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**The gothic other in Charles Dickens's novels: *Oliver twist, Bleak house, and Great expectations***

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**Abstract**

This paper focuses on three novels written at the time of Victorian England: *Oliver Twist, Bleak House, and Great Expectations*. All of them are mainly realistic novels which incorporate various genres including the Gothic. The Victorian era, as described by various critics, is 'an age of transition'. This context constructs fears and anxieties towards the changing society. Urbanization and industrialization in the late eighteenth century, for instance, shifted the Victorian ways of life and contributed to urban growth. They are transformations that are mirrored in nineteenth-century literary works. Dickens's novels reflect many of the fears of the Victorian context: the fears of the racial 'other', poverty and slums, and the transgression of traditional gender roles.

This paper examines the use of the Gothic in Charles Dickens's novels from 1830s to 1860s, dealing with various themes and various forms of Otherness. Its aim is to analyze the use of the Gothic in his novels that is interested in debates about the horrific environment of the nineteenth-century city, particularly in relation to issues of crime, urban contamination, and other concerns. It stresses on the notion of 'Otherness,' based on issues of race, class, and gender.

The aim of the first part is to define the term 'Gothic' and introduce the context in which the genre appeared. It is about the social context that leads to the revival of the Gothic genre in the nineteenth-century novel. Then, the focus will be on the representations of the Gothic Other in Dickens's novels. To reach this goal, he relies on biblical imagery, apocalypse, and myths that represent the Gothic world. The Gothic examined in this paper comes from various sources: classical, biblical, and modern. Dickens's use of the Gothic genre draws heavily on various motifs such as folklore, myths, and allusions to biblical and classical texts that influence him.

**Keywords:** Charles Dickens's, *Oliver twist, Bleak house, and Great expectations*

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**Introduction**

The Victorian era was considered as "an age of transition" as England went through various changes in its industry, culture, and social structure (Moran 1). It was a time of urbanization and industrialization. Dickens's literary works were known for their commentaries on and literary criticism of the urbanized and industrialized society. As John Gardiner asserted in *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect*, Dickens "is crucial to our sense of the Victorians. Indeed it may even be felt that Dickens in some way is the key to the Victorian age" (Gardiner 10). The most crucial genre which appeared during this era and was used by Victorian writers such as Dickens was the Gothic. He wrote a variety of Gothic novels, whose themes are crime, urban slums, disease and contamination, race, gender, and class. Urban pollution caused by industrialization, lack of sanitation, the spread of slums, all required this literary subgenre to illustrate the threatening impacts of industrialization on Victorian society. The Victorian novel shifted its focus from the terrors located in castles and the European countryside to the terrors found in the Victorian city.

To uncover the Gothic identities of the city and its inhabitants, key concept such as 'Otherness,' needs to be examined. Dickens's novels dealt with various kinds of 'Otherness'. For instance, *Bleak House* dealt with "questions of otherness": "the "otherness" of "exotic" characters: monsters and gypsies [...] illegitimate orphans [and] the "otherness" of antiquated social and legal institutions (Chancery)" (Zarifopol-Johnston 16-17). In this

novel, Dickens introduced the concept in a variety of situations. It is the novel wherein specific forms of 'otherness,' were easily seen. The villains appeared in various ways. He placed them within the category of the Other whose fictional representations took various forms of Otherness, including, for instance, the representations of the Jew, the criminal, the slums, the colonial convicts, the prostitutes, and women who went beyond gender norms. The research question that is to be explored throughout this paper is how the Gothic genre can be demonstrated through themes, settings, references, and allusions to hell. Dickens used the Gothic genre to represent London, its slums, and inhabitants as hell.

**1. The Urban Gothic and the Gothic Other**

In order to be able to define the urban Gothic subgenre, it is crucial to examine its relationship with the traditional Gothic. We first need to grasp the meaning of the term 'Gothic'. It was originally associated with 'Goths,' the Germanic tribes that invaded Europe and constituted a threat to the Roman Empire (Abrams and Harpham 152). From its origin, it came to signify everything that was barbaric, savage, and disordered. It emerged as a protest to everything that was characterized by order and unity, attempting to depict the disorder and randomness related to a particular society and context (Punter 14). The Gothic as a genre was related to the basic novels that launched the original materials and tradition of this mode of writing, such as *The Castle*

of *Otranto: A Gothic Story (1764)* written by Horace Walpole. His novel was known as the first 'Gothic story' that introduced the main tropes of Gothic fiction, including a medieval setting and ghostly apparitions, unfamiliar supernatural elements and aristocratic villains (Punter 2). In literary studies, as noted by Punter, "Gothic" was primarily applied to a group of novels produced in England between the 1760s and the 1820s, the first heyday of Gothic fiction with its haunted castles, supernatural elements, villains, and monsters (1).

