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From Terror to Terrorism in *Bleak House*

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Abstract: This paper argues for strong affinities between Dickens's handling of political violence in *Bleak House* (1852-3) and the alteration in meaning of the words 'terror' and 'terrorism' in the nineteenth century. Between the French Revolution and the beginning of the twentieth century, 'terror' and 'terrorism' shifted from connoting revolutionary violence wielded by the state to criminal political violence committed by clandestine organisations and individuals. I first read two key moments of political violence in the novel via Lyotard's definition of 'the Event' as the occurrence that cannot be represented. I argue that Dickens's novel responds to this problem of representation in a dual movement: on the one hand revolutionary violence in confined to the criminal discourse of the detective police, on the other, 'modern' conspiratorial terrorism is returned to the discourse of the French Revolution.

Keywords: Dickens, terrorism, detective, violence, French Revolution, Event

The word 'terrorism', according to the *OED*, appears in English for the first time in 1795, where it is used to denote 'Government by intimidation as directed and carried out by the party in power in France during the Revolution of 1789–94; the system of the "Terror" (1793–4)'. Almost immediately, however, the meanings of the word proliferate from beyond its initial historical-political context. By 1796, the word is used to describe the techniques of any government which rules by violence, and over the course of the nineteenth century the word becomes less attached to governments and more to underground organisations. As defined in the *OED* 'terror' in its more expanded sense denotes:

> The unofficial or unauthorized use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims; (originally) such practices used by a government or ruling group (frequently through paramilitary or informal armed groups) in order to maintain its control over a population; (now usually) such practices used by a clandestine or expatriate organization as a means of furthering its aims.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the associated term 'terrorism' likewise shifts from signifying political violence exercised by a state in order to maintain power to political violence exercised by dissidents in order to destabilize the ruling political power.

It is the argument of this essay that on both an aesthetic and an ideological level Charles Dickens's novel *Bleak House* (1852-3) captures the shift of the word 'terrorism' in the nineteenth century. Dickens's novel is neither a novel about terrorists nor does it serve as a concrete historical source for the emergence of modern terrorism. At the same time, however, *Bleak House*, and Dickens's work more generally, was a major influence on later novels that address the emergence of modern terrorism more directly, most notably Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima* (1885-6) and Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907).[1] Consequently, I argue that *Bleak House* offers us two moments, which, following the work of Jean-François Lyotard, I describe as Events, which inspire terror and which we can read as 'terrorist' occurrences. The narrative offers two very different resolutions to these Events. On the one hand, revolutionary Terror is subsumed under the discourse of criminal law, mirroring terrorism's definitional shift; on the other, conspiratorial, criminal terrorism is both contained at the level of novelistic representation (rather than impinging on the real world) whilst its former, revolutionary claims are, at least partially, preserved. This dual movement accounts for the different valences of 'providence' in the text, where providence is both the God-like ordering of narrative imposed on Terror by the detective police, and the revolutionary claims of providence offered by Frederic Jameson's recent reading of the novel, which also reads its politics through the language of the Event.

In *The Antinomies of Realism*, Jameson offers *Bleak House* as a paradigmatic example of the rejection of politics in the realist novel. For Jameson, realism is based on an aesthetic practice of ontological consistency: 'meaning is inherent in all its objects and details, all its facts, all its events. They are meaningful in and of themselves and require no outside commentary or explanation'.[2] However, Jameson points out that such meaningfulness itself is transcendent, it is not immanent to the existent textual world. Realism, then, is where existence and meaning, immanence and transcendence, 'coincide to the point at which we cannot tell them apart'.[3] Because of this commitment to ontological consistency, according to Jameson, the novel, as a form, is characterized by 'structural and inherent conservatism and anti-politicality' since:

> an ontological realism, absolutely committed to the density and solidity of what is—whether in the realm of psychology and feelings, institutions, objects or space—cannot but be threatened in the very nature of the form by any suggestion that these things are changeable and not ontologically immutable.[4]

The privileged vector of the ontologically changeable is politics. This is, for the realist novel, the 'transcendental transcendence', the aspect of transcendence which cannot be incorporated seamlessly into the ontological consistency of the novel. Such transcendental transcendence 'could only be detected in one possible place, namely in the space of an otherness from what is, a dimension freed from the weight of being and the inertia of the present social order'.[5] This place is 'the future [...], what does not yet and may never exist', which, for Jameson, is the realm of politics.[6]

Jameson demonstrates this argument by examining the satire of the politicized philanthropists in *Bleak House*. In her 'telescopic philanthropy',[7] Mrs Jellyby refuses liberal philanthropic improvement at home, which would alleviate suffering but essentially leaves the social fabric, and ontological consistency of the world untouched.[8] When Dickens shows us her neglected

children and traumatized husband, and deploys the state of her home as a weapon of satire against her projects, it is implied that her time would be better spent restoring her household to the way it 'should' be, thus ensuring the ongoing ontological consistency of the world, rather than trying to change what cannot be seen and which is outside the plane of ontological consistency. Her work is directed towards 'abstraction and non-living […] the loss of ontological life and human reality to pure thought and idle speculation on the not-yet existent',[9] but this is condemned by the novel's satire.[10]

For Jameson, this ontological consistency is allied with the novel's closure, which is not only 'the conventional happy ending and the marriage of Esther to her true beloved' but also the collapse of the trial of Jarndyce and Jarndyce that structures the novel and forms, 'the truly sublime note of salvationality […]: it is an Event, in the most august sense of the term […] in which a whole old world is swallowed up and a new one born'.[11] However, there is a fundamental problematic here: *Bleak House* is both the novel that confirms the conservative ontological consistency of the world as it is, and the novel that ushers in the possibility of an entirely new world. But, what do we see of that new world? Esther's happy ending of bourgeois conformity: 'We are not rich in the bank, but we have always prospered, and we have quite enough' (988).[12] Jameson describes this sort of realist plot as providential: it both offers salvation for the bourgeois protagonists of the realist novel and implies the apocalypse which promises a new political order to come.

This problematic, which Jameson traces very briefly in the formal structure of *Bleak House* invites much further investigation, and it is from his final comments on the novel that I wish to begin. The collapse of the Jarndyce trial in 'universal glee' suggests that:

> the jubilation will necessarily be a collective one, it will tell the climax of the story of the Many rather than the One. In that sense, it bears a strong relationship to Kant's idea of enthusiasm, which he associated with the French Revolution, and whose jubilation at least partly underscores its kinship with the Sublime, a parallel we cannot further explore here, save to recall the profound ambivalence of the Sublime, for Kant as for Burke, which must awaken monstrous feelings of terror and revulsion fully as much as those of the expansion of joy.[13]

Jameson's comments invite us to think about the very problem of terror in *Bleak House* and this essay seeks to explore how the novel provides a case study in terrorism's shifting semantics. *Bleak House*, written at the historical midpoint of this change, provides a case study in its intermediary moment, and terrorism's shifting meaning can be charted through the tension between the various meanings of providence that Jameson identifies in *Bleak House*: providence as the apocalyptic or expansive event, providence as the creation of a People ('the Many rather than the One') and providence as the return to the bourgeois order of things.

The question remains, however, what does all this have to do with London? London is on the one hand a pre-existing locus of political violence (though, as will be seen, a sometimes ambivalent one), a place where modern terrorism emerges in the decades following the publication of *Bleak House*, and also a textual space that offers unique opportunities for theorising new ideas.

