



# The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination

*John Carey*

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## **The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination** John Carey

An exploration of the strange poetry of Dickens's imagination by leading academic and critic John Carey.

Setting aside the usual interpretations of Dickens's work, **A Violent Effigy** delves into the wonderful, terrible fantasy world it inhabited. It shows Dickens torn between the appeal of violence and a fanatical orderliness: he was attracted by characters who commit murder or burst into flame or want to eat one another, but also required people soaped and regimented. The children he created were either the pious gnomes beloved of Victorian readers or callous, sharp-nosed children who pick out adults by the odd personal atmospheres they carry around. Among his females are mythic women whose insidious miniature weapons - needles, scissors - threaten the dominant male. He created a shadow-land between life and death, peopled by effigies, walking coffins, waxworks, stuffed creatures and disturbingly animated corpses.

John Carey skilfully shows how Dickens demolished Victorian shams, while keeping at bay the terrors of his fantasy. He celebrates, above all, Dickens' peculiar genius for renewing the world by the curious lights he saw in it.

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