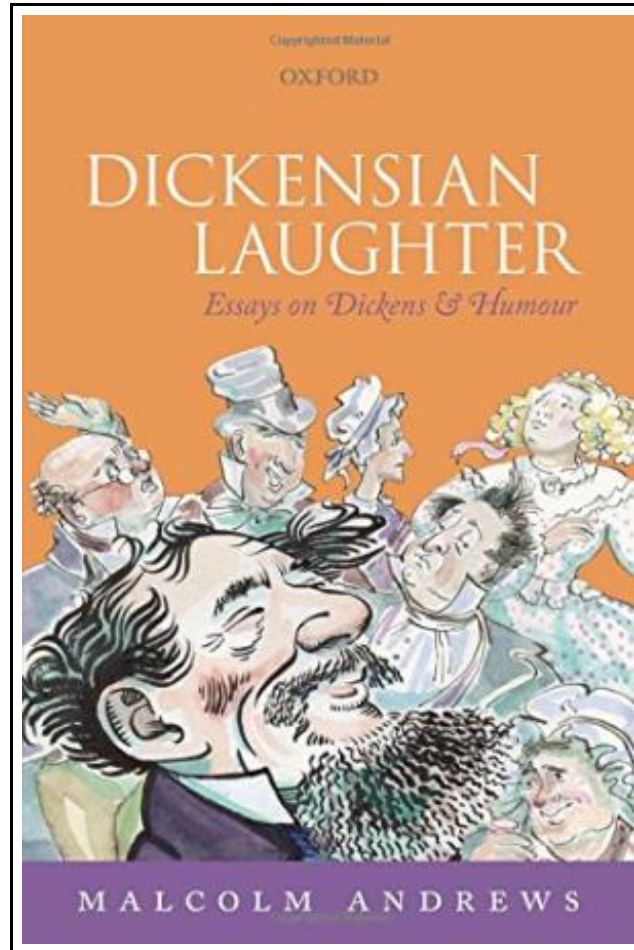


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Oxford University Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Dickensian Laughter: Essays on Dickens and Humour, Malcolm Andrews, How does Dickens make his readers laugh? What is the distinctive character of Dickensian humour? These are the questions explored in this book on a topic that has been strangely neglected in critical studies over the last half century. Dickens's friend and biographer John Forster declared that: 'His leading quality was Humour.' At the end of Dickens's career he was acclaimed as 'the greatest English Humourist since Shakespeare's time.' In 1971 the critic Philip Collins surveyed recent decades of Dickens criticism and asked 'from how many discussions of Dickens in the learned journals would one ever guess that (as Dickens himself thought) humour was his leading quality, his highest faculty?' Forty years later, that rhetorical question has lost none of its force. Why? Perhaps Dickens's genius as a humourist is simply taken for granted, and critics prefer to turn to his other achievements; or perhaps humour is too hard to analyse without spoiling the fun? Whatever the reason, there has been very little by way of sustained critical investigation into what for most people has constituted Dickens's special claim to greatness. This book is framed as a series of essays examining and reflecting on Dickens's techniques for making us laugh. How is it that some written incident, or speech, or narrative 'aside' can fire off the page into the reader's consciousness and jolt him or her into a smile, a giggle, or a hearty laugh? That is the core question here. His first novel, *Pickwick Papers*, was acclaimed at the time as having 'opened a fresh vein of humour' in English literature: what was the social nature of the humour that established this trademark 'Dickensian' method of making people laugh? And how...

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