NO PLACE LIKE HOME: CHARLES DICKENS AND HIS AMERICAN DISAPPOINTMENT
A comparative analysis of Dickens’ correspondence, travelogue and fictional account concerning his first American tour

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A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literature and Linguistics in English (minoring in French)

Academic year: 2016 - 2017
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Acknowledgements
This thesis is the result of hard work and an enormous amount of passion. Charles Dickens has been a companion to me since childhood and his books have accompanied me throughout my career at university. It was a pleasure to gain new insights surrounding this amazing and prolific author of the nineteenth century. I can only say that I did my best to live up to the great expectations surrounding an academic work on this legendary writer. It was a wonderful way for me to finish my studies in language and literature. No small amount of stress is contained within every word on this page, but it is matched by the tremendous amount of love and support I was given during those months and weeks of writing.

Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Jasper Schelstraete for his infinite patience and kindness, his insightful advice and the adjustments that his elaborate feedback allowed me to make. This thesis grew from being a chaos of ideas into a more structured and focused dissertation through your help, thank you for that.

Secondly, I would like to thank my boyfriend for having provided me with his unconditional support and encouragements, for believing in this endeavour and for standing by me during the whole writing process. Thank you for the comments you provided, thank you for your interest in my sometimes passionate arguments about the subject and for listening to all my ramblings, anecdotes and insights without ever complaining.

To my friends I also owe an enormous thank you for the lovely words of support and comfort. I am eternally grateful to you for helping me out with formatting, finding sources or for offering critical insights or extensive feedback on (parts of) my thesis. To those who took the time to ask how my thesis was going, to those who were genuinely interested in the subject and who, through their questions, helped me make some structural alterations, thank you. To my friends from Home Astrid, a special thank you for providing me with laughter and leisure when I was in dire need of a break and with reassuring words or motivation when I was stressed out.

I would also like to thank the study advice department of the University of Ghent, and particularly Annemieke Taildeman for her help in a difficult time and for offering tips and tricks regarding studying, planning and relaxation that I now use daily.

Last but not least; I would like to thank my family, my grandparents and especially my brother and my parents. Thank you for the practical and moral support in everything, for knowing, even before I knew, that this subject was the right one. For knowing, even before I did, that I was going to study language and literature and that it would be the right choice for me. In short, a heartfelt thank you for your undying support and faith in me during all those years, and thank you for believing in me more than I sometimes do.
It has not been easy for me these past few years, and it has been a sometimes nerve-wracking battle against myself to be able to get this far. I am proud to have achieved this and to be able to say that despite everything, I did it.
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General Introduction

“It would be well, there can be no doubt, for the American people as a whole, if they loved the Real less, and the Ideal somewhat more. It would be well, if there were greater encouragement to lightness of heart and gaiety, and a wider cultivation of what is beautiful, without being eminently and directly useful” (AN 296).

When Dickens made up his mind to travel to the United States, he could have never expected the enormous impact the journey would have on his further career. From January 1842 until June 1842, Charles Dickens travelled the North-American continent for a first of two visits in order to discover the country and meet with his audience across the ocean. It would prove a turning point for the young and famous “Boz”, since this visit provided him with writing material for two books: American Notes for General Circulation and the fictional Martin Chuzzlewit. It had been established before departure that Dickens would write about his journey, yet he could not have imagined what he would encounter during the trip. His journey started on the East Coast of the U.S. and he intended to continue Southwards (passing through Richmond, Virginia and Saint Louis) to finish his trip after a visit to the Niagara Falls and Canada. The voyage had been organized in just a few months and Dickens had great expectations for the country. In her biography of Dickens, Claire Tomalin confirms Dickens’ purpose for traveling beyond the Atlantic: “He had a more profound reason for making the long journey, and this was his desire to test out the hope that a better society was established there, free of monarchy, aristocracy and worn-out conventions” (127). Yet, Dickens would soon change his mind. The more he moved away from the bigger cities (such as New York, Philadelphia and Boston), the more his observations grew pessimistic and bitter. He wrote to his friend Fonblanque on the twelfth of March: “It would be impossible to say, in this compass, in what respects America differs from my preconceived opinion of it, but between you and me- privately and confidentially- I shall be truly glad to leave it” (Letters 120). He started looking forward to his return home and lost his original enthusiasm for the country.

The aim of this dissertation is to establish that Dickens’ own personal journey in the United States, during the year 1842, marked his further career as a writer and changed Dickens’ perspective on the U.S. Therefore, the most suited approach was to apply the method of biographical criticism. Through a thorough analysis of Dickens’ three different narratives on the adventure, his criticism will be put into perspective. His personal letters form a first narrative, followed by the travelogue American Notes for General Circulation and finally, the fictional Martin Chuzzlewit. In his correspondence, the context allowed for a certain kind of criticism to
emerge, which the travelogue could not offer. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens expresses (sometimes subtly, sometimes not so) satire on various aspects of American life, based on his own observations. The interaction between those three "American" sources forms the core of this dissertation. Each source will be exhaustively analysed and related to factual information and research concerning Dickens’ journey. As a result, an assessment will emerge of each source and its degree of truth and criticism in comparison with the other sources. Since his letters offer his most reliable account on the journey, this dissertation will use them as a basis of comparison for *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Considering that this is a literary commentary, this dissertation will also use language and stylistic devices (such as humour or metaphors) to corroborate the claims of criticism and to explain the impact of the American journey on Dickens’ writing. That is why this dissertation will be dedicated in majority to the fictional account of Dicken’s American adventure: *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

The most direct account of his observations and analyses can be found in his letters, which he wrote to relatives and friends from across the Atlantic. Dickens being Dickens, these letters were often light-hearted, filled with a touch of humour and a hint of satire. He often made use of metaphors to describe the spitting for instance or the political situation in America. An example is this legendary phrase from Dickens’ correspondence: “The Nation is a body without a head; and the arms and legs, are occupied in quarrelling with the trunk and each other, and exchanging bruises at random” (*Letters* 176). The letters were a way for Dickens to recollect his emotions and rearrange his thoughts towards the country, but they also provided the early sketches for his intended travelogue: *American Notes*. The letters were written on a day-to-day basis and in an episodic fashion, which allows for an overview of Dickens’ changing perspective on America, from the author’s hope for finding a utopian paradise to his gloomy conclusion that the U.S. could not be further away from the dream he had envisioned. Dickens described many issues to his friends and family, but the issues of slavery, American nationalism, the press and the bad manners of the American people were what drove him to despise the country. Another cause which Dickens held close at heart and which he took considerable effort to defend in the U.S. was an International Copyright Agreement. However, no matter how passionately he argued in favour of the cause, it seemed a desperate one. This marked his first of many disappointments in the country that had so exuberantly welcomed him.

The American experience awakened a passion in Dickens that he could not resist writing about for the public, which he did, subsequently, in two very different accounts. The first was a travelogue promoting a rather neutral point of view. The second, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, was a fictional account which offered a highly satirical critique on America. *American Notes for General
Circulation was the intended result of the transformation of Dickens’ correspondence into a book. It was characterized as a travelogue and in that respect, belonged to a pre-existing literary trend of the period and was subjected to a certain amount of genre conventions. The travelogue recuperates most of the material from the letters, but Dickens selected which content he kept and which content he disregarded. The personal and emotional aspects of his journey, such as his nervous exhaustion from the social obligations or his homesickness, have no place in the travelogue, while he elaborated more extensively on social institutions and landscape imagery. The reason for this is that the correspondence was a personal exchange of his adventure with family and friends, where the emphasis would of course be different than in his public account of the country.

Dickens’ only fictional account on the American adventure can be found in Martin Chuzzlewit. This narrative was first published serially from December 1842 onwards to July 1844, roughly a year after Dickens returned from his journey. Dickens wished for a book in which he could express the comicality he encountered in the U.S., because he had not been able to express this in American Notes. He found this by writing an American episode into Martin Chuzzlewit. Through Martin, the protagonist, Dickens was able to express his satiric view and the emotional transformation he had undergone. Martin Chuzzlewit does not offer a flattering portrait of the U.S. at all. The experiences he had edited out of the travelogue were integrated into Martin Chuzzlewit. For instance, the unexpected celebrity welcome or his strong disapproval of certain American manners both become an essential feature of Martin’s journey in the United States. The dangers of the press are equally present, as is the national sentiment and pride of the American citizens. All of these were highly ironized and hyperbolized for the narrative. Humour functions as the main device through which Dickens sublimates those American experiences he could not mention as his public self. Accordingly, the novel becomes an outlet for his deep frustrations with the New World. A lot of Dickens’ own findings and encounters are incorporated into the narrative and are traceable through a comparison with his letters and American Notes.

These three narratives each assert a different truth and a different degree of criticism, which are interesting to compare in order to discern where Dickens’ fictional persona on the one hand and Dickens’ own personal experiences on the other hand conform and differ. The first medium, the letters, holds the immediacy of experience and forms a first-hand source, accompanied by the emotional impact of the journey on the author. The second source is a carefully edited and selected narrative, based on a pre-existing literature, which fits neatly into that category and has therefore been subjected to certain alternations when compared to the letters. The last narrative provided Dickens with the protection of a fictional personage to voice unfiltered criticism and
parody American life as he had sometimes done in his personal correspondence. All three sources share one common element: they demonstrate the enormous influence and emotional impact that the American episode of Dickens' life had on his further career. Harry Stone, in the article “Dickens’ Use of His American Experiences in Martin Chuzzlewit” comments on this highly interactive connection between the three sources:

[B]y analyzing the American chapters in Martin Chuzzlewit in the light of Dickens' letters from America and his American Notes, it is possible to achieve a better understanding of his artistic methods and limitations. One can see (...) how Dickens the observer, the selector, worked, how he broke up some experiences and fused others together. One can watch impressions and images recur and reappear as the associations with which they are connected also recur and reappear. Finally, one can better understand the fictional difficulties and shortcomings in the American interlude of Martin Chuzzlewit; one can better explain a good many artistic lapses and seemingly wild exaggerations (464).

Stone suggests that those three works form an “extraordinary trilogy of materials made to order for the study of the relationship between fact and fiction. But strangely enough, despite the immensity of the Dickens bibliography, one hunts vainly for such a study” (464). Stone’s article, however, dates from 1956 and since then, the study field on Dickens has expanded quite a lot. For instance, in 1976, Lewis Bogaty wrote an extensive study on the three American sources. He also relates Dickens’ experiences to his writings by using a biographical approach. Other than that, Jerome Meckier connects, in a 1984 article, some of Martin’s fictional experiences in the novel to events that Dickens described in his letters. An analysis of the psychological impact of the journey is provided by (among others) Alexander Welsh, who studied the influence of the American adventure on Dickens’ (further) writing, as did Kate Flint in The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens. Most of the studies however, detail only a particular aspect of the journey and there are very few studies who consider the entire perspective by taking into account the letters and the travelogue as well as the novel. Bogaty was the first in that regard and his doctoral thesis provides an enormous amount of material linking the three works together. This dissertation likewise aims to analyse and compare the three works on Dickens’ first American visit. By using a biographical approach and relating fact to fiction, a better understanding can be provided of how deeply this journey affected Dickens. His journey to the U.S. made “an indelible impression on his mind” (Letters 73) and his criticism on the country is visible in varying degrees throughout the three sources.
The motivation behind this dissertation is to uncover a period of the “Dickensian” oeuvre that has long remained in the margins of academic research. As one of the most prolific Victorian authors, Charles Dickens has been analysed time and time again, and while his American visits where certainly well-documented, their impact (both psychological and in his writing) has not often been discussed. His first visit to the country inspired a whole new writing style: a darker Dickens, left with the bitter aftertaste of his unfulfilled American dream. The reason why I chose to write about this is simple. I have always been a fan of Dickens’ works. His humour, his ability to make characters come to life and to immerse his readers completely into his story world, have fascinated me since I first read *Oliver Twist*. When I saw the opportunity to write a dissertation about his American adventure, I did not hesitate for long. I had heard of *Martin Chuzzlewit* as one of his less successful novels, but soon learned that “underappreciated” would fit better as a description. The richness of the American material in Dickens’ writings, the impact of the U.S. on his work and his person have been a pleasure for me to discover. His satiric portrayal, his talent for observation and spot-on critique are but one of the many remarkable aspects of his American episode. At times, though written hundreds of years ago, his commentary is even surprisingly relevant. The choice to assess criticism and truth by comparing the three narratives stems from my interest to see how his personal experience biased his writing. I have always thought Dickens a captivating author, both qua work and life. This dissertation was the opportunity to incorporate those two aspects in a literary study of Dickens’ American spell.
Chapter one: The New World through the eyes of Dickens, author and experiencer

1.1) From the journey to the text: a biographical reading

Dickens’ American tour is often considered a “formative experience”, where “[h]is projected triumphal tour turned out to be a voyage of self-discovery”, as is stated by Jerome Meckier in the article "Dickens Discovers America, Dickens Discovers Dickens: The First Visit Reconsidered" (266). This self-discovery is visible through Dickens’ three narratives, but mostly displayed in his letters. He went from being an ambitious guest in a country that adored him to an embittered sceptic, in a matter of just a few months. Dickens was thrilled to be able to travel to the New World, as is clear from the enthusiasm displayed in his letters: “We are in the best spirits, and full of hope!” (Letters, 10). That his journey to the U.S. shaped his writings is undeniable, as it formed an enriching experience for the author, providing him with new writing material. In From Copyright to Copperfield: The Identity of Dickens, Alexander Welsh calls Dickens’ American adventure “a journey that contributed importantly to his self-recognition, his development as a novelist, and especially his humor (vii)”. The negative feelings towards the United States in his writings hinges on elements from Dickens’ own experience. From his correspondence, it can be deduced that Dickens was often homesick and angered by the way he was treated. He complained in his letters home of exhaustion because of the social obligations imposed on him. Moreover, while in the U.S., Dickens advocated the cause of an International Copyright Treaty, but his proposal was met with incomprehension and criticism by his American readers. This upset Dickens and it turned the public opinion and the American newspapers against him. Dickens recycled a lot of material from his own correspondence, involving descriptions of all kinds, into his (fictional) work, and it is important to keep this personal involvement in mind while analysing his work concerning the U.S.

However, between his correspondence, his travelogue and finally the novel occurs the selection process of the author and the differences between the three sources are worth a comparison. American Notes is rather privy to the authorial process of self-censure. It also constitutes Dickens’ self-assertion of truth regarding his discoveries in America. On multiple occasions in the book, Dickens uses statements to enforce his claims and ensures that his arguments are supported by factual information. American Notes was subjected to an extensive editing process and met the requirements of the travelogue genre. Moreover, in American Notes, a strong authorial presence (as suggested by Patrick McCarthy in his article “Truth in American Notes”, 75) is justified since Dickens was both the author and experiencer.
Dickens’ letters were confidential and private, unintended for publication, so it is only normal that his unfiltered opinion figures in those lines. *American Notes* on the other hand, was shaped by its intended audience and Dickens’ public persona dominated the book. He had to be more careful in considering what to keep and what to leave out of his book. It is certain that Dickens wanted to speak about the social aspects of America in his travelogue as he states that “[t]he American poor, the American factories, the institutions of all kinds - I have a book already” (*Letters* 50). However, Meckier suggests that “Dickens could not dwell on (...) [criticism] in *American Notes*, where his persona as a visiting intelligence meant he had to report on major cities and prominent individuals. So the travel book is generally straightforward and, for Dickens, quite flat” (268).

1.2) **Dickens’ letters as a “truthful” representation of his American experiences**

It is Dickens’ personal friend John Foster that characterizes the epistolary medium as holding the “freshness of first impressions” (244) as opposed to the postponed and edited writing of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *American Notes*. The latter writings are naturally subjected to distortion since Dickens had already returned from America when he wrote those novels. Letters certainly hold a more direct and personal inclination, not in the least because they are addressed to particular persons, relatives and friends of Dickens. There is no reason to withhold anything, to edit anything or to censor something because there is no general audience that can be affected in some way. Letters have “immediacy”, as Jenny Hartley puts it in *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* (ix). This immediacy prevents a relativizing of the events and offers a deeply emotional account, where there is no objective distancing from the facts because it is indeed a deeply “affected” mode of writing. Dickens chose to write home from America but he had no idea of the importance and emotional tone his correspondence would acquire. As argued by Patricia M. Ard in the article “Charles Dickens’ Stormy Crossing: The Rhetorical Voyage from Letters to *American Notes*”, Dickens even used this correspondence as a relief from the sometimes overwhelming attention the Americans accorded him (2).

