Charles Dickens before 1850, with especial reference to the Child Figure in 'Barnaby Rudge' 'The Old Curiosity Shop' and 'Dombey and Son'.

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CHAPTER TEN

FACES IN THE CROWD

"...In the first of the two numbers I have written since I have been away, I forget whether the blind man, in speaking to Barnaby about riches, tells him they are to be found in crowds. If I have not actually used that word, will you introduce it?..."

Dickens to Forster, 8th June 1841.

(i)

The two supposedly separate parts of Barnaby Rudge, the domestic, divided-love plot and the public riot, are really only two parts of the same argument. Some scholars have claimed this as a weakness in the structure of the novel, that it falls into two clearly defined parts. (1). Fully to recognise Dickens' intentions in this novel we must, I think, realise that the family themes and the riot scenes are united, and are sufficiently connected to hold the work together: the riots, the human vortex to which all the leading characters are drawn, occupies the same place in the structure of the novel as the heath scenes in Lear. All the events lead up to the riot scenes in London, and all that subsequently happens to the main characters is a result of these climactic experiences; the riot scenes are thus the central action of the nove, the core of Dickens' imagining. What combines the domestic narrative and the story of social riot?

It is the idea of disunity which really combines both parts of Barnaby Rudge: the public vortex and the family division are united to form the total theme of rupture in whole performance. The novel is a study of the failure of society as a family, and the failure of the family as a society. The obvious comparison is with King Lear (2) where the rift in families is paralleled by a lack of harmony in society which is symbolised by discord in the elements. Barnaby Rudge presents a sad portrait of disintegration at all levels. The crowd and the family are not two separate worlds, but facets of the same problem: "...love cools, friendship falls off;

brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked between son and father...we have seen the best of our time." (3). Other clues which encourage the association with King Lear are the insistence on storm, turbulence, darkness and discord. Edward and Hugh Chester of course remind us of Edgar and Edmund, and the references early in the novel to bad weather, (4) emphasis on night and darkness in the scene between Joe Willet and the stranger (5) and a very interesting paragraph: "There are times when, the elements being in unusual commotion, those who are bent on daring enterprises, or agitated by great thought whether of good or evil, feel a mysterious sympathy with the tumult of nature and are roused into corresponding violence. In the midst of thunder, lightning, and storm, many tremendous deeds have been committed; men self-possessed before, have given a sudden loose to passions they could no longer control. The demons of wrath and despair have striven to emulate those who ride the whirlwind and direct the storm; and man, lashed into madness with the roaring winds and boiling waters, has become for the time as wild and merciless as the elements themselves." (6). I do not want to stretch this analogy too far, Steven Marcus throws off one suggested Shakespearian source after another - Hugh is based on Cade, he claims (7) Barnaby is Tom 'o Bedlam (8) the Ghost of Hamlet's father walks the pages of Barnaby Rudge. (9). Hugh also has marked traces of Barnadine from Measure for Measure (10) although even the fecund Processor Marcus cannot make his mind up about Hugh, later he suggests he might also be Dionysus, or Perseus or St. George. (11). What interests me is not vague possible

sources, but how Dickens uses and develops themes and ideas: it is a question of what he does with them, not where do they come from. Processor Marcus is correct about King Lear, I think; we have much evidence that Dickens was tremendously impressed by Macready's performance. Forster was ill on 25th January 1838 and unable to review Macready's performance for The Examiner, the review which eventually appeared on 4th February, the Restoration of Shakespeare's King Lear to the Stage and a paragraph quoted by Forster on January 28th were probably by Charles Dickens.

The various fortunes of these fathers, sons, masters and apprentices, are drawn to their resolution in the human vortex of the Gordon Riots. The disharmony in society is paralleled in the various tensions and disagreements in the relationship between Sir John Chester and his sons Edward and Hugh, between Gabriel Varden and his apprentice Simon, between Rudge and his son Barnaby, between John Willet and his son Joe. The return to rest in the public world is matched by the resolution of the family quarrels - one way or another.

Possibly the most complex in the novel is the relationship between Sir John Chester and his legitimate son Edward, and his bastard son Hugh. This recalls not only the Lear sub-plot but also the tale of Valentine and Orson. This was a popular story in Dickens' time. Its favour had lasted since the sixteenth century when it first appeared in Henry Watson's version. (13). It continued to be a popular nursery tale for centuries. Valentine and Orson are the two sons of Bellisant,

wife of the Emperor of Constantinople. She is wrongly accused of sin and banished. One of her children is stolen by a bear and brought up as a wild creature; the other son, Valentine, is found by her brother King Pepin, and brought up in court. After many adventures, the two brothers are reconciled. The idea of the wild man of the woods retains its fascination in the modern Tarzan stories. Dickens plays Hugh consistently as an animal. (14).

We should note how carefully Dickens introduces the character of Hugh to the reader. John Willet is talking, and from the comfort and security of his bar parlour, he dilates on the subject of the noble savage: he has already laid great importance on the part fathers play in bringing up children (a major theme of the novel) by way of praising his own performance in the paternal role, and then he goes on to tell us that Hugh's mother was hanged for passing bad notes and he graduated from cow-minding, bird-frightening, through to horse-minding "and to sleep in course of time in lofts and litter instead, instead of under haystacks and hedges." (15). At last he reached the peak of his career in becoming ostler at the Maypole. He ends by saying "that chap that can't read nor write, and has never had much to do with anything but animals, and has never lived in any way but like the animals he has lived among, <u>is</u> a animal. And...is to be treated accordingly." (16).

The idea of the animal nature in Hugh is re-inforced at every opportunity. We have already been told that Hugh is more at his ease among horses than men. (17). Chester refers

to him as a centaur (18) and to Dolly he seems "a handsome satyr" (19). When he calls to return Chester's lost riding-whip he is described entering Chester's room "followed by a dog, as rough and sullen as himself." (20). The illustration to chapter twenty three, which shows Hugh drinking and conversing with Sir John Chester in his apartment, was originally called "Orson Tamed" (21). When he leaves, Chester fells compelled to have the room fumigated: "Foh!...The very atmosphere that centaur has breathed, seems tainted with cart and ladder... Bring some scent and sprinkle the floor...take away that chair he sat upon, and air it..." (22). At a later interview, after hearing that Hugh has been dreaming of him, Chester remarks "Can't you dream in your straw at home, dull dog as you are... the next time you dream, don't let it be of me, but of some dog or horse with whom you are better acquainted..." (23). John Willet tells Chester that although Hugh looks a strange kind of servant "for horses, dog, and the like of that; there an't a better man in England than is that Maypole Hugh yonder. He an't fit for in-doors..." (24). Chester applies other animal names to him, "bruin" and "mongrel dog" (25) "centaur" again. (26). Hugh refers to himself as "a hungry wolf". (27). He goes out to his execution "with the gait of a lion" (28). This is consistently maintained to the very end, Hugh dies more brute than man: "Hugh's was the dogged desperation of a savage at the stake." (29). The effect of this, in Wolfgang Clemen's phrase, is "to make visible...the contrasting life-sphere and back-ground of the...character(s)." (30). Contrast is important, as Dickens intends the contrast to be taken with Chester's sophisticated, essentially civilised sphere.

Hugh of the Maypole.

"...that chap can't read nor write, and has never had much to do with anything, and has never lived in any way but like the animals he has lived among, is a animal. And...is to be treated accordingly."
Barnaby Rudge Chapter 11.


HKB.

Much is made of the basically accidental structure of Dickens' early works, but here in the unifying nature of the imagery, is evidence of some totality of imaginative conception. "Barnaby Rudge underwent several changes in planning," we are told, "but it probably contained two simple boy-meets-girl plots at the start. This beginning was sidetracked effectively by the historical setting, and the boys depart, are absent through most of the story, then return at the last to marry their girls. Dickens added two other melodramatic plots for his historical story, apparently seeing the first signs of the novel which would depend upon a number of alternating or balancing plots conceived around a central theme...the Rudge supposedly-dead-murderer-with-half-witted-son plot and the Sir John Chester-Hugh plot playing upon well-worn emotions. These two sequences are superimposed on history, and the various strands of action jostle each other as the pages fill up..." (31). This surely points to a haphazard piece of creation (note the vocabulary: several changes, sidetracked, Dickens added, superimposed on history, various strands jostle etc.). I am not claiming that Barnaby is a masterpiece of construction. What I do suggest is that if we look at the imagery at work, we may see there is a much more coherent imagination functioning. We may have no extant plan of the novel in Dickens' avouched handwriting (nor for that matter, have we one of Edwin Drood), this does not mean Dickens had no plan. What we do have is the evidence of the novel itself. Here we find consistency.

However piecemeal the construction may (or may not) have been, it is clear that the novelist set out with certain thematic

patterns, and on the whole, he stuck to them. Chester is there as the embodiment of parental failure, both his children have their chances in life seriously endangered because of his cynical indifference to the truly important things of life. Hugh is born of an animal association (there was, I would think, much sport at his bastardizing) and spends his life with snimals, behaving like an animal ("Finishing his speech with a growl like the yawn of a wild animal, he stretched himself on the bench again...") (32) and actually tainting his personality with animal attributes. No noble savage he! (33). In the person of Hugh Dickens seems to be attacking the ethos of "natural" (wild) upbringing. The unfortunate ostler is born a beast, and lives and dies a beast. Dickens' tendency to side with the underdog, as Professor Sylvere Monod has demonstrated, sometimes resulted in his assuming the position of an anarchist: Hugh is a case in point, his wretched origins, his terrible life, his dreadful death - all these circumstances combine to make the readers side with him in his dying words. (34).

The other extreme, which Dickens also attacks, is the urbane and successful world, the world of Sir John Chester, Hugh's father. I do not think Dickens was opposed to the idea of progress, after all he wrote glowingly of what the twentieth century was supposed to bring: "...when all towns are to be well-drained; all refuse to be made productive as manure, instead of poisoning the water we drink; all workmen's houses to exhibit cheap cleanliness instead of costly dirt; all men scorn to get drunk or to beat their wives or to starve their children; all people to learn that the worship of the Golden Calf is not the noblest exercise of man's powers..." (35).

But he seems to be set against the supercilious, smooth-faced and de-humanized result of ultra-civilization. This, he says, destroys those warm feelings, and sense of inter-personal relationship which are among the true distinguishing marks between man and the animals.

In many ways, Sir John Chester is a preliminary study for the character of Mr. Dombey, and Monsieur in A Tale of Two Cities. These characteristics, these inhumanities he detests so much, are found in great abundance in cities, and consequently London in this novel gets on the whole, a "bad press". In the scene immediately before Gabriel Varden's discovery of young Chester lying in the road, there is a gloomy description of a distant prospect of London, dark, busy, labyrinthine, swarming, clustered and noisy. (36). This is the London which Rudge calls "iron-hearted", and where the chill Chester lives. Everything about him Dickens describes as impersonal, polished, with all the life refined out of it. Two qualities Dickens stresses in Sir John, his indolence and his prediliction for lying. He is a complete contrast to Hugh. (37). He is discovered at his breakfast "in a state of perfect complacency, indolence, and satisfaction...not to mention the lazy influence of a late and lonely breakfast, with the additional sedative of a newspaper, there was an air of repose about his place of residence peculiar to itself..." (38). He is the epitome of what Dickens loathed in certain sections of the aristocracy, idle, over-educated and personally indifferent; the smooth front of an outrageous materialism. He denies the existence of love: "My dear fellow..." he tells his son Edward, "...there's

no such thing, I assure you. Now, do take my word for it. You have good sense, Ned, - great good sense. I wonder you should be guilty of such amazing absurdities. You really surprise me." (39). Although a devout believer in an immutable social structure and the efficacy of money (40), he is ashamed to own a family connection on his wife's side, who, though having wealth, had a father who "dealt in pork, and... cow-heel and sausages..." (41). But he swallowed his distaste and married her, "she stepped at once into the politest and best circles, and I stepped into a fortune, which I assure you was very necessary to my comfort - quite indispensable..." (42).

It is significant that he loathes Christmas and family affairs: "I believe you know how very much I dislike what are called family affairs, which are only fit for plebian Christmas Days, and have no manner of business with people of our condition..." (43). His view of life, as he lays it down to Edward, is one long hunt for money, a hunt for which those who are born in his station in society are especially suited by birth and by training. "...I found you a handsome, prepossessing elegant fellow, and threw you into the society I can still command. Having done that, my dear fellow, I consider that I have provided for you in life...you must do as I did;...you must marry well, and make the most of yourself... All men are fortune hunters, are they not? The law, the church, the court, the camp - see how they are all crowded with fortune hunters, jostling each other in the pursuit. The stock-exchange, the pulpit, the counting-house, the royal drawing-room, the senate, - what but fortune hunters are they filled with?..." (44).

It is interesting to compare this with Barnaby's vision of the human rat-race seen in the smoke of the fire. (45). Two other pieces of evidence for the evil of Chester's character and his failure as a man are to be found in his relations with money - a sure index of soul in the Dickens' world: he is unutterably mean (46) and believes that every men has his price, that money can buy everything. (47). Dickens leaves us in no doubt about Sir John Chester's failure as man and father: he is devoid of any understanding or awareness of feelings and passions; he fails as a father, and even disowns the name of father: after dining together in Sir John's apartments, he encourages Ned to have some wine - "It brightens the eyes, improves the voice...you should try it, Ned." "Ah father!" cried his son, "if - " "My good fellow," interposed the parent hastily...and raised his eyebrows with a startled and horrified expression, "for Heaven's sake don't call me by that obsolete and ancient name. Have some regard for delicacy ...Good God, how very coarse." "I was about to speak to you from my heart, Sir..." "Now do, Ned, do not...talk in that monstrous manner... Don't you know that the heart is an ingenious part of our formation - the centre of the blood vessels and all that sort of thing - which has no more to do with what you say or think, than your knees have?... The hearts of animals...are cooked and devoured, as I am told, by the lower classes, with a vast deal of relish. Men are sometimes stabbed to the heart, shot to the heart; but as to speaking from the heart, or to the heart, or being warm-hearted, or cold-hearted, or broken-hearted, or being all heart, or having no heart - pah! these things are nonsense Ned." (48).

Sir John Chester and his Son.

"Don't you know that the heart is an ingenious part of our formation - the centre of the blood vessels and all that sort of thing - which has no more to do with what you say or think, than your knees have?"
Barnaby Rudge Chapter 32.

The critical light in which Dickens here places Chester is sharpened by our knowledge of the actions he has taken to destroy the romance of Edward and Emma Haredale, and by the picture on the wall shown in the illustration. Chester is seen lounging on a couch, Edward - with his hand on his breast, is downcast, while on the wall, Abraham raises the dagger of sacrifice against his son. (49). Chester is ashamed that his son should show such passion and affection, and hopes there is no reflection of his own character in this behaviour. (50). His view of marriage is of a contract: "Marriage is a civil contract; people marry to better their worldly condition and improve appearances. It is an affair of house and furniture, of liveries, servants, equipage, and so forth. The lady being poor, and you poor also, there is an end to the matter..." (51).

He is, like Mr. Dombey in Dickens' later and more penetrating treatment of the same theme, a believer in the cash nexus of all relationships: marriage - an affair of two hearts - is to him a matter of contract, sale and delivery. Both Chester and Dombey combine the attributes of good breeding and immoral behaviour, in Dr. Johnson's celebrated dictum, "the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing master." (52). It is to Edward's credit that he can see his father for what is he worth, a man spoiled by the world and its hypocrisy (53) and his utterance of this view is countered by Chester's insincere muttering about "his...interest...duty...moral obligations...filial affections, and all that sort of thing..." (54). His final threat is to remind Edward that his father (Chester's) had a son whom he disinherited and cursed one morning after breakfast. (55).

This makes Edward try once again to appeal to his father, whom he addresses as "Father". He says how dreadful it is for a son to offer his love and duty and be repelled in every way, and begs for confidence and trust to exist between them. His advances are refused, and Chester sends him to the Devil. (56). Dickens here shows the complete failure of the relationship between father and son. Professing to wish to maintain Edward's interest all the time, he has systematically destroyed everything in Edward's life which the boy loved. He gives instructions to his servant that Edward is never to be admitted again. Significantly he no longer refers to him as his son, but as "that gentleman who has just gone out." (57). The irony of this part of the novel is that Chester treats both his sons, the legitimate and the illegitimate, with equal inadequacy and indifference.

The portrait of Edward and his father which Dickens gives us is full and sharp. Chester thinks that everyone is as evil-natured and mean as he is. In conversation with Emma, for example, he suggests that Edward will already have told her that he is "cold-hearted, calculating, selfish..." (58) and she replies that she has never heard him spoken of in harsh or disrespectful terms "You do a great wrong to Edward's nature if you believe him capable of any mean or base proceeding..." (59). This tells us much about Edward, and much about his father.

Chester invariably acts a part (60) and is frequently described as cold (61) which is a <u>motif</u> we shall find later in

Mr. Dombey. Hugh speaks for both sons when, at the end of the novel, he curses the father who though he never publically owned to his paternity, "in his conscience, owned me for his son" (62) Chester has thus failed them both.

(ii)

Another family group examined in the novel is the Varden household, particularly the relationship between Gabriel Varden and Simon Tappertit. Varden was to have been the original hero of the book (63) and was obviously a character that Dickens took great pains in creating. I have the definite feeling that Dickens admires Varden, and all he stands for.

We should note, I think, the obvious healthiness, the goodness and cleanness of the Clerkenwell where honest Gabriel lives: "There were gardens to many of the houses, and trees by the pavement side; with an air of freshness breathing up and down... Fields were nigh at hand, through which the New River took its winding course, and where there was merry hay-making in the summer time..." (64). This places Gabriel in "the good old days" - the days so robustly symbolised in The Maypole, honest, clean-living days, before railways and speculators. The novelist spends many words underlining the cleanness of the street where Varden lives, but the total effect is strangely eighteenth century, of the world of Dresden figures, Le Petit Trianon, and Pope's Pastorals. (65).

It does not matter for our purposes at the moment whether Dickens successfully uses the pastoral convention or whether his assumed Arcadianism creaks a bit; the point to grasp is

that by placing Varden in such a background he is indicating the character's innate goodness and wholesomeness. However quaint, grotesque and a-symmetric the house and shop may have been, "there was not a neater, more scrupulously tidy, or more punctiliously ordered house, in Clerkenwell, in London, in all England..." (66). And "honest Gabriel" (as the author calls him) is a worthy denizen of this backwater of suburban respectability. When we first meet him, Dickens describes him as a "bluff, hale, hearty" man, "in a green old age: at peace with himself, and evidently disposed to be so with all the world... there was no disguising his plump and comfortable figure..." (67).

He is a man in the Cheeryble mould, obviously, and we would expect his humour and goodness to be externalised in a good table; good food and drink are the outward and visible symbols of the inner goodness of spirit: "It was a substantial meal...over and above the ordinary tea equipage, the board creaked beneath the weight of a jolly round of beef, a ham of the first magnitude, and sundry towers of buttered Yorkshire cake, piled slice upon slice... There was also a goodly jug..." (68). In this we can immediately sense that Gabriel Varden is the inverse of Chester; Varden is plump, honest, warm and generous. He has the unmistakable Dickensian hallmarks of goodness. He seems to belong quite naturally to the world of "marry England" symbolised by the Maypole. This cosy, unchanging and friendly world is placed by Dickens in direct contrast to the darkness of London, and the listless frigidity of Sir John Chester's tiny world. Although there is a noticeable element of antiquity, drowsiness and decay in the opening section

of the book devoted to describing the Maypole, Dickens says quite clearly "It was a hale and hearty age though, still; and in the summer or autumn evenings, when the glow of the setting sun fell upon the oak and chestnut trees...the old house, partaking of its lustre, seemed their fit companion, and to have many good years of life in him yet..." (69) and is thus an exact counterpart to Varden himself, whose goodness is also quietly insisted upon by his swearing by the good book, "All true, my dear...true as the Gospel, Doll" he says. (70).

The good nature of Gabriel is also brought home in contrast to his wife's coldness and bad-temper. When Dolly and her mother come home by coach Miggs greets them by exclaiming "Oh gracious! how cold you are! Goodness me, Sir, she's a perfect heap of ice." (71) and a few lines after this, when Gabriel suggests to her that someone ought to see to Dolly because she has been frightened, Dolly breaks down and weeps. Mrs. Varden is completely indifferent: "...Mrs. Varden expressed her belief that never was any woman so beset as she; that her life was a continued scene of trial; that whenever she was disposed to be well and cheerful, so sure were the people around her to throw...a damp upon her spirits..." (72) and though Dolly is truly ill "it was rendered clear to the meanest capacity, that Mrs. Varden was the sufferer..." (73). Varden's good nature has the power seemingly to radiate a mist and fog dispelling light of its own. (74). Despite his wife's mockery of his joining the volunteer militia at his time of life, he continues to give his services, to defend her and all other women "and our own fireside and everybody else's, in case of need." (75).

"...What on earth do you call it unchristian for! Which would be most unchristian, Martha, - to sit quietly down and let our house be sacked...or to turn out like men and drive 'em off?" (76). In almost all the Varden family scenes the patience of Varden with his nagging wife, who is so ably supported by Miggs, and the trouble his coquettish daughter brings to mankind, is a model of fatherliness. As he walks out to his arms practice he showers "friendly greetings like a mild spring rain" (77). I would not go so far as Angus Wilson, who believes that "Female domination of the home is clearly in Dickens' view one sign of general social dissolution" (78) because I do not think Varden's home is dominated by the women. Although out-numbered, Gabriel triumphs, by virtue of his patience, tact and fortitude. His bigness of soul even allows him to show an almost paternal care for Tappertit (79) but he reserves the right to be indignant about Simon's membership of the Protestant Association. (80). He does not physically prevent him from leaving the shop: "Go thy ways, Sim...I have done my best for thee, poor lad..." (81).

Dickens puts into Varden's mouth the voice of reason and good sense, he can see that nothing is so powerful as a good thing perverted to an evil purpose, "when religion goes wrong, she is very wrong..." (82). He is able to bring home to Mrs. Varden and Miggs that by supporting the Protestant Association with such energy, they had done evil, and in an impressive scene, which is both a "real" event and a powerful symbolic action, he destroys the collection box: "The halfpence and sixpences, and other voluntary contributions, rolled about in

all directions, but nobody offered to touch them... 'That' said the Locksmith, 'is easily disposed of, and I would to Heaven that everything growing out of the same society could be settled as easily.' ..." (83). Immediately after this Varden refuses the offer of protection from the Association. From this point on, Varden is really the hero of the piece, and seems to dominate the action. His greatest moments are in the scenes at Newgate. (84). Here, despite the very real threat of violence, he refuses to put his skill as a locksmith at the service of the rioters. Varden rises to his greatest triumph in the riot, and Mrs. Varden is improved by the experience: "...being quite an altered woman - for the riots had done that good..." (85). He pointedly remarks that the family shall not be separated any more and the return to normality is demonstrated by a scene of the Varden family at supper. (86). The end of the novel finds Varden thoroughly back to normal, full of good cheer and good wholesome food, smoking quietly "the rosiest, cosiest, merriest, heartiest, best-contented old buck, in Great Britain..." (87) - the very picture of bourgeois complacency, and Dickens seems anxious that we should understand this on more than just its face value.

Varden seems to become a symbol for traditional values, permanence and durability: a firm rock in troubled waters, a lode-star of respectability in a world in danger of losing its way: "the sun that shone upon them all: the centre of the system: the source of light, heat, life, and frank enjoyment in the bright household world." (88). This scene follows immediately the scene where Barnaby has been saved by the

concerted efforts of Haredale, Varden and young Chester. Varden is cheered as the hero of the hour, there are cheers for King George, for England and for him.

The only really dark corner of Varden's household is that occupied by the important figure of Sim Tappertit. He is a vicious parody of the stereotyped apprentice. In place of good spirits, loyalty and mischief, we have bad temper, treachery and malice. Traditionally the 'prentices were part of the household, part of the family. (89). The stock situation of master-apprentice, centrepiece of many a pantomime, finds itself in a more melodramatic world. Dickens stresses Sim's small stature, rodentiality, immodesty, and ambitious spirit (90) and the latent violence of his character. (91). Almost on first meeting him, we are told that Sim is in league with a kind of secret society who have it in their power to overthrow the establishment, "make the Lord Mayor tremble on his throne." (92).

He is essentially a two-faced character, a man with a secret double life: "He had been seen...to pull off ruffles of the finest quality at the corner of the street on Sunday nights, and put them carefully in his pocket before returning home...on all great holiday occasions it was his habit to exchange his plain, knee-buckles for a pair of glittering paste..." (93). This other, secret, self symbolises Sim's ambitious soul, the evil nature of his soul is indicated by his frequent invocations of the devil. (94).

The world where he moves with complete ease, as in his native element, is the conspiratorial, dark, rotting world of the 'Prentice Knights. What Dickens is here demonstrating is the beginnings of that estrangement between master and servants (apprentices, working people, dependents) which came about when the master became the capitalist factory owner "remote from the practice of the work which his capital set in motion, until the old social relation of apprentice and master had died out..." (95). Sim joins a subversive organisation pledged to overthrow the "masters", and the group has that common consciousness of the entire manual working class in the face of their employers discussed by social and economic historians (96) which was to become such a source of social tensions in the 19th century. (97).

It is important closely to look at the various elements which go to make up this picture of this secret society: they meet at night, in the dark (darkness is an important symbolic element of the novel) and the place where they meet is of questionable character, off the main track, through a "low-browed doorway...into a blind court, or yard, profoundly dark... reeking of stagnant odours..." (98). Here we should notice the novelist has selected items, or images, of decay, blindness, the very gateway indicative of low intelligence. The atmosphere of the criminal fringe is further generated by the sign over the door, of a bottle which swings to and fro "like some gibbeted malefactor" (99). Stagg, the proprietor of this charming retreat, is - significantly - blind, and pale of face from his underground existence. (100). The chair of state is

decorated with additional emblems of death and decay, human bones. (101).

When we first accompany Mr. Tappertit to the meeting of the 'Prentice Knights, we witness the initiation into that body of a new member, one Mark Gilbert. The ceremony is of considerable interest, and Dickens has taken great pains with it. The initiate is led in, with an armed 'prentice on either side of him. He is blindfolded and dressed as required of a new candidate, in court clothes. He is then compelled to lay his hand upon his breast and bow to Mr. Tappertit. He is then subjected to a detailed harangue from Tappertit about the purpose and merit of the society, with much reference to its "Constitution" and anti-social aims - "he described their general objects, which were briefly vengeance on their Tyrant Masters...and the restoration...of their ancient rights and holidays..."

The next part of the ceremony is the taking of the oath "which every member of that small remnant of a noble body took, and which was of a dreadful and impressive kind..." (102) aimed at the Lord Mayor, sword bearer and chaplain and the authority of the Sheriffs and Aldermen. The oath, he is told, is absolutely binding. When the oath is taken it is accompanied "with many impressive circumstances, among which the lighting up of the two skulls with a candle-end inside of each, and a great many flourishes with the bone, were chiefly conspicuous" (103) the waving about of a blunderbuss and sabre and groaning by unseen 'prentices, off stage. The whole performance is

described by Dickens as "dark and direful". (104). The scene is redolent of the early trade unions' initiation ceremonies, which would have been high-lighted only a few years before the conception of Barnaby Rudge by the trial and transportation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. (105).

Significantly the taking of secret oaths was a central issue in that melancholy trial. (106). The accounts in the papers informed the public of the secretive, furtive nature of these unions, emphasised the mumbo-jumbo, and carried reports of the sensational evidence given by one of the labourers at the Dorchester Spring Assizes. "We all went into Thomas Stanfield's house into a room upstairs," says John Lock in his evidence, reported in The Times in April 1834, "...one of the men asked if we were ready. We said, yes. One of them said, 'Then bind your eyes.' They then led us into another room... Someone then read a paper, but I don't know what the meaning of it was. After that we were asked to kneel down... Then there was some more reading; I don't know what it was about. It seemed to be some part of the Bible...and then we were told to kiss the book, when our eyes were unblinded, and I saw the book, which looked like a little Bible. I then saw all the prisoners there... They told us the rules... They said we were as brothers..." (107). The Dorset labourers were again in the news in 1836 when their sentence was remitted from seven years to two. (108). Once more combinations of working people were featured in the press in 1837 during the trial of the Glasgow Cotton Spinners. (109). Someone reading Barnaby Rudge in the early 1840's would, I think, be bound to recall the Tolpuddle cases and the public issue made of the harsh sentence as

well as the sad Glasgow affair. The genteel and middle classes feared and hated these early unions. "You have heard, I doubt not, of the Trades' Unions," said Dr. Arnold of Rugby, "a fearful engine of mischief, ready to riot or assassinate; and I see no countervailing power." (110). A cartoon of the early 1830's, now owned by the Trades Union Congress, shows a meeting of the trade unions. A stump orator harangues a crowd of raggamuffins and lay-abouts, waving his fists and shouting, "Yes gentlemen, these is my principles, no King, no Lords, no Parsons, no Police, no Taxes, no Transportation - no Nothing!" (111). Another point worth comment is the obvious association a reader of Dickens' novel, as it came out, would make between the petition to reduce the Tolpuddle labourers' sentence, the petition of the Protestant Association (112) and the habit of presenting monster petitions which became part of the tactics of working-class movements during the twenty years following the trial of the six men of Dorset. (113).

