THE RHETORIC OF CHARACTERIZATION: A STUDY OF DICKENS' MR. DOMBEY AND ARTHUR CLENNAM

by

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The purposes of this study are to analyze Dickens' characterizations of Mr. Paul Dombey, Sr., in Dombey and Son and Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit; and to illustrate the critical possibilities of a theory of characterization which regards the methods of creating character as rhetorical strategies. I argue that Dombey and Clennam are uniquely complex characterizations in Dickens' work and that their complexity can best be demonstrated by examining the effects Dickens' use of three basic methods of characterization have on our responses to them.

In the first chapter, I survey the earlier criticism of Dickens' characterizations and those theories of the novel which hold that the novel is either an autonomous object or an experiential process. I then establish a theory of characterization that defines three basic methods: the expository, the dramatic, and the interior. I argue that these methods constitute a continuum of narrative technique with the expository method at one extreme, the dramatic at the other, and the interior at a moving midpoint between them. I also argue that, in the process of reading a novel, our conception of a character is shaped by the gradual accumulation of effects achieved by a writer's use of any or all of these methods. At the end of the chapter, I illustrate a general point about Dickens' method; that is, that regardless of what method of characterization he is using at any particular moment, that method customarily shifts towards the expository pole of the continuum.

Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to detailed analyses of Dickens' methods of characterizing Dombey and Clennam respectively. In both characterizations Dickens shifts among all three methods to achieve a unique, and for the most part a successful, complexity. These are the only two protagonists whose characterizations make extensive use of the interior method, thus in these two protagonists only are we given access to the inner life in novels of omniscient narration.

In the final chapter, I look ahead briefly to Dickens' methods of characterizing Eugene Wrayburn in Our Mutual Friend and John Jasper in the unfinished Mystery of Edwin Drood and backward to Dickens' problems with using the interior method in his characterizations of Florence Dombey and Amy Dorrit. Lastly, I speculate about the directions rhetorical analysis might take as a method of literary criticism.

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PREFACE

This study has two goals: to analyze Dickens' unique achievement in his complex characterizations of Mr. Paul Dombey, Sr. in Dombey and Son and Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit; and to illustrate the critical possibilities of a theory of characterization which regards the methods of creating character as rhetorical strategies.

Dickens' portraits of Dombey and Clennam are unlike any others because in them Dickens departs from his customary methods to experiment with the depiction of their inner lives. It is an experiment he never repeats. Few critics have recognized Dombey's and Clennam's complexity, and none, to my knowledge, has seen the affinities in their characterizations. Those critics who have argued for a certain kind of complexity in them have not adequately accounted for the techniques by which Dickens achieves that complexity.

Traditional methods of analyzing character generally focus on character itself rather than on the methods by which that character is created. Instead, my analysis focuses on the process of creating character (characterization) rather than on the result of that process (character). Accordingly, in the following chapter I describe a continuum of three basic methods of characterization: the expository, the dramatic, and the interior. Because these methods define the means by which an author establishes a conception of character and evokes a response to character, characterization can be seen as a rhetorical problem. As Wayne Booth argues in his now classic study The Rhetoric

of Fiction, the term rhetoric, in the study of literature, encompasses all those techniques by which a writer controls the reader's relationship to the work "as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world upon the reader." Therefore, the rhetoric of fiction also encompasses all those techniques by which a writer controls the reader's relationship to a character.

Because Dombey and Clennam are the only characters Dickens created by all three methods, they are the only characters in Dickens which illustrate the possibilities of a rhetorical analysis of characterization at its fullest. In order to substantiate the claim that this study fills a gap in earlier criticism, I begin by surveying the previous assessment of Dickens' characterizations. I believe that such a survey provides a necessary perspective on Dickens' unique achievements in his portraits of Dombey and Clennam.

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CHAPTER I

THEORIES AND MODELS

Since the first installment of The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club appeared on March 31, 1836, readers and critics have praised or dismissed Dickens as a caricaturist. George Lewes sniffed that there was scarcely a touch of verisimilitude in even so successful a character as Mr. Micawber. George Eliot admired Dickens' powerful rendering of external traits yet wished he would pay equal attention to his characters' psychology. Saintsbury called them (with the exception of what he considered feeble attempts at fullness in the late novels) Jonsonian humours. Apologists focused on the characters themselves--their brilliance, credibility, thematic and symbolic significance, their "unforgettability." Gissing, for example, protested that to "call Mrs. Gamp a caricature is an obvious abuse of language. . . . It is no more the name for Dickens' full fervor of creation than for Shakespeare's. . . ." Probably the most famous defense of Dickens' characters, though, is Santayana's: "When people say Dickens exaggerates," he wrote in 1921, "it seems to me they can have no eyes and no ears." His position was, in fact, that Dickens' caricatures are realistic and credible because the world "is a perpetual caricature of itself."[1]

[1]George Henry Lewes, "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," Fortnightly Review (February 1872); George Eliot, no title, Westminister Review (July 1856); George Saintsbury, Dickens (1916); George Gissing, Charles Dickens: A Critical Study (1898); George Santayana, "Charles Dickens," Dial (November 1921). Quoted in A Bibliography of Dickensian Criticism 1836-1975, ed. Reginald Charles Churchill (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1975), pp. 171-174.

Henry James, on the other hand, complained in 1888 that they are not typical enough, that they are instead too individual.[2]

A few years later, E. M. Forster, having introduced to literary criticism the terms "flat" and "round" in Aspects of the Novel, used Dickens as a signal example of "flatness" in characterization, all the while expressing some bewilderment at the human depth he found in these "flat" characters. His explanation of this paradox is wonderfully ingenious and worth quoting in full:

> Dickens' people are nearly all flat . . . . Nearly every one can be summed up in a sentence, and yet there is this wonderful feeling of human depth. Probably the immense vitality of Dickens causes his characters to vibrate a little, so that they borrow his life and appear to lead one of their own. It is a conjuring trick; at any moment we may look at Mr. Pickwick edgeways and find him no thicker than a gramophone record. But we never get the sideway view. He always has the air of weighing something, and when he is put into the cupboard of the young ladies' school he seems as heavy as Falstaff in the buck-basket at Windsor. Part of the genius of Dickens is that he does use types and caricatures, people whom we recognize the moment they re-enter, and yet achieves effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow. Those who dislike Dickens have an excellent case. He ought to be bad. He is actually one of our big writers, and his immense success with types suggests that there may be more in flatness than the severer critics admit.[3]

Annoyed by what he considered Forster's own conjuring trick of an explanation, Edwin Muir has tried his hand at explaining the paradox that Dickens' characters are both flat and deeply human. Muir points out

[2]Partial Portraits (1888), p. 318. Quoted by George H. Ford, Dickens & His Readers: Aspects of Novel-Criticism Since 1836 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 137.

[3]Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1927), pp. 108-109.

that the very thing which makes them flat, the revelation of their habitual selves, is an open secret to the novelist, the reader, and even, as in the case of Pecksniff, to a character himself. This open secret, he claims, suggests the existence of another side to a character, a side we are not shown. Thus the existence of more than one possible side to a character effects the sense a reader has of human depth in a flat character.[4] Recently, there have been other helpful and provocative explanations for this paradox in Dickens' characterizations.

Although the debate over Dickens' characters has never come to a full stop, it subsided considerably following Edmund Wilson's 1941 essay, "Dickens: The Two Scrooges," which, by emphasizing the dark side of Dickens' vision, spawned the enthusiastic and voluminous interest in the symbolic Dickens which has dominated criticism for over a quarter century. In his essay, Wilson mistakenly proclaimed that: "The only complexity of which Dickens is capable is to make one of his less noxious characters become wholesome, one of his clowns turn into a serious person."[5] That effectively put an end to the matter, and Sairey Gamp was replaced with prisons and fog.[6]

[4]The Structure of the Novel (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1929), pp. 143-145.

[5]In The Wound and the Bow (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941), p. 62.

[6]A check of the 1905-1974 Cumulative Index to the Dickensian shows that articles on Dickens' characters and methods of characterization did not begin to appear until the late sixties, when critics again took up George Eliot's theme and Forster's paradox.

Robert Garis, who has written one of the most important commentaries on Dickens since Edmund Wilson, agrees wholeheartedly with Wilson that Dickens does not examine the inner life of his characters. But, he argues, Dickens does not practice an art given to the exploration of character; indeed, his characters are not "real," and are not to be taken seriously as morally active human beings; they are instead externally rendered mannequins in the Dickens theatre. The only proper response we can make is to applaud their creator, Dickens the illusionist and manipulator. "The elements of serious dramatic art," he maintains, ". . . [are] totally at variance with the procedures and attitudes of theatrical art."[7] By defining serious dramatic art as "the self-developing, continuous, and integrated illusion, the self-effacement of the artist, the disinterested, morally intelligent search for the centre of self of human beings,"[8] Garis rests his case. The Dickens Theatre has been good for Dickens criticism: it has helped restore the reputation of the comic Dickens, and it has rightly demonstrated that Dickens is everywhere present in his work. Nevertheless, Garis' determination to force all of Dickens to conform to his thesis blinds him to the complexity Dickens does achieve in his characterizations, and particularly to Dickens' experiments with depicting the inner lives of Dombey and Clennam.

[7]The Dickens Theatre (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 53-54.

[8]Ibid.

Much more accurately descriptive of Dickens' methods is the work of Dorothy Van Ghent and Barbara Hardy, who have found perceptive ways to explain, rather than to dismiss, half of Forster's paradox. Miss Van Ghent shows how Dickens reveals the inner life of an admittedly flat character through externals and creates a sense of complexity and human depth through the technique of "character doubling." She counters Wilson's objection that Dickens could never combine good and bad in a single character with her theory that, in Dickens' nonnaturalistic world, character is not discrete. One character is superimposed on another "so that together they form the representative human complexity of good-in-evil and evil-in-good."[9] Thus, for example, Estella and Miss Havisham, and Pip and Magwitch, are "not two characters but a single one, a continuum . . ."[10] or "a single essence with dual aspects, as if composed by montage. . . ."[11] She also believes that, as with Miss Havisham and her wedding cake, a character's inner life is transposed to external forms and actions.[12] F. D. and Q. D. Leavis adopt this same view. In the strongest possible terms, they even avow that Dickens is every bit James's equal in the subtle depiction of the inner life.[13]

[9]"On Great Expectations," The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), p. 134.

[10]Dorothy Van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todger's," Sewanee Review, 58 (Summer 1950), 430.

[11]"On Great Expectations," p. 134.

[12]Ibid., p. 131.

[13]Dickens the Novelist (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 249.

Barbara Hardy finds complexity of characterization in Dickens' use of "a psychological series or scale" of characters which usually has "at one extreme . . . a fairly full nature, at the other a totally corrupt one, and in the centre a significant mixture."[14] Dickens, she claims with the great majority of critics, is most impressive at either extremity of the scale; yet she also believes that those characters "who inhabit the central part of his sliding scale" are the most interesting instances of his complexity. "This middle range," she continues, "seems to give him most trouble . . . . It is tempting to see a development in the novels, and I would say that such characters as Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit and Wrayburn in Our Mutual Friend show an emotional complexity and restraint very different from anything that has gone before."[15] Many are not so reluctant to see development in Dickens' novels. Indeed, the dominant view since Edmund Wilson is that Dickens grew in maturity of vision and in mastery of his art and that one of the forms this growth took was in his exploration of human psychology, in other words, in his methods of characterization.

Harry Stone, for example, in an article entitled "Dickens and Interior Monologue," has traced Dickens' use of stream-of-consciousness from Jingle in Pickwick Papers through Mrs. Nickleby, Flora Finching in Little Dorrit, Mrs. Lirriper of the Christmas stories "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings" (1863) and "Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy" (1864), to John

[14]"The Complexity of Dickens," Dickens 1970, ed. Michael Slater (New York: Stein and Day, 1970), pp. 39-40.

[15]Ibid., p. 41.

Jasper in the last, unfinished novel The Mystery of Edwin Drood. There is, Stone maintains, a clear line of development in the treatment of these characters as Dickens' reliance on the conventions of speech becomes more and more tenuous until, in Jasper, it disappears into the dramatic rendering of private, unarticulated consciousness. Dickens, Stone says,

> . . . gave increasing attention to the problem of depicting consciousness and experimented with techniques which would make such representations appear convincing. This growing concern with the ways of the mind and their representation is significant for a number of reasons. It demonstrates that the increasing psychological emphasis and subtlety of the evolving nineteenth-century novel is clearly reflected in Dickens' works. It helps to underline the fact that in many ways the great twentieth-century experimental novelists were merely extending, modifying and carrying forward older methods and traditions. And finally it emphasizes Dickens's growing artistic versatility, his increasing mastery of fresh and complicated techniques, and his constant and often startling experimentation.[16]

That Dickens experimented with new and sophisticated narrative techniques in the depiction of Dombey and Clennam is one of this study's chief arguments. But Stone mistakes occasional experimentation with development. The characterization of John Jasper is not governed by renderings of his inner life. The novel's memorable impressionistic opening is both the beginning and the end of our access to Jasper's opium-clouded mind. The remainder of the characterization depends entirely upon Dickens' familiar methods.

Several other recent works are devoted to analyzing and evaluating Dickens as a conscious artist. Such titles as The Narrative Art

[16]Philological Quarterly, 38 (1959), p. 54.

of Dickens: The Rhetoric of Sympathy and Irony by Harvey Peter Sucksmith and Charles Dickens as Serial Novelist by Archibald Coolidge reveal their authors' interest in technique. By examining in detail Dickens' manuscripts and corrected proof sheets to illustrate his processes of revision, Sucksmith shows unequivocally that Dickens was a conscious, rather than a wholly instinctive, writer.[17] He divides Dickens' artistic methods into two main categories: the "rhetoric of sympathy" and the "rhetoric of irony." Defining rhetoric as "the technical means whereby, through structure, effects are created and vision focused,"[18] he argues that fiction is "a relationship between vision, structure, and effect"[19]--a relationship which roughly corresponds to the writer, novel, and reader, but which is expressed "within the novel itself."[20] When Sucksmith calls Dickens a rhetorical artist, he maintains that he does not mean that Dickens' primary purpose is to instruct or preach; it is to "communicate a vision of life."[21]

Sucksmith also uses letters by Dickens to show that he regarded characterization as basic to the art of the novel and that he was especially interested in the impact of a character on a reader.[22]

[17](Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 9-13.

[18]Ibid., p. 7.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 8.

[21]Ibid., p. 40.

[22]Ibid., p. 15.

Important to my own thesis is the notion that Dickens achieves complexity by combining the rhetorical strategies of sympathy and irony. Sucksmith explains this complexity:

> Through the identification which sympathy makes possible, the reader becomes as intimately involved in the experience of the novel as if he were living within its world while, through irony, he remains detached and able to make an objective and critical assessment of the experience he is living through. In this way, both intellect and motion are invited to respond to the vision of the novel and what may seem contradictory attitudes in author and reader are united in the paradox of a complex art.[23]

This is a helpful if not a particularly original, distinction,[24] but I am more interested in the specific ways in which Dickens induces identification and detachment and the whole range of responses which lies between. For one thing, Sucksmith tends to discount what he calls "the generalizations of an essay"[25] (that is, authorial comment) as a method of characterization, or as a rhetorical strategy. But, in addition to being a method common not only to Dickens but also to the Victorian novel in general, it can be, as I intend to show, a powerfully effective method of characterization.

Sucksmith's claim that vitality itself induces sympathy is also disputable. "There is nothing," he remarks, "with which we so readily sympathize as the quality of life itself; the recognition and approval of life in others is a reaffirmation of our own vital being, an

[23]Ibid., p. 173.

[24]Wayne Booth, for example, asserts that: "Every literary work of any power--whether or not its author composed it with his audience in mind--is in fact an elaborate system of controls over the reader's involvement and detachment along various lines of interest," The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 123.

[25]Sucksmith, p. 279.

expression of our delight in being alive."[26] In support of this contention, Sucksmith cites Bill Sikes, Quilp, Pecksniff, Uriah Heep, and Major Bagstock. He argues that Bagstock, for instance, "might have been a satirical figure only, without true substance, yet he conveys the impression of solidity. . . . Irony exposes his conceit but the manner in which he goes about, puffing himself through puffing Dombey, expresses an undeniable vitality."[27] But what is the necessary connection between vitality and sympathy? Bagstock is in no way a sympathetic, much less complex, character. A character's vitality may make him all the more repulsive because all the more vivid. Dramatic vitality can make a reader accept almost anything, but acceptance is not sympathy.

It is particularly odd that nowhere in this chapter on characterization (Chapter 1) does Sucksmith discuss either Dombey or Arthur Clennam, and he makes only passing reference to David Copperfield and Pip, though he is interested in Dickens' complex portrait of William Dorrit. These characters are, in my opinion and in that of many others, among the most successfully complex of Dickens' characterizations. Their omission is even odder in the light of Sucksmith's perceptive comment that:

> One of Dickens's most fertile discoveries was the ironic relationship between the persona and the inner man. . . . As Dickens matured, he realized that the persona was no mere set expression put on and removed as readily as a papier maché affair but a living part of the human personality with a delicately adjusted relationship to the rest of the psyche. He saw how a man might identify

[26]Ibid., p. 132. James R. Kincaid makes a similar argument in The Rhetoric of Laughter (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971).

[27]Ibid., p. 271.

> himself with his social attitude or role, how particularly true this was of professional people. . . .[28]

The relationship between the persona and the inner man governs to a great extent the characterizations of Dombey, Clennam, Wrayburn, and others, but having simply cited Dombey as an example of a character who identifies himself with the family business, he makes no further mention of him. Nevertheless, Sucksmith's study of rhetorical strategies in characterization has helped clarify my own method, and his contribution will be evident in my analysis of Dickens' methods.

Archibald Coolidge in Charles Dickens as Serial Novelist identifies in detail the structural patterns, stock characters, imagistic and symbolic motifs, and other devices which Dickens used more and more skillfully to unify the serial parts of his novels. He groups these devices into three categories: pervasive metaphor, polarity of plot and situation, and psychological continuity. Coolidge's discussion of Dickens' effort to achieve psychological continuity in his later novels supports my own view of Dickens' methods of characterization. Although, Collidge feels that the use of psycholgical continuity came late in Dickens' development, I find Dickens experimenting with it as early as Dombey and Son.

The novel's continuity, Coolidge claims, is always foremost internal and personal; its external continuity, if present, is not a necessary condition. Since serialization makes simple external continuity difficult, a serial novelist who wanted continuity "was

[28]Ibid., p. 257.

forced to develop the inner, psychological kind."[29] Consequently, it is not strange that Dickens "took one step after another to improve this psychological continuity."[30] Coolidge goes on to argue that this effort takes in Dickens a particular form, which he calls the "maturing passive protagonist." Of Dickens' development of this character type, he comments:

> Essentially [Dickens'] techniques for arranging materials in space and time, most of which he developed in the first third of his career, assumed a passive reader who had stimuli presented to him by an active author . . . . Despite his aggressiveness in his career, his private view of the relation of his self to his world seems to have been a picture of a passive reaction. His sympathies and his philosophy both led him to associate himself with social victims and those who were passively influenced. Perhaps, as a result, he more and more associated himself with the passive reader. Accompanying this association came a tendency to create plots around protagonists who were closer and closer to this passive self and passive reader--protagonists with whom both Dickens and the reader could become increasingly identified.[31]

Whatever the merits of this biographical analysis, it is true that many of Dickens' protagonists, especially the later ones, tend to be passive. Certainly Arthur Clennam and Eugene Wrayburn are both passive and maturing. But again, it seems to me that Dombey represents Dickens' earliest delineation of the type.

Most studies of Dickens' methods, with the exception of Van Ghent's and Hardy's, have suffered from the tendency to confuse the distinctive concepts of "character" and "characterization." The term

[29](Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 131.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., pp. 142-143.

"characterization" describes, or ought to describe, how a fictional character is created; "character" refers to the result of the creative process. For clarity, each of these aspects of fiction needs to be analyzed in its own terms. Character may be described as round or flat, two- or three-dimensional, static or dynamic, simple or complex. The last term can be particularly confusing because it is used to refer to both character and characterization. Independent as they are, a complex characterization will not inevitably create a complex character. For example, Barbara Hardy identifies Sir Leicester Dedlock in Bleak House as a flat character whose characterization is nonetheless complex.[32] If we can accept Earle Davis' contention that a novelist who "attempts several contrasting ways of telling a story . . . aims at a more complex effect than the novelist who confines himself to a carefully studied portrayal of a single character by a single technique of narration,"[33] then Estella in Great Expectations is an example of a complex character whose characterization is simple. At any rate, it is clear that an indiscriminate use of the two terms makes coherent discussion of methods and effects difficult. To avoid this difficulty, I have distinguished three methods of characterization, which are in fact three basic ways of telling a story. Accordingly, I wish at this point to delineate some of the larger issues involved in novel criticism in order to provide a context and a justification for the procedures I follow with the characterizations of Dombey and Clennam.

[32]Hardy, pp. 33-35.

[33]The Flint and the Flame: The Artistry of Charles Dickens (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), p. 74.

A central theoretical issue of criticism is whether to regard the novel as an autonomous object (that is, as a spatially organized, static artifact) or as process (that is, as a temporally organized, dynamic experience). The debate is not new: the two fundamental positions were struck early in this century by Percy Lubbock, James' earliest and chief interpreter, and E. M. Forster. Lubbock insisted on a critical approach that would, by addressing itself to such matters of craft as point of view and structure (what Lubbock's ideal novelist Henry James called a novel's architecture), treat the novel not as life but as a work of art.[34] Forster insisted in turn that a novel is inevitably and justifiably related to life and that a reader never gives a thought to whether or not a novel has a consistent point of view, something Lubbock considered of primary importance. "All that matters to a reader," Forster contended, "is whether the shifting attitude and the secret life are convincing."[35]

In their insistence on form and technique, Lubbock and his successors--theorists like René Wellek, Austin Warren, Mark Schorer, and most recently David Lodge--have been to the novel what the New Critics were to poetry. Arguing that novel criticism should be as formalist and as analytical as the criticism of poetry, the proponents of "autonomy" make these points: 1) a novel is made up exclusively of words which differ radically from the words of non-literary discourse because in literature they <u>are</u> what in non-literary language they represent;

[34]<u>The Craft of Fiction</u> (New York: The Viking Press, 1957).

[35]Forster, p. 128.

2) a novel's phenomenal particularity, which is, thus, an anti-convention employed to conceal the fact that a novel is "discontinuous with real life," can be neither arbitrary nor neutral; 3) because language itself is a novel's only objective and fixed data, the art of the novel, like the art of poetry, is an art of language; and 4) the novel, now correctly seen as a purely linguistic production, should receive the same close, formal analysis as does a poem.[36]

Few today would disagree that a novel is "a verbally created world, not to be confused with the real world."[37] Still, a view of the novel that stresses its continuity with life and its objective autonomy does not square with the experience of an actual reader engaged in the process of reading an actual novel. This has been one of the major objections raised against the formalists. Wayne Booth, whose Rhetoric of Fiction was published in 1961, is the seminal proponent of an experiential theory. Booth descried the rigid prescriptions of formalism, particularly its dogmatic preference for the so-called self-effaced narrator. He wanted a critical approach that would describe what novelists have done and do, not what they should do. This approach would treat a novelist's methods as rhetorical strategies which persuade (or, to use Forster's word, "convince") a reader to accept and participate in the world of the novel, without giving up the disinterestedness that permits a reader to disagree with the norms and values of that world.

[36]David Lodge, Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), Part One, passim.

[37]Ibid., p. 40.

The craft of fiction thus becomes a process of controlling and adjusting the reader's relationship and response to the world of the novel, as he experiences it.[38]

Booth was not, of course, a lone voice against the formalists. Others have argued against "the effort to deduce a prosaics from a poetics"[39] on the grounds that: 1) a novel is not discontinuous with life, as Henry James himself said in "The Art of Fiction" when he claimed that the novel not only does, but has no other business than to, represent life; 2) "the more openly communicative, functional, and extensive language" of prose must not be confused with the "intensive speech" of poetry, especially that of lyric poetry; and 3) formalist "technicism" has created a reductive critical obsession with symbol, image, motif, allegory, and myth.[40] It is admittedly unjust to accuse the formalists, who are avid exponents of the organic nature of art, of reducing a novel to the sum of its techniques.[41] Nevertheless, the painstaking identification of recurring images, symbols, and so on, while it can without question be done, in a nine-hundred-page novel soon becomes a distortion of the whole work.

[38]Lodge himself suggests that "in literary discourse the writer discovers what he has to say in the process of saying it, and the reader discovers what is said in responding to the way it is said," pp. 64-65.

[39]Philip Rahv, "Fiction and the Criticism of Fiction," The Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Robert Murray Davis (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 107.

[40]Ibid.

[41]"Afterword" to Rahv in The Novel, ed. Davis, p. 124.

Perhaps the best demonstration of what is wrong with a rigorously close reading of a novel is that of Douglas Hewitt in The Approach to Fiction: Good and Bad Readings of Novels. Hewitt gives a sample text four possible interpretations, each involving progressively closer attention to the linguistic details of the passage. His text is the Iron Bridge scene between Amy Dorrit and Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit. The fourth reading builds an elaborate interpretation on the two words "roaring streets," a phrase which recurs sixty-one chapters later in the novel's last paragraph. Hewitt's point is that this degree of closeness, though it may be appropriate for a poem, so long as it is not too long, is not appropriate for a novel. Not only, he contends, is this reading over-ingenious, it also violates the actual relationship between a reader and the novel, certainly on the first reading and probably on the second. Furthermore, he believes that our "ability to read closely, to elucidate patterns of imagery and to seize on symbolic overtones" has not been accompanied by "an adequate conception of narrative," which would include such things as pace, tone, memorability, and the degree of attention demanded of the reader.[42]

A novel (by which I do not mean the thing we hold in our hands) is an object only in a metaphorical sense; what it offers is literally a process and an experience. We have a highly refined critical method to deal with the novel as object. What criticism needs is a method that treats the novel as process and experience. Booth's notion of

[42](Towota, N. J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972), pp. 112-123.

the rhetoric of fiction has helped to answer this need. In the fifteen years since The Rhetoric of Fiction appeared, the word rhetoric has enjoyed an almost excessive vogue. Some critics apparently feel that occasional remarks about persuasion or about the author's appeals to the audience constitute rhetorical analysis. Consequently, what is meant by rhetoric, as a critical term, has often been misunderstood. By "the rhetoric of fiction," Booth means the ways a writer manipulates his materials so as to argue for a particular world view and to induce acceptance, though not uncritical acceptance, of it. In other words, fictional techniques are the means of persuasion. Booth, in his book, is largely concerned to show the importance of one particular fictional technique, point of view, which he calls the angle of vision, as a means of persuasion. Another critic, Henry Knight Miller, stresses in his rhetorical analysis of Tom Jones the novelist's kinship with the rhetorician: both, he points out, aim to "arouse and shape the expectations of an audience, to provide . . . clues to meaningful response . . . to lead [the] audience to want certain conclusions . . . ."[43] My approach to Dickens' characterization of Dombey and Clennam owes much to Booth, Miller, and many others who have espoused this theory of the novel.

Before proceeding, I suspect that it is time to admit that in the chapters to come I commit the so-called intentional and affective fallacies. If anything constitutes a trend in literary criticism in

[43]"Some Aspects of Rhetoric in Tom Jones," Philological Quarterly, 45 (1966), 216-217.

the past few years, it is that more and more critics include the words intent and affect in their critical vocabularies, and few now feel the need to apologize for them.[44] This, however, has not meant a return to either historicism or impressionism; it has meant the restoration of two components of the novel that the formalists had lopped off on the grounds that one, intent, is irrecoverable and the other, affect, variable.[45]

In response to the formalist's objections, Mark Spilka postulates an author who is formally, rather than historically or biographically, connected with his work.[46] The distinction between the biographical author and the formal author, then, makes it possible to distinguish between the irrecoverable intention and what Spilka calls the literary work's achieved intention.[47] A reader infers what is intended in a novel, then judges the intention's success or failure. For example, Dickens in Bleak House clearly intends for us to dislike Richard Carstone's solicitor Vholes, and we do. He probably intends for us to like and admire Esther Summerson, but many of us do not. The

[44]See Walter J. Ong, The Barbarian Within, and Other Fugitive Essays and Studies (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962) for a discussion of the limitations of the intentional and affective fallacies.

[45]Lodge, p. 65.

[46]Similarly, Booth uses the term "implied author" and Louis Rubin, Jr. "the teller in the tale," The Teller in the Tale (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), to designate the author who is part of the formal structure of a novel.

[47]"The Necessary Stylist: A New Critical Revision," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (Winter 1960-1961), 283-297.

critical wrangling over what Dickens does intend with Esther attests to the validity of Spilka's conception of achieved intention--that internal purpose which is inferable from the novel itself. Secondly, Douglas Hewitt argues that the variability of affect has been greatly exaggerated. "Of course there will be differences of response," he admits, "but presumably we believe that there is a proper reading for that potentially perfect reader who is as necessary a character as the law's reasonable man."[48] Geoffrey Tillotson makes the same point: "however eccentric each reader may happen to be as a man he is always perfectly normal when he reads a story."[49]

The techniques which control the relationship of the reader to the novel and its author have been the subject of much discussion since Percy Lubbock coined the term "point of view." The classification of points of view varies, of course, but not really very much. The traditional points of view are: first-person, omniscient, limited omniscient (sometimes called central intelligence), and objective (sometimes called dramatic). The main variations have either increased or reduced this four-part system. Wayne Booth, for example, believes the traditional categories to be simplistic and inadequate as descriptions of novelists' actual practices.[50] Instead Booth, who prefers the term "angle of

[48]Hewitt, p. 110.

[49]"Authorial Presence: Some Observations," Imagined Worlds, eds. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregory (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1968), p. 218.

[50]"Distance and Point-of-View: An Essay in Classification," The Novel, ed. Davis, pp. 172-173.

vision," has substituted a system--based on his useful notions of reliability, isolation, and privilege--which is unfortunately cumbersome in its very precision. On the other hand, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg have divided point of view into only two basic types: the "eye-witness" and the "histor" with modifications and combinations falling somewhere between the two parent types. This scheme is appealing not merely for its simplicity but for its solid grounding in literary history. For example, Scholes and Kellogg explain, the historical sources of a narrator's authority--myth, tradition, inspiration, and investigation--occasioned the narrative posture that is neither a character in the narrative nor quite the author himself. They call this posture "the histor" because its concerns are the same as those adopted originally by Herodotus and Thucydides: fact, tireless investigation, and disinterested judgment. Of such virtues are the narrators of The Iliad, Tom Jones, Vanity Fair, and War and Peace made. The only other source of authority for a narrator, they claim, is personal experience, thus "the eye-witness." The eye-witness narrative posture, originally disparaged for its unreliable apologies, became respectable in Saint Augustine's Confessions, and later, in a deliberate unreliability, became exploited by much modern fiction.[51]

In an interesting variation on point of view, Leonard Lutwack suggests that the novel is actually a mixture of three literary genres: essay, narrative, and drama, which are distinguished by purpose and style. The essay is identified by "language that conceptualizes and

[51]The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 240-282.

analyzes," narrative by "language that conveys the story," and drama by "the language in which characters speak."[52] Though I prefer to consider the novel a separate literary genre instead of a mixture of other genres, I believe this classification of the novelistic uses of language to be a valuable addition to the theory of fiction because it attempts to describe the novel's diverse voices. Lutwack's system is incomplete, however, because it does not identify a language (or in Lutwack's own terms, a "genre") that expresses a character's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions[53]--in other words, an expressive use of language. David Lodge, on the other hand, seems to suggest that the language of fiction lies on a continuum between logical discourse (Lutwack's "essay") and the lyric, that language which expresses the inner man.[54]

There is one other problem with Lutwack's categories: in fiction, narration is not a separate method because a novel is a single narrative in which expository comments and everything else are all part of the novel's "story." Lodge's notion of a continuum of fictional language is very attractive, and I am inclined to accept it with qualification: both the essay and the lyric are personal uses of language; consequently, they should not represent the extremes of the continuum. Because drama

[52]"Mixed and Uniform Prose Styles in the Novel," The Novel, ed. Davis, pp. 254-256.

[53]Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," The Novel, ed. Davis, p. 152.

[54]Lodge, Part One, Chapter 1, passim.

is an impersonal use of language, by which I mean that it does not imply the presence of a personal speaker, drama best represents the opposite of logical discourse. In addition, the term lyric would be misleading if it were applied to the several techniques which comprise the method of characterization representing a character's inner life. For these reasons, I have amended both Lutwack's and Lodge's categories.

In the following analysis, I posit a continuum of narrative methods on which lie three basic methods of characterization: the expository method at one pole, the dramatic method at the opposite pole, and the interior method at a moving mid-point between these extremes. These methods are differentiated by the rhetorical relationship which obtains between author and audience, by certain linguistic features (as Lutwack has pointed out), by the particular way in which we receive information about a character, and by the particular kind of information each method can provide.[55] I do not envision these methods as absolute categories, but as degrees of participation along the various points of continuum.

The continuum represents a series of choices in method available to a writer. It also represents the flexibility and the interrelatedness of the methods. It should not, however, be regarded as necessary sequence through which a writer must travel when he shifts from one method to another. There is, for example, no necessity for a writer to

[55]My distinctions between the expository and the dramatic methods and between the variations of the interior method are largely based on Wayne Booth's distinctions between personal and impersonal narration, that is between "telling" and "showing," in The Rhetoric of Fiction.

pass through the interior method on his way from an expository to a dramatic rendering of character. But if he does choose to depict a character's inner life, his method of doing so will tend towards either the expository or the dramatic pole, or it will partake of both.

A visual metaphor for the techniques of a nonvisual art must always be accepted as, in W. J. Harvey's words, "a provisional and convenient abstraction."[56] Such a metaphor inevitably runs the risk of carrying with it certain assumptions and implications which cannot be pursued if the metaphor is to serve a particular analytical purpose. That is not to say that some metaphors are not better--because truer--than others, but that even the best and truest metaphor, when used as an analytical model for a verbal art, will be susceptible to distortion. Harvey begins his defense of the mimetic theory of literature in Character and the Novel with a discussion of this problem. "Many good literary critics," he says,

> are eclectic in their methods and assumptions, caring little for theoretical consistency. Many even distrust critical theory. They prefer to use theories, taking what they want or what is momentarily useful; they fear, above all, that the theories may use them. . . .
>
> One reason for this state of affairs is the critic's awareness that a great many systems or theoretical models potentially exist within the manifold data represented by particular acts of criticism. He knows that one may spend too much time and energy in constructing such models, in endlessly discriminating and multiplying categories; that such activity, though fascinating, soon becomes abstract and arid; that no terminology is stable enough to pin down the complex and shifting processes involved and that such theories may carry in themselves concealed emotional potential which will discharge through any particular act of judgment.[57]

[56]Character and the Novel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 11.

[57]Ibid.

I hope the model which I describe in the next few pages will be accepted in this spirit. It can, I believe, tell us much about the purely verbal process of creating character by focusing attention on the ways in which the methods of characterization evoke appropriate responses to character. Thus, the process of creating character and the rhetoric of characterization are one and the same.

The language of the expository method conceptualizes, analyzes, interprets, and evaluates; thus, it establishes the presence of a personal speaker. This method represents a return to early literary conditions in which a storyteller "had his audience before him in the banquet hall."[58] The expository speaker, in a sense, pretends "that the old physical companionship" still exists[59] and that his "voice" is literally "heard" by his audience. Exposition, in other words, like the personal essay of Lutwack's model, adopts a close, direct rhetorical relationship between speaker and audience. Moreover, it invites the audience to trust and accept the speaker's analysis, interpretation, and evaluation as, in Booth's terms, totally reliable. In other words, it seeks to establish the narrator's "ethos": the ethos of Fielding's benevolent, learned, and witty narrator in Tom Jones or of Dickens' bitterly satirical narrator in Our Mutual Friend. The expository speaker, usually an omniscient narrator, can provide the reader with information that transcends time and space; he may disclose, and comment upon, the emotional and moral states of his characters. In the expository method,

[58]Tillotson, p. 217.

[59]Ibid., p. 218.

however, this information must be presented as direct, explicit statement. Stylistically, the expository method tends to syntactic complexity, semantic abstraction,[60] and to the use of devices for gaining coherence such as causation and conclusion.

The following paragraph, which opens Chapter 14 of A Passage to India by E. M. Forster, illustrates some of the main features of this method:

> Most of life is so dull that there is nothing to be said about it, and the books and talk that would describe it as interesting are obliged to exaggerate, in the hope of justifying their own existence. Inside its cocoon of work or social obligation, the human spirit slumbers for the most part, registering the distinction between pleasure and pain, but not nearly as great as we pretend. There are periods in the most thrilling day during which nothing happens, and though we continue to exclaim, "I do enjoy myself," or, "I am horrified," we are insincere. "As far as I feel anything, it is enjoyment, horror"--it's no more than that really, and a perfectly adjusted organism would be silent.

Here the speaker, who coincides with the implied author in Forster's novel, addresses his audience (the implied reader)[61] directly and in the present tense; he asserts a general truth about the human spirit which, it is assumed, the audience accepts as valid. The paragraph is purely expository. Indeed, when lifted from its position in the novel, it is indistinguishable from a paragraph in an essay.

As a method of characterization, exposition provides what is meant to be reliable information about a character's behavior, thoughts,

[60]Lutwack, p. 259.

[61]Wolfgang Iser has written a book entitled The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) in which he analyzes the varying degrees of reader participation demanded by literary works of different historical periods.

feelings, and motives. George Eliot's narrator in the following passage from Middlemarch, Chapter 7, analyzes, for example, some of the motivating forces in Dorothea Brooke's relationship with Mr. Casaubon. This analysis takes the form of explicit commentary. I have underlined those features which mark the passage as expository characterization.

> She would not have asked Mr. Casaubon at once to teach her the languages, dreading of all things to be tiresome instead of helpful; but it was not entirely out of devotion to her future husband that she wished to know Latin and Greek. Those provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-ground from which all truth could be seen more truly. As it was, she constantly doubted her own conclusions, because she felt her own ignorance: how could she be confident that one-roomed cottages were not for the glory of God, when men who knew the classics appeared to conciliate indifference to the cottages with zeal for the glory? Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary--at least the alphabet and a few roots--in order to arrive at the core of things, and judge soundly on the social duties of the Christian. And she had not reached that point of renunciation at which she would have been satisfied with having a wise husband: she wished, poor child, to be wise herself. Miss Brooke was certainly very naive with all her alleged cleverness.

Because the methods of characterization occupy various points on the continuum of narrative methods, they can tend toward either pole. There is, for example, a special kind of exposition which tends toward the dramatic method. In this method, imagery is the implicit (or dramatic) equivalent of what in "pure" exposition is explicitly evaluative and judgmental. Thus, imagery is a rhetorical strategy which also controls an audience's perceptions and responses. Dickens has been justly praised for the effectiveness of his imagery, as the following passage describing the Dombey dinner party after Paul's christening (Chapter 5) attests:

> There was a toothache in everything. The wine was so bitter cold that it forced a little scream from Miss Tox, which she had great difficulty in turning into a "Hem!" The veal had come from

> such an airy pantry, that the first taste of it had struck a sensation as of cold lead to Mr. Chick's extremities. Mr. Dombey alone remained unmoved. He might have been hung up for sale at a Russian fair as a specimen of a frozen gentleman.

Shivering, we recoil from this man whose heart is so cold that he cannot respond to physical cold. In fact, it is Dombey's iciness that has cast this death-like pall on what should be a festive occasion. Because imagery expresses authorial value judgments, I consider it a dramatic use of the expository method.

At the opposite pole of the continuum is the dramatic method. This method adopts an invisible, or self-effacing narrator--the illusion that no narrator exists; consequently, it represents the most distant and impersonal rhetorical stance possible in continuous discourse. The dramatic method presents character in action and dialogue with no authorial comment on the dramatic situation. The reader deduces the attributes of the character from his actions and words. In addition to the narrative conventions of dialogue, its distinctive stylistic feature is its use of temporal and spatial coherence devices. Consider these examples from Part 2, Chapter 4 and Part 4, Chapter 6 of William Faulkner's Flags in the Dust. The first illustrates the dramatic use of temporal coherence and the second of spatial. I have underlined the relevant coherence features.

> The boy departed. Snopes locked the door, and for a while he stood beside it with his head bent, his hands slowly knotting and writhing together. Then he burned the folded sheet over his hearth and ground the carbonized paper to dust under his heel. With his knife he cut the fictitious address from the top of the first sheet, the signature from the bottom of the second, then he folded them and inserted them in a cheap envelope. He sealed this and stamped it, and took out his pen and with his left hand addressed it with labored printed letters. That night he took it to the station and mailed it on the train. In the meantime he stopped in at Watts' and bought an air rifle.

