Anna Enrichetta Soccio*

Charles Dickens and the Rhetoric of Law in *David Copperfield*

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Abstract: In the Victorian age, a period of rapid changes and social and cultural advancement, the preoccupation with modernizing the law system emerged as a concern for both law experts and ordinary people. However, it was the realist novel that drew particular attention to the inadequacy and inefficiency of a system that needed to be reformed. Charles Dickens was the Victorian novelist who, more than any of his fellow writers, never missed the opportunity to speak of law and justice, allowing his experience in the field to reveal the oddities and idiosyncrasies of the legal system. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens unmercifully criticizes laws and legal procedures but at the same time he proposes changes. In the middle of the century, the laws on marriage and divorce were frequently debated in the press and in Parliament. Dickens chooses his most autobiographical novel to give his own view on those matters as well as on the necessity to reform law courts at large.

Keywords: Charles Dickens, legislation, law courts, marriage, divorce, Doctors' Commons, *David Copperfield*

1. Legislation and social stability seemed to be very much linked to one another in the nineteenth-century, which was particularly complex due to the problems that the ongoing Industrial Revolution was constantly posing and to the news of widespread upheavals from the Continent that had been threatening even the illuminated English constitutional monarchy for a while. The Victorians had always been very concerned with the law and legal issues, as they were convinced that social stability should be assured by a sensible legal system. Indeed, the power and prosperity that England so magnificently displayed at the opening of the *Great Exhibition* in 1851 had been achieved through careful management of civil disturbances, the gradual concession of social reforms, and a shrewd eye on the administration of justice.

In an age of a profound need for legislation, which included important achievements such as *The Poor Law Amendment Act* (1834), three Reform Bills

***Corresponding author: Anna Enrichetta Soccio,** University G. d'Annunzio of Chieti-Pescara, Chieti, Italy, E-mail: enrichetta.soccio@unich.it

(1832–1867–1884), the *Matrimonial Causes Act* (1857), the *Married Women's Propriety Act* (1882), *the Judicature Acts* (1873–1875), the sense of public justice and the way the legal system worked, were part of the great change which affected and shaped almost every aspect of life and labour of the time. The *Poor Law*, for example, encompassed a wide range of issues. As David Englander puts it, "employment and wages, housing and rents, migration and settlement, medicine, marriage, charity and education – all were influenced in way or another."[1] Whether it represented "the triumph of ideology over reality" or "the victory of common sense over chaos,"[2] the 1834 *Poor Law* was undoubtedly to establish a new understanding of the legal system in terms of the new science of political economy. In re-organizing the life of a vast number of citizens – not only paupers but also overseers, ratepayers, officers, justices of the peace – beneath the nobler scope of establishing welfare conditions for the lower classes, the Poor Law concealed a vision of society which was envisaged as a class-obsessed pyramid. Society found itself regulated by a new sense of justice and interpretation of the law.

The three *Reform Bills* each marked a new phase in the history of British reforms. In the midst of parliamentary discussions and alternations of the power between the parties from 1832 to the end of the century, one remarkable result emerged, that is, the sense of change that would be the most prominent feature of Queen Victoria's reign. Although the Reform Bills were very gradual and not at all exhaustive in their response to the demands of a variety of groups of reformers, they substantially contributed to the general sense of a democratic system as well as economic and social advancement, which could only be achieved by political reform. The *Matrimonial Causes Act* and the *Married Women's Propriety Act*, on the other hand, testified to an increasing interest in the women's movement towards emancipation, which eventually would lead to women's suffrage at the beginning of the twentieth century. Insisting on the right for women to divorce and possess property as much as men did, those who urged reform on these matters called attention to a view of marriage as "a locus of companionship and mutual support" rather than "an institution for sexual and reproductive bonding."[3]

Finally, the *Judicature Acts* reorganized the higher court system on the basis of the commercial and financial interests of the captains of industry and the rich

1 David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth-Century Britain, 1834–1914: From Chadwick to Booth* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 1.

2 Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law*, 1.

3 Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage and the Law in Victorian England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 43.

bourgeoisie, which created the High Court of Justice and the Court of Appeal. The new system, in bringing together several tribunals, tried to simplify legal procedures, reduce inefficiency and start the modernization of English law and jurisdiction.