The tone of his correspondence quickly shifted from optimistic to revolted and homesick. Dickens was surprised by the overwhelming popularity he experienced in America and more specifically by the overly familiar treatment he received from many Americans. A display of this enthusiasm is relayed to Forster on the twenty second of January 1842:

I wish you could have seen the crowds cheering the inimitable in the streets. I wish you could have seen the judges, law-officers, bishops, and law-makers welcoming the inimitable. I wish you could have seen the inimitable shown to a great elbow-chair by the
Speaker’s throne, and sitting alone in the middle of the floor of the house of commons, the observed of all observers, listening with exemplary gravity to the queerest speaking possible, and breaking in spite of himself into a smile as he thought of this commencement to the Thousand and One stories in reserve for home and Lincoln’s-inn fields and Jack Straw’s-castle (15).

He was not used to being treated as a celebrity, with no respect for his personal space and privacy. As Stone mentions, “Dickens was lionized in extravagant fashion. (...) But his delight in American institutions, friendliness, literacy and homage soon wore off” (465). In a letter to John Forster on the seventeenth of February 1842, Dickens explains how the levees he was forced to attend and hold were often unprompted:

The moment we had tea, we were forced to open another levee for the students and professors of the college (...) and the townspeople. I suppose we shook hands, before going to bed, with considerably more than five hundred people; and I stood, as a matter of course, the whole time... (Letters 68).

The first few weeks of his stay, he scarcely had time to write letters and his correspondence is short and still optimistic. He states the same summary of events in all of them. In a letter to his friend Thomas Mitton on the thirty first of January 1842, he comments on the exhausting life he is forced to lead in America for the first time: “I am so exhausted with the life I am obliged to lead here, that I have had time to write but one letter, which is at all deserving of the name (...)” (Letters 42). Dickens also mentions the welcome he has received and which has taken him by surprise: “I can give you no conception of my welcome here. There never was a King or Emperor upon the Earth, so cheered, and followed by crowds, and entertained in Public at splendid balls and dinners, and waited on by public bodies and deputations of all kinds” (Letters 43). In a letter to his friend Macready, he describes his first thoughts on the American public: “It is enough to say, now, that they [Americans] are as delicate, as considerate, as careful of giving the least offence, as the best Englishman I ever saw” (Letters 44).

However, as the journey evolves and the weeks go by, a change in this opinion becomes evident in his correspondence. He was intrigued by the peculiar treatment he received on many occasions. The crowd would gaze upon him as if he were a curiosity and would request to shake hands. There would be hundreds of people wishing to lay eyes on him in the same evening and Dickens would be exhausted by the end. His numerous “fans” wrote him letters as well, requesting dinner, a levee or, sometimes, a memento. For instance, on the second of February, Dickens responded to a letter by two ladies who wished for a lock of his hair. Dickens answered
with his usual humorous streak: “I confess that I am afraid to send you a lock of my hair, as the precedent would be one of a most dangerous and alarming kind, and likely to terminate before long in my total baldness” (Letters 47). He often had to decline the requests from the letters of his admirers and confessed to Forster that “by every post, letters on letters arrive, all about nothing and demanding an immediate answer” (Letters 87).

It wasn’t long before Dickens started appearing in various newspapers in America and sometimes the stories in the papers took a sensational turn. Dickens was not pleased with this, as is illustrated by a letter on the fourteenth of February 1842 to a certain Edmund B. Green, marking Dickens’ first altercation with the American press:

I see you have taken my life into your paper. It is so wildly imaginative, and so perfectly new to me, I could not help writing to the editor of the Bunker Hill Aurora, (...) to compliment him on the rich fancy of its author, whose imaginative biography, both of myself and my better half, is the most remarkable invention I ever met with (Letters 61).

He comments upon this incident in his next letter to Forster: “Of course I can do nothing, but in some shape or other it gets into the newspapers” (Letters 72). Dickens would ultimately reach a point where he completely despised the American press: “Freedom of opinion! Where is it? I see a press more mean and paltry and silly and disgraceful than any country ever knew,-if that be its standard, here it is” (Letters 157). In a letter to Chapman, the mayor of Boston, on the twenty first of February 1842, Dickens continues his complains: “I have declined all future Invitations of a public nature; and mean to resolute from this time forth. (...) Half of the population take it ill if I do go where I am asked; and the other half take it ill if I don’t(...)” (Letters 76). However, Dickens will remain adamant during his correspondence that he loved the general nature of the Americans. He just could not handle their enthusiasm and intrusiveness into his life as he was not accustomed to this kind of popularity, as is clear from this letter to Forster:

I can do nothing that I want to do, go nowhere where I want to go, and see nothing that I want to see. If I turn into the street, I am followed by a multitude. If I stay at home, the house becomes, with callers, like a fair. If I visit a public institution, with only one friend, the directors come down incontinently, waylay me in the yard, and address me in a long speech. I go to a party in the evening, and am so inclosed [sic] and hemmed about by people, stand where I will, that I am exhausted for want of air. I dine out, and have to talk about everything to everybody. I go to church for quiet, and there is a violent rush to the neighbourhood of the pew I sit in, and the clergyman preaches at me. I take my seat in the railroad car, and the very conductor won’t leave me alone. I get out at a station, and
can’t drink a glass of water, without having a hundred people looking down my throat when I open my mouth to swallow (Letters 87).

Not only was Dickens followed and cornered by audiences wherever he went, he was also swamped with correspondence of readers eager to meet him and shake hands. Dickens even refused haircuts at a certain point because he was afraid barbers would recuperate the hair and sell it as mementos: “My hair is terribly long, & I am afraid, to have it cut, lest the barber (bribed by admirers) should clip it all off for presents” (Letters 149). On top of that, he struggled with American manners, or rather the lack thereof in his opinion. What Dickens found one of the most offending and shocking American habits was the spitting. In a letter to Forster on the sixth of March, he vividly described this typically American ritual using metaphors and hyperboles as a way of satire.

The flashes of saliva flew so perpetually and incessantly out of the windows all the way, that it looked as though they were ripping open featherbeds inside, and letting the wind dispose of the feathers. But this spitting is universal. In the courts of law, the judge has his spittoon on the bench, the counsel have theirs, the witness has his, the prisoner his, and the crier his. The jury are accommodated at the rate of three men to a spittoon (...) and the spectators in the gallery are provided for, as so many men who in the course of nature expectorate without cessation. There are spitboxes in every steamboat, bar-room, public dining-room, house of office, and place of general resort, no matter what it be. In the hospitals, the students are requested, by placard, to use the boxes provided for them, and not to spit upon the stairs. I have twice seen gentlemen, at evening parties in New York, turn aside when they were not engaged in conversation, and spit upon the drawing-room carpet. And in every bar-room and hotel passage the stone floor looks as if it were paved with open oysters-from the quantity of this kind of deposit which tessellates it all over (Letters 100).

To him, this was a horrifying habit and he expresses his dislike for the spitting vehemently and repeatedly in his correspondence. He mentions it again in a letter to Fonblanque on the twelfth of March: “Of all things in this country, this practice [spitting] is to me the most insufferable. I can bear anything but filth (...) I vow that my stomach revolts, and I cannot endure it” (Letters 118).

Dickens’ anxiety and irritability soon reached a height and his homesickness became apparent in his correspondence as well, particularly in a letter to Daniel Macready on the twenty seventh of February:
Oh for Charley, Mamey, Katey- the study, the Sunday’s dinner, the anything and everything connected with our life at Home! How cheerfully I would turn from this land of freedom and spitoons- of crowds, and noise, and endless rush of strangers- of everything public, and nothing private- of endless rounds of entertainments, and daily levees to receive 500 people- to the lightest, least-prized pleasure of “Den’ner Terrace”! I turn my eyes towards the picture (which is always set out in our great state, wherever we are) and yearn for Home (...)” (Letters 94).

Along with homesickness, Dickens developed more criticism towards America. He visited several prison houses and was appalled at some aspects of prison life: "We dined in the jail: and I told them after dinner how much the sight had affected me, and what an awful punishment it was" (Letters 124). Though he did not entirely disapprove of the solitary confinement system, he did think the treatment cruel and compared it to the English penitentiary: "Putting out of sight the difficulty we have in England of finding useful labour for the prisoners (...), our system is more complete, more impressive and more satisfactory in every respect" (Letters 105). Dickens further commented on American politics in a letter on the fifteenth of March:

"[t]he State is a parent to its people; has a parental care and watch over all poor children, women labouring of child, sick persons, and captives. The common men render you assistance in the streets, and would revolt from the offer of a piece of money. The desire to oblige is universal; (...) [b]ut I don’t like the country. I would not live here, on any consideration. It goes against the grain with me. It would with you. (...) I have a confidence that I must be right, because I have everything, God knows, to lead me to the opposite conclusion: and yet I cannot resist coming to this one (Letters 135).

When Dickens travelled South, he had his first encounter with slavery and this too was subject to criticism on his part: “Richmond is a prettily situated little town; but, like other towns in slave districts (...), has an aspect of decay and gloom which to an unaccustomed eye is most distressing" (Letters 140). Though he was apparently urged or decided to be silent on the subject, his personal views are expressed in a letter to Forster on the twenty first of March 1842: “They won’t let you be silent. They will ask you what you think of it; and will expatiate on slavery as if it were one of the greatest blessings of mankind” (Letters 142). In another letter, addressed to Lord Brougham, he discusses the matter further and explains his reasons for aborting his journey southward: “I have been South as far as Richmond in Virginia; but the weather becoming prematurely hot; and the sight of Slavery, and the mere fact of living in a town where it exists being positive misery to me; I turned back” (144).
In this same letter, he gives a summary of the copyright issue. Dickens spoke out about an International Copyright Law, but unfortunately, despite his efforts and the rallying of American authors to his cause, he encountered a media boycott, was slandered by several papers and witnessed a general non-cooperative stance on the issue by American politicians.

The system, as it stands, is most iniquitous and disgraceful. A writer not only gets nothing for his labours, though they are diffused all over this enormous Continent, but cannot even choose his [publishing] company. Any wretched halfpenny newspaper can print him at its pleasure - place him side by side with productions which disgust his common sense - and by means of the companionship in which it constantly shews him, engenders a feeling of association in the minds of a large class of readers, from which he would revolt, and to avoid which he would pay almost any price (Letters 145).

In a letter to Jonathan Chapman, mayor of Boston, on the twenty second of February 1842, he explains his feelings towards the strong reaction of the crowd in response to his proposition:

I have never in my life been so shocked and disgusted, or made so sick and sore at heart, as I have been by the treatment I have received here (in America I mean), in reference to the International Copyright question. I, - the greatest loser by existing Law, alive,- say in perfect good humour and disinterestedness (for God knows that I have little hope of its ever being changed in my time) that I hope the day will come when Writers will be justly treated; and straightway there fall upon me scores of your newspapers; imputing motives to me, the very suggestion of which turns my blood to gall; and attacking me in such terms of vagabond scurrility as they would denounce a murderer with (Letters 77).

America is often credited for offering Dickens a newfound appreciation of England. Meckier suggests that "he realized he was more English in thought and deed than he was American, French, or European" (272) and even though Dickens was "[a] social critic at home, [he] became a British supporter abroad" (274). The disappointment he experienced changed his opinion concerning the American democratic system. He had hoped it would provide a successful government but was forced to abandon this conviction early on. For all the flaws he had discovered about the English political system, he still favoured it over the American one. Dickens himself confirmed this in his correspondence when he wrote to Lady Holland on the twenty second of March 1842: "I love England better than I did when I left her" (Letters 151).

On American nationalism, another well-documented issue in his correspondence, he observed that the population was very easily offended and that "Americans can't bear to be told of their faults. Don't split on that rock, (...), don't write about America-[they] are so very suspicious"
As the journey progresses, Dickens longs to be home and begins to write longer letters, to more people based in England. He even capitalizes his desire for home in a letter to Forster: “My heart gets, sometimes, S O R E for home” (Letters 181). In a letter to W.C. Macready on the twenty second of March he utters the perhaps most well-known sentences concerning his visit in America.

I am disappointed. This is not the Republic I came to see. This is not the Republic of my imagination. (...) The more I think of its youth and strength, the poorer and more trifling in a thousand respects, it appears in my eyes. In everything of which it has made a boast—excepting its education of the people, and its care for poor children— it sinks immeasurably below the level I had placed it upon. And England, even England, bad and faulty as the old land is, and miserable as millions of her people are, rises in the comparison (Letters 156).

In the very same letter the excitement for the journey back home becomes apparent: “A run into Canada follows of course, and then—let me write the blessed word in capitals—we turn towards H O M E” (Letters 159). In a letter to Macready on the first of April, Dickens summarizes his opinion on America and asserts it has not changed.

Evidently Dickens disagrees on many political issues regarding the United States and he feels he cannot reconcile himself with these. Welsh argued that the Americans were, to Dickens, “the
agents of his disillusionment with their country, in their fulsome disregard of his privacy while there, and in their determination to buy and sell his writings without ever paying him for them, as well as in their own social and political life” (30). As the journey slowly comes to a close, Dickens summarizes exactly what it is he does not like about the New World. He was disappointed because the apparent freedom that America always boasted of is in truth an illusion. The issue of the copyright law also made him lose faith in the system and the slanderous press angered him.

The seventh of June 1842 was the set date of Dickens’ return to England and the letters home became increasingly filled with mentions of the desire to be reunited with the Old World: “This, like my last, will be a stupid letter, because both Kate and I are thrown into such a state of excitement by the near approach of the seventh of June, that we can do nothing, and think of nothing” (Letters 245). Towards the end of the journey, the homesickness seems to grow worse. “We count the days; and long, and yearn, for Home” (Letters 190). Further on, in a letter to his brother Frederick Dickens, the author mentions that “our hearts ache for home. It is impossible to say how we long to see the dear children” (Letters 198). In another letter to Thomas Mitton on the fourth of April, Dickens mention his desire to speak of his adventure to his friends: “I shall have so much to tell and talk about when I come home, that I am half afraid I may return a Bore. But for the pleasure of being at home again, I will consent even to that” (Letters 190). A letter to Foster on the second of June borders on desperation:

As the time draws nearer, we get fevered with anxiety for home... Kiss our darlings for us. We shall soon meet, please God, and be happier and merrier than ever we were, in all our lives... Oh home-home-home-home-home-home HOME ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! (Letters 249).

This last expression is so filled with emotion, expressed through the repetition of “home”, the use of capitals and the graphic punctuation by exclamation marks, that it captures perfectly the essence of the longing Dickens experienced throughout his entire journey. A longing for an ideal country that was not satisfied and then a longing for his life back home. The journey indeed marked a new era for Dickens. He showed more appreciation for England and its political structures than before, because the utopian dream he conceived for America had, in his opinion, collapsed. Lewis Bogaty underlines this when he states that

The letters, written in the heat of the moment, offer us a unique opportunity to examine the evolution in his attitude. Each specific incident further exposed the profound moral deficiency in the culture that in the end defined the country for Dickens (4).
1.3) Dickens' travelogue *American Notes*: a self-asserted truth

When Dickens returned from the U.S., he immediately started working on *American Notes*. He had set out to America with the intention of writing a book upon his return as evidenced by a letter to his publishers Chapman and Hall on the first of January 1842: "In order that we may have on paper, a clear understanding of our position in reference to your advances and my receipts, on account of the American book (...) I state the matter here" (*Letters 1*). The journey described in *American Notes* follows mainly the chronologic order of Dickens' journey from city to city, using what he described in his letters as a source of information. This retrieval of information was planned, as Ard argues: *American Notes* “was based on the lengthy letters Dickens wrote from America to friends in England; back in England, as planned, he collected these letters and mined their contents for his book” (34). There are, however, some major differences between his correspondence and *American Notes*. The American journey was subjected to an extensive process of selection, censoring and nuancing between Dickens' most immediate means of communication and his objectified account in the travelogue.

The public stance of Charles Dickens, the author, was different from the personal experience gathered from his letters. Some social issues were extensively treated in *American Notes* while he merely mentioned them in his letters, such as the issue of slavery or the social reform institutions (workhouses, asylums, prisons). Other issues (international copyright and the celebrity welcome he was given) were left out or reduced in importance. Additionally, *American Notes* lost the directness of experience that his letters contained. Ard names this the "epistolary mediation (...) that occurred between genres" (35), which is the process of adaptation between the letters and *American Notes*. It is interesting to make this comparison, as the shift in focus unveils to which aspects of his journey Dickens himself accorded the most importance. The main distinctions between the letters and *American Notes* relate to three major layers: the structural level, the contextual level and the level of content.

