REALISM AT THE EDGE: DICKENS' EX/CENTRIC WRITING

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by

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ABSTRACT

An awareness of the need to move language beyond its own infrastructure of semantics and grammar—to move meaning *through* language and into the world—comprises, I argue, the central premise of Dickens' fictional realism. The thesis examines his last three novels as works initiating a movement outward from the text; writing "at the edge" Dickens moves his fiction not only to the edge of conventional discourse (and certainly conventional realism), but to the edge of textuality itself, that is, into what may variously be characterized as "the real."

The thesis discusses realism not as an historically delimiting concept but as a mode of discourse which, situated within structures of history and society, can be made intelligible only through them. Chapters one and two offer the rationale and justification of reading language—and specifically Dickens' texts—essentially as a medium of exchange, of *relation*, and chapter three illustrates the interpretive possibilities afforded by such reading.

Thus the first chapter examines the way in which *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend* each expresses the need for community through language, and shows that the failure to reach across boundaries—whether linguistic or social—entails not only the failure of human relations but of life itself.

Chapter two discusses the specific nature of Dickens' realism as a function of relation: a means of breaking through barriers—the barriers between language and life, between the text and the world. In this respect, Dickens' novels are examined as the real/ization of what lies beyond language and the boundaries of the text; as texts in which is contained the text of the world. The chapter draws on both contemporary and modern sources for its argument and reveals Dickens' profound insight into social, moral and spiritual corruption.

Chapter three, finally, discusses a particular thread of images rarely examined by critics in any depth and often regarded as an example of Dickens' eccentric ('unreal') vision. The argument rests on a discussion of Dickens' image of the human parasite—the cannibal and vampire—and with support from fictional and non-fictional material describes how the images trace out fundamental social and economic activities. The chapter reveals the way in which Dickens de/scribes metaphor as a condition of existential truth and breaks down the symbolic into the actual.

In conclusion, the thesis argues that Dickens' realism offers an entrée into conditions of the real. It proposes that only through an examination of text *and* reality can Dickens be revealed as one of the (unacknowledged) masters of a fundamentally realistic discourse.

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RE/MEMBERING: WORD INTO LIFE

We are dry bones in the desert
Who will make us live?

Without reference to context, to the overflow of human experience which spills outward from the text, communication cannot exist. The system of langue through which utterance takes place finds intelligibility only through reference to the larger structures of moral, social and political thinking. Abstracted from these it exists only as a series of linguistic and verbal gestures—full of sound and fury, perhaps, but signifying very little. As Dickens reveals in *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*, the failure of language to signify is precisely the failure of human relations; and it is the failure of connection which inscribes itself upon society as the failure of any fundamentally human life.

Existing as the prerequisite for any human community language orders the basis of human sociality and therefore human life. Indeed, as *Bleak House* suggests, language—the word as law—lies at the heart of all human activity. Locating its court "at the very heart" (p. 6) of the City, Chancery, the jurisdiction of the (written) word, proposes its network of inns and courts as a series of arteries which feed and sustain the greater economic and political structures. Yet when Sir Leicester must spend "hundreds of thousands of pounds" on electoral bribes as a course of "necessary expenses" (p. 501), and when Parliament organizes itself according to principles of nepotism[1]—"the formation of a new Ministry would lie between Lord Coodle and Sir Thomas Doodle . . . giving . . . the Exchequer to Koodle, the Colonies to Loodle, and the Foreign Office to Moodle" (p. 145)—the ruling order is turned over to corruption and decay, and can no longer afford to speak the place of truth. "I trust to your good sense, Volumnia," says Sir Leicester, "not to pursue the subject [of expenses] here or elsewhere" (p. 501).

Language, in effect cannot be allowed to express realities which, by right, it ought to designate, and must be removed from speaking the place of truth. In the Court, consequently, language becomes the sum of its merely linguistic format. Enclosed within the circumference of code it operates not as *relation*, the point of intersection between society and human life, but rather as a means of displacing relation. Released from its function of naming what is other than itself it loses all responsibility to what lies beyond itself, to what exists beyond the word. "I'm told on all hands it's the system," exclaims Gridley:

> I musn't look to individuals. It's the system. . . . My Lord knows nothing of it. He sits there to administer the system. . . . I musn't go to Mr Tulkinghorn. . . . *He* is not responsible. It's the system. (p. 193)

Thus, although he "periodically appears to address the Chancellor" (p. 7), Gridley discovers that by making the word its own justification, its own reality, the Court has absolved itself from the need to examine any extra-linguistic criteria. What 'actually' exists—Gridley himself—finds no account in the text which removes con/text, which translates the word as word. Belief in the primacy of the word in fact cancels out the reality of Gridley's physical presence; he "can by no means be made to understand that the Chancellor is legally ignorant of his existence after making it desolate for a quarter of a century" (p. 7).

In making the word its own signifier—its own definition, authority and meaning—the thing signified is effectively cast aside; to the end, Gridley will be neither heard nor acknowledged. Linguistic technicalities take precedence over any assertion of human life (or death). The urgencies of human existence become simply quibbles over written format, a matter of "bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affadavits, issues, references to masters, masters' reports" (p. 6), none of which, ultimately, can resolve itself into any humanly intelligible matter. Jarndyce and Jarndyce, the "monument of Chancery practice" (p. 22) receives unbounded admiration among those who can delight in the play of word against word. "Every masterly fiction is represented over and over again" (p. 22); but it seems not to matter

that "no man alive knows" (p. 7) what the configuration means.

Richard speaks of Chancery as an elaborate linguistic fieldgame—"all this wasteful, wanton chess-playing" (p. 56). His assessment, however, comes to be gauged as an over-estimation; although Chancery's clients are "gamesters" the 'play' that it offers amounts to nothing more than "a Farce" (p. 758), the antics of a "juggler" (p. 758)—a trickster at "the fair" (p. 315) whose role lies not in wisdom but in mockery. Hence, Jarndyce and Jarndyce remains merely "a joke in the profession" (p. 8), a verbal play of wit; but like Lear's "bitter Fool" it remains to the end "a bitter jest" (p. 307), reducing human life and human meaning to the purely absurd. "They have found it amusing," declares Gridley, "to see me committed into custody" (p. 193).

Like all forms of joking Chancery's "joke" channels language into forms of non-mutuality—the exchange of non/sense as an act of (sublimated) aggression. The joke which turns its back upon human needs (for exchange as trust, as mutuality), turns language against life. Finally, what amuses "the profession" in *Bleak House* "has been death to many" (p. 8). In failing to read language as a process of human interchange—essentially of *faith*—Chancery effectively refuses life, transforms the word into a world of death. Its endless suitors' bills become "bills of mortality" (p. 8) and the formulas of court procedure—its wills, legacies, testaments and bequests, the transcription of final human intention—become the "awful implements of the great torture of the law" (p. 121). To be in Chancery entails being trapped within a tortuous circuit of meaningless activity. Richard suffers upon Ixion's wheel of fire (p. 484) and Gridley endures being "dragged for five-and-twenty years over burning iron" (p. 192). To be caught up in its round means "being ground to bits in a slow mill; . . . being roasted at a slow fire" (p. 52).

Closed within its own frame of reference discourse no longer proposes *community* (language as interaction), but rather solipsism, the negation of interaction. Thus, Conversation Kenge "appeared to enjoy beyond everything the sound of his own voice . . . for it . . . gave

great importance to every word he uttered. He listened to himself with obvious satisfaction" (p. 22). Aptly misnamed, for he speaks profusely but does not actually converse, Kenge deploys the technical format of speech—rhetoric and declamation—not in order to fulfil the requirements of lucid and coherent communication but rather to manipulate power (language as an instrument of will). In denying language as a medium between self and other, however, humankind imprisons itself within a closed circuit of self-referentiality and comes to function within the narrow parameters of purely private, non-relational worlds, a mechanism incapable of connection, incapable of realizing either self or other, self or world. Hence, when Chadband uses language he does so as a means of completely annihilating the remnants of tattered selfhood still remaining to Jo, the hungry pauper:

> For what are you, my young friend? Are you a beast of the field? No. A bird of the air? No. A fish of the seas or river? No. You are a human boy, my young friend. A human boy. O glorious to be a human boy! (p. 242)

His bombast assures his own self-aggrandisement but only at the expense actually of communicating. "I heerd him," says Jo, "but he sounded as if he wos a speakin' to his-self and not to me" (p. 571).

Unable to realize utterance as *medium*, language both as a displacement of other and simultaneously contiguous with it, individuals must live trapped within a mode of solipsistic living, imprisoned in a world shared by no one. "Caught living in a world of their own," they function primarily as "solitaries." Unable to communicate they "soliloquize";[2] incapable of human interaction, ultimately, they withdraw from life.

The refusal to release language into the world wrests it from its intention as exchange and effectively imprisons it in non-meaning. Hence Chancery, whose role lies in interpretation—the translation of the word into (human) meaning—actually turns language against itself and constructs "walls of words" (p. 6). Rather than helping to build a causeway between loved ones—between husband and wife, parent and child, between the living and the dead—it dismantles continuity, construes

language as a *bar* to communication, a bar to meaning. The text of (social) law rests on "trickery, evasion, procrastination, spoliation, botheration" (p. 8), and practical law, ultimately, comes to figure as lawlessness: "you might look in vain for Truth at the bottom of it" (p. 6). Only the abstract sign remains, language as ab/sense, Jarndyce and Jarndyce merely the "dead letter" (p. 88) which signals neither purpose, hope, nor meaning, only the withdrawal into silence which is simultaneously the withdrawal into death.

The conclusion of Jarndyce and Jarndyce betrays language into final abstraction and ultimate non-mutuality. Its documents represent nothing but the redundancy of the word purely *as* word.

> Presently great bundles of papers began to be carried out—bundles in bags, bundles too large to be got into any bags, immense masses of papers of all shapes and no shapes, which the bearers staggered under and threw down. (p. 759)

Merely an empty tribute to the materiality of the world, Jarndyce and Jarndyce, finally, discovers neither purpose nor resolution. Discourse fundamentally as metaphor—the representation of one thing by another—collapses into aborted signification and gives place only to the stoppage of meaning. Richard discovers, finally, that when language and what lies beyond language are severed, language can no longer be made to speak the reality of what he needs to say. In face of the sheer human waste and human despair effected by Chancery, Kenge upholds the suit as "the flower of the Bar" (p. 760). Language no longer speaks the place of truth, and Richard, betrayed by language, lapses into the silence whose only resolution lies in death. The attempt to speak of betrayal—he "made as if he would have spoken in a fierce voice to the judge" (p. 761)—becomes not only impossible but finds its only possible release in the articulation which lies beyond sign, the realization of metaphor as fact. Although he attempts to speak, Richard "was stopped by his mouth being full of blood" (p. 761); human wastage, in other words, reveals itself not as a dry abstraction but as physical actuality and, ultimately, Richard's own death must in fact speak what language cannot.

To undermine language as communication, therefore, undermines the possibility of achieved selfhood and hence, by definition, achieved community. As Dorothy van Ghent explains, language is after all "a provision for social and spiritual order."[3] Its negation determines a "world of isolated integers terrifyingly alone and unrelated"[4]—a condition, finally, in which humankind becomes incapable of its own humanity. Thus, in *Great Expectations* Estella knows love only as "a form of words; nothing more" (p. 376). The initiation into semiotics has precluded the initiation into the complexities of language and reality. The word exists as no more than the total of its own semantic configuration. When the only reality of the word exists as word, however, whatever it represents becomes an irrelevance. Miss Havisham commands Pip to love Estella,

> but if the often repeated word had been hate instead of love—despair—revenge—dire death—it could not have sounded from her lips more like a curse. (p. 261)

By defining the word according to her own stifled and suffocated emotions Miss Havisham allows it to mean anything and everything--including its opposite—which means, in effect, that she allows it no meaning. Cocooning it within her own closed and shuttered world she fails both language and life together. Unable to extend language beyond the confines of her artificially limited system of existence she fails to understand love as the expression of a reaching out, a means of giving *and* receiving, of shared exchange. "I'll tell you . . . what real love is," she declares—

> It is blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself and against the whole world, giving up your whole heart and soul to the smiter. (p. 261)

In divorcing her text from its base in any larger social categories she fails to reach beyond introspection and fails to reach out into any fuller life. In foreclosing "the outlet of the text onto other texts, other codes, other signs"[5] she lifts language from the place of shared and communal activity and imprisons it within the space of self-

reflexion. The word, in effect, can be used to designate what is no longer actually realized and interpret the terms of social reality without regard for their actual conditions. Hence, although Jaggers uses bribes and false witnesses he refuses all categories of speech which threaten to break open the true nature of his practices. He closes his office off from any discourse which threatens to articulate *that which really is*.

> 'What is he prepared to swear?'
> 'Well, Mas'r Jaggers,' said Mike... 'in a general way, anythink.'
> Mr Jaggers suddenly became most irate. 'Now I warned you before,' said he, throwing his forefinger at his terrified client, 'that if you ever presumed to talk in that way here I'd make an example of you. You infernal scoundrel, how dare you tell ME that?' (p. 193)

By keeping separate word and deed the legal system which Jaggers serves pretends to deal in justice and truth while 'in fact' it deals in bribery and corruption. Jaggers' criteria for deciding to stand 'for' or 'against' concerns neither innocence nor guilt but terms of payment. In straitening language, however, the social perception of the law's activities remains blinkered, and the real considerations involved ("Have you paid Wemmick?" [p. 191]), fail to impinge upon public consciousness. Language, in effect, serves not to reveal but to conceal and exclude; rather than effect an expansion outward into the world it submits to closure and containment; rather than effect a probing of the social, political and economic institutions which 'form' the world and direct our reading of it, it submits to leave these unexamined.

Hence, although Drummle is "idle, proud, niggardly, reserved, and suspicious," and variously appraised as "sulky," "sluggish," "awkward," and "a blockhead" (p. 225), when society authorizes the word as its own justification and leaves out what may exist behind or beyond it, he nevertheless remains, undisputedly, a gentleman. The reality underlying the term (Drummle as a boor) does not detract from society's acceptance of Drummle as a gentleman; nor does the effective identification of a term (gentle-man) with its opposite—Drummle either "beats or

cringes" (p. 402)—urge Pip to question the social premises upon which such an identification can be made. He accepts the word despite a larger frame of reference which, morally, places Drummle among society's criminals—one of Jaggers' "true sort" (p. 239)—and which denigrates Joe, the true "gentle Christian man" (p. 472) to the "low" orders. Effectively blinded by a language constructed as self-authenticating Pip lives according to false premises and fails to read the terms of his society's historical and economic conditions.

Thus "people are put in the Hulks because they murder and because they rob and forge and do all sorts of bad" (p. 46) and not because of accidents of birth which make them the passive victims of a brutal society—"I've been done everything to pretty well" (p. 360) says Magwitch. In the prevalent social perception Magwitch is automatically 'criminal' because he is a convict; but what society fails to acknowledge is its own crime in abandoning him—"Summon had run away from me . . . and he'd took the fire with him and left me very cold" (p. 360). Magwitch's first recollection of himself is thus one of elemental survival construed as 'crime': "I first became aware of myself down in Essex a thieving turnips for my living" (p. 360).

The rift between language and larger categories of social and moral experience ensure that convict and criminal become synonymous, while gentleman and criminal remain starkly antithetical. In actual practice, however, the gentleman stands as the greatest criminal of all. The villain who stands behind all the wasted and frustrated lives in the novel is in fact Compeyson, no other than society's accomplished gentleman; and it is, moreover, precisely by counting on society's tendency to discount the continuity between reality and sign which establishes his capacity for evil. As the author of "fifty hands" (p. 438) supremely adept at manipulating the false word, he operates as the novel's most complete exploiter of empty signs and false signification. The broken word, the unkept promise—the word, that is, severed from authentic intention—not only destroys Miss Havisham but, ultimately, all those who trace connection through him. Indeed, as Barickman, McDonald and

Stark suggest, "crime and fraud seem inseparable from the whole complex of social relations"; "elaborate criminal intrigue" exists as "the truest analogue to respectable social relations."[6]

In using language to refute authentic connection—the connection between sign and substance, between inner and outer being, between individual lives ("separate defences, no communication" [p. 364])—Compeyson and the society whose practices he merely emulates make provision for chaos. Indeed, "non-communication is an unthinkable madness," writes Ghent, "for it negates all relationship and therefore all order."[7]

The increasing collapse of any valid signifying practices—the rupture effected between text and context, discourse and human experience—thus signals incipient breakdown—the breakdown into violence, madness and murder. As "capitalist society is being economically and politically choked to death," writes Kristeva, "discourse . . . [heads] for collapse."[8] In *Our Mutual Friend* the refusal to allow language access to the realities which lie beyond itself, to avail itself of the terms and conditions which make meaning possible and which thus make human life possible, precipitates a descent back into chaos, the regression of language into unintelligibility. As the medium of cohesive and social living language not only threatens to fall apart but to bring down with it the structures of relation and community, the order of society itself.

Without regard for the intentionality of speech actually to communicate, to represent something other than itself, society dismantles the very structures which make meaning possible. Hence, when Mrs Wilfer chooses to say something she can do so without regard for the need to *mean*. Her words lose claim to any authentic intention:

> "I was about to say," pursued Mrs Wilfer who clearly had not had the faintest idea of saying anything more; (p. 256)

and finally indeed to any meaning at all:

> When I use the term attractions I do so with the qualification that I do not mean it in any way whatever. (p. 256)

Words need no longer refer even to themselves; their only reality is to

exist as an abstraction signifying nothing.

Unable to cut across purely semantic relations and establish dialogical relationships language becomes a prisonhouse which isolates individuals from each other and from themselves. Fledgeby understands only the materiality of the word; what lies beyond eludes him. £ s d do not *represent* anything, do not transcribe a translinguistic reality—the life of "Luxury, Sensuality and Dissoluteness which they often stand for" (p. 324)—but remain exactly what they are 'in fact': "three dry letters" (p. 324). Ultimately, however, more than 'meaning' remains at issue; ultimately, life itself stands in the balance. In refusing meaning as *departure,* the movement *away* from the word into the matrix of human experience, Fledgeby effectively refuses the venture into life and into human 'being' itself. He exists, in the end, as a form of arrested development, sequestered within the limits of singleness—the word as One withdrawn from any intercourse with Other, withdrawn from connection, from relation, from exchange. Fledgeby, indeed, subsists only at the edges of sterility. Eternally awaiting the growth into fulness, continually "feeling for the whisker that he anxiously expected" (p. 315), he not only withdraws from life as participation, from life as some form of mutual reaching out, but is debarred from interacting with any viable life at all. He remains forever at the stage of sterile and impotent prepubescence, all potential for full living aborted, denied access to any human vitality. Fledgeby, who is never fully fledged ("with a cheek that would not sprout" [p. 314]), inherits only the capacity for deathliness. He leans on the chimney piece "like as on an urn containing the ashes of his ambition" (p. 314).

Abstracted from the place of intersection, from the space between discourse and the human culture, human society, human history in which meaning takes place, language devolves into the dead letter. Torn from the societal base it translates the sign as a meaningless fragment, a shard, incomplete, truncated. The centre cannot hold and words crack, break under the strain. In the arid desert wasteland of the Veneering household—"all the camels out, and all laden" (p. 166)—where there is

no sign, only the "veiled-prophet not prophesying" (p. 52), speech degenerates into a configuration of sounds which threaten the onset of primitive regression, the resolution of language into its constituent material parts. Unrelated to any informing reality—conversations consist in estimating the amount of the (actually non-existent) Lammle fortune—words crumble and fall apart, settle into a series of fragmented and broken syllables: "Thir-ty Thou-sand Pou-nds!" (p. 166).[9] Lacking designation in any larger economic, social or political context, words begin to lose their shape, can no longer survive as signification —the relation of something other—and ultimately disintegrate as a medium of speech altogether. They propose only their own purely physical condition—a movement of jaw, tongue and palate and nothing else: a "smack and relish suggestive of the very finest oysters" (p. 166). Severed from meaning, from human interaction, the word remains merely a dead letter, the dry bone in the desert which utters no speech and calls to no man.

The sign (the hope of life, the possibility of being), comes to propose only negation, to promise nothing. The "staring black and white letters" which Eugene sees painted upon "wharves and Wharehouses" (p. 219) merely inscribe empty talismanic symbols once related to some vital human activity but now without meaning. Ousted from the place of life and relegated only to dark, watery regions of death, they serve merely as the decayed remnants of a moribund and senescent capitalism. They look, notes Eugene, like "inscriptions over the graves of dead businesses" (p. 219).

Dickens' novels thus reveal that without recourse to the continuum beyond language, beyond semantics, discourse flounders amid the chaos of disconnection and non-meaning and prevents access to any understanding of the totality which informs human experience. Language, in other words, cannot be presumed upon to explain itself *by* itself but must be articulated with "[the text] of society and history."[10] Meaning, that is, not only requires context but *is* context. By displacing the relation between discourse and the larger systems which inform it society places a

stoppage upon the continuity between what is and what is said, between word and life. Severance, in effect, loses to humankind all sense of self, of other and of world.

Thus, what sounds the death-knell for the Dedlocks in *Bleak House* is precisely its withdrawal from any frame of reference other than its own, and its purely self-referential mode of existence—a withdrawal, in effect, from all that urges interaction: the exchange across boundaries, participation in other systems, other codes, other lives. The quest into what lies beyond itself remains unconsidered and unproposed. There "may be a world" (p. 80) anterior to its own, but if so it is firmly locked out from the Dedlock consciousness. It remains one, declares Mrs Rouncewell, oldest of the Dedlock retainers, that "I don't understand" (p. 80).

