Miss Havisham's 'eternal moment': a portrait of pathological grief

It is 'this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects'[1] (61) which strikes Pip upon first meeting Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham embodies a physical and temporal 'arrest' which weaves in unsettling counterpoint to Pip's growth and transformation in Dickens' *Bildungsroman*. Facilitated by the novel's original form as a weekly serial, the impetus of Pip's development is directly juxtaposed by Miss Havisham's literal freezing of things around her – replacing Estella's heart with 'ice' (397) – in order to 'crystallise her grief and bereavement into an eternal moment of shock and sorrow', as put by J. Hillis Miller.[2] Miss Havisham's paralysing self-immurement looms over Pip's endeavour of self-improvement. She is perpetually the 'bride-to-be'; her abandonment both ruins her and becomes her, resulting in a paradoxical 'eternal moment' of bitter half-completion. Miss Havisham has faced criticisms of being unrealistic and over-exaggerated – Lorna Bradbury in the 'My favourite Dickens character' series of *The Telegraph* disclaims her article with 'one should acknowledge… that she is not really a proper character at all', rather a mere 'image of the withered bridge.'[3] George Gissing describes her more condemningly as a failure resulting from Dickens yielding to the 'lure of eccentricity'.[4] And yet it is this static image of eccentricity which is her most powerful feature. Described as 'this figure of myself' (397) by Miss Havisham herself, this is what she comes to represent to Pip – a symbolic 'figure' of arrested development which haunts his progression, the very image of expectations unfulfilled.

The image of an emerging butterfly which opens the 2011 BBC1 adaptation of *Great Expectations* sees director Brian Kirk visualisation of the novel's central theme of metamorphosis. [5] Miss Havisham is thus the eternal chrysalis surrounded by the white rags of her wedding dress and decades of accumulated cobwebs, cocooned in 'white' 'satins, and lace, and silks' (58). In a novel about the evolution of personality, Dickens gives us a character who is absolutely 'standing still' in time. The first detail Pip notes of Miss Havisham's dressing room is that 'No glimpse of daylight was to be seen in it.' In shutting out the daylight Miss Havisham not only denies the source of natural warmth and growth, but also defies the dawning of a new day. Just like the veiled stranger in Dickens' short story *The Black Veil*, who dreads 'To-morrow' and 'darkened the room on purpose' so as not to 'expose' her dead son, Miss Havisham's denial of the sunlight represents a denial of the

[1] Dickens, Charles, *Great Expectations* ed. Margaret Cardwell, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1993), p. 61.
[2] Miller, J. Hillis, *Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels*, London: Oxford University Press (1958), p. 256.
[3] Bradbury, Lorna, 'My favourite Dickens character', [http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/7849/], accessed 25/11/14.
[4] Gissing, George, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, from *Collected Works of Gissing on Dickens* ed. S.J James and D. Parker, Grayswood Press (2004), p. 56.
[5] 'Episode 1', *Great Expectations*, writ. Sarah Phelps, dir. Brian Kirk, BBC, 1 Apr 2012:Television.

mortal coming-on of time.[6] Miss Havisham's 'crystallis[ation]' of time is most literally figured in the stopped clocks; 'her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and… a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine' (59). Pip later remarks, 'It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago' (61). She not only stops her own watch, but the entire world of Satis House around her – 'all the things about her had become transfixed' (62).

The image of the dressing room is described as a chaotic heap of bridal paraphernalia;

> some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on… some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayer-book, all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass. (58)

Pip naively remarks, 'She had not quite finished dressing', appearing almost to genuinely believe that she has just been deserted. Sara Thornton describes the pile 'frozen in a moment of time with the superfluous appendages of existence lying uselessly about as if to emphasise their transience and worthlessness.'[7] Miss Havisham here reminds the post-20th century reader of the woman in the 'burnished throne' (II. 77) amidst a heap of trinkets in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[8] Miss Havisham's 'lace' and 'sparkling' 'jewels' are reminiscent of the woman's 'satin' and the 'glitter of her jewels' (II. 84-5), with 'candle-flames' (II. 91) alighting the backgrounds of both descriptions. The almost Pandaemonium-style mountain of 'trinkets' sees Miss Havisham as ultimate overseer of her own kingdom, 'la[id]… waste' (397). The simultaneous instantaneousness and eternity in Miss Havisham's purgatorial waste land instilled an anxiety in Pip, namely the prospect of entering this world as yet another 'superfluous appendage of existence', a testament not to greatness but to 'transience and worthlessness'.