Dickens uses the figure of Sim Tappertit as a representative figure of the whole idea of malcontented working people, those who may lie dormant, causing no trouble, for years, but who glow in the breath of subversion and may become indeed burning riot if subjected to the right influences. This quality is in Simon all the time, it is simply waiting for an outlet, the slightest thing will bring it out. The name "Joe", first name of his hated rival Joe Willet, makes him walk up and down with folded arms, with the longest strides he could take, kick small articles out of his way, curl his lip, and eventually "(with) a gloomy derision...upon his features" he smiles and

utters with supreme contempt the monosyllable "Joe!" (114). He is quite unable to work that day, and can do nothing but grind. "I'll grind up all the tools. Grinding will suit my present humour well. Joe!" Whirr-r-r-r. The grindstone was soon in motion; the sparks were flying off in showers. This was the occupation for his heated spirit. "Something will come of this!... I hope it mayn't be human gore!" (115). Other important features of Sim's physical character are his numble legs and the voice inside him which whispers "Greatness".

Nor is Sim's political message to be confined to the Varden menage. He advises Gabriel to provide himself with another journeyman, "I'm my country's journeyman," he tells him, "henceforth that's my line of business." (116). "This night I have been in the country, planning an expedition which shall fill your bell-hanging soul with wonder and dismay." (117). At the height of the riots he tells Dolly Varden that he is "not a 'prentice, not a workman, not a slave...but the leader of a great people, the captain of a noble band..." (118). This language sounds like the language of O'Brien, O'Connor and the other Physical Force Chartist demagogues. It is further significant that in this scene he underlines the breach with Gabriel Varden. He does not triumph, however, and it may be felt that Dickens' treatment of him is rather harsh. At the end of the turbulence we learn that the recreant 'prentice has been burned and bruised and has had his legs shot up, "his legs, his perfect legs, the pride and glory of his life, the comfort of his whole existence, crushed into shapeless ugliness." (119).

With somewhat heavy poetic justice, Dickens shows us Simon at last, set up in business as a shoe-black, with a shop of his own "by the locksmith's advice and aid" (120) and married to the widow of a rag and bone man, whom he beats with the tools of his trade when they disagree while she retaliates by removing his artificial legs. In his case the price of attempted parricide is humiliation indeed.

I think what emerges from the novelist's treatment of Sim and Varden is Gabriel's steadfast goodness and patience, his virtue and kindness - he helps Simon right to the end - and the sorry inadequacy of Tappertit's failure to recognise his master's goodness when he sees it. After all, he was apprenticed to Varden for a long time before he turned against him. The social attitudes implied in this part of the novel are conservative, it is very much a question of "proper stations" and Dickens shows the results of servant rising against master; we are in the same world as Disraeli's Sybil and Kingsley's portrait of the desirable social hierarchy.

The question here is not whether Dickens is "radical" or not (he obviously isn't, anyway) but whether, within the terms of reference he has elected to work, he is just? The punishment of Tappertit does seem a harsh one, but Dickens' concern here, I think, is not simply to show Sim suffering for rebelling against society (this, I think, is a secondary consideration here) but as being punished for biting the hand that fed him: he is unjust and treacherous to Varden, Varden who has loved him like a father, brought him up, taught him his trade and who

finally, when he is really on his beam ends, places him once again within the economic system. I think that once we grasp Dickens' main drift in this novel Sim's fate seems inevitable if still a bit cruel. As L.W. Tantock said with reference to another great spirit of the nineteenth century so often misunderstood, Emil Zola, it is "a pity that so many professional critics devote their ingenuity to explaining how an artist could have done something quite different, much better, how he could have improved his work out of all recognition by doing what he never intended to do..." (121). It is essential to look at what Dickens was trying to do, as far as we can recognise it: I think Sim is being caned here for his revolt against the kindly paternalism of his employer.

The case is strangely a foreshadowing of the moral problems posed in Hard Times. What Dickens wants is more Christian humility, not the abolition of capitalistic industry, nor the total restraint of the working people: in the words of Professor K.J. Fielding he was "attacking society, but not - as Shaw would have it - in company with Karl Marx in order to arouse revolution, but in the hope that all who were part of it would act with greater Christian humility and charity." (122). The workers are led astray by evil rabble-rousers such as Slackbridge, but the employers are portrayed as evil, bullying, grasping materialists of the Bounderby mould - both are in the wrong. Dickens' answer seems vague, after all "charity", "humility" are easy words to utter, but difficult to define and even harder to act upon. Varden is cast by Dickens in the role of an ideal employer - everything which Bounderby isn't - and

Sim betrays him. Varden continues to be kind, but Dickens punishes Tappertit. He has done wrong against a sacred code, Professor Johnson grants Tappertit four lines in his discussion of Barnaby Rudge (123) but he has an obviously important part to play in demonstrating Dickens' politico-social philosophy. Dickens was to return to the master-'prentice situation again in Dombey and Son, where we have the other side of the coin, the master lets the 'prentice down, but the boy makes good and returns to marry the master's daughter: in the earlier treatment of this relationship, it is the 'prentice who fails the master. The situation was one which interested the novelist greatly, especially in its wider familial application.

(iii)

The story of the relationship of old John Willett and his son Joe also develops the themes of parental responsibility and filial affection. In many respects the Maypole Inn seems to stand as a symbol of warmth and goodness, a haven of comfort in the troubled paths of life: "Cheerily...shone the Maypole light that evening. Blessings on the red - deep, ruby, glowing-old curtain of the window; blending into one rich stream of brightness, fire and candle, meat, drink, and company, and gleaming like a jovial eye upon the bleak waste out of doors! Within, what carpet like its crunching sand, what music merry as its crackling logs..." (124). The inn is a token of an age that is past, a crazy, rambling gothic structure, of the age of Henry VIII, Queen Bess, with diamond paned lattice windows, sunken and uneven floors, blackened ceilings. (125).

Old John Willett, the landlord of this house, is not quite so pleasant as his inn. He is slow-witted, stubborn, with a very strong reliance upon his own merits. (126). He has a charming son, Joe "A broad-shouldered strapping young fellow of twenty," (127) whom he treats as a child; old Willett is also very mean to his son, a sure sign of an uncommendable character in the Dickens world. He is also a terrible bully to his son, and forbids him to speak: "Silence sir!...When your opinion's wanted, you give it. When you're spoke to, you speak. When your opinion's not wanted and you're not spoke to, don't give an opinion and don't you speak..." (128). Old Willett believes that there is no such thing as a boy, there are only babies and men, he has no belief in the in-between stage. We are left in no doubt in this opening conversation in the bar parlour that John Willett is stupid. Just as the novelist goes to a great deal of trouble to show us old Willett's poor qualities, his sloth, his immodesty, his bullying nature; so he presents to us Joe's good qualities, his patience, warmth and kindness. We note, for example, care and concern he shows for the stranger's horse in the opening scenes of the novel. (129). Although he treats him so roughly, Joe's father admits even to strangers, that he relies on him. He asks Chester's pardon for keeping him waiting in the porch "but my son has gone to town on business, and the boy being,...of a kind of use to me, I'm rather put out when he's away..." (130).

Though he publicly acknowledges his reliance on his son, he always keeps him short of money: "...why don't you let me have some money of my own?...why don't you father? What do

you send me in to London for, giving me only the right to call for my dinner at the Black Lion...as if I was not to be trusted with a few shillings?..." (131). To which lament his father replies: "Let him have money!... Hasn't he got money? Over and above the tolls, hasn't he one and sixpence!" (132). His neglect of his son's needs is suggested by a little aside which could easily be missed: old John Willett watches his son ride away: "John stood staring after him, or rather after the grey mare (for he had no eyes for the rider)..." (133).

He returns to the house and falls into a doze - invariably a symptom of his indifference to the world. This image is persistently used by Dickens to suggest his detachment from life, his isolation from the life going on all round him: "He looked upon coaches as things that ought to be indicted...disturbers of the peace of mankind" (134). He seems to have deliberately opted out of the idea of time - his boy will never grow up, he will always remain a boy, the times will never change; he has mastered the art of sleeping with his eyes open, and smoking in his sleep. He is king of the domain of the past, ably supported in his domestic tyranny by the cronies in the bar at the Maypole: "As great men are urged on to the abuse of power...by their flatterers and dependents, so old John was impelled to those exercises of authority by the applause...of his Maypole cronies...who would shake their heads and say that Mr. Willett was a father of the good old English sort..." (135). They all support old Willett in his policy of keeping his son down, in his place and without funds - all of them swearing that they had been so treated when they were young and that this

was why they were all such fine fellows today. John had reached such a pinnacle of domestic tyranny by stages, inch by inch, as Joe proportionately submitted, nor does he hesitate to ridicule his son in public (136) and to accuse him of trying to stir up differences between noble gentlemen and their sons.

Not surprisingly, Joe early resolves to run away from home. He is driven to leave home by the unbearable bullying of his father. I think Dickens presents the unlettered loquacity and stupid self-satisfaction masquerading as the wisdom of experience, with unbearable accuracy. Against this we must place the true, simple and honest nature of Joe, no scholar but with "little ill-will to give to anything on earth." (137).

He leaves home to enlist in the army, and is too "honest and perhaps too proud to score up to his father's charge" at his meal at the Lion (138). We should note here the element of Whittington contained in his story: he makes his fortune abroad and returns to marry Dolly, the master craftsman's daughter, Dickens stresses the similarity quite deliberately in the scene where Joe sits on the stones in London, waiting "but there were no voices in the bells" to bid him turn. (139). He does not reappear until chapter sixty seven when he returns from the colonial wars having lost an arm. He has returned in time to play an important part in the rescue of Dolly and Emma during the riot scenes. His father cannot comprehend what has happened to his son, and has repeatedly to be told. (140).

It is as if he does not wish to know what his treatment of his only son finally resulted in. Dickens shows that father and son are happily reconciled, although with John Willett's change of heart there goes no proportionate development of intelligence. Obviously impressed by the exotic place-name where the loss occurred, he is intoxicated by the name "Savannah" (The Salwanners, he calls it).

When Joe and Dolly Varden marry and take over the re-built Maypole, on his own volition old Willett retires and lives in a cottage in Chigwell where in company with Solomon Daisy, Mr. Cobb, Phil Parkes and his other old cronies he continues to play the role of landlord: "all four quaffed, and smoked, and prosed, and dozed as they had done of old". (141). Here Willett is even provided with a slate where he can score up vast amounts of food and drink in the style of his former life. He has, in fact, remained in the past, has disowned the present and retreated into his own past, has finally opted out of life. His dying words are "I'm going, Joseph...to the Salwanners..." (142).

Rudge's actions have destroyed the family unity in his household, and it is Mrs. Rudge's sad task to see that father and son never meet (143) and the cost on the family is the sanity of poor Barnaby and the premature aging of his mother. (144). Barnaby reacts as a loving son when the burderer and his boy finally meet, he puts his arms round his neck, and kisses him "(and Grip) hopped about them, round and round, as if enclosing them in a magic circle..." (145).

(iv)

The general impression of the resolution of these family problems and estrangements is vaguely conservative. Unconsciously attempting to make Dickens an honorary member of the twentieth century (146) Professor Edgar Johnson claims that "What Dickens did desire (in Barnaby Rudge) was that government should represent the people and that its concern should be the welfare of the people... He desired the laws of society to be better, not worse, than the law of the jungle; to cease being weighted against who had too little... And he made the very central theme of Barnaby Rudge...(that) uprisings were not always quelled. Unless their selfish indifference yielded to a change of heart, gentlemen might someday rue the hell-fury they had blown to burning in poor men's hearts." (147). I must confess to finding little justification for this view of the novel. I can see that Dickens shows immense sympathy for the poor people who suffer when a riot breaks out but he does not say that it is the sufferings of the poor which cause the riots. "In a word, those who suffered as rioters were for the most part the weakest, meanest, and most miserable among them. It was an exquisite satire upon the false religious cry which had led to so much misery, that some of these people owned themselves to be Catholics..." (148). Dickens says quite clearly here (a) the poor and lowly suffer in riot, (b) the cause of the riot was a false one, the riots were whipped up by rabble-rousers. It is thus a dreadful cautionary tale against riot, not a tract on the condition of the poor: the whole bias of the novel is towards maintaining social equilibrium, almost the status quo: the social hierarchies are

carefully preserved - kind marries kind (Emma marries young Chester, Joe marries Dolly, Sim is appropriately coupled and punished for rising against his master) trade is respected (Joe and Edward's partnership) the need for the maintenance of the family unit is heavily stressed. It is a call towards closing the ranks and upholding law and order. Dickens here spoke for the silent majority of his day.

There are two qualities in Barnaby Rudge which place it high among Dickens' early achievements, I believe: they are his perception of the enduring qualities in the family unit which he sensed - however misguided his real motives may have been - was likely to decline into a level of impersonal, anonymous social living; and his vivid portrayal of mob leaders, as valid a creation in the day of Feargus O'Connor as in the century which has thrown up Governor Wallace, Toni Imperiale, the Reverend Paisley, and Oswald Mosely. The book is often incoherent, but on these two points the novelist's voice is clear. These are the evils he sensed abroad.

The basis of Dickens' interest seems clear enough: the danger to society of allowing people to remain uninformed, this in many ways is a worse social danger than mere inequality: ignorance is ultimately a kind of self-incendiarism. Despite the claims everybody makes, Dickens was not writing about the Chartists, or at least, not only about the Chartists. (149). His concern, I think, is with the relationship between one human being and another in the setting of the nuclear family, and the larger reflection of that in society as a whole. (150).

He saw the decay of the family unit, a symptom of the wider moribundity which affected the whole of the modern Britain he lived in. It is no accident that the sociologists of his time were beginning to note the serious signs of decay and loosening of bonds within the family as a direct result of modern capitalised industrial living. (151). Some contemporary commentators portray the effects of industrialism on family life in extremely sordid colours, Gaskell writing in the mid-1830's described households reduced to conditions "little elevated above that of the savage. Recklessness, improvidence, and unnecessary poverty...parental cruelty and carelessness... absence of maternal love, destruction of brotherly and sisterly affection...ruin of domestic enjoyments, and social misery." (152). The basis of all Dickens' masterworks is the idea of the family, it may be in the simple melodrama of A Christmas Carol, or in the subtle and terrible vision of Dombey's world, but it is there, as one of Dickens' major messages.

Not only does Dickens point to the dangers in the individual family, he discusses the wider issues also. The idea of common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction, the unity of marriage, blood and culture - which are the basic elements in the accepted definition of the family - these are the things he wrote about, in Barnaby Rudge as much as in Great Expectations. Lord Ashley believed that the effects of industrialism would seriously erode family life, "Domestic life and domestic discipline," he said, "must soon be at an end; society will consist of individuals no longer grouped into families..." (153). I am sure this is one of the things which has given

Dickens his universality ("Nostro Carlo Dickens est mort" ran an Italian newspaper headline in June 1870) and has given him a place among mythologists: he writes about archetypal human needs and conditions.

Although varied in different cultures, the family is found to be more ubiquitous than any other human institution. (154). Observers have noted that the family began particularly to disintegrate after the First World War, and saw isolation, the impersonality of modern life as a particularly ominous sign. Some have accounted for the development of interest in Existentialism as an expected corollary of the death of the family. The situation has worsened since then, the Hippies, the drug-scene with its emphasis of the need for love, the family - however socially demented it all may seem - might be an almost blind reaching out for that essential something we may have lost as part of the cost of creating our modern, economy-dictated society. We should, I think, note the way that the captains of Japanese industry try to encourage their workers into the consoling belief that the vast business combines which own them body and soul for the duration of their working lives are really a kind of family, a family writ large. (155).

The traditional family was a stabiliser because it gave to groups of people and societies, a sense of identity, the feeling of belonging in a two way chain in inheritance and generation. It gave the individual the identification with a permanent home. (156). The Christian religion, with its essential idealization of the family unit, the Holy Family, the

great mother figure of the Madonna, the immortal - and striking - image of the son, who is at the same time the Son of God, so that there is a parallel with another, immortal and permanent family. The earliest of surnames are invariably place-names, the spirit of place, of belongingness is thus a human permanency. (157). Contemporary with the creation of Dickens' greatest novels was the work of the founder of modern sociological investigation of the family, Pierre Guillaume Frederic le Play. (158). I think Dickens grasps the same essential truth about the family, and among the saddest sights in our modern world are many of Dickens' perceptions and prophecies tragically coming true. (159). Even the most well-ordered society may become a mob. (160). The preservation of the family unit was also of course a major concern of Karl Marx (161), although he was not altogether gloomy about the ultimate effects of industry on the survival of the family unit. (162).

Throughout his novels the disintegration of the family unit, elaborately developed by Dickens, became one of the central ideas investigated by 19th century sociologists. "The family," said Hegel, "is specifically characterized by love, which is mind's feeling of its own unity. Hence, in a family, one's frame of mind is to have self-consciousness of one's individuality within this unity as the absolute essence of oneself, with the result that one is in it not as an independent person but a member." (163).

There are two main aspects of the family and the problems facing the family dealt with in Barnaby Rudge. One is that

the dissolution of the family distracts from the wholeness of the family unit, which is such a strong feature of the old patriarchal family system of the past, which the novelist presents particularly in the Varden family. (164). Varden suffers from a feeling of division from his wife and Sim, and also John Willett is another, if milder, treatment of the same theme. In Dickens' mind seems to be the idea that there must be co-operation not only within the family unit as an entity, but also this co-operation must be wider reflected within the framework of society, that the responsibility of human beings lies also within the larger collectivity of kin, government, religion, class and state. (165). It is no accident that makes Aldous Huxley stress the disappearance of family connections in his vision of the future: "...Human beings used to be...well, they used to be viviparous... Well, then they were parents... In brief...the parents were the father and mother... These are unpleasant facts; I know it. But then most historical facts are unpleasant...in those days of gross viviparous reproduction, children were always brought up by their parents and not in State Conditioning Centres..." (166). Another 20th century visionary, George Orwell (significantly, an admirer of Dickens) also gives central place to the theme of the disappearance of the family in modern times. (167).

It is this element in Dickens' work which makes him at once a Victorian, and a modern. There is frequent talk of "the world of Charles Dickens" or "the Dickens world" as if the novels form one single world: but the point really is, I think, each novel creates a world of its own, each novel explores

its own cosmos. Barnaby Rudge creates a particularly interesting one, part progressive, part idyllic, part nostalgic. Talking of the early novels Morton Dauwen Zabel has observed that they have a persistent imbalance. "...A high strung balance...a token, no doubt, of his own increasing ambiguity of mind and feeling, the sentimentalist at grips with the radical in his nature, the conformist at odds with the critic and social rebel..." (168). Varden, old Willett, the atmosphere of the Maypole seem to me characteristic of Dickens' very earliest work, but Sim, Hugh and the mob seem to introduce a new tone of discord.

The discussion of the family relationships has a special interest, and is indicative of Dickens' typically intuitive perception. The novelist here senses the early tremors which are to disturb a cosy society. Put bluntly, Dickens here predates Engels and Marx. I do not suggest he is a Marxist in all but the name, but I do propose that like the professional social analysts of the later nineteenth century, he responded to those deep changes which disturbed age-old social assumptions and attitudes: it could be argued that his reaction to what he sensed was "conservative" rather than "radical" as the novel may be interpreted as a plea to close the ranks against change, but it is enough, I think, to claim that Dickens felt that great upheaval was to come and he describes the symptoms. He tries to show the need for strong family unity in a disturbed society, of which political disintegration (riot) is only one part. The family is seen as a shelter and haven from the social storm. This continues the investigation of the family begun in Nicholas Nickleby (mixture of money and family tensions)

and continued in Martin Chuzzlewit and Dombey and Son. The family tree which opens Chuzzlewit and is usually dismissed as an unnecessary piece of Dickensian fun, is thus vital to Dickens' theme. We have Forster's evidence for the fact that he was aiming, in subject and design, at something higher in Martin Chuzzlewit: "Broadly what he aimed at, he would have expressed on the title-page if I had not dissuaded him, by printing there as its motto...'Your homes the scene, yourselves the actors here!'." (169). At a time when readers dearly loved a family saga, which inevitably begins with a family tree (170) Dickens seriously treats the theme of the family. Money, families, social tensions and social responsibilities, these are the themes, which the rest of his output are to present in terms of endless variations. (171).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR AND "DOMBEY"

"...my point is that bad and good are inextricably linked in remembrance, and that you could not choose the enjoyment of recollecting only the good. To have all the best of it you must remember the worst also..."

Dickens in a letter to Forster, 21st November 1848.

The period of the early Christmas books is a key to our understanding the miracle of Dombey and Son; it is important to approach Dombey through these stories because Dickens was here experimenting with style and form which was to lead him to that mastery of fable and symbol in the later novel, and this period of his life was one in which he returned deeply to the early years of his life and mulled over in memory and imagination those jarring experiences of his childhood. (1). The theme of memory, time past and time yet to come, was present in Dickens' imagination from the beginning of the decade. (2). In The Old Curiosity Shop (1840-1841) Nell and grandfather Trent pause to rest during their flight. It is evening. "The child sat silently beneath a tree, hushed in her very breath by the stillness of the night...the time and place awoke reflection, and she thought with a quiet hope - less hope, perhaps, than resignation - on the past, and present, and what was yet before her..." (3). The same theme is later discussed by Nell and the schoolmaster. Nell had lamented that those "who die about us, are so soon forgotten..." She is answered by the good man "There is nothing...no, nothing innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten..." (4).

In the mid-forties Dickens was experiencing what Professor Steven Marcus has called a "massive return to the past". (5). He almost always dreamed of his past: "My own dreams are usually of twenty years ago," he wrote to Dr. Stone in 1851. (6). "I often blend my present position with them, but very confusedly, whereas my life of twenty years ago is very distinctly represented..." (7). His memory of his past was always extremely

strong. In the summer of 1838 a Dr. Kuenze had written to ask him for some details of his life story. Dickens' reply, dated July 1838, is a rather cocky and sprightly resumé of his life and works, but it is extremely vivid on his childhood and days in journalism. (8). When he came to write the account of Mrs. Pipchin's establishment in Dombey he wrote to Forster "I was there...I remember it well, and certainly understood it as well, as I do now..." (9). The episodes Dickens referred to happened to him when he was eight years old. In 1844 he wrote to his former schoolteacher, the Revd. William Giles, "When I read your handwriting, I half believe I am a small boy again..." and in closing the letter he said "I am half inclined to say now, 'If you please Sir, may I leave off' - and if I could make a bow in writing, I certainly should do it..." (10). His schooldays were ever fresh in his mind. (11). I am reminded of that beautiful passage of Jung's about the interrelationship of past and present: "It is of course impossible to free oneself from one's childhood... Nor can it be achieved through intellectual knowledge only; what is alone effective is a remembering that is also a re-experiencing. The swift passage of the years and the overwhelming inrush of the newly discovered world I leave a mass of material behind that has never been dealt with. We do not shake this off; we merely detach ourselves from it. So that when, in later years, we return to the memories of childhood we find bits of our personality still alive, which cling round us and suffuse us with the feeling of earlier times. Being still in their childhood state, these fragments are very powerful in their effect. They can only lose their infantile aspect or be corrected when

they are reunited with adult consciousness. This 'personal unconscious' must always be dealt with first, that is, made conscious, otherwise the gateway to the collective unconscious cannot be opened..." (12).

This would give considerable point to A Christmas Carol, a story in which the protagonist vowed to live in the past, the present and the future. Indeed the theme of the past, the obsession with time is found in all the Christmas stories written at this period, as well as continued in Dombey and Son (the ticking watches in the scene of the birth of Paul, the clock at Dr. Blimber's and the constant re-iteration of the idea of time and mortality in the emblem of the sea which colours this whole novel). We also know that Dickens lived and experienced the story of Scrooge with great intensity, probably more so than any other of his stories as it poured out of him (13); he said he "wept and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself in a most extra-ordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all sober folks had gone to bed." (14).

He was fully confident in his own powers at this time. "I feel my power now, more than ever I did," he wrote to Forster, "That I have a greater confidence in myself than I ever had. That I know, if I have health, I could sustain my place in the minds of thinking men, though fifty writers started up tomorrow..." (15).

The Christmas season seemed to give him the release he needed after his deep involvement in Carol: "Such dinings, such dancings, such conjuring, such blind-man's-buffings, such theatre-goings, such kissings-out of old years and kissings-in of new ones never took place in these parts before... And if you could have seen me at a children's party at Macready's the other night, going down a country dance with Mrs. M., you would have thought I was a country gentleman of independent property, residing on a tiptop farm, with the wind blowing straight in my face every day" he wrote to Cornelius Felton. (16). The season of Christmas, with its idea of looking back into the past year, enjoying the present in feasting and drinking, and peering into what the future may hold in the coming year, particularly appealed to Dickens' imagination. A whole section of the Centenary Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1970 quite rightly was devoted to Dickens and Christmas. (17).

Also, of course, children are particularly associated with Christmas, and children as symbols of the divine Christ child are present in much of Dickens' feelings about the season. Children feature prominently in the Christmas Books and some of them, particularly in A Christmas Carol, The Chimes and The Haunted Man, seem to have a divine, "other worldly" quality. He was very conscious of his own past.

He was made "dark and cold" by the death of John Forster's brother (18) and was reminded of the death of poor Mary Hogarth. (19). An awareness of mortality was driven into him by the severe illness of Hood (20), the death of Sydney Smith's brother

(21) and the suicide of Laman Blanchard. (22). Dickens' own past was burned into his memory, it was in the 1840's that he told Forster some of the darker episodes from his past, as well as some of those which for happier reasons, he would never forget. (23).

Despite Forster's painfully formal style, something of Dickens' real anguish comes through in his account of his reminding the author - now wealthy and well established - of his juvenile employment in a factory off the Strand. Forster describes what must have been a piece of lumbering tactlessness in his best Podsnappian manner as an "accident". (24). Dickens was silent for several minutes. Some weeks later Dickens "made further allusion to my thus having struck unconsciously upon a time of which he never could lose the remembrance while he remembered anything, and the recollection of which, at intervals, haunted him and made him miserable, even to that hour." (25). "Shall I leave you my life in MS. when I die?" Dickens wrote and asked Forster. (26). "There are some things in that would touch you very much." He did write out a narrative of this period of his life and gave it to his friend Forster, it is the basis of the second chapter of the first book of Forster's Life of Charles Dickens.

Making due allowances for the tone of self pity noticed by C.E.B. Roberts and Hugh Kingsmill (27) these passages are immensely poignant: "No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship... The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and

hopeless... My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that, even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life..." (28). As Professor J. Hillis Miller points out, the mode of memory was not difficult for Dickens (29) and this continued throughout the novelist's life. Only months before his death he was playing a silly memory game with his family at Christmas time. At the end of a whole string of nonsense to be memorized Dickens adds - what to his family must have seemed meaningless jibberish - "Warren's Blacking, 30, Strand..." (30). As Forster reminds us, his past was literally "never-to-be-forgotten" (31).

He dreamed of the past (32) and closely related to this sense of the past is the powerful family feeling which is so marked a characteristic of these Christmas stories. His letters from America contain constant references to his family: "...You are a part, and an essential part, of our home, dear friend," he writes to Forster, "and I exhaust my imagination in picturing the circumstances under which I shall surprise you by walking into 58 Lincoln's Inn Fields. We are truly grateful to God for the health and happiness of our inexpressively dear children...I don't seem to have been half affectionate enough, but there <u>are</u> thoughts, you know, that lie too deep for words..." (33). And later, as he anticipates the return home: "...God bless you, my dear friend, As the time draws nearer, we get FEVERED with anxiety for home... Kiss our darlings for us. We shall soon meet, please God, and be happier and merrier than

ever we were, in all our lives... Oh home - home - home - home - home - home - HOME!!!!!!!!!!!!"(34).

He wrote to tell Forster in August 1842 that he had been very impressed in reading Tennyson, especially The Dream of Fair Women, which contains these lines:

> The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
> Pour'd back into my empty soul and frame
> The times when I remember to have been
> Joyful and free from blame..." (35)
> The poet wakes from his dream:
> No memory lingers longer from the deep
> Gold mines of thought to lift the hidden ore
> That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep
> To gather and tell o'er
> Each little sound and sight. With what dull pain
> Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to strike
> Into that wondrous track of dreams again!
> But no two dreams are like.
> As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,
> Desiring what is mingled with past years,
> In yearnings that can never be exprest
> By signs or groans or tears..." (36)

In November 1843 he wrote to tell Forster how moved he had been by reading Browning's A Blot on the 'Schutcheon: "Browning's play has thrown me into a perfect passion of sorrow... It is full of genius, natural and great thoughts...I know nothing that is so affecting...as Mildred's recurrance to that

'I was so young - I had no mother! '..." (37). The idea which impresses him is the backward glance to youth. Mildred exclaims "I was so young!

Beside I loved him...and had
No mother - God forgot me -" (38)

And there is Mertoun's backward glance:

I was scarce a boy...
...And you were infantine
When first I met you - why, your hair fell loose
On either side! (39)

Mertoun has a short speech at the opening of the third act on the idea of the past (40) and later in the same act Tresham reminds his sister:

"How we waded - years ago -
After those water lilies in the plash
... And you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so we stood
Laughing and crying..." (41)

These thoughts are strikingly similar to Dickens' fond recalling of the past; as Edgar Johnson observes "no emphasis can overstate the depth and intensity" of his youthful experiences. (42).