Oblivious to anything which lies beyond its own narrow space and which lies located beyond the parameters of "fashionable intelligence" (p. 138), the Dedlock world remains incapable of reading itself or of reading the larger world's otherness. It fails to see itself simply as one structure, one code among others, fails to realize itself as text within con/text—one class structured in relation to, and dependent upon, others. Assuming itself to be the sole architect and support of what is —the Dedlocks are "as old as the hills" and although the world "might get on without hills . . . would be done up without Dedlocks" (p. 12)— it considers that its own singular perspective provides not merely the only valid perspective but by rights the *only* perspective. Mr Tulkinghorn may be appraised as a "slow torturing kind of man" (p. 566) in another context; but at Chesney Wold, where his decent "black clothes" signify "a kind of tribute" (p. 14), his activities do not hinder his standing as one of Sir Leicester's trusted elect ("surrounded by a mysterious halo of family confidences" [p. 13]). In refusing to see what lies beyond the sign of eminent respectability and in refusing to look into what lies beyond the category of the word, Sir Leicester fails to take human reality into account. Hence, although Chancery is dimly perceived to "involve an occasional delay of justice and a trifling

amount of confusion" (p. 15) what this might mean for those who must actually suffer by such delays and confusions fails to influence Sir Leicester's belief in Chancery as "something devised in conjunction with a variety of other somethings . . . for the eternal settlement (humanly speaking) of everything" (p. 15). Chancery remains primarily a symbol whose actual operation as a corrupt and debased institution makes no difference to the way in which he interprets it. Read according to the hallowed system of "precedent and usage" (p. 10) which leaves unquestioned and unexamined the nature of "precedent and usage" and which, indeed, accepts them simply *on their own terms*—Chancery is given blessing and permitted to continue.

As their name suggests, the Dedlocks are indeed dead-locked—dead to the claims of human reality and locked within the dark and narrow prison of their own limited world. They "cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds and cannot see them as they circle round the sun" (p. 11). In their refusal to accept a world elsewhere, in refusing to cross barriers they themselves have made, they initiate a loss of access not only to any larger human realities ("everything must be languid and pretty" [p. 145]), but to life itself. Self-enclosure becomes self-interment. The estate in Lincolnshire appears a little "unhealthy for want of air" (p. 11) and, increasingly, lays claim only to a hûshed and death-like stillness. Unrevitalized by any influx of life external to itself it slowly suffocates. The sealed world is a dying world; Chesney Wold is "deadened," like "a body without life" (p. 498).

The fiction of self-sustaining autonomy, finally, can be maintained only at the expense of life, by turning the terms of illusion or unreality *against* life. Thus, the Dedlocks hold the agreement "to put a smooth glaze on the world and to keep down all its realities" (p. 145). The 'integrity' of the Dedlock structure remains intact, that is, only so long as it is extracted from its place among surrounding social, economic and moral considerations, from the places which reveal its own corruption. The Dedlock world, in other words, must deny its own reality.

In effecting such a denial, however, the Dedlocks preclude them-

selves from ever discovering anything vital or urgent and commits them to deathliness. My Lady "is childless" (p. 11) and the Dedlocks subsist only amid vistas of sterility. The only youth capable of emerging from the place of "ghosts" (p. 77) and "graves" (p. 81) remains merely a parody of youth—youth not only imperfectly imitated but already decrepit, decaying and, at core, death-like. Chesney Wold's resident "young lady," a coquettish matron ("of sixty" [p. 347]), flutters through the estate all rouged pallor and ghastly bloom; its vivacious flirts and "charmers," its "fascinating creatures" (p. 667), display charms already "ancient" and decaying, plump necks already withered into "skeleton throats" (p. 667). Their procession—and profession—of gaiety finds its most consummate expression, finally, only in an unholy Danse Macabre. They wander through the halls "like Death and the Lady fused together" (p. 667).

The spiritually debilitating and corrupting effect of self-reflexive thinking and living discovers similar definition in *Great Expectations*. Once again, hermetic enclosure—the notion that meaning and being may be achieved in isolation from the process of living—reveals itself as a veritable negation of life and being. The aspiration to achieve an absolute independence, the belief in selfhood sustained purely from within, refuses the very interdependence which makes any viable human life—discoverable through sociality, through interaction—possible. Behind her locked gates and barred windows, Miss Havisham withers not into truth but into wasted non-being. She participates not in the higher life of the spirit but rather in a harrowing negation of it. The consummation of "waxwork and skeleton" (p. 87) she exists in a body which has become its own memorial, its own sarcophagus. "Corpse-like" (p. 90) she exists not as a monument to perfectly arrested time, the moment caught, arrested and stilled *outside* of time, but rather as the decaying structure which speaks of unnatural stoppage. Miss Havisham exists in Satis House not as fulfilment achieved but as thwarted potential. Her stopped clocks measure out a life spent in a barren limbo of unfulfilled being.

In making a single house the limits of her world and a single moment the experience of a lifetime Miss Havisham precludes the growth into maturity and health and entombs herself in her own spiritual and moral malaise. Sealed off from intercourse with the world she lives cut off from any real knowledge of it. Responding neither to the rising of the sun nor the setting of the moon—always the artificial light of the candle burns—she knows neither day nor night, the movement of the stars, nor the changes of the constellations: "You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?" (p. 88) she asks Pip. Ultimately, however, her refusal to experience what lies after "twenty minutes to nine" (p. 88) is a refusal to accept the continuity of life—"There, there! I know nothing of days of the week; I know nothing of weeks of the year" (p. 91). Her denial of temporality, however, condemns her to solitary and dis/eased being. "She had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences" and in self-enclosure "her mind, brooding, solitary, had grown diseased" (p. 411). In reversing the natural order of connection and connectedness and in denying the participation between text (her "story" [p. 205]) and context (human experience beyond betrayal), her existence inscribes her life as negation. Withdrawn from the larger structures of human activity—from its own history (as a centre of productivity and exchange) and from the human relations in which it developed (marriage, family life)—Satis House signifies merely her emptiness and loss. "There were no pigeons in the dove-cot, no horses in the stable, no pigs in the sty, no malt in the store-house" (p. 93). Satis House, in effect, exists as a configuration of ab/sense. Shored against the incursion of new life and new experience, denied release *into* life, its symbols of potential growth (into meaning) stagnate amid wastage. The garden falls into "wilderness" (p. 413) and "ruin" (p. 491). As Wemmick's Newgate "greenhouse" indeed makes clear the only type of plant capable of being raised in the space of closure is a "dead plant" (p. 282), the only possible growth a growth into death.

Thus, the need to allow a perception of the relation of things to

inform human consciousness (discourse) and human activity (society), the need, in other words, to allow language to mean, the word to signify, the text to refer, may be seen in the three novels under discussion to be crucial if humankind is to remain alive to what it is—to what it means—to be alive, to be in the world at all. The smaller systems of human construction require to be perceived as relational, as structures of intersection. Without recourse to connection humanity loses all sense of community, lives only amid anarchy.

In *Our Mutual Friend* the social process which dispenses with the need for any essential human reality—which establishes the anonymous and abstract "Voice of Society" (p. 888) as final authority—creates a situation in which human beings function merely as a mass of disconnected fragments. Existing as parts in segregation from each other and from themselves, cut off from participating in any form of integrated living—living as a form of transaction—they become incapable of sustaining any kind of human wholeness, any fundamental human being. Becoming wholly what they are in part they incarcerate themselves in a prison of partial and unreal selves, attain identity only as a Member, a Grievance, a Public Office, a Poem on Shakespeare—or simply as a designated sum of money. Veneering's "new race of intimate friends" are "only to be spoken of in the very largest figures" (p. 690). Any human reality (or unreality) behind the figure—the mere 'sign' of wealth—plays no part in the social circuit, and humankind discovers its greatest value to lie in abstraction. The signifier (form) takes precedence over the thing signified (human content) and increasingly stands complete and absolute on its own terms. The representation is valued in and for itself, and the value of the thing represented cast aside.

Hence, the "mature young lady . . . of property" and the "mature young gentleman . . . of property" (p. 159) both discover that in accepting the sign as its own measure and author/ity and in failing to give it place against any larger economic context they fail in their reading of each other's reality. Between them they have neither maturity, youth nor property. In accord with the premise of the empty sign, however,

they manage to live well on an income of nothing, proceed to furnish a splendid house, which does not exist, with money they do not have, and establish "a shining reputation" (p. 307). Indeed, given the precedence of the non-signifying representation they provoke a wave of envy for what has no reality, and no prospect ever of existing. Growing quickly "envious of the non-existent Iammle structure" acquaintances soon become "dissatisfied with their own houses" (p. 307).

Illusion, in fact, serves as the sole criterion of evaluation and as the source of all assigned value. Veneering's decision to become an M.P. sets in motion a series of activities *signifying* work but actually informed by no such thing. The supremely empty gesture subject, nevertheless, to an unquestioned acceptance in and for itself can afford to dispense with reality; for "nothing is understood to be so effectual as scouring nowhere in a violent hurry" (p. 301) and indeed doing nothing. The "Veneering fiction" (p. 161) can finally afford to maintain illusion *in defiance of* reality—illusion, that is, as deception—because the entire social mechanism is itself built on illusion. Supporting a political process of "rallying round" (p. 301) even though the Veneerings "know nobody" (p. 301) and have no friends actually to "rally," and laying claim to Veneering's success in 'winning' his seat, when in fact Pocket Breeches, as its name suggests, has actually been bought and pocketed ("there was no opposition" [p. 302]), society dooms its members to unreal selves and unreal lives.

Hence, at the Veneerings' dinner party the reflections in the mirror both locate and define society's primary reality, that is, reality as image—people as no more than the sum of their surface appearance. Their reflections, in effect, serve as their total reality—people who do not exist beyond the image they present, who have no inner resources of selfhood and who have been abstracted from their own reserves of humanity. The mirror "reflects charming old Lady Tippins" but the face it reflects is itself "like a face in a tablespoon" (p. 53): the image of an image which ultimately resolves itself, in Miller's terms, into a "reflection of nothing by nothing."[11]

The sign, indeed, discovers that at the point of self-validation and self-authentification, reality is inessential to (social) identity. One may "scalp . . . peel . . . and scrape" Lady Tippins to try and get at the "genuine article" (p. 164); but beneath the layers of rouge and dye and varnish nothing remains to be discovered. Peeling away the layers of 'sign', searching through the wigs and drapery, reveals that after all there is no real Lady Tippins. Informed by nothing vital, by no inner reality, she remains purely figure—rouge and varnish which signifies simply rouge and varnish. As the signification of human being she remains merely *void* signification, dead form. Hence, if her "grisly little fiction" (p. 54) is grisly it is precisely because of its nature as a wholly inauthentic construction, illusion not as an opening onto truth but illusion merely as lie.

In order to sustain any valid and humanly liveable life, therefore, humankind must discover its humanity through the discovery of Other; conceive not only of separateness but of relation, not only difference but contiguity. Expansiveness rather than closure remains critical. Hence, if the desire exists

> to civilize human beings, expand their horizons, increase their sensitivity to the potential of imagination and reality, emancipate them from . . . the unreflected life in the hope that human society can thereby be made less barbaric, the study of literature ought properly to be conjoined to these ends by maintaining an awareness of all the lines of interaction with human experience.[12]

If the text—human discourse—is to serve as a medium of human experience, in other words, then it must be affirmed as more than the terms of a purely formal structure, must admit more than a purely linguistic (or aesthetic) response. Reading, the process which makes reality discoverable through analogy (metaphor as truth), proposes the need not only for linguistic competence but for a whole range of social, moral, political and cultural structures of thought and experience to be brought into play: the act of making connections by which reading is transformed into an essentially transactive experience. Confronted by a system of abstract referents, a gap between what exists as sign and the locus of

meaning beyond sign, the act of imaginative expansion bridges separation. Through the imaginative process, the appeal implicit in any text for re/creation—the piecing together of word and image as a configuration of human experience—the text discovers its fulfilment. Without this process only the empty sign, the dry bone, remains; and art, as well as the act of reading, has failed. The means by which the structures of 'unreality' (fiction, representation) may be discoverable as reality remain unrealized and in this failure, as Prospero recognized, the end of art lies in "despair." Without an essentially imaginative response the sign remains lifeless and a mere dead thing; to be breathed into life it requires the fundamental act of imaginative faith which releases it into the world.

Thus, in *Bleak House* the death of poor Jo does not simply ask to be read in terms of its "adequacy"[13] to the novel's thematic and aesthetic scheme but demands to be experienced as a personal acknowledgement of responsibility, a personal acknowledgement of guilt. The narrative's resonant "Dead your Majesty. Dead my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women" (p. 572) defies the terms of its own fiction and asks that the reader confront (and accept) his own implication in the real deaths of real children "dying thus around us every day" (p. 572). The novel asks, in other words, that the boundaries between art and life be made fluid. The abstraction of the latter from the former may propose, perhaps, the refinement of an exquisite aesthetic sensibility, but it does so, finally, only at the expense of developing a fully human sensibility.

Indeed, Skimpole's desire to lay claim to the more ennobling pursuits of mind—to the pursuit of poetry, painting, the contemplation of beauty—effectively serves to disengage him from "the duties and accountabilities of life" (p. 66) and the "moral obligations" (p. 727) which life imposes. He weeps over the poor Peasant Boy "Thrown on the wide world, doom'd to wander and roam, / Bereft of his parents, bereft of his home;" (p. 386) but remains untouched by the plight of the real orphan, poor Jo. Prompted only by the desire to "get rid of him" and

the urge to "turn him out" (p. 384) he later sells the boy for "a bank note" (p. 728), sum unspecified. When aesthetic sensibility operates in divorce from human sympathy the aesthete comes to inhabit only a squalid moral wasteland. Avowals of sensitivity—"I can sympathise with the objects. I can dream of them" (p. 67)—betray Skimpole's actual inability to empathize with human life—both his disregard for moral thinking and his incapacity for moral action. Seeing with the eyes of art Skimpole looks away from human reality. Transforming everything into matters of harmony and aesthetics he translates human activities into questions of pattern, and issues of morality and justice, good and evil, merely into a scheme of appropriate decorum. "Why *isn't* he a prisoner?" asks Skimpole when Jo appears ill and hungry at Bleak House; "there would be more of an adventurous spirit in it," he declares, "and consequently more of a certain sort of poetry" (p. 385).

Perceiving all in accordance with a personal System of Harmony Skimpole sweeps aside all "the sordid brambles of reality" (p. 68) without compunction, and imposes an aesthetic distance between himself and the rest of the world. Thus, rather than seeing slaves on the American plantations as people caught up in a devastating social process, he projects them merely as figures on a painted landscape, images designed to populate an otherwise empty canvas. They give the scene "a poetry for me" (p. 227).

Although for Podsnap in *Our Mutual Friend* the criterion of perception is different—compartmentalized according to the precepts of Respectability rather than Art—the vision of human reality it offers similarly reduces the urgencies of human experience. Belief in respectability, as Carlyle recognized "winnows away [men's] souls"[14] by causing them to perceive no difference between the categories of good and evil; "custom," the premise of respectable living, he declared in *Sartor Resartus*, "doth make dotards of us all."[15] Lizzie, consequently, cannot be entertained as "a lady" (p. 891) in Podsnap's perception of things because he understands only the Voice of Society and cannot hear what speaks of moral or ethical worth. Fixed and categorized according to

social and economic worth—valued according to the stakes of wealth and breeding—Lizzie remains "a female waterman turned factory girl" (p. 889). Oblivious to notions of degree as a matter of ethical standing, Podsnap in fact reduces Lizzie almost to the status of an obscenity: "my gorge rises against such a marriage . . . it offends and disgusts me" (p. 889).

Similarly in *Great Expectations,* Pip views both his love and the object of his love through a haze of unreal expectations and false values. Colouring both himself and Estella with the tints of saga, romance and fairy tale, he becomes "the hero," a "Knight of romance" who will perform "shining deeds" and finally "marry the princess" (p. 253). In the process, however, he casts Estella into artificial categories and forces her into roles not her own. She becomes a version of the sleeping princess[16]—"when should I awaken the heart within her that was mute and sleeping now?" (p. 265)—who has neither will nor power of her own, "destined" (p. 265) for him, alloted and assigned without regard for her own *human* reality, without regard for her own human needs and desires—"she could not choose but obey" (p. 319). Indeed, throughout the novel Estella exists primarily as an agent of other people's wills, remains essentially the object of other people's desires. Pip, who swears to love her in fact objectifies her ("the prize . . . reserved for me" [p. 321]), and abstracts her into inaccessible Beauty. He identifies her always as a bright but distant star and regards her as a kind of transcendental value—"Estella and I went out into the garden . . . I, trembling in spirit and worshipping the very hem of her dress" (p. 257).

In effect, Pip's 'love' interacts with nothing humanly viable or humanly mutual and, indeed, is more finely and completely reaized in Estella's absence. "I never had one hour's happiness in her society, and yet my mind all round the four-and-twenty hours was harping on the happiness of having her with me unto death" (p. 319). By translating her into an object of wished-for romance Pip sets aside the 'reality' of Estella and engages his emotions to the image of Estella,[17] to "all those

visions that had raised her face in the glowing fire" (p. 257). In the event, however, he commits her to unreality and, in effect, places her among those who do not (and cannot) live. "Forced to live her life within the incomprehensible shadow of unrealistic sexual terms," declares Vivian Gornick, "woman herself has become dangerously lost."[18] Hence, Estella prepares to leave Satis House—one house of death—but only in order to enter another.

The house in rural Richmond, although "by the Green" (p. 290) and surrounded by trees, has nothing of nature in it and nothing of life. Its trees are stiff and contorted, "cut into fashions as formal and unnatural as the hoops and wigs and stiff skirts" (p. 290) of those who died there long ago. Into this artificial world Estella enters, herself an artifact "made" (p. 322) by Miss Havisham and fictionalized by Pip—"you have been in every line I have ever read" (p. 378)—to live in a world where greenery offers no promise of life, no hope of Spring. In their gnarled, twisted and disfigured shapes the trees give intimations merely of "the great processions of the dead," the ghosts among whom Estella has come to take her place. She is "absorbed" (p. 290) by the house, and joins the fold of the lost.

Unlike Skimpole or Podsnap, however, Pip attempts to leave behind the evils of distorted and unreal vision and, finally, gains access—however partial—to reality as a humanly redeemable experience. In contrast to Pumblechook who turns language into a mockery of communication ("his conversation consisted of nothing but arithmetic" [p. 84]) or to Smallweed in *Bleak House* who turns it into an instrument of abuse ("you are a brimstone pig" [p. 262]), Pip allows language its final participation in the urgency of human commitment and human communication. He comes to perceive not only the existence of relation, but the *need* for relation. In writing the appeal for Magwitch's pardon he forces language to speak on behalf of life and not against it; and comes to understand, finally, that given the social use of language to ensnare and entrap, and granted Wemmick's account of Newgate's true "manuscript confessions" —"every one of 'em Lies" (p. 231)—that the most authentic gesture of

understanding and commitment lies in the communication beyond language—"I pressed his hand in silence" (p. 469)—which moves beyond abstraction into action: a concretization of the acknowledged need for human mutuality and exchange.

The 'decline' into forms of non-mutuality, conversely, creates only a wasteland of dead forms and empty utterances. In *Our Mutual Friend* the divorce of language from any facility for interchange and interaction figures as a decline into misapprehension and misunderstanding. Wegg's "declining and falling" (p. 96) takes no heed of meaning, ignores the capacity of discourse to penetrate into areas *beyond* discourse, to reveal the place of life. In contrast to Boffin for whom books propose participation, the engagement in "a new life" (p. 97), Wegg simply "read on by rote and attached as few ideas as possible to the text" (p. 104). Language, in other words, remains no more than a semantic construction, the dyadic relation between "one and other"[19] unrealized.

Indeed, for Wegg, reading translates merely into another form of 'grinding', a process aligned to the bitter and inhuman "grinding" of the "money mills" (p. 667) in the City—a process which drains humanity and leaves it spent, exhausted and utterly dead to the possibilities of any *human* life. Only the wearied "tread of a million . . . feet" (p. 667) identifies the fragment which it has become—a metonomy which bears evidence to the terms of human incompleteness, an image of dismembered and disconnected parts.[20]

Dismemberment, in fact, may be seen to figure the essential condition of a society subject to aggressive economic battle. In dismantling the fundamental connection into wholeness, in severing language from any vital living and displacing expression from human intention and human being, society exists as mutilation. The elliptical, disjointed syntactical structures which describe the Veneering dinner parties imprison characters within structures of disconnection. Language functions not as parts re/membered but as severance, a cutting of the possibility for communication and hence the possibility of any viable community. Thus,

dismemberment becomes castration: society as the subject of a widespread spiritual mutilation whose only legacy is the threatened death of self, the negation of human being. Thus, Wrayburn sits "buried alive" (p. 53) in his chair and Harmon "lie[s] buried somewhere" (p. 442), each engulfed beneath a morass of empty utterances and unreal selves, beneath a rubble of corpses—"so much moral sewage" (p. 63)—dead to the claims of life. Mortimer's conclusion to the story of the Harmon Murder—yet another severance, yet another act of mutilation—suggests, in fact, wholesale murder. His clipped, elliptical "Man's drowned" (p. 59) hazards not just the individual 'death' of Harmon but a condition in which generic Man has been implicated. It is the whole of society, in other words, which undergoes the baptism unto death. Descended into "the Abyss . . . whither all delusions are"[21] it subsists amid darkness waiting for the cry (language) which is simultaneously a call for connection, the act which re/members.

Cut off from the capacity to admit connection—incapable of exercising the imaginative life which sustains connection—humankind exists as a creature of non-being. When Headstone gazes into the fire, the source of vision, energy and life for Lizzie, he perceives nothing, undertakes a retreat merely into the emptiness of dying ashes, discovers only deadened humanity.

> Rigid before the fire . . . he sat with the dark lines deepening in his face, its stare becoming more and more haggard, its surface overspread with ashes. (p. 372)

Finally, as he rises he becomes simply an 'it'. Unable to live through any imaginative engagement with himself or the world he is slowly drained of his capacity to be human until he has, in Garret Stewart's words, "almost nothing human left."[22]

Similarly, Fledgeby—untroubled by "any . . . weak imaginings" (p. 332)—exists merely as one of society's dead souls, doomed to go back "down to life" (p. 334), to live only the life of the streets—the region of spiritual non-being, the non-reflective life of those who can neither see nor feel any sense of Other and who, therefore, cannot truly

live. As Harald Fawkner explains, Jenny Wren's "get down to life" (p. 334) warns that to live only the life of the City—commerce, business, facts—is to live amid "a dark world of nothingness";[23] and indeed after dark nights of non-being this world awakens to dawns which bring only "a ragged tear of light" to rip through the "grey hole of day"(p.219).