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was one of the 'greatest' writers who incorporated the fantastic elements of the Gothic genre within his literary works that were known for their commentaries on and literary criticism of the urbanized and industrialized society. In "Dickens and the Gothic," Robert Mighall assumes that Dickens: "helped to change the face of Gothic fiction. [...]. In his hands, the Gothic moved from the remote and exotic to the familiar worlds of everyday existence" (94). Dickens used the Gothic genre to shock and frighten his readers through different materials that came hand in hand with the political, social, and cultural issues of the era.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Gothic genre became 'domesticated' and associated with the contemporary problems and anxieties of the era: the challenges of urbanization and industrialization (Botting 123). The Gothic in the Victorian era moved from the conventional space of the medieval castle into the more realistic urban location. In his discussion of the main shift in Victorian Gothic fiction, Botting similarly noticed the major departure that the Gothic genre underwent, from the remote space of the castle into the city, referring to the 'domestication' of Gothic devices within realistic settings (Botting 123). The characters were also 'domesticated' and were no longer the aristocratic villains and sentimental heroines. However, "domestic, industrial and urban contexts and criminals were the new villains" (Botting 123). The urban Gothic sub-genre came in response to certain circumstances that were associated with the real world. In other words, what frightened the reader were no longer the medieval castle, or unexplained supernatural elements but human being themselves whose portrayals anticipated their otherness and social difference. Accordingly, in earlier Gothic novels, the 'Other' was the ghost, the monster, and the ghoul. In Victorian Gothic literature, the 'Other,' was no longer something outside the familiar.

The image of the 'Other,' to which many Victorian authors kept returning in their literary works, appeared in the Gothic. The Gothic provided a useful lens with which to view and represent the Other. Andrew Smith and William Hughes argued that the Gothic "incorporated within its anti-Enlightenment fervour a set of complex views on the East, although often in order to consolidate rather than to question the kind of Orientalism identified by Edward Said" (3). The Victorian novel showed the relationship between the self and 'Other'. "Others," are identified in "Otherness and Identity in the Victorian Novel," as those who "were members of marginalized groups whose collective identity was perceived to differ in fundamental ways from the Victorian mainstream" (Galchinsky 404). Accordingly, it is important to remember that Edward Said offered a very important definition of the term 'Other,' in the sense that this definition was useful to understand and study various forms of Otherness. In *Orientalism*, Said referred to the relationship between Europe and Orient based on "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison

with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7). The 'Orient,' was 'the East,' which was the 'Other' to the West: the East was viewed as "the uncivilized," "the savage," "the undeveloped," "the weak," and "the feminized," while the West was seen as "the superior," the "civilized," "the strong," and "the masculine" (Said qtd. in Schaefer 1003). Accordingly, the 'Other' is identified as anyone the Victorians perceive as different from them and 'other' to their established norms and standards.

## 2. The Gothic Other in Dickens's novels

### 2.1 Race and Foreign Invasion

Critics note that Dickens's Gothic novels are haunted by "Otherness". *Oliver Twist* is pervaded by questions of race. It is the most obvious case in which representations of the Gothic Other are clearly manifested. Patricia Plummer assumes that Dickens in this novel is "obsessed by Otherness" (272). Plummer goes on to say that the novel is about "the discourse [of] Otherness [and] the issues of immigration" (272). The novel is about the representations of Otherness and is filled with anxieties about the exotic foreigner and urban slums. It is centered around the Jew who is depicted as the main Other. The threat of the Jewish presence in London found expression in racial discourse.

Fagin's 'otherness' takes many forms. It is represented through his endless movement in the East End of London. The writer shows how Fagin is fashioned as a Gothic Other through his movement. He is depicted many times "wandering" its dark streets. His wandering brings to mind the biblical wandering of Adam and Eve after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden (David 94). This technique of alluding to serpents in reference to Fagin is sustained through Dickens's depiction of him "crawling" in the darkness of the streets (Dickens 40). 'Crawling' is a word that has biblical connotations and is associated with the serpent of Genesis. 'To creep' or 'to crawl' which means to move with difficulty refers to the first curse or cursed serpent in Eden as "she must move upon her belly" (Ryken and Wilhoit 86). This movement is used to identify the 'Other,' the foreigner, and the unfamiliar. The fear of the Other to which Dickens kept returning in this novel imports allusion to the serpent of Genesis (David 94). It has a strong connection with biblical wandering.

Various words related to Fagin strengthen his characterization as a Gothic Other. Fagin is 'a specter,' 'hideous phantom,' and 'evil spirit' (Dickens 60). His representation suggests that he is transfigured into a ghost or specter, stripped of human attributes. His depiction shows his shapeless existence and invisibility.

Both the urban space and the Jew contribute to the construction of otherness. Dickens demonstrates how the urban setting serves to represent him as a Gothic Other. Fagin, whose appearance within the darkness of the city suggests the 'otherness' of the city where he appears as a monster or a vampire, is exemplified in the passages in which Dickens represents him walking through the slum that is haunted by "darkness" (Dickens 121). The words used to depict the atmosphere, "damp", "windy", "cold", and "clammy" explicitly connote the strangeness of the setting (Dickens 121). As he wanders in its darkness, "he became involved in the maze of the means and dirty streets.... The Jew was evidently too familiar with the ground he traversed [and] the darkness of the night" (Dickens 121). The East has strong connections with darkness, the color of race and difference. The word 'involved' can be read as the role of the Jew in the production of the Otherness of the East. The East also participates

in the production of his Otherness. In this case, Dickens "examines the highly complex relationship that can be developed between individuals and urban environments. This relationship is not just imaginative, then, but corporeal. Fagin's body helps to form this environment" (Newland 150). The darkness of the city suggests his 'Otherness'. The Jew was not simply an 'Other' in this context, but a projection and production of the Gothic slum.

