Revue Africaine et Malgache de Recherche Scientifique (RAMReS) : Littérature, Langues et Linguistique
N°7, 1er semestre – Juin 2018

Revisiting Charles Dickens' Writings: Romance as Mediator on Human Values

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1. Introduction

One of the aspects of Dickens' mastery of his age can be traced through his interest in the works of his contemporaries that were concerned with fairytales, dreams, the nature of the unconscious and the psyche. Conversely, the cult of the supernatural in his age sheds light on the formation of Dickens' literary imagination and the shaping of his works. He often advised and encouraged his contemporaries and wrote about the supernatural in order to set an example. He collected folk tales in their oral and written forms, and wrote theoretical essays on fairytales, dreams and other related psychic phenomena.

Dickens' early contact with decontextualized fairytale items and the art of storytelling occurred, as with Meredith, when he was about twelve and was living in London with his paternal grandmother who was a housekeeper. In a tale published in *Household Words* for Christmas 1855, the narrator who speaks for Dickens himself, wrote, as if referring to the same grandmother, that "my first impression of an inn, dated from the nursery; consequently I went back to the Nursery for a starting point, and found myself at the knee of a sallow woman with a fishy eye, an aquiline nose, and a green gown" (4). In Dickens' story, that woman was an expert in telling tales about a landlord who always killed and ate his visitors (5). Apart from this tale which is clearly of the "Bluebeard" type, Dickens recalls other frightening stories heard from the same woman.

This article examines the importance the Victorian writer and novelist Charles Dickens granted to romance which he perceived as central in an age dominated by the onslaught of positive values: utilitarianism, urbanization, birth of banking system with a new spirit of acquisitiveness; in short all sorts of social transformation which were causing dehumanization.

As a humanist, Dickens addressed pedagogical issues and such social problems as criminality, town planning and education. This article is steeped in Dickens' humanistic preoccupation and reformism.

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2. Dickens' Theoretical Approaches to Romances

Tales of the "Bluebeard" motif and those about "Chips who had sold himself to the Devil" and become haunted by rats, were decidedly the most persistent ones in Dickens' youthful mind. In an article published in *All the Year Round* and later on inserted into *The Uncommercial Traveler* (1860) under the title of "Nurse's Stories", Dickens harked back to the same type of stories with devils and other fearful creatures that intruded in his early imagination. He wrote:

> The utterly impossible places and people, but none the less alarmingly real-that found I had been introduced to by my nurse before I was six years old, and used to be forced to go back to at night without at wanting to go […] If we all knew our own mind (in a more enlarged sense than the popular acceptation of that phrase), I suspect we should find our nurse responsible for most of the dark corner we are forced to go back to, against our wills. The first diabolical character who introduced himself on my peaceful youth was a certain captain Murderer. This wretch must have been an offshoot of the bluebeard family, but I had no suspicion of the consanguinity in those times (148).

The quotation clearly points to Dickens' early exposure to oral tales and to the relationship between the fairytale and the dark corner of the human psyche. Dickens also attempted to classify tales according to their "consanguinity" type and motifs. He recalled his frightening juvenile contacts with contextualized printed tales. Even before he could read and write, he was already acquainted with fairy picture books: all about scimitar, and slippers and turbans and dwarfs and giants and genies and fairies, and bluebeard and bean-stalks and riches and caverns all new and all true. Naturally, the same taste found its way into his early readings. He collected and read popular books such as *Jack the Giant-Killer*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Little Red Reading Hood*. Writers such as Scott, Washington Irving and other masters brought vividness of descriptions to the passive pictures of the previous period as Dickens started to enjoy *The Yellow Dwarf*, *Mother Bunch Tales* and other fairytale-books which he had found on his Christmas tree as a child. This taste was sustained by Dickens' editorial work as a mature writer. In 1838, when William J. Thoms (1825-1910) was writing for Bentley's Magazine, Dickens was then the editor of that journal and had handled in one form or another, Thoms' books ranging from superstitions, customs and other folklore items to the tales about "Fair Rosamond" (a story of the Fairy Annie' Wedding" type), to historical ballads of "Robin Hood" (Child 125-164) and animal tales of the "trickster-figure" type[1]. Similarly, Dickens himself directed the periodicals *Household Worlds* and *All the Year Round*, both of which printed fairytales and controversial articles about them; for example, Horne's "A Witch in the Nursery" and Morley's "The School of the Fairies", both of which were indexed and classified by Dickens.