Thus, the call to "come up and be dead" (p. 335) paradoxically serves as a call to life—a request not for the transcendence *beyond* life but rather for a more complete living, a means of remaining *in* life. Donald D. Stone has suggested that Jenny's call proposes the urge "to immerse oneself in a fantasy of non-being";[24] but in a world whose mode of (social) existence is no more than a living death her cry urges, rather, a recoil from what unnatural conditions have made of life and not a retreat from life itself. She proposes, in effect, commitment to the act of imaginative faith which reaches out into human experience and realizes human life.

Hence, at the point of crisis Harmon discovers precisely the need for connection—the resolution into wholeness, the integration of being through a re/membering of self and world—which Jenny Wren urges. The emergence into authentic selfhood requires that the old dead forms be shuffled off; that the reawakening into life be conditional upon a regeneration of *sign*—the means by which identity, the configuration of past and present, the interaction of self with history and society, may be articulated. As he struggles in the water poised between life and death, Harmon begins the process of re/membering life.

> The consciousness come upon me, 'This is John Harmon drowning! John Harmon, struggle for your life. John Harmon call on Heaven and save yourself!' I think I cried it aloud in a great agony, and then a heavy, horrid unintelligible something vanished and it was I who was struggling there alone in the water. (p. 426)

The "horrid unintelligible something" which threatens death because it cannot be uttered is exorcised through articulation, by the realization of language not simply as contiguous with life but *as* life.

Headstone, conversely, who cannot articulate, faces self-extinction.

"I cannot speak to you or speak of you," he tells Lizzie, "without stumbling at every syllable" (p. 454). His passion, Alan Kennedy declares, "is inarticulate and terrible—and it is terrible in part because it is inarticulate."[25] Forced to suppress natural impulse and natural feeling, forced to strangle the need (and desire) for human connection Headstone becomes incapable of the very act (speech) which proposes not only a mediation between self and other but, simultaneously, relation. Losing language, Headstone loses himself. Self-expression becomes the expression only of loss—lost meaning, lost humanity.

> I love you. What other men may mean when they use that expression I cannot tell; what *I* mean is, that I am under the influence of some tremendous attraction . . . which overmasters me. (p. 454)

Soldered within his own isolation Headstone faces the loss of that human part of himself which finds its identity in the context of achieved mutuality, a loss whose ultimate resolution lies in suicide:

> "Stop! . . . Ain't I told you that a man as has come through drowning can never be drowned? I can't be drowned."
> "I can be!" returned Bradley in a desperate clenched voice. "I am resolved to be." (p. 874)

In contrast to Headstone's final act of self-destruction, Harmon's ability to achieve authentic utterance leads him not only to selfhood but towards Otherness. The communion between language and self proposes as its concomitant the communion between self and other. Through the harmony of achieved oneness ("Solo") he discovers its complement and fulfilment through the coming together of two ("Duet" [p.421]). Re-integration, made possible not only by remembering the past but by re/membering the present, makes possible, in its turn, the translation of language into community. The articulation of selfhood involves, finally, not merely enunciation but like the articulation practised by Venus, a process of "piecing little things together" (p. 357), a reconnection of fragments. Through such connection what threatened merely dead weight (Harmon's drowning body) or simply waste matter (Venus' dismembered bones), acquires the possibility both of new life

and new meaning. That which floated lifeless in the water is reconnected into life; the dry bone has been recalled to life.

Wrayburn, similarly, undergoes the baptism into life by discovering in himself the need for commitment, for sharing, for meaning, and by discovering, at last, utterance as authentic expression. Because his existence has been more thoroughly deadened, however, the struggle for connection, for language to give voice to what has been battered most of all—the desire for exchange, for human trust—requires the assistance of those around him. It needs Jenny Wren actually to speak the word for which Wrayburn strives, and Mortimer actually to execute intention; but the *desire* for the utterance and for its fulfilment through marriage lies within Wrayburn himself. The word 'wife', whose unspoken couplement is 'husband' effectively signifies the reaching out of self towards other, the realization of being through relation. Wrayburn's redemption, like Harmon's, and unlike Sidney Carton's in *A Tale of Two Cities,* is achieved not by giving up life but by entering more fully into it.

Everything shows, declared Dickens in a letter of 1858, "that you can't shut out the world; that you are in it, to be of it; that you get into a false position the moment you try to sever yourself from it."[26] The act of severance, in effect, condemns humankind to the nightmare of solipsistic living; the responsibility of each for each faces denial and the negation of any integrated and mutual living becomes the primary condition of urban social existence. In the face of separateness, therefore, connection proposes itself as the imaginative act which breaches the gulf between self and other, word and life, and which in making them conjunct brings human being to humankind. "The deepest need of man," as Erich Fromm has after all declared, "is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness." The "absolute failure to achieve this aim," he concludes, "means insanity."[27] Without the act of connection—the means by which we remember ourselves and each other—we fail to re/member our world. The man without memory, doomed to re-enact the mistakes of his past not only lives *without* a past (the Veneerings are "bran-new people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter

of London" (*Our Mutual Friend*, p. 48), but lives without knowledge, without selfhood and, ultimately, without being at all.

DIS/COVERING DISCOURSE: REALITY BEYOND THE FORMS OF REALISM

> I have had glimpses . . . of
> things submerged.
>
> —*A Tale of Two Cities*

The Novel's primary reality is its primary existence as a verbal matrix—a gesture of sign and symbol; yet simultaneously its reality introjects into another plane, extends beyond the confines of its own purely formal structure. It confronts, in effect, what lies *beyond* the text. As a discourse shared between author and reader, it yields itself as a transactive experience, an exchange shared between the two whose point of intersection lies in acknowledged community: shared culture, shared history, shared experience. Literature as Georges Bataille has declared "is communication."[1] The black marks on the white page are recoverable as "the co-ordinates of human existence"[2] only through a process of connection which sees the text as a product of relations—the interweaving of social, historical and cultural traces. The Novel, in effect, also has reality as a dynamic cultural compound.

To explicate what 'realism' might mean, therefore, demands more than simply the explication of formal categories.[3] Dependent as the Novel—and indeed all discourse—is on "the existence . . . of a continuous culture that links up author and reader,"[4] its essential realism, finds its etymological root in that which exists ('in reality'). It defies category, abjures precept and cannot be gauged by the terms of paradigm and precept alone. In the event it is discoverable only as multiplicity. Theoretical frameworks whose primary impulse directs them towards definition, the imperative to catalogue and categorize, inevitably strive to funnel multiplicity into oneness, to channel the "myriad forms"[5] of life into the contours of a specific aesthetic. Critical practice converts realism into strategy—a principle of shaping and selection—which acquires definition principally through conformity—

how it *confirms* certain received modes of critical thinking and perception.

When evaluation takes place as the outcome of an applied (and predetermined) theoretic, however, the actual practice of realism, founded in essential diversity, defies the scope of the (critical) concept. Although organized *as* form it nevertheless struggles to be released from form, from the fixity of the text, and to effect an entrée into "the diachronic process of inter-relations in which human capacities develop."[6] The co-ordination of words which constitutes the text cannot in themselves provide the sole axis either of meaning or interpretation.[7] Rather, the words act as a trajectory which extends into something beyond the formulation of a semantic infrastructure, which tries to release itself from the prisonhouse of language and open itself up to lived human experience.

Almost by definition, therefore, theoretical constructs propose only to delimit and constrain what in fact constantly strives to defy both limitation and constraint. Demanding to be read as a form of reality novelistic realism moves across boundaries, finds its most cogent expression by shattering formulas. Its imperatives are not only aesthetic but social, moral and political; its commitment is not only to the text, to its own fictionality, but rather to both of these as they attempt to mediate reality. Fictional linguistic structures, in other words, undertake the "interpretation of human life in its fullest social sense."[8] Realism, consequently, offers an ontological interrogation of society, and literary judgements, therefore, presume upon an implicit evaluation of that society. The novelist, as Steven Marcus has indicated, effects a "quarrel . . . with his own society" and proposes that the critic "prosecute that quarrel."[9]

In *Dombey and Son*, Dickens had called for "a good spirit who would take the house-tops off . . . and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from midst their homes" (p. 601). In *Bleak House, Great Expectations, and Our Mutual Friend* Dickens himself performs precisely the task he urged. The dark shapes which issue from the pages of his

novels emerge from the murky depths which belie respectability: "Instantly the ghost passed once more and was gone. What *was* it?" (*G.E.*, p. 259). The dark shadows which will not be banished are in fact no other than the underside of genteel life. The "stagnant commercialism"[10] of Satis House, and the pride, hauteur and stateliness of Estella have their source and origin in oppression, crime and murder; ideals of hearth and home underpinned by the tyranny of a monstrous patriarchy, ideals of industry and progress harnessed to wholesale exploitation. The artist, declared Dickens, sees "into the heart of things";[11] and in this respect his own novels penetrate into regions often obscured and dim, and dis/cover there, persecution, domination and slavery as the obverse of a society founded on principles of power, mastery and aggression. The Captains of Industry are in fact discovered as Dogs of War—scavengers who prey on the dead and make corpses of the living, who "amass [both] scalps and money."[12] Hence, Veneering prospers "exeedingly upon the Harmon murder" and turns it to "account" (p. 180); Podsnap, although he "highly disapproved of Bodies in rivers as ineligible topics" nevertheless has "a share in this affair which made him a part proprietor" (p. 181). Their only allegiances, in effect, are to investment and profit. Hence, in *Great Expectations*, Wemmick warns Pip:

> You may get cheated, robbed, and murdered, in London . . . there's not much bad blood about. They'll do it, if there's anything to be got by it. (p. 195)

In the bitter "battle of all against all"[13] the forces of competiton enlist merely mercenaries—

> 'Capitalists' because they live upon a civilisation to which they contribute nothing—and . . . 'anarchists' because they are ready to destroy the civilisation which bore and nourished them.[14]

Realism, in other words, does not circumscribe a merely abstract universe. Rather it proscribes interaction, an engagement with the world and thus with the entire corpus of society, history, politics and morality. Far from being end-stopped the realistic novel exists as a fundamentally open-ended discourse. Its world extends into the world

beyond the text. Philip Collins has spoken of Dickens' capacity to create passages in his novels which are no more than "happy little irrelevanc[ies]";[15] and he quotes the description given of Mr Grubble and his kin in *Bleak House:*

> "If you please miss, his wife is a beau-tiful woman, but she broke her ankle and it never joined. And her brother's the sawyer that was put in the cage miss, and they expect he'll drink himself to death entirely on beer." (p. 457)

The passage, declares Collins, "does not (as far as I can see) relate to any of the themes of the novel, nor does it advance the plot or tell us anything about a character who matters to us."[16] Ordinarily, as Susan Horton explains, the expectation upon reading a novel is that "after the first few chapters . . . the population of that novel will remain stable."[17] In Dickens' novels, however, that expectation is thwarted; the novels function not as self-enclosed space but rather open out to suggest worlds which lie beyond their own (fictional) edges, point towards all the lives, stories, texts they do *not* tell. Dickens' "peripheral vision"[18] points to the fact that the world of the novel is not entire, is not complete; that it moves into other worlds and penetrates other lives. Conventional strategies, in creating the *illusion* of totality and completeness, maintain what Ermath has termed "the *consensus* of realism"[19] but in defiance of the reality they purport to represent. By trespassing across the boundaries of fictional consensus, by establishing points of departure which cross over the edges of fiction and text, Dickens directs the reader to the continuity between text and world rather than their absolute separation. The characters and situations located at the edge of his texts indicate that no clear division exists between where the text leaves off and where 'the world' begins; rather each interrupts the other, makes the borders separating them, fluid.

In challenging more conventional fictional structures, however, Dickens comes, inevitably, to challenge the category of (conventional) realism itself. To adopt Malcoln Bradbury's words, his novels sacrifice "to life rather than to form or convention."[20] They effect, in other

words, an interrogation of themselves as fiction and attempt to move beyond fiction—even if, finally, such an attempt forces a break with orthodox realism and with orthodox structures of representation.

Thus, when Mortimer undertakes the task, in *Our Mutual Friend,* to tell the story of "the man from Somewhere" (p. 55), he proceeds by opposing the dictates of narrative telling with the need to convey what lies beyond merely aesthetic formula. In order to approach the truth he must "destroy romance" (p. 55) and subvert its implicit capacity for distortion—the channelling of complex human personalities and actions into stereotypes ("A character whom the versifiers and novelists call Another" [p. 56]). By drawing deliberate attention to the artifice of conventional narrative—"we must now return as the novelists say, and as we all wish they wouldn't" (p. 57)—Mortimer draws attention to the limitations of any proposed schematization of experience, to the social, economic and psychological forces—the reality—which it denies.

Barthes declares that "there is no art in the West which does not point a finger at its own mask";[21] yet Mortimer's gesture of pointing, a technique of telling which turns the finger against its own unreality —serves not to *deny* reality or to exclude it but paradoxically works to speak more completely of it. In revealing the emptiness of mere formulation Mortimer in fact comes to name conventional categories of omission—regions of human experience left to silence and unexplored by orthodox modes of representation.

Indeed, in 1855 Dickens wrote privately that "mere form and conventionalities usurp, in English art as in English government and social relations, the place of living force and truth."[22] In seeking to challenge form and convention, therefore, Dickens seeks to probe more deeply into what each of these fail to locate—the realities at the edge, realities beyond their frame of reference. Indeed, as Bruce Kawin[23] suggests, when a text pays attention to itself as text, it engages in an exploration precisely of what is *not* text, in other words, in an exploration of reality; by opening itself to what is *not* there it signals the place of what is other than itself, what lies at the edge of discourse (reality).

Dickens' novels thus attempt to inscribe categories of human experience pushed into the dark space beyond the limiting frames of 'the real'. In undertaking this task, however, they necessarily align themselves against conventional modes of discourse—and simultaneously against conventional modes of perceiving 'the real' ("Who represents nature?" asked James).[24] In disrupting expectations—the reader's sense of narrative *and* of reality—Dickens calls into question the adequacy (or inadequacy) of normal perception and the type of mimetic activity it proposes. In effect, he counters the notion that "what makes up the real world is restricted to the visible exterior of the mid-Victorian life of London as it was lived . . . by the purest strain of the bourgeoisie";[25] the notion that

> the world got up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past five, and dined at seven; (*OMF*), p. 174)

and that these bounds alone circumscribe what any 'realistic' art can adequately express:

> Literature; large print, respectfully descriptive of getting up at eight, shaving close at a quarter past, breakfasting at nine, going to the City at ten, coming home at half past five, and dining at seven. (*OMF*, p. 174)

Dickens' art, in other words, proposes access to what the art of surface representation denies.[26] The suggestion that realism functions as a mirror which reflects life implies the exclusion of what is incapable of being reflected, that is, anything which exists below surface, what lies beneath external appearance. The mirror does not grant access to life but merely to *things*, to physical details, concrete facts. Hence, the "great looking-glass" at the Veneerings

> Reflects the new Veneering crest, in gold and eke in silver. . . . Reflects Veneering; forty, wavy-haired, dark, tending to corpulence. . . . Reflects Mrs Veneering; fair, aquiline nosed and fingered, . . . gorgeous in raiment and jewels. . . . Reflects Podsnap; prosperously feeding, two little light-coloured wiry wings, one on either side of his else bald head. (p. 52)

The mirror, in effect, does not reflect the hidden dimensions which underlie "the state of high varnish and polish" (p. 48)—the world, in John Romano's terms, "of mud, filth and decay, instinctual and violent and pervaded by death"[27] which belies the foundations of an acquisitive and materialistic society.

Thus, the configuration of seemingly grotesque images in Dickens' novels ("lawyers lie like maggots in nuts" [*B.H.*, p. 119]), and often unexpected metaphoric constructions ("the dead wall of her face" [*G.E.*, p. 109]), serve not to detract from a perception of the truth but rather to direct perception *towards* truth, to guide the reader to what Pickwich called "the truths which lie beyond," and which Frieda Grafe has latterly characterized as "the repressed, censored portion of the 'this side' of things."[28] Hence, if Dickens releases the reader from one mode of realism—from one mode of perception—it is only to the extent that he permits access to another: a realism which articulates realities both unnamed and unnameable by strategies of orthodox discourse, realities, in effect, which have been traditionally "silenced by culture."[29]

The seemingly non-representational qualities of Dickens' novels search, therefore, to dis/cover regions of human experience pushed to the edge of conventional signifying practices and hence to the edge of human consciousness itself. The apparent dis/order of his descriptions fractures the dominant structures of unity, completion, wholeness and, simultaneously, fragments the syntax of cultural order. Trollope, indeed, judged Dickens' style to be "jerky, ungrammatical and created by himself in defiance of rules";[30] yet as Carlyle's Teufelsdrockh discovers, if humankind is to have the chance of realizing itself once more the old dead forms of language must be sloughed off. The "rags and tatters of old Symbols"[31] which hide from humankind its own deformities and which cover over what they purport to reveal, must be torn away. Dickens, in effect, must "fragment the old text of culture"[32] in order to lay bare its underlying structures, must dis/cover what the terms of public discourse have served to conceal. The grotesque in other words—or what has been called the grotesque in Dickens' art—thus proves to be

the pattern of experience; the dismembered, partial and splintered selves which litter his novels violate "the most cherished of all human unities: the unity of character"[33] and defy the cultural "celebration of the autonomous personality";[34] but in doing so they point to a deeper underlying structure of human experience: the realization of how tenuous is the hold on any integrated human living in a largely inhuman society.[35]

Hence, in *Great Expectations* Wemmick is both "the right twin and . . . the wrong twin" (p. 404). Effecting a complete severance between his "Walworth sentiments" and his "official sentiments" (p. 310), he attempts to divide and totally separate the two aspects of his life—to live, in fact, as two different people. Behind the hoisted drawbridge he serves as a caring son, complete with "a gentle heart" (p. 423) and a touching devotion; the "hard face," notes Pip, "really softened" (p. 230). Beyond the drawbridge, however, as he moves closer and closer to the City "by degrees Wemmick got dryer and harder" (p. 232) until he assumes once more the impassive mask of his profession, a dry "wooden face" (p. 196) whose "appearance of smiling" is "merely mechanical" (p. o93). The drawbridge thus serves as a point of symbolic demarcation. Once raised it "cut[s] off . . . communication" (p. 229) and serves to separate Wemmick's two lives—the life of "private and personal capacities" (p. 314) and the life of "the office" (p. 231). Like Jaggers and the Aged, "the two," declares Wemmick, "must not be confounded together" (p. 310).

In proposing the need to sever the standards of the marketplace—"get hold of portable property" (p. 224)—from categories of personal living, Wemmick's divided existence actually gives evidence to the inherent incompatibility between an engagement in the economic process—"no feelings here" (p. 427)—and the exercise of human (and humane) qualities. The Castle at Walworth may offer a refuge, a means by which to salvage human relationships, but its existence brings into question the nature of a society which lies outside its protective walls; a society, in effect, hostile to the expression—and the very existence—of whatever human feelings, human warmth and human trust may be preserved

inside the Castle. Constructed primarily "with the idea of fortifications" in mind, and imagined by Wemmick as a "little place besieged" (p. 229) the place at Walworth suggests that the reserves of commitment and fellowship given place there face decimation at the hands of a social mechanism which repulses the attempt at intimacy—"it's no use my boy. I'm only a subordinate" (p. 281)—and which both repudiate and castigates human sentiment:

> "A man can't help his feelings, Mr Wemmick," pleaded Mike.
> "His what?" demanded Wemmick, quite savagely. (p. 427)

Ironically, however, the very enemy to sentiment and feeling which Wemmick attempts to lock out from the castle and against which he raises his drawbridge, is in fact no other than the 'enemy' he carries within himself—the "wrong twin" (p. 404), that part of himself which lives among the "Newgate cobwebs" (p. 230) and which cannot be brushed away. He cannot, finally, cut himself off from himself. At best Wemmick can splinter and fragment his selfhood and segregate portions of himself from other portions of himself, but in experiencing himself as a series of incomplete and isolated parts he forgoes the hope of any integrated being, loses his sense of personal wholeness.

The deliberate suppression of vitality and animation which characterizes his legal persona—"I feel that I have to screw myself up when I done with [Jaggers]" (p. 404), he exclaims—cannot ultimately be acted out in divorce from the rest of his life. Although he practises self-division as a strategy of survival, as an attempt to preserve the sense of community and commitment lost to Jaggers—"he seemed to bring the office home with him," and his home, indeed, has an only austere "official look" (p. 234) to it—Wemmick ultimately participates in the violation of himself as a complete individual, commits himself to the dis/eased living of urban society. "Culture," Michael Meakin has declared, "must be the whole man not just part of a man"[36] or it will submit to fragmentation and disintegration. For when inner being faces erosion what remains to humankind is only an incomplete and partial existence, a condition of

living which signifies the sickness of humanity's "broken soul," the schiz/phrenos of the utterly divided man.[37]

Thus, Wemmick's Castle offers only a precariously established sanctuary. Precisely the qualities which make it a fortress—the isolation which impresses self-division more deeply within Wemmick, and its (mock) fortifications—serve to undermine its efficacy as a place of spiritual refuge.