His journalism is steeped in recollections of his past and in reading these pieces, whatever our opinion as to their literary merit, we cannot but be struck by the clarity and immediacy of Dickens' experience of his past. (43).

A Christmas Carol would seem then, in its concern for the

Dickens began work on A Christmas Carol in October 1843, and the main ideas of the story seem to have been present in his mind from the Autumn of that year. He spoke in Manchester on October 5th 1843 at the first annual soiree of the Athanaeum (47) and we can see in the speech he made some of those ideas which inform the Christmas stories and Dombey and Son. In the midst of the capital of the Industrial Revolution it was befitting, Dickens believed, that there should be "a splendid temple sacred to the education and improvement of a large class of those, who, in their various and useful stations, assist in the production of our wealth... I think it is grand to know that while her factories re-echo with the clanking of stupendous engines...the immortal mechanism of God's own hand, the mind, is not forgotten..." (48). The emphasis is on the need for that sense of wonder at the world and its marvels, which is to be so beautifully developed in the education of Paul Dombey in the cause celebre, Blimber v. Glubb (1846): "The more a man who improves his leisure in such a place learns, the better, gentler, kinder man he must become... Something of what he hears or reads within such walls can scarcely fail to become at times a topic of discourse by his own fireside, nor can it ever fail to lead to larger sympathies with men, and to a higher veneration for the great Creator of all the wonders of this universe." (49).

Although the well documented association between the novelist and Miss Burdett-Coutts has been questioned as an influence on Dickens' work (50) there are present in A Christmas Carol as well as in Dombey those concerns for the education of children

child, an appropriate work for Dickens to have created during this period in his life when he was so concerned with his past. Scrooge is made to return to his own past, and to experience the sufferings of the present, and to see what the future may hold. The themes Dickens handles here are fully dealt with again in Dombey, the reduction of all human intercourse to the level of the cash nexus, the great need properly to educate the young of the nation, and the dangers of hiding oneself from the realities of what rapid social change was actually doing to human beings: Marley laments to Scrooge, "Business!...Mankind was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business." (44). The chain which Marley drags with him is a chain of his memories, forged by him link by link throughout his business life. Scrooge notices that the other phantoms hovering in the air each "wore chains like Marley's Ghost: some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free..." (45). Scrooge notices one ghost in particular, with "a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever." (46). The moral is clear, we must learn to become our brother's keeper, to be responsible for one another here and now, and that it is worship of money and business to the exclusion of all else which divides us from our fellows. These themes are to be developed in Dombey and Son.

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and the need for well directed benevolence which we can see in his direct involvement in social and educational schemes during the eighteen forties. (51).

Another very strong link with the Christmas Books and Dombey and Son is Dickens' formulation of the belief in the change of heart: it was not from "isms" - from Political Economy, government action etc., etc., that we should hope for social reform, but from within ourselves. Maybe he was unconsciously echoing Carlyle: "To reform a world, to reform a nation, no wise man will undertake; but all but foolish men know, that the only solid, though a far slower reformation, is what each begins and perfects on himself" the sage had written as early as 1829. (52). The key is misfortune, if a man is brought to a catastrophe, or to a great emotional crisis, he will be made to see people and things as he had not seen them before; thus Scrooge cries to his last visitor: "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in they must lead... But if the courses be departed from the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!...Spirit! ...hear me! I am not the man I was... Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life! ...I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future..." (53). Thus with Mr. Dombey, we note the choric "Let Him Remember it in That Room Years to Come" and the terrible complex of crises which bring about his change of heart, in that phrase of Professor Barbara Hardy's, his "heart is taken by storm." (54). The past and the present and the future must be harmoniously balanced in our outlook, Dickens seems to be saying, in order to make us

fully human.

It was just as evil to live entirely in the past as it was to neglect the past and ignore the future. We have two treatments of this theme in the later novels - Miss Havisham and Mrs. Clennam. Mrs. Clennam seems to be frozen in inanimate time: "The wheeled chair had its associated remembrances and reveries... Pictures of demolished streets and altered houses, as they formerly were when the occupant of the chair was familiar with them, images of people as they used to be... To stop the clock of busy existence...to suppose mankind stricken motionless...to be unable to measure the changes beyond our view, by any larger standard than the shrunken one of our own uniform and contracted existence...(is) the mental unhealthiness of almost all recluses." (55). Significantly, in the same novel, Dickens uses the river/sea image as an emblem of life and death and time: "Between the real landscape and its shadow in the water, there was no divison; both were untroubled and clear, and, while so fraught with solemn mystery of life and death, so hopefully reassuring...because so tenderly and mercifully beautiful." (56), and again, in the same novel: "They talked of many subjects...and so to bed and so to sleep. While the flowers, pale and unreal in the moonlight, floated away upon the river; and thus do greater things that once were in our breasts, and near our hearts, flow from us to the eternal seas." (57). At the end of Dombey and Son Mr. Dombey has experienced the climax and catastrophe of his affairs, has become reconciled to his past, is involved with his present and accepts the future in the continuance of the business in the hands of his daughter and son-in-law. (58).

The Chimes, which Dickens wrote in 1844 (59) continues the theme of time and memory: the bells of the church where this strange story opens had been consecrated by bishops "so many centuries ago, that the register of their baptism was lost long, long before the memory of man... Time had mown down their sponsors..." (60). The very title of the story is suggestive of the idea of a man looking back to his past. The title may have been suggested by Dickens' listening to the clashing of the bells at Genoa in October 1844. A few days after these discordant sounds had drifted to him on the wind, he wrote to John Forster a letter on which not a syllable was written but "We have heard THE CHIMES at midnight, Master Shallow." (61). This is quoted from the Second Part of Henry IV, and the scene between Falstaff, Silence and Shallow is a poignant mixture of comedy and pathos as these would-be men of the world, well past any "prime" they might have had, look back over their careers: "We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow," says Falstaff and is answered by Shallow "That we have...O the days that we have seen!" (62). Earlier in the scene Shallow muses on mortality: "O the mad days that I have spent: and see how many of mine old acquaintances are dead!..." (63).

Some of the atmospheric effects in The Chimes are strongly reminiscent of Charles Lamb, especially New Year's Eve, which was a particularly favourite essay of Dickens' (64) "...Of all sounds of all bells...most solemn and touching is the peal which rings out the Old Year..." (65). In the essay Lamb looks back and meets himself as a child at Christ's Hospital (66)

and laments the mortality of life: "I care not to be carried with the tide, that smoothly bears human life to eternity...I am in love with this green earth..." (67). "Do I advance a paradox, when I say, that, skipping over the intervention of forty years, a man may have leave to love himself, without the imputation of self-love?"

The pathetic leading figure of the story of The Chimes, the porter Trotty Veck, looks back to his childhood and school-days (68) and when he fails immediately to recognise what his daughter has brought him for his dinner exclaims that he would forget "his own name next! It's tripe!" (69). Meg has a kind of soliloquoy on the need for recollection, memory and communication in order to live properly and fully which is really a crystallisation of the leading motives of these Christmas stories. "How hard, father, to grow old, and die, and think we might have cheered and helped each other! How hard in all our lives to love each other; and to grieve, apart, to see each other working, changing, growing old and grey...how hard to have a heart so full as mine is now, and live to have it slowly drained out every drop, without the recollection of one happy moment...to stay behind and comfort me, and make me better!" (70). As the Old Year dies "it made appeal in its decline to have its toiling days...remembered, and to die in peace." (71). The Third Quarter opens with a vivid description of the memory: "...the sea of thought... gives up its Dead..." (72).

The Goblin of the Bell warns Trotty that those who lament

for the past do Time a wrong: those who put into the mouth of Time "a cry of lamentation for days which have had their trial and their failure, and have left deep traces of it which the blind may see - a cry that only serves the Present Time, by showing men how much it needs their help when any ears can listen to regrets for such a Past - who does this, does a wrong..." (73). He is made to see his beloved Meg as a forlorn old woman, "Changed, the light of the clear eye, how dimmed. The bloom, how faded from the cheek..." (74) and thus the theme of the past, the present and the future as all existing somehow in a world of the mind where time has no meaning - the central idea of A Christmas Carol - is presented to us again. Richard and Meg, living in terribly reduced circumstances, plough over the ancient fields of memory. (75).

Trotty is given the gift of moving in a world where past present and future exist concurrently, and sees his beloved Meg as an old woman: "He hovered round her; sat down at her feet; looked up into her face for one trace of her old self; listened for one note of her old pleasant voice..." (76). The story ends as the New Year breaks, Meg is to marry her beloved Richard and the glimpses of the terrible future held in store for Trotty by Time are seen to be bad dreams which do not veraciously foretell the future. Meg looks back "to all the years we've passed together, father..." and thinks the old man may be lonely. The whole story is given a plausible texture by the world of the dream, where time and place are subject to their own laws: "Had Trotty dreamed? Or are his joys and sorrows, and the actors in them, but a dream; himself a dream; the teller

of this tale a dreamer, waking but now?..." (77). As Taylor Stoehr suggests, the world of the dream is one in which Dickens was able to move in and explore with a strange and compelling appropriateness, the incidents in his fiction having their own special kind of language, "with its own lexicon and grammar..." (78).

As the main emblem of Time and Memory Dickens uses the death of the old year and the birth of the new, redolent with suggestions of death and re-birth, life and death, all the associations of Auld Lang Syne. It is the Spirit of the Chimes who reveals to Trotty his past, present and future. "I know that our inheritance is held in store for us by Time," the old man exclaims, "I know there is a Sea of Time to rise one day, before which all who wrong us or oppress us will be swept away like leaves. I see it on the flow!..." (79). As in A Christmas Carol, here in The Chimes, Dickens weaves a story in the pattern of a dream, using the threads of his own return to the past, his own fears, dreams and hopes. The result is at once both intensely personal and strangely universal. The frequent attempts by superior literary persons to sweep these tales under the carpet as not worth the attention of serious examination is really a fear of their simple yet immense potency.

The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain, which originated as early as 1846 (80) is of the same period as Dombey and shares with that remarkable book a certain gloominess and tenebrous tone. He wrote to Forster in the summer of 1846 to say that

he had been dimly "conceiving a very ghostly and wild idea... It will mature in the streets of Paris by night..." (81). He showed Forster the opening sections in September 1847. (82). It was a story in which the novelist felt himself deeply involved, and one which lived particularly for him; behind the facetiousness of the tone, a letter to Miss Burdett-Coutts is quite revealing: "...The Haunted Man says he thinks he will want a little fresh air shortly. I think of taking him down to Brighton next week..." (83).

There are several direct references in the story to the main features of the novelist's state of mind during the actual period of the story's composition. Like his protagonist Redlaw, Dickens was suffering from a sense of strain in his work. (84). Dickens was burdened with memories from his past, and was overwhelmed by the recent illness and death of his sister Fanny, whom he dearly loved. Significantly Professor Edgar Johnson names a chapter in his Charles Dickens, His Tragedy and Triumph which deals with this moment in his life, The Haunted Man. (85). In part he seems to resolve some of these pre-occupations in the story; he wrote to Forster that "the point is that good and bad are inextricably linked in remembrance, and that you could not choose the enjoyment of recollecting only the good. To have all the best of it you must remember the worst also..." (86) and the experience of his sense of companionship with her is obviously behind the essay he published in Household Words in 1850 only two years after her death, A Child's Dream of a Star: "There was once a child... He had a sister, who was a child too, and his constant companion. These two used to wonder all day long. They wondered at the beauty of the

flowers..." (87). She had been in delicate health for some time, and in November 1846 she broke down while singing at Manchester at a party. (88). It was found that she had tuberculosis. Dickens had her examined by his friend Dr. Elliotson and for a time there was some hope of her recovery. Elliotson believed that her lungs were not affected at this stage (89) but she gradually became worse and coughed all the time, she could sleep only when drugged. (90). In July 1848 she became much worse. "A change took place in poor Fanny about the middle of the day yesterday," he wrote to Forster on July 5th. (91). "...Her cough suddenly ceased almost, and, strange to say, she immediately became aware of her hopeless state; to which she resigned herself...with extraordinary sweetness and constancy. The irritability passed, and all hope faded away ..." (92). Dickens was with her to the end. Coming out of her sickroom into the warmth and brightness of a summer's day he was quite overcome with grief. (93).

Dickens very poignantly transposes his emotions on his loss to the character of Redlaw, who has made a pact with his evil spirit to have his memory taken away - believing he will be happier in its loss. Old William Swidger is talking of his departed wife: "You remember my poor wife, Mr. Redlaw?" The Chemist answered yes. "Yes?" said the old man. " - She was a dear creetur. - I recollect you come her one Christmas morning with a young lady - I ask pardon, Mr. Redlaw, but I think it was a sister you was very much attached to?" The Chemist looked at him, and shook his head. "I had a sister," he said vacantly. He knew no more. "One Christmas morning," pursued the old man,

"that you come here with her - and it began to snow, and my wife invited the young lady to walk in, and sit by the fire that is always a burning on Christmas day... I was there; and I recollect...she read the scroll out, that is underneath that picter. 'Lord, keep my memory green'. She and my poor wife fell a talking about it; and it's a strange thing to think of, now, that they both said (both being so unlike to die) that it was a good prayer, and that it was one they would put up very earnestly, if they were called away young... 'My brother,' says the young lady - 'My husband,' says my poor wife. - 'Lord, keep his memory of me, green, and do not let me be forgotten!' " (94).

Dickens is here showing that it is no good hoping that memory will brush all unhappy recollections under the carpet: we must come to terms with life; memory - like life itself - is happy and unhappy things, gay and sad, hope and disillusion, fondness and indifference, warm and inclement - this is the very fabric of life: to put a caveat in the mind will seriously dull one's apprehension of life (the wretched child Redlaw finds is the emblem of a soul without a mind and feelings. He knows neither love nor hate, consequently is only "alive" in the physical sense;).

Redlaw, like Dickens himself, desperately needs to come to terms with his past, his present and his future. We see him in this scene with his memory impaired: he cannot feel sorrow at this recollection of his sister, for he cannot feel anything: "Tears more painful, and more bitter than he had

ever shed in all his life, coursed down Redlaw's face... 'Philip!...I am a stricken man... You speak to me, my friend, of what I cannot follow; my memory is gone'." (95). It is not fanciful to see in this story the novelist's gradually adjusting himself to his past; as Forster has recorded (if we needed other evidence) the memory of his sister and their childhood together, was sharply vivid to him and made - in a way - more painful by the sad circumstance of her early death. (96). As Forster shows, this experience was also used by Dickens in the essay The Child's Dream of a Star, and here Dickens projects himself, like Scrooge - into his future; he foresees his old age "consoled still under the successive domestic bereavements...by renewal of that vision of his childhood" (97) and he sees himself lying on his death-bed he says "My age is falling from me like a garment, and I move towards the star as a child. And O my Father, now I thank thee that it has so often opened to receive those dear ones who await me..." (98).

Another very strong feature of The Haunted Man is the use Dickens makes of it as a vehicle of the bitterness he felt about his childhood, this has been commented on by Angus Wilson. (99). Everyone seems to be aware of the fact that the Chemist seems to be a haunted man (100) "listening to some old echoes in his mind." (101). The Spectre which visits him is really the evil spirit of his own nature, externalised as an apparition; it reminds him of his own past: "...neglected in my youth, and miserably poor, who strove and suffered... No mother's self-denying love...no father's counsel, aided me... My parents, at the best, were of that sort whose care soon ends..." (102).

He has a close friend to whom he gave all his love: not all, Redlaw reminds him, "I had a sister" (103). "Such glimpses of the light of home as I had ever known had streamed from her. How young she was, how fair, how loving!... She came into the darkness of my life, and made it bright...I hear her in music, in the wind, in the stillness of the night..." (104). The unashamed subjectivism of these lines must strike us forcibly: the self-centred pity at his early hardships which we know, marked him for life. (105). There is also his overwhelming love for his sister and his sense of personal achievement against great odds. His sister lives to see him become famous (106) and then dies. (107). It is these sad reflections which make the wretched man wish that he could lose his memory. The theme of memory and old age has already been presented to us by the person of old Swidger, who has the best memory in the world although he is eighty-seven: "There never was such a memory as my father's... He don't know what forgetting means," his son says of him. (108). Significantly, father and son and daughter are decorating the house with holly, whose evergreen associations had a special meaning for Dickens.

These then, were the main considerations in the novelist's mind as he approached the moment of Dombey; he returned to his own childhood, recalling the suffering and humiliations he never really outlived. He sensed the passing of time, ideas of mortality invaded his consciousness. He sought to come to terms with his own past, present and future. He experienced the loss of beloved members of his family and circle: these themes are at the basis of Dombey and Son, for I believe that

in the character of Florence he portrays himself, neglected and disowned; the inhumanity of Dombey himself stands for the indifference Dickens felt his parents showed him, and in the death of Paul he attempts to portray his own anguish at the sufferings of his sister Fanny. These are the personal themes which work their way into the matter of Dombey, the public, the social themes of Dombey he had explored in the Christmas Books too, the need to give children their place in the world, the failure of money as a basis for life, the need for individual reform (social reform from within, self-generated, not grafted on by legislation or dogma from outside) and the manner of presenting these themes in the form of his own unique mixture of fairy-tale, allegory and myth he evolved in the period of The Christmas Books. Dombey then, was a return to the past, and a venture into the new and the unexplored.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE ANATOMY OF "DOMBEY AND SON"

"...may I not be forgiven for thinking it a wonderful testimony to my being made for my art, that when...I sit down to my book, some beneficent power shows it all to me, and tempts me to be interested, and I don't invent it - really do not - but see it, and write it down... It is only when it all fades away and is gone, that I begin to suspect that its momentary relief has cost me something..."

Dickens in a letter to Forster: undated, quoted in Forster's Life of Charles Dickens Book IX Chapter i.

"...the cutting open of the wolf by the Hunter and the restoration of Little Red Cap to life, which is no part of the English story, seemed familiar to me, as if I had read it before..."

Dickens in a letter to a German lady, dated 3rd April 1847. Letters edited by Dexter Volume II page 21.

(i)

Dickens was proud of Dombey and Son. "I have a strong belief, that if any of my books are read years hence, Dombey will be remembered as among the best of them..." he wrote to Forster in September 1849. (1). I think his pride well justified. We are fortunate in that we know a great deal about Dombey's conception, development and creation. (2). The two most revealing pieces of evidence we have, I think, are a letter to Forster which the novelist wrote in July 1846 and the design for the cover of the serial parts. Dickens' letters to Hablot Browne about the Dombey illustrations are very specific, he was anxious about the designs, and was always giving a hint here and a suggestion there. (3). What we have here laid bare are the very bones, the very marrow of the basic structure of Dickens' imagining of this novel. "I design to show Mr. Dombey 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 propose showing her learning all sorts of things, on 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 for refuge 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 arm's 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 for that matter - as a mere convenience and handle to him. The death of the boy is a death blow, of course, to all the father's schemes and cherished hopes... 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 round 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 feelings 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 the dead boy whom, in his way, he loved so well too. So I mean to carry the story on, through all the branches and off-shoots 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 his 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..." (4).

Thus the major elements in the structure of the narrative were clear to him at an early stage, as this was the covering letter sent with the first four chapters. (5). Some authorities consider that he had the subject well in mind as much as six months before this time. (6). At this stage Dickens was sure of the place which Susan Nipper and Polly Toodle were to play in the novel, as a link which holds the parts of the novel

together. (7). His conception of the character and function of Walter Gay was to change a great deal: "About the boy...I think it would be a good thing to disappoint all the expectations that chapter seems to raise of his happy connection with the story and the heroine, and to show him gradually and naturally trailing away, from that love of adventure and boyish light-heartedness, into negligence, idleness, dissipation, dishonesty, and ruin... I could bring out Solomon Gills and Captain Cuttle well, through such a history..." (8). Some of this was to change, much of it to intensify, but I cannot accept the view that the direction of the novel floundered as a direct result of Dickens' over-working himself in trying to produce his usual Christmas book at the same time. (9). There is, it is true, evidence that he was feeling the strain of so much work (10) at this time, but if we consider the "difficulties" (11) too clinically I think we neglect the main evidence we have of Dickens' real powers at this time - I mean the evidence of Dombey and Son as a work of art.

Contemporary readers - and reviewers - unaware of Dickens' creative agonies, found the novel worthy of praise: "The readers of Mr. Dickens must be happy to find him again in his proper walk, and as original and amusing as ever." was an early comment. (12). "The good ship Boz is righted, and once more fairly afloat" proclaimed Chamber's Edinburgh Journal. (13). The public were, it is true, puzzled by the course the novel took after the death of Paul (14) but praise for the opening was universal: The Economist believed that it showed "neither newspaper writing nor newspaper have dried up in Dickens those

exquisite sources of pathos and tenderness..." (15). The Sun praised Dombey almost persistently without a break during its serialisation. "...An old friend has left us - the voice of a dear favourite is silent - Dombey and Son is completed..." wrote Charles Kent, editor of The Sun in April 1848. (16). People generally noticed that in some respects it was a new departure in Dickens' work, there seemed more in it, it seemed more carefully constructed, it seemed a richer work. I especially like the story in Forster's Life of the old charwoman who said to Mrs. Hogarth that she never thought there was a man that could have put together Dombey: "Being pressed further as to what her notion was of this mystery of a Dombey" she confessed "Lawk ma'am! I thought that three or four men must have put together Dombey!" Dickens took this as a compliment. (17). She was a perceptive critic, Dombey is a very rich work.

The original cover of Dombey is an important piece of evidence: it is elaborate and detailed. We are given the full title, Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, Wholesale, Retail and for Exportation. This style of title was new for Dickens, and struck out in a new direction, away from the previous mode of "life and adventures" of a leading character. This novel plainly is more of a social study, there is an air of greater seriousness about the work. (18). At the apex of the design sits Mr. Dombey, enthroned in a massive arm chair. (19). His dias is a large cash-box, the throne and box are supported on a flowing structure of cash boxes, ledgers, court guides, directories and playing-cards. It is the kind of dream-like memory chain we have seen before entwining Jacob

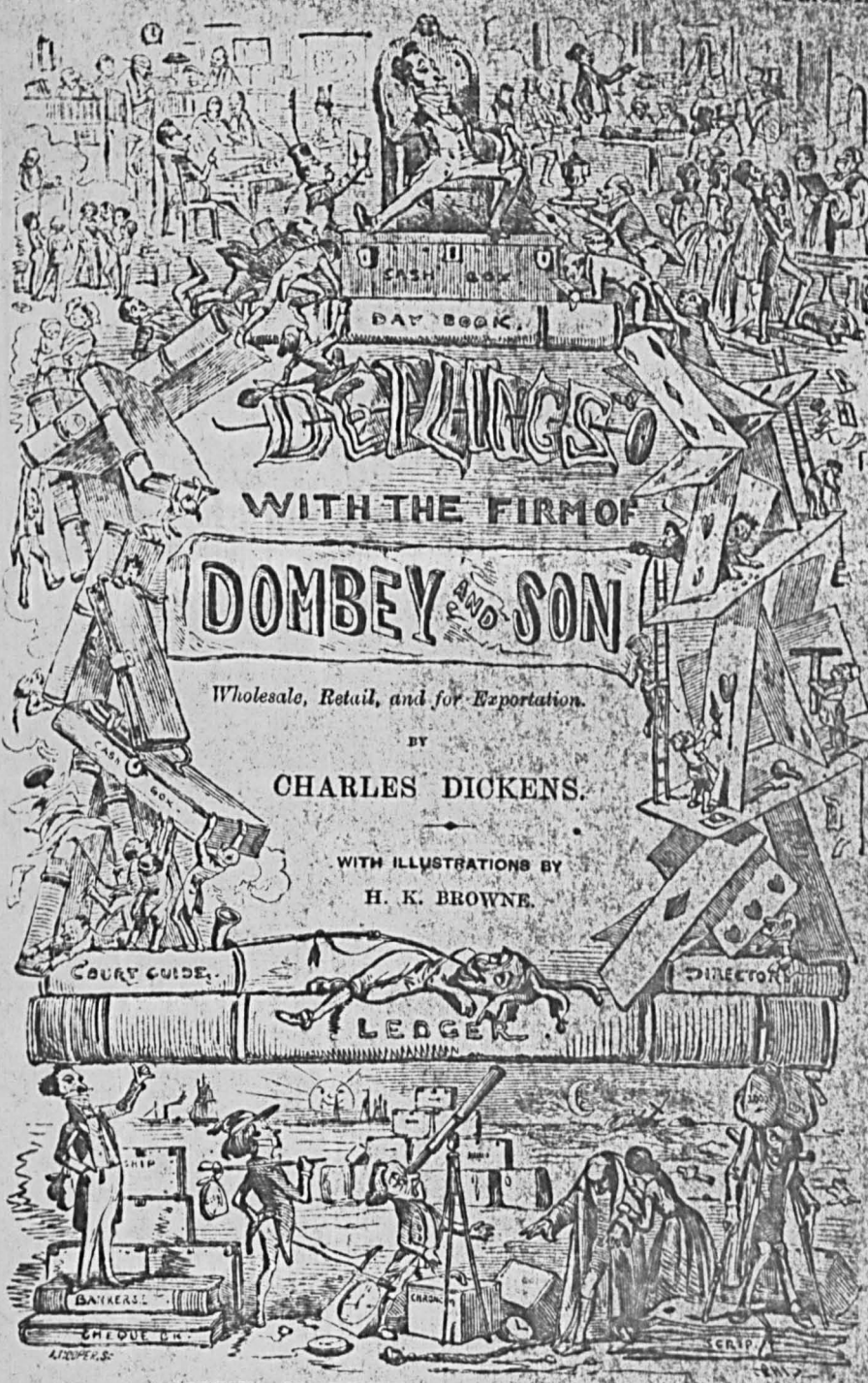
Marley. These are the emblems of Dombey's world and the element of speculative risk is represented in the playing-cards: a powerful double image, of flimsiness and of the nature of gambling. This we have seen before in Grandfather Trent. This image is given extended treatment in the body of the novel where we see Mr. Carker at work at Dombey and Son's office, as a man playing cards: "The general action...pausing to look over a bundle of papers in his hand, dealing them round in various portions...dealing, and sorting, and pondering by turns - would easily suggest some whimsical resemblance to a player at cards. The face of Mr. Carker...was in good keeping with such a fancy. It was the face of man who studied his play, warily: who made himself master of all the strong and weak points of the game...who was crafty to find out what the other players held, and who never betrayed his own hand..." (20).

The design is almost allegoric, as Dickens wrote to Forster, it shadows out "(the) drift and bearing of the story." (21). Butt and Tillotson suggest that there is in this design "a narrative line" which represents "part of the moral curve of the narrative. The line of prosperity and promise runs upward from the left of the centre...and down through the tumbling house of cards on the right." (22). But I think the implication of the design is towards <u>general instability</u>: the ledgers and boxes on the left are not solidly, firmly piled, they are tumbling as precariously as the cards on the right. The drift of the design is that the whole of business life is based on insecure foundations. The minute figures which swarm in and out of the boxes, ledgers, cards, are all attempting to build, to re-inforce this disintegrating structure - there are ladders,

Original cover of Dombey and Son.

"I think the cover very good: perhaps with a little too much in it, but that is an ungrateful objection."
Dickens in a letter to Forster, early September 1846.

N° I. OCTOBER. PRICE 1s.



Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation.

BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

H. K. BROWNE.

LONDON: BRADBURY & EVANS, WHITEFRIARS.

AGENTS:—J. MENZIES, EDINBURGH; J. MACLEOD, GLASGOW; J. M'GLASHAN, DUBLIN.

bricks, ropes, hods of masonry, and at the bottom left people are actually getting crushed under the foundations! The whole of this business edifice is mounted on a vast ledger, held aloft by two figures; on the left Mr. Dombey, young, upright and vigorous; he holds the structure up with the thumb of his left hand, his right hand casually in his pocket; he stands on bankers' books and checks, this side seems to stand for "Prosperity". On the right we see the figure of Dombey, crippled, broken and prematurely aged, hobbling on crutches on a plinth of "scrip" - this is Dombey at the nadir of his fortunes. On the left we have the rising, healthy sun, a ship going out on a prosperous voyage, on the right the sickly moon and a shipwreck. In the foreground other figures of importance in the novel; Walter Gay sets out as Whittington to seek his fortune, unmistakable in his cap and neckerchief bundle over his shoulder, Sol Gills with one of his telescopes, and the faltering Dombey supported by his "Good Genius" Florence. Present also are those two recurring groups of images of Dombey and Son, symbols of mortality, life, reconciliation and continuity - the sea and clocks and watches. (23). Little figures at the top of the page show baby Paul in his nurse's arms, a school scene, an office, Dombey in the Commons, the second marriage of Mr. Dombey. So at this early stage we have a fairly clear narrative outline, accompanied by the symbols and images which are to enforce and colour the tale. The frontispece to the first complete edition of 1848 adds more details of the actual narrative element of Dombey and Son and stresses the all-pervasive emblem of the sea and the harmony, reconciliation and love attained in eternal life - the message which the waves were always saying. (24).

