal boy, whose stories had been made familiar to the people due to the increase of chapbooks and newspapers. At the same time, he is identified as a middle-class boy by Mr Brownlow and Rose. The novel involves a dilemma in allowing both legitimate authority and criminality to coexist (Brantlinger 81). The gap between respectable and humble tastes was bridged through Dickens’s works. Ironically, Dickens’s anxiety seems to arise from this success because the greater popularity of printed texts might have assimilated and eliminated oral materials, which have invoked people’s fancy.

*Oliver Twist* is the novel about materials related to literacy.<sup>10</sup> They demand a target to be written about and to be enclosed in papers. That target is the protagonist, Oliver Twist. It begins with the author’s consciousness that he is to write “memoirs” or “biography” (17) of the



protagonist and ends with the responsibility of the “historian” who tells “the fortunes of those who have figured in this tale” (357). The whole life of Oliver is moved from one plot to another by the author’s and his biographers’ will. Robert Tracy states that “Oliver’s true destiny is to be the subject of a written story, to be scripted” (24). According to J. Hillis Miller, “there is no escape” for Oliver in the novel (*Charles Dickens* 42). Steven Connor, in a paper entitled “‘They’re All in One Story’,” also argues that Oliver “will be enfolded by narratives not his own” because he “is prevented from telling what he knows of his own history” (7). It is striking that the state of confinement is not only caused by the writers’ will of narrating his life, but also is brought about by written materials. In fact, his life is always beset with printed statements, books, and magazines that are offered to him by the writers.

From the beginning of his life, Oliver is believed by the white-waistcoated gentleman in the workhouse that he will “be hung” (29) because he has “asked for more” foods audaciously in the work house. A bill is pasted up on the outside of the workhouse gate, offering “a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the parish” (27). The bill, in which the gentleman reads the destiny of his death by hanging, becomes a text which drives his life forward. The narrator, on the contrary, responds to this scribbler of Oliver’s criminal life, saying that he will continue to write without hinting “whether the life of Oliver Twist [has] this violent termination or no”: he wishes to “show in the sequel whether the white-waistcoated gentleman was right or not” (29). Instead of following the gentleman’s tale, Oliver is dragged

into the narrator's narrative.

Mr Bumble is also a narrator, who identifies Oliver as an illegitimate child of a disgraceful and loose mother. He can control the child's story at will in the meeting with Mr Brownlow. While he has told Oliver's life as a villain to Mr Brownlow first, "he might have imparted a very different colouring to his little history" of Oliver (124) if he had known that Mr Brownlow expects to know that Oliver is a good boy. Oliver is forced to be confined within a small space by Mr Bumble because the narrator and Mr Bumble have shut him in a stereotyped story of an orphan. However, in his confinement, he "draws himself closer and closer to the wall" (29). It is only in this solitary confinement that he can retain his identity without being manipulated by others. The plot about his life and his retreat into a solitary space are repeated a few times throughout the novel.

He enters the solitary state of confinement in the scene where his destiny leads him to a different course of life, particularly just when a writer of his life is replaced with another. For instance, when he would have died by hunger and fatigue, Fagin saves him from his narrator's pen, which has been trying to bring him to his death. The villain, however, tries to make him a criminal. The "drowsy state," into which Oliver falls unconsciously, can be regarded as a momentary escape from the plot of Fagin. Because in that state he "[spurns] time and space" and "the restraint of its corporeal associate" (66), it is a sort of resistance against the writers, who try to define his identity. Hillis Miller points out that if there is an "active volition in Oliver," it is his resistance to "all the

attempts of the world to crush him or bury him or make him into a thief” (42). His resistance is to be in the state, in which “he loses conscious altogether” (H Miller 47). In the state, he is released from all restrictions around him, so the solitary space offers him a haven from a storm of printed texts and writers of his life.

The world of Fagin is surrounded by reading material such as newspapers and criminal records. From the eighteenth century until the 1830s, “the widening demand for reading material was accompanied by a profound revolution in print technology,” and “cheap literature flooded the market” and newspapers “became more accessible and plentiful” for “the reproduction of knowledge” (K Williams 76). For Fagin and his friends, newspapers are sources of useful information. He learns the failure of burglary by Sikes and Oliver not from his gang but from a newspaper (170). Sikes gains the information of Fagin’s capture from “to-night’s paper” (336). In the 1830s, “the daily newspaper became more prevalent,” and particularly weekly newspapers published on Sundays, whose features were “blood, gore and crime . . . were most popular newspapers, catering for a mass working-class readership” (K Williams 83-84). Although the dates when Fagin and Sikes read them are not clearly indicated, they must have read these kinds of newspapers. Furthermore, Fagin is “deeply absorbed in the interesting pages of the Hue-and-Cry” (106) and gives a lecture “on the crying sin of ingratitude” (125), which might appear in the magazine. The book, which Oliver is given to read in order to make him a criminal, also treats “dreadful crimes” (140). The book could be *The Newgate Calendar*.

The flood of literacy brought the domination of written words over oral popular culture in the Victorian era. In Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, some of the stories sold by street sellers centre on bloody crime. The outlines are heard by the audience on the street. Stories from "street literature," collected by Charles Hidley in 1871, are all murderers' biographies from their birth up to the time of execution. For instance, one of them is entitled, "The Life & Execution of Sir John Old Castle at the New Gallows." This story, printed in a standard format on a broadside sheet, would be sold by street-sellers of literature, who cried its price and sang its lines briefly. Mayhew reported that the street literature on crime and murder was read even by some vagrants:

Respecting their education, according to the popular meaning of the term, 63 of the 150 were able to read and write, and they were principally thieves. Fifty of this number said they had read "Jack Sheppard," and the lives of Dick Turpin, Claude du Val, and all the other popular thieves' novels, as well as the "Newgate Calendar" and "Lives of the Robbers and Pirates." Those who could not read themselves, said they'd had "Jack Sheppard" read to them at the lodging-houses. Numbers avowed that they had been induced to resort to an abandoned course of life from reading the lives of notorious thieves, and novels about highway robbers. (419)

The description of Fagin's books conforms to Mayhew's reports.

The novel integrates some of the elements of the Newgate Novel, which was a "sophisticated and developed version of the execution

broadside,” as Tracy notes (18). The contents of broadsides, where criminal news and ballads were printed, were transmitted to the audience by voices on the street. They originally belonged to traditional oral culture. Juliet John demonstrates that in the 1830s street popular narrative printed on broadsides was gradually absorbed into “the bourgeois Victorian novel” by the spread of readership of the Newgate story (128). Popular but immoral traditional literature, which had stemmed from street broadsides, was transformed into “respectable” writing with a middle-class sense of value through Dickens and other Victorian writers.

The moment, when Oliver meets Mr Brownlow, is also important for this history of literature. Fagin permits him to go out with Bates and Dodger as part of the lessons of pickpocketing. Although Oliver knows nothing about their purpose of walking around the street, he witnesses the scene where they draw a handkerchief from an old gentleman’s pocket. In front of the bookstall, Mr Brownlow, “a very respectable-looking personage,” is “reading away, as hard as if he were in his elbow-chair, in his own study” (73). The street can give him the environment similar to “his own study” because he can read a book “with the greatest interest and eagerness” there (73). Symbolically, his reading figure shows that the distinction between the mean street and the sophisticated sphere of the middle-class gentleman’s study around is actually blurred.

Oliver fails to run away from the spot with Dodger and Bates, who lead a throng of people, shouting “Stop thief!” and chasing him as a pickpocket. The excitement of the heat can be seen as being generated

by the clash of the world of the Newgate Novel with the middle-class reading represented by Mr Brownlow. It is caused by the people on the street as well as Dodger and Bates, who could easily be in the Newgate Calendar. Oliver is innocent and rather looks like a son of a gentleman than a lower-class villain. Nevertheless, on one hand, Dodger and Bates have thrown him into the world of criminal stories. On the other hand, the people try to chase him as a criminal. The seemingly middle-class boy is thrust into a lower-class story by the people on the street. This scene can be interpreted as representing the transition of street and popular literature from vulgarity to sophistication and also from a traditional oral narrative to the form of a book. Oliver can be considered as standing at the crisis of the decline of traditional oral literature.

The people's interest in entertainment had gradually changed from oral culture to a "respectable" literary material. Drawing on the background in the midst of an increase of readership, Kathryn Chittick comments that Dickens "[entered] the literary stakes as a humourist, and his humour put him in his literary place – the genre of 'entertainment'" (61). However, in *Oliver Twist*, the description of the dreadful group of people reflects a fear for the domination of "the literary stakes." The fear is represented by a crisis in Oliver's identity, which is defined by and fixed on texts.

His identity is determined not only by the rabble on the street but also by "sophisticated" people. Oliver is taken care of by Mr Brownlow, but he is recaptured by Sikes and Nancy when he goes out on an errand and is returned to Fagin's den. At this time, he is forced by Sikes to

commit a burglary in the house of the Malies. He is shot when one of the inhabitants witnesses them, yet they save him and take him into the house. Here, the history of his earlier life is investigated by Mr Losberne. He tries to find out how Oliver is involved in the robbery. David Miller declares that Mr Losberne plays the role of the police in the middle-class community (577-78). As a detective police officer, he accumulates pieces of evidences that Oliver's origin can be traced not to a villain's den but to a middle-class home. Again, his life-story is rewritten by someone other than himself. He is forced by the "police" to identify himself with the middle class. His final "drowsy state" comes to him in the house of the middle-class family as if he were trying to escape from his forced identity.

It is striking that it comes during the time of his reading. When "he had been poring over [the books] for some time, . . . he fell asleep" (230). Emerging unconsciously from the world surrounded with books in Rose's house, he notices that Fagin and Monks have been looking at him. They might have been watching for a chance to turn him into a criminal. He recognises them "as if it had been deeply carved in stone, and set before him from his birth" (231). Even in dream, he cannot move at all. The middle-class home of the Malies and Fagin's den make him absorbed into his fabricated identities. Fagin and Monks manipulate him to be one of their followers as in an article of the *Newgate Calendar* while the middle-class people attempt to form his life as a respectable child by making him read books.

As Hillis Miller comments, Oliver "can only submit passively to a



succession of present moments” even in his secure world (77). His passivity can be seen in the fact that he is beset with printed texts such as books, newspapers, and magazines. In Mr Fang’s office, where Oliver is arrested as a pickpocket, for instance, he is saved from being condemned as a criminal by a book-stall keeper. He testifies to his innocence (80). The book-stall keeper symbolizes the changing state of his life; Oliver is being transferred from the criminal world to middle-class respectability. Mr Brownlow releases him from Fagin’s plot, in which he is trying to fix the boy’s identity as one of the gang, and leads him to his own world. It is a world of books. In Mr Brownlow’s study, Oliver “[marvels] where the people could be found to read such a great number of books as seemed to be written to make the world wiser” (97). In order to “make him wiser,” he is allowed to read them only under the condition that he “[behaves] well” (97). In the Victorian era, it was almost impossible for a child, who was born and brought up under unfavourable conditions in his childhood like Oliver, to learn how to read and write. Mr Brownlow, nevertheless, encourages him to read books without bothering about his literacy. The gentleman is eventually to play the role of “[filling] the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge” (359) from a great deal of his books in the end of the novel. Oliver is forced to accept the identity as a literate child “passively.”

John Bayley claims that “the world of the novel may be a prison but [Oliver, Bates and Nancy] are not finally enclosed in it” (53). However, at least for Oliver, the repetition of an unconscious state is an endless game of chasing; he is always running from his biographers, who

are trying to enclose him in printed texts. At the beginning of his life, he has been already determined by his own father to lead a certain way of life. The paternal judgement passed on him leads him to the end of the novel. In his dream, in which there are Fagin and Monks, it is revealed that the “story” of his father and mother is written on “the papers,” which Monks keeps (343). In one of the letters, his father entreats his mother not to “think the consequences of their sin would be visited on her or their young child” (343). He repeats this “in the same words, over and over again, as if he had gone distracted” (343). His desperate words, in which he endeavours to keep his sin away from his son, might have created Oliver’s innocent face. Although Dodger and Bates have been brought up in a similarly wretched environment, his face can be distinguished from theirs due to the trace of his father’s writing. It has inscribed him with an identity as a middle-class boy.

Oliver is unconsciously caught up in the current of the period when popular literature was being “sophisticated” (that is, violent, sexual and bloody scenes are being removed from it) and spreading among people of all ranks in England. His identity is constructed by reading books in a middle-class home and criminal biographies in a thief’s den. However, throughout the novel, the environments, into which he is thrown by his biographers, are ceaselessly changing from one to another. The rise of popular literature causes uneasiness and restlessness in his identity. It may be said to be the result brought about by the nature of written and printed words. They fix his identity on pages.

Indeed, Fagin is destined to be drawn in a criminal magazine as a

condemned murderer. When he is sentenced to be hung, he is conscious of his own image to be inserted in a newspaper or a magazine:

There was one young man sketching his face in a little note-book. He wondered whether it was like, and looked on when the artist broke his pencil-point, and made another with his knife . . . . (351)

The artist might be a young writer, Dickens, himself; he did not actually draw Fagin's portrait, but he could write his appearance in a sketch of words to be included in his collection of literary sketches.<sup>1 1</sup> Reading many criminal reports and newspapers during his life, Fagin knows how he is destined after his execution. He is to be featured in *The Newgate Calendar* and newspapers as a criminal protagonist. It is a matter of course that Dickens as a professional writer is immersed in the world of words, but in his writing where written texts undermine one's identity, uneasiness is inevitably aroused about the cultural shift into a society that overemphasizes literacy.

#### 1-2: Reciprocal Communication and Nostalgia for Old England in Orality

While his novels evince the anxiety for the domination of literacy, Dickens brings the force of pieces of popular culture created by voices into play to criticise exclusive reliance on rationalism and order in documents. In the nineteenth century, the pre-literate type of oral materials was disappearing from the scene of popular culture.<sup>1 2</sup> In their place, the custom of solitary reading, especially of novels had taken root. The following argument in this chapter will show that Dickens is

aware of the lack of reciprocal communication in the relationship between the reader and the audience, when books are read not aloud in a family circle but silently in a private room.

A community is not required by one who reads books silently and alone in his/her library or a compartment on a train. On the other hand, since old days, people enjoyed listening to minstrels, ballad singers, and street “patterers,” forming a community, which consists of authors as well as listeners. In “Leisure and Sociability: Reading Aloud in Early Modern Europe,” Roger Chartier, collecting various records of reading aloud in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Western Europe, discusses how “reading can itself create a social bond, unite people around a book, foster convivial social relations, on the condition that it be neither solitary nor silent” (104). For instance, one of his collections is Samuel Pepys’s records during his journey from Cambridge to London in 1668: Pepys wrote that “in the midst of the uncertainties of travel, [the reading group] could foster a temporary bond among fellow travellers” (110).

The bond, which had been formed by a reading community in the seventeenth century, still existed in a reading circle as group of people gathered around a person, who read aloud, in the nineteenth century. In “Texts, Printing, Readings,” Chartier shows that “popular editions of fairy tales by borrowing from folkloric traditions” are forms which unite spoken with printed words (160). According to him, the nineteenth-century custom of reading popular books aloud carried on “the return of multiple texts into oral forms, where they are destined to be read aloud” (160). Because they were usually transmitted by reading aloud,

“the rudimentary reader” could take part in reading books in the same environment as the listeners had enjoyed listening to storytelling, forming a “social bond” in the traditional oral culture (160).<sup>1 3</sup>

It is this environment of reciprocity that Dickens attempted to create in *The Pickwick Papers*. In *Other Dickens*, John Bowen claims that the friendship between Mr Pickwick and Sam Weller and the relationship between Sam and his father can be extended to a potentially “much wider imagined community, between Dickens, his readers, and characters” (61). He continues to state that the friendship is established for Dickens by writing and for his readers by reading and the communication between them dissolves in the end of the novel (62). The bond between Dickens and his readers is fragile and exists only in his imagination.

Mr Pickwick’s duty as a member of the Pickwick Club is to collect folklore and tales in the countryside. It is seemingly intended to recover the communal bond because folkloric traditions recall them to the traditional form of reading circles. However, the traditional community is replaced by the gentlemanly association of the club. It imitates the societies of gentlemen with an objective for collecting folklore and traditional ballads, which were in fashion then. They placed reliance on such scientific activities as they researched and put together records in documents, yet the novel attempts to avoid such reliance on academic records. Leslie Simon argues that the novel “operates structurally as an archive, revealing the discovery of scientific objects and literary manuscripts alike, blurring the line between things that record objective and those that record subjective histories” (24). In the way similar to

blurring the boundary between scientific treatises and fictional works, the scientific statement in the association cannot keep its objectivity in the novel for a couple of reasons.

First, the Transaction of the Pickwick Club is a satire aimed at the belief in the reliability of documents because the reports, which are recorded by the members, have “no official statement of the facts” (20). Records of scientific transactions lack the proper form of an academic statement. Second, Mr Pickwick, the headman of the club, often fails to record tales and anecdotes, which he has listened to, on his note-book. Instead his companion, Mr Snodgrass, makes a list of tales and episodes for the club’s collection. Mr Pickwick always departs from the standard of making a scientific collection. In the chapter of Dismal Jemmy’s tale, for instance, he and his followers are enjoying listening to his tale with friendly companions. Dr Slammer, who has wrongly challenged Mr Winkle to a duel in the previous chapter, enters the room vigorously to interrupt this “warm” and “harmonic” circle; though “the highest gratification” for a member of the club would have been to “record Mr. Pickwick’s opinion of the foregoing anecdote,” Mr Snodgrass has to pass it over due to the interrupter (55-58).

In this scene, there are two remarkable things which orality and literacy are related to. The first is that the community of storytelling is broken due to the development of the episode of Dr Slammer and Mr Winkle. Another is that the faith in the “scientific” records of the Pickwick Club is shaken because Mr Pickwick cannot advance his opinion. On one hand, the reliance on science is satirised. On the other hand, the

work reveals that it is difficult that the “harmonic” community, which is created by a voice, is maintained as opposed to the strength of printed words.

Collecting folklore evoked nostalgia in Victorian gentlemen. Andrew Sanders, who discusses England of *The Pickwick Papers*, observes that the world of the novel is “passing” and “loosing” in “a new and differently structured England” (125). This newly “structured” England has partially come into being with the rise of readership and an increasing number of literary entertainments during the nineteenth century. Printed words enable us to preserve and accumulate our knowledge on papers and provide us with the means of considering things structurally and accumulatively. The more people acquire literacy, the more they are inclined to demand that things are “structured.” As a result, the “structured” England makes the “loose” values of old England lessen. Ironically, while the Pickwick Club embodies this “structured” England, Mr Pickwick feels nostalgia for the culture that is “passing” away and for the close-knit community created by storytelling.

*Master Humphrey’s Clock* inherits the nostalgia for the reading community. Elizabeth Palmberg claims that the use of the clock of the old man gives it a sense of the past as “saleable nostalgia” (25). The magazine reproduces a traditional community. In it, one can have a communal experience of enjoying anecdotes together with others. Here, it conforms to the Victorian domestic situation and is actualised in Master Humphrey’s retrospection on his younger days:

When my fire is bright and high, and a warm blush mantles in

the walls and ceiling of this ancient room; when my clock makes cheerful music, like one of those chirping insects who delight in the warm hearth, and are sometimes, by a good superstition, looked upon as the harbingers of fortune and plenty to that household in whose mercies they put their humble trust; when everything is in a ruddy genial glow, and there are voices in the crackling flame, and smiles in its flashing light, other smiles and other voices congregate around me, invading, with their pleasant harmony, the silence of the time. (112)

In *Dear Reader*, Garrett Stewart defines “the location of the Clock” as “the very space of storytelling,” but the space is “everywhere and nowhere” because little information is given about where the shop is and who the members of the reading group are (206). The problem here is not only the absence of the members but also that the community of Master Humphrey is punctuated only by the presence of “the deaf gentleman.”<sup>1 4</sup> It means that the audience is expected to read printed papers silently instead of listening to vocal narratives in spite of Master Humphrey’s longing for the traditional space in front of his clock. The scene of the reading community is disrupted by the deaf man. The absence of sound changes the reading circle from a nostalgic representation of old England into a paradox.

On the contrary, ballads and rhymes, which are embedded in the text of *Bleak House* (1852), are employed to reproduce sound and voice in the novel and bring the atmosphere of old England into it for the Victorian readers. It does not denote a newly “structured” England but



one that is immersed in popular culture, particularly the culture of sound and voice. At the time of publication of the novel, a lot of ballad dealers and street sellers of songs, called “patterers,” were hawking broadsides, songs and news. Mayhew reports that numerous sellers of literature and stationary are wandering about crying the merits of their commodities. It is interesting that ballads and songs, which are to be sung and read aloud by the people who buy them, have been accompanied by voices of the “patterers”: Mayhew explains that “to patter, is a slug term, meaning to speak” (213).

Ballads and songs presented domestic incidents such as notorious murder cases and the facts and fiction about the Queen and the royal family. For instance, in Mayhew’s reportage, there is a chaunter who is working in Liverpool-street. He hawks a piece, asserting that “the Queen was going to sing at the opening of the parliament.” Because “she changed her mind” (227), now the chaunter can sell the sheet. Actually, the story, which is contained in the sheet, is about the lives of poor women. The last phrases of his hawking are striking: “We are going to send in a copy of worses in letters of gold for a prize. We’ll let the foreigners know what the real native melodies of England is, and no mistake” (228). Stressing the “native melodies” and using the Queen as a catchphrase, the chaunter’s ballad raises the awareness about internal affairs in England.

Another piece is also one of “the native melodies.” It is a broadside ballad called *Sarah Gale’s Lament*, which was published by Hillat and Martin in 1837.<sup>1 5</sup> Sarah Gale was condemned to exile because she had

murdered Hannah Brown, with whom her husband was guilty of bigamy. In the ballad, she laments her wretched life with her husband before she goes to “the land of Botany Bay” to “linger” (3-4) there. She warns all “females,” who are “rich and poor, high and low” and are living in the nation, that it is difficult for them “to walk in the paths of virtue” (49-53).

The subject matters of these ballads, which are sold on the street, range from the story of old Britannia to the contemporary political, royal and criminal affairs, and each ballad is strongly conscious of national identity. A ballad-singer, who Mayhew comes across on the street, says,

The ballad . . . may be considered as the native species of poetry of this country. . . . Many of the ancient ballads have been transmitted to the present times, in them the character of the nation displays itself in striking colours. (275)

The ballad has been an essential part of English culture from the ancient era to the nineteenth century. It was a culture shared by all the people in England, establishing a direct communication between listeners and performers through pattering voices.

It is difficult to say that the ballad, which is used in Dickens’s novels, is a material belonging to the shared, oral culture because it is included in a printed book. Umberto Eco suggests that “characters migrate” in a context in which it is possible for one to “migrate . . . from oral tradition to book” (8). The characters can be transferred from a ballad into a book such as a novel, but in the book they are to become signs which refer to something as every written word does. For instance,

printed signs can become tangled with each other throughout *Bleak House*. Hillis Miller, in “Interpretation in *Bleak House*,” suggests that the “system of interpretation,” that is a pattern with “a stable centre” to be interpreted, becomes fictional within the circle of signs, referents and metaphors that each character is woven into (49). Such fiction raises “a suspicion that there may be no such centre” (H Miller 49). The novel, therefore, “has a temporal structure without proper origin, present, or end” (H Miller 46). An indeterminable structure is created only by signs, where “each phrase is alienated from itself and made into a sign of some other phrase” (H Miller 46). The structure cannot be constructed without written and printed signs.