> Presently the Stinger went off with a Bang that shook the crazy little box of a cottage as if it must fall to pieces. (p. 231)

Self-containment, and self-sufficiency, although intended as the means of self-preservation propose no real solution and, in fact, suggest their own dangers. To live in the Castle is to live constantly imperilled. The Aged threatens not only to destroy himself but indeed the entire wooden construction—

> as he was always on the verge of putting either his head or the newspaper into [the candles], he required as much watching as a powder mill. (p. 316)

By dividing himself up into separate portions Wemmick mitigates the effects of a complete professional inhumanity but only at the cost of estranging himself from the possibility of any truly authentic life. Increasingly, his strategy of self-preservation corrodes whatever genuinely remains of Wemmick the man. His courtship of Miss Skiffins suggests the inroads of mechanicalness have penetrated deep into his heart. His choice of a companions, after all, is a woman "possessed of portable property" (p. 313), and herself, like the 'official' Wemmick, "of a wooden appearance" (p. 313). Ultimately, their embraces, as Grahame Smith suggests, resemble "the mating gestures of two puppets."[38]

Thus, Wemmick reveals that violence cannot be perpetrated against a part of human integrity without affecting the whole. Wemmick cannot subject simply a part of himself to a process of instrumentalization without implicating his entire being; and, indeed, slowly but surely the dis/ease of the part infects the whole. Increasingly, Wemmick loses his

remaining reserves of heart and substitutes a dehumanizing business mentality. He "would put down a five pound note" (p. 461) to get Magwitch out of the condemned cell, evaluating life according to pecuniary measures; and indeed, his primary concern remains not with Magwitch the *man* who is to be sacrificed—rather "what I look at," he says, "is the sacrifice of so much portable property" (p. 461).

Joseph Gold has commented that Wemmick's response actually makes him "one of the most integrated characters in the fiction." Wemmick is not, he declares, a "social worker or a revolutionary" (whatever that may have to do with the matter), "he is a professional and he does a professional job." "Would the critic," he asks, "have a surgeon return home from the hospital and practice on his family or regard them as aneasthetised . . . or conversely . . . weep at every case brought to the operating table?"[39] Apart from the fact that the analogy is flawed —a doctor's function (his "profession") is to save others whereas Wemmick's profession participates in the active denial and ab/use of others —what remains more fundamentally at issue than whether a character is to be admired for his techniques of survival is the fact that he must have such strategies enjoined upon him at all.

Barnard's Inn, replete with "dry rot and wet rot and all the silent rots that rot in neglected roof and cellar" impinges upon Wemmick's consciousness as a remnant of country living: "'Ah!' said he, mistaking me; 'the retirement reminds you of the country. So it does me;" (p. 197), but Wemmick, lawyer's clerk and man of the City, no longer 'knows' the country, no longer knows nature, and lives alienated from both. He attempts to live as best he can given unnatural conditions, but the grasp he has upon any natural and wholesome life grows increasingly slack. At the beginning of the novel Pip observes him "walking in a self-contained way" (p. 196); and at the conclusion of the novel he appears "even tighter than usual" (p. 462), his marriage offering little hope or promise of any joyous release:

> Mrs Wemmick no longer unwound Wemmick's arm when it adapted itself to her figure but sat in a high-backed chair against the window like a violoncello in its case and submitted to be embraced as that melodious instrument might have done. (p. 464)

The split character remains not only divided from himself but from nature itself. In splitting himself, as Bakhtin notes,[40] he has ceased to coincide with himself. His existence becomes not simply eccentric but actaually ex/centric, losing all access to the vital centre of self, the basis of viable human being. Hence if Wemmick as a character appears somewhat 'mechanical', it is as Grahame Smith declares "because an inhuman dichotomy is the key, the symbolic nature of his reality";[41] if he appears to have been diminished by caricature it is precisely because he has "already been diminished by life."[42]

The techniques of seeming unreality, in effect, "make the reader see," as Tennyson said of Carlyle's work, "as he has never seen before what is actually there."[43] In each of the three novels under consideration Dickens centres his art upon what, indeed, is "actually there." Nicolai Hartmann has declared that what the arts "are in their essence they can only be in the framework of the historical reality which gave them birth"; they cannot "cut themselves off from life."[44] In this respect, Dickens' novels become 'realistic' only as the reader permits their engagement in larger social, political and moral contexts, in categories of lived human experience. Because the novels lack directly articulated patterns of theme and action, descriptions of behaviour and situations may initially appear as merely "excrescent" (or unreal), but the key to intelligibility lies in the discovery of "hidden structures" which make them intelligible.[45] Often, however, the inability to come to terms with their 'realism' signals a deeper inability to come to terms with the forms of reality (the "hidden structures"), which their art dis/covers. Richard Ohmann, for example, has spoken of the possibility that "since the bourgeoisie realies for its comfort on the discomfort of others it has good reasons for cloaking or ignoring the realities of social process and it looks away from labour and economic activity to find beauty."[46] The way in which art tends to be interpreted, he suggests, offers the critic who does not wish to probe too deeply "a means of freedom *from* society."[47]

In the final analysis, however, the images of twitching and

distorted bodies which populate Dickens' novels—"dropping half a dozen pieces of himself while he tried in vain to pick one up" (*OMF*, p. 603)[48] —and what Ghent has characterized as the nervous, galvanic life of 'things'[49]—Pip's bed becomes a "despotic monster . . . squeezing the wretched little washstand in quite a Divinely Righteous manner" (*G.E.*, p. 379)—can be understood only as images of ourselves, the dark shapes, brooding and obscure of our own realities. In dismantling the forms of orthodox realism his novels transgress the known territories of the real and chart a voyage of discovery into the *terra incognita* of urban industrial society. Breaking through the boundaries of what we thought we knew they discover what we did not know at all; realities hidden from view and often from consciousness which may be driven ever further underground, buried ever more deeply beneath wealth, complacency and respectability, but never driven quite away. Dickens' novels, in other words, lead to the dark "pit of insecurity beneath the surface of life,"[50] betray the rhetoric of humanism as a rhetoric underscored at every point by an ideology of dehumanization.[51] In *Bleak House*, Mrs Jellyby and Mr Quale "held a discussion . . . of which the subject seemed to be—if I understood it—the Brotherhood of Humanity; and gave utterance to some beautiful sentiments" (p. 41). 'Man' may indeed be a higher creature but in the practical details of trade and commerce 'men' (and women) become as expendable as lumps of dead meat. As he walks through Smithfield market "all asmear with fat and blood and foam" (p. 189), Pip comes across Newgate where he is promised that "'four on 'em' would come out at that door the day after tomorrow at eight in the morning to be killed in a row" (p. 190). Indeed, one of the clients appealing for Jaggers' services proposes that all other lawyers view their legal business as mere dealings with meat scraps—"Oh Oh Jaggerth, Jaggerth, Jaggerth! all otherth ith Cag-Maggerth" (p. 190).[52]

Hence, the judgement that Dickens' art operates largely through techniques of unreality or exaggeration signals more accurately, perhaps, a society cut off from a perception of itself, a society cut off from any knowledge of itself.[53] In 1844, for example, Engels spoke of the

ability of the prosperous classes to practice a "systematic . . . shutting out" and "tender . . . concealment"[54] of all that threatened to offend them—even if, in the event, they themselves produced the very conditions which offended. Similarly, *The Times* of the same year spoke not merely of the "wounds of want" but specifically of the "*unknown* wounds of want,"[55] wounds daily exposed to the City's view but which the City did not care to see. The issue, in other words, was not simply that the notorious Two Nations existed but rather that "one half of mankind lives without knowing how the other half dies";[56] that respectable society did not wish[57] to open its eyes to what lay before it and all around it—to the conditions produced and still being produced by its own 'respectable' dealings.

Hence, Podsnap in *Our Mutual Friend* moves amid a world he refuses either to see or acknowledge. Eminently "well-satisfied with most things and above all other things with himself" (p. 174) he prefers to ignore what may disturb complacency; for in a society where "some half a dozen people had died lately in the streets of starvation" (p. 187) self-satisfaction is made possible only at the cost of suppressing all social consciousness.[58] Although "the Inquests and Registrar's returns" (p. 187) certify the circumstance *as fact*, Podsnap blandly assuages its devastating implications:[59] "I don't believe it" (p. 187). He not only achieves the ability to shut out what he does not wish to see but in fact also lays claim to the quite common ability not to 'see' at all.

> The meek man . . . suggested that there must be something appallingly wrong somewhere.
> "Where?" said Mr Podsnap. (p. 187)

His final distinction, however, comes with the ability to jettison whatever he does not wish to believe into the region of non-existence. With a "peculiar flourish of his right arm" he clears the world "of its most difficult problems by sweeping them behind him (and consequently clear away)" (p. 174)[60] until nothing remains of the world except a tiny Podsnappian portion of the sceptred isle. "With his favourite right arm flourish he put the rest of Europe and the whole of Asia, Africa and

America nowhere" (p. 180).

In *Bleak House*, Mrs Jellyby's "telescopic philanthropy" (p. 34) similarly serves as a means of distancing or escaping from the consciousness of localized wrongs.[61] Her activities help to shield her from knowledge—she sees "nothing nearer than Africa"; and poor Jo, "wholly unconnected with Borrioboola-Gha"—"Homely filth begrimes him, homely parasites devour him, homely sores are in him, homely rags are on him" (p. 564)—remains safely beyond her scope of vision. Channelling her energies into activities which redirect focus away from her own society, she lapses into a convenient proclivity to avert her eyes from the social and existential barbarities being committed every day around her. Looking far away she remains indifferent not only to the sufferings of poor Jo the pauper but to those of her own children.

> As we came into Mrs Jellyby's presence one of the poor little things fell downstairs—down a whole flight (as it sounded to me) with a great noise. (p. 37)

In the course of the evening, despite a daughter "jaded and unhealthy-looking" (p. 37), the appearance of Peepy with "wounded knees" (p. 39), and the "constant apparation of noses and fingers in situations of danger between the hinges of the doors" (p. 40), Mrs Jellyby never loses her peace for a moment, remains serenely indifferent throughout. Shrouded in a veil of non-seeing she discovers nothing to disturb "the evenness of her disposition" (p. 40) and preserves a protective and self-sufficient barrier of equanimity through which nothing of the real world may penetrate.

"Ardwick," as Cooke Taylor declares in his travelogue of 1841, "knows less about Ancoats than it does about China and feels more interested in the condition of New Zealand than of Little Ireland."[62] Podsnap and Mrs Jellyby, in other words, are not simply monstrous creations; rather what remains monstrous is the complicity of each in unchecked evils—evils which, despite doing nothing to support or condone, they do nothing to alleviate and which, indeed, their acquiescence helps to perpetuate. Sheltered from evils they refuse to see—Cooke Taylor,

again, describes how the destitute remained "less known to their wealthy neighbours . . . than the inhabitants of New Zealand or Kamtschatka"[63]—the Podsnaps and Jellybys of the world assume their release from it and from any implication in it; they assume release, in effect, from any personal responsibility *for* it. Hence, Podsnap not only denies the possibility of starvation but adds that if it *does* occur the fault is not his but "lies with the sufferers themselves." Carlyle's notion of the "wondrous . . . bonds that unite us one and all"—the "soft binding of Love" and the "iron chaining of Necessity"[64]—remain unperceived and unacknowledged. Human commitment remains an abstraction and human community impossible.

The general inability to perceive connections in fact suggests a society not only incapable of perceiving itself, of understanding itself as a network of interrelations ("What connexion can there be?"[*B.H.*, p. 197]),[65] but active in attempting to *sever* relations, to *deny* connections. Thus, in *Great Expectations* Pip feels himself increasingly withdrawn from any fundamental implication in, or responsibility for, Magwitch. "If I had often thought before with something allied to shame of my companionship with the fugitive," he reflects, "my comfort was, that it happened a long time ago, and that he had doubtless been transported a long way off and that he was dead to me" (p. 173). In effect, Pip tries to posit relationship only as absence; yet his wealth—the wealth of a genteel class—is built precisely upon the labour of Magwitch and those like him. His life of idleness and wealth rests, in effect, on the expenditure of another human being:

> I lived rough, that you should live smooth; I worked hard that you should be above work. (p. 337)

Literally as well as metaphorically, Magwitch emerges from the darkness beneath. "The abyss" which Pip had thought separated himself and Estella from "the taint of prison and crime" (p. 340) in fact unites them; the creature from "the marshes" (p. 39) serves both as source and origin of what they are and what they have. As Estella's biological father and Pip's symbolic father—

> Look'ee here, Pip. I'm your second father. You're my son. . . . I've made a gentleman of you! (p. 337)

—he explodes the myth of individualism and economic self-sufficiency. The self-made man does not exist.[66] The gentleman who does not work for his wealth—and by definition a "gentleman" cannot: "I have been bred to no calling and I am fit for nothing" (p. 357) declares Pip—lives upon the work of others. For each rich man, stated Southey, a "hundred . . . are sacrificed body and soul."[67] In the most basic human terms Pip thus remains implicated in (and guilty of), an obscene parasitical living. Living off the fat of the land means, in the end, living off Magwitch, society's outcast.

Pip's real guilt, therefore, rests upon both his desire for, and his acceptance of, great expectations. In embracing them he condones, accepts, and becomes responsible for what Ghent has described as the "making of Magwitches,"[68] a social process which transforms human beings into instruments of use, which denies the capacity for humanity in another. The desire for power which his desire for money embodies makes Pip guilty of the desire to feel superior to others (regardless of his or their innate qualities)—

> As I passed the church I felt (as I had felt during service in the morning) a sublime compassion for the poor creatures who were destined go go there, Sunday after Sunday all their lives through, and to lie obscurely at last among the low green mounds (p. 173)

—mere beasts of the field, indeed. Allowing himself to feel more worthy than the villagers he comes to feel that his own human status is somehow better than theirs. His first satisfaction, upon acquiring his new wealth is to feel "the stupendous power of money"—that it had "morally laid upon his back, Trabb's boy" (p. 178). What exists as his triumph, however, exists fundamentally as another's reduction. Triumph—rising above others—does not rest upon his moral or spiritual enlargement but rather upon self-aggrandisement, the process of belittling others.

In embracing the values of a materialistic society and in accepting its *modus vivendi* (competition), Pip inevitably embraces and accepts

the acts of social aggression which society commits. The greatest crime of all, indeed, remains the one which he and his adoptive class commit every day—"to murder in the socially chronic fashion . . . which consists in the dehumanization of the weak, or in moral acquiescence in such murder."[69] Living by the standards of a society built on a foundation of unnatural relations—master and mastered, oppressor and oppressed, tyrant and victim, rich and poor—Pip becomes not only answerable for the existence of Magwitch but for his brutalization. Given a social structure in which a person "can be successful only because others are not,"[70] in which 'success' finds its measure only as the mark of another's failure, the engagement in success entails treading others underfoot. The "mere warmint" (p. 336) whom society spurns ("The blood horses of them colonists might fling up the dust over me as I was walking" [p. 339]), actually provides the labour upon which it builds its empire. "Our ways are different ways" (p. 334), Pip attempts to tell Magwitch; but their difference is not after all their separation. Pip's participation in the social process ties him to Magwitch as inextricably as if they were indeed shackled together with chains—a relationship Pip comes slowly to see (though not without horror), when he recognizes in Magwitch a "burden" (p. 341) he must carry.

Although for Pip the recognition of connection comes late, for most it comes not at all. Unaware of the intricate network which binds individuals and forges its links between class and class respectable society remains oblivious of what underlies its own clean living, blind to the sub-stratum of poverty and decay which has soldered its fortune. Indeed, in 1855, Dickens felt compelled to write of England as

> a country . . . with an enormous black cloud of poverty in every town which is spreading and deepening every hour and not one man in two thousand knowing anything about, or even believing in, its existence.[71]

His own novels attempt to de/scribe the invisible traces written into the (social) structure—the subtext inscribed in the general text of society—and name it as its other: its hiddens, its beyonds, its unknowns.

Thus, when Snagsby, for example, "who has lived in London all his

life" (p. 227) and worked in its legal heartland penetrates the deep interlacing network of streets which lead to Tom-all-Alone's ("the desirable property . . . in Chancery" [p. 198]), he can "scarcely believe his senses" (p. 277). Confronted with what he did not know existed he can avail himself of its reality only in terms of starkest unreality—the haunting of nightmare, shadow and dream. The sheer and absolute otherness of what he experiences finds outlet in his consciousness only as the subject of vision. His descent leads him to a nightmare pit, the "infernal gulfs" (p. 277) of dark and unformed being. The crowd "hovers . . . like a dream of horrible faces" (p. 278), defying all coherent categories of shape, order and form. It "flows" (p. 278) like the black mud and corrupt waters which have become its element; and like the unwholesome fog which infects London "fades away . . . up the alleys and in the ruins" (p. 278). Snagsby, in effect, approaches an order of reality whose only release is through a language which overturns 'normal' modes of perception and orthodox descriptions of the 'real'. It achieves definition—however partial—only by organizing itself in opposition to public representations of reality. As "the blackest nightmare in the infernal stables" it proposes a realm of (human) experience sublimated by society and consciousness, concealed by the rhetoric of humanism and untapped by the discourse of politics, economics and science.[72]

Hence, if Dickens' novels appear to de/form the real, it is precisely because they speak of a deformed reality: a society which, beneath the "painted . . . picture of an ordered world"[73] conceals a maimed and disfigured humanity. The Smallweeds in *Bleak House*, for example, do not function simply as physical grotesques. Rather they dis/cover the spectres of Capitalism—alienation and loss, the loss of selfhood, of meaning, of humanity itself—not simply as abstraction but as actual modes of existence. Dickens prevails upon the twisted and contorted de/forms of the body to discover the soul. In offering the body in all its awkward, ungainly and ugly aspects he offers humanity at its most naked and exposed. Torn from beneath the wrappings that

disguise deformity and conceal mutilation the Smallweeds reveal what lies hidden beneath the veneer of civilized capitalism—not 'natural man' stripped of his civilizing influences but rather a humanity crushed and corrupted *by* civilization:[74] a humanity maimed and crippled and ground into unnatural being by a process of capital accumulation which counts on the calculated depletion of all human resources. "A secretary is worth so much in the market," declares Boffin in *Our Mutual Friend;* "a man of property like me is bound to consider the market-price" (p. 523). Under a similar subjection to the power of wealth Bella is not only willed away like a piece of property, a 'thing', but upon being courted by gentlemen who "were always lounging in and out of the City on questions of . . . par and premium and discount and three-quarters and seven-eighths" is paid tribute to "as if she were a compound of a fine girl, thorough-bred horse, well-built drag, and remarkable pipe" (p. 530). In Jaggers' office in *Great Expectations* this reduction achieves its most absolute and literal expression. The two masks which decorate his room were once men who have now become objects—"famous clients of ours" declares Wemmick, not simply "like him," he adds of one in particular; "it's himself you know" (p. 223). Displaying their heads like some primitive token—trophies taken from the legal battlefield—Jaggers the tribal "chief" (p. 404) reduces his former clients merely into symbols of his own success—"they got us a world of credit" (p. 223)—talismanic objects signifying his power, their depletion.

Thus, in their crippled and deformed state the Smallweeds in *Bleak House* live most completely as creatures of their society. Formed in its own monstrous image—the "Brute-god Mammon"[75]—they sacrifice all that is truly human: all claims of affection, all ties of friendship, all bonds of love. The "products of a monstrous barbarism masked as civilization," the quintessential "offspring of foggiest London"[76] they deny their human legacy and hence any fundamental humanity. Grandfather Smallweed "claws the air" (p. 331) verging on the edge of arrested evolution, a stoppage of any essentially human development. Without hope of creative release—he knows only "the first four rules of arithmetic and

a certain small collection of the hardest facts" (p. 257)—the possibility of any valid human selfhood retreats. Everything in his "mind was a grub at first and is a grub at last. It has never bred a single butterfly" (p. 257). Indeed, within this spiritually sterile genealogy descended in its time from a "horny-skinned, two-legged, money-getting species of spider" (p. 257), lineage proposes only a process of threatened recividation. Judy Smallweed, youngest of the brood, avails herself only of some indistinct and timeless "geological age" (p. 263) and appears "to date from the remotest periods" (p. 263). Subject to a form of prehistoric regression, she reverts to a type of prehuman existence. Claiming kinship with "an animal of another species" (p. 259) she exemplifies the general "family likeness to the monkey tribe" and indeed "might walk about the table-land on the top of a barrel-organ without exciting much remark as an unusual specimen" (p. 259).

Dickens dissects, in effect, the human realities of an inhuman system—one which, as Cooke Taylor noted, forces humankind to renounce its soul and assume "an aspect which ceases to be human."[77] Forced to work under the pressures of the city, Londoners, noted Engels, "have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city."[78] There exists, he declared, "something repulsive" in the turmoil of its streets, "something against which human nature rebels."[79] In R.D. Laing's words, "we are born into a world where alienation awaits us";[80] potentially human but, through the pressures of unnatural living, denied release into humanity.

Thus the Smallweed clan makes concrete the plight of the soul under capitalism—a social mechanism which isolates each in a prison of narrow self-seeking and cages humanity in the grave of private interest. Under bondage to Mammon the originator of the present Smallweed tribe, having internalized the values of his society (his "God was Compound Interest" [p. 257]), initiates a process of human deterioration. The Smallweeds, in effect, tell of a corrupted human psyche—humankind divorced not only from itself but from all capacity for being, from all

potential engagement in human mutuality, human giving, human creativity. The ethos of acquisition ("The property!—the property!—the property!" [p. 412]), premises the obverse of human involvement and human connection, proposes, indeed, human reduction—the resolution of the soul into "nothing but a human money-bag and meat-trough"[81] to which only a kind of devouring capacity remains. The Smallweeds article the contents of Krook's store with "ravenous little pens" (p. 414); while Vholes stuffs his briefcases out of "all regularity of form" until they appear "as the larger sorts of serpents are in their first gorged state" (p. 484).