Miss Havisham's eccentricity precipitates both morbid curiosity and fear in Pip. He describes the uncanny figure as 'the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see';

[6] Dickens, Charles, *The Black Veil*, [http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/7849/], accessed 25/11/14.
[7] Thornton, Sara, 'The Burning of Miss Havisham: Dickens, Fire and the "Fire-Baptism"', *Charles Dickens's Great Expectations* ed. Harold Bloom, Infrobase Publishing (2010), p. 84.
[8] Eliot, T. S., 'The Waste Land', *Selected Poems*, London: Faber and Faber Limited (1961), p. 44.

> She was dressed in rich materials – satins, and lace, and silks – all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. (58)

Dickens' characteristic use of descriptive repetition is at full play here, as Pip appears to linguistically stumble over himself in the repetitive littering of 'white' and 'hair' throughout his sentences. The polysyndeton is indicative of an enthusiastic saturation of detail, reflecting young Pip's rigorous fascination with the scene. The repetitions constantly return us to the image and we, like Pip, are forcibly suspended in Miss Havisham's 'eternal moment' through the fixation of the narrative. This linguistic double take is enacted equally in Pip's visual reassessment of the scene after this initial sighting. He observes,

> I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, had no brightness left… I saw that the dress had been put on the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. (59)

The visual focus is evidenced through the anaphoric emphasis; 'I saw… I saw… I saw'. Described once again as 'the figure', Miss Havisham has become just 'like the dress', as much an object as the rest of her paraphernalia, and rather an aesthetic statuesque symbol than fully fledged human being. Just as his previous 'but' hastens to undercut the potential suggestion of vitality in 'bridal flowers' with an image of white hair, here he disclaims that 'like the flowers', the entire image of 'white' bridal purity is expiring. Miss Havisham's image holds in tension her 'arrest' of time and the unstoppable degradation of all that surrounds her. What was once 'rounded' has now 'shrunk to skin and bone' – Pip envisions Miss Havisham as the literal deflation of her own expectations. Already she is being associated in Pip's mind with failure, who unsettlingly remarks that she 'ought to be white'. What was in his first glance simply fascination with her image, now becomes loaded with the anxiety of what one 'ought to be' and the possible failure of identity which psychologically looms over Pip himself throughout the novel. The older narrator Pip emerges in the narrative, the same Pip who chimes in with an allusion to the future during the description of the sight as both the strangest he has 'ever seen, or shall ever see'. He describes in echo of Dickens' own journalistic voice,

> Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly wax-work at the Fair, representing … [an] impossible personage lying in the state. Once, I had

> been taken … to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. (59)