Historians of terrorism concur with the lexicographers by placing the emergence of modern terrorism in the French Revolution, which 'gave birth to the term "terror"'.[14] However, in relation to the emergence of modern terrorism, there is a significant prehistory of political violence and radicalism connected to London. Randall D. Law notes that terrorism as it

emerged in France was prefigured by discourses of tyrannicide in Early Modern England, particularly in the Gunpowder plot, which, by using an 'attack to signal a revolt' with 'the hope that it would precipitate a popular rebellion[,] bring[s] us [close] to the modern meaning of terrorism'.[15] This strategy seems to be echoed in *Bleak House* by the fantasy of destroying Chancery with 'ten thousand hundredweight of gunpowder' (144) and its spectral allusions to the English Civil War. But the sixty years between the French Revolution and the publication of *Bleak House* also saw the trial of radicals belonging to the London Corresponding Society for treason in 1794;[16] the assassination of Spencer Perceval in the lobby of the House of Commons on 11 May 1812;[17] the 1820 Cato Street Conspiracy which saw London home to the same fears of revolutionary secret societies as those that had swept the European Continent;[18] and, against the backdrop of the 1848 revolutions, Chartism, which raised anxieties of revolutionary violence in the capital, even if revolution did not ever materialise.

While the prehistory of terrorism in London seems clear, these events of the early nineteenth century are less discussed by the histories of terrorism, which tend to posit a gap between the French Revolution and the emergence of modern clandestine terrorism with the Russian anarchists of the 1860s. Nor is it clear to what extent these post-French Revolution examples of political violence in London can be associated with terrorism: the London Corresponding Society decried violent methods; the assassination of Spencer Perceval was not, as originally supposed, the work of Luddites but an aggrieved merchant; the Cato Street Conspiracy was effectively thwarted; and the Chartist demonstrations in London were largely peaceful. None of these events resulted in violence that seems to match the description of terrorism offered by Chaliand and Blin who are at pains to stress that terrorism is not just political violence but 'strategic' political violence which aims to 'single out certain targets while avoiding others'.[19] Indeed, during the period that Dickens is writing, terrorism seems to be in

abeyance: the state terrorism of the French Revolution disappeared until the Russian Revolution, and modern conspiratorial terrorism – both Chaliand and Blin, and Law, argue – does not emerge until the 1860s and 70s.[20] The latter emerges in London with Fenian and anarchist dynamite campaigns of the 1880s.[21] These expressions of terrorism pitted the terrorist against the state in contrast to a form of terrorism that is wielded by the representatives of the revolutionary state itself. Split in this way, the nineteenth century can be understood as developing two discourses of terrorism and in *Bleak House* – which was written during a period of abeyance for either form of terrorism – these two discourses converge.

The early nineteenth century history of political violence and agitation, some of it terroristic, and some not, undoubtedly influenced Dickens. Dickens's historical interest in the French Revolution, political violence, and ensuing problems of representation, is well attested. Most obviously this is the case in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), but as the editors of an important and rich recent collection on the novel point out, Dickens's interest in political violence stemmed back to at least 1836 when *Barnaby Rudge* (1840) was conceived.[22] *Barnaby Rudge* is, moreover, related to 'particular political anxieties […] not least among them the threatened incursions of Chartist crowds into the city during the 1830s'.[23] In that novel, the reactionary anti-Catholic politics of the Gordon Riots are made equivalent to the radical revolutionary politics of Chartism.[24] Dickens even seems to have signed up as a special constable during the Chartist National Convention of 1848, though claims he did not turn out as a special constable on the day.[25] An interest in revolution also emerges in, for example, the intimation that Mr Jingle has taken part in the 1830 revolution in France in *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7) and references to the English Revolution and 1830 revolution in *David Copperfield* (1849-50). As Gareth Stedman Jones points out:

> There is [a] tenacious myth about the period in which Dickens was writing, which has led commentators to discount the seriousness of his politics. That is that the 1850s was 'an age of equipoise' and therefore that in *A Tale of Two Cities* a 'soothing distance' separated the novelist from his subject. This was certainly not how Dickens experienced that decade. Like other Whigs and Radicals, he was appalled by the 'iron tyranny' brought about by the *coup d'état* by which the 'cold-blooded scoundrel' Louis Napoleon declared himself Emperor of France. […] Furthermore, with the general defeat of the 1848 revolutions, Britain was left as the old defender of liberty in Europe.[26]

Aside from *A Tale of Two Cities*, though, it is perhaps *Bleak House*, which began its serialisation in March 1852 (three months after Louis Napoleon's coup in December 1851), that contains the most explicit references to the French Revolution. Most notable in this regard is the character Hortense, who seems to have been anachronistically displaced from the Reign of Terror, and who appears alongside references to Wat Tyler, the English Civil War, and Spanish revolutionary refugees in Somers Town.[27] Furthermore, Dickens scholars have produced an important body of critical work on politics and violence. A particularly influential current has stressed Dickens's celebration of, and frequent complicity with, the creation of a disciplinary state.[28] More recent interventions have continued to stress the importance of these studies.[29] In contrast, Jeremy Tambling posits *Bleak House* as being characterized by 'a resistance in Dickens to the surveillance and control of modernity, a resistance through allegory',[30] and, as mentioned above, Jameson seems to suggest a revolutionary potential in the novel as confirmed by its providential ending. Dickens's politics are often difficult to pin down, and the novels frequently read as theorising instruments which explore, combine, and test the developments of urban modernity.

Dickens, then, produces a novel that both responds to political violence, and to the particular development of coercive modernity, which I read as theorising the shift from state terror to modern conspiratorial terrorism, where revolutionary political terror is circumscribed within criminal law. He does this during a period, which, though politically turbulent, is characterised by the absence of what could properly be named terrorism. During this period of abeyance for terrorism, Dickens theorises, in the novel, the transition between state terrorism and conspiratorial terrorism, by linking the depiction of a representative of revolutionary state terrorism, Hortense, being captured within a discourse of criminal law, with the pre-emptive representation of conspiratorial dynamite terrorism in the image of Krook's spontaneous combustion. In this context, *Bleak House* also challenges received narratives about the literary history of terrorism. The seeming lacuna in terrorism between the French Revolution and the terrorism of the 1860s onwards is reflected in critical narratives that reproduce this lacuna, where the Gothic novel is associated with the French Revolutionary Terror and terror re-emerges as a theme for the novel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My reading of *Bleak House* suggests that this lacuna is actually a period when Dickens begins to theorise the relation between these two forms of terrorism.[31]

In this context, London presents a remarkably complex figure. The city's importance to the novel is difficult to underplay: 'LONDON.' (13) is its opening, telegraphic sentence, the sign under which all else takes place. It has been the site of proto-terrorism, failed revolutionary violence and reactionary political violence, and will become a key locus of dynamite terrorism in the late nineteenth century, both historically and in literature, but at the time that Dickens is writing, London is 'impoverished' in political activity 'with regard to Manchester or Birmingham', where Chartism was much more active, let alone Paris which experienced four revolutions between 1789 and 1871.[32] If London offers possibilities for Dickens to

theorise terrorism, these are the possibilities of the textual London of Dickens's imagination rather than one based on historical events; there is some truth in relation to terrorism, when Jeremy Tambling points out that London has no prior existence, but is brought into being by Dickens: 'he is writing about London, and by writing, creating London'.[33] I return to this at the end of this essay, when I suggest that this textual London sets the stage for the emergence of a revolutionary People. On the other hand, the historical London is, as Dickens's work and that of some of his commentators discussed below attest, a key locale for the development of discourses of policing, the prison and criminality in the nineteenth century and resistance to these.[34] Dickens combines these textual and historical perspectives in order to theorise mutations of terrorism.