Ultimately, like Jo, humankind devolves to the point where it "is of no order and no place; neither of the beasts nor of humanity" (p. 564); until finally, in Carlyle's phrase, "only a kind of Digestive, Mechanic life remains."[82] The hostile forces of profit and loss range themselves against human life and sever humankind from its own potential humanity. "Without work all life goes rotten," Albert Camus has declared; "But when work is soulless life stifles and dies."[83] Denied the joyous expression of an essentially creative praxis—the exercise of both rational and imaginative thought, communion through friendship, trust and affection; caught in a mechanism of exchange which remains purely mercenary, people lose, as Edward Bond has recently claimed, the capacity "to function as human beings at all."[84] Dead to all claims of human relation the Smallweeds thus act out only "the autonomous life of what is dead."[85] Gesticulating with "hands like the legs of a skeleton" (p. 334) and propped only on "spindle legs" (p. 258), Grandfather Smallweed gives evidence to a life of total impotence: a crippling of mind, body and spirit. Variously "a broken puppet" (p. 259), "a doll" (p. 267) and "a harlequin" (p. 267), he ultimately loses even these vestiges of human outline; absolved of the status even of mannequin—which imitates a vaguely human form—he deflates into "a mere clothes bag" (p. 259). No longer capable of sustaining external semblance he is reduced to an empty pile of clothes, surface collapsed in upon itself.

Hence, what was once human must now be "shaken up like a great

bottle and poked and punched like a great bolster" (p. 259), so that collapsed shapelessness may once more be returned to something vaguely resembling human form. Losing all access to inner being, humankind is threatened with the dissolution of any viable human identity—in effect with non-existence itself. In the place of human being it proposes only an assemblage of 'things'. Thus, Turveydrop, for example, exists only as the total of his accessories—

> He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuff-box, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but any touch of nature. (p. 171)

—as Carlyle's "charnel house of nature."[86]

What Dickens' novels propose, consequently, is a realism which makes visible the process of dehumanization implicit in the structures of capitalist thinking and practice—makes concrete the absence of any viable impulse towards complete human living. The images of apparent grotesquerie in fact serve as the revelation of a splintered, shattered and reduced humanity, a condition of existence whose only possible expression demands that textual wholeness be fragmented and which discovers in synechdochal incompleteness its most compelling forms of truth. "When our personal worlds are rediscovered," declares Laing, "we discover a shambles":

> Bodies half-formed, genitals dissociated from heart; heart severed from head. . . . Man cut off from his own mind, cut off equally from his own body.[87]

Nautre's "Small still voice," in Carlyle's words, "shall not, under terrible penalties, be disregarded. No man can depart from the truth without damage to himself."[88] Dickens' novels chart this damage; his realism gives rise to the ominous perception that the properties of a materialistic and acquisitive society undermine the basic faculties of human consciousness and threaten to destroy all human awareness of self, of other and of world. In constructing language anew Dickens dis/covers discourse in order to discover reality: the images of apparent unreality become, in effect, the most powerful tokens of truth. Indeed, the

revulsion often felt against the forms of a seemingly grotesque art may in fact signal, as Geoffrey Harpham explains, the realization that "in the midst of an overwhelming impression of monstrousness there is much we can recognise, much corrupted or shuffled familiarity."[89] The "most fantastic thing of all," hazards Chesterton, is after all "often the precise fact."[90] Hence, if Dickens' art "strikes to the soul like Reality"[91] as Dickens himself claimed art should, it is because it "kicks to bits the flimsy trellises and paper roses of soothing make-believe"[92] and confronts us with images of ourselves—our own humanity, our own realities. A culture which does not allow itself access to such vision, which does not allow itself to look clearly upon itself, refuses to look upon the realities it has itself constructed; it "is a culture," declares Cynthia Ozick, "of tragic delusion." Committing itself to unreality "it will sup on make believe"[93] and never know what it is, or can be, to be alive, will sicken into "the leprosy of unreality"[94] and perhaps awaken no more. In leaving us to the art of discovery Dickens leaves to us the hope of dis/covering not only truth but the hope of discovering ourselves—the hope of discovering humanity.

CANNIBAL FEASTING: THE W/HOLE REMAINS

"What right have they to butcher me?"
—Oliver Twist

In seeking to confront regions beyond the realm of public and official discourse—human experience located beyond the structures of empiricism, logic and functionality—language necessarily undertakes a quest into itself. Grappling with its own constructions it struggles against itself, against its own framework of semantics and grammar, and strives to reach, as Kristeva has suggested, "beyond the sentence."[1] The attempt to break through the dominant modes of discourse, however—the attempt, in effect, to break down the rule of language—opens language to new possibilities, allows it to move beyond the code of authority and to articulate what linguistic prescriptions ordinarily deny. The "established universe of discourse," as Marcuse has indicated, "bears throughout the marks of the specific modes of domination, organization, and manipulation to which the members of a society are subjected."[2] To challenge the terms of the linguistic code, therefore, challenges the terms of social rule and social order. The linearity of the sentence—the movement from statement to conclusion—codifies language (thought) and thus the ways in which society organizes perception and knowledge. It determines, in effect, "the coherence of our fundamental social code."[3] How we know and what we know arrange themselves as functions of (available) language—that is, in accordance to predetermined, prearranged and pre-established forms. The "choice of syntax and vocabulary," suggests Laing, "defines and circumscribes the manner in which 'facts' are to be experienced."[4]

Hence, the text which disrupts the laws of language—and therefore of representation—challenges the authority of prevailing modes of perception and disturbs categories of (social) reality. Disturbing the status of the Word as 'One': as "God, Law, Definition,"[5] in Kristeva's

terms, it not only usurps *linguistic* codes but challenges the rule of "God, authority and social law."[6] At the opening of *Bleak House*, for example, Dickens' description of the City discards the norms of grammatical transition, the government of noun and verb, and the order of the (narrational) past tense.

> London. Michaelmas term lately over and the Lord High Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. (*B.H.*, p. 5)

In doing so, however, it proposes not a denial of the *validity* of order but rather an attempt to reveal underlying structures of dis/order, society's 'rule' as essential misrule—

> "she's beauty nough—tsetup Shopofwomen—but rather larming kind—remindinmanfact—inconvenient woman—who *will* getout-ofbedandbawthestablishment—Shakespeare." (*OMF*, p. 572)

Breaking the barriers of semantics and grammar forces language to say "what it doesn't want to say,"[7] to articulate what lies beyond the limits of official language, official discourse. By fragmenting the unity of one-ness, Dickens' texts are released from fixity: language not as declaration but as exploration; language not as truth but, as Bakhtin[8] suggests, the *search* for truth. Losing the imperative of statement and definition it realizes the interrogative whose base is quest(ion). Thus, the text which violates the terms of monological discourse—which splinters 'character', 'subject', 'I'—ruptures both prevailing modes of of perception ('reality') and of textuality ('realism'); it refuses, in effect, "the bondage of definite form."[9]

Thus, when *Bleak House* stops mid-sentence, when *Great Expectations* offers two alternate endings and finds resolution in neither, and when *Our Mutual Friend* leaves unsolved its central mystery (who did kill Radcliffe?), Dickens refuses the prescriptions of closure, releases his texts into multiplicity. In presenting his fiction essentially as comedy he inscribes language as duality, makes it dialogical, "a discharge with two meanings between sense and nonsense."[10] The high level of non/sense in his novels—"Ma was talking . . . at her usual canter,

with arched head and mane, opened eyes and nostrils" (*OMF*, p. 182)—functions not, ~~however,~~ as a *lack* of sense but rather as Kucich explains, as "that which actively empties sense of its contents . . . which reveals the normal itself to be absurd."[11] It reveals the rhetoric of rationalism and realism as little more than covers for actual insanity,[12] the savage and brutal barbarity of a civilization wherein "normal men have killed perhaps one hundred million of their fellow-men in the last fifty years."[13]

By conflating seemingly disparate and irreconcilable elements Dickens dissects the structures of naming and permits the expression of what conventional signifying practices leave unnamed.

> He had the special peculiarity of some birds of prey that when he knitted his brows his ruffled crest stood highest. (*OMF*, p. 65)

He proposes not simply analogy whose basis is similitude but in fact *identity:* man not like a bird of prey but man *as* a bird of prey. His novels effect a rupture of the social and moral rhetoric which permits men to "eat people . . . kill people . . . make war . . . enslave others . . . dominate and degrade women" under the name of "being a true man—of being strong and not weak."[14] In effect, they refuse to abide by the prescriptions of social order and "social morality as well";[15] they offer, as Kristeva says, "protest."[16]

Hence, what Kincaid has called "the rhetoric of laughter"[17] in Dickens' novels faces cultural rejection—finds place, that is, only at the margin of 'seriousness', at the periphery of the Great Tradition—not because it parodies, not because it exposes man as he postures behind the rituals of tragedy and epic but, as Artaud declares, because it is "murder and revolution."[18] Dickens' novels detail a social insanity which only the disrupted forms of the seemingly monstrous—the forms, apparently of the grotesque and the unreal—can either comprehend or inscribe; they wither ideology into truth and reveal that in the battle for power the principle of social and economic bonding has resolved itself into what Carlyle termed "the primitive one of cannibal-

ism: that I can devour Thee."[19]

Bleak House, Great Expectations and *Our Mutual Friend* thus present the apparently symbolic and the apparently metaphoric as statements of actuality. What appear to be symbols and metaphors, in other words, "are *not* symbols and metaphors . . . but mean exactly what they say."[20] Images of devouring—of unclean feasting, of parasites, cannibals and vampires endlessly feeding—define a fundamental social and economic reality: a situation in which relentless economic laws set in motion a process of unnatural human consumption. In a "ruthless competitive society," declares Harald Fawkner, success and even survival itself, become possible "only at someone else's expense."[21] Thus, in *Our Mutual Friend,* "every bargain, by representing somebody's loss," acquires for Fledgeby, "a peculiar charm" (p. 324). Human relations devolve merely into the mechanics of utility—"Here is an instrument. Can I use it?" (p. 614)—while the principle of relation between individuals bases itself on purely mercenary considerations. Podsnap, "beginning with a good inheritance . . . had married a good inheritance" (p. 174); Fledgeby emerges from the "vast dark ante-chambers of the present world" (p. 320) only as the consequence of an unpaid bill.

When society functions by perceiving individuals as instruments subordinate to the imperative of accumulation, however, it engages in killing the human soul and systematically depleting the reserves of human being. In *Bleak House,* for example, Tulkinghorn considers Hortense as no more than a pure object of use, to be manipulated "as if she were any insensible instrument used in business" (p. 581). Similarly, in *Great Expectations* Pip comes to the awareness that he has in fact been ab/used of his human identity. Viewing him not as a person with individual human rights and feelings, Miss Havisham has practised upon him as a customary convenience, "a model with a mechanical heart" (p. 341). In *Our Mutual Friend,* when the Boffins decide to adopt an orphan, children become mere commodities of sale, units of (economic) exchange which glut the market. "Counterfeit stock got into circulation" and "genuine orphan-stock was surreptitiously withdrawn"; and ultimately, the one

"principle at the root of all these various operations was bargain and sale" (p. 224). Human considerations collapse under the weight of the Cash Nexus and people come to view one another simply as a means of possible sustenance, possible profit—"Come! I'll speculate! I'll invest a bow in you" (p. 90).

Thus, the often violent images with which Dickens' novels abound predicate an aggressive social system in which violence has become a normal way of life. Orlik's "I'm jiggered" hints at the possible enactment of dark and violent deeds. "He attached no definite meaning to the word," observes Pip, but used it to

> convey an idea of something savagely damaging. When I was younger I had had a general belief that if he had jiggered me personally he would have done it with a sharp and twisted hook. (p. 158)

Jaggers, moreover, whose name similarly hints at obscene possibilities, becomes the outlet of society's aggressive tendencies. He "seemed to bully his very sandwich as he ate it" (p. 194) and actually makes interrogation a way of life.

> He cross-examined his very wine when he had nothing else in hand. He held it between himself and the candle, tasted the port, rolled it in his mouth, swallowed it, looked at his glass again, smelt the port, tried it, drank it, filled again, and cross-examined the glass again. (p. 263)

In court, cross-examination in fact becomes a means of verbal assault and verges, indeed, on physical violence—

> [he] had a woman under examination or cross-examination . . . and was striking her, and the bench, and everybody present, with awe. (p. 225)

Access to power, in other words, rests on forms of social violence; the struggle for economic success on the savagery of economic individualism. In training for adulthood Pip and Estella play out the game of "beggar my neighbour" (p. 89), prepare in other words for life in a Cain and Abel world[22] where self-interest and the drive for self-enrichment hold absolute sway. In lieu of the primary human bonds of love, trust and

friendship, the operation of making money projects merely a "Scrunch or be Scrunched" (*OMF*, p. 537) philosophy, a social process which turns parent against child,[23] kin against kin.[24]

In replacing essentially human concerns with financial ones, ~~however~~, humankind becomes the veritable devourer of its own. In *Bleak House*, Chadband apostrophizes dead parents for having left orphans such as Jo to "the wolves and vultures and the wild dogs" (p. 322) who would rend and tear the weak and helpless; yet finally the wild and ravening crew of which he speaks is no other than the social collective itself. The cruel and savage predators who would prey upon the young and unprotected are no other than the inhabitants of urban society—and indeed include Chadband himself. He speaks, in effect, his own condemnation and ours; the place of "protection" which the family offers presupposes a society both hostile and "extraordinarily dangerous."[25] Thus only a "dark flat wilderness" (*G.E.*, p. 35) where convicts fight like "wild beasts" (p. 67) exists beyond the forge; in London the unsuspecting fall into "nets" (p. 364) and "traps" (p. 362)—"Suddenly—click—you're caught!" (p. 221): "mantraps" (p. 222) set by men for men.

In *Bleak House*, similarly, Chancery, institutionalized to act *in loco parentis* as the protector of the weak, the orphaned and the sick, in fact functions as no more than a snare to entangle those who pass through its Courts. The protector becomes the predator, the guardian merely a false patriarch ("with a foggy glory round his head" [p. 6]), who sits amid darkness and administers the rituals of oppression. The "one great principle of English law"—to "make money" (p. 482)—transforms benevolence into exploitation, trust into abuse. Having the weak and helpless placed under its care it proceeds to enrich itself "at their expense" (p. 422). The "various solicitors" in Jarndyce and Jarndyce "inherited it from their fathers who made a fortune by it" (p. 6).

In effect, Chancery enacts a process of authorized extortion, extracting all it can from its clients, draining them of all vital life. "My whole living was in it," exclaims Gridley, "and has been . . . shamefully sucked away" (p. 193). The instruments of legality become "awful

implements of . . . torture" (p. 121), and Chancery itself a "curtained sanctuary" in which rites of sacrifice are performed. Tulkinghorn, "a slow torturing kind of man" (p. 566) adept at extracting the lees of human worth acts as its "high priest" (p. 514). Volumnia Dedlock, indeed, believing that he is at "the head of a lodge" and "is made a perfect Idol of with candlesticks and trowels" (p. 502). When Snagsby approaches him, moreover, he comes as "a bowing and propitiatory little man" (p. 514) as if attempting to placate the tribal lord whose office is to keep the altar of human sacrifice well supplied. At Krook's rag and bottle shop the exact nature of Chancery's unclean rites are in fact made clear.

> One only had to fancy . . . that yonder bones in a corner, piled together and picked very clean, were the bones of clients. (p. 49)

Thus, in a society which organizes human relations according to strategies of competition—"where each, isolated . . . turned against his neighbour, clutches what he can get and cries 'Mine'" (p. 26)—anthrophagy comes to characterize its major activities. Capitalism, founded on a dynamics of "winners and losers" and operative through a system of domination and abasement, has evolved, declares Eli Sagan, as one of "the descendants of cannibalism."[27] In his novels, Dickens in fact shows that under the momentum of competition men live by eating one another—"the good consuming and consumed" (p. 489). Setting out into the savage wilderness of the economic world, consequently, Jobling in *Bleak House* must change in name to Weevle.[28] In order to chance survival in the market for jobs he must assume the character of a parasitic insect, a crustacean endlessly devouring, boring away at sources of life not its own. The human parasite, however, feeds essentially upon its own kind. Battening onto those too weak to resist it draws out their life and leaves them, finally, merely a drained and empty husk.

Thus, the legal system not only 'uses' its clients but effectively uses them up. They exist merely as so much matter, human material to be exploited and ultimately discarded. In 1846 *Punch* in fact offered the following definition of the legal practitioner—"Lawyer: an individual

who lives upon law as a certain animal might feed upon corrupt substances."[29]

Under the auspices of a purely formal, economic rationality human worth becomes accountable as nothing. Chadwick, for example, queried how much a child (the "non-aged") might be worth—whether more or less than nothing.[30] Human being as value disintegrates and the individual becomes a mere thing in the unnatural relations between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, between the cannibal and the victim. Hence, when Vholes attaches himself to Richard, he initiates a process of deadly and fatal feeding. He accepts Richard's invitation to dine not only in the guise of guest but as an inhuman, devouring organism. Never once removing "his eyes from his host's face" (p. 721), he assumes Richard not only as the dinner host but actually as host to an ugly parasitic consumption; Richard himself, in effect, becomes the active means of sustenance. Vholes eyes him hungrily as if he were "making a lingering meal of him" (p. 485) and, finally, leaves Richard empty, drained and at the point of death. As Jarndyce and Jarndyce comes to an end—consumed by costs which have gradually eaten away the entire estate—Vholes "gave one last gasp as if he had swallowed the last morsel of his client and his black buttoned-up unwholesome figure glided away" (p. 760).

Although Vholes presents himself as the guiding light of hope—a shepherd in the Valley of the Shadow of the Law, and a veritable means of spiritual salvation—"This desk is your rock, sir!" (p. 485)—he actually exists as a scavenger upon those in his care. His office smells of "unwholesome sheep" (p. 482), the decaying remains of those he has destroyed and whom he is slowly consuming. He echoes the life-giving office of St. Peter only by parody and inversion. When he raps the desk that is to be Richard's "rock," it sounds "as hollow as a coffin" (p. 485) and gives the impression only of "ashes . . . falling on ashes and dust on dust" (p. 486). The service he performs is not, after all, one of communion but one of death; when he leads Richard out into the street to ride with him he leads him only to the "gaunt pale horse" (p. 471) of death.

The injunction to depersonalize and dehumanize all sense of Other —for in the bonding of parasite and host all qualities of "loyalty and friendship" are "fatal" to it[31]—obliges Vholes to repudiate all sense of mutuality and reciprocal exchange and, finally, all sense of humanity itself. Caught in a momentum which attempts to capitalize on all human relationships Vholes in fact subjects himself to a horrifying spiritual and psychological damage. The cannibal who devours others not only dehumanizes other, he also comes to dehumanize himself. To live by the precepts of an inhuman and destructive dynamic proposes the slow strangulation of human selfhood, a destruction of the capacity for authentic human living. The man who kills others cannot, in the end, live without in some way killing himself, and thus Vholes, the destroyer of others in fact comes to inflict the most appalling forms of damage upon himself. Implicated in acts of "social murder"[32] he implicates himself, simultaneously, in an act "of suicide";[33] undergoing a veritable process of self-peeling he "takes off his close black gloves as if he were skinning his hands, lifts off his tight hat as if he were scalping himself" (p. 484). The cannibal, ultimately, cannibalizes himself.

Hence Vholes, finally, has only a "lifeless manner" (p. 481) and "bloodless quietude" (p. 485) remaining to him; like the pale horse of death to which he leads Richard, he is a creature of death, "bloodless and gaunt" (p. 720). The private space of the individual has not only been invaded by the social process but has been progressively whittled away and devoured by the hostile forces of non-being. The outer man—the social scavenger—preys upon the inner until only the w/hole remains: "a shrivelled, desiccated fragment of what a person can be."[34] Vholes, as the secret syllable at the centre of his hame suggests (V/holes), exists only as the hollow man, the vampire who exists merely as "present absence,"[35] the realization of *what is not*, the consuming vortex which absorbs all that *is*. Esther notes, indeed, that there is "something of the vampire in him" (p. 72). Living entirely in terms of exteriority and sharing with Tulkinghorn only the reality of outward form—the latter reveals "nothing but his shell" (p. 127), wears only the "usual expres-

sionless mask" (p. 147)—he deteriorates into a state of inner emptiness, a mask concealing nothing, inward void, an empty w/hole.

As Alan Kennedy has suggested, however, the figure "who is hollow in his heart, who is void within" is the figure "of absolute evil";[36] his existence presumes upon negation, the inverse of all that is vital, human and living. He is merely "sign without sense . . . a signifier without a signified"[37]—form without content, body without soul; an inhuman mechanism which requires to feed upon the subjective life in others.

Hence, Turveydrop, the man become\$ tailor's dummy, exists merely as a "state of elegance."

> He had a fur collar, and he had a padded breast to his coat . . . he had . . . a neckcloth on. . . . He had, under his arm, a hat of great size and weight . . . and in his hand a pair of white gloves. (p. 171)

Living purely as figure, a compound of "a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers and a wig" (p. 171), he becomes no more than a human effigy, a form of necrotic existence, which, having none of its own, must live off the life in others. Devoid of any authentic human resources—a "complex of things, of 'its'"[38]—he is sustained only by drawing upon other people's vitality, requires, indeed, the expenditure of another human being.

> He had married a meek dancing mistress . . . and had worked her to death, or had, at best, suffered her to work herself to death to maintain him in . . . his position. (p. 173)

Similarly, in keeping with his professed Drone Philosophy, Skimpole justifies the expense of thousands so that one may live well: proposing, in human terms, complicity in the most obscene forms of parasitical living. Skimpole, moreover, manages to infest even the most life-giving of environments in the novel, Bleak House itself. "Live and let live," he exclaims to Esther, "and let us live upon you" (p. 527). Richard and Ada offer merely the prospect of passing on a vicarious life; he abandons them when they degenerate in their power to do so. The human reality of others remains unacknowledged and their existence becomes a means

simply of feeding the voracious centre of self. Thus, Skimpole sells Jo for a sum of money. As mere dispensable matter he acquires value only as he provides a utilitarian function, that is, as he becomes a viable commodity of exchange. Skimpole turns him over to Bucket on receipt of a certain "bank note" (p. 728).