> In the waiting room a stove glowed red hot and about the room stood cheerful groups, in sleek furs and overcoats, but he did not enter. He set the sack against the wall and tramped up and down the platform, warming his blood again. In both directions along the tracks green switch lights were steady in the dusk; a hands-breadth above the western trees the evening star was like an electric bulb. He tramped back and forth, glancing now and then into the ruddy windows, into the waiting room where the cheerful groups in their furs and overcoats gesticulated with festive though soundless animation, and into the colored waiting room, whose occupants sat patiently and murmurously about the stove in the dingy light. As he turned here a voice spoke diffidently from the shadow beside the door. "Chris'mus gi', boss." He took a coin from his pocket, and went on. Again from the square a firecracker exploded heavily, and above the trees a rocket arched, hung for a moment, then opened like a closed fist, spreading its golden and fading fingers upon the serene indigo sky without a sound.

When compared with Dickens' description of Paul's christening party, these dramatic descriptions of action and scene depend upon a relatively neutral use of literary language. (I have not forgotten Lodge's caveat that there is nothing either arbitrary or neutral in literature.) The last sentence in the second example, because of its imagery, tends to dramatic exposition.

Scenes in fiction can also be either purely dramatic or not, depending upon the extent to which they include information about a character's tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, and other pointers, including expository analysis and commentary, to control audience response and interpretation. If these pointers are missing, as for example in Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants," the scene employs the impersonal rhetorical stance of the dramatic method. If a scene includes information disclosing such things as what has motivated a character to say what he says or how he feels about what is said, as is the custom of Victorian novelists, it shifts toward the personal

rhetorical stance of the expository method. A couple of examples should make this distinction clear. The first is from "Hills Like White Elephants," the second from Trollope's The Warden, chapter 5.

"It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig," the man said. "It's not really an operation at all."

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

"I know you wouldn't mind it, Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in."

The girl did not say anything.

"It'll go with you and I'll stay with you all the time. They just let the air in and then it's all perfectly natural."

"Then what will we do afterward?"

"We'll be fine afterward. Just like we were before."

"What makes you think so?"

"That's the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy."

The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads.

"And you think then we'll be all right and be happy."

"I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it."

"So have I," said the girl. "And afterward they were all so happy."

The archdeacon, with all his virtues, was not a man of delicate feelings; and after having made his morning salutations in the warden's drawing-room, he did not scruple to commence an attack on "pestilent" John Bold in the presence of Miss Harding, though he rightly guessed that that lady was not indifferent to the name of his enemy.

"Nelly, my dear, fetch me my spectacles from the back room," said her father, anxious to save both her blushes and her feelings.

Eleanor brought the spectacles, while her father was trying, in ambiguous phrases, to explain to her too-practical brother-in-law that it might be as well not to say anything about Bold before her, and then retreated. Nothing had been explained to her about Bold and the hospital; but, with a woman's instinct, she knew that things were going wrong.

"We must soon be doing something," commenced the archdeacon, wiping his brows with a large, bright-coloured handkerchief, for he had felt busy, and had walked quick, and it was a broiling summer's day. "Of course you have heard of the petition?"

Mr. Harding owned, somewhat unwillingly, that he had heard of it.

"Well!" The archdeacon looked for some expression of opinion, but none coming, he continued,--"We must be doing something, you know; we mustn't allow these people to cut the ground from under us while we sit looking on." The archdeacon, who was a practical man, allowed himself the use of every-day expressive modes of speech

> when among his closest intimates, though no one could soar into a more intricate labyrinth of refined phraseology when the church was the subject, and his lower brethren were his auditors.

In the Hemingway example, the reader is obliged to make of it what he will. No narrator accepts, as it were, the responsibility for what is being disclosed, although of course Hemingway is in control of the scene. In Trollope, the dialogue is part of a larger passage which contains a great deal of exposition. In purely dramatic characterization, the implied author makes no commitment to his audience that what they hear or see can be accepted as carrying his endorsement. Instead, he pretends to shift the whole burden of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation to the audience.

The third method of characterization I have called the "interior," not obviously after a literary genre or a prose style but because it reveals a character's inner life--his thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. As a consequence of its position between the expository and dramatic poles, it can incorporate aspects of either method. The variations in interior characterizations are, thus, matters of degree. In order to illustrate the way in which the interior method moves along the continuum, I begin with an example from Thackeray's Vanity Fair which reports on, rather than represents, a character's consciousness without overt authorial comment, though the narrator's attitude is readily apparent.

> Now, before he faced the head of the Osborne house with the news which it was his duty to tell, Dobbin bethought him that it would be politic to make friends of the rest of the family, and, if possible, have the ladies on his side. They can't be angry in their hearts, thought he. No woman ever was really angry at a romantic marriage. A little crying out, and they must come around to their brother; then the three of us will lay seige to old Mr. Osborne. So this Machiavellian captain of infantry cast about him for some happy

> means or strategem by which he could gently and gradually bring the Miss Osbornes to a knowledge of their brother's secret.

The logical connectives "so" and "by which" and the expression "this Machiavellian captain of infantry" betray the voice of the expository speaker.

Somewhat further along the continuum from the expository pole is the following passage from D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love. A single, self-aware, and self-conscious character controls the perspective and colors his experience with his own unique psychology; yet this too is more a report than a direct rendering of consciousness.

> Birkin sat down and looked at the table. He was so used to this house, to this room, to this atmosphere, through years of intimacy, and now he felt in complete opposition to it all, it had nothing to do with him. How well he knew Hermione, as she sat there, erect and silent and somewhat bemused, and yet so potent, so powerful! He knew her statically, so finally, that it was almost like a madness. It was difficult to believe one was not mad, that one was not a figure in the hall of kings in some Egyptian tomb, where the dead all sat immemorial and tremendous.

The reader is shown Birkin in the act of thinking, feeling, and responding to his world. This has been, since James's concept of "the central intelligence," the most common use of the interior method.

In a character like Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, the interior method shifts toward the dramatic. The implied author has all but disappeared behind a dramatic perceiver; hence, the rhetorical relationship between implied author, character, and audience is nearly identical with that of the dramatic method. Mrs. Dalloway differs from a character who reveals himself through dialogue in that she does not tell her own story; the reader is, instead, privy to her unarticulated mental and emotional activities. The following passage from early in the novel illustrates this dramatic use of the interior method:

> For it was the middle of June. The War was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven--over. It was June. The King and Queen were at the Palace. And everywhere, though it was still so early, there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it; wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air, which, as the day wore on, would unwind them, and set down on their lawns and pitches the bouncing ponies, whose forefeet just struck the ground and up they sprung, the whirling young men, and laughing girls, in their transparent muslins who, even now, after dancing all night, were taking their absurd wooly dogs for a run; and even now, at this hour, discreet old dowagers were shooting out in their motor cars on errands of mystery; and the shopkeepers were fidgeting in their windows with their paste and diamonds, their lovely old sea-green brooches in eighteenth-century settings to tempt Americans (but one must economise, not buy things rashly for Elizabeth), and she, too, loving it as she did with an absurd and faithful passion, being part of it, since her people were courtiers once in the time of the Georges, she, too, was going that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party. But how strange, on entering the Park, the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks; the pouched bird waddling; and who should be coming along with his back against the Government buildings, most appropriately, carrying a dispatch box stamped with the Royal Arms, who but Hugh Whitbread; her old friend Hugh--the admirable Hugh!

Though this seems in many ways to be undramatic, Harry Stone's demonstration of the relationship between the run-on speech patterns of Dickens' Jingle, Flora Finching, and Mrs. Lirriper and the patterns of interior monologue shows the dramatic origins of this variation of the interior method.

Nowhere is this relationship clearer than in Molly Bloom's interior monologue:

> Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the <u>City Arms</u> hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting to that old

> faggot Mrs. Riordan that he thought he had a great leg of and she never left us a farthing all for masses for herself and her soul greatest miser ever was actually afraid to lay out 4d for her methylated spirit telling me all her ailments she had too much old chat in her about politics and earthquakes and the end of the world let us have a bit of fun first God help the world if. . . .

This narrative technique is as impersonal as pure dialogue or as unreliable first-person narration. It represents the furthest that interior characterization can move toward the dramatic method.

A critical theory, to be useful, must reconcile two contradictory objectives: it must sufficiently simplify what is complex so as to be enlightening, but it must not allow the need for simplicity to distort the complexities inherent in whatever the theory seeks to explain. I believe the one I have just described manages this reconciliation. I cannot claim any special originality for it. It is, of course, a synthesis of the many theories that have preceded it, particularly those of Wayne Booth, Leonard Lutwack, and David Lodge. I set out to develop a theory of characterization that would adequately and accurately describe Dickens' methods of characterization in Dombey and Arthur Clennam in terms of the ways in which those methods establish, adjust, and modify our responses. I believe this theory accomplishes this objective. It attests to the literal truth of Lodge's observation that a novel is a wholly verbal creation and to my equally strong conviction that, when we read literature, "we are not quasi-scientific observers of either phenomenon outside ourselves, historical as the Romantic critics would have it, or the words-on-the-page as the new critic would have it.

Rather, we are involved with the text and it with us in a process as mutual as a witch's bargain."[62]

It may seem that Dickens has been strangely absent from the introduction to a study of his work. I want to correct that now by establishing a general principle about Dickens' methods. In Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance, Taylor Stoehr argues that Dickens' typical narrator disappears into a scene, the objects of which thereby seem to thrust themselves forward and make their own meaning without help from a self-conscious narrative voice. He supports this assertion with an analysis of the Hunger passage from A Tale of Two Cities, Chapter 5. From this premise, he goes on to argue that, since Dickens' style as a rule contributes to the illusion that the story tells itself and that the narrator is habitually absent, passages of direct authorial comment force themselves unpleasantly on us. Such passages are, in other words, out of keeping with Dickens' customary practice.[63]

When I read the Hunger passage (and just about any other passage he could have chosen), I get an entirely different impression of the speaker's role in it. I would argue that Dickens is always "there," on virtually every page of every novel, not as Robert Garis' verbal magician so much as the analyzing, interpreting, guiding intelligence of the expository method. Consequently, passages of direct authorial comment are an integral part of the novels. It is for this reason

[62]Norman N. Holland, The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 272.

[63](Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), Chapter 1, passim.

the dominant illusion of a Dickens novel is not that of a story telling itself, as Stoehr contends, but of someone telling a story. Because Stoehr and I differ so radically on this point, I would like to explain just what in the Hunger passage argues for the presence of an expository speaker. Here is an excerpt:

> And now that the cloud settled on Saint Antoine, which a momentary gleam had driven from his sacred countenance, the darkness of it was heavy--cold, dirt, sickness, ignorance, and want, were the lords in waiting on the saintly presence --nobles of great power all of them; but, most especially the last. Samples of a people that had undergone a terrible grinding and re-grinding in the mill, and certainly not in the fabulous mill which ground old people young, shivered at every corner, passed in and out at every doorway, looked from every window, fluttered in every vestige of a garment that the wind shook. The mill which had worked them down, was the mill that grinds young people old; the children had ancient faces and grave voices; and upon them, and upon the grown faces, and ploughed into every furrow of age and coming up afresh, was the sign, Hunger. It was prevalent everywhere. Hunger was pushed out of the tall houses, in the wretched clothing that hung upon poles and lines; Hunger was patched into them with straw and rag and wood and paper; Hunger was repeated in every fragment of the small modicum of firewood that the man sawed off; Hunger stared down from the smokeless chimneys, and started up from the filthy street that had no offal, among its refuse, of anything to eat. Hunger was the inscription on the baker's shelves, written in every small loaf of his scanty stock of bad bread; at the sausage-shop, in every dead-dog preparation that was offered for sale. Hunger rattled its dry bones among the roasting chestnuts in the turned cylinder; Hunger was shred into atomies in every farthing porringer of husky chips of potato, fried with some reluctant drops of oil.

First, Stoehr claims that the anaphoric repetition of the word hunger contributes to the impression of narrative detachment and objectivity. The narrator, he says, seems to be merely reporting in neutral terms the scene as it presents itself in the natural order of contiguity. Anaphora, however, is a highly self-conscious rhetorical device; the stylist who uses it impinges on our perception of the scene so that we are aware both of it and of him.

In addition, the word that Dickens chooses to repeat--hunger--is not at all descriptive; it is a judgmental inference drawn by the observer from the carefully chosen "evidence" which constitutes those things which are described. A truly "camera-eye" method (a term Stoehr uses to describe Dickens' narrator) would have left it entirely up to the reader to infer hunger, or any number of other things, such as poverty, misery, and so on, from the scene. This is not Dickens' method. The speaker here leaves us no alternative. We must view the scene from his point of view. Writers never give us sensory alternatives. If a house is described in a novel as red, then we must in our mind's eye, unless we are color-blind or do not know the meaning of the word, see it as red. I am talking about an interpretive and judgmental point of view. In these matters too Dickens gives us no choice. He sees hunger, and so must we. He is appalled and angered by it, and so are we.

Stoehr also claims that the metonymy which makes the village Sainte Antoine an actual presiding saint supports his thesis. But again, it seems to me that the rhetorical figure itself betrays the presence of an apprehending and interpreting intelligence. A style that deliberately eschews figurative language may essay the illusion of scenes which put themselves forward for the reader's contemplation and of stories that tell themselves. A style that makes extensive and habitual use of rhetorical figures expresses a consciousness mediating between the fictive world and the reader.

Furthermore, Stoehr points to the contribution made to the illusion that the scene presents itself by the passage's circumstantiality.

I disagree. For example, the first sentence Stoehr quotes in support of his contention (". . . the children had ancient faces and grave voices; and upon the grown faces, and ploughed into every furrow of age and coming afresh was the sign, Hunger") includes no circumstantiality. The epithets ancient and grave do not describe external appearance; they interpret, and in so doing they unequivocally establish the presence of the perceiving and responding interpreter. Stoehr himself is in some difficulty on this point, even though it is a key one in his argument. Toward the end of his book, long after his discussion of the Hunger passage, he refers in a footnote to "the peculiarly Dickensian narrator who is omnipresent but nowhere to be seen."[64] He may not be seen but he certainly is heard. One reader has even called him "the great master of 'auditory prose,' of prose like the orator's, written to be heard."[65]

No matter what method he employs, Dickens habitually includes expository comment. He rarely, in effect, uses truly impersonal narration, not even in the celebrated impressionistic treatment of Dombey's railway journey. Consider, for instance, a passage in Chapter 32 of Dombey and Son. I have chosen this scene because it is rendered primarily in dialogue, the narrative method least likely to include expository mediation and comment. The following speech is typical:

> "I say, I should like to speak a word to you, Mr. Gills, if you please," said Toots at length, with surprising presence of

[64]Ibid., p. 247.

[65]Peter Dixon, Rhetoric, Vol. 19 of The Critical Idiom, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1971), p. 63.

> mind. "I say! Miss D. O. M. you know!" (my emphasis here and in the following quotations).

The brief explanatory phrase which I have underlined keeps the expository speaker before us as the sponsor of the scene. This impression would, of course, be stronger if what Toots says were reported indirectly (e.g., Toots said that he would like to speak a word. . . .), but it would be weaker if Dickens had made even so slight a change as "with great presence of mind," because the participial adjective surprising is the equivalent of the statement, "I was surprised." This is not an isolated case. Later in the same passage we read:

> "If we could see Sol Gills, young gen'l'm'n," said the Captain [Cuttle], impressively, and laying his heavy hand on Mr. Toots's knee, "old Sol, mind you--with your own eyes--so you sit there--you'd be welcomer to me than a wind astarn to a ship becalmed. . . ."

And:

> "Upon my word and honour," cried Mr. Toots, blurting out his words through a singular combination of awkward chuckles and emotion.

I grant that impressively does not work in quite the same way as surprising; that is, it does not necessarily have to be the equivalent of "I was impressed;" it could be the equivalent of "Mr. Toots was impressed." Nevertheless, it is an interpretation of the tone, rather than a description of the tone, in which Captain Cuttle delivers his remarks. Singular, on the other hand, is clearly an expository comment; such a response is not in the Captain's repertory.

This passage illustrates another important stylistic feature typical of Dickens. He includes, even in almost purely dramatic scenes, explanations of what has motivated a character's words or

actions. For instance, Captain Cuttle makes a little speech introducing himself to Mr. Toots:

> "Cap'en Cuttle is my name, and England is my nation, this here is my dwelling-place, and blessed be creation--Job," said the Captain, as an index to his authority.

And Mr. Toots, we are told, having as usual gotten his thoughts tangled, "unintentionally fixed the Captain's eye" because he was "endeavoring to concentrate his mental powers. . . ." The word because does not appear in the original, but the cause and effect relationship obtains nonetheless.

> Mr. Toots, endeavoring to concentrate his mental powers on this question, unintentionally fixed the Captain's eye, and was so discomposed by its stern expression that his difficulty in resuming the threat of his subject was enhanced to a painful extent.

The "so . . . that" construction is also causal: Toots has difficulty resuming because he is discomposed by the Captain's expression. This and other causal constructions are much favored by Dickens; they reveal that he is far more interested in the underlying causes of human behavior, even in his simple characterizations, than many have suspected.

There is one final, and somewhat miscellaneous, group of features in the passage. This group encompasses the enormous amount of information about feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and other intangibles that inform the scene. Toots, who has just entered the Wooden Midshipman, "looks over his shoulder compassionately at his own legs, which were very wet and covered with splashes." Captain Cuttle, who has retreated to the back parlor in dread that the visitor will prove to be his former

landlady and nemesis Mrs. Macstinger, emerges "with a most transparent and utterly futile affectation of coming out by accident." When Toots mentions Florence Dombey's maid Susan Nipper, the Captain nods his head "with a grave expression of face, indicative of his regarding that young woman with serious respect." Toots opines that he does not believe it possible "'to form an idea of the angel Miss Dombey was this afternoon,'" whereupon the Captain answers "with a jerk of his head, implying that it might not be easy to some people, but was quite so to him." A final example:

> "Oh! said Mr. Toots, after long consideration.
> "Oh, ah! Yes . . . ."

Had Dickens written "after a long pause" some nebulous quality of the expository speaker's management of the scene would have been lost. We can observe a pause in conversation, but we can only infer that the pause signifies consideration. The expository speaker makes that inference. Thus, this scene, and many more like it, resonates with expository interpretations of what goes on inside and between characters, with motivations and implications, with inferences and evaluations.

The analysis which begins in the next chapter with Mr. Dombey assumes, then, that in Dickens both the dramatic and the interior methods shift habitually toward exposition. But it is also true that Dickens made occasional and significant use of the interior method's special qualities without the aid of exposition in his psychological analysis of Dombey and Arthur Clennam.

CHAPTER II

MR. DOMBEY

On the last day of May 1846, Dickens moved with his wife Katherine, his six children, Kate's sister Georgina, various servants, and a dog to Lausanne.[1] Martin Chuzzlewit had not done well, and Dickens was feeling uncommonly restless. The change, he thought, would do them all good and, most especially, would be congenial to the writing of his next novel. In one sense, the move failed. Dickens had more trouble with that next novel than with any of the earlier novels. In another sense, perhaps it helped. Dombey and Son proved in more ways than one to be the first novel of Dickens' maturity. It is the first of his masterpieces.

For the first time, Dickens had thoroughly worked out each installment of the novel on paper before he began to write.[2] He knew precisely what he wanted in Dombey; even the title was set from the very beginning.[3] The novel, he had told his closest friend and advisor John Forster three months before the move to Lausanne, "was to do with Pride what its predecessor did with Selfishness."[4] In

[1]Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952), p. 592.

[2]John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at Work (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1957), p. 90.

[3]Ibid., p. 91.

[4]John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1880), p. 232.

July, Forster received, along with the manuscript of the first four chapters, a letter in which Dickens outlined the master plan of the novel. This letter makes it absolutely clear that Dickens was determined to prepare the way for Dombey's change of heart at the end of his story. "I design," he wrote,

> to show Mr. D. with that one idea of the Son taking firmer and firmer possession of him, and swelling and bloating his pride to a prodigious extent. As the boy begins to grow up, I shall show him quite impatient for his getting on, and urging his masters to set him great tasks, and the like. But the natural affection of the boy will turn towards the despised sister; and I purpose showing her learning all sorts of things, of her own application and determination, to assist him in his lessons: and helping him always. When the boy is about ten years old (in the fourth number), he will be taken ill, and will die; and when he is ill, and when he is dying, I mean to make him turn always to the sister still, and keep the stern affection of the father at a distance. So Mr. Dombey--for all his greatness, and for all his devotion to the child--will find himself at arms' length from him even then; and will see that his love and confidence are all bestowed upon his sister, whom Mr. Dombey has used--and so has the boy himself too, for that matter--as a mere convenience and to handle him. The death of the boy is a death-blow, of course, to all the father's schemes and cherished hopes; and "Dombey and Son," as Miss Tox will say at the end of the number, "is a Daughter after all.". . . From that time, I purpose changing his feeling of indifference and uneasiness towards his daughter into a positive hatred. For he will always remember how the boy had his arm around her neck when he was dying, and whispered to her, and would take things only from her hand, and never thought of him. . . . At the same time I shall change her feeling towards him for one of a greater desire to love him, and to be loved by him; engendered in her compassion for his loss, and her love for a dead boy whom, in his way, he loved so well too. So I mean to carry the story on, through all the branches and offshoots and meanderings that come up; and through the decay and downfall of the house, and the bankruptcy of Dombey, and all the rest of it; when his only staff and treasure, and his unknown Good Genius always, will be this rejected daughter, who will come out better than any son at last, and whose love for him, when discovered and understood, will be his bitterest reproach. For the struggle with himself, which goes on in all such obstinate natures, will have ended then; and the sense of his injustice, which you may be sure has never quitted him,

> will have at last a gentler office than that of only making him more harshly unjust.[5]

This is an extraordinary document; we have nothing like it for any of the other novels. From his earliest plans for the novel to the writing of its last number, Dickens made no substantive changes.[6] From the beginning, too, Dombey himself was to be a departure from Dickens' usual methods of characterization.

Something had happened in the unusually long lapse between Martin Chuzzlewit and Dombey and Son that may account for this departure. Between Chuzzlewit and Dombey, and overlapping with them, Dickens had written the five Christmas books: A Christmas Carol (1843), The Chimes (1844), The Cricket on the Hearth (1845), The Battle of Life (1846), and The Haunted Man (1848). These stories mark a major change in style from Chuzzlewit to Dombey. Sylvère Monod goes so far as to call it Dickens' "new style."[7]

Because the Christmas books were published as single volumes rather than serially, they forced Dickens to abandon his customary episodic plots for tighter, more unified structures. They also required him to work with smaller casts of characters and with greater

[5]Ibid., p. 233.

[6]Dickens originally intended for Walter Gay to go bad, for Edith to become Carker's mistress, for Miss Tox to remain silly and trivial throughout the novel, and for Dombey's firm to play a greater role.

[7]Monod describes Dickens' "new style" as characterized by cleaner, neater title and chapter headings, "growing frequency of refrains" in the text, and "other effects founded on repetition, symmetry, and contrast," impressionistic renderings of Dombey's railway and Carker's carriage journeys, and the "transference of feelings--or at any rate, of their expression--from persons to objects. . .," Dickens the Novelist (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), pp. 242-246.

attention to his themes. Consequently, they represent an important advance in technique and unity. Moreover, in these tales, for the first time, "a significant part of the action takes place in characters' minds . . . ."[8] And, except for the inconsequential Battle of Life, the stories turn on their protagonists' search for their identities.[9] Thus, this concentrated work in the single volume form had a considerable impact on Dickens' subsequent practice as a novelist.[10]

When Dickens came to write Dombey and Son, he consciously imposed constraints on both his inventiveness and his style in order to achieve structural and thematic unity in a long, serialized story.[11] The effort no doubt strained him and may have contributed to the great difficulties he had in writing Dombey. He had begun with extraordinary enthusiasm and confidence. "BEGAN DOMBEY!" he had written Forster. "I performed this feat yesterday. . . and it is a plunge straight head over heels into the story."[12] But soon he was agonizing to his good friend over his inability to get on with it at his usual pace.[13] Dickens complained of sultry weather, a plague of flies, a

[8]Charles W. Bishop, "Fire and Fancy: Dickens' Theories of Fiction," unpubl. diss. (Duke University, 1970), p. 207.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Archibald Coolidge, Jr., Charles Dickens as Serial Novelist (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 64.

[11]Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1954), pp. 157-201.

[12]Johnson, p. 595.

[13]Ibid., pp. 589-606.

calendar full of social engagements. He was also struggling to begin that year's Christmas book, the first time he had attempted to begin two new works at once. This, and his longing for the London streets, distracted him from his novel. He even considered, in great despair and near hysteria abandoning the Christmas book altogether. Finally, in October, he finished The Battle of Life and turned his attention to the novel for which he had such high hopes.

These unpleasant conditions certainly impeded Dickens' progress on Dombey, but the causes of his inability to work at his accustomed pace must be sought elsewhere. The fact that Dickens' marriage was becoming progressively more burdensome and his wife progressively less tolerable to him kept Dickens frenetically restless and irritable. He was, however, unable at that time to perceive his marital situation as a source of his creative difficulties. Nonetheless, it must be considered one, if not the only, cause of them. But there was at least one other cause. Dickens was used to giving free rein to his imagination. The episodic nature of the novels before Dombey perfectly suited both his temperament and his working method. He was, consequently, chafing at his newly self-imposed restraints. He wrote in a letter to Forster:

> Invention, thank God, seems the easiest thing in the world; and I seem to have such a preposterous sense of the ridiculous. . . as to be constantly requiring to restrain myself from launching into extravagances in the height of my enjoyment. But the difficulty of going at what I call a rapid pace is prodigious: it is almost an impossibility.[14]

So Dickens' problems with Dombey were in large measure actually technical.

[14]Ibid., p. 602.

Writing Dombey remained an uphill battle. Hoping to make the writing go more easily,Dickens moved from Lausanne to Geneva, then to Paris, London, Broadstairs, and Brighton, where at last he wrote the final number in March 1848. Christmas 1847 had come and gone without his yearly tribute. The book that Dickens had intended--and even begun--for that year, The Haunted Man, was eventually published as the Christmas book for 1848. But the effort had paid off. From the first number to the last, Dombey and Son was a popular success. Never again did Dickens need to feel uneasy about money. Dombey, having lost his fortune, had made Dickens'.

Edgar Johnson speaks for most critics when he calls the novel a turning point in Dickens' literary art.[15] In addition to an unprecedented discipline of style, tone, and structure, Dickens' analysis of society had undergone an important change. In the novels before Dombey, Dickens treats evil as a problem of individual characters: Dodson and Fogg (the unscrupulous lawyers of Pickwick vs. Bardell), Quilp, Squeers, Monks, and best known of all, Mr. Pecksniff. Whatever Dickens may have thought, however, Dombey is not to his world what Pecksniff is to his. In Martin Chuzzlewit, as in all the earlier novels, Dickens suggests that what is wrong with society can be righted by taking care of the Pecksniffs. But in Dombey and Son, Dickens sees the problems of society as more complex. He understands that a character named Paul Dombey, Sr. is not the real, or the whole, problem. Dombeyism is the problem.[16] Consequently, Dombey does not

[15]Ibid., p. 626.

[16]Ibid., p. 635.

embody evil, he represents it.

Dickens began moving towards this broader view in A Christmas Carol. There his protagonist Ebenezer Scrooge represents "a whole social class and an entire economic philosophy."[17] By the time Dickens conceived of Dombey, he had seen that evil is not so much a person as a principle. Dombeyism is the first expression of that principle: "the callous inhumanity" of nineteenth-century economic doctrine.[18] For the rest of his career Dickens would continue to pursue the implications of that insight into Mr. Dombey.

The conception of evil as social rather than personal imposes a new burden on characterization. It requires a method of creating character which will discriminate between the man, Dombey, and the principle, Dombeyism. To solve this sophisticated problem of characterization, Dickens explores the possibilities of the expository and dramatic methods, and he experiments with an innovation in his art, the interior method.

In response to complaints that Dombey's change of heart is unmotivated and unbelievable, Dickens was moved twelve years after the last number was published to add a preface defending his characterization. "I make so bold as to believe," he wrote,

> that the faculty (or the habit) of correctly observing the characters of men, is a rare one. I have not even found, within my experience, that the faculty (or the habit) of correctly observing so much as the faces of men, is a general one by any means. The two commonest mistakes in

[17] Ibid., p. 627.

[18] Ibid., p. 630.

> judgement that I suppose to arise from the former default, are, the confounding of shyness with arrogance--a very common mistake indeed--and the not understanding that an obstinate nature exists in a perpetual struggle with itself.
>
> Mr. Dombey undergoes no violent change, either in this book, or in real life. A sense of his injustice is within him, all along. The more he represses it, the more unjust he necessarily is. Internal shame and external circumstances may bring the contest to a close in a week, or a day; but it has been a contest for years, and is only fought out after a long balance of victory.[19]

A few critics still argue the case against Dombey's conversion, but most agree that Dickens' claims in his preface are borne out by the novel. Archibald Coolidge complains that: "The changes in Dombey occur largely in a few brief passages of direct exposition and at the very end of the book. . ."[20]; and Joseph Gold judges Dombey's conversion to be more like St. Paul's, despite the plentiful evidence of his struggles and sufferings, than like Pilgrim's progress toward salvation.[21] Dickens' hint that Dombey is not arrogant but shy cannot be taken seriously. It is true, however, that the unquestionably arrogant Dombey longs to enjoy the physical as well as the emotional relationship Paul has with Florence, and that Florence had with her mother. What prevents his doing so hardly seems to be shyness. Dickens' main point, though, is that Dombey's change is not "violent," that is, not grafted on to a character incapable of change. Dickens means that the change is prepared for, that the

[19]From the "Preface" to Dombey and Son (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), n.p.

[20]Coolidge, p. 166.

[21]Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 156.

seeds of remorse and guilt are there from the beginning, and that Dombey has enough self-awareness to know he is unjust to Florence, which guilty awareness makes him all the more unjust. (St. Paul's conversion may have been abrupt, but I doubt if it was wholly external to his character.)

In any case, both Coolidge and Gold confuse the number of words in a novel devoted to a period of narrative time with the time itself. If a few brief passages describe the changes in Dombey, that is not to say that the changes occurred in a brief period of narrative time. The time lapse, Kathleen Tillotson has rightly pointed out, is foreshortened in the novel's last two chapters. We do not feel cheated by Dombey's conversion, she believes, because the account of his sufferings fully justifies the reconciliation and redemption which Dickens accomplishes with "a combination of picture and analysis"[22]--not merely, as Coolidge claims, in direct exposition. In fact, Dickens has relied in good part on the interior method to express the intensity of Dombey's sufferings while he manages, at the same time, to suggest their duration. We do not need to see Dombey suffering through chapter after chapter; we do need to know that he suffers and to feel the quality of his suffering. Consequently, another critic asserts that, in the novel's final two chapters:

> . . . the over-riding impression, created by the finely controlled blend of scenic presentation, authorial interpretation, and erlebte Rede, is of the father's suffering--and of the slow changes forced on him by experience: the death of Paul, remarriage, the relations of Edith and Florence, Edith's willfulness

[22] Novels, p. 170

> and adultery (in spirit: Dombey thinks of her as "sunk into a polluted creature"), Carker's treachery, Florence's flight and marriage, his own disgrace and financial ruin. The nerve-shattered aging man whom Florence rescues has come a long way from the "handsome well-made" Dombey who jingled his heavy gold watch chain in pride at his son's birth. And Dickens has so vividly caught the "felt life" of that human journey that the reader accepts at the end the portrayal of the breaking of Dombey's pride not as theatrical manipulation but as the objective revelation of great art.[23]

Tillotson also maintains in Novels of the Eighteen-Forties that Dombey "is the origin, center, and continuum of the novel, as no previous character of Dickens' had been."[24] In Dickens at Work she and her co-author John Butt regard Dombey as "a new departure for Dickens" because, for the first time, he has written "a novel founded upon a relation [Dombey's with Florence], and upon a character's inner conflict."[25]

The characterization of Dombey represents another innovation in Dickens' art. In the characterization of Pecksniff, for example, we are told that Pecksniff has solitary thoughts as he sits before the fire, but Dickens never shifts into the interior method for the thoughts themselves.[26] With Dombey he does. We are told, and occasionally we are even given access to, what Dombey thinks.

The delineation of Dombey's inner conflict has been the subject of some perceptive critical studies. Dickens set himself a difficult

[23]Ian Milner, "The Dickens Drama: Mr. Dombey," Dickens Centennial Essays, eds. Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 164-165.

[24]Tillotson, p. 163.

[25]Butt and Tillotson, p. 96.

[26]Tillotson, Novels, p. 162.

task: the psychological study of a man who says and does very little and who unburdens himself to another not at all--until his icy reserve is finally melted by Florence, of course. The success of Dombey's portrait is, as Tillotson says, a "remarkable feat"[27], because Dickens makes "us aware of the hidden depths of a character, while keeping them largely hidden; his method respects Mr. Dombey's own proud reserve."[28]

We come back, at this point, to the paradox that puzzled Forster and has puzzled many since: by what means has Dickens achieved psychological complexity--human depth, Forster called it--in a character whose characterization does not depend primarily on "a Jamesian interior projection" of mind?[29] In "The Dickens Drama: Mr. Dombey," Ian Milner argues that:

> As to method we are not usually shown Dombey reflecting about himself. Nor does Dickens much analyze his state of mind, although both authorial comment and style indirect libre are used as supplementary means with fine effect. Dickens' primary mode is to show us Dombey, and Edith, at a series of nodal points in the action. These points have been selected so as to provide the dramatic intensity and vividness of focus needed for the most effective illumination of personality. What Dombey says and does at such a point offers a sudden and peculiarly revealing vision of his inner self and its motivations. Character is shown in action; the mode is kinetic. And it is impressionistic. Character, and inner growth, is evoked and suggested by the discontinuous, selective "picturing" of high points of experience. There is not the linear sense of character development depending on the knowledge and insights derived from continuous authorial or other mediation. Rather an intermittent series of dramatic

[27]Ibid., p. 167.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Gold, p. 161.

> illuminations imply and suggest instead of interpreting and defining. But the impressionism is cumulative in its effect.[30]

Milner has rightly noted Dickens' effective use of the dramatic method in his characterization of Dombey. But he is mistaken in some of his other points. There is, for instance, a great deal of expository analysis, and though interior analysis is not Dickens' primary method of characterization in Dombey, there is a far greater use of it than Dickens has been given credit for. This study examines how Dickens has relied on all three methods of characterization to make us aware of Dombey's hidden depths, "while keeping them largely hidden."

Modulations: Characterization as Process and Response

The most interesting feature of Dombey's characterization is the relationship Dickens achieves among the methods and his shifts from one method to another. Accordingly, I have chosen first to analyze from the novel's early, middle, and late chapters several passages which best illustrate the effect these shifts have on our perception of Dombey. I have also chosen, however, not to apply this analytical procedure to the whole characterization. It runs the risk, it seems to me, of becoming either tedious or redundant, or both. Instead, I consider later each of the three methods separately. This dual approach is not merely a convenience; it allows us to understand Dickens' achievement from two equally valid critical perspectives--as an experiential process and as the product of an artistic creation.

[30]Milner, p. 157.

Dombey presents a special problem of characterization because Dickens must be unusually careful in managing our responses to this frigid, unlikable protagonist. Dickens wants us to be both against and for Dombey--or rather, he wants us to be against Dombeyism and for the Dombey who could become a better man. The ambiguity and tension in our relationship to Dombey is primarily achieved by Dickens' careful modulation from one method of characterization to another.

In the main, Dickens uses the expository method to provide information about Dombey's mood or state of mind before a dramatic scene in which Dombey does or says things that make us recoil from him. In this way, Dickens forces us to take into consideration the circumstances which help to account for Dombey's behavior. Consequently, our reaction against him is softened slightly, just enough, in fact, to keep us from writing him off as a thoroughly hopeless case.

This strategy is of paramount importance to the success of Dombey's characterization. The first example gives us what is also the first extended dramatic presentation of Dombey. Following his wife's death, Dombey has been interviewing wetnurses for his son, Paul. His interview with Polly Toodle, who does become Paul's nurse, is introduced by an expository glimpse into Dombey's state of mind before and during the interview. This exposition, if it does not justify, somewhat mitigates our disgust at his behavior to the Toodles, and it may even account for his uncharacteristically generous offer to send the oldest Toodle son, Robin, to school. Unfortunately,

the school turns out to be a very bad one, but that is not Dombey's fault.

This expository paragraph immediately precedes the scene in which Dombey talks to Polly and her husband:

> Mr. Dombey had remained in his own apartment since the death of his wife, absorbed in visions of the youth, education, and destination of his baby son. Something lay at the bottom of his cool heart, colder and heavier than its ordinary load; but it was more a sense of the child's loss than his own, awakening within him an almost angry sorrow. That the life and progress on which he built such hopes, should be endangered in the outset by so mean a want; that Dombey and Son should be tottering for a nurse, was a sore humiliation. And yet in his pride and jealousy, he viewed with so much bitterness the thought of being dependent for the very first step towards the accomplishment of his soul's desire, on a hired serving-woman who would be to the child, for the time, all that even his alliance could have made his own wife, that in every new rejection of a candidate he felt a secret pleasure. The time had now come, however, when he could no longer be divided between these two sets of feelings. The less so, as there seemed to be no flaw in the title of Polly Toodle after his sister had set it forth, with many commendations on the indefatigable friendship of Miss Tox.[31]

Coming as it does after the rather light-hearted authorial mockery in the first chapter, the serious tone of this psychological analysis pulls us up short. In Chapter 1, Dickens' narrator makes cleverly facetious fun of Dombey's obsession with his son. In Chapter 2, our initial impression that Dombey is a typically ludicrous Dickensian villain changes. The tone of the expository comments, as in this one, turns serious, and we begin to regard Dombey as a seriously flawed, complex, and even dangerous man. This expository analysis shows us a Dombey in sharp contrast to the Dombey rendered by the dramatic

[31]Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 15. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition of the novel and will be identified only by page numbers in the text.

method. Far from being devoid of emotion, Dombey is wracked by his warring feelings. We realize that his distant and cold behavior to others represents only a part of his character.

The emotions that contend within him are not the least bit admirable. He regrets his wife's death only because it has deprived his son of his physical nourishment, not because he loved her and not even because he wishes his son to have a mother's love. On the other hand, in spite of the fact that he wants more than anything for his son to thrive, he turns away applicant after applicant for the position of nurse because he hated the thought of having a member of the lower class be to Paul what his own wife would have been. Thus, his pride and jealousy threaten the very life of the child he nearly worships. Nevertheless, knowing the bitter frustration Dombey feels subtly adjusts our response to him in the succeeding scene when he substitutes the impersonal and sexless "Richards" for Polly's real name, commands that she see as little of her family as possible, and announces that he wants their dealings to be nothing more than a question of wages. He then says:

> "You have children of your own. . . . It is not at all in this bargain that you need become attached to my child, or that my child need become attached to you. I don't expect or desire anything of the kind. Quite the reverse. When you go away from here, you will have concluded what is a mere matter of bargain and sale, hiring and letting: and will stay away. The child will cease to remember you; and you will cease, if you please, to remember the child" (p. 16).

Without the expository explanation of what lies behind such a despicable sentiment, our antipathy to Mr. Dombey might at this point be irreversible.

Next Dombey requests a private word with Mr. Toodle. From this interview he learns that Mr. Toodle can neither read nor write, that he has perfect confidence in his wife's understanding and ability, and that, having worked for years both under and above the ground in a coal mine, he intends to work on a railway, as he says, "'when they comes into full play.'" The latter discovery is a particular disappointment to Dombey who may have hoped for at least a slightly more acceptable occupation for the husband of his son's nurse. In this scene, the dramatic method reveals Dombey's obtuseness and naiveté; he believes, of course, that every husband has the same attitude towards his wife as he did, for example. He is genuinely mystified by Mr. Toodle, who is "a thorough contrast in all respects to Mr. Dombey," to Dombey's disadvantage--Mr. Toodle has Dickens' wholehearted endorsement. In his first question to Toodle, Dombey tries to find common ground for his man-to-man talk. But Toodle's reply makes it clear that they have nothing whatever in common.

> "You have a son, I believe?" said Mr. Dombey.
> "Four on 'em, Sir. Four hims and a her. All alive!"
> "Why, it's as much as you can afford to keep them!" said Mr. Dombey.
> "I couldn't hardly afford but one thing in the world less, Sir."
> "What is that?"
> "To lose 'em, Sir" (p. 17).

The dialogue is economical and natural; Dombey's inability to regard any situation except in a financial light is obvious.

At the end of the interview Dickens shifts back to expository comment and, in paragraph three, into an interior projection of Dombey's irrational fears. Dombey has just dismissed Toodle.

> For all his starched, impenetrable dignity and composure, he wiped blinding tears from his eyes as he [paced up and down]; and often said, with an emotion of which he would not, for the world, have had a witness, "Poor little fellow!"
>
> It may have been characteristic of Mr. Dombey's pride, that he pitied himself through the child. Not poor me. Not poor widower, confiding by constraint in the wife of an ignorant hind who has been working "mostly underground" all his life, and yet at whose door Death had never knocked, and at whose poor table four sons daily sit--but poor little fellow!
>
> Those words being on his lips, it occurred to him--and it is an instance of the strong attraction with which his hopes and fears and all his thoughts were tending to one centre--that a great temptation was being placed in this woman's way. Her infant was a boy too. Now, would it be possible for her to change them.
>
> Though he was soon satisfied that he had dismissed the idea as romantic and unlikely--though possible, there was no denying --he could not help pursuing it so far as to entertain within himself a picture of what his condition would be, if he should discover such an imposture when he was grown old. Whether a man so situated, would be able to pluck away the result of so many years of usage, confidence, and belief, from the impostor, and endow a stranger with it?
>
> As his unusual emotion subsided, these misgivings gradually melted away, though so much of their shadow remained behind, that he was constant in his resolution to look closely after Richards himself, without appearing to do so. Being now in an easier frame of mind, he regarded the woman's station as rather an advantageous circumstance than otherwise, by placing, in itself, a broad distance between her and the child, and rendering their separation easy and natural (p. 18).