With this background in mind then, I would like to return to the questions of providence and the Event which circle terror(ism) in *Bleak House*. We might begin by noting that there is a contradiction at work between the claims of providence and the claims of the Event. Providence implies a teleological form of time that moves towards a preordained end. In Jameson's account of *Bleak House,* this could be the happy ending (though Jameson forecloses on the contested nature of the ending here) or the collapse of the Jarndyce trial since we expect both outcomes from the very beginning. By the time of the composition of *Bleak House*, Dickens had already established his pattern of happy endings based on the formation of the providential, bourgeois family-community. This begins in *Oliver Twist* (1837-9), where Oliver rediscovers his lost bourgeois origins and is adopted into Mr Brownlow's house, and is evident in the two novels preceding *Bleak House*: *David Copperfield* and *Dombey and Son* (1846-8), which both end with the reestablishment of bourgeois families. His systematic satirical bite, which promises the destruction of the Court of Chancery was less well established.[35] However, its collapse, like the heat death of the

universe, is prepared both by the apocalyptic atmosphere of entropy with which the novel opens, 'snow flakes – gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun' (13), and by the information that the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce was 'squeezed dry years upon years ago' (15). When the case finally collapses, we know exactly what is happening. In contrast, the Event, properly speaking, promises bewilderment. For Lyotard, the Event is an occurrence that cannot be represented, for the depiction of which, language will not work: it is 'the occurrence "before" the signification (the content) of the occurrence'.[36] As such, the Event bears a close relationship with the sublime experience of terror; the sublime takes place

> when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept […] We can conceive the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to 'make visible' this absolute greatness or power appears to us painfully inadequate.[37]

The terror of the sublime event is the appearance of a power impossible to be represented. Finally, for Lyotard, the Event is characterized not by the question 'What is happening?', with the assumption that eventually the facts of the matter will become clear, but by the more vertiginous, terrible question, 'is it happening?'.[38] As such, Jameson's claim that the collapse of the Jarndyce and Jarndyce trial is the characteristic Event of the novel does not seem wholly satisfactory. It is, after all, exactly what we have been waiting for from the outset of the novel, from its very first pages. We know exactly what is happening and why it is happening. I would rather direct my attention to two other Events, which are key occurrences in the plotting of the novel: the spontaneous combustion of the doppelganger Lord Chancellor, Mr Krook, in the very centre of the novel (at the end of the tenth of its twenty instalments) and the murder of Tulkinghorn, the lawyer to the aristocracy and Chancery solicitor, by Hortense. These two narrative Events seem to capture Lyotard's definition more closely and offer a sense of terror in three, interrelated aspects: the terror of the failure of

representation, revolutionary terror (both enthusiasm and the exercise of coercive power), and modern terrorism as we understand it in the twenty-first century.

The spontaneous combustion chapter is, significantly, entitled 'The Appointed Time' (Chapter 32), as though Dickens wanted to draw attention to the very Eventuality of the episode.[39] And yet, we are left with the question of what this appointed time actually refers to: it is both the appointed time for a meeting between Guppy, Tony and Mr Krook — 'isn't it an extraordinary thing of Krook to have appointed twelve o'clock to-night' (511) — and the time of the unrepresentable Event. The novel never actually depicts Krook's spontaneous combustion, indeed it actively shies away from telling us what is occurring at all. Instead, it encourages the question, 'is it happening?' Inconsequential explanations for his absence are offered — 'He hasn't forgotten the appointment, I hope?' (511); 'Mr Krook's being "continual in liquor"' (505) — and as his death becomes clearer, there is always a sense of uncertainty tempered by these prosaic explanations. Possibilities of 'what is happening?' are undercut by the question 'is it happening?':

> 'Why, Tony, what on earth is going on in this house to-night? Is there a chimney on fire?'
>
> 'Chimney on fire!'
>
> 'Ah!' returns Mr Guppy. 'See how the soot's falling. See here, on my arm! See again, on the table here! Confound the stuff, it won't blow off – smears, like black fat!'
>
> They look at one another, and Tony goes listening to the door, and a little way up-stairs, and a little way down-stairs. Comes back and says it's all right, and all quiet (512)

The question 'what is happening?' is effectively replaced by uncertainty as to whether whatever is happening is happening at all. This atmosphere of the presence of something that might be wholly absent is sustained by Dickens: 'One disagreeable result of whispering is,

that it seems to evoke the atmosphere of silence, haunted by the ghosts of sound – strange cracks and tickings, the rustling of garments that have no substance in them' (514). As the suspicion of the Event becomes more concrete and more visceral, the narrative continues to undermine the certainty of its occurrence: 'A thick, yellow liquor defiles them, which is offensive to the touch and sight, and more offensive to the smell. […] "What have you been doing here? What have you been pouring out the window?"' (516). Furthermore, whatever seems to be happening has already happened. The gothic distinction between terror and horror is operative here. Terror, according to Ann Radcliffe, 'is not distinctly pictured forth, but is seen in glimpses through obscuring shades'.[40] Terror thus corresponds with the difficulty of apprehending the Event, whereas horror is the recognition of the Event after it has occurred and is altogether more visceral: '[h]orror resorts to a cruder presentation of the macabre: by an exact portrayal of the physically horrible and revolting'.[41] The melted human fat which 'defiles' the window inspires horror ('This is a horrible house' (516)) rather than terror, as though the moment of terror, the apprehension of the Event of spontaneous combustion, has been missed because of its unrepresentability, leaving only a horrified, delayed reaction possible. When Tony goes downstairs to investigate, terror emerges from the realisation that the Event itself is structured around an absence, 'He has been so horribly frightened in the short interval, that his terror seizes the other', but what has inspired this terror is that 'the burning smell is there – and the soot is there, and the oil is there – and he is not there!' (517). Finally, the chapter ends with a startling shift in narrative attention and tone. Tony and Guppy's conversation is reported via a relatively neutral 'over the shoulder' perspective and free indirect discourse, but the narrator then turns to address the readers directly and implicate them in the Event whilst formally denying any sort of resolution to those now directly implicated in it:

> Here is a small burnt patch of flooring; here is the tinder from a little bundle of burnt paper, but not so light as usual, seeming to be steeped in something; and here is – is it the cinder of a small charred and broken log of wood sprinkled with white ashes, or is it coal? O Horror, he IS here! and this, from which we run away, striking out the light and overturning one another into the street is all that represents him. (519)

What 'represents' Mr Krook is precisely his absence, the fact that he is unrepresentable, that he might be something else. And his death remains uncertain, right down to the uncertainty that hovers around the very notion of spontaneous combustion, betrayed by the narrator's anxiety about the reality of spontaneous combustion being denied — 'Call the death by any name Your Highness will, attribute it to whom you will, or say it might have been prevented how you will' (519) — and redoubled in Dickens's appeal to scientific authorities in the Preface (6). The spontaneous combustion of Mr Krook then, at the very centre of the novel, is the Event as a moment of unrepresentable terror, of violence that cannot be named, and which, as I will discuss below, also constitutes a key moment in a pattern of images of terrorism, in this case pertaining to the image of the terrorist as the clandestine bomber.