Skimpole, in effect, serves to perpetuate society's system of deathly and inhuman feeding. Life becomes no more than an extended feasting ground in which other people form the banquet. Plantation slaves become merely 'things' to feed Skimpole's sensibility. Depersonalized and reified they serve merely to fill the w/hole of Skimpole's existence: "they people the landscape for me . . . that is one of the pleasanter objects of their existence" (p. 227).

By disregarding the essentially human quality of other people and by abstracting them from their capacity to *feel* society makes reasonable, rational and right, its manipulation of them as objects, as tools designed for *use*, mere instruments of trade, barter and exchange. The "outrageous violence perpetuated by human beings on human beings,"[39] in ~~w~~other words, functions not as an abnormality within society but rather as the fulfilment of a social mechanism. Humankind, in effect, commits its greatest violence by living in accord with society. Vholes destroys Richard (and others), not because of an obscure personal malignity but because he wishes to do no more than "to live in amity with my professional brethren" (p. 487), to live the life of the socially respectable man. He intends, after all, no more than to do the right thing—to support his aged father "in the Vale of Taunton" (p. 482) and, given the ethics of the marriage market, to leave a "little property . . . to my daughters Emma, Jane and Caroline" (p. 487). In this respect, he lives absolutely as society's representative man, lives most purely as "a type of his . . . [professional] class" (p. 483). His cannibalistic activities, ~~in fact~~, exemplify the activities called for by the ruling social order; "the social system cannot afford—to lose an order of man like Mr Vholes" (p. 483)—which means, in effect, that it requires cannibalism as a veritable principle of organization. Competition, as

Sagan has declared, is after all aggression; and ultimately all "forms of social aggression are related to cannibalism."[40] Vholes's capacity for destruction maintains, in effect, the social mechanism; the imperative to kill and devour remains the order of an "institutionalized aggression" which moralizes exploitation. The dynamics of slavery, implicit, as Sagan writes, in "racism, imperial domination . . . the tyranny of men over women . . . and [in] capitalism"[41] remain, fundamentally, the dynamics of cannibalism: "Make man-eating unlawful and you starve the Vholeses" (p. 483).

The organization of the powerful and the weak—of "master and slave" as Cobbett termed it,[42] where what is not self is alienated as merely the otherness of 'thing'[43]—proposes a basic division between rich and poor. In a hierarchy of power constructed around the single factor of possession, the possession of money gives power over the possession of life. "The whole of English society," commented Alex de Tocqueville, "is based on the privilege of money";[44] while at a later date, Ruskin observed that"the power of riches was essentially power over men."[45] Hence, as House suggests in his study of Dickens, wealth exists as "a weapon of immense power"; if Dickens' heroes are largely unarmed in the world it is "*because* they are poor."[46] A hierarchy based on wealth, in other words, ensures that those who "do well" do so at the expense of those who do *not* do well; and that it reamins in their interest, consequently, to ensure that those whom their power debases remain debased. Dickens reveals the operation of this principle in the organization, in *Great Expectations*, of the Gargery household—the social structure, as Sagan has suggested, being no other than that of the family "writ large."[47]

Thus, although Joe has refused the role of monstrous patriarch and repudiated the will to power implicit in it, the role itself has not been abandoned; it has merely been assumed by Mrs Joe. The *reversal* of roles does not alter their basic condition. Hence, Mrs Joe would be "everybody's master" (p. 141) and, tyrannically, "is given to government" (p. 79). Precisely the qualities which make her abusive, however—her

austere manner and speech, her somber, angular clothing, her attempts at intimidation, and her aggressive authoritarianism—serve as the qualities of masculine despotism; she does not simply parody the bad mother, she actually epitomizes the Father. Ruling by virtue of a power based on the weakness of others she maintains the status quo of her household by ensuring continued oppression[48]—

> "She an't over partial to having scholars on the premises," Joe continued, "and in partickler would not be over partial to my being a scholar, for fear as I might rise. Like a sort of rebel, don't you see?" (p. 79)

She retains authority, in other words, by ensuring that those beneath her are kept in their state of abject inferiority through the exercise of sheer force—she "comes the Mo-gul over us now and again . . . she do drop down upon us heavy" (p. 79).

As Dickens reveals, however, seizing power over other people and using "the human soul . . . for satisfactions not its own"[49] finds its ultimate fulfilment in murder and its most absolute expression in the cannibal act. In taking possession of others' lives, the one who masters effectively takes possession of their *potential* for power and ritualistically proceeds to absorb it himself. Thus, when Orlik threatens Pip he speaks not so much of murder as of appropriation—"Now . . . I've got you" (p. 435) he cries. As he unfolds his intention to kill Pip the deed implicit in his threat becomes more explict:

> "I'm a going to have your life!"
>
> He leaned forward staring at me, slowly unclenched his hand and drew it across his mouth as if his mouth watered for me. (p. 436)

Indeed, so utterly does he desire to make Pip his own—absorbing the flesh of one's victim, as Sagan explains, enables one to absorb his mana, his essential power[50]—that he intends absolutely nothing of Pip to remain, threatens to cannibalize even the remains themselves—"I won't have a rag of you, I won't have a bone of you left on earth" (p. 436). The cannibal feast will be made complete and in the oven of the lime kilm nothing will be left of Pip but "white vapour" (p. 438),

absolute non-being.

Orlik's intended deed of murder in fact proposes more than merely the death of the physical body. It proposes the negation of *all* being, all selfhood, the decimation of Pip 'in esse': his right, that is, to be remembered by the living *as he was*.

> The death close before me was terrible but far more terrible than death was the dread of being misrememberd after death . . . despised by unborn generations. (p. 436)

Orlik's act presumes not only upon the abrogation of life but upon a total assimilation of another's selfhood, complete possession of another's right to independent human being.

Ultimately, however, Orlik has simply learnt the language of his masters and intends no more than to follow their daily precepts. His anticipated deed merely proposes to act out in its starkest terms the dynamics of mastery and oppression—the drive for possession as the social drive for power. The fate with which he threatens Pip, in other words, becomes the expression of dark and deadly social forces. The man who Pip eventually comes to recognize as "a man who had meant to be my benefactor" (p. 456) society relegates to the status not only of beast—"a hunted, wounded, shackled creature" (p. 456)—but as a form of human stock which may do good to spice a jaded appetite. His anticipated destiny in the prison colonies serves the Wopsles and Pumblechooks of the world as "good sauce for food" (p. 64).

Although Magwitch's attempt to revenge himself on "the other fugitive" (p. 68) by recapturing him proves not only futile but self-destructive; and although he becomes guilty, himself, of the social imperative to possess another as one would possess a piece of property ("If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learnin, I'm the owner of such . . . which on you owns a brought-up London gentlemen?" [p. 339]), his primary motive in fighting Compeyson resolves itself into a refusal any longer to be *used*, to be regarded as the instrument of another's will.

> "Let *him* go free? Let *him* profit by the means as I found out? Let *him* make a tool of me afresh and again? No, No, No." (p. 68)

His violent reaction—they fight like "wild beasts" on the marshes—has its main impulse in the refusal any longer to submit to oppression, to be held as less than fully human, to be regarded as a mere object of manipulation: "a poor tool I was in his hands." Bringing into focus the dynamics of the entire social structure—the process of bonding which creates masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited, consumers and consumed—their relationship in fact makes explicit the precise nature of the tie between the classes. Compeyson the gentleman is above all the "master"; he "made me his black slave," declares Magwitch—"I was always in debt to him, always under his thumb, always a working, always a getting into danger" (p. 364). It locates, in effect, a dynamic founded on categories of mastery and oppression; and although "the slaves of developed industrial civilization are sublimated slaves," declares Marcuse, "they are still slaves."[51] For slavery, as Francois Perroux declares, is determined "neither by obedience nor by hardness of labour but by the status of being a mere instrument, and the reduction of man to the state of a thing."[52]

Like Vholes's instrumentalization of people, Compeyson's abuse of others remains, in the end, the consequence not of a singular and personal malevolence but rather of a social mechanism. When power devolves on those who have the greatest capability for exploitation, power inevitably comes to rest on those who have the least humamity.[53] Society, in other words, is structured by, and sustained through, the man most able to ab/use others—the social "gentleman" who is not so by ethical right but "from appearance" (p. 362). "What a gentleman Compeyson looked," exclaims Magwitch, "wi' his curly hair and his black clothes and his white pocket handkercher" (p. 365). Yet beneath the surface exists only emptiness—he "had no more heart than an iron file" (p. 362). In dehumanizing others, Compeyson enforces dehumanization upon himself; in ab/using others he in fact abuses his own potential for any viable human life. To kill the spiritual life in others serves simultaneously to murder the life in oneself; and thus what remains of Compeyson, finally, is not simply the imitation of a gentleman but the mockery of a

human being: "a watch, and a chain and a ring and a breast-pin and a handsome suit of clothes" (p. 362). Like Vholes in *Bleak House* he survives only as a living dead thing—"he was as cold as death" (p. 362) —a "botched mass of tailors' and cobblers' shreds."[54]

Thus, if Orlik warns Pip that "the Devil lived in a black corner of the forge and that . . . it was necessary to make up the fire once in seven years with a live boy and that I might consider myself fuel" (p. 140); the devil is, after all, a gentleman. The momentum of industrial capitalism, in other words, requires human blood to keep the wheels of production oiled; and the devouring Moloch becomes no other than society's respectable man, the man "well brought up" and of "good character": the man known in "clubs and societies" (p. 365) and whom society in fact recognizes as quintessentially its own ("ain't it him as the Judge is sorry for, because he might be done so well" [p. 365]). Compeyson is indeed the true Son of his Country (Campagne/son),[55] the monstrous offspring of society's false Father: the great white Patriarch whose most compelling image, Fritz Zorn has declared, is Cronus, the father who devours his own.[56]

Hence, the precise nature of Pip's usefulness at the place "up town" (p. 81), the great house fronting genteel commercialism—Miss Havisham's father "was a country gentleman . . . and a brewer" (p. 203) —becomes clear as Mrs Joe pounces on him "like an eagle on a lamb" (p. 82) in order to prepare him for the visit. Already hints of incipient slaughter: and indeed Pip is duly "trussed up" like a joint of meat and "delivered over" (p. 83). His role, in fact, is to be sacrificial victim—the victim offered up to exploitation and the manipulation of a society which preys upon the poor and helpless; and as its child Pip is, of course, amongst the poorest, and weakest, and most helpless of all.

Goaded like an "unfortunate little bull in a Spanish arena" (pp. 56-57), Pip exists not only as the object of an abscure blood-lust but as the subject of a society which systematically slaughters its young. "Our own cities," declares Laing,

> are our animal factories; families, schools, churches are the slaughterhouses of our children; colleges and other places are the kitchens. As adults in marriage and business we eat the product.[57]

"Reared" (p. 128) in the Gargery household, Pip is duly priced and weighted, his humanity disposed of according to retail market value. "If you'd been born a Squeaker," postulates Pumblechook,

> You would have been disposed of for so many shillings according to the market value of the article and Dunstable the butcher would have come up to you as you lay in your straw, and he would have whipped you under his left arm and with his right he would have tucked up his frock to get a penknife from out of his waistcoat-pocket and he would have shed your blood and your life. (p. 58)

Pumblechook's conditional "if," however, remains redundant to the final argument; Estella and Miss Havisham turn Pip into an animal—he is fed in "the yard" as "insolently as if I were a dog in disgrace" (p. 92)—as effectively as Pumblechook and Mrs Joe; and although his visits to Satis House earn him "a premium" (p. 129) it is a premium drawn in blood. Pip's story does not, as Garrett Stewart suggests, tell the story of "the suicide of the imaginary life"[58] so much as of its murder. Snubbed, scorned and degraded, Pip experiences the deepest forces of human ab/use: a relegation of his human existence to an inhuman status, a denial of his human capacity to feel. Fostered at the place "up town" (p. 81) as "a model with a mechanical heart to practise on" (p. 341) means to be denied any heart at all, which, ultimately, means to kill the heart that *is*.

Hence Pip's entrance into genteel society at Satis House effectively prepares him for his role as the spiritual son of Magwitch—spurned, humiliated, scorned and betrayed. For like Pip the child, Magwitch the man experiences life as abuse. In Ghent's terms he exists as "the child" ab/used at the hands of "the prodigal father"[59]—that is, by society itself. Although each individual enters the world with certain expectations, is born into it with certain rights—to be emotionally and physically nurtured, to be cared for and loved—Dickens in fact shows the child entering a cultural order in which "the weight of aggression

. . . is so heavy that the unthinkable happens: we batter it."[60] Hence, Magwitch is "whipped and worried and drove" (p. 360), and Pip is "soaped, and kneaded, and towelled, and thumped, and harrowed, and rasped" (p. 82).[61] Confronted with a system of strident commercialism and ruthless individualism the child without economic resources is not only denied access to his birthright—to be humanly nurtured—but faces active persecution. Thus, Magwitch's first coming to consciousness entails the consciousness of hunger and abandonment—"I first became aware of myself down in Essex a thieving turnips" (p. 360); and his subsequent progress details incessant victimization—"I've been done everything to, pretty well—except hanged" (p. 360). This final distinction, however, forever awaits him; and in the name of the Father the sacrifice is finally made: "I saw two-and-thirty men and women put before the Judge to receive that sentence together" (p. 466).

When even love is disfigured by the dialectics of a class hierarchy[62] and inscribed by a structure of power and oppression; when it finds its most complete expression in "blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission" (p. 261); when there is no lover only "the smiter" of one's heart (p. 261); in this society the child cannot be loved because no one is loved and no one loves. Indeed, "In a society where competition for basic cultural goods is the pivot of action," declares J. Henry, "people cannot be taught to love one another."[63] Hence, Magwitch "the little ragged creetur . . . to be pitied" (p. 361), becomes "a mere warmint" (p. 336) to be hounded and "drove . . . off" (p. 361). Even when, at best, the child lives well dressed and well fed and, like Pip and Estella, is at least provided for, spiritual molestation unfolds itself. Neatly clothed, with jewels against her hair, Estella nevertheless grows up only as the instrument of another's specifically adult wishes, the agent of another's desires, formed, shaped and moulded at will—

> I adopted her to be loved. I bred her and educated her, to be loved. I developed her into what she is, that she might be loved. (p. 261)

Denied access to any inner mental space of her own—to her own wishes, feelings, thoughts; created as a means of (displaced) access to power—because this is what 'love' really means to Miss Havisham: each heart broken is a victory achieved—she exists simply to fulfil certain functions and orders.

> "I am to have a carriage and you are to take me. This is my purse and you are to pay my charges out of it. Oh, you must take the purse! We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions." (p. 285)

Conceiving of her association with Pip as if it were "forced upon us and we were mere puppets" (p. 288), Estella in fact comes to regard herself absolutely as 'thing' ("I and the jewels" [p. 290]). And indeed in a society of dehumanized and dehumanizing relationships, forced to perform another's wishes—manipulated, directed, disposed of at will—she does become mere *product:* "I am what you have made me" (p. 322). Like Magwitch and Pip himself she is 'done to' ("it is a part of Miss Havisham's plan for me" [p. 290]); in her actions through the course of her life, she is not herself the active principle but merely the principal agent in another's plans. As the means by which Miss Havisham may live out a vicarious existence she becomes the means by which the latter may fill the void at the centre of her own life. Sacrificed to the emptiness in Miss Havisham's heart, to her spiritual and moral non-existence, she is abstracted from herself, turned over to another's use, and in the process actively devoured. Miss Havisham kisses her adopted daughter "with a ravenous intensity" (p. 261) and later sits "mumbling her own trembling fingers . . . as if she were devouring the beautiful creature she had reared" (p. 320). Finally, nothing remains of Estella's potential for selfhood or self-realization. Sucked dry of human substance she is left with "no heart" (p. 259). Miss Havisham, in effect, functions as a devourer of hearts as deadly as the "young man" whose threatened diabolic activities—"your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate" (p. 38)—she recalls to Pip's memory (p. 88).

Miss Havisham, however, not only participates in a process of unclean consumption but exists, in her turn, as the victim of others.

Subject to "sharper teeth than teeth of mice" (p. 117) her heart and her life together are both progressively devoured. In a society where, in William F. Axton's words, "every human relationship is cankered by exploitation,"[64] no one escapes desecration. Human exploitation provokes a principle hostile not only to the victimized but also to the victimizers themselves—a principle, in other words, hostile to *all* human life.

Hence, despite her withered and already corpse-like body ("I am yellow skin and bone" [p. 114]), Miss Havisham exists as a feast still in the making. Gathering like the members of a scavenging horde smelling out death her relatives group round the long table. Where success must be wrung from the calculated depletion of another's resources the Pockets —all empty pockets—hover over Miss Havisham as round a feeding ground. When "the ruin is complete" (p. 117) their victory will be achieved and they will come, marshalled at their appointed places, "to feast upon me" (p. 116).

The ethos of property—money and the accumulation of money—demands, in effect, that "as we live together we necessarily practise emotional and economic cannibalism."[65] Hence the accession of crude materialism comes to be measured, not in economic terms but in the expenditure of viable human life. "It is not your purses that suffer," warned Carlyle—"No it is not these alone but a far deeper than these: it is your souls that lie dead."[66] Dickens' novels, in effect, trace what Wordsworth described as "The utter hollowness of what we name / The Wealth of Nations."[67] The worthless scrip which proposes to give value to humankind and define the worth (or worthlessness) of individuals condemns them to a life wherein human meaning is lost and human identity confounded. Caught in a social mechanism which barters with human life —"what will you take for me?" (p. 126)—people become no more than merely the sum total of their physical substance, simply a physical function divorced from any identifiable human being. "In reality," declares the Contrator in *Our Mutual Friend*, Lizzie Hexam exists as no more than a certain amount of input—"so many pounds of beefsteak and so many pints of porter"—and a certain amount of output—power produc-

tive of "so much money." She exists as a "female engine" (p. 890), simply another means of production,[68] another commodity of sale.

Trade in human bodies, indeed, provides the pivot of the entire social construct. Rogue Riderhood attempts to collect money on his own death—"I ain't a goin' to be drownded and not paid for it" (p. 613)—and Wegg haggles over the value of his own (severed) leg—"Come! According to your own account I'm not worth much" (p. 127). He not only translates *part* of his anatomy into an object of sale but in fact depersonalizes himself entirely and speaks of himself *in toto* as if he were no more than his deceased member, one dead object among many—"'bring me round to the Bower', said Silas when the bargain was closed" (p. 350). Woodenness, indeed, eventually comes to pervade his entire body. He acquires a "hard grained face" and a "stiff knotty figure," and looks "like a German wooden toy," without life and without "spontaneity" (p. 553).

The City, as Alexander Welsh observes, in fact becomes little more than a huge receiver for bodies dead or alive.[69] As humankind come increasingly to sell themselves and each other, the individual devolves merely into a market item; whether alive and walking or not, he assumes the status merely of human carrion. Hence, Pleasant Riderhood regards "seamen, within certain limits, as her prey" (p. 406); Wegg hovers around Boffin as a vulture "fluttered over prey" (p. 237); and Gaffer Hexam, scouring the river with "a hungry look" (p. 44), considers the bodies he fishes out as his family's legitimate "meat and drink" (p. 45). Processed through an economic system which drains out all human reserves, humankind emerges as a "flabby lump of mortality" (p. 504), discovers as its legacy only the "squashed pulp of humanity" (p. 799).

Having assumed the money ethic as its public creed—Money, declared Lytton, "is the mightiest of all Deities"[70]—the dynamics of competition erects the Stock Exchange as the new temple to civilized man and, in the process, makes a religion of cannibalism.

> O mighty Shares! To see those blaring images so high and to cause us smaller vermin . . . to cry out night and day 'Relieve us of our money, scatter it for us, buy and sell us, ruin us,

> only we beseech ye take rank among the powers of the earth and fatten on us! (p. 160)

The "Fathers of the Scrip-Church" (p. 690) bow down before dead gods and false idols and offer worship to "precious metal worth so much an ounce" (p. 177); Mrs Podsnap wears a "majestic headdress in which Podsnap has hung golden offerings" (p. 52). As one of the votaries of Mammon Podsnap consolidates his power by projecting ever further accumulations of precious plate—which entails, ultimately, the prospect of further acts of exploitation and, ultimately, the sacrifice of his daughter to marriage as a business settlement, an arrangement "to take as directed and with worldly goods as per settlement to be endowed" (p. 327).[71] In the event, the drive to accumulate proposes merely the accumulation of "dead-weight" (p. 175)—a materialism which crushes humankind amid the detritus of 'things' and de/forms the soul. Left only to a kind of "vulture soul"[72] it comes to function as a mechanism of death, plundering the autonomy of others and violating their right to human selfhood.

Hence, Lammle, one of the "dark lord[s]" (p. 319) of a society held together by the momentum of aggression gains his initial stronghold in the place of violence and force *by* violence and force. A "bully by nature and by usual practice" (p. 325), he fails to understand any relationship—including marriage—not built on a mechanism of mastery and submission.[73] Indeed, on his honeymoon, he conceives of "subduing his dear wife Mrs Alfred Lammle, by at once divesting her of any lingering reality or pretense of self-respect" (p. 173); and later, as Georgiana and Mrs Lammle leave to go out, he walks behind, "savagely following his little flock like a drover" (p. 318). Having married his wife for her (apparent) wealth, he similarly cultivates Georgiana Podsnap's acquaintance for the reserves it may yield. Attempting to capitalize on all forms of human interaction he regards Georgiana merely as a piece of expendable human capital, an object in the marriage market, to be "sold into wretchedness for life" (p. 476), a piece of merchandise to be plundered. Indeed, in the schemes for making money, she has her part as a piece of (human) property to be turned over the the best

bidder, a token of exchange in "a savage all male game."[74] "Love was to be made for Fledgeby and conquest was to be insured on him" (p. 327), Georgiana to serve as the principal tool in "our little compact of advantage" (p. 322).

Subject to a process of dehumanization, however, Georgiana actually undergoes a slow and gradual process of murder. Stripped of all that makes her in any way human—denied personal will, personal autonomy, personal relationship—she is to "be sacrificed" (p. 476),[75] her heart torn from its place of feeling and laid upon the marble slab of a cold and loveless marriage. When Lammle lets her out of the house "as if he were opening her cage door" (p. 318), he releases her from one prison only in order to commit her to another—a proposed lifetime of bondage to Fledgeby.