The previous narrative filled with personal zeal is replaced by a detached objective, and almost forensic voice. Whereas before Pip exhibits absolute marvel, now we see Pip's attempts to understand the mysterious vision before him – a quest which prevails throughout the rest of his life, the narrator remarking that 'I have often thought since' of 'how she must have looked' (61). The Gothic influence on Dickens' portrait of Miss Havisham is crucial to understanding her function. When Freud describes the phenomenon of the 'uncanny' in his essay 'The Uncanny', he states as example 'the impression made by waxwork figures' and 'the peculiar emotional effect' which results.[9] Miss Havisham, already described as both 'wax-work' and repeatedly as a 'figure', is an image of this uncanny conflation of life and death. Freud quotes Jentsch in describing the uncanny as the 'uncertainty whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton'.[10] Miss Havisham is described as death personified in terms of this uncertainty; 'Now, wax-work and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me' (59). The conflations of the virginal and the sterile, the preserved and the decaying, the 'familiar' and the 'strange' (60) render Miss Havisham a confusing 'fleshly oxymoron' as she is described by Sara Thornton; 'the 'memento mori' which lurks in … paintings in contrast to youth or beauty are present in the form of Miss Havisham's body itself'.[11] Pip's forensic remuneration upon the visual details of the scene, which continue far into the rest of his life, are indicative of his 'uncertainty' about why he feels so terrified of her, not yet coming to a conscious realisation that she will represent 'a constant reminder of failed expectations', to use Linda Raphael's terms.[12]

Miss Havisham on a conscious level affects Pip emotionally rather than cerebrally. Pip finds himself unable to articulate his experiences of Satis House to Mrs Joe and Pumblechook, describing the 'dread of not being understood' (66);

> I felt convinced that if I had described Miss Havisham's as my eyes had seen it, I should not be understood… [and] Miss Havisham too would not be understood... she was perfectly incomprehensible to me. (67)

[9] Freud, Sigmund, 'The Uncanny', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* ed. & trans. James Strachey, vol. XVII, London: Hogarth (1853), p. 219
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 219.
[11] Thornton, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[12] Raphael, Linda, 'A Re-vision of Miss Havisham: Her Expectations and Our Responses', *Great Expectations* ed, Roger D. Sell, MacMillan Press Ltd. (1994), p. 229.

The power of Miss Havisham's visual impression affords Pip a personal perspective, 'as my eyes had seen it'; an atavistic understanding of her which would be rendered 'perfectly incomprehensible' in words. It is this subjective resonance on Pip which determines her centrality to the novel. For of course, the 'eccentricity' in her which Gissing denounces is only exaggerated through the lens of Pip's own morbidly fascinated narrative voice, and her bizarre supernatural qualities only evident in the incantatory repetitions of Pip's descriptions.

The 'peculiar emotional effect' which the environment has on Pip can also be identified in scattered but unelaborated descriptions of emotional response. He states 'This was very uncomfortable, and I was half afraid.' (58), 'I should have cried out, if I could' (59). The 'eternal moment of shock and sorrow' described by Miller has entirely absorbed Pip, who's own shock and sorrow at the scene inexplicably incapacitates him. The uncanny emotional effect saturating the atmosphere can be understood in terms of the Gothic concepts of *terror* and *horror*. Devendra Varma writes in *The Gothic Flame*, 'The difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realisation: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse.'[13] In Satis House both of these effects are realised. By suspending time in the very 'moment' of her fall from grace, Miss Havisham in this extension of instantaneousness preserves both Terror, sitting at the dressing table as if she is still 'getting ready', and Horror, looking perpetually upon the 'sickening realisation' itself. She is surrounded by the 'smell of death' in the rotting food and decaying debris, and she herself is the 'corpse' upon which Pip stumbles. The atmospheric and visual effects of Miss Havisham and her surroundings collude to extend her personal 'moment' over Pip's own life. Her influence on him can once again be described in Varma's terms 'Terror… creates an intangible atmosphere of spiritual psychic dread', whereas Horror holds the 'grotesque power of something ghastly, too vividly imprinted on the mind and sense.'[14] The 'spiritual psychic dread' is tangible in Pip's narration of Satis House;

> In the heavy air of the room, and the heavy darkness that brooded in its remoter corners, I even had an alarming fancy that Estella and I might presently begin to decay. (89)

The 'heavy darkness' is personified, and becomes Pip's own 'brood[ing]', evoking the 'awful apprehension' that his fate will match up to that of Miss Havisham's. Pip appears to have developed an intuitive sense about the tragedies which will befall him. We are reminded of his instinctive statement towards the end of the novel, 'an impression settled heavily upon me that Estella was