2. This flurry of activity concerning new laws and legislation becomes a very fertile source for Victorian novelists, who not only found stories to tell but also modes and a language to use when telling stories. Hence, the distinction between "law *as* literature" and "law *in* literature"[4] appears irrelevant, in so far as novels accept the law, its mode of narrating, its devices and language and transform the stories of law into literature. As Elizabeth Judge puts it, "Victorian novelists recognized the parallels between trial procedure and novel conventions such as point of view that [...] influence how information is arranged and then received by the reader."[5] In more than one sense, it is true that the storytelling function of both the law and fiction make them resemble one another to the point that law provides rules and rhetoric for fiction, whereas fiction offers procedures and method to the construction of legal cases. As it can be seen, the mutual interdependence is easily recognizable and thus the two fields of interest show their complementary nature. This is even more evident in the Victorian context in which the readership was familiar with the representation of justice and trial procedures. For many a Victorian novelist, that was the occasion "to comment about the possibility of truth, the limitations of knowledge, and the subjectivity of narrative interpretation",[6] while simultaneously pointing out the profound cultural implications that possible procedural changes would inevitably entail.

As early as 1858, British essayist Walter Bagehot – author of the highly praised *The English Constitution* (1867) – discussed Dickens's interest in law and justice,[7] which derived from the novelist's experience as a legal clerk. In 1827, when he was only fifteen years old, Dickens started working as a junior clerk for Ellis and Blackmore, lawyers in Holborn Court,[8] where he stayed for eighteen months. Then he worked for a few months for Charles Molloy, a solicitor in

4 James Boyd White, *The Legal Imagination* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973); James Boyd White, *Justice as Translation: An Essay in Cultural and Legal Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

5 Elizabeth F. Judge, "Law and the Victorian Novel," in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, eds. William Baker and Kenneth Womack (Westport, CONN, and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 123–136, 125.

6 Judge, "Law and the Victorian Novel," 125.

7 Walther Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, II vol. (London: Longmans, 1884), 184–220.

8 Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 27; Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Vintage, 2002), 66.

Lincoln's Inn.[9] For Dickens, it was enough to understand that "legal London" was not the London he would work in, and that his career would take other directions. In particular, he had enrolled as a shorthand reporter at Doctor's Commons[10] and later as a Parliament reporter on the *Mirror of Parliament* (1831), for which Dickens had to provide detailed records of the proceedings in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Later, Dickens worked for *The True Sun* (1834) and then for *The Morning Chronicle* (1836). Those were years of intense political excitement, with the battles over parliamentary reforms and the passing of the important acts that paved the way to the political action of Victoria's reign. Accounts of parliamentary debates were to become very popular in terms of mass entertainment and a source of profit for the leading daily papers. Working as a journalist allowed Dickens to gain knowledge of the political and legal system of the country, but also to step into professional authorship. A superb example of this kind of understanding is "A Parliamentary Sketch"– a piece published in a revised form in *Sketches by Boz* in 1836 – in which one can find Dickens's first attempt to give an unflattering description of the daily routine at the House, but also Dickens's critical suggestion that the place where laws are conceived, discussed and released is more like a market than a sanctuary of laws, and that the MPs are more to be laughed at than admired:

> The body of the House and the side galleries are full of Members; some, with their legs on the back of the opposite seat; some, with theirs stretched out to their utmost length on the floor; some going out, others coming in; all talking, laughing, lounging, coughing, oh-ing, questioning, or groaning; presenting a conglomeration of noise and confusion, to be met with in no other place in existence, not even excepting Smithfield on a market-day, or a cock-pit in its glory.[11]

Such a description, though mediated by hyperbole, redundancy and paradox, could be easily taken for a piece from Dickens's mature work. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that similar accounts of London's political life were not at all unusual in both newspapers and fiction at the time. Dickens had only a brief experience as a legal clerk and reporter, he was neither a trained lawyer nor an expert; yet, he was a keen observer of British institutions, and legal matters were presented to the ordinary readership every day as exercises of

9 Slater, *Charles Dickens*, 29.

10 The Doctors' Commons was a college of lawyers near St Paul's Cathedral where some courts coexisted in the same hall. Only Doctors at Law from Oxford holding a degree from either Oxford or Cambridge could appear in these courts. The Doctors' Common ceased to exist in 1867 when it was supplanted by the High Court.