However, ballads are represented as a means to disrupt a framework constructed by printed words. In *Bleak House*, a nursery rhyme and a ballad in the descriptions of Lady Dedlock “migrate” from the traditional material to Dickens’s book. The words can be signs woven with others in the text. However, the song and the ballad do not always assume the same characteristics as those of printed words. In spite of the migration into the novel, ballads are prevented from entering the labyrinth of signs and referents and from assimilating themselves into literacy.

These songs foretell the future of the characters. A lady from a nursery rhyme “migrates” into the description of the rainy scenery of Lincolnshire where Lady Dedlock is the centre:

So with the dogs in the kennel-buildings across the park, who  
have their restless fits, and whose doleful voices, when the  
wind has been very obstinate, have even made it known in the

house itself: up-stairs, down-stairs, and in my lady's chamber.

(77)

The last words are quotations from the following nursery rhyme:

Goosey goosey gander,  
 Whither shall I wander?  
 Upstairs and downstairs  
 And in my lady's chamber.  
 There I met an old man  
 Who wouldn't say his prayers,  
 So I took him by his left leg  
 And threw him down the stairs.<sup>1 6</sup>

The rhyme associates Lady Leicester Dedlock with the story of Lady Morbury Dedlock, who lived in the reign of King Charles the First.

The legend of the old Lady Dedlock is narrated by Mrs Rouncewell. After her death, Lady Morbury Dedlock has become a ghost, treading the terrace of the Ghost's Walk with a "crippled" leg. She has been lamed in the hip when her husband has seized her by the wrist on the terrace (84). She was born humbly and had relatives, who are "King Charles's enemies" (84). She curses the Dedlocks "after her favourite brother, a young gentleman, was killed in the civil wars (by Sir Morbury's near kinsman)" (84). The sound of the footsteps on the terrace is, therefore, to be heard "until the pride of this house is humbled" (84). The present lady is to avenge the dead lady on her husband. She is to force him out of his social position; he and the Dedlock's mansion are to be pulled "down" by Honoria's disgrace as shown in the title of the chapter where he makes his

last appearance. The future of the Dedlocks is thus foreshadowed in the reference to the nursery rhyme.

Another song, referring to a “Lady,” is cited in the chapter after Lady Dedlock’s flight from the Dedlocks.

Carriages rattle, doors are battered at, the world exchanges  
calls; ancient charmers with skeleton throats, and peachy  
cheeks that have a rather ghastly bloom upon them seen by  
daylight, when indeed these fascinating creatures look like  
Death and the Lady fused together, dazzle the eyes of men  
(667).

“Death and the Lady” is a title of a ballad called “The Messenger of Mortality; or Life and Death Contrasted in a Dialogue Between Death and a Lady.” The piece was composed by Charles Lamb and its tune was set in Chappell’s music book and had been popular since the eighteenth century.<sup>1 7</sup>

Readers of the novel can predict two things from the ballad: the lady is destined to be invited by Death and is concerned about her beautiful daughter. The ballad is a dialogue between Death and a Lady. Death “come[s] to summon” (4) the Lady, who offers resistance to him firstly with her glory and pride and finally with a sort of entreaty; “I have a daughter beautiful and fair, / I’d live to see her wed whom I adore; / Grant me but this and I will ask no more” (44-47). Despite her earnest appeal, Death takes the lady to his world because, “While [she] flourish here with all [her] store, / [She] will not give one penny to the poor” (68-69). She resembles Lady Dedlock exactly in her pride and arrogance

and in having a “beautiful” daughter, who is to be married. Honoria does not plead with Death nor express a wish to see her daughter’s wedding. However, as she writes to Esther, she almost commits suicide in order to protect her daughter from the mother’s infamy. The ballad gives a hint about the secret of Lady Dedlock to the reader.

Although Lady Dedlock and her affair become part of references in the circle of signs tangled with each other, the rhyme and the ballad only indicate the destiny of Lady Dedlock clearly and directly because they have no relationship with other signs of characters except the lady herself. They are not involved with the complicated accumulation of semiotic references, which each printed sign helps to build up. In this regard, they perforate the system of semiotic references, bringing oral words to the novel.

However, the novel as the system of printed signs seemingly attempts to disrupt the form of a traditional narrative. The person, who stands on the side of literacy, is Tulkinghorn, a lawyer. He is one of the professional gentlemen. As Clifford Siskin analyses in *The Work of Writing*, those who were called “professional gentlemen” had been engaged in “the practice of writing” (3). In the nineteenth century, writing had become a part of economical and social activities for earning a living rather than a skill belonging exclusively to a privileged group of people: “New forms of business – . . . the advent of modern professionalism – helped to fuel this increase in the practice of writing . . . (Siskin 3). The word “professional” was itself a part of the “new vocabulary” which is argued to be “part of a new way of writing about work” (Siskin 108).

In *Bleak House*, the symbolical power inheres in Tulkinghorn, who collects documents to be used as damaging evidence against Honoria. The master of writing disrupts the storytelling of the legend of the Dedlocks. When he exposes her past affairs in front of Sir Dedlock and other relatives, Volumnia cries, “A story! O he [Tulkinghorn] is going to tell something at last! A ghost in it, . . .” (505). Although she expects to be told a story like the legend of the Ghost’s Walk in the family circle, he declines to offer such a story: “No. Real flesh and blood, Miss Dedlock” (505). He makes the ghost story a real story with “real flesh and blood.” In other words, he authenticates the reality of Lady Dedlock’s disgrace. The world of literacy intrudes upon the private sphere when he attempts to introduce business and writing into it.

In *Great Expectations* (1860-61), also, the polarities between the private and public spaces and between the Victorian oral culture and the business world of professional gentlemen are described in the presentation of another lawyer in a more complex way. There is an impressive scene where Mr Jaggers brings the news that Pip has “great expectations.” Pip is listening to Mr Wopsle, who “read[s] the newspaper aloud,” with Joe and the villagers in a local pub: “A highly popular murder had been committed, and Mr Wopsle was imbrued in blood to the eyebrows” (105). Mr Jaggers intrudes into the “cosy” atmosphere of the circle: “There was an expression of contempt on his face, and he bit the side of a great forefinger as he watched the group of faces” (106). The typical professional gentleman, the lawyer, suspects that the exaggerated performance of Mr Wopsle’s reading is different from the actual case of

the murder that is documented on “the printed paper” (106). The reliability of the news has been a trivial matter for the villagers including Pip, who enjoy his performance itself. However, the authoritative attitude of Mr Jaggers makes them despise Mr Wopsle, who is “full of subterfuge” (107). The authority of the newspaper, with which the lawyer provides them, destroys the warm communal atmosphere produced by a reading performance.

Mr Jaggers points his forefinger at Mr Wopsle and his company in order to show his authority. It is as if the lawyer would not allow a margin for something except the “exact substance” (107) in the newspaper. He does not show how and what he thinks of the case. He moves his forefingers as if it, something independent of his body, were drawing a line between the inside and the outside of himself with it. Strikingly, there is “the smell of scented soap in his great hand” (108). Soap was one of the representations of the Victorian ideal of cleanness and was used as a commodity to show respectability in contrast with dirt and lack of hygiene, which were accompanied by the image of the poor conditions of the working-class people and of the indigenous colonies.<sup>1 8</sup> At the opposite extreme of Mr Wopsle’s performance, full of blood and dirt, is the clean finger of the English gentleman. The forefinger evokes two images; one is the world of documentation as it negates the bloody performance and the other symbolises the line between cleanness and dirt.

Wemmick uses a pen when he describes Mr Jaggers’s character: “‘Deep,’ said Wemmick, ‘as Australia.’ Pointing with his pen at the office floor, to express that Australia was understood for the purposes of the



figure, to by symmetrically on the opposite spot of the globe” (155). It is interesting that, as well as Mr Jaggers’s forefinger, his “slit of a mouth” (155) represents a line between his private feeling hidden inside and his official self as a man of business in Mr Jaggers office. However, here, his use of the pen is worth considering. It shows Mr Jaggers’s intimate connection with literacy and also suggests that he is somehow connected with the penal colony. He has a business relationship with Magwitch, who remits money from New South Wales to Pip. The instrument for writing implies that Mr Jaggers knows where Pip’s “great expectations” come from, pointing to somewhere outside England. The pen as an instrument for writing separates clearly the private sphere like Wemmick’s home and the local community created by Mr Wopsle’s reading performance from the public sphere of Mr Jaggers’s legal business.

However, Dickens sought for adjusting the polarity between the two worlds produced by literacy and orality: the former is related to business and facts whereas the latter creates a homely and close-knit community and an unwritten margin beside facts. It is reading aloud for Dickens that has reconciled the polarisation. Dickens devoted himself to it in the last years of his life.

His public reading succeeded in establishing the bond between him as a public reader and his audience. Through reading his own novels aloud, he created a sphere of oral communication. Kreilkamp points out the changing ideas of the middle class about voices on the street. According to him, in the 1830s and 1840s, “the threat of disruptive or dissident orality” hung over the middle-class legitimate people because

the public space became the place where one could address political opinions to “an assembled crowd” (37). During writing *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* in the later 1830s,

Dickens sought rhetorically to redefine this readership as a family circle consuming his books not in the open spaces of the public sphere, but before the fire in a virtual home. The definition of his audience as friends or even siblings fathered around his own hearth worked, in a back-handed way, to reassert the proprietary rights of an author over his work.

Dickens’s association of authorship with domesticity became a means by which Victorian print culture adapted itself to include the effects of a mass readership, while still preserving a place for proprietary authorship. (Kreilkamp 106)

Brantlinger also comments that Dickens created the familiar interrelationship between authors and readers by means of periodical publication, of presentation of morality, of “the pattern of reading aloud within family circles,” and of public reading (13). Indeed, Forster wrote that Dickens’s “reading [was] not looked upon as a performance, but as a friendly meeting it was longed for by people to whom he has been kind.”<sup>19</sup> While performance and theatrical acts were neglected by the middle-class people because of their illegitimacy and immorality, Dickens created the familiar space for these people through the homely function of reading aloud in private.<sup>20</sup>

Sound is essential to Dickens’s world even in his novels. In *Bleak House*, for instance, the legend of the Ghost’s Walk has been handed down

in the Dedlock family, yet it substantially comes to an end when it is overlaid with the story of Honoria, the present lady Dedlock. A legend is defined as “an unauthentic or non-historical story, esp. one handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical.” (OED “legend,” def. 6a). The legend of the Ghost’s Walk has been transmitted by words of mouth for a long time only in the family. The familiar and private story is, nevertheless, publicised by Esther’s writing and by Dickens’s novel. The sound of the strange footstep of the ghost, therefore, fades away from the terrace after the old lady in the legend is incarnated in Lady Dedlock (763), that is, when the legend is authenticated by her as written in Esther’s and Dickens’s texts. Mrs Rouncewell feels that it is to “pass her and go on” (693). After falling into a decline, the Dedlock mansion with few residents is no longer filled with the ghostly footsteps from the old legend. However, new sounds, “echoings and thunderings which start out of their hundred graves” (763), are carried through Chesney Wold. The new sounds in the Dedlock mansion may indicate the beginning of a new legend of Sir and Lady Dedlock. In the world of literacy, in which signs and referents are tangled with each other, sounds produced by orality begin to echo in the end of the novel again.

### 1-3: The Physical Act of Writing

Alison Winter connects animal magnetism with the rise of the Victorian public reading and recognises Dickens as the most famous performer, who read aloud in a mesmeric way (320). She points out that “Dickens wrote to his friend John Forster, he had been in full flow . . . ”

during his performances: “listeners found Dickens’s reading ‘magnetic’ and ‘contagious’” (322). Dickens practiced his reading performance as theatrically as an actor would have done and aroused his audience’s enthusiasm (Collins lvii-lxi). In the last days, Dickens exhausted all his energies from reading aloud in tours, of which George Dolby gives a full account in his biography of Dickens. The reading performance was a physical action for him. Significantly, there are physical activities apart from the uses of songs and ballads in *Bleak House*. There, the act of writing is sometimes represented as a physical activity.

A lawyer’s clerk, Guppy, shows a conspicuous bodily act when the impossibility of arranging documents in order is revealed. He pries around Lady Dedlock’s past affairs and the origin of Esther in order to get married to her. He plays at being a detective. The detective story, that is, “the tightly organized, classically plotted story” (Ong 148), is symbolical in the history of written narratives. Ong notes that, because writing “is essentially a consciousness-raising activity,” “with the arrival of the perfectly pyramidal plot in the detective story, the action is seen to be focused within the consciousness of the protagonist—the detective” (148). Although Ong does not define any Dickens’s novels as a detective story, Guppy as a detective can be said to be one of the precursors, who represent the history of “written” literature.

However, Guppy fails to complete his investigation, an “organized” plot, which he designs for himself. Looking at Esther’s disfigured face, he encounters an unforeseen circumstance. He has to withdraw his offer of marriage due to the change of her face. His body starts to move

immediately when he realises that his investigation is frustrated. In “such faltering, such confusion, such amazement and apprehension” (478), “he put his hand [to his throat], coughed, made faces, tried again to swallow it, coughed again, made faces again, looked all round the room, and fluttered his paper” (478). In “fluttering” his paper, he attempts futilely to find out something in which he can record Esther’s disfigurement. He needs some documented supports in order to make his withdrawal of his proposal valid. Then, when he tells it to Esther, he “[measures] the table with his troubled hands” (478). His hands, which are usually used to produce legal documents, measure something unknown. He undergoes a conflict between the failure of the logical plot with a happy ending, in which he is to marry Esther after his investigation is completed, and the legal world surrounded by documents, in which he believes he has been immersed. His physical act is, thus, entangled inextricably with writing by means of using his hands. It represents a lacuna within the logical world produced by documents.

Esther is also related to written texts and the act of writing. Her writing releases her from the confinement in her imposed identity. Her identity has been demarcated by the handwritings of her father, Hawdon, and her mother, Lady Dedlock. Her parents have hidden their past selves from the public, yet ironically they are exposed in their own letters of handwriting. First, Hawdon’s handwriting makes Lady Dedlock aware that her former lover is alive. Although it is not printed, the words written in a paper lead to the beginning of the story, in which Esther is to know the secret of her birth. Then her mother’s letter reveals her past life and

determines her as a still-born child: “I [Esther] never, to my mother’s knowledge, breathed – had been buried – had never been endowed with life – had never borne a name” (452). Carolyn Dever rightly comments that “Esther Summerson is produced in this text by writing, by the commingling of the handwriting of her two parents” (95). Esther’s identity is manipulated by the letters; it is constructed by texts written by her parents.

However, she also writes her life in the novel. The result of her writing is to publicise her mother’s letters and to expose the secret of her birth to the public. Because her aunt hides her from the world and her mother defines her as a dead child, she searches for her own subjectivity by trying to revive herself from the state of death in using the power of writing. Dever asserts that she struggles with the letters which constrain her life (85). Her “struggle” is projected into her act of writing. Although she always tries to make herself “[fall] into the background,” she goes on writing “the narrative of [*her*] life” (27) from the beginning to the end. Through the act, she produces her own life, in which she treads the path different from the life documented on these letters. The process of writing is itself a positive and powerful act and releases her from the identity constructed by others’ texts.

As opposed to the fixity of written words, her writing can be paralleled with oral activities, speech. Carey McIntosh states in the book, in which he explains the transformation of English in prose, that language is audible even when it is written on papers because we read a passage in prose through reading aloud in mind (120). According to him, English had

had two types, speech and academic writing, but, in the 1700s, these two types were unified in the ordered style of written languages in prose: there are “oral dimensions of written prose” (120). Esther may be considered to be one of the characters, who embody such a unification of speech and written words, when we locate her in the history of English prose.

She “write[s] [her] portion of these pages” in the novel (17), but actually she seems to be telling aloud to an audience episodes from her childhood. In the opening chapter of her “portion,” she tells her doll what has happened in the day. “While [she] busily stitch[es] away,” she “[tells] her all [she] had noticed” in her school life to the doll (17). Stitching and picking up the threads of her daily life are inseparable from each other for her. It is not surprising that her storytelling for the doll is replaced by her “text.” The written text is an extension of her speech. She narrates her daily life for her audience or the readers of the novel. The written words are audible clearly for her.

Thus, the practice of writing is represented as a lacuna in legal documents through Guppy and as the replacement of vocal storytelling through Esther. Furthermore, there is another figure who avoids entering the endless circle of signs in documents. It is intriguing that a police inspector, Mr Bucket, uses not pens and papers but his fingers in order to record the details of a case. “He is free with his money, affable in his manners, innocent in his conversation – but through the placid stream of his life there glides an under-current of forefinger (626). The finger moves instead of a pen when he tries to decipher a complicated case: “he

has very little to do with letters, either as sender or receiver” (629). He is not related to “letters” but can “write” in his mind by means of his forefinger.

Strikingly, unlike Mr Jaggers, the representation of his forefinger is connected not only with his body but also with oral culture such as legends in folklore where demons and familiar spirits appear:

When Mr Bucket has a matter of this pressing interest under his consideration, the fat forefinger seems to rise to the dignity of a familiar demon. He puts it to his ears, and it whispers information; he puts it to his lips, and it enjoins him to secrecy; he rubs it over his nose, and it sharpens his scent; he shakes it before a guilty man, and it charms him to destruction. (626)

“A familiar demon” of his finger appears, charming “a guilty man.” His finger takes on the illusory image that is incompatible with the logical world produced by written words in the official sphere. Although he as a detective is involved in the well-organised plot of a detective story, he can keep himself away from the fixity of written words.

Bucket, constantly moving his fingers, may have an important factor in common with Esther, who writes her life endlessly. The physicality of his finger prevents himself from being sucked into and fixed in the world of documents. Esther replaces her storytelling to her doll with writing her life as Mr Bucket uses his “familiar demon” instead of a pen. Although they are in the world of literacy, both of them are actually representatives of orality.

Dickens has explored how orality can survive in a variety of ways



in his novels. In *Oliver Twist*, he reveals an anxiety about the public demand for literacy in popular culture because the domination of literacy might bring the people to a place far removed from a familiar, intimate community. As mentioned in the argument of *The Pickwick Papers* and *Master Humphrey's Clock*, he was anxious about the disappearance of old England in ballads and the decline of oral entertainment. The uses of oral popular materials undermine the domination of written words in *Bleak House* because they create a distance between them and written signs. A printed text represents only one of many aspects of things in the endless chain of signification, where one sign is tangled with another, yet the ballads and the songs in the novel are independent of the chain, unequivocally being directed to a certain person. However, one cannot run away from writing. Consequently, the physical acts of writing are represented as one of the ways in which one avoids entering the world of literacy. The acts of writing, storytelling and uttering, all produce physical actions, which have to break the fixity of documents. It is through illustrating these physical acts that Dickens can go on offering the reader the possibility of escaping from the fixity of written words.

## Chapter 2

### The Neo-Victorian Novel Inspired by Charles Dickens (I):

#### Writing a New Story

This chapter will focus on two neo-Victorian novels inspired by Charles Dickens. One of them is *The Mutual Friend*, which was written by an American writer, Frederick Busch, in 1978. Another is *Estella: Her Expectations*, written by Sue Roe in 1982, who is an editor, biographer, poet, and lecturer at the University of Sussex.

Representing the sounds of ballads and storytelling and the physical acts of writing, Dickens provides us with something that could not be fixed in a text. Since his death in 1870, he had gradually grown into a larger-than-life figure, one of the great authors of the past. This means that he has become a dazzling but dead character; his personality is to be portrayed by a lot of biographers and critics in the twentieth century. It naturally follows that Dickens's life and work now provide inspiration for the writers of the new novel. Neo-Victorian fiction is engendered by an admiration for and a challenge to the great canonical author.

His texts, furthermore, encourage modern writers to create a new life story, which is removed from the established image of Dickens. The neo-Victorian novels attempt to discover or rather create something that is supposed or imagined to be hidden behind the established image of Dickens and his novels. Rewriting is brought by "hysteria's anomie" in

“an acting out of unconscious and repressed material in the precursor texts” and “a cognitive and emotional invention that seeks to recover lost memory” (131) as Ankhi Mukherjee notices. For the modern writers, the established standards cause the state of “anomie.” Orality and a physical act of writing are a means to undermine the texts, which have been established by Dickens himself as well as by his biographers and critics.

Mukherjee, focusing on Lacan’s “the impossibility of signifying the real,”<sup>2 1</sup> also observes that rewriting is “an *intentional* act of wish-fulfilment that emphasizes the retroactivity of meaning” (122) and is “renew[ing] old pleasures and reopen[ing] old wounds by their deliberate affiliation with familiar texts” (129). However, the “*intentional* act” based on “the impossibility of signifying” seems to be posed as a question in neo-Victorian fiction. The twentieth-century scholars have found a void in the established standard and multifarious, if arbitrary, interpretations. They recognise the void as a space where there is no difference between the signifier and the signified. The neo-Victorian novels are now acknowledging modern literary theories as their own standards and are attempting to reconsider the “anomie.”

## 2-1: Writing Voices: *The Mutual Friend* (1978)

In *The Mutual Friend*, Dickens as a character is presented by the main narrator, George Dolby, and other narrators, who have been related with him. The real George Dolby was the manager of Dickens’s reading tours. He wrote a biography of Dickens, *Charles Dickens as I Knew Him*, in 1885. It covers the period from Dickens’s reading tours around

America to his death. In *The Mutual Friend*, Dolby reminisces about the days from the reading tour of 1867-68 to his Chief's death. Furthermore, through Dolby, the other narrators relate their experiences with Dickens. These characters are based on real people, who have been once around him. Even Dickens narrates himself. All narrators attempt to excavate something hidden in his established image. According to Stacey Olster, Busch tries to access "the darkness of the human soul" in his works (139) in order to accept a deviation from established historical contexts. The dark side of one's mind is concealed behind a visible expression. The invisible side of a mind encourages Busch to resist "the kind of determinism that infused the portrayals of it by earlier writers" (Olster 139). The darkness of Dickens's soul has mostly been concealed and repressed in biographies. In *The Mutual Friend*, it is exposed by the voices of the characters around him, who are marginalised from the forerunner's texts.

Storytelling is focused on as the central topic in this neo-Victorian novel. In Afterword, which was written by Busch for the reissue of 1994, he claimed as follows:

Nor will I deny that I loved learning, by trying to invent it, the soul of one of our greatest writers. A novel about Dickens is a novel about storytelling. For all his enormities and pettinesses . . . Dickens emerges, as I understand him, a hero of this novel and of storytelling, a hero of story itself. (224)

Storytelling coloured Dickens's life. In the same way, oral narration is to bring new light to bear on his dark, repressed side.

John Kucich discusses the function of storytelling in *Excess and Restraint*. He draws on Jacques Derrida's proposition that "language is always absence that masquerades as presence; the word never arrives at the thing itself" (5).<sup>2 2</sup> However, he continues to state that "in Dickens, the signs . . . beyond significance are the extravagant wordplays, the inflated and mock-pompous diction, and the impossible characterizations" (7).<sup>2 3</sup> In *Great Expectations*, "signs written in the external world" are used in Pip's "attempt at understanding" his identity, yet the signs lead him to "a false conception" because his "perception and identity are both made up, and they combine to make all human existence a mere fabrication" (20). These signs "fabricated" (Kucich 21) during the life of Pip are merely the signs, which reproduce an identity, not his genuine personality. Then, storytelling is used to present "a defiance of the very arbitrariness and fixity threatened by personal identity and perception" (Kucich 21). It expresses the "excess" of signification that signs assume when they represent a personality. It is a means by which one avoids being determined the identity designed in the "fraudulent fiction" (Kucich 21).