Dickens' view that the child should be recognized as a child, even in a dehumanized industrial society, made him see the fairytale as literature appropriate to them and fight the war for the triumph of this noble cause. As with other social and economic causes, he only stepped in when the issue was well advanced, an aspect clearly shown by T. A. Jackson's study on the "progress of a radical" (Jackson 1937). Dickens' radicalism is also apparent in his theoretical approaches to the fairytale, which appeared in both his letters and essays. His two articles "Where We Stopped Growing " (Household Word, January both, 1853) and "Frauds on the Fairies" (Household Word, July 1st , 1853) were reactions "against alterations for any purpose - of the beautiful little stories which are so tenderly and humanly useful to us in times when the world is too much with us, early and late". In "Frauds and Fairies", Dickens protested in an even more vigorous way, against any didactic unnatural distortion of famous oral or written tales, and above all the ethical value found in them:

> In a utilitarian age (wrote Dickens) of all other times, it is a matter of great importance that Fairytales should be respected. Our English Red Tape is too magnificently red over to be employed in the tying up of such trifles, but everyone who has considered the subject knows full well that a nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun. The theatre, having done its worst to destroy these admirable fictions- and having in a most exemplary manner destroyed itself, its artists and its audiences, in that perversion of its duty- it becomes doubly important that the little books themselves, nurseries fancy as they are, should be as much preserved in their simplicity, and purity, and innocent extravagance, as if they were actual fact. Whoever others them to suit his own opinions, whatever they are, is guilty, to our thinking, of an act of presumption, and appropriates to himself what does not belong to himself what does not belong to him (Household Words 97-100).

Then Dickens proceeds to show how bad a didactic rewriting of a fairytale could be, by supplying a different didactic version of Cinderella. He was an admirer of Hans Christian Anderson, whose numerous fairytales for children were being translated into English, for example "The Little Mermaid" which appeared in Bentley's Miscellany (1846). In his turn, Dickens collected and dramatized fairytales during the rest of his life. In his novels, articles and essays of the forties and the fifties, he constantly used fairytale-motifs and recurrently put forward his belief that children deprived of the tales of "Puss in Boots", "Tom Thumb" and "Jack the Giant Killer" can only be emotionally shallow, mentally and imaginatively weak and physically stunted. And in an essay read to "The Mudfog Association for the Advancement of Everything" and published in *Bentley's Miscellany*, he poked fun at those educators who stuff children with "mental arithmetic, with half the Jacks passing the examinations everyday in facts", and who never teach team " Jack and Jill" on the grounds that fairytales are not moral. He concluded by saying that fairytales were dying. He thus made a substantial contribution to the growth of fairytale literature.

3. II. The Transformation-Motif as a Fairytale's Method of Expression

In his article, "the problem of transformation in the fairytale", Hedwig von Beit has raised the deeper layer of meaning hiding the symbolic aspect of the tale of transformation. He writes:

> From the standpoint of symbolism a consideration of the transformation motif, which is so essential in the fairytale, brings to mind the question why the popular fairytale is also enriched or even formed by symbolism which is so often and consciously employed in literature for a deeper effect (Strelka, 1972, p.51).

Dickens' fairytale "The Magic Fishbone" also uses the same symbolism, that of the old witch-figure and the poor princess to convey bitter social criticisms.

The fairytale motif of the child as a victim-hero creeps into the fiction of a writer who played an important part in the effort to have children recognized as such. The motif is frequent in folklore as a variation of the "Hansel and Gretel" motif in which a monster, usually an ogre or a wolf, turns himself into a strange creature to devour children. Morley's "A Witch in the Nursery", a variation of the famous tale "Household of the Witch", an item indexed by Dickens, is a variant of the type.