Firstly, on the matter of structure, it is important to note the differences inherent to the medium. A book is generally structured into chapters, contains an introduction and an epilogue of some kind and is edited to appeal to a diverse audience. Letters, however, contain personal messages aimed at a select public. *American Notes* indeed includes an introduction, is divided into chapters and at the end figures an epilogue called "Concluding Remarks" as well as a postscript. The organisation of the text is also chosen by the author, who selects what to keep and what to leave out. As an example, Dickens wanted to insert an introductory chapter into *American Notes*, but Forster advised against it, which is indicated by the explanatory note in the Pilgrim Edition of a letter to John Forster on the tenth of October 1842: "At their meeting in [October] to consider
whether it should be printed, they [Forster and Dickens] decided against it—though CD [Charles Dickens] ‘so reluctantly’ that Forster had to undertake to publish it [later]” (Letters 340). This illustrates how the editing process was subject to changes and censoring by Dickens and that he considered the possible consequences of publishing certain textual material. Ard argues that the rearrangement of the letter material into *American Notes* is indeed a matter of difference in medium, because "[t]he revisions from the epistolary form were problematical since they represented a move from the private life of the letters to the public art of the book— from the necessarily episodic style of the letters to a book-length narrative” (36). Thus, the format of the book imposed new conventions and a need for structural modifications to the antecedent source of information: the letters.

Secondly, on the level of context, Dickens abandoned the epistolary medium for the genre of the travelogue. In doing so, Dickens participated in a literary tradition well established at the time. That is to say, *American Notes* is based on previous travel journals and makes use of certain materials from those books, as well as relying on them for its structure. Nancy Metz accounts for this in her article “*The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*: Or, America revised”: “Dickens constructed dialogue, description and even entire scenes implicitly as ‘conversations’ with other travel writers” (78). She relates this to *Martin Chuzzlewit* but a similar argument can be made for *American Notes* since Dickens read these travel writers before he departed to the U.S. On that account, the previously existing tradition was also on his mind while writing *American Notes*. Metz names Martineau, Trollope, Marryat, Tocqueville, Thomas Hamilton and Basil Hall as the standard accounts on America that Dickens most probably read before his journey (78). In his article "The New World in Charles Dickens’s Writings. Part One", Robert B. Heilman argues that Frances Trollope in particular influenced *American Notes* with her *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (26): “Dickens and Mrs. Trollope observed various aspects of American life almost identically” (27).

Amanda Claybaugh, in “Toward a New Transatlanticism: Dickens in the United States”, acknowledges that Dickens was “quite familiar with this usually standardized genre” (446), namely the genre of travel books. She further makes an argument for the use of travel book genre conventions by Dickens:

> The topics taken up in the period’s travel books are conventional, mostly concerning American manners, and the itinerary followed in them is conventional as well. The standard tour included the principal cities of the United States (Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC) and the principal natural sites (the Mississippi River, the prairies of the West, and, above all else, Niagara Falls) but they also included
institutions of reform: the poor houses of Boston, the asylums of Long Island, and the prisons of Philadelphia. So conventional was this itinerary that it was followed not only by those travellers we now think of as reformers, such as Martineau and Dickens, but also by those travellers who had little to do with reform at all (446).

This pre-existing literature provided Dickens with a standard format for his book and justifies his use of certain materials, as well as the prevailing importance of certain episodes of his travels over others. The chapters of *American Notes* indicate that more significance and weight is indeed accorded to describing social structures and reform institutions than in his letters. Chapter five concerns the American railroad system and the Lowell Factory System, Chapter seven is entitled "Philadelphia, and its Solitary Prison" and a whole chapter is dedicated to slavery (chapter twelve). Moreover, Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington are part of the U.S.’ principal cities and are accordingly covered by Dickens in separate chapters. Additionally, Dickens visited some of the principal natural sites as well which are recounted in his book: his passage on the Mississippi and the Looking-glass Prairie (close to St. Louis) as well as Niagara Falls. *American Notes* thus participates in an existing literary canon and must fulfil certain conventions to appeal to his audience. That the audience played an important role regarding *American Notes* is deductible from the annotation to a letter from Dickens to H.P. Smith, on the fourteenth of July 1842. The annotation paraphrases the author’s note in the eliminated introductory chapter of *American Notes*, meant to justify Dickens’ criticism on the U.S. and to appeal to his American audience:

> It was simply a record of ‘impressions’, with ‘not a grain of political ingredient in its whole composition’. He [Dickens] knew that it would offend the many Americans ‘so tenderly and delicately constituted, that they [could not] bear the truth in any form’; and he did not need the ‘gift of prophecy’ to foretell that those ‘aptest to detect malice’ and lack of gratitude would be ‘certain native journalists, veracious and gentlemanly, who were at great pains to prove to [him]...that the aforesaid welcome was utterly worthless’ (*Letters* 270).

Dickens was concerned with how *American Notes* would be received and left out this chapter as advised by Forster since it could be “mistaken for an apprehension of hostile judgements which he was anxious to deprecate or avoid” (Heilman 30). Ard suggests that “[i]n *American Notes*, concerns over appealing to a largely American audience, and the process of rewriting epistolary material, often produce a paler Dickens vision of America than in the letters themselves” (35).
This leads to propose that *American Notes* is a milder and more nuanced account of Dickens’ American journey, in which the author promotes a more neutral and publicly defensible stance. This is partly due to the restrictions of the travel book genre and to the fact that it was subjected to readers and critics on both sides of the Atlantic. He wrote the travelogue with his audience in mind since he foresaw the indignation his travelogue would bring about. He commented on this himself:

> I have little reason to believe, from certain warnings I have had, that it will be tenderly or favourably received by the American people; and as I have written the Truth in relation to the mass of those who form their judgements and express their opinions, it will be seen that I have no desire to court, by any adventitious means, the popular applause” ([*AN*] 300).

Finally, a considerable and noteworthy change relates to the content of the book. In comparison with the letters, Dickens left out a substantial amount of material relating to, in particular, the issue of copyright and the habits of the Americans which he had so frequently complained about in his correspondence. Ard also states that “his attempts to deal with the unpleasantness occasioned by his staggering fame in America- only obliquely appear in the book” (36). There is no chapter dedicated to International Copyright in *American Notes*, as Welsh underlines (37). Welsh cites a review from the *Edinburgh Review* dating from January 1843, by James Spedding, to illustrate that this did not go unnoticed by the public: “Mr. Dickens makes no allusion to it [the cause of International Copyright] himself. A man may read the volumes [of *American Notes*] through without knowing that the question of International Copyright has ever been raised on either side of the Atlantic” (Welsh 36-37). This silence in *American Notes* contrasts greatly with his speeches supporting the cause while in the U.S., for instance at the Boston dinner and at the Hartford dinner (*Letters* 59), and with his frustrated letters home on the issue.

A possible explanation implies that Dickens simply felt there was no more to add on the matter, since the American response to the cause had implied he would not succeed. In an article to the British Press after his return (seventh of July 1842) he addresses International Copyright: “For myself, I have resolved that I will never from this time enter into any negociation [sic] with any person for the transmission, across the Atlantic, of early proofs of any thing I may write; and that I will forego all profit derivable from such a source” (*Letters* 258). Perhaps Dickens’ resolution offered him closure on the matter. Furthermore, he urged other British authors not to correspond with American publishers about early sketches of their works (*Letters* 259). Perhaps he felt he had done what he could. In another letter on the nineteenth of July 1842 he states that
he has “no hope of the States doing Justice in this dishonest respect, and therefore do not expect to overtake these fellows” (*Letters* 274).

Some other content from the correspondence was left out. Dickens himself acknowledged this in *American Notes* and explains his reasons for doing this in the “Concluding Remarks” chapter:

> I have made no reference to my reception, nor have I suffered it to influence me in what I have written; for, in either case, I should have offered but a sorry acknowledgment, compared with that I bear within my breast, towards those partial readers of my former books, across the Water, who met me with an open hand, and not with one that closed upon an iron muzzle (301).

This “iron muzzle” is a possible metaphorical reference to the American press, whose treatment Dickens did not appreciate. He believed the influence of the press to be exaggerated, especially when the press manipulates politics. The press as a mechanism of control over the citizens is incidentally an issue that will come up in *Martin Chuzzlewit* as well, especially in its ironic juxtaposition with the allegedly omnipresent sense of freedom in the U.S. Dickens was not mild in his critique:

> But while that Press has its evil eye in every house, and its black hand in every appointment in the state, from a president to a postman; while, with ribald slander for its only stock in trade, it is the standard literature of an enormous class, who must find their reading in a newspaper, or they will not read at all; so long must its odium be upon the country’s head, and so long must the evil it works, be plainly visible in the Republic (AN 296).

The silence of *American Notes* on the matter of copyright is balanced by Dickens’ recurring mentions of slavery in the manuscript. He not only dedicated an entire chapter to it but also describes the occasions during his travels on which he met slaves and abolitionists. His correspondence remained rather silent about slavery and in the U.S where Dickens was not allowed to speak out publicly on the issue. In *American Notes*, however, he voices his opinion and his judgement clearly. For instance, he talks about his visit to Boston and one Doctor Channing:

> I was reluctantly obliged to forego the delight of hearing Dr. Channing, who happened to preach that morning for the first time in a very long interval. I mention the name of this distinguished and accomplished man (with whom I soon afterwards had the pleasure of becoming personally acquainted), that I may have the gratification of recording my humble tribute of admiration and respect for his high abilities and character; and for the
bold philanthropy with which he has ever opposed himself to that most hideous blot and foul disgrace – Slavery (AN 29).

He uses bold terms to express his feelings towards slavery and shows great respect for Dr. Channing, who strongly opposed it. Dickens seems to side with him on the issue, in disfavour of the custom. It was in the city of Baltimore that Dickens had his first personal encounter with slavery: "We stopped to dine at Baltimore, and being now in Maryland, we were waited on, for the first time, by slaves" (AN 135). This experience left a mark on Dickens as he describes his unease:

The sensation of exacting any service from human creatures who are bought and sold, and being, for the time, a party as it were to their condition, is not an enviable one. The institution exists, perhaps, in its least repulsive and most mitigated form in such a town as this [Baltimore]; but it is slavery; and though I was, with respect to it, an innocent man, its presence filled me with a sense of shame and self-reproach (AN 135).

Further on in Baltimore, Dickens witnessed the trial of a man who took a stand against slavery while noticing that meanwhile the Declaration of Independence was proudly displayed in the city. Dickens found this of the utmost hypocrisy since the Declaration advocated equal rights for all, yet in practice this was not true for all. He ironically cites how the Declaration endorsed liberty, yet slaves enjoyed neither the freedom nor the rights on the Declaration:

And publicly exhibited in the same city all the while; gilded, framed and glazed; hung up for general admiration; shown to strangers not with shame, but pride; its face not turned towards the wall, itself not taken down and burned; is the Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America, which solemnly declares that All Men are created Equal; and are endowed by their Creator with the Inalienable Rights of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness! (AN 142)

Dickens also decided to abort his journey South partly due to “the pain of living in the constant contemplation of slavery” (AN 151). However, the most significant addendum of American Notes to the letters is undoubtedly chapter twelve, simply named "Slavery". The mere fact that Dickens dedicated an entire chapter to the matter marks his great concern for the subject. In his article "Slavery in Dickens’s Manuscript of American Notes", Joel J. Brattin remarks that Dickens based a lot of content from this chapter on an anti-slavery manuscript by Weld, without ever crediting his source (153). However, according to Brattin, this is explained because of the impact Dickens desired the chapter to make on his readers; he did not wish his argument to appear impersonal:
[He] wanted to make the strongest case against slavery he could. Perhaps he feared that admitting he was reprinting advertisements Weld had collected, or presenting arguments Weld had offered, would diminish their power and effectiveness in changing the mind of his readers (Brattin 154).

Dickens wished the reader to think the material original and direct, as if he himself had gathered the proof while in the U.S. He wanted to assert that he processed those materials so that the reader could not doubt his rejection of slavery. It was also part of the traditional subjects of previous travelogues and if he wished to respect genre conventions, he needed to dedicate attention to the matter.

Evidently far longer than a letter, the travelogue also focuses more intently on descriptive language and on the visits of certain social institutions. Where in his letters he often remains brief about landscapes and cityscapes, in *American Notes* he drags out descriptions and elaborates. As illustrated by Bogaty:

> Thus an inordinate amount of space is given to details of the transportation between points. We follow Dickens from boat to train to coach, from east to west to east, having land described that we have had described many times before, having boat dimensions described that we have had described many times before, and having whole cities dismissed in a sentence or paragraph. Dickens can safely discuss the countryside, and so he talks of it often. Unfortunately it has been described many times before (132).

Another example is his visit to Niagara Falls. Although in both media he stresses the sort of spiritual connection he experienced upon seeing Niagara Falls, the description in the travelogue takes up close to two pages (*AN* 237-239), while in the letters it is closer to a paragraph (*Letters* 210-211, 239). Another important difference regarding content in the letters and in the travelogue concerns Dickens’ homesickness while in the U.S. In several letters, Dickens expresses his desire to go back home, not only because he misses friends and family, but also because he misses England, as evidenced by a letter to Fonblanque on the twelfth of March 1842:

> For all this, I would not live here two years-no, not for any gift they could bestow upon me. Apart from my natural desire to be among my friends and to be at home again, I have a yearning after our English customs and english [sic] manners, such as you cannot conceive. (*Letters* 120).
He does not speak of this longing for home in *American Notes*, and its absence again demonstrates that the book served a different purpose altogether: the wish to create a factual, not an emotional, account of his travels. On another note, the fact that Dickens accorded more attention towards social institutions and the issue of slavery also fits the genre conventions of the travelogue. Thus it provides an explanation for Dickens’ extensive critique and descriptions on these matters. Jessica DeSpain, in *Nineteenth Century Transatlantic Reprinting and the Embodied Book* points out that the genre of the travelogue was indeed well anchored in the tradition of criticism: “before Dickens took his trip in 1842, the American travel narrative became its own sub-genre characterized by a superior tone, a critique of American institutions, and a preoccupation with bodily and spatial transgressions” (19).

Consequently, the differences and focus shifts from letters to travelogue are justified by the travelogue genre impositions on the level of structure, content and context. Dickens chose this medium because he was aware of the pre-existing canon, and it allowed him to discuss what he saw in America in an informative and objective way. Though *American Notes* was an edited and structured account of his ventures, Dickens insisted on it being true. Patrick McCarthy analyses the instances where Dickens asserts the truth and concludes that

> *American Notes* reaches for [truth] in its dedication, prefaces and final pages. The dedication is offered to ‘those friends of mine in America’ who ‘can bear the truth’, and the first preface to find the ‘fact’ that will prove him right or wrong (69).

A closer look at the preface confirms that Dickens desired to be seen as an authentic and informed speaker on the subject of his travels:

> My readers have opportunities of judging for themselves whether the influences and tendencies which I distrusted in America had, at that time, any existence but in my imagination. They can examine for themselves whether there has been anything in the public career of that country since, at home or abroad, which suggests that those influences and tendencies really did exist. As they find the fact, they will judge me. If they discern any evidences of wrong-doing, in any direction that I have indicated, they will acknowledge that I had reason in what I wrote. If they discern no such indications, they will consider me altogether mistaken—but not wilfully (*AN* np).

Likewise, in his concluding remarks, Dickens asserts that what he states is always based on fact and that, though often tempted, he did not let his own judgement and opinions cloud what he wrote about the country:
There are many passages in this book, where I have been at some pains to resist the temptation of troubling my readers with my own deductions and conclusions: preferring that they should judge for themselves, from such premises as I have laid before them (AN 291).

Even so on the matter of slavery, where Dickens, in the eponymous chapter on the matter, states that: “[t]he upholders of slavery in America- of the atrocities of which system, I shall not write one word for which I have not had ample proof and warrant” (AN 272). In the introductory chapter left out of American Notes, there is another assertion of truth to be found. Robert B. Heilman quotes a passage from this suppressed chapter:

I went there expecting greater things than I found, and resolved as far as in me lay to do justice to the country, at the expense of any (in my view) mistaken or prejudiced statements that might have been made to its disparagement. Coming home with a corrected and sobered judgement, I consider myself no less bound to do justice to what, according to my best means of judgement, I found to be the truth (29).

Again, Dickens’ desire for veracity can be noticed through the assertion of truthfulness and his determination to account for the neutrality of his observations.