*Great Expectations* shows the Gothic representation of the 'Other' in terms of race too. It is read as a novel that sets up the urban Gothic of 'Otherness,' thus creating for his readers the 'Otherness' of many characters, including Magwitch. The novel is Gothic dealing with issues of race, identity, and colonial invasion. The Otherness of the colonial figure is demonstrated through various words based on 'descent mythology' (Sugano 40). The theme of invasion is represented, as many critics maintain, through classical and biblical notions of 'descent to,' and 'ascent from' hell. The return from Australia to London is represented through the 'descent' and 'ascent' movements derived from classical and biblical sources. It is a return from the 'underground'. Dickens depicts the convict's return from Australia as a 'return from hell' (Sugano 40). The horrific moment of Magwitch's appearance in London is a moment that is demonstrated "with an image of ascent from darkness underneath the antipodean hell to the top surface where Pip holds the light" (Sugano 40). Dickens relies on ancient sources to represent the Otherness of Australia and its convicts who embody the threat of the underworld that haunts the safety of the homeland.

To further intensify his Gothic representations, the fearful convict with all the mysteries of colonial transportation and criminal doings encounters the young man in the city. The convict's return to London after his transportation to Australia enhances his Otherness that is produced by the child's imagination. Stein assumes that "City seeing", in this respect, "always requires a quick and comprehensive transformation of people into Others, into forms that are simultaneously more recognizable and more anonymous than they might have been otherwise, into what Pip calls "faces in the streets"" (235). His description as a monster or a 'ghost' is a direct consequence of the gothic image of convicts in the nineteenth-century England, the frightful figures who are viewed as foreigners. Culbert quotes from Said to refer to Magwitch who "confronts Pip like a monstrous ghost or the return of the colonial repressed" (qtd. in Culbert 236). Accordingly, his return to London deconstructs the hierarchical position between the civilized and uncivilized; the home and colonial space. He is constantly haunted by the convict through the process of turning the past into present. Pip is constantly haunted by Magwitch who firstly appears physically frightening and reappears later in the novel to revive the horrific experience that he undergoes throughout the novel, pushing him to go back to the past associated with horrific encounters. Magwitch's return makes the traditional supernatural elements such as ghouls or ghosts become familiar as they are psychologized and relocated onto the ghost imagined by the child (Stein 235).

The theme of crime is an important topic in Dickens's novels through which the criminal is represented as the monstrous 'other' whose vivid depiction indicate elements of degeneration that are expressed through his physical deformed body. Magwitch is othered by being repeatedly devoid of his humanity. Dickens depicts him as someone who appears "terribly like a hungry dog" (Dickens 302). From his use of the phrase "hungry

dog" to represent the convict, the notion of social Darwinism which compares humans to animals is sustained (Capuano 150). The language that is used to represent the Gothic Other contains elements of animal origins. When Dickens links Magwitch to "a black ox," "dog" (Dickens 45) or other vulgar animals, he stripped him of his human body, of his existence, and of his humanity, an image woven out of his imagination and Gothic materials that he relies on while dealing with the colonial or criminal figure.

The fear of the 'Other' is further explored through another character, namely Hortense, the French maid, who is considered as a colonial figure whose Gothic depiction is meant to represent the threat of the colonial 'Other'. As it is in the case of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*, *Bleak House* represents this woman whose 'otherness' cannot be understood in isolation, apart from racial otherness. Esther says she "seemed to bring visibly before me some woman from the streets of Paris in the reign of terror" (Dickens 275). Through the characterization of this female character, Dickens makes the case that non-English women threaten Victorian norms and rules. The characterizations of Magwitch and Hortense illustrate anxieties about the invasion of London by outside forces, revealing the relationship between the British and the 'Other'.

The portrayal of Hortense acquires animalistic traits. Dickens uses the animal metaphor to represent the Gothic Other. She is compared to a variety of creatures. She seems, for instance, "to go about like a very neat She-Wolf imperfectly tamed" (Dickens 135). Here too Dickens draws a similarity between human and animal, a similarity produced by associating her with animalistic traits. The language that is used by Dickens to describe her contains elements of animal origins. She is associated with "Wolf," or "vixen" (Dickens 135-136), the vocabularies that explore the criminal race. The Gothic relies on the demonization of the Other, with the help of scientific discourses of the era. In this context, the Victorian Gothic, as Botting assumes in *Gothic* was influenced by "Darwinian models of evolution, researches in criminology, anatomical and physiological science [that] identified the bestial within the human" (12).

The encounter between Hortense/Magwitch and the detectives in Dickens's novels suggests the encounter between 'us' and 'them,' the British and the 'Other'. Both are Gothic Others who must be removed from the mainstream society to protect the homeland. Dickens represents the 'Self,' the British as 'homely Jupiter' (Dickens 629). Dickens says: "It is impossible to describe how Mr Bucket gets her out, but he accomplishes that feat in a manner so peculiar to himself; enfolding and pervading her like a cloud, and hovering away with her as if he were a homely Jupiter, and she the object of his affections" (Dickens 629). The 'Self' becomes the 'hero,' 'Jupiter,' identified as the God who gives life to animals and humans (Ryken and Wilhoit 897). The murder mystery is solved during the detective's 'heroic success'. In biblical context, the word 'hovering' refers to God's protection. It suggests the "image of birds hovering over Jerusalem and conveys the idea of God protecting and delivering his people [...]" (Renn 112).