The use of storytelling is effectively adopted in *The Mutual Friend* through the voices of the characters. Dickens's personality is constructed in the biography written by Dolby. To use Kucich's phrase, Dolby's words "never arrive at Dickens himself" although he might have written the biography as faithfully as he could because he had watched him throughout his reading tours. Their vocal sounds of storytelling declare "a defiance" of Dickens's constructed identity by introducing his arrogant

and self-complacent characteristics. For example, a female servant of the Dickenses, Barbara, accounts the cruelty of her Master's patriarchal power. She tries to overturn the image of Dickens as "the spirit of household and hearthside" (62).

The main narrator, George Dolby, also tries to describe his Chief's authority. It is interesting that his Chief's power is exhibited in documents. He shows his disgust at the way in which his personality is twisted in the Chief's letters to Kate and Georgiana Hogarth:

"everything" about Dolby is "changed by his pen to what he thought it should be" (7). All that the Chief writes are created by a process of stealing his "flesh and blood" (3, 219): "He was a pirate, he stole the living world" (7). The image of a man who robs someone of something overlaps with the description of the Chief's reading performance. The Chief's most impressive reading for Dolby is "Sikes and Nancy."<sup>2 4</sup> The descriptions of Dickens's reading performance in the novel are all based on the grisly scene of Sikes's killing of Nancy. When he acts Sikes, being the murderer is confused with being the performer: Barbara says, "it was Sikes who did the Murder and the Master who read it aloud" (55). Dickens's reading and writing are both related to committing a crime.

What the Chief as a thief writes is not his character's subjectivity but identity. He creates the identity of someone with flesh and blood. Stuart Hall observes that identity

has at its 'margin,' an excess, something more. The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundation, is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure,

every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it 'lacks.' (5)

Busch replaces the notion of identity with the presentation of Dolby's disgust over Dickens's writing. A character's identity with "an excess" is falsified by being fixed by the author. The excess is contained in flesh and blood although it cannot be constructed in Dickens's texts. A voice produced from flesh and blood offers a space in which one can escape from "a constructed form of closure," an identity formed by the signs.

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams has suggested that, when reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*, what is potentially significant in the work is "a positive flow of that wider human speech"; "an ordinary language" (245).<sup>2 5</sup> In addition to that, in *Writing in Society*, he warns his readers, who read "modernist literature as in theoretical linguistics and structuralist Marxism," that there is a contradiction between "that the systems of human signs are generated within the systems themselves and that to think otherwise is a humanist error" (223). For him, oral speech clears up the contradiction. What Busch attempts to act out in the novel is the oral speech, the "wider human speech."

One of these voices is raised by Barbara. Her voice is echoed "in [Dolby's] spinning head and heated brain" (36). Although she calls her story a "little book," Dolby inscribes her story with a resounding sound in his brain. Her episode is narrated by her own voice, that is, as if she were speaking aloud. She has escaped from a brothel to Urania Cottage, an asylum for fallen women, which was established by Dickens and his friend Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts in 1847. While working in Gad's

Hill as a servant, she has a sexual relationship with the son of her Master, Dickens, and gets pregnant. Her Master does not forgive her and persuades her to have an abortion, looking down upon her as a loose woman. For Barbara, the fact that he is “the spirit of household and hearthside” (62) as a popular novelist alienates her from the house where he and his son live. She is hired by her Master as “a secret Jew” (43). As she declares herself “a Jew,” who murdered Christ and is treated as a murderer through the figure of Fagin in *Oliver Twist* (41-43), she thinks of herself as one of the aliens in Dickens’s world.

Strikingly, she tells that her Master has “the tone of assurance which rigidified the membrane between [her], as then [she] was, and a possible life” (62) in the book, in which he has written of “tragic” women. These women are Nancy, who is destined to die in *Oliver Twist*, and the prostitutes in Urania Cottage. In either case, there is not “forgiveness” for them (62) because Nancy dies and prostitutes are labelled as fallen women in the refuge. The use of “membrane” in her narration is highly symbolic. It presents not only a barrier between her actual life and “a possible life” but also symbolises an ancient material for writing because it can be defined as a parchment. She knows that the material for writing primarily has a function of changing her subjectivity and constructing her identity. Her vengeance on her Master is, therefore, not to fix his identity in her book, but to represent him physically. For her, “writ[ing] of him” is synonymous with “[constituting] him according to [her] mind and body” (67). His life is not falsified in her book but is finally revived in her son’s body and eyes. She devotes her voice and her son’s body to resisting the



function of literacy.

Our next argument is to explore instability of orality in a text full of written words. David Simpson, re-examining Williams's claim about a voice telling history, argues as follows:

I do hear his voice every time I try to read or think about his writings. . . . Williams had an intuitive ability to make this work for him against what he saw as the inhumanities of 'writing' – of theory, abstraction, schematization, the techniques he often identified with the cruel facilitation of global rationalization, and . . . with the sparse theoretical paradigms of European Marxists." (10)

As argued by Simpson, Williams has admitted that a voice has a function against "the inhumanities of 'writing'," which has been established in Europe. This notion partly conforms to the view regarding to voices and documents in *The Mutual Friend*.

As has been examined in the first chapter of the dissertation, for Dickens, orality had a function that re-created a culture of the warm and intimate community in old England while literacy was connected with the "inhuman" function of words in the public, official sphere although in his novels the "inhumanities of 'writing'" was undermined by his own words. Therefore, although sounds and voices remain in England, things in the public sphere take on the oriental atmosphere. In *Our Mutual Friend*, whose title is adapted into *The Mutual Friend*, for instance, oriental trade is represented as a profitable business: trading with China brings wealth into England. Mr Wilfer is employed by a firm engaging in a trade with

China. A conversation about the family wealth passes between Mr Wilfer and his daughter, Bella:

And then, as they sat looking at the ships and steamboats making their way to the sea with the tide that was running down, the lovely woman imagined all sorts of voyages for herself and Pa. . . . ; now, Pa was going to China in that handsome three-masted ship, to bring home opium, . . . and to bring home silks and shawls without end for the decoration of his charming daughter. (318)

China is a source of revenue produced by opium, silks and shawls.

These items metamorphose themselves from the symbols of wealth in England in *Our Mutual Friend* into the representations of Chinese rebellion opposing the Empire's force and the metaphors for the "ill" workers in England in *The Mutual Friend*.

Now, in 1900, bloody new age all over the land like poison smoke over the bloody Midlands. The Queen fat and ill. International force sent to relieve the legation at Pekin. Siege laid down by Chinese Fist of Harmony – blighters in Parliament call them Boxers. Shrinking the Empire's spheres of influence. . . . . String of Chinese laundries and opium dens uniting the forces of English dissent, what? See it: bloody Fist of Harmony raised in salute by a mob of opium-smoking British workers in front of Westminster. (212)<sup>2 6</sup>

Opium connects the Chinese peasants in the rebellion with English labours because it inspires resistance against the Western domination in

China and against the privileged classes in England.

With the rebellion in China in the background, Dolby introduces the voices of those who have got involved with Dickens. He dictates his tales to Moon, a Chinese ward orderly. The Chinese orderly echoes the voices of the characters through Dolby's dictating voice. They are tangled with the forces of resistance in Moon's note as the sentences quoted above show. Oral sounds and the forces of resistance in China and England are concerned with each other in the light of being against the authorities that have been established in England. Unlike in Dickens's novels, these voices in the neo-Victorian novel are no longer rooted in England, but are dispersed across the world.

More strikingly, the focus on oral sounds in *The Mutual Friend* seems to re-examine Williams's claim that a voice has a particular function to resist the dominant power of "inhuman" words. A voice causes a problem in being documented in a text. For instance, Barbara is aware of a complicated representation of a voice in a book. She says; "a book is no more than a voice. There are many voices. All of them in time are lost" in the book (67). Once it is written down, one cannot help ignoring excess meanings which have not been documented in the text. The voices of the characters do not merely operate in the novel as a counterpart of an authorial and repressive culture, but also they accept the phenomenon in which they are to be transferred from words of mouth into written words.

In the section narrated by Ellen Lawless Ternan Robinson's voice, her identity is enclosed in her Protector's, Dickens's, storytelling. Ellen's relationship with her Protector is negotiated through storytelling:

Aye, Ellen Ternan, I, Ellen Ternan, turned to *she*. She was ice, and she watched his flame lick her blue surface as his tongue had licked her blue-white neck. . . . Oh, she went with him and talked with him, and always he spoke and instructed her, and, as before, he was the knight and she was his rescued maid. But the maid, she learned, had been made to rescue the knight. She was his errant idea, and though he worked to salvage its shape, his long-fingered hands could not contain it. (141)

In the tale of chivalry, she is a maid rescued by a knight. It is created by her Protector's "speaking" and "instructing" and gives her a constructed identity as "*she*." The identity enacted by Ellen accords exactly with that of Estella in Dickens's *Great Expectations*: "He wrote a book. He named a character Estella, to stand for Ellen, and described her as a princess carved of ice . . . " (142). The storytelling of her Protector does not redeem "a constructed form of closure" of identity but operates for constructing it.

Kreilkamp, who examines the treatment of a voice in Dickens, observes that "voice eludes its capture of paper, and preserves its stubborn heterogeneity" (88). On the other hand, Dickens's vocal storytelling offers "a means of controlling, protecting, and in effect copyrighting his writing as speech" for the public (Kreilkamp 90). Actually, in his energetic reading tour, Dickens failed to regain emotional stability in his mind because of his uneasiness about the mass audience's energy, which might overwhelm his control over them (Kreilkamp 99).<sup>2 7</sup>

A word of mouth contains a paradox within itself, that is, between its authoritative force of conveying one's words and its potentiality for direct communication between people.

While each voice of the characters is raised in order to act out their own subjectivities and Dickens's dark side excluded from his texts, the state of deadlock, fixity, is always attached to it, particularly when the Chief's reading performance is dramatized by Dolby. The reading activities entail a constant element of danger. Dolby describes in detail that the Chief's public reading is directly the cause of his death. He narrates that, during his Chief's passionate reading performance,<sup>28</sup> "... he [the Chief] was witnessing [the audiences'] astonishment, and would be unable to resist creating such an effect again and again, and he would die for those words" (103). "Those words" are recited by him from the scene of Nancy's death in *Oliver Twist*. He performs the scene too passionately and sharply and, unable to endure the physical burden, is finally killed by it.

Dolby is also on the verge of death. He writes and dictates a manuscript of the book in the ward under medical treatment; "when the ward's a chorus of gagging and lament," Moon brings "one of his little tributes to the slowly dying man" (2). Whereas his reading voice attempts to redeem himself and other characters from Dickens's books and novels, he goes on writing his book at the death's door as Dickens, the Chief, has done. Their voices prove that their "flesh and blood" are living, but, at the same time, they cannot escape from the state of deadlock, which the written words produce when they are inscribed on papers.

In the opening words, Dolby describes the living voices of the people around him in the ward as if he were trying to attest to the substantial reality of the text. While he is satisfied with having his “cheap papers” and “cheap ink” for writing his book, “hear[ing] their voices” is consciously emphasized (1). The voices are raised by the patients in the ward to “[name] the facts of their lives and [Dolby’s] own” (1) although they are facing death there. Dolby “herewith write[s] down” the voices; he says that he has “an hundred sheets or more inscribed” (35) with what he has heard. Paradoxically, documenting living voices is to turn them to a dead text.

Digging out repressed human voices is accompanied by the pain that he feels as a writer. He is engaged in the same profession as his Chief, Dickens. Moon witnesses Dolby behaving as if the Chief were manipulating his body: “Dolby standing on the bed. Bouncing. Voice from another world coming through his own” (217). The owner of the voice is the Chief. He has been observed by Dolby as writing a letter after a passionate reading performance in 1869. While writing of Dolby, who has “served” him, in the letter, the Chief asks him if he endures “‘the woe and work [he has] put [him] to’” (33). Dolby answers that he has learned from his work for him, and then,

He [the Chief] sighed, as if half into sleep, “Learned what, my good, good Dolby?”

“You cannot imagine, sir.”

I [Dolby] backed toward the door.

*Deeper silence, still.*

I saw the red pen mobbing in the margins, smoke of his  
language poured up. I booked his halls and blacked his boots. I  
was his page. He made me what I am.

*New strength. A wicked low laugh.*

“Can’t I, Dolby?” *Dolby leans against door. Perspiration.*

*In the darkness, pain.* “Haven’t I?” (33)

The italics are the words written by the Chief in the letter. Dolby realises how his identity is defined by the writer on “the page.” The scene is, then, almost repeated between Dolby, who is dying in the last part of the novel, and Visitor, who comes to his bed. “*Deeper silence*” fills there “as his Chief would have instructed” and the words, which have been said by the Chief, are repeated by Dolby (217). However, “a wicked low laugh” has been that of Dolby, but it is evoked by Visitor (219): he may be the Chief. One who writes of the other and the other who is written are interchangeable. Dolby has felt in front of his Chief the pain that he feels as “his page”, but now, as a writer, he fixes on his own page his Chief’s identity, his life and death.

After Dolby’s death, the last writer of the novel is Moon. He states as follows: “Rewrite the lives old Dolby set down, his, his Chief’s and my own” and “I will make changes” (219-20). The concern about making changes in a text is raised in Stuart Schneiderman’s *Jacques Lacan*. In the book, the author traces the life of Lacan in the historical context of French psychoanalysis. The book is not a fiction like *The Mutual Friend*, yet the fascinating narrative is similar to it because Schneiderman represents Lacan’s behaviour and what he said vividly as Busch does for

Dickens's life. For Schneiderman, however, it is "impossible" to introduce his subject today "because Lacan is dead" (1). These words in the beginning of this book are repeated in the ending as follows: "His 'saying' . . . can never be accounted for by a written text. . . . That the saying of one man becomes an event, transforming the discourse that sustains the existence of those around him, this is intolerable for any human being" (181). "Actualising" human discourse is merely a dream without "flesh and blood." One can seek for and dig out ordinary voices, human speeches, when they are hidden behind the images in a text: it is possible to take notes of these voices and fix them in a text. However, some "changes" start in a book from the moment when the voices are separated from flesh and blood and are written down there. The last words of Moon suggest the endless repetition of recreating one's voice. The novel attempts to disengage human speeches with flesh and blood from Dickens's pages, yet it is haunted by the uneasiness about changing and revising the real even when it describes the dark side of the canonical author.

## 2-2: Beyond the "faded blue-grey" Worlds of the Victorian and

Twentieth-Century Miss Havishams: *Estella: Her Expectations* (1982)

Sue Roe's *Estella* is a neo-Victorian novel set in London in the 1980s. In the novel, a girl, Estella, takes herself into the "faded blue-grey" world of a modern Miss Havisham. She is a solitary dancer in her room in the flat in the twentieth century novel. The dancer imitates Miss Havisham's way of living, in which she is independent from the



male rule in patriarchal society. The modern Estella paradoxically admires her as a “colourful” woman with her independent, individual subjectivity; she wants to be “a painted woman” in the dancer’s house (11). For Estella the city is coloured with “news print.” It belongs to the world dominated by printing and writing and, at the same time, is a place for women who have lost their individual subjectivity: “who just do things for others” (10). She desires for entering the other world which “the legitimate underworld” or “the functioning world never glimpses” (13). It might be in the dancer’s house because she is associated with garish theatre where “there is no system and no transgression” (14).

One day shortly after Estella has arrived there, the dancer tells her the story of her failed marriage, sewing at the side of a piano in her room with her yellowing, decayed wedding dress and the spiders as in Miss Havisham’s room. In the story, Miss Havisham’s failure in her marriage is revised from a feminist point of view. She has brought her marriage to an end on the day previous to the wedding ceremony because she has felt it “ridiculous” to walk into a ballroom in a “tight white dress” with “enormous white feathers” for a waiting bridegroom in black (46). Listening to her life story, Estella watches the dancer sewing the dress with “her thin, black thread” (48). She notices that her sewing has its own story and meaning apart from her life: “a meaning in the yellowing lace and the thin, black threads, a meaning that could only be contained in the dress, not in any story” (48). Although the appearance of the dress is apparently based on the description of Miss Havisham’s wedding dress in *Great Expectations*, we can find a similarity in the act of sewing between

her and Esther in *Bleak House*. The way of telling her story is the same as Esther's telling her tale to her doll when she was a child. Both of them are sewing something in the course of narration. Esther's "stitching" expresses her physical activity of making her own text as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, yet Estella finds an unknowable meaning apart from the dancer's hackneyed plot of gaining the identity as a deviant woman. While the act of stitching, that is, writing, is important for Esther, writing a plot itself is problematic for *Estella* in the same way as *The Mutual Friend* expresses concern about writing voices. The dress presents the other story different from that of Miss Havisham and of the twentieth-century critics who have interpreted her as a repressed woman.<sup>29</sup>

Peter Brooks claims in *Reading for the Plot* that Pip starts his life "in search of the sense of plot" and closes his narrative in a renunciation of plots (138). For Brooks, "in a post-tragic universe, our situation is more likely to be that of Pip, compelled to reinterpret the meaning of the name he assigned to himself with his infant tongue, the history of an infinitely repeatable palindrome" because there is rarely a plot, in which the name fulfils and negotiates its owner's identity (142). Plot is "the organizing line and intention of narrative," which arises from desire; Eros in Freudian terms (Brooks 37).<sup>30</sup> The central idea of making a plot is that one organises and determines the line of a story. "Plot is its thread of design and its active shaping force, the product of our refusal to allow temporality to be meaningless, our stubborn insistence on making meaning in the world and in our lives" (323), as Brooks demonstrates.

What Dickens, a “master-plotter” (140), reveals is that the organic unity which is found in Pip’s life is always attached to an inorganic status in the world. Dickens’s energy to make a plot is raised by desire for meaning and for naming the inorganic status. The plotted place is not “the state of normality” at all: “In between a beginning prior to plot and an end beyond plot, the middle – the plotted text – has been in a state of error” (Brooks 139).

Mukherjee, who discusses three neo-Victorian novels that have appropriated Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, Kathy Aker’s *Great Expectations*, Roe’s *Estella*, and Carey’s *Jack Maggs*, adduces Brooks’s argument about the master novel. In “Missed Encounter,” Mukherjee uses it in order to argue that “Freud’s model of repetition” in Dickens’s novel is a predecessor of Lacan because Lacan’s “logic of [the] deferred action” can be applied to the insight into rewriting.<sup>3 1</sup> Brooks also regards the function of metafiction as “a more overt staging of narrative’s arbitrariness and lack of authority” (317). The theoretical notion of Freud and Lacan opens the way for creating metafiction on the impossibility of understanding and naming. However, by focusing on the problem of writing a plot, it is being suggested in this section that *Estella* has a function that undermines the critical model proposed by Brooks.

In Part Six of *Estella*, the heroine, Estella, compares writing a book with painting and dancing. She is asked by the dancer, the modern Miss Havisham, if she wants to be a writer because the dancer “wants to be in a book” (93-94). Her answer is: “I wouldn’t be able to keep the story moving. I’d want to write a still life” (93). Her writing is different from

painting and dancing in that one can “use paint or the body to express it” although all express one’s idea: “in writing, you start with an idea that’s in language, and you have to use language to express it in” (94).

Language is a tool with “an edge” that intervenes between what one tells about and what is being told. Painting and dancing are no such tools but are performed by a body. The body can express directly what she has in her mind. In dancing and painting, it is unnecessary to find the middle between the lines of plotting because these activities do not produce a deviant space, an excess of meaning out of the signifier, while in writing language is always left in the state of deviance in Brooks’s discussion.

Living with the dancer in the decayed dress, who wants to be plotted by an author, however, Estella also longs for “the designs of the world, [to] explore between the lines of it” (8). Looking back on Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, she puts herself in the world of the past because it has been plotted by Dickens. At the same time, in the world of his designs in the original novel, she explores the deferred spaces that cannot be named. The spaces exist between plot-lines. She observes them with her critical eye influenced by the theories of Freud and Lacan. The acts of dancing and painting are then reflected by Estella on the dancer’s house. The house represents the world of the past in order for Estella to blur the plotted lines and discover the deferred spaces.

Acknowledging that it is impossible to make a plot for the dancer, however, Estella struggles to write it as the dancer desires. The next day following the dancer’s request for writing, she “wakes to the recollection of the dancer’s desire to read about herself, and the dream of the strange

world of writing, and the gypsy” (99). The gypsy has a Japanese mother. He is an illusory character in her mind when she is in the dancer’s world. He appears in her dream to write haiku for her.

Roe seems to use Barthes’s notion of haiku to designate Estella’s engagement with the past and with the twentieth-century critical theory. In *Empire of Signs*, Barthes claims that

the haiku means nothing, and it is by this double condition that it seems open to meaning in a particularly available, serviceable way – the way of a polite host who lets you make yourself at home with all your preferences, your values, your symbols intact. (69)

He calls the phenomenon of haiku as “absence” or “a breach” (69). The gypsy and Estella try to make a meaning through the words of haiku, yet a heap of papers is only left in the room. The words of haiku “[make] no sense” (98) for Estella. As Barthes finds a pleasure in “absence” and “a breach” of the words of haiku, she notices that they produce no meanings and plots. “The dream of the strange world of writing” (99), then, encourages Estella to write. She tries to write her story of “her own namesake” (100). However, “she cannot write what she means” without the gypsy’s help (100). Her story is, after all, neither the dancer’s nor her own, but about her dream, in which the gypsy appears. She avoids writing a book, which will give names to the dancer’s or her own individual subjectivity.

It is highly suggestive that the character who tries to write something is a gypsy with a Japanese mother. As the voices are resounded

not in England but in China in *The Mutual Friend*, the act of writing is introduced into Estella's world by an oriental character. Estella and the gypsy used to know each other before he appears in her dream. She once loved him "as an artist loves" (23). Painting has connected her with him in her childhood. However, when, after she has moved to the dancer's house, she remembers him, the gypsy "[reads] a newspaper in the red flocked pub," wearing "a shirt of small checks" and "gleamed" shoes (23). He has changed from "a small gypsy baby" into an English gentleman engaging in business. The image of the typical English office worker originates from the Victorian middle-class men in business. However, she notices that the newspaper, which he is reading, is "upside down" (24). In the pub full of "Victoriana," the image of an English gentleman is overturned by the gypsy who may be a Japanese or an "Indian" (24). Furthermore, the gypsy refuses to understand the printed words in the newspaper while he can write haiku. His oriental characteristic breaks the fixed image of a gentleman in London, England, and his practice of writing haiku is followed by his denial of the printed words of the newspaper.

However, her room of the dancer's house provides her with something "unbroken" (105). While she looks at the plotted world with a critical eye as a twentieth-century woman, Estella feels "[her] own continuous, consistent space" in the room where "everything means something" and "everything's to scale" (105). When she tries on the dancer's decayed dress, "she feels free" in "someone else's fabrics and someone else's old jewels" (78). In Miss Havisham's dress, adopting her

life as her own, her identity becomes coherent and stable as if she is placed in the plot designed by an author.

Paradoxically, the dancer's house and the decayed dress symbolise freedom because they belong to "another era" (78). "Another era" is a place removed from the modern world outside the house. It stretches under the house, which is actually a flat, for Estella. She calls the world the "the legitimate underworld" (13), looking down there from the window of the house. "Another era" offers her a space deviating from "the legitimate underworld." However, she has to "feel a puppet" in herself even here. In her imagination a man "pulls the strings" of herself for the audience who watch her dancing (105). In spite of refusing to write a plot and wanting to feel free in the house, Estella is forced to dance by the man, who is called her "choreographer" (105). Her friend, Mercy, who lives in the underworld, is aware of this contradiction and says, "Your dancing takes on a structure" (105).