The second Event of *Bleak House* that I want to draw attention to relates to Hortense, namely Tulkinghorn's murder. Prior to this and important for interpreting the murder, there is a key, scene which proleptically hints at the status of Hortense as a violent revolutionary, realised in the terrorist Event of Tulkinghorn's murder. Ada and Esther are shown walking through the Dedlock park in Lincolnshire and are forced to take shelter from the rain in a lodge (Chapter 18). They meet Lady Dedlock, who has sent for a carriage, and when it arrives, Hortense is travelling in it alongside Lady Dedlock's new maid, in favour of whom Hortense has been dismissed. Hortense is strangely displaced, '"What now? said Lady Dedlock. "Two!"' (299). Her redundant doubleness makes Hortense spectral, but at the same time she is marked by 'a

defiant confidence […] her lips very tightly set' (299). When Lady Dedlock returns in the carriage, she leaves Hortense behind, who: 'without the least discomposure of countenance, slipped off her shoes, left them on the ground, and walked deliberately in the same direction, through the wettest of the grass' (299). What are we to make of this intense and intensive action? A number of explanations are posited for Hortense's behaviour: 'is that young woman mad?' (299); 'she's mortal high and passionate – powerful high and passionate; and what with having notice to leave, and having others put above her' (299-300); 'to cool her down [from anger]' (300); 'or […] she fancies it's blood […] she'd as soon walk through that as anything else, I think, when her own's up' (300). The final view of Hortense goes so far as to offer a fully contradictory image: 'a peaceful figure too in the landscape, went Mademoiselle Hortense, shoeless, through the wet grass' (300). Again, at this point, the narrative breaks off, denying any sort of resolution for the characters involved in the scene, and any further explanation by the narrator is delayed until the instalment after next, and some four chapters, so her behaviour stands as an enigma for a considerable length of time, both with reference to narrated time and the reading experience of the contemporaneous audience. Preparing the way for Hortense's involvement in the terrorist Event, however, this scene does recall a previous instance of political violence. Chapter 7, 'The Ghost Walk', a title echoed by Hortense's spectral walk, relates the story of a previous Lady Dedlock who engages in an act of political, terrorist violence during the English Civil War. She supports the Parliamentary cause, while her husband is a Royalist, and 'she is supposed to have more than once stolen down into the stables in the dead of night, and lamed their horses'. A ghost story develops based on her vow to 'walk here, until the pride of this house is humbled' (113). These hints about Hortense, introduced in Lincolnshire, are realised in London.

Chapter 23 opens with some sort of partial explanation for Hortense's behaviour, which stresses temporal uncertainty and firmly establishes Hortense as an agent of terror. Hortense arrives seeking employment from Esther, and physically forces herself on her ('she pressed herself upon me' (368)). Esther observes that Hortense has 'a lowering energy in her face […] which seemed to bring visibly before me some woman from the streets of Paris in the reign of terror' (368). Is this, then, why Hortense 'fancies' that she is walking through blood as she walks barefoot from the park? Her walk may be considered a prefiguration in Dickens's oeuvre, though of course historically after the fact, of the violent revolutionary crowd in a sea of spilt wine that stands for blood in *A Tale of Two Cities*:

> Those who had been greedy with the staves of the cask, had acquired a tigerish smear about the mouth; and one tall joker so besmirched, his head more out of a long squalid bag of a nightcap than in it, scrawled upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees—blood. The time was to come, when that wine too would be spilled on the street-stones, and when the stain of it would be red upon many there.[42]

Hortense's association with the French Revolution is further stressed by her passionate assertion of equality with her employer, 'My Lady was too high for me; I was too high for her' (368). Hortense, then, is a sort of anachronism, a figure from the French Revolution displaced into the Victorian world of *Bleak House*, but she also embodies a promise of revolution. The narration at this point repeatedly stresses Hortense's 'quickness'. She speaks in 'a quick natural way' (367), she states herself that she comes from the South, 'where we are quick' (368), and most tellingly of all, her 'quickness anticipated what [Esther] might have said presently, but as yet had only thought' (367). Quick is an ambiguous word. Hortense seems to be excessively endowed with life, despite being a revenant of the past, but quick also implies pregnancy: Hortense is pregnant with the future, she says and does what has, by others, only been thought. Her disruptive temporality seems in itself to embody

revolution, the promise of a world to come where time will no longer pass in linear progression. She is the revolutionary 'blasted out the continuum of history', as though by a bomb, in short: the event embodied.[43]

The Event which constitutes the culmination of Hortense's history is an act of revolutionary terrorism, a fulfilment of the promise of her revolutionary being, but also a minor act, a shabby failure to live up to her immense energy, the failure of the anachronism. This is the murder of the lawyer Tulkinghorn, which is again figured as Event in Lyotard's sense but which is ultimately reincorporated into the narrative as it closes down on Hortense in carceral control. Her anachronism is not commensurable with the modernity of the Victorian detective police. Hortense shoots Tulkinghorn but the representation of this Event again draws attention to the impossibility of its being represented. Into a description of the quietness of the London night, the narrator interjects, 'What's that? Who fired a gun or pistol? Where was it?' (749). However, the question 'What is happening?' is soon replaced by 'Is it happening?' for 'soon it is over' and 'there is a lull' (749), which leads up to a further question: 'Has Mr Tulkinghorn been disturbed?' (750). While something appeared to have been happening, the occurrence is reframed as an Event in Lyotard's sense: has anything happened at all? And at this point, strong parallels with the previous Event, the spontaneous combustion of Krook, are established. These are the two cataclysmically violent deaths (not) portrayed in novel and the narration explicitly links them. This is effected, firstly, via a verbal echo of explosions, which conjures up their sound, when the narrator asks, 'What power of cannon might it take to shake [Tulkinghorn] out of his immoveable composure?' (750). Secondly, the narrative also connects the episodes in structural terms as in both cases, the occurrence of the Event itself is not depicted — representation fails — and it is only its aftermath that is perceived/perceivable. The moment of Tulkinghorn's death is elided and the narration begins

again the subsequent morning. Hortense, a figure of revolutionary Terror, becomes the conspiratorial assassin of terrorism.

As such, there are (at least) two moments, Events, in *Bleak House* which we could ascribe to different connotations of terrorism, but how does Dickens handle the historical shift of the word 'terrorism' in the novel? I have suggested that *Bleak House* both circumscribes revolutionary terror in the discourse of the police and criminal law, and also retains some of the force of revolutionary terror alongside images of criminal terror in its narrative discourse. To understand this dual operation, we must turn to the passage of the unrepresentable Event into novelistic representation.