Further drawing on ancient and biblical myths, the Other is thus the wanderer. The dominant feature of *Bleak House* is intertextuality, as we have direct references to Genesis. Iinca Zarifopol-Johnston notes that his novels are 'hybrid,' including *Bleak House* that is influenced by other texts. She argues that

Dickens "accepts, exploits, and integrates [various] conventions into his own text" (139). Dickens's Gothic novels are haunted by other 'texts' as their supernatural elements and settings are related to various kinds of sources. Larson also refers to the rich language of Dickens and his "uses of subtextual allusion [that] create some of his richest, most complex effects" (17). What is borrowed from the original text is tightly linked to the Gothic genre that tends to speak the threat of foreign invasion. Dickens, as Larson maintains, quotes from the Bible, "earth...filled with violence" to represent the threat of the foreigner (22). Through such intertextuality, it is possible to weave parallels between Cain and Hortense. Dickens also represents Hortense when she returns to Chesney Wold: "shoeless, through the wet grass" (Dickens 224). Hortense is the criminal woman who, like Cain, finds herself in a state of darkness and alienation (Larson 22). She is represented as the devil or a fallen angel who wanders the earth like the ancient mythical figures after the fall.

Dickens's depiction of the British 'Other' doesn't differ from his depiction of the Jewish Other or non-English characters. Both receive the same degree of Otherness. *Oliver Twist* is about criminals, particularly Sikes, whose crime pushes him to wander through the city. Dickens alludes to Genesis to represent the criminal whose movements in the streets transform the modern urban space into a hellish setting. The urban criminal is "a figure of Cain," the myth of Abel and Cain, the allusion to Genesis which tells the story of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain who is punished by God to wander the earth (Larson 54).

The Otherness of Sikes is further enhanced through the urban space where he wanders after the murder. He literally exists in a featureless place: "[He] he *rambled to and fro, and up and down, and round and round, and still lingered*" (Dickens 315). Wandering is the outcome of this crime and is the punishment that causes restlessness. Connecting the criminal with the concept of wandering is a very ancient idea which can be traced back to Biblical mythology. Larson assumes that this movement corresponds to the movement of Satan in Job (151).

## 2.2. Places: Gothic Slums, London, Class

'Otherness' also involves places. The Gothic narrative of Dickens's novels revolves around the attempt to represent various kinds of 'Otherness'. This concept is also used in the representations of London, its poor areas, and slums. Dickens classifies urban slums and its inhabitants as 'Others'. The Victorian novel invites a range of 'Otherness': buildings, streets, and houses. Wolfreys assumes that the representations of London's streets and buildings "are suggestive "of an otherness and also a tendency towards excess of detail and irrationality in design" (90).

London is represented through representations such as that of the crossing sweeper who is depicted as 'savage' creature whose endless wandering in London's streets is compared to the wandering of biblical figures. Jo is a "slouching figure" (Dickens 131). He is represented as an urban wanderer and contextualized within images of exile and homelessness. 'Moving on' the streets calls to mind the same movements of biblical figures after the 'fall'. This idea is maintained by critics, including Larson who assumes that Jo's 'movement' calls to mind the movement in Job "Driven to and fro" (Job 13: 25). They are repeatedly located in spaces that indicate their inferiority, and thereby demonstrate this otherness through wandering movements. Referred to in various

instances as a "crossing sweeper" and "wanderer," Jo in his depiction, is represented in the sequence of wanderings that are used to depict his exile and alienation. Like Sikes, he is of "no order and no place" (Dickens 544).

Jo crosses the path of both west and East. His otherness is enhanced through his contact with other characters. His encounter with the inhabitants of the West End of London exposed him as a Gothic Other. He is perceived as the disease transmitter. In this novel, the chapter entitled "Stop Him," locates him within the category of a dangerous invader who must be removed. He is described as a 'fever' and a 'devil' that haunts the city and its inhabitants. He is perceived as "the fever coming up the street" (Dickens 205). The inhabitants of the West End of London are represented throughout the novel as the ultimate other, against which Jo is judged.

A further figure that is described in Othering terms in *Bleak House* is Nemo whose 'dirt' and 'smoke' associate him with the dust and smoke of the East and differentiate him from Westerners. Nemo is described as having "gypsy color" and "wild black hair and beard" (Dickens 142). The phrases indicate the gypsy trope that foregrounds the concerns of the Victorian era. The slum environment is depicted as the source of disease and cause of the production of gypsy-like figures. The 'gypsy' color is perceived as a sign of racial difference. The 'otherness' of his 'wild hair' and his skin color are the characteristics of Gypsies: the images associated with the Victorian notions of 'otherness' (Nord 103).

Dickens depicts the poor characters with a close eye to biblical language. They are introduced as 'deserted children' (Dickens 533). He assumes that Jo lives in "his desert region unfit for life" (533). He is reduced to a ghost or 'spirit'. Nemo is represented as 'no one' and a 'deserted infant' (Dickens 125). Nemo's body, like Jo, is depicted as a 'desert,' the one who "has a yellow look" (Dickens 119). The allusion to the 'abandoned child' has biblical meanings. It provides some insight into the desert depicted in Exodus. Dickens's novels allude to the biblical theme of 'deserted' places and children, particularly the context in Exodus to depict London and its slums. The frequent use of words 'dust' or 'dirt' is meant to remind readers of the biblical themes of the creation of man from 'dust or clay'. Critics add on this subject including Larson who assumes that 'dust' in Dickens's writings is "if not God's dust" is "a human creation" (120). Accordingly, Dickens depicts the poor figure's creation from urban dust and mud which are the substances out of which Nemo is made. Dickens creates the Gothic Other from urban dust and dirt. He frequently associates his characters, mainly poor children, with urban 'dust,' 'dirt,' and 'smoke' to represent the Gothic Other. These urban materials are not of God's creation; however, they are of human creation, the products of urbanization and industrialization.