[13] Varma, Devendra, *The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England*, Barker (1957), p. 103.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

married.' (379) Indeed, his becoming attune to this fact is described in terms of discourse with Satis House itself; 'a new desolation in the desolate house had told me so.' (396). Despite Miss Havisham's static existence, through her Gothic evocations of terror and horror she creates cycles of anticipation and realisation which effect the momentum of the entire novel. His own comprehension of time is disordered in a particularly Havishamesque way; 'I never had one hour's happiness in [Estella's] society, and yet my mind all round the four-and-twenty hours was harping on the happiness of having her with me unto death' (299). The word 'harping' recalling a Harpy – the mythological female agent of punishment – and the notions of living with unrequited love 'unto death' immediately conjure up Miss Havisham unconscious to the narrator himself. Miss Havisham's image and disordered sense of time has pervaded Pip's internal discourse without his even knowing it.

While terror appears to evoke Miss Havisham's temporal manipulation of Pip's development, her visual projection over his life can be understood in terms of Horror. The force of Miss Havisham's image has already been noted in the aforementioned repetitions of 'I saw… I saw… I saw', leaving the the imprint on Pip's 'mind and sense'. The inexplicably lasting nature of the effect is remarked upon long after his first encounters with her, particularly in moments of expectation or realisation. Pip states looking over the marshes and thinking of his future that 'I somehow thought of Miss Havisham', 'descrying traces of Miss Havisham and Estella all over the prospect, in the sky and in the water', for they and 'the strange house and the strange life appeared to have something to do with everything that was picturesque.' (109). As the two female's names saturate Pip's narrative itself, for 'strange' and subconscious ('somehow') reasons, 'traces' of their existence seem to colour Pip's entire world.

Crucial moments of realisation also exhibit Miss Havisham's latent diffusion into the rest of Pip's life, most notably in the mirroring effect between her, Molly and Estella. Upon a subconscious recognition of similarity between Molly and Estella, he uneasily ponders the resemblances to himself; 'What was it that was borne in upon my mind… In some of her looks and gestures there was that tinge of resemblance to Miss Havisham… What *was* it?' In the conscious comparison of Estella to Miss Havisham and the unconscious comparison of her to Molly, whom he has just seen at dinner with Jaggers, the imprinting of Miss Havisham's image upon Pip's mind becomes newly significant. Also tying together the women is the shared fire imagery, which prefigures the 'great flaming light' (399) of Miss Havisham ablaze before she dies. Pip sees Estella's face in the fires of the forge, 'scorning me', and first describes Molly's face as 'disturbed by a fiery air, like the faces I had seen rise out of the Witches' caldron' (212) in *Macbeth*. Indeed, Miss Havisham herself appears like the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth, carrying 'a bare candle in her hand', walking the corridors 'in a ghostly

manner, making a low cry' (305). Sara Thornton describes 'the fiery faces of Miss Havisham, Molly and Estella', calling them 'the three Macbeth witches imagined by Pip.'[15] Indeed, as the Weïrd Sisters do Macbeth, these three women collectively determine and drive Pip towards his fates, their presence in his life constant in the perpetual mirrorings which he puzzles over. Since his first sighting of Miss Havisham, her image lingers over him for the rest of his life. He describes how

> A thousand Miss Havishams haunted me. She was on this side of my pillow, on that, at the head of the bed, at the foot, behind the half-opened door of the dressing room, in the dressing-room, in the room overhead, in the room beneath - everywhere. (301)

The neurosis of the passage is indicative of the contagious effect of Miss Havisham's ghostly image. She reflects herself throughout the novel in the forms and fires of Estella, Molly, and even Compeyson, who Pip feels behind him 'like a ghost' (383). The apparitions of Miss Havisham are so tangible in all of these forms that even hallucinations seem absolutely real to Pip, whose describes a vision of her hanging from a beam;