Lammle, in fact, becomes one of the great cannibal chiefs in what Thackeray called "a ready money society."[76] Committing obscure "deed[s] of violence" (p. 319) he lives in antagonism to any humanly livable life. Dead to any notion of mutuality he fails to live amid any humanity; ghoulishly, he not only lives through others—through connection—but *upon* others. "Somebody must pay even for gentlemen who live for nothing a year,"[77] and in the event Lammle proposes that the cost is paid in human life. He opens "a bottle of soda-water as though he were wringing the neck of some unlucky creature and pouring its blood down his throat" (p. 319). "Violence," declares Bond, "shapes and obsesses our society."[78] Those who live by its norms must submit either to having violence inflicted upon them or to inflicting violence themselves—and ultimately, indeed, must submit to both. In committing others to a life of dehumanized existence the aggressor dehumanizes himself. The act of murder, in other words, becomes an act of suicide; the man who cannibalizes others empties himself of his own humanity.

In a structure of social and economic living built upon the mechanics of accumulation and perpetuated by strategies of in-built coercion, the "conforming, socially moralized good citizen" will not only be "the most violent of all"[79] but will commit the most outrageous

acts of violence against himself. Hence, Bradley Headstone, "methodically dressed in decent black coat and waistcoat, decent formal black tie and pepper-and-salt pantaloons," the "nightbird with respectable feathers," is in fact "the worst nightbird of all" (p. 618). Engaged in squeezing out his humanity drop by drop in order to live by the precepts of his society ("watching and repressing himself daily" [p. 345]), he slowly kills what is human within himself, murders his own capacity for human being. He lives in a "half suffocated" (p. 455) state, strangulating the impulse towards connection, denying the human imperative for contact and the release of human feeling: "I don't show what I feel; some of us are obliged habitually to keep it down" (p. 400). In refusing what is human within him, however, Headstone violates no one as completely as himself—he "set[s] his teeth" and turns upon himself "with a curious tight-screwing movement of his right hand in the clench-palm of his left, like the action of one who was being physically hurt, and was unwilling to cry out" (p. 400). Eventually, indeed, he draws out his own blood ("a great spirt of blood burst from his nose" [p. 704]), and engages in "consum[ing] the lonely hours and consum[ing] himself" (p. 608). Ultimately he has only "a ghost's" (p. 705) face; the process of emptying himself has been made complete and nothing human remains. When Riderhood threatens, like a human parasite, to fasten onto him—"till I've drained you dry" (p. 870)—Headstone's reply implies a dangerous double edge: "you can't get blood out of a stone" (p. 871). Petrified human form, he indeed achieves the final social distinction to exist as non (human) being, as no/body,[80] a declension of 'he' into 'it'.

> Not until the late daylight made the window transparent did the decaying statue move. Then it slowly arose, and sat in the window looking out. (p. 872)

Severed from the sources of humanity—from community and co-operation, the essential relation through which human identity is discoverable—humankind loses access to its own nature, reverts to the forms of inhumanity. "Generous feelings . . . [are] shrunk up, seared, violently wrenched and amputated."[81] Under the auspices of a strident opportunism

both the capacity and the *need* for giving, for sharing rather than seizing, are denied; the pressure ever to acquire, to create more money, corrodes the notion of exchange as mutual transaction, eats away at the heart of society and the heart of man himself. "Man is no longer a man," exclaimed Carlyle, "but a greedy, blind, two-footed animal."[82] Indistinguishable from the predators who share their world humankind pursue a course which careers towards regression, a relapse into primitive savagery. In the "wilderness of court and alley" (p. 105) sprung up alongside emergent industrialism marauding hordes roam—"amphibious human creatures" (p. 118) intent upon making a killing, "bird[s] of prey" (p. 45) in vaguely human form ready to tear and rend each other. As Riderhood treks home through the sludge of the City he leaves behind him, not human footprints, but "shapeless holes," marks from which "the very fashion of humanity had departed" (p. 204). Like an animal he dwells "deep and dark in Limehouse Hole" (p. 405), living a subterranean existence. Without the redeemable presence of his daughter, Pleasant, he would have buried himself in his hole as in a "grave" (p. 406).

The waterside wasteland, however, holds no monopoly upon human deterioration. The relapse into prehuman, reptilian form characterizes an entire society. The Boffins are a "prey to prosperity" (p. 226), and the world of high society and high finance is discoverable only as "a Dismal Swamp" (p. 261). Infested by "fish of the shark tribe" (p. 262) who would devour the living, the dying and the dead, and inhabited by "all manner of crawling, creeping, fluttering and buzzing creatures attracted . . . by gold" (p. 257), it holds no place for humanity. Thus, Fledgeby, barely emergent from some prehensile, primitive state, has the habit "not to jump, or leap, or make an upward spring at anything in life but to crawl at everything" (p. 491). Wegg "hops up ladders like some extinct bird" (p. 262), and Mrs Podsnap serves as a fine specimen "for professor Owen" (p. 52). The Podsnap dinner party serves merely as a gathering place of "the heads of tribes" (p. 186), a meeting ground where "prowling bathers" (p. 181) lunge at each other and "retreat," where the pianist is held "captive" (p. 181), and where Georgiana

Podsnap acts out the role of sacrifice, a "victim, heading the procession of sixteen as it slowly circled about, like a revolving funeral" (p. 185). As one of the "elders of tribes" (p. 187), Podsnap presumes to interpret "Providence" and to propound "articles of faith" (p. 175); but the "Tokens" and "Marks" and "Signs" (p. 179) he undertakes to expound actually reveal a society heading towards psychotic breakdown. It teaches the "savages"—those who do not live according to its rites—how to become "civilized" (p. 888) by practising barbaric acts of death —by preying upon themselves and upon each other. Lightwood, for example, recounts how, upon leaving them, they were ~~indeed~~ "becoming civilized"—"at least they were eating one another which looked like it," he exclaims (p. 888). The *relapse* into cannibalism, however, signals, as Sagan has claimed, a social regression essentially "pathological"[83] in nature—a sickness which "spreads like a sort of Dog-madness; till the whole World-kennel will be rabid,"[84] and which leaves society merely "a dead carcass,—deserving to be buried."[85] Thus in *Our Mutual Friend,*

> the cold eastern glare, expressionless as to heat or colour, with the eye of the firmament quenched, might have been likened to the stare of the dead. (p. 771)

Under the pressure of the City—"we live among bankers and City big-wigs and be hanged to them, and every man, as he talks to you, is jingling his guineas in his pocket"[86]—humankind are constricted, crippled and deformed; the "set of humanity outward from the City is as a set of prisoners departing from gaol" (p. 450). Twisted out of its natural course into depravity, deformed by the social obsession to master, dominate and subdue, humanity is held under "bondage [to] Mammon"[87] and loses the freedom to act humanly at all. Wegg desires Boffin's complete and total subjection, to keep him in a "state of abject moral bondage and slavery" (p. 561) and ultimately desires to use up his every reserve. "It was not to be borne that the minion and worm should carry off any of that property which was now to be regarded as their own property" (p. 561). Society, in effect, becomes merely a collective of scavengers condemned to a nightmare of unclean and

unnatural living, relating to each other only through stratagems of warfare and battle. The Lammles range their forces of deception and hypocrisy against "all other people" (p. 173) and commit themselves to victory by destroying those around them. Riderhood, similarly, intends to extract "everythink" (p. 869) from Headstone and to live solely at the latter's expense: a human parasite bound to a human host. "You can't get rid of me," he exclaims, "I am a going along with you wherever you go" (p. 873).

The mechanics of survival, where "everyone stands for himself and fights for himself,"[88] pits each person against his neighbour and in so doing forces humankind to sell its human birthright for a mere mess of potage. Organizing itself according to principles of exploitation, the process of accumulation initiates a process of (human) erosion. Wegg's "rapacious eyes" (p. 850) signal dehumanization, the loss of human identity, as much as they signal greed—greed itself, in fact—the desire for possession, for another's property, another's livelihood—being itself instinct with the desire to dehumanize others. In effect, Dickens traces the roots of industrial commercialism and dis/covers at their base a process of obscene devouring. Imperialism—the appropriation of territory *and* human beings—premises no more than slavery and savage tribal warfare; and capitalism—forcing success from another's loss—a form of primitive cannibalism. "The Dreadful" as Laing suggests, has indeed "already happened";[89] it is already with us. Crushed and ground into unnatural being humankind loses itself and its own humanity. "Above the water-line" as Thackeray declares, everything is "proper, agreeable and decorous";[90] but dis/covered beneath the depths are eaters of men—"fiendish marine cannibals, revelling and feasting on their wretched pickled victims," a humanity no longer human, "writhing and twirling, diabolically hideous and slimy, flapping amongst bones or curling around corpses."[91] Ultimately, however, not only the cannibalized lie amongst the dead; the cannibal who victimizes others—who exploits, degrades and oppresses—remains victim to his own inhumanity. In relationships built on a hierarchy of mastery and submission all

come to be implicated in a process whose end can only be the death of what it is, or can be, to be human at all, to be humanly alive; for not only the death of another but the denial of his humanity diminishes all. "If one is suppressed and the other suppressing," write Gornick and Moran, "the behaviour of both is circumscribed. . . . In order to oppress . . . men must act as oppressors." It becomes necessary, in other words, to kill what is potentially human within, to "destroy any impulse"[92] toward the expression of human release, human *giving*, which does not confirm the terms prescribed by exploitation, slavery and cannibalism. Denied outlet into fundamental *human* relations humankind functions only as a maimed, wounded, crippled creature, surrounded on all sides by the hostile forces of deathliness. Restricted, constrained, incapable of expressing itself, of discovering its own humanity, it deadens itself, slowly mutilates itself, until finally, as Dickens warns, "Reality will take a wolfish turn and make an end of you."[93]

DE/SCRIBING THE TEXT: INSCRIBING THE WORLD

It is true.

—Preface to
Oliver Twist

The ex/centric quality of Dickens' writing—the construction of apparently grotesque images and seemingly fantastic metaphoric configurations may ~~ultimately~~ be seen to inscribe a world, not merely unreal or abstract, but rather a world of which we are every day in the midst, a world intimately our own, but which we nevertheless often fail to see. "Greater differences still exist between the common observer and the writer of genius," wrote Dickens:

> The former accuses the latter of intentional exaggeration, substitution, addition. . . . The reason is, that such an individual has never developed the sense required for the seeing of such things.[1]

The strange shapes, dark, brooding and obscure, which his novels transcribe are in fact no other than the shapes of our own dark realities—the consequences, made visible, of humankind's engagement in fundamentally inhuman activities. They reveal, in effect, a widespread spiritual, moral and psychic corruption. The monstrous forms which the novels depict realize a humanity decaying (though not yet decayed) at its core and becoming increasingly estranged from its own humanity.

In admitting the forces of "upheaval, dissolution and transformation"[2] into his novels, Dickens usurps the orthodox locus of realism, but makes available in its stead, a mode of discourse which speaks the place of truths "screened out by ordinary language."[3] Through the logic of an essentially poetic discourse he moves language not only to the edge of (conventional) writing, but to the edge of the text itself—towards the text's 'other' which has its source in the reality beyond

text. His novels erupt through the silence imposed upon regions of human experience and human being situated on the outskirts of "everyday" (rational, 'realistic')[4] language, and give expression to what Carlyle described as "the Unseen but not Unreal World."[5]

Hence, because the text inscribes the world the critical act which undertakes to explicate a text undertakes, by definition, a task which not only involves de/scription—taking apart sets of images and metaphors, breaking down language—but a description of the larger structures of the world. In de/scribing the text, the critic inscribes the place of society, history, culture, morality. The critic, in other words, not only examines the relationship between semantic units enclosed in the narrow space of the novel—the bounded text[6]—but engages in an exploration of the relationship between semantic units and "something outside the work."[7] What the nature of this "something" may be remains finally questionable; but to the end, it is precisely this quality of "something" which is *other* than the text, which as Foucault explains, is something *more* than simply the use of "signs to designate things," which renders the fictional (poetic) text "irreducible to language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*)."[8] It is this something more, ultimately, which it remains the concern of the critic to discover.

Understanding, as Richard Palmer has noted,[9] can never be situated outside of history or society, but must always be positional. Situated at the intersection of history and society it is not only dependent upon these as context but, in fact, *is* context. Critical analysis, therefore, concerns itself with what exists outside and beyond the text as vitally as with what is situated within; it directs the critic not only to the word but to lived categories of human experience. Writing, as Barthes has declared, "is always rooted in something beyond language,"[10] and as such the critic is involved in de/scribing *and* describing "what cannot be symbolized (one might say . . . 'the real')"[11]—the reality in effect which is *not* text, which *is* the world. The code of textuality requires to be read as simultaneously the code of human experience. Without recourse to matters at the edge of the text, what lies beyond language as a formal construction, there can be no access to 'meaning', the

possibility of understanding. In its place remain only an empty set of critical imperatives which, rather than placing the study of literature and poetry "at the sensitive centre of contemporary 'human' sciences"[12] engage criticism only in "a form of idolatry"[13] or, little better, a "mode of laudatio."[14] Literature, in other words, threatens to devolve into little more than precisely that condition commemorated by Wimsatt's "the verbal icon" or Cleanth Brook's the "well wrought urn": literature as a monument of deadness, stilled in all its living and vital force: criticism diverted into essentially non-critical ends.

To declare, in effect, that the fictional text "by definition" cannot pose any "congruity with a given state of affairs" because it proposes "a potential deviation from facts [which] cannot be corrected"[15] threatens, ultimately, to give evidence only to Dickens' fear of the "small narrow world of fact" (*B.H.*, p. 260). Encroaching upon humankind as though fictional (and human) truth extends into no dimension other than that which can be measured, defined, weighed and calculated, it threatens to overwhelm humanity beneath the morass of pure materialism, the Podsnappian "dead weight" (*OMF*, p. 175) which mortifies the soul and kills the spirit. "Wilt thou know a Man, above all a Mankind," asked Carlyle, "by stringing together beadrolls of what thou namest Facts?"[16] Rather, the truth which literature makes discoverable is that which, in Marcuse's terms, functions as a *state of being:*[17] a condition of existence as much as a statement of 'fact'.

Hence the realistic novel—quintessentially, the novel 'of reality'—serves both to open up the world to us, and simultaneously to open us up to the world. It seeks, in effect, to move us towards the condition of truth which saves reality from destruction,[18] and turns it away from the dark place of non-being where there is no knowledge, no awareness, no realization of self, of other, or of world.

In de/scribing Dickens' fictional world, the critic thus inscribes within his own (critical) text the place of the world, and engages in an explication not only of sign, word and image, but in an explication of reality itself. The text, as Barthes has claimed, "is a moral object,"[19]

and the critic, consequently, engages in what remains in intention and effect, a moral activity. The imaginative response entails, in effect, moral thinking: a thinking about the text not simply as text, the tale not simply as tale, but rather as a fictional paradigm of human experience, human life. Literature, as Kristeva claims, remains after all, "a mode of practical knowledge,"[20] a means of reaching after knowledge and towards the place of truth. The art of reality offers access to what must ultimately be acknowledged as images of our world—images of ourselves and each other, images of our own reality:

> Awake o nightmare sleepers. . . . This is not playhouse poetry; it is sober fact.[21]

We are a feelingless people. If we could really feel, the pain would be so great that we would stop all the suffering. . . . If we could really feel it in the bowels, the groin, in the throat, in the breast, we would go into the streets and stop the war, stop slavery, stop the prisons, stop the killings, stop destruction. Ah, I might learn what love is.

— Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*

ENDNOTES

RE/MEMBERING

[1]"The old established political families habitually batten on the public patronage—their sons, . . . their relatives and dependants of every degree are provided for by the score." *Northcote-Trevelyan Report*, 1853, as submitted to Gladstone. Quoted in Humphry House, *The Dickens World*(London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 188.

[2]V.S. Pritchett, quoted in Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1961), p. 125.

[3]Ghent, *Form and Function*, p. 26.

[4]Ghent, *Form and Function*, p. 26.

[5]Roland Barthes, "The Textual Analysis of Poe's *Valdemar*," in *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 137.

[6]Richard Barikman, Susan MacDonald and Myra Stark, *Corrupt Relations: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins and the Victorian Sexual System* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 26.

[7]Ghent, *Form and Fiction*, p. 26.

[8]Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: a Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon Roudier, ed. Leon Roudier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 8.

[9]As noted by G.W. Kennedy in "Naming and Language in *Our Mutual Friend*," *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 28 (1973), 169.

[10]Kristeva, p. 37.

[11]J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: the World of His Novels* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 298.

[12]Jeffrey L. Sammons, "The Threat of Literary Sociology and What to Do About It," in *Literary Criticism and Sociology*, Yearbook of Comparative Criticism, vol. 4, ed. Joseph P. Strelka (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1973), p. 38.

[13]"To speak of the truth or untruth of a text is largely irrelevant; we can only explain it by evaluating its adequacy to the verbal system": Michael Riffaterre, quoted in Jacques Leenhardt, "Towards a Sociology of Reading," in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation,* ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 223.

[14]Thomas Carlyle, quoted in Barry V. Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: the Novel as Book of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 105.

[15]Thomas Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," in *Essays and Belles Lettres* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1913), p. 194.

[16]"Woman is the Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, she who receives and submits. In song and story the young man is seen departing adventurously in search of a woman; he slays the dragon, he battles giants; she is locked in a tower, a palace, a garden, a cave, she is chained to a rock, a captive, sound asleep; she waits." Simone de Beauvoir quoted in Marianne Hirsch, "Spiritual *Bildung:* the Beautiful Soul as Paradigm," in *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development,* ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 23.

Similarly, in"Being and Doing: a Cross-Cultural Examination of the Socialization of Males and Females," Nancy Chodorow notes that "boy's 'doing' becomes men's transcendence. . . . Women, on the other hand, are carefully trained to 'be'. A girl's natural inclination would also be to 'do', but she learns to make herself into an object, to restrict herself." In *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness,* ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: New American Library, 1971), p. 273.

[17]"I am not real to my civilization, I am not real to the culture that has spawned me and made use of me. I am only a collection of myths. I am an existential stand-in. The *idea* of me is real—the temptress, the goddess, the child, the mother—but *I* am not real . . . and will be denied to the death, our death." Vivian Gornick, "Woman as Outsider," in Gornick and Moran, ed., p. 144.

[18]Gornick, "Woman as Outsider," p. 142.

[19]Kristeva, p. 69.

[20]In *The Limping Hero: Grotesques in Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), Peter L. Hays traces the significance of the maimed or lame hero in fiction. Although Dickens' cripples are not

the stuff of which heroes are made, the general implications of Hays's thesis—that wounding marks out restricted, limited characters living in a sterile and moribund environment—nevertheless remains relevant.

[21]Carlyle, quoted in Janice Nadelhaft, "The English Malady, Corrupted Humours and Krook's Death," *Studies in the Novel* 1 (1969), 238.

[22]Garrett Stewart, *Dickens and the Trials of the Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 169.

[23]Harald William Fawkner, *Animification and Reification in Dickens' Vision of the Life-Denying Society* (Diss. Uppsala, 1977), p. 126.

[24]Donald D. Stone, *The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 279.

[25]Alan Kennedy, *Meaning and Signs in Fiction* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), p. 99.

[26]Letter from Dickens to Collins, dated Sept. 6, 1858, quoted in Grahame Smith, *Dickens, Money and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 181.

[27]Erich Fromm, quoted in Joseph Gold, *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist* (Toronto: Copp Clarke Publishing Company, 1972), p. 66.

DE/SCRIBING

[1]Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil,* trans. Alastair Hamilton (London: Calder and Boyars, 1973), p. 1.

[2]Hans H. Rudnick, "Recent British and American Studies Concerning Theories of a Sociology of Literature," in Joseph P. Strelka, p. 270.

[3]Although Elizabeth Deeds Ermath, for example, proposes to read realistic fiction as "grounded in collective assertion" (p. xiii), her primary consideration is of the way in which realism finds definition through *consensus,* that is, the notion of realism as a largely formal achievement—"I argue that fictional realism is an aesthetic form of consensus, its touchstone being the agreement between the various viewpoints made available by a text" (p. x). Elizabeth Deeds Ermath, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

[4]Nicolai Hartmann, quoted in Walter H. Bruford, "Literary Criticism and Sociology," in Joseph P. Strelka, p. 9.

[5]Henry James, *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 10.

[6]Pamela McCallum, *Literature and Method: Towards a Critique of I.A. Richards, T.S. Eliot, and F.R. Leavis* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Humanities Press, 1983), p. 226.

[7]"The words of the work are themselves the primary datum, a self-sufficient reality beyond which the critic need not go." Hillis Miller, p. x.

[8]Bond, Introduction to *Plays: Two* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), p. xii.

[9]Steven Marcus, "The Novel Again," in *The Novel: Modern Essay in Criticism* (1962), ed. Robert Murray Davis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 288.

[10]Geoffrey Thurley, *The Dickens Myth: Its Genesis and Structure* (St. Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1976), p. 282.

[11]Dickens quoted in Michael Goldberg, *Carlyle and Dickens* (Athens: Georgia University Press, 1976), p. 282.

[12]Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1960), p. 262.

[13]Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, trans. Florence Kelly Wischnewetzky (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Company, 1892), p. 75.

[14]T.S. Eliot, quoted in McCallum, p. 129.

[15]Phillip Collins, *A Critical Commentary on Dickens's "Bleak House"* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1971), p. 75.

[16]Collins, pp. 74-75.

[17]Susan R. Horton, *The Reader in the Dickens World: Style and Response* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 58.

[18]Horton, p. 55.

[19]Ermath, p. x.

[20]Malcolm Bradbury, *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 13—though he does not use the term apropos of Dickens.

[21]As noted by Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: the Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 34.