"Dancing" and "taking on a structure" are incompatible with each other because dancing is a way of expressing her mind directly through a body but a structure has a pattern built by written words. "Absence" in haiku and "a deferred space" deviated from a plot are removed from a structure. The dancer can express her idea directly with her body, yet she is in the structured text created by Dickens. Estella has entered the world of the dancer because she has desired for belonging to the meaningless space deviated from the structure. In using the terms of Freud and Lacan, the gypsy, "running in from the outside" (109), presents the phenomenon of impossibility of meaning in the structured text. Estella dreams of the

gypsy, who gives her “an absence – a space unfilled by any form that might represent” her, and dances in “the theatre of her imagination” in order to discover voluntarily her subjectivity in her own world (116-18). Thus, she travels back and forth between the gypsy’s illusion and the dancer’s “structured” world that has been plotted by Dickens and reconstructed by modern critics. In Part Nine, she realises that “she must . . . make it impossible to feel the end” in the world of the dancer (142).

A Victorian doll, which is in Estella’s room of the dancer’s house, is symbolical. It is called Fleur and “a model for a dated femininity” (61). It is like “a pressed flower” in the corner of the room, where “the angle-poise lamp is green-shaded and rusty” (61). Katherine Mansfield uses the lamp hanging on the gate of the precious doll’s house in “The Doll’s House.” It offers the potential for crossing the two worlds, that of Kezia, a daughter of the authoritative family in the village, and that of the poor sisters, the Kelveys, who are always ignored by the village children. While for Mansfield the lamp embodies a hope in the conservative society of the village, Estella’s lamp in the modern novel illuminates the narrow space of the corner rather than the outside of the house. It is a marker of the “unhelpful” (61) symbol of confinement.

As the twisted use of the doll and lamp in her room, evoking Mansfield’s short story, shows, Estella tries to find the deferred space in the past text, that of Miss Havisham. Because she cannot resign her hope for living in the dancer’s house, she repeats the way in which the twentieth-century critics of Dickens have analysed *Great Expectations*,



using the theory of Freud and Lacan. The act itself confines her to the house, the text of the past.

As a result, two crucial tragic events for making a plot happen just after this presentation of the doll and the lamp. Firstly, Estella is raped on the night street, the outside of the house (66). Estella sometimes tries to go out of the house and ramble around the city. Once, she “runs on the city pavement” in the early morning (49). Second, she walks “through the city night” (64). The city is, for her, “a kind of art” in the light that “you make stories” uncomplicatedly there (49); in other words, it is the place that belongs to “the scheme of things” (69). There, she confronts a turn of the plot: she is raped.

After being raped, she comes to hide herself in the dancer’s house more deeply than before, yet a more crucial incident, the second turn of the plot, happens later in the world of the dancer. The baby of her friend, Mercy, dies (146) because Estella has taken the mother from their house in the underworld to her world of dancing and painting. She understands that the mother and her baby have achieved a sort of unity in her “legitimate world.” It is shattered by Estella. The baby and Mercy’s face “break into splinters” (146). Although she has longed for obtaining her subjectivity in the site of “absence” through dancing and painting, what she now finds are only pieces splintered there. Estella has been involved in the endless repetition of signs and absences of their meanings in order to escape from the established space. Her attempt at seeing the dancer’s house with her twentieth-century eye, however, fails because her belief in the dancer and her house causes the tragedy, in which Mercy is separated

from her baby.

Estella decides to leave the dancer's house and the city soon after the second tragedy. She frees herself from the text which has been plotted by Dickens and is being analysed on the basis of the twentieth-century theories of Freud, Lacan, and Barthes. After all, she follows the root of the plot that has been arranged in the beginning of the novel. She has planned to leave for Paris before she comes to live in the dancer's house. However, Roe leads her heroine to a road different from the plot of the original novel of Dickens. In *Estella*, when Pip sees Estella off, "follow[ing] her down the road" from the house, she "is sure to come back, one warm, bright day when [Pip] will have changed, grown up, and she will have stayed the same" (149) although no one knows if she comes back to the dancer's house. The modern Pip has learned dancing in the house, but he goes out of the illusory house with her. Although he slips out of the past world and watches over Estella in the dancer's house, now he waits for "the day to come" (149). Unlike in *Great Expectations*, the future of Pip and Estella are surely arranged for growing up and seeing each other again. In order to realise that arrangement, she "begins her journey; settle herself to watch" (154). As Estella's destination has already been arranged from the beginning of the novel (8), she is expected to grow up and meet Pip after the journey.

Linda Raphael, comparing modern responses to *Great Expectations* with the reviews by Dickens's contemporaries, notes as follows:

For the twentieth-century reader, the richness of this novel may be enhanced by an analysis that pays attention to the

cultural dynamics at work during Dickens's time with an emphasis on what more recent psycho-analytic, social, and literary narratives offer us for understanding. (401)<sup>3 2</sup>

*Estella* recreates this "richness" of the novel, which is plotted by Dickens and is interpreted by twentieth-century critics. However, Estella finally attempts to make her own plot outside the dancer's house. She will work in Paris as she has decided before coming to live in the dancer's world. In the last scene of Paris, Estella encounters a French woman on the train. There, she observes that the woman "looks through to the other side of the glass" of the window (154). In contrast to Estella, she succeeds in "looking through" the expanse of the universe with two sides, that of the present world where she is and that of the other world beyond. If the woman is the future Estella, the novel is expected to have a plot. It situates Estella at the centre and presents her growth although her bildungsroman is not narrated.

As in *The Mutual Friend*, in which the modern Dolby digs out the voices hidden under the past texts of Dickens, the modern Estella seeks for a space deviated from the standards in society under the dancer's house and for a deferred space between the plots in Dickens's text. However, the modern characters in these neo-Victorian novels are tortured by their own behaviours. Dolby's acting out the other voices causes uneasiness about writing because it is attended with changes of the other's subjectivity, in other words, death. Estella does not show any uneasiness, but attempts to represent a new meaning of making a plot as she discovers a particular meaning in the dancer's dress, which she [the

dancer] has sewn by herself in the earlier scene of the house. In *The Mutual Friend*, the voices of deviation from Dickens's authority are represented as a crisis of perversion when an author writes a story. More optimistically than the novel, the modern Estella "begins her journey" (154) beyond the stories, which Dickens created in the nineteenth century and the modern critics interpreted in the twentieth century.

### Chapter 3

#### The Neo-Victorian Novel Inspired by Charles Dickens (II):

#### Voices from Beyond the Sea

Dolby's writing the other voices and Estella's making a new plot are inherited by two neo-Victorian novels, which this chapter will discuss. One is *Jack Maggs* written by Peter Carey in Australia in 1997 and another is *Mister Pip* by Lloyd Jones in New Zealand in 2007. Strikingly, these two works share a sense of the importance of oriental elements, which are given as the setting in China in *The Mutual Friend* and the appearance of a Japanese haiku writer in *Estella*. In these novels, voices are echoed in places beyond the sea.

*Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* are adapted from Dickens's *Great Expectations* like *Estella*.<sup>3 3</sup> The former centres on Magwitch, who is renamed as Maggs, and the latter focuses on Pip, who is realised as a white man in Papua New Guinea. Some scholars have discussed these two novels. Gribble states that "Carey creates an Australian way of seeing, but Australian ways of seeing are subjected to powerful indictment in *Mister Pip*" (183).<sup>3 4</sup> Each author attempts to explore how their identities are shaped as an Australian or a New Zealander within influences of the great English author in their novels.

Recently, neo-Victorian fiction has been vigorously subjected to postcolonial criticism. In 2012, Elizabeth Ho published *Neo-Victorianism*

*and the Memory of Empire*. She argues that “Neo-Victorianism emphasizes these *improper* postcolonialism defined by a present still haunted and seduced by colonial structures or privilege . . . ” (11). The postcolonial perspective of neo-Victorian fiction has generally been given in discussions like Ho’s argument in order to act out an ethnic discourse repressed by British writers. On the other hand, according to Kohlke and Gutleben (2010), neo-Victorian fiction is the “fictional and poetic type of prosopopoeia that constituted the hallmark of contemporary revisions of the nineteenth century” (31). To revise is to reconstruct the standpoint that has previously been accepted and documented by the suzerain country and to dig out the marginalised voices from the text.

Fundamentally, both postcolonial theories and revisionary criticism in neo-Victorian arguments hinge on the flourishing of the culture of literacy. They are concerned about a written and printed text in the past. The text has been documented by an agent for authority, that is, an author or a coloniser.

Like Dickens, the two neo-Victorian novels show an anxiety about documentation even when the marginalised voices are restored to life. In order to blur the confinement within a text, there are representations of the physical acts of writing and the utterances in these novels. Strikingly, on one hand, the physical act of writing, a process that produces a text, has a force against documentation in England. On the other hand, orality is presented in the former British overseas colonies. The colonial relationship between Britain and Australia or New Zealand seems to embrace a tension among orality, literacy and writing in neo-Victorian

fiction.

### 3-1: Illusion of an Australian Voice in England: *Jack Maggs* (1997)

(1)

Carey's *Jack Maggs*, which is set in Victorian London, is a writing on writing. Dickens started to write *Great Expectations* in 1859 and its serial publication began in 1860. A young author in *Jack Maggs*, Tobias Oates, writes "*The Death of Maggs*" for a magazine over the same span as Dickens's work was serialised. In the illusory novel and *Jack Maggs*, the protagonist, Pip, in Dickens's original novel is replaced by Magwitch, a man from New South Wales. The final sentence of *Jack Maggs* is a quotation from Oates's dedicatory message in "*The Death of Maggs*." Oates's "*The Death of Maggs*" comes to a close by Magg's death, but the ending of Carey's *Jack Maggs* is not his death. Oates's message is attached to the seven copies of "*The Death of Maggs*," which are now collected in "the Mitchell Library in Sydney" (327). The illusory novel, "*The Death of Maggs*," starts after the final sentence of Carey's novel. A fiction over another fiction exists inside and outside the novel.

Most of the criticisms of the novel have looked at it as a postcolonial rewriting of the Victorian work, *Great Expectations*.<sup>3 5</sup> The novel brings an Australian colonial subject of the master novel, Magwitch, into the centre of the stage. His alter ego, Maggs, returns to the colonial island in its ending, "[giving] up his English son and his English house and [returning] home without fear . . . " (Brittan 54). It has

what Mukherjee calls “an ‘acting out’ of unconscious and repressed material in the precursor texts” and “a cognitive and emotional intervention that seeks to recover lost memory” (131). Magwitch has been repressed and alienated from Pip’s world by his death in the ending, so he can be revived in the contemporary novel.

There are several arguments pointing out that it is significant that the novel’s centre is situated in Australia, separating it from Dickens’s England. Annegret Maack states that it is “an authentic Australian version” (242). Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp defines it as one of the postcolonial texts, which disrupt the discourse of European hegemony (246). Jörg Heinke also observes that Maggs builds an ideal colonial society in the colony in order to resist being “(em)braced” in the novel (215). According to Alice Brittan, the novel describes Australian desire and hostility as an enemy of England, the Australian host (54).

The Australian hostility in *Jack Maggs* has been engendered by its history of repression and exploitation. According to Sadoff, “the British exportation of its criminal class and its colonial exploitation of the convicts it transported” are ignored in Pip’s story (173). She continues to state, “Carey’s postcolonial reconstruction of Maggs’s history gives Dickens’s marginalised character a voice” (175-76): it tells the criminal life in his miserable childhood in London before he is condemned to exile. Drawing on Freud’s theory of trauma, she argues that Maggs’s recollection of his past repeats Dickens’s own “scenario of paternal abandonment and neglect” (167-81).

The traumatic repetition of the past in one’s mind is caused by a



paternal existence, the origin: for instance, Dickens's father for Dickens, Magwitch for Pip, and Dickens for Carey. Repeating a painful event in the past text, a neo-Victorian writer revises it to complement his/her own desire. Carey's desire can be seen as an attempt at relocating the repressed Australian deported convict in a stage of Australian history. His intervention in *Great Expectations* has often been argued as stealing by critics. He boldly steals the characters and the plot from Dickens.

Heilman and Llewellyn state that the main element of neo-Victorianism is to "steal" from the original text (17). Beverly Taylor discusses how Carey "tells the suppressed story of nineteenth-century Australia" (99).

According to Taylor, Carey is "a self-conscious thief, a magg stealing from Dickens's life and works" (98). The author attempts to revise the master novel, to transform it into a new form, and to add new meanings in his own novel. In *Jack Maggs*, stealing is repeated by the writings of two writers, Maggs and Oates. They steal one's identity from the owner in order to change and forge it in a novel, a sketch or a letter.

Although a lot of critics look at stealing and revising in *Jack Maggs* in a postcolonial perspective, what should primarily be considered is that the power of written words has enabled the authors to repeat the past as a traumatic experience. To revise and rewrite always depend on the presence of a written and printed text. This phenomenon of literacy is described consciously in the novel. The writers' intention in writing a book is complicatedly tangled with the repressed pain of the written object. On the other hand, it is interesting that, while the characters' voices are heard only in China in *The Mutual Friend*, a voice is implicitly

carried from England to New South Wales in *Jack Maggs*.

(2)

*Jack Maggs* opens with a specific statement of time, “six of the clock on the fifteenth of April in the year of 1837” (1). The novel is set in the reign of Queen Victoria and in the period of Dickens’s earlier writing career as we learn from Oates’s depiction. As it has been observed in Chapter One of the dissertation, the spread of popular literature in written forms drove oral popular material and performance into obscurity in the 1830s. The year, 1837, when Maggs revisits London in order to start a heart-warming relation with his dear son, Phipps, was in historical and literary terms the moment when Dickens established the system of serial publication of the novel. Although the serial form had started in journals and magazines in the eighteenth century, according to Chittick, the publication of a novel in monthly instalments was inaugurated by the periodical *The Pickwick Papers*. Its publication in monthly numbers began in April 1836. The numbers were finally bound and published in three volumes, which gave it the status of a respectable three-decker novel (Chittick 61-91). During the decade, the Victorian market of popular literature had been gradually changed by Dickens and his contemporary writers and publishers from traditional oral transmission to dealings in printed books and papers.

A lot of Victorians including Dickens had been engaged in writing in their businesses. As has been argued in the first chapter, for instance, the fictional lawyers, Tulkinghorn and Guppy, surrounded by legal

statements, embody the Victorian middle-class gentleman. A scattering of legal papers in Krook's shop symbolically presents the barrenness of lawsuits in Chancery and the sterile society in England. In *Jack Maggs*, the representations of Ma Britten and her son, Tom, are symbolic of the Victorian print culture because they are haunted by "papers." The world dominated by printed papers makes their surroundings bleak. Tom spends "endless hours" with his mother in reading "papers" (210) such as "the titles, and mysterious other Certificates and Orders": "they huddled over their papers" (212). Maggs sees an inky figure of Ma Britten in his dream. There, she is "shadow, passion, hurt, an inky malignancy" (230).

Furthermore, in the thievery team with Maggs and Silas's daughter, Sophina, Tom is an expert in picking a lock of a mansion. He can force open the door quite easily. The scene is interestingly illustrated as follows. When he picks a key of a mansion, "he [makes] less mess than a death-watch beetle, and when he was done the house would sit waiting for us, as easily opened as the pages of a book" (210). In order to steal the wealthy family's property, he opens "the pages of a book" without any conflict as if he were a representative of those who were born in the Victorian literary culture. His act of stealing has partly the same meaning as reading a book. This book, the mansion, provides wealth for him and Ma. For them, literacy has a direct effect on their commercial practice, a sort of business.

In his childhood, Maggs belongs to an environment dominated by literacy in the house of his foster mother, Ma. It is the world of categorising and classifying. As Ong discusses, "the world of visualized

pages” show “analytic, dissecting tendencies” because of its dependence on the human sense of sight (72). When he was three days old, Maggs was abandoned “in the mud flats” (75) in the London slum. Symbolically, his first experience is to be “torn” by two scroungers there (75). They struggle for his scanty belongings, a shawl and a bonnet, as they would like to sell them to a pawnbroker like Old Joe in *Christmas Carol* or use them for themselves. Maggs is treated as one of the commodities required for their living. He is taken to Ma’s house by his so-called father, Silas, a figure similar to Fagin in *Oliver Twist*, after he has been picked up by Muddlers. Ma is a gang member and a peddler of pills for abortion. She gives Maggs a role of “identifying the otherworldly shapes and colours of the organs of dead beasts” (94) as food or medicine. He is engaged in dividing things into fragments, helping Ma’s business. Before learning the alphabet, he is forced to work in the world of literacy. It means, at the same time, that he is to be buffeted about in the world of market economy.

After he secretly returns to England from the penal colony, he confronts a more complicated situation in this world than when he was a child. *The Mutual Friend* and *Estella* have expressed a writer’s fear for changing one’s voice and his/her attempt at making a new plot beyond past discourses, yet in *Jack Maggs*, the writer’s desire for writing is tangled with a fear in the written objects. The fear is caused not only by being fixed on a page but also by being published.

Laura Savu emphasises that Maggs is fictionalised by Oates (142), yet Oates novelises his life. When Maggs reads Chapter One in the draft of the novel, “*The Death of Jack Maggs*,” he says to Oates, “You stole my

Sophina” (280). The conversation between Oates and Maggs continues as follows:

“It is a memorial I am making. Your Sophina will live for ever.”

“Don’t say her name.”

“I write that name, Jack, like a stone mason makes the name upon a headstone, so her memory may live for ever. In all the Empire, Jack, you could not have employed a better carver.”

. . .

“You are planning to kill me, I know that. Is that what you mean by painful? To burn me alive?” (280)

Oates has known all about Maggs’s life by performing mesmeric operations on him. The Victorians believed that “an imponderable fluid could pass from one individual to another” through the operation (Winter 35). It was a part of medical practices to treat a physical and mental illness by controlling “the invisible stream of magnetic fluid” in a body (Winter 68). Oates takes out Maggs’s secret memory from his mind, pretending to kill pain on his face. He uses the scientific skill to write a novel, which is based on Maggs’s life. For the writer, his writing is a skill for an “employed” professional writer, that is, “a stone mason” who can keep his characters living “for ever” in “all Empire.” As a mason in the publishing world, he expects that his book will be sold throughout the British Empire as *Great Expectations* was. Undoubtedly, he understands that the market for publishing is expanded over the Empire. His book is a commodity in his dealings.

For Maggs, the novel brings a result that his secret life is “burgled” by Oates. It forces him to enact a constructed identity and threatens him to “kill” his inner self. Therefore, Maggs is anxious that, after Oates writes the book, a part of his identity is “burnt” by being a character in the novel while his subjectivity is “alive” in his mind. As Oliver constantly attempts to escape from his identity being fixed in a magazine or a book in *Oliver Twist*, Maggs cannot help feeling a pain of confinement when he peeps into the book written by Oates. He recalls that he has been tortured in New South Wales on “the triangle,” a wooden triangle, on which an ill-mannered convict is tied with a rope for flogging: “He had had that feeling in his gut before, that cold terror associated with the triangle. He knew his life and death were not his own” (273). He fears that he might be confined in a book by a writer as he has been tied up on “the triangle” in New South Wales. The draft of Oates’s novel is burnt by the writer himself after all, yet, eventually, it is to be written again by the author and published after Maggs’s death. Once he finishes his own life, Maggs is destined to be fixed as a character. His life is published in a book, one of Oates’s commodities.

Although he feels a fear for the publication of his life, he also seems to have become one of the writers, who publish their works. His “works” are letters to his son, Phipps, which he has been writing for years. He is not engaged in writing a book as a profession. Nevertheless, these letters have gradually been made public as if they were official documents. Mukherjee claims that he intends to “recover his history in epistolary form” (125) while he reveals it only to “the intended

addressee” in order to keep it secret (126). Phipps refuses to “recover his history” by rejecting Maggs’s passionate love. He unconsciously perceives that he is to be enclosed in the letters and is to be published.

The letters are made public by Maggs himself. As Kristjana Gunnars argues that “the core of writing requires something that is very vulnerably personal, and yet at the same time very communal” (80), Maggs’s private letters are always in danger of being exposed to the public. Asking Constable, his colleague, to send letters to Phipps, he introduces the third person into the secret relation between Maggs and Phipps. These letters take a step forward towards becoming official. Maggs is also conscious of writing a letter “with the borrowed quill of Tobias Oates” (238). He comes closer to a professional writer by using the pen of the “mason” although he is writing a private letter. These letters are, then, packed by “a large oblong parcel about the size of *The Times*” (247), a newspaper. Although he wants to avoid announcing them to the public, ironically, the parcel is the size of the public paper. Furthermore, the wrapping is sealed with “several layers” so tightly that even Maggs gets annoyed at the delay when Partridge tries to open it. Here is the moment when his strictly private letters turn into official papers. His letters look like “a very learned-looking leather volume with a great deal of gold filigree on the cover and, on the spine, an artfully tooled crest” (248). “The scholarly appearance of this book” (248) is implying that these letters are to be published. Even when it is a private letter, a written page is connected with publishing in the world dominated by literacy.

## (3)

Although the written objects get annoyed not only at fixity but also being published, the act of writing is a significant performance for the writer. A text produces a form of fixing. There seems to be a physical act of writing against fixing in *Jack Maggs*. As for Barthes as a writer, Sontag explains that he is always in “perpetual flight before what is fixed by writing”, so that he “wants to move on,” that is “to write” (84). Going on writing saves him from “what is fixed”. In *Jack Maggs*, the writers are obsessed with writing. According to Anthony Hassall, “Carey’s characters repeatedly seek to escape from the bodies, the lives or the narratives in which they believe they are trapped” (133). As an object observed by Carey, Oates endlessly struggles against the author, who has created him from the biographies of Dickens, as if he is driven by a mysterious power. Oates constantly and futilely dedicates himself to writing something throughout the novel.

The writing figure of Oates’s forefather, Dickens, was watched and recorded by people who wrote of him. Richard Lettis analyses in detail their descriptions of Dickens, for example the records by Henry Burnett and John Forster and the letters of Dickens himself. He wrote with a quill of blue ink on a white slip or a blue paper (Lettis 5). Also, according to Lettis, for Dickens, “imaginative creation was a physical act requiring . . . legs to propel the body, facial muscles to shape the face, lips to speak what his imagination distinctly heard, and eyes to see what benign providence showed to him . . .” (22). In *Jack Maggs*, when he starts to



write his novel about the life of Maggs in a coach, Oates's writing figure is observed by Maggs and other passengers. It is like a performance in a sort of a show. There, he can write letters even in the shaky vehicle in such a way as to set the book and the bottle of ink on the "ingenious portmanteau upon his knee" and to write "in an ornate but graceful hand": he "[writes] 'Chapter One,' and underline[s] it twice" (223). One of the passengers says, "'I could not read with all this motion, . . . But to write, Sir, that is certainly an accomplishment'" (224). All of them including Maggs watch the process of his writing, so that the writer seems to present a stage performance of writing. Oates's writing is "a physical act" for them and more valuable than its written content, in which only Maggs is interested.

A physical act of writing is a means of upsetting the stability of the world of printed pages. Although he does not act a writing performance, Maggs's "physical act" is suggestive in considering a physical act against fixity in a text. He intervenes in the middle space between two fixed worlds through the physical act. At his earlier mugging, before Tom joins the team, Maggs has unlocked the doors of houses from the inside. His way of unlocking is different from Tom's because he enters a mansion by falling down to the inside through a chimney. The chimney is a passage between the exterior and the interior of houses. He gets physical experience in the passage. For the first time in his thievish life, as he is suddenly pushed into the chimney of a house by Silas, he desperately struggles to drag himself out of it: "When death did not come, I kicked with my boots, and squirmed my shoulders and, in trying to climb back up

towards the sky, slid even further into the pit” (98). He resists falling down to the bottom of the chimney literally and to a criminal life metaphorically.