> a strange thing happened to my fancy. I thought it a strange thing then, and I thought it a stranger thing long afterwards… I saw a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the feet; and it hung so, that I could see that the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the face was Miss Havisham's, with a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call to me. In the terror of seeing her figure… I at first ran from it, and then ran towards it. And my terror was greatest of all, when I found no figure there. (65)

> A childish association revived with wonderful force in the moment… I fancied that I saw Miss Havisham hanging on the beam. So strong was the impression, that I stood under the beam shuddering from head to foot before I knew it was a fancy – though to be sure I was there in an instant. (398)

In the first passage, Pip pieces together his previous descriptions of Miss Havisham like a puzzle to identify the hanging figure. The impression of the first sighting is so tangible to Pip that despite his terror he cannot help but be drawn 'towards it'. The image stays with him till adulthood – 'I thought it a stranger thing long afterwards' – returning 'So strong' that he declares himself 'sure I was there

[15] Thornton, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

in an instant'. Once again, the power of Miss Havisham's ghostly figure at once 'call[s] to' and terrifies Pip, and his arrest in a 'moment' which he has not encountered for years is reflective of Miss Havisham's arrest in her own 'eternal moment'. In these spectral visions, the faces of other characters, and her influence on Pip's narration itself, she is kaleidoscopically projected through his psyche; 'A thousand Miss Havishams haunted me'.

Mirroring is also an important visual symbol in the novel's film adaptations. Regina Barreca writes of David Lean's 1946 adaptation, 'Miss Havisham is… framed next to mirrors in a number of scenes, making visual the way the spinster wishes to multiply her image through Estella.'[16] Mike Newell's 2012 adaptation stages Miss Havisham looking at herself in the mirror both as she demands Pip to 'Come here, let me look at you!' and when she calls 'Stella!' to enter.[17] Newell's Havisham uses her own reflection to summon the children, and the suggested effect is curse-like. The mirroring of herself onto Pip and Estella spreads the influence of her 'eternal moment', her pathological grief like a disease, onto the children. This effect, precipitated by Miss Havisham's image and its reflections, is already in progress in Estella who has learned her 'lessons… looking up into your face, when your face was strange and frightened me!' (303). Estella at the end of Lean's adaptations sits down in Miss Havisham's seat herself, resolving to become her post-mortem mirror-image.[18] In the novel, Pip's absorption of her reflection is prefigured in their first meeting, in which she looks at and addresses him whilst 'looking at the reflexion of herself' (60), and the effect is realised when he sees Miss Havisham's 'ghostly reflection thrown large by the fire upon the ceiling and the wall, I saw in everything the construction that my mind had come to, repeated and thrown back to me.' (301) The flickering mirror chambers of Satis House have become Pip's own mental 'construction'. In himself, Miss Havisham's 'ghostly reflection' has finally been 'repeated and thrown back at me' as Miss Havisham has played out her own revenge fantasy of heartbreak upon him through Estella – the intermediary Havisham reflection. In Lean's movie, after Joe's visit Pip himself observes in a mirror the person he has become, himself embodying the narcissism which he has absorbed from Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham is the Weïrd Sister now become Medusa, who dooms whoever that looks upon her to feel the force of her revenge. Magwitch recounts of Arthur Havisham's hallucination of the jilted bridge, echoing Pip's descriptions, 'She's al in white… wi' white flowers in her hair', 'at the foot of the bed, awful mad' (347). He cries, 'Why look at her!... Look at her eyes!' (347), envisioning in a fit being suffocated by her before promptly dying. As with Pip's vision of Miss Havisham hanging,

[16] Barreca, Regina, 'David Lean's *Great Expecations*', *Dickens on Film* ed. John Glavin, Cambridge University Press (2003), p. 41.
[17] *Great Expectations*, dir. Mike Newell, BBC Films (2012).
[18] *Great Expectations*, dir. David Lean, prod. Ronald Neame, Universal Pictures (1946), accessed on YouTube 25/11/14.