11 Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers, 1833–39*, ed. Michael Slater (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994), 151–161, 156.

democracy in a society that was looking for "more democratic" justice. What Dickens came to observe was the world around him: reforms were very slow, the law was complicated and contradictory, and lawyers were "narrow, mean, ignorant pettifoggers."[12] For this reason, in Dickens's novels, as Catherine O. Frank has noted, there is a "pervasiveness of law [...] a kind of legalism at work that makes it possible to read for the law even when legal matters don't appear to be part of the novel's immediate subject."[13]

The law and novel writing: the American jurist John H. Wigmore attempted a classification of what he called "legal novels" in two articles that appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. First, Wigmore gives the definition of "legal novel" as "a novel in which a lawyer, most of all, ought to be interested, because the principle or the profession of law form a main part of the author's theme"[14]; then he goes on to give details about the four types that he identifies:

(A) Novels in which some *trial scene* is described—perhaps including a skillful cross-examination;
(B) Novels in which the *typical traits of a lawyer or judge* or the *ways of professional life*, are portrayed;
(C) Novels in which the methods of law in the *prosecution and punishment of crime* are delineated; and
(D) Novels in which some *point of law*, affecting the rights or the conduct of the personage, *enters into the plot*.[15]

As is evident, Wigmore, whether deliberately of not, lays the foundation for the theory that supports "law and literature" studies. So according to his classification, almost every novel written by Dickens can be defined as a "legal novel." Not only does Dickens describe courts and trials, crimes and punishments, criminals and lawyers, but he often engages in an open discourse and critique of the British legal system, to the point that his novels suggest possible ways to reform it in order to eliminate inequality, injustice and malfunctions.

David Copperfield contains some memorable pages on this topic. Although it is generally agreed that this novel's protagonist should not be identified with

12 John Marshall Gest, "The Law and Lawyers of Charles Dickens," *The American Law Register (1898–1907)*, 7, 44 New Series (July 1905): 406.
13 Cathrine O. Frank, "Victorians and the Law: Literature and Legal Culture," *Victorian Network* 5.2 (Winter 2013): 1.
14 John H. Wigmore, "List of One Hundred Legal Novels," *Illinois Law Review*, 17, (1922–1923): 26–41, 26.
15 Wigmore, 26.

Dickens, it cannot be denied that David as a novelist conveys the same sort of vision and interpretation of the world as the mature Dickens.

3. In chapter XXIII, David narrates his first approach to the Doctor's Commons which clearly replicates Dickens's experience in the same field. He does so by adding his own critique and satirical view on the way justice and the law were administered in those days. Confusion and paradox dominate the description which follows David's inquiry about proctors and solicitors:

> 'What is a proctor, Steerforth?' said I.
> 'Why, he is a sort of monkish attorney,' replied Steerforth. 'He is, to some faded courts held in Doctors' Commons,—a lazy old nook near St. Paul's Churchyard—what solicitors are to the courts of law and equity. He is a functionary whose existence, in the natural course of things, would have terminated about two hundred years ago. I can tell you best what he is, by telling you what Doctors' Commons is. It's a little out-of-the-way place, where they administer what is called ecclesiastical law, and play all kinds of tricks with obsolete old monsters of acts of Parliament, which three-fourths of the world know nothing about, and the other fourth supposes to have been dug up, in a fossil state, in the days of the Edwards. It's a place that has an ancient monopoly in suits about people's wills and people's marriages, and disputes among ships and boats.'[16]

As one can see, the dialogue is based on the idea of a failed reform of justice. The persistence of a system that has remained unchanged for centuries does not allow for fair judgement. The choice of terms and phrases that refer to a distant past (*old, would have terminated about two hundred years ago, obsolete old, dug up, in a fossil state, ancient*) constitute an open accusation of the lack of adaptation of the law courts with respect to the changing society. Not only that: when David discovers that the same court deals with problems related to nautical matters and ecclesiastical matters, he exclaims that this is pure non-sense. But Steerforth continues to explain that the courts are always managed by the same people, regardless of their competence and that they are like "actors." This is, therefore, where the connection between fact and fiction, between law and fiction, is established in a world in which the protagonists stage small performances at the expense of defenceless citizens who do not know the language and rhetoric of a trial:

> 'Nonsense, Steerforth!' I exclaimed. 'You don't mean to say that there is *any affinity between nautical matters and ecclesiastical matters?*'

16 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. Nina Burgis, with an Introduction and notes by Andrew Sanders (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 335. Further references in the text, abbreviated as DC.