In his remarkable essay, 'Dickens with Kant and Sade', Jeffrey A. Netto takes up the problem posited by both Derrida and Lacan of an original violence occurring at the moment of any act of representation. For Netto, Dickens's representations of violence, particularly murder, complicate and stand in for such originary violence of representation. In Netto's reading, the rift between representation and what it represents is a violent splitting '*of* and *at* the origin of representation'.[44] Netto illustrates this with recourse to Lacan's notion of anamorphosis, which 'appears at the moment in art history when the vanishing point of perspective painting […] gave way to another kind of vanishing point – the point at which representation runs up against its foundational violence'.[45] Netto recapitulates Lacan's reading of Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533). This painting figures the anxiety of the original, violent moment of representation in the form of an anamorphic skull, which becomes visible only when the painting is viewed at a certain angle. The painting thus depicts its own act of representational illusion, and by doing so opens up the gap between reality and its representation. In turn,

however, this anamorphosis is itself 'a means of mastering emptiness',[46] filling the void between reality and representation with the symbol of mortality. The void of the Real/Real of the void is mastered by establishing that void as part of the Symbolic Order.

We might think of the suspension of representation at the moment of the Event as a reopening of the gap outlined above. The Event understood in this way becomes the moment when all representation reveals its vertiginous inability to capture the terror of the occurrence. As Netto argues, Dickens's depictions of violence, and murder in particular, are privileged instances that reveal Dickens to be grappling with the gap of representation. Dickens identifies with and simultaneously repudiates his murderers, because, like the anamorphic skull, they stand in for the original violence of representation. As such, Dickens's novels offer an uncanny celebration of murder at the same time as they attempt to contain its danger: 'Dickens's novels attempt to *charge* the figure of the murderer with the violence of representation, even as they work insistently towards arresting and recontaining this more primal violence at the level of their plots'.[47] This problem of the representational instability of violence occurs in *Bleak House* in relation to the Event of terror/the terrorist Event: Hortense's murder of Tulkinghorn becomes a matter of criminal law, not revolutionary violence, and in turn, that revolutionary violence is transferred to the third person narrator, who orchestrates the explosion plot, whilst also limiting the possibilities of revolutionary violence in the providential narrative.

Despite having previously established Hortense's revolutionary credentials, the novel quite literally mobilizes the police in order to insist that her act is not revolutionary but criminal. This containing of Hortense is already built into the historical sources from which Dickens

constructed the character. As Philip Collins points out in *Dickens and Crime*, 'it is generally accepted' that Dickens was inspired by 'perhaps the most notorious [execution] of the century'; he based Hortense on Maria Manning, a Belgian woman who had, together with her husband, killed their lodger for financial gain. Manning 'captured the public imagination' with her 'intrepid and passionate temperament' and her refusal to recognize the validity of the law in her trial.[48] Furthermore, despite having made the connection between Hortense and revolutionary politics the narrative as a whole obfuscates that connection: 'Soon after one finishes the story, one has forgotten why she killed Tulkinghorn — if, indeed, one ever quite understood'.[49] This obfuscation of motive is complemented by the transformation of Hortense's Event into a representable narrative of cause and effect. As Inspector Bucket sums it up, 'how did my calculations come out under these circumstances?' (834). However, to the last, Hortense offers a resistance to criminalisation. As Adrian Wisnicki observes, 'Hortense tempers Bucket's greatest achievement in *Bleak House*. While Bucket attempts to whisk Hortense away after the arrest, she turns the tables and enumerates his failures, emphatically noting his inability to save some of the novel's central characters'.[50] The final fate of Hortense maintains a certain ambiguity between reterritorialization by the police order and revolutionary defiance against it. On the one hand, her final statement — 'It is but the death, it is all the same. Let us go, my angel. Adieu you old man, grey. I pity you, and I des-pise you!' — suggests a sort of commitment to the French Revolutionary cry of Liberty or Death. Bucket's arrest, disturbingly, is carried out by 'pervading her like a cloud […] as if he were a homely Jupiter' (837). Not only is her subjectivity blotted out, but it comes to contain the emissary of the law, in a violent act that, despite the qualifying 'homely', implies rape as a weapon of patriarchal society to control unruly women. As such, D.A. Miller's description of the specific power of the detective story in contrast to Chancery, that 'the detective story gives obscurity a name and a local habitation: in that highly specific "mystery" whose

ultimate uncovering motivates an equally specific program of detection',[51] could apply just as easily to the obscurity of revolutionary Terror as to Chancery, both are processes which cannot be adequately represented by the novel. Similarly, Ian Ousby sees Bucket's restoration of order over the representational void of the Event as 're-establishing the clarity of vision which the shift in narrative method has temporarily destroyed', and ultimately, for Ousby, this is a process that moves towards a kind of conservative Providence, the 'true' family is restored, 'the restrictive and shadowy influence of the past on the present begins to yield'.[52]

The fate of Hortense, then, reflects the definitional and historical shift in the word 'terrorism', from revolutionary state violence to violence performed by clandestine organisations against the state, as revolutionary violence is reinscribed in a criminal framework. Ultimately Wisnicki sees *Bleak House* as tending towards (though not identical with) the conspiracy theory novels of Thomas Pynchon and Don Delillo (via the aforementioned *The Princess Casamassima* and *The Secret Agent*), where terrorism is no longer an expression of popular violence but of criminal conspiracy.[53] This shift also parallels the historiography of the French Revolution, which according to the historian Sophie Wahnich, has recriminalized revolutionary terror at least three times. In the first instance, in the Therimodorian Reaction (27 July 1794/9 Thermidor Year II), the 'neologism "terrorist" […] not only anthropologized a violence that was also seen as popular, but [the Thermidorians and their ideological successors] actively obscured what had given this terror a situational legitimacy'; in the second instance there is the 'conscious construction of a new reception of the French Revolution which, out of disgust at the political crimes of the twentieth century, imposes an equal disgust towards the revolutionary event'; and in the third instance: 'the language of the nineteenth century founds the representation of those events of the eighteenth century that composed the "French Revolution", and more precisely, the "revolutionary Terror". This

representation […] is supposed to be able to inform us about what happened on "9/11"'. In sum, '[t]he French Revolution is a figure of what is politically intolerable today, as it had already become in 1795'.[54] While this history helps us to understand how Hortense shifts from revolutionary terrorist to criminal terrorist, it perhaps does not account so easily for the other 'terrorist' event of the novel, the spontaneous combustion of Krook.

Some incidental remarks from Dominick LaCapra's critique of D.A. Miller can offer a starting place for thinking about how this other instance of the terrorist Event, Krook's death, can be read as offering a partial alternative to the reinscription of Hortense in the discourse of the criminal. LaCapra observes that, 'One tends to lose sight of the potent critique, indeed the grotesque carnivalization, of bureaucracy in *Bleak House*. The world represented in the novel is a *monde à l'envers*, and Dickens must use fire to fight fire – not fire in the stereotypical image of anarcho-apocalyptic conflagration (an image, that is, by the way, unjust to the complexities of anarchism) but the fire of powerfully carnivalized criticism – irony, parody, outrageous caricature, self-consuming characters, and so forth'.[55] Of course this is true, but perhaps it underestimates the importance in Dickens's discourse of the conflagration, of the explosion, which is used as part of the deconstructive-carnivalesque strategy that 'places in radical question this mode of legitimation and all associated types of absolute sovereignty, including the sovereignty of "the people."'.[56]