the vision is tangible, in fact tangible enough to exact physical revenge, and once again the curse is enacted by 'look[ing] at her' into 'her eyes'. Reminiscent of Pip's memory of 'her wan bright eyes glaring at me' (300), she curses Pip to experience the heartbreak she has experienced. By his own admission, 'with that figure… fixing its eyes upon [Estella]… I was under stronger enchantment.' (239)

The pathological nature of Miss Havisham's grief is referenced by Pip directly, remarking that her 'mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased' (396), and describing Estella's immediate contempt for him as 'so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it' (61). Miss Havisham linguistically contaminates not only Pip's own vision and identity but also his narrative itself. Her appeals for him to 'Love her, love her, love her!' 'could not have sounded from her lips more like a curse' (240). The curse infects his vocabulary; 'I adapted them for my own repetition… "I love her, I love her, I love her!" hundreds of times.' (244). Pip's impressionable nature, as well as Estella's grooming by Miss Havisham, render them fully exposed to the contagion. However, in the never-ending complex of mirrors, Miss Havisham becomes victim of her own virality as she feels the brunt of her own cold-heartedness in the children. As stated by Raphael, 'her repetition never leads to a satisfying mastery'.[19] The reflection of her own doings is shown to her, and she reveals 'until I saw you in a looking-glass that showed me what I once felt myself, I did not know what I had done.' (396) Indeed, in fulfilment of his childhood terror, Pip has become that image of horror which he was so unsettled by and which now unsettles Miss Havisham herself, who responds with a 'ghastly stare' (363) of recognition as he states how 'I too had come to be a part of the wrecked fortunes of that house.' (357)

Miss Havisham's 'malignant enjoyment' (116) of the thought of Pip's heartbreak is mirror imaged in what seems to be, in spite of Pip's self-professed 'compassion' (396), a kind of relish in her desperation,

> seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed, in the vanity of sorrow which had become a master mania, like the vanity of penitence, the vanity of remorse, the vanity of unworthiness, and other monstrous vanities that have been curses in this world (396)

The repetition of her 'vanity' feels almost like an indulgent undermining of her 'remorse', condemning her for representing all the 'monstrous vanities that have been curses in this world'. For Dickens, Victorian England is not diseased by maladies but by the cruelty of others. Pip's

[19] Raphael, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

understanding of her as representation of exploitative power cannot be shattered by her bizarre apology. When kneeling at Pip's feet begging for forgiveness, he writes 'I knew not how to answer, or how to comfort her' (396). Miss Havisham has inadvertently passed on her stilted emotions to Pip as well as to Estella – and suffers the consequence of this from both, crying incredulously 'Estella, Estella, Estella, to be proud and hard to *me*!' (303). Miss Havisham is nothing when her own system of mirror imaging breaks down. Curt Hartog calls Miss Havisham's sterility the 'catastrophic' 'failure of feminine identity',[20] but in fact, she is the catastrophic failure of any identity at all.

She is, as Steven Connor describes, 'locked into an Imaginary relationship with her own image'.[21] She is the individual shaped solely by the signifier, a mere snapshot, reflected in the shadows and mirrors of novel. Yet defined by what she lacks, her 'figure' is insubstantial, merely visual. At the very root of her identity is Compeyson's absence; Raphael writes of her 'installing the lost loved one into the self to mitigate the loss'.[22] Outside of her own self-created system and without a wider frame of reference she simply cannot exist – as put by Miller, she would 'cease to be Miss Havisham'.[23] Her home is defined by negatives,

> 'no pigeons in the dove-cot, no horses in the stable, no pigs in the sty, no malt in the storehouse, no smells of grains and beer' (64)

and this Satis House's darkness and emptiness like Miss Havisham herself physically embodies the self-imposed ontological void; she cries 'I do not want to know' (84) when Pip tries to disillusion her to the day of the week. Even the onomastic significance of her name defines her in terms of absence, the unmarried 'Miss' paired with a maiden name. Crying out, 'Who am I, for God's sake, that I should be kind?' (358), 'Who' she is has been entirely defined by what she has lacked. She herself was never used as a repository for kindness and has consequently become an empty vessel, and her vain obsession with her own image, that which is external rather than that which is internal, emphasises all the more her hollowness of self.