Professor Hillis Miller has argued that the tendency to spatialise the symbols in a novel in the process of analysing its effect, which he believes is taken over largely from the criticism of poetry, lyric poetry, is not successful. (25). It may work very well with lyric poetry, he says, which is usually short. So short that it exist almost in a single moment. A novel, he suggests, does not exist in a single moment, it is a long temporal structure (26), and therefore we may say with less justification that in a novel there can be a pattern or design of symbols or metaphors which makes the structure of the work. "Here you are on page 300, in the middle of a certain passage. The other passages which echo this passage exist only as peripheral things rather distant from the passage at hand. Nobody has total recall of Our Mutual Friend at any moment..." (27). But I cannot feel that this in any way erodes belief in the metaphoric or symbolic structure of a novel, because - most important of all - it grossly underrates the deep effect of symbol and metaphor on the imagination. We do not need "total recall" (which after all, implies merely the regurgitation of programmed data) because symbolism reaches far deeper into the mind and the sensibility than just the level of conscious memory. I cannot see why we allow symbolic structure to a short lyric poem, and disallow it to a novel - which is only a "long imagining" - and a poetic drama. It is only when we examine the amazing symbolic structure of plays like Othello and King Lear that we begin to appreciate the makings of them. The symbolism of a novel does, I believe, exist "spatially" as well as "temporally". We do not need total recall, far from it, to respond to the metaphoric structure

of Dombey and Son. Professor Miller's dictum neglects a very serious aspect of the evidence: putting aside the effect or impression made on the reader of Dickens - whether he has total recall or not - did Dickens himself have a metaphoric-symbolic structure as a totality when he wrote his novels? We must remember, I think, that the so-called "symbolism"of Dickens' writing has this characteristic quality, that it is frequently, almost invariably, real; it is usually an intrinsic ingredient in the narrative, it is not stuck on from the outside in order to dress up a story with a bit of imagery and symbolism. It is the normal, natural and believable, used symbolically. We think of the storm at the very centre of David Copperfield - on one level a piece of credible drama, but obviously used by Dickens as a "mortal storm". Or the use of the sea in Dombey and Son. The sea is a natural element quite rightly associated with the important London merchant Dombey, but Dickens uses this symbolically as well. The journey of Nell and her grandfather is a real journey through real places, but it also carries the connotation of the mythical journey through life to the life everlasting. With Dickens, and this to me is one of the immortal wonders of his art, the real and the symbolic live and grow together, and in essence the symbolic assumptions are present from Dickens' earliest imagining of the novel. (28).

What makes Dombey such an impressive work of art really suggests itself from a consideration of the letter where Dickens discusses the germinal ideas of the novel, and the frontispiece and cover: what is impressive is the way that Dickens combines story and moral, fable and symbol. Themes

Frontispiece to the first complete edition of Dombey and Son (1848).

"It is from the life, and I was there - I don't suppose I was eight years old; but I remember it all as well...as I do now. We should be devilish sharp in what we do to children..."
Dickens in a letter to Forster, 4th November 1846.

are given out, or suggested, then developed, orchestrated and recapitulated. Dombey has an almost "symphonic" quality. I think it is this quality in the novel which so "surprises" and "astonishes" critics: Dr. Leavis says several times in his discussion of the novel that he is astonished at this and that element. (29). Professor Harry Stone confesses that "If one reads Dickens' novels chronologically, one is astonished, upon beginning Dombey and Son...to find that Dickens has achieved a totally new mastery." (30). Professor Sylvere Monod also is convinced that Dickens' "manner has undergone profound changes ... It is clear that his artistic development has continued through the long period of quasi-silence that came to an end with the first number of Dombey..." (31). The point I want to make is not that this is the same old Dickens of the early novels, but I do want to make quite explicit my belief that Dombey and Son, read in the light of a study of the preceeding novels, is an inevitable stage in the development of a great and maturing literary artist. Dombey should not "astonish" or "surprise" us - we should admire it, God knows we should, but it can be seen to be the work of the same artist who created Barnaby, with its complex plot structure and analogous interrelationships, its concern with the family; the same imagination which created The Old Curiosity Shop with its symbolic and allegoric elements and its penetrating portrayal of innocence in a money-world; the same mind which produced Martin Chuzzlewit, with its central treatment of hypocrisy, seeming to do good while really perpetrating evil, and its strong presentation of the allegory of the journey; we should think also of the Christmas Carol with its attack on money values, the symbolic

presentation of good and evil, warm and cold, of Tiny Tim - another suffering innocent - and of the strange dream-world of The Chimes: we should also consider Dickens' own obsession at this period with his own past, his own childhood, with the idea of memory. Sylvere Monod adds in a footnote that the silence was only "quasi" because "several Christmas Books were published in the meantime. Yet, however intrinsically valuable and interesting, these small volumes do not concern the historian of the Dickensian novel." (32). Dr. John Lucas, alone of all the critics I have consulted, really sees the continuity of Dickens' writing in the eighteen-forties, and discusses the links in the novels and short stories between Barnaby and Dombey. (33).

(ii)

The sea, that "authentic symbol of a non-human power whose chief characteristics are reconciliation and continuity...a place of the incessant repetition of a murmuring speech which no human ears can understand...the place of origin and ending, the place from which all things come and to which they go..." in Professor J. Hillis Miller's words, the sea is presented to us at the outset. (34). We are given the guiding principles 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..." (35). At the moment of the death of Mrs. Dombey the image of the sea is again recalled: "The Doctor gently brushed the scattered ringlet of the child (Florence) aside from the face and mouth of the mother. Alas how calm they lay there; how little breath

there was to stir them! Thus, clinging fast to that slight spar within her arms, the mother drifted out upon the dark and unknown sea that rolls round all the world." (36).

We should notice several things about Dickens' use of this symbol. One is a matter of verbal texture: the beautiful and masterly way in which the words lead, seemingly without conscious premeditation, to the idea of the sea - the words "calm" "breath to stir them" and this leads to "clinging fast" and to "that slight spar" and there, finally, the awesome, ancient symbol of the sea, an image, in Dr. Daleski's phrase, of "the course of life itself, leading from a point in the present through an unknown future, to death..." (37). But we should also be aware of the variety of suggested meanings and overtones Dickens uses in the symbol of the sea; it represents also the duality of life and death, the continuity of life. The theme of mortality is present right from the opening of the novel: "Dombey was about eight-and-forty years of age. Son about eight-and-forty minutes. Dombey was rather bald, rather red... Son was very bald, and very red... On the brow of Dombey, Time and his brother Care had set some marks, as on a tree that was to come down in good time...while the countenance of Son was crossed and recrossed with a thousand little creases, which the same deceitful Time would take delight in smoothing out... with the flat part of his scythe, as a preparation of the surface for his deeper operations." (38). This theme is developed, I think, by the constant reference to timepieces in the novel: "Dombey, exulting in the long-looked-for event, jingled and jingled the heavy gold watch-chain that depended from below his

trim blue coat..." (39). Here in the same sentence, in the same moment, we have birth and mortality. Florence's impression of her father is "the blue coat and stiff white cravat... a pair of creaking boots and a very loud ticking watch..." (40). As the crisis of Mrs. Dombey's weakness is reached and she begins to die "There was such a solemn stillness round the bed ... There was no answer but the loud ticking of Mr. Dombey's watch and Dr. Parker Pep's watch, which seemed in the silence to be running a race." (41). Dombey's "heavy gold watch-chain" is again emphasized at the christening. (42). "It was a dull, grey, autumn day indeed, and in a minute's pause and silence that took place, the leaves fell sorrowfully. 'Mr. John,' said Mr. Dombey, referring to his watch... 'Take my sister, if you please...' " (43). The autumn leaves support the theme of mortality, of death and decay which surround little Paul. As Polly presses him to her to keep him warm as she walks illegally back to her own children "the withered leaves came showering down." (44). We notice also at Dr. Blimber's there is always present in the background the ticking of a great clock which seems to "take up" what Dr. Blimber said "and to go on saying, 'how, is, my, lit, tle, friend? How, is, my, lit, tle, friend?' over and over and over again." (45).

The sea is associated with little Paul almost invariably as an emblem of mortality and eternity. (46). As he lies in bed, having come home from Dr. Blimber's for the holidays "His fancy had a strange tendency to wander to the river, which he knew was flowing through the great city; and now he thought how black it was, and how deep it would look, reflecting the

hosts of the stars - and more than all, how steadily it rolled away to meet the sea." (47). He is obsessed with the image of the river, which, he comes to believe, will never stop because it is to bear him away. (48). He comes to know his three medical attendants so well that "he even knew the difference in the sound of their watches." (49). The idea of the sea begins to take possession of him as he weakens: "Now lay me down... How fast the river runs, between its green banks and rushes... But it's very near the sea. I hear the waves! They always said so!" (50). Presently he says that "the motion of the boat upon the stream was lulling him to rest. How green the banks were now, how bright the flowers growing on them... Now the boat was out at sea, but gliding smoothly on. And now there was a shore before him..." (51). Like the other divine children he is associated to the last with radiance, brightness, greeness and symbols of Immortality: "Mamma is like you Floy. I know her by the face!... The light about the head is shining on me as I go!" (52). The sea has always "talked" to Paul, but he could not understand what the waves were saying. (53). It seems that theirs was a message of immortal love which transcends time and place. We are reminded of this much later in the book, when Walter and Florence are together at sea. As she hears the sea and sits watching it from the deck, it makes her think of Paul: "And the voices in the waves are always whispering to Florence, in their ceaseless murmuring, of love - of love, eternal and illimitable, not bounded by the confines of this world, or by the end of time, but ranging still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away." (54).

The sea, for Dickens, lay deep in the mind as a picture of the cradle of life, of the ebbing and flowing of life: "the sea had ebbed and flowed, throughout a whole year, the winds and clouds had come and gone; the ceaseless work of Time had been performed, in storm and sunshine. Through a whole year, the tides of human chance and change had set in their allotted courses..." Thus the idea of time and the affairs of men are presented to us at the opening of the chapter which deals with the wreck of Mr. Dombey's business fortunes. (55). A few years after completing Dombey Dickens wrote in an article: "I stand upon a sea-shore, where the waves are years. They break and fall, and I may little heed them; but, with every wave the sea is rising, and I know that it will float me on this traveller's voyage at last..." (56). And in Little Dorrit we hear of "the flowers, pale and unreal in the moonlight, (which) floated away upon the river; and thus do greater things that once were in our breasts, and near our hearts, flow from us to the eternal seas." (57). Dickens had intended that the theme of the waves, the sea and its eternal message for us all, should continue right through to the end of Dombey and Son, but at the last moment, for reasons of space he had to omit the original concluding section. Florance has now married Walter Gay and they have a little son called Paul. In the autumn days Mr. Dombey and his little grandson are to be seen on the shore: "The white-haired gentleman walks with the little boy, talks with him, helps him in his play...sometimes when the child is sitting by his side, and looks up in his face, asking him questions, he takes the tiny hand in his, and holding it, forgets to answer... 'What,

Grandpapa, am I so like my poor little uncle again?' 'Yes, Paul. But he was weak, and you are very strong.' 'Oh yes, I am very strong.' 'And he lay on a little bed beside the sea, and you can run about.' And so they range away again, busily, for the white-haired gentleman likes best to see the child free and stirring..." (58). The novel would have ended with these paragraphs: "The voices in the waves speak low to him of Florence, day and night - plainest when he, his blooming daughter, and her husband, walk beside them in the evening, or sit at an open window, listening to their roar. They speak to him of Florence and his altered heart; of Florence and their ceaseless murmuring to her of the love, eternal and illimitable, extending still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away. Never from the mighty sea may voices rise too late, to come between us and the unseen region on the other shore! Better, far better, that they whispered of that region in our childish ears, and the swift river hurruied us away!" (59).

The sea also holds the several strands of the novel together: the sea is obviously always in the background of Dombey's business, as it is an essential to the business of the analogous group in the Wooden Midshipman's shop. Such is Dickens' consistent use of the emblem, or image of the sea in Dombey, and it gently rounds off the whole tale. It is also used to point the contrast between the two "houses" - the Dombey business and household, and the Midshipman group: Dombey's business is presented to us as a vessel and the bankruptcy as a "wreck". (60). Mr. Dombey appears a stubborn captain who would not listen to advice "and would not listen to a word of warning that the ship

he strained so hard against the storm, was weak, and could not bear it." (61). When his business fails, his staff fly like rats from a sinking ship. (62). Against this we contrast the sea-worthiness of the Wooden Midshipman, which, Dickens tells us, partaking of the general nautical infection of Soll Gills' premises, "seemed almost to become a snug, sea-going, ship-shape concern, wanting only good sea-room, in the event of an unexpected launch, to work its way securely, to any desert island in the world..." (63). This has a vital part to play in the total realization of Dickens' original "imagining" of Dombey and Son, and is not the "picturesque embroidery" dismissed by Kathleen Tillotson. (64). Much of the undoubted power of Dombey and Son is a result, I think, of Dickens' use of parallel and analogy: this is a conscious thing, not part of what Dr. Leavis calls the "creative afflatus" in the novelist's art. Dr. K.J. Fielding has shown that we have Dickens' own words for this. Frederic Chapman, one of Dickens' publishers said that when he intended to begin a book he would start by "getting hold of a central idea" which he then "revolved in his mind until he had thought the matter thoroughly out" and then he would make "a programme of his story with the characters" and finally "upon this skeleton story he set to work and gave it literary sinew, blood and life." (65).

In Dombey and Son he tells the reader quite explicitly he is concerned with the inter-relationships and parallels in society. Talking of Good Mother Brown and Alice and Mrs. Skewton and Edith he asks "Were this miserable mother, and this miserable daughter only the reduction to their lowest grade, of certain social vices sometimes prevailing higher up? In this

round world of circles within circles, do we make a weary journey from the high grade to the low, to find at last that they lie close together, that the two extremes touch, and that our journey's end is but our starting place? Allowing for great difference of stuff and texture, was the pattern of this woof repeated among gentle blood at all?" (66). Edith notes that Mrs. Brown was like "a distorted shadow of her mother" and that Alice was like herself. (67).

Dickens deliberately sets out to create in the Midshipman group a clear balance with the Dombey menage: but where Dombey's associations are dark and cold, Sol Gills' are warm and loving. Think of the description of Dombey's mansion we are given: "(it) was a large one, on the shady side of a tall, dark, dreadfully genteel street in the region between Portland Place and Bryanstone Square. It was a corner house, with great wide areas containing cellars frowned upon by barred windows... It was a house of dismal state, with a circular back to it, containing a whole suit of drawing-rooms looking upon a gravelled yard, where two gaunt trees with blackened trunks and branches, rattled rather than rustled, their leaves were so smoke-dried. The summer sun was never on the street..." (68). The sun, the bustling street tradesmen, Punch and Judy shows, itinerant musicians and street lighting all fail to bring any life or illumination to this dark street. "It was a blank house inside as outside. When the funeral was over, Mr. Dombey ordered the furniture to be covered up... Accordingly, mysterious shapes were made of tables and chairs... covered over with great winding-sheets. Bell-handles, window

An Old Mansion in Mark Lane, said to have been the Residence of the Spanish Ambassador: a suggested original for Mr. Dombey's mansion.

"It was a house of dismal state, with a circular back to it... The summer sun was never on the street... It was as blank a house inside as outside.
Dombey and Son Chapter III.

Drawing by Thomas Hosmer Shepheard dated 1854
British Museum.

blinds, and looking glasses, being papered up in journals... obtruding fragmentary accounts of deaths and dreadful murders. Every chandelier...muffled in holland, looked like a monstrous tear depending from the ceiling's eye. Odours, as from vaults and damp places, came out of the chimneys..." (69). And Polly walking about with baby Paul in her arms catches glimpses of the solitary figure of Dombey sitting at his breakfast like "a lone prisoner in a cell, or a strange apparition that was not to be accosted..." (70).

With this we cannot help but to place in contrast the warmth, good cheer, and above all the life of the "wooden" midshipman group. They too are associated with the sea, but significantly it is not a sea of death, but of life going on, of bustle, of trade, of travel, or provisions, and sails going up, ships leaving, men coming and going, in the very heart of busy old London: even in the midst of London were to be found "hints of adventurous and romantic story" - not so far from the Bank of England and its vaults of gold and silver "down among the dead men" and "Just around the corner stood the rich East India House, teeming with suggestions of precious stuffs and stones, tigers, elephants, howdahs... Anywhere in the immediate vicinity there might be seen pictures of ships speeding away full sail to all parts of the world...and little timber midshipmen in obsolete naval uniforms, eternally employed outside shopdoors of nautical instrument makers..." (71). Gills, unlike the chill Dombey who "owns" his business and yet is detached from it, really directly involves himself in his business; he is described as "Sole master and proprietor" and

offers to equip ships for voyages in every particular, from objects in brass and glass "barometers, telescopes, compasses, charts...specimens of every kind of instrument used in the working of a ship's course..." (72). He mixes with ship-chandlers and was acquainted with ship's biscuits, dried meats and tongues. Frequently jars are produced on his table with "dealer in all kinds of Ship's Provisions" on the label. (73). Cuttle seems to have the same moral virtues as the circus people in Hard Times: "...there was a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another..." (74).

It has been pointed out before that Dickens' use of the old salt, the sea dog - here as much as in Dan'l Peggotty - is derived from his deep immersion in Smollett. This I feel, although very true, is usually rather cursorily discussed, and seldom examined in any depth. (75). Even Dr. Leavis does not go very deeply into the matter in his discussion of what Dickens owed to a novelist whom, after all, he loved. It would not be strictly true to say that Smollett used the old seamen to symbolise, or even represent a moral virtue, but there does seem to be an unmistakable aura of plain good sense, mixed with kindness and generosity, in Trunnion, Pipes and Tom Bowling in Peregrine Pickle. It is in Cuttle that I catch that echo of Smollett's use of old sailors. (76). I recall that tremendous scene in Peregrine Pickle where the honest Pipes, having come to the Fleet prison with his unfortunate master, offers to help him, saying "...once the vessel is ashore, what signifies

Shop-fronts in Leadenhall Street:
suggested site of The Wooden Midshipman's.

Drawing dated 1855
British Museum.

talking? We must bear a hand to tow her off, if we can... If she won't budge for all the anchors and capstans aboard, after we have lightened her, by cutting away her masts, and heaving our guns and cargo overboard, why, then, mayhap a brisk gale of wind...may float her again in the blast of a whistle. Here is two hundred and ten guineas by the tale in this here canvas bag; and upon this scrap of paper - no, avast - that's my discharge from the parish for Moll Trundle - ey, here it is - an order for thirty pounds..." This kind offer is refused, and the honest Pipes "twisting the notes together...threw them into the fire without hesitation, crying 'Damn the money!'..." (77). In the character of Cuttle there is an obvious debt to Smollett. His appearance and his dialogue owe much to Smollett, but I think the eighteenth century Scottish novelist seldom uses his seamen to symbolise or represent what is rough and ready, and also utterly good, almost too childish - foolish for this world. (78). Their household is snug, old-fashioned and protected from the rush and hurly-burly of modern life by its own antiquity. Dombey's mansion is particularly associated with black, and darkness, Sol Gills' with green and with the sun: "with eyes as red as if they had been small suns looking at you through a fog" (79) and he has a "newly awakened manner, such as he might have acquired by having stared for three or four days successively through every optical instrument in his shop, and suddenly comes back to the world again, to find it green." (80).

Dombey is associated with what is cold, Sol Gills and Cuttle with what is warm. This is directly presented to us

in the emblem of the wine. Little Paul begins to cry at the christening and Florence restores his good humour by entertaining him: "The atmosphere became...colder and colder, when Mr. Dombey stood frigidly watching his little daughter... clapping her hands, and standing on tip-toe before the throne of his son and heir..." (81). The church is damp and cold, life and death, marriage and funeral, mortal and immortal are all jostled together. Miss Tox thinks of marriage as she takes Dombey's arm, (82) and here at the christening, there is mention of "the damp corner by the bell-rope, where the black tressels used for funerals were stowed away, along with some shovels and baskets...the strange, unusual, uncomfortable smell, and the cadaverous light; were all in unison. It was a cold and dismal scene." (83). The christening party have to wait to enter, because there is a wedding on. The officiating curate "appeared like the principal character in a ghost story, 'a tall figure all in white'..." (84). The whole of this scene is a wonderful piece of writing, typical of Dickens' art at its peak; point after point is made, contributing to a total impression of the occasion, cold, formal, morbid. Dombey dominates the scene and "perhaps assisted in making it so cold, that the young curate smoked at the mouth as he read." (85). The meal served afterwards to this "bleak fellowship" looks "more like a dead dinner lying in state than a social refreshment." (86). There was a toothache in everything and the wine "was so bitter cold that it forced a little scream from Miss Tox." (87). Only Dombey is unmoved by the icy coldness of the lobster, the veal, the salad, the patties; he "might have been hung up for sale at a Russian fair as a specimen of a frozen

gentleman." (88). The appearance of Polly occasions "a partial thaw" (89) but it does not last.

Those who are associated with the Wooden Midshipman are the opposite. Dombey's rejection of his daughter as "a piece of base coin that couldn't be invested - a bad Boy - nothing more" (90) is directly paralleled by Gills' concern and love for Walter. When we first meet him he is concerned because Walter has not come home for his meal. (91). When he does come home his first enquiry is to find out how Sol has managed without him all day, such is the unity of this family group that one member would be missed. Not so Dombey's, his family is run like a business, Polly is hired on an impersonal, contractual level (92) and one of the early chapters carries the caption "In Which Mr. Dombey, as a Man and a Father, is seen at the Head of the Home-Department," (93) which stresses the point that Dombey makes his family a business, and that Sol Gills' business is a family.

This is quite deliberately contrasted by Dombey's business establishment, the keynote of which is "respect" - a respect for Dombey and all he stands for. The offices of this august company are in a court frequented by street traders - in Dickens' world a sure sign of warmth, vigour, the traffic of real everyday lived-life - these offer for sale "slippers, pocket-books, sponges, dogs' collars, and Windsor soap, and sometimes a pointer or an oil-painting." (94). The casual juxtaposition of the pointer and the oil-painting is a master stroke: here we have the length and breadth of life as it is lived - slippers,

note-books, sponges, soap, dogs' collars, pointers and oil-paintings. These are addressed to "the general public; but they were never offered...to Mr. Dombey. When he appeared, the dealers in those wares fell off respectfully." (95). When he enters the office all wit is stilled, and 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 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..." (96). The cold, damp and gloomy world of Dombey is thus described by Dickens, with an art so effective yet seemingly unpremeditated, literally as a world apart - apart from warm, companiable, bustling human life. The subservient Perch the messenger, the fawning Carker, in their own ways, continue the idea of alien life. Only Morfin - the despised inferior - has vitality: "a cheerful-looking, hazel-eyed elderly bachelor..." (97), who does not allow his respect for Dombey as a man of business to over-awe his sense of Dombey as a human being. Morfin's psyche is delivered to us in the few words Dickens devotes to his clothes: "gravely attired, as to his upper man, in black; and as to his legs, in pepper and salt colour..." (98). He is a genial temper and a devoted amateur musician.

The "otherness" of Dombey is stressed particularly in his relations with his family, which are bound to contrast with the other family groups see see in the novel. There is above all I suppose, Polly and her family. This is a character

Dickens spent a lot of trouble on and was very anxious should not be seen as a caricature. (99). But I think the critics usually neglect her. (100). The contrast Dickens draws between Dombey and Polly is vital to a full understanding of the novel. Dombey is presented to us in terms of stiffness, he is crisp like a new bank-note, he is a financial Duke of York; as Dr. Daleski has suggested, his outer stiffness seems analgous to the paralysis of Clifford in Lady Chatterley's Lover, suggesting "like it, the paralysis of his emotional self." (101). We are presented in the Toodles with the antithesis of this morbid chillness the utter liveliness of the Toodles - active, fertile (they are a large family, as Dombey himself remarks) plump, affectionate and rosy-cheeked: "...Miss Tox escorted a plump rosy-cheeked wholesome apple-faced young woman, with an infant in her arms; a younger woman not plump, but apple-faced also, who led a plump and apple-faced child in each hand; another plump and also apple-faced boy who walked by himself; and finally, a plump and apple-faced man, who carried in his arms another plump and apple-faced boy..." (102).

It is typical of the way Dombey sees things that circumstances should so have arranged themselves as to introduce into his very house these people: Dombey's son needs nourishing, mother's milk is not forthcoming, therefore Dombey will buy with money the simple sustenance nature provides the mammals. Here is the child, here is the breast; and now let me pay you - but first I will tell you my terms. The whole of Dombey's contacts are on this level, the contractual level of the commercial house. Mrs. Chick, too, sees Polly in that light and

by way of making her acquaintance examines her "marriage certificate, testimonials, and so forth." (103). She then takes "a report" in to Mr. Dombey, and we notice that when he turns in his chair to see Polly and her husband he turns round "as one piece, and not as a man with limbs and joints." (104). Among his conditions is the changing of her name in order further to formalise their relationship, "Polly" being far too lively a name: "But I must impose one or two conditions on you, before you enter my house... While you are here, I must stipulate that you are always known as - say as Richards - an ordinary name, and convenient..." (105). Polly asks that this should be taken into consideration in the wages, and this leads Dombey to his next point: "Oh, of course...I desire to make it a question of wages, altogether. Now Richards, if you nurse my bereaved child, I wish you to remember this always. You will receive a liberal stipend in return for the discharge of certain duties, in the performance of which, I wish you to see as little of your family as possible. When those duties cease to be required...and the stipend ceases to be paid, there is an end of all relations between us..." (106).

The speech is so typical of the man, the attitudes and vocabulary shadow forth the very fabric of his soul, that we should look carefully at this passage; he imposes conditions, he stipulates, he offers a stipend, in order to secure living milk for his child - he cannot bring himself to look the life in the eye, to use words like "milk" or nurse, the actual function, one of the greatest human acts, the feeding of a child by the breast, he clothes in language any Department of

Management and Business Studies would be proud of - "the discharge of certain duties" - and the completion of the business is to be - like the paying of a last penny in the pound to a creditor - simply "ended". It is typical of Dombey that he can see no more in his relationship between a woman and a child she is asked to feed than "a question of wages, altogether." (107).

The Toodle family are superbly contrasted to the world of Dombey: Polly's home is referred to as "a sacred grove" (108) and in the neighbourhood the people "trained scarlet beans, kept fowls and rabbits, erected rotten summer-houses..." (109). We note the warmth of her reception when she illegally goes to visit her family: "Why, Polly!" cried Jemima. "You! what a turn you have given me! who'd have thought it! come along in, Polly! How well you do look to be sure! The children will go half wild to see you, Polly, that they will." (110). When she is surrounded by her family, Dickens describes her in terms of colour, life and growth: "her own honest apple face became immediately the centre of a bunch of smaller pippins, all laying their rosy cheeks close to it, and all evidently the growth of the same tree." (111). Polly's husband is, in his sister-in-law's words, "the peacablest, patientest, best-temperedest soul in the world, as he always was and will be!" (112). Mother and children are so devoted, that Polly has to sneak away from them at this visit. (113).

Florence, responding instinctively - like a child - to the warmth and honesty of the Toodle's children, immediately joins

in their play: "being conducted forth by the young Toodles to inspect some toadstools and other curiosities...she entered with them, heart and soul, on the formation of a temporary breakwater across a small green pool that had collected in a corner." (114). All these are strong and telling evidence of the warmth of the human heart, a quality Mr. Dombey so hideously lacks. As James Roy Pickard has said, "in showing how superior such domestic virtues are to the capricious circumstances of time and place, their constancy emphasises the central conviction of the novel, that just as the sun is the heart of the planetary system, so is the human heart the centre of the moral universe." (115).

It is part of the marvellous art of Charles Dickens that he does not show Dombey indifferent to the Toodles, that would be decidedly not enough: he does actually react to them as human beings, he shows that he is aware of them. He does indeed show a deep response to them: he is profoundly appalled by the very idea that his son, his Paul, should have to come into contact with such people. He has to admit that the children of Polly and her husband "look healthy" but he adds "to think of their some day claiming a sort of relationship to Paul!" (116). This is a masterstroke, the phraseology gives us Dombey the man, who cannot conceive of people like the Toodles being able to create or establish any real relationship with anything or anybody as they hardly exist at all for him, therefore he can bring himself only to speak of "a sort of relationship." It is part of the truly wonderful irony in Dickens' art that Dombey is so wrong, so utterly and hideously wrong. He is the one who - tragically - fails in this very

matter of human relationships of any sort. We think, as Dickens wanted, nay compells us to think for most of the book, of sad little Florence - that sorry little figure of the neglected child needing to love and be loved; she is no issue worth speaking of - 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." (117). And we recall that he instructs Paul's tablet be inscribed "only child" instead of "only son." (118).

The contrast with the Toodles is powerful: the trust that exists between Toodle and Polly, "Polly heerd it... It's all right" he tells Mr. Dombey, who comments "As you appear to leave everything to her...I suppose it is of no use my saying anything to you?" "Not a bit," said Toodle. (119). There is the touching co-operation between the members of the Toodle family; Toodle tells Dombey that although he cannot read and write, "One of my little boys is a going to learn me, when he's old enough, and been to school himself." (120). Toodle also tells him that although he has worked underground all his life and only came to the level when he married, he hoped to do the best for his family by "a going on one of these here railroads when they comes into full play." (121). This is the last straw for Dombey, and at the thought of his Paul coming into contact with such people - illiterate, common, underground people, people with aspirations of going on the railroads - the water comes into his eyes and "for all his starched impenetrable dignity and composure, he wiped the blinding tears from his eyes

...and often said, with an emotion of which he would not, for the world, have had a witness, 'Poor little fellow!' " (122).