Rather, *Bleak House* can be read, as instantiating a vision of the People, not 'the glorious body of the people, itself heir to the immortal body of the king and the basis of all forms of totalitarianism',[57] but rather of a people who are born out of the unrepresentable Event and who continue through the novel to assert some sort of popular sovereignty based on

illegitimate unrepresentability until the triumphant ending of Chancery which I began this essay with. To some extent the revolutionary experience is always that which cannot be named. For Jacques Rancière, the genuinely revolutionary people would be 'a supplementary existence that inscribes the count of the uncounted, or part of those who have no part'.[58] For Rancière, this coming into existence of the 'part who have no part', is fundamentally an aesthetic issue. The emergence of the people is the representation of the unrepresentable because 'the part who have no part' can, definitionally, not be seen in the current aesthetic-political order of society, what Rancière calls the *partage du sensible*, variously translated as the 'partition' or 'distribution of the sensible'. The people cannot exercise political power because they are literally invisible until they come into being as the paradoxically unrepresentable represented, 'the part who have no part'. The distribution of the sensible which excludes the people is called by Rancière the 'police', by which he means something far broader than the police force: 'The essence of the police lies in a partition of the sensible that is characterized by the absence of void and supplement'.[59] As we have seen, in *Bleak House*, the detective police fulfil much broader aesthetic functions relating to the imposition of seamless, cause and effect narration, which D.A. Miller associates with the novel form more generally: 'What the form really secures is a close *imbrication* of individual and social, domestic and institutional, private and public, leisure and work. A drill in the rhythms of bourgeois industrial culture'.[60] The novel maintains and enforces a policed distribution of the sensible alongside the police force that it depicts. And yet, this does not contain the disruption in narrative that stands at the very heart of the novel: Krook's spontaneous combustion. This Event is never reinstated into a logic of cause and effect, in the seamless assignation of proper narrative to the unrepresentable Event. Indeed, Dickens's rather desperate and exasperated attempt to account for the 'reality' of spontaneous combustion, 'there are about thirty cases on record' (6), is immediately belied by his metaphorical use of

spontaneous combustion: 'I shall not abandon the facts until there shall have been a considerable Spontaneous Combustion of the testimony on which human occurrences are usually received' (7), implying the phenomenon's liminal position between representable fact and metaphorical meaning, a problematic only exaggerated by the failure to represent it in the narrative itself. Krook's death is a disruption to the police distribution of the sensible.

Wahnich interprets revolutionary violence in similarly Rancièrean terms. For Wahnich, the Terror of the French Revolution was in the first instance the desire of the 'part that had no part' to be recognized as a people, 'a power transformed from unhappy and complaining bodies into a people disposing of powerful political *logos*'.[61] In Wahnich's reading of the Terror then, its object is to retain the newly sovereign people recognized *as* people rather suffering bodies put back into their proper place. As Wahnich carefully explains, through detailed references to the primary sources and the precise chronology of the Terror, it was not a spontaneous aberration but a political response by a people under the threat of being no longer recognized as a people: 'a shift in emotions, from 'being terrorized' to 'being in anger' and 'being terrifying'.[62] Terror is a redistribution of the sensible in order to hold open the possibility of a constitution of the people: 'The object is to protect above all humanity as a group constituted politically by its respect for declared natural right, from the most local to the most cosmopolitan level'.[63] The Thermidorian reaction, by instituting a limited, representative form of parliamentary democracy, essentially stripped the people of their right to be recognized as political actors.

It is my claim that we can see the Court of Chancery as representing a police distribution of the sensible, against which Krook's death inspires a kind of literary terrorism, at the level of

narration, which in turn contributes to the constitution of a people. Chancery in *Bleak House* represents a much wider despotic power which is metonymic for a despotic society in general. It 'gives to monied might the means abundantly of wearying out the right' and its mode of being is, at least in part, through the production of despotic terror: it 'exhausts […] courage' and 'there is not an honourable man among its practitioners who would not give – who does not often give – the warning, "Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!"' (15). The effect of Chancery is that 'old Tom Jarndyce in despair blew his brains out' (16). Chancery is 'being ground to bits in a slow mill; it's being roasted at a slow fire; it's being stung to death by single bees; it's being drowned by drops; it's going mad by grains. […] We listened in horror.' (71-2). Miss Flite anticipates but seems to live in perpetual terror of 'Judgment Day': 'I have felt something sharper than cold' (73). And Gridley, the man from Shropshire, worn down by the court, attempts to reassert his humanity with disastrous results. Gridley has responded to the terror inflicted on him by Chancery with the French Revolutionary response of 'being in anger' and 'being terrifying'. Gridley has an 'angry stare' and 'a combative look' (244) but we also hear that he looks after the orphaned children who live on the floor above him: 'He bent over the group, in a caressing way, and clearly was regarded as a friend by the children' (249). Gridley's anger then is not only directed at the court, but also sublimated into the creation of a community of the part that has no part in a passage which is far more moving than the traditional derision of Dickens as sentimental would suggest:

> 'I came to take these babies down to my room for half an hour,' he said, going to them again, 'and let them play about. […] You're not afraid of me, Tom; are you?'
>
> 'No!' said Tom. 'You ain't angry with *me*.'
>
> 'You are right, my child. You're going back, Charley? Aye? Come then, little one!' He took the youngest child on his arm, where she was willing enough to be carried. 'I shouldn't

> wonder if we found a gingerbread soldier downstairs. Let's go and look for him!' (252-253)

However, like Hortense, Gridley's violence comes to be contained within police structures and it is highly personalized, 'His passion was fearful. I could not have believed in such rage without seeing it. […] "I am violent, I know"' (252). When he is first encountered he has 'been in prison for contempt of Court' and 'for threatening the solicitor' (252) and at his end he is arrested by Bucket (401-406).

Gridley's limited, individualized attempt to effect the emotional transformation of being terrorized into the exercise of terror as the creation of a people is doomed to failure, but the novel, in its critique of Chancery, offers another possibility. The third person narration itself, adopts the representation of the unrepresentable, of terror, as a mode of critique which both preserves the notion of revolutionary terror and tends towards the new definition of nineteenth-century terrorism; it simultaneously imagines the exercise of terror as the revolutionary creation of a people and contains this dangerous terror, though much less successfully than the police, in the novel form.

While Krook's death is unrepresentable, it stands as a kind of prototype of a terrorist violence which does come into representation. The third person narrator's discourse here is joined by that of other characters, and together they construct a network of images that fantasize about destroying the Court of Chancery by bombing it. This begins with the narrator imagining the papers in Chancery, in a suggestive pun, as 'loaded with heavy charges' which could be 'burnt away in a great funeral pyre' (19); continues with Mr Boythorn commenting that:

> Nothing but a mine below it on a busy day in term time, with all its records, rules, and precedents collected in it, and every functionary belonging to it also, high and low, upward and downward, from its son the Accountant-General to its father the Devil, and the whole blown to atoms with ten thousand hundredweight of gunpowder, would reform it in the least! (144)

and is further articulated by Mr Bucket's fear that the secret about Lady Dedlock 'may take air and fire, explode, and blow up' the whole district of Chancery (407).[64] It finally culminates in the clearly symbolic explosion that destroys Krook, the surrogate Lord Chancellor. By harnessing the unrepresentable Event of terror to a political aim, the discourse of the novel itself, dialogically woven between narrator and characters, becomes a kind of terrorist in the late nineteenth-century sense of the word. The novel is a terrorist, a conspirator, imagining planting a bomb under the Court of Chancery in order to destroy it. But the discourse of the novel *also* activates the dream of the people as the part that has no part which is offered by revolutionary Terror.