Writing to an unidentified woman who had sent him a few tales to publish in one of his journals, Dickens showed his profound knowledge of the "consanguinity" and migrations of fairytale-types and the law of substitution in folklore:

> Dear Madam, (he wrote), I am very sorry that I cannot assist you, in the publication of the enclosed transformation . . . The tales are charming. I have read Snow Whitey to my little girls with prodigious success. I have six children (four of them boys) and expect to have a seventh child some fine morning in May. So you see I commend a pretty large audience for fairies. Unless I am mistaken, some of these tales have been translated into English. Little Red Cap, under the name of Little Red Riding Hood, is very old English story – a hundred years old, at least, I should say. But the cutting open of the Wolf by the hunter, and the restoration of Little Red Cap to life, which is no part of the English story, seems familiar to me, as I had read it before. I must have read it in translation; for I regret to say that I do not understand German (*Household words* 97 – 100).

Dickens was right. "Little Red Riding Hood" first appeared in Perrault's collection and dated back a hundred years at last. Though partial transformations of specific tales of the collection were available by the time Dickens was writing, it must nonetheless be noted that a full translation of the collection did not appear until 1888 with Andrew Lang's edition of Perrault's Popular Tales. The happy ending the lady-correspondent gave to her version in

the resuscitation of "Little Red Cap" first appeared in German, in the Grimm brother's collection of Marchen where it had the title of "Little Red Cap". Carlyle's German Romances (1827) probably acquainted Dickens with these various Marchen.

Various other tales of the English folklore tradition provide numerous instances of the child as a victim-hero; and range from Bishop Perey's ballad motifs of "Babes in the Wood", "The Children in the Wood" in which the witch-figure is turned into a reptile and terrorizes children. But in Dickens' version of these stories, as it appears for instance in "The Magic Fishbone", nature is forsaken and the witch-figure always brings happiness to the heroes. His accounts for Thackeray's appointment about Dickens, yet too far removed from its awing to the way its author introduced realistic overtones.

The difference between the two writers' attitudes to the fairytale, however, is more of a perspectival nature than of anything else. Thackeray used the imaginative potentialities offered by the fairytale format to sustain his bitter satire and criticism of vital issues, whereas Dickens was more inclined toward the imaginative side of things. Dickens criticized the foundations of the materialistic bourgeois world which he wanted to have rebuilt and replaced by a fairytale-like world. As a result, he used an imaginative vision of society which retained at the same time its realistic perceptive. This duality in Dickens's fiction was sustained in Robert E. Lougy's essay, *Dickens' Romance as Radical Literature* (1972).

Our Mutual Friend (1865) displays originality in its non-ironic use of the fairytale. Through Noddy Boffin, Dickens explored another aspect of the fairytale different from the witch-figure or the fairy godmother of his shorter tales. Boffin's title of "The Golden Ousman", as well as his role as who raised Bella from "rags to riches" connects the novel with some aspects of the fairytale. To Mr. Milvey's questions, that "you have never had a child Mr. and Mrs. Boffin? But, like the Kings and Queens in the fairytales, I suppose you have wished for one", their reply was: "In a general sense yes." And to Mrs. Milvey's congratulations about their decision, they made it clear that they want to adopt "a child" and Mr. Boffin added "an orphan, my dear" (104), thereby stressing the "Cinderella" motif in Bella's story.

Like each of Captain Murderer's wives in Dickens' own written version of "Bluebeard", begging: "dear Captain Murderer, marry me next for I always loved you", Bella must show perfect faith in John. The engagement party celebrated by John, Bella and Mr. Wilfer is several times rendered by the author in the tone of the fairytale as the three are depicted as "three nursery hobgoblins at their house in the forest" (609). The Blue beard-motif and the romance it develops are better understood when pitted against the more realistically handled "Cinderella" romance of Lizzie Hemax in the same novel.

Like Cinderella, Lizzie has been raised from a lower state to a higher position, she is the “Beast” turned into a “Beauty”.

