THE BRONTËS AND DICKENS: 19TH CENTURY VOICES ON ENVIRONMENTAL HARDSHIP IN ENGLAND

by

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ABSTRACT

The Brontës and Dickens: 19th century voices on environmental hardship in England

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Charlotte and Emily Brontë wrote at the same time as Charles Dickens: the mid-19th century at the height of the industrial revolution. Their voices, emerging from different parts of the country, population densities, and genders speak to the same country and era. The Brontës and Dickens wrote about social class, but what do they say about environmental hardships faced by the people? How do their differences contribute to the conversation? My thesis will examine works from these authors to identify and analyze passages relevant to environmental hardship, particularly environmental justice. The analysis will include contextual details and comparison between the works. The passages I find may be used to further the message of environmental causes like environmental justice and ecofeminism. This work is worth doing because stories capture our imagination. We empathize with their victims and heroes, helping us to better see the victims and heroes in our stories today and how we might help. Cultivating environmental hardship passages from the Brontës and Dickens will awaken new takeaways from their well-loved stories, reaching audiences and hearts everywhere.

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Personal Reflections

While reading and writing for this thesis, I held the very unsettling conviction that I was living through history. In a year like 2020, writing a master's thesis does not feel like the highest priority, and analyzing classic literature feels worlds away from a global pandemic, climate catastrophes, crippled economy, and a momentous civil rights movement. However, as I dug into my source texts, the relevance took me by surprise.

As I read *Jane Eyre*, I was horrified by the typhus outbreak Charlotte Brontë described at Jane's school. The disease ravaged the students because of neglect and mismanagement, eerily echoing COVID-19 outbreaks in the United States. Another case of illness occurred in *Oliver Twist* in which Rose Maley, a kind friend to Oliver, falls very ill. The suddenness and unexpected severity of the illness, along with the attempts to shrug it off as nothing all felt very poignant to me. It's frightening to see the situation escalate so quickly, but when Rose makes it out the other side, I felt calmer that we will too. Another element that struck me in a poetic and cathartic way: how beautiful the outdoors seemed to Jane and Oliver, who remained healthy despite the illness around them. I felt a strong connection to them both, as I sat in my home office for months on end, healthy and able to appreciate the beautiful spring and summer weather. I remember seeing the cherry blossoms in my neighborhood and feeling such joy, then returning home and remembering why I was there in the first place. Despite the beauty of nature, enjoying a lovely day amidst deadly illness devastating our communities, creates cognitive dissonance. Being able to stay at home I felt survivor's guilt like Jane and Oliver, who played outside in the nice weather while their friends lay dying. It wasn't only *Jane Eyre* and *Oliver Twist* that seemed to resonate with the times. All four books I analyzed for my thesis contained passages juxtaposing the strangeness of nature's beauty in the face of illness and death. These books helped me come to terms with the fact that calamity and beauty coexist, and that experiencing one does not diminish the validity of the other.

The other message the modern relevance of which struck me was the commentary in *Great Expectations* on the prison system. Dickens spent much of the novel on prisons but gave the reader room to gradually change their mind and soften towards incarcerated people. As I was reading, I felt saddened and dismayed by the early negative associations tied to people connected with the prison system. Then I was comforted by the gradual change of perception, and the building sympathy for the most prominent incarcerated character. By starting from a place of disgust and fear, a reader with the same perspective can relate. Then with the gradual change of narrative perspective, the reader's view may also change, demonstrating the ethical power of fiction. Though I was not that reader in the beginning, I could feel the significance of the change

in tone, and what impact it could have on readers of all kinds. The story commented on how a person born to low status who comes to a life of crime at a young age, finds it impossible to leave. Criminal records prevent gainful employment and provide no opportunities to learn a skill. Dickens contrasts how the system works against a poor, low status individual compared to its leniency towards a gentleman of high society. Reading this today brought up our modern struggle of racism in the criminal justice system, particularly police brutality towards Black people. While Dickens did not attach race to his discussion, he did express the concept of unequal treatment across socio-economic status in the prison system. He also highlighted the prejudices faced by people involved with the prison system despite how unjust their connection may be. There is a sense of disapproval in the criminal justice system that I felt relevant to decriminalization and deincarceration efforts today. While reading, I built a human connection with the incarcerated character and grew disillusioned with the justice system that had tossed him around and ignored his needs. I saw how Dickens, some 160 years ago, called attention to the inequalities fostered and carried out by the prison system, and how endemic injustice is to the justice system, echoing the ongoing cries of protesters in the United States and across the world.

As a modern woman reader and researcher, I felt one more striking connection that was less intertwined with the large historical events of 2020. In each book, I noticed a common trope that I identified as "the unnatural woman." This was the most prevalent in *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Great Expectations*, though it was present in *Oliver Twist* as well. All four texts contained descriptions of women who fell outside contemporary societal expectations, and were described as wild, mad, frenzied, and/or cold. Some of these women played antagonistic parts, but others were protagonists. What unites them aside from this "unnatural" characterization, is the power they wield or once held. These women showed that there is strength in circumventing the norms, a message that resonated strongly with me. Though I was concerned by the negative associations sometimes connected with these characters, their mere presence made me think about how powerful women today are often characterized in the same way.

Humanity: that is the name for the connections I felt when I read the Brontës and Dickens and the discipline that my work exists within. My interest in the human element within the environment brings this work to the more specific realm of environmental humanities. The human experience does not exist apart from the environment surrounding it. With that in mind, we can do things like read old fictional books and look at the characters, plot, and setting through an environmental humanist lens. Working with these books in an environmental program was quite a journey, and a very personal experience. I invite you, reader, to go to that personal level while reading this thesis - also when you engage with any other art, history, or otherwise humanist creations and study. If we allow ourselves this connection, there is no limit to what we can gain.

I.

Background

We certainly don't pick up novels from every famous-in-their-time novelist so many years after they were written, so why do we keep reading Charles Dickens, Charlotte and Emily Brontë or anyone else for that matter? There are many reasons to read classic works of literature, and the most obvious one is that we enjoy them. We wouldn't enjoy the work of just any author who died 150 years ago, because few authors attain that timeless relevance. We've studied these authors for decades upon decades, and we will continue to reference them into the future because of that relevance. We empathize with the characters of these stories, helping to inspire empathy within ourselves towards those less fortunate. When poor Oliver Twist requesting more soup in the 19th century can permeate pop culture references, be known to so many who never read the book, we see the cultural power literature holds. This thesis takes on *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, as well as *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. Each novel has cultural power today with many underlying themes to explore.

The stories and characters are what stay with us over time, but that which lies under the surface can be the most potent message of all. The underlying environmental messages in Dickens and Brontë novels could be focused and used to further environmental efforts today. As people connect through years of Christmas spirit when they watch a new adaptation of *A Christmas Carol,* people can also connect over the environmental challenges the characters face. These messages can be accessed across the many languages these novels appear in. It can

permeate its way through our cultural and literary references. If these underlying messages are revealed, they will not go back into hiding again. As Italo Calvino articulates in *Why Read the Classics,* "a classic is a book which has never exhausted all it has to say to its readers" (Calvino).

Charles Dickens spent much of his life in London, but overall moved around frequently. He lived from 1812 to 1870, aged 58 at death. His father was followed by debt throughout his life, eventually landing him in prison. Charles, 12 at the time, was sent to work in manufacturing to help support the family. His childhood greatly influenced his writing, which highlighted plights of the poor, especially children (Paroissien). Pulling from his experiences, Dickens wrote biting commentary on the treatment of the poor and disadvantaged in Victorian era England that is still relevant in today's world. This commentary earned him the title from Arlene Andrews, "the social worker of his time" because of his concerns about social inequity and economic disparity in Victorian society (Andrews). Despite these heavy issues he took on, Dickens's humor and emotional pull made his works accessible not just for academics, but a wide variety of readers throughout the years, according to Donald Hawes (Hawes). His characters' social, economic, and environmental conditions were depicted in ways epitomizing their inseparability.

Charlotte and Emily Brontë wrote at a similar time to Dickens, but in differing circumstances. The Brontë sisters were a few years younger than Dickens, and also did not live as long. Charlotte was born in 1816 and lived to be 38 years old, dying in 1855. Emily was born two years later in 1818, and only survived to 30, dying in 1848. Both sisters spent most of their life in the Yorkshire town of Haworth, where their father was curate. At the time, this was a rural village, nestled among the harsh Moorish countryside. The Brontë sisters faced diminished social power as women in this era, exemplified by their decision to write under male pseudonyms, Charlotte as Currer Bell and Emily as Ellis Bell (Thormählen). Despite their male pen names,

their works include strong female characters who face social and economic challenges in the backdrop of the harsh, lonely countryside. In their early years, Emily and Charlotte lost their mother and two eldest sisters. The sisters died of tuberculosis, though their deaths were surrounded by a typhus epidemic that infected their school. The setting of their lives, and the early exposure to death and disease greatly influence Charlotte and Emily's written works.

Regardless of their differences, the Brontës and Dickens witnessed the changes driven by the industrial revolution. When they were writing, manufacturing towns and the effects of industry were well underway in England. The British industrial revolution began its dramatic and influential ascent at the end of the 18th century and was still trending upward at the times of Dickens and the Brontës. This revolution spurred the decline of the primarily agricultural market, where half the economy was built on agriculture. Moving away from farming, the national economy progressively grew more dependent upon industry. In a few decades, expanding industry increased the British economy by 27% in 1860, largely stemming from textiles (Clark). This upwelling of manufacturing meant that towns were increasingly common. The people who live and work within such rapidly growing communities suffer the consequences of the industry's wild and unregulated boom. People made more money in the manufacturing towns than on the land (Clark), causing mass migration. Migration to manufacturing towns concentrated more and more people together, encouraging the spread of disease. This historical context is important to consider when reading these texts and noticing trends of illness and poor living conditions

Poor living conditions and disease disproportionally effect disadvantaged communities, so another important context to keep in mind with these books is environmental justice. Originally termed environmental racism, environmental justice as a modern movement traces

back to 1982, when a majority black community in North Carolina protested hazardous waste dumping in their home, Warren County. The historic protests spurred studies that found race the most accurate predictor of where hazardous sites could be found (Perez et al.). Environmental injustice awareness grew from these places of action. The movement is propelled by poor environmental conditions that are disproportionately felt by marginalized groups like racial minorities, and the working poor. It bridges the gap between the social and the natural, pointing to the poor environmental circumstances clustering around disadvantaged communities (Perez et al.). Social justice focuses on people and environmentalism focuses on the environment; but we cannot truly discuss one without the other. Environmental justice acknowledges that our environment impacts our lives, and our lives impact the environment, too often in negative ways. Indeed, poor environmental conditions have long been shouldered by disadvantaged communities; polluting industries and facilities are rarely located near the affluent privileged neighborhoods. Though environmental justice as a movement started a few decades ago, the injustices it calls out have been happening for centuries. Through those centuries of society building and separating all over the world, environmental injustice has continued. The environmental injustices in the 19th century British literature discussed in this thesis echo the same struggles people face in the modern environmental justice movement.

The type of work this thesis undertakes falls within the eco-criticism discipline of literary studies. This field focuses on human interactions with their natural surroundings in literature. Eco-criticism has been around for nearly 30 years. Eco-critics analyze works within the canon of environmental literature, for example: Rachel Carson, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Henry David Thoreau. Beyond environmental literature, eco-criticism also tackles less obviously environmental novels (Cohen), as this thesis does. Using eco-critical analysis, this thesis will

explore Dickens and the Brontë sisters. Eco-criticism covers a wide range of topics and methodologies, and this research is just one example of how it can be done. This thesis tackles a variety of environmental themes within the texts, loosely connected under the term 'environmental hardship.' This choice of words is meant to capture the breadth of environmental and social challenges faced by characters in these novels.

With these historical, biographical, environmental, and modern contexts in mind, this thesis will analyze the works of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and Charles Dickens. This analysis begins with *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, followed by *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. After the Brontës, the analysis will turn to Charles Dickens with *Oliver Twist* and finish with *Great Expectations*. The themes and tropes explored in this thesis cover a broad scope of ideas, sometimes overlapping to reveal commonalities. Each book will be examined independently, then a following discussion chapter will make connections between them.

The Process of *Jane Eyre*

Jane Eyre was the first novel I worked with for this thesis. When I initially wrote this chapter, it stood alone as a litmus test for the question: do I want to write this kind of thesis? During my environmental studies masters, I hungered for the humanities. So, I struck out on this adventure to find environmental themes in Charlotte Brontë's most known work. While I was a student of literature in the past, I had never taken on a project of this analytical depth before. I started with reading, flagging the passages I found interesting and relevant, and taking notes. I then went back and wrote my analysis for every passage I flagged. This left me with the problem of how to fit everything together – a truly baffling task. I cut numerous passages that I couldn't find a home for and then lumped everything else together according to when they happened in the book. From there, I went back and brought in relevant articles and other contextual details to deepen my analysis. Because of this novel's early role in my thesis journey, it stands apart from the others. It benefitted from more time to finesse and add external sources. However, it also suffered from my lack of experience in this work. As I continued through the other novels, my methods grew more streamlined and direct, but I had less time for the contextualization I wished to impart. My time with *Jane Eyre* was enlightening, frustrating, and fulfilling; it ultimately convinced me I was interested enough in this work to make it my thesis.

II.

Jane Eyre

Introduction

"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will," Jane Eyre cries out (C. Brontë 297) against the external forces upon her life, winning the reader over time and time again with her agency and spirit. This strong female character is the famous, eponymous heroine of Charlotte Brontë's seminal novel, published originally in 1847. Throughout the novel, Jane experiences and witnesses circumstances beyond her control. She sees and feels the pain those circumstances cause and often responds with defiance. Jane's position in life spans many phases: orphan, schoolgirl, governess, would-be mistress, runaway, country schoolteacher, and independently wealthy woman. These different roles Jane plays let her speak to and for various groups, even though she does not solely belong to any of them. This analysis of *Jane Eyre* will bring together othering theory and environmental justice issues faced by the novel's characters. It will proceed chronologically, starting with Jane's humble beginnings and her time at school. From there, the analysis will discuss the story of Bertha Mason, the mad wife of Mr. Rochester, Jane's love interest. Finally, this chapter will examine her time as a schoolteacher in the country and the journey preceding it.

The primary concept discussed in relation to *Jane Eyre* is othering theory. Othering separates people into two groups: the in-group and the out-group, or the self and the other. There may be many bases for this separation, causing a perceived difference between these groups. This difference can be felt by either the in-group and/or the out-group. Wherever the perceived

difference comes from, it creates an imbalanced power dynamic and gives the in-group the upper hand. While the initial separation is perception based, the resulting power dynamic has real life impacts and consequences (Brons). These consequences are wide reaching and vary greatly depending on the case. This power imbalance is created by othering and leads to environmental injustices; this analysis will focus on these injustices.

Jane's childhood

Jane Eyre begins life a few steps backward. Born to parents who married for love, what would her life be, had they remained with her? Alas, Jane's mother and father succumbed to typhoid fever, dying after only one year of marriage; this set off the chain of events comprising their daughter's sad, strange, and beautiful story. Typhus killed Jane's parents because her father, a priest, frequently visited a poor manufacturing community. Due to their associations with the working poor, Jane's parents died of the poor's sufferings. In the manufacturing town's churchyard, described by her cousin St. John as "a grim soot-black old cathedral" (Brontë 440), Jane's parents were buried under the cloud of the working people's environmental hazards.