Nevertheless, he discovers “the smell of apples and oranges” and “a feeling of almighty comfort” (99) at the destination of this passage. Later, he has a sexual relationship with Sophina in these mansions as if they were in Eden. He writes, “’Twere the sweetest thing in all my life, to go burgling with Sophina and to flirt with the great dangerous web of sleep” (216). Struggling physically in the chimneys, between the inside and the outside of mansions, Maggs succeeds in gaining a sort of connection with someone and between two worlds. Therefore, Maggs and Sophina “lay under [their] counterpane at night, asleep in each other’s arms, imagining [themselves] safe, as least, in [their] heartfelt feelings for each other” (212) in the mansions while the other world of Silas over their heads in the chimneys is filled with “the tedium of close confinement” (213). The physical experience leads Maggs to a sort of Eden, where he has deeply intimate relationship with his girlfriend.

The relationship with Sophina is repeated in Maggs’s illusion about Phipps. When he enters his owned house in London and sees Phipps for the first time, he recalls “a house in Kensington whose kind and beautiful interior he had entered by tumbling down a chimney, like a babe falling from the outer darkness into light” (322). He has built an image of Phipps on his warm closeness with Sophina. Both Sophina and Phipps offer a warm and intimate unity for him.

The illusion about Phipps is created by the act of writing letters to

him. The act of writing is a physical experience as he has had it in the chimney of the mansion. As he has a “sweetest” relationship with Sophina after falling down through the chimney, he expects to gain the friendly and warm unity with Phipps while he is writing the letters. Writing is a sort of temporal communication with him. Accordingly, Maggs recognises how far the act reminds him of his “heartfelt feelings” with Sophina at the night when they have been in a bed “in each other’s arms” (212): “the man now who writes this [letter] embraces her still, and longs, thirty years later, for the smooth whiteness of her skin and all that great house around [them]” (216). The act of writing leads him to an intimate closeness with Phipps, such as he has experienced with Sophina.

The act of writing is uniquely performed by Maggs. It is defined as steps in his “physical way of writing” by Sigrun Meinig (136). The first step is dipping a pen; he “dipped the great albatross quill into the apothecary’s bottle” (74). Then, “he [writes], *Dear Henry Phipps*, in violet-coloured ink”: “He wrote fluidly, as if long accustomed to that distrustful art” (74). The sketch of his writing activity continues; “He pause[s], starting up at the gilded ceiling while the ink faded to a pale, pale lilac,” fills characters on the paper, and “watch[s] these fresh lines fade, first to lilac, then to white, until, that is, they [become] invisible” (74). He writes the letter in mirror writing with special ink in case his criminal record should be read by someone other than his son. The ink is invented by him. It is intended to disappear on the paper. What is of great consequence here is the representation of the process in which he writes “fluidly” and the ink vaporises. He attempts to create a reciprocal

relationship with his son when he is pouring his words into confidential letters by means of his enthusiastic performance of writing. Writing is a purely private act for him because he assumes that the letter is to be exchanged only between the sender and the receiver.

Ironically, Maggs's desire for the Eden is only an illusion in his mind. It is dashed by Phipps himself. When Constable sends the letters to Phipps, Phipps misunderstands them for an official and public statement, not intimate letters.

“And the largest of the tree, so I understand, is a certain document which Mr Maggs would have you read.”

Constable then held out all three parcels.

“A legal document?” asked Henry Phipps, unable to hide his growing excitement. (164)

He has grown up as one of the typical Victorian gentlemen in the market economy system. He desperately asks for “a legal document” concerning funds from Maggs while Maggs desires for building up the “sweetest” connection with him. His desire has been created privately by writing, yet it is frustrated by the officially inscribed paper.

Furthermore, his illusion about the private connection is supported by a voice. First of all, the symbolic name of “Maggs” signifies something physical and vocal. It has two definitions: “to pilfer” and “to chatter.” On one hand, the name “Maggs” has been often focused on as “pilfering” by critics.<sup>3 6</sup> “Pilfering” stands for him as a convict in Australia and as a character who is fabricated from Dickens's Magwitch. On the other hand, he is also an eloquent speaker. The Australian

colloquial expression “to magg” means “to chatter” (cited in OED 1).<sup>3 7</sup> The Australian term makes us evoke a concrete image of Maggs as a man who represents orality.

Because his father is a convict exiled to New South Wales, Phipps fires a gun at him, prompted by Percy Buckle, who is afraid of being accused of harbouring him. At the moment, Phipps realises that his letters have been “lies” for himself, but “comfort” for his father:

Henry Phipps had sung to Jack Maggs, sung for his supper. He had sung without understanding it was a siren song, without ever dreaming that this tortured beast might demand of him that which had been conceived only as a flight of fancy. (325)

They have exchanged letters for years. At the same time as Maggs’s illusion about Phipps has been cherished by writing letters, the son’s false words have resounded as his voice in his father’s mind. The song has resonated through Maggs’s brain, or heart, until the moment when he shoots at him. Magg’s physical struggle in the chimneys, writing to Phipps and Phipps’s songs in the letters lie in parallel with one another in his mind: all create his illusion about a unity with others.

Dickens sought for the way in which he could communicate intimately with his readers and achieved it through public readings. In *Jack Maggs*, Maggs desires for the same unity with others as Dickens had done. Therefore, he listens to the singing voice from his son in New South Wales. However, he cannot succeed in building up a warm community in England. In the world of documented papers, a private unity is colonised by a public, official and commercial sphere. A potential for sounds is now

not in England but in Australia, in the neo-Victorian novel.

### 3-2: Oral Culture of Papua New Guinea and *Great Expectations: Mister Pip* (2007)

#### (1)

*Mister Pip* is set in Bougainville, an island of Papua New Guinea, at the time of the Bougainville crisis when the island was blockaded.<sup>3 8</sup> Dickens's *Great Expectations*, which is used to educate the local children, is read aloud by the white teacher in the school of the island. In postcolonial terms, in which Homi Bhabha claims that "postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order" (171),<sup>3 9</sup> the local island is a "cultural location." A resistance to and anxiety about the authority of Dickens and England are presented in the story of a local girl, in which the violent disorder as opposed to "the modern world order," erupting in the island, is depicted.

Patrick McCarthy, referring to the relationship of *Mister Pip* and *Great Expectations*, comments: "Dickens lies at the center of both the fantasy and the realism. *Great Expectations* affords both paradigms and contrast to the story" (59). Dickens's novel slips into various places in Jones's neo-Victorian novel. Pip's story shows not a flat transformation of the original novel into another but is incorporated as a spatial and polyphonic variation in *Mister Pip*. In the swelling space of the text, the

Victorian boy's life melts into the narrator Matilda's and Mr Watts's respectively. This section will argue that the Victorian text is regenerated in the rewritten text, arriving at an understanding of the changing situation of the nineteenth century's vocalised communication and the literary theory of the twentieth century.

Some reviews characterise *Mister Pip* as a postcolonial rewriting. "In this story-within-a-story," Olivia Laing observes, "Jones has created a microcosm of postcolonial literature, hybridising the narratives of black and white races to create a new and resonant fable". In "Dickens in the South Pacific," the reviewer states, "Lloyd Jones gives the tired postcolonial themes of self-reinvention and the reinterpretation of classic texts a fresh, ingenious twist but his real achievement is in bringing life and depth to his characters" (Burleigh).

In the view of postcolonialism, however, there are possibly two conflicting explanations of the novel. One will be made from a positive viewpoint; the author attempts to mingle the story of the white boy with Matilda in the black island: the hybridity as Bhabha tries to practice in his book. In fact, her identity is formed by both the white world learned from Mr Watts and the local society of the island. She opens up a place of a cultural hybridity of the white world and the native locality in her mind.

On the other hand, it can be said that the reading act of Mr Watts changes the kids into adherents of Dickens's world, or the white world. Matilda, as a grown-up young woman, discovers that Mr Watts

was whatever he needed to be, what we asked him to be. Perhaps there are lives like that – they pour into whatever space we have

made ready for them to fill. We needed a teacher, Mr Watts became that teacher. We needed a magician to conjure up other worlds, and Mr Watts had become that magician. When we needed a saviour, Mr Watts had filled the role. When the redskins required a life, Mr Watts had given himself. (210)

Although Matilda mentally grows up through Mr Watts and *Great Expectations*, the novel suggests that he turns her and the local kids into a sort of white gentlemen as a “magician” just as Magwitch and Miss Havisham have transformed Pip and Estella into a gentleman and a lady. The grown-up Matilda visits Mrs Watts, Mr Watts’s ex-wife, to learn about his former life. She presents a quite different figure of Mr Watts to Matilda. When their conversation turns to Grace, his present wife, who pretends to be Queen of Sheba because of her mental illness, Mrs Watts warns Matilda of his dangerous behaviour. She thinks that he has changed Grace into Queen of Sheba and made her unable to “snap out of” the role (209) because he has driven her to change her identity and appearance.

There is another scene illustrating how Mr Watts manipulates others. When villagers finish their speeches in the classroom, the kids are encouraged to applaud by Mr Watts. After some of their lectures, they break into applause “without prompting from Mr Watts.” It means that they have gained “the gentlemanly ways . . . under his guidance” (74). In other words, “the children are mesmerised” (Atkins) by their white teacher; the white man controls the islander’s life with his superiority. Thus, when one sees the story in the Pacific with a postcolonial viewpoint, it is possible to develop both arguments: stories of hybridity and of an



oppressive white man.

These postcolonial explanations of rewritten novels have been repeated in existing criticism. The author himself focuses on the postcolonial aspects. He says in an interview in *The Observer*, “If you’re from a migrant society, it’s easy to see the orphan and the migrant as interchangeable. For both, the past is at best a fading photograph” (Bedell). He sees *Mister Pip* in a colonial light. He connects the past of orphans, who do not have a memory of the place where he has had a stable identity, with the sense of instability of migrants, who have lost strong attachment to their homelands. Yet, while he brings a background of migrants in his novel, he consciously refers to the past of orphans and migrants, too. In addition to the sense of the past, the reviewer in *The Times* states that Jones asks the reader to see how “we construct and repair our communities, and ourselves, with stories old and new” (Katsoulis). He is aware of the question of time distance, which is indicated in the novel; between the new *Great Expectations* for the village kids and the ancient stories of their mothers and grandmothers, and between the modern age and the Victorian *Great Expectations*. In short, although Matilda is a colonial other for the white Mr Watts, they stand in a line against the Victorian period; the past is the other for the present.

The representation of the past and the present in *Mister Pip* will lead us to an understanding of the interrelation between the Victorian period and the modern era. In trying to elucidate the otherness of the past it is useful to concentrate on trauma, the one prominent theme in the novel. We will discuss how the traumatic experiences of Matilda and Mr

Watts are interwoven, ultimately to form a totality. Another leading factor will be the usage of orality in the novel. The book is full of oral potentialities; oral narrative is brought back from the past to the modern era by means of the narration of *Great Expectations*.

(2)

*Mister Pip* traces Matilda's slow recovery from the terrible events of the past. Matilda gradually heals herself by narrating her story of loss. Giving an order to the process of loss and writing back to her own past enable her to free herself from the trauma. As a sense of order is essential for her, the story of her life in the island is written in a chronological sequence of deprivation. First, she loses her father, who goes to work in Australia. Second, medicines, canned food, and everything imported to the island are kept out of the island. Then, all her belongings, her shoes, a gift from her father, a pencil and a calendar, are burnt by the government soldiers called "redskins." Next, her house and the only copy of *Great Expectations* in the island are burnt. Finally, her mother and Mr Watts are killed by them, and she loses the ability to feel. She writes: "I do not know what you are supposed to do with memories like these. It feels wrong to want to forget. Perhaps this is why we write these things down, so we can move on" (179). Writing these terrible things and arranging them in order push her on to advance, leaving the past behind her. At this point, in the text, a gap in time clearly exists between the past, which Matilda is "trying to forget" (196), and the present.

In considering the interrelationship of the present and the otherness

of the past, the theory propounded by Hans-Georg Gadamer, a leading scholar of hermeneutics, is highly suggestive. He describes “the fusion of horizons” in historical understanding in *Truth and Method*. He states that “*knowledge of oneself can never be complete*” (302) because one has “a horizon,” yet a horizon can be extended to another; so that it is possible to know the other’s horizon. He points out that when one knows about the other, one “must place [oneself] in the other situation in order to understand it” and then “[acquire] an appropriate . . . horizon” of it (303). In the light of historical understanding, the present cannot be formed without the horizon of the past. Then, he argues,

In tradition this process of fusion [of the horizons of the past and of the present] is continually going on, for there old and new are always combining into something of living value, without either being explicitly foregrounded from the other. (306).

It is likely that *Mister Pip* fulfils this idea at different levels.

Firstly, Matilda has driven the events of the past in the island out of her mind for a long time after she has migrated to New Zealand; they are too painful and intolerable, constituting a trauma for her. The separation between the island and her new life is drawn by Matilda when she is saved from near drowning by Mr Masoi’s boat, by which the Masois are illegally leaving the island. Her new life starts at that point. She does not recall the island and tries rather to forget it eagerly. In other words, she hardly tries to understand the past events. In fact, Matilda’s memory of shipping from the island to Gizo is blurred. There is not a line dividing up the past and

the present in her memory. Since she does not perceive her past events clearly, she is unable to participate in a process of transforming herself from the past to the present.

However, later, she makes distinctions in time by herself. She recalls a scene in the island. In this scene, Mr Watts has asked her whether she would flee from the island with him and the Masois without her mother and she has not answered affirmatively. Looking back on this episode, she imagines what it was and what it would be.

Because it seems to me, thinking about it all these years later, that what I felt was a parting, a line drawn. I have called it a line, but maybe it is better to talk about a curtain. A curtain dropped between Mr Watts and his most adoring audience. He would move on and I would shift into that burial ground occupied by figures of the past. I would be a small speck on a large island as he sat in Mr Masoi's boat motoring from one life to another. (215)

Strikingly, she consciously changes the word "line" to "curtain." A line makes a distinction on a flat surface, yet a curtain closes Mr Watts's reading theatre. It clarifies the distinction between the two worlds and gives Matilda a standing point to see the other world. It is obvious that she looks at her island from the ocean since she gradually becomes "a small speck" in her imagination. Gadamer defines "horizon" as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (302). While a line merely distinguishes this from that, the curtain produces two spaces, each with a distinct horizon.

The curtain seems to have been taken from a passage in *Great Expectations*: after Pip reluctantly enters his apprenticeship, he thinks:

There have been occasions in my later life . . . when I have felt for a time as if a thick curtain had fallen on all its interest and romance, to shut me out from anything save dull endurance any more. Never has that curtain dropped so heavy and blank, as when my way in life lay stretched out straight before me through the newly-entered road of apprenticeship to Joe. (87)

He imagines that the curtain hangs between the world of “interest and romance,” which means a life with Estella and Miss Havisham, and his own “dull” life with Joe. The side where Estella and Miss Havisham stand is like the stage of a theatre. The representation of Satis House has, in fact, a theatrical atmosphere in Pip’s description; for instance, Miss Havisham’s whiteness is presented as “the ghastly wax-work at the Fair” (70). She is the object to be watched as an exhibition here, and Satis House is a scene of “interest and romance” for Pip. In short, the curtain suggests the existence of a stage where the fanciful play of his imagination will be enacted.

The use of the curtain by Pip can be applied to Matilda’s description. In her recalled past, there are two areas; one is Mr Watts’s world that is “moving on” and another Matilda’s “burial ground,” the island, although the reality has gone in the opposite direction for Matilda and Mr Watts. The “burial ground” has the sense of the past and stagnation, and the reader can at least imagine the horizontal room such as a stage where the curtain falls, dividing Matilda’s two worlds.

The space of the island with a horizon of the past, then, reminds Matilda that she has actually not “moved on” and still belongs to her past. When she returns to her flat in London from Gravesend, she discovers how she has been “trapped” in her former possessions:

There were the trappings of my life – the mounted photograph of Dickens, an article blown up to poster size announcing publication of *Great Expectations* in book form. There was my desk and the pile of paper known as my thesis. It had sat there all day waiting for me to get back from Gravesend with fresh material. It had sat there like Mr Watts had once, with his secret exercise book, waiting for fragments. Well, I didn’t have any fresh material. (215)

Since the second day when she starts to go to a high school in New Zealand, she has devoted herself to the study of Dickens. The phrase, “like Mr Watts,” used in the quoted sentences, metaphorically presents her identity bound by a person from her past, Mr Watts. She cannot also bring back the “fresh material” from Gravesend. It shows that she has not reached a new world even though she is in her “new world” after she left the island. She has lived in a narrow sphere, “overvaluing what is nearest” her (Gadamer 302), before she recalls the curtain, which is to create the horizons in the past and in the present.

(3)

The act of writing releases her from the narrow sphere. After the six days of depression and psychic confusion in New Zealand, Matilda

starts to write her story, *Mister Pip*, due to her discovery of the curtain and the space behind the horizon of the island. By the act of writing, she situates herself in the past and sees the horizon which is divided by the curtain and the stage. In the process, the fusion of the “old and new” works for Matilda. She writes as follows at the end of the novel: “Pip was my story, even if I was once a girl, and my face black as the shining night. Pip is my story, and in the next day I would try where Pip had failed. I would try to return home” (219). “Pip” connects Matilda’s past with her present. In the sentence, a restless girl and a young woman combine together in Matilda to form a figure, Pip.

As she recalls her childhood in writing, the act softens her trauma of the cruel events in the island. The discussion of trauma here will be in terms of Freud’s theory. According to Cathy Caruth, who rightly points to the relationship between Freud’s principles of trauma in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) and the critical theory of poststructuralists, Freud’s traumatic process is based on the story of the beginning of Jewish history. Freud has considered that history is not a simple style of “experience and reference” but consists of discontinuation of the past and the future, where a terrible event of the murder of “Egyptian” Moses by the Hebrews is hidden in a context of “the preservation of Hebrew freedom” (Caruth 184). The circumstances of “liberal return to freedom” (Caruth 184) to Canaan in the Old Testament have been created to eliminate the real event concerning Moses. The replacement of Moses’s story is caused by the trauma made unconscious of his murder. In short, the story of the departure and the return to freedom, which are joined together in the plot,

includes a traumatic space between them, that is, the killing of Moses in history. In Freud's explanation, the unconsciousness of the trauma is brought by "*the act of leaving*," which is the exodus from Egypt in Jewish history (Caruth 190).

"*The act of leaving*" and the unconscious trauma are observed by Matilda. Her mother and Mr Watts are killed in a terrible way by the redskins in the island. Then, liberation is gained by her illegal emigration from there. Like Moses, she leaves her birthplace beyond the ocean in a storm. In her new life, she studies Dickens eagerly for herself due to Mr Watts's introduction involving the great novelist, but pretends to improve her results at school by the support of her father, who is proud of her and does not know anything about her past: "I didn't have the heart to tell him about Mr Watts. I let him think I was all his own work" (198). In addition, she "[tries] to forget" her mother, too, although "[s]ometimes . . . I couldn't keep the door closed on that little room in my head where I'd put her" (196). Due to the departure from the island and the terrible past, she has unconsciously hidden her mother and Mr Watts away behind schoolbooks and research sources of Dickens and pushes them to "that little room in [her] head" although the narrator Matilda is aware of the unconscious trauma of the narrated Matilda.

Caruth points out that many contemporary critics "make history unconscious" due to this Freudian theory of unconscious trauma, "depriving history of its referential literality" (186). They suggest that "consequently we may not have direct access to others" (Caruth 181). Against these poststructuralists, Caruth's survey of Freud's writing



indicates that he has focused on the insight that “events are only historical to the extent that they implicate others” (Caruth 188). She examines it through the context of Freud’s own writing; he wrote the book in Vienna from 1934 to 1937 when the Nazi invasion and persecution had occurred, and finished it in England in 1937 after he had left his birthplace. She recognises a repetition of trauma and unconsciousness in history within the overlapping of life stories of Moses and Freud:

. . . Freud tells of his own work – of a history whose traces cannot be effaced, which haunts Freud like a ghost, and finally emerges in several publications involving extensive repetition – it is difficult not to recognize the story of the Hebrews – of Moses’ murder, its effacement, and its unconscious repetition (189).

Trauma and unconsciousness are repeated in history and at the same time make one overlap with another.

Caruth’s idea is applicable to our argument of *Mister Pip*. In Matilda’s story of trauma, the trauma of another person, Mr Watts, is repeated. Matilda narrates few events of his past because she does not have any means to find them. What she learns about his former life except his own explanations is that he has once married a white woman, who lived in a dull and motionless place, known Grace who was his neighbour next door, and played in an amateur theatre with her. He, however, emphasizes Pip’s liberation from the marshes in *Great Expectations*. He repeats the following sentences in his comments on Pip:

‘Pip is an orphan who is given the chance to create his own self

and destiny. Pip's experience also reminds us of the emigrant's experience. Each leaves behind the place they grew up in, each strikes out on his own. Each is free to create himself anew. Each is also free to make mistakes . . . .' (78)

Mr Watts focuses on Pip's transformation and liberation from the monotonous marshes to London in his reading, while removing all terrible and murderous scenes. Accordingly, Matilda identifies the situation of Pip with her dull island. In short, his emphasis on Pip's wish to migrate is transcribed onto Mr Watts's traumatic experience, within which he has desired for liberation. As Freud's experiences are assimilated into the Jewish history, Mr Watts's past trauma is indicated by Matilda's narration of liberation from her own trauma. A phenomenon encountered by a character in a text is unconsciously reflected on another text of the writer. The multi-layered structure of texts produces a space beyond the horizons in the past and the present. Freud's and Matilda's acts of writing enable the production of the space.

(4)

Although Matilda finds a connection between herself and her other self by writing as Maggs does so with Phipps, the phenomenon in the novel has resulted from textuality, a characteristic of written words, unlike in *Jack Maggs*. In this regard, orality is incompatible with revisionary texts based on postmodern ways of thinking. Gadamer's theory is not involved in the vocal theatre of Mr Watts because oral practice has timeless continuity, where there are no horizons with

limitations. Indeed, Gadamer states; “In the form of writing, all tradition . . . involves a unique co-existence of past and present, insofar as present consciousness has the possibility of a free access to everything handed down in writing” (390). He requires written texts, which “always express a whole,” for our understanding (390). Furthermore, an inducement to write the past is an anxiety about the unknown nature of the former events, as Mary Poovey discusses: “... the anxiety that signals our vexed relation to the past we partly construct also provokes us to write” (171). It seems that writing Matilda’s trauma and reading aloud have a strained relation to each other. In other words, written and printed words are virtually essential to realize Gadamer’s interpretation of horizon and a theory of trauma. However, the island of *Mister Pip* in Papua New Guinea is full of orality; Mr Watts’s oral reading of *Great Expectations* and the villagers’ anecdotes.

Monica Latham states that the novel “celebrates the power of literature and the power of stories to shape us, but suggests we also have an impact on books” (39). Her argument is right because in fact the book, *Great Expectations*, exerts a great influence on Matilda’s future. However, it is significant that voices carry the story of Pip to her. The use of the Victorian novel effectively brings oral culture back into the novel. The story of *Great Expectations*, which Mr Watts reads for the local kids in the classroom, is composed of “fragments” of the master novel (196). After the villagers are deprived of all possessions including their book by the government soldiers called redskins, the kids collect “fragments” of *Great Expectations* so as to recover the story. Mr Watts tells the villagers

and the local resisters, regarded as rambos, the story of his life. His story consists not only of “fragments and anecdotes” (162) of *Great Expectations* but also of the villagers’ tales.