Dickens rearranged a lot of the materials he had collected in his letters, carefully selecting and organizing them into a mostly informative account. On the level of structure, some necessary adjustments were made for the book to fulfil format requirements. The context of pre-existing travelogue literature provided genre restrictions and conventions to which Dickens was supposed to conform, and therefore the travelogue recalls the canon of travelogue literature and fits into that literary tradition. Content-wise, some of the more sensitive material was left out, for instance the International Copyright Issue, on which Dickens had amply spoken while in the U.S. On the other hand, the matter of slavery, which Dickens dared not speak about in the U.S., became a subject of disapproval and was greatly discussed and dismissed in American Notes. In all, Dickens aimed for his travelogue to be an objective and descriptive account of his travels in America, especially compared to the personal tone, humour and more radical opinion present in his correspondence. As Ard comments: “[t]he tone of comical disdain that infests the [letters] has been obscured to fit the ‘more responsible’ persona of the American Notes narrator” (39). Yet this tone of comical disdain and the humour Dickens had often employed in his letters secured a spot in his next novel: Martin Chuzzlewit.
1.4) Chapter conclusion

The conclusion drawn after analysing Dickens’ letters and his travelogue is that both profess a different degree of truth and criticism. One motivation for altering his account from letter to book is the degree of subjectivity: Dickens’ personal view was far less mitigated and neutral in the letters. Dickens’ disappointment follows a transformation in his correspondence. His view of a future for the American democracy grows more pessimistic by the day and his homesickness and emotionality in tone seem to increase the more disappointed he becomes. This resulted in a renewed appreciation for England and further fuelled his critiques on the U.S. Dickens himself uses a fitting metaphor to summarize his disappointment: “But however much I like the ingredients of this great dish, I cannot but come back to the point from which I started, and say that the dish itself goes against the grain with me, and that I don’t like it” (Letters 158).

This profound disillusionment and sentimentality are underrepresented in American Notes. Though Dickens goes to great lengths to assert the truthfulness of his travelogue, in comparison to his letters, the truth is clearly twisted and bent into fitting a more objective perspective. The focus shifts from disillusionment to description and from sentimentality to objective reporting. The author avoids any overly emotional display and circumvents certain experiences such as the exhausting consequences of his fame or the cause of copyright. American Notes does offer criticism, but on a different scale than in the correspondence. Where in his letters Dickens is sometimes adamant in stating what is wrong with the country, he seems much more careful in American Notes not to exaggerate and intent on not hurting any feelings. He chose to keep his criticism within the respected confines of the travelogue tradition. Slavery, politics and social institutions were examined and passed judgement on, while the international copyright, American manners and the satiric descriptions were reserved for his personal friends and family. Lewis Bogaty, in “Dickens’s America: A Study of The Backgrounds and of Dickens’s Use of America in American Notes and Martin Chuzzlewit”, states that:

In terms of Dickens’s experience in America, it [the travelogue] is also inadequate, weakened by his unwillingness to write about what was most interesting in his trip - his lionization, his controversies, his meetings with the famous, and his encounters with the general population (121).

Yet, some of those discarded issues would soon be given a voice through the fictional narrative of Martin Chuzzlewit.
Chapter 2: *Martin Chuzzlewit* as a fictional account of Dickens’ American travels

### 2.1) Fiction as a vehicle for criticism

Dickens could not use *American Notes* to express everything regarding his travels. He did not have the protective label of fiction to dismiss his views and opinions as that of a literary character. Some of the material of his letters thus remained unused by the travelogue and Dickens himself seemed to regret he could not use all that material, as is clear from this letter to John Forster on the twenty sixth of April 1842: “I do perceive a perplexingly divided and subdivided duty, in the matter of the book of travels. Oh! The sublimated essence of comicality that I *could* distil, from the materials I have!” (*Letters* 211). Stone confirms that “[b]y April [1842], Dickens realized that his projected American travel book would not be a proper vehicle for the grossness and pomposity which he was now finding everywhere in the United States” (465). This ultimately led Dickens to consider fiction, the form where he would be given the ultimate freedom of speech. *Martin Chuzzlewit* then became a vehicle for the parody and satire Dickens sometimes expressed in his American correspondence. Aside from the political views he disagreed with, Dickens was equally shocked by the Americans and their (lack of) manners. This is significant as he hyperbolized these typical manners and traits in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Through the character of Martin, Dickens could then voice his more private thoughts and findings about America (Meckier 276).

The choice to analyse *Martin Chuzzlewit’s* American episode in particular is conscious, since it is through this narrative arch that the artistic sublimation of Dickens’ journey to the U.S. is most discernible. However, this does not mean that the American episode in *Martin Chuzzlewit* should be seen as a disconnected unit compared to the rest of the story. Even though the general opinion is that the American episode was either inserted for commercial reasons or that it seemed out of place (Bogaty 5), there is strong evidence that it fits perfectly into the theme of the novel as a whole. The American scenes would then stand in contrast to the domestic events, and serve as a way for Martin to gain a newfound appreciation for his home and to return a reformed man, as Dickens did when he returned home. Although *Martin Chuzzlewit* is in the first place a novel about English hypocrisy and egoism, the American episode has been subject to many analyses and many parallels have already been drawn between Martin’s experience and Dickens’ own journey. As Welsh suggests: “Young Martin, through many implausibilities, inherits Dickens’s experience as a visitor to America” (45). Both protagonist and author undergo a reformative experience that influenced their future. Martin understands he has been selfish all
along, while Dickens learns that the Republic of his imagination is not at all what he deemed her to be, and this disappointment provided him with new insights.

2.2) Comparing fact to fiction

2.2.1 The U.S. of Martin Chuzzlewit

The fictional representation of the U.S. in *Martin Chuzzlewit* seems modelled on a specific part of the U.S. Namely; the American episode shows geographical similarities with the South and the West of the U.S. which Dickens visited towards the middle and end of his trip. Specifically the region of Cairo must have impressed him, since it would become the true inspiration for “Eden”, as suggested by Edgar Johnson in his biography of Dickens (410). This is significant, as it is in those regions that Dickens’ disappointment in the country grew stronger. He started noticing a change for the worse in manners, as well as a change in politics. Gerhard Joseph in “Charles Dickens, International Copyright, and the Discretionary Silence of *Martin Chuzzlewit*” points out that:

the braggart insularity, the vulgarity of manner, the rapaciousness of real estate speculation, the political corruption, the unattractiveness of the landscape both urban and rural- all such reasons emerge clearly enough in the critical comments within (...) the American section of *Martin Chuzzlewit* (...)” (523).

The America that Dickens portrays in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is the collective essence of his worst experiences with the press, the rudeness of the people, the spitting, the hypocrisy, the corrupted politics and the nationalism, as he had described them in his letters home. The American people that Martin and Mark encounter on their journey are not like the friends Dickens encountered on the East Coast, as he described them in a letter to Forster on the twenty-second of March 1842:

The people are affectionate, generous, open-hearted, hospitable, enthusiastic, good humoured, polite to women, frank and cordial to all strangers; anxious to oblige; far less prejudiced than they have been described to be; frequently polished and refined, very seldom rude or disagreeable (*Letters* 158).

Later on in his journey, Dickens realized that the American people had their flaws. This was even clearer to him after the publication of *American Notes*, since it received mixed reviews from the American audience. He deplored the fact that they were so easily offended and that they took critiques so personally. He made an analogy to explain his train of thought to Jonathan Chapman on the fifteenth of October 1842:
In lieu of the American people (or the worst among them) as a mass, consider them, for a moment, as a man. If you could only retain the friendship of an Individual by the sacrifice of everything which elevates you in your own respect – by fearing to speak the Truth- by keeping a timid silence- by debating within yourself at every turn, as though he were a rich relation (...) would you seek to hold it, for a day? If I know you, No. Neither would I (Letters 345).

*Martin Chuzzlewit* was Dickens’ way of leaving the timid and moderate criticism of *American Notes* to denounce his bitter afterthoughts on the journey. The Americans in the novel are stereotypical caricatures of the least pleasant people Dickens remembered from his journey.

On another note, the landscape depicted in the novel, especially the land of Eden, where Martin and Mark will go to be part of a settler community, is a desolate swamp:

A flat morass, bestrewn with fallen timber; a marsh of which the good growth of the earth seemed to have been wrecked and cast away, that from its decomposing ashes vile and ugly things might rise; where the very tress took the aspect of huge weeds, begotten of the slime from which they sprung, by the hot sun that burnt them up; where fatal maladies, seeking whom they might infect, came forth (...) (*MC* 325).

The landscape is not that of Niagara Falls, or New York, or Boston or any other city where Dickens had positive experiences. The U.S. in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is the U.S. he observed from the canal boat, as he described it so vividly in *American Notes*:

The eye was pained to see the stumps of great trees thickly strewn in every field of wheat, and seldom to lose the eternal swamp and dull morass, with hundreds of rotten trunks and twisted branches steeped in its unwholesome water. It was quite sad and oppressive, to come upon great tracts where settlers had been burning down the trees, and where their wounded bodies lay about, like those of murdered creatures, while here and there some charred and blackened giant reared aloft two withered arms, and seemed to call down curses on his foes (181).

The personification of the landscape as a sick being is present in both descriptions. It is clear that the novel assembles all the worst traits of the U.S. and is gathered from Dickens’ memories on the Western and Southern parts he visited. As he described it when he started his journey westwards: ‘I have a great store of oddity and whimsicality, and am going now into the oddest and most characteristic part of this most queer country’ (*Letters* 162). *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a way for Dickens to lend a voice to the nightmarish experiences he had in this area of the U.S.,
containing some of the most impolite and despicable characters he met during his travels. In his article “Topographic Disaffection in Dickens’ American Notes and Martin Chuzzlewit”, Rodney Stenning Edgecombe confirms that Dickens’ “process of revulsion, (...), was reinforced as Dickens went westwards into the American hinterland” (37).

2.2.2 Selfishness and individuality
To acquire a better understanding of the American episode, a closer look is needed at Martin Chuzzlewit’s general themes: individualism, selfishness, hypocrisy and the flaws of character (Flint 34). The themes of individuality and selfishness run throughout the entire novel as a recurring motif embodied by several characters but most importantly by Martin himself. Flint observes that “Dickens’s satiric armory against American hypocrisy” (37) is way of exposing “that society’s proclaimed democratic openness” (37). In Martin Chuzzlewit, the satire indeed serves the purpose of revealing an American people that have become a cliché, unwilling to keep an open mind and resolutely holding on to their values which are, in the eyes of the protagonist (and Dickens), irreconcilable. The Americans often speak and act regardless of others, specifically without any concern of possibly offending Martin or Mark with their patriotic addresses. For Dickens, this lack of thoughtfulness towards others was what most shocked him in Americans. Welsh confirms:

The Americans were the true inspiration of Martin Chuzzlewit, (...) as the agents of his disillusionment with their country, in their fulsome disregard of his privacy while there, and in their determination to buy and sell his writings without ever paying him for them, as well as in their own social and political life (30).

The spitting especially concerned Dickens and struck him as a most impolite thing to do, as is clear from the various and vivid descriptions in his letters. It was an illustration of contempt for others and it attests of a lack of manner. This also ties in with the main theme of selfishness since, as Bogaty states: “ultimately, then, the manners of the sullen, spitting Americans demonstrate an essentially anti-social, self-centeredness which becomes more and more apparent to Dickens at each stage of his journey”(115). The novel depicts the emotional evolution of the character of Martin, who, while in the U.S., realizes he has been selfish his entire life and vows to abandon the vice. On his return to England, he is a changed man. Martin furthermore realizes towards the end of his journey that not only are the Americans he encountered selfish in their oblivious display of bad manners, but that he too has fallen prey to the sin. In this respect, Eden forms the cure for Martin’s selfishness.
So he had grown selfish. But he had never known it. If any one had taxed him with the vice, he would have indignantly repelled the accusation, and conceived himself unworthily aspersed. He never would have known it, but that being newly risen from a bed of dangerous sickness, to watch by such another couch, he felt how nearly Self had dropped into the grave, and what a poor, dependent, miserable thing it was (MC 452).

When Mark falls ill, Martin has no choice but to adapt and to change. He has to take up the role of the eternal optimist that Mark had taken upon him. By doing so, he realizes that the vice of selfishness has always been a part of his personality:

Now, when Martin began to think of this, and to look at Mark as he lay there, never reproaching him by so much as an expression of regret; never murmuring; always striving to be manful and staunch; he began to think, how was it that this man who had so few advantages, was so much better than he who had had so many? (...) It was long before he fixed the knowledge of himself so firmly in his mind that he could thoroughly discern the truth; but in the hideous solitude of that most hideous place, with Hope so far removed, Ambition quenched, and Death beside him rattling at the very door, reflection came, as in a plague-beleaguered town; and so he felt and knew the failing of his life, and saw distinctly what an ugly spot is was. Eden was a hard school to learn so hard a lesson in; but there were teachers in the swamp and thicket, and the pestilential air, who had a searching method of their own. He made a solemn resolution that when his strength returned he would not dispute the point or resist the conviction, but would look upon it as an established fact, that selfishness was in his breast, and must be rooted out (MC 452).

And so it is that Martin undergoes an emotional catharsis in America and returns to England to become a more altruistic man. He also realizes that he has to go home, as there is nothing for him in America. His newfound empathy can first be seen in his taking care of Mark, taken by swamp fever. Dickens underwent a similar catharsis: he returned to England after his American journey with a better appreciation of his homeland and with the conviction that the American system was lacking. The two main themes of the novel (selfishness and hypocrisy) are in fact a representation of the flaws that Dickens encountered on his travels in the New World. For him, American politics and American people were too self-absorbed, too individualistic and too concerned with money to be able to provide a working democracy.
2.2.3 Dickens and Martin, both revered by the crowd

Martin’s confrontation with Americans is remarkably similar to what Dickens encountered as an author, namely the levees he was forced to hold, the newspapers slandering him and the shaking of hands with important people. Dickens described those events in great detail in his correspondence. As Whitney Helms argues in her article “Performing Authorship in the Celebrity Sphere: Dickens and the Reading Tours”:

[T]he celebration and fetes were often undermined by the mobs, reporters, and enthusiastic fans who hounded Dickens wherever he went. Eager to catch a glimpse of the author whose name had, by this time, become a household word, the public often mistook intense familiarity for knowability, forgetting that they maintained a one-sided acquaintance with Dickens that could not be reciprocated accordingly (124).

However, Welsh argues that Martin Chuzzlewit as a character would have never undergone all that attention had Dickens been consequent and truthful in his narrative (46). Martin would not have become a celebrity; he would not have been noticed by the press or by influential people. The whole satiric portrayal of American celebrity culture would not have been possible if Dickens had not inflated the story by allowing Martin to become famous. The fate that befalls Martin when he becomes a celebrity in spite of himself is thus necessarily based on Dickens’ own run-ins with admirers:

As soon as it was generally known in the National Hotel, that the young Englishman, Mr. Chuzzlewit, had purchased a “lo-cation” in the Valley of Eden, and intended to betake himself to that earthly Paradise by the next steam-boat; he became a popular character. Why this should be, or how it had come to pass, Martin no more knew than (…) but that he was for the time being, the lion, by popular election, of the Watertoast community (…) (MC 313).

The word “lion”, which symbolizes the British lion and is a metaphor for Martin being British, could also be a play on the verb “to lionize”, which means “to treat as an object of great interest or importance” (Merriam-Webster dictionary online). After all, Dickens and Martin both experienced first-hand the consequences of such a sudden lionization. Martin soon starts receiving letters, of the same kind as the ones received by Dickens, with requests to give a lecture and a personal letter asking Martin if he could help an aspiring artist to gain the favour of members of “the Congress of England, who would undertake to pay [his] expenses to that country, and for six months (…)” (MC 314). Dickens too received letters asking for favours, ranging from demands for financial help to someone who asked him for his opinion on a
paraphrase of the Book of Job (Stone 473). Dickens projected his own experience with his excessive fame and the celebrity culture of the U.S. onto Martin. Martin is forced to hold a "levee" (MC 315) in order to satisfy the wish of the crowd, otherwise, as he is warned, the crowd will riot and he would fall in disgrace (315). Both the shaking of hands and the constant rush of people wanting to gaze at the celebrity form an inevitable component of levees, which Dickens as well as Martin experienced. It is described in Martin Chuzzlewit:

Up they came with a rush. Up they came until the room was full, and, through the open door, a dismal perspective of more to come was shown upon the stairs. One after another, one after another, dozen after dozen, score after score, more, more, more, up they came: all shaking hands with Martin. Such varieties of hands, the thick, the thin, the short, the long, the fat, the lean, the coarse, the fine; such differences of temperature, the hot, the cold, the dry, the moist, the flabby; such diversities of grasp, the tight, the loose, the short-lived, and the lingering (MC 316)!

Both Dickens and Martin were exposed to the scrutiny of the crowd and were commented upon as if they were a living spectacle:

Amateurs in the physiognomical and phrenological sciences roved about him with watchful eyes and itching fingers, and sometimes one, more daring than the rest, made a mad grasp at the back of his head, and vanished in the crowd. They had him in all points of view: in front, in profile, three-quarter face, and behind. Those who were not professional or scientific, audibly exchanged opinions on his looks. New lights shone upon him, in respect of his nose. Contradictory rumours were abroad on the subject of his hair (MC 316).