The modulation from the expository method to the interior occurs in the third paragraph. The entire passage could have been interior except for the interpolated expository comment "and it is an instance of the strong attraction" and so on. The fourth paragraph is wholly interior, including its interpolated comment, "though possible, there was no denying."

Here, as in the expository analysis which preceded the dramatic depiction of him, we see Dombey as a victim of emotions which are running beyond his control. The necessarily rare direct presentation

of Dombey's thoughts substantiates the narrator's claims. The slightly ridiculous and amusing hyperbole in Chapter 1 which describes Dombey's obsession with his son we now know does not exaggerate, for we have seen him driven to distraction by it. The dramatic method cannot substantiate the claims of exposition because Dombey's demeanor must be at odds with his inner life.

In Chapter 11, Dombey has gone to Mrs. Pipchin's to announce his intention of sending Paul to Blimber's establishment. We and Mrs. Pipchin discover him "contemplating the vacant arm-chair of his son and heir." In this chapter, expository comments do not enclose the dramatic scenes; instead Dickens alternates between the dramatic and the expository methods. Dombey engages, for example, in a brief conversation with Mrs. Pipchin. His last remark is: "'My son is getting on, Mrs. Pipchin. Really, he is getting on.'" Then Dickens shifts to this expository interpretation:

> There was something melancholy in the triumphant air with which Mr. Dombey said this. It showed how long Paul's childish life had been to him, and how his hopes were set upon a later stage of his existence. Pity may appear a strange word to connect with any one so haughty and cold, and yet he seemed a worthy subject for it at the moment (p. 138).

Dickens is, I think, treading carefully here. He induces our sympathy for Dombey not by demanding that we pity him, but by admitting that, though that response seems a strange one, Dickens feels it almost in spite of himself. The point is not belabored; we are immediately returned to the dramatic scene, again with a telling expository aside:

> "Six years old!" said Mr. Dombey, settling his neckcloth--perhaps to hide an irrepressible smile that rather seemed to strike upon the surface of his face, and glance away, as finding no resting-place, than to play there for an instant. "Dear me, six will be changed to sixteen, before we have time to look about us" (p. 138).

There is no complexity or ambiguity here. What we are aware of in this scene is the depth and intensity of Dombey's longings and of the effort it requires for him to maintain his reserved and haughty bearing. This impression is not allowed to last long. Dombey's next speech is a return to the old manner, though perhaps now we are prepared not only to condemn his moral blindness and his rigidly materialistic values but also to pity him for having those values.

At the end of this chapter, Dombey has installed Paul at Blimber's and prepares to take his leave. He is, as usual, tender with Paul as he shakes his son's hand in farewell. The expository comments which follow are notable for their extreme tentativeness. The last remark is particularly conditional. It is difficult to say what the effect of this tentativeness is. Perhaps Dickens is being a bit too coy with us here, for surely he wants us to recognize in Dombey the potential for clearer sight, that is, for change. Nonetheless, it is, on the whole, a poignant scene as well as a good instance of Dicken's difficulties with his recalcitrant subject.

> The limp and careless little hand that Mr. Dombey took in his, was singularly out of keeping with the wistful face. But he had no part in its sorrowful expression. It was not addressed to him. No, no. To Florence--all to Florence.
>
> If Mr. Dombey in his insolence of wealth, had ever made an enemy, hard to appease and cruelly vindictive in his hate, even such an enemy might have received the pang that wrung his proud heart then, as compensation for his injury.
>
> He bent down over his boy, and kissed him. If his sight were dimmed as he did so, by something that for a moment blurred the little face, and made it indistinct to him, his mental vision may have been, for that short time, the clearer perhaps (p. 149).

In the second paragraph, Dickens employs a device akin to that of the "Pity may appear a strange word" comment. While we may heartily

dislike Mr. Dombey, we are certainly not his cruelly vindictive enemy. We are not because Dickens does not permit us to be. Consequently, if the pain which Dombey feels would satisfy such an enemy, how much more will it satisfy us; indeed how much more will it affect the extent to which we do sympathize with him. The expository disclosure of Dombey's pain colors our response to the rest of the dramatic scene so that when we are told that Dombey leaves Blimber's "with his usual polite frigidity" we know what his customary demeanor has cost him.

A final example of the effects Dickens achieves by modulating among his several methods of characterization comes long after Paul's death. In Chapter 40, Dombey reproaches Edith for her refusal to submit to his requirements in a wife. The confrontation between them is introduced by a long expository analysis which shades into interior monologue and back to exposition before Dombey speaks his first words to Edith. Once again we learn from the expository speaker that Dombey is as much a victim of his own nature as are those around him. Authorial comment tells us things about Dombey that he does not, cannot, know. For instance, Dickens makes the point in the chapter's opening paragraph that:

> It is the curse of such a nature--it is a main part of the heavy retribution on itself it bears within itself--that while deference and concession swell its evil qualities, and are the food it grows upon, resistance and a questioning of its exacting claims, foster it too, no less. The evil that is in it finds equally its means of growth and propagation in opposites. It draws support and life from sweets and bitters; bowed down before, or unacknowledged, it still enslaves the breast in which it has its throne; and, worshiped or rejected, is as hard a master as the Devil in dark fables (my emphasis, p. 560).

This observation receives support in the next paragraph from the information about Dombey's relationship with his first wife, whose

meekness and submission we are told only fostered his conceit. "He had kept his distant seat of state on the top of his throne, and she her humble station on its lowest step;" Dickens then says, "and much good it had done him, so to live in solitary bondage to his one idea!" (my emphasis, p. 510). Now Edith, the perfect contrast to the first Mrs. Dombey, has in her determined opposition to him also nurtured his ideé fixe, making it "more concentrated and intense, more gloomy, sullen, irksome, and unyielding, than it had ever been before" (p. 560). Later in the passage, Dickens speaks of "the moody, stubborn, sullen demon" (p. 562) that possesses Dombey.

Dombey also sees himself as a victim. The shifts to the interior method reveal how mistaken he is about what he is a victim of. The narrator's analysis is the right one; Dombey is a victim of his own self-tormenting demon. Dombey's analysis is wrong; he thinks he is a victim of Florence's want of filial duty at best and of her outright hostility at worst. The expository and the interior methods appropriately treat these two opposing views. The interior method gains a great deal from the dramatic irony on which Dombey's broodings turn. It saves, for instance, the passage from its melodramatic leanings, and it adds a note of suspense to those broodings.

When Dickens first shifts from exposition to interior monologue, we think that this is perhaps a discovery scene for Dombey. Twice he comes to right answers, and twice he carries those answers to wrong conclusions. Consequently, the reader's hopes for Dombey are raised, then dashed, raised and dashed again. I know of no way to illustrate these points than to quote the whole long passage.

Dickens has just finished explaining the wounds suffered from self-love.

> Such wounds were his. He felt them sharply, in the solitude of his old rooms; whither he now began often to retire again, and pass long solitary hours [these are the rooms in which Dombey imprisoned himself after Paul's death]. It seemed his fate to be ever proud and powerful; ever humbled and powerless where he would be most strong. Who seemed fated to work out that doom? (p. 561).

We know that the answer to his question is Florence. We feel, at this point, that if Dombey can just see that for himself, he will have begun to exorcise his demon. But, having found the answer, he makes it an indictment of his daughter.

> Who? Who was it who could win his wife as she had won his boy? Who was it who had shown him that new victory, as he sat in the dark corner? Who was it whose least word did what his utmost means could not? Who was it who, unaided by his love, regard or notice, thrived and grew beautiful when those so aided died? Who could it be, but the same child at whom he had often glanced uneasily in her motherless infancy, with a kind of dread, lest he might come to hate her; and of whom his foreboding was fulfilled, for he DID hate her in his heart? (p. 561).

The central fact for Dombey, the thing that hurts and frustrates him most, is that all his love and care could not save his son's life.

Florence is a daily reminder of his powerlessness and of his loss. He has tried not to hate her; but now that she has once again, in the change she effects in Edith, shown him powerless where she is powerful, he gives himself to his passion.

> Yes, and he would have it hatred, and he made it hatred, though some sparkles of the light in which she had appeared before him on the memorable night of his return home with his Bride occasionally hung about her still. He knew now that she was beautiful; he did not dispute that she was graceful and winning, and that in the bright dawn of her womanhood she had come upon him, a surprise. But he turned even this against her (p. 561).

Dickens then adds an expository comment explaining what has caused Dombey to pursue such a mistaken line of reasoning.

> In his sullen and unwholesome brooding, the unhappy man, with a dull perception of his alienation from all hearts, and a vague yearning for what he had all his life repelled, made a distorted picture of his rights and wrongs, and justified himself with it against her (p. 561).

As soon as we understand why he is having these wrong-headed and vindictive thoughts, we begin to forgive him for them, to pity him for his alienation and vague yearnings.

The next sentence functions as a transition from exposition back to the interior method, marked, as before, by Dombey's questions.

> The worthier she promised to be of him, the greater claim he was disposed to ante-date upon her duty and submission. When had she ever shown him duty and submission? Did she grace his life--or Edith's? Had her attractions been manifested first to him--or Edith? Why, he and she had never been, from her birth, like father and child! They had always been estranged (p. 561).

This is a crucial insight into their relationship. We feel that Dombey must surely this time discover the truth, conquer his self-tormenting pride and jealousy, and satisfy his yearnings in Florence's love. Again we are disappointed.

> She had crossed him every way and everywhere. She was leagued against him now. Her very beauty softened natures that were obdurate to him, and insulted him with an unnatural triumph (p. 561).

The next shift to exposition has one main function: to suggest that the conflict within him has been borne of his wholly novel feelings for Florence and that these feelings, though forcibly quelled, have still their place in Dombey's character.

> It may have been that in all this there were mutterings of an awakened feeling in his breast, however selfishly aroused by his position of disadvantage, in comparison with what she might

> have made his life. But he silenced the distant thunder with the rolling of his sea of pride. He would bear nothing but his pride. And in his pride, a heap of inconsistency, and misery, and self-inflicted torment, he hated her (p. 562).

The silent and distant thunder will return, we suspect, loud and close, before Dombey's story is over.

Hating Florence hardens Dombey in his resolve to subdue his wife. The following comment signals the modulation to the dramatic method of characterization: "He had been long communing with these thoughts, when one night he sought her in her own apartment." The confrontation which follows gives us a Dombey so offensive and unyielding that only the explanations and insights provided by the expository and interior methods manage to maintain the necessary ambivalence in our relationship to him. The scene culminates in this exchange. Edith has forced herself to speak thus to Dombey for Florence's sake:

> "If you will promise to forbear on your part, I will promise to forbear on mine. We are a most unhappy pair, in whom, from different causes, every sentiment that blesses marriage, or justifies it, is rooted out; but in the course of time, some friendship, or some fitness for each other, may arise between us. I will try to hope so, if you will make the endeavor too; and I will look forward to a better and a happier use of age than I have made of youth or prime" (p. 568).

This is Dombey's one chance to save his marriage, his home, even ultimately the firm. His reply precipitates the loss of them all and dooms him to the calamity which, in turn, saves him for Florence.

> "Madam," said Mr. Dombey, with his utmost dignity, "I cannot entertain any proposal of this extraordinary nature."
>
> She looked at him yet, without the least change.
>
> "I cannot," said Mr. Dombey, rising as he spoke, "consent to temporise or treat with you, Mrs. Dombey, upon a subject as to which you are in possession of my opinions and expectations. I have stated my ultimatum, Madam, and have only to request your very serious attention to it" (p. 568).

By just such skillful and deliberate alternation among the methods of characterization, Dickens creates Dombey and elicits our responses to him. The modulation from one method to another controls, as Wayne Booth would put it, our "distance" from Dombey, hence, our relationship to him. Furthermore, to extend Mark Schorer's dictum that technique is discovery,[32] technique, perhaps especially in the delineation of character, is persuasion. Through it and by it, we are persuaded to discover the man Dombey is.

A detailed examination of each method in turn reveals, in other ways, how Dickens persuades us of Dombey's psychological complexity and human depth.

The Expository Method: A Plea for Tolerance

Although, when he began Dombey and Son, Dickens was more practiced in the exhibition than in the analysis of character,[33] his portrait of Dombey shows him straining at the confinements of his customary practice. While the expository method is still used primarily to exhibit character, Dickens forces exposition to its limits by also making it a means of analyzing character. In fact, one critic argues that Dombey's characterization contains an "unusually high proportion of analysis." Dickens, he suggests,

[32]"Technique as Discovery," The Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Robert Murray Davis (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp. 75-93.

[33]Tillotson, Novels, p. 167.

> seems prepared in this novel to risk sacrificing a certain amount of dramatic color in the purely objective presentation of character, in the attempt to produce a more rounded, subtler, quieter sense of human personality. It seems clear that Mr. Dombey. . . [is] meant to possess a range of interest, a complexity of spiritual life, far beyond anything Dickens had yet aspired to.[34]

Of the three methods of characterization, the expository dominates; that is to say, Dickens the omniscient narrator dominates Dombey's characterization explicitly through expository commentary, analysis, speculation, and evaluation, and implicitly through imagery. Thus, the ethos of the Dickensian narrator makes an important appeal to the reader.[35] Consequently, whether or not we accept Dombey as a complex character, deserving of our sympathy as well as our scorn, depends greatly on whether or not we accept the narrator as a man of reason, good will, and virtue (the attributes Aristotle ascribes to the proper rhetorical persona), and a tough-minded judge of character.

Good will and Dickens' characteristic irony and satire may seem to be incompatible attributes, but in fact their combination makes it possible for Dickens as narrator[36] to play both the tough-minded judge who sees people for what they are and the compassionate man

[34]Grahame Smith, Dickens, Money and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 116.

[35]Sylvia B. Manning asserts that the Dickens narrator "defines the standpoint and the norm from which the [satiric] attack is justified;" therefore, "his presence in the foreground of the work is both as central and as legitimate as that of the speaker in Pope's satires and moral epistles," Dickens as Satirist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 16.

[36]Manning also argues that Dickens' persona is "virtually identical with Dickens' image of the ethical man he wanted--and often believed himself to be," although in fact, she points out, Dickens was more bourgeois than his persona, p. 16.

who tries to understand and accept them with all their moral failings. In a sense, Dombey's true antagonist is not Florence but the man who tells his story.[37] These two characters (if I may, for the sake of my point, call the narrator a character) embody opposing ways of thinking, feeling, and dealing with others.

Dickens' narrator is kind and magnanimous to all but the most shallow and mean-spirited of the novel's characters. He is compassionate in his treatment of the rotten apple of the Toodles family, Rob the Grinder, and of the silly, sychophantic Miss Tox. He treats Good Mrs. Brown's grief at her daughter's death as genuine. He even accords Mrs. Skewton some sympathy through the imagery of the waves which relates her death to those of Paul and his mother. Just before Carker dies horribly under the wheels of the railway engine, as he turns to look on the morning sun, Dickens asks:

> As he cast his faded eyes upon it, where it rose, tranquil and serene, unmoved by all the wrong and wickedness on which its beams had shown since the beginning of the world, who shall say that some weak sense of virtue upon Earth, and its reward in Heaven, did not manifest itself, even to him? If ever he remembered sister or brother with a touch of tenderness and remorse, who shall say it was not then? (p. 778).

All in all, of the important characters, only the thoroughly repulsive and vicious Major Bagstock receives no mercy.

Dickens can also be humorous and ironic, and sometimes angry. In the whimsical simile which concludes the novel's opening paragraph,

[37]Denis Donoghue believes, as I do, that the most intelligent character in Dombey and Son is the narrator in the sense that he knows what he is doing, "The English Dickens and Dombey and Son," Dickens Centennial Essays, eds. Nisbet and Nevius, pp. 20-21.

we are introduced to the narrator's kindly wit. He describes the infant Paul lying in his basket next to the fire, "as if his constitution were analogous to that of a muffin, and it was essential to toast him brown while he was very new" (p. 1). We are also introduced to the novel's protagonist through the fanciful comparison between him and his new-born son. This device works to Dombey's benefit because we are inclined to like babies and by extension new fathers. We are quite ready to allow Dombey his exultation, even his pride, in his son. It is, I believe, significant that our very first impression of Dombey is not unfavorable. In the one point of contrast, Dombey sits in a corner of the darkened room away from the fire while Son lies in a basket near the fire. As it turns out, this is a symbolically significant difference: Dombey is associated with cold and ice, never with the warmth and life of a fire.

Chapter 1 contains two other important expository passages which exemplify other stances the narrator adopts toward his hero. In the first, Dickens comments on Dombey's last words to his wife: "'Dombey and Son.'"

> Those three words conveyed the one idea of Mr. Dombey's life. The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre. Common abbreviations took new meanings in his eyes, and had sole reference to them: A. D. had no concern with anno Domini, but stood for anno Dombei--and Son (p. 2).

The hyperbole is a humorous and even blasphemous inflation of the case. We think, at any rate, when we read this that it exaggerates;

we learn in Chapter 2 to take the hyperbole seriously, even though Dombey would never express his feelings about the family business in these terms. For one thing, he does not have the imagination for it.[38] Dickens, who does, can poke fun at Dombey's obsession. The tone of the exposition becomes increasingly more facetious as Dickens examines Dombey's attitudes. The series of that-clauses in the long sentence beginning "Mr. Dombey would have reasoned that. . ." mimics the way Dombey might tick the points off in his head. The syntax is business-like and orderly, like the columns in a ledger. The sentence fragments which begin the next two paragraphs are also brisk and business-like and verge on interior monologue. Mrs. Dombey, he has reasoned, must have been happy as his wife.

> Or, at all events, with one drawback. Yes. That he would have allowed. With only one; but that one certainly involving much. They had been married ten years, and until this present day on which Mr. Dombey sat jingling and jingling his heavy gold watch-chain in the great arm-chair by the side of the bed, had had no issue.
>
> To speak of; none worth mentioning. There had been a girl some six years before. . . (p. 3).

The concluding observation twits Dombey with his disregard for his daughter:

> But what was a girl to Dombey and Son! In the capital of the House's name and dignity, such a child was merely a piece of base coin that couldn't be invested--a bad Boy--nothing more (p. 3).

In the second example, which follows the doctor's indirect hint to Dombey that his wife is dying, Dickens apprises us of Dombey's

[38] Dombey, Donoghue says, inhabits the surface of things: "what is appalling in him is the terrible penury of the symbolism by which he lives; he has so little in that way that he must hold on to what he has with insistence of will," p. 7.

thorough-going materialism--his daughter is like a base coin, now his wife is regarded in the same light as a piece of furniture. The tone of this remark is slily ironic. We are led, at first, to think that perhaps Dombey does have some feeling in him after all, only to have this hope reversed:

> To record of Mr. Dombey that he was not in his way affected by this intelligence, would be to do him an injustice. He was not a man of whom it could properly be said that he was ever startled or shocked; but he certainly had a sense within him, that if his wife should sicken and decay, he would be very sorry, and that he would find something gone from among his plate and furniture, and other household possessions, which was well worth having, and could not be lost without sincere regret. Though it would be a cool, business-like, gentlemanly, self-possessed regret, no doubt (p. 5).[39]

In this first chapter, Dickens treats Dombey as a complacent prig, which he certainly is, but not as the monomaniac which he also is. That Dombey is, as we have seen, saved for Chapter 2. We are disposed first to like the humorous and ironic Dickens of Chapter 1, then to trust the judgments of the serious and analytic Dickens of Chapter 2.[40]

[39]Donoghue also claims that "Dickens is relying upon the reader to receive these first pages with a sense of the perturbation in the given relationships. The image of this family is presented, set off against another image which is not yet given in fact: that of a properly operative family," which is soon provided for in the Toodles, p. 2.

[40]Steven Marcus observes that the prose of Dombey and Son is subdued in contrast with that of earlier novels, particularly Martin Chuzzlewit. The narrator's voice, he says, is "older and more tempered," deliberate, restricted in range, and moving "with a measured, ponderous directness. . . . Here for the first time in Dickens is a voice that seems to be listening to or overhearing itself; its tone reverberates inwardly, and though the prose is direct, it is not simple nor without subtlety. . . . In Dombey and Son there is in the main but one voice. This voice modulates, develops and shows considerable variation, but in general it speaks to us in one character, the voice of a man who understands that he is saying something very serious," Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1965), p. 293.

Dickens can also be both exasperated and angry with Dombey. These authorial outbursts have an interesting effect. They give one the impression that Dombey is, at times, so infuriating, so stupid, so mean that even the narrator whose restraint and control have become well-known to us is moved to righteous indignation and occasionally disgust. Take, for example, the confrontation scene between Dombey and Edith which has earlier been discussed in some detail. Dombey, having told Edith that he considers her both a connection and a dependent, is pleased to see "her bosom throb, and. . . her face flush and turn white" (p. 564). Whereupon Dickens exclaims: "Blind idiot, rushing to a precipice! He thought she stood in awe of him!" (p. 564).

The evening after Dombey and Edith return from their honeymoon, Florence finds herself, for the first time ever, alone with her father in the drawing-room. She longs to use this happenstance to improve her relationship with him, yet shrinks from his approach whenever he passes her in his pacing about the room. "Unnatural emotion," Dickens cries, "in a child, innocent of wrong! Unnatural the hand that had directed the sharp plow, which furrowed up her gentle nature for the sowing of its seeds!" (p. 502).

After Paul's death, Florence makes a nightly visit to the door of Dombey's rooms. One night she finds the door partially open. Entering, she startles her father, who is grieving for his dead son. Dombey treats her badly. His old indifference is gradually turning to hatred. He asks Florence why she has come:

> "I came, Papa--"
> "Against my wishes. Why?" (p. 256).

As Florence drops "her head upon her hands with one prolonged low cry," Dickens intones:

> Let him remember it in that room, years to come. It [Florence's cry]has faded from the air, before he breaks the silence. It may pass as quickly from his brain, as he believes, but it is there. Let him remember it in that room, years to come! (p. 256).

After Florence, married now to Walter Gay, has left England and Dombey and Son is bankrupt, Dickens' warning becomes the refrain of Dombey's conversion.

> And the ruined man. How does he pass the hours alone?
> "Let him remember it in that room, years to come!" He did remember it. It was heavy on his mind now; heavier than all the rest.
> "Let him remember it in that room, years to come! The rain that falls upon the roof, the wind that mourns outside the door, may have foreknowledge in their melancholy sound. Let him remember it in that room, years to come!"
> He did remember it. In the miserable night he thought of it; in the dreary day, the wretched dawn, the ghostly, memory-haunted twilight. He did remember it. In agony, in sorrow, in remorse, in despair! "Papa! papa! Speak to me, dear papa!" He heard the words again, and saw the face. He saw it fall upon the trembling hands, and heard the one prolonged low cry go upward (pp. 838-839).

Dickens issues a graver, apocalyptic warning in Chapter 43, "The Watches of the Night." Florence observes her father as he sleeps, following the fall from his horse. To her loving eyes his face seems, for once, free of "the cloud that had darkened her childhood" (p. 609) --his coldness and dislike. "He might have gone to sleep," she thinks, "blessing her" (p. 608). Dickens abruptly breaks the tranquility:

> Awake, unkind father! Awake, now, sullen man! The time is flitting by; the hour is coming with an angry tread. Awake! (p. 609).

Florence hesitantly steals to the bed and kisses him softly on the face. Again, Dickens exhorts him:

> Awake, doomed man, while she is near. The time is flitting by; the hour is coming with an angry tread; its foot is in the house. Awake!. . . . He may sleep on now. He may sleep on while he may. But let him look for that slight figure when he wakes, and find it near him when the hour is come! (p. 609).

"When addressing Dombey himself," comments Sylvère Monod, "Dickens stands as an inspired prophet, but his warning is of course all the more tragic because it is not in the nature of things that it should be heard. . . ."[41] Another critic, Janice Carlisle, believes that Dickens could have made the same point about Dombey's miseducated and morally deformed character more effectively if he had shown more and told less.[42] But she admits that the authorial commentary, which some readers might consider intrusions, works because it "demands that the reader see [the diseased and destructive world of Dombey and Son] as his own, as a world for which he bears responsibility and to which he must respond. In short, the reader is asked to do what Dombey cannot do, to heed the narrator's apocalyptic warnings. . . ."[43]

Dickens has often been accused of being vulgar, sentimental, and melodramatic. He often is. But, it must be said in fairness, so were his readers. That Dickens as an artist and a man was deeply involved with his audience is a commonplace. His readers' powerful responses to his powerful art sustained him in complex and mysterious ways. Because the Victorians believed in cultivating feeling both

[41]Monod, p. 247.

[42]"Dombey and Son: The Reader and the Present Tense," Journal of Narrative Technique, 1 (September 1971), 150.

[43]Ibid., p. 151.

for its own sake and as a corrective to Victorian middleclass utilitarianism, pragmatism, and commercialism, they demanded of their writers moral earnestness, noble emotions, warm sympathies, and benevolence. The enthusiastic and grimly determined cultivation of feeling to which the Victorians gave themselves often, but not always, degenerated into a vapid and maudlin sentimentality, which invaded not only the novels of Dickens but also those of innumerable writers of the period. Nowhere is this tendency more likely to surface than in literary works centered around family life.

The Victorians idealized the family. To them it was the antithesis of the hard, competitive world of business and society. The Victorian conceived of home as the source of virtue and emotion, a place protected from the world, a garden of Eden, a refuge, and an escape from the insecurities and anxieties of life. Home and the family represented security, peace, and innocence. A Victorian reader would have regarded Dombey's cruelty to Florence as horrible and unnatural beyond our ability now to comprehend. Consequently, he would probably also have regarded Dickens' angry outbursts, his grave prophesies, and his severe admonitions to Dombey as the entirely admirable and right rhetorical stance for the novelist to adopt towards his erring protagonist. Even overdoing it would have bothered few Victorians.[44]

[44]See George H. Ford, Dickens & His Readers: Aspects of Novel-Criticism Since 1836 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), and Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) for detailed discussions of the Victorian audience.

Just so far can explanatory criticism go in extracting from modern readers a degree of tolerance for Victorian earnestness and sentimentality, but, I admit, not much further. Once in a while Dickens permits himself a speech that, for one reason or another, clearly damages his ethos for even the most tolerant among us. When Dombey begins to court Edith in Leamington, for instance, her mother Mrs. Skewton directs her to show off her accomplishments. As Edith turns from the harp to the piano, Dickens addresses her directly in a curiously childish sing-song:

> Edith Granger, any song but that! Edith Granger, you are very handsome, and your touch upon the keys is brilliant, and your voice is deep and rich; but not the air that his neglected daughter sang to his dead son! (pp. 296-297).

Immediately Dickens laments:

> Alas, he knows it not; and if he did, what air of hers would stir him, rigid man! Sleep, lonely Florence, sleep! Peace in thy dreams, although the night has turned dark, and the clouds are gathering, and threaten to discharge themselves in hail! (p. 297).

This stiff and somewhat pompous prayer cannot be justified even on the grounds that it ends a number; it ends a chapter in the middle of the seventh number. I object more, though, to the arch and even cruel cuteness of this interpolation into the scene where Florence and the Dombey household wait for Dombey and Edith to arrive home from their honeymoon:

> Where are the happy pair, for whom this brave home is waiting? Do steam, tide, wind, and horses, all abate their speed, to linger on such happiness? Does the swarm of loves and graces hovering about them retard their progress by its numbers? Are there so many flowers in their happy path, that they can scarcely move along, without entanglement in thornless roses, and sweetest briar? (pp. 498-499).

The dominant impression created by these direct authorial intrusions, both the tolerable and the intolerable, is of Dickens' total involvement with Dombey, of Dickens' fascination for him. We feel Dickens' struggle to understand Dombey and to succeed with him as an artistic creation. Because these intrusions are few and do little to damage our acceptance of Dickens the narrator as sensitive, intelligent, and fair-minded, Dickens succeeds in involving us in that struggle.

These attributes of Dickens' ethos are nowhere more apparent than in the combination of confidence and caution with which he analyzes and judges Dombey. Most of the time Dickens simply tells us what we need to know about Dombey in order to perceive him properly. This function of the expository method is especially important in Dombey's characterization because Dombey is remote, secretive, unreflective, and obtuse. He understands neither others nor himself, which is not to say that he is innately stupid but that his social position, his wealth, and consequently, the treatment accorded him have conspired to make him, like a child, totally egocentric. So Dickens must make Dombey's hidden self accessible to us. For example, in Chapter 5, "Paul's Progress and Christening," Dombey has just told his sister Mrs. Chick that, until Paul is grown, "'I am enough for him, perhaps, and all in all. I have no wish that people should step in between us'" (p. 46). Dickens follows this speech with a penetrating commentary on the secret forces underlying Dombey's remarks:

> . . . Mr. Dombey had truly revealed the secret feelings of his breast. An indescribable distrust of anybody stepping in between himself and his son; a haughty dread of having any rival or partner in the boy's respect and deference; a sharp misgiving, recently acquired, that he was not infallible in his power of bending and

> binding human wills; as sharp as a jealousy of any second check or cross; these were, at that time, the master keys of his soul. In all his life, he had never made a friend. His cold and distant nature had neither sought one, nor found one. And now when that nature concentrated its whole force so strongly on a partial scheme of parental interest and ambition, it seemed as if its icy current, instead of being released by this influence, and running clear and free, had thawed for but an instant to admit its burden, and then frozen with it into one unyielding block (p. 47).

Dombey, we assume, has never till now felt the slightest insecurity. But he was powerless to prevent his wife's death and this has shaken him, not because he cared for his wife but because she was important to his son's welfare. That Dombey has no friend appeals to our sympathies. Determined never to be so powerless again, he does not understand, and would refuse to believe it if he were told, that he cannot will someone, not even his son, to be his friend, his all-in-all, his alter-ego.

The importance of Dombey's obsessive and all-consuming jealousy cannot be overstressed. It is responsible for Dombey's coming to hate Florence; it is even responsible for Paul's death. As the imagery at the end of this passage makes clear, Dombey in his compulsive desire to enclose Paul freezes his son to death. He destroys Paul's best chance at health and life when he dismisses his wetnurse, the quintessentially maternal Polly Toodle, for having taken <u>his son</u> into Stagg's Gardens. Paul never recovers from this "second deprivation"; immediately, he begins visibly to weaken. Dombey commits an even greater sin against his son's life when, unconcerned with the signs of Paul's ill-health, he literally wishes Paul's childhood away. To be fair, he might have been concerned if he had known there was reason for concern, but no one dares to tell him. Mrs. Chick and Miss Tox,

thus, cater with mortal consequences to his isolation. Dombey believes, Dickens tells us,

> that the child must necessarily pass through a certain routine of minor maladies, and that the sooner he did so the better. . . . he merely wondered, in his haughty manner, now and then, what Nature meant by it; and comforted himself with the reflection that there was another milestone passed upon the road, and that the great end of the journey lay so much nearer. For the feeling uppermost in his mind, now and constantly intensifying, and increasing in it as Paul grew older, was impatience. Impatience for the time to come, when his visions of their united consequence and grandeur would be triumphantly realized (p. 90).

The understated irony of Dombey's impatience for the end of Paul's childhood evokes conflicting responses. We are, on the one hand, dismayed by Dombey's utter nonchalance about Paul's frailty and angry that he cares for his son only for what Paul will be to him and the family business when he becomes a man. But we also pity him for these same reasons.

Dickens builds on our tentative and ambivalent sympathy for Dombey in the very next passage of expository comment. His first observation implicates him and us in Dombey's failings as a father and a man. By implicitly cautioning us not to feel too superior to Dombey, Dickens saves us from being no better than Dombey in his pride and arrogance. The remainder of the passage is a direct appeal to us to be forbearing in our judgment of Dombey's attitude towards his son:

> Some philosophers tell us that selfishness is at the root of our best loves and affections. Mr. Dombey's young child was, from the beginning, so distinctly important to him as a part of his own greatness, or (which is the same thing) of the greatness of Dombey and Son, that there is no doubt his parental affection might have been easily traced, like many a goodly superstructure of fair fame, to a very low foundation. But he loved his son

> with all the love he had. If there were a warm place in his frosty heart, his son occupied it; if its very hard surface could receive the impression of any image, the image of that son was there: though not so much as an infant, or as a boy, but as a grown man--the "son" of the Firm. Therefore he was impatient to advance into the future, and to hurry over the intervening passages of his history. Therefore he had little or no anxiety about them, in spite of his love; feeling as if the boy had a charmed life, and must become the man with whom he held such constant communication in his thoughts, and for whom he planned and projected, as for an existing reality, every day (pp. 90-91).

That this stiff, cold, uncommunicative man holds "constant communication in his thoughts" with an abstraction, a vision of the man he wants his infant son to be, is both sad and appalling.

It is difficult when one has read a novel many times to know what one felt and anticipated on the first reading, but surely Dickens has by the end of the third number created in us a sense of dread for both Paul's and Dombey's future. And, since their future is in doubt, we pity Dombey for being impatient for it. He must come to grief--a richly deserved grief, to be sure. Nevertheless, Dickens' management of Dombey's characterization does not permit us to take unequivocal joy in that grief. For example, when Dombey returns home after Paul's funeral, Dickens makes a single, brief, restrained, but poignant comment: "And what the face is, in the shut-up chamber underneath: or what the thoughts are: what the heart is, what the contest or the suffering: no one knows" (p. 241). It is, Dickens suggests, not even given to Dombey's chronicler to know all his secret thoughts and sufferings. So imprisoned is he that he is at times inaccessible not just to the other characters in the novel but to the novel's very narrator. This pretense on Dickens' part is, I feel, very effective. No isolation could be more profound or frightening than Dombey's.

Dickens adopts the same rhetorical stance towards Dombey in his relationship with Edith; that is, he is at times confident of his insights and at other times cautious. After Dombey has rebuked Edith in front of Carker for having snubbed his guests at their first dinner party, Dickens tells us that Dombey has no resources against his wife's silent and withering scorn. Later that evening, Dombey watches Edith come from Florence's room and descend the staircase. Dickens asks:

> Was he coward enough to watch her, an hour afterwards on the old well staircase, where he had once seen Florence in the moonlight, toiling up with Paul? Or was he in the dark by accident, when, looking up, he saw her coming, with a light, from the room where Florence lay, and marked again the face so changed, which he could not subdue?
>
> But it could never alter as his own did. It never, in its utmost pride and passion, knew the shadow that had fallen on his, in the dark corner, on the night of the return; and often since; and which deepened on it now as he looked up (p. 520).

This expository speculation and comment reminds us that Dombey is most dangerous when he feels most powerless. Florence, by exercising no power at all, is strong where Dombey is weak; and soon he will hate her for it.

Six months elapse. Dickens conveys the passing of time in an exceptionally long passage of meditation on the sources of Dombey's moral deformity. The passage opens Chapter 47 in which Edith elopes with Carker and Dombey strikes Florence. The enormity of Dombey's offenses requires his narrator to take particular care with his argument in Dombey's behalf. "Let us be just to him," Dickens pleads:

> In the monstrous delusion of his life, swelling with every grain of sand that shifted in its glass, he urged her [Edith] on, he little thought to what, or considered how. . . (p. 646).

The effort to be just, to place Dombey's character in its proper context, leads Dickens into a disquisition on social and moral corruption.

> Was Mr. Dombey's master-vice, that ruled him so inexorably, an unnatural characteristic? It might be worth while, sometimes, to inquire what Nature is, and how men work to change her, and whether, in the enforced distortions so produced, it is not natural to be unnatural. Coop any son or daughter of our mighty mother within narrow range, and bind the prisoner to one idea, and foster it by servile worship of it on the part of the few timid or designing people standing round, and what is Nature to the willing captive who has never risen up upon the wings of a free mind--drooping and useless soon--to see her in her comprehensive truth!
>
> Alas! are there so few things in the world, about us, most unnatural, and yet most natural in being so? (pp. 646-647).

We hear next the familiar Dickens outrage at the brutal and foul physical conditions which blast and stunt the lives of London's poor. But this is no digression, for Dickens argues that this physical pestilence has its moral counterpart.

> Those who study the physical sciences, and bring them to bear upon the health of Man, tell us that if the noxious particles that rise from vitiated air were palpable to the sight, we should see them lowering in a dense black cloud above such haunts, and rolling slowly on to corrupt the better portions of the town. But if the moral pestilence that rises with them, and in the eternal laws of outraged Nature, is inseparable from them, could be made discernible too, how terrible the revelation! Then should we see depravity, impiety, drunkenness, theft, murder, and a long train of nameless sins against the natural affections and repulsions of mankind, overhanging the devoted spots, and creeping on, to blight the innocent and spread contagion among the pure (pp. 647-648).

By a skillful argument from analogy, Dickens appeals to the authority of science for his conclusion that Dombey's seemingly unnatural master-vice is as much a natural consequence of a moral perversion abroad in the land as is the physical pollution which hangs over it. Dombey is, Dickens argues, a victim of a "perversion in nature," which in

Dombey's character is "as great, and yet as natural in its development when once begun, as the lowest degradation known" (p. 648). This rhetorical strategy effectively precludes our holding Dombey responsible for the evil that is in him. And if he is not responsible, we are, therefore, obliged to pity him.

At the end of this passage Dickens suggests that Dombey's salvation lies in being roused to a knowledge of his own relation to the human life around him (p. 648), but as usual in Dickens his salvation is personal, not social.[45] He must come to a knowledge of the constancy and profundity of Florence's love. But he must first come to believe that he has lost her through his own blindness and cruelty. After Florence has fled to the Wooden Midshipman, Dickens tells us that Dombey

> may think of her constantly, or he may never think about her. It is all one for any sign he makes.
>
> But this is sure; he does not think that he has lost her. He has no suspicion of the truth. He has lived too long shut up in his towering supremacy. . . to have any fear of that. Shaken as he is by his disgrace, he is not yet humbled to the level earth (p. 716).

When, in Chapter 59, Dombey sinks into his dark night of the soul, Dickens turns to the interior method of characterization.

Before leaving the expository method, however, it is necessary to look briefly at its use as a vehicle for implicit commentary. As many critics have noted, Dickens uses imagery and other figurative

[45]See Alexander Welsh, The City of Dickens (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971) for a perceptive study of the religious values in Dickens' novels.

language to "reflect the aura and quality of a world emanating from the mind of the protagonist."[46] This device is not new to Dombey and Son, but it acquires new prominence and importance as a method of characterization in this novel.

I have already mentioned the images of cold and ice which convey Dombey's emotional sterility and spiritual death. Dickens also conveys Dombey's character through description. In Chapter 3, for example, we are given a chilling description of Dombey's house, "a large one, on the shady side of a tall, dark, dreadfully genteel street. . ." (p. 21). Its cellars are "frowned upon by barred windows, and leered at by crooked-eyed doors leading to dustbins." Its gravelled yard houses "two gaunt trees, with blackened trunks and branches, [which] rattled rather than rustled, their leaves were so smoke-dried." The sun shines on it for only a little while in the morning. And at night "the lamplighter made his nightly failure in attempting to brighten up the street with gas" (p. 22). "It was," Dickens observes, "as blank a house inside as outside" (p. 22). The description expresses Dombey's stern, disapproving, socially self-conscious, and most importantly, his life-denying and morally stunted character.

In the afternoon it is Polly Toodle's duty to walk the infant Paul back and forth in front of Dombey's glassed-in breakfast room so that he may observe his son. Her view of Dombey through the glass captures his alienation, his solitary confinement.

> From the glimpses she caught of Mr. Dombey at these times, sitting in the dark distance, looking out towards the infant from

[46] Gold, p. 161.

> among the dark heavy furniture--the house had been inhabited for years by his father, and in many of its appointments was old-fashioned and grim--she began to entertain ideas of him in his solitary state, as if he were a lone prisoner in a cell, or a strange apparition that was not to be accosted or understood (pp. 22-23).

Dombey's business offices are equally depressing:

> Such vapid and flat daylight as filtered through the ground-glass windows and skylights, leaving a black sediment upon the panes, showed the books and papers, and the figures bending over them, enveloped in a studious gloom, and as much abstracted in appearance, from the world without, as if they were assembled at the bottom of the sea; while a mouldy little strong room in the obscure perspective, where a shady lamp was always burning, might have represented the cavern of some ocean-monster, looking on with a red eye at these mysteries of the deep (p. 169).

The appropriateness of the sea-imagery scarcely needs comment. The images of ghostly unreality which close both of these descriptions speak to us of the unreal, closed world in which Dombey lives and of his spiritual death. Both may even derive from St. Paul's observation to the Corinthians that "we see through a glass, darkly." Dombey must come in the course of his life to see his daughter and himself, as St. Paul writes, "face to face." We the readers must come in the course of the novel to see him clearly, to know and understand him. The primary function of the expository method is to make sure that we do.