There are no borders demarcating among Pip’s story, Mr Watts’ life, the villagers’ anecdotes, superstitions and myths, and Dickens’s written novel. For the local kids, “reading” *Great Expectations* in the classroom constitute the same situation as “listening” to the local myths and superstitions of their mothers and grandmothers. All of these stories received by the kids in the classroom, including Pip’s life, are poured into Mr Watts’s life by his storytelling. The Dickensian world is provided by the sound of his voice: “When Mr Watts read to us we fell quiet. It was a new sound in the world. He read slowly so we heard the shape of each word” (17). Therefore, Dickens’s plot is carried exactly like Mr Watts’s story in Matilda’s ears by him as she finally discovers that “[her] Mr Dickens used to go about barefoot and in a buttonless shirt” (219). The literary cannon and the oral tradition coexist in the twenty-first century text. In short, oral culture is revived in *Mister Pip* through Mr Watts’s reading of *Great Expectations* in Papua New Guinea although Matilda’s healing act of writing is practiced in England (and Australia).<sup>4 0</sup>

The past legacy of orality has been rejected by Gadamer and Freudian interpretation of trauma, yet it operates to show the articulation of two irreconcilable situations in the novel. The novel presents articulation of different spaces with a limited horizon. Each horizon extends its sphere, crushing the “curtain” of others. Although both the theories of repetition of horizons and unconscious trauma depend on

literacy, the novel attains to another level of language, creating a space where there are no borders between two categorised times and cultures. Reading the novel aloud and telling stories to listeners are not just bygone ways of communications in the past. Orality is interwoven in the neo-Victorian novel although the setting is not England but the local island. In both novels focused on in this chapter, orality, vocal sounds, is revived overseas by being transferred from England to places beyond the sea.

## Chapter 4

### The Neo-Victorian Novel with a Victorian Background:

#### The Regeneration of Orality and Oral Culture

This chapter will mainly focus on Wesley Stace's *Misfortune* (2005) with references to Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988) and Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* (2002). In these novels, the Victorian period is set as a background and looked back on self-consciously. The authors allude to the Victorian conventions of sexuality, Christianity, and popular culture and bring modern reflections and renovations to bear on these subjects. However, what is most remarkable in these neo-Victorian novels is the predominance given to orality. Particularly, the use of ballads in *Misfortune* is worth considering. This chapter will argue why orality is to be distinguished from the twentieth-century theories, which are based on neo-Victorianism, and how it is to be compared with the world of literacy in these novels. It will also examine how the use of ballads gives a new perspective on oral-based words in fiction.

#### 4-1: Twentieth-Century Theories in Neo-Victorianism

Rose, Oscar and Maud, the main characters in *Misfortune*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, and *Fingersmith* bring about a collapse of authority as postmodern characters. They have often been discussed from the viewpoint of gender ideology. They challenge the ideas and concepts of

gender by exploiting the Victorian power balance between male and female. Indeed, because the authors of these novels self-reflectively set their fiction in both the Victorian background and the modern discourse of sexuality, neo-Victorian fiction is often associated with the overturning of the norm of sexuality. Rose, physically a boy, is brought up as a girl and becomes a cross-dressing man in *Misfortune* and Maud and Sue are lesbians in *Fingersmith*. Although he is not involved in a sexual deviation, Oscar in *Oscar and Lucinda* gets absorbed in gambling in order to divert himself from the strict religious discipline.

These neo-Victorian novels “override” the previous academic studies of the Victorian era. Cora Kaplan’s study on sexuality may be worth quoting.

If Victorian sexuality has been the dominant theme for narrative Victoriana in literature, film and theatre it has not simply taken the form of exposing the repressed and repressive Victorians as hypocrites obsessed with sexuality, nor, on the other hand does it necessarily confirm Michel Foucault’s brilliant and influential inversion of the repressive hypotheses, which, at the end of the 1970s, argued that the proliferation rather than the suppression of the discourses of sex was what characterised the nineteenth century. (95)

Many critics have demonstrated their aversion to the suppression of sensuality and sexuality by the Victorians. In the modernist era, sexuality was the focal point of abhorrence of and assault on Victorian culture.

Neo-Victorianism seems to modify the modernist attitude against the value system of the previous period.

*Misfortune* represents not the Victorian suppressive discourse of sexuality but rather the diversity of sexuality. Indeed, Rose determines that her/his sex is neither female nor male after the period of her/his sufferings. Because of the protagonist's unique sexuality, a number of critical essays have used queer theory in order to analyse the novel, relying on the ideas of Judith Butler. For instance, Sarah Gamble asserts:

Indeed, Rose embraces a determinedly indeterminate gender identity that preserves her as an icon of "gender trouble."

And . . . *Misfortune* displays the process of the discursive formation of gender, . . . . (Gamble 136)

In a similar way, Emily Jeremiah brings Butler's *Gender Trouble* into her argument, asserting that the novel puts heterosexuality "in the service of queerness" (136). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler has raised the question that, if "identity" is confirmed in a binary distinction of two sexes, "the person," who "fail[s] to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility," has no choice in identity construction (23). In short, it can be argued that Rose is "the person" and her/his life in the novel validates Butler's assertion of a proliferation of sex and gender, "confounding the very binarism of sex, and exposing its fundamental unnaturalness" (Butler 190).

Heilmann and Llewellyn classify *Fingersmith* into one of the works which find some solution "to the sexual colonization of women" (139). Maud's last scene, in which she writes lesbian pornography, shows that



her narrative is against “the male heterosexual market” (139).<sup>4 1</sup> Kaplan discusses in *Victoriana* that Waters’s fiction including *Fingersmith* creates “a space of invention, a supplement to . . . ‘real’ history, and . . . a researched history,” which is overlapped on an imaginary one (113). The person, who stands on the space, is “the subjective female voice” for Waters (Kaplan 114). Most of the neo-Victorian novels by Waters regenerate a female desire, which could not be revealed according to the norm of the Victorian era. Particularly, lesbianism is predominant there because performing homosexual parts in fiction challenges the heterosexual and patriarchal standard.<sup>4 2</sup>

Waters argues in a paper, which is co-written with Laura Doan, how “lesbians may now indulge the serious pleasure of repossessing their own lost histories” through the “expansion of lesbian publishing” (13). In the paper, she examines that “a metafictional utopia space” provides lesbians with presenting queer identities because they have been hidden in history (24-25). The metafictional function in fiction, in which we can rewrite and revise history established as the “fact,” has enabled writers to write lesbianism.

Histories that have lain buried in the official history have been uncovered by a number of twentieth-century critics. For example, postcolonialists like Said and Bhabha have revealed the histories of ethnic minorities while Butler has exposed the possibility for “the complexity of gender” (xiii). They have offered resistance to what has been represented in canonical narratives: by Scott, Disraeli, and George Eliot for Said in *Orientalism* (169) and by Simone de Beauvoir, Kristeva

and Foucault for Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1). For both of them, representation is a writing, a print-based text of something and someone being represented. Said states that the knowledge of Orientalism was acquired in the West, “filtering it [the knowledge] through regulatory codes, classifications, specimen cases, periodical reviews, dictionaries, grammars, commentaries, editions, translations . . . ” (166). For Butler:

On the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women. (1)

As we have seen in the Introduction of the dissertation, “visibility” and “categorization” are processes in the world of literacy, based on written and printed words. A lost history was “either misrepresented or not represented at all” (Butler 1) in the established texts.

As neo-Victorian fiction looks at buried lives under the prevailing representations, its foundation conforms to what Butler and Said have offered resistance to. However, the novels can be distinguished from these theories because orality or oral words are predominant in them. Although oral words are “represented” in the printed novels themselves, orality in them distorts the linear history of printed and written texts from the past to the present even including those of Said and Butler. In the culture dominated by literacy Dickens desired for vocalised words and physical performances of writing which might create a closer relationship

with others. As in his novels, orality is intrinsic to these neo-Victorian novels.

In *Misfortune*, the use of ballad is highly effective in producing sounds of words in the written texts. As sound flashes by so quickly, ballads are fragile even when they are printed on broadsides, itself a fragile medium easily falling to pieces. The fragility brings vacillation to the world of written words. In the world of documentation, on one hand, the representations of Scott, Eliot, Beauvoir, Kristeva and Foucault produced the canonical, prevailing narratives about women and the West. On the other hand, all of us, including Said, Butler and neo-Victorian novelists, depend completely on books and documents even when we challenge the canonical authors. In the three novels taken up in this chapter, the authoritative world of books is firmly closed as if their covers were protection against the fragility and momentariness of sounds in ballads. The next section will discuss the world haunted by books.

#### 4-2: The World Haunted by Books

As if the whole world is haunted by books, *Misfortune*, *Fingersmith* and *Oscar and Lucinda* are full of references to books: texts in the process of being composed as novels and also entities in the narratives themselves. The Gothic and Sensational novels, particularly Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, suggest the existence of a heritage behind *Fingersmith*, for instance. The novel is created by stealing some elements from the past texts as the author of *Jack Maggs* and the fictional writers in it have done. Kate Mitchell argues

that *Fingersmith* is a novel which “ventriloquises Victorian Gothic and Sensation fiction, grafting the representation of lesbian experience onto their generic structure” (142). The plot of *The Woman in White* is traced by Maud, an heiress of Briar, and Sue, a young thief in London and Maud’s counterfeit maid, in *Fingersmith*. Richard Rivers drags Sue into an asylum as the heiress of Briar instead of Maud. A “fingersmith” is defined as a “thief” in the Borough code (31). The first part of the novel is set in the Borough, Southwark, in London. Incidentally, it was a very traumatic site for Dickens because his father was imprisoned in Marshalsea Debtors Prison in Borough High Street. There, Sue is brought up by Mrs Sucksby, who is a baby farmer and a mistress of the house of thieves. She is like Mrs Mann and a female Fagin. Thus, the novel is obviously formed by borrowing some elements of Victorian texts.

The narrative itself presents a world surrounded by numerous books. It is exclusive and closed. Before she leaves Briar with Rivers, Maud has been imprisoned by her bookish uncle, Mr Lilly, as his assistant, compiling a library index of pornographic volumes, reciting them for him and gentlemen and copying rare books. Briar is completely cut off from the outside. He is dyed black with ink of the volumes: he is marked by “his own dark finger” (76). His library has “a stunning amount” of “more shelves, more books” (75). Maud is subordinated to her uncle and her identity is painted over in solid black ink: “There is so much of [the blood on Mr Lilly’s table], I think it runs, like ink” (180). She imagines herself as “a sort of book” (251), an item in her uncle’s collection of pornographies. The content of the book is indecent however luxurious and

valuable its binding is as an item in the fine collection. The attractive cover of the volume is only a forgery. As the neo-Victorian novel is a sort of forged fiction of real Victorian novels, Mr Lilly and Maud are surrounded by books of falsely decent appearance. The books are “poisons” (198), that “[provide] fuel for the satisfying of a curious lust” (199).

In *Oscar and Lucinda*, also, Oscar suffers from literacy. His father believes in a strict religious sect and is engaged with collecting and dividing dead seashells and fish on the beach according to their species as a scientist (13). Oscar is afraid of his father’s absolute belief in scientific works as well as in the sect. His work depends on the characteristics of literacy because it involves categorising and dividing: “to label, dissect, kill” is his life (13). After escaping from his father’s house, Oscar enters the Anglican Church. However, the house of Reverend Stratton is surrounded by written materials, too: “It was like a gloved hand pressing your nose into the pages of a musty book. . . . Books, papers, newspapers, leaned and tottered all around him not always on shelves, either, sometimes like towers built straight upwards from the floor” (41). There, “his world did not open, rather closed, and he was trapped inside the vicarage with nothing to take away his bewilderment and grief” (57). As a result of the childhood experiences, he is addicted to an eccentric and risky action, gambling, that is, a risk that is not intended by any books.

The closed life in the world of books conforms to the environment of Love Hall in *Misfortune*. In the novel, the literary culture in the Victorian era and the predominant power of books are described more

consciously than in *Fingersmith* and *Oscar and Lucinda*. Like Maud and Oscar, Rose confronts trouble in the confined space of Love Hall. S/he lives in the age of written popular culture, wrestling with it during her/his earlier life from 1820 to 1839 until s/he settles in Love Hall again. It is the year 1837 when s/he leaves Love Hall, partly driven by the Osberns, who attempt to usurp Rose's position at the head of the Lovealls, and partly discovering her/his subjectivity during her/his trip like a hero in a Victorian Bildungsroman. S/he experiences the transformation from an orally transmitted culture to the dominance of the written words.

Complicatedly, in Love Hall, Rose's mother is addicted to books while her/his father, Geoffroy, lives in an age based on orality. Because the father is the head of the family though the so-called mother is employed as a librarian, the mansion is dominated by his world of orality. However, the world dominated by literacy is encroaching on the mansion since the arrival of the Osberns.

Geoffroy has been drifting in the flow of time, remaining in the era of the traditional ballads, in Love Hall since he was a child. He is isolated from society around Love Hall and even from his mother. In his limited space, he plays games with dolls with his sister, Dolores, "assigning them roles, having them talk in languages," and conversely he even becomes her doll (51). Indeed, he is described as a doll-like-figure during all his life: ". . . his head lolled to one side like a rag doll" (231) and "he sat bolt upright in bed, as though a puppeteer had jerked suddenly on his invisible strings" (233). "They [have] no one else to play with, nor [do] they want anyone" (51). Like their doll's house, the mansion protects them in their

own safety. Accordingly, in Love Hall, a house without any “draughts” (64), they succeed in building a perfect house of cards which never collapses until Dolores falls out of a tree. The perfection without intrusive others distorts Geoffroy’s perspectives so that he regards Rose as his absent sister Dolores and never admits her/him to be a boy. Thus orality produces a rigidly isolated, artificial space.

Rose spends her/his childhood in orality in the same way as her/his father is committed to it. S/he remembers her/himself “surrounded by roses” that her/his father provides her/him (106). On the other hand, she is also forced to live “in the library on a rose-pattered mat, a small white fence around [her/him]” (105). Mary Day, the poet, is believed by Anonyma that “the separation of the two sexes represented deterioration from the original perfection and fruitfulness of the imagined undivided sexuality” (97). Rose is an incarnation of Day’s idea. This means that she is a creature born from the printed page, Day’s poems (119). Rose’s adolescent suffering is caused by the result of her parents’ unreasonable requests: partly excluding others in orality and partly identifying her/him with a child born of written words.

Rose herself tries to live in the world of ballads in Love Hall before she confronts the trouble of her/his gender. “[Her/his] mother was happiest when surrounded by books and assumed that [s/he] would be, too” (119), Rose feels. It is implicit in this sentence that s/he is not “happiest” in such surroundings. In short, s/he desires to place her/himself far from books. Although Anonyma loves books, she vocalizes a ballad and continues telling her own story after she reads the

written narratives when s/he lies on bed at night: “My mother softly sang me ‘The Ballad of La Pucelle’” after the book called “*The Gallery of Heroick Women*” and she was often “lost in her own telling of a fairy story” (130). In the childhood world, within a great number of books, Rose’s memory has her mother’s spoken stories and sung ballads impressed upon it: “many of the stories I loved were never written down” (130). Obviously, Rose has been made to belong to the oral world of Love Hall.

Additionally, in her/his childhood, the sense of time for Rose is formed by orality. When s/he explains her/his earliest life, the narrator Rose does not have any key to mark the changing of the seasons in her/his memory: “I have few of those chronological markers: only *before* and *after*. I depend on my mother’s journal to place things” (171). S/he notices that the written diary of Anonyma marks the time of the events to supply her/his vague memory. S/he has not experienced changes of address, nor attended schools, nor changed hair styles in Love Hall (171), which may help in fixing the moments in time. In short, the narrated Rose cannot assign a day for any one event. For her/him, time was just a continuous flow without any punctuation. Her/his sense of time has been similar to that of those people who live in the timeless world of orality, the world of traditional oral culture.

In fact, the novel does not give the exact date of Rose’s birth because s/he is a child born of a supposedly unknown mother. The exact story of her/his birth is kept away from her/him. Even the official newspaper announcement, which is to inform the public of the birth of the



heir of the Lovealls, is inserted “in the best national newspapers, without date, carefully worded by Hamilton so as to be entirely true” (99). A newspaper usually encloses and underscores the accuracy of events and times. Nevertheless, this specific characteristic of printed papers is ignored in the novel.

Rose is brought up not only in the midst of ambiguity of her/his gender but also with the blurred sense of chronology of her/his life. In the equivocal world, s/he is forced to suffer from the difference of physical formations between a female and a male and her/his own sexuality. S/he is able to doubt the accuracy of written words through her/his body: s/he is sceptical of the definition of “sex” in a dictionary (189). This doubt conforms to the argument of Goody and Watt against the dominance of literary media: “There can be no reference to ‘dictionary definitions,’ nor can words accumulate the successive layers of historically validated meanings which they acquire in a literate culture” (306). The dictionary fails to define the discomfoting sense of her/his body and mind. This is why s/he is “confused” by the existence of the “gray area” in her own body (189) when s/he first confronts the product of literacy, that is, the dictionary.

The “gray area” specifically points to her/his sex, yet Rose’s existence itself is engaged in it. Since the moment when s/he is given birth to, the baby Rose has been treated as an important piece of evidence of the existence of an heir by the Lovealls and their relatives, albeit the environment is established by oral culture. After suffering from identity confusion, the matured narrator Rose finds her/himself to have been

“surrounded by evidence,” evidence of her identity as the male heir of Love Hall (78). Although s/he has believed that s/he lives her/his life based on orality, s/he has been enveloped by documents ever since s/he “learn[ed] to crawl among the stacks” (119). Her/his existence itself is a document, a written piece of evidence, although s/he has been surrounded by orality. Rose tackles unconsciously with the evidential body even before s/he confronts a crucial event.

What first compels Rose to exile her/himself from Love Hall are the three letters B-O-Y written on the drive, the library door and her/his bed (223-24) by Anstance, who abhors the unidentified child. Before the event, Rose has gradually discovered that her/his body differs from Sarah while it is similar to Uncle Edwig and Stephen. Nevertheless, these three letters make her/him notice that s/he perceives the actuality of her/his body: “My life had changed forever. . . . I understood the difference: women had everything hidden inside their bodies, folded inward, whereas men were exposed” (224). It is the written letters that define ultimately what human sex is, thrusting the sense of distinction on Rose.

After the event of the three letters, the relatives who oppose Rose as an heir gradually undermines Rose’s position, using their legal statements, until she/he is finally expelled. A lawyer, Thrips, who is employed by the Osberns, is symbolically given a nickname “Inky” (385) as if he were another Mr Lilly, Maud’s bookish uncle, in *Fingersmith*. Here, the ink, a tool for writing, is associated with the vicious relatives. Furthermore, Rose is obliged to live as a male heir because newspapers announce to the public at the Osberns’ prompting that s/he is a male.

Since then, the male clothes, which she has to wear, have made her/him feel “constrained” (239).

It is significant that these cruel events have taken place by 1837. The year is symbolical in the history of popular literature. As has been discussed in Chapter One, the Victorian period was a transitional epoch for the verbal forms of literary expression. The era saw a rapid spread of literary forms of popular culture within the populace along with the development of a consumer culture. The symbolic year, inaugurating the age of popular novels when Dickens was publishing *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* simultaneously, was spent fruitlessly by Rose, ironically, due to letters, ink, and newspapers.

Rose, Maud and Oscar all experience the distress of repression in the world haunted by books. Rose’s suffering is caused by her/his father’s distorted world of orality that unconsciously excludes or revels against literacy, her/his mother’s addiction to books, and the relatives’ legal pressure. Oscar’s addiction to gambling is caused by his desire for guilt, revelling against his father’s earnest devotion to science and the puritanical sect. Maud is confined within the bookish uncle’s house. In rewriting the Victorians’ lives in the golden age of popular literary culture, the neo-Victorian novels demonstrate how the world of books can be changed into a closed space.

#### 4-3: Ballads in the Victorian Era and *Misfortune*

Focusing on neo-Victorian fiction, the second and third chapters in the dissertation have examined how orality, that is, vocal sounds and

physical acts of writing, is effective when they attempt to overturn the Victorian canon. In these novels, in spite of the fact that their origins are Dickens's novels and life, the vocalised words are echoed beyond the sea far from England, the nation of their origin. In *Misfortune*, set in the Victorian period, orality is elaborated in England.

The use of ballads in the Victorian background provides the most striking perspective to our argument of orality and writing in *Misfortune*. Ballads have been products of popular culture. John and Jenkins argue, for instance, that the present state of contemporary Cultural and Literary Studies has resulted from the cultural formation in the Victorian age: the "low" culture was categorised in a group for the populace whereas the traditional study of the "high" culture was viewed "from the academic telescope" (4-5). Then, in "rethinking the Victorian culture," they attempt to "demonstrate the continuities between the past and the present, the high and the low" (5). This seems to be effective in considering the use of ballads.

There are conflicting arguments about the chronological transformation of popular culture and the definition of low and high cultures. If "popular" or "ordinary" refers to the culture of those who are uneducated and illiterate, access to the materials is difficult because the pre-literate people have transmitted their culture by words of mouth. On the other hand, there are written forms also like chapbooks, penny dreadfuls, serial newspapers and cheap weekly readings. These literatures were published for the general public.<sup>4 3</sup> According to Barry, popular culture had been "conceived as the pure residue of an earlier peasant

world” (90) until the eighteenth century. Although there are a number of considerations about the association of popular culture with written literature, it can be argued that, in the nineteenth century, “there were many ways of bridging the gap between the literate and oral worlds, such as by reading newspapers or printed tracts aloud, or even singing published ballads” (Harris 18). In the popular culture of the Victorian period, both the literate and illiterate lived together. The low and the high are jumbled together as in Dickens’s novels.

Ballads<sup>4 4</sup> are a medium which specifically shows “the continuities between the past and the present” (John and Jenkins 5) and between oral and printed words. Historically speaking, the ballad has always been at the front of the jumbled popular culture since the introduction of printed broadsides. The form of ballads varied from age to age. Jacqueline Bratton notes that we can divide ballads into three categories; “the traditional ballad,” “white-letter broadsides,” and “literary imitations” (4).<sup>4 5</sup> The third category of ballads is defined as the revival of the ballad form by the English Romanticists like Wordsworth and Coleridge. These two poets collaborated in publishing *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. They intended to write “chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure” (Bratton 3). A later critic states that they have brought traditional ballads to academic attention (Bratton 17). Yet in considering literacy and orality in popular culture the first and second forms of ballads are naturally more significant than the poems of the Romantics. In *Misfortune*, traditional

and broadside ballads appear at important turning points in the story.

Traditional ballads are narrated in short ballad stanzas. They have been orally passed down generations in folk songs among the populace (Yamanaka iv). As the printing technology was improved, these ballads came to be printed on “single-sheet white-letter broadsides” at first and then on the “three feet” sheets from the sixteenth century (Bratton 24). The most famous earlier collection was made by Samuel Pepys. He collected broadsides of ballads from 1660 to 1700. Owing to the collections made by him and his followers, traditional broadside ballads have been preserved. A leading scholar of broadside ballads, Hyder Rollins, noted in 1922, “the word *ballad* had in general one meaning only: namely, a song (usually written by a hack-poet) that was printed on a broadside and sold in the streets by professional singers” (ix). Since the 1600s, ballads had been printed on sheets and hawked by singers on the street.