Polly knows from the beginning, instinctively and naturally, something which Mr. Dombey does not learn until the end of the book when he has suffered and lost everything, she knows what love and sympathy are, she knows what it is to be a human being: she is touched straight away by Florence's need for affection: "The child...was so gentle, so quiet, and uncomplaining...that Polly's heart was sore when she was left alone. In the simple passage that had taken place between herself and the motherless little girl, her own motherly heart had been touched...and she felt, as the child did, that there was something of confidence and interest between them from that moment... And perhaps, unlearned as she was, she could have brought a dawning knowledge home to Mr. Dombey at that early day, which would not then have struck him in the end like lightning." (123).

(iii)

This novel is about far more than "Pride". (124). It seems to me to be a plea for warmth, love and charity in a world which is tending to become lonely, chill and indifferent. (125). An interesting clue to what was in Dickens' mind at the time of the conception and composition of Dombey and Son is the fact that the novelist completed his The Life of Our Lord in 1846. (126). This work, which he wrote for his own children, was based on the gospel according to St. Luke. The parallels are worth remarking: "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in Heaven... But woe

unto you that are rich...woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!" (127). There we have the proud, the rich, the possessive Dombey - praised and admired. "I knew you would admire my brother. I told you so before hand, my dear..." says Mrs. Chick to Miss Tox. (128). To which that spinster replies, "But his deportment, my dear Louisa! His presence! His dignity!... Something so stately you know... A pecuniary Duke of York, my love, and nothing short of it..." (129). Then, very striking, are the lines: "And the ruin of that house was great." (130) and "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth." (131). The whole of Dombey and Son is an exploration of the nature of familial division and division in business, "house" in both the domestic and business sense. Then there is the emphasis in Dombey on the difference between wealth and well-being, between public show of possessions, and inner darkness of the soul: "Take heed therefore that the light which is in you be not darkness." (132) and again "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." (133). Very early in the novel we are bound to be struck by the way in which Mr. Dombey reacts to the news that his wife, having just delivered him of a son and heir, is in a dangerous condition: "To record of Mr. Dombey that he was not in his way affected by this intelligence, would be to do him an injustice...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 a something gone from among his plate and furniture, and other household possessions, which was well worth the having..." (134).

Dombey is too proud of his possessions, and too inclined to treat his family as things he possesses, and can buy and dispose of at will. One of the major themes of the book is the evil of such possessiveness and its impotence when compared to warmth and love. This is also part of the main burden of St. Luke's gospel: "Take heed and beware of coveteousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth..." (135). There is the continual presence in Dombey's evil mentor Bagstock of gluttony and insensitivity, he is always stuffing himself with curry and richly seasoned food, filling himself with spirits and wines, going purple with his excesses - excesses of appetites which Professor Marcus, quite rightly I think, associates with a vicious, over-active sexuality. (136). Luke warns "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." (137) and even more marked is the later warning "take heed of yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness...so that day come upon you unawares." (138).

One of the most striking things if the way in which this passage in Luke is realised in Dombey and Son: "Suffer little children to come unto me...whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein ..." (139). This is what happens; Florence changes Mr. Dombey into a child, he becomes a more acceptable human being by becoming childish, by adopting those childish virtues which Dickens admires - simpleness, heart, wonder, and that sense of the excluding togetherness of parent and child; Florence has become the parent, Dombey the child. The virtues of the child -

innocence, perception, trust and wonder - are stressed throughout this novel: "Now Paul," said Mr. Dombey exultingly. "This is the way indeed to be Dombey and Son, and have money. You are almost a man already." "Almost," returned the child. This is as they stand before Dr. Blimber's school. Dickens adds "Even his childish agitation could not master the sly and quaint yet touching look with which he accompanied the reply." (140). Not long after this, Dr. Blimber asks "Shall we make a man of him?" to which Paul answers: "I had rather be a child." (141). The adult world is dull and cold, the world of the child is bright and warm; as they stand on the steps of Dr. Blimber's "Paul stood with a fluttering heart, and with his small right hand in his father's. His other hand was locked in that of Florence. How tight the tiny pressure of that one, and how loose and cold the other!" (142).

Even the sometimes rather rhetorical style of the prose in Dombey and Son can be seen to be reminiscent of St. Luke: "Let him remember it in this room!" is very much in the tone of the scriptures. (143).

The art of Dickens cannot really be discussed without reference to English fairy-tale and folklore, and the popular stage plays of the time. (144). Dickens said himself that "Every writer of fiction...writes, in effect, for the stage", (145) and of his public readings he said it was "like writing a book in company." (146). As William Axton suggests - quite rightly I believe - there are two main elements in Dombey and Son which may be fairly certainly traced back to Dickens'

experience of folklore and theatrical experience: Dick Whittington and Black Ey'd Susan. (147). Dick Whittington had been put on the stage by Dickens' friend Albert Smith (1816-1860). (148). Douglas Jerrold had written Black Ey'd Susan in 1829 and it was played over and over again in Dickens' lifetime. It was this work which made Jerrold's reputation as a playwright. (149). The Whittington figure appears in the right foreground of the original wrapper; he is unmistakable with his stick over his shoulder, striding optimistically into the future, a future illuminated with the promising sun. Walter Gay is particularly associated with this Whittington figure: toasting young Ned with the magic old Maderia, Sol Gills remarks "We'll finish the bottle, to the House, Ned - Walter's house. Why it may be his house one of these days, in part. Who knows? Sir Richard Whittington married his master's daughter." (150). To which Cuttle adds "Turn again Whittington, Lord Mayor of London..." (151). The aspirations of Walter certainly seem to be those of a pantomime principal boy.

Dickens makes this quite plain, he refers to "That spice of romance and love of the marvellous, of which there was a pretty strong infusion in the nature of young Walter Gay, and which the guardianship of his uncle, old Solomon Gills, had not very much weakened by the waters of stern practical experience ..." (152). Hardly a Sunday passed, we are told, but that Cuttle and Gills dream of Walter's Whittingtonian realisation of good fortune. (153). Walter is described as "a frank, free-spirited, open-hearted boy" and Florence as "very pretty,

and it is pleasant to admire a pretty face. Florence was defenceless and weak, and it was a proud thought that he had been able to render her any protection..." (154). Walter remembers his adventurous rescuing of Florence "better and better. As to its adventureous beginning, and all those little circumstances which gave it a distinctive character and relish, he took them into account, more as a pleasant story very agreeable to his imagination...than as a part of any matter of fact with which he was concerned... Sometimes he thought...what a grand thing it would have been going to sea on the day after that first meeting, and to have gone, and to have done wonders there, and to have stopped away a long time, and to have come back an admiral...or at least a post-captain with epaulettes of insupportable brightness, and to have married Florence (then a beautiful young woman) in spite of Mr. Dombey's teeth, cravat and watch-chain, and borne her away to the blue shores of somewhere or other, triumphantly. But these flights of fancy seldom burnished the brass plate of Dombey and Son's offices into a tablet of golden hope, or shed a brilliant lustre on their dirty skylights; and when the Captain and Uncle Sol talked about Richard Whittington and masters' daughters, Walter felt that he understood his true position at Dombey and Son's, much better than they did." (155).

But in fact the course his fortunes are to take is really only a realisation of all his Whittingtonian promise - the sea voyage, the merchant's daughter and the commercial success - he has it all. His eventual good fortune is not just a "happy ending" as we are given several early clues to his good sense,

duty and understanding. (156). Likewise his love for Florence is carefully placed and developed early in the novel (157) and is not simply a piece of concluding narrative mechanism.

It is not necessary conclusively to prove that Dickens actually saw the production of Smith's Dick Whittington and his Cat at the Lyceum Theatre on March 24th 1845, or read it when it was later published as a play-book. Dickens was in Italy between the summer of 1844 and June 1845; it is not mentioned in his letters, even if he had seen it after this date, he might have been made personally familiar with this version of the play in his very close association with Albert Smith at the time of the conception and composition of Dombey and Son as Smith was involved in staging both The Cricket on the Hearth and The Battle of Life at this time (158) as well as the production of Jonson's Every Man in his Humour. (159).

What is of interest here is not the source of Dickens' ideas, but what he does with them: in the case of Walter Gay, as William Axton suggests (160) what is important is Dickens' handling of age old archetypal figures and stories. We sympathise and identify with Walter because of the skilled way the novelist uses this timeless figure of youth and ambition: the references to Whittington in Dombey and Son are only a clue, they are not an explanation. Can the similarities between the merchant FitzWarren and Mr. Dombey, between the motherless Alice and Florence, between the merchant's crafty, conspiring clerk and Mr. Carker the Manager explain the deep effect of Dombey and Son? (161).

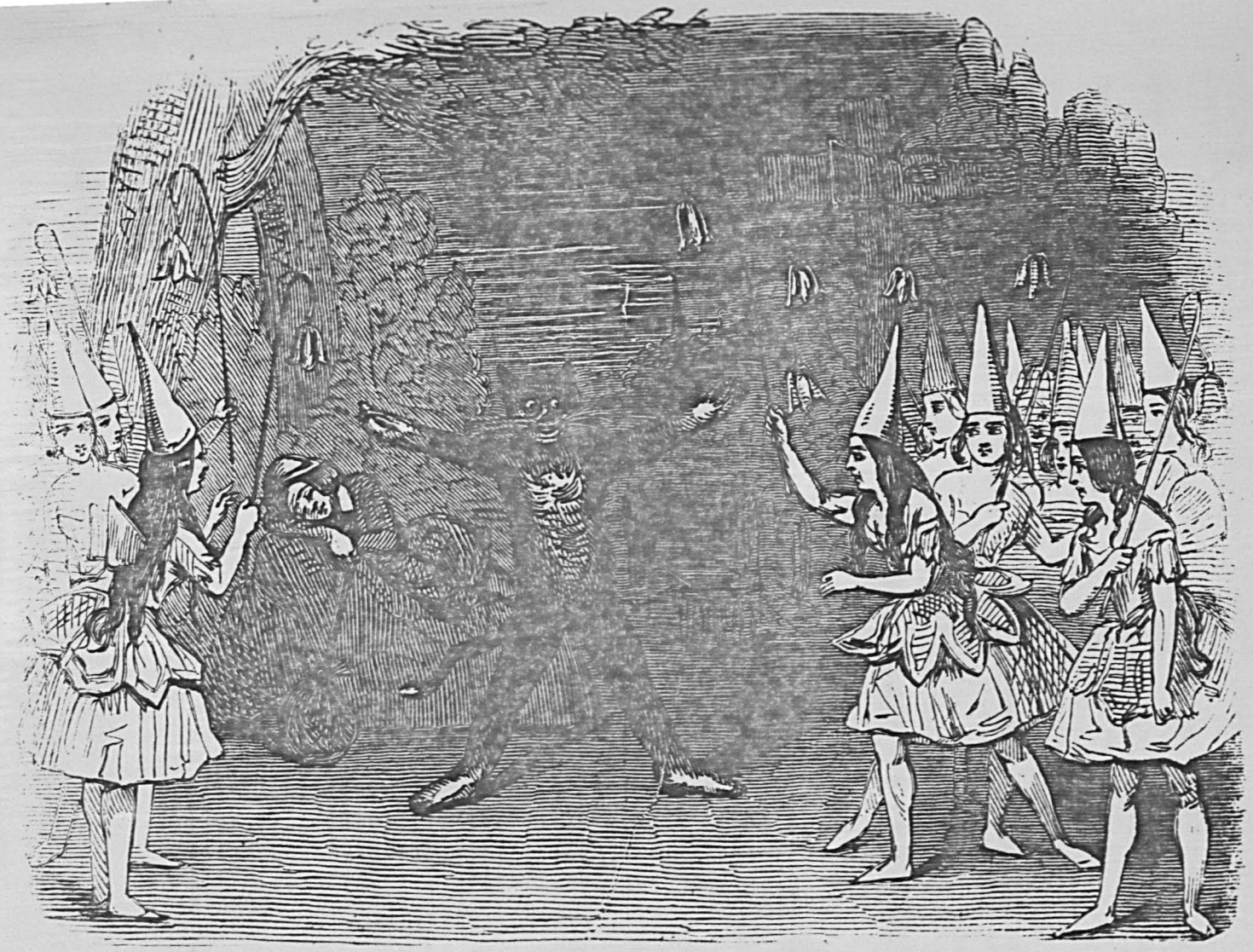
Like young Whittington, Walter is an orphan who has come to London in the hope of finding his fortune, his uncle asks him after his first day at Dombey's "(are there) No bankers' books, or bills, or such tokens of wealth rolling in from day to day?..." and asks if Mr. Dombey has taken any notice of him. (162). The bottle of old madeira that Sol gets out to wish him well in his career is really used as a gesture of good luck to launch Walter on the voyage to good fortune: "You shall drink the other bottle, Wally,...when you have come to good fortune..." (163). Life has passed him by, he says, but he believes Walter will realise his ambition and find the good fortune which alluded him: "...When that uniform was worn... then indeed, fortunes were to be made, and were made. But competition, competition - new invention, new invention - alteration, alteration - the world's gone past me. I hardly know where I am myself..." (164). But Walter is set on the right road and in the right direction to find good fortune: "...whatever I leave behind me, or whatever I can give you, you in such a house as Dombey's are in the road to use well and make the most of. Be diligent..." (165).

Sol has been a dreamer, he is several times associated with fog and cloudy atmosphere, we are told that he looks "wistfully at his nephew out of the fog that always seemed to hang about him..." (166) and he is anxious that Walter should not dream his life away, to allow life to pass him by. To this end he has tried to purge him of any romantic notions about the sea, travel, adventure; but he has succeeded only in implanting in Walter the urge to seek adventure himself:

Mrs. Mary Ann Keeley as Dick Whittington in Albert Smith's Burlesque of Whittington and his Cat at the Lyceum Theatre, March 1845.

"...A little departure is made from the original story, inasmuch as Whittington accompanies Puss to Morocco; but the leading features remain the same. We have the arrival of little Dick (Mrs. Keeley) in London, by the Chertsey waggon; his engagement by Master Fitzwarren (Mr. F. Mathews), and ill-treatment by Ursula, the cook (Mrs. Usher). Then we have his day dream upon Holloway Hill (which our illustration shows), with the song of the old bells; his love for Alice Fitzwarren (Miss Villars); his return, and final venture of his cat, on board the merchant's argosy. In Act II we arrive at Mogadore... Alice, disguised as a sailor, and Dick, with Puss, are wrecked upon the island, and being found in the harem, are sentenced to death, when Dick offers to free the state from the rats. A grand battle takes place; the Cat is victorious, and Dick and Alice return to England...laden with wealth..."
Illustrated London News 29th March 1845.

"No one was more intensely fond than Dickens of old nursery tales, and he had a secret delight in feeling that he was here only giving them a higher form. The social and manly virtues he desired to teach, were not less the charm of the ghost, the goblin, and the fairy fancies of his childhood... What now more to be conquered were the more formidable dragons and giants that had their places at our own hearths..."
John Forster: Life of Charles Dickens Book IX Chapter 1.



SCENE FROM THE BURLESQUE OF "WHITTINGTON AND HIS CAT," AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE.

"...the simple minded uncle in his secret attraction towards the marvellous and adventurous - of which he was, in some sort, a distant relation, by his trade - had greatly encouraged the same attraction in the nephew; and...everything that had ever been put before the boy to deter him from a life of adventure, had had the usual unaccountable effect of sharpening his taste for it..." (167).

As William Axton has suggested (168) the good qualities seem particularly to be associated with those belonging to the sea, while it is the land people who are cunning and treacherous. This may hark back to the archetypal nautical/land morality found in Gay's Sweet William's Farewell to Black Ey'd Susan: William, foretopman, has to leave Susan to answer the call of duty, he promises to do his country honour and to return to her, she begs for his safety and constancy. She is not to believe what the landsmen say about the inconstancy of sailors, he will always think of her:

O Susan, Susan, lovely dear,
My vows shall ever true remain;
Let me kiss off that falling tear,
We only part to meet again.
Change, as ye list, ye winds; my heart shall be
The faithfull compass that still points to thee.

Believe not what the landmen say,
Who tempt with doubts thy constant mind:
They'll tell thee, sailors, when away,
In every port a mistress find.
Yes, yes believe them when they tell thee so,
For thou art present wheresoe'er I go. (169)

Walter Gay takes on some of the traditional virtues of the Jolly Jack Tar: he is cheerful, loyal, and though triumphant in the end, the victim of a landsman's machinations. The similarities with Douglas Jerrold's stage melodrama, Black Ey'd Susan, are quite marked: William is estranged from Susan by being shanghaied by the villain (cf. Gay's being sent away by Carker) and believed lost at sea (cf. the rumours of the fate of the Son and Heir) he returns in time to save her from disaster (cf. Gay's return and marriage to Florance). (170). When he has married his Susan, Sweet William sets up in business - as a ship's instrument maker. (171). The whole atmosphere of the scene where Walter retrieves Florence after her abduction by Good Mother Brown suggests the maiden-rescuing hero of myth and legend: "Walter picked up the shoe, and put it on the little foot as the Prince in the story might have fitted Cinderella's slipper on. He hung the rabbit skin over his left arm...and felt, not to say like Richard Whittington - that is a tame comparison - but like St. George of England, with the dragon lying dead before him. 'Don't cry, Miss Dombey,' said Walter, 'What a wonderful thing for me that I am here. You are as safe now as if you were guarded by a whole boat's crew of picked men from a man-of-war. Oh, don't cry.' " (172). He listens as she tells him of her terrible adventures, "as if, far from the mud and grease of Thames Street, they were rambling alone among the broad leaves and tell trees of some desert island in the tropics - as he very likely fancied, for the time, they were." (173). It is interesting that in changing from his original plan of making Walter "gradually and naturally trailing away, from that love of adventure and boyish light-

Thomas Potter Cooke in Douglas Jerrold's Black-Eyed Susan. Reputed "the best sailor...that ever trod the stage" Thomas Potter Cook (1786-1864) served in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic war and became stage manager of the Surrey Theatre. He was particularly celebrated for his performance in nautical parts, such as William in Black-Eyed Susan and Long Tom Coffin in Edward Fitzball's The Pilot.

'How do I know how many a lout has been quickened to activity by Mr. T.P. Cooke's hornpipe? (Cheers) How do I know on how many a stale face and heart Long Tom Coffin, and Nelson's cox-swain, and Black-Eyed Susan's William, have come healthily dashing like the spray of the sea?"
Charles Dickens, in a speech at the Royal General Theatrical Fund dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern, April 4th 1863.

"...I roused myself and went to the play. There I found a virtuous boatswain in His Majesty's Service - a most excellent man, though I could have wished his trousers not quite so tight in some places and not quite so loose in others..."
Great Expectations Chapter XLVII.

(Collection of the City of Bath Central Reference Library.)

T. P. Cooke in "Black-Eyed Susan."

heartedness, into negligence, idleness, dissipation, dishonesty and ruin;" (174) Dickens was in fact, making Walter even more like the accepted, traditional, archetypal hero of fairy-tale.

Another significant fairy tale element in Dombey and Son is the Cinderella theme, already hinted at. Florence, like Cinderella, is a neglected child and actually has a proud and haughty step-mother, although she is really ill-treated not by her, but by her own father, the proud, the haughty, the unloving Mr. Dombey. This makes Florence, for most of the book, seem to play the role of a surrogate orphan, she is several times referred to as a lost child, as an orphan: she tells Edith that she knows she has never been "a favourite child...I have missed the way, and had no one to show it to me..." (175). Florence dreams that her parent dies. (176). Dombey is utterly neglectful of her at the parties and gatherings at his home after his second marriage. (177). Mrs. Chick laments that she is not noticed by anyone, and is made "of no more account than Florence!" (178). After she has tried to show her love for her father when Edith has left, and Dombey strikes her, "She saw she had no father upon earth, and ran out, orphaned, from his house." (179). The way Florence loses herself in London earlier in the book (and is, by the way, ritualistically stripped of all she owns, even her hair) operates on the double level of narrative (it introduces good Mother Brown, and brings Walter and Florence together) and at the same time symbolically demonstrates her loss of property and her losing her way in life. As she leaves Dombey's mansion after he has struck her she feels "stunned by the loss of all she loved, left like the

sole survivor...from the wreck of a great vessel...without hope, without purpose..." (180).

There are two other elements of fairy-tale in Dombey and Son worth comment, these are Mrs. Pipchin's establishment and Mr. Dombey's business premises. One of the earliest references to Mrs. Pipchin will be bound to impress upon our minds associations with tyranny, the murder of innocent babes, the Tower of London and all the apparatus of British legendary history: "This celebrated Mrs. Pipchin was a marvellous ill-favoured old lady..." (181). Where have we heard that echoing phrase before? It is in the original stage direction to Shakespeare's Richard III, Act III Scene 5, where Gloucester and Buckingham enter in rusty armour "marvellous ill-favoured." She is presented to us in black, the traditional costume of the evil, and in black so black "of such a lustreless, deep, dead, sombre shade, that gas itself couldn't light her up after dark, and her presence was a quencher to any number of candles." (182). Her home is called a "Castle" and she is given the name "ogress and child-queller" (183). The area of Brighton where this ogress lives is a veritable Waste Land; sterile, crumbling, isolated, populated almost exclusively by snails, in an airless atmosphere. She is likened to a witch, and her black cat is her familiar: "The good old lady might have been a witch, and Paul and the cat her two familiars, as they all sat by the fire together. It would have been quite in keeping with appearance of the party if they had all sprung up the chimney in a high wind one night, and never been heard of any more." (184). There is a "Castle Dungeon" which Dickens describes as "an empty

apartment at the back, devoted to correctional purposes." (185). Another child staying there is "led in from captivity" for mealtimes (186) and Mrs. Pipchin, unexpectedly catching the children playing romps and enjoying themselves is likened to "the Cock Lane Ghost revived." (187). Mrs. Wickam refers to Mrs. Pipchin's establishment as "a gaol of a house." (188). Mrs. Pipchin keeps "watch and ward" over Paul and Florence, in the best manner of mediavel ogresses. (189).

The office of Mr. Dombey is presented in terms of something out of myth and legend: "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 shaded 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." (190). The hierarchy of the office Dickens presents in terms of The Arabian Nights, Mr. Perch the messenger might just as well have bestowed upon Mr. Dombey some such title "as used to be bestowed upon the Caliph Haroun Alraschid" (191) and said to him "You are the Light of my Eyes. You are the Breath of my Soul..." (192). Mr. Carker is the Grand Vizier and Dombey is the Sultan himself.

These fairy-tale, legendary and mythical suggestions produce a very special atmosphere, an atmosphere which makes it

possible for us to accept this Dickens world, a mixture of the real, the grotesque and the storybook, in which apparently real events can move and terrify us, and yet in which poetic justice can be done and credibly done. As George Santayana so early observed "the secret of this new world of Dickens lies...in the combination of the strictest realism of detail with a fairy-tale unrealism of general atmosphere..." (193). Retribution, when it comes, is also in keeping with the fairy-tale element: the threads of the story are gathered together, the change of heart in Mr. Dombey, the marriage of Toots and Susan, the marriage of Walter and Florence, all are going to live happily ever after. As Captain Cuttle says in the closing pages of the book: "...what did I tell Wal'r to overhaul on that there night when he first took business? Was it this here quotation, 'Turn again Whittington Lord Mayor of London!' and when you are old you will never depart from it? Was it them words?..." (194).

It is this blending of language and references redolent of the scriptures, of fairy-tale and melodrama which creates a world in which Dickens bodies forth the great myth of Dombey and Son: a world where unlikely coincidences, analogies, events, seem quite acceptable: where figures larger than life are convincingly alive; where dream, suggestion and symbol operate on the mind with a power unmatched by most novelists who try to present realism. This is the quality in Dombey, I think, that made contemporary readers say of the behaviour of Dickens' characters, "out of all nature: it is impossible" (195) and "profoundly unreal" (196). As early as 1844 a commentator

noted that in a Dickens' novel "the good fairy" thwarts "the evil one." (197). This it is that so distinguishes Dickens, he is so unlike other "Victorian" novelists. Dr. John Lucas has written very interestingly about this novel (198) and has said that in the course of time he came to revise his opinion of it: originally he found that the book did not fulfil its promise, that the happy resolution of events at the close was somehow a literary fraud practised on the reader. (199). But in the course of time he came to accept the conclusion as Dickens left it as somehow "right", somehow expected, just: "a final gesture of open-mindedness, a refusal to settle for an apocalyptic vision, and an attempt to honour a 'design' and 'mystery' that suggest a ceaseless process of change, decay and renewal...I do not think this is cowardice. On the contrary it is imaginatively courageous, for it allows the novel an open-endedness that is in no way pietistic or vacuous..." (200). Dr. Lucas is here particularly discussing the happy ending of Walter Gay's career, but I note the way he finds himself able to talk of the imaginative rightness of the ending. Dombey has not only the rightness of fairy-tale, it has also the power of fairy-tale.

(iv)

The use Dickens makes of the railway in Dombey and Son is extremely interesting and repays study. As Humphry House has shown, the chronology of Dombey is fairly accurate. If we assume that the story of the book concludes in 1848 when it ceased to appear, by what events and incidents can we establish chronology? Florence, at the book's conclusion, has a son who

is old enough to talk sensibly about his "poor little uncle" (the "son" of the novel's title). If Florence was in her early twenties, Paul would have been born about 1833 and died in 1840 or 1841. Mr. Dombey and Major Bagstock journey to Leamington soon after Paul's death (201) and the line on which they travelled, the London and Birmingham line, was opened in September 1838. They stayed at the Royal Hotel, Leamington, which was pulled down in 1841-2. (202). In reading Dombey we are strongly conscious of the railways although their direct appearance in the novel is infrequent, there is the journey to Leamington, the description of the building of the line through Staggs' Gardens (the actual construction of the line to Euston terminus) and the death of Carker at Paddock Wood station, this must have been after 1844 when the branch line was opened there from Maidstone. (203).

It has been observed that one of the leading themes of the novel is the idea of change and progress (204), and it is here I think that the significance of Dickens' treatment of the railways in Dombey chiefly lies. The period of time during which the action of the novel happens was one of intense activity in railways. (205). Between 1836 and 1837, the period of the destruction of Staggs' Gardens there was a boom in railway investment and building. (206). A contemporary commented: "The press supported the mania; the government sanctioned it; the people paid for it. Railways were at once a fashion and a frenzy. England was mapped out for iron roads. The profits and percentages of the Liverpool and Manchester were largely quoted. The prospects and power of the London and

The Railway Dragon.

Etching by George Cruickshank from his Table Book (1845).

"I come to dine. I come to sup.
I come, I come...to eat you up!"

This drawing illustrates an article, The Natural History of the Panic, by Angus Bethune Reach, on the financial panic of the mid-eighteen forties. Note the flesh consuming mouth and the vivid eyes. It cannot help but recall the death of Carker in Dombey and Son: "...the red eyes, bleared and dim, in the daylight..."

The Railway Dragon

Birmingham were as freely prophesied..." (207) Humphry House comments on the way in which in Dombey and Son particularly Dickens could "sense the mood of his time, and incorporate new sensations in imaginative literature." (208).

Punch's Almanack for 1846 was devoted to the theme of the current railway mania, and in 1845 Punch published a heartrending cartoon, Lord Brougham's Railway Nightmare, which showed the unfortunate Privy Councillor in a night-cap with railway shares dancing all round his bed and a train actually running over his bedclothes. (209). This was accompanied by a letter from the sleepless baron which read: "I am subject to a species of nightmare in the shape of a very heavy oppression at my chest, as if a steam engine was cutting right across me, and my whole body were intersected by various lines of railway. I hear all sorts of noises - steam boilers appear to be bursting in my ears; valves seem exploding under my very nose and pistons work before my eyes..." (210).

In some ways Dickens seems to be reflecting the public's ambiguous, or love-hate, relationship with the railway: he sees it both as an example of the way modern inventions destroy the beautiful things in life, and also evidence of the triumph of modern man over his environment, and the more general social benefits of "progress". The optimism of the new Railway Age, was sung by Charles Mackay:

Lay down your rails, ye nations near and far;
Yoke your full trains to Steam's triumphal car;
Link town to town, and in these iron bands
Unite the strange and oft imbattled lands.
Peace and Improvement round each train shall soar,
And Knowledge light the ignorance of Yore.
Men, joined in amity, shall wonder long
That Hate had power to lead their fathers wrong;
Or that false glory lured their hearts astray,
And made it virtuous and sublime to slay.
Blessings on Science and her handmaid Steam
They make Utopia only half a dream. (211)

Mackay's optimism was not universally shared. Some believed that tunnels would be dangerous to health, producing catarrhrs and even consumption: the deafening noise, it was believed, the gloom, the glare of the engine would have a bad effect on the nerves. Being moved through the air at such speeds would be injurious to the lungs, while those with blood pressure would be catapulted into apoplexy. Suddenly plunging from darkness into light would be bad for the eyes. On the other hand, opponents of this view claimed that the speed and sway of the engine and train would be good for the circulation, cure constipation, promote digestion, tranquilise the nerves and ensure good sleep. (212). Henry Booth, treasurer of the Liverpool and Manchester Railways said that we "must determine ...whether it be desirable that a nation should continue in the quiet enjoyment of pastoral or agricultural life, or that it should be launched into the bustle and excitement of commerce

and manufacture...it must be admitted that the golden age is part, and it is to be feared the iron has succeeded. The locomotive engine and railway were reserved for the present day. From west to east, and from north to south, the mechanical principle, the philosophy of the nineteenth century, will spread and extend itself. The world has received a new impulse. The genius of the age, like a mighty river of the new world flows onward, full, rapid, and irresistible..." (213).