The image of the city as a desert is further enhanced by the representation of the crossing sweeper. Jo himself becomes a 'desert'. He is "so dry" (Dickens 200). The adjective 'dry' is often used in biblical context to describe "dry and thirsty land" and is also the expression of 'drought,' the latter being a consequence of God's punishment, "an image of suffering in the Bible" (Ryken and Wilhoit 221). Jo is such a harsh place and is, like the 'desert,' needs the excessive use of water. References to 'filth,' 'parasites,' 'sores,' and rags' help create 'his desert' (Dickens 544).

*Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House* are loaded with Gothic representations of urban slums. Saffron Hill, for instance, is the

Gothic slum that represents the threat of the Other. The slum is 'otherized' as it is inhabited by criminals and poor class people who "wallow in filth" (Dickens 50). The phrase is an allusion to hell. To 'wallow' means "to roll in dust". 'Wallowing in filth' appears in biblical texts, referring to "rolling in dust, an expression of sorrow for sin" (Renn 835).

The novel gives an idea of the 'market day' that conjures up the 'ruins' and 'confusion' of London. Like Babylon, London is characterized by confusion. The symbol of 'confusion' influences Dickens's literary works to describe the gothic diversity of the city: "the modern Babylon" (Wolfrey 30). Dickens also relies on the myth of Babylon to represent the Gothic diversity of the slum. Visually, the city is composed of various kinds of people that intensify its diversity, including "[c]ountrymen," "butchers," "drovers," "hawkers," "boys", "thieves," "idlers," and "vagabonds" (Dickens 135). The various sounds are reminiscent of Babel. The list includes the "whistling of drovers," "the barking dogs", "the bellowing and plunging of the oxen" (Dickens 135). The latter point forward to the confusion described in *Sketches by Boz* in which Dickens suggests that the place has the attributes of Babel: "a hum of voices and confusion which would rival Babel, but for the circumstance of its being all in one language" (Dickens 44).

The 'market day' is an 'industrial' day and is represented through a Babylon of various sounds that remind readers of the confusion of Babylon. The list includes the "whistling of droves," "the barking of dogs," and "Yiddish words" (Dickens 135). The confusion that identifies London is caused by the multiplicity of sounds and people. It is represented through the Babylon of violent activities: "crowding," "beating," "whooping," "yelling," "running to and fro" (Dickens 135).

Dickens's representations of Jacob Island are derived from biblical allusion. In *Oliver Twist* Dickens represents this slum as an 'island,' a desert. Its name contains biblical references. Islands carry symbolic meanings. They are known as places that are created after the fall from the Garden of Eden. According to the myth, God places the couple in Paradise or the Garden where they can own everything they need; however, after the 'sin' they are punished by God who places them in an abandoned place or Island (Murray 105). Islands "were seen as peripheral fragments of the earth formed by the flood after the fall of Eden" (Murray 105). Eden, after the Fall, is transformed into an island wandered by Adam and Eve. They are the product of God's anger, punishment, and flood. Eden is 'transfigured' into an Island that is imagined as 'a fallen earth,' the paradise that is destroyed by flood after the expulsion (Murray 105).

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens stresses on the apocalyptic depiction and biblical classification of the slum based on the myths of the Fall. The novel suggests a "Babylonian" depiction of the Island: "the myth of the crumbling Babylon". The slum is represented through 'heaps of broken images'. Dickens depicts its walls, houses, and buildings as "crumbling down," and its doors as "falling" (Dickens 329-330). The words 'to fall' or 'falling' are biblical words that refer to "falling in a variety of ways. It means 'fall' in the sense of 'descent'; or 'drop to the ground'" (Renn 362). The word is used to describe the state of transition from order to disorder or to the various myths of fall like the 'the fall of Satan,' 'the fall of Adam,' or the 'fall from innocence' (Ryken and Wilhoit 362). The chimneys that "are blackened" and that "yield no smoke" call to mind the 'fallen Babylon'. Jacob's Island is

represented as an 'empty' place where everything suffers from the lack of life: there are no light and no inhabitants. Dickens employs 'apocalyptic' words to represent the slum: 'broken and empty' buildings, and 'falling' doors (Dickens 329-330). Dickens transfers the otherness of Babylon to the urban slum. Its representation reminds readers of the condition of Babylon after the Fall. The story of the Tower of Babylon is summarized as the story of 'Fall'. When Nimrod builds the Tower to reach the sky, Babel is destroyed and its Tower is fallen (Ryken and Wilhoit 66-67).

Islands are important in their biblical contexts as they are used to locate themes of exile and refuge. Dickens identifies the Island as a place of 'refuge' (Dickens 330). It is a place where criminals hide, a place of exile where they seek refuge. Jacob's Island is the direction of Sikes's flight. According to Christian folklore, islands are associated with Adam and Eve's Fall from the Garden of Eden (Murray 105). After the Fall, they seek 'refuge' in it. Islands maintain ideas of exile.