The second form of ballads, named “white-letter broadsides” by Bratton, is mainly the product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mayhew calls the second form of ballads “long songs” in *London Labour and the London Poor* (221). According to his reportage, during the nineteenth century, the “white-letter broadside” ballad was published by printers and sold on the street by “street-patterers.” Many of these ballads of the nineteenth century are often called “murder ballads” or “gallows ballads.” The ballads of “white-letter broadsides” were published as a section in an article treating a true murder case.

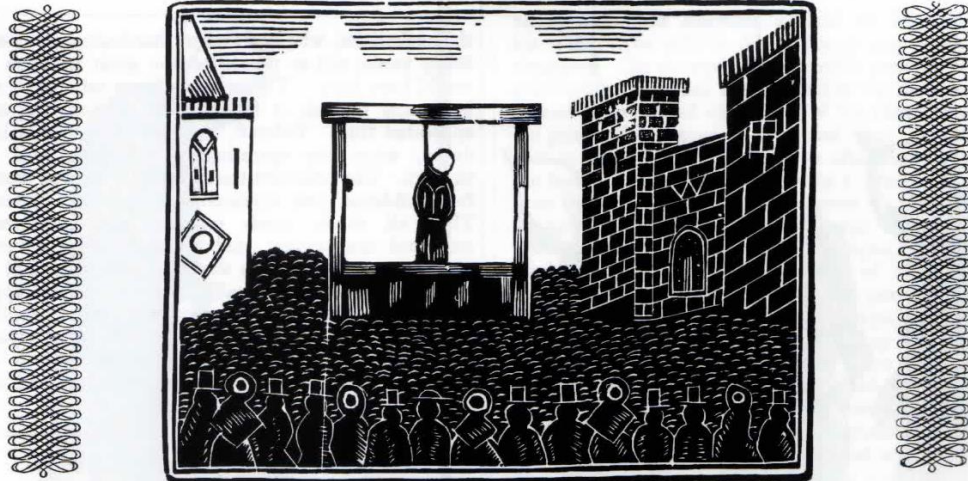
The broadside ballad was not only the printed copy of a traditional

verse but also had the considerable impact on a later printed, fictional text, the novel. It was part of the earliest form of crime reporting. Heather Worthington, who writes on the history of crime fiction in “From *The Newgate Calendar* to Sherlock Holmes,” notes as follows: “*The Calendar* anthologies were expensive, limiting their audience to the higher social classes. Satisfying the demand for similar material at the lower end of the market, even cheaper than the Accounts and published simultaneously, were the broadsides and ballad sheets” (15).<sup>4 6</sup> Out of *The Newgate Calendar*, a minor genre, the Newgate novel, was born. According to Hollingsworth, *Oliver Twist* is one of the Newgate novels. As has been mentioned in Chapter One, Fagin enjoys reading these criminal Calendars or magazines. Dickens’s novel shows a stage on which the oral-based ballad was being imported into the dominant form of a print-based text, the novel.

A murder broadside consists of several sections, a ballad, an illustration and accounts. On a sheet, there are a woodcut illustration of a murderer’s execution, a ballad of his last words, a journalistic note of his case, his trial and conduct in prison, and a documentation of the sentence. Some typical sheets are collected in *Curiosities of Street Literature* by Charles Hindley. One broadside is, for example, entitled “Execution of Michael Barrett, Who was executed this morning at the Old Bailey, for the wilful murder of Sarah Ann Hodgkinson, one of the sufferers at the Clerkenwell Explosion” (Fig.2). It has the illustration of the convict’s execution, the document of his case and the ballad which records his last words. The illustration shows the most sensational moment in the whole

# EXECUTION OF MICHAEL BARRETT,

Who was executed this morning at the Old Bailey, for the wilful murder of Sarah Ann Hodgkinson, one of the sufferers at the Clerkenwell Explosion.



This morning the unfortunate Fenian convict, Michael Barrett, suffered the extreme penalty of the law at the Old Bailey. The prisoner has been attended by the Rev. Mr. Hussey, a Roman Catholic priest, who has remained with him a considerable time every day. He was very taciturn, and although he was no doubt aware of the efforts that were being made to obtain a reprieve, it was a noticeable fact that he never attempted to declare his innocence. Down to recently he used to attend the service in the prison regularly, but after Mr. Hussey had been with him he entirely refrained from doing so. He has not been visited by any one since his conviction. All his relations appear to reside in Ireland, and he does not seem to have had any connexions or friends in this country.

The sheriffs of the prison arrived at an early hour, and immediately proceeded to the condemned cell, where they found the prisoner in devotional exercises with the Rev. Mr. Hussey. He declared himself ready to die, and seemed to consider himself a martyr. The time having arrived, Calcraft, the executioner, was introduced to the prisoner, who immediately commenced pinioning him, which operation having been gone through, the prisoner thanked the governor and other officials of the prison for their kindness towards him. The procession was then formed, and slowly took its way towards the scene of execution. The prisoner ascended the scaffold with a firm step. Everything having been prepared, the cap was drawn over his eyes and the rope adjusted, the bolt was drawn, and he appeared to struggle but slightly before life was extinct.

## COPY OF VERSES.

Adieu, vain world, I now must leave you,  
Here I cannot longer dwell,  
I have been tried, and I am sentenced  
To die for the deed in Clerkenwell;  
Oh! that dreadful sad explosion,  
Which did so much destruction cause,  
Brought me to the tree at Newgate,  
My sufferings sure no one knows.  
I must leave this world of sorrow,  
On earth I must no longer dwell,  
Sentenced to be hanged for murder,  
For the sad affair in Clerkenwell.  
Alas! my name is Michael Barrett,  
Born and brought up in Erin's isle,  
I did adore my native country,  
Wheron I oft did sweetly smile;  
Oh yes, my own dear native Erin,  
Behold me on the fatal tree,  
A miserable malefactor,  
In a murderer's grave I soon shall be.

A traitor did swear hard against me,  
A wretch, Mullany known by name,  
Worse by far than any other,  
And many persons know the same;  
Only one amongst the prisoners,  
And that poor one, alas! was me,  
Poor unhappy Michael Barrett,  
Condemned to die upon a tree.  
I twice have been respited,  
I did not expect to die,  
But I must go in grief and woe,  
On Newgate's tree so high;  
That I should gain my liberty,  
Some thousands did believe,  
But, oh, alas! all hope is passed.  
And I have been deceived.  
Farewell, my friends, I'm doomed to leave  
With you I can no longer stay, [you,  
Let not my departure grieve you,  
I die upon the twenty-sixth of May,

On the fatal tree at Newgate,  
For the affair at Clerkenwell,  
Called a Fenian, Michael Barrett,  
Friends and kindred, farewell!  
I see the hangman now before me,  
Standing on the fatal drop,  
In the prime of life and vigour,  
Hard is Michael Barrett's lot:  
Only one of all the number,  
All the rest, alas! but me,  
Acquitted was, but Michael Barrett  
Dies on Newgate's fatal tree.  
A last adieu, vain world, I leave you,  
I am going to the silent bourne,  
Lovely Erin, I grieve for you  
But I never shall return;  
Approaching is the Tuesday morning,  
I am summonsed far away,  
Erin, remember Michael Barrett,  
Who died upon the twenty-sixth of May.

Fig. 2.



life of the murderer and the written statement contains the account of his life and case, yet the ballad is a fiction. Although no one can know his feelings about death, his utterance of lamentation is inserted as the ballad of the murderer's farewell. The dramatic, exaggerated monologue is composed as if he spoke it aloud: the first two sentences are "Adieu, vain world, I now must leave you, / Here I cannot longer dwell" (1-2) and the last ones are "Lovely Erin, I grieve for you / But I never shall return; / . . . / Erin, remember Michael Barrett, / Who died upon the twenty-sixth of May" (55-60). Although these words are printed, the verse can be accepted as an utterance: it is spoken by the murderer himself unlike the accounts of the case and the trial which are journalistic narratives.

What is more interesting is the fragility of broadsides. The single sheet is a flimsy paper printed on one side. It may be disposed soon after reading like a newspaper. It is different from three-volume books, which are bound durably for the purpose of being stored in a bookshelf. The fragility of the broadside sheet embraces a sense of time, instantaneous and fleeting. This sense of fleeting time does not require any pivotal moment, which separates the before and the after, because a broadside is destined to fade away soon after its appearance on the street. When we look back on the broadside ballad, the vulnerability seems to be linked to the lack of spatial continuum in orality and the instantaneous leap of sounds from mouths to ears.

Furthermore, in the Victorian era, the broadside seemed to be tied closely with street cries. A famous illustration of a female ballad dealer is collected in John Ashton's *Modern Street Ballad* (Fig.3). It is engraved

along with the words, “FIFTY SONGS FOR A FAR-R-R-R-Den!” The female dealer emits the desperate cry with her mouth open to sell her ware. In the illustration, her anguished voice connects her goods with orality. A ballad, “The Cries of London” (Fig.4), in Ashton’s collection, is a more cheerful example of street ballads and cries than the illustration. The song consists of street-patterers’ sales cries. Like the woman in the illustration, the patterers hawk broadsides with other commodities like fruits and fish on the street: “Oh! what fun is to be seen in town every day / . . . / You will find in London a melody of cries” (1-5). Broadside ballads were always linked with voices even when it became a part of a printed text.

Ballads, “the earliest form of popular literature . . . as part-song, part-text,” created a space where “any clear boundaries between oral and literate culture would have been blurred” (Barry 82). Perhaps caused by the progress and rise of cheap newspapers, journals, and popular fiction, along with an improvement of literacy rate during the Victorian period, street ballads disappeared rapidly after the middle of the nineteenth century (Bratton 13). The popularisation of literary culture led to the substitution of oral forms of literature with other written materials. The twilight of ballads coincided with the internalisation of printed culture for the masses.<sup>4 7</sup> However, whereas they were absorbed into written, printed literature, ballads survived in music halls. In the 1840s, the social and political content of ballads were adopted in the songs of the earlier music halls although the commercialisation of music halls and their increasing popularity among people from various classes gradually



Fig. 3

*THE CRIES OF LONDON.*



Fig. 4.

diminished the social elements in ballads (Bailey 128-30).<sup>4 8</sup> In short, the popularisation of cheap reading materials and the development of music halls filled the void created by the disappearance of broadside ballads. The decline of ballads was superseded by the rise of predominance of literacy around from 1840 to the 1870s, when street ballads were in the final stage of extinction.

#### 4-4: The Regeneration of Orality and Oral Culture

The instantaneous speed of sounds in utterance, the fragility of broadside ballads and the decline of ballads encroach on the confined space surrounded by books in *Misfortune*. Precisely because orality is vulnerable and ephemeral, it comes to disturb the solid and enclosed world of books.

*Misfortune* interweaves a range of past literary texts such as Greek myths, Victorian social documents, and the twentieth-century theories. It is a postmodern text influenced by the theory of intertextuality. However, the last chapter of the novel reveals that the story is being spoken by the narrator and is being read aloud by the reader. In the middle of the novel, Rose narrates, "I used to write, and now I dictate. Full stop" (103). The story, however, continues after the "full stop." We find the same statement in the last scene again. The narrator dictates the whole part of the first-person narrative in the novel to her/his son so that the last "Full stop" is read aloud by the son after Rose speaks, "I used to write and now I dictate" (519). Like the last conversation between Dolby and Moon in *The Mutual Friend*, the ending is closed by the voices of Rose

and her/his son. It is more interesting than Busch's novel because her/his son reads the story aloud while Rose voices it to him. The narrator Rose is highly conscious of the change from the period when s/he was born to that of literacy: s/he states, "Many years have passed since the events of 'Anonymous'" and "Novels have changed. Spelling has been mostly standardised, or standardized" (78). Nevertheless, although s/he tries to write a novel as a person, who lives in the nineteenth century, her/his story is not digested by silent reading but is recounted by voices.

Like *The Mutual Friend* and *Misfortune*, *Fingersmith* is also brought to a close by orality. In the ending, Maud writes pornographies for her living in Briar without her uncle after surviving various troubles. When Sue discovers her writing in her room, she hears her voice "as a whisper, as a murmur" (541). Maud writes a book, reading her lines aloud. As Maggs sees Oates writing in *Jack Maggs*, Sue watches her "[writing] a line": "Then she lifted the pen, and turned and turned it, as if not sure what to put next. Again she murmured, beneath her breath" (541). Her physical act of writing is led by her murmuring.

*Fingersmith* and *Misfortune* are different from other neo-Victorian fiction discussed in the dissertation because sounds of words echo not overseas but in England. For instance, escaping from the repression by his father and the religion in England, Oscar goes further and further into the deepest part of Australia, carrying his glass church. The origin of the glass is "liquid" although Oscar believes that the house has a "solid" structure (111). Like the seemingly perfect card house of Dolores and Geoffroy, which is broken down, the glass church is mysteriously crushed

to pieces in New South Wales (494). He thinks that the church is “the devil’s work” (500). It is placed by him at the opposite pole of the reasonable, moralistic, and religious way of thinking of his father. Therefore, he is urged to transport the “devil’s” glass church to the place remotest from England, the root of his suffering. Similarly, the world consisting of orality is frequently set outside England in neo-Victorian novels. For the purpose of going beyond the original form of narrative and culture, it is necessary that the setting of the opposite culture is distant from the authentic place. In *Misfortune*, however, the binary poles are melted down so that the world of orality is not released from England.

The coexistence of two opposite forms of language is realised in broadside ballads, as has been noted. The traditional ballads, transmitted orally, are different from printed broadsides. They belong to the distorted space of her/his father. In the island of Turkey where s/he has drifted after being expelled from Love Hall by the Osberns, s/he imagines her/himself to be a hero/heroine of some traditional ballads. It should be noted that, telling her/his life, s/he emphasises that s/he sings “the story of [his/her] life” before she arrives at Turkey (311). The story sung by her/him is her/his life in Love Hall. It is retold by female cross-dressing sailors in traditional ballads, or folk songs, like “the Rose of Britain’s Isle” (303), “the banks of Nile” (304), “The Young Sailor Bold,” “Lisbon,” “The Silk-Merchant’s Daughter,” and “The Female Drummer” (339).<sup>4 9</sup> The singing of her/his life-story imitates merely the songs of these female characters. However, in her/his “new house” s/he rejects the role of the heroine/hero of these traditional ballads. S/he refuses to be a

doll of her father in the distorted world.

In the new Love Hall oral ballads and written proses on broadsides are embodied together by Rose. Just before returning to the new house, s/he succeeds in erasing the distinctions of time and sex in the spring of Salmacis in Turkey. To illuminate this experience of Rose, it may be useful to adduce the European narrative tradition here. This is because its classical root can be seen on Rose's story. In *Odyssey*, it is argued that the narrative of the hero's return to his country encourages him to have the awareness of self (Cobley 54). This form of the narrative of a person's life has been inherited in European literature so that the travel to gain and establish his own subjectivity is, in European stories, based on the transition of time and space (Cobley 55). Because Rose discovers her/his own subjectivity by travelling to the spring of Salmacis, the form of her/his narrative undoubtedly follows this tradition.

However, Rose implies that two different times and places are to be "folded" in a single space rather than to be going on in time and space. The spring of Salmacis has been discovered by the child Rose in the painting of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus on the wall of Love Hall. The child Rose has groped for what its other side includes on the back of the canvas and has wanted to help "an unhappy man" out of it (199). In the spring, after years, s/he finds her/himself "in both places at once," falling into water. At the moment when "time [has] folded in upon itself," s/he can go back "through the canvas, the veil, and [be] reunited with [her/his] seven-year-old body" (356). This event brings about her/his metamorphosis. The distinction created by the canvas between the past

and the present melts into water, and there s/he knows the coexistence of two different periods of time in her/his body.

The experience leads Rose to the new Love Hall, the world retrieved by the use of broadside ballads. Now, Rose's birth is recounted in two broadside ballads. Broadside ballads, a part of the street literature of the Victorian age, are appropriated in the novel's opening scene: the poorest and most miserable district in London. A boy ballad singer, Pharaoh, runs towards "a crooked house" (3), announcing that the relatives of the Lovealls are approaching to take the life of a descendant of the family, whose mother is now giving birth to a newborn baby secretly in the house. The baby Rose is discarded into a dust hill, and is rescued by Geoffroy almost immediately afterwards. The scene in which he discovers his "daughter" is observed by Pharaoh. He composes two ballads based on his observation. They are to save Rose's life in the latter part of the story.

In order to restore Love Hall, these two ballads explain the secret of Rose's blood relation to the Lovealls. Rose's life is sung by Pharaoh so as to tell that s/he is an heir of the Lovealls although s/he is born in a "crooked" house in a miserable street. The title of the ballad is as follows:

**THE ROSE AND THE BRIAR**

**Or**

**THE ABANDONED BABY SAVED FROM THE HOUNDS**

*An excellent ballad to a merry old Tune, called "The Old Wife She  
Sent to the Miller, Her Daughter"*

*From the publisher of*



***“The Last Confession of James Riley, Highwayman.”*** (366)

The descriptions of the slum, the seller and the singer are adapted from Mayhew’s reportage. He is convinced that “the street-ballad and the streets-narrative, like all popular things, have their influence on masses of the people” (220). The broadside ballad has been published by a printer, Bellman, of “206 Brick Lane, Whitechapel” and a balladeer, Pharaoh, of “38 Ironmonger Row, Borough” (367). Brick Lane, Whitechapel, and Borough are explored by Mayhew as a place flocked by chaunters and printers. The figure of Bellman, whose songs are “sold three abreast” (11), is borrowed from long-song sellers. They “vended popular songs, ‘Three songs abreast’” (Mayhew 221). These ballads on the street are often accompanied with a well-known tune. The ballad that is advertised as from the same publisher, “The Last Confession of James Riley, Highwayman,” is a verse of a convict’s lamentation. The tune of Rose’s ballad marks a link with the format of murder ballads.

“The Rose and the Briar” is discovered from the collection of broadside ballads of Anonyma by coincidence. She “catalogue[s]” it with a written explanatory label as a librarian. It seems that the ballad is marked as a written material in her way, yet she understands that a ballad conveys its worth by being sung as she says, “a song doesn’t exist if it isn’t sung” (389). She encourages Rose to “bring this one [“the Rose and the Briar”] to life” (389). Thus, in order to regain Love Hall, the broadside ballad is conveyed orally in front of the cruel and prosaic Osberns while they request Rose to submit the legal evidence that s/he is an heir of the family.

In addition to the ballad, Pharaoh sings another piece, “The Seamstress of Bethnal Green.” It illuminates a series of events on the day of Rose’s birth: the affairs of a killing of Rose’s father in a “mean” house “close by Bethnal Green” and a seamstress’s delivery of Rose in “the bleeding house” (506-07). Rose’s mother is a great-granddaughter of Bad Lord of the Lovealls. His third wife has escaped from Love Hall with her son to hide themselves from the relatives of the Lovealls. She has written poems as Mary Day in a shabby corner of London for the rest of her life. The Days have stayed in London as a poor family, and Rose’s mother has been a seamstress in Bethnal Green. The ballad is composed by Pharaoh, but the story of the Days is discovered by Anonyma, Samuel Hamilton and his son Steven. They respectively study and research the poems of Mary Day and the family books of the Hamiltons. Because the past story cannot escape from being attached to written papers, the poems and the family books are extremely important in establishing Rose’s blood relationship to the Lovealls. However, as well as the first ballad, the story of Rose’s predecessors in the document is metamorphosed into Pharaoh’s ballad. The world of ballads is thus regenerated in the neo-Victorian novel.

The fragile existence of broadside ballads provokes the novelist to narrate the age in order to regenerate them. When the ballads retrieve Love Hall from the Osberns, Rose finds out her/his subjectivity by taking both the past of orality and the new world dominated by literacy into her/his body. The sound of traditional ballads, the texture of cheap sheets and the historical background of ballads, all form the world of orality in

*Misfortune*. They perforate the structured space constructed by written, printed words so that the Osberns fail to have a power over the songs of Rose and her/his mother. At the same time, in the novel as well as in *Fingersmith*, orality is regenerated finally in England, that is, not only in Australia and Papua New Guinea but in the place of origin, where the Victorian texts were created, the texts of which neo-Victorian fiction are to be generated. Oral sounds are no longer inconsistent with written words but are coexistent with them in a printed document. Incorporating orality into itself, the novel shows a possibility that different ages can exist in the same moment and different cultural forms can be embraced together.

## Conclusion

The dissertation has examined how in the novels of Dickens and neo-Victorian novelists orality causes oscillation in the fixity and closure that literacy creates in textuality. The demand for orality had already been abated in the Victorian era, yet Dickens attempted to introduce it to a world increasingly dominated by literacy, interpolating it into his written and printed fiction. For him, oral transmission is a means by which he conveys his words directly to others in a close-knit community. Therefore, as devices of oral transmission in the printed novel, he introduces traditional ballads and songs. He also gives prominence to the physical act of writing as a substitute for vocalizing words. This is because the fleeting flow of words at the moment of writing can penetrate the domain of literacy on a page in a way similar to oral transmission. Neo-Victorian fiction, discussed in the dissertation, also brings orality and the act of writing to the fore in the world of literacy.

By surveying briefly the history of books and oral culture, this conclusion will consider why neo-Victorian novels integrate the Victorian sensibilities with twentieth-century theoretical principles and why these writers including Dickens try to consolidate orality and the act of writing in their novels. The Victorian period was the age of literacy in popular culture. Martyn Lyons calls the nineteenth-century Europe “the golden age of books” (445). According to him, by the 1890s, 90 per cent in

Europe had been literate and the discrepancy between men and women had disappeared (445). A new readership came into being with the rising level of literacy and the demand for low-price books increased (445-46). The populace, who had enjoyed singing ballads in local communities and listening to peddlers' cries at markets, supported "the golden age of books" by raising the amount of book consumption. Oliver and Fagin in *Oliver Twist* represent the new readership; they read cheap magazines and newspapers without any difficulty.

In these circumstances, the novel became one of the commodities in the marketplace of consumer culture. In the market economy, the book has been associated with the legal system since around the eighteenth century. In *The Order of Books*, drawing on Foucault's discussion about an author-function in his famous essay "What is the Author?", Chartier points out that his sketch of "a history of the emergence of (and variations on) the attribution of texts" (30) must be reconsidered in "the context in which the concept of literary property first appeared" (32).<sup>50</sup> The legal dispute about literary ownership between "the author's genius, and the inalienability of the author's ownership" and the book trader's "literary property" broke out during the eighteenth century (36). However,

After the mid-century the situation [between "literary works" and "economic transactions"] was reversed when a possible and necessary monetary appreciation of literary compositions, remunerated as labour and subject to the laws of the market, was founded on an ideology of creative and disinterested genius that guaranteed the originality of the work. (Chartier 38)

Writing a novel differs from enacting a law, yet as a commodity it is controlled by the market system. Thus, “the order of books” was introduced in popular culture between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Chartier, however, describes how, within the reader’s liberty, his/her interpretation “invents, shifts about, distorts” the order: the order that is interpreted, understood and followed by the author or the authority under the copyright (viii–x). It is the liberty that the neo-Victorian writers enjoy exploiting by re-forming, re-visioning the Victorians’ conventions and texts and by undermining their authorship. It permits them to rewrite, reinvent and restore the Victorians and their narratives. Neo-Victorian fiction has been interpreted by critics as just as that, rewriting, reinvention, and restoration.