But her story is not idealized like that of the heroine Cinderella whose facilities and abilities to cross status and social classes she does not have, though she eventually married Eugene. Dickens twists the happy-ending of his story and introduces the death of Eugene in order to avoid sentimentalism and melodrama. In so doing, he avoided having, within the same novel, two “Cinderella” motifs: John did not turn out to remain the street-sweeper he had always been. Through Mr. Boffin’s generosity, he became a rich man. And having taken Mr. Boffin’s generosity, he plays in this turn the role of a beneficent fairy with Bella and bestows his money on the poor (803), who live happy ever after. The sources of the novel’s lack of artistic unity and its incongruous mixture of realism and romance are revealed from a fairytale perspective.

Dickens’ essay “Frauds on the Fairies” shows the author’s sympathy and “very tenderness for the fairy literature of our childhood” (*Household Words* 1853). Such literature has the potentiality “to keep us, in some sense, over young, by preserving in our worldly ways one slender track not overgrown with weeds, where we may walk with children sharing their delights” (*Houshold Words* 1853).

In Dickens’ opinion, “the fairy flower garden” of the child’s mind is constantly threatened by the sterile intrusion of the adult psyche. Therefore, it is worth preserving within the small child, for, once it is lost, the child becomes an isolated man. That isolation Dickens sees as accelerated by the industrial age. So, it is “a matter of grave importance that the fairytales should be respected”. That “grave importance”, in the opinion of Dickens, lies in the role of the romance as a mediator between man and the human values of the past.

Hard Times (1854) dramatizes that isolation, the psychic conditions it generates, and man’s psychic reintegration into the scheme of romance. When in October 1853, Dickens claimed that “a nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will hold a great place in the sun” (*Households Worlds*), he was then dramatically voicing a protest he was to fictionalize the following year in the shape of parable, that of the world’s need for imaginative fairytale-amusement. In the opening scenes of the novel, he introduces the utilitarian Gradgrind and his school of facts. The teacher Mr Choakum child pours facts into the children’s brain he considers as “vessels” from which the “robber fancy” must be excluded. His own children are themselves the victims of his own system. Like their father Gradgrind, they are ignorant of ogres, nursery rhymes and as Dickens puts it in detail, they do not know who Tom Thumb is. Dickens taps his own experience with his children to characterize Gradgrind’s school in a negative way. Dickens vividly recalled the

adaptations of Henry Fielding's Tom Thumb which he and other Dickens children had performed at home in 1854 – the year in which *Hard Times* was written – under the supervision of their father (Dickens H. F. 4-5). In his attacks against the utilitarian system, Dickens went further and referred to the school's ignorance of specific fairytales he knew as a child.

By using oral and written fairytales and nursery rhymes, Dickens introduced the major issue of the novel and elaborated over it. To these children who are ignorant of the delights of fairytales and nursery rhymes, he opposed the world of the circus and its children represented by Sissy Jupe. They are "eight or nine little children, who did the fairy business when required", and performed pantomime and versions of "Jack the Giant Killer" and "The Children on the Wood" (74-76), which Dickens probably knew in their ballad form in Bishop Percy's collection[2]. Like the other children in the circus, Sissy had read and enjoyed tales about fairies and hunchbacks. No wonder then that she found herself in the privileged position of saving both Luisa and Tom Gradgrind, whose stifled romantic nature had caused Tom to degenerate into a thief.