In *Bleak House*, the slum is represented through the 'descent imagery'. The word 'descent' refers to the "imagery of physical descent—of going down— [which] is part of the directional imagery of the Bible [and] classic Christian texts like Dante's *Divine Comedy* and *Milton's Paradise Lost* [...]" (Ryken and Wilhoit 204). It is about "the vertical imagery," or "the picture of going down into graves" (Ryken and Wilhoit 204). Dickens relies on the 'descent' mythology: Greek, classical, Christian to represent the Otherness of the East. The journey through the East End of London requires the 'downward movement' which is reminiscent of Dante's path to hell (Hollington 199). As they enter the slum, the characters "feels as if he were going, every moment *deeper down, into the infernal gulf*" (Dickens 268). "Going deeper down" is considered as the 'descent movement' which is often used by Dickens to create the strong connections between London and hell.

In *Bleak House*, Dickens borrows words to fabricate this horrific urban environment. Phrases such as "darkness," "light burning" "nauseous air," "desert unfit for life," "volcanic fires," "infernal stability," "infernal gulf," and "black depilated streets" (Dickens 130) are linked with the image of the slum as hell. The textual allusion is strengthened by the word 'infernal' to construct its Otherness. The borrowing of words creates the bond of past and present. The word 'infernal' describes the journey of Dante in *The Divine Comedy* (Hollington 199). Dickens incorporates allusion to Dantean elements in his novels as a means of creating the Other/slum, of turning it into hell.

The next category of otherness is the graveyard which is another source of contagion. Dickens depicts the ruins and chaos of urban graves as a "shame," the word that represent "the satiric and ironic biblical allusion" (Larson 58). The otherness of the graveyard is represented through the different races that are buried there. References to the word 'Kafir,' which is defined in the novel's endnotes as the noun 'Kafir,' a Muslim Arabic word derived from the verb 'kafara' (to reject) which means the 'unbeliever' (745). The burial ground is like London itself, a Babylon of various kinds of people. The identities of the dead that populate this place are numerous. Thus, the graveyard becomes a Gothic place that goes beyond the established borders, the place where the 'rich' and the 'poor', 'the Turk', the 'Kaffir,' and 'Christian', the 'contaminated' and the 'healthy' are buried (Mackay 116). In the same context, Marina Mackay assumes:

"Allusions to "heathen" Turks and Kaffirs mock the imperial hypocrisy of this "boastful island" and all its pretensions to Christian superiority [...]" (116).

Dickens weaves images of apocalypse to represent the Otherness of London. He represents London from an apocalyptic perspective. Killen points out London is "a nexus of the ages in which past and future, Genesis and Apocalypse, are refined and zoned, presided over by moral pollution, perpetuated by modern bureaucracy" (18). Dickens also uses the 'desert imagery' to represent the otherness of London. He represents London as 'a desert' "with the smoke lowering down from chimney pots" (Dickens 3). The imagery with which Dickens chooses to depict the city is suggestive of 'apocalyptic' chaos. It is characterized by darkness and invisibility.

The novel also examines the otherness of London's houses. The house does not escape the harmful impacts of the urban environment as it is exposed to the contaminated public world, an exposure achieved through the "wind that blows" 'easterly' against the house (Dickens 421). The urban wind is destructive. Larson assumes Dickens's 'wind' "blows from the Book of Job" and has biblical symbolism (125). Winds, namely the 'east wind', destroy nature and harm life. The efforts to protect the domestic from the chaos of the public do not achieve its total success. In the urban world of Dickens, the 'East wind' is dangerous as it harms the city, withering its surrounding elements.

*Bleak House* also explores the otherness of minor characters. Allusion to Babylon and its Tower are also used to suggest the confusion of houses and families. Mrs. Jellyby's house is represented as "disgraceful" (Dickens 39-40). Her children are also "disgraceful". (Dickens 39-40). The adjective 'disgraceful,' has biblical meaning and used to describe the "shame" of "one's spiritual nakedness" (Renn 888). Disgrace is a characteristic of disorder and inability to respect rules and it is most clearly seen throughout the novel particularly in relation to the depiction of the domestic life. As Old assumes, Dickens uses the term 'disgraceful,' to represent the 'shame' that threatens the era: the 'shame' of women who abandon their conventional roles as mothers and wives, "the disgrace of poverty, the shame of ignorance, the ravages of alcohol, the tyranny of child labor—the Word of God that speaks to the problem" (87).

Family names are associated with words that are also used to suggest the otherness of British families. The brickmaker's name has biblical meanings that mirror the situation of the house and family. The word '*bricks*' refers to the 'bricks' made to build the Tower of Babel and becomes an allusion to the confusion of Babel (Ryken and Wilhoit Ryken 120). In this novel, the family's name is an allusion to the 'confusion' of Babel and gives insight into its moral character and the confusion of Brickmaker's house. Dickens suggests further possibilities of otherness as a site for critical representations of the domestic sphere. Dickens depends on the trope of the devil to invent the traits of his characters. His portrayal of the Smallweed family is another source of urban hell. He refers to it as the "Smallweed family circle" (253). This family is associated with a catalogue of animal imagery such as 'monkey', 'pig', 'dog', and 'cat' (Dickens 250). Indeed, the Grandfather uses the word 'brimstone' to describe one of the members of the family, particularly the Grandmother who is called "brimstone black-beetle" (Dickens 398). The word brimstone has many connotations and mainly refers to hell's fire. The term means ""(burning) sulfur," and is in each context either

implicitly or explicitly, the instrument of God's punishment on the wicked" (Renn 148). He calls Mr. George "a brimstone beast" and his wife "a brimstone chatterer" and "a brimstone pig" (Dickens 254). Through this name, Dickens accurately fictionalizes the Gothic Other.