The Dramatic Method: Arrogance

We have already seen that the primary function of the dramatic method is to exhibit Dombey's dominant vices, pride and jealousy. Many pages of examples could be compiled illustrating these and other antipathetic attributes of his character: his severity, cruelty,

selfishness, arrogance, and coldness. But, since this is the Dombey with which every reader is most familiar, I prefer instead to look at those scenes which, because they are exceptions to this rule, make important contributions to a complex and three-dimensional characterization.

As one would expect, several of these scenes involve Paul. In the first example (Chapter 8), Paul is five years old. His health is delicate, but his father believes his son's problems to be the usual maladies associated with children. Dombey is eager for Paul to grow up; consequently, he lives in the future and actually notices little about the present condition of his son. Every evening, after dinner, Paul's little chair is taken to his father's room. One evening Dombey and Paul, who is like his father in many ways, have an interesting interview on the subject of money. This often discussed scene affords a fine example of Dickens' dramatic control and understatement. In it Dombey's discomfiture and fumbling attempts to answer his small son's questions are treated sympathetically. The use of indirect discourse for Dombey's one long reply has the effect of making Dombey seem reasonable and patient. Indirect discourse, because it is the narrator's report of a speech or a conversation, can be made to take on expository qualities. In this case, the narrator's reasonableness and sensitivity are transferred to Dombey. Paul has just said: "'If [money is] a good thing, and can do anything, . . . I wonder why it didn't save my Mama'" (p. 93). Mr Dombey

> expounded to him how that money, though a very potent spirit, never to be disparaged on any account whatever, could not keep people alive whose time was come to die; and how that we must

> all die, unfortunately, even in the City, though we were never so rich. But how that money caused us to be honoured, feared, respected, courted, and admired, and made us powerful and glorious in the eyes of all men; and how that it could, very often, even keep off death, for a long time together. How, for example, it had secured to his Mama the services of Mr. Pilkins, by which he, Paul, had often profited himself; likewise of the great Doctor Parker Peps, whom he had never known. And how it could do all, that could be done (p. 93).

We hear in Dickens' rendering of Dombey's remarks the studied patience of a teacher explaining an obvious, though difficult, point to a pupil who has asked a singularly exasperating and somewhat embarrassing question.

When Paul begins to talk about his tiredness and pain, Dombey's attempts to provide a reasonable explanation for them, his bewilderment, and his desire to understand his son touch us. He lays his hand gently on Paul's back and with his other turns Paul's face towards his own without a word (pp. 93-94). Only once before, on the day of Paul's birth, have we seen Dombey touch another. This scene immediately precedes that nearly epiphanic moment when Dombey watches in silence as Florence, singing softly, carries Paul up the great staircase to bed--though it could just as well be to heaven.

> After [Paul and Florence] had left the room together, he thought he heard a soft voice singing; and remembering that Paul had said his sister sung to him, he had the curiosity to open the door and listen, and look after them. She was toiling up the great, wide, vacant staircase, with him in her arms; his head was lying on her shoulder, one of his arms thrown negligently round her neck. So they went, toiling up; she singing all the way, and Paul sometimes crooning out a feeble accompaniment. Mr. Dombey looked after them until they reached the top of the staircase--not without halting to rest by the way--and passed out of his sight; and then he still stood gazing upwards, until the dull rays of the moon, glimmering in a melancholy manner through the dim skylight, sent him back to his own room (p. 95).

These scenes illustrate an important dramatic device: the use of what Kathleen Tillotson calls "carefully timed silent pauses. . . moments sharply presented to the sight and impressing the imagination"[47] that suggest the on-going struggle within Dombey. Dickens uses this device again a few pages later. When it is decided that Paul for his health will go to Mrs. Pipchin's school in Brighton, Dombey's sister Mrs. Chick tells him: "'I don't think you could send the child anywhere at present without Florence, my dear Paul. . . . It's quite an infatuation with him. He's very young, you know, and has his fancies'" (p. 98).

> Mr. Dombey turned his head away, and going slowly to the bookcase, and unlocking it, brought back a book to read.
> "Anybody else, Louisa?" he said, without looking up, and turning over the leaves.
> "Wickham, of course. . . . You would go down yourself once a-week at least, of course."
> "Of course," said Mr. Dombey; and sat looking at one page for an hour afterwards, without reading one word (p. 98).

As Paul lies dying in Chapter 16, we discover Dombey sitting silently at the foot of his son's bed. Dickens renders the scene with complete consistency through Paul's failing eyes. He confuses the doctor who attends him with others around his bed and with his father, "sitting with his head upon his hand" (p. 222). Paul is content not to try to unravel these shifting images.

> But this figure with its head upon its hand returned so often, and remained so long, and sat so still and solemn, never speaking, never being spoken to, and rarely lifting up its face, that Paul began to wonder languidly, if it were real; and in the nighttime saw it sitting there, with fear.
> "Floy!" he said. "What <u>is</u> that?"
> "Where, dearest?"

[47] <u>Novels</u>, p. 167.

> "There! at the bottom of the bed."
> "There's nothing there, except Papa!"
> The figure lifted up its head, and rose, and coming to the bedside, said: "My own boy! Don't you know me?"
> Paul looked it in the face, and thought, was this his father? But the face so altered to his thinking, thrilled while he gazed, as if it were in pain; and before he could reach out both his hands to take it between them, and draw it towards him, the figure turned away quickly from the little bed, and went out at the door (pp. 222-223).

The dramatic method poignantly understates Dombey's anguish, made even more painful by the dehumanizing neuter pronouns. True to his nature, in spite of the impending loss of the son he has loved so obsessively, Dombey retreats into solitude and misses a chance to feel Paul's arms around him. But the next time Paul observes "the figure sitting at the bottom of the bed," he calls to it.

> His father coming and bending down to him--which he did quickly, and without first pausing by the bedside--Paul held him round the neck. . . (p. 223).

Later in the chapter, shortly before his death and after he has said goodbye to everyone else, Paul asks: "'Where is Papa?'" Dombey's alacrity in responding must surely touch even the reader least disposed towards him. Paul "felt his father's breath upon his cheek, before the words had parted from his lips" (p. 225).

The brief exchange between Dombey and the stonecutter at Paul's funeral reveals the appalling depths of Dombey's monomania. The economy and restraint of this scene has deservedly been much praised. When the service is over, Dombey calls to the stonecutter, writes out an inscription, and hands it to him.

> The man bows, glancing at the paper, but appears to hesitate. Mr. Dombey, not observing his hesitation, turns away, and leads towards the porch.

> "I beg your pardon, Sir;" a touch falls gently on his mourning cloak: "but as you wish it done immediately; and it may be put in hand when I get back--"
>
> "Well?"
>
> "Will you be so good as read it over again? I think there's a mistake."
>
> "Where?"
>
> The statuary gives him back the paper, and points out, with his pocket rule, the words, "beloved and only child."
>
> "It should be, 'son,' I think, Sir?"
>
> "You are right. Of course. Make the correction."
>
> The father, with a hastier step, pursues his way to the coach. When the other three, who follow closely, take their seats, his face is hidden for the first time--shaded by his cloak. Nor do they see it any more that day (p. 241).

While the dramatic method primarily renders those attributes of Dombey's character which repulse us, these scenes conveying his feelings for his son are powerfully effective in engaging our sympathies.

Dombey's character is also dramatically established by his association with other characters. His choice of Bagstock as a friend reveals a myopic lack of judgement, resulting from his own blind egotism but also from his loneliness and grief. Dombey is not nearly so objectionable as Bagstock, who is a truly repulsive character. The same is true of his relationship with Carker. Dombey is not given to calculated evil, not even in his treatment of Florence. Because Dombey is too secure in his egocentricity, he falls easy prey to the machinations of Bagstock and Carker. It simply never occurs to him that others might seek to do him ill. He himself is not calculating, clever, or sly. His business dealings have all presumably been honorable and above-board, the firm trustworthy. He is a literal-minded stuff-shirt, but a gentleman.[48]

[48] Donoghue feels that Dombey is "neither vicious nor deceitful," but "a man of honor," p. 4.

Morfin's balanced attitude towards his long-time employer attests to Dombey's rectitude. Our introduction to Morfin leaves no doubt that we are to like him: "The gentleman. . . was a cheerful-looking, hazel-eyed elderly bachelor. . ." (p. 170). Cheerful is second only to little in Dickens' lexicon as an encomium. Although Morfin appears only a few times, his judgments clearly carry Dickens' endorsement. He knows Dombey personally but not intimately; he sees and accepts both Dombey's strengths and his weaknesses; he never tries to manipulate Dombey for his own ends; he is not self-serving; he is cheerful in his work and in his association with others but melancholy in the practice of his art, playing the 'cello. We are bound to take seriously Morfin's respect for Dombey and especially the tribute he pays him after the firm's collapse. Morfin is speaking to Harriet Carker:

> " [Mr. Dombey] is a gentleman of high honour and integrity. Any man in his position could, and many a man in his position would, have saved himself, by making terms which would have very slightly, almost insensibly, increased the losses of those who had had dealings with him, and left him a remnant to live upon. But he is resolved on payment to the last farthing of his means. His own words are, that they will clear, or nearly clear, the House, and that no one can lose much. Ah, Miss Harriet, it would do us no harm to remember oftener than we do, that vices are sometimes only virtues carried to excess! His pride shows well in this" (p. 817).

But Dombey's excessive pride renders him helpless in the face of those two sharks, Bagstock and Carker. They can, as they well know and as Bagstock even tells Mrs. Skewton (Chapter 26), have their way with him. His character allows others to take advantage of him; so he does, in a sense, ask for it without, in another sense, deserving

it. Dickens customarily relies on the dramatic method to delineate their intentional and malicious manipulation of Dombey.

Also customary, as I have argued in Chapter 1, is Dickens' habit of infusing dramatic scenes, particularly those of some length, with expository comments, observations, analyses, and asides. Nevertheless, the dramatic method dominates and provides the narrative context for the scenes which I will discuss.[49]

The dramatic method, when used to render Dombey's relationships with Carker and Bagstock, makes an appeal to us for a sympathetic suspension of judgment. Hence, these primarily dramatic scenes make an important contribution to our perception of Dombey's character. In them, we see him as the victim of his two arch-exploiters. Dombey's victimization at their hands actively engages our sympathies. In contrast to Carker and Bagstock, Dombey seems, and indeed is, an honorable man. In Chapter 20, for example, Dombey breakfasts with the Major before their trip to Leamington, intended as a restorative after Paul's death. Dombey, vulnerable to sycophantic flattery anyway, has been made more so by his grief. He is consoled by Bagstock's exaggerated esteem, especially since "the impotence of his will, the instability of his hopes, the feebleness of wealth, had been so direfully impressed upon him" (p. 272). Thus, Dombey, "in his

[49]A problem inevitably arises in discussions of long scenes: quoting them in their entirety is unwieldy; quoting selectively from them is often unacceptably distorting. I have tried to circumvent this problem by what may seem an over-abundance of summary. I have quoted from only a few of the most important scenes in order to illustrate Dickens' general technique.

friendlessness," accepts the Major's familiarity. This expository information elicits sympathy for Dombey's forlornness so that, when Bagstock carefully leads Dombey into perceiving that Miss Tox aspires to marry him, we are repulsed by Bagstock and horrified that Dombey is so easily manipulated. At the same time, we are exasperated with his vanity and arrogance. These ambivalent feelings produce precisely the degree of tension required in our attitude towards Dombey.

> "You have been looking over the way, Sir," observed the Major. "Have you seen our friend?"
>
> "You mean Miss Tox," retorted Mr. Dombey. "No."
>
> "Charming woman, Sir," said the Major, with a fat laugh rising in his short throat, and nearly suffocating him.
>
> "Miss Tox is a very good sort of person, I believe," replied Mr. Dombey.
>
> The haughty coldness of the reply seemed to afford Major Bagstock infinite delight. He swelled and swelled, exceedingly: and even laid down his knife and fork for a moment, to rub his hands.
>
> "Old Joe, Sir," said the Major, "was a bit of a favourite in that quarter once. But Joe has had his day. J. Bagstock is extinguished--outrivalled--floored, Sir. I tell you what, Dombey." The Major paused in his eating, and looked mysteriously indignant. "That's a de-vilish ambitious woman, Sir."
>
> Mr. Dombey said "Indeed?" with frigid indifference: mingled perhaps with some contemptuous incredulity as to Miss Tox having the presumption to harbour such a superior quality.
>
> "That woman, Sir," said the Major, "is, in her way, a Lucifer. Joey B. has had his day, Sir, but he keeps his eyes. He sees, does Joe. His Royal Highness the late Duke of York observed of Joey, at a levee, that he saw."
>
> The Major accompanied this with such a look, and, between eating, drinking, hot tea, devilled grill, muffins, and meaning, was altogether so swollen and inflamed about the head, that even Mr. Dombey showed some anxiety for him.
>
> "That ridiculous old spectacle, Sir," pursued the Major, "aspires. She aspires sky-high, Sir. Matrimonially, Dombey."
>
> "I am sorry for her," said Mr. Dombey.
>
> "Don't say that, Dombey," returned the Major in a warning voice.
>
> "Why should I not, Major?" said Mr. Dombey.
>
> The Major gave no answer but the horse's cough, and went on eating vigorously.

> "She has taken an interest in your household," said the Major, stopping short again, "and has been a frequent visitor at your house for some time now."
>
> "Yes," replied Mr. Dombey with great stateliness, "Miss Tox was originally received there, at the time of Mrs. Dombey's death, as a friend of my sister's; and being a well-behaved person, and showing a liking for the poor infant, she was permitted--I may say encouraged--to repeat her visits with my sister, and gradually to occupy a kind of footing of familiarity in the family. I have," said Mr. Dombey, in the tone of a man who was making a great and valuable concession, "I have a respect for Miss Tox. She has been so obliging as to render many little services in my house: trifling and insignificant services perhaps, Major, but not to be disparaged on that account: and I hope I have had the good fortune to be enabled to acknowledge them by such attention and notice as it has been in my power to bestow. I hold myself indebted to Miss Tox, Major," added Mr. Dombey, with a slight wave of his hand, "for the pleasure of your acquaintance" (pp. 273-274).

Dickens exerts great control over the dramatic method in this scene. Even the expository comments are rendered from the point of view of an observer, sensitive to what behavior and facial expression reveal about the inner man but not privileged with explicit interior information. For example, Dickens writes: "The haughty coldness of the reply seemed to afford Major Bagstock infinite delight" (my emphasis, p. 273).

It is imperative that Dickens use the dramatic method as the vehicle for Dombey's victimization by Bagstock--and Carker--because only this method can successfully balance the dramatic rendering of Dombey's arrogance and coldness. We need Dombey's disadvantage demonstrated, not simply asserted, as would have been the case had Dickens employed exposition to make this point. He could not, of course, have chosen to show others manipulating Dombey by the interior method because Dombey is, and must be, an unconscious victim.

Unconscious of Bagstock's drift in this conversation he certainly is. We sense that Dombey interprets the Major's remarks as a reproach for being on familiar terms with such an unworthy person, thus his uncharacteristically long speech explaining and defending Miss Tox's position in his household. He rather resents the necessity for the explanation, most especially because it forces him to speak of his dead son. Bagstock turns Dombey's painful memories to his own brutal advantage.

> "Dombey," said the Major, warmly: "no! No, Sir! Joseph Bagstock can never permit that assertion to pass uncontradicted. Your knowledge of old Joe, Sir, such as he is, and old Joe's knowledge of you, Sir, had its origin in a noble fellow, Sir--in a great creature, Sir. Dombey!" said the Major, with a struggle which it was not very difficult to parade, his whole life being a struggle against all kinds of apoplectic symptoms, "we knew each other through your boy" (p. 274).

Ironically, Dombey is right: Miss Tox is the agent of their acquaintance. When she was introduced into the Dombey house by Dombey's sister Mrs. Chick, Bagstock determined to meet Dombey in order to revenge himself for the loss of Miss Tox's attentions.

Bagstock permits a pause in the conversation before returning to his original theme.

> Mr. Dombey seemed touched, as it is not improbable the Major designed he should be, by this allusion. He looked down and sighed: and the Major, rousing himself fiercely, again said, in reference to the state of mind into which he felt himself in danger of falling, that this was weakness, and nothing should induce him to submit to it.
>
> "Our friend had a remote connexion with that event," said the Major, "and all the credit that belongs to her, J. B. is willing to give her, Sir. Notwithstanding which, Ma'am," he added, raising his eyes from his plate, and casting them across Princess's Place, to where Miss Tox was at that moment visible at her window watering her flowers, "you're a scheming jade, Ma'am, and your ambition is a piece of monstrous impudence. If it only

> made yourself ridiculous, Ma'am," said the Major, rolling his head at the unconscious Miss Tox, while his starting eyes appeared to make a leap towards her, "you might do that to your heart's content, Ma'am, without any objection, I assure you, on the part of Bagstock." Here the Major laughed frightfully up in the tips of his ears and in the veins of his head. "But when, Ma'am," said the Major, "you compromise other people, and generous, unsuspicious people too, as a repayment for their condescension, you stir the blood of old Joe in his body."
>
> "Major," said Mr. Dombey, reddening. "I hope you do not hint at anything so absurd on the part of Miss Tox as--"
>
> "Dombey," returned the Major, "I hint at nothing. But Joey B. has lived in the world, Sir: lived in the world with his eyes open, Sir, and his ears cocked: and Joe tells you, Dombey, that there's a de-vilish artful and ambitious woman over the way."
>
> Mr. Dombey involuntarily glanced over the way; and an angry glance he sent in that direction, too.
>
> "That's all on such a subject that shall pass the lips of Joseph Bagstock," said the Major firmly. "Joe is not a tale-bearer, but there are times when he must speak, when he will speak!--confound your arts, Ma'am," cried the Major, again apostrophizing his fair neighbour, with great ire, --"when the provocation is too strong to admit of his remaining silent" (p. 275).

That is all that need be said of the subject. Bagstock by bluff indirection and a hypocritical display of sensitivity to Dombey's pride has effected Miss Tox's dismissal from Dombey's condescending favor. More importantly, he has so convinced Dombey of his concern for Dombey's interests that Dombey easily succumbs to Bagstock's manipulating him into marrying Edith Granger.

Dombey is handled with even more adroitness and success by his business manager. In a scene (Chapter 26) paralleling the one in which Bagstock reveals Miss Tox's marital aspirations, Carker slily hints to Dombey that Florence has romantic inclinations towards his lowly office boy. At this point in the story, Walter has already been sent to sea on the Son and Heir, which is now missing. Dombey has been feeling a bit guilty about his decision to send Walter because Paul's

last words to him were to take care of Walter. Carker has just unnerved Dombey by introducing Florence into their conversation.

> "What business intelligence is there?" inquired [Dombey], after a silence, during which Mr. Carker had produced some memoranda and other papers.
>
> "There is very little," returned Carker. "Upon the whole we have not had our usual good fortune of late, but that is of little moment to you. At Lloyd's, they give up the Son and Heir for lost. Well, she was insured, from her keel to her masthead."
>
> "Carker," said Mr. Dombey, taking a chair near him, "I cannot say that young man, Gay, ever impressed me favourably--"
>
> "Nor me," interposed the Manager.
>
> "But I wish," said Mr. Dombey, without heeding the interruption, "he had never gone on board that ship. I wish he had never been sent out."
>
> "It is a pity you didn't say so, in good time, is it not?" retorted Carker, coolly. "However, I think it's all for the best. I really think it's all for the best. Did I mention that there was something like a little confidence between Miss Dombey and myself?"
>
> "No," said Mr. Dombey, sternly.
>
> "I have no doubt," returned Mr. Carker, after an impressive pause, "that wherever Gay is, he is much better where he is, than at home here. If I were, or could be, in your place, I should be satisfied of that. I am quite satisfied of it myself. Miss Dombey is confiding and young--perhaps hardly proud enough, for your daughter--if she have a fault. Not that that is much though, I am sure. Will you check these balances with me?" (pp. 365-366).

Although Florence is innocent of this charge, Dombey is, as always, prepared to believe the worst of her.

Bagstock and Carker act out of similarly base motives. Bagstock wants to revenge himself on Miss Tox because Dombey has replaced him in her affections; Carker wants to destroy anyone who might replace him in Dombey's consideration--he wants, in fact, to be Dombey's heir. Neither villain makes a straight-forward declaration of the information he intends Dombey to know. Instead, by half-statement and suggestion, both lead him to draw the desired conclusions. The dramatic treatment of these scenes allows us to see and hear for

ourselves the consequences of Dombey's total inability to judge aright the characters of others. Though Dombey is easily duped, he is not quick to detect the implications of these half-statements and suggestions. Indeed, Dombey is so obtuse that his manipulators must come to the brink of explicit declarations before he gets the point.

It is just after this scene that Bagstock asserts his control over Dombey's life. He and Mrs. Skewton have been discussing the state of Dombey's feelings for Edith.

> "Is there as much Heart in Mr. Dombey as I gave him credit for?" languished Cleopatra tenderly. "Do you think he is in earnest, my dear Major? Would you recommend his being spoken to, or his being left alone? Now tell me, like a dear man, what would you advise."
>
> "Shall we marry him to Edith Granger, Ma'am?" chuckled the Major, hoarsely.
>
> "Mysterious creature!" returned Cleopatra, bringing her fan to bear upon the Major's nose. "How can we marry him?"
>
> "Shall we marry him to Edith Granger, Ma'am, I say?" chuckled the Major again (p. 371).

The horror of Dombey's helplessness comes home even more convincingly in Bagstock's soliloquy as he walks home from Mrs. Skewton's.

> "As to alteration in her, Sir," mused the Major on his way back. . . "as to alteration, Sir, and pining, and so forth, that won't go down with Joseph Bagstock. None of that, Sir. It won't do here. But as to there being something of a division between 'em [Dombey and Edith]--or a gulf as the mother calls it--damme, Sir, that seems true enough. And it's odd enough! Well, Sir!" panted the Major, "Edith Granger and Dombey are well matched; let 'em fight it out! Bagstock backs the winner!" (p. 374).

The juxtaposition of these scenes has an important effect on our sympathy for Dombey. When Chapter 26 ends, we see him caught securely by Carker, Bagstock, Mrs. Skewton, and Edith, who though she may be an unwilling exploiter of him, is nonetheless perfectly aware not only that she is entering upon a loveless marriage but also

that she will not even accomodate herself to the bargain she has acquiesced in making. We fear for Dombey because we know that, for all his wealth and pride, he does not stand a chance against them.

Dombey's one remaining defense has been to withhold from them the workings of his mind. That last barrier falls to Carker's assault in Chapter 42 when Dombey makes his "Manager" the conveyor of his reproaches and instructions to Edith. In a lengthy dramatic scene Carker lures Dombey into confiding in him. Carker controls the conversation from beginning to end. He introduces the subject of Dombey's wife by inquiring after her. "'You remind me,'" replies Dombey, "'Of some conversation that I wish to have with you'" (p. 595). Carker, by referring to his having employed Rob the Grinder, appraises Dombey of "'that spontaneous interest'" he has "'in everything belonging'" to his employer.

> "Your allusion to it [Carker's considerate regard] is opportune," said Mr. Dombey, after a little hesitation; "for it prepares the way to what I was beginning to say to you, and reminds me that that involves no absolutely new relations between us, although it may involve more personal confidence on my part than I have hitherto--"
>
> "Distinguished me with," suggested Carker. . . (p. 593).

Carker cautiously but pointedly needles Dombey into greater frustration with his domestic situation, then makes an opportunity to bring Florence into the discussion, further aggravating Dombey's discomfort and anger. The unexpected mention of Florence jars Dombey's composure.

> Swiftly and darkly, Mr. Dombey's face changed. His confidential agent eyed it keenly.
>
> "I have approached a painful subject," he said, in a soft regretful tone of voice, irreconcilable with his eager eye. "Pray forgive me. I forget these chains of associations in the interest I have. Pray forgive me."

> But for all he said, his eager eye scanned Mr. Dombey's downcast face none the less closely. . . .
>
> "Carker," said Mr. Dombey, looking here and there upon the table, and speaking in a somewhat altered and more hurried voice, and with a paler lip, "there is no occasion for apology. You mistake. The association is with the matter in hand, and not with any recollection, as you suppose. I do not approve of Mrs. Dombey's behaviour towards my daughter."
>
> "Pardon me," said Carker, "I don't quite understand."
>
> "Understand then," returned Mr. Dombey, "that you may make that--that you will make that, if you please--matter of direct objection from me to Mrs. Dombey. . ." (pp. 596-597).

This directive might, in all likelihood, not have occurred to Dombey without Carker's promptings. Having fed the fire of Dombey's jealousy, Carker succeeds in making Dombey's instructions crueler and more disastrous than Dombey may have intended. The dramatic method, thus, makes it possible for us to infer that, bad as Dombey is, Carker has made him worse.

But Carker is not yet through with Dombey. He presses him ever more closely to divulge his motives, his inner life. Only then will Carker have Dombey completely in his power.

> "I beg your pardon," said Carker, after a silence, suddenly resuming his chair, and drawing it opposite to Mr. Dombey's, "but let me understand. Mrs. Dombey is aware of the probability of your making me the organ of your displeasure?"
>
> "Yes," replied Mr. Dombey. "I have said so."
>
> "Yes," rejoined Carker, quickly; "but why?"
>
> "Why!" Mr. Dombey repeated, not without hesitation. "Because I told her."
>
> "Aye," replied Carker. "But what did you tell her? You see," he continued with a smile, and softly laying his velvet hand, as a cat might have laid its sheathed claws, on Mr. Dombey's arm; "if I perfectly understand what is in your mind, I am so much more likely to be useful, and to have the happiness of being effectually employed. . ." (p. 598).

Dombey stiffens and resists Carker's probing, but in the end he acquiesces in Carker's version of his reasoning. He understands that

because Dombey's communications to Edith will be "'particularly unpalatable'" coming through him, Dombey sees in this, as Carker inquires, "'a likely means of humbling Mrs. Dombey's pride. . . and, not to say of punishing her, but of reducing her to the submission you so naturally and justly require.'" Dombey replies, in some embarrassment, "'I am not accustomed, Carker, as you know, . . . to give such close reasons for any course of conduct I think proper to adopt, but I will gainsay nothing of this'" (p. 598).[50]

Dickens' use of the dramatic method to show us Dombey's victimization at the hands of these relentless schemers balances the dramatic presentation of Dombey's reprehensible behavior to others. Handling both situations with the same method of characterization makes both features of Dombey's character equally credible and equally important to our perception of him. There is, I have suggested, even a causal relationship between them: Dombey's pride and jealousy make him susceptible to flattery; his egocentricity makes him vulnerable to exploitation.

Dombey's moral helplessness before Bagstock and Carker receives a comic commentary in his physical helplessness before Florence's maid, Susan Nipper. After his interview with Carker over Edith's

[50]Dombey's complete domination by Carker is made credible by Captain Cuttle's. Cuttle is under the misimpression that Carker knows and approves of an alliance between Florence and Walter Gay. Cuttle even thinks that he and Carker share equally each other's confidence. When this forthright innocent is taken in by Carker we are made to understand that not even Cuttle's virtue is proof against cunning--how much less proof is Dombey's vice. In the face of such masterful deceit, both Cuttle and Dombey are equally innocent.

conduct, Dombey falls from his horse on the ride into town. While he is confined to bed with a broken leg, Susan seizes the chance to speak her mind about Florence and his neglect of her: "The quick eye of the Nipper detected his helplessness immediately, and now, as she afterwards observed, she felt she had got him" (p. 615). Dombey, lost in astonishment and nearly speechless, chokes with rage. He cannot even reach the bell-rope to call for relief from Susan's lecture which concludes: "'you don't know your own daughter, Sir, you don't know what you're doing, Sir, I say to some and all. . . that it's a sinful shame!" (p. 616). The Nipper is summarily expelled from the household. We are delighted by her bravura performance and Dombey's discomfort, but it does Florence no good and probably harm.

To conclude, the dramatic method has three main functions: to characterize Dombey as both oppressor and victim; and to suggest, through silent pauses in the narrative, the depths of his passionate and obsessive nature. Because the dramatic method presents a character directly, it is capable of eliciting powerful responses. If these responses conflict too stridently, the characterization will not have the unity it needs to achieve credibility, and the reader will feel blatantly manipulated. But Dickens, in his portrait of Dombey, has such control over his method that, though we respond to Dombey in many ways, our responses are not antithetical but complexly interrelated.

The Interior Method: The Progress of a Conversion

Finally, there are the intermittent glimpses of Dombey's inner life. Dickens experiments with presenting a character from within

in his characterization of Dombey. He makes considerably more use of this method in his portrait of Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit, but it makes its first important appearance here. The method's primary functions are to depict Dombey's inner struggle, to substantiate the expository claims of the omniscient narrator, and to chronicle Dombey's mental collapse and subsequent conversion.

Dickens restricts his use of the interior method to moments of unaccustomed emotion and mental activity in Dombey's life: Dombey distractedly musing the night before his marriage as images of Edith, Florence, Paul's armchair, Paul's face, Florence again float before him; wondering how Edith's rooms will look when he sees them again as he leaves his disastrous confrontation with his wife; remembering when he commissions Carker to convey his instructions to her, the look on her face when he rejected her request for forbearance on both their parts.

Like the expository method, the interior method argues for fairness in our judgment of Dombey and for a degree of sympathetic identification. For example, just after Polly Toodle has succeeded in including Florence in Paul's nightly visits with his father, we are told that the last time Dombey has seen Florence

> there had been that in the sad embrace between her and her dying mother, which was at once a revelation and a reproach to him. Let him be as absorbed as he would in the Son on whom he built such high hopes, he could not forget that closing scene. He could not forget that he had had no part in it. That, at the bottom of its clear depths of tenderness and truth, lay those two figures clasped in each other's arms, while he stood on the bank above them, looking down a mere spectator--not a sharer with them--quite shut out.
>
> Unable to exclude these things from his remembrance, or to keep his mind free from such imperfect shapes of the meaning

> with which they were fraught, as were able to make themselves visible to him through the mist of his pride, his previous feelings of indifference towards little Florence into an uneasiness of an extraordinary kind. He almost felt as if she watched and distrusted him. As if she held the clue to something secret in him, of the nature of which he was hardly informed himself. As if she had an innate knowledge of one jarring and discordant string within him, and her very breath could sound it.
>
> His feeling about the child had been negative from her birth. He had never conceived an aversion to her: it had not been worth his while or in his humour. She had never been a positively disagreeable object to him. But now he was ill at ease about her. She troubled his peace. He would have preferred to put her idea aside altogether, if he had known how. Perhaps--who shall decide on such mysteries!--he was afraid that he might come to hate her (p. 29).

Only the parenthetical "who shall decide on such mysteries" explicitly calls our attention to the expository treatment of this interior analysis. It is fair to say that Florence has no innate knowledge of her father's secret nature. She loves him out of complete innocence because he is her father and because she is virtue personified. She does, however, call up from within Dombey a fragment of his considerably stunted self-knowledge. It may be too strong to say that Dombey longs to be included in the circle of Florence's and her mother's tenderness and truth. But he is, at the very least, sensitively aware of his exclusion from it and half ashamed of his sensitivity. That final sad embrace reveals to Dombey his estrangement from others. It is a reproach to him because the source of his estrangement lies within himself. Florence is an unpleasant reminder that he can be made to feel, of all things, left out.

Dickens does not always manage a smooth transition into this method of characterization. Often he resorts to rhetorical questions as a way of introducing us to Dombey's inner life. In Chapter 35,

for instance, Dombey approaches a turning point in his understanding of what Florence means to his life. Sitting quietly in the drawing-room, Florence finds herself for the first time ever alone with her father. Dickens shifts from a passage rendered in part from Florence's point of view to a complementary passage detailing Dombey's reflections by asking:

> And what were his thoughts meanwhile? With what emotions did he prolong the attentive gaze covertly directed on his unknown daughter? Was there reproach to him in the quiet figure and the mild eyes? Had he begun to feel her disregarded claims, and did they touch him home at last, and waken him to some sense of his cruel injustice? (p. 503).

These questions are first answered by an expository observation about the nature of those human types for which Dombey is a kind of case study: "There are yielding moments in the lives of the sternest and harshest men, though such men often keep their secret well" (p. 503). Gradually, Dickens then leads us into Dombey's mind through a series of speculations about the workings of that mind, beginning: "The sight of her in her beauty, almost changed into a woman without his knowledge, may have struck out some such moments even in his life of pride"; and concluding: "The mere association of her as an ornament, with all the ornament and pomp about him, may have been sufficient" (p. 503). Throughout the scene Dombey silently observes his daughter, who believes him to be sleeping. The next sentence makes the transition from exposition to the interior method complete:

> But as he looked, he softened to her, more and more. As he looked, she became blended with the child he had loved, and he could hardly separate the two. As he looked, he saw her for an instant by a clearer and a brighter light, not bending over that child's pillow as his rival--monstrous thought--but as the spirit of his

> home, and in the action tending himself no less, as he sat once more with his bowed-down head upon his hand at the foot of the little bed. He felt inclined to speak to her, and call her to him. The words "Florence, come here!" were rising to his lips--but slowly and with difficulty, they were so very strange--when they were checked and stifled by a footstep on the stair (pp. 503-504).

Only the two parenthetical interpolations are expository. Both comments, though superfluous, are not really bothersome. Dombey's thoughts are interrupted, at the end of the passage, by a shift to the dramatic method.

We are, at this moment, closer to Dombey than we have yet been. Never have we had such hope for him, nor been so disappointed when, by an artful coincidence, Edith enters the room in search of Florence. With Dombey, we listen to their conversation and feel him retreat further than ever into moral darkness. He sees Edith gentle and affectionate with his daughter, sees the instantaneous alteration in her face and manner when Florence speaks of him, sees her gentle again as she and Florence leave the room "like sisters" (p. 504). "Her very step was different and new to him, Mr. Dombey thought, as his eyes followed her to the door" (p. 504). We feel his angry pain; we understand his utter isolation; and we fear the consequences of his deeper descent into bitter hatred. The final chilling paragraph places us once again outside Dombey.

> He sat in his shadowy corner so long, that the church clocks struck the hour three times before he moved that night. All that while his face was still intent upon the spot where Florence had been seated. The room grew darker, as the candles waned and went out; but a darkness gathered on his face, exceeding any that the night could cast, and rested there (pp. 504-505).

Expository comment would, in this case, be not only superfluous but also intrusive. The dramatic tableau speaks eloquently for itself.

The best known instance of interior characterization is the extended impressionistic set-piece describing Dombey's semi-conscious responses as he gazes out the window of the railway carriage bearing him with Major Bagstock to Leamington. The "darkness of Mr. Dombey's mind," one critic contends, "is projected on the railway through the very rhythms in which Dickens creates his journey. . . ."[51] Unfortunately, the impression is less that of experiencing Dombey's thoughts than of Dickens' technical brilliance.

Dombey's brooding reverie is prompted by his encounter with Mr. Toodle on the railway platform. Toodle wears on his cap a bit of crape in remembrance of Paul. Dombey bitterly resents the gesture because it represents, to him, a claim upon his son, whom he is able to share no more in death than he had in life. Dickens captures the cadences of Dombey's furious indignation in this paragraph from the beginning of the interior passage:

> To think of this presumptuous raker among coals and ashes going on before there, with his sign of mourning! To think that he dared to enter, even by a common show like that, into the trial and disappointment of a proud gentleman's secret heart! To think that this lost child, who was to have divided with him his riches, and his projects, and his power, and allied with whom he was to have shut out all the world as with a double door of gold, should have let in such a herd to insult him with their knowledge of his defeated hopes, and their boasts of claiming community of feeling with himself, so far removed: if not of having crept into the place wherein he would have lorded it, alone! (p. 280).

The parallel description of Carker's flight from Dombey is, in my opinion, more successful than that of Dombey because Dickens

[51] A. E. Dyson, The Inimitable Dickens: A Reading of the Novels (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), p. 104.

maintains in it a better balance between a credible rendering of consciousness and his own stylistic exuberance. The Dombey passage breaks up into short sections of first one kind of narration, then another. We have already seen, for example, Dickens using the interior method. Two paragraphs later, he begins the most memorable section in his set-piece.

> Away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, from the town, burrowing among the dwellings of men and making the streets hum, flashing out into the meadows for a moment, mining in through the damp earth, booming on in darkness and heavy air, bursting out again into the sunny day so bright and wise; away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, through the fields, through the woods, through the corn, through the hay, through the chalk, through the mould, through the clay, through the rock, among objects close at hand and almost in the grasp, ever flying from the traveller, and a deceitful distance ever moving slowly within him: like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death! (p. 280).

Dickens continues in this vein through several more paragraphs until he returns to Dombey with this announcement:

> As Mr. Dombey looks out of his carriage window, it is never in his thoughts that the monster who has brought him there has let the light of day in on these things: not made or caused them. It was the journey's fitting end, and might have been the end of everything; it was so ruinous and dreary (pp. 281-282).

Dickens' purpose is not merely to express the dark projections of Dombey's mind; he wants to make the point that the railway, by giving its passenger a chance to see the desolation and pollution that has existed all along, is a force for progress, for good.

Having reintroduced Dombey into the passage, Dickens uses the interior method to chart Dombey's growing animosity towards Florence. Nevertheless, Dickens takes one more opportunity to reiterate his view of the railway:

> . . . [Dombey] knew full well, in his own breast, as he stood there, tingeing the scene of transition before him with the morbid colours of his own mind, and making it a ruin and a picture of decay, instead of hopeful change, and promise of better things, that life had quite as much to do with his complainings as death (p. 282).

Even though the whole long passage is ostensibly devoted to Dombey's reflections, what we remember best is the sense of the railway carriage speeding through the countryside during which we are far more aware of Dickens than of Dombey. Consequently, though an unquestionably impressive tour de force, the railway carriage ride contributes little to Dombey's characterization.

Quite the opposite is true of Dickens' entirely successful delineation of Dombey's fevered meditations in Chapter 59, "Retribution." This extraordinary chapter is composed of several separate comic scenes, punctuated by a refrain totally at odds with their humor: the house "is a ruin, and the rats fly from it" (p. 832). The clash of tone and mood in these scenes with the refrain's portentous solemnity creates in us a sense of uneasy wariness. At the end of each scene a layer of Dombey's public image is peeled away: first the household's servants, then its furnishings, finally its ogress house-keeper Mrs. Pipchin. At the same time, the scenes become progressively less comic as Dickens slowly drains the chapter of its humor until the last rat has fled the house. Paralleling this decline is an increase in dialogue directly concerned with Dombey, who has shut himself up in his old rooms. He is alone in the great, empty house except for the good-hearted, dutiful Polly Toodle and the ever-faithful Miss Tox.

Dickens closes in on Dombey by quoting an earlier refrain; again he makes the transition with the familiar device of the rhetorical question:

> And the ruined man. How does he pass the hours, alone?
> "Let him remember it in that room, years to come!" He did remember it. It was heavy on his mind now; heavier than all the rest.
> "Let him remember it in that room, years to come! The rain that falls upon the roof, the wind that mourns outside the door, may have foreknowledge in their melancholy sound. Let him remember it in that room, years to come!" (p. 838).

The ensuing interior analysis chronicles Dombey's psychological and spiritual journey into despair. The journey begins in simple awareness. Dombey understands at last the terrible mistake he has made. This realization removes the blinders from his moral vision. He sees himself and his daughter clearly.

> He knew, now, what he had done. He knew, now, that he had called down that upon his head, which bowed it lower than the heaviest stroke of fortune. He knew, now, what it was to be rejected and deserted; now, when every loving blossom he had withered in his innocent daughter's heart was snowing down in ashes on him.
> . . . . He thought, now, that of all around him, she alone had never changed. His boy had faded into dust, his proud wife had sunk into a polluted creature, his flatterer and friend had been transformed into the worst of villains, his riches had melted away, the very walls that had sheltered him looked on him as a stranger; she alone had turned the same mild gentle look upon him always. Yes, to the latest and the last. She had never changed to him--nor had he ever changed to her--and she was lost.
> As, one by one, they fell away before his mind--his baby-hope, his wife, his friend, his fortune--oh how the mist, through which he had seen her, cleared, and showed him her true self! (p. 839).

In spite of this radical change in Dombey, he remains proud. The quintessential Dombey has refused to buckle. Dickens' decision not to snuff out Dombey's pride completely is admirable and right. Morfin, we remember, speaks for Dickens when he tells Harriet Carker that our vices are only our virtues to excess. Dombey must admit and repent his sins against Florence, but he must also retain the strength of his essential self. We want Dombey humbled, not humiliated.

> . . . so proud was he in his ruin, or so reminiscent of her, only as something that might have been his, but was lost beyond

> redemption--that if he could have heard her voice in an adjoining room, he would not have gone to her. If he could have seen her in the street, and she had done no more than look at him as she had been used to look, he would have passed on with his old cold unforgiving face, and not addressed her, or relaxed it, though his heart should have broken soon afterwards (p. 840).