This point is brought home in the story by Luisa's remark to her father: "You have trained me so well, that I never dreamed a child's dream. You have dealt so wisely with me, father from my cradle to this hour, that I never had a child's fair" (114). Dickens harks back to one of the tales he first came across, namely that of "Bluebeard and the Hidden Chamber", to characterize Gradgrind and his school of facts whose rooms were *"blue chambers"* (131). Similarly to Bluebeard depriving his wives of life, Gradgrind has deprived both Tom and Luisa of those very values found among the children of the circus. But *Hard Times* ends with the same note of optimism as that of which Dickens' "Frauds on the Fairies" ended, but not without a full exploration of a tension between facts and fancy. But putting the novel against "Frauds on the Fairies", one may gain some additional insight into the characters. Bounderby's psychic and imaginative sterility are manifested on his physiognomy and in his past. He is both the perpetrator and victim of the society he inhabits. Though sensual, he is rendered almost impotent. Luisa Gradgrind left him after their quick and unconsummated marriage and the "blustruous Bounderby crimsoned and swelled to such an extent (...) that he seemed to be, and probably was, on the brink of a fit. With his very ears a bright purple shot with crimson, he pent up his indignation" (150).

The passage is directed against conditions resulting from the repression of man's imagination and therefore of his sexuality. This theme is the central philosophy of the novel. Stephen Blackpools' death is reminiscent of the innocent death of "Babes in the Wood" always plotted by relatives. But in the case of Stephen, it is caused by the greater family which is formed by society.

The realism with which Dickens linked Stephen and the realistic background of the colliers could by no means turn Stephen into either a "dragon-slayer" or even a hero who has a good turn done to him by a fairy, Sissy Jupe. She saves Tom by helping him escape in the circus and saves Luisa by chasing Harthouse away. In the end, she saves them all by introducing fancy romance and fairytales into their house, and above all, saves Gradgrind by pointing to him the evil of his own system. And as Dickens pointed out, when Gradgrind intuited into her values, "He raised his eyes to where she stood, like a good fairy in his house" (*Hard Times* 321).

4. III. Dream Allegories: Fairytale Transformation and the Phenomenology of the Human Mind

When, in an essay, Dickens wrote that "*the wild freaks of fancy reveal more of the real life of man than the well-trimmed ideas of the judicious thinker*", he was simply expressing in broad terms the ability fairytales, legends, romances and dreams have to reveal what lies in the "dark corner of the human mind". Most nineteenth century tales of the supernatural and adaptations of fairytales published in magazines showed his awareness of such relationship by bringing in the protagonist's sudden awareness that he was dreaming, thereby explaining away the supernatural. That is the case with the anonymous story of *Dorf Juystein*[3]. Dickens used the same technique. *In Pickwick Papers* (1837), the fairytale-like story of " The Collins who Stole a Sexton" is explained away as dreams[4], and "the days had hardly broken when Gabriel Grub awoke, and found himself lying at full length on the flat gravestone of the churchyard" (404). The vision of Scrooge in A Christmas Carol (1843) and the tale of the Baron's meeting with the genies of despair and suicide in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) are explained away as dreams, delusions and other fantasies of the psyche. In so doing, Dickens shared his formal awareness of the relationship between dreams and fairytales.

Dickens' theories of dreams too throw light upon his fictional use of the same motif. He wrote articles about dreams. In fact, writing about the topic around 1851, he discusses his views with a certain unidentified Dr. Stone before publishing his articles in *Household Words*. His essay "Dreams", which appeared in 8th, March, 1851 was jointly devised by Dickens and Dr. Stone and expressed in Dickens' own phraseology. In a letter to Dr. Stone, prior to the publication of "Dreams", Dickens emphasizes three points about the phenomena of dreaming. There he expresses his views that we do not dream of recent events or of problems recently connected with the mind, except adds Dickens, "in a sort of allegorical manner"; second, taking into account "our vast differences of mental and physical constitution, our dreams are astonishingly alike; and third, that

while we dream, half of the brain is awake and knows that we are dreaming". Dickens' "Dreams" recapitulates the same ideas. In it, he wrote that:

> Very strong impressions received during the day may modify and very materially influence the characters of our dreams at night…. The influence of the day's occurrences, and the thoughts which have occupied the mind during the day, have been said to give a corresponding tone and colouring to our dreams at night. . . My own dreams are usually of twenty years ago. I often blend my present position with them, but very confusedly, whereas my life of twenty years ago is very distinctly represented ("Household Words" 1853).