Dickens, although called by Ruskin "a leader of the steam-whistle party par excellence (with) no understanding of any power of antiquity except a sort of jackdaw sentiment for cathedral towers..." (214) does not present the modern steam railway in an uncritical light in Dombey and Son. Nor does he blindly censure it. He seems genuinely to be reflecting and responding to the immediate contemporary emotions and views of the new railway age. A few months before Dombey and Son started to appear Wordsworth wrote:

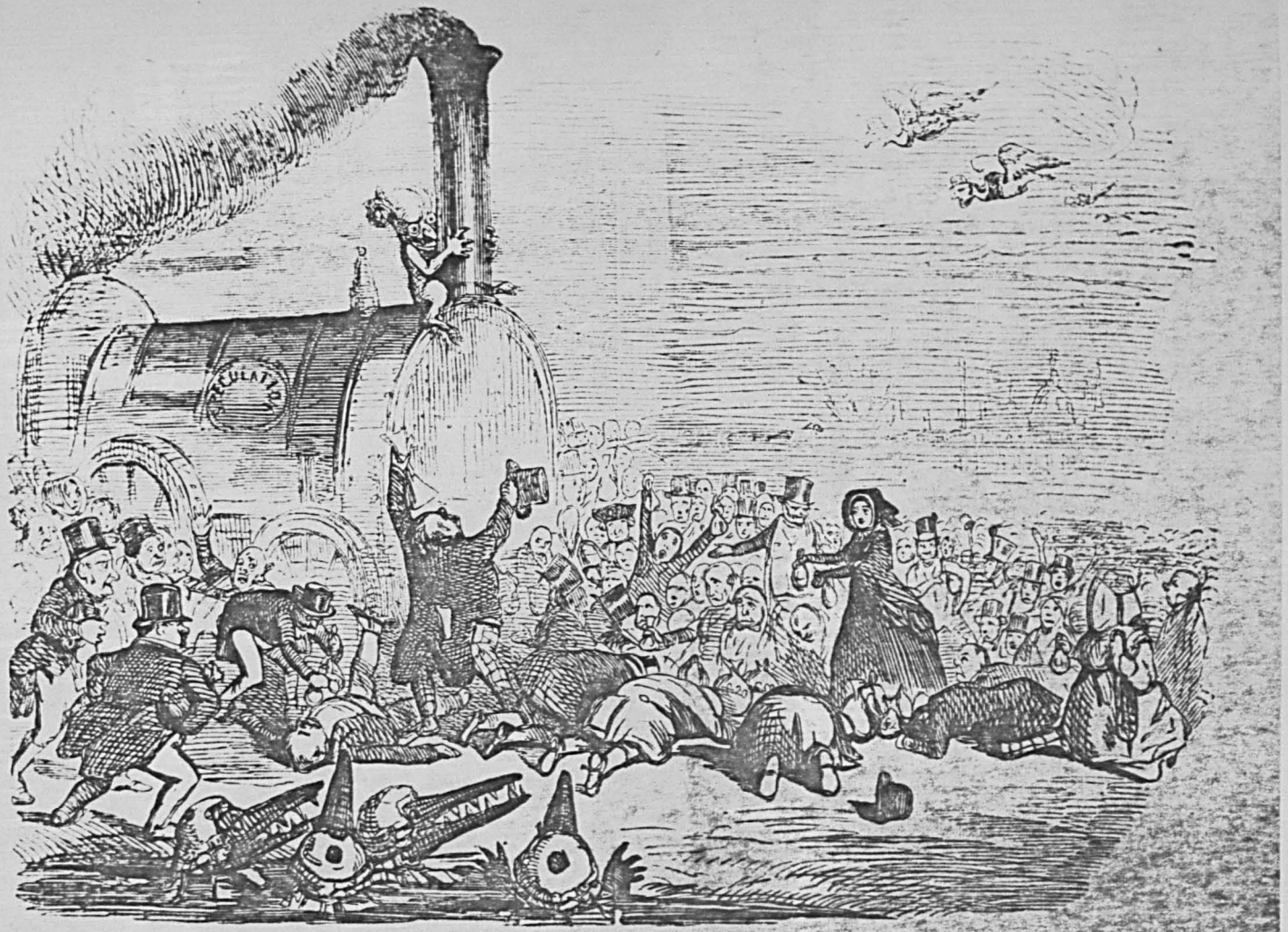
> Is then no nook of English ground secure
> From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
> In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
> As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
> Must perish - how can they this blight endure?
> And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
> Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
> 'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
> Baffle the threat, bright Scene from Orest-head
> Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance:
> Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance

Of nature; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds, ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong. (215)

In an age of which the most perceptive and sensitive feared that the whole tendency of life was ever increasingly towards the mechanization of all things human and otherwise, an obvious reaction to the railways was to see them as the way of the Juggernaut, which will lead to the sacrifice of our humanity. (216). Tony Weller did not like them. Mrs. Gamp was convinced that they caused miscarriages, and Mr. Chadband is consistently associated with train-oil (this is a superb stroke I have always thought, it suggests the link between public sanctity and capitalistic enterprise - it epitomises Max Weber's immortal Protestant Ethic and continues the similar association between religious hypocrisy and financial greed stated in Pecksniff). It was early sensed that the railways, as well as liberating mankind, somehow restricted us: "A railway conveyance is a locomotive prison," wrote a traveller in 1838, "At a certain period you are compelled to place your person and your property in the company of a set of men exceedingly independent, and who have little regard for your accommodation. Till your journey is accomplished, you are completely subservient to their commands. You pass through the country without much opportunity of contemplating its beauties; you are subject to the monotonous clatter of its machinery, and every now and then to the unpleasant grating sensation of the brake. To all these things must be added the horribly offensive smells of rancid oil and smoky coal..." (217).

The Railway Juggernaut of 1845.

A train, named "Speculation" calmly runs over the citizenry who so faithfully worship it, guided by a demon it keeps on its relentless journey while others rush to sacrifice their gold to it.
Cartoon by Leech in Punch Volume IX (1847) page 47 - the year Dombey was serialised.



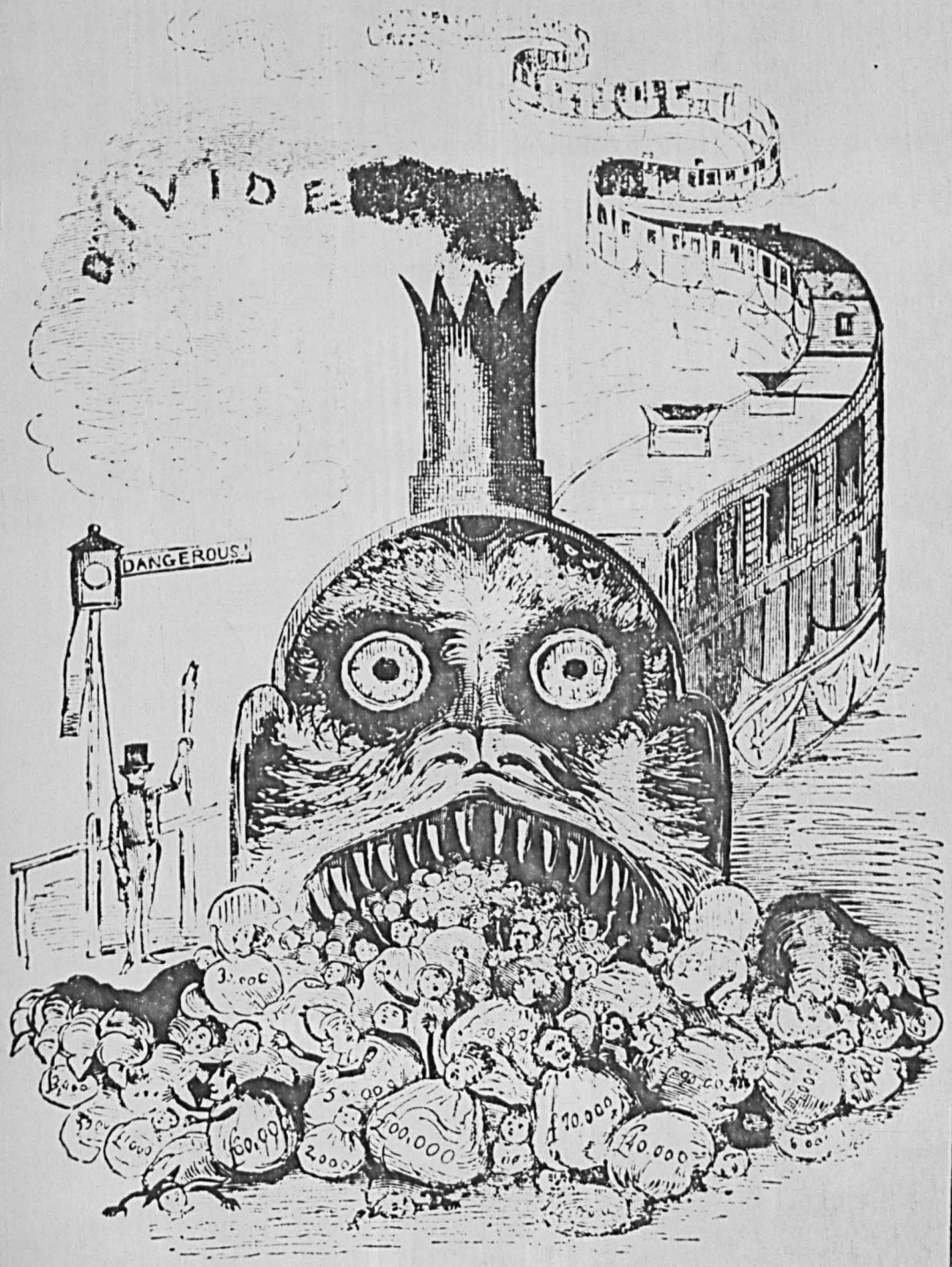
THE RAILWAY JUGGERNAUT OF 1845.

The new Fire-king was ruthlessly greedy for land: "The whole country, from coast to coast, was to be traversed and dissected by iron roads; wherever there was a hamlet or cattle-track, a market or a manufactory, there was to be a railroad; physical obstacles and private rights were straws under the chariot wheels of the Fire-king..." wrote Robert Bell a few years after Dombey and Son appeared, "...mountains were to be cut through as you would a cheese; valleys were to be lifted; the skies were to be scaled; the earth was to be tunnelled...the shrieking engine was to carry the riot of the town into the sylvan retreats of pastoral life...hissing locomotives were to rush over the tops of houses..." (218).

The novelists were early commentators on the new railways (219), and their evidence is extremely interesting (220) but what makes Dickens' use of the railways in Dombey and Son so striking is not simply that he is one of the earliest novelists to use the railways as the stuff of a novel, nor that he describes the age of steam and railway so accurately and impressively, but that he incorporates the iron steam-engine into that unique mythology of his, it becomes a vital and hard-worked element of the world of Dombey, it takes on the aura of dream and symbol: Dickens' use of the symbol of the railway is typical of the best of his art, it is "real" - that is to say, it has certain vraisemblance which accords with our own experience of the real, the everyday, but at the same time it has the strange, self-explanatory symbolic-signalling quality of the dream; and that these strands of symbol and narrative have a linking coherance essentially their own. Professor J. Hillis Miller has

The Great Land Serpent!

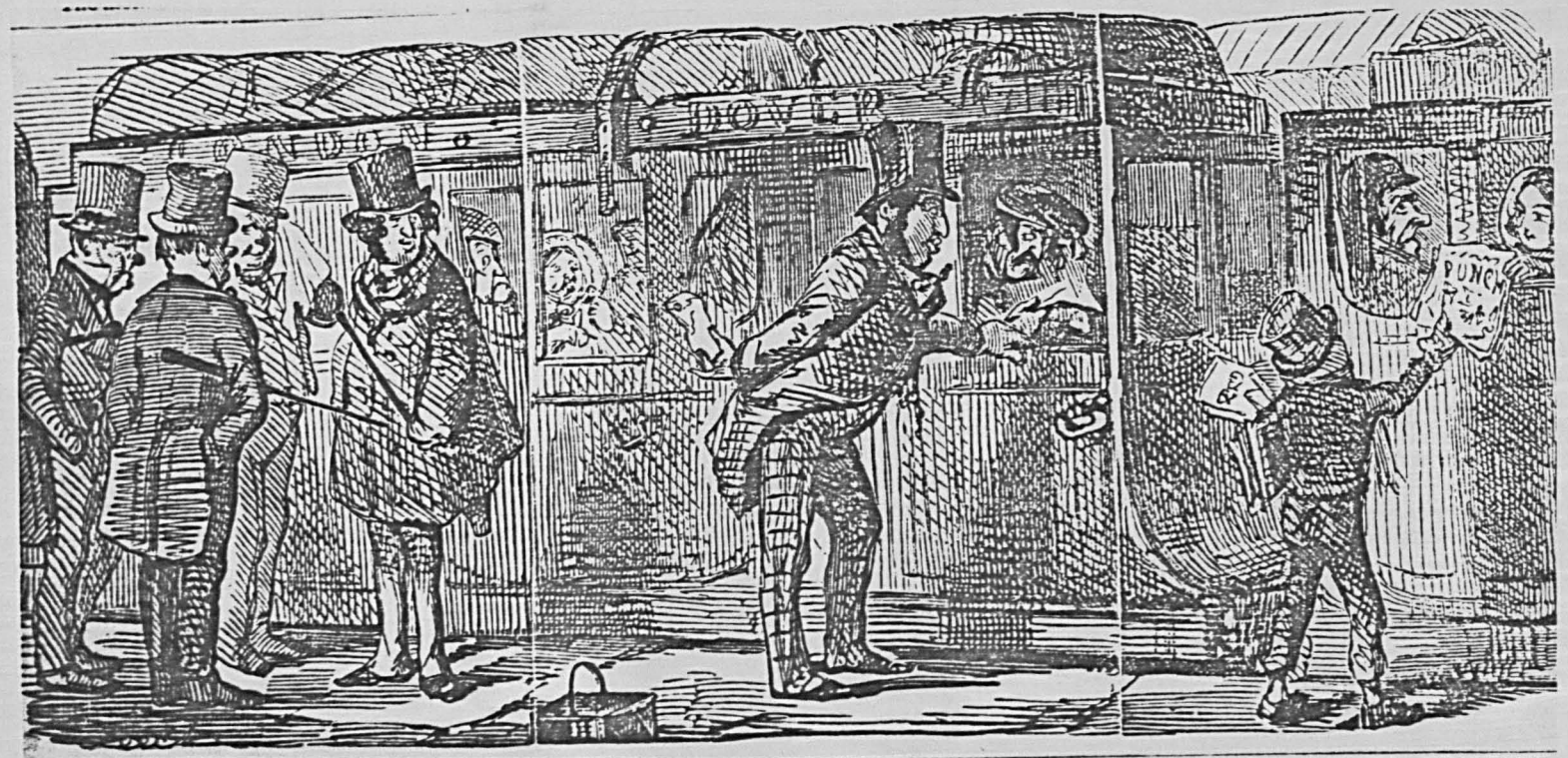
An "anthropomorphic locomotive" - illustration from
The Puppet Show Volume II (1848) page 87.
A comment on the Railway Mania, consuming the wealth and invading the land of the nation: the signal points to "danger" and the dividend is obscured in smoke.



THE GREAT *LAND* SERPENT!

Railway Miseries No.VIII.

Punch's Almanack (1846).
Scene - A Terminus.
Sherriff's Officer: "You are, I believe, the Hon. Mr. Stag, Provisional Director of the West Diddlesex?"
Hon. Mr. Stagg: "Ahem, - Ye-is."
Sherriff's Officer: "Off to France, I believe sir?"
Hon. Mr. Stag: "Ye-is."
Sherriff's Officer: "Sorry to trouble you, but you must come with me, sir."
In the next carriage is the unmistakable face of Lord Brougham.



Railway Miseries. No. VIII. } SCENE—*A Terminus.* SHERIFF'S OFFICER. "You are, I believe, the Hon. Mr. Stag, Provisional Director of the West Diddlesex?" HON. MR. STAG. "Ahem,—Ye—is." SHERIFF'S OFFICER. "Off to France, I believe, sir?" HON. MR. STAG "Ye—is." SHERIFF'S OFFICER. "Sorry to trouble you, but you must come with me, sir."

discussed this aspect of Dickens' imagination and pointed out that the significance of the images is not simply in their immediate relation to the narrative line, but in relation to all the images in their contexts before and after. "In Dickens," he says, "this spatial quality results in part from the intricate plots in which everything that happens and all the characters turn out in the end to be somehow related..." (221). Professor Taylor Stoehr suggests that the emphasis on the spatial quality of the symbolic structure is right as "A Dickens novel is like a crossword puzzle, worked out temporally, one item at a time, but existing finally in space, all at one, in a net work of inter-connections..." (222). The use of the railway in Dombey is a dramatic example of this kind of structure in a masterpiece of imaginative fiction: "...the author pours over the objects which he figures for himself, something of the ever-welling passion which overflows him. Stones for him take a voice, white walls swell into big phantoms, black wells yawn hideously and mysteriously in the darkness: legions of strange creatures whirl shuddering over the fantastic landscape: blank nature is peopled, inert matter moves. But the images remain clear; in this madness there is nothing vague or disorderly: imaginary objects are designed with outlines as precise and details as numerous as real objects, and the dream is equal to the reality." Thus Taine. (223).

The railway links Mr. Dombey, Major Bagstock, the Toodles, Carker, as well as introducing the ideas of speculation and "progress" or "change". We are quite early introduced to the idea of the railways when we meet the Toodle family. Mr. Toodle

is a stoker by trade. He is asked by a partially understanding Miss Tox, how he likes it? "Which Mum?" said the man. "That," replied Miss Tox, "Your trade." "Oh! Pretty well, Mum. The ashes sometimes gets in here;" touching his chest, "and it makes a man speak gruff, as at the present time. But it is ashes, Mum, not crustiness." (224). The railway in this case is seen as neither good nor bad, it provides Toodles with work, but it makes his voice husky. Mr. Dombey - and this should be noted not as an objective reaction, but one given specifically to Dombey - is horrified when he learns from the man's own lips of his enthusiasm for "these here railroads." (225). The reader, I do not think, is meant to be horrified. The eldest son of the Toodle family is actually "known in the family by the name of Biler, in rememberance of the steam engine." (226).

It is a mark of the extraordinary power of Dickens' writing that the celebrated scenes of the destruction of Staggs' Gardens by the new railroad, which has become one of the most famous sequences in the novel (227) should in fact be so brief: it is only four paragraphs long. Here too, as with "grinder" later on, we must consider the etymology of the name of the neighbourhood.

The word Stag is defined in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as "A person who applies for an allocation of shares in a joint stock concern solely with a view to selling immediately at a profit." This meaning is currently retained on the Stock Exchange today. As Michael Steig has indicated, this word was probably first used in this context by Thackeray (228)

Railway Miseries No.XI.

Punch's Almanack (1846).
The Stag at Bay.
The stag, obviously just preparing to pack, is run to ground by sherriff's officers.

ailway Miseries.
No. XI.

THE STAG AT BAY.—"Never! I'll bolt or conquer!"

in a short article for Punch, The Stags: A Drama of Today.(229). The two heroes of this piece are lowly swindlers who hope to obtain railway shares using credit references in the name of Wellington and Peel; they hope to off-load them and make their profit before their initial lack of funds is realised. Their address is "Staggland, Bucks." The word soon became a fashionable term for such financial roguery; a cartoon in Punch shows Mr. Punch himself, with a shot-gun searching for game in the Stock Exchange, men who wear antlers - Punch thus exposes the "Stags" of the day, the dishonest buyers and sellers of railway shares. (230).

In November 1845 their cartoon The Stag at Bay shows an unfortunate speculator barricading his door against his creditors. George Cruikshank's Table Book of 1845 also has some references to "Stags" which suggest how much of a vogue-word it had become, reinforcing the point that Staggs' Gardens would have a special redolence to readers of the time. The Natural History of the Panic by Angus B. Reach, which appears in the Table Book, has mention of the pranks that the Railway Panic has been playing with "our friends the Stags" and refers also to the Stags' "pulled-in" horns. (231). This is followed by a parody of the celebrated Beggar's Petition which began:

Pity the sorrows of a poor old man

Whose trembling limbs have borne him to your door...

The railway version of this popular recitation piece is called The Stag's Petition and it tells the sorry tale of "a poor old Stag, brought by the panic to the workhouse door." (232).

Dickens throws out one or two suggestions for the etymology of Stagg's Gardens: "Some were of opinion that Stagg's Gardens derived its name from a deceased capitalist one Mr. Staggs, who had built it for his delectation. Others, who had a natural taste for the country, held that it dated from those rural times when the antlered herd, under the familiar denomination of Stagges, had resorted to its shady precincts. Be this as it may, Stagg's Gardens was regarded by its population as a sacred grove not to be withered by railroads..." (233). We notice the association with capitalism and investment, contrasted to the primitive, unspoilt rural days, and recall how clearly Dickens, in the agency of Mr. Morfin, makes us aware of Mr. Carker's immense and reckless speculations and their consequences: "That he has abused his trust in many ways...that he has oftener dealt and speculated to advantage for himself, than for the House he represented; that he has led the house on, to prodigious ventures, often resulting in enormous losses...will not perhaps surprise you now..." he tells Harriet and John Carker. (234). "Undertakings have been entered on, to swell the reputation of the House for vast resources, and to exhibit in magnificent contrast to other merchants' houses, of which it requires a steady head to contemplate the possibility - a few disastrous changes of affairs might render them the probably - ruinous consequences. In the midst of the many transactions of the House, in most parts of the world; a great labyrinth of which only he has held the clue: he has had the opportunity, and he seems to have used it, of keeping the various results afloat, when ascertained, and substituting estimates and generalities for facts..." he continues. (235). Dickens does not

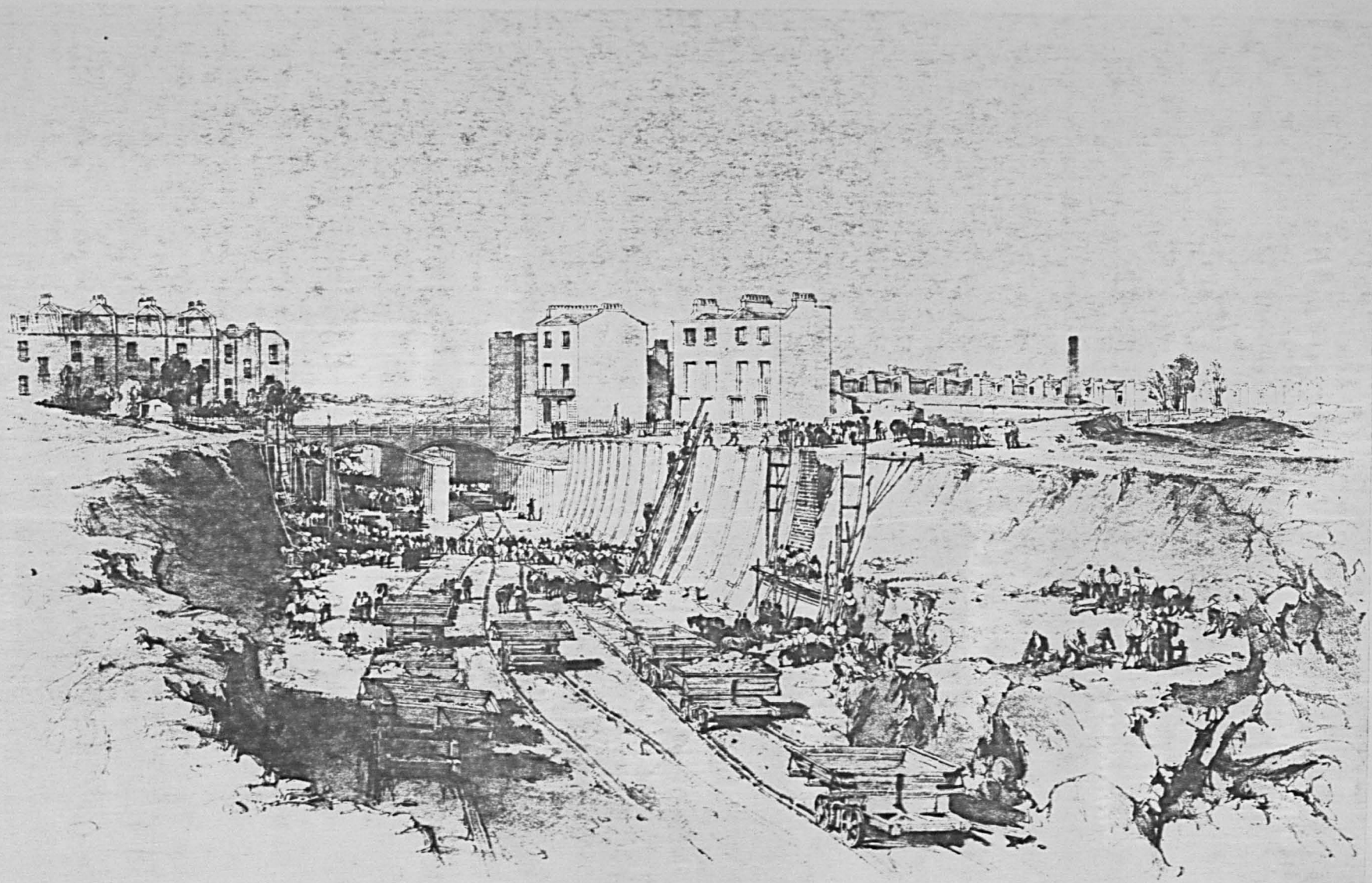
directly associate Mr. Carker with railway speculation, but in the context of the time when the parts of Dombey appeared, the assumption would be that Carker had dabbled in railway speculation. This seems to place him in such company as Ralph Nickleby, Merdle, among Dickens' gallery of swindlers. (236). As Humphry House has suggested, in creating Merdle in Little Dorrit Dickens was thinking not solely of John Sadleir or Hudson the Railway King, he was concerned in producing what Humphry House calls "a satire on social and financial conditions which belong more truly to the crisis of the late 'forties than to the middle twenties, with which they are apparently meant to be connected." (237).

We know that Dickens was deeply interested in the great railway mania of the 'forties, and Grahame Smith, citing evidence from the Preface to Little Dorrit and his letters, suggests that Dickens had a "Merdle" character in mind before the failure and suicide of his supposed original Sadleir. (238). In suggesting that Carker speculated with the firm's money in railway shares Dickens was treating with a theme already very familiar by the end of the eighteen forties. Many times contemporary cartoons exhibit the monster of railway-mania in various forms and guises. (239). As early as 1850 Carlyle spent his satiric fire on the subject of Hudson. (240). Novels appeared with railway speculators as their leading characters, Robert Bell's The Ladder of Gold (1850) and Emma Robinson's The Gold-Worshippers (1851). "The worship of the Golden Calf was the heresy of the greater proportion of the people... The frightful contagion spread; and England became one great gamble..." wrote one novelist. (241).

The nature of the presentation of the destruction of Stagg's Gardens is, I think, ambiguous. The first impression is one of shock, a violent series of actions has just happened: "The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood... Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations; carcases of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth; and mounds of ashes blocked up rights of way, and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood. In short, the yet unfinished and unopened railroad was in progress; and, from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilisation and improvement." (242).

Building Retaining Wall, Camden Town, September 1838.
Drawing by J.C. Bourne. British Museum.

"...Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up..."
Dombey and Son Chapter VI.



We would notice first the use of terms associated with natural, elemental catastrophe - rent, course, broken, undermined, pits and trenches, earth and clay thrown up, chaos, carcases, wilderness - all presenting a meaningless destructiveness mirrored in the incomprehensibility of dream; there are springs and eruptions, ashes, the glare and roar of flames. But we should note that the area was a loathesome, urban desert before: "There were frowzy fields, and cowhouses, and dunghills, and dustheaps, and ditches, and gardens...at the very door of the railway." (243). These existed before the railway, and Dickens does not commend them, he does not say that this was a beautiful, snug, organic little working class community which was ruined by the railways. A.E. Dyson suggests that in Dombey and Son there is a nightmare quality in the modern railway which somehow is analogous to the nightmare realities of the capitalist world (244), but I do not think the issue is as clear-cut as this: out of the chaos of the act of railway-creation, "from the very core of all this dire disorder, (the yet unfinished and unopened railroad) trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilisation and improvement." (245). It is true that Dickens does mention "one or two bold speculators" (246) but Dickens suggests that what they have invested in might not be wholly unbeneficial to the community, including new streets, a brand-new tavern (The Railway Arms), the old established ham and beef shop had become "The Railway Eating House". Is this ironic in tone? I am not sure, but there are other clues as to Dickens' view of the new railways.