The representations of the Gothic Other are illustrated with the help of religious diction. To identify and name his villains, Dickens depends on biblical words. The Lord High Chancellor is represented as the "most pestilent of hoary sinners" (Dickens 3). Colledge assumes that Dickens uses biblical words to identify his villains such as 'sinners' and 'wicked' (266). Dickens uses symbolic names to enforce the theme of hell. His name reminds readers of another word, 'crooked,' the word that refers to the "wicked" (Renn 233). The 'crooked' are those who refuse to follow the 'right' or 'straight' way shown in biblical texts. The word is also used to denote a 'curved path,' which is the opposed of a 'straight path' or road (Renn 233). The name suggests some connections between the 'crooked' in biblical texts and Dickens's villain.

### 3. The Gothic Other: Gender

The urban Gothic emerged as a response to the various transformations that shaped the conventional values of British society. The nineteenth century showed significant changes for women. There were important social changes because of women's struggle against the patriarchal conventions. The Victorian era witnessed the appearance of the "new women" and the breakdown of the traditional social norms (Moran 40). The female characters in Dickens's novels foreshadowed the social and political changes occurring during this era. The literary representations of women who went beyond the domestic ideology were "a kind of demonization by worried males of those independent women who appeared at the turn of the century, refusing to play the role of Victorian wife and mother" (Kitson 169).

*Great Expectations* shows the Gothic representations of the 'Other' in terms of gender. Written between 1860 and 1861, the novel is known for the rich portrayal it conveys of Gothic women. The notion of the 'Other' is central to my analysis of Dickens's use of the Gothic to represent his female characters. The novel is controlled by Gothic women who are threatening and whose behavior and appearance are juxtaposed with the Victorian norms of patriarchy. Dickens demonstrates his renewed interest in the Gothic genre: the Gothic that deals with further social and contemporary issues of the era.

Dickens's male narrator represents the spinster, Miss Havisham, as a 'skeleton'. The macabre imagery provides an interesting lens with which to view her otherness (Sengupta 14). Victorian society is patriarchal as unmarried women were perceived as 'witches,' or 'evil spirits' (Sengupta 14). Phrases such "skeleton-like form," "corpse-like" body, "the Witch of the place," and ghastly "waxwork", (Dickens 80) make her more supernatural than natural. The use of the supernatural leads to the horrific representations of the Other, stripping her of humanity and causing further ambiguity in the identity of the Other.

In addition to this, Dickens uses the 'the desert imagery,' the allusion to barren lands in biblical context to represent the otherness of women who do not respect the domestic ideology. Her garden is depicted as "a deserted place" (Dickens 60). It is a direct allusion to Man's exile from Eden.

Directly linked to Miss Havisham as an Other is Estella, her adopted child. Estella's Otherness is different from that of the spinster. Dickens uses biblical allusion to Eve to represent Estella as a seducer or temptress whose "pretty brown hair spread out in her two hands" (Dickens 60-61). Her "untied hair" or "flattered hair" (Dickens 60-61) evokes images of fallen women, the fall from the expected patriarchal norms. She embodies the role of the seducer of man.

Estella is represented as a fallen woman. Her 'untied' hair is expressive of sexuality. She is depicted as the tempter. Dickens uses biblical allusion to create the image of Estella as a 'temptress'. She is the villainous figure as she uses seduction as the main tool through which she can lead men to fall. Dickens uses biblical allusion to create the image of Estella as a temptress (Simmons 124). Biblical texts display various kinds of temptations like 'the temptation of Satan, the 'temptation of Adam' by the serpent. Her representation invites the reader to define 'temptation' in sexual terms. It exhibits the 'temptation' of Eve (Simmons 124).

Mrs. Joe is also a 'She-devil' (Dickens 40). Her representation as 'ghost' or 'witch' is a form of othering that strips her of humanity. She incarnates the image of the Gothic woman who is totally opposite to conventional mothers. Associating women with ghosts or other supernatural elements is a very ancient idea which can be traced back to biblical history. The representations of these women in this novel are derived from the biblical binary of Virgin and Eve created by Christian theology (Simmons 124).

In *Great Expectations*, the description of Molly, the criminal woman, as a Gothic Other is further reinforced as Dickens repeatedly draws the reader's attention to further physical attributes that strengthen this otherness. Molly is associated with traits that disrupt social norms. Her body clearly articulates her alien identity: her hands and face indicate her 'Otherness'. Mr. Jaggers remarks: "Very few men have the power of wrist that this woman has" (Dickens 197). Her hands have muscular characteristics and her physical appearance indicates her strength. The strong wrist, criminal behavior, and monstrosity of this woman seem to be influenced by the work of degeneration. The "remarkable force of grip" in Molly's hands "alludes to her previous crime [and] reflects contemporary anxiety regarding the fragility of the barrier between the human and the animal" (Capuano 137).

Allusion is useful to represent the Gothic Other. What is borrowed from the original text is directly linked to the Gothic that tends to associate this woman with the supernatural. Molly is represented as a supernatural woman whose face seems to be "ris[ing] out of the Witches' cauldron" (Dickens 196). The phrase "Witches' cauldron" is derived from the ancient idea of Shakespearean ghosts. Dickens alludes to Macbeth, "the witches in the opening scene of Shakespeare's Macbeth" (Snodgrass 164). The parallel is that in both novel and play, the characters are haunted by women who appear like witches or ghosts.