While most of *Jane Eyre* takes place in the country, there are a few descriptions of urban, manufacturing settings. When Jane first accepts her post as governess to Adele, she attempts to situate her new home, Thornfield Hall, geographically in her mind. The biggest town nearby is a manufacturing town with "long chimneys and clouds of smoke" (C. Brontë 105). Jane expresses distaste of this smokey manufacturing town, but Thornfield escapes this distaste because it is far enough from the town. Another manufacturing description comes from Jane's pupil, Adele, who describes her first impressions after leaving France. She declares her port city in England as a similarly dark and smoky town. Adele came from a small, clean town in France, and the contrast

of the port town was repugnant to her. From these mentions, manufacturing towns hold a collective negative connotation in *Jane Eyre's* setting. In both Adele and Jane's descriptions, there is a line drawn between grimy manufacturing centers and clean, good places. This line contributes to the othering of these towns and those who must live there to survive. The out-group represents the working poor in the manufacturing towns, and the in-group represents inhabitants of clean country towns. It expresses a dichotomy between the country and manufacturing urban spaces.

After Jane Eyre was born into this dark and sickly beginning, she fell into an aristocratic family's home, far from manufacturing grime. Her uncle initially took her in, but he died before Jane was old enough to know him. After her uncle's death, Jane was left with the remaining Reed family; they cared for her only out of obligation to the dead, not love. At the Reeds' home, Jane is impressed by the differences between herself and her benefactors. She exists in a sphere apart from her aunt and cousins, lesser than they. Jane cannot forget that everything belongs to the Reeds, and she has no right to any of their comforts. She may enjoy the food, shelter, and security from living in a rich family's home, but they are not unequivocally hers. She is constantly reminded she is an orphan with nothing to her name. From a young age Jane experiences being the out-group, while the Reeds are the in-group. She represents her own singular disadvantaged group. Any complaint she makes is made out to be her own fault or without grounds; she is also the frequent scapegoat of problems among the distinguished family members. Jane feels all this bitterly, eventually revolting against the mistreatment only to be villainized yet again.

This revolt occurs in the novel's opening, with a "penetrating," and "somber" rain event strong enough to keep everyone in doors. The weather persists through the entire first day the

reader spends with Jane. At the day's end, Jane experiences a traumatic event that will stay with her for the rest of her life: her imprisonment in the red room where her uncle died. Jane's confinement comes in part from her defiant behavior. The wild weather outside reflects her wild agency. Emotional from an unjust punishment and primed by the foul weather and eerie room, Jane receives a fright so strong that she cries out in desperation and faints when her cries are dismissed. Following the swoon, a more feminized response to stress than defiance, Jane is taken care of and spends the following days recovering under the watch of a doctor. Being an orphan child at the Reeds' unkind mercy, the power dynamic sways heavily in the family's direction. The dynamic extends to the Reed children whose mistreatment of Jane leads to her memorable night in the red room. The negative associations and differences between the Reeds and Jane culminate with Jane being sent away to an orphan girls' boarding school, removing the out-group entirely from the privileged home.

Illness at Lowood

When Jane arrives at Lowood, she takes some time to settle in. The school's proprietor attempts to separate her as the worst among her school fellows, but this attempted othering does not stick, and Jane becomes one of the girls. The Lowood girls make up a large out-group, poor orphans who cannot speak for themselves. The consequences of this othering manifests in the school's apparently idyllic surroundings. Jane's first spring at Lowood arrives and the setting is picturesque, but this loveliness is misleading: "Have I not described a pleasant site for a dwelling, when I speak of it as bosomed in hill and wood, and rising from the verge of a stream? Assuredly, pleasant enough: but whether healthy or not is another question" (C. Brontë 91). Impressions of natural beauty abruptly turn to images of sickly sorrow. Placing the good

alongside the bad in this way intensifies the horror: over half of the girls at school are sick and dying of typhus. This disease is emboldened by the school's location in a valley of stagnant fog. The poor quality of the girls' food and inadequate water sanitation leads to the Lowood epidemic, infecting the majority of Jane's peers, and sending many to an early grave. The systemic lack of nourishment and medical attention at Lowood encourages its sickly environment, leaving immune systems weak and undefended when the contagion takes hold. The tragic spread of disease contrasts with Lowood's beauty.

Jane's best friend at Lowood, Helen, dies differently from her unfortunate peers, but continues in the vein of natural splendor as a foil to a sickly underbelly. Helen took ill before typhus settled in at the institution, her health failing from consumption, or tuberculosis. On Helen's last night, Jane is struck by the evening's natural splendor outside her friend's ward. Upon hearing the negative prognosis from Helen's doctor visit, Jane resolves to see Helen while she still can. Before heading up to the sick ward, she looks around admiring the lovely evening and feels sorry that Helen cannot appreciate it. Jane associates all things good with Helen, and grapples with how a long life full of beautiful nights can exceed her friend's grasp.

Typhus appears only twice in the novel: within the larger context of Lowood's outbreak, and is mentioned briefly as the cause of Jane's parents' early death. These two instances are connected not only because they share the same disease, but also through the circumstances that spawned the illnesses. Her parents through their affiliation with a poor typhus infected community suffered the same fate as many of the Lowood girls. Both of these othered and disadvantaged groups were exposed to disease because of their subpar living standards. Throughout Jane's childhood she understands her parents to be poor; the nature of their death and the epidemic at Lowood speaks to an equivalent poverty. The orphans at picturesque

Lowood and the working poor surrounding Jane's parents exist in an extremely vulnerable state with limited agency. If these people had money or connections at their disposal, they might have lived. This is a prime example of disadvantaged out-groups experiencing undue environmental hardship, an environmental injustice.

In 1847 when *Jane Eyre* was first published, typhus and tuberculosis were common illnesses. In fact, Charlotte Brontë's two older sisters died of tuberculosis they contracted surrounding their school's typhus outbreak, presumed by some scholars to be the inspiration for the Lowood typhus epidemic (Stoneman). These illnesses, like many infectious diseases, have a greater impact on the poor who are subject to inadequate access to food, cramped living conditions, and higher exposure to dangerous materials. British surgeon George Ross wrote an article for *The Lancet* on the causes of typhus in 1844. He found the most likely origin to be the consumption of spoiled food and that the poor were most susceptible to that contamination method. He commented that, "It is a cause, indeed, that exists less among the rich than among the poor, and among the latter there is often a great jealousy of acknowledging the consumption of bad food" (Ross). Bad food is mentioned specifically in *Jane Eyre* as a cause for the typhus epidemic at Lowood. Half a century later, A.K. Chalmers wrote on Britain's sanitation improvements. Chalmers associated typhus and many other disease outbreaks with the poor: their cramped living conditions, and the poor sanitation standards of Brontë's time (Chalmers). According to medical history and this reading of *Jane Eyre*, typhus was a disease of the poor.

Less mentioned in the novel, but of great significance in Charlotte Brontë's own life was tuberculosis, also a disease of the poor. Arthur Newsholme analyzed this disease in-depth, clearly laying out its connection to the English poor: "Poverty and tuberculosis are close companions, for poverty not only furnishes the appropriate soil, but also increases the closeness

of contact and the frequency of opportunities for infection" (Newsholme). Tuberculosis claimed the life of Brontë's elder sisters, and it resurfaced in Jane Eyre's life to claim her dear school friend. To paint Lowood as a sickly place, Brontë not only describes a typhus epidemic, but also includes the minor presence of tuberculosis. Both diseases are conspicuously associated with England's poor.

English professor, Alan Bewell, discusses disease and health tropes within *Jane Eyre*, connecting these mentions in the novel to broad English national interest in sanitation laws. He especially highlights how healthy a landscape is or is perceived to be, pointing to Lowood's false portrayal of health. The prevalence of disease in the novel speaks directly to public demand for better sanitation, mirroring Brontë's own life experiences (Bewell). Disease in disadvantaged groups is also relevant when Jane is hired on as governess for Adele and moves to Thornfield Hall, where she falls for the famous Mr. Rochester.

Unnatural Woman

One of the greatest plot elements in *Jane Eyre* centers on a different kind of illness: the mad woman in the attic, first wife of Mr. Rochester, Bertha Mason. Bertha falls under a trope identified in this thesis as an 'unnatural woman.' This woman, often described as a devil, or creature, inflicts violence upon her husband and brother, and terror upon Jane. Bertha Mason stands in the way of their wedding and leads to Jane's flight from Thornfield. She exists in opposition to the female norms of the time. Bertha's madness impacts her husband's character immensely. Without a mad wife, he may not have taken up with a French mistress, leading him to raise Adele, who needed a governess. Without his wife, Mr. Rochester may never have hired

Jane and fallen in love. There would be no story without this mad character. She catalyzes the plot.

A strong narrative device used throughout the novel but especially regarding Bertha Mason, links Bertha's story with 'bad' weather. For example, Mr. Rochester recounts a story of her having a fit in the West Indies and the violent hurricane that accompanied it. He nearly kills himself in a bout of depression before a calm wind from the north blows through. The wind inspires Rochester to bring his wife to England, where he shuts her up beyond the reach of the public eye and reestablishes residence in his home country. In his retelling, Rochester clearly associates her violent outburst with the violent weather. Similar weather driven descriptions accompany the night Bertha Mason visits Jane, and Jane's subsequent swoon. Jane is rendered unconscious by fear twice in the novel. The first occasion is the fright of the red room, and the second is this terrifying visit from Bertha Mason. These swoons are brought on by extreme fear, with parallel weather coloring the backdrop of the two events. That night of the visit was surrounded by wind described as "doleful," "moaning," and "mournful." Bertha Mason's appearance visibly shows her state of illness and captivity, frightening Jane so much she collapses into a faint. This moment juxtaposes female illness by contrasting Jane's swoon with the terrifying ugliness of Bertha's illness. Jane exhibits a very feminized response to stress, while Bertha's illness is dehumanized. Jane's retelling of the event to Rochester is shaped by the differences between herself and Bertha and the wild weather.

The gale earlier in the evening sets the eerie mood and associates Bertha with the wild weather. This association engenders a sense that Bertha, like the weather, can have dangerous effects on the surrounding environment. Jane's own wildness as a child in the red room reflects the same association. As an adult however, she represents tranquil femininity to contrast the mad

woman. Rochester also serves as a contrast, making calculated judgements on where to house his mad wife and how to care for her. The equivalence of Bertha with wildness and Rochester and Jane with calmness, humanity, and sanity widens the gulf between the in-group (Rochester and Jane) and the out-group (Bertha). The othering of Bertha extends to the point of dehumanization.

Bertha Mason is a member of an othered, disadvantaged, and vulnerable group; we see this explicitly through a scene in which we learn that Rochester had the power to lock her away with impunity, in conditions that might have killed her: "…I possess an old house, Ferndean Manor, even more retired and hidden than this, where I could have lodged her safely enough, had not a scruple about the unhealthiness of the situation, in the heart of a wood, made my conscience recoil from the arrangement. Probably those damp walls would soon have eased me of her charge…" (C. Brontë 351). This complicated and loaded statement shows the extremely imbalanced relationship between husband and wife. Bertha Mason is ill, in a disadvantaged state, and her husband reigns in this position of power over her. The novel villainizes and dehumanizes Bertha, who is powerless, normalizing the mistreatment of people with mental illness in this social context. Bertha has limited power over her destiny, like many other disadvantaged out-groups, who are subject to decisions made by higher-ups. In the excerpt above, Rochester is conscious of his position and restrains himself from abusing it; in that way he acknowledges the depth of his power. At his whim and to his direct benefit, he could cause his wife's death through neglect and it would not be considered murder. This scene echoes the typhus epidemic of Lowood, where orphan girls died of neglect and an unhealthy environment. Rochester highlights the same dynamic, that being placed in a poor environment can lead to death.

Rochester points out to Jane that he has not yielded to this temptation. Does this raise her esteem of Rochester? Is he a good man because he did not shut his mad wife up to die slowly of

neglect? Perhaps he is a bad man for thinking of it at all. The self-awareness of his comment is the most interesting part. The privileged in-group (Rochester) acknowledges and avoids committing a further environmental injustice upon the disadvantaged out-group and even villainized class (Bertha). He considers his wife a monster, but wishes to avoid that descriptor for himself, though Bertha would perhaps be eager to label her captor thusly.

Rochester presents the reader with this visual in which the mad woman slowly wastes away, dying from damp neglect in a secluded cabin. This potential death caused by her husband would have been a death totally out of Bertha's hands. When Bertha does die (a necessity for Jane and Rochester's happy ending) it entirely opposes the slow damp death. She sets fire to her cage, Thornfield Hall, and leaps to her death from the burning rooftop. That night, and the other nights that she broke out of captivity, shows an urgent, violent agency within her own othered disadvantaged group. From a place of passion, people with limited control can force the power away from their captors. Bertha rejects any death pressed upon her by external forces and chooses her own end. The mad woman dies by her own will and goes out in a brilliant fiery spectacle.

Racialization

Aside from her dehumanization and othering as an 'unnatural woman,' Bertha Mason is also racialized as a Creole. Her family is described as mentally infirm going back several generations. Her mother was also mad, residing in an asylum along with a younger brother who was an 'idiot.' This family came into Rochester's life when he was in the West Indies, and their background is partially English, partially Creole. In this time period and context, the term is used to describe someone born in the West Indies. The Creole side of Bertha's family, her mother's

side, is where the mental instability purportedly stems from. The associations with the Creole mother, and the Creole side of Bertha are negative, showing racist undertones that reflect the colonial attitudes of the time. There are three mentions of "Creole" in the novel. The first mention is a recording of Rochester's marriage. Bertha's father is described as an English merchant, and her mother as a Creole. The second mention occurs when Rochester first describes his wife's mother, "Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard!" (C. Brontë 341). Since the overall tone of this sentence is negative, it does not put "Creole" in a positive light, rather Creole is a part of the message that the woman was bad. The final mention occurs in a bitter tirade by Rochester, who calls his wife "the Creole" rather than her name or something more personal. In this instance the term is used to racialize and dehumanize Bertha, a product of Rochester's hatred towards her. In Rochester's usage, a Creole is a bad thing, different from himself. Here he is not only othering Bertha, but the entire group of people in the West Indies who identify with this term. Bertha represents not only the generally disadvantaged, but also this specific identity to which the novel imparts such a negative connotation.

Creole as an identity began as a way to differentiate people who were born in the colonies but of European or African descent. Creoles remained separate from the indigenous peoples and those born in Europe or Africa. The term was rejected by North Americans but retained usage in Central America and the Caribbean, known in Brontë's time as the West Indies. The term's meaning by the mid-19th century was linked exclusively to white ancestry. North American rejection of Creole identity reveals a fear of being too different or lower than the people of the Old World, according to Joyce E. Chaplan in Charles Stewart's book on creolization (Stewart). So, while the identifier "Creole" was used by the people carrying the term, the negative tones and othering of Bertha as part Creole exemplify the negative nuances to the word. In the late 16th

century, Juan Lopez de Velasco, described Creoles in a manner that reflected racist sensibilities of the time (Stewart). Velasco explains that Creoles adapt to the different climate and culture, having darker skin and shorter stature, thoroughly departing from their heritage. According to Velasco, in a few generations the changes would accumulate to make Creoles indistinguishable from the natives, even without assimilation through marriage (Stewart). In the mid-19th century, a Creole was not so othered as the native or slave groups, but the strong regional association provides an anchor for differentiation.

Homelessness and Class Separation

Towards the end of the novel, Jane resolves to run away after discovering Rochester's mad wife. The weather in this scene is calm and beautiful, contrasting the tempest within and the suddenness of her flight. Jane sees nature's beauty around her as a comfort, untainted by the challenges she has faced, a tether to cling to. Unfortunately, as her journey continues and she remains outdoors, there is less comfort and more hardship. She sleeps on the ground, which is unsafe and chillingly wet. Beautiful nature grows damp and drains on her remaining strength; it breaks her down almost completely before she finds respite. This scene recalls the weather's role as a significant narrative device in the novel. Jane's journey reflects her turbulent mind and feelings. She knows she is right to run away, but the difficulties from leaving still nearly overcome her. This internal struggle parallels the gradual downturn of the weather. In this way, the changing weather is simply an extension of her mind, absorbing the reader in the way that Jane feels. Luckily, she is saved from death at the last moment and taken in by the Rivers family.

