The Global Imaginary in the Victorian Novel: Dickens, Collins and Crafts

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The mid-nineteenth century saw decisive changes in the ambition and scope of the modern novel. As the dominant literary and cultural form, it became increasingly global in both its subject matter and circulation. This module will focus on the fiction of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins in that period and also consider the remarkable contemporary appropriation of Dickens’s *Bleak House* in Hannah Crafts’s *The Bondwoman’s Narrative*, the first novel by an African-American woman and the only known novel by a fugitive slave woman.

Dickens and Collins’s writings changed the modern novel’s form, ambition and course, while creating important new possibilities both generically and in subject matter. We will be particularly concerned with the texts’ formal, narrative and generic innovations; their conceptions of the ‘world’ and depictions of racial and imperial violence at home and abroad; and with questions of social transgression, cultural otherness, and sexual and bodily difference. Texts will include Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone*; Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*; Hannah Crafts’s *The Bondwoman’s Narrative*; and Collins’s and Dickens’s 'The Perils of Certain English Prisoners.'