Unfortunately, Dombey's remnant of pride is misdirected. Pride in his business dealings is justified because it allows Dombey to retain a kernel of self-esteem. But Dombey should not be proud with the one person he most needs to ask forgiveness of. Dombey has not, and never does, overcome his intrinsic passivity. Asking forgiveness would require Dombey to initiate an action. That action would, more than anything, stand as the hallmark of his conversion. For some reason, Dickens falters on this point. He even waffles just a bit when he examines the cause of Dombey's fantasizing that he would not go to Florence. It may be, he says, Dombey's pride, or it may be his belief that she is irretrievably lost to him. Dickens seems to sense that Dombey's attitude towards the relationship between himself and his daughter is still not right. The second reason for Dombey's fantasy, his reminiscence of Florence, seems calculated to soften our impression of his stubbornness.

The tension between Dombey's profound remorse and his indestructible pride proves too much for him. His mind shattered, he wanders about the house at night, hearing the ghostly footsteps of his two lost children and seeing an ethereal figure carrying a child up the stairs. More and more disoriented, Dombey finally collapses into suicidal dissociation.

> The world was very busy and restless about him. He became aware of that again. It was whispering and babbling. It was

> never quiet. This, and the intricacy and complication of the footsteps, harassed him to death. Objects began to take a bleared and russet colour in his eyes. Dombey and Son was no more--his children no more. This must be thought of, well, to-morrow.
>
> He thought of it to-morrow; and sitting thinking in his chair, saw in the glass, from time to time, this picture:
>
> A spectral, haggard, wasted likeness of himself, brooded and brooded over the empty fireplace. Now it lifted up its head, examining the lines and hollows in its face; now hung it down again, and brooded afresh. Now it rose and walked about; now passed into the next room, and came back with something from the dressing-table in its breast. Now, it was looking at the bottom of the door, and thinking.
>
> --Hush! what?
>
> It was thinking that if blood were to trickle that way, and to leak out into the hall, it must be a long time going so far. It would move so stealthily and slowly, creeping on, with here a lazy little pool, and there a start, and then another little pool, that a desperately wounded man could only be discovered through its means, either dead or dying. When it had thought of this a long while, it got up again, and walked to and fro with its hand in its breast. He glanced at it occasionally, very curious to watch its motions, and he marked how wicked and murderous that hand looked.
>
> Now it was thinking again! What was it thinking?
>
> Whether they would tread in the blood when it crept so far, and carry it about the house among those many prints of feet, or even out into the street.
>
> It sat down, with its eyes upon the empty fireplace, and as it lost itself in thought there shone into the room a gleam of light; a ray of sun (pp. 842-843).

Dickens' relish for the morbid and murderous is acceptably transferred to Dombey's unhinged mind. But, when with the ray of sun Florence enters Dombey's dark room, Dickens' tone becomes unacceptably hysterical.

> Yes. His daughter! Look at her! Look here! Down upon the ground, clinging to him, calling to him, folding her hands, praying to him (p. 843).

Nevertheless, the interior method, which has given us direct access to Dombey's inner life, argues convincingly for the depth of his mental instability and the sincerity of his repentance.

As Kathleen Tillotson points out, what Dombey's conversion lacks in duration it makes up for in intensity.[52] This intensity is achieved by the interior expression of Dombey's new understanding: his guilt, remorse, and despair. Although Dickens is not always perfectly at ease with interior characterization, he succeeds in essaying the unfamiliar narrative technique demanded by his subject--a changing and maturing protagonist.

The interior method plays a brilliantly effective part in Dombey's characterization. Dombey begins as an inaccessible and enigmatic character, secret and hidden from both others and himself. Neither the reader, nor on occasion the narrator, is permitted direct, unmediated access to him. Consequently, because they view a character from outside, the expository and the dramatic methods, which predominate at the beginning of Dombey's characterization, appropriately convey his inaccessibility. But, as Dombey moves slowly and haltingly towards his catastrophe and conversion, Dickens' use of the interior method parallels Dombey's growing accessibility to himself, to Florence, and to us.

Dickens' characterization of Dombey is not an unqualified success. We occasionally sense that he has to work rather more than he should to achieve a unified conception of his protagonist. For instance, the expository pleas he must make in Dombey's behalf seem at times too much of a struggle, too much of a conscious effort to invest the

[52] Novels, p. 170. It is important to remember that, because the Victorians believed in sudden conversions, sudden conversions occurred.

characterization with a contrived complexity. Yet, despite these difficulties, Dombey is a masterful creation. Dickens has succeeded, as I have tried to demonstrate, in evoking appropriately conflicting and ambiguous responses to Dombey. No amount of authorial special pleading could have unified or made credible these conflicting responses; only the unprecedented access Dickens gives us to Dombey's inner life makes this unity possible.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Arthur Clennam's characterization is both more and less complex than Dombey's. Clennam seems less psychologically complex, perhaps because he is less enigmatic and secretive. He is also, unlike Dombey, a thoroughly sympathetic character. In Dombey, Dickens has to persuade us that a cold and forbidding protagonist deserves our tolerance and understanding. In Clennam, on the other hand, Dickens has to make us perceive the weaknesses in a kind and gentle protagonist--a much less difficult problem of characterization. But Dickens' portrait of Clennam is more complex because it makes more skillful use of all three methods of characterization and particularly more consistent use of the interior method; hence, Clennam's character is imbued with greater depth and dimension than Dombey's.

CHAPTER III

ARTHUR CLENNAM

Little Dorrit, published serially in 1857, has since been acclaimed by a handful of critics as "one of the most profound of Dickens' novels and one of the most significant works of the nineteenth century"[1] and as "a closer and more thoughtful study than any that has gone before of what bad institutions make of men."[2] John Wain even regards it as Dickens' "most tragic novel," calling it "both grand and apocalyptic . . . his most solid attempt at solving the specific problems of long fictional narrative."[3] Not all of Little Dorrit's readers, however, have been so liberal with their praise. Early in the twentieth century, G. K. Chesterton declared the novel Dickens' "one collapse," his "dark moment."[4] His regret at finding to praise only one passage "in the older and heartier manner," the description of the Circumlocution Office, is shared by many.

[1]Lionel Trilling, "Little Dorrit," The Dickens Critics, eds. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), pp. 279-280.

[2]Edmund Wilson, "Dickens: The Two Scrooges," The Wound and the Bow (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1941), p. 53.

[3]"Little Dorrit," Dickens and the Twentieth Century, eds. John Gross and Gabriel Pearson (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 186.

[4]Introduction to Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens (New York: Dutton, 1963), pp. xii-xiii.

Robert Garis, for example, complains that "a note of strain" has replaced the "old spontaneity" of Pickwick and the early novels.[5]

This diversity of critical judgments typifies the various readings the novel has received, ranging from biographical interpretations to symbolic analyses which usually regard the Marshalsea debtors' prison in London, home of the impecunious Dorrit family, as central to the novel's design. Edmund Wilson's seminal essay on the counterbalancing of good and evil in Dickens' art was the first to emphasize the pervasive prison motif as a correlative with what Wilson called "imprisoning states of mind."[6] His insight into the novel's structure and his emphasis on its psychological depth greatly stimulated critical interest in it.

Some critics, among them Chesterton and Earle Davis, read the novel as William Dorrit's story. This view holds that the plot sequence which relates the history of Dorrit, his three children, and his brother Frederick--his poverty and imprisonment, his wealth and release, and his death--is the main narrative line. The opposing view is that the novel is Clennam's story and that his career constitutes the main plot. In Ross Dabney's reading, for example, the relationship between Clennam and Amy Dorrit, not the metaphor of imprisonment, is the principle of organization. Dabney observes that "the interaction of Clennam's interest in Little Dorrit and his search for his parents' guilt introduce all the

[5]The Dickens Theatre: A Reassessment of the Novels (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 164.

[6]Edmund Wilson, p. 56.

relationships with people or institutions which are to be important to him in the book."[7]

Readers disagree over the success of Dickens' characterization of Clennam as well as over his thematic significance. Unlike Angus Wilson, who regards Clennam as a "very successful hero,"[8] Garis is extremely critical. He admits that Clennam represents an earnest effort to reveal the thoughts and feelings of his character, but he pronounces the effort a "crucial failure in creative energy" because Dickens' "new awareness of complexity has not bred appropriately new methods of operation. It is . . . dispiriting," Garis laments,

> to see new insights "processed" in the old way--I use the word deliberately to suggest that in Little Dorrit Dickens' method of rendering character and action is close to seeming as mechanical and automatic as the system which he continues to attack.[9]

Far from being the result of a new insight processed in the old way, Clennam is unique in the Dickens canon. And it is precisely Dickens' method of rendering his character that makes him unique. Clennam is not what we mean by a "Dickens character," observe F. R. and Q. D. Leavis, but

> he decidedly exists for us--is felt (that is) as a real personal presence. . . . [Clennam] has been very early, with a subtlety of purpose and touch Dickens isn't as a rule credited with . . . established as the presence of what one may very well find oneself

[7]Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), p. 100.

[8]"The Heroes and Heroines of Dickens," Dickens and the Twentieth Century, eds. Gross and Pearson, p. 10.

[9]Garis, p. 165. Garis' complaint echoes one of A. O. J. Cockshut's that Clennam moves "like a clockwork toy," going nowhere through the streets of London, The Imagination of Charles Dickens (New York: New York University Press, 1962), p. 144.

> referring to as plain unassertive normality. And what that means is that we tend to be Clennam, AS WE OBVIOUSLY DON'T [sic] . . . any other character in the book. . . . [Consequently], we accept with ready sympathy the sense of the world represented by this earnest, intelligent and pre-eminently civilized man: we respect him as we respect ourselves.[10]

The Leavises are talking here about the rhetoric of characterization--about the narrative strategies a writer uses to persuade us to respond to a character in certain ways. In the case of Arthur Clennam, as they point out, Dickens creates in us respect, identification, sympathy, and acceptance. But he also creates in us a capacity to see Clennam clearly--to judge him objectively and fairly.

Dickens' characterization of Clennam can be studied as a fully-rounded portrait of a complex, morally active personality. Dickens never reduces his actions to mannerisms; his speech is not signalled by tag phrases; and most importantly Dickens has given the reader access through the interior method to Clennam's many thoughts and feelings, which render him self-aware, self-critical, and sensitive to the relationships between himself and others. Unlike many Dickens characters, Clennam acts out no single virtue or vice, no single response to life. Dickens resisted manipulating his character simply for thematic effect and in doing so created a hero who is both individual and typical.

In Little Dorrit Dickens pits the internal, individual, private view and its subjective reality against the external, social, public view and its objective reality. This basic antithesis underlies the many forces of the novel. It also, however, posed for Dickens a problem in the characterization of the novel's hero which he had not

[10]Dickens the Novelist (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), pp. 218-219.

confronted in any previous novel. The problem was to create an appropriate voice for each view and its particular kind of reality, the subjective and the objective. Dickens had had experience handling the subjective point of view in his use of a first-person narrator in David Copperfield. He could have chosen to let Clennam, like David, reminisce about his traumatic childhood, his cold and rigid Calvinist upbringing, his bondage to the family business in China, his return to London, and his search for a purpose in life. But Clennam's story, which takes up almost half of Little Dorrit's great length, comprises only half of its central antithesis. The whole subject requires at times a broader and a more detached view than that of a single, limited consciousness. Furthermore, the novel, geographically and temporally, is beyond the credible reach of a first-person narrator.

If, on the other hand, the familiar, Dickensian omniscient narrator had been called upon to provide both points of view, the novel would have lost the intensity and immediacy of a functioning consciousness. Although brilliantly able to evoke scene, atmosphere, and mood, to scan the panoramas of time and space, and to draw broad social satire, omniscience cannot make us experience the hero's despair, frustration, and hopelessness. If we are to accept his generosity and kindness in a world of greed and opportunism, and if we are to share in both his downfall and his salvation, we must at times feel the impact of events on his thoughts and emotions.

Dickens addressed a similar problem in Bleak House, published four years before Little Dorrit, by representing the social view with chapters written in omniscience and the individual with chapters in

first-person narration. These two points of view are kept absolutely distinct and separate throughout the earlier novel, which integrates the two different stories into a powerful work. This technical solution, however, is distracting and tends to focus the reader's attention on the form at the expense of the content. Throughout Little Dorrit Dickens chose instead to use traditional third-person narration. Skillful shifting among narrative and thematic perspectives within the third-person convention prevents the kind of distraction created by the overt shifts in Bleak House between the first-person narrator, Esther Summerson, and the omniscient narrator. From the experimentation with point of view in Bleak House, Dickens seems to have developed some insight into the methods of character delineation. The complexity in his portrayal of Arthur Clennam may have been produced by this technical growth.

Because we have no trouble liking and sympathizing with Clennam, the shifts from one method of characterization to another are not as important to a proper perception of him as they are to our perception of Dombey. For this reason, I have not devoted a separate discussion to them. Instead, I have commented on any particularly interesting shifts at what I hope will seem appropriate times in the course of discussing each of the methods of characterization. Furthermore, although Dickens' presence pervades Little Dorrit as much as it does earlier novels, it is a different kind of presence. Dickens' narrative persona changed in the course of his career from being a strongly felt, identifiable, and personal presence to a less clearly defined, disembodied, and

impersonal voice.[11] This change diminished the importance of the narrator's ethos in Dickens' characterizations. Dickens cut his major characters loose to do more for themselves. In Little Dorrit, we feel Dickens most strongly in his treatment of minor characters (Henry Gowan and Mrs. Merdle, for example) and that ingeniously satirized institution the Circumlocution Office. Our belief in Clennam depends less on our belief in his narrator than does our belief in Dombey. Consequently, a close study of Dickens' ethos is not as necessary a feature of Clennam's characterization as it is of Dombey's.[12]

The Expository Method: Sympathy and Judgment

In the characterization of Arthur Clennam, the expository method has two primary functions. It expresses the continuous influence that the past has on Clennam's character, and it describes those attributes of mind and heart which rendered by the interior method would upset the balance between our identification with Clennam and our independent judgment of him.

[11]See Sylvia Manning, Dickens as Satirist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

[12]Another way of explaining Clennam's greater independence from his narrator is, as Manning points out, that he is treated mimetically rather than satirically. "The character who would grow and change, whose attitudes would be complex and varying," she says, "would not be treated satirically. There is one such character in Little Dorrit--Arthur Clennam--and about him Dickens writes novelistically. . . . Because we follow Arthur through the events that finally deplete the life within him, because we see the depletion in graduated stages, we understand the process and perhaps even sympathize with the character," my emphasis, p. 169. I would say that there is no "perhaps" about it, that we do sympathize with him.

Because the expository method provides the reader with information about the effect of Clennam's past on his mental and emotional condition, it is able to convey insights into Clennam's psychology. Some attributes of character are better handled by the gradual accumulation of evidence that the dramatic and interior methods afford. Others, however, need to be established early in a reader's relationship to a character so that he can read with the proper expectations, which the writer will either thwart or fulfill according to the demands of his story. For example, it is entirely appropriate that Dickens use the expository method to explain Clennam's weeping at his cold reception in London as "the momentary yielding of a nature that had been disappointed from the dawn of its perceptions, but had not quite given up all its hopeful yearnings yet." We need to know that he has suffered many disappointments since birth, but since his childhood is not a part of the novel proper, the exposition economically provides the information. More importantly, however, it plainly tells us that whatever Clennam believes about his loss of hope, his is a nature that will not easily relinquish its basic hopefulness. The expository comment creates an expectation that our association with Clennam will reveal this aspect of his character. Clennam cannot tell us this about his psychological condition, but Dickens the omniscient narrator can.

When it becomes possible that an investigation by Mr. Casby's rent-collector Pancks into the Dorrits' history may reveal a secret wrong

[13]Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 32. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition of the novel and will be identified only by page numbers in the text.

committed against them by the Clennams, exposition usurps the interior method for an assessment of Clennam's psychological condition, because the interior method would force his guilt feelings to be conscious rather than subconscious.

> The shadow of a supposed act of injustice, which had hung over him since his father's death, was so vague and formless that it might be the result of a reality widely remote from his idea of it. But, if his apprehensions should prove to be well founded, he was ready at any moment to lay down all he had, and begin the world anew. As the fierce dark teaching of his childhood had never sunk into his heart, so the first article in his code of morals was, that he must begin in practical humility, with looking well to his feet on Earth, and that he could never mount on wings of words to Heaven. Duty on Earth, restitution on earth, action on earth; these first, as the first steep steps upward (p. 319).

Such an analysis of his own moral code would certainly not be as effective coming from Clennam. Dramatic scenes, particularly the one in which he befriends the injured Cavalletto, demonstrate his attitude toward the doctrine of good works. His consistent desire to do good testifies to his humanitarianism. The succinct recapitulation of this aspect of his character sustains the focus of his characterization and reveals the hardihood of his inherited nature. Dickens can, with complete credibility, state that, if required, Clennam is prepared to begin life anew at any moment to atone for a past sin committed by his family. This is an interesting comment on his character, because when he is actually faced with laying down all he has and beginning life anew after bankruptcy and scandal, his resilience fails. He himself has been the perpetrator of the wrong, not a member of his family. He is strong and honorable in accepting full responsibility for ruining his business, but once incarcerated in the Marshalsea he is powerless to renew his life

or to reassert his optimism. The experience nearly crushes him, and would have done so, had it not been for the salvation offered him by Little Dorrit's love.

The developing awareness of Clennam's capacity to feel and to respond to life is further augmented by another explanation of his psychology, which occurs early in our acquaintance with him.

> For it had been the uniform tendency of this man's life--so much was wanting in it to think about, so much that might have been better directed and happier to speculate upon--to make him a dreamer after all (p. 40).

In spite of all the disappointments of his empty life, Dickens explains, he has not become a bitter and empty man. He can still dream, about the past and about the future.[14] No other voice but that of the omniscient narrator could persuasively announce what the uniform tendency of Clennam's life has been, except possibly Clennam himself. His admission, "I have always been a dreamer," would have raised serious questions about his attitude towards himself and towards such an admission. If he seemed to view dreaming as a virtue, we would probably be put off by his self-praise. If he turned the admission against himself into an apology for dreaming, he would sound phony.

[14]Grahame Smith regards Clennam's ability to dream a weakness rather than a strength. He argues that if "the ideal human life consists of the interaction of subjective expression, personal relations, and social connection, then Arthur is at the farthest remove from reality"; consequently, he lives in a fantasy world and eventually retreats into a world of dreams. "Clennam's pilgrimage," Smith contends, "is that of a man moving slowly away from fantasy--his love for Pet, his idea that he can defeat the Circumlocution Office, his ultimate delusion by the power of money--into the clear light of reality by means of suffering," Dickens, Money and Society (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1969), p. 157.

Expository disclosures about Clennam's past can often obliquely describe his immediate response to another character, a situation, or an event. For example, the hypocrisy of Mr. Casby, a typical Dickensian predator, needs to be established for the reader fairly early in our acquaintance with him; but it is not a point that deserves developing dramatically because Casby is a minor character. The most direct approach, therefore, is the expository. Dickens could simply state that "the Patriarch" of Bleeding Heart Yard is a hypocrite. Instead, by focusing upon Clennam's reaction to Casby, the expository method expands our knowledge of the character of both men.

> Now, in the old days at home, certain audacious doubts respecting the last of the Patriarchs, which were afloat in the air, had, by some forgotten means, come in contact with Arthur's sensorium. He was aware of motes and specks of suspicion, in the atmosphere of that time. . . . He knew that some of these specks even represented Christopher [Casby] . . . as being a crafty imposter. Other motes there were which showed him as a heavy, selfish, drifting Booby, who, having stumbled, in the course of his unwieldy jostlings against other men, on the discovery that to get through life with ease and credit, he had but to hold his tongue, keep the bald part of his head well polished, and leave his hair alone, had had just cunning enough to seize the idea and stick to it (p. 149).

The passage reveals by way of authorial statement that Clennam is a good judge of character. He is sensitive to the details of human behavior and is not taken in by appearances.

Clennam's ability to react rightly to the good and evil in human nature plays an important part later in his confrontation with Blandois, the novel's villain, and is so central an attribute that it is established by the dramatic and the interior methods, and well as by exposition. After Pet Meagles' engagement to Henry Gowan, Clennam quickly discerns the seeds of snobbery in his friend Mr. Meagles' interest in the

genealogy and affairs of the Barnacles and the Stiltstalkings, who run the Circumlocution Office.

> In the beginning of the dialogue [about the two families], Clennam had expected some great harmless outburst from Mr. Meagles, like that which had made him burst out of the Circumlocution Office, holding Doyce by the collar. But his good friend had a weakness which none of us need go into the next street to find, and which no amount of Circumlocution experience, could long subdue in him. Clennam looked at Doyce; but Doyce knew all about it beforehand, and looked at his plate, and made no sign, and said no word (p. 204).

In addition to its reiteration of Clennam's keen insight into character, this is an interesting paragraph for its use of narrative shifts. The second sentence, containing the fact of Mr. Meagles' snobbery, is expository, but because it is preceded by the suggestion of interior analysis in the first sentence and followed by the essentially dramatic last sentence, the "telling" seems to be conveyed dramatically and implicitly rather than by explicit authorial comment.

The expository method also describes certain of Clennam's inner responses which pose difficulties in the reader's response to Clennam. Authorial commentary thus makes it possible for the reader to judge Clennam even while sympathizing and identifying with him. For example, the interior method depicts Clennam, in the course of his mental perambulations over falling in love with Pet, advancing arguments for competing with Gowan for her hand. He concludes that "the question was not what they [he and her parents] thought of it, but what she thought of it" (p. 195). The interior method shows Clennam in a rare mood of optimism about himself. The shift of his position on the subject is accompanied by a shift to the expository method.

> Arthur Clennam was a retiring man, with a sense of many deficiencies, and he so exalted the merits of the beautiful Minnie in his mind, and depressed his own, that when he pinned himself to this point, his hopes began to fail him. He came to the final resolution . . . that he would not allow himself to fall in love with Pet (p. 195).

By using exposition to show his deciding against falling in love, Clennam is relieved of the necessity to review himself in a bad light, thus running the risk of appearing insincere. Exposition may make him appear overly modest, but the interior method could only have represented him as objectionably self-effacing and self-deprecating. Dickens' characterization is designed to reveal Clennam's weaknesses without diminishing his character.

The interior method also dominates his later visit to Twickenham when Pet discloses to him her engagement to Gowan. At the actual moment of announcement, however, Dickens shifts again to exposition.

> At that time, it seemed to him, he first finally resigned the dying hope that had flickered in Nobody's [Clennam's] heart so much to its pain and trouble; and from that time he became in his own eyes, as to any similar hope or prospect, a very much older man who had done with that part of life (p. 334).

Dickens' intervention prevents the impact of Pet's loss on Clennam's feelings from being reduced to melodrama and self-pity. At the same time the authorial comment "it seemed to him" enables the reader to regard this resignation of hope for romantic fulfillment as temporary, and possibly as unfounded altogether.

Following a request by Gowan that he be allowed to present Clennam to his mother, Dickens comments:

> What could Clennam say after this? His retiring character included a great deal that was simple in the best sense, because unpracticed and unused; and, in his simplicity and modesty, he could

> only say that he was happy to place himself at Mr. Gowan's disposal. Accordingly he said it, and the day was fixed. And a dreaded day it was on his part, and a very unwelcome day when it came, and they went down to Hampton Court together (p. 311).

Clennam is unable to decline the invitation because he lacks practice in social ceremony. No doubt there is an acceptable and a gracious way of declining, but he is not adept at the niceties. On the other hand, he is not a tactless man, and since Gowan is obviously a favorite with Pet, he feels that it would not be gallant to refuse bluntly.

What motivates Clennam to accept such an objectionable invitation affects our relationship to him, because we must not suspect him of a secret interest in the world of "Society"--Merdles, Barnacles, Stiltstalkings, or Gowans. Ridding his character of such insinuations makes us more able to sympathize with his bad judgment in investing Doyce's money with Merdle. It is Clennam's most serious failure, but it is also the event which, by sending him to the Marshalsea, brings about his marriage to Little Dorrit and an end to his search for will, purpose, and hope. Therefore, a proper understanding of his attitude towards Society is essential to the judgment we are called upon to make about him when he, on the insistent advice of Pancks, decides to speculate with Doyce's money. Clennam is not merely trying to make a fast buck, or to ally himself with the great Merdle. He genuinely wants to increase his partner's capital. Dickens does not insist that we forgive Clennam unequivocally, but he wants us to judge him fairly. The brief expository comments about Clennam's simplicity and modesty before Society's invitation, which he wants to refuse, help to prepare us for that judgment.

So far we have seen that appropriate expository comment can often provide the right information at the right time without interrupting the reader's engagement with the narrative. But occasionally a haphazardly

placed or an ill-advised comment intrudes sharply into our involvement with the novel. For example, Clennam's first long conversation with Little Dorrit contains this comment:

> How young she seemed to him or how old he to her; or what a secret either to the other, in that beginning of the destined interweaving of their stories, matters not here (p. 100).

We almost instinctively prickle: If it matters not here, why put it here? Why include it at all? Unhappily, Dickens uses the same strategy in describing Clennam's decision to visit Flora, ostensibly to be of service to Little Dorrit.

> It is hardly necessary to add, that beyond all doubt he would have presented himself at Mr. Casby's door, if there had been no Little Dorrit in existence; for we all know how we all deceive ourselves--that is to say, how people in general, our profounder selves excepted, deceive themselves--as to motives to action (p. 144).

The facetious sarcasm cheapens the relationship Dickens has established with the reader, but the most annoying thing about the passage is that it cogently makes its point if the offending sentence is deleted.

> . . . he argued with himself that it might--for anything he knew it might--be serviceable to the poor child, if he renewed this acquaintance. . . .
>
> With a comfortable impression upon him, and quite an honest one in its way, that he was still patronizing Little Dorrit in doing what had no reference to her, he found himself one afternoon at the corner of Mr. Casby's street (p. 144).

The second paragraph is nonintrusive exposition that guides the reader's understanding of Clennam's exact psychological position and helps control the necessary balance between our identification with his consciousness and our objective attitude towards him.

The rhetorical device which expresses the ironic discrepancy between Clennam's infatuation with Pet and his stance towards his romantic feelings for her is another example of self-conscious exposition. The situation is introduced by the interior method when Clennam considers falling in love with her.

> He was twice her age. (He changed the leg he had crossed over the other, and tried the calculation again, but could not bring out the total at less.) He was twice her age. Well! He was young in appearance, young in health and strength, young in heart. A man was certainly not old at forty; and many men were not in circumstances to marry, or did not marry, until they had attained that time of life. On the other hand, the question was not what he thought of the point, but what she thought of it (p. 195).[15]

He concludes, however, after weighing his deficiencies against her merits "that he would not allow himself to fall in love with Pet" (p. 195).

The interior method shows Clennam in the act of testing his dormant hope and of thinking well of himself. Once he decides against himself Dickens employs a rhetoric of negation.

> If Clennam had ever admitted the forbidden passion in his breast, this period might have been a period of real trial; under the actual circumstances, doubtless it was nothing--nothing.
>
> Equally, if his heart had given entertainment to that prohibited guest [his love for Pet], his silent fighting of his way through the mental condition of this period might have been a little meritorious. In the constant effort not to be betrayed into a new phase of the besetting sin of his experience, the pursuit of selfish objects by low and small means, and to hold instead to some high principle of honour and generosity, there might have been a little merit. In the resolution not even to avoid Mr. Meagles's house, lest, in the selfish sparing of himself, he should bring any slight distress upon the daughter through making her the cause of an estrangement which he believed the father would regret, there might have been a little merit. . . . But, after the resolution he had made, of course he could have no such merits as these; and such a state of mind was nobody's--nobody's (pp. 308-309).

The passage contains some important points about Clennam's character: his honor, generosity of spirit, and his moral strength in fighting

[15]I have always wondered when reading this passage what gave Sylvère Monod the impression that Clennam was "almost an elderly man . . . ," Dickens the Novelist (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), p. 417.

against the natural tendency to self-pity. His struggle against meanness and self-interest should illustrate his true strength of will and purpose.[16] The expository rhetoric intended to de-sentimentalize Clennam's virtue actually wastes the opportunity to turn the struggle inward and dramatize his inner battle through the interior method.

Rarely does exposition effectively replace interior analysis for a lengthy treatment of Clennam's psychology. There is only one long expository analysis of Clennam, and it twice alternates with sections of interior analysis. The passage concludes Chapter 13, after Clennam has returned to his hotel following the crushing disappointment of his meeting with Flora, the one cherished remembrance of his youth.

> Left to himself again . . . he was naturally in a thoughtful mood. As naturally he could not walk on thinking for ten minutes without recalling Flora. She necessarily recalled to him his life, with all its misdirections and little happiness.
>
> When he got to his lodging, he sat down before the dying fire, as he had stood at the window of his old room looking out upon the blackened forest of chimneys, and turned his gaze back upon the gloomy vista by which he had come to that stage in his existence. So long, so bare, so blank. No childhood; no youth, except for one remembrance; that one remembrance proved, only that day, to be a piece of folly.
>
> It was a misfortune to him, trifle as it might have been to another. For while all that was hard and stern in his recollection

[16]Both Taylor Stoehr and Joseph Gold interpret Clennam as more given to self-pity and rationalization than I do. Stoehr contends, for example, that Clennam's "earnestness is peculiarly sterile, because of his heritage and situation in life. He succumbs to the general contagion because--in spite of his earnestness--he lacks will, purpose, and hope, which he says have been ground out of him by his rigorous upbringing . . . ," Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 177. Gold echoes Stoehr when he asserts that "Arthur is a good, gentle man who has found no meaning in his own existence and rationalizes his personal inadequacies by using his upbringing quite consciously to excuse himself," Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 225.

> remained Reality on being proved--was obdurate to the sight and touch, and relaxed nothing of its old indomitable grimness--the tender recollection of his experience would not bear the same test, and melted away. He had foreseen this on the former night, when he had dreamed with waking eyes; but he had not felt it then; and he had now.
>
> He was a dreamer in such wise, because he was a man who had, deep-rooted in his nature, a belief in all the gentle and good things his life had been without. Bred in meanness and hard dealing, this has rescued him to have a warm and sympathetic heart. Bred in a creed too darkly audacious to pursue, through its process of reversing the making of man in the image of his Creator to the making of his Creator in the image of an erring man, this had rescued him to judge not, and in humility to be merciful, and have hope and charity.
>
> And this saved him from the whimpering weakness and cruel selfishness of holding that because such a happiness or such a virtue had not come into his little path, or worked well for him, therefore it was not in the great scheme, but was reducible, when found in appearace, to the basest elements. A disappointed mind he had, but a mind too firm and healthy for such unwholesome air. Leaving himself in the dark, it could rise into the light, seeing it shine on others and hailing it.
>
> Therefore he sat before his dying fire, sorrowful to think upon the way by which he had come to that night, yet not strewing poison on the way by which other men had come to it. That he should have missed so much, and at his time of life should look so far about him for any staff to bear him company upon his downward journey and cheery it, was a just regret. He looked at the fire from which the blaze departed, from which the afterglow subsided, in which the ashes turned to grey, from which they dropped to dust, and thought, "How soon I too shall pass through such changes, and be gone!"
>
> To review his life was like descending a green tree in fruit and flower, and seeing all the branches wither and drop off one by one, as he came down towards them.
>
> "From the unhappy supression of my youngest days, through the rigid and unloving home that followed them, through my departure, my long exile, my return, my mother's welcome, my intercourse with her since, down to the afternoon of this day with poor Flora," said Arthur Clennam, "what have I found!"
>
> His door was softly opened, and these spoken words startled him, and came as if they were an answer:
>
> "Little Dorrit" (pp. 164-165).

In the first paragraph Dickens betrays his presence in the words "naturally" and "necessarily"; if they were deleted from the three sentences in which they appear, the paragraph would be wholly interior. Clennam in the process of thinking would not simultaneously make to himself the

comment that it was natural for him to be in a thoughtful mood or that Flora necessarily inspires memories of his misdirected and unhappy life. These judgments on what causes Clennam to think what he is thinking are Dickens'. The second paragraph is predominantly interior. The parenthetical comparison between this scene and the former scenes of him standing at the window of his old room is probably expository. Paragraph three is interior and paragraphs four and five entirely expository until Clennam's thoughts are literally transcribed as articulated interior monologue. Paragraph six can be read as either expository or interior analysis. But if read as interior, Clennam's representing his life as a green tree withered by his touch reveals a rather adolescent caste of mind which would mar the characterization. Paragraph seven is dramatic because Clennam actually speaks aloud his thoughts.

Many of the passage's revelations repeat points that have already been either made or firmly introduced. Previous exposition has described Clennam as a dreamer who has retained his hopeful yearnings for a fulfilled life. Both the expository and the dramatic methods have impressed us with the coldness and the severity of Clennam's childhood and with the darkness of his mother's religion. His honor has been demonstrated by his desire to set right, at whatever expense, any wrong for which his father or the family business may have been responsible. We have seen his consideration for others, his sympathy in his dealings with Little Dorrit and her father, and his charity in his aid to the injured foreigner Cavalletto. His conduct towards Flora is open and kind. His attack on the Circumlocution Office in an earnest attempt

to disentangle the facts of the Dorrits' financial affairs demonstrates his willingness to confront social injustice.

A recapitulation of these points is not in itself objectionable. It could have been used to great advantage in reinforcing the characterization and extending the range of Clennam's attributes. The weakness of this scene is the crowding together of the expository reiterations. All of Clennam's virtues are heaped together so that none retains any clarity. The scene is pivotal. If we have had any experience of Dickens at all, we can be fairly certain at this point that Little Dorrit will fall in love with Clennam, that Clennam will discover her love and return it, and that they will marry. The interest of Clennam's journey will not necessarily be its outcome but the stages of his progress towards that outcome, his acceptance of Little Dorrit's love.

Near the end of the novel the revelation of Little Dorrit's love for Clennam occurs in a scene marred by an excess of dramatic suspense. It buckles under its own weight, as this scene buckles under an excess of exposition and of the verbal stiffness of Clennam's thoughts. Both excesses seriously diminish the impact of the knowledge each scene conveys. Nevertheless, the attempt is clearly a portrait of a man adrift in the maze of his hopes and dreams, struggling with his emotions and the circumstances amid which he finds himself.

In fact, expository statements about Clennam's mental and emotional state are sometimes significantly couched in terms of drifting and wandering. His characteristic analogue, and one which he applies to himself, is that of a "waif and a stray," will-lessly drifting "where any current may set" (p. 20). The imagery of such a journey, of river

currents, of traveling consciously or unconsciously towards one's destination constitutes an important motif in the novel. Working through all three methods, its presence gives the characterization an internal principle of unity and links Clennam to that part of the story which is external to him. For example, following the disappointment of his encounter with Flora and his introduction to her mother-in-law, Mr. F's Aunt, Dickens describes Clennam as "so much more lightheaded than ever, that if it had not been his good fortune to be towed away [by Pancks], he might . . . have drifted anywhere" (p. 160). Pancks takes an unusual interest in the Dorrits' affairs and contracts with Clennam to share whatever information he discovers about their situation if Clennam will reciprocate. Clennam is uneasy about the arrangement because he knows little of Pancks, the consummate businessman, except that he collects rents from the residents of Bleeding Heart Yard for the reprehensible fraud, Mr. Casby. "Labouring in this sea [of indecision about Pancks], as all barks labour in cross seas," Dickens remarks, "he tossed about and came to no haven" (p. 320).

Imagery is the most effective device the expository method has for involving the reader with the inner life of the character. The image of a rudderless vessel, loose from its moorings, is an effective way of enlisting our sympathy for Clennam and for reproducing in external terms Clennam's inner helplessness and confusion. For example, when Pet announces to Clennam her engagement to Gowan, she gives him a handful of roses. They walk together toward Twickenham where the Meagleses live, but he stays behind when she and the family enter. Dickens describes the scene.

> When he had walked on the river's brink in the peaceful moonlight for some half-an-hour, he put his hand in his breast and tenderly took out the handful of roses. Perhaps he put them to his heart, perhaps he put them to his lips, but certainly he bent down on the shore, and gently launched them on the flowing river. Pale and unreal in the moonlight, the river floated them away (pp. 337-338).

The delicacy with which Dickens treats this passage in Clennam's life (accomplished by his use of perhaps) expresses his respect for Clennam's private pain. The pale unreality of the handful of roses represents the insubstantiality of his involvement with Pet. He launches the flowers as a sign of his resigning himself to a loveless, companionless life. The current of the river floats the powerless flowers away to their destination as Pet, powerless to change the treacherous and shallow Gowan, is carried along her appointed way to a resigned unhappiness. Clennam, too, drifts with his current, making unsuccessful attempts along the way to control his path and to improve that of others, until he arrives at the Marshalsea and the love of Little Dorrit.[17]

[17]When Clennam lies ill in prison, he first senses, as his delirium subsides, an impression of flowers, rendered by the interior method.

> Dozing and dreaming, without the power of reckoning time, so that a minute might have been an hour and an hour a minute, some abiding impression of a garden stole over him--a garden of flowers, with a damp warm wind gently stirring their scents (p. 755).

With a painful effort he gathers his senses together to discover the source of his impression.

> Beside the teacup on his table he saw, then, a blooming nosegay; a wonderful handful of the choicest and most lovely flowers (p. 755).

The blooming nosegay re-introduces Little Dorrit into Clennam's life. The flowers she brings him are not pale and unreal in the moonlight, floating will-lessly away, but fragrant and colorful and standing quite securely beside his teacup.

The journey motif also acts as a link between Clennam and the rest of the novel. The image is implicitly introduced in Chapter 2, entitled "Fellow-Travellers," by the quarantined ship on which Clennam, Mr. and Mrs. Meagles, and their daughter Pet are passengers returning to England. Its first explicit statement occurs in the dialogue between Clennam and Mr. Meagles in which Clennam asserts that he is a will-less drifter without purpose or hope. Clennam's speech expresses the individual and private aspect of the journey motif. Later in that same chapter a general, public aspect is expressed by the bitter and cynical Miss Wade, who is also on board the ship.[18]

> "In our course through life we shall meet the people who are coming to meet us, from many strange places and by many strange roads . . . and what it is set to us to do them, and what it is set them to do us, will all be done" (p. 25).

Both Clennam's and Miss Wade's representations of the journey motif are rendered dramatically, that is, in dialogue. Thus, they tell us about Clennam's view of himself and Miss Wade's fatalistic view of the world. Because these uses of the motif are dramatic, we are not bound to accept either character's version. But Dickens corroborates Miss Wade's philosophy, though not Clennam's assessment of himself, by concluding the chapter with a similarly fatalistic expository observation.

> The day passed on; and again the wide stare stared itself out; and the hot night was on Marseilles; and through it the caravan

[18]Stoehr sees Clennam as like the cynical, treacherous lesbian Miss Wade in "his self-willed malaise," his touchiness about class distinctions, and his refusal to believe that he can be loved for himself (p. 179).

> of the morning, all dispersed, went their appointed ways. And thus ever, by day and night, under the sun and under the stars, climbing the dusty hills and toiling along the weary plains, journeying by land and journeying by sea, coming and going so strangely, to meet and to act and to react on one another, move all we restless travellers through the Pilgrimage of life (p. 27).

Extensive naval and water imagery accompanies the progress of Clennam's quest for purpose and definition in his life. Little Dorrit opens with a brilliant description of Marseilles and its harbor, whose water is foul and black compared to the beautiful sea beyond. This distinction is an important early expression of good and evil at close quarters.

> There is no wind to make a ripple on the foul water within the harbour, or on the beautiful sea without. The line of demarcation between the two colours, black and blue, showed the point which the pure sea would not pass; but it lay as quiet as the abominable pool, with which it never mixed (p. 1).

The villain Blandois, who represents private, individual evil, lies at this moment in the Marseilles prison, accused of having murdered his wife. At the same time, Clennam is on board a quarantined ship which lies at anchor in the Marseilles harbor. Thus before we even meet him, our conception of Clennam is influenced by his geographical association with the pure blue water beyond the harbor.

Clennam and Blandois are both drifters: one a true gentleman, the other false; one eager to help others, the other eager only to advance himself; one virtuous, the other vicious. Like the blue and black water, they never mix but they are both affected by the same staring sun, the preternatural stillness which oppresses Marseilles, and the destiny which brings them both to the Clennam house in London and the secret it conceals. Their confrontation is presaged by an almost exact repetition of the expository comment which concludes Chapter 2, except that in this remark Dickens refers to Mrs. Clennam's room of self-confinement.

> Strange, if the little sick-room fire were in effect a beacon fire, summoning some one, and that the most unlikely some one in the world, to the spot that must be come to. Strange, if the little sick-room light were in effect a watchlight, burning in that place every night until an appointed event should be hatched out! Which of the vast multitude of travellers, under the sun and the stars, climbing the dusty hills and toiling along the weary plains, journeying by land and journeying by sea, coming and going so strangely, to meet and to act and re-act on one another, which of the host may, with no suspicion of the journey's end, be travelling surely hither? (p. 179).

Blandois is, of course, the "most unlikely some one" who is travelling towards Mrs. Clennam's beaconlight. But so too is Clennam himself. By the powerful rhetorical device of an incantatory refrain (which Dickens had essayed in Dombey and Son), we see Clennam as a participant in the purposeful universal design which informs his life and that of every other character in the novel.