> 'I don't, indeed, my dear boy,' he returned; 'but I mean to say that they are managed and decided by the same set of people, down in that same Doctors' Commons. You shall go there one day, and find them blundering through half the nautical terms in Young's Dictionary, apropos of the "Nancy" having run down the "Sarah Jane," or Mr. Peggotty and the Yarmouth boatmen having put off in a gale of wind with an anchor and cable to the "Nelson" Indiaman in distress; and you shall go there another day, and find them deep in the evidence, pro and con, respecting a clergyman who has misbehaved himself; and you shall find the judge in the nautical case, the advocate in the clergyman's case, or contrariwise. They are like *actors:* now a man's a judge, and now he is not a judge; now he's one thing, now he's another; now he's something else, change and change about; but it's always a very pleasant, profitable little affair of private theatricals, presented to an uncommonly select audience.' (DC, 335, emphasis added)

Finally, Steerforth, on David's request, traces the difference between "advocates" and "proctors": it emerges that working in the Doctors' Commons as a *proctor* is much more convenient from an economic and social point of view:

> 'But advocates and proctors are not one and the same?' said I, a little puzzled. 'Are they?' 'No,' returned Steerforth, '*the advocates are civilians—men who have taken a doctor's degree at college*—which is the first reason of my knowing anything about it. *The proctors employ the advocates*. Both get very comfortable fees, and altogether they make a mighty snug little party. On the whole, I would recommend you to take to Doctors' Commons kindly, David. They plume themselves on their gentility there, I can tell you, if that's any satisfaction.' (DC, 336, emphasis added)

Later in the novel, Mr Spenlow will provide an even more detailed analysis of the work that David will be doing, with him as his proctor:

> He said it was the genteelest profession in the world, and must on no account be confounded with the profession of a solicitor: being quite another sort of thing, infinitely more exclusive, less mechanical, and more profitable. We took things much more easily in the Commons than they could be taken anywhere else, he observed, and that set us, as a privileged class, apart. He said it was impossible to conceal the disagreeable fact, that we were chiefly employed by solicitors; but he gave me to understand that they were an inferior race of men, universally looked down upon by all proctors of any pretensions. (DC, 377)

From Mr Spenlow's point of view, proctors are superior to solicitors, their job being more stimulating and more rewarding. However, in an attempt to render the most appealing sides of his profession, Mr Spenlow reveals the paradoxical and anachronistic dynamics of trials in the Doctors' Commons, in a long paragraph that is worth quoting:

> Then, he launched into a general eulogium on the Commons. What was to be particularly admired (he said) in the Commons, was its compactness. It was the most conveniently organized place in the world. It was the complete idea of snugness. It lay in a nutshell. For

> example: You brought a divorce case, or a restitution case, into the *Consistory*. Very good. You tried it in the Consistory. You made a quiet little round game of it, among a family group, and you played it out at leisure. Suppose you were not satisfied with the Consistory, what did you do then? Why, you went into the *Arches*. What was the Arches? *The same court, in the same room, with the same bar, and the same practitioners, but another judge, for there the Consistory judge could plead any court-day as an advocate*. Well, you played your round game out again. Still you were not satisfied. Very good. What did you do then? Why, you went to the *Delegates*. Who were the Delegates? Why, the Ecclesiastical Delegates were the advocates without any business, who had looked on at the round game when it was playing in both courts, and had seen the cards shuffled, and cut, and played, and had talked to all the players about it, and now came fresh, as judges, to settle the matter to the satisfaction of everybody! Discontented people might talk of corruption in the Commons, closeness in the Commons, and the necessity of reforming the Commons, said Mr. Spenlow solemnly, in conclusion; but when the price of wheat per bushel had been highest, the Commons had been busiest; and a man might lay his hand upon his heart, and say this to the whole world,—'Touch the Commons, and down comes the country!' (DC, 378, emphasis added)