As Jane first comes to the Rivers' home, she appears ragged and desperately in need of help. Hannah, who works in the home, immediately turns her away seeing nothing but a beggar.

Jane, on her last hope, cries out that she will die if not taken in, with a wild fear echoing the cries of distress when as a child she was so frightened at the Reeds' house. At this point, Jane has been outdoors for three days. The weather worsened as she grew weaker from starvation and lack of shelter, culminating in this moment where relief is so close yet unattainable. Weather worn Jane takes several days to recover once she is taken in by the Rivers. In this low moment of her history, Jane had no one to turn to, and no way to help herself without the help of others. In such a delicate position, a little bad weather and over-exposure to the elements would have been the end of her. Her anguish in being turned away expresses her awareness of being in mortal danger. This episode in Jane's story encourages empathy with homeless people, taking the reader along with her as she tumbles from security, and how difficult it was to climb back out. She shows the environmental injustice homeless people face, reduced unwillingly into this circumstance and suffering harm from exposure to the elements and want of food.

While Jane recovers, she has a conversation with Hannah, who initially closed the door on her in such a time of great need. "Did you ever go a-begging afore you came here?" (C. Brontë 395) Hannah asks of Jane. Hannah assumes that Jane is a beggar and that their meeting was not the first time she had begged for food or shelter. Jane feels insulted by this line of inquiry, being defined by one extreme set of circumstances that brought her to the mercy of strangers. Hannah makes the connection that want of a home or money makes one a beggar. Jane reproaches Hannah for valuing people based on whether or not they have a home and money, and for turning away someone in need during such a storm. She declares, "Some of the best people that ever lived have been as destitute as I am; and if you are a Christian, you ought not to consider poverty a crime" (C. Brontë 397). This line sends a pointed message to empathize with others, despite what their circumstances may look like. Jane Eyre lived through a typhus

epidemic at her poor orphan school and survived starving without shelter for three days as well; she knows firsthand what poor conditions people of little means must deal with and stimulates compassion for those living through these challenges.

The conversation with Hannah represents another strong case of othering, with some nuance to it. Hannah clearly separates beggars and homeless people into the out-group, defining the difference in circumstances as the reason they are different from herself and the family she serves. She also comments on Jane's apparent schooling and manners which contrast noticeably with what Hannah is used to in her encounters with unsheltered people. Because of these accomplishments, Hannah easily accepts Jane as part of the in-group. In response Jane rejects this othering process, reprimanding Hannah for her part in it. However, Jane still partakes in the othering of beggars by being so insulted at Hannah's assumption, which weakens somewhat her overall message to reject othering. Insult may have been her immediate reaction, but rejection came through clearly enough in her message to compensate.

Where there is a separation of economic strata, there is inevitably a similar separation of living conditions. The girls at Lowood, poor orphans, were subject to the typhus epidemic precisely because of their low socioeconomic status. Poverty surfaces many times throughout the novel, a major defining trait of the title character. Jane remains poor for most of the novel. From birth, through her time at the Reeds', Lowood, Thornfield, and the early days with the Rivers, she is described repeatedly as poor. Yet, she is not as poor as some. When Hannah assumes Jane is a habitual beggar, she is insulted. When St. John Rivers offers her a meager position in Morton, she notes that the children in her country school are peasants of whom only a few can write. There is a difference between the poor of Jane Eyre and the poor of these country school children. Of the kids Jane says, "I must not forget that these coarsely-clad little peasants are of

flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy, and that the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, kind feeling are as likely to exist in their hearts as in those of the best-born" (C. Brontë 415). This sentiment simultaneously separates the children from herself by referring to them as coarse and peasants, while also noting that Jane and her students are equally capable and worthy of respect. While Jane instinctually others the children, she also works against the othering, recognizing the children as part of the same group as herself and those above her.

Jane also mentions interactions with her pupil's parents who admire and appreciate her. She enjoys feeling appreciated by the people surrounding her, "though it be but the regard of working people" (C. Brontë 425), which maintains that instinctual othering towards rural working-class people that she exhibits towards the children and beggars. Jane and her students' parents esteem one another as good and worthy acquaintances, but their difference in class still separates them. While Jane perpetuates this othering barrier between herself and the country peasants, she also maintains a similar barrier between herself and higher classes. During her failed engagement, Rochester attempts to buy her the finest ornaments and clothing, but she rejects these attentions, retaining that superficial socioeconomic status line and upholding her position in the out-group. This is a character that sees the bars of the cage, but not the door to get out; she acknowledges that everyone is the same, but still operates within the system of lines that divide.

Conclusion

Jane Eyre is a character who straddles the line between in-group and out-group. Her life story brings forward the relationship between environmental injustices and the social disparities

of class, making her an excellent companion for the reader that seeks to understand these links. Her history shows the reader how typhoid epidemics disproportionately affected the poor and the personal repercussions of othering a marginalized child. As Jane discovers Bertha Mason, the reader is confronted with a terrifying out-group that when further investigated deserves understanding and protection from harm. Jane takes her readers on a journey with homelessness and relative poverty in the northern English countryside. *Jane Eyre* has survived generations of re-readings because Charlotte Brontë created a timeless heroine. We still relate to Jane today as we face modern day othering and the environmental injustices they breed.

The Process of *Wuthering Heights*

Wuthering Heights was the second novel I took on for this thesis project. After choosing *Jane Eyre*, I knew I wanted to analyze it alongside some of Charles Dickens's work. Rather than read another of Charlotte's novels, I decided to read the other famous Brontë novel, by her sister Emily. I was most interested in very well-known works by these authors because these are the books that have had the most staying power. I approached this novel like the one before: reading, flagging, and taking notes. When it came to my analysis, I learned that I didn't need to work with every single passage that piqued my interest. Instead, I took some time to consider what themes I noticed and wanted to talk about, pulling only the passages relevant to those themes. This made putting it together a much easier task, though I still tended towards discussing events in the order they appear in the book. My work with *Wuthering Heights* was unique because it was the only book from this thesis I hadn't read before. This added a new layer of difficulty from what I experienced previous. The main roadblock was that I didn't enjoy this story on the same level as the other novels, and I found less passages to flag. In the end, *Wuthering Heights* proved to be much more enjoyable to analyze than to read. Additionally, the lower amount of passages flagged certainly did not translate into poor material to work with.

III.

Wuthering Heights

Introduction

Wuthering Heights, published in 1847, is the only novel written by Emily Brontë (Thormählen). Despite the small physical shelf space her work takes up, Brontë is known the world over still today for her wild and unusual writing. This story exists within a closed off, isolated setting, including only two houses and the wild moors surrounding them. In this isolated locale, the reader becomes entrenched in the ever-intertwining lives of the Earnshaw, Heathcliff, and Linton families. They marry amongst themselves and branch off into strikingly similar paths that differ at crucial points. The confined setting and number of characters highlight the storytelling prowess Brontë possessed.

This chapter will analyze *Wuthering Heights* from the perspective of five environmental and social themes present in the work. First, it will discuss the comparisons made between characters by the narrator. These comparisons pose the question of how nature and nurture influence a person. After nature vs. nurture, this chapter will analyze the racialization and general dehumanization of Heathcliff, one of the main characters. Heathcliff's counterpart, Catherine Earnshaw/Linton, faces a similar problem discussed in the next section on the 'unnatural woman' trope. From there, this chapter examines the prevalence of illness and death in this novel. The last section explores how the characters interact with animals, and what that tell the reader about that character.

Nature vs. Nurture

Throughout the novel, Brontë presents multiple comparisons between her characters, providing foils to one another. These comparisons constantly present the nature vs. nurture argument. How much of a character's behavior is dictated by their nature, that which is predetermined by their biology, and how much is influenced by their surrounding environment?

Brontë poses Edgar Linton and Hindley Earnshaw against one another. Both were born to respectable families, both elder sons with younger sisters, and both married for love and lost their wives to childbirth. However, they both respond to the death of their loved one and the children left behind in very different ways. Edgar Linton rose to the challenge and raised his daughter attentively and affectionately. Hindley Earnshaw loved his son, but drank himself to financial ruin and an early grave. The narrator, Nelly, is biased in her telling of the story and confused by the outcome, "But I thought in my mind, Hindley, with apparently the stronger head, has shown himself sadly the worse and weaker man" (E. Brontë 185). Nelly is partial to Hindley Earnshaw, because of how they spent their childhood together. Despite her partiality, Edgar Linton still showed himself to be the superior character. The narrator's thoughts on the comparison emphasizes the role of "nature" in determining a person's outcome.

Though some of Hindley and Edgar's circumstances are the same, there are also some differences in environment that Nelly ignores in her narration and discussion of what sets the two apart. Hindley Earnshaw's strained relationships with his father and adopted brother, Heathcliff, place additional burdens on his life. Edgar Linton does not encounter similar struggles. Perhaps with a more stable home life, Hindley Earnshaw may have responded better to his wife's death? Although this is not an argument made specifically by the novel, it is not a great leap for the reader to make. Because Heathcliff is often portrayed as a villain who ruins the lives of those

around him, one can infer that he affects Hindley Earnshaw's behavior. This reduces the likelihood that Earnshaw's faults are only caused by his weak nature.

These are not the only two characters who are deliberately placed next to each other to compare how their paths diverge. Hareton Earnshaw, son of Hindley Earnshaw, and Linton Heathcliff, son of Heathcliff and Isabella Linton, are compared for their differences: upbringing, nature, and outcome. In this comparison, the reader sees the two characters through the eyes of Heathcliff, father of one and benefactor and imprisoner of the other. "But there's this difference, one is gold put to the use of paving stones, and the other is tin polished to ape a service of silver – *Mine* has nothing valuable about it; yet I shall have the merit of making it go as far as such poor stuff can go. *His* had first-rate qualities, and they are lost" (E. Brontë 219). These characters are discussed by the combined influence of their natures and the external factors that nurture them. In effect, this passage argues, a weak character cannot truly be nurtured into greatness, but a strong character can be sunk through poor environment.

When Nelly narrates the character of Hareton, son of Hindley Earnshaw, she attributes all his flaws to the hostile environment Heathcliff created at Wuthering Heights. Nelly also accredits all Hareton's good qualities to his inherent nature. When comparing characters of similar circumstances Nelly favors nature as the cause of difference, but in Hareton's case, she associates difference of behavior with how he was raised rather than his natural inclination. When Heathcliff compares Hareton and Linton, he notes the impact of both nature and nurture on the lads. Heathcliff's more nuanced look into character may reflect how he views himself. He sees himself as having a naturally strong character that has been beaten down and estranged by poor circumstances. He clearly sees something of himself in Hareton Earnshaw (who is not his son) and his nuanced but positive explanation of Hareton's character is reflective of that.

The question of a character's 'nature' arises for discussion throughout the novel. One interesting passage compares the very different natures of Edgar Linton and Heathcliff to nature itself – extending the metaphor directly into the natural world. Edgar's character is drafted in the likeness of a bountiful, pleasant valley, while Heathcliff is barren hills. Their natures distinctly contrast one another, as do the landscapes they are likened to. These associations strengthen the connection between the characters and the natural world, showing this is as much a story of weather and countryside, as it is a multi-generational soap opera.

Racialization

The nature vs. nurture conversation is one that surrounds Heathcliff throughout the story. Heathcliff's appearance and murky background are frequently mentioned and often attached to negative behaviors he exhibits. From the first pages he is described by the first-person outsider point of view as a "dark-skinned gypsy" (E. Brontë 5). This appearance is contrasted with gentlemanlike dress and airs associated with virtue. When young Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff were caught sneaking around the Linton home, one of their servants at first thought Heathcliff was a robber before realizing he was only a child. He noticed the mean look on Heathcliff's face and commented that it foreshadowed a life of villainy. The servant said of young Heathcliff, "yet, the villain scowls so plainly in his face, would it not be a kindness to the country to hang him at once, before he shows his nature in acts as well as features?" (E. Brontë 50). This calls to a direct connection between a person's appearance and their behavior.

Later when the story's narrator describes Heathcliff's arrival to the Earnshaw household as a child, the mother refers to him as a 'gypsy' brat. A while later, Hindley Earnshaw also calls him a 'gypsy,' along with a string of insults including "beggarly interloper" and "imp of Satan"

(E. Brontë 39). In the episode where Catherine and Heathcliff are caught spying on the Lintons, the Lintons are amazed that the respectable young Miss Earnshaw would be running around with a 'gypsy.' His appearance is guessed by Mr. Linton as possibly being American, Spanish, or East Indian (Lascar). Joseph, servant of the Earnshaw household calls Heathcliff a "divil of a gypsy" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 87) Many years later, Edgar Linton uses the term 'gypsy' to remind himself of who Heathcliff was, associating the term with being a laborer. Nelly reprimands this description, knowing how dear Heathcliff is to Catherine and that she would be upset by anything that degrades him. Appearance and behavior are correlated casting Heathcliff in a negatively racialized light.

Heathcliff is also frequently dehumanized. He is equated with animals at multiple points. The first instance is when Nelly talks uneasily of Heathcliff's renewed presence in Catherine and Edgar Linton's lives. She likens him to a beast hunting down forsaken sheep, ready to destroy the sheep at the most opportune moment (E. Brontë 107). There is little humanity in this portrayal of Heathcliff's character. Later, at Heathcliff and Catherine's final meeting, Nelly is taken aback by his animalistic behavior, "he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog…. I did not feel as if I were in the company of a creature of my own species; it appeared that he would not understand, though I spoke to him…" (E. Brontë 162). These animal comparisons rise from a place of fear. Nelly does not understand Heathcliff's behavior and is frightened by it, so she equates him to animals who similarly confuse and frighten her. In the final chapters, Nelly narrates a more extreme description than the animal comparisons and dehumanizes Heathcliff to the point of being a "goblin," a "ghoul," and a "devil." This is in response to Heathcliff's madness near the end of his life. Again, the narrator is frightened by his incomprehensible behavior and dehumanizes what she doesn't understand. For the reader, responding to a clearly

very sick man with this dehumanized fear, is evidence of the narrator's flaws. In this scene she also refers to him as a "little dark thing" of unknown heritage to support her fears that he is a demon. This expression colors the fears with a racial subtext, which is read into Heathcliff's character by the narrator and by the first-person perspective who the story is being told to.

Unnatural Woman

One of the primary female characters, Catherine Earnshaw/Linton, runs wild with her passions, impulses, and instincts. This wildness goes against contemporary expectations for what a woman 'should' be, so she instead represents an 'unnatural woman.' As a child, Catherine's wildness goes unchecked, until she spends five weeks at the Lintons' home After this stay, her wildness becomes more suppressed as she shows the outward appearance of a lady. That outward appearance dissolves completely when she roams the moors with Heathcliff. She remains wild when it comes to Heathcliff, a deviation from the norms she never leaves behind.

As an adult, her wild connection with Heathcliff comes to a head with the crucial conflict between Heathcliff and her husband, Edgar Linton. She warns that she will go wild with madness and ultimately does when Edgar demands she choose between himself and Heathcliff. In Catherine and Heathcliff's last meeting she is in the same state of wildness which blurs together with madness. After this parting, Catherine remains senseless until her death, a short while later.