The fact that all manner of sea-going vessels sail through Little Dorrit and nautical terminology is applied to nearly every character and situation also affects our perception of Clennam. He is not isolated from his world; he partakes of its weaknesses; he is just one of its good men, trying to keep his head above water and trying to help others do the same. By not reserving a special imagery for Clennam, Dickens increases our admiration for him and his struggle, and increases our sense of his complexity. When Blandois arrives in London and introduces himself at the Clennam house, Mrs. Clennam in a rare outburst of self-justification tells him: "'. . . I shape my course by pilots, strictly by proved and tried pilots, under whom I cannot be shipwrecked--cannot be-- . . .'" (p. 365). William Dorrit in prison is likened to a "passenger aboard ship in a long voyage, who has recovered from sea-sickness, and is impatient of that weakness

in the fresher passengers . . ." (p. 223) for his barely tolerant attitude towards new inmates who still manifest a preference for the outside world. Mr. Casby is an "unwieldy ship in the Thames river . . . heavily driving with the tide, broadside on, stern first, in its own way and in the way of everything else, though making a great show of navigation . . ." (p. 199). Mr. Casby has been taken in tow by the snorting, puffing, and laboring little steam-tug Pancks. The aftermath of Merdle's suicide and exposé is described in the violent imagery of a sea battle:

> The admired piratical ship had blown up, in the midst of a vast fleet of ships of all rates, and boats of all sizes; and on the deep was nothing but ruin; nothing but burning hulls, bursting magazines, great guns self-exploded tearing friends and neighbors to pieces, drowning men clinging to unseaworthy spars and going down every minute, great swimmers, floating dead, and sharks (p. 711).

Little Dorrit's admirer, Young John Chivery, sits in his backyard "like the last mariner left alive on the deck of a damp ship without the power of furling the sails" (p. 256) as he grieves over his unrequited love. With the transactions complete for Fanny Dorrit's marriage to Merdle's step-son Edmund Sparkler, the omniscient narrator remarks:

> No longer feeling that want of a defined place and character which had caused her [Fanny] so much trouble, this fair ship began to steer steadily on a shaped course, and to swim with a weight and balance that developed her sailing qualities (p. 600).

Sparkler himself has "no greater will of his own than a boat has when it is towed by a steam-ship; and he followed his cruel mistress through rough and smooth on equally strong compulsion" (p. 593). Sparkler and Clennam are defined by almost identical images, but by comparison Sparkler's kind of drifting will-lessness improves Clennam's. Ironically,

however, Clennam also requires on occasion the services of the steamship Pancks to guide him safely through rough waters.

Most of the novel's journey, naval, and water imagery appears, as one would expect, in passages of expository comment. Consequently, the images help create for us a world drowning in greed, hypocrisy, and red tape. That characters occasionally use similar images in their own comments shows us that the flaws in the novel's society penetrate even the consciousness of its citizens.

Clennam's journey is a quest for home and for a purposeful, natural function in life. He leaves his false home to live half way round the world for twenty years before returning to his childhood home in London. He is haunted by the belief that his home is guilty of some crime, that the Clennam house is surrounded by mystery. He seeks to solve the mystery, right the wrong, and embrace his vindicated home. Wronged by his unnatural mother and her unnatural religion, he cannot, however, find his place in the false home of his childhood. His quest lies not in the past but in the future. Neither does it lie in recapturing his ties with his boyhood sweetheart Flora, nor in the substitution of Pet Meagles for that lost love. He must look to a new relationship and a new life with Little Dorrit.

The Dramatic Method: Gentilesse

Dickens, who has always been associated with colorful, eccentric, and stylized characters, shows in Little Dorrit a decided preference for the dramatic method of characterization. Although the portrait of Arthur Clennam does not rely on manneristic character-tags, the dramatic

method has several important functions in his characterization: it introduces Clennam and his central moral focus; it is an important instrument of character revelation; and it is the means for conveying the turning points in Clennam's story. Although the dramatic method is Dickens' customary vehicle for key revelations, it is not always used advantageously in the novel. Unfortunately for Dickens' characterization of Clennam, it is least successful in the treatment of the major romantic events in Clennam's relationship to Little Dorrit. With this exception, it is, nevertheless, a comfortable method for Dickens and an effective one.

The introduction of Clennam is almost purely dramatic. Chapter 2 opens in the middle of a conversation between two unidentified speakers suspended in time and space. There are four exchanges of dialogue before the speakers are either identified or placed.

> "No more of yesterday's howling, over yonder, today, sir; is there?"
> "I have heard none."
> "Then you may be sure there is none. When these people howl, they howl to be heard."
> "Most people do, I suppose."
> "Ah! but these people are always howling. Never happy otherwise."
> "Do you mean the Marseilles people?"
> "I mean the French people. They're always at it. As to Marseilles, we know what Marseilles is. It sent the most insurrectionary tune out into the world that was ever composed. It couldn't exist without allonging and marshonging to something or other --victory or death, or blazes, or something."
> The speaker, with a whimsical good humour on him all the time, looked over the parapet-wall with the greatest disparagement of Marseilles; and taking up a determined position by putting his hands in his pockets, and rattling his money at it, apostrophied it with a short laugh.
> "Allong and marshong, indeed. It would be more creditable to you, I think, to let other people allong and marshong about their business, instead of shutting 'em up in quarantine!" (p. 15).

Even the single expository paragraph is largely dramatic; it presents one of the speakers in action and contains only the authorial comment on his "whimsical good humour," but no explanation about the time, place, or situation. Nevertheless, we are learning about, and responding to, the speakers. The first is good-naturedly belligerent and voluble. The tone and diction of his speeches are clearly masculine. He is disposed to judge by generality and prejudice, although the real source of his irritation is personal: "Marseilles" has shut him and his companion up in quarantine. The only concrete information we have of the second speaker is that he is also a man; the first speaker addresses him as "sir." His succinct, non-committal remarks, however, present a problem in interpretation. They can be read as haughty, cynical, bored, tolerant--any number of ways.

It is significant that this first encounter with Arthur Clennam is ambiguous. Dickens does not draw him full-face in a few brilliant strokes. Instead, our apprehension of his character depends on his being revealed by many small touches so that the impact of his personality is cumulative. Moreover, the half-information divulged piques our curiosity. Chapter 1 had opened in a very unpleasant Marseilles, where we were either seared by the staring sun or stifled by the dark airless prison. It had also introduced the unsavory villain, Blandois. The proximity of the unidentified speakers to Marseilles and to the response we have already made to it arouses suspense about the relationship between the two scenes and foreshadows the future involvement of the characters in them.

During the course of the conversation we learn to interpret the tone and inflection of the second speaker's remarks. He is sensitive to his companion's feelings regarding a deceased daughter; he is gentle, tolerant, and reserved. By the time we finally hear him spoken to by name, we have been predisposed to trust him and to react sympathetically to what he says about himself. And now, Mr. Clennam, Mr. Meagles, the first speaker, asks,"'Perhaps I may ask you, whether you have yet to come to a decision where to go next?'" Clennam's reply is of signal importance to his characterization.

> "Indeed, no. I am such a waif and stray everywhere that I am liable to be drifted where my current may set. . . . I have no will. That is to say," he coloured a little, "next to none that I can put in action now. Trained by main force; broken, not bent; heavily ironed with an object on which I was never consulted, and which was never mine; shipped away to the other end of the world before I was of age, and exiled there until my father's death there, a year ago; always grinding in a mill I always hated; what is to be expected from me in middle life? Will, purpose, hope? All those lights were extinguished before I could sound the words" (p. 20).

The speech is too concentrated to be natural, but Clennam's assessment of himself as an aimless and a broken man with no purpose or hope in life constitutes one of the novel's main concerns and the central irony in Clennam's story.

Dickens' depictions of the major male characters in many of his other novels combine in his characterization of Clennam. The drifting, aimless Steerforth in David Copperfield, Rick Carstone in Bleak House, and James Harthouse in Hard Times lose their boredom and cynicism in Dickens' portrait of the drifting, aimless Clennam, while the benign and benevolent Santa Claus figure, like Pickwick or John Jarndyce in Bleak House, acquires more flesh, blood, and feeling by

becoming in Clennam dramatically ineffectual. He is himself in need of help. Clennam's first important speech clearly reveals the regret he feels because of his lack of will, purposiveness, and determination. The dramatic description, "he coloured a little," succinctly evokes Clennam's embarassment at revealing himself and his doubts to a man with whom he has only recently become acquainted.

Clennam's progress in the novel is from this state of drifting and enervation to one of limited horizons, containing limited, specific purposes and goals. His marriage to Little Dorrit at the novel's conclusion defines for him the scope of his life; they will create an oasis of quiet, calm, and light for themselves, their children, and friends amid the "usual uproar" of the "noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward [sic] and the vain" (p. 826). Within this circumscribed sphere Clennam can achieve purpose and hope sufficient for the remainder of his life.

As an instrument of character revelation, the dramatic method handles the important juxtaposition of Clennam and his evil counterpart Blandois. Although no less a critic than Edmund Wilson contends that "the official villain Blandois has no organic connection with the story save as a caricature of social pretence,"[19] he is an integrated element in the plot and in the characterization of Clennam. Self-seeking, treacherous, with no loyalties beyond his own desire for advancement, this evil drifter journeys on his appointed way to the

[19]Edmund Wilson, p. 56.

cataclysmic destruction of himself and the Clennam house and to the revelation of its musty secret.

Consequently, the seemingly minor contrasts between Clennam's natural gallantry and Blandois' artificial pretensions become a focal point for the moral antithesis between them. The insistent gentility of Blandois' speech to his cellmate Cavalletto in Chapter 1 epitomizes the false gentleman.

> "Have I ever done anything here [in the Marseilles prison]? Ever touched the broom, or spread the mats, or rolled them up, or found the draughts, or collected the dominoes, or put my hand to any kind of work? . . . A gentleman I am, a gentleman I'll live, and a gentleman I'll die! It's my intent to be a gentleman. It's my game. Death of my soul, I play it out wherever I go" (pp. 8-9).

In contrast to this assertion of gentility, Clennam is presented in the act of being a gentleman in a series of dramatic scenes. The indirectness by which we learn that he has removed his hat at the Plornishes is an eloquent example.

> Arthur entered the rather dark and close parlour . . . and sat down in the chair she [Mrs. Plornish] placed for him.
> "Not to deceive you, sir, I notice," said Mrs. Plornish, "and I take it kind of you."
> He was at a loss to understand what she meant; and by expression as much in his looks, elicited her explanation.
> "It ain't many that comes into a poor place, that deems it worth their while to move their hats," said Mrs. Plornish. "But people think more of it than people think" (p. 137).

The dramatic method blends with the interior method to great effect; the first gives us an unmediated view of Clennam and the second reveals that his politeness is completely unconscious and natural. The expository observation about Clennam's expression provides the needed motivation for Mrs. Plornish's explanation.

The exigencies of plot are turned into an opportunity to illustrate Clennam's disinterested kindness in a scene which echoes the parable of the Good Samaritan. Having newly arrived in London, Cavalletto, the little Italian who had been Blandois' cellmate in Marseilles, is run down by a street cab as Clennam drifts towards his night's lodging. A crowd gathers around the stricken man but only Clennam takes any action in his behalf. He calls for water, speaks with the man, accompanies him to the hospital, and promises to return the following day. Later Clennam employs Cavalletto in the Doyce and Clennam business. Echoes of the Good Samaritan sustain the scene but are not belabored. They add to our sense of Clennam's moral strength and raise important doubts about his earlier assertion that he has no will. The scene also dramatically opposes Clennam's true charity to the loveless Calvinism of his mother.

Incidental gestures of sensitivity to another's feelings also reveal Clennam's innate gallantry. For example, when he meets Little Dorrit at her uncle's shabby apartment and asks to be allowed to accompany her on her walk that morning, he sees her embarrassment and makes "a pretence of having mislaid his walking-stick, to give her time to set the bedstead right, to answer her sister's impatient knock at the wall, and to say a word softly to her uncle. Then he found it, and they went downstairs . . ." (pp. 94-95).

Much later in the novel Blandois' role as a foil to Clennam is enacted when the two men, on a chance encounter, brush against each other outside the Clennam house. To Clennam's great surprise the man

knocks loudly at his mother's door and speaks of the family as if they were on intimate terms. Clennam reacts in anger and indignation.

> "Pray tell me, Affery," said Arthur, aloud and sternly, as he surveyed him from head to foot with indignation; "who is this gentleman?"
> "Pray tell me, Affery," the stranger repeated in his turn, "who--ha, ha, ha!--who is this gentleman?" (p. 545).

The stranger's voice comes back like a distorted recording of Clennam's own. Blandois apologizes on learning that the gentleman is Mr. Arthur Clennam.

> Arthur looked at him again in no more flattering manner than before, and turning on his heel without acknowledgement, went upstairs (p. 545).

Together they enter Mrs. Clennam's room, and Clennam quickly notices that her reception of the visitor has a special quality about it.

> "Madame," said Blandois, "do me the honor to present me to Monsieur, your son. It appears to me, madame, that Monsieur, your son, is disposed to complain of me. He is not polite."
> "Sir," said Arthur, striking in expeditiously, "whoever you are, and however you come to be here, if I were the master of this house I would lose no time in placing you on the outside of it."
> "But you are not," said his mother, without looking at him. "Unfortunately for the gratification of your unreasonable temper, you are not the master, Arthur."
> "I make no claim to be, mother. If I object to this person's manner of conducting himself here, and object to it so much, that if I had any authority here I certainly would not suffer him to remain a minute, I object on your account" (p. 545).

Clennam defends the honor of a woman of whom he has much to complain. The scene is also important because it sustains the knowledge gained elsewhere through the expository and interior methods that Clennam is instinctively a good judge of character. His heart knows the villain instantly and is repelled. He confronts the novel's most evil character, its agent of destruction, in righteous wrath.

Clennam is as close in this scene as he ever will be in the novel to the secret of his birth. In the fixed looks between Mrs. Clennam and Blandois lies the key to his history. He himself unknowingly brings about Blandois' exposure as a villain when he employs Cavalletto, whom he has learned knows the man, to report to him all that he can discover about his whereabouts and his affairs. Clennam never suspects that the mystery is in his own history and the pact Mrs. Clennam later makes with Little Dorrit insures that he will never know.

A long scene between Clennam and Mrs. Gowan contains additional examples of character revelation by the dramatic method. The situation is purely incidental, but it shows Dickens in excellent control of tone and Clennam in one of his most admirable moments. Gowan has invited Clennam to dinner at his home ostensibly for Clennam to meet his mother. Clennam has reluctantly accepted. In a long interview with Mrs. Gowan, he acquits himself on behalf of the Meagleses with honor.

> "Mr. Clennam," said Mrs. Gowan, "apart from the happiness I have in becoming known to you . . . there is a subject on which I am dying to speak to you. It is the subject in connection with which my son first had, I believe, the pleasure of cultivating your acquaintance."
>
> Clennam inclined his head, as a generally suitable reply to what he did not yet understand.
>
> "First," said Mrs. Gowan, "now is she really pretty?"
>
> In Nobody's difficulties, he would have found it very difficult to answer; very difficult indeed to smile, and say "Who?"
>
> "Oh! You know!" she returned. "This flame of Henry's. This unfortunate fancy. There! If it is a point of honour that I should originate the name--Miss Mickles--Miggles."
>
> "Miss Meagles," said Clennam, "is very beautiful."
>
> "Men are so often mistaken on those points," returned Mrs. Gowan, shaking her head, "that I candidly confess to you I feel anything but sure of it, even now; though it is something to have Henry corroborated with so much gravity and emphasis. He picked the people up at Rome, I think?"

The phrase would have given Nobody mortal offence. Clennam replied, "Excuse me, I doubt if I understand your expression."

"Picked the people up," said Mrs. Gowan, tapping the sticks of her closed fan . . . upon her little table. "Came upon them. Found them out. Stumbled against them."

"The people?"

"Yes. The Miggles people."

"I really cannot say," said Clennam, "where my friend Mr. Meagles first presented Mr. Henry Gowan to his daughter."

"I am pretty sure he picked her up at Rome; but never mind where--somewhere. Now (this is entirely between ourselves), is she very plebian?"

"Really, ma'am," returned Clennam, "I am so undoubtedly plebian myself, that I do not feel qualified to judge."

"Very neat!" said Mrs. Gowan, coolly unfurling her screen. "Very happy! From which I infer that you secretly think her manner equal to her looks?"

Clennam, after a moment's stiffness, bowed. . . .

"Henry," the mother resumed, "is self-willed and resolute; and as these people naturally strain every nerve to catch him, I can entertain very little hope, Mr. Clennam, that the thing will be broken off. I apprehend the girl's fortune will be very small; Henry might have done much better; there is scarcely anything to compensate for the connection; still, he acts for himself; and if I find no improvement within a short time, I see no other course than to resign myself, and make the best of these people. I am infinitely obliged to you for what you have told me."

As she shrugged her shoulders, Clennam stiffly bowed again. With an uneasy flush upon his face, and hesitation in his manner, he then said, in a still lower tone than he had adopted yet:

"Mrs. Gowan, I scarcely know how to acquit myself of what I feel to be a duty, and yet I must ask you for your kind consideration in attempting to discharge it. A misconception on your part, a very great misconception if I may venture to call it so, seems to require setting right. You have supposed Mr. Meagles and his family to strain every nerve, I think you said--"

"Every nerve," repeated Mrs. Gowan, looking at him in calm obstinancy. . . .

"To secure Mr. Henry Gowan?"

The lady placidly assented.

"Now that is so far," said Arthur, "from being the case, that I know Mr. Meagles to be unhappy in this matter; and to have interposed all reasonable obstacles, with the hopes of putting an end to it."

Mrs. Gowan shut up her great green fan, tapped him on the arm with it, and tapped her smiling lips. "Why, of course," said she. "Just what I mean."

Arthur watched her face for some explanation of what she did mean.

"Are you really serious, Mr. Clennam? Don't you see?"

> Arthur did not see; and said so.
>
> "Why, don't I know my son, and don't I know that this is exactly the way to hold him?" said Mrs. Gowan, contemptuously, "and do not these Miggles people know it, at least as well as I? Oh, shrewd people, Mr. Clennam. . . ."
>
> "I beg and entreat you, ma'am--," Arthur interposed.
>
> It made such a painful impression upon him to hear her talking in this haughty tone, and to see her patting her contemptuous lips with her fan, that he said very earnestly, "believe me, ma'am, this is unjust, a perfectly groundless suspicion."
>
> "Suspicion?" repeated Mrs. Gowan. "Not suspicion, Mr. Clennam, certainly. It is very knowingly done indeed, and seems to have taken <u>you</u> in completely" (pp. 314-317).

The fact is, of course, that Mrs. Gowan and her worthless son have strained every nerve to secure Pet's small fortune because his relatives, the Barnacles, have not seen fit to set him up in some sinecure in the Circumlocution Office. Mrs. Gowan is the worst sort of social climber; she seeks to enhance her position by deprecating others. Clennam does his best against her hauteur; nevertheless, she has the last word. The dramatic method works very effectively in this scene. It easily sustains the painful and awkward tone of the interview. It is not marred by the melodrama, sentimentality, or rhetorical embellishment that detracts from the scenes dealing with Clennam's romantic involvement with Little Dorrit.

Clennam's feelings regarding Pet have their most poignant expression in two scenes whose merit lies in the skillfully understated dialogue between him and Doyce, in the innuendos, and in the awkward pauses which punctuate their conversation.

> Mr. Doyce stood, chamber-candlestick in hand, the other hand in his pocket, looking hard at the flame of his candle, with a certain quiet perception in his face that they were going to say something more.
>
> "I thought our good friend [Mr. Meagles] a little changed, and out of spirits, after he [Gowan] came this morning?" said Clennam.
>
> "Yes," returned Doyce.

"But not his daughter?" said Clennam.

"No," said Doyce.

There was a pause on both sides. Mr. Doyce, still looking at the flame of his candle, slowly resumed.

"The truth is, he has twice taken his daughter abroad, in the hope of separating her from Mr. Gowan. He rather thinks she is disposed to like him, and he has painful doubts (I quite agree with him, as I dare say you do,) of the hopefulness of such a marriage."

"There--," Clennam choked, and coughed, and stopped.

"Yes, you have taken cold," said Daniel Doyce. But without looking at him.

"--There is an engagement between them, of course?" said Clennam airily (p. 204).

In the second scene Doyce has just returned from a trip to Twickenham, a visit which Clennam declined, and has looked in on his partner before retiring for the night.

"Come in, come in!" said Clennam.

"I saw you were reading," returned Doyce, as he entered, "and I thought you might not care to be disturbed."

But for the notable resolution he had made [not to love Pet], Clennam really might not have known what he had been reading; really might not have had his eyes upon the book for an hour past, though it lay open before him. He shut it up rather quickly.

"Are they well?" he asked.

"Yes," said Doyce; "they are well. They are all well."

Daniel had an old workmanlike habit of carrying his pocket-handkerchief in his hat. He took it out and wiped his forehead with it, slowly repeating, "they are all well. Miss Minnie [Pet] looking particularly well, I thought."

"Any company at the cottage?"

"No, no company."

"And how did you get on, you four?" asked Clennam gaily.

"There were five of us," returned his partner. "There was What's-his-name. He was there."

"Who is he?" said Clennam.

"Mr. Henry Gowan."

"Ah, to be sure!" cried Clennam, with unusual vivacity. "Yes!--I forgot him."

"As I mentioned, you may remember," said Daniel Doyce, "he is always there on Sunday."

"Yes, yes," returned Clennam; "I remember now."

Daniel Doyce, still wiping his forehead, ploddingly repeated, "Yes. He was there, he was there. Oh yes, he was there. And his dog. He was there too."

"Miss Meagles is quite attached to--the--dog," observed Clennam.

"Quite so," assented his partner. "More attached to the dog than I am to the man."

> "You mean Mr.--?"
> "I mean Mr. Gowan, most decidedly," said Daniel Doyce.
> There was a gap in the conversation, which Clennam devoted to the winding up of his watch.
> "Perhaps you are a little hasty in your judgment," he said. "Our judgments--I am supposing a general case--."
> "Of course," said Doyce.
> "Are so liable to be influenced by many considerations which, almost without knowing it, are unfair, that it is necessary to keep a guard upon them. For instance, Mr.--"
> "Gowan," quietly said Doyce, upon whom the utterance of the name almost always devolved.
> "Is young and handsome, easy and quick, has talent, and has seen a good deal of various kinds of life. It might be difficult to give him an unselfish reason for being prepossessed against him" (pp. 307-309).

The dramatic method brilliantly expresses Clennam's efforts to be nonchalant and also to be unbiased in his judgment of Gowan. The authorial comment in the third paragraph is smoothly integrated into the scene.

There are two major points to be made about Clennam's temporary love for Pet and about his very sensible and proper decision not to love her. The episode in terms of plot seems quite irrelevant, although it does provide a tenuous means of keeping Clennam in touch with Dorrit after her father's turn of fortune. The capacity for infatuation at forty enriches the reader's perception of Clennam and gives his character a foundation of tenderness and youthful responsiveness on which to build the more substantial and enduring relationship he has later with Little Dorrit. Because Clennam's involvement with Pet is an attempt to re-enact the kind of relationship he once had with the beautiful, naive, and frivolous Flora, it cannot provide him with a mature love.

The first major decision Clennam makes about his own life, his abandonment of the family business, is almost entirely rendered by the

dramatic method. The announcement of his intentions is respectful, but firm and honest.

> "You have anticipated, mother, that I decide for my part to abandon the business. I have done with it. I will not take upon myself to advise: you will continue it, I see. If I had any influence with you, I would simply use it to soften your judgment of me in causing you this disappointment: to represent to you that I have lived the half of a long term of life, and have never before set my own will against yours. I cannot say that I have been able to conform myself, in heart and spirit, to your rules; I cannot say that I believe my forty years have been profitable or pleasant to myself or to anyone; but I have habitually submitted, and I only ask you to remember it" (pp. 46-47).

The assertion of his will over his mother's is an important step for Clennam. It demonstrates that he is not a broken man, as he had contended in his confession to Mr. Meagles. In rejecting the Clennam business house, he frees himself to begin his quest for a place and a purpose in life which he cannot find either in the home of his childhood or in any part of his past.

This same scene also introduces Clennam's fear that the Clennams harbor a secret guilt.[20] This suspicion directs the novel's main action. In an effort to unlock the family secret, Clennam becomes interested in Little Dorrit, re-acquainted with Flora, and introduced to the Circumlocution Office and to the Plornishes. It is significant that his inquiry into a secret which concerns his true home and mother

[20]In some tangled fashion Mrs. Clennam owes Little Dorrit a thousand pounds as a result of a codicil to Clennam's father's uncle's will, which left the money to the young woman who was Clennam's natural mother, or if she were not living, to the youngest daughter of her patron or his brother. The patron happened to be Frederick Dorrit, who had no children. Hence, his brother William's youngest daughter had rightful claim to the money and she happens to be Little Dorrit.

occurs in the same dramatic scene as his rejection of his false home and mother.

> He lowered his voice and said, with manifest reluctance and against his will:
>
> "I want to ask you, mother, whether it ever occurred to you to suspect . . . that he [Arthur's father] had any secret remembrance which caused him trouble of mind--remorse? . . .
>
> "Is it possible, mother," her son leaned forward to be the nearer to her while he whispered it, and laid his hand nervously upon her desk, "is it possible, mother, that he had unhappily wronged anyone, and made no reparation?" (p. 48).

Mrs. Clennam makes no reply as her son presses her more and more urgently for an answer to his inquiry, while she recoils further and further from his close physical presence and his insistent beseeching.

> Still so recoiling in her chair that her overpoised weight moved it, from time to time, a little on its wheels, and gave her the appearance of a phantom of fierce aspect gliding away from him, she interposed her left arm, bent at the elbow with the back of her hand towards her face, between herself and him, and looked at him in a fixed silence.
>
> "In grasping at money and in driving hard bargains--I have begun, and I must speak of such things now, mother--some one may have been grievously deceived, injured, ruined. You were the moving power of all this machinery before my birth; your stronger spirit has been infused into all my father's dealings for more than two score years. You can set these doubts at rest, I think, if you will really help me to discover the truth. Will you, mother?"
>
> He stopped in the hope that she would speak. But her grey hair was not more immovable in its two folds than were her firm lips.
>
> "If reparation can be made to any one, if restitution can be made to any one, let us know it and make it. Nay, mother, if within my means, let me make it. I have seen so little happiness come of money; it has brought within my knowledge so little peace to this house, or to any one belonging to it; that it is worth less to me than to another. It can buy me nothing that will not be a reproach and misery to me, if I am haunted by a suspicion that it darkened my father's last hours with remorse, and that it is not honestly and justly mine."
>
> There was a bell-rope hanging on the panelled wall, some two or three yards from the cabinet. By a swift and sudden action of her foot, she drove her wheeled chair rapidly back to it and pulled it violently--still holding her arm up in its shield-like posture, as if he were striking her, and she warding off the blow.

> A girl came hurrying in, frightened.
> "Send Flintwinch here!" (pp. 48-49).

The intensely emotional scene is packed with significant problems and attitudes for the working out of the plot. Clennam's will in this situation is passive; he does not wish to initiate the confrontation. His conscience overrules his will. The attitude towards money which the scene expresses accounts in part for Clennam's refusal, after he has become an inmate of the Marshalsea, to accept Little Dorrit solely because she is wealthy.

The long dramatic scenes which carry the major romantic elements of Clennam's relationship to Little Dorrit usually show Dickens, and Clennam, at their worst. Dickens seems peculiarly unable to rely upon either of the other methods at these moments. For example, Little Dorrit's love for Clennam hovers about in his memory of her when he inhabits her old room at the Marshalsea. Dickens might have used the interior method to pursue these memories until Clennam realized her true relationship to him. Instead it is forced upon his understanding externally by a dramatic interview with the forlorn, but honorable Young John Chivery.

> "I wonder," he [John] at length said . . . "that if it's not worth your while to take care of yourself for your own sake, it's not worth doing for someone else's."
> "Truly," returned Arthur, with a sigh and a smile. "I don't know for whose."
> "Mr. Clennam," said John, warmly, "I am surprised that a gentleman who is capable of the straightforwardness that you are capable of, should be capable of the mean action of making me such an answer . . ." (p. 725).

John continues in this vein at great length to Clennam's bewilderment and discomfiture. Eventually he picks up one thread in the conversation.

> "It seems to me just possible," said Arthur, when he had retraced the conversation . . . "that you have made some reference to Miss Dorrit."
>
> "It is just possible, sir," returned John Chivery (p. 727).

After several more circuitous exchanges between John and Clennam, John, imploring him to "speak free," asks: "'Mr. Clennam, do you mean to say that you don't know?'"

> "What, John?"
>
> "Lord," said Young John, appealing with a gasp to the spikes on the wall. "He says, What!"
>
> Clennam looked at the spikes, and looked at John.
>
> "He says What! And what is more," exclaimed Young John, surveying him with a doleful gaze, "he appears to mean it! Do you see this window, sir?"
>
> "Of course I see this window."
>
> "See this room?"
>
> "Why, of course I see this room."
>
> "That wall opposite, and that yard down below? They have all been witness of it, from day to day, from night to night, from week to week, from month to month. For how often have I seen Miss Dorrit here when she has not seen me!"
>
> "Witness of what?" said Clennam.
>
> "Of Miss Dorrit's love."
>
> "For whom?"
>
> "You," said John. . . .
>
> If he had dealt Clennam a heavy blow, instead of laying that light touch upon him, its effect could not have been to shake him more. He stood amazed . . . his whole appearance that of a man who has been awakened from sleep, and stupefied by intelligence beyond his full comprehension (pp. 728-729).

The scene begins with the right touch of reserve and rhetorical obscurity in the exchanges of dialogue but quickly becomes ridiculous as both men's roles become overstated. John, whose melodramatic morbidity has been a comic element through the novel, seems on the verge of raving, and Clennam is made to appear unbelievably obtuse.[21]

[21]Manning argues that in his satiric juxtaposition between John Chivery's comic melancholy and Clennam's depression, Dickens manages to retain sympathy for Clennam and make his satiric point too. "The validity of Arthur's emotion," she contends, "remains unaltered. Yet the satirically biased comedy of Young John does have moral relevance to

The scene of Clennam's refusal either to let Little Dorrit use her money to free him from prison or to marry her bears an unfortunate resemblance to a scene between her and her father before they gained their release from prison. In this scene, Mr. Dorrit alternately degrades himself before her in a wash of self-pity and boasts of his elevated position among the Marshalsea's inhabitants. She begs him to stop and for once to think of her feelings instead of his own.

> Thus, now boasting, now despairing, in either fit a captive with the jail-rot upon him, and the impurity of his prison worn into the grain of his soul, he revealed his degenerate state to his affectionate child. No one else ever beheld him in the details of his humiliation (pp. 228-229).

In this scene Clennam's assertion of his honor in refusing Little Dorrit's offer also demeans him. Little Dorrit's attitude towards money is substantially the same as Clennam's; it has value only in service to others. "'I have no use for money,'" she pleads,

> "I have no wish for it. It would be of no value at all to me, but for your sake. I could not be rich, and you here. I must always be much worse than poor, with you distressed. Will you let me lend you all I have? Will you let me give it to you? Will you let me show you that I never have forgotten, that I never can forget, your protection of me when this was my home? Dear Mr. Clennam, make me of all the world the happiest, by saying Yes!" (p. 759).

And so on in a nearly hysterical vein until she concludes: "'Pray, pray, pray, I beg you and implore you with all my grieving heart, my friend--my dear!--take all I have, and make it a blessing to me!'" (p. 759). But of course, he won't. His earlier experience with money

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Arthur's situation: the bathos is a comic version of the self-regarding abdication from action and responsibility that Arthur verges upon," p. 174.

convinced him that it could not, of itself, bring one happiness; therefore, he rejects its usefulness in any capacity.

> "No, darling Little Dorrit. No, my child. I must not hear of such a sacrifice. Liberty and hope would be so dear, bought at such a price, that I could never support their weight, never bear the reproach of possessing them. But with what ardent thankfulness and love I say this, I may call Heaven to witness!" (pp. 759-760).

The tone of his speeches throughout the too-long scene is one of strained forbearance and self-righteousness. Nothing in his characterization has prepared us for his substituting, at a critical moment in his life, an unswerving loyalty to a hollow code of honor for the genuine nobility of spirit which could accept Little Dorrit's offer. Clennam would have eagerly bestowed any amount of money on anything or anybody to alleviate her suffering while she inhabited the Marshalsea. It is a mark of weakness that he cannot allow her to do the same for him. His willingness to condescend to her is apparent in his next speech.

> "If, in the bygone days when this was your home and when this was your dress, I had understood myself (I speak only of myself) better, and had read the secrets of my own breast more distinctly; if, through my reserve and self-mistrust, I had discerned a light that I see brightly now when it has passed far away, and my weak footsteps can overtake it; if I had then known, and told you that I loved and honoured you, not as the poor child I used to call you, but as a woman whose true hand would raise me high above myself, and make me a far happier and better man; if I had so used the opportunity there is no recalling--as I wish I had, oh I wish I had!--and if something had kept us apart then, when I was moderately thriving, and when you were poor; I might have met your noble offer of your fortune, dearest girl, with other words than these, and still have blushed to touch it. But, as it is, I must never touch it, never!" (p. 760).

Presumably Little Dorrit's own pride would have prevented her from marrying Clennam if he had asked while she was poor and in prison, but Clennam then would probably have admonished her against false pride.

One wonders if Dickens did not intentionally draw the parallel between Mr. Dorrit's degradation and Clennam's; the hints at similarity seem very clear. As he continues to disparage himself before her, Clennam takes her in his arms, "as if she had been his daughter," and says:

> "Always so much older, so much rougher, and so much less worthy, even what I was must be dismissed by both of us, and you must see me only as I am. I put this parting kiss upon your cheek, my child --who might have been more near to me, who never could have been more dear--a ruined man far removed from you, for ever separated from you, whose course is run, while yours is but beginning. I have not the courage to ask to be forgotten by you in my humiliation; but I ask to be remembered only as I am. . . . This is now a tainted place [his prison cell which used to be her room], and I well know that the taint of it clings to me" (pp. 760-761).

This, like the painful scene with Mr. Dorrit, is terribly cruel and insensitive to Little Dorrit's feelings. Perhaps it can be justified by the corrupting effect of the prison, which can debase both weak and strong alike. The existence of the several possibilities introduces an ambiguity which does nothing to advance Clennam's characterization. Ambiguity is often a desirable attribute in a rich and many-faceted character; however, in this case the ambiguity is not a function of character but a failure of authorial intent. We do not know how to respond to this Clennam largely because we cannot determine how Dickens intends for us to respond.[22] Does he consider Clennam to be speaking

[22]Hewitt believes as I do that "Dickens's conscious intentions in the latter part of the novel are not entirely in accordance with the effect which the book actually has upon us. This is obviously due in part to his inability to create the redeeming of Little Dorrit with the necessary strength, but also to his frustrating the logic of his symbolic scheme in the interests of an ending which rewards virtue and punishes vice," p. 99.

out of a state of degradation? If so, the parallels between this scene and Mr. Dorrit's are intentional and central to our acceptance of Clennam's fall. If, however, Dickens intends Clennam's attitude to arise out of a sincere, though possibly misdirected, sense of honor, the parallels are accidental and should have been scrupulously edited from the scene. It is even possible that Dickens did not consider Clennam's "honor" misdirected, in which case we may justifiably complain of a, to my mind, serious failure in Dickens' moral vision.[23]

Dickens' preference for the dramatic method often creates masterful and memorable scenes, alive with thematic interest and the vivid personalities of the characters who people them. His failures are rare, but also memorable because they are occasionally scenes which treat central issues in the novel.

The Interior Method: The Progress of Love

The interior method has only one function--to represent Clennam's subjective, and often unarticulated, mental and emotional responses to the people and events of the novel. This single function has, however,

[23]Douglas Hewitt calls the scene of Clennam's refusal to marry Little Dorrit on the grounds that she has money and he does not "moral and emotional lunacy." He says: "We are surely meant to applaud this as the antithesis of that greed for money which obsesses so many of the other characters. But in fact it is a proclamation that the power of money--the fear of seeming mercenary in the world's eyes (for Little Dorrit would not believe him mercenary)--is so great in his mind that to it he will sacrifice, not only his love, but hers. It reminds us of Mr. Dorrit's bestowing of his imprisonment and degradation as a portion on his daughter," The Approach to Fiction: Good and Bad Readings of Novels (Towota, N. J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972), pp. 99-100.

several important features. First, it makes the reader's point of view that of Clennam. This identification between reader and character establishes a bond between them and has the effect of making the reader the character's confidante. We share certain beliefs and opinions not shared by any character in the novel, and we have privileged information about the character's thoughts and feelings. It also enables Dickens to manipulate the reader's responses to the narrative without his direct intervention and guidance. For example, the interior method simultaneously introduces both Clennam and the reader to Henry Gowan, the cynical amateur artist who marries Pet Meagles. Through Clennam's eyes we first see Gowan at a distance, and we share Clennam's observation of the man's behavior.

> This gentleman looked barely thirty. He was well dressed, of a sprightly and gay appearance, a well-knit figure, and a rich dark complexion. As Arthur came over the stile and down to the water's edge, the lounger glanced at him for a moment, and then resumed his occupation of idly tossing stones into the water with his foot. There was something in his way of spurning them out of their places with his heel, and getting them into the required position that Clennam thought had an air of cruelty in it. Most of us have more or less frequently derived a similar impression from a man's manner of doing some very little thing: plucking a flower, clearing away an obstacle, or even destroying an insentient object (p. 201).

This interior passage builds on the earlier expository passage concerning Clennam's assessment of Mr. Casby, the hypocritical, greedy landlord of Bleeding Heart Yard. It reiterates his sensitivity to details in human behavior and strengthens our confidence in his ability to judge character. The obtrusive authorial observation of the last sentence damages the even flow of the interior view as Clennam observes and responds to the man, but the important thing is that we know at this point exactly what Clennam knows about Gowan and our response to him is

controlled by Clennam's distaste. Further acquaintance with Gowan confirms our initial reaction.

Because Clennam is not only a narrative agent in almost half the novel, shaping and informing much of our perception of Little Dorrit's world, but also the novel's hero, we need to know when to trust his responses and when not to, and it is important that we usually find him reliable. The interior method encourages us to trust Clennam by making at least some of his judgments coincide with those we have already made. For example, the flashback to Mr. Dorrit's life in the Marshalsea creates in the reader an aversion to his pretentious, and wholly unsupported, claims to gentility. This early, tentative judgment is clarified and confirmed by Clennam's initial reaction to William Dorrit on his first visit to the prison.

> He felt himself quite lost in wonder at the manner of the man, and that the probability of his daughter's having had a reserve as to her family history should be so far out of his mind . . . Arthur saw she [Little Dorrit] was troubled and took nothing [to eat or drink]. Her look at her father, half admiring and proud of him, half ashamed for him, all devoted and loving went to his inmost heart (p. 82).

Sometime later, when Mr. Plornish, the out-of-work plasterer, boasts that "'Miss Dorrit and her sister [Fanny] dursn't let him know that they work for a living,'" Clennam quietly observes: "'Without admiring him for that . . . I am very sorry for him'" (p. 139).

Secondly, the interior method has the unique advantage of being able to analyze implicitly Clennam in the act of thinking, feeling, responding, or himself analyzing a situation. For example, when Clennam goes to Little Dorrit's uncle Frederick's shabby apartment in search

of her, his sensitivity to the subtleties of others' attitudes is revealed by the interior response he makes to a conversation with the old gentleman.

> "Amy, Mr. Clennam. What do you think of her?"
> "I am much impressed, Mr. Dorrit, by all that I have seen of her and thought of her."
> "My brother and I would have been quite lost without Amy," he returned. "We should all have been lost without Amy. She is a very good girl, Amy. She does her duty."
> Arthur fancied that he heard in these praises a certain tone of custom which he had heard from the father last night, with an inward protest and feeling of antagonism. It was not that they stinted her praises, or were insensible to what she did for them; but that they were lazily habituated to her, as they were to all the rest of their condition. He fancied that although they had before them, every day, the means of comparison between her and one another and themselves, they regarded her as being in her necessary place; as holding a position towards them which belonged to her, like her name or age. He fancied that they viewed her, not as having risen away from the prison atmosphere, but as appertaining to it; as being vaguely what they had a right to expect, and nothing more (pp. 93-94).

Clennam intelligently analyzes the moral condition inherent in the Dorrits' attitude towards Amy and clearly discerns the implications of it, while the interior method simultaneously analyzes Clennam's attitude. He inwardly protests against their acceptance of her devotion and her efforts in their behalf as their rightful due. He feels antagonistic towards them for not perceiving her true worth and for not being properly grateful, the implication being that he does perceive her worth and values her accordingly. Her personality has made an impact on him much greater than he believes. Clennam feels that his relationship to Little Dorrit is completely disinterested; the reader knows, however, that he, without being aware of it himself, is becoming personally involved with her, and that we can expect to watch this involvement grow during the course of the novel.