As is typical of Dickens's imagination, rhetorical questions, redundancy, antiphrasis and the final apocalyptic tone, all convey his sense of irritation with the system. As Mr Spenlow explains the way in which even simple processes are handled in English courts, the reader can perceive Dickens's irony while criticizing the inadequacy of a system that must be reformed. Times have changed, but not the law. Here it is only worth remembering that in *Bleak House* (1852–3), a novel entirely constructed on the attack of the Court of Chancery, Dickens made his point about the English law in general:

> The one great principle of the English law is to make business for itself. There is no other principle distinctly, certainly, and consistently maintained through all its narrow turnings. Viewed by this light it becomes a coherent scheme and not the monstrous maze the laity are apt to think it. Let them but once clearly perceive that its grand principle is to make business for itself at their expense, and surely they will cease to grumble.[17]

At a time when England was parading its achievements in every field of human understanding – only one year before the publication of *Bleak House*, the Great Exhibition celebrated the power of the nation in art and industry – the English legal system appears as anachronistic as it is unjust. The law courts need to be updated: David senses the opportunity to do so and tries to give his response to this need.

The occasion for this is his very first case at court – a "divorce-suit" by a certain Thomas Benjamin who, having got married as "Thomas" only and "not finding himself as comfortable as he expected," now declares himself not to be

17 Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 573.

married at all.[18] By indulging in the details and his opinions on this divorce case, David suggests that "we might even improve the world a little," claiming that the process is "a little nonsensical," "a little unreasonable," "a little unjust," and "a little indecent" (DC, 446–447). Characteristically, a series of adjectives with negative prefixes and deliberate repetition convey David's – and Dickens's – sense of discomfort towards the bad legal practice that David will later call "such a pestilent job, and such a pernicious absurdity, [...], which [...] must have been turned completely inside out, and upside down, long ago." (DC, 467)

However old-fashioned and ineffective they were, the Doctors' Commons still resist. What seems of particular interest for both literary critics and scholars of law and literature is that David's first approach to law is in a court dealing with marriage and divorce. It must be remembered that, despite the fact that people had been divorcing for about a century, divorce in England would only become legal with the *Matrimonial Causes Act* of 1857. By the time of the publication of *David Copperfield*, a Royal Commission had been appointed by the prime minister, Lord Russell. Its task was to evaluate the state of the marriage and divorce law which involved very complex legal procedures, not to speak of the time the Parliament spent on private bills of divorce. On the basis of the Royal Commission's report, the Parliamentary debate started in 1854 when Lord Chancellor Cranworth introduced the *Divorce Bill* into the House of Lords. The proposal did not, however, encompass a revision or change of the law in itself; rather, it required a reform of the courts so that the divorce process could be reorganized into a one-court process.[19] As is well known, the *Divorce Bill* was withdrawn only to be reintroduced in 1856 and passed as the *Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Acts* in 1857. This, in Mary Poovey's words, "made significant contributions to legal reform; it put an end to the Church's participation in law, for example, and rationalized overlapping legal procedures".[20] It cannot go unnoticed that, although the new civil court inherited the functions of the old ecclesiastical courts, its judges had to be trained, from then onwards, in common law instead of ecclesiastical law, with the result that matrimonial jurisdiction was

18 As Lawrence Stone has pointed out, the *Marriage Act* of 1753 "made null and void any marriage in which there was the slightest mistake, however trivial or accidental." *Road to Divorce: England 1530–1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 132. See also David Lemmings, "Marriage and Law in the Eighteenth Century: Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753," *The Historical Journal*, 39: 2 (June 1996): 339–360.

19 See on this topic Kelly Hager, "Chipping Away at Coverture: The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857." Available at http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=kelly-hager-chipping-away-at-coverture-the-matrimonial causes-act-of-1857 (last access May 30, 2019).

20 Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 85.

slowly moving away from the Church's sphere of influence towards the possibility of becoming non-religious.[21]

Therefore, David's observations appear to be appropriate because they envisage the future scenario of English law reforms. In more than one sense, Dickens's critique encourages its readership to reflect on the evils of old institutions. Kelly Hager has claimed that *David Copperfield* is "a novel of divorce" more than a novel of marriage in the traditional sense.[22] Her point stems from the idea that in the novel there is more on the temporary nature of marriage and the desirability of overcoming first marriages:

> After all, this is a novel in which a woman—Emma Micawber reads over her vows by the light of a candle to ascertain whether or not she can leave her husband. This is a novel in which Miss Betsey Trotwood leaves her husband and assumes her maiden name; a novel in which the hero is an apprentice at Doctors' Commons, the ecclesiastical court which deals with all legal aspects of marriage, including divorce; and in which Dora bequeaths her husband to his second wife, and David is rewarded with Agnes. This is a novel which endorses, encourages, even preaches the wisdom and rightness of second marriage.[23]

Nonetheless, *David Copperfield* can also be regarded as a novel *on* divorce, that is a novel which draws attention to the legal side of the institution of marriage from within. David's reaction to the fact that it is the ecclesiastical court that deals with marriage and divorce shows both the inadequacy and inequity of the system. This gives Dickens the opportunity to speak as a social reformer, advancing proposals and advocating for reforms. In *Hard Times*, published a few years later (1854), when the Parliamentary debate on the Divorce Act started, Dickens also describes divorce as an exclusive legal privilege for the rich. In this case, Stephen Blackpool, a weaver in Bounderby's factory, cannot even think of divorcing his bestial wife because it is too expensive. In the British law of the mid-nineteenth century, divorce is only a question of money and Stephen has to come to the conclusion that justice is for the rich only.[24] In *Hard Times*, Dickens's aim was to display the evil sides of utilitarian theories and their application to human beings; so the topic of marriage and divorce perfectly suited the purpose of criticizing the gap between the legalized right of the rich

21 As it is known, as issues of marriage and divorce were moral questions, their jurisdiction could not be but regulated by Christian principles.

22 Kelly Hager, "Estranging *David Copperfield*: Reading the Novel of Divorce," *ELH*, 63: 4 (Winter 1996): 989–1019, 990.

23 Hager, "Estranging *David Copperfield*: Reading the Novel of Divorce," 991.

24 On *Hard Times* and divorce see my "Divorce and the Failure of Law in Dickens's *Hard Times*," in *Fables of the Law*, eds. Daniela Carpi and Marett Leiboff (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2016), 275–282.

and the impossibility of divorcing for the poor, a gap, which is expressed in terms of legal abuse for the former and uselessness for the latter. So, legislation, whose aim is, in Bentham's words, "to augment the total happiness of the community,"[25] fails in its very principle.

In *David Copperfield*, however, Dickens advances the necessity for social change as the only way to pursue social happiness. This is even more interesting because Dickens does not discuss reforms on marriage and divorce directly anywhere. His periodicals, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* did not advocate any reforms on the matter. Yet, Dickens's novels – as *David Copperfield* demonstrates – stand as "agents of cultural formation rather than as objects of interpretation and appraisal".[26] Concerned as it is with the nature of relationships between men and women, the rich and the poor, authority and ordinary citizens, Dickens never stops posing questions on crucial matters such as marriage, divorce and the reform of law system. As both realistic fiction and legal procedures follow narrative trajectories to make their cases,[27] Dickens uses his own experience in courthouses – stories, characters, language – to call attention to a modernization of justice and, of course, to an advancement of society.

Anna Enrichetta Soccio

Anna Enrichetta Soccio is Full Professor of English Literature at the University G. d'Annunzio of Chieti and Pescara (Italy). Her fields of research are: Romantic novel, nineteenth-century and twentieth-century novel and poetry, and British contemporary poetry. Amongst her latest publications: Elizabeth Gaskell, *Racconti* (Editore Croce, 2017) and *Transmedia Creatures. Frankenstein's Afterlives* (co-ed. Francesca Saggini, Bucknell University Press, 2018). She is sub-editor of *RSV. Rivista di Studi Vittoriani* and is a member of The Dickens Society, The Philip Larkin Society, The Gaskell Society, ESSE, AIA, AIDEL and CUSVE.

25 John Stuart Mill, "Bentham," *in Utilitarianism and On Liberty. Including Mill's "Essay on Bentham" and Selections from the Writings of Jeremy Bentham and John Austin*, ed. with an Introduction by Mary Warnock (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 17–51, 19.

26 Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986), xvii.

27 It is interesting what Jonathan Grossman says a propos of *The Royal Courts of Justice* which was inaugurated by Queen Victoria in 1882: "If architecture is expression in space, the Royal Courts themselves seem shaped in form and function like a Victorian novel." "Representing Pickwick: The Novel and the Law Courts," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 52.2 (September 1997): 171–197, 195.