The force of Chancery is imagined to go far beyond that of a court dealing, however, inefficiently and cruelly, with the specialized area of legal equity. Rather, Chancery is depicted as a force of generalized oppression. As I have already noted, it is where 'monied might [has] the means abundantly of wearying out the right' and later we are told it is 'held in universal horror, contempt, and indignation; was known for something so flagrant and bad, that little short of a miracle could bring any good out of it to any one' (396). Could, then, the terrorism which is imagined against the Court of Chancery be a way of mastering this horror?

I would suggest yes, insofar, as the novel instantiates the notion of the people as the part who have no part. Alongside the fantasized destruction of Chancery and its attempt to turn terror

against the terrorizer, the discourse of the novel works hard to bring a people into being. In contrast to Gridley's moving but doomed attempt to bring this about on a personalized level, the third person narrative voice addresses and includes the reader as part of a wider collective, in sovereign terms: 'your Highness' (20), or, at a crucial juncture, the death of Jo: 'Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us, every day' (733). On the one hand, of course, this offers a rebuke and indictment to those in power, over the death of the poor, but it simultaneously imagines those same 'men and women, born with Heavenly compassion' in their hearts, as being alternatively sovereign, not least because it is around Jo, at another key moment, that another vision of the people is offered.

In a much discussed passage, the narrator enquires:

> What connexion can there be, between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabout of Jo the outlaw with the broom who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together! (256)

It would be easy to read this passage, after D.A. Miller, as a perfect example of the discourse of the novel replicating the narrativizing discourse of the detective, or even the discourse of the novel replicating the Rancièrean police, which puts each subject in their right place. However, it is worth taking a closer look. Firstly, Jo here is imagined as sacred in some way. Blessed by a 'distant ray of light' on the churchyard-step, he is not so much a subject to be put in his proper place as the sacred foundation of a new conception of a people. And

secondly, after having imagined connections which replicate those of police narrativization, between Lady Dedlock and Jo, a different sort of connection is dreamt: one of a multitude of people, who are united not by their allotted roles in a mystery, but in a manner which is inexplicable, 'curious', uncountable. The curious bringing together of people would be what Rancière considers true democracy: 'So, democracy is characterized by the drawing of lots, or the complete absence of any entitlement to govern. It is the state of exception in which no oppositions can function, in which there is no principle for the dividing up of roles. […] Democracy is the specific situation in which it is the absence of entitlement that entitles one to exercise the *arkhê* [right to govern].'[65] Jo, then, who is 'unconscious of the link, if any link there be', which connects the vast multitude of the people, is the sacred foundation of the people as the part who have no part: he is reviled, outcast, and 'he "don't know nothink"' (256). Jo above all has the qualification to be a part of the people: a total absence of qualification. And for Wahnich, the declaration of equality, as the foundation for the laws of the French Republic, was the sacred object that had to be defended by Terror: 'the safety of the people is the supreme law', she explains, adding that '[t]o demand that terror be placed on the agenda meant demanding a politics aimed at constantly renewing this sacred character of the laws, permanently reaffirming the normative value of the Declaration of Rights'.[66] Jo is the representation of the sacred possibility of equality.

We see in *Bleak House*, then, a double movement insofar as terrorism is concerned. Hortense, as representation of revolutionary Terror, is inscribed as a criminal conspirator under the law and under a later definition of terrorism, while the discourse of the novel more broadly activates this new form of terrorism, via conspiratorial bombing, in order to return to a dream of Terror as the maintenance of the sacred value of the People in a condition of equality. The matter of London is paramount in this regard. It is the complexity of depicting London, its

tendency to take on a textual existence, that allows Dickens to imagine an urban environment which – contrary to London's historical fabric – provides a utopian space of equality. In his negative mode, Dickens still makes London the place where things become 'undistinguishable' in mud and fog (13). But London is also necessary for his writing: without London 'the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is immense'.[67] London can be the place of non-differentiation, of police power, of putting things in their allotted places, but it can also be the magic lantern which imagines something anew. London is, then, a space of both state and dissident violence, and these themes run all the way through Dickens's work, forming the dialectic I have described between reinscription by the police and the coming together of the people. Utterly contradictory, oneiric and painfully real, London is the place that cannot be represented.

Capturing London's unrepresentability, Dickens not only recognises historical mutations in the practice of terror, but also the aesthetic challenge of *writing* terror – a challenge which continues to vex postmodern literature. Where modernity would seek to solve the impasse of the sublime (as in Kant, where the sublime ultimately reinforces the power of the subject who gains mastery over it), Lyotard associates the Event which stubbornly refuses representation with the postmodern condition.[68] Dickens's refusal to resolve the representational terror of the terrorist event looks, then, formally, towards the postmodern expressions of extreme, mediatized violence which present problematics of representation in our contemporary present.[69]

More immediately, though, the non-representability of London in *Bleak House* is particularly acute for the character of Jo. Through him Dickens reminds us that London is a textual space,

plastered all over with ‘all that unaccountable reading and writing’ which is an ‘unintelligible mess’ (258). Consequently, the city we encounter is a textual space – one scored over with shop signs, advertisements, charters, and laws. It is a paradoxical place where non-representation can come into being, and create the foundations for the people as those who ‘know nothink’.

[1] There have been a number of general histories of terrorism, both scholarly and popular, published in the past few years. See M. Burleigh, *Blood and Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008); G. Chaliand and Arnaud Blin (eds.), *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to al Quaeda* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2007); W. Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1971); R. D. Law, *Terrorism: A History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009). Dickens is absent from survey studies of literature and terrorism, for example, P. C. Herman (ed.), *Terrorism and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[2] F. Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2015), 211.
[3] Jameson, 211.
[4] Jameson, 215.
[5] Jameson, 212-213.
[6] Jameson, 213.
[7] C. Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Nicola Bradbury (London: Penguin, 2003), 49. Further references to this work are given in the text.
[8] Mrs Jellyby ends the novel turning her attention to the rights of women to sit in parliament.
[9] Jameson, 214.
[10] At the level of content rather than form, Dickens’s critique of Mrs Jellyby’s colonial politics is far more defensible.
[11] Jameson, 221
[12] While Jameson seems happy to accept the ending as happy, there is extensive critical commentary on the ambiguity of the novel’s ending, including its final unfinished sentence, which seems to chime with the representational uncertainty I read in other moments in the novel. Indeed commentary on the ending has become a veritable critical tradition, encapsulated by John O. Jordan’s observation that “*Bleak House* has many endings. It is also a novel that refuses to end” (85). Jordan sees the novel ending with a bifurcation of Esther into a conventional gender stereotyped Victorian wife and a disruptive ghost haunting the text in J.O. Jordan, *Supposing Bleak House* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 67-86. To offer a sample of other responses: J. Kucich, ‘Action in the Dickens Ending: *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (1978), 88-109, which sees the ending as an unconvincing moral imposition on unresolvable sexual contradictions in the novel; J. Sawicki, ‘“The Mere Truth Won't Do”: Esther as Narrator in *Bleak House*’, *Journal of Narrative Theory* 17 (1987), 209-224, sees the ambiguity of the ending as representative of the narrative instability of the novel as a whole; H. Michie, ‘“Who Is This in Pain?”: Scarring, Disfigurement, and Female Identity in *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*’, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 22 (1989), 199-212 argues that the ending both traps Esther in motherhood and liberates her from identity; and J. Gribble, ‘Borrioboola-Gha: Dickens, John Jarndyce and the Heart of Darkness’ in *Dickens, Europe and the New Worlds*,