The wildness of Catherine reflects the natural setting of the story. This novel spends much of its time outdoors. Nature seeps in throughout the story in ways that go beyond setting. The moors upon which Wuthering Heights stand are a harsh climate with inclement weather and powerful winds. It is a wild and isolated locale which produces wild and isolated characters.

Catherine Earnshaw was a wild and unbridled child, letting her nature run free to reflect the wild landscape around her. At the Lintons', she grew calm and ladylike, the wildness tamped down. She remained wild with Heathcliff and wrestled between her wild self and her tame self – between her nature and that which was nurtured into her. In the absence of Heathcliff, who she considers an extension of herself, she loses that wildness. Her marriage to Edgar Linton brings years of calm before Heathcliff (and therefore Catherine's wildness) returns. Her wildness defies societal expectations, and her adherence to her wild spirit exemplify the 'unnatural woman' trope.

Illness

Wuthering Heights's dramatic multigenerational story of the Earnshaws, Heathcliffs, and Lintons is all told by a servant of the families, Nelly. She tells the story to an outsider, Mr. Lockwood, who has moved into this strange little world and fallen sick from being caught in a winter storm. Nelly tells Lockwood the story of these intertwining families while he recovers his health. Most of the characters in her tale die from one ailment or another by the novel's end. Up until the very end, the reader hears the story as told to an outsider in their sickbed. The last pages of the story unfold when Lockwood is healthy and returns to learn what happened after he left the area. In a sense, the whole novel is set within illness caused by exposure to the wild and unforgiving weather of this isolated area.

One character, Catherine Earnshaw/Linton, faces two significant sick periods in the novel, the second of which leads to her death. The first illness occurs when Heathcliff disappears. Heathcliff runs away as he hears Catherine talk of marrying Edgar Linton. Catherine is so upset by his disappearance caused by her words, that she waits for him outside in the rain.

She waits and remains in her soaking clothes all night hoping for his return. The violent storm that soaked Catherine and surrounded Heathcliff's departure also split a tree, signifying their separation. Prolonged exposure to rain and the mental shock of losing the person closest to her sends Catherine to her sickbed. She flies into a rage defending and mourning the loss of Heathcliff which turns into delirium and a fever. This weather-induced illness is compounded by the loss of Heathcliff, which rent her in two like the tree torn apart by the storm. Catherine's fever ultimately infects and kills Mr. and Mrs. Linton, parents of Edgar and Isabella. Catherine's illness shows how being exposed to bad weather puts people at greater risk of falling sick, and that one person's exposure can extend beyond themselves. Catherine also shows the link between mental health and physical health, as she exposed herself for emotional reasons and her delirium was also fueled by those same emotional reasons.

Catherine's second illness is a recurrence of the same kind, based in delirium. This one follows the reappearance of Heathcliff and a quarrel between him and her husband. Her husband, Edgar Linton, demands she must choose between them, sending her into a delirious rage. Catherine Earnshaw/Linton cannot reconcile her wild passion for Heathcliff with the calm domestic life she had with her husband. She wants both but cannot have them and goes mad with the impossibility of choosing. This bout of delirium, described as "brain fever," lasts months. Catherine's fits of madness are dramatic and frightening. She violently thrashes about, speaking insensibly and angrily. She is physically strong in the early stages of this episode. Despite her strange and violent behavior, Catherine is doted on and cared for throughout her illness. This doting does not save her life, but it likely prolongs her time. This shows the importance of proper care and attention during illness, which is not something everyone can afford. Catherine is

treated as a human to the end of her life. Her death follows a final impassioned meeting with Heathcliff and the birth of her daughter and namesake, Catherine Linton.

The narrator, Nelly, works for Catherine's family during both delirious episodes. She understands that Catherine and Heathcliff were close, but also associates this wild madness in Catherine with Heathcliff. When Catherine receives the ultimatum to choose between her husband and Heathcliff, Nelly believes she fakes the fit in an attempt to get her way. Instead, the fit spurs her second bout of illness. Nelly realizes too late that it is a dangerous illness, and this delay in response does nothing to help Catherine survive. This dismissal shows how inappropriately the narrator handles mental ailments; she either ignores them as with Catherine or fears them as with Heathcliff. With Heathcliff, she dehumanizes him when she does not understand his own bouts of passion. It also shows how prejudice can endanger lives.

Near the end of the novel, Heathcliff descends into madness much like his eternal love, Catherine Earnshaw/Linton. He dies many years after Catherine. His madness is spurred by a night walking the moors. He mentions earlier how strongly he associates everything with Catherine, but nowhere is this stronger than in nature. He returns from out on the moors that night distracted, happy, and deranged, implying some unearthly visitation or message from Catherine, at least as perceived by his unhinged mind. The following days he grows madder, refuses to eat, talking to and staring at what he perceives to be Catherine's ghost. Ultimately, he leaves his windows open to a storm and then is found dead in his bed, soaked through from the rain. In Catherine's illness, she also wished to be on the moors, breathing the air of Wuthering Heights, but she could not as easily indulge that fancy. This illness, also similar to Catherine's first fever and delirium, is spurred by Heathcliff's exposure to the weather and a mental break. Both Catherine and Heathcliff exhibit wild and passionate behavior throughout the novel,

echoing the unbridled wildness of the moors; they both meet their end through their wildness combined with that of the wild moors.

Another notable illness is that of Hindley Earnshaw's wife, Frances, who dies of consumption (tuberculosis) shortly following the birth of Hareton Earnshaw. When the reader is introduced to Frances, she arrives at Wuthering Heights with a cough. She is described to have no background and no connection to the community aside from her husband. She is pleased with even the most mediocre of the house's offerings, so the narrator assumes she did not come from money. Tuberculosis, like many diseases of the time period, is depicted as a disease most likely to affect the poor, as indeed it was (Newsholme). This validates the assumption that Frances Earnshaw is not well off. As Nelly narrates Frances's story, she expresses a coldness towards her, as an outsider, but feels sympathy for her as she nears death. When the doctor diagnoses her, he says to Hindley, "Don't take on, and fret about it too much: it can't be helped. And besides, you should have known better than to choose such a rush of a lass!" (E. Brontë 64). These two assumptions about Frances, her weakness and her poverty, culminate in her death of a poor person's disease.

There are many more instances of illness in the novel. Mrs. Earnshaw, mother of Catherine and Hindley, dies young with no explanation of what ailed her. Mr. Earnshaw, her husband, experiences a prolonged unnamed illness growing weaker until he quietly dies with the blustering sounds of wind about the house. Hindley Earnshaw, who owed so much to Heathcliff as a result of gambling and lost himself when his wife died, drinks himself to his grave. Isabella Linton/Heathcliff dies slowly of an unnamed illness, away from the setting of the novel, and many years after she removed herself from it.

Like his sister, Edgar Linton dies of an unnamed illness, slowly growing weaker until he passes peacefully with his daughter Catherine at his side. Shortly after, Linton Heathcliff, chronically unwell, dies slowly like his uncle in Catherine's care. In the time leading up to these deaths, the surrounding countryside is described as a beautiful foil to the dying characters: "…a golden afternoon of August – every breath from the hills so full of life, that it seemed whoever respired it, though dying, might revive" (E. Brontë 265). These descriptions of the beautiful countryside make a call to encourage the good health in the characters, yet they still worsen and die. This contrast shows nature as a positive foil to the illness and death, as an entity separate and unaffected by the lives of the characters.

Interactions with Animals

Before Lockwood learns the story of Wuthering Heights from Nelly, he visits the home and does not receive a warm welcome. The dogs of the house give evidence of a mistrust of outsiders. They growl, then attack him when he is alone with them. Heathcliff states they are "not kept for a pet" (E. Brontë 6). The next day the dogs warm up ever so slightly, when Lockwood is no longer a total stranger to them. He attempts to make small talk with Catherine Linton/Heathcliff about the dogs and finds that avenue unfruitful. Still attempting conversation, he comments instead about what he assumes to be some kittens that he thinks she may favor over the dogs. The kittens are in fact dead rabbits, showing how Catherine does not even have the comfort of animal companionship, despite Lockwood's assumptions.

These are not the only encounters with pets in the novel. The Lintons' watchdog bites Catherine Earnshaw/Linton, causing her to stay with the Lintons for five weeks. Years later, a descendent of that dog lives in Wuthering Heights as a pet to her brother, Hindley Earnshaw. In

one scene, the poor animal hides from his master but is found out and abused casually as Hindley walks past. When Isabella Linton/Heathcliff runs away with Heathcliff, he ties her little dog up by a handkerchief, nearly strangling it to death. While he claims this as a display of indifference to her, she takes it as a sign of love. These last two examples of animal abuse is telling. Hindley and Heathcliff only care for one other person: Hindley, his wife; and Heathcliff, Catherine. When they lose these women, they care for nothing else and hurt the dogs with no remorse. Despite the dogs' cries of pain, which would move most people, they engage in this abuse. These scenes send a message to the readers, who are repulsed by such behavior, that these men are unfeeling and innately violent.

Conclusion

The themes present in *Wuthering Heights* tell a story of wildness, illness, and the cascading effects of how the characters interact with one another. This novel circumvents norms and echoes the scenery. Emily Brontë's book speaks to the wildness within readers today the same way it did in 1847. This story takes readers on a gripping adventure, encouraging us to explore our own wildness once the book is closed.

The Process of *Oliver Twist*

The first rumblings of what would become my thesis began with my interest in Charles Dickens. As I commuted to grad school, I listened to audiobooks of his works. Eventually, the thought struck me that an author so known for his commentary on society would have something to say about the environment as well. So, I tried it out with *Jane Eyre* and went full steam ahead. By the time I got to *Oliver Twist,* the third novel of my thesis, my methods solidified. I continued with the same reading, flagging, and taking notes of the first two books. The approach I learned in the previous book helped me dramatically; if I attempted to write up my thoughts on every passage I flagged in *Oliver Twist*, I would still be doing that today. One departure from the previous method was that I did not stick to the novel's order of events. This made the themes stronger and flow better within their sections. The greatest challenge with *Oliver Twist* was the constraints of time and energy. There were many more things I would have liked to dig into, but I needed to keep the project as manageable and succinct as possible. There is a part of me that isn't done with Oliver's story just yet, but what I have learned so far has been rich and engaging.

IV.

Oliver Twist

Introduction

Oliver Twist first met with its audience in 1837, making it the earliest of the four books analyzed in this text. One of Charles Dickens's most famous works, this novel made quite a splash at the time, with a strong current continuing into modern day. Oliver's story follows his early years through continuous hardship. From his time as an orphan ward of the church, through his experience with a London pickpocketing gang, he maintains a child's innocence and an angel's goodness. The reader sympathizes with Oliver every step of the way, calling into question the institutions and structures within society that contribute to his hardships. The pity the reader feels for Oliver is rewarded when he comes to his happy ending, but it also mobilizes to sympathize with others in Oliver's position.

In this chapter, *Oliver Twist* will be analyzed according to the most significant social and environmental themes found within it. The analysis begins with the role of food and hunger on Oliver's life and the lives of other characters. From want of food the chapter moves on to want of shelter, examining the presence of homelessness in the novel. The next section similarly focuses on shelter, but instead of lacking a roof altogether, this part analyzes the descriptions of unhealthy shelter. After the living environment, this chapter takes on the prevalence of illness and death, particularly Oliver's illnesses and their role in the story. Next the analysis turns to the 'unnatural woman' trope and who falls under that umbrella. The last two sections discuss mentions of race, and interactions with animals.

Food

Oliver Twist deals heavily with Britain's paupers, the working class, and the downtrodden. With their low economic and social status, these groups face many challenges. One of the most primal of these is the basic need for food. Food scarcity and malnourishment is a common theme throughout this story, faced by Oliver himself and many side characters as well. In the second chapter of the first volume, Dickens mentions the philosophy that a horse could survive without eating. He compares this philosophy in a critique of the starvation of orphans at the parish-run children's home in which Oliver spends his childhood. The children, small and starved, often meet untimely ends thanks to this line of thinking.

A little while later young Oliver lives in the parish workhouse, where the food is equally meager. A stronger child frightens Oliver into giving up his dinner serving, and being so hungry himself, he simply cannot do without this meal. Oliver then requests an extra bowlful to replace his stolen one. "Please sir, I want some more," (Dickens, *Oliver Twist* 15) he feebly requests, the phrase burning itself into our cultural history. This line provokes shock and anger from the higher ups in the workhouse. Oliver is hungry and surrounded by others just as hungry. Yet the audacity of such a simple request that his basic nutritional needs be met, leads to his removal from the workhouse as quickly as possible. He finds no compassion or understanding but is instead treated like a troublesome burden. The inmates of the workhouse live in a perpetual state of hunger, and fear of the staff. Despite that fear, Oliver's need for food guides his request for more. Oliver dares to defy and does so in the name of such a basic need, the reader easily empathizes with him, and by extension the general circumstances he shares with his peers.

The workhouse sends Oliver to be an apprentice to an undertaker. His first meal in this house consists of scraps left for the dog, a pitiful meal by many standards, including the family

who had left them. However, Oliver eats these scraps eagerly, being the most nourishing meal he has experienced throughout his time in the children's home and the workhouse. Oliver is connected to the dog, who is lower in the world than the undertaker's family whose scraps it eats. Notably, these scraps for a dog provide more of a meal than what the parish feeds to its poor. While Oliver is fed like a dog in his new home, his status distinctly elevates from his position in the parish workhouse.

Oliver's experience with the food of higher society highlights the stark contrast between the poor and the comfortable. When he is nursed back to health at Mr. Brownlow's home, he drinks a strong broth to restore his energy. Dickens describes this single serving of restorative broth as rich enough to feed 350 at the workhouse, watered down according to their standards. This meal at Mr. Browlow's home is hundreds of times more substantial than what Oliver receives at the workhouse. Oliver's comfort, and his ability to recover from illness increases by a similarly large factor. A properly nourished sick person is much more likely to recover, and the recovery will take less time. In a 2010 study, Katherine Brown and Tania Phillips found a significant connection between adequate nutrition and a patient's ability to recover from being wounded (Brown and Phillips). This indicates the significant role food plays in bodily recovery, explaining how Oliver makes it through his illness in part because his nutritional needs are met.

Homelessness

Oliver experiences homelessness many times throughout the telling of his story. Even in the womb, Oliver's mother wandered without shelter until she was taken in, unconscious, by the parish workhouse. When Oliver does have shelter there is still a sense of transient homelessness until he is rescued by caring homes. The places Oliver lives before coming to those caring homes

- the children's home, workhouse, funeral home, and a pick pocket's den - are not places where he can be comfortable or even adequately taken care of. He also experiences one extended period with no shelter, where he wanders in a complete state of homelessness. He walks for seven days and 70 miles to reach London, homeless, weakened by the physical exertion and winter weather, and hungry. Many towns he passes through have signs posted that beggars will be persecuted and sent to jail, making the journey even more logistically challenging for Oliver, a child with no money to buy food. Dickens mentions two strangers whose food and kindness keep Oliver from dying on the road, with no roof over his head or food in his belly. During Oliver's journey, he encounters barriers to survival every step of the way. While the reader sympathizes with the homeless child, the disregard for his life by passersby and the anti-begging signs show how he is viewed by society. This sympathy of Oliver's fight for survival encourages the reader to see Oliver in other homeless people and extend their sympathies.

After a week of traveling homelessness, Oliver nears London where he meets the Artful Dodger. Dodger brings Oliver to a place of shelter and feeds him. This new shelter is provided by Fagin, adult guardian and leader of a band of young pick pockets. At last, Oliver has food and shelter, but a shelter that is not of the most restorative kind. For many, a life of crime may be the only thing keeping them from sleeping in the streets; these criminals are the first people to provide for Oliver in his homeless state. Unfortunately, he finds them difficult to leave once he learns of their thieving.