Although the projection of Dickens’ own experiences with the crowds and the public opinion in the U.S. onto Martin seems shaky with regard to the plot of the novel, it shows that his fame clearly marked him. He had never really been treated this way in England, and it was a whole new experience for him when he arrived on the shores of the U.S. Thus the welcome and reverence Martin received resemble what Dickens himself underwent. If at first Dickens enjoyed the fame, he quickly became exhausted from all the attention and from his social obligations towards the American public. Martin undergoes the same pressure and soon collapses under the weariness: "Martin felt, from pure fatigue, and heat, and worry, as if he could have fallen on the ground and willingly remained there, if they would have had the mercy to leave him alone" (MC 317).
2.2.4 Parodying the American Press

While in America, Dickens experienced first-hand the slanderous and untrue stories the American press would write about him and in *Martin Chuzzlewit* he seems to take revenge on this lowbrow kind of journalism aimed at provoking sensation. This revenge is already announced in some way in *American Notes*: “But, the foul growth of America has a more tangled root than this; and it strikes its fibres, deep in its licentious Press” (294). The names of the New York papers yelled at Martin and Mark upon disembarking from their ship are clearly meant as a satire of their mediocre content.

"Here’s this morning’s New York Sewer!” cried one. “Here’s this morning’s New York Stabber! Here’s the New York Family Spy! Here’s the New York Private Listener! Here’s the New York Peeper! Here’s the New York Plunderer! Here’s the New York Keyhole Reporter! Here’s the New York Rowdy Journal! Here’s all the New York papers!” (MC 220)

More than merely a snide comment, the names reflect what Dickens thought of those journals and their journalistic methods. He goes on stating that the New York Sewer has a “full account of the Ball at Mrs. White’s last night, where all the beauty and fashion of New York were assembled, with the Sewer’s own particulars of the private lives of all the ladies that was there” (MC 220). Dickens hyperbolizes the American press and its focus on sensationalism even further when he mentions the “exclusive account of a flagrant act of dishonesty committed by the Secretary of the State when he was eight years old” (MC 220). Of course this act is completely irrelevant, but the papers act as if it is front-page news. That was exactly Dickens’ own problem with the press, along with the fact that some papers published made-up articles about aspects of his private life as is clear from the aforementioned letter to Edmund B. Green on the fourteenth of February 1842.

In his article “The American Episode of ‘Martin Chuzzlewit’: The Culmination of Dickens’ quarrel with the American Press”, Sidney P. Moss states that “within a month’s time, Boz [Dickens], the favourite author of Americans, the man they revered as the friend of the poor and the opposer of social evil, was stigmatized by American newspapers” (224). In Dickens’ correspondence, the matter also surfaces in a letter to Forster on the seventeenth of February 1842.

Of course I can do nothing but in some shape or other it gets into the newspapers. All manner of lies get there, and occasionally a truth so twisted and distorted that it has as much resemblance to the real fact as Quilp’s leg to Taglioni’s” (Letters 72).
Moss argues that the treatment Dickens received by newspapers was mostly due to his stance regarding International Copyright: the "American reprint publishers perceived [his pleading] as promoting Dickens', not to say British, interests at the expense of their own" (224). He also seemingly violated propriety by speaking on the issue during public dinners (Moss 224). In the case of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens thus takes revenge for the way the press in America treated him. Journalistic institutions make more appearances in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for instance as Martin meets Colonel Diver, the editor-in-chief of The New York Rowdy Journal, who asks Martin’s opinion on an article.

> "Why, it's horribly personal," said Martin. The colonel seemed much flattered by this remark; and said he hoped it was. "We are independent here, sir," said Mr. Jefferson Brick. "We do as we like." "If I may judge from this specimen," returned Martin, "there must be a few thousands here rather the reverse of independent, who do as they don’t like." (...) "They rile up, sometimes; but in general we have a hold upon our citizens both in public and in private life, which is as much one of the ennobling institutions of our happy country as-" "As nigger slavery itself," suggested Mr. Brick. (*MC* 226-227)

In this passage, a parallel is drawn between the freedom of the press and slavery, which of course forms an entirely satiric and ironic comparison. Slavery is presented as a noble institution of the country and is compared to the freedom of the press, yet it is to be deduced from this comparison that both are, in fact, mechanisms of control. The press serves to control the public opinion and the private lives of the citizens, and slavery is a manner of completely controlling a person, both body and mind. The qualifier "happy" seems a very ironic way of describing those two practices.

Later, Martin becomes unexpectedly popular and an article relating to him is published in the Watertoast Gazette, featuring the publication of two letters addressed to him and his response (*MC* 314). The landlord of Martin’s hotel then suggests he should satisfy the crowd by organising a levee since “[the] citizens an’t long of riling up, I tell you; and our Gazette could flay you like a wild cat” (*MC* 315). The power of the press over the public opinion is expressed through the example of the Watertoast Gazette. Martin has no choice but to accept his newfound popularity. This was the same fate that had befallen Dickens upon his journey, as Helms confirms:

> Aside from his complaints of feeling overwhelmed by crowds and various social gatherings, his letters frequently cite moments that show how this invasive conduct had (...) turned him into a kind of performative commodity. Treated as a traveling exhibition
as he visited one city to the next (...) he shook hands with so many strangers he feared he had 'almost paralyzed [his] right arm' (127).

In another satire of the American press, Dickens describes an “interview” with Martin by two journalists of said Gazette:

Two gentlemen connected with the Watertost Gazette had come express to get the matter for an article on Martin. They had agreed to divide the labour. One of them took him below the waistcoat; one above. Each stood directly in front of his subject with his head a little on one side, intent on his department (MC 316).

Dickens uses humour to illustrate a point about the American press: their articles are often superficial, focusing not on fact but on mere interpretation. Helms confirms that the “scrutiny inevitably made [Dickens] the subject of unfounded gossip and rumors” (118). Martin undergoes that same process as he suddenly becomes a celebrity in the U.S. He too, is subjected to extensive scrutiny. Incidentally, Dickens was also the subject of such an article at some point. In a letter to Forster on the fifteenth of April 1842, an article from the *St Louis People’s Organ* on the twelfth of April is partly quoted in the annotations:

His hair has been described as very fine. We did not find it remarkably so; it is slightly waxy, and has a glossy, soft texture. It is very long, with unequivocal soap locks, which to our eye looked badly. We had thought from his portraits that it was thick, but did not find it so. (...) His eye is, to our perception, blue, dark blue, and full; it stands out slightly, and is handsome, - very beautiful. It is the striking feature of his physiognomy.

These are indeed the same kind of articles that were written about Martin. A description of the body seems anything but interesting and relevant, but that is seemingly what the readers of the Watertost Gazette want. The journalists do not address Martin, but exchange comments about him as if he were not there. Though it seems very unlikely that Martin would ever experience the same fame and press attention Dickens endured in America, the fact that he does so means Dickens wanted to make a point of this for his story. He wanted to share his own negative experiences and hyperbolize them through fiction. Stone remarked on this as well:

[The idea that youthful Martin Chuzzlewit, an obscure steerage passenger, be treated as a fascinating celebrity, a man of infinite sagacity, and the proper recipient of formal tributes and levees, is an absurdity which turns Dickens' indignation into farce and his realism into caricature. Dickens is here too emotionally involved with his recent memories (...) (472)
At a certain moment, Martin is confronted with letters from admirers and people he encountered. The first letter is from a La Fayette Kettle, whom Martin met on a train. The man wishes to see Martin deliver a lecture upon the subject of the Tower of London and “as a large issue of quarter-dollar tickets may be expected, your answer and consent by bearer will be considered obliging” (MC 313). This does not leave much room for Martin to make a decision, since the practical arrangements for the lecture have already been made. On the eight of February 1842, Dickens received a similar request to deliver a lecture for the Young Men’s Institute of New Haven (Letters 53). On another occasion, the character of Mrs. Hominy, an author that Martin and Mark encounter on their journey, receives a letter reading:

Two literary ladies present their compliments to the mother of the modern Gracchi [i.e. Mrs Hominy], and claim her kind introduction, as their talented countrywoman, to the honourable (and distinguished) Elijah Pogram, whom the two L.L.’s have often contemplated in the speaking marble of the soul-binding Chiggle. On a verbal intimation from the mother of the M.G., that she will comply with the request of the two L.L.’s, they will have immediate pleasure of joining the galaxy assembled (…) (MC 466).

This is a pastiche of a real letter Dickens received demanding an introduction to him that he related to C.C. Felton on the fourteenth of March 1842:

What do you think of this incendiary card being left at my door last night? “General G. sends his compliments to Mr. Dickens, and called with two literary ladies. As the two L.L.’s are ambitious of the honor of a personal introduction to Mr. D., General G. requests the honor of an appointment for to-morrow” (Letters 130).

There are various examples where the press is ridiculed or portrayed as sensation-seekers who would even go so far as to forge letters, as is apparent from a passage in Martin Chuzzlewit:

“Pray,” said Martin, after some hesitation, “may I venture to ask, with reference to a case I observe in this paper of yours, whether the Popular Instructor often deals- I am at loss to express it without giving you offence- in forgery? In forged letters, for instance,” (…) “Well, sir!” replied the colonel. “It does, now and then.” (…) “Is smartness American for forgery?” asked Martin (MC 227).

According to DeSpain, “Dickens was disturbed by the sheer enormity of the American press, whose speed in production and distribution left little time for ethical responsibility on the part of editors and publishers” (25). This unethical behaviour is exactly what he means to illustrate and denounce through the satire of the American press in Martin Chuzzlewit.
2.2.5 Satire of the American language and manners
Using rhetorical strategies, Dickens goes to great lengths to reproduce a realistic American speech pattern in his novel. Through linguistic differences with British English (spoken by the other characters of the novel), Dickens ensures that the Americans are singled out as characters and that the contrast with Martin and Mark is accentuated. Moreover, Dickens satirizes and hyperbolizes the typical manners and traits of Americans that he found striking when he himself was traveling the country. He exaggerates their ignorance, patriotism and the sometimes incongruous associations of concepts such as freedom and slavery, nonetheless celebrated by the Americans as inherently part of their lives. All are used to compose an unflattering portrait of the American characters, which Dickens based on specimens of American people that he himself encountered.

While traveling, Dickens first noticed little difference in language between British and American English.

[B]ut for an odd phrase now and then-such as *Snap of cold weather; a tongue-y man* for a talkative fellow; *Possible?* As a solitary interrogation; and *Yes?* For indeed – I should have marked, so far, no difference whatever between the parties here and those I left behind (*Letters* 36).

In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, however, Dickens is much more explicit in differentiating the American speech from the speech of Martin and Mark. There are many instances where the American accent is represented literally in the graphology of the text. In his article "Charles Dickens Makes Fun of Idiolects in *Martin Chuzzlewit*", Adolfo Luis Soto Vazquez mentions that in "the representation of American speech the Victorian writer uses features such as deviant spellings, unusual morpho-syntactic patterns, standard words used in a different context, extralinguistic capitals and hyphens" (261). That Dickens had an ear for observing the linguistic aspects of the American dialects can also be deduced from his letters, particularly in his description of an incident to Forster on the fifteenth of April.

A St. Louis lady complimented Kate upon her voice and manner of speaking: assuring her that she should never have suspected her of being Scotch, or even English. She was so obliging as to add that she would have taken her for an American, anywhere: which she (Kate) was no doubt aware was a very great compliment, as the Americans were admitted on all hands to have greatly refined upon the English language! I need not tell you that out of Boston and New York a nasal drawl is universal, but I may as well hint that the prevailing grammar is also more than doubtful; that the oddest vulgarisms are
received idioms; (...) and that the most fashionable and aristocratic (...), instead of asking you in what place you were born, enquire where you “hail from”! (Letters 196)

With respect to the last statement, Dickens reuses the idiom “hailing from” in Martin Chuzzlewit, (318). Page, in Speech in the English Novel, otherwise suggests:

There are many instances of orthographic variants suggesting non-standard pronunciation (...) and of modifications of the normal form of English words (...); but even more prominent are variations in stress, indicated by capitalization, hyphenation, italicization, the use of diacritics, or some combination of these methods (150-151).

As soon as Martin and Mark are on American grounds, the difference in speech pattern is visible in the writing: “the Whigs was” instead of “the Whigs are”, “Arkansas dooel with bowie knives” for “duel” and “here’s (...)” instead of “here are” (MC 220). All these illustrate a difference between British English and American English on the morpho-syntactical front. There is also the recurring use of “toe” instead of “to”. Moreover, some new lexical forms are introduced such as the word “locofoco” or the expression “chawed up” (MC 220). Another feature that often reoccurs is the loss of letters in words such as “interestin’” or “leave ‘em” (MC 220, 222). There is also a loss of the end “g” in “lookin” (MC 223) and in several other words ending in [ing].

Martin describes another linguistic feature of the American speech, stating that Colonel Diver, an American character, “emphasized all the small words and syllables in his discourse, and left the others to take care of themselves” (MC 222). The American speech pattern also features vowel changes in some words (Soto Vazquez 265), such as “cap’en” (MC 223) or “air” (304) for “are”. Vowel replacement is present for “new one” in “new ‘un” (227) and there is also the loss of the “r” in “bust” (226). The typical interrogation form that Dickens cites in his letter to Forster is also present in Martin Chuzzlewit: “Yes?” said the colonel” (223), as well as the standalone instance of “Possible!” (248). The expression “haven’t got” and the shortened “p’raps” (223) are also an example of American speech, as is the word “fortun” (223) or else the simplified “nat’rally” (298). Shortened verb forms are also featured in “The General come back!” (247) instead of the grammatically correct form “the general has come back”.

Another linguistic device used by Dickens is hyphenating words or the use of capitals: “Mostly, American speech and its tendency to excessive emphasis is ridiculed by (...) capital letters and hyphens” (Soto Vazquez 266). Instances of that can be found in “to-day’s” (226), “En-tirely” (227), “Pro-fessor” (233), or else “ex-clusiveness” (248) and “con-clude” (297). This serves to illustrate the “accentuation of the first syllable of certain polysyllabic words, a trait highly characteristic then, as now, of American speech” (Soto Vazquez 266). All these examples bring
about a detailed and realistic portrayal of American figures through their speech. Soto Vazquez argues that:

The combination of all these non-standard linguistic features accompanied by the repetitive rhetorical speech patterns combine to help create Dickens's figure of the unsympathetic American (267).

The qualifier of “unsympathetic” is used here because most of the Americans Martin and Mark encounter are not likeable characters; they are morally flawed, prejudiced (in terms of slavery and towards Britain) or even unintelligent. Dickens satirizes American customs and manners to ensure that his audience is left with an unflattering impression of the other side of the Atlantic, particularly of its inhabitants.

Stone generalizes Dickens' portrayal of Americans in Martin Chuzzlewit as follows, stating that “repulsive traits which Dickens found in the American character become of supreme importance in Chuzzlewit and, as a result of satiric exaggeration, are treated there as universal and unrelieved qualities of American life” (470). On the subject of manners, Dickens had a lot to say in his correspondence, expressing his disgust and incomprehension at certain American customs. However, in Martin Chuzzlewit this is greatly distorted and exaggerated, for instance, when Martin is invited to dine with the Norris family. The ladies of the family speak highly of their own education, as they are attending a certain kind of lectures:


Martin comments that he admires their studiousness and wonders how they combine those lectures with managing a household, whereupon his friend informs him “that domestic drudgery was far beneath the exalted range of these Philosophers, and that the chances were a hundred to one that neither of the three could perform the easiest woman's work herself (...)”(252). Besides, “Philosophy of the Vegetables” can hardly be taken seriously as a philosophy course. Equally, there is a hint of absurdity in that such “learned” women are however unable to perform small household tasks.

Dickens described the habit of tobacco spitting intensively and repeatedly in his correspondence, and a particular scene in Martin Chuzzlewit proposes the same kind of description.
Their new friend said no more just then, being busily employed in cutting a quid or plug from his cake of tobacco, and whistling softly to himself the while. When he had shaped it to his liking, he took out his old plug and deposited the same on the back of the seat between Marl and Martin, while he thrust the new one into the hollow of his cheek, where it looked like a large walnut, or tolerable pippin. Finding it quite satisfactory, he stuck the point of his knife into the old plug, and holding it out for their inspection, remarked with the air of a man who had not lived in vain, that it was 'used up considerable' (296).

Again, Dickens uses irony and satire to portray a typically American feature he would have encountered himself. The satire becomes even clearer in another description of a gentleman who "was about five-and-thirty; was crushed and jammed up in a heap, under the shade of a large green cotton umbrella; and ruminated over his tobacco-plug like a cow" (457).