While we are at times encouraged to identify with Clennam, a total and complete view of his character and his world requires us to know more about him than he knows about himself, to understand his feelings better than he does. Therefore, the third use of the interior method is to reveal Clennam occasionally shortsighted enough about himself to establish an ironic discrepancy between his perception and the reader's. One recurring example is the misconstruction Clennam puts on Little Dorrit's actions when they are together; for instance, during one of their walks she asks him:

> "If you were in prison, could I bring . . . comfort to you?"
> "Yes, Little Dorrit," [he replies], "I am sure of it!"
> He gathered from a tremor on her lip, and a passing shadow of great agitation on her face, that her mind was with her father (p. 260).

Her mind is actually on Clennam, and her agitation is a result of her excitement at hearing his reply, the hope that he may someday return her love for him, and the realization that he has misunderstood the point of her inquiry.

The illusion of independent judgment Dickens thus creates for the reader establishes a confidence between them. The reader is in on a secret shared only with the narrator himself so that, even though the reader identifies and sympathizes with the character, he can also back off from him and judge him with objectivity. The number of actions Clennam takes on someone's behalf, for example, belie his assertions that he has no will or purpose in life and are, therefore, good examples of our ability to see what he cannot. The interior method often records his attempts to create for himself a purpose by asserting himself in the service of others. The incident of his befriending Cavalletto, discussed

earlier as a dramatic episode, is only one such instance. In an effort to untangle the legalities of Mr. Dorrit's imprisonment, Clennam goes to the Circumlocution Office determined to meet with Mr. Tite Barnacle and clear up the Dorrits' affairs once and for all. He is, predictably, shuffled from department to department and instructed to fill out stacks of forms, but he persists admirably with his stubborn "'I want to know . . .'"to the great consternation of Barnacle Junior and to the amusement or annoyance of the other clerks.

> Its [Clennam's inquiry] effect upon young Barnacle was to make him repeat in a defencelss [sic] way, "Look here! Upon my SOUL you mustn't come into the place, saying you want to know, you know!" The effect of that upon Arthur Clennam was to make him repeat his inquiry in exactly the same words and tone as before. The effect of that upon young Barnacle was to make him a wonderful spectacle of failure and helplessness . . . .
>
> Arthur Clennam felt that he had devoted himself to the storming of the Circumlocution Office, and must go through with it . . . (pp. 113-114).

Nevertheless, after days of storming and wanting to know, he concludes that "the case of the Father of the Marshalsea [Mr. Dorrit] was indeed a hopeless one, and sorrowfully resigned the idea of helping him to freedom again" (p. 144).

Ultimately, for all his generosity and kindness, and for all the exertion of a will to do good, Clennam is ineffectual. The one opportunity he might have taken to accomplish some real and lasting good he declines in favor of an unwavering loyalty to Pet Meagles' wishes. The Meagleses respect him very much, to the extent even that Mr. Meagles at one point implies that Clennam would have been his and Mrs. Meagles' choice of a husband for their daughter. They might have welcomed his intervention with Pet to prevent her marriage to the cruel and parasitic Gowan. But Clennam's honor prevents his trying to dissuade Pet

because he wants to avoid the appearance of being self-serving. Pet, sensitive to Clennam's feelings for her, tells him herself that she and Gowan are to be married. She implores him to reconcile her parents to their marriage and to influence them towards a better opinion of her future husband. The interior method conveys many expressions of Clennam's inner struggle during this time.

> He found a contest still always going on in his breast, between his promise to keep Gowan in only good aspects before the mind of Mr. Meagles, and his enforced observation of Gowan in his own conscientious nature against misgivings that he distorted and discoloured him, by reminding himself that he had never sought those discoveries, and that he would have avoided them with willingness and great relief. For he never could forget what had been; and he knew that he had once disliked Gowan, for no better reason than that he had come in his way.
>
> Harassed by these thoughts, he now began to wish the marriage over, Gowan and his young wife gone, and himself left to fulfill his promise, and discharge the generous function he had accepted (p. 403).

It will be easier for Clennam to keep his promise to Pet when Gowan is not present because the truth of his words will not have to contend with the actual person. He is right to suspect his own dislike of the man as an outgrowth of his thwarted love for Pet, but Doyce, Mr. Meagles, and Mrs. Gowan have confirmed the fairness of his reaction. Another consideration might be that Clennam cannot bring himself to be the perpetrator of the same kind of painful separation that had been forced upon him and Flora many years ago.

Flawed characters who act as centers of consciousness in a novel can enlist and maintain the reader's sympathy because, in the process of identifying our point of view with the characters, we become as willing, or almost as willing, to forgive his failings and mistakes as

we are our own.[24] The interior method disposes us to forgive Clennam his weaknesses because we know their origins; we have shared in his efforts both successful and otherwise; and we are ready to vow that his heart is in the right place. While we are sympathizing with Clennam, we are also able to perceive what constitutes a weakness or a failure on his part. It is one of the novel's major successes that Dickens handles the dual problem of identification and independent judgment so well in his characterization of Clennam that we move for the most part easily and comfortably between them.

The responses that dominate Dickens' use of the interior method in Little Dorrit are those that Clennam makes to the central relationships of his life. Places and people are associated with each other in his mind and in his responses to them: Mrs. Clennam and her house, the Casby house and Flora, Twickenham and Pet, the Marshalsea and Little Dorrit. For example, on his arrival in London he reacts to the city as though it were a sentient being. The passive hostility he feels for London hovers over all his separate responses to the places and people contained in her.[25] Chapter 31 opens with a remarkable description of London--remarkable because through its imagery it simultaneously dramatizes Dickens' expository comment and expresses Clennam's subjective response.

[24]Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 245-249.

[25]Again, Joseph Gold blames Clennam for using his past to shut himself up in prison, for his almost self-pitying excuses for his lack of will, and for "projecting onto the world the indifference of his own distorting perception no less than the other characters in the novel," p. 224.

> It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close, and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, as if the Plague were in the city and the dead-carts were going round . . . . Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to breathe but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up. Nothing for the spent toiler to do, but to compare the monotony of his seventh day with the monotony of his six days, think what a weary life he led, and make the best of it--or the worst, according to the probabilities.
>
> At such a happy time, so propitious to the interests of religion and morality, Mr. Arthur Clennam, newly arrived from Marseilles by way of Dover, and by Dover coach to the Blue-eyed Maid, sat in the window of a coffee-house on Ludgate Hill. Ten thousand responsible houses surrounded him, frowning as heavily on the streets they composed, as if they were every one inhabited by the ten young men of the Calender's story, who blackened their faces and bemoaned their miseries every night. Fifty thousands lairs surrounded him where people lived so unwholesomely, that fair water put into their crowded rooms on Saturday night, would be corrupt on Sunday morning . . . . Miles of close wells and pits of houses, where the inhabitants gasped for air, stretched far away towards every point of the compass. Through the heart of the town a deadly sewer ebbed and flowed, in the place of a fine, fresh river . . . .
>
> Mr. Arthur Clennam sat in the window of the coffee-house on Lutgate Hill, counting one of the neighboring bells, making sentences and burdens of songs out of it in spite of himself, and wondering how many sick people it might be the death of in the course of a year (pp. 28-29).

The satiric, mocking tone of "At such a happy time, so propitious to the interests of religion and morality" identifies the voice of the omniscient narrator, who underlines Clennam's dark view of London. The reader, too must share this view because, at least for the moment, it is the only one he has.

The interior method effectively evokes Clennam's mood and intensifies the impression in Chapter 2 of his quiet melancholy. The gloom of the city and the despairing groan of the bells revive in him

memories of the "long train of miserable Sundays" he spent in his childhood when he was marched "like a military deserter" to chapel "morally handcuffed to another boy" (p. 34). The repetition of Clennam's sitting in the window of the coffee-house is picked up in variation, several paragraphs later.

> He sat in the same place as the day died, looking at the dull houses opposite, and thinking, if the disembodied spirits of former inhabitants were ever conscious of them, how they must pity themselves for their old places of imprisonment (p. 30).

The repetition evokes the chiming of the bells; the consecutive prepositional phrases, particularly the first two times the sentence is used ("Mr. Arthur Clennam sat in the window of the coffee-house on Ludgate Hill"), beat a heavy, monotonous cadence. Clennam's physical inertia suggests his spiritual inertia. The sentence which describes him in the act of leaving the coffee-house captures his lack of vigor: "Mr. Arthur Clennam took up his hat and buttoned his coat, and walked out" (p. 30). Automatically going through the motions of his routine existence, he departs in the rain for his mother's house, where he spent his unhappy and guilt-ridden youth.

The extensive passage which introduces Chapter 31 is important for several reasons. It is the reader's first private encounter with Clennam. It immediately invests Clennam with a psyche which begins exerting an influence on the reader's perception of him. The primary focus of the narrative is thus established: Clennam will be the novel's dominant center of consciousness. At least, the use of the interior method leads us to expect to accompany Clennam through the novel.

This passage contrasts with the similarly long expository description which introduces the blindingly bright and sun-scorched

Marseilles in Chapter 1. The "deadly sewer" in London recalls the "abominable pool" of the Marseilles harbor. The "lairs" and "pits of houses" echo the close, dank, airless Marseilles jail. Both images are important metaphors in the novel.

The interior method continues as Clennam comes at last to his mother's old brick house; then Dickens shifts, perhaps unnecessarily, to the dramatic method for Clennam's reaction,

> . . . so dingy as to be all but black, standing by itself within a gateway. Before it, a square court-yard where a shrub or two and a patch of grass were as rank (which is saying much) as the iron railings enclosing them were rusty; behind it, a jumble of roots. It was a double house, with long, narrow, heavily-framed windows. Many years ago it had had it in its mind to slide down sideways; it had been propped up, however, and was leaning on some half-dozen gigantic crutches . . . .
>
> "Nothing changed," said the traveller, stopping to look round. "Dark and miserable as ever. A light in my mother's window, which seems never to have been extinguished since I came home twice a year from school, and dragged my box over this pavement. Well, well, well!" (p. 31).

Clennam's response to the house coincides with his feelings for his mother. The double nature of the house represents the duplicity of Mrs. Clennam's relationship with Arthur, and the house's infirmity duplicates her own self-willed paralysis. Clennam's greeting by Mr. Flintwinch, Mrs. Clennam's sly manservant and business clerk, and his interview with his mother are presented primarily by the interior method. Authorial comment breaks in here and there, once to comment on Clennam's shedding of tears at his cold reception home.

> It was the momentary yielding of a nature that had been disappointed from the dawn of its perceptions, but had not quite given up all its hopeful yearnings yet. He subdued it, took up the candle and examined the room (p. 32).

The exposition alerts us to the discrepancy between the way in which Clennam sees himself and the way we are to see him, between a nature which has lost all hope and one which retains its hopeful yearnings. Then in a clean, spare sentence Dickens ushers us back into Clennam's mind as he examines the various articles in the room.

Face to face with Mrs. Clennam, our expectations of cold, rigid severity are dramatically realized. She offers her son, whom she has not seen in twenty years, "one glassy kiss, and four stiff fingers muffled in worsted" (p. 33). The expository and the interior methods fuse in the explanation that

> The old influence of her presence and her stern strong voice so gathered about her son, that he felt conscious of a renewal of the timid chill and reserve of his childhood (pp. 33-34).

Her customary religious reading in the evening further revives his young terror.

> She then put on her spectacles and read certain passages aloud from a book--sternly, fiercely, wrathfully--praying that her enemies (she made them by her tone and manner expressly hers) might be put to the edge of the sword, consumed by fire, smitten by plagues and leprosy, that their bones might be ground to dust, and that they might be utterly exterminated. As she read on, years seemed to fall away from her son like the imaginings of a dream, and all the old dark horrors of his usual preparation for the sleep of an innocent child to overshadow him (pp. 35-36).

The interview completes the placing of Clennam in the context of his upbringing and justifies his claim to moral enervation, which is the starting point on his journey towards Little Dorrit and what she will represent for him.[26]

[26]Already we have felt the justice of Mr. Meagles' exhortation to Clennam in Chapter 2 to light up the fires of will, purpose, and hope, to study and profit by his "'tough commencement. . . . like a practical man'" (p. 16). As he prepares to leave his mother's house, Clennam hears

In this same scene, Affery recalls to Clennam his boyhood sweetheart Flora and gives him news of her present widowed and wealthy state. Later that night in his room the interior method reveals him musing on his past romance.

> Mrs. Flintwinch had introduced into the web that his mind was busily weaving, in that old workshop where the loom of his youth had stood, the last thread wanting to the pattern. The airy folly of a boy's love had found its way even into that house, and he had been as wretched under its hopelessness as if the house had been a castle of romance. Little more than a week ago at Marseilles, the face of the pretty girl from whom he had parted with regret, had had an unusual interest for him, and a tender hold upon him, because of some resemblance, real or imagined, to this first face that he soared out of his gloomy life into the bright glories of fancy. He leaned upon the sill of the long low window, and looking out upon the blackened forest of chimneys again, began to dream (p. 40).

He dreams vaguely of recapturing the excitement, the intensity, and the object of his boyhood passion, which Mrs. Clennam and Mr. Casby had conspired to end, by re-establishing ties with the Casby house. He goes to the house and finds it "as little changed as [his] mother's and . . . almost as gloomy" (p. 145). "But," he thinks,

> "the likness ends outside. I know its staid repose within. The smell of its jar of old rose-leaves and lavender seems to come upon me even here."
> . . . He stepped into the sober, silent, airtight house . . . and the door, closing again, seemed to shut out sound and motion. . . . There was a grave clock, ticking somewhere up the staircase; and there was a songless bird in the same direction, pecking at his cage, as if he were ticking too. The parlour-fire ticked in the grate. There was only one person on the parlour-hearth, and the loud watch in his pocket ticked audibly.

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another plea to action, this time from Mrs. Clennam's simple, nervous housemaid, Affery Flintwich, who tells him, "'don't you be cowed. . . . stand up against them,'" meaning Mrs. Clennam and Flintwich, Affery's husband. Clennam never does stand up against them. He is capable only of extricating himself from them by giving up his share of the property and the family business.

> The servant-maid had ticked the two words "Mr. Clennam" so softly that she had not been heard; and he consequently stood, within the door she had closed, unnoticed (p. 145).

Time ticks implacably away inside the house without changing anything. Mr. Casby and Flora are both prisoners of their own fixed and stagnant conceptions of themselves. Flora is eager to resume her old relationship with Clennam on exactly the same plane, and on the same terms, as twenty years ago, but she has grown fat and silly and has refused to shed her girlish charms for the more settled and appropriate ways of a mature woman. Clennam, crushed to discover her so physically altered while so emotionally unchanged, abandons all hope of carving a life for himself out of the past.

> With the sensation of becoming more and more lightheaded every minute, Clennam saw the relict of the late Mr. F enjoying herself in the most wonderful manner, by putting herself and him in their old places, and going through all the old performances. . . . And still, through all this grotesque revival of what he remembered as having once been prettily natural to her, he could not but feel that it revived at sight of him, and that there was a tender memory in it.
>
> The Patriarch [Mr. Casby] insisted on his staying to dinner, and Flora signalled "Yes!" Clennam so wished he could have done more than stay to dinner--so heartily wished that he could have found Flora that had been, or that never had been--that he thought the least atonement he could make for the disappointment he almost felt ashamed of, was to give himself up to the family desire. Therefore, he stayed to dinner (p. 155).

The interior view shows us that Clennam, in spite of his discomfort and embarrassment, is sensitive to the feelings that prompt Flora's performance. A dramatic rendering of the scene could have shown us his discomfort but not its accompanying sensitivity. The interior method also expresses Clennam's characteristic frame of mind. In his desire to atone for his own disappointment, he couches his thoughts

in the language of sin and guilt, just as he does when he thinks of his childhood home that it harbors some guilty secret for which he must atone.

In addition to Mrs. Clennam and Flora, two other secondary relationships are handled initially by the interior method: that with Cavalletto and that with Blandois. Both encounters occur while Clennam is wandering the streets of London. As he "was pondering his way along towards St. Paul's," a crowd of people flocks around him and he stands aside to let them pass.

> As they came up, he made out that they were gathered around a something that was carried on men's shoulders. He soon saw that it was a litter, hastily made of a shutter or some such thing; and a recumbent figure upon it, and the scraps of conversation in the crowd, and a muddy bundle carried by one man, and a muddy hat carried by another, informed him that an accident had occurred. The littler stopped under a lamp before it had passed him a half-a-dozen paces, for some adjustment of the burden; and, the crowd stopping too, he found himself in the midst of the array (p. 161).

Dickens exerts perfect control over the interior perspective in this brief passage. We see and hear exactly and only what Clennam sees and hears as the scene unfolds itself to him. This chance meeting with Blandois' former prisonmate links Clennam to the novel's agent of individual evil and to the one man who has in his possession proof of Clennam's true parentage. On Clennam's instructions, Cavalletto later tracks Blandois down, exposes his criminality, and precipitates his ultimate destruction.

On another pensive evening walk Clennam happens to see Pet's companion-maid Tattycoram, who has recently run away from Twickenham, in the company of a man whose description is already familiar to the reader.

> He was passing at nightfall along the Strand, and the lamp-lighter was going on before him, under whose hand the street-lamps, blurred by the foggy air, burst out one after another like so many blazing sunflowers coming into full-blow all at once,--when a stoppage on the pavement, caused by a train of coal-waggons toiling up from the wharves at the river-side, brought him to a standstill. He had been walking quickly, and going with some current of thought, and the sudden check given to both operations caused him to look freshly about him, as people under such circumstances usually do.
>
> Immediately, he saw in advance--a few people intervening, but still so near to him that he could have touched them by stretching out his arm--Tattycoram and a strange man of remarkable appearance: a swaggering man, with a high nose, and a black moustache as false in its colour as his eyes were false in their expression, who wore his heavy cloak with the air of a foreigner. . . . Clennam followed them, resolved to play this unexpected play out and see where they went. . . .
>
> When he rounded the dark corner, they were walking along the terrace, towards a figure which was coming towards them. If he had seen it by itself, under such conditions of gas-lamp, mist, and distance, he might not have known it at first sight, but with the figure of the girl to prompt him, he at once recognized Miss Wade (p. 530-532).

Through the entire incident--and it is a long one--we overhear parts of their conversation, track them through the streets of London, and watch them disappear into a doorway, just as Clennam does. The nearly pure interior view is sustained with a relaxed and natural control and is very effective in initiating and maintaining the tone of suspense. As a rule, one would have expected Dickens to convey the suspense in this scene dramatically, so it is a mark of his special achievement in this novel that he choose instead to rely on the interior method. That choice of a less comfortable and less familiar narrative mode demonstrates Dickens' commitment to making Clennam's inner life the central focus of the novel.

Clennam's chance encounter with Tattycoram, Blandois, and the misanthropic, bitter Miss Wade, who had been on the ship with Clennam

on his trip home, resolves its mysterious connection with his life while he lies ill in the Marshalsea, during which time the narrative focus is on Little Dorrit. She has a remarkable interview with Mrs. Clennam, who discloses the secret of Clennam's birth to her and secures her promise to remain silent at least until after her death.[27] She witnesses the collapse of the Clennam house and the simultaneous destruction of Blandois. With the help of Mr. Meagles and a repentent Tattycoram, she obtains the papers identifying Clennam's natural mother, which had been entrusted to Miss Wade by Blandois. Thus into Little Dorrit's hands comes the answer to the mystery that has haunted Clennam and which first inspired his interest in her.

Little Dorrit holds the key to his life; she, not the revelation of his true mother, holds his salvation out to him because he must in the course of the novel learn to accept his future, not his past. She is the only child born inside the gates of the Marshalsea; it is her true home. Significantly, it becomes a home for Clennam before he can accept her. They must both be intimately associated with the same place before they can leave it to make a new home together.

[27]Hewitt regards the burning of the codicil at the end of the novel as the "destruction of the truth about sexual passion" because he contends, such a view fits in better with the essential sexlessness of Little Dorrit, her inability to function as a representative of that force of passion which, logically, could alone rescue Arthur from the paralysis of feeling which has been caused by its systematic suppression, and with the asexual, paternal, nature of Clennam's feeling for her," p. 131.

Dickens uses the interior method primarily to chart the course of Clennam's relationship with Little Dorrit. In the following examples, we shall see Clennam move towards the destination of his long quest for a place in life.

Clennam first sees Little Dorrit sitting, almost hidden, in a dark corner of his mother's room during his first visit home. Later he asks Affery who she is and is told her name but nothing more. On subsequent visits he is able to watch her doing needlework and other odd services around the house. He notices that his mother has a barely detectable special regard for this tiny, retiring young woman.

> . . . Mrs. Clennam's eyes had some individual recognition in them, which seemed reserved for her. As there are degrees of hardness in the hardest metal, and shades of colour in black itself, so even in the asperity of Mrs. Clennam's demeanor towards all the rest of humanity and toward Little Dorrit, there was a fine gradation . . . . It was not easy to make out Little Dorrit's face; she was so retiring, plied her needle in such removed corners, and started away so scared if encountered on the stairs. But it seemed to be a pale transparent face, quick in expression, though not beautiful in feature, its soft hazel eyes excepted. A delicately bent head, a tiny form, a quick little pair of busy hands, and a shabby dress--it must needs have been very shabby to look at all so, being so neat--were Little Dorrit as she sat at work.
>
> For these particulars or generalities concerning Little Dorrit, Mr. Arthur was indebted in the course of the day to his own eyes and to Mrs. Affery's tongue (pp. 52-53).

His curiosity about her associates itself with his obsession about the family secret, and at last he resolves "to watch Little Dorrit and know more of her story" (p. 56). This resolve on Clennam's part is the narrative justification for devoting the two subsequent chapters to a flashback of the history of the Dorrits' imprisonment in the Marshalsea. Even though great space is given the Dorrits' fluctuations of fortunes, the technique of introducing them as a direct result of Clennam's

interest in the youngest daughter prevents the narrative from losing its primary focus. No matter where Dickens may take us and no matter how many secondary subjects the story may take up, we begin and end with Clennam.

Clennam immediately falls into the habit of regarding her, as does everyone else, as a child. In his first opportunity to observe her for any length of time he finds

> . . . that her diminutive figure, small features, and light spare dress, gave her the appearance of being much younger than she was. A woman, probably of not less than two-and-twenty, she might have been passed in the street for little more than half that age. Not that her face was very youthful, for in truth there was more consideration and care in it than naturally belonged to her utmost years; but she was so little and lithe, so noiseless and shy, and appeared so conscious of being out of place among the three hard elders [Mrs. Clennam and Mr. and Mrs. Flintwinch], that she had all the manner and much of the appearance of a subdued child (p. 52).

This way of regarding her recalls Clennam to himself and makes him self-aware. For example,

> The little creature seemed so young in his eyes, that there were moments when he found himself thinking of her, if not speaking to her, as if she were a child. Perhaps he seemed as old in her eyes as she seemed young in his (p. 95).

Presumably, he certainly would not wish to be considered old; his unconscious attitude towards her is not, perhaps, entirely paternal.

The interior method also expresses Clennam's subconscious attitudes and feelings for Little Dorrit. For instance, on a particularly blustery day he responds to her look of fragility and defenselessness against the weather by wanting to "take her up in his arms and carry her to her journey's end" (p. 173). Instead of interpreting his feeling as adult love, he attributes it to his compassion and to "his habit of considering her a child apart from the rest of the rough world."

As their relationship develops, other considerations enter Clennam's perception of her. As soon as he discovers where she lives, he arranges a visit to her father's room. He stays past closing time and is locked in for the night. Lodged at the prison Snuggery, he speculates on the prison and the circumstances that have brought him there.

> The novelty of the place, the coming upon it without preparation, the sense of being locked up, the remembrance of that room upstairs, . . . and above all of the retiring childish form, and the face in which he now saw years of insufficient food, if not of want, kept him waking and unhappy.
>
> Speculations, too, bearing the strangest relations towards the prison, but always concerning the prison, ran like nightmares through his mind while he lay awake. . . .
>
> And these involuntary starts of fancy were, after all, but the setting of a picture in which three people kept before him. His father, with the steadfast look with which he had died, prophetically, darkened forth in the portrait; his mother, with the arm up, warding off his suspicion; Little Dorrit, with her hand on the degraded arm, and her drooping head turned away. . . .
>
> A swift thought shot through his mind. In that long imprisonment here, and in her own long confinement to her room, did his mother find a balance to be struck? I admit that I was accessory to that man's captivity. I have suffered for it in kind. He has decayed in his prison; I in mine. I have paid the penalty (pp. 88-89).

The next morning Clennam turns out of his bed as soon as day breaks and paces about the courtyard until the gates open. The lightheadedness he had felt before Flora and a sense of having lost his bearings come upon him as he looks towards the sky above the towers of the prison.

> The walls were so near to one another, and the wild clouds hurried over them so fast, that it gave him a sensation like the beginning of sea-sickness to look up at the gusty sky (p. 90).

The image sustains Clennam's metaphorical drifting with the current. At times it is pleasant and other times, such as in this instance, not.

A later reference to Mr. Dorrit as a "passenger aboard a ship in a long voyage, who has recovered from sea-sickness, and is impatient of that weakness in the fresher passengers . . ." (p. 223) recalls Clennam's seasickness and presages his eventual return to the Marshalsea as one of the "fresher passengers" himself.

Clennam's relationship to Little Dorrit is ambiguously that of father-daugher, benefactor-beneficiary, and man-woman. Clennam's view of himself as a father-surrogate has some internal narrative and thematic justification since Little Dorrit has never had in Mr. Dorrit a functioning father; she has cared for him and for her brother and sister as though she were the mother. Clennam, on the other hand, missed having a real mother. When he is in prison, Little Dorrit fills that role for him. It is necessary for them both to have had the natural filial attachments and experiences before they can properly meet their responsibilities as husband and wife, and as parents of their own children.

At first, Clennam is distracted from the latent romantic possibilities in his attachment to Little Dorrit by his infatuation for Pet Meagles. On his initial walk to Twickenham, the interior method reveals Clennam's taking stock of his life up to that point and considering some plan for the future.

> First, there was the subject seldom absent from his mind, the question, what he was to do henceforth in life; to what occupation he should devote himself, and in what direction he had best seek it. He was far from rich, and every day of indecision and inaction made his inheritance a source of greater anxiety to him. As often as he began to consider how to increase his inheritance, or to lay it by, so often his misgiving that there was some one with an unsatisfied claim upon his justice, returned; and that alone was a subject to outlast the longest walk. Again, there

> was the subject of his relations with his mother, which were now upon an equable and peaceful but never confidential footing, and whom he saw several times a week. Little Dorrit was a leading and a constant subject: for the circumstances of his life, united to those of her own story, presented the little creature to him as the only person between whom and himself there were ties of innocent reliance on one hand, and affectionate protection on the other; ties of compassion, respect, unselfish interest, gratitude, and pity. Thinking of her, and of the possibility of her father's release from prison by the unbarring hand of death--the only change of circumstance he could foresee that might enable him to be such a friend to her as he wished to be, by altering her whole manner of life, smoothing her rough road, and giving her a home--he regarded her, in that perspective, as his adopted daughter, his poor child of the Marshalsea hushed to rest. If there were a last subject in his thoughts, and it lay towards Twickenham, its form was so indefinite that it was little more than the pervading atmosphere in which these other subjects floated before him (pp. 187-188).

He recognizes the similarities between his and Little Dorrit's childhoods, the common sufferings of being imprisoned by one's home and by the mentality of one's parents. Mrs. Clennam's imprisoning aberration is her Calvinism; Mr. Dorrit's is his elaborate pretensions to gentility. The forcing of these obsessions on their children has been more crippling than their inability to leave their physical environments. When Little Dorrit's father dies, Clennam wants to give her a home, that which he most lacks and the final object of his search. Ironically, Little Dorrit's home instead becomes Clennam's when he enters Marshalsea as a prisoner.

For all his habit of regarding her as a child--as in fact his adopted child--he cannot accept the idea that she might have a lover. When Little Dorrit rejects Young John Chivery's offer of his love, Mrs. Chivery tries to enlist Clennam's aid against the Dorrits, who, she erroneously believes, have ruled against the romance because of the Chivery's humble station in life. Clennam is incredulous.

> She was so confident in her exposition of the case, and it was so undeniably founded on correct premises in so far as the relative positions of Little Dorrit and her family were concerned that Clennam could not feel positive on the other side. He had come to attach to Little Dorrit an interest so peculiar--an interest that removed her from, while it grew out of, the common and coarse things surrounding her--that he found it disappointing, disagreeable, almost painful, to suppose her in love with young Mr. Chivery in the backyard, or any other such person. On the other hand, he reasoned with himself that she was just as good and just as true, in love with him as not in love with him; and that to make a kind of domesticated fairy of her, on the penalty of isolation of heart from the only people she knew, would be but a weakness of his own fancy, and not a kind one. Still, her youthful and ethereal appearance, her timid manner, the charm of her sensitive voice and eyes, the very many respects in which she had interested him out of her own individuality, and the strong difference between herself and those about her, were not in unison, and were determined not to be in unison, with this newly presented idea (p. 259).

It is difficult for him to accept Little Dorrit in a romantic context because, of course, her childlike and ethereal qualities argue against her sexuality. He tries to dispel this argument by reasoning that it is a weakness of his own with regard to her, and decidedly unfair to Little Dorrit. The idea is fundamentally disagreeable, "almost painful," for him, however, because he himself loves her already, although his disappointment over the loss of Pet Meagles prevents him from ridding himself of his imprisoning persona as Little Dorrit's adoptive father.

Mrs. Chivery's declaration of an attachment between Little Dorrit and her son increases Clennam's awareness of Little Dorrit's sensitivity and nervousness around him without his discovering the true cause. During one episode she is particularly upset by the delivery to Clennam of letters from her father and her brother requesting money. She begs him not to accompany her home and leaves in a flutter.

> He felt that it was better to respect her entreaty, and did not move while her slight form went quickly away from him. When it had fluttered out of sight, he turned his face towards the water [under Iron Bridge] and stood thinking.
>
> She would have been distressed at any time by this discovery of the letters; but so much so, and in that unrestrainable way?
>
> No.
>
> When she had seen her father begging with his thread-bare disguise on, when she had entreated him not to give her father money, she had been distressed, but not like this. Something had made her keenly and additionally sensitive just now. Now, was there some one in the hopeless unattainable distance? Or had the suspicion been brought into his mind, by his own associations of the troubled river running beneath the bridge with the same river higher up, its changeless tune upon the prow of the ferry-boat, so many miles an hour the peaceful flowing of the stream, here the rushes, there the lillies, nothing uncertain or unquiet? (p. 263).

It is difficult to imagine how he could consistently fail to recognize even the possibility that her agitation might be attributable to a feeling on her part for him, but his mind is on Pet and such a possibility never occurs to him.

Occasionally Clennam's feelings towards Little Dorrit are treated by the sentimental rhetoric of the following response to Maggy, the idiot woman in Little Dorrit's care. At such times the inner view of Clennam's emotions is handled with little subtlety and skill.

> Ah! But Arthur would have known what was wanting to its [Maggy's history's] completeness, though he had never heard the words Little Mother [Maggy's name for Little Dorrit]; though he had had no sight for the tears now standing in the colourless eye [Maggy's]; though he had had no hearing for the sob that checked the clumsy laugh. The dirty gateway with the wind and rain whistling through it, and the basket of muddy potatoes waiting to be split again, or taken up, never seemed the common hole it really was, when he looked back to it by these lights. Never, never! (p. 102).

The intruding voice of the narrator robs the expression of Clennam's reaction of its internal focus. The tone of the passage is, therefore, more expository than interior.

When Pancks finally uncovers the confused circumstances of Mr. Dorrit's incarceration and proves him to be a very wealthy man, the family departs the Marshalsea in grand and condescending style (Little Dorrit and her uncle Frederick excepted) to make the Continental Grand Tour. Clennam is temporarily forgotten while the narrative follows the Dorrits as they pursue Society and become intimate with the Merdles. In the meantime Pet and Gowan are married and are also travelling on the Continent while Gowan wastes Pet's dowry and idly pursues his art. When the story returns to Clennam, he is working hard at his new partnership with Doyce and resolved to "make way with the Circumlocution Office," this time in an effort to get Doyce's invention patented and into production. He has settled into a life of routine attacks on the Circumlocution Office, visits to his mother's sickroom and to Twickenham, and an occasional letter from Little Dorrit.

> He sadly and sorely missed Little Dorrit. He had been prepared to miss her very much, but not so much. He knew to the full extent only through experience, what a large place in his life was left blank when her familiar little figure went out of it. He felt, too, that he must relinquish the hope of its return, understanding the family character sufficiently well to be assured that he and she were divided by a broad ground of separation. The old interest he had had in her, and her old trusting reliance on him, were tinged with melancholy in his mind: so soon had change stolen over them, and so soon they had glided into the past with other secret tendernesses (p. 518).

This pargraph from an extensive interior passage reveals Clennam in the process of reflecting on his own place in life. Only in relationship to Little Dorrit does he tackle the problem of self-definition. She acts as a mirror for him, making him self-aware and bringing him into focus.

> When he received her letter he was greatly moved, but did not the less sensibly feel that she was far divided from him by more than distance. It helped him to a clearer and keener perception of the place assigned him by the family. He saw that he was cherished in her grateful remembrance secretly and that they resented him with the jail and the rest of its belonging.
>
> Through all these meditations which every day of his life crowded about her, he thought of her otherwise in the old way. She was his innocent friend, his delicate child, his dear Little Dorrit. This very change of circumstances fitted curiously in with the habit, begun on the night when the roses floated away, of considering himself as a much older man than his years really made him. He regarded her from a point of view which in its remoteness, tender as it was, he little thought would have been unspeakable agony to her. He speculated about her future destiny, and about the husband she might have, with an affection for her which would have drained her heart of its dearest drop of hope, and broken it.
>
> Everything about him tended to confirm him in the custom of looking on himself as an elderly man, from whom such aspirations as he had combated in the case of Minnie Gowan [Pet] . . . were finally departed (pp. 518-519).

At this point in his journey towards her, his conception of himself is distorted because he does not yet know she loves him.

His gradual perception of the role she has played, and continues to play, in his life grows clearer as a result of his imprisonment in the Marshalsea and especially of his occupation of her old room. John Chivery, who long ago discerned the object of Little Dorrit's love, arranges for him to have the room. Immediately it brings to Clennam's mind crowded "associations with the one good and gentle creature who had sanctified it."

> Her absence in his altered fortunes made it, and him in it, so very desolate and so much in need of such a face of love and truth, that he turned against the wall to weep, sobbing out, as his heart relieved itself, "O my Little Dorrit!"(p. 719).

Clennam is moving towards self-discovery and to a personal realization of her love. The interior method charts his mental progress towards the central relationship of his life.

> Taking in account where he was, the interest that had first brought him there when he was free to keep away, and the gentle presence that was equally inseparable from the walls and bars about him, it was not remarkable that everything his memory turned upon should bring him round to Little Dorrit. Yet it was remarkable to him; not because of the fact itself: but because of the reminder it brought with it, how much the dear little creature had influenced his better resolutions (p. 720).

In the next paragraph Dickens generalizes on Clennam's mental and emotional condition.

> None of us clearly knows to whom or to what we are indebted in this wise, until some marked stop in the whirling wheel of life brings the right perception with it. It comes with sickness, it comes with sorrow, it comes with the loss of the dearly loved, it is one of the most frequent uses of adversity. It came to Clennam in his adversity, strongly and tenderly (p. 720).

Then in an effort to dramatize explicitly the interior process, Dickens substitutes interior monologue, for reflection.

> "When I first gathered myself together," he thought, "and set something like purpose before my jaded eyes, whom had I before me, toiling on, for a good object's sake, without encouragement, without notice, against ignoble obstacles that would have turned an army of received heroes and heroines? One weak girl! When I tried to conquer my misplaced love, and to be generous to the man who was more fortunate than I, though he should never know it or repay me with a gracious word, in whom had I watched patience, self-denial, self-subdual, charitable construction, the noblest generosity of the affections? In the same poor girl! If I, a man, with a man's advantages and means and energies, had slighted the whisper in my heart, that if my father had erred, it was my duty to conceal the fault and to repair it, what youthful figure with tender feet going almost bare on the damp ground, with spare hands over working with its slight shape but half protected from the sharp weather, would have stood before me to put me to shame? Little Dorrit's." So always, as he sat alone in the faded chair, thinking. Always, Little Dorrit. Until it seemed to him as if he met the reward of having wandered away from her, and suffered anything to pass between him and his remembrance of her virtues (pp. 720-721).

The necessity that Dickens feels to abandon the interior method at crucial moments and to rely instead on the dramatic method mars the

narrative whenever it happens. The soliloquy sounds strained and unnatural compared to the even flow of Clennam's musings in the preceding paragraph. Moreover, Dickens cannot let even this quasi-interior passage carry the point with Clennam and, therefore, contrives the elaborate dramatic interview with John Chivery, which makes Clennam ludicrously stupid about Chivery's disclosure of Little Dorrit's love.

Once Clennam is faced with the prospect that she loves him, the narrative returns to the interior method as he reviews the history of their acquaintance.

> Looking back upon his own poor story, she was its vanishing point. Everything in its perspective led to her innocent figure. He had travelled thousands of miles towards it; previous unquiet hopes and doubts had worked themselves out before it; it was the centre of the interest of his life; it was the termination of everything that was good and pleasant in it; beyond there was nothing but mere waste and darkened sky (p. 733).

This new knowledge reshapes the view he has of his life. Little Dorrit has not been all the things in his life that he ascribes to her. His relationship with Doyce, for instance, was good and pleasant until he fell prey to the Merdle fever. Little Dorrit is significant because Clennam himself has made her his life's vanishing point.

His imprisonment wears heavily on him, and he begins to sink into apathy. Finally, he collapses. He is nursed back to health by Little Dorrit, who has returned from the Continent after the deaths of her father and her uncle. She reappears in the novel from the perspective of Clennam's dazed and near hallucinatory impressions while he lies ill. At first he has the blurred sense of being in a garden; a tea cup and a nosegay come slowly into focus and he delights in the

fragrance of the flowers. He wonders how they have come to him and subsides into his former half-dreaming state.

> Dozing and dreaming, without the power of reckoning time, so that a minute might have been an hour and an hour a minute, some abiding impression of a garden stole over him--a garden of flowers, with a damp warm wind gently stirring their scents. It required such a painful effort to lift his head for the purpose of inquiring into this, or inquiring into anything, that the impression appeared to have become quite an old and importunate one when he looked around. Beside the teacup on his table he saw, then, a blooming nosegay: a wonderful handful of the choicest and most lovely flowers.
>
> Nothing had ever appeared so beautiful in his sight. He took them up, and inhaled their fragrance, and he lifted them to his hot head, and he put them down and opened his parched hands to them, as cold hands are opened to receive the cheering of a fire. It was not until he had delighted in them for some time, that he wondered who had sent them; and opened his door to ask the woman who must have put them there, how they had come into her hands. But she was gone, and seemed to have been long gone; for the tea she had left for him on the table was cold. He tried to drink some, but could not bear the odour of it: so he crept back to his chair by the open window, and put the flowers on the little round table of old.
>
> When the first faintness consequent on having moved about had left him, he susided into his former state. One of the night-tunes was playing in the wind, when the door of his room seemed to open to a light touch, and, after a moment's pause, a quiet figure seemed to stand there, with a black mantle on it. It seemed to draw the mantle off and drop it on the ground, and then it seemed to be his Little Dorrit in her old, worn dress. It seemed to tremble, and to clasp its hands, and to smile, and to burst into tears.
>
> He roused himself, and cried out. And then he saw, in the loving, pitying, sorrowing, dear face, as in a mirror, how changed he was; and she came towards him; and with her hands laid on his breast to keep him in his chair, and with her knees upon the floor at his feet, and with her lips raised up to kiss him, and with her tears dropping on him as the rain from Heaven had dropped upon the flowers, Little Dorrit, a living presence, called him by his name (pp. 755-756).

The deliberately diffuse focus of the first paragraph resolves itself in the image of the teacup and the nosegay of flowers, which involves sight, smell, and touch, in the second paragraph as Clennam manipulates them. The third pargraph returns to a blurred,

impressionistic style which focuses finally on the image of Little Dorrit's face. The clear image of the mirror-like aspect of her face graphically demonstrates how much Clennam relies on her for information about himself. He does not notice what changes have occured in her; he does not notice if she is unchanged. Her face reflects his image and he sees how changed he is.

The concluding chapter contains Clennam's comprehension of the love Little Dorrit bears him.[28] The interior method reveals that he has already accepted that love without fully realizing what it means to do so. In the following passage his impressions are all of the natural scene of the autumn day outside his window and its contrast with the changeless and barren prison. Little Dorrit is reading to him, but he only half attends to her voice and not at all to what she is reading.

> Clennam, listening to the voice as it read to him, heard in it all that great Nature was doing, heard in it all the soothing songs she sings to man. At no Mother's knee but hers had he ever dwelt in his youth on hopeful promises, on playful fancies, on the harvests of tenderness and humility that lie hidden in the early-frosted seeds of the imagination; on the oaks of retreat from blighting winds, that have the germs of their strong roots in nursery acorns. But in the tones of the voice that read to him, there were memories of an old feeling of such things, and echoes of every merciful and loving whisper that had ever stolen to him in his life (p. 815).