Another jarring moment of homelessness in *Oliver Twist* does not directly follow Oliver's story line. Back in Oliver's hometown, Dickens describes the cold, unforgiving weather. He contrasts the comfortable people who will huddle together in their heated homes, thankful for the fire, with the poor and homeless who will freeze to death. Driving the point home, he alludes

that these circumstances under which they die are harsher than whatever may await them in the afterlife, regardless of the crimes they may have committed, indicating heaven or hell would be an improvement. A parish official Oliver knew at the workhouse, Mr. Bumble, complains of the greedy paupers dissatisfied with the parish's charitable offering of bread and cheese. He is outraged that they request coals for a fire instead of food. One pauper claims they will die in the streets without help, and so they are turned away only to die in the streets. "There's an obstinate pauper for you!" says Bumble of the death (Dickens, *Oliver Twist* 187). Bumble's outrage, contrasts Dickens's description of the weather, warning of homeless dying in the cold and the poor without fires to warm themselves. This stark contrast vilifies Bumble, who so disrespects the death of a homeless person. He claims that too much aid for the poor would make them only want more, with no end in sight. Dickens leads the reader to disagree with and dislike Bumble, showing that the poor and the homeless deserve a much kinder response.

Unhealthy Living Environment

In *Oliver Twist*, the quality of living environment gets a great deal of attention along with homelessness. When Oliver first comes to the pick pocketing den, Dickens does not provide a favorable description of the surrounding area. The part of town is dirty and full of lower-class people frequenting taverns and getting up to no good. The second time Oliver is brought to Fagin's hole, the reader enjoys a similarly dismal description of the inside. On the surface, the building is very dirty and in an extreme state of disrepair. Oliver spends a great deal of time alone in this gloomy place, finding mice and cobwebs abound. Beyond his isolation, there is also very little light in the house, with all the shutters boarded up, save one cloudy window. There is an impression that this decaying building was once grand, beautiful, and inviting, highlighting

the bleak depths of disrepair it has fallen to. Oliver suffers greatly from this stifling shelter, never allowed to breathe fresh air or interact with other people. While Oliver may have a roof over his head and food in his stomach, he does not receive human interaction, or the rejuvenating powers of fresh air and sunshine. This poor living environment would harm anyone, a fact that Fagin uses in an attempt to manipulate Oliver into joining the pick pocketing business. Oliver continually defies Fagin's designs, despite his starvation for human contact and the outdoors. This defiance speaks to Oliver's goodness, that he is a character worth pitying and who deserves better treatment.

A friend of Fagin, Monks, hides out in a different area that is similarly undesirable. The reader encounters this scene in Oliver's hometown, which follows the disliked Mr. Bumble. Bumble performs a shady business deal with Monks, and the area surrounding the hideout echoes the nature of the deal. Nearby houses are in ruins, and the land they are built upon is described as a "low unwholesome swamp" (Dickens, *Oliver Twist* 306). The people who live there are in cobbled together shacks on the riverbanks with decaying and unusable boats harbored at their doorsteps. Towering over this ruinous neighborhood is an old factory, falling apart and into the water. The weather lends to this unsightly scene, lightning pealing and rain pouring in the background. This hardly represents a comfortable and healthy living environment for the people living in the shacks, and Monks who hides among them. While this passage may not engender much sympathy due to the characters involved, it does expose the poor living conditions that many people must endure.

Another striking description of unhealthy built environment involves the unpleasant account of the public court in which prisoners are given a trial. The room is covered in a layer of scum, over-filled with prisoners, jurors, and spectators, and topped with a blackened ceiling. This

monument to justice does not give off a favorable impression or indicate much hope for the prisoners on the docket. The lack of care for this public structure indicates a lack of care for the people within it. With such a poor description of the public facing building, one can imagine the state of the prisons: beyond capacity and coated in grime.

The final description of a bad part of town comes near the end of the novel, when another friend of Fagin, Sikes, attempts to flee after murdering a young woman and friend of Oliver, Nancy. The neighborhood he flies to is on the banks of a river inlet. Here, the low and hiding members of society force their way into the empty, dirty, and decrepit buildings. The 'river' around this neighborhood often dries up. The inhabitants collect water when it is there, despite the questionable cleanliness of it. Up to this point, Dickens has provided numerous descriptions of bad parts of town, and this one seems to top them all. People of lowest status deal with the worst conditions, drinking dirty water and living in structures likely to fall. Again, this description does not include sympathetic characters, but instead shocks the reader with the squalor that can make up people's homes.

Illness

Oliver Twist is fraught with illness and death, which are often significant plot drivers. The story begins with Oliver's birth and by extension the first death of the story: his mother. She survives only long enough to see the first few minutes of Oliver's life. After a long journey on foot, she is exhausted by a lack of food, shelter, and rest. She had pushed herself as far as possible, but ultimately succumbs to the want for food and over exposure to the elements. This first death, so driven by lack of vital resources, sets the tone for Oliver's life and initiates the

reader's sympathetic response to him. There are a number of other illnesses and deaths brought forth by these same environmental stressors.

By the time Oliver leaves his hometown, the reader becomes well acquainted with death and illness. As Oliver grows up, he moves from the parish children's home to the workhouse. Many children and workers die of malnourishment in these institutions. The people in power at these parish-run institutions often decry the burden the sick and dying paupers place on the parish. For example, when Mr. Bumble explains a parish decision regarding the sick paupers in their care, it is only in the context of a burden and not one of human need. When a pauper dies, the parish must pay for their funeral. To avoid such an extravagant expense, they pay to move sick paupers into another parish. Though it does cost to move them, it comes out cheaper, for this parish at least. Two paupers in transit enjoy the luxury of covered travel as they are moved from Bumble's parish to another one; the cheap rates of covered travel are thanks to a bargain with the other parish. Under normal circumstances, they would transport sick paupers in open carts and rainy weather. Such flagrant disregard for human health, and describing the ill as a nuisance to be offloaded, amplifies the piteous state these paupers are in. Such exposure to the elements would only make them sicker, despite what Mr. Bumble expresses. His lack of care for them as humans is reflected in his threatened transportation treatment of them.

After Oliver leaves the workhouse and before he flees from his hometown, an undertaker brings him on as an apprentice, where he constantly encounters illness and death. In the funeral business, Oliver learns his appointed trade through attending funerals and the needs associated with this service. In one traumatic scene, the reader accompanies Oliver's first visit to a dead person's home. Coming up to this home, Dickens describes a rough part of town which is falling apart, with homeless people tucked away in the crevices and a stagnant gutter scattered with

decaying rats that are “hideous with famine.” (Dickens, *Oliver Twist* 41). The dead person’s home further reflects the poor neighborhood. Oliver even sees a reflection of the rats in the husband and mother of the dead person. The husband raves about how she starved to death; he does not want his wife buried because the worms would have nothing of her to eat. This account of her death is in stark contrast to how Mr. Bumble, the parish officer, described her cause of death. Bumble complains of how the husband refused lifesaving medicine, claiming that it would not help her, therefore leading to her death. Perhaps enough food would have been a more effective medicine, particularly administered before she came down with the fever to begin with. Without adequate nourishment, people are more likely to fall sick, and less adept to handle illness. Researchers Peter Katona, and Judit Katona-Apte explain the connection between malnutrition and illness, “Malnutrition is the primary cause of immunodeficiency worldwide, with infants, children, adolescents, and the elderly most affected” (Katona and Katona-Apte).

The perspective of a funeral business on death and disease provides many cold and inhumane observations. For example, when a person dies young, they need a smaller coffin. Also, when adults die small and frail from malnourishment, they need smaller coffins than healthy adults. These small coffins reduce the cost of building materials for a funeral home and provide a benefit to that business from the suffering of the dead. Also, when coffins are in high demand, “business is good,” like when a measles outbreak runs through the community. The measles outbreak kills children at rates never seen in living memory, and the coffins are small and cost efficient. These moments call into question who stands to benefit from mistreatment and neglect of the poor, and what is their position of power? Like how the funeral home benefits from high death rates and small coffins, the parish saves money on food, clothing, and heating

when they disregard the basic needs of their poor. The paupers have no one to speak for them, and when they do speak for themselves, they are attacked for having a bad attitude.

Throughout his sad early life in his hometown, Oliver has only one friend, Dick, who is of a sickly nature. On the eve of his departure, he visits this friend for the last time. In this final meeting, Dick tells Oliver that he is dying, kissing him, and sending him off with a blessing. The emotional goodbye and blessing leave an impression on Oliver for the rest of his life. It strikes him because he had never been blessed before, and his young friend spoke with such pure love and devotion that he felt the blessing deeply. Oliver does not learn of Dick's death until the end of the novel, but Dick himself and the reader clearly see that the end is not far off for him. This amplifies the gravity of the young, pure soul's death and provokes a strong desire to see Oliver avoid that fate. It reminds the audience that Oliver's fate could easily be the same under the inadequate charity of the parish.

After leaving Dick, Oliver arrives in London, where he will encounter his first serious illness. In London, he is taken in by Fagin and his pick pocketing crew. Fagin sees him as a tool for his use and is unconcerned for Oliver's welfare. Then something lucky happens: Oliver gets picked up by the cops. He is saved from jail time by the first person in his life to take care of him. Oliver experiences a traumatic episode at the jailhouse, fainting from the stress of the situation which initiates a serious bout of sickness. All the trials he has faced so far in his story culminate in this sickness which only comes about when he can finally rest in safe hands. Before Oliver initially faints, his last request is for some water, and when he comes back to his senses, many days later, his first request is the same. Oliver suffers many deficiencies throughout his story, and none are more apparent than the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, and water. At last, Oliver quenches his thirst and lives for a short while with all his needs met, even those

beyond the basic ones. He is nursed back to health by a stable and caring environment. Without this care, he perhaps would have died from his severe fever. Perhaps also without this care, he would have staved off illness from the instinctual knowledge that he might not survive it without such exhaustive attentions.

Oliver once again finds himself captured by Fagin and his friends only to be separated from them and is left in a sickly state. This separation arises after Oliver is forced to participate in a house break which goes awry; Oliver is wounded and abandoned in the flight from their pursuers. He wakes from unconsciousness, cold, wet, and in serious pain. He slowly and painstakingly makes his way to the house his captors attempted to rob, as it is the closest place where he could beg for help. He grows weaker with every step, depleting his last reserves of energy. He knocks, and collapses at their door, helpless to their mercy. In this scene, Oliver skirts close to death, but is thankfully taken in by some new and well-intentioned friends. Again, Oliver finds himself very ill and nursed back to health by kind strangers. His exposure to the elements in an already weakened state makes for a stubborn fever and a lengthy healing process. When a person is in a weakened state, like Oliver who was injured, seemingly minor environmental factors like the weather and traveling in it can combine to have drastic implications. Similar to the earlier sick stay with the kind stranger, Oliver's second serious illness further emphasizes how healing is much more productive in a stable and caring environment.

Oliver fully recovers and grows to be a part of this Maylie household who took him in; unfortunately, there is another illness which the Maylies encounter after nursing Oliver back to health. They retire to the country, experiencing the splendor of the great outdoors during spring and summer. With Oliver's illness behind them, another member of the household falls sick: a

young woman, Rose, who is described as even tempered, good natured, kind, and beautiful. Her character seems like a perfect woman. Rose's illness comes on quickly and severely, holding a sharp contrast with the beauty of the countryside summer. The scene with a sudden illness of a young, healthy woman, brings along with it some interesting reflections. Beautiful nature functions as a foil to the tragedy of life-threatening illness. Oliver cries about how someone so good could be allowed to come to such a sad end. He struggles with the dichotomy that the world can still be beautiful while the good lay dying. As Rose declines, she at first denies feeling poorly, then she admits to it, all while believing that a good night's rest will restore her. The next day finds her much worse with no improvement in sight.

Another illness, this time involves Bill Sikes, who forced Oliver to be an accomplice to a home robbery and then left him to die wounded in the cold and wet. Unlike Rose and Oliver, and even the sweeping descriptions of the poor suffering from sickness, Sikes does not evoke the same sense of pity and compassion. He takes out his foul mood upon Nancy, who is also in a weakened state and faints from the abuse. Sikes's illness and Nancy's weakness appear tied to lack of money for sustenance. Dickens describes Sikes as having a death-like appearance, which foreshadows his impending death later in the novel. This same evening, Nancy follows Fagin to get some much-needed cash, and eavesdrops on a conversation between Fagin and Monks plotting against Oliver. This knowledge drives Nancy to reach out to Rose Maylie in an effort to help Oliver. In this action she betrays Sikes and Fagin, which leads to her eventual murder and Sikes's foreshadowed reckoning.

Unnatural Woman

A young woman who grew up under Fagin's watch, Nancy, goes against what is expected of her by Fagin and company. Nancy drags Oliver back to Fagin, despite his wishes. She immediately regrets what she had done and goes to great lengths to protect Oliver after his arrival. She flies into a frenzied rage to protect Oliver from physical abuse. This wild frenzy evolves into a distinct remorse for her part in returning him to Fagin. Fagin and Sikes, her lover, cannot appease her fury. The episode only comes to an end when Nancy falls into a fainting fit. Sikes comments on her arm strength when she is in this frenzied state, and throughout the scene both men seem afraid of her. In her moment of strength and power, fueled by her feminine rage, she is fearful and crazy to the male onlookers. In contrast, she seems heroic to poor Oliver, whose cause she is taking up. In a later scene Nancy has another fit of passion like this protective rage. She is held captive and furious because she urgently needs to leave on an errand to save Oliver from falling back into Fagin's hands. Once the outburst subsides, Fagin and Sikes talk of attempts to tame her, and consider that this episode could be caused by a fever. From this male perspective, female rage can only be explained away as illness or seen as a negative trait to be tamed out of. These assertions indicate something wrong with such passion, something to correct for. Nancy is an imperfect character with a rough past who played a critical part in involving Oliver with these people who seek to harm him. To compensate for the wrongs she has done, she must do good in this urgent and frenzied way.

Racialization

There are two notable instances of racist descriptions in *Oliver Twist*. When Oliver is first brought to Fagin's den, Dickens describes the part of town as dirty and in disrepair, as discussed

in the unhealthy living environment section. One part of that description includes the kind of people who frequent this area: “the lowest orders of Irish (who are generally the lowest orders of anything)” (Dickens, *Oliver Twist* 63). This off-hand statement, not made by any character, indicates a connection between the Irish and poor, unclean living environments.

The other trend of racialization centers on one character’s identity as a Jew. Fagin, head of the pickpocketing troupe, plays a decidedly antagonistic role in Oliver’s story. This great villain, who ends the novel awaiting his turn at the gallows, is frequently described as “the old Jew.” Fagin, like the Irish briefly mentioned, lives in poverty and is housed by dirty and neglected living spaces. Dickens’s choice to reiterate and emphasize the Jewishness of this character was even criticized at the time of publication. Maria Paganoni discusses how Dickens represents the Jewishness of this character and mentions the remonstrations Dickens received from an acquaintance for the disservice he had done to Jews. Years later, he removes most mentions of ‘Jew’ from *Oliver Twist* and includes a positively characterized Jewish character in a later novel (Paganoni). These years later corrections do not undo the damage of portraying Fagin as a one-dimensional villain, and the strong connection between him and his Jewishness.

Despite the sympathy drummed up by Oliver’s character and the good that does for orphans, the poor, and unhoused people, these racist undertones must be acknowledged and condemned. However, the poverty of these groups and the unhealthy living environments they are surrounded by present the opportunity to recognize the impact of their low status in society of the time.