In *Gender and Ventriloquism* (2012), Helen Davies re-evaluates the neo-Victorian enterprise, analysing “the tension between ‘original’ and ‘copy’ and ‘repetition’ and ‘subversion’” (36). For her, the former is a “manipulative ‘ventriloquist’” and the latter is a “manipulated ‘dummy’” (20). She states; “As ventriloquial voice [of the Victorian] might refuse location to a finite source, neo-Victorian ventriloquism resist being fixed to a finite intention or agenda” (178). As she states (and as discussed in Chapter Two and Three of the dissertation), some neo-Victorian novels refuse to become a “ventriloquial dummy” not only of Victorian discourses but also of twentieth-century theories because, in the place where “authorship becomes a process of ventriloquism” (176), the dummy is only a “repetition” of the original. The idea of the original authorship,

guaranteed in the legal system, appeared around in the latter half of the eighteenth century, according to Chartier. The neo-Victorian attempts at distorting could not be realised without the notions we have of the original author. It is natural that the books, which were bestowed “authorship” in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are explored in neo-Victorian fiction.

The authors established “the order of books,” the format of the prose narrative. Discussing Dickens’s contribution to fictional creation of voices, Matthew Bevis states:

words are continually threatening to riot, and sentences have the potentially unruly energy of demagogic utterance, but from within such portents of linguistic crowd trouble one can sense a talent for plotting, shaping, and managing linguistic exuberance – the assiduous reporter’s ability to take down and translate voices into print, blended with the aspiring novelist’s search for an enduring fictional and political order. (108-09)

The “fictional and political order” is required for the description of the disturbances in the novel when the “words” in uproar and the “sentences” of “demagogic utterance” are transcribed in printed texts. In the novel, these voices have to be arranged and managed in order to incorporate them into prose narratives. Then, neo-Victorianism destroys the format determined by our “forefathers” (Byatt 37) in “the golden age of books.”<sup>5 1</sup>

While it has been maintained by the order in the market economy and the format of narrative, at the same time, the novel demonstrates a

power that resists order, arrangement and establishment. In this regard, Eiichi Hara's work on the rise of the novel in commercial capitalism is highly suggestive. According to him, the novel originated from drama, a medium of oral transmission; plays of apprentices from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. In the plays, the apprentices can be heroes as successful men (or women) in a civil society if they follow the path of virtue conforming to civilised customs, yet they also live in danger of falling into the path of degeneration when they fail to control their own desire for destruction (Hara 48-49). Their dissatisfaction with the system of civilisation is usually hidden behind civilised behaviour, but the violence inside them is to have ascendancy over it as soon as a flaw in the system begins to reveal itself (91). The apprentice's desire is deeply associated with his innermost self, as opposed to the artificially constructed social organisation (90).

The novel inherits the apprentice's conflict between their inward desire and their identity as respectable citizens in capitalist society (Hara 220). Their desire is aroused when they refuse to be fixed in the social order. The contradiction of the apprentice as a rebel hidden inside civil society can be interpreted as that of orality in the novel, which consists of written words. In "the golden age of books," orality was gradually being withdrawn from popular culture. However, oral culture is neither ultimately civilised nor refined even when it is distinguished from literacy. Orality is fundamentally inconsistent with "the order of books," in other words, the order of novels.



Thus, orality can be associated with the apprentice as a potential rebel. It represents the fundamental power of an outlaw in the written text. In fact, the most famous hero of popular ballads, whose exploits have been handed down in songs and chapbooks since the fifteenth century, is an outlaw, Robin Hood. He embodies the destructive and violent power of rebellion against the authorities of the administration and the Church (Kobayashi 201). If the authorities in the medieval period are replaced with a civil society that begins to emerge from the fifteenth century onwards, Robin Hood can be seen as transformed into an apprentice with potentials for rebellion.

In one of Dickens's Christmas stories, *Doctor Marigold* (1865), the rebel's discourse is changed into a downtrodden voice in Victorian society. In the story, while Marigold's oration is delivered as a voice of a repressed man in society, the tension between orality as a rebel and the privilege of literacy is relieved. His speaking words avoid being socially and morally destructive: in short, the repressed man treads the path of virtue or civilisation.

The story begins with his self-introduction, "I am a Cheap Jack," which is followed by the speaker's eloquent political speech (435). In Mayhew's reportage, there are several references to Cheap Jacks, who are a kind of "patterers" (324): for instance, "I bought three memorandum-books for it at Cheap Jack's thatched house" (189). They are also "the most celebrated and humorous" of the hawkers and often exhibit "cleverness," hawking street-literature and other goods (Mayhew 214). One of them, Doctor Marigold, imitates contemptuously the

harangues of “Dear Jack,” who is one of “the political hawkers,” when he hawks his commodities. His hawking follows Dear Jack’s election speech exactly in everything from the use of cockney to the choice of oratorical phrases. He insists that, except that they are “endowed with privileges” and Cheap Jacks are not, there is no difference between them (483). Bevis notes that “Marigold’s voice was an eloquent symbol of an oppressed class whose time had come” (143).

Although Marigold has opposed the government through his political voice in his earlier life, he begins to stock books and stationaries in his cart after he has found an orphan, Sophy. Not by “privileges” but by “cleverness,” he educates his daughter, prepares many tools for reading and writing in the Library Cart for her, and marries her to a promising clerk in a merchant’s house, overcoming his hard life as one of the “oppressed class” and her hearing impairment. Sophy goes to China with her husband, who has gained an opportunity to rise in the world through overseas trade. Her education makes her rise from the rank of peddlers to a middle-class lady in the capitalist society.

The world of literacy is often associated with the prosaic and cruel closed-world as we have discussed in the dissertation: the savage children of Mrs Jellyby who is absorbed in sending out letters asking for charity for natives in remote Borrioboola-Gha in *Bleak House*, Oscar’s unhappy family bounded by his father’s religious belief in *Oscar and Lucinda* and the dull house of Mr Lilly, an inky man, in *Fingersmith*. However, in *Doctor Marigold* Sophy and her family bring a happy ending for her father. In the ending, when he is napping, “watching [the light of the fire]

as it shone upon the backs of Sophy's books" (471), she comes back to his cart with her daughter with "a pretty voice" (472). The child's voice breaks silence in the cart, where he has lived with his "deaf and dumb" daughter before and with her "dumb" books as substitutions for her later. His cart embodies in miniature the civilised sphere, where literacy dominates. The voice has been repressed unexpectedly and unconsciously in the cart, yet the child's new voice brings the family members, who have dispersed around the world, together. Here, the voices in the story can be interpreted either as a rebel or as a virtue in civil society.

Dickens revised the published story, and prepared and performed the reading version in London on 10 April 1866. It "immediately became . . . one of the most popular items in the repertoire" (Collins 379). There are hardly changes in words, phrases or incidents in the plot from the published version to the reading script.<sup>5 2</sup> Marigold's monologues, which begin with "I am a Cheap Jack," fit exactly into the style of reading aloud. There is no discordance between the absence of order in orality and the order in literacy when words are addressed directly to an audience by Marigold in the printed text and are read aloud by Dickens in the reading version.

Thus, Dickens and the neo-Victorian novelists use orality as a means of rebellion in different ways, piercing the discordance between orality and documents. As has been noted in Chapter One, in *Bleak House* songs and ballads bring about an oscillation in the plot, in which various signs are woven intricately together. There, some characters become one of the signs in the plot, yet they attempt to avoid the closed world, which

is built up by a chain of signs. The alignment of oral transmission and the physical acts of writing suggests an anxiety that the world dominated by literacy can be turned into a closed sphere, where one's relationship with the other is broken. For Dickens, the acts of reading aloud in a local community or on a stage, of going on writing, and of singing are the ways of conveying his words directly to the audience.

However, in the twentieth-century neo-Victorian fiction, Dickens's novel symbolises the order, which is to be questioned, criticised, and finally distorted, while orality is a means of performing this kind of reassessment. Dickens's uneasiness about literacy is inherited by *The Mutual Friend*, yet there is a growing uneasiness with the act of writing itself there. The novel confronts us with a contradiction: written and printed voices become "a page" even though the voices of the people concealed in Dickens's novels and biography are acted out. In *Estella*, Estella tries to discover a "differed" space deviated from the plot established by Dickens. By writing haiku, the gypsy makes her stray into the "deferred" space, or an absence, in the established world of Miss Havisham. More complicatedly than in *The Mutual Friend*, Estella is aware that the gypsy's discourse has been given in terms of twentieth-century theories. Not only Dickens's fiction but also the theories have established the system of ideas and principles. In the modern age of literary theories, an anxiety for writing requires writers to go on making a new story because the act inevitably produces "the order of books."

The novels discussed in Chapter Three are also sceptical about the possibility of placing the sound of voices in a culture of written literature, in civilised society. In *Jack Maggs*, Maggs endeavours to create a connection with his English son, Phipps, by writing letters and listening to his voices through them, yet the voice coming from Victorian England is only an illusion in his mind. As the sound can be heard by Maggs in New South Wales, oral transmission is practiced in the local island of Papua New Guinea through reciting *Great Expectations* and telling local stories in *Mister Pip*. In these novels, while upsetting the authorities of the suzerain, orality as a force of rebellion is placed in remoteness from them: in Australia as against England and in the local island as against the government of Papua New Guinea. By extension, orality no longer belongs to the centre of the order and the system of civilisation but presents the strain between England and the countries beyond the sea.

The strain between England and the colonies and the contradiction of orality in a written text are partly dispelled in *Misfortune*. In the novel as well as in *Oscar and Lucinda* and in *Fingersmith*, the Victorian era is represented as one dominated by a culture of books encroaching on oral culture. The ambiguity of broadsides in the history of literature and the fragility of oral words in ballads provoke the novelist to narrate the age in a way which undermines fixity and order established by literacy. Due to the appearance of broadside ballads in the novel, orality is regenerated in England while it still shows a resistance to the society dominated by documents and authoritative principles. As a result, the neo-Victorian novel offers a possibility for different ages to co-exist in the same

moment, in contrast to the modernists and the twentieth-century critics who have distanced themselves from the Victorian age.

In *Stranger at the Door*, drawing on Maurice Blanchot's discourse, Kristjana Gunnars regards writing "not as product, but as an act constantly in development" (75):<sup>5 3</sup>

Writing writes itself. One ideas flows from another, one phrase from another, with a life of its own that has more to do with language and semiotics than with the will of the writer. . . . Once on the page, the text is dead. (75)

Authors go on writing because their words are "dead" as soon as they stop the act. Although the ballad is now a historical form of verse stored in the collections of broadsides, its orality can act as an opposing force to the world dominated by literacy in a "dead" book.

These authors use orality and writing to think about literacy and its closed world of texts in ways which unsettle the fixity of printed words. If orality and writing are a space of possibilities for these authors, this is because of its resistance to a single imposed narrative written by Dickens and a limitation of the idea suggested by the twentieth-century critics, who have deconstructed Dickens's canonical narrative. Orality and writing in these novels always refuse to be fixed on a single text whether these novels situate it in the remote colonies beyond the sea or engage it in the original situation. The relationship between orality and literacy in these neo-Victorian novels always entangles the present with the limits of the past text. In doing so, orality and writing perforate the order of the novel itself.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Barthes argues that writing is in a dead end because a writer cannot help using signs from past books in his earliest work, *Writing Degree Zero*. Here, he distinguished three modes of literature: language, style and writing. In his earlier works, he tended to divide and categorize things. After his study of Japan in *Empire of Signs*, he discovered a space of meaninglessness or which was not to be categorized.

<sup>2</sup> Barthes discovered a pleasure of nothingness or meaninglessness in representations of Japan in *Empire of Signs*: a sort of space which is not represented, pointed or distinguished.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, in Barthes's *Empire of Signs* Japanese dishes have the space, which is "not of seeing but of doing," on the tray (11) and tempura holds "a piece, a fragment" in a substance fluid as water, cohesive as grease" (25).

<sup>4</sup> Neo-Victorian fiction and the theory of intertextuality have the same impact on the literary world in that they share the insight: numerous texts derived from the past texts overlap on the present text. John Lechte suggests that Kristeva approaches to what the critics of the 1960s have never looked at in their semiotic accounts for language. While they had been concerned with language as the systematic and discrete product due to the development of structuralism, she was aware of "the 'outside' of language" in a text (Lechte 99). According to Lechte's concise account,

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the place “became its non-systematizable, dynamic, and even non-formalization aspect – the aspect of ‘play, pleasure or desire’” (99) due to her insight of intertextuality. The place is not the surface of language as a sign but rather is located outside the “homogeneous” aspect of language. As language has the place which is not the signifier, Kristeva puts a text at “the intersection of language (the true practice of thought) with space (the volume within which signification, through a joining of differences, articulates itself)” (65) as she states in “Word, Dialogue, and Novel.” A text constructed by the fixed signs of language has the space which opens towards three dimensions, “writing subject, addressee, and exterior texts” (66). Particularly, it is important for her and for the creation of neo-Victorian fiction to discover the space of “imperfect semiological systems” under the signs of language and “relations among larger narrative units” in a text (66). The space of a text produces the potential for intertextuality, which implies the way for the overlapping of different texts and various writing subjects in neo-Victorian fiction.

<sup>5</sup> About the relationship between Victorian reaction to Darwin and the neo-Victorian traumatic representation of Darwin, see Posse-Miquel’s “Apes and Grandfathers” (2010).

<sup>6</sup> Tomiyama cites the following representation of Bertha’s voice: “the laugh was repeated in its low, syllabic tone, and terminated in an odd murmur” (123).

<sup>7</sup> See Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Steven Marcus’s “Language Into



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Structure: Pickwick Revised” (182-202).

<sup>9</sup> Mitchel Foucault collects the documents of the case and analyses the murderer’s madness in his crime in *I, Pierre Riviere, Having Slaughtered my Mother, my Sister and my Brother* (1975).

<sup>1 0</sup> About the education of Oliver and the use of reading materials in *Oliver Twist*, Brantlinger’s discussion in *The Reading Lesson* is highly suggestive. He focuses particularly on the education of Oliver as a poor boy and Fagin as a murderer, showing the rise of criminal stories and the changing circumstances of moral consciousness in the Victorian period (69-92).

<sup>1 1</sup> See Kathryn Chittick’s *Dickens and the 1830s* (46-154) and Amanpal Garcha’s *From Sketch to Novel* (145 ).

<sup>1 2</sup> According to David Vincent, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, they “were combined with a growing confidence in the use of literacy to produce a diverse and vibrant category of material which consolidated the identity of the industrial communities, celebrating their values and achievements, and deploying myths about their past to condemn sufferings in their present” (227).

<sup>1 3</sup> Chartier defines “the rudimentary readers” as those who “read books with a previously gained knowledge that was easily evoked in the act of reading. This knowledge was gained from the recurrence of coded forms, from the repetition of themes, and from the books’ images . . . .” (165).

<sup>1 4</sup> Stewart points out that the identities of the other members in Master Humphrey’s group are hardly known to the readers (205).

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<sup>1 5</sup> See Johnson Ballads 454 in *Broadside Ballads Online from the Bodleian Libraries*. The origin of the ballad was the case of James Greenacre, Sarah's husband, sentenced to be hung in December 1836.

<sup>1 6</sup> Iona Opie and Peter Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (223-24).

<sup>1 7</sup> Robert Bell, *Ancient Poems, Ballads, and Songs of the Peasantry of Englnd* (32-35). All lines of the poem in this paper are quoted from this source.

<sup>1 8</sup> About the representation of soap in the Victorian novel, see Tomiyama (35-40). Also, the historical accounts of soap and cleanness in Victorian Britain are well organised in Anthony Wohl's *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*.

<sup>1 9</sup> This comment is quoted from Phillip Collins's introduction of *The Public Readings* (liii). Collins cites it from *Freeman's Journal* (12 January 1869). For further historical background of Dickens's public readings, see Collins's *The Public Readings* and Forster's biography of Dickens.

<sup>2 0</sup> For further references of this familial space in the act of reading aloud at a hearth and his reading performance, see Malcolm Andrew's *Charles Dickens and his Performing Selves* (29-40) and Deborah Vlock's *Dickens, Novel Reading and the Victorian Popular Theatre* (61).

<sup>2 1</sup> Mukerjee uses Lacanian readings in her discussion. In *Écrits: A Selection*, Lacan proposes that "... there is no language (langue) in existence for which there is any question of its ability to cover the whole

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field of the signified, it being an effect of its existence as a language (langue) that it necessarily answers all needs” (150).

<sup>2 2</sup> See Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*. Derrida claims that “the sign, the image, the representation, which comes to supplement the absent presence are the illusions that sidetrack us” (154).

<sup>2 3</sup> Furthermore, Kucich discusses the use of signs in Dickens’s novels as follows: “the fulcrum is a dialectical relationship between our willingness to experience loss and our need to incorporate loss within the normal world of meaning, survival, and restraining affection – to merge loss with significance or, more dynamically, to found significance on the idea or the experience of our mortality. Thus, when I claim that Dickens’ work features nonsense as a violation of significance, I do not mean that Dickens advocates an ethos of irresponsibility and a philosophy of nihilism; I mean only that Dickens tries to violate the world of common sense to stage liberating encounter with the freedom represented by death, and that these encounters take place in a way that legitimated the expenditures within a more conservative framework of values” (13).

<sup>2 4</sup> In *Charles Dickens As I Knew Him*, Dolby writes some responses of the audience of Dickens’s public reading of the murder scene. One of them is as follows: “One visitor, a celebrated critic, expressed an opinion as to the danger of giving in the Reading before a mixed audience, as he had an irresistible desire to scream. A celebrated physician, concurring in this, declared that if ‘only one woman cries out when you murder the girl, there will be a contagion of hysteria all over the place’” (351).

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<sup>2 5</sup> This citation is quoted by Kreilkamp in *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (15).

<sup>2 6</sup> Historically speaking, opium is always involved in the Orient and the East. The origin of wild poppy has always been assumed to be around the Mediterranean Sea or in Asia Minor although there is no specific evidence. See Martin Booth's *Opium: A History* about the historical involvement of opium with the Orient.

<sup>2 7</sup> For Dickens's struggle against uneasiness during his life, see Kreilkamp, *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (89-121).

<sup>2 8</sup> In the novel, the attitude and tone of the Chief's readings is borrowed from George Dolby's descriptions of Dickens's reading tour in his *Charles Dickens As I knew Him*.

<sup>2 9</sup> For instance, Raphael notes that Miss Havisham is "emblematic" of repression in the novel (410).

<sup>3 0</sup> Brooks cites from Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

<sup>3 1</sup> See *Lacan's Ecrits: A Selection* (1977).

<sup>3 2</sup> In doing so, Raphael draws on the argument that Miss Havisham is "emblematic" of the repressed force of characters in Dickens's novel (410).

<sup>3 3</sup> The specific definition of "adaptation" is referred by Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation*.

<sup>3 4</sup> Sadoff also quotes Gribble's notion in "The Neo-Victorian Nation at Home and Abroad." Another critical argument, Beverly Tayler's

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“Discovering the New Past: Legacies in the Postcolonial Worlds in *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip*,” is also one of recent attempts to engage these two novels with a postcolonial perspective.

<sup>3 5</sup> Sanders categorises the novel into “postcolonial reworking” (130) and Widdowson into a “re-visionary fiction” of postcolonialism (497). Also, Georges Letissier points out that Carey “write[s] back” the English canon *Great Expectations* from the Australian viewpoint (124-5). Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp agrees with them in her paper.

<sup>3 6</sup> For instance, see Tayler (98).

<sup>3 7</sup> Thieme also points out the Australian meaning of “to magg” (111).

<sup>3 8</sup> See Eugene Ogan’s “The Naisoi of Papua New Guinea” about Bougainville and the historical events.

<sup>3 9</sup> For the detail, see Bhabha, ‘The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency’, in *The Location of Culture* (171-97).

<sup>4 0</sup> In the case of *Mister Pip*, Australia can be considered as a suzerain state for Matilda, who has grown up in a local island, Papua New Guinea.

<sup>4 1</sup> The lesbian arguments on *Fingersmith* are numerous. See, for example, Mariaconcetta Costantini’s “‘Faux-Victorian Melodrama’ in the New Millennium” and Sarah Parker’s “‘The Darkness is the Closet in Which Your Love Roosts Her Heart’: Lesbians, Desire and the Gothic Genre.” Eckart Voigts-Vichow states in her discussion of lesbian neo-Victorian fiction that these writers attempt to use Victorian subculture and homosexuality to escape from the mainstream of Victorian (and present) literature and sexuality.

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<sup>4 2</sup> Jeannette King offers an explanation for Victorian female desire in the modern fiction including Waters's *Affinity* and *Tipping the Velvet* in *The Victorian Woman Questions in Contemporary Feminist Fiction* although she does not deal with *Fingersmith* mainly.

<sup>4 3</sup> Barry explores this problem of the distinction of high and popular culture in "Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture" (69-74).

<sup>4 4</sup> There have been numerous books and arguments about historical ballads since the nineteenth century. See Barry, Harris, Yamanaka, Ichiro Hara and Hirano. Although the definitions of a traditional ballad are various, it is defined as follows in OED: "A light, simple song of any kind; (now) spec. a sentimental or romantic composition, typically consisting of two or more verses sung to the same melody with only light musical accompaniment" ("Ballad" def. n. 1a)

<sup>4 5</sup> The categorisation of the types of ballads is also shown in Yamanaka's *Eikoku Balladshi Rokujussen [Sixty English Literary Ballads]* (i-v).

<sup>4 6</sup> See also Lyn Pykett's "The Newgate Novel and Sensation Fiction, 1830-1868" (32-33). She shows in detail the objections to *The Newgate Calendar* among the middle-class people: "One of the objections to the Newgate novel was that it imported the literature of the streets (popular ballads, and broadsheets gallows confessions) to the drawing room" (32).

<sup>4 7</sup> Ong demonstrates that "the climactic linear plot" of detective stories, which are recognised as beginning in 1841, proves the development of the mind "[interiorising] literacy" (144-7)

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<sup>4 8</sup> For a detailed history of music halls see Inose's *Daieiteikoku Wa Music Hall Kara* [*Music Halls in the British Empire*].

<sup>4 9</sup> Heilmann and Llewellyn are also aware of that Rose is an imitation of “female cross-dressers” in traditional ballads collected from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries although they discusses how the characters lead Rose to “a resolution to his hybrid sense of gender” (39).

<sup>5 0</sup> This is because the context of the emergence of the author and the copyright has been revised in recent studies: “The first major revision suggested that the affirmation of literary ownership, far from arising from a particular application of a modern individual property law, derived directly from the book trade’s defence of permissions to print – authorizations that guaranteed exclusive rights to a work to the bookseller who had obtained title to it” (Chartier 32)

<sup>5 1</sup> Byatt calls the Victorians “forefathers” and the theorists like Freud and White “fathers” for us. In the first two essays in *On Histories and Stories*, she discusses twentieth-century attempts at distorting the format of the Victorian novel. Freud and Hayden White prompt the modern writers to carry out the attempts, according to her. Both suggest that there is no single and essential thing; in a sense of Self for Freud and in a history for White. Owing to them, we are given the liberty of restoring an established consideration of a thing. Byatt argues how the modern historical novelists have produced a distance between the past and the present in using the liberty. Quoting the famous phrases in the nineteenth-century historical novels, Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* and

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George Eliot's *Romola*, she draws attention to "samenesses and continuities between the past and the present" in these novels of our "forefathers" (37). On the contrary, "postmodernists writers . . . have felt free to create their own fantasy pasts from odd details of names, events and places" (37). Their desire for inventing the new past from the established stories and their freedom of writing it lead neo-Victorian novelists to re-narrate the novels and histories of their "forefathers," who created the format of the novel.

<sup>5 2</sup> Collins also points out that "no rearrangement of episodes was necessary" (379).

<sup>5 3</sup> About Maurice Blanchot, the French writer and theorist, Michael Holland's *The Blanchot Reader* is suggestive.



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