Thus Little Dorrit becomes his true mother, symbolically because she knows who his mother was and subconsciously because he associates her voice with a time before memory when he knew his natural mother.

[28]Ross Dabney feels that as "human beings Arthur and Amy are only fitfully convincing, and their relation to each other loses some of its effect through the huddling in of essential plot connections at the end of the book," p. 94.

Again Dickens' preference for the dramatic method supersedes an interior rendering of Clennam's conversion to Little Dorrit's love and to the idea of a future life with her. One day Little Dorrit comes to his room and asks him once more if he will not accept at least half of her fortune. He refuses.

> As she looked at him silently, there was something in her affectionate face that he did not quite comprehend; something that could have broken into tears in a moment, and yet that was happy and proud.
>
> "You will be sorry to hear what I have to tell you about Fanny. Poor Fanny has lost everything. She has nothing left but her husband's income. All that papa gave her when she married was lost as your money was lost. It was in the same hands, and it is all gone."
>
> Arthur was more shocked than surprised to hear it. "I had hoped it might not be so bad," he said; "but I had feared a heavy loss there, knowing the connexion between her husband and the defaulter."
>
> "Yes. It is all gone. I am very sorry for Fanny; very, very, very sorry for poor Fanny. My poor brother, too!"
>
> "Had he property in the same hands?"
>
> "Yes! And it is all gone--How much do you think my own great fortune is?"
>
> As Arthur looked at her inquiringly, with a new apprehension on him, she withdrew her hand, and laid her face down on the spot where it had rested.
>
> "I have nothing in the world. I am as poor as when I lived here. When papa came over to England, he confided everything he had to the same hands, and it is all swept away. Oh, my dearest and best, are you quite sure you will not share my fortune with me now?" (pp. 816-817).

Her loss allows them to begin life anew on an equal footing, but because the characterization of Clennam has had its special strength in the active mental and emotional life Dickens created through the interior method, it seems unfitting for the destination of Clennam's journey, his acceptance of the future and his discovery of a home, to occur outside the stream of his thoughts and feelings. But his creator is not quite at home with the interior method and cannot bring himself to rely on it.

Nevertheless, the characterization of Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit is Dickens' only consistent attempt to enter a character's consciousness for information about how the world impresses and effects him and how he himself fashions the world. Never before had Dickens used the interior method to dominate and sustain a characterization. Dickens' characterization of Clennam is complex not because Clennam is a complex character but because the method of characterizing him makes subtle and convincing use of the interior method in collaboration with the expository and dramatic methods.

By shifting among these perspectives within the narrative, Dickens deliberately enables the reader to call his critical faculty into play even while sympathizing with Clennam. We need to back off from his character on occasion and regard him with objectivity without having our sympathetic relationship to him damaged. The regulation of the reader-character relationship in accordance with the inherent needs of a narrative demands great skill on the part of the writer, who must know, and be able to render in words, precisely when and how much identification and objectivity are required.

In his characterization of Clennam, Dickens moves among the varying degrees of reader-character identification with few lapses of credibility or effectiveness. We are called upon to identify with Clennam's despair and spiritual weariness, with his kindness and generosity, with his childlike hopefulness in his effort to help others and to find his place in the world. We feel keenly his need for companionship and his need to love and be loved. At the same time, we are made to recognize

Clennam's failures of spirit, to examine their causes and to judge their effects. Garis' objection that Dickens' new awareness of complexity in character "has not bred appropriately new methods of operation" overlooks what is for Dickens a strikingly new method of characterization, the interior method, which he had first used in Dombey. But only in his characterization of Arthur Clennam has Dickens exposed to the reader's examination and experience as a matter of sustained third-person reflection the thoughts, feelings, and unarticulated responses of a character.

Arthur Clennam emerges from Little Dorrit as a sensitive and thoughtful man whose stern Calvinist upbringing has succeeded in subduing his eager boyishness, but has failed to destroy his innate hopefulness. He has arrived at middle-age haunted by the domineering personality of his strong-willed mother and the guilt her religion has inculcated in his gentle and loving nature. The experience of his childhood has left him bruised but not, as he believes, broken. His ill-fated romance with Flora and his twenty-year bondage in China to the family business have convinced him that he is a man of no prospects, no hope, and no will. Clennam believes himself to be reconciled to his empty future. He seeks only to do someone some good in what is left to him of life. Clennam lacks certain basic Victorian virtues: tenacity, firmness, business acumen, desire for material success, force.[29] He is not a John Bull, fighting the good fight in the tradition represented

[29]Walter E. Houghton, "Part III: Moral Attitudes," The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), passim.

by novels such as Tom Brown's School Days. The Victorian age, which valued action above thought, is inimical to Clennam's natural preferences; he is caught between the two. He desires to perform good acts, to be energetic in the cause of others, to make a place for himself through his own efforts; but his quiet disposition and thoughtful nature require that he spend much time in passive contemplation.

This central attribute of Clennam's character necessitates the use of the interior method. Dickens' decision to make the dramatic center of Little Dorrit a man given to reflection committed his story to a subjective point of view. The basic activity of Clennam's story is mental and emotional; hence, his creator is obliged to render his thoughts and emotions in order to give the reader access to his character. The use of the interior method, though often experimental and tentative, is thus justified by the demands Clennam's character makes upon his characterization. The interior method is the major instrument which renders Clennam's relationship with other characters. These human relationships, the sense Clennam has of his relationship to others, embody the moral activity which enriches Dickens' characterization of him. Clennam's self-awareness, particularly his capacity for self-criticism, reveals the responsibility he feels towards those relationships.

Clennam's good intentions come to ill or nothing largely because he denies his natural inclinations. If he had not, for example, suppressed the repugnance he felt for Henry Gowan, he might have prevented the sacrifice of Pet Meagles to an unhappy marriage. He refuses to speak against Gowan on grounds of a misplaced code of

chivalry and a superfluity of self-denial. For Daniel Doyce, too, Clennam attempts to overcome his natural aversion to the making of money. He forgets temporarily that it is not valuable in and of itself. The method of characterization Dickens chose for his portrait of Clennam depicts these weaknesses in his character without diminishing the sympathy we have for him, because we have shared Clennam's experiences in his encounters with the world and because we understand from his point of view the bases for them. The expository method, which provides information about Clennam's past and the effects of his mother's Calvinism on his personality, corroborates the information provided by the interior method. Conversely, those facets of his character revealed by the dramatic method support authorial judgments. The information provided by the expository and dramatic methods enables the reader to know when Clennam's judgments are reliable and when not. The joint effect of the three methods operating on the reader's assessment of, and response to, Clennam creates the illusion that the reader is examining attributes of character, and reaching conclusions, without the ever-present assistance of the author.

In the solitary case of Arthur Clennam, Dickens' method of characterization combines the individual strengths of the three methods to endow Clennam's characterization with a richness and a complexity unique among his characters. Although Dickens may never have felt completely at home with the interior method, our experience of Clennam is dominated by our experience of his thoughts and feelings, of his struggle to overcome the influences of his past and to shape his world

to his own needs. This is how we remember Clennam, as a psychologically and morally active man whose encounter with the world we have shared.

CHAPTER IV

LOOKING BOTH FORWARD AND BACKWARD

At the end of his career Dickens finished one remarkable novel and left another unfinished. Although Our Mutual Friend (1864-65) and The Mystery of Edwin Drood (begun in 1870, the year Dickens died) are vastly different in scope, setting, and (so far as we can tell) theme, the two novels have one important similarity: the method of characterization Dickens chose for his dominant male figures, Eugene Wrayburn and John Jasper.[1] We have in the preceding chapters seen Dickens' two important experiments with complex characterizations in his portraits of Paul Dombey, Sr., and Arthur Clennam. These experiments would seem to point the direction Dickens' art would take. But that is not the direction it did take. After Clennam, Dickens returned to the more comfortable and less complex methods of exposition and drama in A Tale of Two Cities (1859) and of first-person narration in Great Expectations

[1]Taylor Stoehr believes, as I and others do, that Wrayburn is the hero of Our Mutual Friend. Stoehr says that, while Dickens' inventory of the novel's situation at the end of the second book shows that he intended Harmon to be the hero of the novel and Lizzie Hexam the heroine, neither "undergoes the sequence of actions we have learned to expect of a Dickens hero." The real hero and heroine, Stoehr contends, are Eugene and Bella Wilfer, "the two characters whose fortunes matter to us, whose stories command our interest, whose natures are explored in their actions. . . . they are the problem children whose destinies are uncertain and therefore matter to us." Unfortunately, according to Stoehr, the Bella plot is not very interesting, whereas Eugene's is very interesting and very good, Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 205-207.

(1860-61). Finally, in the characterizations of Wrayburn and Jasper, Dickens abandoned even exposition for a nearly pure dramatic method.[2]

The coolly detached, ironic, and terse[3] persona Dickens adopted for the narrator of Our Mutual Friend is perfectly suited to the dramatic method of characterization. J. Hillis Miller has observed that

> The narrator of Our Mutual Friend is in exactly the same position as the characters of the novel in relation to one another. For the narrator, the characters' inner lives are there, available, in what he can see and hear of them, their bodies, gestures, behavior, and surroundings. The reader is neither wholly outside of Wegg or Venus or Boffin, nor wholly inside. He is both inside and outside at once. Dickens keeps the objectivity of the third-person narrator. He does not give us the streams of consciousness of the characters, but presents, from the outside, their supposed consciousnesses. . . .[4]

Since it is not my intention to analyze in any detail Dickens' portrait of Wrayburn, there are only two points to be made about the rhetoric of this characterization. Wrayburn could have been as unattractive and unsympathetic a character as any of Dickens' cynical idlers--James Harthouse of Hard Times or Henry Gowan of Little Dorrit, for example. And yet from the beginning of our experience of him, we are inclined to be tolerant, amused, and even to some extent approving. Dickens achieves these responses in two ways.

[2]I have not discussed Wrayburn and Jasper in detail because, although their characters are complex, their characterizations are simple, relying as they do on a single method.

[3]J. Hillis Miller, "Our Mutual Friend," Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Martin Price (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 175.

[4]Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 290.

First, although the expository method is utterly absent in Dickens' characterization of Wrayburn, that characterization nonetheless carries an implicit authorial endorsement. Like his narrator, Wrayburn is coolly detached, ironic, and terse. Like his narrator, Wrayburn deplores and repudiates society's values. As Edgar Johnson observes, "Wrayburn's skepticism of received values . . . makes him an effective instrument for Dickens' criticism of society."[5] Thus, Dickens creates an identification between himself as narrator and his urbanely world-weary idler. It must also be admitted that Dickens always had a kind of sympathy for this character type--with its disregard for conventional social goals and values and with its passive, nonchalant attitude. All his life Dickens was on the attack against stifling and inhumane social institutions, so he must have envied Steerforth, Harthouse, Lightwood, and Wrayburn their languid, cynical refusal to get involved or even to much care. Nevertheless, Dickens has taken pains to evoke a measure of sympathy from us for Wrayburn, not so much because his hero is destined to be saved in the end by Lizzie Hexam's love but because both Dickens and Wrayburn are against the same things.

Second, although to some readers Mortimer Lightwood and Wrayburn might seem like identical twins, they are in fact differentiated almost from the beginning, and the differences between them are important to our perception of Wrayburn. At first Lightwood seems to be the more important of the two characters. He is given more to say and a larger role in the action. Wrayburn is kept very much in the background for several

[5]Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952), p. 1034.

chapters. Indeed, his emergence as a major character comes as something of a surprise, since Lightwood is the more likable of the two characters. His comments at the novel's first dinner party are less cynical and less bitter than those of Wrayburn. His character seems less hard and more tolerant than his friend's. This more favorable impression Dickens gives us of Lightwood is important because it helps us to accept Wrayburn, who is, as I have said, Lightwood's friend. We like Mortimer; Mortimer likes Eugene; hence, we too like--or at least are willing not to dislike--Eugene. Thus, when Wrayburn emerges in the foreground of the novel, he brings with him a residue of our initial response to his friend Mortimer Lightwood.

At first glance, one is tempted to conclude that the characterizations of Wrayburn and Jasper, in The Mystery of Edwin Drood, have little in common. When we think of Eugene, we remember him lounging along the riverbank or exercising his whimsically cynical wit; but we also remember being excluded from the workings of his mind. When we think of John Jasper, however, we seem to remember seeing the world from inside his dual and distorted view. That memory, no matter how vivid, arises from one—and only one—passage in the novel, its beginning.

Much attention has been paid to Jasper's stream-of-consciousness opium dream which opens Edwin Drood. But the expectation which it raises that Jasper will be to Drood what Clennam is to Little Dorrit, that is, the novel's center of consciousness, remains unfulfilled. Dickens never again permits us access to Jasper's mind. The opening impressionistic interior monologue is not an announcement of things to come; it is a typically Dickensian set-piece introduction. One has only to think of

the astonishing tours de force which open such novels as Bleak House, Little Dorrit, and A Tale of Two Cities to see the resemblance.

All of which is not to say that the opening interior monologue's effect on our perception of Jasper is insignificant. On the contrary, the impact of that one glimpse inside Dickens' tortured hero-villain is sufficient to persuade us of his dark, violent, depraved, and anguished nature--one glimpse before Dickens closes the door, heightening our sense of Jasper as an unfathomable enigma. That one instance of the interior method, in fact, dominates our memory not only of the character but also of the novel. Nevertheless, the remainder of the characterization depends almost entirely on the dramatic method, with only a rare expository comment.

While it is true, as Harry Stone asserts, that "the opening lines of Dickens's last novel . . . underline the tremendous shift which had taken place in Dickens's methods and interests since the days of Pickwick. . . . by plunging into Jasper's 'scattered consciousness' (the phrase is Dickens's) as he awakens from an opium dream,"[6] it is not true, as Stone suggests, that Dickens' portrait of Jasper is the culmination of a clear line of artistic development. That Dickens grew in his art will not be gainsaid, but it is not quite accurate to see in the sequence of his characterizations a development. What we do see, Stone points out elsewhere in his article, is "Dickens's growing artistic versatility, his increasing mastery of fresh and complicated techniques, and his constant

[6]"Dickens and Interior Monologue," Philological Quarterly, 38 (1959), 58.

and often startling experimentation."[7] What Stone does not acknowledge is that Dickens' experiments in presenting the inner life came, not at the end of his career, but in the middle.

In his portraits of Paul Dombey, Sr. and Arthur Clennam Dickens experimented with a method of characterization that reached its full flowering in the art of Henry James--interior psychological analysis. But unlike James, who preferred a consistent use of the interior method with a single center of consciousness, Dickens employs in these two unique characterizations nearly the whole range of narrative methods. Consequently, the characterizations of Dombey and Clennam are, in the terms I have chosen, more complex than a Jamesian portrait. They represent, in fact, the most complex type of characterization possible in fiction, as Earle Davis maintains. Davis believes that a novelist who attempts "several contrasting ways of telling a story . . . aims at a more complex effect than the novelist who confines himself to a carefully studied portrayal of a single character by a single technique of narrative."[8] Dickens attempted just such a complex effect with Dombey and Clennam--and for the most part, though not entirely, he succeeded.

Archibald Coolidge suggests that Dickens' shifts from one narrative technique to another are of a different order from the traditional omniscient-author point of view. Dickens, he says, changes his vantage point in concert with the shifts in plot lines. Coolidge calls this

[7]Ibid., p. 54.

[8]The Flint and the Flame: The Artistry of Charles Dickens (Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 1963), p. 74.

technique "impressionism" because Dickens usually "looked over the shoulder of one character . . . in each subplot, and when he changed subplots, he changed observation posts," thus enabling him to show "a character or event from the several points of view of a number of other characters or spectators."[9] This impressionistic technique makes the reader responsible for sorting out the several views of a character and for fitting them together, especially if those views conflict.[10]

Dickens' actual method is not as rigorously consistent as Coolidge would have us believe. Nevertheless, something of this sort does happen in his treatment of Dombey and Clennam. The information we are given about Dombey by each method of characterization conflicts enough to create in us a tension between revulsion and sympathy. We never feel, however, that Dickens deliberately leaves it up to us to resolve the conflicting views. He himself seems at times not to have a firm stance towards his subject; consequently, we see Dickens struggling to maintain his, as well as our, perspective on Dombey. Dickens' own struggle, it seems to me, more than any conscious design on his part, contributes to the tension the characterization creates in the reader. Dickens had, after all, set himself a difficult task--a task that writers of the twentieth century have been much more at home with--to induce sympathy for an unsympathetic character by making him the protagonist of his novel. For some reason, Dickens never again essayed this kind of character by a complex narrative method.

[9]Charles Dickens as Serial Novelist (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 103.

[10]Ibid., p. 104.

The only other time Dickens chose to work with a complex characterization, he chose instead a more congenial subject, Arthur Clennam. Dickens' conception of Clennam required the opposite tack from that of Dombey. Instead of asking us to be understanding and compassionate with an unlikable character, he asks us to perceive in Clennam's virtue and good-heartedness the flaws that make him weak and passive. Dickens had been to school in his portrait of Dombey; consequently, Clennam benefits from his creator's earlier experiment with treating a character's inner life. But that is not the only reason for the superiority of Clennam's portrait over that of his predecessor.

Always keener and more brilliant with human vice and folly than with virtue, Dickens probably found it easier to mix bad with good than good with bad. At times Dickens almost has to plead with us to accord Dombey a measure of tolerance, whereas he can let Clennam's weaknesses reveal themselves to us less insistently. Hence, Dickens' shifts among the methods of characterization proffer less abruptly disparate views of Clennam than of Dombey. This greater unity of characterization results from Dickens' clearer conception of Clennam than of Dombey, which in turn results from a change in his conception of evil.

In Dombey and Son Dickens is still, as in his earlier novels, localizing evil in particular characters. But in the later Little Dorrit he diffuses evil into every thread of the social fabric. Again, Clennam benefits from this profound change in Dickens' vision. Clennam's flaws are given a social context: his susceptibility to risking Doyce's money in the Merdle stock swindle, while reprehensible, is minor when placed in the context of a whole society's greed; his passivity and lack of

confidence derives understandably from his stern, vengeful Calvinist upbringing. Dombey is not so fortunate. Although we may assume that his character also has its causes in his upbringing, Dickens never makes for him the genetic argument he makes for Clennam so that his arrogant, cold nature seems almost sui generis and therefore more open to condemnation. His obsessive pride in the family business, and thus in his son, is given no social context at all.

Stanley Tick in "The Unfinished Business of Dombey and Son" believes that character must be revealed in a social, not merely a personal, context in order to constitute a significant theme rather than mere portraiture.[11] He claims that, in spite of the unusual amount of preplanning Dickens gave to this novel, it is not unified because it lacks the emphasis on commerce and business which would have provided Dombey's characterization with the social context it needs. Dickens initiated this theme in the novel's first four chapters, then unaccountably abandoned it; consequently, the economic contrast between Sol Gills and Dombey falls through completely. Tick suggests that, because Dickens was incapable at this point in his career of reconciling "financial and moral imperatives," he could not answer what should have been the novel's large question: what has pride necessarily to do with business?[12] On the other hand, Dickens' clearer sense of purpose and firmer control of his themes in Little Dorrit accounts, I believe, in large part for his

[11] Modern Language Quarterly, 36 (December 1975), 392.

[12] Ibid., p. 402.

surer, more skillful handling of the complex method of characterization in Clennam.

The complex effect at which Dickens aims in both novels, however, leads him into occasional difficulties. Percy Lubbock, because of his adherence to James' doctrines, always decried the practice of shifting among various perspectives in a single narrative. He felt that it disconcerted the reader to see the writer shift from one view of a character to another, from one character's view to another's. We are, in fact, disconcerted only when the maneauvering is awkward, obvious, or superfluous.[13] Dickens can be guilty of such disconcerting maneuvers as his announcement in Chapter 22 of Dombey and Son that "to explain why Mr. Carker reined in his horse quickly, and what he looked at in no small surprise, a few digressive words are necessary." Although this is a minor lapse in Dickens' ability to manage his intricately plotted story, it nonetheless typifies the kind of naked machinery he objected to in other nineteenth-century novelists. One of Dickens' few explicit aesthetic principles held that all parts of a novel, including authorial comment, should contribute to, not interrupt, its illusion. A writer, he believed, has to respect the illusion he creates enough not to reveal the tricks behind the magic.[14]

[13]See Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (New York: The Viking Press, 1957; 1st ed. London: J. Cape, 1921) and Louis Rubin, Jr., The Teller in the Tale (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1967).

[14]See Charles W. Bishop, "Fire and Fancy: Dickens' Theories of Fiction," unpubl. diss. (Duke University, 1970), especially pp. 291-322.

Dickens makes a more serious mistake earlier in Dombey when he has Walter Gay eavesdrop on a conversation between Carker the Manager and his older brother Carker the Junior. Gay has been the occasion of a painful interview between them. But, when Carker dismisses him, Dickens is for some reason unwilling to let him go. He wants Gay back a bit later for a scene in which Carker the Junior tells his sad story to the young man, but that in itself does not necessitate Dickens' tarnishing Gay's heretofore honorable conduct by placing him in the awkward position of eavesdropping almost with his ear to a keyhole. Dickens tries to justify Gay's behavior by having him hear one of the brothers mention his name, but the ploy does not work. Nothing is gained by having him overhear Carker castigating his brother.

> Walter passed out at the door, and was about to close it after him, when, hearing the voice of the brothers again, and also the mention of his own name, he stood irresolutely, with his hand upon the lock, and the door ajar, uncertain whether to return or go away. In this position he could not help overhearing what followed (pp. 177-178).

Florence, too, is made to do a little eavesdroppping, but it comes more naturally to her for she has developed, since Paul's death, a penchant for secrecy. During Dombey's mourning, she nightly prostrates herself on the cold stones before his closed door just to be near him. During the day she wanders unseen and unheard through the upper floors of her father's great and gloomy house. She keeps silent vigil from behind her bedroom curtains on the family which occupies the house across the street. So when Dickens places her in a garden arbor at the Skettles, we are prepared for her to overhear a lady and her young niece discussing Florence's plight, even though the scene itself is superfluous and borders on the sadistic in that it causes Florence such pain.

Dickens' decision to provide interior views of characters other than Dombey is, I believe, artistically justified. In some ways he, in fact, achieves a better balance among the points of view in Dombey and Son than in Little Dorrit because he restricts his use of the interior method to those characters who are Dombey's proper antagonists.[15] The intended interior analysis of Dombey's railway journey is countered by the more successfully rendered interior analysis of Carker's carriage journey. Both passages convey powerful impressions of broken men, the men whom Dickens plays off against each other throughout the novel.

It is also fitting that Dickens at times characterizes Paul and Florence by the interior method since thematically they stand in opposition to Dombey. We see the story from Paul's point of view in two key passages: the party at Blimber's before Paul leaves the school, and the account of his worsening health before he dies. John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson in Dickens at Work cite the decision to render parts of the novel from Paul's perspective as one of Dickens' technical innovations. They quote from a letter Dickens wrote to Forster in which he announces that Paul's illness will be "expressed in the child's own feelings. . . ."[16]

Appropriately, he does not give us access to Florence's inner life until after Paul's death, and then only by a gradual shift from

[15]With the one exception of Edith. It is, however, to Dickens' credit that he refrains from giving us Edith's inner life since much of her strength and credibility depends on the repression of her thoughts and feelings.

[16](London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1957), p. 100.

expository report to interior analysis. But no matter how thematically and structurally right it may have been to treat Florence's inner life directly, Dickens does not seem to have been aware of the effect the interior views would have on our perception of her. If Dickens had set out to examine the emotional and psychological damage a child could sustain from a cruel or an indifferent parent, he could not have drawn a more telling portrait than he did in Florence. But he instead felt he was conducting a study of a loving heart, as he entitled one of the novel's chapters. As often in his depictions of good female character, Dickens lacked the distance from his subject requisite for understanding. He cannot comprehend his own profoundly accurate insights; consequently, the characterization of Florence lacks credibility because the reader senses that Dickens misinterprets his own creation.

Florence's mortification before her father's closed door illustrates this paradox in Dickens' depiction of her.

> When no one in the house was stirring, and the lights were all extinguished, she would softly leave her own room, and with noiseless feet descend the staircase, and approach her father's door. Against it, scarcely breathing, she would rest her face and head, and press her lips, in the yearning of her love. She crouched upon the cold stone floor outside it, every night, to listen even for his breath; and in her one absorbing wish to be allowed to show him some affection, to be a consolation to him, to win him over to the endurance of some tenderness from her, his solitary child, she would have knelt down at his feet, if she had dared, in humble supplication (p. 249).

Florence's behavior revolts us, yet it exhibits an accurate insight into an adolescent girl's vulnerability to self-pity and religious adulation. Indeed, the aura of a morbid religious obsession is the scene's most disquieting quality. Far from being revolted, however, Dickens praises

Florence's masochistic worship of her father as the expression of a gentle heart's ingenuous love.

Dickens' method of characterizing Florence parallels that of Dombey. Expository report moves in each successive long passage towards an interior view. For example, in the next extended analysis of Florence's state of mind, Dickens' method lies at a midpoint between the expository and the interior methods.

> But there was one thought, scarcely shaped out to herself, yet fervent and strong within her, that upheld Florence when she strove, and filled her true young heart, so sorely tried, with constancy of purpose. Into her mind, as into all others contending with the great affliction of our mortal nature, there had stolen solemn wonderings and hopes, arising in the dim world beyond the present life, and murmuring, like faint music, of recognition in the far-off land between her brother and her mother: of some present consciousness of both in her: some love and commiseration for her: and some knowledge of her as she went her way upon the earth. It was a soothing consolation to Florence to give shelter to these thoughts, until one day--it was soon after she had last seen her father in his own room, late at night--the fancy came upon her, that, in weeping for his alienated heart, she might stir the spirits of the dead against him. Wild, weak, childish, as it may have been to think so, and to tremble at the half-formed thought, it was the impulse of her loving nature; and from that hour Florence strove against the cruel wound in her breast, and tried to think of him whose hand had made it only with hope.
>
> Her father did not know--she held to it from that time--how much she loved him. She was very young, and had no mother, and had never learned, by some fault or misfortune, how to express to him that she loved him. She would be patient, and would try to gain that art in time, and win him to a better knowledge of his only child (pp. 321-322).

Although Dickens attempts some detachment from Florence in his speculation that her fancy may be wild, weak, and childish (that is, silly), he obviously believes it to be sweet. But it is actually the kind of psychological dilemma a deeply confused child could easily fall prey to; it does not represent a healthy state of mind in spite of the fact that Dickens gives it his approval. The interior method lets us see what

Dickens cannot, but it also gives Florence's character attributes that Dickens never intended her to have.

In an increasingly despairing effort to understand why she does not have her father's love, Florence moves from paying him secret homage to self-blame and finally to a desire for death. Dombey's psychological deterioration, like his daughter's, culminates in suicidal fantasies: he contemplates the knife; she contemplates willing herself to die. Like her father's death fantasy, Florence's fantasy of re-enacting Dombey's love for Paul in her own death is rendered by the interior method.

> And now Florence began to think, if she were to fall ill, if she were to fade like her dear brother, would he then know that she had loved him; would she then grow dear to him; would he come to her bedside, when she was weak and dim of sight, and take her into his embrace, and cancel all the past? Would he so forgive her, in that changed condition, for not having been able to lay open her childish heart to him, as to make it easy to relate with what emotions she had gone out of his room that night; what she had meant to say if she had had the courage; and how she had endeavoured, afterwards, to learn the way she never knew in infancy?
>
> Yes, she thought if she were dying, he would relent. She thought, that if she lay, serene and not unwilling to depart, upon the bed that was curtained round with recollections of their darling boy, he would be touched home, and would say, "Dear Florence, live for me, and we will love each other as we might have done, and be as happy as we might have been these many years!" She thought that if she heard such words from him, and had her arms clasped around him, she could answer with a smile, "It is too late for anything but this; I never could be happier, dear father!" and so leave him, with a blessing on her lips (p. 350).

The parallel course of the father and daughter ought to have contributed to the narrative unity of Dombey and Son. Unfortunately, Dickens failed to take full advantage of it as a means of character analysis. Indeed, the interior views of Florence which enable us to perceive the unhealthy state of her mind give her character far more interest than it might otherwise have had, or than Dickens suspected. And that is the problem:

Dickens' execution of her character does not conform with his obvious intentions.

Dickens faced a similar problem in his characterization of Little Dorrit. He awkwardly announces at the beginning of Chapter 14 that "[t]his history must sometimes see with Little Dorrit's eyes, and shall begin that course by seeing him [Clennam]" (p. 166). The interior views of Little Dorrit subsequent to this announcement are strained and unsatisfactory. They attribute to her more self-awareness and conscious contrivance than are consistent with the selfless behavior which, as demonstrated by the dramatic method and as observed by the expository narrator, is the keynote of her character. For example, during her first visit to Clennam's room, she is urged to put her feet nearer the fire; instead she draws them under her skirts. The motivation for this action is disclosed by the interior method.

> Little Dorrit was not ashamed of her poor shoes. He knew her story, and it was not that. Little Dorrit had a misgiving that he might blame her father, if he saw them; that he might think, "why did he dine to-day, and leave this little creature to the mercy of the cold stones!" She had no belief that it would have been a just reflection; she simply knew, by experience, that such delusions did sometimes present themselves to people. It was a part of her father's misfortunes that they did (p. 167).

The authorial disclaimer that Little Dorrit does not herself harbor any suspicions about her father's behavior towards her only worsens the intrusiveness and falseness of the passage. What masquerades as an interior view is actually an awkward extension of Dickens' expository commentary, forcing thoughts and feelings where none exist.

A page or two later another attempt at an examination of Little Dorrit's mental and emotional life aggravates the difficulty Dickens has

handling the consciousness of a character whose credibility depends on an ingenuous disregard for self.

> She feared that he was blaming her in his mind, for so devising to contrive for them, think for them, and watch over them, without their knowledge or gratitude; perhaps even with their reproaches for supposed neglect (p. 169).

If Little Dorrit were genuinely fearful of Clennam's blaming her for deceiving her family, she would not have couched that fear in terms of self-pity and even of bitterness.

Since Little Dorrit is the novel's heroine and Clennam's complement, it would seem fitting to find some psychological interest in her characterization. Nevertheless, it is not true, as Dickens avows, that the story must "sometimes see with Little Dorrit's eyes." Nothing is gained by using her as a center of consciousness. It sheds no new understanding on Clennam's character; we have already been allowed to guess at her feelings for him from the beginning. Neither does it further our understanding of her character, but introduces instead problems in our interpretation of her relationship to herself and to her own innocent virtue. Even when the story leaves Clennam behind in London while the Dorrits travel the Continent, Little Dorrit could, and for the most part does, function as a central character without the use of the interior method.

Two other characters, Mr. Dorrit and Mrs. Clennam, are each in a single episode portrayed by the interior method. These brief psychological incursions into their characters interrupt the reader's engagement with them because they have, up to this point, been comprehended entirely from external views. The interruptions are, therefore, jarring

and objectionable. The interior passage concerning Mr. Dorrit begins on his journey back to Rome where Little Dorrit and her uncle Frederick continue to reside, after a trip to England during which he made the acquaintance of Merdle. He arrives home late, unanticipated. He mounts the stairs

> slowly, and tired, and looked into various chambers which were empty, until he saw a light in a small ante-room. It was a curtained nook, like a tent, within two other rooms; and it looked warm and bright in colour, as he approached it through the dark avenue they made.
>
> There was a draped doorway, but no door; and as he stopped here, looking in unseen, he felt a pang. Surely not like jealousy? For why like jealousy? There were only his daughter and his brother there; he, with his chair drawn to the hearth, enjoying the warmth of the evening wood fire; she seated at a little table, busied with some embroidery work. Allowing for the great difference in the still-life of the picture, the figures were much the same of old; his brother being sufficiently like him to represent himself, for a moment, in the composition. So had he sat many a night, over a coal fire far away; so had she sat, devoted to him. Yet surely there was nothing to be jealous of in the old miserable poverty. Whence, then, the pang in his heart? (pp. 638-639).

Stumbling unaware upon a revelatory scene, Mr. Dorrit gazes through the haze of his confusion upon a re-enactment of the warm, intimate relationship he once enjoyed with Little Dorrit. The inappropriate interior view invests a man who has all along been oblivious to the needs of others and incapable of meaningful self-examination with a power of perception beyond the limit of credibility.

A similar encounter with Mrs. Clennam's consciousness occurs as she has just come from the explosive and revelatory scene with Blandois, who has exposed his complete knowledge of Arthur's birth and the circumstances of his great-uncle's will, leaving money to Little Dorrit. The emotional trauma she undergoes during the scene overcomes her psychosomatic paralysis. She flees the house to seek Little Dorrit at the Marshalsea.

> Made giddy by the turbulent irruption of this multitude of staring faces [the people whom she passes as she rushes towards the prison] into her cell of years, by the confusing sensation of being in the air, and the yet more confusing sensation of being afoot, by the unsuspected changes in half-remembered objects, and the want of likeness between the controllable pictures her imagination had often drawn of the life from which she was secluded, and the overwhelming rush of reality, she held her way as if she were environed by distracting thoughts, rather than by external humanity and observation. But, having crossed the bridge and gone some distance straight onward, she remembered that she must ask for a direction; and it was only then, when she stopped and turned to look about her for a promising place of inquiry, that she found herself surrounded by an eager glare of faces (p. 787).

Nothing in the novel thus far has prepared for these sudden shifts of perspective on the characters of Mr. Dorrit and Mrs. Clennam. It is as though at the last minute Dickens decided to round out their characters in one telling interior view. A single interior passage, however, is not sufficient to give the reader an effective insight into their characters; it serves only to cloud our relationship to them.

The shifts in perspective within Dombey and Son and Little Dorrit are objectionable not because Dickens in doing so violates some arbitrary requirement of narration, that an author be consistent or that his method be pure, but because either the incidental interior views of some characters or the information disclosed is inconsistent with the terms set up by the narrative itself. The ability to handle narrative shifts unobtrusively insures a narrative's undisturbed movement and an uninterrupted relationship between reader and character. Dickens' failures with the interior method in these novels make his successes look that much better and also help to define them. The method of analyzing characterization I have used has helped to locate those successes and failures and to understand how and why one method of characterization succeeds whereas another fails.

Nevertheless, a critical method which divides the nearly infinite techniques of characterization into three types is inevitably simplistic and reductive. In order to overcome these disadvantages, I have tried to keep in view the theory that the three basic methods of characterization lie along a continuum of narrative methods. Thus, the expository, the dramatic, and the interior methods should be considered only convenient terms for major points of change from one technique to another on that continuum. The very simplicity of a three-part classification, however, can also be an advantage in that it avoids such cumbersome, and potentially confusing, terms as expository-dramatic, dramatic-interior, expository-interior, and so on; or a proliferation of different terms to account for the techniques which shade into the major divisions.

Used in an inclusive and flexible sense, this method can account for every technique of characterization without doing injustice to an author's own varied and personal treatment of character. Every sentence, every word in a work of fiction which bears upon the creation of a character leans towards one pole on the continuum or another--the expository or the dramatic method--or towards the middle--the interior method.

The terms I have adopted do not entirely satisfy. Expository and dramatic work fairly well, but interior is neither grammatically nor logically consistent with them. The only alternative seemed to be lyrical, the mode of literary language which David Lodge contends occupies the opposite pole from that of exposition (which Lodge calls

the language of logical discourse).[17] The term lyrical has the advantage of being grammatically consistent with expository and dramatic, but because of its special generic meaning, it does not accurately describe the range of language used for interior psychological analysis in works of fiction.

It would have been possible to identify the three basic points on the continuum by terms wholly unrelated to literary genre--perhaps some set of terms such as "the assertive mode," "the demonstrative mode," and "the expressive mode." But an over-fastidious concern with terminology can be more distracting than illuminating, so I chose instead to work with already familiar terms in the hope that their very familiarity would not get too much in the way of what I wanted to learn from their application to a literary text.

I have not been interested in merely classifying Dickens'--or any other writer's--methods of characterization. Simple classification cannot elucidate the literary experience. I wanted to learn about a process, about how a writer makes a character take a certain shape in the mind of a reader by creating in that reader a number of responses which add up to a particular conception of a character. That process is, in the broadest and truest sense, the rhetoric of characterization. My study of Dickens' characterizations of Dombey and Clennam differs from other studies of Dickens' characters in that it analyzes the process of creation rather than the product, that is the character itself. It

[17] Part One, Chapter 1, The Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), passim.

focuses attention, in other words, less on who a character is than on how he becomes who he is as we respond to him. It also differs from traditional discussions of point of view in its emphasis on the rhetorical relationship among author, character, and audience.

Among English literary periods and fashions, Victorian literature is perhaps most self-consciously a literature of persuasion. That I have conducted a study of Dickens' methods of persuasion does not, however, mean that rhetorical analysis is suitable only for characters in Victorian novels. Instead, I would agree with Wayne Booth and others that every literary work of every era and genre has a rhetorical function: to persuade its audience to accept its version of things. Nor does the fact that the discussion of the novels has been limited to an analysis of their protagonists mean that the rhetoric of literature is best, or only, seen as a function of characterization. My method primarily accounts for the control a writer exerts over a reader's experience of a literary work. That concern applies equally to every aspect of literature.

I would like to see many more experiments with rhetorical methods of literary criticism, particularly those which address themselves to literary personas. The most difficult task of my own study was the analysis of Dickens' persona both as implied author and as narrator. I felt again and again that I was groping for a critical vocabulary not yet born. I have felt the same frustration in trying to treat autobiography as a literary genre. The problems of a fictional narrator who is an authorial persona and of an autobiographer speaking _in propria persona_ seem not dissimilar. These are, of course, in the first instance,

problems of tone, which is for me, and I suspect for others, among the most difficult attributes of language to analyze or describe. But tone is crucial to the rhetoric of literature because it is central to a work's ability to persuade.

Rhetorical analysis can address many other central concerns of literary criticism. "Among the other vitally important functions of rhetoric," Henry Knight Miller explains,

> was to arouse and shape the expectations of an audience, to provide those clues to meaningful response that are, of course, essential. . . . The aim of the rhetorician was always to lead his audience to want certain conclusions--to create (as we should perhaps say today) a particular Gestalt that the audience would wish to see completed in the form that the speaker's rhetoric had inclined them to desire. And this, too, is the proper and necessary role of the comic novelist--perhaps any novelist."[18]

I have tried in this study to understand the ways in which Dickens shapes our expectations, our perceptions, and our responses through the three methods of characterization. The role that the arousal and shaping of an audience's expectations plays in "the total effect of a work"[19] needs a much fuller exploration, one that goes beyond a limited concern with characterization. Douglas Hewitt makes a significant point when he reminds us that

> Some of the ways in which novelists see to it that we read aright, that we do not pursue undesirable lines of thought, rely upon very simple and basic responses. Perhaps these can be taken for granted, but I do not think that in discussion of fiction at the moment it is

[18]"Some Aspects of Rhetoric in Tom Jones," Philological Quarterly, 45 (January 1966), 216-217.

[19]Douglas Hewitt, The Approach to Fiction: Good and Bad Readings of Novels (Towota, N. J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972), p. 129.

> safe to assume that the elementary will not be forgotten. At every critic's shoulder, perhaps, there should be that reader whom Tolstoy said was dearest to him, saying "I wonder what's going to happen next?"[20]

Finally, we come again to the theoretical problem with which this study began: a work of literature is both an object and a process. Although we have many critical methods for dealing with literature as object, we have few for dealing with it as process.[21] "Our ability to read closely, to elucidate patterns of imagery and to seize on symbolic overtones," Hewitt regrets, "has not been accompanied by any comparable concern for an understanding of narrative in terms of variation of pace, of tone, of demanded attention."[22] And again, rhetorical analysis provides the soundest, most comprehensive, and most flexible approach to the study of literature as process and as experience. When we have finished reading a novel, for example, we have, "or ought to have," as Hewitt says,

> a recollection of what the process of experiencing the book was like. We remember that we were surprised at some points, in suspense at others, that we wanted to hurry on in some sections and to linger in others, that sometimes our temporary expectations were fulfilled and some times they were frustrated.
>
> This awareness of the process of reading, the sequence of experiences, is what we tend to forget in critical discussion. . . . Variations of tempo, of degrees of attention, of memorability, are all elements of the novel, and so are surprise, suspense and frustration.[23]

[20]Ibid., p. 193.

[21]Ibid., p. 188.

[22]Ibid., p. 112.

[23]Ibid., pp. 188-189.

I hope that future critics will develop other rhetorical methods and critical vocabularies to elucidate the process of reading. For I believe that Lauriat Lane's eminently sensible comment on Dickens holds true for most, if not all, the world's literature. ". . . whenever and whatever Dickens' novels mean," he contends,

> they do so not assertively but imaginatively and poetically. Dickens forces us not to think but, in the highest sense, to feel; severed from artistic expression and embodiment, his ideas become truisms. It is our experience of the literary expression of these ideas that matters (my emphasis).[24]

[24]"Introduction: Dickens and Criticism," The Dickens Critics, eds. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 6.

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