Although Dickens did not mention American dining habits in the letters or the travelogue, it features in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, described not unlike a carnivalesque painting:

> It was a numerous company (...) Of these some five or six ladies, who sat wedged together in a little phalanx by themselves. All the knives and forks were working away at a rate that was quite alarming; very few words were spoken; and everybody seemed to eat his utmost in self-defence, as if a famine were expected to set in (...) and it had become high time to assert the first law of nature. The poultry (...) disappeared as rapidly as if every bird had had the use of its wings, and had flown in desperation down a human throat. The oysters, stewed and pickled leaped from their capacious reservoirs, and slid by scores into the mouths of the assembly. The sharpest pickles vanished; whole cucumbers at once, like sugar-plums; and no man winked his eye. Great heaps of indigestible matter melted away as ice before the sun. (...) What Mrs. Pawkins [the host] felt each day at dinner is hidden from all human knowledge. But she had one comfort. It was very soon over (232-233).

Another typical trait that Dickens seemed to enjoy was the use of military titles for American characters. Characters met by Martin and Mark are named Colonel Diver, Major Pawkins, Capitain Kedick and General Fladdock but whether or not this is connected to an actual military position is often left in the middle. Martin himself comments on the matter: "What military officer? You know they spring up in every field" (MC 294)! There is another degree of irony to this: Colonel Diver despises the word “master” (MC 228), stating that “there are no masters here”, yet his own title does imply such a degree of authority.
American manners were partly described both in *American Notes* and in the letters but were never explicitly mocked or exaggerated. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* however, Dickens seems to take every worst aspect of the American people and their characteristics and, through satire and hyperboles, ridicules the language and the typical habits. A potential purpose could be to aggravate the sense of alienation experienced by Martin and Mark in a foreign country. The aberrant speech pattern of Americans, as well as their seemingly inappropriate manners, then co-represents this discrepancy between Englishmen and Americans. There seems to be one American character however, that rises above other Americans. Mr. Bevan bears more resemblance to the friends Dickens made on the East Coast and he will ultimately help Martin and Mark to leave Eden. However, in his portrayal by Dickens, Bevan is singled out since the American accent is far less acute in his speech than with his fellow Americans. Secondly, Bevan expresses criticism towards his own country (MC 240), while most of his countrymen would not dare say a negative word. Nevertheless, the majority of American characters in the book are subjected to Dickens’ satire and become a living caricature of the persons Dickens met on his journey. Bevan is the exception confirming the rule.

### 2.2.6 American “issues”: politics, slavery and the absence of international copyright

While Dickens travelled through the U.S., he observed American politics on many occasions. Before departure, he idealized the American political system. Upon his return, however, the disillusionment took over and in *Martin Chuzzlewit* it manifests itself through biting satire:

> Dickens satirized (...) American politics; American’s unremitting brag of liberty and independence; American slavery, all the worse in a land that bragged of liberty and independence; American anglophobia continually blustering about war with England; American commercialism (...) and American impoverishment in manners (...) (Moss 228).

A statement or satiric comment on the issue of copyright, on the other hand, is noticeably absent from *Martin Chuzzlewit*. There is no mention of it during the American episode and no direct allusion to it anywhere in the novel. However, as noticed by Gehard Joseph: "The American piracy of Dickens’s novels (as well as those of the other English writers), arguably the primary reason for his American journey, gets displaced in *Martin Chuzzlewit* onto a meditation on Pecksniff’s theft of Martin’s grammar school plans" (532). This scene is indeed the only comment somewhat related to the issue of copyright in the whole novel. Just when Martin and Mark return from the U.S., they notice a celebration is about to take place for the building of a new grammar school. Martin, upon hearing Pecksniff is the architect and upon seeing the plans, realizes Pecksniff plagiarized his own plans for that school. However, Dickens abstains from
satire or critique in the whole passage and there is no authorial comment on the matter. Whereas he seemingly has a lot to say about the political issues and the issue of slavery, the international copyright treaty remains, like in *American Notes*, unmentioned.

Dickens is not mild for American politics in *Martin Chuzzlewit*: upon the protagonists’ arrival in America, he already describes a situation illustrating their absurdity:

> [A]n alderman had been elected the day before; and Party Feeling naturally running rather high on such an exciting occasion, the friends of the disappointed candidate had found it necessary to assert the great principles of Purity of Election and Freedom of Opinion by breaking a few legs and arms, and furthermore pursuing one obnoxious gentleman through the streets with the design of slitting his nose (*MC* 219).

The satire resides in the hypocritical use of the notion of “Freedom” by American politics, since there is Freedom of Opinion, but it is not respected since violence ensues after the election. Stone comments that “the heat of political campaigning which Dickens noted in his letters (…) is treated as ingrained lawlessness and rowdyism in *Chuzzlewit*” (470) and this passage marks an example of that. Moreover, Dickens feared that the capitalistic system in America “created its own aristocracy, not of worth and intelligence but of dollars” (Meckier 272). This critique is evidenced by a passage in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

> It [the conversation] was rather barren of interest, to say the truth; and the greater part of it may be summed up in one word- dollars. All their cares, hopes, joys, affections, virtues and associations, seemed to be melted down into dollars. Whatever the chance contributions that fell into the slow cauldron of their talk, they made the gruel thick and slab with dollars. Men were weighed by their dollars, measures gauged by their dollars; life was auctioneered, appraised, put up, and knocked down for its dollars. (…) Do anything for dollars! What is a flag to *them* (*MC* 234-235)?

Money rules the thinking and conversation of Dickens’ fictional Americans. Dickens also humiliates and satirizes important American citizens by giving them all the title of “one of the most remarkable men of the country” (*MC* 230, 233, 234, 299) which of course ironizes the uniqueness and noteworthiness of this epithet. In his article "*Martin Chuzzlewit: The Novel as Comic Entertainment*", Albert J. Guerard points out how “Americans [in the novel] deceive themselves with rhetoric, and (…) believe that the constant reiteration of “freedom” and “equality” and higher “moral sense” constitute or create realities” (116). This is specifically true for American politicians in the novel and the way they speak to Martin and Mark.
Kettle, General Choke, Hannibal Chollop and Elijah Pogram are influential plot figures in *Martin Chuzzlewit* inasmuch as that they permit Dickens to offer commentary on America and American politics.

Firstly, La Fayette Kettle, whom Martin and Mark encounter on their journey by train, is a nationalist who appears to feel strong resentment towards Britain, calling her the "unnat'ral old parent" (*MC* 296). Another American gentlemen, General Choke, subsequently expresses his similar sentiment towards Britain with a violent metaphor: "May the British Lion have his talons eradicated by the noble bill of the American Eagle, and be taught to play upon the Irish Harp and the Scotch Fiddle that music which is breathed in every empty shell that lies upon the shores of green Columbia!" (*MC* 297). Martin and the two gentlemen thereupon engage in a debate concerning the living quarters of Queen Victoria. The two Americans seem convinced she lives in the Tower of London, despite Martin's vehement denial of this information: "When you say, sir, (...) that your Queen does not reside in the Tower of London, you fall into an error, not uncommon to your countrymen" (*MC* 298). As it turns out, it is the same General who will introduce them to the Eden Land Corporation. It is ironic that the discussion between the American nationalists and Martin, which could provide for an interesting political debate, only relates to a royal's living quarters. This is again an illustration of the satire, this time depicting how Americans in *Martin Chuzzlewit* are ignorant regarding foreign affairs and extensively praise nationalism.

The most notorious and most controversial political figure from the novel is no doubt the character of Hannibal Chollop, a local settler who visits Martin and Mark while they are in Eden. The man is a caricature embodiment of American values and of the stereotypical settler. According to Meckier, "Chollop caricatures the uncultured brute that Dickens felt the New World considered an exemplary naturalized American" (271). The exchange between Chollop, Mark and Martin is worth reproducing:

"Do you con-sider this a swamp, sir?" enquired Chollop gravely. "Why yes, sir," returned Mark. "I haven't a doubt about it, myself." "The sentiment is quite Europian," said the major, "and does not surprise me: what would your English millions say to such a swamp in England, sir?" "They'd say it was an uncommon nasty one, I should think," said Mark, "and that they would rather be inoculated for fever in some other way." "Europian!" remarked Chollop, with sardonic pity. "Quite Europian!" (*MC* 447)

The ensuing portrait of Chollop depicted by Dickens is one intended to be comical and satirical:
Mr. Chollop was, of course, one of the most remarkable men in the country; but he really was a notorious person besides. He was usually described (…) as a "splendid example of our native raw material, sir," and was much esteemed for his devotion to rational Liberty; for the better propagation whereof he usually carried a brace of revolving-pistols in his coat-pocket, with seven barrels apiece. He also carried, amongst other trinkets, a sword-stick, which he called his "Tickler", and a great knife, which (for he was a man of a pleasant turn of humour) he called "Ripper", in allusion to its usefulness as a means of ventilating the stomach of any adversary in a close contest (MC 448).

The bitter irony used by Dickens works on several levels, with again the notion of Liberty ridiculed by the juxtaposition with extreme violence and use of weaponry. This violence is vulgarized and devaluated because of the naming of the weapons and the dark humour of Chollop in choosing "Tickler" and "Ripper" as names for his weapons. He is celebrated as a local hero since he “was greatly beloved for the gallant manner in which he had ‘jobbed out’ the eye of one gentleman, as he was in the act of knocking at his own street-door” (448). Two things are out of place here: the adjective “gallant” as means of description for an act of brutishness is a paradox and the “crime” of the gentleman seems hardly a crime at all.

Another irreconcilable pair of character traits in Chollop are described: “[h]e always introduced himself to strangers as a worshipper of Freedom; was the consistent advocate of Lynch law, and slavery; and invariably recommended, both in print and speech, the “tarring and feathering” of any unpopular person who differed from himself” (MC 448). Where Chollop thinks of himself as a worshipper of freedom, the rest of that description is almost a definition of racism and discrimination and thus the absolute opposite of freedom, as is the concept of slavery. Chollop finally leaves Martin and Mark with the warning that they should be careful with their words since he has “draw’d upon A man, and fired upon A man for less” (MC 450). This is again an ironic statement coming from a worshipper of freedom, since this clearly goes against freedom of opinion.

On the canal boat out of Eden, Martin and Mark meet with another political figure, the “Honourable Elijah Pogram, Member of Congress; one of the master-minds of our country, sir” (MC 458). Pogram is an uncharismatic figure who at first strikes Martin as quite apathetic: “It occurred to Martin, that if the Honorable Elijah Pogram had staid at home, and sent his shoes upon a tour, they would have answered the same purpose; for they were the only part of him in a situation to see anything” (MC 458-459). When Martin expresses his dislike of Eden, Pogram takes this to be an insult towards America: “this hatred of our Country, and her Institutions! This national antipathy is deeply rooted in the British mind” (MC 459)! Pogram also considers
Chollop as an example of American greatness and as a “child of Freedom” (MC 460). Outraged at this, Martin launches into a tirade:

“What an extraordinary people you are!” cried Martin. “Are Mr. Chollop and the class he represents, an Institution here? Are pistols with revolving-barrels, sword-sticks, bowie knives, and such things, Institutions on which you pride yourselves? Are bloody duels, brutal combats, savage assaults, shootings down and stabbings in the street, your Institutions! Why, I shall hear next, that Dishonor and Fraud are among the institutions of the great republic!” (MC 461)

Pogram stands ridiculed and if that wasn't enough satire, the bell for dinner rings and the solemn façade of Pogram falls through. Pogram quickly abandons the conversation for the prospect of food and forgets to fold his umbrella before entering the door, causing a comical scene. The discussion is reopened over an incident at the dining table, this time concerning the American manners.

“Acquire!” cried Martin. “But it’s not a question of acquiring anything. It’s a question of losing the natural politeness of a savage, and that instinctive good-breeding which admonishes one man not to offend and disgust another. (…) The mass of your countrymen begin by stubbornly neglecting little social observances, which have nothing to do with gentility, custom, usage, government, or country, but are acts of common, decent, natural, human politeness. You abet them in this, by resenting all attacks upon their social offences as if they were a beautiful national feature. From disregarding small obligations they come in regular course to disregard great ones; and so refuse to pay their debts (…)” (MC 462).

Pogram’s response to Martin’s speech is significant because it is simply absent: “they went on the deck again, where, resuming his former post, he [Pogram] chewed until he was in a lethargic state, amounting to insensibility” (MC 462). In this, Dickens confirms the “paralyzed government; the unworthy representatives of a free people” he had mentioned in his letters (Letters 175).

The political satire is extended to landscape imagery when, after a chapter on the Pecksniff plot, Dickens returns to America with a comically intended transition:

Mr. Pecksniff’s house is more than a thousand leagues away; and again this happy chronicle has Liberty and Moral Sensibility for its high companions. Again it breathes the blessed air of Independence; again it contemplates with pious awe that moral sense
which renders unto Caesar nothing that is his; again inhales that sacred atmosphere which was the life of him (...) who dreamed of Freedom in a slave’s embrace (...) (293).

Dickens here exaggerates and hyperbolizes the values that form America’s fundamentals and he personifies America as a living entity embodying liberty and independence. Yet, the component of satire is not far away as in the next lines Dickens turns to criticism:

And now the engine yells, as it were lashed and tortured like a living labourer, and writhed in agony. A poor fancy; for steel and iron are of infinitely greater account, in this commonwealth, than flesh and blood. (...) Thus the stars wink upon the bloody stripes; and Liberty pulls down her cap upon her eyes, and owns Oppression in its vilest aspect, for her sister (293).

In this description of the engine, everything that Dickens despised about American politics is embodied: the lashing and torturing of labourers alluding to the matter of slavery, the greater importance accorded to steel and iron (and perhaps, by extension, money) than to actual human beings. The contrasting notions of Liberty and Oppression are joined together in this paradoxical nation, in a union that Dickens had trouble understanding, as did Martin. Dickens issues a warning about this contradictory aspect of America early on in Martin's American journey when stating that:

Martin knew nothing about America, or he would have known perfectly well that if its individual citizens, to a man, are to be believed, it always is depressed, and always is stagnated, and always is at an alarming crisis, and never was otherwise; though as a body they are ready to make oath upon the Evangelists at any hour of the day or night, that it is the most thriving and prosperous of all countries on the habitable globe (231).

This particular citation embodies Dickens’ own points of view regarding the matter of American politics: though there are obvious issues and matters that need resolving, Americans still believe their country to be the most evolved and accomplished country in the world.

*Martin Chuzzlewit* also has critique to offer on the matter of slavery. Mark meets a slave not long after disembarking and tells his tragic story to Martin:

"I know it is, from hearing his whole story. That master died; so did his second master from having his head cut open with a hatchet by another slave, who, when he’d done it, went and drowned himself: then he got a better one: in years and years he saved up a little money, and bought his freedom, which he got pretty cheap at last, on account of his strength being nearly gone, and he being ill. Then he come here. And now he’s a saving
up to treat himself afore he dies to a small purchase—it’s nothing to speak of; only his own
daughter; that’s all!” cried Mr. Tapley, becoming excited. “Liberty for ever! Hurrah!” (MC 242-243).

Of course this is bitter irony since the “small purchase” is another human being, which the man
has to buy free for a small amount of money. Mark’s outcry of “liberty for ever” is one of ironic
desperation since nothing about slavery has anything to do with liberty. Mark adds another
ironic comment:

“Lord love you, sir,” he added, “they’re so fond of Liberty in this part of the globe, that
they buy her and sell her and carry her to the market with ‘em. They’ve such a passion
for Liberty, that they can’t help taking liberties with her. That’s what it’s owing to.” (MC 243)

It seems that at this moment, Dickens himself is speaking through Mark, since his own thoughts
on slavery where of the same form: “With sharp points and edges such as these, Liberty in
America hews and hacks her slaves” (AN 290). The America in Dickens’ letters and its fictional
twin in Martin Chuzzlewit praise themselves on their freedom of opinion, but Martin utters that
the opposite is true. Bevan advises Mark not to be seen in the company of a slave and Martin
answers that Mark is used to doing as he pleases:

“(…) I think he had better go with us. He is an honest fellow, and speaks his mind so very
plainly.” “Why, the fact is,” said Martin smiling, “that being unaccustomed to a free
republic, he is used to do so.” (MC 243).

This is again an example of satire as Martin means to say that, though America glorifies its
freedom in all aspects of life, the reality is very different, since there is neither freedom of
opinion, nor freedom for each individual. The views represented in the novel more closely
resemble Dickens’ personal opinions and his unmitigated critique on the different American
political matters (as gathered from his letters) than the asserted truth in American Notes.

