Charles Dickens, a man so representative of his age as to have become considered synonymous with it, demands to be read in context. This book illuminates the worlds – social, political, economic and artistic – in which Dickens worked. Dickens's professional life encompassed work as novelist, journalist, editor, public reader and passionate advocate of social reform. This volume offers a detailed treatment of Dickens in each of these roles, exploring the central features of Dickens's age, work and legacy, and uncovering sometimes surprising faces of the man and of the range of Dickens industries. Through forty-five digestible short chapters written by a leading expert on each topic, a rounded picture emerges of Dickens's engagement with his time, the influence of his works, and the ways he has been read, adapted and reimagined from the nineteenth century to the present.

Sally Ledger was the Hildred Carlile Chair in English at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Holly Furneaux is Lecturer in Victorian Literature at the University of Leicester.
for Sally Ledger
in loving memory
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of illustrations</td>
<td></td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on contributors</td>
<td></td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td></td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on references</td>
<td></td>
<td>xxi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part I: Life and Afterlife

1. The life of Dickens 1: before Ellen Ternan                              
   **John Bowen**                                                        
   3

2. The life of Dickens 2: after Ellen Ternan                               
   **John Bowen**                                                        
   11

3. Dickens’s lives                                                        
   **Michael Slater**                                                    
   18

4. Victorian stage adaptations and novel appropriations                   
   **Anne Humpherys**                                                    
   27

5. Reviewing Dickens in the Victorian periodical press                   
   **John Drew**                                                         
   35

6. The European context                                                  
   **Michael Hollington**                                                 
   43

7. Major twentieth-century critical responses                              
   **Toru Sasaki**                                                       
   51

8. Modern stage adaptations                                               
   **Tony Williams**                                                     
   59

9. Modern screen adaptations                                              
   **Toru Sasaki**                                                       
   67
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The heritage industry</td>
<td>Juliet John</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Neo-Victorian Dickens</td>
<td>Cora Kaplan</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART II: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Popular culture</td>
<td>Paul Schlicke</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The rise of celebrity culture</td>
<td>Joss Marsh</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The newspaper and periodical market</td>
<td>John Drew</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Authorship and the professional writer</td>
<td>Florian Schweizer</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The theatre</td>
<td>Marty Gould</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Melodrama</td>
<td>Juliet John</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The <em>Bildungsroman</em></td>
<td>Florian Schweizer</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Visual culture</td>
<td>Kate Flint</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The historical novel</td>
<td>Ian Duncan</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The illustrated novel</td>
<td>Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>Sally Ledger</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
<td>Holly Furneaux</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Martin Danahay</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

25 Europe
   Ruth Livesey

26 The Victorians and America
   Ella Dzelzainis

27 Educating the Victorians
   Patrick Brantlinger

28 London
   Anne Humpherys

29 Politics
   Michael Sanders

30 Political economy
   Paul Young

31 The aristocracy
   Andrew Sanders

32 The middle classes
   Priti Joshi

33 Urban migration and mobility
   Josephine McDonagh

34 Financial markets and the banking system
   Francis O’Gorman

35 Empires and colonies
   Grace Moore

36 Race
   Priti Joshi

37 Crime
   Anne Schwan

38 The law
   Jan-Melissa Schramm

39 Religion
   Emma Mason

40 Science
   James Mussell
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jonathan H. Grossman</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Illness, disease and social hygiene</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Janis McLaren Caldwell</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Domesticity</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Catherine Waters</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Holly Furneaux</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Gender identities</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Catherine Waters</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Further reading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

Unless otherwise specified, images are by generous courtesy of the Charles Dickens Museum, London.


4 William Powell Frith, *Dickens*, 1859.


10 ‘Phiz’ (Hablot Knight Browne), ‘Shadow’, *Bleak House*, 1853.
List of illustrations

11 ‘Phiz’ (Hablot Knight Browne), ‘Tom All Alone’s’, *Bleak House*, 1853. 174
12 ‘Phiz’ (Hablot Knight Browne), ‘Mr Pickwick and Sam in the Attorney’s Office’, *Pickwick Papers*, 1836–7. 200
13 ‘Phiz’, Hablot Knight Browne, ‘Mr Stryver at Tellson’s Bank’, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 1859. 280
14 John Leech, ‘How to Make Culprits Comfortable; or, Hints for Prison Discipline’, *Punch*, 1849. Courtesy of University of Leicester Library. 304
16 Dickens and his daughters in his phaeton. Photograph by Mason & Co., c. 1866. 335
17 ‘Phiz’ (Hablot Knight Browne), ‘Mr Bob Sawyer’s Mode of Travelling’, *The Pickwick Papers*, 1836–7. 336
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Preface

Dickens, a man so imbricated in his age as to be synonymous with it, demands to be read in context. As John Gardiner points out in The Victorians: Age in Retrospect (2002), Dickens ‘is crucial to our sense of the Victorians. Indeed it may even be felt that Dickens in some way is the key to the Victorian age; “Dickensian” often illuminates “Victorian”, rather than vice-versa’ (161). This book seeks to illuminate the contexts – social, political, economic and artistic – in which Dickens worked, as well as the ways he has been read and rewritten from the nineteenth century to the present. Described by James Eli Adams in A History of Victorian Literature (2009) as ‘the single most important literary career of the Victorian era’ (23), Dickens’s professional life encompassed work as novelist, journalist, editor, public reader and passionate advocate of social reform. This volume offers a detailed treatment of Dickens in each of these roles, exploring the central features of Dickens’s age, work and legacy, and uncovering sometimes surprising faces of the man and of the range of Dickens industries.

Dickens felt himself to be incomplete without the context of his audience, what in a letter to F. M. Evans dated 16 March 1858 he famously called ‘the personal (I may almost say affectionate) relations which subsist between me and the public’ (Letters, v111, 533). He aspired through a career of nearly forty years ‘to live’, as he put it in the manifesto to Household Words, ‘in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look’ (30 March 1850). This public life continues as readers, adaptors and a lively heritage industry continue to remake Dickens, with an energy undiminished as we approach the bicentenary of his birth.
Preface

The first section of this book addresses Dickens’s ‘Life and Afterlife’, whilst a second section is devoted to ‘Social and Cultural Contexts’. Each chapter is accompanied by a short list of recommended further reading.

This book was conceived and shaped by the late Sally Ledger, whose own important work on Dickens informs much of the scholarship here-with. I share with many of the contributors a sense of the painful honour it has been to be involved in the completion of this book as one small testament to Sally’s special ability to draw people together and to inspire our best work. This one’s for Sally!

HOLLY FURNEAUX
University of Leicester
Notes on references

Quotations from Charles Dickens’s novels are sourced, where applicable, to volume or book and chapter, and are given in brackets, e.g., *The Pickwick Papers* (ch. 1) or *Oliver Twist* (book 1, ch. 1). References to Dickens’s letters are, unless otherwise stated, to the twelve-volume Pilgrim Edition detailed below, and are denoted by volume and page, e.g. *Letters*, 1v, 30.


Other references are supplied in Further Reading, at the end of the book, or in the endnotes to individual chapters.