The gypsy trope influences the literary representations of women. Molly is represented as having "some gypsy blood in her" (Dickens 358). Gypsies in nineteenth-century Britain are "Marks of Race" (Nord 117). In this respect, her gypsy traits locate her within the category of the Other, a threat to the national security and social order. It functions not only to demonstrate racial 'otherness,' but also to challenge gender.

Through the lens of *Oliver Twist*, the literary representations of Nancy and Rose are important as they aim to show the difference between the British and the Other. The representations of Rose locate her within the category of the British against which the prostitute embodies the role of the 'Other'. In contrast with Rose whose physical depiction represents her English identity, Nancy's portrayal insists on her Gothic otherness. From the use of the words "corpse," "ghost," "she-devil," (Dickens 312) used to represent Nancy, her otherness is sustained.

Her otherness is also projected through "untied hair," "disordered appearance," "perfume of Geneva," and "drink of laudanum" (Dickens 166). It is represented through the reference to the Book of Revelation which reminds readers of 'Geneva Bible' which points to the "seven-headed beast of Revelation" and "the Whore of Babylon" (Thornton 85-86). Sara Thornton assumes that Dickens is inspired by the Whore of Babylon and "mother of harlots": Estella is represented as the Whore and Miss Havisham is portrayed as the "mother of harlots" (85-86). In *Oliver Twist*, he also transfers the 'otherness' of Babylon to the public woman, and the purity of the Christ to Rose. References to her 'blue eye,' 'nobbled head,' 'sweetness,' 'cheerful happy smile,' and 'Home,' (Dickens 186) locate her within the place that categorizes her as the English and familiar woman.

Dickens locates Nancy's identity within the context of urban dirt and so doing he alienates her from the purity of Rose. Dickens associates his female figure with the 'dark water' and 'urban dirt', the unsanitary conditions of the city (Dickens 307). In *Myths of Sexuality*, Lynda Nead demonstrates how "the elements of sanitary debate [...] the tainted air and impure water, the miasma from metropolitan burial grounds" are involved in particular references to fallen women (127). In *Bleak House*, Lady Dedlock also represents the threat of impure women. She is frequently associated with the "polluted air" that locates her within the category of fallen women. She is "linked through metaphor and notion of contagion [...] contaminated waste and indicates filth of the city" (Nord 83).

In opposition to Nancy's sexuality which is associated with the unsanitary conditions of the city, Rose is represented through nature. Dickens relies on classical sources to create his character. Her name locates her within the category of the pure and innocent woman. He alludes to the 'enclosed garden' to represent the British. It refers to the Virgin's 'hortus conclusus' which symbolizes 'untouched womb'. It is defined as a "popular subject in the later Middle Ages, representing the Madonna and Child in a walled garden [...]" (Murray 263). Nancy is represented as a threat to the established norms of the Victorian society. The West represents her as a "disgrace to her sex," (Dickens 261) the negative image of women who go beyond social borders. Through the eyes of Westerners, Nancy is a prostitute and her representation was loaded with negative connotations. She is the prostitute who symbolizes the disorder of the East. An important element that leads to their perceptions of her as Other is the fact that her physical appearance does not conform to the basic norms. Critics assume that Dickens's use of words such as "fallen," "shame," and "error" belong to the "language of sin, repentance, and forgiveness, in conspicuous Christian sin" (Colledge 89). She represents the 'shame' of public women who threaten the conventional gender roles.

## Conclusion

The Urban Gothic arose directly out of and appears in response to particular social conditions. The appearance of the Gothic

genre in Victorian novels is a response to the urban and industrial transformations. It is used to investigate contemporary issues, such as the changing role of women in society and to criticize the criminal urban underworld. *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Bleak House* are amongst Dickens's Gothic novels which illustrate the crisis of the Victorian age and its negative impacts on its inhabitants. The novels are read as stories of urban crime, degeneration, the horrific environment of urban slums inhabited by foreigners and criminals. Drawing on the notion of Otherness and the Gothic style that Dickens relies on to represent the Other, my main argument in this study is that it is through his concern with race, class and gender, Dickens interrogates the Victorian norms. The concept of 'otherness' encompasses various spheres. The main characters depicted by Dickens as Gothic Others are combined in their otherness by the sense of exile, homelessness, and alienation caused by crime, poverty, race, and other facts. It is the fantastic and hellish world that Dickens attempts to recreate in his novels. He depends on biblical allusion, the echoes of Dante's allusion to hell, and various other sources to create a Gothic London to which various problems, fears, and anxieties of the era can be voiced.

It is important to note that in Dickens's Gothic novels, it is easy to find an 'Other,' whose traits alienate him or her from the given social norms. Otherness involves the members of the Victorian society such as criminals, lower class people, foreigners who threaten the peace of England, as well as women who go outside gender norms. The language of the Gothic in Dickens's novels was highly rich. Dickens's Gothic was viewed as 'open' as it imported its materials and conventions from various sources, both biblical and classical. The Gothic genre is thus an 'open' genre that offers Dickens the words, imageries, and supernatural elements from various sources for his creation of the Gothic Other. Biblical allusions and allusions to classical myths provide his novels with words, diction, and imageries that serve this goal.

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