Interactions with Animals

In *Oliver Twist,* there are numerous examples of animal abuse. An early instance of animal abuse in the novel is when the reader catches a brief glimpse of Oliver's would-be apprentice master. The character rolls into the scene with his donkey, verbally and physically abusing the animal. This abuse delights of one of the parish officials who holds a particularly bad opinion of Oliver. Oliver senses that this man would mistreat him and begs not to be apprenticed to him. If Oliver had gone with him, his trade would have been chimney sweeping, a hazardous field for a child's lungs. The reader comes to learn this man abuses and neglects the boys in his apprenticeship, to the point of causing multiple deaths. So, the behavior towards the donkey turns out to be a good indicator of how the man treats humans as well. Animal abuse is used by Dickens to signal a bad character. This encourages the reader to associate animal abuse in general with a bad character with no remorse for harming animals or, by extension, humans.

Just as the chimney sweep's donkey abuse foreshadows child abuse, Bill Sikes's dog abuse indicates generally violent tendencies in him as well. There are multiple instances where Sikes physically harms his pet dog, Bull's Eye. At times the dog takes it, and at others it fights back. With this pattern of abuse, the dog exhibits violent behavior towards the other humans around it. When Fagin 'lends' Oliver to Sikes for the house break in, Sikes takes advantage of this aggressive behavior in Bull's Eye to keep Oliver in line.

The violent relationship between Sikes and his dog informs the violent relationship between Sikes and Nancy. In the scenes where these two characters interact, Sikes verbally abuses Nancy, with threats of violence. By the end of the novel, Sikes's violent behavior towards her culminates in murder. Following the murder, Bull's Eye follows Sikes during his flight, and draws attention to him. To remove this attention, Sikes attempts to drown the dog. This attempt

is unsuccessful, and the dog runs off to the location of Sikes's ultimate hiding attempt, predicting his master's arrival. Bull's Eye's presence possibly gives away the hideout to the mob who are hunting Sikes and seek retribution for the murder. When Sikes accidentally hangs himself in front of the mob, the dog also jumps to its death, fulfilling the violent relationship to the end.

There is one more, smaller mention of animal abuse, regarding Mr. Bumble. Bumble attempts to woo the workhouse mistress, hoping to gain financially from their union. As he whispers sweet nothings, he professes that he would kill cats for her, a strange sweet nothing to say the least. Specifically, if the cats did not enjoy their mistress's company, they must be drowned. This gives pause to the reader and sends similar connected messages between Bumble's attitude towards animal abuse and the poor treatment of humans as well. Though, he does not perform this abuse, rather just talks about it. This distinction also mirrors Bumble's blustery character, whose unpleasant words and opinions do not predispose him to act.

Conclusion

The story of *Oliver Twist* has long been a champion of the poor, particularly poor children. Upon further reflection, the sympathy Dickens encourages can be extended and specified to the environmental themes covered in this chapter. The pity for Oliver's constant state of hunger, lends to pity for all those who are hungry and malnourished. The poor treatment Oliver receives while homeless calls into question the mistreatment of houseless people at large. Unhealthy living environments negatively impact Oliver, and the reader can extend that understanding to the many people who similarly live in squalor. As Oliver falls ill, the contributing factors leading to his illnesses are felt by disadvantaged people everywhere. Side characters circumvent societal expectations of women from the time, they are racialized, and

their actions around animals all send messages to the reader on who the characters are. All the hardships faced by Oliver and others question how society's structure and institutions serve those who need help the most. This story invites the reader to look critically at those institutions and structures and demand that they change for the better.

The Process of *Great Expectations*

Great Expectations was the fourth and final book of my thesis, and I fought to keep it on the roster. In order to include this novel, I needed to extend my thesis timeline beyond the allotted schedule. I initially set out to work with two Brontë novels and two Dickens novels, so I wanted to make that happen. Also, after getting a taste of Dickens in *Oliver Twist*, I couldn't leave *Great Expectations* behind. I followed the same method as with the previous book, down to the same focus on grouping by theme rather than chronology. By the time I was working with this final book, the whole process came much more naturally. This brought forward a greater depth of analysis right from the start. Thanks to this streamlined method and my own growth in writing, I wrote up as much for one theme in *Great Expectations* as I had for the entire analysis of the other novels. Both Dickens novels I worked with intimidated me with how much I found in them, and I know there is more I can say of both. In the end, I am so happy I chose to include *Great Expectations* because of all I learned from it and all I still have yet to learn.

V.

Great Expectations

Introduction

Great Expectations was originally published in serial format from December 1860 to August 1861. This makes it the latest book analyzed in this thesis. Charles Dickens wrote this work over twenty years after *Oliver Twist*, with many novels and short stories in between. This story is perhaps not quite as well known, but it is still widely read around the globe. *Great Expectations* follows the life of Pip from his childhood up to middle age, with most of the story spent with him as he grows up and into early adulthood. He is raised to be a blacksmith, but life changes dramatically when a mysterious benefactor lifts him up into high society and alludes to the great expectations of his future. One of the main plot lines follows Pip's pursuit of his unrequited love. The other follows his connection with a prison escapee who he was frightened into stealing food for as a child. Pip's story is one primarily of growth. It is a growth that happens slowly enough to bring the reader along in the changes of character that occur.

This chapter will discuss *Great Expectations* from the perspective of the most prominent environmental and social themes identified. The first and longest section will focus on how the prison system is represented throughout the novel. Following prisons, the chapter will analyze the unhealthy living environments described in the story, and the implications of who lives in them. The analysis then moves on to what instances of illness are present, and the factors leading to those sicknesses. From there, the 'unnatural woman' trope will be examined in relation to three female characters who circumvent norms in different ways throughout the novel. After

taking on these female characters, the chapter will look at a few mentions of race in the novel. Finally, the chapter will conclude with how the characters interact with and are compared to animals.

Prison System

From the very first pages of *Great Expectations*, Dickens focuses on Britain's criminal justice system. The first scene of the novel introduces young Pip being frightened by an escaped convict, Magwitch, whose relationship with Pip supplies the major plot points of the story. He is shown in a very bad light, from Pip's perspective. Dirty, ravenous, throwing the young boy around and threatening violence, the opening creates a negative association with Magwitch. However, as evil as his behavior towards young Pip may seem, the driving force behind it stems from starvation. He eats the bread he finds on Pip "ravenously," sees the boy as a source of food, and is willing to do anything to stave off his hunger, including violently threaten a child. Later, terrified and fearing for his life, Pip steals food from his home for Magwitch. Self-preservation is what compels both Pip and Magwitch to violate rules, and these necessary violations cement the connection between them, creating a link between the relatable first-person protagonist, Pip, to the unrelatable 'other,' Magwitch.

A few pages later, Pip delivers nourishment and a metal file Magwitch demands, and here Pip describes more viscerally Magwitch's need for food. There is the distinctly dog-like manner of eating along with the urgent need to eat even if death is nigh. Magwitch emphasizes the importance of food over any illness he may be taking on from exposure to the harsh climate in which he eats. Witnessing Magwitch's hunger, Pip's terror lessens and he comes to pity him. He

grows concerned for him, worried about him falling ill, and is happy to see the starved man so appreciating the food. As Pip softens towards Magwitch, so does the reader.

The next day, young Pip travels with the party of officers and bystanders who find Magwitch. In this last childhood encounter, Pip is freed from repercussions of his theft by Magwitch's confession to stealing the food. This confession surprises Pip's guardian, Joe. Despite his surprise, Joe expresses that he would gladly have given the food, "We don't know what you have done, but we wouldn't have you starve to death for it." (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 40). Joe's honest humanity, to the reader, lessens Pip's wrongdoing, though he does still keep it a secret. Throughout the novel, especially as Pip grows into an adult, Joe stands out as a shining example of simple goodness. So, Joe's humane value judgement regarding Magwitch lines up with a good and humane response for anyone to have.

From this point, there is a large gap in the story where Pip tries to forget about his childhood adventure, and the exciting tale fades into the background. When he goes to London after learning of his mysterious fortune, he seeks out his appointed guardian, Mr. Jaggers. At Jaggers's establishment, the reader infers from the hovering characters who also want to see Jaggers, that these clientele are of a criminal reputation. Waiting to meet Jaggers himself, Pip's first stroll around the city includes Newgate Prison. He describes the people waiting around, as trials are underway in the prison, as dirty and smelling of alcohol. He sees the gallows and learns of the executions to come, disturbed by the scene. Pip's disgust is expanded to include his guide, wearing mildewed clothes he believes came from the unfortunate visitors to the gallows. These first moments in London are hardly favorable, and this introduction to the world surrounding his guardian serve to instill fear and a desire to distance himself from places like Newgate, despite being so intertwined with them.

Another association Pip makes with Jaggers's clientele is that of their greasy shoulders. In that first trip to the Jaggers establishment, Pip notes marks along the back wall of Mr. Jaggers's room, presumably made by greasy shoulders pressing as far away from the powerful man as possible. He also notes later that the stairwell outside his room carries the same marks. The effect of this recurring detail is two-fold – it associates Mr. Jaggers's house of law with filth, and a gradual buildup of filth over the years of operation. More importantly, that dirtiness comes from his clients and the class of people who seek his services. The greasy, unkempt, accused criminals taint the place with their repeated presence.

Also a feature in Mr. Jaggers's room, are two grotesque busts, which greatly disturb Pip. We later learn that those busts are actually cast from two clients who were committed and hung, after their death, thus amplifying the disgust (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 200n2). There are other little reminders of the clients whose trial end in the gallows, notably the mourning rings his assistant, Wemmick receives as gifts from these deceased. Wemmick collects these rings as an investment in "portable property," which he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of. These relics of clients who met their unfortunate end leave a physical and monetary impression on Jaggers's workplace, reminding the reader how many of the clients do reach that end, lending further insight into the kind of person who typically frequents the Jaggers law house.

Though he displays busts of his dead clients and chooses to work with similar people every day, Jaggers also "washes his clients off, as if he were a surgeon or a dentist" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 210). Pip explains in detail how after each client meeting or trial, Jaggers goes into a closet in his office which houses a wash up station and washes his hands. The particular hand washing event that Pip describes, Jaggers "seemed to have engaged on a case of a darker complexion than usual…" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 210). Extending beyond a mere

hand wash and towel dry, Jaggers also washes his face, gargles, and scrapes the dirt out from under his nails. The association between a bad case and one of a "dark complexion" suggests a racial association. At the very least, this statement connects badness with a dark complexion, continuing the theme established by the image of the greasy shoulder stains on the walls. The broad take-home for the reader is that Mr. Jaggers works with dirty, lower class criminals. What drives Jaggers to work with these people whom he must so vigorously wash his hands of?

Outside the Jaggers' law house, Pip encounters two convicts and casually talks with his friend, Herbert, who notices Pip's discomfort in their presence. Pip claims disinterest in them, while Herbert takes a clearer stance "What a degraded and vile sight it is!" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 226). As Pip is to travel alongside these convicts, he recognizes a connection between one of them and the convict who frightened him as a child, Magwitch. In describing to the reader the state of the convicts, Pip calls them "mangy," "ungainly," and "lower animals," mentally agreeing with Herbert's assessment. He describes the distinctive scent that hangs around them as a combination of the type of fabric their clothes are made of, the bread and water mixture used to treat wounds in prison, and the smells associated with their labors: breaking rocks and separating old ropes (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 227n1). Aside from Pip and Herbert, other bystanders also make their unfavorable views of convicts known. Another traveler refuses to sit near them, as if they are contaminated. The convicts respond in kind, "*I* don't want to go. *I* am quite ready to stay behind. As fur as I am concerned any one's welcome to *my* place" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 228). Pip thinks he would feel much the same, having no control over his situation and being so degraded by everyone. These responses to convicts and of convicts show their low status. They are likened to animals, as when Pip saw Magwitch's eating as dog-like.

Pip next encounters people in the prison system during an impromptu field trip to Newgate Prison with his friend and underling of his guardian, Wemmick. It is frequently referred to also as a jail. It is unclear whether a distinction between the two terms exists in this text. The prisoners have visitors which Pip observes, finding the visitations unorganized and depressing. In setting the scene at Newgate, jails are described as neglected, their living conditions as comparable to those of soldiers and paupers, hinting at the contemporary 1861 Chatham Prison riot over poor food quality and living conditions (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 260n1). The living conditions of prisoners is portrayed as so poor as to encourage unrest.

As Pip tours Newgate, he feels that Wemmick looks at the jailed Jaggers clients as crops that he tends to. This "gardening" metaphor extends throughout the scene in Wemmick's interactions with the prisoners. Wemmick is surprised at seeing a new and familiar face behind bars, giving his attention to the newcomer, as he would to a new shoot. He also cultivates "portable property" in the form of trained pigeons from an inmate soon to face capital punishment, as a plant which bears fruit at the end of its life. Pip describes the end of Wemmick's meeting with this inmate as such: "he looked back, and nodded at this dead plant, and then cast his eyes about him in walking out of the yard, as if he were considering what other pot would go best in its place" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 262). When Wemmick gains something from the dying plant/inmate and scans for what plant/inmate might next follow suit, it turns the green plenty of the "garden" metaphor into a deadly brown. This metaphor also dehumanizes the inmates whose survival is reliant upon Wemmick's attention. Pip meets Estella shortly afterwards and wishes he did not have the place hanging about him still. This negativity highlights the darkness in the vivid green growth associated with the "gardening" metaphor.

Up until the end of the second volume, Pip's connections with the prison system have been unpleasant reminders to him of a frightful and shameful experience in his childhood, rather than the focus of the story. Rather, the story line was tied up more so with Estella, his unrequited love. So, when Pip discovers that his rise to fortune is not attached to Estella as he presumed but instead with that childhood event and the reminders of it, he is completely taken aback, and so is the reader. The truth of his fortune comes to light when Magwitch, the prison escapee he stole food for in his youth, shows up to Pip's home in secret and announces that he is his benefactor. Beyond shock, Pip is disturbed to learn of his deep connection to a man whose life was so marked by crime. When Magwitch lays a hand on Pip's shoulder, Pip can only think of how it may be tainted with blood. Magwitch, in contrast holds a strong affection for Pip, the boy who saw enough humanity in him on the moors to save him from hunger. For the final volume of the book, Pip's connection with Magwitch openly defines the end of the story, as it had covertly defined it throughout the novel.

When Pip asks Magwitch what he was brought up to be, the response is a simple and telling word, a "varmint" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 330). Magwitch is well aware of the place he was born in society and feels that this status encouraged his life of crime. He had no height to fall from and learned nothing with which to raise himself. Magwitch believes that, despite what character he may have, because he was brought up to be nothing more than "vermin," then that is what he was destined to be. Magwitch assigns responsibility for his life of crime on how he was nurtured from childhood. The term "varmint" holds unclean and disease carrying associations. This self-labeling also acknowledges that people do not want to associate with him for fear of contamination, like they would shy away from "vermin." Pip also seeks details on the crime spurring Magwitch's last trial, and he responds shortly, explaining that his

crime was already paid for. Magwitch, and everyone else in the criminal justice system are often judged by the results of their trials and by their association with that system in general. Though Magwitch is a "varmint" and cannot escape that judgment, he rejects the specificity of that final judgment. While Magwitch judges himself as "vermin" and rejects judgement from others from crimes he had paid for, he also imposes judgement upon others, based on the same society that misunderstands him. Before Pip introduces Herbert, his friend and roommate, Magwitch expresses that he will see if he likes the look of him to decide whether or not he was trustworthy. This emphasizes his own warped sense of self-worth.

As Pip seeks out a suitable disguise for Magwitch, whose presence in England is a crime penalized by death, he finds that no clothing or hairstyle can mask the convict ingrained in him. He sees Magwitch's unfortunate past in his rugged appearance, how he walks, eats, looks around, and sits. Driven by a lifetime of want which so colored their first meeting, Magwitch finishes every meal by soaking the bread in the remainders and swirling up every last morsel of food. This, and many other examples, Pip perceives as clear indicators of the institutions Magwitch spent most of his life in and out of.