ed. Anny Sadrin (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 90-99, suggests that the ending supresses the colonial exploitation on which Esther's new home is based.
[13] Jameson, 221-222. The reference to revolution and enthusiasm in Kant is to *The Contest of Faculties* (1798), now a key focus of discussion in critical theory. For a particularly insightful discussion on this essay in relation to the Event, see A. Zupančič, 'Enthusiasm, Anxiety and the Event', *parallax*, 11 (2005), 31-45.
[14] G. Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, 'The Invention of Modern Terror', in *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to al Quaeda*, 95-122, 95.
[15] Law, 54.
[16] Marilyn Butler, 'Godwin, Buke, and Caleb Williams', *Essays in Criticism* 32 (1982), 237-57 offers an excellent summary of this episode in relation to Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, itself a novel deeply concerned with the Terror and terrorism, and a significant influence on Dickens according to Edgar Allan Poe in 'The Philosophy of Composition' (1846). Poe tells us that Dickens drew his attention to Godwin plotting the novel backwards, and it thus is an important milestone in the development of the detective story, alongside *Bleak House*; E.A. Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, ed. David Galloway (London: Penguin, 2003), 430-442.
[17] Law, 70
[18] Law, 66.
[19] Chaliand and Blin, 101, 103.
[20] Chaliand and Blin, 111; Law 98.
[21] Law, 144.
[22] C. Jones, J. McDonagh and J. Mee, 'Introduction', in *Charles Dickens,* A Tale of Two Cities *and the French Revolution*, ed. by Colin Jones, Josephine McDonagh and John Mee (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1-23, 3. For a compelling account of political violence in *Barnaby Rudge*, see S. Connor, 'Space, Place and the Body of Riot in *Barnaby Rudge*', in *Charles Dickens*, ed. by Steve Connor (London: Longman, 1996), 211-229.
[23] Connor, 227.
[24] J. Tambling, *Going Astray: Dickens and London* (Harlow: Pearson, 2009), 97.
[25] Michael Diamond, *Victorian Sensation* (London: Anthem Press, 2003), 45.
[26] G. S. Jones, 'The Redemptive Power of Violence? Carlyle, Marx and Dickens', in *Charles Dickens,* A Tale of Two Cities *and the French Revolution*, 40-63, 57.
[27] Tambling, *Going Astray*,156.
[28] See, for example, J. Arac, *Commissioned Spirits: The Shaping of Social Motion in Dickens, Carlyle, Melville and Hawthorne* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979) and D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
[29] For example, S. Daly, 'Belligerent Instruments: The Documentary Violence of *Bleak House*', *Studies in the Novel*, 47 (2015), 20-42, and the material on Dickens in A. S. Wisnicki, *Conspiracy, Revolution, and Terrorism from Victorian Fiction to the Modern Novel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).
[30] J. Tambling, *Dickens, Violence and the Modern State: Dreams of the Scaffold* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 71.
[31] This is the literary history offered by Herman's comprehensive collection of essays which jumps from the 1790s to 1880s, and a similar collection of essays, M. C. Frank and Eva Gruber (eds.*), Literature and Terrorism: Comparative Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Brill/Rodopi, 2012), which begins with Dostoevsky's responses to Russian terrorism in the 1870s. Three important recent studies of terrorism and literature have associated nineteenth-century responses to the emergence of literary modernism rather than longer, evolving nineteenth-century mutations, these are, S. Cole, *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); D. Ó Donghaile, *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); and A. Houen, *Terrorism and Modern Literature, from Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[32] Tambling, *Going Astray*, 97.
[33] Tambling, *Going Astray*, 1.
[34] In a strongly historicist mode, Isobel Armstrong sets out how this dialectic of control and resistance can be read through the theories of Henri Lefebvre in I. Armstrong, 'Theories of Space and the Nineteenth-Century Novel', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 17 (2013), 1-21.
[35] *Bleak House* is only the third full length novel in the second phase of Dickens's career, defined by systematic satire of political institutions*,* as suggested by S. Marcus, *Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971).
[36] J.-F. Lyotard, *The Differend*, trans. Georges Van den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 79.
[37] J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 78.

[38] J.-F. Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 92.
[39] The appointed time could also imply the running down of the clock ahead of an explosion, here spontaneous combustion, occurring at a designated time. The time bomb did not come into widespread use until a little later in the nineteenth century, but Dickens already seems to be imagining it here. *The Secret Agent*, particularly, takes up the strange experiences of time that are associated with the Event of the explosion.
[40] A. Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' [1826], in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820*, eds. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 163-172, 169.
[41] D. P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame* (London: Barker, 1957), 130. The distinction between terror and horror remains a vexed issue for critics of the Gothic novel, but here the contrast between the unknowable, terrible moment of the Event, and the visceral, recognisable moment of horror is strong, and borne out in Dickens's language.
[42] C. Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, ed. by Richard Maxwell (London: Penguin, 2003), 32.
[43] W. Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arednt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 245-255, 253.
[44] J. A. Netto, 'Dickens with Kant and Sade', *Style*, 29 (1995), 441-458, 442.
[45] Netto, 442.
[46] Netto, 442.
[47] Netto, 442.
[48] P. Collins, *Dickens and Crime*, Third Edition, (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994), 235.
[49] Collins, 280.
[50] Wisnicki, 33.
[51] Miller, 69.
[52] I. Ousby, *Bloodhounds of Heaven* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 106, 110.
[53] Wisnicki, 35; see 162-173 for James and Conrad.
[54] S. Wahnich, *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty of Death in the French Revolution*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2015), 2-3; 100-101. The original French title translates more literally and rather less luridly as *Liberty or Death: An Essay on the Terror and Terrorism*
[55] D. LaCapra, 'Ideology and Critique in Dickens's *Bleak House*', *Representations*, 6 (1994), 116-123, 122.
[56] LaCapra, 120-121.
[57] J. Rancière, 'Ten Theses on Politics', in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. by Steve Corcoran (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 35-52, 42.
[58] Rancière, 41.
[59] Rancière, 44.
[60] Miller, 83.
[61] Wahnich, 83.
[62] Wahnich, 20.
[63] Wahnich, 90.
[64] The fantasy of destroying the Chancery buildings echoes other crypto-terrorist fantasies of destroying buildings which represent power in Dickens, including the burning down of Newgate in *Barnaby Rudge*, the burning down of the Monseigneur's chateau in *A Tale of Two Cities*, and the collapse of the Clennam house in *Little Dorrit* (1855-7).
[65] Rancière, 39.
[66] Wahnich, 23, 27.
[67] C. Dickens, *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), vol. 4, 612.
[68] I. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §25, trans. James Creed Meredith, ed. Nicholas Walker (Oxford University Press, 2007), 80.
[69] See, for example, A. Thurschwell, 'Writing and Terror: Don Delillo on the Task of Literature after 9/11', *Law & Literature*, 19 (2007), 277-302.