2.3) Swamps and meadows, the Eagle and the Lion

2.3.1: Contrasts between the U.S. (Eden) and Britain in Martin Chuzzlewit

In Martin Chuzzlewit, Eden functions as an inversion of paradise on earth. The name, an ironic
play on the Biblical garden, is in stark contrast with the actual reality of the place. As soon as
Martin and Mark discover their new home, in which they invested every last penny they had,
there is a shift in the language and attitude. Particularly Martin suffers, shifting from optimism to
despair upon seeing the sickly and swampy landscape and focusing on its deficiencies. Mark
approaches the situation more practically and sets about to discover what the land has to offer. The importance of Eden as a place is that it has two significant functions within the novel. Firstly, it forms an antithesis for England and secondly, it gives Martin the opportunity to change: Eden serves as a lesson and a plot device by Dickens to teach his protagonist, Martin, the value of altruism.

As established before, Eden is far from a pastoral or romantic place: it is a harsh and unforgiving landscape. Additionally, Martin and Mark succumb to homesickness at some point during their journey. In her article “‘Fevered with Anxiety for Home’: Nostalgia and the ‘New’ Emigrant in Martin Chuzzlewit”, Nancy Metz analyses the feelings of nostalgia and homesickness in Eden in detail. She points out that “a root cause of suffering in Eden [was] (...) homesickness so intense that it endangers life itself” (54). Martin and Mark suffer from certain symptoms that can be related to the nineteenth century medical condition of “nostalgia”, symptoms which are detailed by Metz: “sadness, sleeplessness, want of appetite, and exhaustion” (54). In her book Yesterday's self: nostalgia and the immigrant identity Andreea Ritivoi describes the history of nostalgia as a medical condition, especially with relation to immigrants. She uses Hofer's theories on nostalgia, as he was the first to provide a systematic analysis of the disease. Ritivoi explains: “in [Hofer's] view, nostalgia was an affliction of the imagination: fantasies about home gradually occupy the mind of the patients, to the point where they can simply not entertain any other thoughts (16)".

Indeed, in Martin Chuzzlewit, Martin becomes obsessed with the idea of returning home at any cost:

We left home on a mad enterprise, and have failed. The only hope left us: the only one end for which we have now to try, is to quit this settlement for ever, and get back to England. Anyhow! by any means! Only to get back there, Mark. (...) I am to blame for coming here, and I would do anything to get away (353-354).

Perhaps in order to make the subplot of Mark and Martin as settlers realistic, Dickens integrated feelings of homesickness and nostalgia into the story, equally drawing on his own homesickness when he was in the U.S. This forms another possible reason for his intense focus in Martin Chuzzlewit on all the negative aspects of the States. After Martin and Mark both become sick with swamp fever, they realize that they miss their lives in England. They miss their homes, their friends and the English landscape. This again shows similarities to Dickens’ own experience in the U.S. He too, suffered bouts of homesickness and often complained of a longing towards home in his letters. He misses his children and his friends but also the English state of mind and the English manners, which differ immensely from what he observed in America. Both Dickens and Martin compare their situation in America to home and the latter always comes out superior.
Furthermore, McCarthy is convinced that Dickens' longing for home stemmed from a "[r]awness and newness [that] made him impatient for his own established world. He misses snugness; he misses the old and familiar" (71). Metz confirms this when she elaborates on the matter:

Nostalgia is a term that Dickens never uses in *Martin Chuzzlewit* or applies to his own experiences. But it is certain that he drew on the passionate intensity of his own homesickness when he depicted the travelers’ mental and physical breakdown. Throughout his life, Dickens’s letters from abroad exhibit a strong attachment to the domestic scenes he has left behind. In his letters from America, however, this attachment manifests itself in obsessive ways and at an emotional pitch that frequently strains against linguistic decorum (55).

The parallel with his fictional counterpart is clear from a passage in *Martin Chuzzlewit*:

> Often at night, when Mark and Martin were alone, and lying down to sleep, they spoke of home, familiar places, houses, roads, and people whom they knew; sometimes in the lively hope of seeing them again, and sometimes with a sorrowful tranquility, as if that hope were dead (*MC* 455).

Both author and personage come back home changed (owing to an emotional catharsis for Martin and a larger appreciation for England by Dickens himself). Thus the experiences of Martin and Mark regarding Eden, its contrast with England and their homesickness, can be related to Dickens’ own wish to come home to England. Eden is portrayed as a hellish place and Dickens uses several rhetorical devices to ensure the contrast with England shows clearly. On the other hand, Eden is also a symbolical antithesis to the English society in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

**a) Symbolic contrast**

A symbolic contrast in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is illustrated by the opposing values of “home” (embodied by England and the affairs unfolding there) and “foreignness” (embodied by the American episode and by Eden specifically). Dickens goes to great lengths to show the differences between the two places, by using contrasting imagery and metaphors to signal oppositions. In doing so, Dickens relies heavily on the concept of the ideal Victorian home, and uses it to demonstrate Martin's failure to establish such a home in Eden. According to Fumie Tamai in her article "Globalisation and the Ideal of Home: *Martin Chuzzlewit*, "[h]ome in the Victorian era is neither just a word nor simply an object but an idea around which bourgeois identity is constructed and maintained" (291). Eden then serves as a complete reversal of that idyllic idea of home. Eden is described by Tamai as “the symbolic representation of a society which has fallen into an anarchic state of disorder and chaos" (290). In Eden, the conditions for
creating a home measuring up to that image are simply absent. An ideal Victorian home meets certain requirements, which have been detailed by Judith Flanders in *Inside the Victorian Home*:

The home was a microcosm of the ideal society, with love and charity replacing the commerce and capitalism of the outside world. (...) Meanwhile, advances in technology were changing more traditional aspects of home life. With improved sanitation and hygiene, child mortality was falling. The middle classes had more disposable income, and thus anxiety about the fundamentals of life—enough food, affordable light and heat—diminished (6).

Eden does not fulfil any of these requirements. There is no improvement in hygiene or comfort since they live in primitive huts and the risk of swamp fever is constantly present. The people of Eden are all sick and seem depressed:

The man advanced towards them through the thickening gloom, very slowly: leaning on a stick. As he drew nearer, they observed that he was pale and worn, and that his anxious eyes were deeply sunken in his head. His dress of homespun blue hung about him in rags; his feet and head were bare. He sat down on a stump half-way, and beckoned them to come to him. When they complied, he put his hand upon his side as if in pain, and while he fetched his breath stared at them, wondering (MC 325).

There is a high degree of child mortality in Eden since, upon their arrival, they are greeted by a man whose “youngest died last week” and whose oldest son “has his chill upon him, and is lying wrapped up in the blankets” (MC 325). A few days later, another tragedy strikes: “[t]he season was a sickly one; the settlement a grave. [Another] child died that night (...)” (MC 445). This also marks the disruption of family in Eden, whereas family was an important value in Victorian culture.

Victorian houses always looked neatly in order and were expanding since family members were starting to move into separate bedrooms (Flanders 9). This marks an upcoming desire for privacy, as is illustrated by Tamai: “the bourgeois home [functions] as a refuge from the struggles and strife of the public sphere” (291). This need for refuge became explicit in the housing conditions:

[T]he English house became more inward-turning. The small wrought-iron balconies that had decorated so many Georgian houses vanished, seemingly overnight. Thick curtains replaced the airy eighteenth century windows, as much to block out passers-by who might look in as to prevent the damage from sun and pollution (Flanders 8).
Again, this is in stark contrast with the living conditions of the people in Eden and more specifically with the hut assigned to Martin and Mark.

In a word, he conducted them to a miserable cabin, rudely constructed of the trunks of trees; the door of which had either fallen down or been carried away long ago; and which was consequently open to the wild landscape and the dark night. Saving for the little store he had mentioned, it was perfectly bare of all furniture; but they had left a chest upon the landing-place, and he gave them a rude torch in lieu of a candle (MC 326).

There is no demarcation of privacy, no doors to isolate them from the rest of the world and no separate rooms or even beds. This is the absolute opposite of what a cosy Victorian home should be since “household possessions, types of furnishing, elegance of entertaining and dress, all these ‘home’ aspects were a reflection of success” (Flanders 11) and “around every domestic scene there must be a strong wall of confidence, which no internal suspicion can undermine, no external enemy break through” (Flanders 16).

This is far from being the case in Eden. Martin especially becomes miserable upon seeing its primitive living conditions. There is no real sense of “home” in Eden, seeing as their hut is far removed from any comfort or from conditions they (or at least Martin as an upper middle-class citizen) were used to live in. This illustrates that they are far from the safety of England, far removed from civilization as they know it. The sense of alienation thus created serves to accentuate how America was different from England and how it did not provide a homely feeling, neither for Martin, nor for Dickens. Eden does not offer genuine human contact and the little marks of civilization that might have been present have since been eradicated:

There were not above a score of cabins in the whole; half of these appeared untenanted; all were rotten and decayed. The most tottering, abject, and forlorn among them, was called, with great propriety, the Bank, and National Credit Office. It had some feeble props about it, but was settling deep down in the mud, past all recovery (MC 328).

The bank is a symbol of prosperity, success and financial stability. None of these things seem to be present in Eden. There are very few inhabitants and all the social institutions have fallen into decay or are simply non-existent. This is in great contrast with what Martin and Mark know from England. Flanders notes that “the ingredients that make up a respectable household [are]: church, family prayer, and prompt bill-paying” (17). None of these elements is present in Eden since there is no church and the bank is a decaying ruin. Eden is still in the development stage of becoming a civilized place and Martin encounters great difficulty with adapting to this new situation.
In fact, he does not adapt, since he falls ill almost the moment he enters Eden: “[Martin] had greatly changed, even in one night. He was very pale and languid; spoke of pains and weakness in his limbs, and complained that his sight was dim, and his voice feeble” (MC 328). This illustrates his failure to adapt to a foreign environment and forms a prelude to the entire American adventure: it will not succeed and Martin and Mark will have to return home. While in America, Martin and Mark seek to settle into a new community, but Eden fails in providing that. However, Eden does help in one respect: it allows Martin to lose his selfishness and change into an altruist. Eden then functions as a sort of catalyst to make Martin realize he does not belong there. America forms the ideal harsh environment for a test of Martin’s personality and it provides him with new insights into himself.

As soon as Martin and Mark make up their mind to return, Eden becomes part of the past and they are reborn, looking forward to going home. Upon their arrival home, they rejoice in seeing London and it is clear that they are relieved to be out of America. Tamai argues that “(t)he English domestic sphere is thus presented as antithesis of the world of violence and aggression of America” (294). This is indeed true since the memories of England and the prospect of their return offers Martin and Mark great comfort in Eden, and both recover from swamp fever as they make up their mind to go home. The ideal of home marks an important aspect of Martin Chuzzlewit as it is intended to soothe Martin and Mark while they are in a foreign environment.

The chapter structure is another element representative of the intertwining concepts of “home” and “foreignness”. Dickens constantly shifts between the narrative arch in Eden and the matters unfolding in England. The narrative flow is thus interrupted and as soon as the reader has eased into one chapter and is “settled” in either Eden or England, the perspective changes. This illustrates that, even while they are away in America, Martin and Mark cannot let go of home, of England. It is always present in their thoughts and the switching between adventures is a strategy from Dickens to render feelings of unsettlement and homesickness in the structure of the story.

Dickens used this strategy of opposing the different elements from England and Eden to illustrate the contrast between them. He wanted to highlight the foreign aspects of Eden so as to bring out the alienating effects of the place on Martin and Mark. England, on the other hand, is presented as a safe haven. Martin and Mark are struggling in Eden and seem stuck in one place, while at home the pieces are slowly falling into place, the plot thickens and the storyline is more dynamic. This symbolic opposition creates a dichotomy between America and England that Dickens too began to see during his travels, with England emerging as the victorious nation out of the contrasting comparisons.
Rhetorical contrast

Upon arriving in Eden, the description of the landscape resembles that of a sickly old man and the population of Eden is described as living corpses. This stands in sharp contrast with the descriptions of England in the novel. For instance, the opening scenes of *Martin Chuzzlewit* feature the stereotypical landscape of England with its green meadows and gurgling streams:

The wet grass sparkled in the light; the scanty patches of verdure in the hedges—where a few green twigs yet stood together bravely, resisting to the last tyranny of nipping winds and early frosts—took heart and brightened up; the stream which had been dull and sullen all day long, broke out into a cheerful smile; the birds began to chirp and twitter on the naked boughs (...) (*MC* 6).

Where England is represented as green meadows and pastures galore, Edgecombe suggests that Dickens reverts to an idea of “primordial reversion” (41) in Eden, a place where Nature still has the upper hand over civilisation. He argues that “the human presence in the landscape becomes increasingly thin, the settlers more obviously spectral and impotent, the river ever more tangible and powerful” (Edgecombe 41). The descriptions of the landscape do become hyperbolically negative: “the monotonous desolation of the scene increased to that degree, that for any redeeming feature it presented to their eyes, they might have entered, in the body, on the grim domains of Giant Despair” (*MC* 325). The sentence runs on into a personification of the landscape, described as an almost monstrous presence: “(...) where even the blessed sun, shining down on festering elements of corruption and disease, became a horror; this was the realm of Hope through which they moved” (325). Dickens uses strong words associated with gothic horror stories and the like, namely: “decomposing”, “wrecked”, “wretched”, “fatal”, “misty shapes”, “creeping” and “spectres”. The sentence ends in a climax with the word “Hope” as an ironic apogee because of course, there is absolutely nothing hopeful about the landscape.

Dickens further exaggerates the unwelcoming aspect of the landscape by using religious imagery: “[t]he waters of the Deluge might have left it but a week before: so choked with slime and matted growth was the hideous swamp which bore that name” (325). For Edgecombe, Eden can be summed up as a land of “(m)ud, decomposition, and regress to post-diluvian time: that is the essence of the land; and on that land, a harsh, combative and violent society imaged in the very growth of the trees” (53). There are no pretty countryside or pastoral landscapes present in Eden, it can all be summed up as a chaotic swamp, where Martin and Mark feel completely lost and isolated. The language Dickens uses represents those same feelings of detachment and horror at the disappointment that is the settlement.
However, when Martin and Mark are on their way back home, almost back in port, they rejoice in seeing the familiar cityscape and the vivid description of the English soil heightens the contrast with the swamps of Eden:

Bright as the scene was; fresh, and full of motion; airy, free, and sparkling; it was nothing to the life and exultation in the breasts of the two travellers, at sight of the old churches, roofs and darkened chimney-stacks of Home. The distant roar, that swelled up hoarsely from the busy streets, was music in their ears; the lines of people gazing from the wharves, were friends held dear; the canopy of smoke that overhung the town, was brighter and more beautiful to them, than if the riches silks of Persia had been waving in the air. And though the water, going on its glistening track, turned, ever and again; aside, to dance and sparkle round great ships, and heave them up; and leaped from off the blades of oars, a shower of diving diamonds; and wantoned with the idle boats, and swiftly passed, in many a sportive chase, through obdurate old iron rings, set deep into the stone-work of the quays; not even it, was half so buoyant, and so restless, as their fluttering hearts, when yearning to set foot, once more, on native ground (MC 471).

This description of London shows structural similarities to the description of Eden, however it reverses all metaphors and imagery used. Where Eden was a place of disease, death, stillness and infinite growth of sickly and ugly plants, England is the bright, dynamic and very much alive centre of human life. There is movement in the city, as opposed to the dull nothingness and static state of decomposition in the swamp. The description of the English port focuses on the animated aspects of urban life and human activity, using words reminiscent of the busy effervescence of cities such as: "fresh", "motion", "free", "sparkling", "life", "exultation", "busy", "roar", "music", "people", "beautiful", "glistening track", "turned", "dance", "sparkle", "diamonds", "sportive", "restless", "fluttering"... The use of these words strongly opposes the words associated with death and sickness in descriptions of Eden.

Here, everything is focused on movement, on humans, on civilisation ordered by humans (for instance: the iron rings, the boats, the track, the wharves). There is a vibrant energy present that is completely opposed to life in Eden. Martin and Mark welcome this familiar cityscape as they are happy to be back into this orderly and civilized world, a world ruled by humans and life, not by nature and death. Edgecombe also noticed this as for him Dickens’ “characters welcome the grime and smoke of London” (53) as opposed to the American swampy landscape. Dickens, through the use of language, builds an opposition between the extremes of civilisation (the smoke, the air pollution, the buildings of London) and the extremes of wild Nature (the trees, the unchecked growth of plants and the untameable and infertile ground of Eden).
On the other hand, there is one recurring metaphor in the novel which symbolizes the opposing values and the contrast between England and Eden (and by extension: the U.S.), namely the image of Lion versus Eagle. The eagle is the national emblem of the U.S., while the lion stands for Great Britain. In the novel, on several occasions, those two images are represented battling each other in some way or other. Often, the American population uses the image to ridicule Martin or Mark and the lion is mocked while the eagle is seen as superior. For instance, in the proposal of La Fayette Kettle that the American eagle might slay the British Lion (MC 297), or else when the same La Fayette Kettle attends a meeting with Martin:

[T]he great meeting of the Watertoast Sympathizers was to be holden in the public room of the National Hotel. Being very curious to witness the demonstration, and know what it was all about, Martin kept close to the the General; and, keeping closer than ever when they entered the Hall, got by that means upon a little platform of tables at the upper end: where an arm-chair was set for the General, and Mr. La Fayette Kettle, as Secretary, was making a great display of some foolscape documents (...)