As always in Dickens, what seems a caricature is never a simple yielding to that 'lure of eccentricity' described by Gissing. If she is a mythological Harpy, Medusa or Weird Sister, she matters because she has lain her curse on society. If she is a madwoman, her grief is pathological and seeps into the fabric of all other aspects of the novel's world. She is the master puppeteer of her own kingdom, but her

[20] Hartog, Curt, 'The Rape of Miss Havisham', *Studies in the Novel,* Vol. 14, No. 3, University of North Texas (1982), p. 262.
[21] Connor, Steven, 'The Imaginary and the Symbolic in *Great Expectations*, *Great Expectations* ed. Roger D. Sell, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
[22] Raphael, *op. cit.*, p. 225.
[23] Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

kingdom is a sterile and barren semantic waste land without which her identity collapses entirely. For Dickens, Miss Havisham represents the hollow narcissism which plagues Victorian society, infecting the very narration of the novel itself. Raphael writes of his revealing 'the vicious circularity of individual and social misery',[24] evidenced by the 'circularity' of Miss Havisham's infinite reflections in the world of the novel which ultimately compensate for her own lack of substantiality. Miller's chief praise Dickens is his 'constant attempt to reach something transcendent... a supra-reality… that hallucinated vision of things'.[25] The 'hallucinated vision' of Miss Havisham affects us with the same atavistic terrors and horrors as she affects on Pip, moving beyond the 'eccentric' to transcend the borders of her character.

[24] Raphael, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
[25] Miller, p. 329.

Bibliography

- Primary:

Dickens, Charles, *The Black Veil*, [http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/7849/], accessed 25/11/14

Dickens, Charles, *Great Expectations* ed. Margaret Cardwell, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1993)

'Episode 1', *Great Expectations*, dir. Brian Kirk, writ. Sarah Phelps, BBC, 1 Apr 2012,Television

Eliot, T. S., 'The Waste Land', *Selected Poems*, London: Faber and Faber Limited (1961)

Great Expectations, dir. David Lean, prod. Ronald Neame, Universal Pictures (1946), accessed on YouTube 25/11/14

Great Expectations, dir. Mike Newell, BBC Films (2012)

- Secondary:

Barreca, Regina, 'David Lean's *Great Expecations*', *Dickens on Film* ed. John Glavin, Cambridge University Press (2003), pp. 39-45

Bradbury, Lorna, 'My favourite Dickens character', [http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/7849/], accessed 25/11/14

Connor, Steven, 'The Imaginary and the Symbolic in *Great Expectations*, *Great Expectations* ed. Roger D. Sell, MacMillan Press Ltd. (1994), pp. 166-177

Freud, Sigmund, 'The Uncanny', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* ed. & trans. James Strachey, vol. XVII, London: Hogarth (1853)

Gissing, George, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, from *Collected Works of Gissing on Dickens* ed. S.J James and D. Parker, Grayswood Press (2004)

Hartog, Curt, 'The Rape of Miss Havisham', *Studies in the Novel,* Vol. 14, No. 3, University of North Texas (1982)

Miller, J. Hillis, *Charles Dickens: The World of his Novels*, London: Oxford University Press (1958)

Raphael, Linda, 'A Re-vision of Miss Havisham: Her Expectations and Our Responses', *Great Expectations* ed. Roger D. Sell, MacMillan Press Ltd. (1994), pp. 216-233

Thornton, Sara, 'The Burning of Miss Havisham: Dickens, Fire and the "Fire-Baptism", *Charles Dickens's Great Expectations* ed. Harold Bloom, Infrobase Publishing (2010), pp. 79-92

Varma, Devendra, *The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England*, Barker (1957)