Professor Edgar Johnson accepts that the lines about "civilisation and improvement" are ironic (247) and is not ready to see the other side of the discussion: it is true that we see how it disrupts a community living in Stagg's Gardens, but that society is not destroyed, it is changed. From an idyllic walk where he can look round on the green English grass and the home landscape, "listening to the birds, and the Sunday bells, and the softened murmur of the town..." (248) Walter Gay is summoned by Susan Nipper to find Polly and come to Paul, who is ill. They try to find Stagg's Gardens, but there was, now, "no such place." It had "vanished from the earth. Where the old rotten summer houses had once stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond. The miserable waste ground, where the refuse matter had been heaped of yore, was swallowed up and gone; and its frowsy stead were tiers of warehouses, crammed with rich goods and costly merchandise. The old by-streets now swarmed with passengers and vehicles of every kind..." (249). The newly projected streets which had seemed if they were to lead nowhere, the bridges constructed with nowhere to cross, all this now made sense, as a new community had been created, and these ways "led to villas, gardens, churches, healthy public walks..." (250). The doubts about the railways, Dickens conveys in a religious metaphor, had been dispelled: "As to the neighbourhood which had hesitated to acknowledge the railroad in its struggling days, that had grown wise and penitent, as any Christian might in such a case..." (251).

Entrance Portico, Euston Grove Station
drawn by J.C. Bourne (British Museum)
published September 1838.

"There was no such place as Stagg's Gardens. It had vanished from the earth. Where the old rotten summer houses once had stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond."
Dombey and Son Chapter XV.

ENTRANCE PORTICO — EUSTON GRATE STATION

The whole standard of living of the area had improved as a result of the modern railways; life, bustle and a generosity of social living are visited on the place once known as Stagg's Gardens: "There were railway patterns in its drapers' shops, and railway journals in the windows of its newsmen. There were railway hotels, railway coffee-houses, lodging houses... To and from the heart of this great change, all day and night, throbbing currents rushed and returned incessantly like its life's blood. Crowds of people and mountains of goods, departing and arriving...produced a fermentation in the place that was always in action." (252). We should note the use of words associated with life, the heart, the circulation, life's blood, fermentation, with the latter's associations of effervescence, heat, and change of properties, agitation, excitement. Members of Parliament, who had formerly scoffed at the wild dreams of the railway engineers, now personally acknowledged the triumph of steam by going north by train themselves, sending messages on beforehand to warn of their arrival by electric telegraph. The engines, which had seemed once such terrible engines of destruction, are now described as "tame dragons" and their motion is described as smooth and gliding. (253).

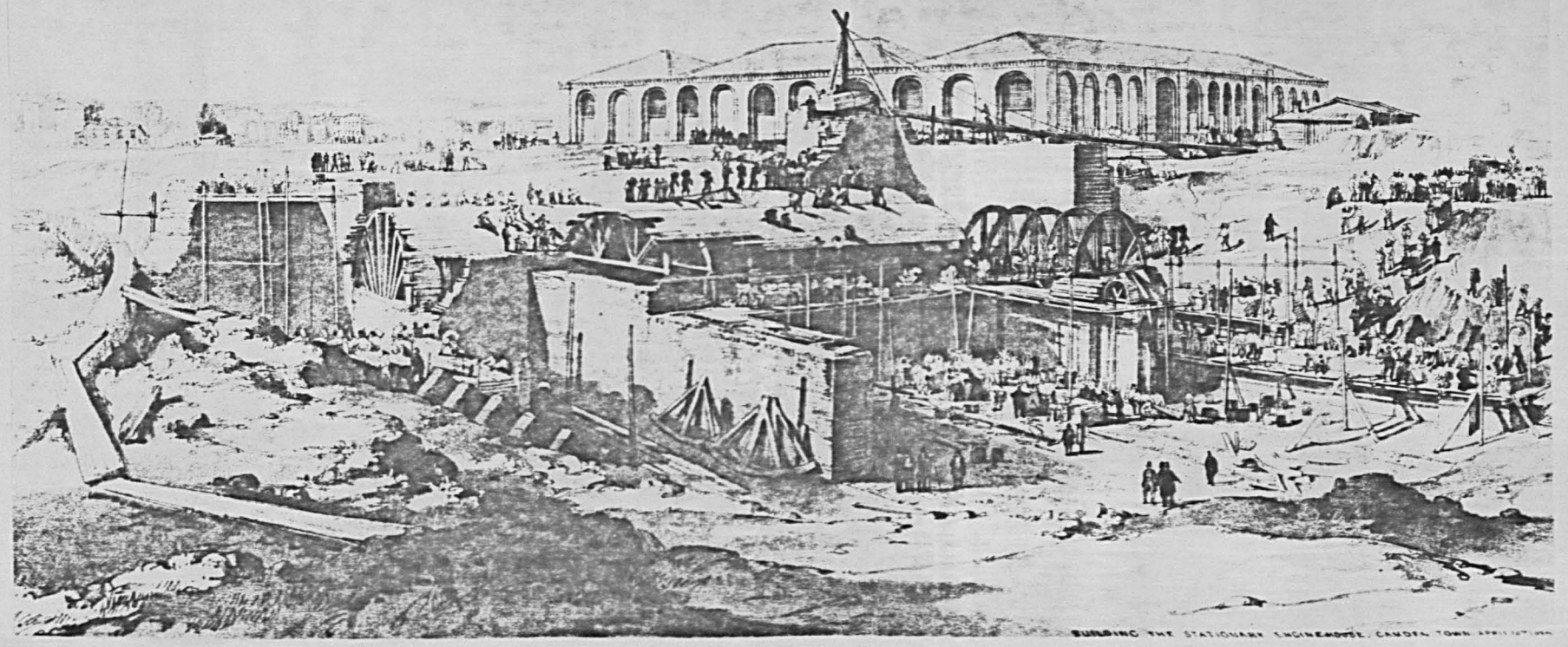
It is true that Dickens insists that Stagg's Gardens had been "cut up root and branch" but we must consider what has replaced it: Mr. Toodle, now an Engine Fireman, lives in the Company's own Buildings, where we see him eating his dinner with a healthy appetite, having just come back from Birmingham, sitting in the bosom of his family surrounded by new babies. (254). It has not made Toodles mechanical or unloving, it has improved

the standard of living of the whole area, improved commerce, broadened their horizons, made them more prosperous, it has swept away a frowsy community which had lingered, ailing, into the nineteenth century, and replaced it with a thriving modern community. When we meet Mr. Toodle in his professional capacity we are told that, although he is liberally besmeared with the debris of his trade "he was not a badlooking fellow, nor even what could be fairly called a dirty-looking fellow..." (255), and we should also notice that although he is now working for the greatest mechanical wonder of the age he is still a wonderful human being, as he shows one of the greatest Dickensian virtues, sympathy: poor, depraved, dirty wretch as he might seem to Mr. Dombey he commiserates with that great man on the death of Paul.

Another striking use of the railways in Dombey and Son is the journey of Mr. Dombey to Leamington. This is a passage that needs careful consideration, as it is frequently taken to mean that the railways and all they stand for, are Death and Destruction. (256). The vision of the railways we have in this scene, it is very important to grasp, is viewed subjectively through the eyes of Mr. Dombey. He is at this time particularly under stress, something has happened to him which seldom happens - a human action has pierced his creaking, starched almost paralysed exterior, and touched something deep in the recesses of his psyche. He is disturbed: "...there was something more in his bitterness, and in his moody way of falling back in the carriage and looking with knitted brows at the changing objects without..." than in simply considering the academic failure of

Building the Stationary Engine House, Camden Town, April 1839. Drawing by J.C. Bourne. British Museum.

"Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable...carcases of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding... There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness..."
Dombey and Son Chapter VI.



BUILDING THE STATIONARY ENGINEHOUSE, CAMDEN TOWN

Rob the Grinder. It is Mr. Toodle's compassion for his loss in Paul which has so wounded Dombey. (257). "He had seen upon the man's rough cap a piece of new crepe, and he half assured himself from his manner and his answers, that he wore it for his son." (258). We should notice here that far from mechanizing Mr. Toodle, he is acting as a fully human being, a being who shows sympathy for other human beings; what galls Mr. Dombey is the feeling that his dear son is being soiled by posthumous contact with common people: "...from high to low, at home or abroad, from Florence in his great house to the coarse churl who was feeding the fire then smoking before them, everyone set up some claim or other to a share in his dead boy, and was a bidder against him! Could he ever forget how that woman had wept over his pillow, and called him her own child! or how he, waking from his sleep, had asked for her, and raised himself in his bed and brightened when she came in!' (259).

The depth of the blow to Dombey is in direct proportion to the degree of penetration they have made into that secret, secure and personal world of Dombey, his innermost world, protected from the outside by gold and wealth and social position. He is here almost mortally wounded: "To think of this presumptious raker among coals and ashes going on before there, with his sign of mourning!... 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..." (260).

He finds no relief in the railway journey, Dickens is very explicit about this - there are beautiful things to be seen here, but Mr. Dombey does not see them: "Tortured by these thoughts he carried monotony with him, through the rushing landscape, and hurried headlong not through a rich and varied country, but a wilderness of blighted plans and gnawing jealousies..." (261). For Mr. Dombey the power and speed of the engine seem to mock the frailty of Paul's life. It is important to see that this is the burden carried by this significant passage - Dickens is not saying that the railways equal death, he is saying that Mr. Dombey sees how frail human hopes are, how short life is, and that in mortality bliss is not to be achieved. "The very speed at which the train was whirled along mocked the swift course of the young life that had been borne away so steadily and so inexorably to its foredoomed end. The power that forced itself upon its iron way... defiant of all paths and roads, piercing through the heart of every obstacle, and dragging all living creatures of all classes, ages, and degrees behind it, was a type of the triumphant monster, Death." (262).

Dickens is not saying here that the Railway and all it stands for equals Death: what he is saying is that the course of life towards death is inexorable, like the path of the railway engine. (263).

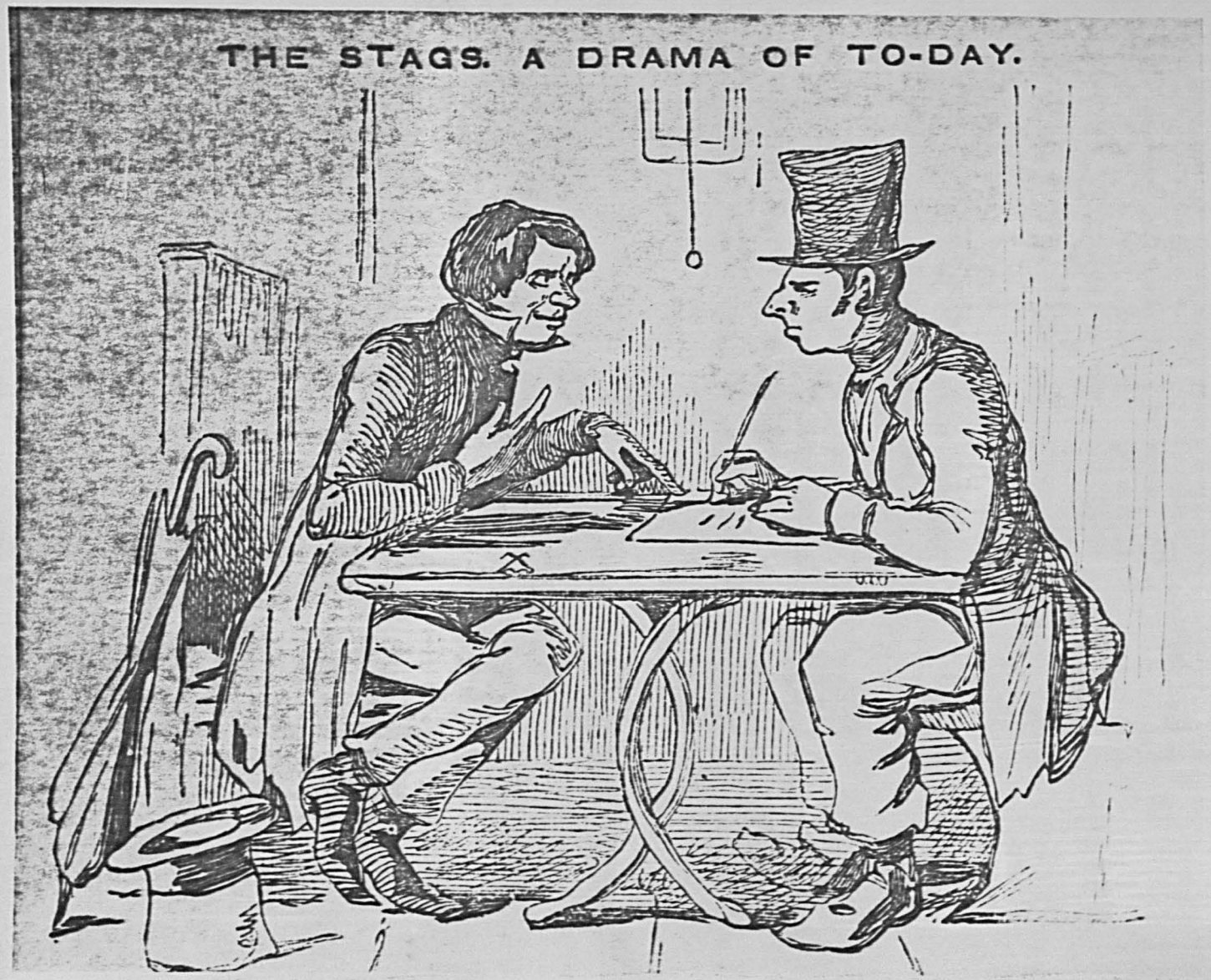
There are other passages in Dickens which are similar (264) to this section in Dombey and Son but no other passage known to me makes such forceful use of the railway as an image of the

relentless passage of time. Wherever Mr. Dombey looks during this journey, "He found a likeness to his misfortune everywhere. There was a remorseless triumph going on about him, and it galled and stung him in his pride and jealousy, whatever form it took: though most of all when it divided with him the love and memory of his lost boy." (265). These are his thoughts as he looks out of the carriage window, and sees "...dark pools of water, muddy lanes and miserable habitations far below... jagged walls and falling houses...battered roofs and broken windows..." (266). The idea of mortality, life and death, light and darkness, is pressed home by the analogy of the open line and the tunnel: "...plunging down into the earth again, and working on in such a storm of energy and perserverance, that amidst the darkness and whirlwind the motion seems reversed, and to tend furiously backward, until a ray of light upon the wet wall shows its surface flying past like a fierce stream. Away once more into the day, and through the day, with a shrill yell of exultation..." (267).

The gloom and morbidity which so many commentators have detected in this passage, it should be noted, is entirely subjective, this is what Dombey thought, not what Dickens thinks: "All things looked black, and cold, and deadly upon him, and he on them. He found a likeness to his misfortune everywhere..." (268). There are beautiful sights to be seen from the train, Dickens tells us of "the shower and sunshine", "great works and massive bridges" of "cottage-homes, of houses, mansions, rich estates, of husbandry and handicrafts, of people, old roads and paths..." (269). We are told quite explicitly that Mr. Dombey

The Stags: A Drama of Today.

Cartoon and short comic feature by Thackeray in
Punch Volume IX (1845) page 104.
Tom Stag, a retired thimblerigger and Jim Stag, a costermonger, complete an application for railway shares for which they obviously have no funds, using the name "Victor Wellesley Delancey" with the address "Staggland, Bucks." Supporting referees are Wellington and Peel.


THE STAGS. A DRAMA OF TO-DAY.

does not think that the "monster" let the light of day on these dreary things, nor made or caused them. (270).

The final appearance of the railways in Dombey and Son is in the scenes of the death of Mr. Carker the manager. He has a fleeting premonition of his death: "Some visionary terror, unintelligible and inexplicable, associated with a trembling of the ground, - a rush and sweep of something through the air... He shrank, as if to let the thing go by. It was not gone, it never had been there..." (271). Carker's flight by coach is used in much the same way as Mr. Dombey's railway journey - a subjective view of landscape which parallels his frame of mind: "The clatter and commotion echoed to the hurry and discordance of the fugitive's ideas. Nothing clear without, and nothing clear within. Objects flitting past, merging into one another, dimly descried, confusedly lost sight of, gone! Beyond the scraps of fence and cottage immediately upon the road, a lowering waste. Beyond the shifting images that rose up in his mind and vanished as they showed themselves, a black expanse of dread and rage... Sometimes that rush which was so furious and horrible, again came sweeping through his fancy, passed away and left a chill upon his blood. The lamps, gleaming on the medley of horses' heads, jumbled with the shadowy driver, and the fluttering of his cloak, made a thousand indistinct shapes, answering to his thoughts. Shadows of familiar people, stooping at their desks and books, in their remembered attitudes; strange apparitions of the man whom he was flying from, or of Edith, repetitions in the ringing bells and rolling wheels, of words that had been spoken; confusions of time and place...

commotion, discord, hurry, darkness and confusion in his mind, and all around him... Again the nameless shock comes speeding up, and as it passes, the bells ring in his ears..." (272).

The use of the journey here is very close in intention and effect to Mr. Dombey's train journey; in both we are given a subjective view, and are allowed to glimpse the innards of a tortured mind. The journey seems to Mr. Carker "like a vision, in which nothing was quite real but his own torment." (273). And significantly "a fevered vision of things past and present all confounded together; of his life and journey blended into one..." (274). Mr. Carker becomes obsessed with the rush of trains, which exercises a strange almost mesmeric fascination for him. When he returns to England it is his intention to find some quiet spot where he can recover in hiding. He thinks himself safe in a country township, "a retired spot, on the borders of a little wood..." (275). But here his terrible vision of the rushing sensation behind him becomes a reality: "he started up and listened in sudden terror. For now, indeed, it was no fancy. The ground shook, the house rattled, the fierce impetuous rush was in the air! He felt it come up, and go darting by..." (276). His fear, which has become a living part of himself, has now taken physical shape.

The railways begin to exercise a strong and strange hold over him; he seems unable to keep away from the track: "It made him shrink and shudder even now, when its faintest hum was hushed, and when the lines of iron road he could trace in the moonlight, running to a point, were as empty and as silent as a

Proposed Design for a Monument to a Defunct Railway Line.

Punch Volume X (1846) page 247.
Note the prominent stags' antlers.

A Degraded Academy.

desert. Unable to rest, and irresistibly attracted...to this road, he went out and lounged on the brink of it... A trembling of the ground, and quick vibration in his ears; a distant shriek; a dull light advancing, quickly changed to two red eyes, and a fierce fire, dropping glowing coals...a high wind, and a rattle - another come and gone, and he holding to a gate as if to save himself! He waited for another, and for another..." (277).

Even when he goes to bed he is still haunted by the presence of the train, and when he feels the trembling and vibration he leaves his bed and goes to the window. (278). In his dreams he is visited by the memory-phantom of his journey, bells, wheels, horses' feet until the next train disturbs him with its vibration and rattle. He is utterly without a sense of relevance and connection when morning comes: the way Dickens tells us this is very important. The actual words are "the past, present and future, all float confusedly before him, and he had lost all power of looking steadily at any one of them." (279). In his inability to come to terms with the past, present and future, in his failure to see them in perspective he is in such a dangerous state as Scrooge before his change of heart: he assures the last spirit that he "will live in the Past, the Present and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within" him. "I will not shut out the lessons that they teach." he says. (280).

As we have seen, the accommodation of past, present and future is one of the guiding themes of Dickens' fiction in the

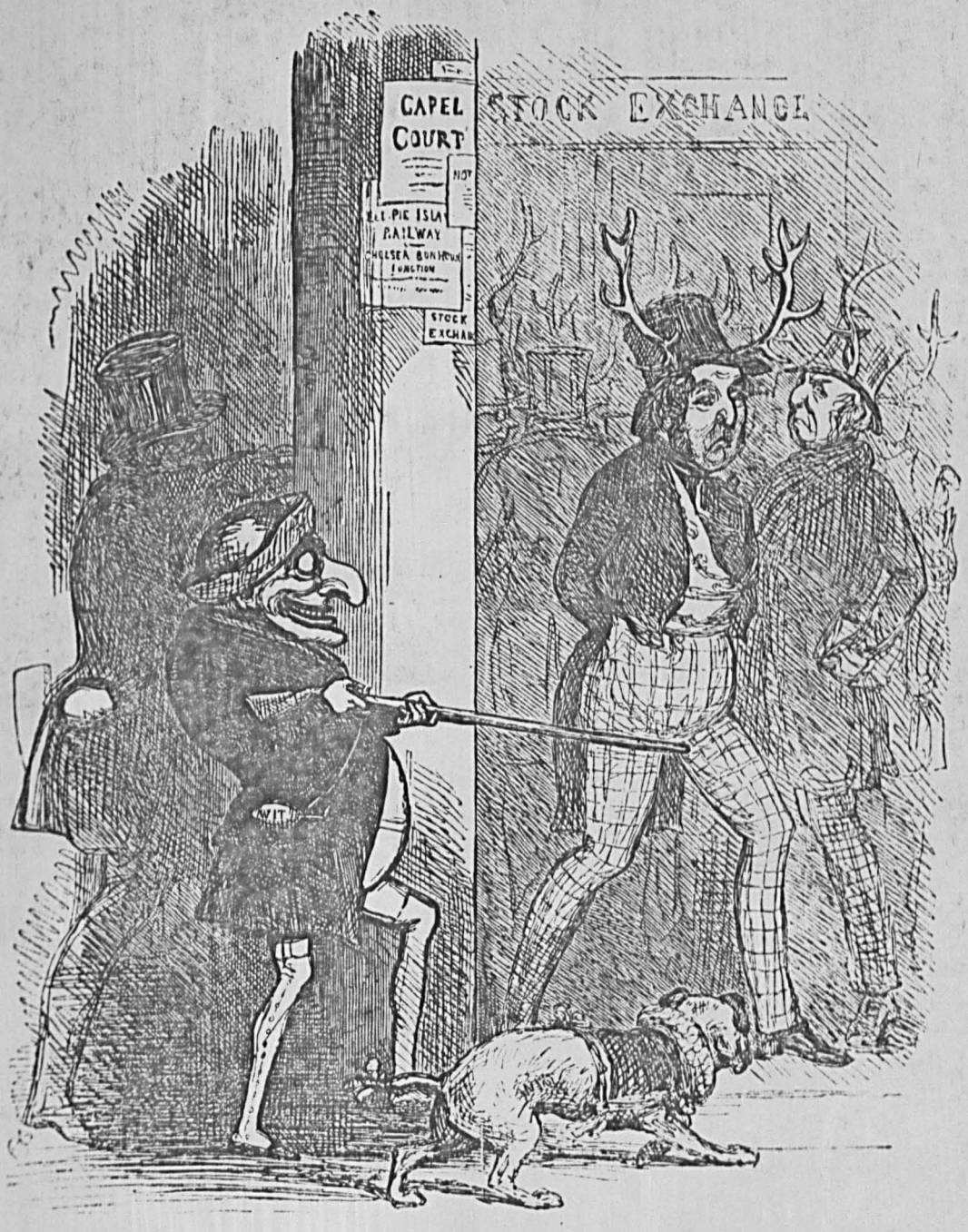
eighteen forties, in Dombey and Son (it is not, I believe, too wild to claim) as much as in the Christmas Books. Mr. Dombey's change of heart essentially involves his coming to terms with the past (Paul Dombey), the present (Florence and Walter) and the future (the firm of Walter Gay and the future promised in their little son).

It is Carker's one hundred per cent involvement with the present which destroys him: personal gain (his swindling of Mr. Dombey), personal success (his attempted conquest of Edith). He says to Edith when they are alone that the period of his cruel probation is over now, and she is his: "Hard, unrelenting terms they were!...but they are fulfilled and passed, and make the present more delicious..." (281). It is that powerful emblem of the present, the railway engine, which is to destroy him, to strike him limb from limb and lick "his stream of life up with its fiery heat, and cast his mutilated fragments in the air." (282).

The strength in the structure of Dombey and Son is in part the effect of its substance and texture - that rich and masterful blending of scriptural echoes, of fairy tale and legend, of the popular stage and of the subtle use of a potent image of the present, the railway: while still at the opening numbers of Dombey and Son Dickens had written to Forster, that despite difficulties in actual written composition, "Invention, thank God, seems the easiest thing in the world..." (283). We must still marvel at its vitality, wholeness and power.

"Stag" Stalking in Capel Court.

Cartoon by Richard Doyle in Punch Volume IX (1845) page 172. His field-piece loaded with "wit" Mr. Punch sets out to hunt the crooked speculators of Capel Court, a lane adjacent to the London Stock Exchange, well known haunt of stock-dealers.


CAPEL
COURT
STOCK EXCHANGE
RAILWAY
STOCK

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PAUL AND FLORENCE

"...It is from the life, and I was there - I don't suppose I was eight years old; but I remember it all as well, and certainly understood it as well, as I do now. We should be devilish sharp in what we do to children..."

Dickens in a letter to Forster, November 1846: quoted in Forster's Life of Charles Dickens Book VI Chapter ii.

We know that the character of Paul and that its place in the total scheme of the novel, as well as that of his sister Florence, was strongly present in Dickens' imagination from the book's earliest conception (1), yet most modern commentators of Dombey and Son contrive to discuss the novel without mentioning Paul and Florence if they can possibly help it: somehow they feel embarrassed by the whole thing. (2).

Yet it is the children who hold the novel together: I would dispute Mrs. Leavis' contention that the novel wavers and changes direction after the death of Paul (3) for I believe that in the story of Paul and Florence he is attempting to repeat what he had done previously in miniature in A Christmas Carol: Tim dies, and yet he does not die. We experience all the anguish of Tim's suffering and death, and are relieved to find that at the end of the story Tiny Tim did not die. A Christmas Carol is really a comedy, but Dombey and Son is a tragi-comedy: Paul dies, there is no doubt of that, but he lives on in Florence. There is a beautiful scene where Dombey and Edith have returned from Paris. They are married and the Dombey mansion is being redecorated. The supper over, Mrs. Skewton withdraws to bed, soon followed by Edith. Dombey remains downstairs while Florence brings her work into the room to be with her father. "Shall I go away, Papa?" she asks. "No" he answers, "You can come and go here, Florence as you please. This is not my private room." (4). He composes himself to sleep in his chair, Florance watching him from time to time. She is unaware that he is quietly watching her the whole time. And what was he thinking 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... There are yielding moments in the lives of the sternest and harshest men... Some passing thought that he had had a happy home within his reach - had had a household spirit bending at his feet...may have engendered them... The mere association of her as an ornament with all the ornamental pomp about him, may have been sufficient. 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...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..." (5). We should note that the central action of this passage the fulcrum of its whole mechanism, is the phrase that "she became blended with the child he had loved, and he could hardly separate the two..."

More even than The Old Curiosity Shop, Dombey and Son is marked with the image of childhood, the world of the child, the vision of the world through the eyes of the child, the image of the child as man lost in a society of his own creating. (6). There are three main areas where this use of the child figure in Dombey and Son is particularly to be noted: there is the personal level of the feeling of rejection, which the Freudians would suggest comes from Dickens' own harrowing experiences as

a child. Thus the death of Paul is a ritualisation of punishing his parents for what they did to him, Charles John Huffam Dickens, and the long-term rejection of poor Florence is a remembering of his rejection as a child.

Then, secondly there is the collective image of the child as an emblem of immortality, which all Jungians would recognise; like all children - and like Wordsworth too - Dickens was a devout believer in immortality. (7). We have much evidence for Dickens' declared belief in immortality. He wrote to console William Bradbury on the death of his child in 1839: "I hope and believe that from the very depth and strength of your affection for your dead child, will arise your best and truest consolation. The certainty of a bright and happy world beyond the Grave, which such young and untried creatures...must be called to...the happiness of being always able to think of her as a young and promising girl...above all, the thought of one day joining her...where sorrow and separation are unknown - these are all sources of consolation which none but those who have suffered deep affliction can know in all their force..." (9). A few months later he wrote to George Beadnell, who had lost his son: "It is nothing that death is inevitable; but it is something that it has been without pain...that the object of our love...has passed away in peace, leaving behind nothing but pleasant thoughts of his worth... It is impossible to separate the idea of the dead from the companionship of the living..." (9). The little son of Dickens' own sister Fanny was, it has been suggested, the original of Paul Dombey. (10). The novelist wrote to his father after the child had died: "I hope

that if I were you, I would - when the first burst of my love and grief was past - thankfully confide him to that better Father to whom he has passed, and to that enduring world, where...he has rejoined his mother, and forever cast aside his sorrows and infirmities..." (11). Only months after this he writes to John Leech, whose young daughter had just died: "...Above all, try to remember that she has certainly gone to the inestimable happiness of God, and that she is among His angels evermore." (12). Mr. Dombey believes that death is the end of life, and Dickens makes quite sure that we understand he is in the wrong - death is not the end, it is transformation, the exchange of mortality for the eternal: this is the great message of the waves, of the restless, quick and moving sea, the archetypal image of life: it is this message that Dombey has to learn, he thinks of Paul as "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..." (13).