With Herbert approved by Magwitch, the two young men learn the details of his life. He describes his first memories of thieving turnips and being abandoned. He spent his childhood in and out of jail, picked out as a hardened criminal at a young age. Notably, his young head was measured for the false science, phrenology, which associates a person's skull shape with their personality (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 346n1). Magwitch makes the comment that they would have understood his recurring incarcerations if they had measured his stomach instead of his head; he needed to eat and was provided no alternative methods to feed himself. Of his early adulthood, he mentions that very little time was spent doing honest work thanks to his criminal

record. From Magwitch's story, his criminal past exists because he needed to feed himself to survive, and after entering the criminal justice system it is difficult to truly depart from it. His life was the victim of poor circumstance, constantly reinforced with every booking at the local jail. While Magwitch does not claim to be a saint, he grows increasingly more sympathetic to Pip and the reader.

Eventually, Magwitch was taken in by someone who found a use for him because of his criminal record. This someone, a man of higher stakes crimes, seemingly took in Magwitch as a person to settle the blame on if his schemes fell apart. Of this one-sided partnership, Magwitch refers to himself as like a slave, hopelessly intertwined and indebted to do the bidding of his keeper. The reader, who now may be warming to Magwitch, could also extend those feelings to enslaved people. When this partnership comes to a trial, Magwitch takes on double the sentence of his partner. His partner is greatly aided by his good upbringing, in a part of society far removed from the likes of Magwitch. Magwitch needed to eat, which ultimately led him down a path of crime and to the penal colony in Australia where he made his fortune. The other man had an expensive gambling hobby that required clever and complicated plots to fund, which gave him a few years in prison, and a social life waiting for him on the other side. One is the eternal convict and the other merely a gentleman who had fallen in with the wrong sort. The result of the trial drives home the message that the criminal justice system best serves the already well-off members of society and punishes the lower status individuals for their lack of privilege.

Pip discovers that Estella is Magwitch's biological child and knowing that Jaggers placed Estella with Miss Havisham, Pip questions him about this knowledge. To this inquiry, Jaggers opens a window into how he views the world he works in, though not explicitly associating himself with the description. He describes the evil of the business, and the poor children raised

within that world with no chance to leave its sphere of influence. He saw the fate of the children as, "so much spawn, to develop into the fish that were to come into his net," (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 413). This net symbolizes the legal services he provides, indicating that these children are destined to be criminally investigated, and similarly destined to pay Jaggers for their best chance at freedom. Jaggers saw that young Estella could be saved from this fate and placed her with the wealthy Miss Havisham. Yet he will come to profit from all the children not as lucky as Estella. The Jaggers business could not survive without his clients, nor could it if every case against them ends in the gallows. The way Jaggers talks of the children in this circle brings to mind the "gardening" metaphor Pip attached to Wemmick earlier. Wemmick befriends the clients and gains from them even in death, and Jaggers whisks away a child when the opportunity presents itself, yet profits off more children falling into his snare.

Pip's bond with Magwitch grows while Magwitch goes into a long period of hiding in London. At the end of this period, he and Pip begin their attempted escape from England for Magwitch's safety. After being isolated in a small apartment for months, Magwitch relishes the fresh air and appreciates the freedom of being outside and with Pip. He claims to appreciate this freedom to a degree that Pip cannot understand. Pip attempts to refute this claim, but Magwitch has the final word. He knows what depths the absence of freedom can be, and therefore feels the difference between captivity and freedom to a much greater extent. This reminds Pip and the reader of what Magwitch has gone through. It also encourages the reader to realize the freedoms they have and the value of freedom for everyone, even incarcerated people.

Unfortunately, the escape goes awry when Magwitch's old enemy from his last trial hunts down their escape boat. When their boats come in contact, a very dramatic scene ensues. Magwitch grabs his enemy at the same time a larger ship runs into one of their smaller boats.

This impact sends the struggling men overboard, with only Magwitch returning to the surface. He is immediately cuffed by the wrists and ankles, despite his visible injuries. This action of placing restraints upon an injured person shows a lack of empathy. Magwitch is seen as nothing more than a criminal, and by extension criminals are undeserving of pity. Once ashore, they head to a nearby tavern, where Pip is allowed to dress the wounds of his manacled friend. With news of a drowned man, one bystander goes out to search for the body. Pip suspects the man will pillage clothing from the body, thus adding to their outfit which Pip assumes was gradually acquired by similar means. This comparison harkens back to Pip's first impression of the gallows, that the man who provided the tour clothed himself cheaply from the dead. These assumptions are unkind to the people in question; this disturbing idea exists in order to degrade them further in his eyes. The idea does hint at how a person may still be taken advantage of and disrespected even in death.

With the unfortunate news of the failed flight, Wemmick comes to visit Pip, apologizing for his misguided advice on what day to make the attempt. However, his first words mourn the loss of Magwitch's fortune, or his "portable property" as Wemmick likes to call it. Pip responds with a greater concern for the person, and Wemmick rationalizes that the money could have been saved, while Magwitch it seems could not. Wemmick is sympathetic to Magwitch and Pip, to the point that he would put his own money down to save their unfortunate friend. Yet, he still reverts back to the mindset that human loss holds an opportunity for monetary gain. Magwitch's efforts to remain hidden were largely under Wemmick's guidance, clearly showing his investment in saving the man, at least for Pip's sake.

Magwitch is locked up in the prison infirmary, shackleless, thanks to his severely deteriorating health, and Pip visits as often as he is allowed. At the trial, he is condemned to die.

The judge tells the story of Magwitch from the law's eye, of a person constantly breaking the law and running from it. The law tells how he seemed to change for the better once transported to Australia, by earning an honest living. The story concludes with his disgraced return and attempted flight where he was implicated in the death of his enemy. The description includes terms like: "scourge," "miserable," "wretched," and "violence" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 457). Pip holds Magwitch's hand, who sits to best preserve his life. His life is preserved so he can hear his death sentence. During the trial and judgement, Pip notices in great detail the rainy day that gives way to sunlight streaming through the droplets and onto the damned. He sees how in the eyes of England, Magwitch was always a blemish on society, irredeemable. In his own eyes, Pip sees a kind and loving man, who was so thrown in the way of bad, that he never had the chance to be much otherwise. Pip sees in Magwitch's eyes that he feels himself to be the "varmint" he was brought up as, but one an innocent boy had seen goodness in, and continues to see goodness in. To the well-dressed onlookers, Pip feels Magwitch is a mere spectacle to them. Magwitch dies in the infirmary before his sentence can be carried out, with Pip at his side. Being tried for death at such a low state of health calls into question the reason behind such judgement. What harm would this dying man pose to society if he were not sentenced to death? There is a tone of inevitability in the judge's monologue. This indicates Magwitch was destined for this end from his earliest memories of stealing turnips to fill his empty stomach. That course might have been corrected at any point in his history, with a little effort to open doors and encourage gainful employment. This lack of reintegration effort harmed Magwitch, as it continues to harm people today.

Magwitch today would have similarly stayed in or near the criminal justice system his whole life. With decreasing use of capital punishment, he at least would less likely face that end.

The reader learns from Magwitch that despite a gruff and frightening appearance, he deserves our sympathy and understanding, that he is a product of the low place in society he was born into and a lack of aid thereafter. He strongly associates his crimes with filling his stomach, and complains of hunger within the prison walls, highlighting the poor living conditions of convicts. His attachment to Pip shows how far a little compassion can go, inviting readers to extend empathy towards others who need compassion just as badly.

Unhealthy Living Environment

While the prison system may be the largest and most significant theme in this novel, there are a few other notable categories. Unclean and polluted environments make a regular appearance in *Great Expectations*. They take the form mostly of the characters' places of shelter, and in the human influence on the environment. Pip grows up in a country marshland town, and most of his descriptions of these dirty environments center around London, where he moves as an adult. However, shelter in the countryside can also fall into neglect. One of the rural spaces, is the home of Miss Havisham, a wealthy, eccentric woman who requests Pip as a playmate to her adopted daughter, Estella. Pip describes one room with great attention to its neglect: spiders and mice crawl about, mold grows, dust collects, the air is stale, and the fire smokes in its damp fireplace. Pip is impressed by a sense of former grandeur, fallen into neglect. This description shows the incredibly unhealthy environment Miss Havisham lives in and reinforces the unsettling first impression she and her home make upon him. Though Miss Havisham can afford to live in a clean, healthy space, she does not because of her mental condition, showing the impact of mental illness upon physical health and their interconnectedness.

When Pip first comes to London, his first impressions are similar to that of Miss Havisham – overwhelming and dirty. The first home he enters, bolsters this unfavorable impression of city life. He describes Barnard's Inn, home of Herbert and eventual home of Pip himself, as decaying, rotting, and pest ridden. He comments on the layers of soot and ash, and later will describe rain falling on the Barnard's Inn window panes as "sooty tears" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 219). Herbert's abode, in contrast to that of fallen grandeur and disrepair of Miss Havisham's, is sparingly and cheaply furnished. While Miss Havisham has the means to change her unhealthy living space, Herbert clearly lives in this dirty, sooty space because he can afford nothing else. This highlights the forced exposure to unhealthy living conditions that the poor must endure. Even Herbert's workplace is described as grimy, showing how Herbert's entire daily life exists within unclean spaces.

One shelter description coincides with a stressful moment in Pip's life, emphasizing and adding to his distress. Pip spends the night in a public house after he receives a cryptic warning not to return home from Wemmick. There is nothing obviously unclean in the public house, however his imagination plays tricks on him. He stares at the ceiling, picturing all the insects and creatures that must lay dormant there, imagining the sensation of their falling on top of him. He imagines his bed is the same one of a man who destroyed himself and was found in a pool of blood. These fancies do not speak directly to the quality of the shelter, but instead to his internal turmoil, and how Pip projects his unhealthy frame of mind onto the space he is in.

Just before Pip meets Magwitch again and discovers him to be his benefactor, he describes an extended period of inclement weather. Pip tells of the London streets deep with mud, and violent winds tearing the lead from city roofs. Lead debris in rainy weather sounds alarms for a modern reader that Dickens may not have foreseen. While lead has been

acknowledged as poisonous since the Roman empire, understanding in Dickens's time would not have covered this kind of exposure. Since Dickens, we have reduced the use of leaded fuels and lead paint because of how the repeated low-level exposure was connected to poisoning (Needleman). Today we understand the impacts of water runoff pollution. During this storm, the lead roof debris will increase the amount of lead in the waterways, and in drinking water. To the modern reader, this mention of lead roofing ripping away from the buildings in a dense city like London, highlights the health threats city dwellers face. In describing this storm, Pip also mentions the impact on the countryside, citing upended trees and windmills, and tales of shipwrecks along the coast. The harm caused in rural areas contrasts with London because it is focused more on the elements and less on the human structures that fail under such stress. Beyond the broad scene this inclement weather sets, in Pip's personal life, this stormy weather brings Magwitch to his doorstep. This meeting, their first since Pip's boyhood, produces the unwanted realization that Magwitch is his benefactor. When Magwitch appears, Pip responds in shock and horror, with pouring rain and thrashing wind in the background. The violent weather reflects Pip's inner turmoil upon receiving the news.

Pip later describes another unhealthy mix of the built environment and the nature it coexists alongside. He passes by dry docks and shipyards while looking for Magwitch's hideout, and describes them unfavorably. Along the water he notes, "what ooze and slime and other dregs of tide," (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 374) and the pulled apart ships rest their rusty and unused anchors on the docks. Pip wanders this area distractedly, worried, but in a calmer state of mind than he had been the night before when he could not return home and didn't yet know why. Another similar description happens when Pip and his friends attempt to get Magwitch out of England via boat. They row through the port, avoiding rusty cables, wooden debris, and notably,

coal scum (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 436). These descriptions show London's impact on the river in a negative, unhealthy light, further emphasizing the pollutive capacity of the city.

Just before this flight, Pip finds himself back in the country, responding to the request of a blackmailer. He approaches the appointed meeting location, a secluded hut, and notes the dilapidated state of the structure, which he felt would not survive the elements for much longer. He soon learns that he has been lured to this hut by an old enemy, who attempts to kill him. The enemy appears to live in this poor shelter and blames his impoverished position on Pip's meddling. This is not wholly untrue, as Pip took the opportunity to use his privilege as a gentleman to suggest the removal of this enemy from a job connected with Miss Havisham and Estella. Pip's influence drove this enemy into the hands of Magwitch's own great enemy, who ultimately thwarts the attempted escape. In the same visit to his hometown when Pip removed this enemy's job, Pip also meddled with the employment of another, less serious enemy. One of these slighted enemies tries to exact revenge, while the other helps rescue Pip from this attempted murder. This scene gives Pip the opportunity to reflect on how he had impacted these people. He offers an apology and a monetary gift to his savior whom he had harmed before. This humbling and frightful experience shows how using power to negatively affect the lives of others can have serious implications.

Illness

There are a few mentions of illness in *Great Expectations*, sometimes calling out specific diseases, and at others leaving it unnamed. When Joe comes to London, both Joe and Pip are equally uncomfortable in their interactions. Pip reads Joe's discomfort, and imagines that he fears contracting whooping cough just from spending a day or two in London. Pip feels

defensive of his home and lifestyle, guilty for his own altered behavior and feelings towards Joe, and projects this negativity onto Joe's own altered behavior. This shows Pip's awareness of the unhealthy urban living environment and assumes that Joe sees it as well. While Pip associates whooping cough with London, he also connects the measles with a dirty newspaper. Pip attempts to read the paper in question as he avoids interacting with an enemy in his presence. In this bothered state, he notices how out of date the paper is and sees food and drink stains covering its surface. Many people have touched this paper, marring its appearance. He connects this dirty, outdated newspaper, with the measles. These two connections, whooping cough with London, and the measles with dirtiness come from the same place. London is a dirty place according to Pip's descriptions, and the paper has been crowded with countless people, like the density found in the city.

Another mention of illness in the novel is the long-standing poor health of his sister, wife of Joe, and parental figure to Pip through his childhood. Pip's sister took blunt trauma to her head and needed a dedicated caretaker for several years before she died. When Pip returns home to attend her funeral, he reflects on the poor relationship they had. Though she abused him as a child, he softens towards her as he admires the beautiful summer day en route to her funeral. As she is put in the ground, Pip notes the singing birds and dancing shadows. This beautiful scenery contrasts with the dark gloom of death. Because Pip was not close to his sister, and his life is going well otherwise, he can more easily see the beauty that coexists with ugliness.

Towards the end of the novel after Magwitch dies in prison, Pip falls very ill. Pip was severely burned preceding Magwitch's escape attempt, and after the failed attempt Pip spends every moment possible visiting Magwitch in prison. Following Magwitch's death, Pip is left alone, facing massive debts, and needing to rest. The pressure of it all becomes too much, and he

succumbs to fever, delirium, and long bouts of unconsciousness lasting some weeks before he recovers. As Pip fell ill, debt collectors called on him, and would have taken him to debtor's prison had he been well enough to move. He is nursed to health and saved from the consequences of his debts by his old friend, Joe. Without financial and physical support from his friends, Pip could have died, or survived to go to prison for his debts. Though Pip's position in life was falling at the time of his illness, he still came through it unscathed, highlighting his inherent privilege, and the goodness of his friends.

Unnatural Woman

Another significant theme in this novel is that of 'the unnatural woman.' There are three female characters in *Great Expectations* who defy the cultural norms of womanhood in their period: Miss Havisham, her adopted daughter, Estella, and Estella's biological mother, Molly.