Dickens supports his own views by citing the testimony of his friends, which was quite remarkable in pre-Jungian days: "I have asked many intelligent and observant men whether they have found their dreams usually of the same respective character. Many have thought not, at first, but on consideration have strongly confirmed my own experience" (568). Dickens identified dream-motifs which he thought were to us all and saw some of the dreams allegorical ones:

> For instance – he wrote – if I have been perplexed during the day in bringing out the incidents of a story as I wish, I find that I dream at night, never by any chance of the story itself, but perhaps of trying to shut a door that will fly open, or to crew something tight that will be loose, or to drive a horse upon some very important journey, who unaccountably becomes a dog and can't be urged along, or to find my way out of a series of chambers that appears to have no end. I sometimes think that the origins of all fables, and allegory, the very such conceptions of such fictions may be referable to this class of dreams (569).

The issue of reading illegible texts in dreams took Dickens to his views about the no less important issues of the allegorical language of dreams. In the letter to Dr. Stone mentioned earlier, Dickens argued that "language has a great part in dreams. I think on waking, the head is usually full of words" (569). Clearly, these ideas of Dickens are surprisingly modern as they indicate Dickens' perception of the relationship between dream-types as archaic images common to all dreamers. They also offer a clear instance of Dickens' views about the chaotic nature of dreams.

In an essay written in July 1860 in *All the Year Round*, Dickens came back to these ideas from a different angle. He asked "are not the sane and insane equals at night as the sane lie a dreaming… Do we not nightly jumble events and personages and times and places, as these do daily?" (47).

> How many dreams are common to us all, from the queen to the costermonger! We all fall off that Tower, we all skim above the ground at a great pace and can't keep on it, we all say "this must be a dream, because I was in that strange, low-roofed, beam-constructed place once before, and it turned out to be a dream". We all take unheard of trouble to go to the theatre and never get in, or to go to the feast which can't be eaten or drunk, or to break thralldom or other, from which we can't escape, we all confound the living and the dead . . . we all go to public places in our night dresses and are all horribly disconcerted lest the company should observe it (98).

Dickens proceeds to analyze the role of the brain and the relationship of the latter with the psyche in dreams, and reached the conclusions that "I cannot help thinking that this observant and corrective speech of the brain suggests to you my good fellow how can you be in this crowd when you know you are in this shirt? "(*All the year Round* 1860). The waking part is the channel through which sounds alien to the dream-process can radically alter the dream contents. Dickens supplies a particular instance drawn from his oneiric experience: "We ourselves, when in Italy, could on one occasion trace the origin of a very remarkable dream to our having heard, in an obscure and half-conscious manner, during sleep, the noise of people in the streets on all Soul's Night, invoking alms for the dead" (101). Introducing the notion of time-duration in dreams, he suggests that impressions made on the mind of a sleeper by whispering into his ears, "the accidental jarring of a door", and other noises, may suggest the entire contents of a dream:

> One of the most striking circumstances connected to the human mind is the extreme lightening-like rapidity of its thought, even in our waking hour; but the transactions which appear to take place in our dreams are accomplished with still more incalculable rapidity; the relations of space, the duration of time, appeared to be annihilated; we are transported in an instant to the most distant region of the earth, and the events of ages are condensed within the span of a few seconds (568).

Dickens' statement involves his views about the psychology of the creative imagination and reveals his ideas that dreams are uncontrollable irrational phenomena. Writing from Geneva, in October of 1846, at a time when a religious revolution was in progress in that city, Dickens makes the following remark about the writing of his current Christmas book:

> I dreamt all last week that the Battle of Life (1846) was a series of chambers impossible to be got to rights or got out of, through which I wandered drearily all night. I was perpetually roaming through the story, and endeavouring to dovetail the revolution here into the plot. The mental distress was horrible[5].