[22]Dickens quoted in Nancy K. Hill, *A Reformer's Art: Dickens' Picturesque and Grotesque Imagery* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), p. 3.

[23]Bruce Kawin, *The Mind of the Novel: Reflexive Fiction and the Ineffable* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), especially the Introduction and chapter five.

[24]Henry James, review in *The Nation* (New York), 21st Dec. 1865, quoted in Philip Collins, *Dickens: the Critical Heritage* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), p. 469.

[25]John Romano, *Dickens and Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 33-34.

[26]Mirrors, as Robert Scholes points out, "are superbly iconic in their reflections of reality but patently artificial in at least three respects. They reduce three dimensions to a plane surface of two, they double the distance and reduce the size . . . and most significantly they reverse right and left.." Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 12.

[27]Romano, p. 31.

[28]Frieda Grafe, quoted in Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 171.

[29]Irene Bessière, quoted in Jackson, p. 54.

[30]Trollope, quoted in Goldberg, p. 165.

[31]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 177.

[32]Kristeva, p. 108.

[33]Jackson, p. 82.

[34]Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Nations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 56.

[35]In "Dickens and the Dystopian Novel: from *Hard Times* to *Lady Chatterley*," Jerome Mercier argues that Dickens already feared the possibility that human nature was *not* an irreducible essence, that human beings could become creatures purely of *fiction*, of animation without life. See: *The Novel and Its Changing Form*, ed. R.G. Collins (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1972), pp. 51-59.

[36]Michael Meakin, *Man and Work: Literature, Culture and Industrial Society* (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 146.

[37]As explained by R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), p. 90.

[38]Smith, *Dickens, Money and Society*, p. 209.

[39]Gold, p. 253. Interestingly, Garrett Stewart also considers the castle as a veritable bower of well-being and indeed creativity. Although he acknowledges Wemmick's "emotional schizophrenia," he believes that his "escapist strategy" is not "a rigour coerced but a balance won." In his private and personal persona, indeed, he sees Wemmick as both artist and magician—he is "the sole architect of the miracle, the Prospero of this magic place." See: Stewart, *Trials*, p. 159.

[40]Bakhtin, quoted in Jackson, p. 16.

[41]Smith, *Dickens, Money and Society*, p. 207.

[42]Goldberg, p. 218.

[43]Tennyson quoted in Goldberg, p. 178.

[44]Nicolai Hartmann, quoted in Bruford, "Literary Criticism and Sociology," in Strelka, p. 10.

[45]Barikman, MacDonald and Stark, p. 47.

[46]Richard Ohmann, "Teaching and Studying Literature at the End of Ideology," in *The Politics of Literature: Dissenting Essays on the Teaching of English,* ed. Louis Kampf and Paul Lauter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 152.

[47]Ohmann, p. 152.

[48]In this description of Mr. Dolls, as Harald Fawkner explains, Dickens quite literally externalizes "the disintegration of the human self." We see, he declares, "an actual physical disintegration of the individual into parts: we are shown people who crumble to pieces before our very eyes." See: Fawkner, p. 96.

[49]Ghent, *Form and Function.*

[50]The evocative phrase was actually used by William James to describe his spiritual crisis. Quoted in Robert Newsom, *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things: "Bleak House" and the Novel Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 128.

[51]"The empty phrase Man," writes Adorno in *The Jargon of Authenticity* (quoted in McCallum, p. 200), "distorts man's relation to his society." It serves, in effect, to depersonalize him and to abstract him from what he is really like, from the conditions in which he lives. The "jargon" of universality which abstracts Man into a concept divorces him from his place in time and history. What disappears, Istvan Meszoros has claimed, "is precisely the real human being." Quoted in McCallum, p. 213.

It may be of interest in this respect to note that although Mrs. Jellyby and Mr. Quales speak the language of Liberal Humanism and (conceptually) embrace all men as their brothers, the writer James Baldwin has written that in the event "the white man can deal with the Negro [only] as a symbol or as a victim . . . never as a real human being." Quoted in Vivian Gornick, "Woman as Outsider," in Gornick and Moran, p. 144.

[52]As Angus Calder explains in his notes to the Penguin edition of *Great Expectations,* "Cag-Mag" was actually a slang word for scraps of bad meat and refuse; hence "Cag-Maggers," the often disreputable people who dealt in them (p. 504).

[53]"There are yet great truths to tell if we had either the courage to announce or the temper to receive them." See: Benjamin Disraeli, quoted in Marcus, *Engels, Manchester and the Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 38.

[54]Engels, p. 47.

[55]Quoted in Engels, p. 32.

[56]From *The Quarterly Review*, June 1839, quoted in House, p. 43.

[57]"I know there are such unfortunate beings as pick-pockets and street-walkers . . . but I own I do not much wish to hear what they say to one another." Lady Carlyle quoted in A.E. Dyson, "Introduction," in *Dickens: Modern Judgements* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1968), p. 13.

[58]"The English middle-class, which is directly enriched by means of the poverty of the workers, persists in ignoring this poverty. This class, feeling itself the mighty representative class of the nation . . . will not confess, even to itself . . . distress, because it, the property holding . . . class must bear the moral responsibility for this distress." See: Engels, pp. 17-18.

[59]"Let the testimony of the witnesses be never so clear and unequivocal, the bourgeoisie . . . always finds some back door through which to escape the frightful verdict death from starvation. The bourgeoisie dare not speak the truth in these cases for it would speak its own condemnation."(Engels, p. 25.) "When society . . . permits these conditions to remain its deed is murder." (Engels, p. 96.)

[60]In *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at Breaking Point* (1970), Philip Slater describes what he terms "The Toilet Assumption"—"The notion that unwanted matter, unwanted difficulties, unwanted complexities and obstacles will disappear if they are removed from our immediate field of vision. . . . Our approach to social problems is to decrease their visibility—out of sight, out of mind. . . . The result of our social efforts has been to remove the underlying problems of our society farther and farther from daily experience and daily consciousness." Quoted in Richard Ohmann, *English in America: a Radical View of the Profession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 79.

[61]In *The White Slaves of England*, John Cobden cited contemporary evidence in detailing precisely the nature of what the Jellybys and Podsnaps could not (or would not) see. Interestingly, he quotes from "A Report on the Factory Commission"—actually taken down in *Hansard*—in which Mr. Powers took evidence from an overseer at Milnes Factory in Leiton, Nottingham, a Mr. Fortesque: "At the factory. . . [children] go on working all the night as well as day. I believe them to have done so for the last year and a half. (A respectible female here entered with a petition against Negro-slavery; after she was gone Mr. Fortesque continued), I think home slavery as bad as it can be abroad."

The parenthesis, Cobden comments, "is *bona fide* a part of the report. . . . The 'respectable female' was probably the original of

Dickens' Mrs. Jellyby." See : John Cobden, *The White Slaves of England: Compiled from Official Documents*, 1860; rpt. Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971.

[62]Cooke Taylor, "Notes on a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire" (1842), quoted in Shiela M. Smith, *The Other Nation: the Poor in the English Novel of the 1840's and 1850's* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 44.

[63]Cooke Taylor, quoted in Marcus, *Engels, Manchester and the Working Class*, p. 51.

[64]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 184.

[65]Barikman, MacDonald and Stark suggest that when Dickens links Miss Havisham, Jaggers, Pip, Estella, Compeyson, Orlik and Mrs. Joe; or links Esher, Lady Dedlock, Nemo and Jo in "a secret conspiracy," he is "surely questioning the very basis of Victorian moral and social hierarchies." What these characters after all discover at the climax of their careers is "a secret nexus of fraud" which implicates "all major Victorian institutions from marriage and the family to whole systems of law, religion and government." See Barikman, MacDonald and Stark, pp. 26-27.

[66]Bounderby in *Hard Times* considers himself "a self-made man"—"here I am and nobody to thank for it but myself"—but this not only makes him inhuman (the claim of self-sufficiency implicitly denies all human relations), but in the event is patently untrue. The end of the novel discovers Mrs. Pegler as the mother who materializes behind the "self-made man" and whose sacrifices have made his success possible.

[67]Southey, quoted in Cobden, p. 25.

[68]Ghent, *Form and Function*, p. 137. Grahame Smith notes, similarly, that by the nineteenth century it was precisely "the greed for money" which could be defined as lying "at the heart of almost all personal and social evil," that "other forms of wrongdoing are superstructures erected upon this one essential foundation, and that it is diffused throughout the whole of society." See: Smith, *Dickens, Money and Society*, pp. 14-15.

[69]Ghent, *Form and Function*, p. 137.

[70]Eli Sagan, *Cannibalism: Human Aggression and Cultural Form* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974), p. 129.

[71]Dickens, quoted in Smith, *Dickens, Money and Society*, p. 147.

[72]"The demand for men, like that of any other commodity, necessarily regulates the production of men." "The wear and tear of the slave, it has been said, is at the expense of his master . . . [but] the wear and tear of the free servant . . . generally costs him much less. . . . The fund for replacing or repairing, if I may say so, the wear and tear of the slave, is commonly managed by a negligent master or careless overseer." Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, quoted in Engels, p. 80.

[73]Jung, quoted in A.P. Fawkes, "On the Wings of Fictionality, Some Observations on Literature's Relationship to Reality," in *The Uses of Criticism*, ed. A.P. Fawlkes (Berne: Herbert Lang, 1976), p. 170.

[74]"What we call 'normal' is a product of repression, denial, splitting. . . . It is radically estranged from the structure of being." Laing, *Politics*, p. 11.

[75]Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 183.

[76]George Gissing, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*, p. 250.

[77]Cobbet, "Tour," quoted in Smith, *The Other Nation*, p. 11.

[78]Engels, p. 23.

[79]Engels, p. 24.

[80]Laing, *Politics*, p. xv.

[81]Carlyle, quoted in Qualls, p. 40.

[82]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 106.

[83]Albert Camus quoted in Meakin, p. 5.

[84]Bond, "Preface" to *Lear* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. xii.

[85]H. Avron, quoted in Meakin, p. 12.

[86]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 41.

[87]Laing, *Politics*, p. 33.

[88]Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 137.

[89]Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 5.

[90]G.K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: Last of the Great Men* (New York, 1902; rpt. New York: Press of the Readers' Club, 1942), p. 36.

[91]Dickens quoted in Smith, *The Other Nation*, p. 43.

[92]Smith, *The Other Nation*, p. 259.

[93]Cynthia Ozick, "Women and Creativity: the Demise of the Dancing Dog," in Gornick and Moran, p. 450.

[94]Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1970), p. 102.

CANNIBAL FEASTING

[1]Kristeva, p. 167.

[2]Marcuse, p. 193.

[3]Kristeva, p. 24.

[4]Laing, *Politics*, p. 39.

[5]Kristeva, p. 70.

[6]Kristeva, p. 79.

[7]Kristeva, p. 31.

[8]Bakhtin, quoted in Jackson, p. 15.

[9]Wordsworth, quoted in David Simpson, *Fetishism and Imagination: Dickens, Melville, Conrad* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 18.

[10]Kristeva, p. 109.

[11]John Kucich, *Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 7.

[12]In his history of madness, Foucault in fact claims that "the prestige of patriarchy is revived around madness. . . . Henceforth . . . the discourse of unreason will be linked with the dialect of the family." Quoted in Phyllis Chester, "Patient and Patriarch: Women in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship," in Gornick and Moran, p. 388.

As early as 1964, R.D. Laing and A. Esterson had also made a connection between the structures of patriarchy and sickness. The unit of (mental) disease, they suggested, was "not the individual but the family," and indeed, "society at large." See: *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1964), p. 9.

In her study "The Paradox of the Happy Marriage," Jessie Bernard argues that the (patriarchal) institution of marriage actually deforms —and even destroys—the character of women. Given the standards of desirable mental well-being, she writes, "the happy housewife, depressed, phobic, passive, does not seem very well." Increasingly, she suggests, it becomes clear that "in order to fit them for marriage we must first make women sick." Could it be, she asks in conclusion, that the archetypal patriarchal institution, "Marriage itself, is sick?" In Gornick and Moran, p. 158.

[13]Laing, *Politics,* p. 12. Thus: "The insanity of the whole absolves the particular insanities and turns crimes against humanity into a rational enterprise." Marcuse, p. 52.

[14]Sagan, pp. 92-93.

[15]Kristeva, p. 70.

[16]Kristeva, p. 65.

[17]James R. Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

[18]Kristeva, p. 80.

[19]Carlyle, quoted in Elliot L. Gilbert, "In Primal Sympathy: *Great Expectations* and the Secret Life," *Dickens Studies Annual* 11 (1983), 92.

[20]Marcuse, p. 192.

[21]Fawkner, p. 152.

[22]It is also significant, in this respect, to note that Magwitch's Christian name is Abel. As namesake of the first victim, he too faces persecution and suffers at the hands of others.

[23]"The moral being . . . of this exemplary person derived its highest gratification from anathematizing his nearest relations and turning them out of doors . . . he next found himself at leisure to bestow a similar recognition on the claims of his daughter. . . . The venerable parent—on a cold winter's night it is said—anathematized and turned her out." *Our Mutual Friend,* p. 56.

[24]"I am one of two brothers . . . all was to come to me except a legacy of three hundred pounds that I was then to pay my brother. . . . I, and some of my relations, said that he had had a part of it already in board and lodging. . . . To settle that question, my brother filing a bill, I was obliged to go to Chancery." *Bleak House,* p. 192.

The fact of taking issues to Court—and Chancery, dealing with disputes over wills, legacies and trusts, concerns itself essentially with *family* disputes—signals nothing less than the failure of personal relationships, the failure of personal communication.

[25]Laing, *Politics,* p. 59.

[26]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 174.

[27]Sagan, p. 110.

[28]As noted by David Simpson, p. 52.

[29]*Punch,* Nov. 1846, quoted in Janice Nadelhaft, "The English Malady, Corrupted Humours and Krooks's Death," *Studies in the Novel* 1 (1969), 234.

[30]Chadwick, cited in Steven Marcus, *Engels, Manchester and the Working Class,* p. 17.

[31]Richard A. Levine, "Dickens, the Two Nations and Individual Possibility," *Studies in the Novel* 1 (1969), 158.

[32]Engels, p. 25.

[33]Edward Bond, "Preface to *Lear*" in *Lear* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. ix.

[34]Laing, *Politics*, p. 10.

[35]Jackson, p. 118.

[36]Kennedy, *Meaning and Signs*, p. 15.

[37]Kennedy, *Meaning and Signs*, p. 12.

[38]Laing, *The Divided Self* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), p. 21.

[39]Laing, *Politics*, p. xv.

[40]Sagan, p. 109.

[41]Sagan, p. 110.

[42]Cobbett, "A History of the Protestant Reformation," quoted in Smith, *The Other Nation*, p. 8.

[43]A process viewed by Kant as indeed the basic ground of immorality. In viewing certain groups of people as not human, society turns them into legitimate objects of aggression. "Such societies divide the . . . world into those who are human (me) and those who are subhuman (them). The list of 'them' is a catalogue of the oppressed, dominated and exploited." Sagan, p. xv.

[44]Tocqueville, quoted in Marcus, *Engels, Manchester and the Working Class*, p. 62.

[45]Ruskin, "Unto this Last," quoted in Smith, *Dickens, Money and Society*, p. 63.

[46]House, p. 59.

[47]Sagan, p. 75.

[48]E. Pearlman, "Inversion in *Great Expectations*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 7 (1978), 193, states that Mrs. Joe's tyranny "is inexplicable." Given Mrs. Joe's own oppression, however (see Borikman, MacDonald and Spark, pp. 70-71), it may be interesting to note an observation made by B. Whiting and D. Slater that a woman "resentful of [her] subordinate and isolated role in society" may compensate for it "by exercising arbitrary . . . power in the household, particularly over male children." Quoted by Chodorow in Gornick and Moran, p. 290.

[49]Ghent, *Form and Function,* p. 128.

[50]Sagan, pp. 8 and 20. Reay Tannahill, *Flesh and Blood: A History of the Cannibal Complex* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), pp. 6-9 also makes the same point.

[51]Marcuse, p. 32.

[52]Francois Perroux, quoted in Marcuse, p. 33.

[53]"Through historical times our institutions have been aggressive and because of this they make it easier for aggressive people to get power and authority." Bond, "Preface" to *Lear,* p. xi.

[54]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 42.

[55]Given the Englishman's traditional pronunciation of French with accentuated "e" endings as "ey" ("parler" into the Anglicized "parley"), Dickens' use of "compey" for French "Campaigne" would, I think, have found recognition among both his listeners and his readers.

[56]Fritz Zorn, *Mars* (London: Picador, 1982), p. 157.

[57]Laing, quoted in Gold, p. 196.

[58]Stewart, *Trials,* p. 197.

[59]Ghent, *Form and Function,* p. 137.

[60]Bond, "Preface" to *Lear,* p. viii.

[61]"The better I get to know myself the more I experience myself as I really am: destroyed, castrated, whipped, dishonoured, disgraced." Zorn, p. 150.

[62]"Dickens' intention," declares Gold, is "to point to the concept of class as a killing mode of perception. That such a view partializes, fragments . . . is made clear. . . . It produces," he continued, "a false and diminishing view of one's own humanity and subsequently distort[s] the humanity of others." Gold, p. 269.

[63]Quoted in Laing, *Politics,* p. 293.

[64]William F. Axton, "*Great Expectations* Yet Again," *Dickens Studies Annual* 2 (1973), 279.

[65]Thurley, p. 192.

[66]Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 213.

[67]Wordsworth, *The Prelude: A Parallel Text*, ed. J.C. Maxwell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 492.

[68]Taken to their logical conclusion, such views were, and continue to be, horrifying in their implications. Shiela M. Smith, for example, cites the *Children's Employment Commission (Mines)*—quoted in *Hansard*—giving the evidence of "a most respectable man, a clergy man" (so denominated by the commission), who feared that particular deformities of the back "requisite to the employment could not be obtained if children were initiated [into the mines] at a later age than twelve." He could contemplate with equinamity a child deformed by its work, declares Smith, "because this very deformity indicated that it was an efficient instrument in extracting coal." Smith, pp. 38-39.

[69]Alexander Welsh, *The City of Dickens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 61.

[70]Bulwer Lytton, quoted in Smith, *Dickens, Money and Society*, p. 36.

[71]"Her heart was dead long before her body. She had sold it to become Sir Pitt Crawley's wife. Mothers and daughters are making the same bargain every day in Vanity Fair." See: Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1961), p. 138.

[72]Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 182.

[73]In *Why Women Are So* (1912), Mary Roberts Coolidge suggested that mastery "was the ambition of men not fully civilized; but in a brutal, competitive world, they found it difficult to achieve over other men and contrary circumstances. All the more, therefore, they desired mastery in their households." Quoted in Jessie Bernard, "The Paradox of the Happy Marriage," in Gornick and Moran, p. 146.

In "Woman as Outsider," Gornick also describes how the man who is without any real power in society will oppress his wife or (female) companion "because the woman, who is the only living thing *beneath* him, relieves him of his stunning sense of powerlessness, and utter powerlessness . . . devolves upon her." In Gornick and Moran, p. 133.

[74]Barikman, MacDonald and Stark, p. 89.

[75]If society's fathers find their most archetypal expression in Cronus, the father who devours his sons, then society's daughters are figured in Iphogenia, the female child sacrificed in the struggle for (male) power.

[76]Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 194

[77]Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 370.

[78]Bond, "Preface" to *Lear*, p. v.

[79]Bond, "Preface" to *Lear*, p. x.

[80]When Twemlow goes to dine at the Veneerings, what he discovers is an existential condition of non-being: "Nobody there. Nobody *there*. Nobody anywhere!" (*OMF*, p. 468). Indeed, Veneering himself, host to this gattering of no/bodies is in fact the epitome of those whom he entertains—"mere vacant space" (*OMF*, p. 691).

[81]E. Colby, quoted in Laing, *Politics*, p. 42.

[82]Carlyle, quoted in Qualls, p. 40.

[83]Sagan, p. 140.

[84]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 176.

[85]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 162.

[86]Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 194.

[87]Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 199.

[88]Engels, p. 132. In *The Skilled Labourer: 1760-1832*, D.L. Hammonds and Barbara Hammonds wrote in 1919 that the history of England at the times discussed "reads like a history of civil war." Quoted in Marcus, *Engels, Manchester and the Working Class*, p. 158.

[89]Laing, *Politics*, p. 33.

[90]Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 645.

[91]Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 645.

[92]Gornick and Moran, "Introduction" to *Woman in Sexist Society*, pp. xxx-xxxi.

[93]Dickens, *Hard Times*, p. 192.

DE/SCRIBING THE TEXT

[1]Dickens, quoted in Hill, pp. 96-97.

[2]Kristeva, p. 25.

[3]Kristeva, p. 25.

[4]Marcuse has described the process by which societal thinking has come to accept the notion that "what is real is rational"; the "equation" as he describes is that Reason = Truth = Reality (p. 123).

[5]Carlyle, quoted in Qualls, p. 17.

[6]The term is from the title of Kristeva's essay "The Bounded Text." Kristeva, pp. 36-63.

[7]Monroe Beardsley, quoted in Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Literary Sociology and Practical Criticism: An Inquiry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 139.

[8]Foucault, quoted in Robert Young, "Introduction" in Young, p. 9.

[9]Richard Palmer, in Susan R. Horton, *Interpreting Interpreting: Interpreting Dickens's "Dombey"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 123.

[10]Barthes, quoted in Kristeva, p. 102.

[11]Barthes, quoted in Kristeva, p. 111.

[12]Kristeva, p. 65.

[13]Palmer, quoted in Horton, *Interpreting*, p. 30.

[14]Sammons, *Literary Sociology*, p. 72.

[15]Karlheinz Stierle, "The Reading of Fictional Texts," in Suleiman and Crosman, p. 83.

[16]Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus," p. 153.

[17]Marcuse, p. 129.

[18]"The struggle for truth is a struggle against destruction, for the 'salvation' . . . of Being." Marcuse, p. 125.

[19]Barthes, quoted in Young, p. 32.

[20]Kristeva, p. 96.

[21]Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 261.

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