When young Pip first encounters Miss Havisham, her strange life and behavior confuses and frightens him. He is introduced to her as a potential play mate for Estella. Miss Havisham's life is frozen in time; she has lived for decades paused in a single moment. When she was a young woman, her fiancé deserted her the morning of their wedding day. In her dressing gown with one shoe on her foot, she learned the news. She stopped all the clocks in the house, shut up the windows and blinds, and never changed out of the dressing gown, nor into the other shoe. While Pip will only learn the full story as an adult, he understands that this is a very unusual woman, and a very unusual house. In their first interview, Miss Havisham asks Pip, "you are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 58). Pip puts on a brave face, despite his fear.

Pip describes Miss Havisham as withered and lifeless, likening her to a wax figure, a skeleton, and a corpse. Miss Havisham spent so many years shut up indoors with no sunlight that she has left her humanity entirely behind in Pip's eyes. She removed herself from nature, taking on this inhuman, 'unnatural woman' identity. Living without sunlight can have significant effects on mental health, leading to decreased cognitive function (Kent et al.). The reader clearly sees this in Miss Havisham from Pip's earliest interactions with her. Her sunlight deficiency is reiterated throughout their acquaintance. At the end of her life, Pip feels pity for her despite the harm he suffered from her. He saw the damage done to her mind by shunning the healing powers of the outdoors.

Mr. Jaggers's housekeeper, Molly, makes a lasting impression on Pip, though she is just a minor side character. Before Pip visits the Jaggers home, his friend Wemmick tells him to pay close attention to the housekeeper. He says, "you will see a wild beast, tamed," (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 202) and implies the great effort required to tame, further exemplifying Mr. Jaggers's prowess. Wemmick also dehumanizes Molly, by calling her an "it." When Pip visit's Mr. Jaggers's home and sees Molly for himself, Jaggers displays Molly's wrists, highlighting how strong they are and overpowering her desire to keep them hidden. This both shows his total control over her, and the strength that she could fight back with if she were not so broken. This section of the book highlights the power Mr. Jaggers wields, and makes the reader feel frightened and uncomfortable around him as Pip does. Wemmick is impressed by Jaggers's ability to tamp down such a wild woman. Pip later discovers that Molly is the biological mother to Estella, his unrequited love. On the road to this discovery, he also learns something of her mother's heritage through Wemmick, "She was a very handsome young woman, and I believe had some gipsy blood in her." (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 392). Molly's wildness and by

extension, Estella's own 'unnatural' ways are now associated with this assumed heritage. Estella is strongly connected to this minor side character, and both of them are characterized as 'unnatural women.'

Throughout the novel, Estella, who Pip pines endlessly for, is presented as emotionless and unfeeling, to the point of being inhuman. Pip kisses her on the cheek and describes her face in that moment as calm, like a statue. Comparing Estella to a statue holds two distinct meanings: she is cold, and she is perfect. Her statuesque perfection and lack of emotion dehumanizes her and separates her from a mere mortal like Pip. In his other interactions with her he is plagued by a compulsion to analyze every word, tone, and look; he sees everything as a calculated move meant to either attract or repel him. Nothing she does is genuine or real in this assumed calculation. It is worth noting that Estella herself vehemently proclaims her inhuman lack of emotion. When Estella and Pip first meet as adults, Estella makes a point to explain to him that she does not have a heart and feels no tenderness for anyone, trying her best to make Pip understand and warn him. Pip refuses to believe her, despite his own belief in her perfection. Miss Havisham even calls attention to Estella's cold heart, crying out that she is made of stone.

Miss Havisham, inhuman in her own way, sees Estella's coldness, along with Pip. Yet they refuse to believe it. But Estella knows herself and knows what is absent within her. Pip and Miss Havisham project their ideals of womanhood on Estella, denying who she is, and impressing their own sense of the inhuman upon her. Is she truly 'inhuman' or willfully misunderstood? Pip refuses to believe her, because she is so beautiful and her beauty must reflect in her heart. "Surely it is not in Nature," Pip explains (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 362). Pip associates warmth with goodness and beauty with goodness. And yet Estella is both beautiful

and cold, standing in contrast to Pip's convictions. He must deny her coldness in order to continue believing in her goodness.

Racialization

While Charles Dickens may have been a progressive social justice advocate of his time, his work is still a product of 19th century England. There are a few mentions of race in this book, some already discussed in previous sections. Estella's biological mother is described as part 'gypsy,' mentioned in the 'unnatural woman' section. This racial identity is connected to her wildness, highlighting the negative assumptions surrounding this identity. Mr. Jaggers is described in the prison system section as compulsively washing up after a case of a "darker complexion" than usual. This implies a particularly heinous case, and associates that depravity with dark complexions, showing racist connotations. Beyond these cases, there are a few other distinguishable mentions of race.

In Pip's younger days, he describes an evening when his sister irritably cleans the house because she was not invited with Joe and Pip to Miss Havisham's home. They stay out of her way during her cleaning rampage. When they return to the house, she angrily asks Joe, "why he hadn't married a Negress Slave at once?" (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 99). This is a jarring moment for a modern reader, as it equated housework to the labor of enslaved Black people. This comparison shows how Black people were viewed at the time, and the distinct separation from someone like Pip's sister. However, these words are attributed to Pip's sister, an antagonist in the story, so they may potentially be used to further her negative characterization. Indeed, Dickens was disturbed by the institution of slavery during his 1842 visit to the United States (Paroissien), connecting his disapproval of slavery with the antagonism of this character.

The other mention happens during Pip's sister's funeral. Pip arrives at his childhood home, where mourning clothes are being provided to the immediate family and friends. Pip describes a hat being wrapped in black cloth, "like an African baby," (Dickens, *Great Expectations* 279). This description connects dark skin with dark cloth. The connection to a baby could be in the way the hat was held, or in how it was wrapped, like swaddling a child. This scene also feels strange to a modern reader, but perhaps with less severity as the previous one. It feels more out of touch than malicious. This adds to the potential that the previous passage felt so negative because it was meant to make Pip's sister look bad.

Interactions with Animals

In *Great Expectations* there are multiple comparisons between people and animals, and one notable case of animal abuse. Many of the comparisons between a person and an animal center around Magwitch and are discussed at length in the prison system section: Magwitch calls himself a "varmint" and a dog, and Pip compares his eating behavior to a dog. Young Pip also describes himself as like a dog when Estella treats him poorly. All these instances of human to animal comparison are used to lower the esteem of that person. Magwitch is described as doglike when he eats to emphasize that he lacks table manners. Magwitch describes himself as an animal to show that he sees himself as less than human. Pip describes himself as a dog because he is mistreated as animals are. These short descriptive lines emphasize the human-animal relationship as one where humans are considered above and separate from animals.

The animal abuse description impresses a different effect than that of equating animals to lowness. Bentley Drummle, husband of Estella and by extension one of Pip's greatest enemies, abused his wife and horse. Drummle, so hated by Pip, is given only negative descriptions, and

this abuse falls in line with the generally unfavorable characterization. The reader, who mirrors Pip's ever-changing feelings throughout the story, also learns to dislike Drummle and is unsurprised by the abuse. The poorly treated horse killed him in response to this mistreatment. Drummle's end is a grotesquely satisfying one; he mistreated an animal and met retribution for that action. In this passage, the animal is used as an innocent party who must be treated well. When mistreating an animal, that character is demonized, and a death by that animal feels justified.

Conclusion

In *Great Expectations*, Pip takes the reader along with him on his life journey. As Pip grows and changes his opinions, the reader mirrors him. As a young boy, Pip is frightened by an escaped prisoner, but as an adult he gradually learns to care for this individual who so frightened and disgusted him. The reader changes with Pip and can extend their empathy to other members of the prison population. This empathy directs questions to the prison system and how it serves the people – questions still relevant today. The living environments and mentions of illness tell a deeper story of class division, raising questions of what circumstances lead to these hardships. People are dehumanized through expectations of what a woman is, how they are racialized, and the way they are compared to animals. Pip's story, and the characters he shares it with, inspired empathy in contemporary readers, and so it inspires modern readers as well.

VI.

Discussion

The four books analyzed in this thesis, *Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Oliver Twist, and Great Expectations,* cover a wide range of settings, characters, and stories written in the same time period. Between them, there are anticipated and also unexpected similarities and differences. The Brontë novels spent their time in the Yorkshire countryside, while Dickens's books lived primarily in London.

The two Brontë novels, written by sisters, Charlotte and Emily, have their own differences. *Jane Eyre* travels through multiple settings as the main character moves from place to place. In contrast, *Wuthering Heights* exists within a small, isolated setting, and the characters who do move outside it seem to disappear. In the first novel, this change in location exposes the main character and reader to more social settings. With greater exposure to different settings, this book has more to say on broad social issues related to humans within their environment. In the second novel, this focused setting brings more intense details of the restricted social structure with the interplay between the characters and their setting. These books do share illness and death as major plot driving events, and the illnesses are largely connected to the poor. The appearance of tuberculosis in both novels reflects the significance of this illness in their family; tuberculosis caused the death of their two elder sisters (Thormählen). The books also share dramatic inclement weather scenes which cause a tree in each novel to be split. In *Jane Eyre*, the tree splits after a disingenuous marriage proposal. In *Wuthering Heights*, the long-term

separation of two characters coincides with the tree splitting. Both trees signify drastic change in the characters' lives.

One trope discussed in both Brontë novels, 'unnatural woman' contains characters with striking similarities between the different stories. From *Jane Eyre*, the character is Bertha Mason, the 'mad woman in the attic' who is the secret wife of Jane's lover. The *Wuthering Heights* character is Catherine Earnshaw/Linton, a main character and lover of Heathcliff. When Catherine flies into fits of madness, they parallel Bertha's outbursts, with violent and insensible movements and speech. Catherine and Bertha are both described by their strength in these fits. Bertha's illness is only described as madness, while Catherine's is labeled as "brain fever". Despite their similarities, their treatment was very different. Bertha was caged, while Catherine was doted on. Catherine is treated as a human to the end of her life, in sharp contrast to Bertha's imprisoned existence following her decline. The difference in treatment calls forth the question: if Bertha had been treated more as a human, would her behavior have reflected that?

The Dickens novels have more continuity between them as they are written by the same author, not just the same family. However, Charles Dickens had many years to grow and change in between the writing of each. Both stories follow a main character who is an orphan, though Oliver from *Oliver Twist* is in a worse state than Pip of *Great Expectations.* Oliver's story spends chapters away from the main character to show other perspectives. Pip's story is told in the first person and therefore follows the main character exclusively. The distance between Oliver and the voice of his story allows him to be this perfect image of goodness; his greatest impact on the reader comes from the empathy he inspires. The closeness to Pip makes a perfect image impossible. Instead, his impact on the reader lies in how he learns to empathize, thus leading the

reader by example. These tools are both effective in different ways, but the later novel has more nuance in the way it encourages empathy.

One theme discussed at length in *Great Expectations*, prison system, was not analyzed in depth in *Oliver Twist*. However, the prison system played a notable role in both novels. The characters around Oliver who wind up behind bars are seen exclusively as criminals. Oliver nearly lands in the same position, but is rescued, maintaining his goodness and the separation between himself and those who commit crimes. Years later, when Pip's story is written, one of the main characters is a previously incarcerated individual, Magwitch, who the reader learns to understand on a deeper level. This difference in how characters connected to the prison system are portrayed shows a change in Dickens as well. Magwitch inspires empathy in a more nuanced way than Oliver, but they both play that role. An interesting connection between them is how their actions are motivated by hunger, an undeniable human need. Food is a large part of both stories; it is used to advocate for better conditions for the poor and the incarcerated.

Taking the four books of this thesis together, there are a few common themes and tropes. One trope, 'unnatural woman,' manifested differently in Dickens than it did in the Brontës. The women in the Brontë novels were described as mad and delirious. While there was some madness attached to the women in Dickens, there was also coldness and brutality. Women in each novel mirror each other's behavior: all fly into a frenzy, exhibiting great strength, and are restrained by other characters. Regardless of what sets them apart, there are women in each novel who go against what was expected of women in their era. Another recurring theme played a minor role in each book, racialization. There are several groups who are racialized in these books: Creoles and 'gypsies' in the Brontës; and Jews, Irish, and 'gypsies' in Dickens. These identities are often attached to specific characters in order to cast them in a negative light. The

final theme that was prevalent through all four books surrounds illness and death. Illness is often connected to the poor in these books, but a more striking similarity is in how they frame some instances of illness and death. Each novel presents the darkness of death and severe sickness alongside the sharply contrasting beautiful outdoors. Main characters in every story face this darkness, while also enjoying and appreciating the outdoors, showing the duality of their worlds.

Within the overlapping themes, there are also specific scenes and descriptions which strongly resemble one another across the authors. In both *Wuthering Heights* and *Great Expectations*, there are mentions of the word, 'gypsy.' In the first it is attached to Heathcliff, an antagonist, and in the second it is attached to Molly, a minor character and 'unnatural woman.' These characters are associated with this identity to racialize and other them. This connection across books, and authors of similar time and country, allude to broader discriminatory trends of the time and place.

Between *Jane Eyre* and *Oliver Twist* there are a couple more parallel scenes. Both books include the death scene of the main character's childhood best friend. Jane's friend, Helen, dies slowly of tuberculosis, and Jane spends Helen's last night with her. Oliver says goodbye to his friend, Dick, on his way out of town and Dick treats this goodbye as the final one, as he understands he will die soon of an unnamed illness. Helen and Dick are praised for their goodness by Jane and Oliver, calmly facing death with visions of heaven. Both children were orphans and subject to mistreatment and neglect in their respective parish run, charity institutions. Charlotte Brontë and Charles Dickens both saw the failures of such charities in their time, and separately call attention to them. The two different authors pointing to the same problem legitimizes the prevalence of the issue and the desire to address it.

Another strong similarity between *Jane Eyre* and *Oliver Twist* is the attention they pay to homelessness. Jane and Oliver both spend crucial moments in their stories without shelter. Specifically, both characters end a period of homelessness by knocking on a stranger's door in hopes of mercy. For Oliver, it was not connected to his large period of homelessness, but it does correspond with a moment of having nowhere to go for shelter and support. In these scenes, the cold, rainy weather is against them, and both Jane and Oliver know they will die if they are not helped. They are ill received by staff initially but are ultimately taken in by the families. These scenes impart great concern for the main characters' lives as the reader hopes they are saved. This larger theme of homelessness in both authors' books draws attention to the circumstances that lead to homelessness, which are unrelated to the quality of person who is without shelter.

Among these books and the authors that wrote them, there are many more moments of distinction and conjunction, but these topics cover the themes discussed in this thesis. The similarities between these texts speak to the environmental and social concerns of mid-19th century England. They impart alike messages, through different messengers who have their own unique tools of communication at their disposal. Analyzing the books separately provides great insight into the culture that surrounded them at publication, and that surrounds them now with their continued relevance. By discussing these novels next to one another, broader trends emerge, bringing broader cultural enlightenment.

Future Research

Upon completing this thesis, I felt that this work was just beginning. In returning to this project, I would like to incorporate more sources for historical and modern context, and include more novels by these authors as well. This thesis included many themes, tropes, and ideas, and in future research I would like to take one of those as a focus across these books and other contemporary works. I am most interested in doing this with the illness and 'unnatural woman' themes. There was also one scene in *Great Expectations* that particularly caught my attention: the connection between accused criminals seeking legal representation, and these people symbolizing a garden that must be tended to and harvested from. I noticed a similar statement in *Oliver Twist*, and would like to expand that train of thought into other works where it may be present as well. This first foray into eco-critical analysis proved itself to be fruitful research and an excellent learning experience. I look forward to continuing this work in the future.

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