Clearly, Dickens understood the allegorical nature to these dreams which Ruskin for instance never did. Dickens' experience and theories concerning the allegorical nature of certain types of dreams filtered into his fiction. His semi-fictional narrative "A Visit to Newgate" in Sketches by Boz (1839) describes the dream of a prisoner condemned to die. He goes to sleep and his visions turn out to be connected with his parents' situation, namely his trial. In *Pickwick Papers*, he introduced an allegorical dream motif in the fairytale-like story of "The Old Man's Tale of the Queer Client", where he reworked the allegory of revenge. The prevailing passion of Heyling's life is the desire of revenge against his father-in-law who had driven him to prison. But in his dreams, the same passion is transmuted into some allegorical symbolism with connections apparently irrelevant to the revenge motif as:

> Scenes changed before his eyes (Heyling's), place succeeded to places and event followed event, in all the hurry of delirium; but they were all connected in some way with the great object of his mind. He was sailing over a boundless expanse of sea, with a blood-red sky above, and the angry waters, lashed into fury beneath, boiling and eddying up on every side (344).

Such a dramatic vision culminated with the dreamer perpetrating revenge upon the old man whom he sank into the sea, and "he was dead; he had killed him, and had kept his oath."

Barnaby Rudge (1841) illustrates its author's view that while we dream there is always a part of the psyche that knows that we are doing so. Dickens describes the vague consciousness of pain experienced by a guilt-ridden sleeper. Instead of modifying the contents of the dream or playing the role of Freudian censor, this particular vague awareness remains in the immediate vicinity of the dreamer's consciousness:

> It pursues him through his dreams, gnaws at the heart of all his fancied pleasures, robs the banquet of its taste, music of its sweetness, makes happiness itself unhappy, and yet is no bodily sensation, but a phantom without shape, or with face to face, until the sleep is past, and waking agony returns (199).

In the same novel, dream-allegories take the form of some unidentified horror. The younger Barnaby Rudge said: "I dreamt just now that something – it was in the shape of a man – followed me – came softly after me - wouldn't let me be – but was always hiding and crouching, like a cat in dark corners waiting till I should pass; when it crept out and came softly after" (398). Mr. Heredale, too, is in the grip of his dreams of a "phantom" which even his waking psyche finds hard to exorcise.

5. Conclusion

Dickens who was well steeped in the nineteenth century folk tradition, knew also the intellectual tradition of the romance in all its forms: folktales, fairytales, ballads and all the long tradition of gothic romances the exegesis of which he trapped to provide material to his novels and to write theoretical essays for the pedagogical world, and the reading public at large. Dreams, nightmares and more generally the psychology of the mind which were raised at that time became also some of his preoccupations. He wanted to re-enchant and to re-fancy the world at an age when utilitarianism, the Industrial age and the Positive spirit were dizzyingly and vertiginously gaining ground and imparting radical mutations and changes to the Victorian Age.

Until his death, Dickens was always fascinated by romance in all its forms and other related psychic phenomena. In the first long paragraph of his unfinished novel, Edwin Drood (1870), Dickens experimented with other aspects of the dream-motif merely Jasper's "opium-dream". Describing Jasper,

he wrote "Shaking from head to foot, the man who scattered consciousness has thus fantastically pieced himself together at length arises, supports his trembling frame upon his arms and looks round". Opium Sal, the old hag who provides Jasper with the stuff, says that dreams could be influenced by touching the dreamer. The motif is so important in the novel that it was in Jasper's dreams and "shattered consciousness" that the mystery lay concealed – the mystery, still unsolved today, concerning the apparent death of Edwin Drood.

Notes

1. These were his *Lays and Legends of Various Nations*, *Their Traditions, customs and superstitions* (1834); *Fair Rosamond* (1841), *Robin Hood and the King* (1846) ; and his readaptation of Caxton's *The History of Reynard the Fox* (1846).
2. The melodramatic structures of these tales involving children whose lives were threatened would have appealed to the humanitarian side of Dickens.
3. Published in *Fraser's Magazine* (1832)
4. *Pickwick Papers*, New York, London, Toronto, Oxford University Press, (1947). The story begins with a fairytale opening, "A mong, long while ago, so long that…"
5. I am indebted to Warrington Winters's essay "Dickens and the Psychology of Dreams", *PMLA*, 63, (1948), pp. 948 – 1006.

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