"Well, sir!" he said, as he shook hands with Martin, “here is a spectacle calc’lated toe make the British Lion put his tail between his legs, and howl with anguish, I expect!” Martin certainly thought it possible that the British Lion might have been rather out of his element in that Ark: but he kept the idea to himself (MC 310).

In the same scene, one "young Columbian" expresses his intense disapprobation for the British Lion:

“Alone, I dare him! I taunt that Lion. I tell that Lion, that Freedom’s hand once twisted in his mane, he rolls a corse before me, and the Eagles of the Great Republic laugh ‘Ha, Ha!’”

When it was found that the Lion didn’t come, but kept out of the way; that the young Columbian stood there, with folded arms, alone in his glory; and consequently that the Eagles were no doubt laughing wildly on the mountain tops, - such cheers arose as might have shaken the hands upon the Horse-Guards’ clock, and changed the very mean time of the day in England’s capital.

The metaphor of the battle between Lion and Eagle stands for the old connection between England and the U.S., and the War for Independence waged by the latter. The feelings of resentment towards Britain are still strong in the America of Martin Chuzzlewit and the imagery of “taming the lion” or “subduing the lion” occupies a lot of the discourse by the American population in the novel. America is always emerging victorious from the fight. Martin becomes accustomed to the nickname “Lion” granted to him by the population.
Otherwise, the transition between chapters is always marked with a humorous link between what happens in Eden and what happens in America, and the metaphor of the Eagle is also used for this purpose:

From Mr. Moddle to Eden is an easy and natural transition. Mr Moddle, living in the atmosphere of Miss Pecksniff’s love, dwelt (if he had but known it) in a terrestrial Paradise. The thriving city of Eden was also a terrestrial paradise, upon the showing of its proprietors. The beautiful Miss Pecksniff might have been poetically described as a something too good for man in his fallen and degraded state. That was exactly the character of the thriving city of Eden, as poetically heightened by Zephaniah Scadder, General Choke, and other worthies: part and parcel of the talons of that great American Eagle, which is always airing itself sky-high in the purest ether, and never, no never, never, tumbles down with draggled wings, into the mud (MC 443).

Of course this is irony since mud is all there is in Eden and thus the Eagle did in fact fall into mud. Moreover, it sold mud to Martin and Mark, who are now far from living in a terrestrial paradise. A last significant use of the metaphor is by Mark. When England appears into view from the boat, he turns to Martin and says:

"Why I was a thinking, sir," returned Mark, "that if I was a painter, and was called upon to paint the American Eagle, how should I do it?" "Paint it as like an Eagle as you could, I suppose." "No," said Mark. "That wouldn’t do for me, sir. I should want to draw it like a Bat, for its short-sightedness; like a Bantam, for its bragging; like a Magpie, for its honesty; like a Peacock, for its vanity; like a Ostrich, for its putting its head in the mud, and thinking nobody sees it." "And like a Phoenix, for its power of springing from the ashes of its faults and vices, and soaring up anew into the sky!" said Martin (MC 471).

This is perhaps the most concise and insightful statement uttered on the U.S. in the novel. Using the metaphor of the Eagle, the symbol by excellence of the Americans’ self-proclaimed superiority, Mark and Martin completely turn its meaning around. They point out all the flaws in the population and the system by using animals and traits typically associated with them to illustrate what is wrong with the U.S. It is a meaningful picture, since it is clear that Dickens’ own experiences interfere with this portrait.

For instance, the “springing from the ashes of its faults and vices” is something he addressed in his correspondence, namely that according to him, Americans, no matter whether they are wrong or right, will always believe they are right. The head in the mud image is a play on the previous use of the metaphor, wherein it is asserted that the Eagle could never ever be in contact
with mud. Yet, after Eden, Martin and Mark now know that the Eagle is in fact a façade hiding many issues and problems.

2.4) Chapter conclusion

*Martin Chuzzlewit* may be a fictional narrative, but a lot of elements from Dickens’ correspondence are found in the pages of this book. Moreover, there is an especially strong level of projection and identification between the author and the protagonist: Martin in fact acts as “a surrogate for Dickens, the traveler to America” (Welsh 45-46). Sending his character to America provided Dickens with the occasion to speak his mind on America without being forced to endorse his claims as a public persona. Stone summarizes the journey from Dickens’ own experience in the U.S. to its transformation into a fictional account of the travels:

"(O)nce one can see how his memory of what he had seen became darker and more critical with passage of time and the distorting demands of satire. Of course, his change of attitude towards America was connected to personal disappointments, newspaper abuse, invasion of privacy, and the vexed question of an international copyright law (469)."

He thus provides an argument for an interpretation of *Martin Chuzzlewit* in which Dickens’ own (negative) perspective of his American journey obscure the fictional narrative. There are remarkable differences between *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, especially on the level of content. *Martin Chuzzlewit* uses the comical and parodic material from the letters that Dickens neglected for the travelogue. The novel portrays Americans as a pastiche of the worst Dickens had seen in the U.S. and hyperbolizes certain aspects of American life that Dickens noticed and described in his correspondence. The novel is designed to be a humorous portrait and the label of fiction offers Dickens a certain freedom of speech that was restricted in the travelogue. There were less genre impositions and conditions that needed to be respected, and *Martin Chuzzlewit* thus allowed the author to use the comical material he was left with from the letters. This enabled Dickens to voice his disappointment in the country more prominently.

The degree of criticism, compared to the letters and the travelogue, is at its peak in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, as the many ways in which Dickens’ uses satire throughout clarify. The truth holds less importance in the novel, since it is a fictional narrative, and Dickens did not need to be concerned with a truthful rendition. However, his own American experience is markedly present, as are the critical observations he made during his journey. Dickens’ criticism is expressed through various devices, from language pastiche to parody and irony, with the occasional reference to authentic events attested by his letters. The American experience of
Dickens consequently amalgamates with that of Martin, creating an interesting blend of fact and fiction to express the criticism Dickens could not voice in *American Notes*.
General Conclusion

"A lover of Freedom, disappointed" (Letters 176).

It is undeniable that Dickens’ journey to the other side of the Atlantic shaped his writings and his personality. Though he often stressed how much he appreciated most of the people he encountered, and acquired friends who would last beyond the journey, Dickens returned home disillusioned and unconvinced. The U.S. had failed to fulfil his expectations on many fronts, not in the least because the promised freedom ideal proved incompatible with the reality he observed. This journey of disappointment is documented in all three of his “American” narratives, and that is why all three are encompassed in this comparative study. A better understanding of how the journey influenced not only Dickens’ writing, but even the core of his personality and opinions, is consequently developed. The American disappointment was so hard to bear that it is often stated Dickens entered a “new era” with regard to his writing style: his humour was darker and the novels were concerned with different subjects than his previous ones. Flint calls it “a conspicuous restlessness” which seems to surround these novels of the 1840s, combined with the notion of “self-realization” (34).

Dickens’ personal correspondence is the most direct, first-hand and unmediated account of the travels. A second source is the travelogue, American Notes for General Circulation, in which Dickens narrated his journey to the U.S. to the public. Its contents are more objective and less emotional in tone than the letters and it consists mainly of landscape descriptions, followed by an in-depth analysis of several social institutions and a commentary on slavery. The concluding remarks provide a (partial) explanation for the mitigated content since they reveal that Dickens knew the travelogue would produce a certain reaction from his American audience. Moreover, since he had decided to write a travelogue, he was aware of the pre-existing literary canon and the conventions that came with the genre. A last account of his first American visit can be found in Martin Chuzzlewit. This medium offered Dickens the greatest liberty to express certain opinions that can be traced back to his letters. He transposed certain American character traits or habits that marked him to the fictional narrative. However, the portrait depicted in the novel is not the most flattering towards the American people. It is based on stereotypical features that Dickens observed during his journey which he then exaggerated for the purpose of satire.

The letters offer the most truthful account of Dickens’ American journey since they resemble a diary, keeping track of almost every adventure and providing an insight into Dickens’ ongoing thought process along with his change of opinion towards the country. Since the correspondence was personal, Dickens did not have to be careful concerning what he wrote and therefore the letters allow a high degree of criticism. The letters sometimes recount the harsh reality of being
away from home in a foreign country and voice many complaints such as “I am so sick to death of the life I have been leading here- worn out in mind and body-and quite weary and distressed” (76). Homesickness was something that clearly marked Dickens’ journey and it occurs regularly in the correspondence. Dickens’ celebrity life in the U.S. forms another important part of the epistolary exchange. He enjoyed the attention at first but before long the darker side of this fame emerged: “anonymous letters; verbal dissuasions; newspaper attacks making Colt (a murderer who is attracting great attention here) an angel by comparison with me, assertions that I was no gentleman, but a mercenary” (83).

After publicly speaking on copyright, Dickens fell in disfavour with the press and this seemed to mark a significant change in his appreciation of the country, roughly one month after his arrival. The press had an elevated level of control over the public opinion in the U.S. and sometimes held a questionable ethic, which Dickens found unacceptable. Furthermore, he gradually starts to witness the flaws in America’s political system and testifies to this in his letters, telling Forster that he trembles “for a radical coming here, unless he is a radical on principle, by reason and reflection, and from the sense of right. I fear that if he were anything else, he would return home a tory…” (90). His final opinion on the country formed itself by experiences and encounters and would prove a harsh verdict: “I think it impossible, utterly impossible, for any Englishman to live here, and be happy” (Letters 135). The letters are the most authentic and reliable source since they are contemporaneous with the described facts and written by the experiencer himself, unintended for publication. They were not written in hindsight of the events and were not aimed at a large audience. The focus lies on Dickens’ emotional journey and the change of opinion towards America, from dream vision to disillusionment.

*American Notes for General Circulation* is an elaboration of the existent correspondence, whose contents were carefully mined, organized, selected and adapted to fit the genre and form of a travelogue. What results is an attenuated travel report answering to certain impositions, in which the truth from the letters is slightly bent and modified. The criticism is far less present and is diluted, except for the fiery chapter on slavery. Slavery was a concept Dickens could not understand or sympathize with since he called it, in his travelogue, “the worst deformity and ugliness” (*AN* 289). He was not allowed to speak much on the matter in America, but took to writing about it upon his return to England. *American Notes* thus provides another “truth” than the letters and the medium warrants a selection and censorial procedure by the author to fit certain genre conventions.

What is remarkably absent compared to the letters is a comment on the International Copyright Issue, Dickens’ lionization, and his more cynical observations on the American character. On the
other hand, observations on social and political matters, as well as lengthy descriptions are added to the travelogue. The United States from *American Notes* resembles that of previously existing travel narratives and adheres to a more publicly acknowledged view on the country. This is not the same impression gathered from the letters, where a much more humorous approach is used. The travelogue discards any expression of satire and aims to convey objectivity and factuality. Dickens was very concerned with the question of truth in this particular narrative, as is proven by the several claims of truthfulness and sincerity of experience. He deemed it necessary to provide a genuine image of the United States and to render the country as close to reality as possible. He asserts several times that the narrative is based on close observations and that he only wrote about matters for which he could provide irrefutable evidence. On that account, *American Notes* can be considered as self-asserting truth. Accordingly, Dickens’ authorial presence is strong in *American Notes* and the view and opinions he holds are publicly accepted views which have been defended before in other travelogues.

The travelogue did not allow him the same freedom of speech or level of comicality which *Martin Chuzzlewit* would provide. A reading of *Martin Chuzzlewit* through a comparison with Dickens’ own personal views (gathered from his correspondence home and his travelogue) offers a means of explanation for the parodic portrayal of the U.S. and the American people. Dickens often hyperbolizes the American way of life and criticizes the state of mind of American citizens he encountered during his travels. Humour, irony and parody (of both manner and language) are the main devices he uses to voice his disillusionment of the New World through fiction. The American scenery of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a first parodic device describing the South and West part of the U.S., where Dickens’ disappointment reached a height. In those regions, he encountered people who were very different from the ones he met in New York and Philadelphia. He complained in his letters of the spitting habit, of the manners of the Americans, but he also commented on political issues (such as slavery or nationalism) that marked this particular part of the U.S. and all those topics would resurface in the novel.

Dickens recognized that his American readers and Americans in general accepted criticism poorly. According to him, Americans were blind to their own flaws. The fictional Americans in *Martin Chuzzlewit* suffer from this same shortcoming. Despite the fact that the American political system was far from perfect, American citizens irrevocably supported it. In *American Notes*, he briefly mentions the subject in the concluding remarks: “It is an essential part of every national character to pique itself mightily upon its faults, and to deduce tokens of its virtue or its wisdom from their very exaggeration” (*AN* 292). For Dickens, this sentiment stood in the way of possible progress. He also comments on individualism in the American citizens and he took offense in the
sometimes blatant disregard for other people while he was visiting. That is why those character traits (the easily offended pride and the individualism) are so often present in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens also comments on the matter of slavery, but a commentary on the International Copyright question remains notably absent. While in America, Dickens himself received a lot of public attention. Martin likewise undergoes a celebrity welcome and became the subject of some articles in the American press. Dickens' parodic portrayal of this American press in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is an illustration of his contempt due to his deteriorated relationship with American journalists when he was in the country.

Other than a parodic portrayal or ironic commentary, Dickens often uses language as a humorous mechanism in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, to represent American identity, as opposed to English identity. An example is the accent used by (most) Americans in the novel, which is rendered in the graphology of the novel. Dickens also uses contrasting metaphors or contrasting descriptions to emphasize the difference between Martin's homeland on one hand and the U.S. of *Martin Chuzzlewit* on the other hand. He deploys satire and humour to relate his personal opinion on America and his worst experiences there. The novel is less concerned with a truthful representation of Dickens' American experience than its predecessors. Instead, the truth is distorted and exaggerated and all of Dickens' personal disappointments with the U.S. are fitted into this fictional story. While it bears resemblance to events described by Dickens in some letters, the author does not shy away from heavy critique and irony to illustrate the flaws of the U.S. This is the truth of Dickens the critical observer, or the "radical" as he called himself during those days (Tamai 276), bent on changing society for the better.

With regard to extant research and literature, this dissertation has tried to combine existing insights regarding the link between the three works with newer and more specific research into Dickens' American experience. The comparative approach used in this dissertation analyses the truth and criticism claims for each novel and compares them to each other, by assessing the different versions of the facts. There is an innovative take on how humour and linguistic devices function as vehicles of Dickens' criticism and serve the purpose of marking identity. On another note, this dissertation provides a biographical reading of the American experiences. It analyses how Dickens' personal experience is woven into the pages of his American works.

What is different from mainstream research on this subject is the total perspective. Where other articles often remain restrictive, or only partially discuss the American episode by selecting very specific aspects, this dissertation aims to show that the correlation between his visit and his subsequent writing plays out on several levels. Comparing the degrees of truth and criticism in each narrative proposes new ways of analysing exactly how personally involved Dickens was in
his works on the United States. This dissertation furthermore focuses on rhetorical and stylistic aspects in *Martin Chuzzlewit* which hint at Dickens’ own personal opinion. A new outlook is suggested for further research by analysing the different humorous devices and critical commentaries in the American scenes by juxtaposing them to factual information. Moreover, a close reading of the contrast between Eden and England proposes a new kind of analysis that takes rhetorical and stylistic aspects into account. Dickens’ personal involvement is undoubtedly reflected in the language he uses, though additional investigation in that respect might lead to a more complete understanding of the fictional representation of the United States in Dickens’ works.

His first visit to the country would forever change the author, the man and his writing. For all the beauty he saw there, for all the inspiring people he met, in the end, the country as a whole could not satisfy him. Dickens had started his journey with the conviction that previous travelogues detailing the American life were wrong on several levels and he intended to defend the country against criticism (Johnson 357). However, he was soon compelled to establish that the dream vision fell through, as he wrote to Macready on the twenty second of March: “Are you quite sure Sir, that you do not view America through the pleasant mirage which often surrounds a thing that has been, but not a thing that is” (*Letters* 155).
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