And lastly, there is the use of the child as an "innocent" - as someone who questions the standards and basic assumptions of the world, and of a being who is "lost" in the world. The strange religiosity of Dombey has been noted before. (14). In this context, it is very interesting to recall that Dickens completed The Life of Our Lord, which he wrote for his children, in 1846 - the very moment of Dombey. (15). He wrote this book because he was anxious that his children should know the essential facts about Jesus' life and the elements of the Christian faith, as he understood it. (16). Dickens inclined

to the Unitarians in the 1840's. He had noted while in U.S.A. that they seemed more tolerant and when he returned to England he took out a sitting at a leading Unitarian chapel in the West End. (17). Dickens frequently emphasises the qualities of the New Testament over the Old: in his Will he said: "...I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the teaching of the New Testament in its broad spirit..." (18). In the novels there are several detailed treatments of the punitive, repressive and violently sin-burdened Old Testament ethos we associate with the Murdstones, Mrs. Dorrit and the religious teaching to be had at the Charitable Grinders. (19). In Dombey also we find the preference clearly indicated in favour of the New Testament. Florence is that child figure we have met before in Dickens, the divine child, and her divinity is stressed several times to present her as a child of grace: "...it is not in the nature of pure love to burn so fiercely and unkindly long. The flame that in its grosser composition has the taint of earth, may pray upon the breast that gives it shelter; but the sacred fire from heaven is as gentle in the heart, as when it rested on the heads of the assembled twelve, and showed each man his brother..." (20). So here Florence is directly associated with the disciples, strengthened like them, with the Holy Spirit. As Professor Collins has suggested, Dickens based most of his Life of Our Lord on the gospel of St. Luke and this gives us further insight into the basic structure of Dombey and Son: there are some very impressive parallels.

These are discussed in the section on the "Anatomy of Dombey" but we should note here the emphasis on the parent-child

relationship which is such a feature of the gospel according to Luke: "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law." (21). Florence is estranged from her father, Edith is in a state of animosity with her mother, Carker the manager, Dombey's surrogate son, betrays his master. This is not stretching credulity too far, I think; we should note the way Dickens suggests a very close, almost father/son relationship, between Dombey and Carker: "He affected a stiff white cravat, after the example of his principal... His manner towards Mr. Dombey was deeply conceived and perfectly executed... The stiffness and nicety of Mr. Carker's dress and a certain arrogance of manner, either natural to him, or imitated from a pattern not far off, gave great additional affect to his humility... 'You respect nobody, Carker, I think,' said Mr. Dombey. 'No?' inquired Mr. Carker... 'Well, not many people I believe. I wouldn't answer...for more than one...' " (22). In every way the ultimate traitor Carker is modelled, son-like, on his master.

Much of Dombey and Son points forward to the later, more "documented" novels, there is the whole question of the arranged marriage (23) and the loss of innocence in the taint of money (24) but above all, I refer to the discussion of educational ideas which is so central to Dombey and which Dickens continued and developed so superbly in Hard Times. The kind of education which Paul Dombey is subjected to is an example of that

mechanization of everything in life which Coleridge and Carlyle, writing before Dickens, had so feared. (25). It was not the external and physical alone which was affected by machinery, Carlyle said, but the "internal and spiritual also. Here too nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old natural methods. Everything has its cunningly devised implements, its pre-established apparatus; it is not done by hand, but by machinery. Thus we have machines for Education...monitors, maps, emblems. Instruction, that mysterious communing of Wisdom and Ignorance, is no longer an indefinable, tentative process, requiring a study of individual aptitudes, and a perpetual variation of means and methods... but a secure, universal, straightforward business, to be conducted in the gross, by proper mechanism..." (26).

We must first notice what Paul is like before he is "educated". He is young, natural, direct and openly curious about the world about him. His mind goes right to the essence of things: "If you had money now," his father says to him, "as much money as young Gay has talked about; what would you do?" "Give it to his old uncle," returned Paul. (27). Mrs. Pipchin asks him how he thinks he will like her. "I don't think I shall like you at all," he replies, "I want to go away. This isn't my house." "No, it's mine" retorted Mrs. Pipchin. "It's a very nasty one" said Paul. (28). Mrs. Pipchin has a certain fascination for Paul, and she notices that as they are sitting by the fire, he is staring at her; she asks him what he is thinking about: "You," said Paul, without the least reserve. "And what are you thinking about me?" asked Mrs.

Little Paul
Extra plate by Hablot Browne.

"I think Paul very good indeed - a beautiful little composition altogether."
Dickens in a letter to the artist.

LITTLE PAUL

"I think Paul *very good indeed*—a beautiful little composition altogether."
Dickens in a letter to Phiz

Pipchin. "I'm thinking how old you must be" said Paul. "You musn't say such things as that, young gentleman... That'll never do." "Why not?" asked Paul. "Because it's not polite," said Mrs. Pipchin snappishly. "Not polite?" said Paul. "No." "It's not polite," said Paul innocently, "to eat all the mutton chops and toast..." (29).

His directness and innocence enable him not to be easily put off by her bullying retort: "Remember the story of the little boy that was gored to death by a mad bull for asking questions. "If the bull was mad," said Paul, "how did he know that the boy asked questions? Nobody can go and whisper secrets to a mad bull. I don't believe that story." (30). We note here that immense power of the child innocent. Mrs. Pipchin deemed it prudent "to retreat until he should have forgotten the subject". (31). We have already seen in the novel Paul's devastating ability to go right to the heart of the matter in the way that he has questioned his father about what money is and what it can do: Mrs. Pipchin is now being faced with the same unstoppable innocence. "Why are you fond of your sister Florence?" she asks him. "Because she's very good," Paul answers, "There's nobody like Florence." "Well!" retorted Mrs. Pipchin shortly, "and there's nobody like me, I suppose." "Ain't there really though?" asked Paul, leaning forward in his chair, and looking at her very hard. "No," said the old lady. "I am glad of that... That's a very good thing." Mrs. Pipchin didn't dare to ask him why, lest she should receive some perfectly annihilating answer. (32). Paul seems an invincible saint, his strength lies in his

innocence, his fancy and what Dickens - with cruel irony allows Mrs. Skewton to refer to as "free play of soul".

Before Paul was sent to Mrs. Pipchin's, even the rather shallow Mrs. Chick had observed to Mr. Dombey that it might not be advisable to separate Paul from his sister, Florence, as "He's very young you know, and has his fancies". (33). But at Mrs. Pipchin's young Paul is to have his first contact with "the system". Mrs. Pipchin is quite an educational theorist. It was part "of Mrs. Pipchin's system not to encourage a child's mind to develop and expand itself like a young flower, but to open it by force like an oyster..." (34). It is essential to note in this context that Dickens was very interested in the educational ideas of Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782-1852). (35). Household Words included the first notable essay on the Kindergarten Movement, which was much quoted and commended by the English followers of Froebel. (36). Mr. Dombey regrets that his son takes such a long time to grow up, despite the kind of "system" he is subjected to. (37). "There is nothing of chance or doubt in the course before my son," he tells Mrs. Pipchin. "His way in life was clear and prepared, and marked out, before he existed. The education of such a young gentleman must not be delayed. It must not be left imperfect. It must be steadily and seriously undertaken..." (38). Here he strikes a chord in the Ogre, who responds: "There is a great deal of nonsence - and worse - talked about young people not being pressed too hard at first, and being tempted on, and all the rest of it, Sir," said Mrs. Pipchin, "impatiently rubbing her hooked nose.

"It never was thought of in my time, and it has no business to be thought of now. My opinion is, keep 'em at it." (39).

Dombey and Mrs. Pipchin talk over the merits of sending Paul on to Dr. Blimber's academy. Her list of the school's commendable features is an interesting index of her educational philosophy: "I've heard that it's very strictly conducted, and that there is nothing but learning going on from morning to night." (40). Mr. Dombey adds to this the fact that he has heard Paul is not too young to go there, as he heard several instances "of boys in Greek at about the same age." (41). The school is given a wonderful "cod" prospectus by Dickens, who here presents in full treatment the kind of Educational Machine which Carlyle had so far feared: whatever young man was in the Doctor's hand was in a very tight squeeze, "The Doctor only undertook the charge of ten young gentlemen, but he had, always ready, a supply of learning for a hundred, on the lowest estimate... In fact, Doctor Blimber's establishment was a great hothouse, in which there was a forcing apparatus incessantly at work. All the boys blew before their time. Mental green peas were produced at Christmas, and intellectual asparagus all the year round. Mathematical gooseberries (very sour ones too) were common at untimely seasons, and from mere sprouts of bushes, under Doctor Blimber's cultivation. Every description of Greek and Latin vegetable was got off the driest twigs of boys, under the frostiest circumstances. Nature was of no consequence at all. No matter what a young gentleman was intended to bear, Doctor Blimber made him bear to pattern..." (42). This is the "system" that young Paul is to

go through, like a plant to be trained and forced before his time in utterly artificial conditions literally "brought on" by a perverse and cruel horticulturalist. Here we cannot help recalling those natural, rosy pippin-cheeks of the Toodle family: loving, warm, unspoiled, untouched by social conditioning, they grow and grow as their creator intended, without the need of the force-house system.

We are told that the results were tragic, that the products did not keep well, and we are given Toots as an example of the Doctor's produce, vain, empty headed and half-sophisticated, because he has not been allowed to grow up naturally: "...sticking ornamental pins into his shirt, and keeping a ring in his waistcoat pocket to put on his little finger by stealth, when the pupils were out walking; constantly falling in love by sight with nurserymaids, who had no idea of his existence..." (43). Mr. Toots makes direct reference to this in the speech he feels obliged to make at the wedding of Miss Blimber and Mr. Feeder: "I really...in this house, where whatever was done to me in the way of - of any mental confusion sometimes - which is of no consequence and I impute to nobody - I was always treated like one of Dr. Blimber's family, and had a desk to myself for a considerable period..." (44).

Dr. Blimber is aided and abetted in these child murders by his daughter, Miss Cornelia Blimber, about whom there was no light nonsense: "She kept her hair short...and wore spectacles. She was dry and sandy with working in the graves of deceased languages. None of your live languages for Miss

Blimber. They must be dead - stone dead - and then Miss Blimber dug them up like a ghoul." (45). Mr. Feeder B.A., Doctor Blimber's assistant, is the epitome of the mechanical teacher, who grinds his little learning out as from a hurdy-gurdy: "he was a kind of human barrel-organ, with a little list of tunes at which he was continually working, over and over again, without any variation. He might have been fitted up with a change of barrels, perhaps, in early life, if his destiny had been favourable; but it had not been; and he had only one..." (46).

The results of this system are the annihilation of the imagination, the destruction of the soul and the evaporation of the mind: "Under the forcing system, a young gentleman usually took leave of his spirits in three weeks. He had all the cares of the world on his head in three months. He conceived bitter sentiments against his parents or guardians in four; he was an old misanthrope, in five; envied Quintius Curtius that blessed refuge in the earth at six; and at the end of that first twelvemonth had arrived at the conclusion, from which he never afterwards departed, that all the fancies of the poets, and lessons of the sages, were a mere collection of words and grammar, and had no other meaning in the world." (47). This introductory chapter to the world of the Blimbers ends with young Paul, left by his father and sister, sitting in the Doctor's study, "with an aching void in his young heart, and all outside so cold, and bare, and strange (sitting) as if he had taken life unfurnished, and the upholsterer were never coming." (48).

Young Biler, the Toodle boy who is given the unspeakable advantage of an education at the Charitable Grinder's, is used by Dickens as an example of what the dangers of a mechanical education, and education purged of all human relevance, can do. The association with grinding is an interesting one: Mr. Feeder grinds out his learning, the school young Toodle is condemned to is the Charitable Grinders, we obviously recall the name of Dickens' most celebrated pedagog, Mr. Gradgrind. In the scene where Mr. Dombey's goodness of heart has compelled him to make the necessary arrangements to have Biler saved from being sunk with the rest of his family in ignorance, the whole mechanical nature of the Grinders establishment is presented to us: the pupils are to be manufactured into members of the inferior classes who will know "their position and conduct themselves properly." (49). The uniform of the school is hard and restricting, with "very strong leather small-clothes". (50). We note the mechanical, business-like Mr. Dombey tells Richards how he has arranged for the boy to go there: "I have nominated your eldest son to an existing vacancy; and he has this day... assumed the habit." (51). The child even loses his name and becomes a number; "The number of her son, I believe," said Mr. Dombey, turning to his sister and speaking of the child as if he were a hackney coach, "is one hundred and forty-seven..." (52). We are bound to recall Mr. Gradgrind's "girl number twenty". This so-called education ruins Biler, who has come from such a happy and loyal home, and turns him into a sneak, a renegade and a traitor. The system likewise destroys Tom Gradgrind, who becomes a gambler, a thief and dies in disgrace in Australia. As Professor Richard Altick has recently shown,

Dickens' use of the word "grind" and "grinder" and its associations is rich in allusion and contemporary reference. (53). As well as the obvious surface meanings of crushing, oppressing, there is its use in the sense of one who makes others work under him at reduced wages, a "sweater" - the word is used in this sense by Mayhew. A few months before the appearance of Dombey and Son the grinders of Sheffield had several times been in the news for trade union terrorism (54) including incendiarism and the use of explosives to terrorise workmen into paying their union dues: the name Charitable Grinders would assume an ironic dimension to readers of the day quite lost on us. The sense of grinders as teeth is also present, Rob's teeth are referred to as "grinders" and this will call up associations with Mr. Carker, whose teeth are such a feature.

The tyrannic educational system in Dombey is contrasted to Old Glubb, the old man who pushes Paul along the beach in his wheelchair, "a weazen, old, crab-faced man, in a suit of battered oilskin, who had got tough and stringy from long pickling in salt water, and who smelt like a weedy sea-beach when the tide is out." (55). Paul worships him because he seems at one in the world of nature, knows the winds, the secrets of the deep, the wonders of creation, the phases of the moon, the tides, the lore of the sea: "He's a very nice old man... He used to draw my couch. He knows all about the deep sea, and the fish that are in it, and the great monsters that come and lie on rocks in the sun, and dive into the water again when they're startled, blowing and splashing so, that they can be heard for miles. There are some creatures...I don't know how

many yards long, and I forget their names...that pretend to be in distress, and when a man goes near them, out of compassion, they open their great jaws, and attack him... And I wish... that you'd let old Glubb come here to see me, for I know him very well, and he knows me." (56). The Doctor thinks that this is bad, but that study will cure it: yet this is the only way in which Paul's interest in life and in the world has been aroused, through listening to the yarns of an old salt. We should note what little importance is placed on exactitude, on factual knowledge ("I don't know how many yards long, and I forget their names..." cf. "Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!... Girl number twenty possessed of no facts...") What is important here is not an accumulation of factual data, those statistics which Carlyle so loathed and distrusted, but a grasp of the marvel, the majesty, the animation of life - this Paul has seen, has seen through the agency only of Glubb, an old Brighton sailor.

This reading is, I feel, against most contemporary trends in dealing with this novel, the tendency usually is to see Paul as some kind of personified Deathwish, and to link - as Michael Steig certainly and clearly does - the "old fashioned" quality of Paul with the cadence of chapter XVI, "The old, old fashion - Death!" (57) but I want to maintain that Paul, like Nell and Dickens' other Divine Children, stands for the positive, life-giving qualities which are being destroyed by modern men and modern times, by mechanism, materialism, mammonism. It has been asserted that Dickens' view of the world is that of a child (58) and like all children, he believes in Immortality,

"What are the wild waves saying?"

Paul and Florence together on the beach by C.W. Nichols.

in the ancient and honourable folk-lore belief that death is not death, but transformation: Michael Steig should have read this passage further, as Dickens goes on to say: "Oh thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of Immortality!" (59). This of course is what the waves were always saying, and it is only when Mr. Dombey has, through his suffering, become like a child, that he can see this, can see that those who pass on are not - in Dickens' vital word - "estranged" when "the swift river bears us to the ocean." (60). The world of Dickens is, in Levi-Strauss' sense of the word, a magic world. Dickens' thinking seems to be magic, not scientific, based on a belief in a complete and all-embracing determinism, a totally structural and coherant universe in which all things and all events are related to one another. (61). It seems to me that this world, for Dickens the real, the true, the most valuable human world, is threatened by representatives of the modern, mechanical and mammonistic world; the values which Paul, and indeed Florence, stand for are the potent enemy of mechanism. The machinery of his education - dead languages taught mechanically, his being pushed and strained beyond endurance in order for him to realise Dombey's blue-print of what he should be, his being deprived of real love or the opportunity of loving - all these combine to destroy young Paul. (62). The effects of the system are to make us less human, ultimately to de-humanise us; of Blimber's school Dickens tells us that the elder pupils are "principally engaged in forgetting with prodigious labour, everything they knew when they were younger." (63). The "system" in fact, was designed to knock any naturalness out of them, to eradicate all that nature gave them as their birthright.

Against the positive standards of nature, growth, immortality, imagination which the children represent (Florence means blooming, Flora was the goddess of flowers) we place the artificial world of Dombey, Mrs. Skewton, Major Bagstock and the Blimbers. Mrs. Skewton, savagely referred to with the epithets appropriated from Antony and Cleopatra, is associated with the false, the artificial. Her maid is called Flowers, and we see her having her "youthful cuffs" and "frills" fastened on, in a "kind of private coronation ceremony...with a peach-coloured velvet bonnet; the artificial roses in which nodded to uncommon advantage, as the palsy trifled with them, like a breeze." (64). Nothing here is natural or honest, even the effect of the breeze is a cruel deception. What makes Mrs. Skewton such a marvellously outrageous creation is that Dickens puts into her mouth the major theme of lack of heart, artificiality: "My sweetest Edith, and my dearest Dombey, do we not know that any difference between you two...with the Heart you possess in common, and the excessively charming bond of feeling that there is between you, must be slight and unimportant?... Therefore I am glad to take this slight occasion - this trifling occasion, that is so replete with Nature, and your individual characters, and all that - so truly calculated to bring the tears into a parent's eyes - to say that I attach no importance to them in the least, except as developing these minor elements of Soul, and that, unlike most mammas-in-law... as they have been represented to me to exist in this I fear too artificial world..." (65). Mrs. Skewton praises the "heart" in Mr. Carker, and he in turn commends her "quick feeling". (66). When she is cruelly struck down by paralysis we are given this

picture of her: "Cleopatra was arrayed in full dress, with the diamonds, short-sleeves, rouge, curls, teeth, and other juvenility complete...she lay like a horrible old doll that had tumbled down. They took her to pieces in very shame, and put the little of her that was real on a bed..." (67).

It is wonderfully typical that as she regains a few of her faculties, she manages to make it understood that she wishes for the rose-coloured curtains to be put in her bedroom to provide for the better presentation of her complexion when the doctors come - artifice to the very end. Reprimanding the behaviour of her daughter Edith for not spending all her time with her, she laments that "The world is coming to such an artificial and ungrateful state, that I begin to think there's no Heart - or anything of that sort - left in it..." (68). Mrs. Skewton has been a poor mother, fostering in her daughter all the wrong standards, lacking in real love, and we notice that Edith's attentions to her mother are described by Dickens as "mechanical". (69). Good Mother Brown ironically calls her "a good mother yourself". (70). When Dombey and Edith return from Paris, she manages to shed the few tears which she feels it is incumbent on her to shed. (71). Dombey tells her that no expense has been spared to redecorate the house according to their wishes: "I directed no expense should be spared; and all that money could do, has been done, I believe." "And what can it not do, dear Dombey?" observed Cleopatra. "It is powerful, Madam," said Mr. Dombey. (72). Edith recognises what her mother is, and what she has done; it is this recognition that makes Edith want to protect Florence from Mrs.

Skewton's influence: "Am I to be told...that there is contagion and corruption in me, that I am not fit company for a girl?" demands Mrs. Skewton. (73). "I have put the question to myself," Edith answers, "...and God knows I have met with my reply. Oh mother, mother, if you had but left me to my natural heart when I too was a girl - a younger girl than Florence - how different I might have been!" (74). Edith is anxious that Florence be not "tampered with and tainted by the lessons I have learned." (75).

This sorry portrait of a mother child relationship is paralleled with the relationship between Good Mother Brown and Alice: "You think I'm in my second childhood, I know!... That's the respect and duty I get from my own gal..." croaks the old woman. (76). Dombey comes to them for information about Carker and Edith, and he is prepared - of course - to pay for it: "Money," he tells them, "will bring about unlikely things. I know..." (77). And Alice asks him "Do you know nothing more powerful than money?" (78). Mrs. Brown's glance, as she takes the clinking money from Dombey's hands for the information, is "as bright and greedy as a raven's." (79). The mother then sits and communes with her money, the daughter with her thoughts. We can guess what they were; as she tells the other Mr. Carker that her mother had not been very mindful of her as a child, had found out her merits and was fond of her and proud of her. "She was covetous and poor, and thought to make a sort of property out of me..." (80). The tale narrates a sad catalogue of seduction, prostitution and crime. Here is another child who has been misguided, perverted by its parent. (81).

When Alice dies, she leaves this world with the name of the Saviour on her lips, though learned in the ways of the world, of true enlightenment she has been starved: as Harriet Carker reads the Bible to her she asks that "as you read I may see the words in your kind face." (82). Once more we are reminded of the presence of the New Testament in this novel, for stained with shame and criminality, "shunned of all our dainty clay" as Dickens says, Alice receives compassion "of Him who, through the round of human life, and all its hopes and griefs, from birth to death, from infancy to age, had sweet compassion for, and interest in, its every stage, its every suffering and sorrow." (83).

After the death of Paul, it was clearly Dickens' intention to throw the emphasis on to Florence: "To transfer to Florence, instantly, all the previous interest, is what I am aiming at. For that, all sorts of other points must be thrown aside in this number..." he wrote to Forster on the 7th of February 1846. (84). This was an unexpected turn in the story, I believe. Paul Dombey had been an impressive and touching character and a successful creation, his death had shocked readers. "Paul's death has amazed Paris," Dickens wrote, "All sorts of people are open-mouthed with admiration..." (85). Thackeray at this time was serialising Vanity Fair. The second number had just appeared. He read the death of Paul Dombey and exclaimed to Mark Lemon in Punch's editorial office, "There's no writing against such power as this - One has no chance! Read that chapter describing young Paul's death: it is unsurpassed - it is stupendous!" (86). Francis Jeffrey, the Critic Laureate,

wrote from Edinburgh, "Oh, my dear Dickens! What a number 5 you have given us! I have so cried and sobbed over it last night, and again this morning..." (87).

Dickens now wanted the emphasis of the story to focus on Florence; this was not a new departure, as right from the beginning the suggestion had always been that Florence was a rejected child. We are told in the opening chapter that Mr. Dombey had been married for ten years, and there had been no issue: " - To speak of; none worth mentioning. There had been a girl some six years before... But what was a girl to Dombey and Son!..." (88). Forster says that in his view the interest and passion in the Florence-Edith aspect of the novel took a stronger hold of Dickens "than any of his previous writings, excepting only the close of The Old Curiosity Shop." (89). This is a very interesting piece of evidence; the pathos, the suffering and patience of the character he imagined in Florence, involved the novelist as much as the character and fate of Little Nell. But Forster goes on, very interestingly, to comment on the basic differences between Florence and Nell. Forster quite rightly points out the passive nature of Nell, who, placed in the midst if grotesque violence and strange indifference, passes through life with that inimitable innocent unconsciousness, "passing unscathed as Una to her home" beyond the world. (90). He contrasts this policy of modest, patient inaction in the face of the rough ways of the world, with Florence's action, resistance, and brave, resolute heart "that will not be crushed, and neither sinks nor yields, but works out her own redemption from earth's roughest trials." (91).

What Dickens is trying to create in Florence, I believe, is active goodness: the purpose is to show what goodness can do in the world. By behaving as she does, Florence redeems her father. If we could be made to see, like Mr. Dombey is made to see, the noxious particles in our being, the depravity, the evil in our motives, then we would be - like him - saved from ourselves: Dickens refers to Asmodeus, "the lame demon" of Lesage's tale (92) and wishes for a good spirit to take the roof tops off, so that we could see our own evil ways. If we could only see, he says, men "delayed no more by stumbling-blocks, of their own making, which are but specks of dust upon the path between them and eternity, would then apply themselves, like creatures of one common origin, owing one duty to the Father of one family, and tending to the common end, to make the world a better place!" (93). Florence is such a good spirit, then; she shows Mr. Dombey what he is: Dickens draws the parallel between the single family unit, and the larger family of God with one, almighty, "Father", and stresses our common duty and our common end as God's children. With such a divine mission, we should expect the child Florence to be associated with brightness, with the rising sun, with flowers and things that grow, with innocence. We compare Mrs. Skewton's artificial flowers with Florence's natural ones.

Staying at the home of Sir Barnet Skettles with other children, Florence tries to get to know these children and learn the secret they have found of being on loving terms with their parents: "Children who were as frank and happy with fathers and with mothers as those rosy faces opposite home.

Children who had no restraint upon their love, and freely showed it... On many a bright morning did she leave her bed when the glorious sun rose, and walking up and down upon the river's bank...look up at the windows of their rooms, and think of them, asleep, so gently tended and affectionately thought of..." (94). As she rises from the ground to meet these children one afternoon, she gathers up "her flowers". (95). They ask her about her father and wonder why he so neglects her: "The flowers that Florence held to her breast began to fall when she heard these words...she held them closer; and her face hung down upon them..." (96). As her story is told "More of the flowers that Florence held, fell scattering on the ground..." (97). It is in this sequence that Dickens tells us Florence's sole purpose: "The flowers were scattered on the ground like dust... But true of heart and resolute in her good purpose, Florence held to it as her dying mother held by her upon the day that gave Paul life. He did not know how much she loved him. However long the time in coming...she must try to bring that knowledge to her father's heart..." (98).

The emblem of the flower is associated with her elsewhere; we are told that in the dreadful gloom and desolation of the Dombey mansion "Florence bloomed there, like the king's fair daughter in the story." (99). She blooms there like a flower in the desert, her home is called by Dickens "her wilderness of a home." (100). She is resolved to survive in this domestic wilderness, urged and sustained by that almost divine quality, suggested by Dickens in her constant association with the sun:

"The morning sun shone down upon the faded house, and found the resolution bright and fresh within the bosom of its solitary mistress. Through all the duties of the day, it animated her ..." (101). Captain Cuttle calls her "bright di'mond" (102) and we see her standing "in the rosy light of the bright evening sky." We are shown Florence, despised and dejected, "a load of sacred care...heavy in her breast." (103). Christ-like, Florence seeks the nameless grace among the poor. (104). She journeys from this Wilderness, through suffering at the hands of her father, to the Promised Land in marrying Walter Gay: Captain Cuttle in the scene where he and Walter ask Mr. Dombey's help to save the fortunes of Sol Gills says of young Gay "If there is a lad of promise - one flowing...with milk and honey - it's his nevy." (105). Later in the novel when it is feared Walter has been lost at sea Cuttle says of him: "Wal'r...is what you may call a out'ard and visible sign of a in'ard and spirited grasp..." (106). Florence has already appealed to Walter to show her some way through the world. (107). When she returns to the Dombey mansion, now married to Walter Gay and with a son called Paul, and becomes reconciled with her father, "they (remained) clasped in one another's arms, in the glorious sunshine which had crept in with Florence."

A significant part of the strength of Florence's presentation in Dombey and Son is the result of the contrast of her qualities - honesty, affection, patience - with those of Mr. Carker, Dombey's other mentor. Carker is given to us as the archetypal enemy, reptilian, hypnotic, smooth. Florence encounters Carker at the Skettles' place at Fulham: "Florence

had no remembrance of having ever seen him, but she started involuntarily when he came near her, and drew back..." (108). She recoils from him "as if she had been stung." (109). Like a reptile Carker has that power to fascinate, hypnotise almost, those who gaze on him: despite her pride and haughtiness, Edith knows that Carker has her in some spell. Though "shame, remorse, and passion raged within her" yet "she knew that in her spirit she was down at his feet." (110). She has distrusted him from the very first time her eyes met his. (111). He is given the qualities of a snake, Edith those of a bird. (112). She has brilliant, bird-like eyes (113) and is often presented to us as a proud bird in resplendent plumage. Like a snake Carker seems to bewitch this proud bird: he bewitches Rob the Grinder too, who follows him through the streets of London as if in a trance (114): Carker notices the effects of his enchantments on Rob as he goes to leave him after visiting the Toodle home: "he turned from Rob's eyes, which were nailed upon him as if he had won the boy by a charm, body and soul, and rode away. But again becoming conscious, after trotting a short distance, that his devoted henchman...was yielding him the same attendance...he reined up, and ordered him off. To insure his obedience, he turned in the saddle and watched him as he retired. It was curious to see that even then Rob could not keep his eyes wholly averted from his patron's face..." (115). Rob thinks that Carker has the power always to watch and see him wherever he goes. (116). Florence's simple divine goodness is therefore impressed upon us in contrast with the slimy, fascinating, insidious evil of Carker.

Some have seen Dickens' relish for Florence as a flaw in Dombey and Son (117) but how successful is Dickens' presentation of her? Her place in the novel is vitally important and the novelist obviously expected her to carry a great deal of the fable's weight. There is a great deal of personal feeling in the way Florence is presented. The kind of rejection she experiences is a very special kind. It is not simply a "need to be loved". This must be fully understood: she is emphatically not deprived of love. Everyone loves her: Toots, Susan Nipper, Captain Cuttle, Walter Gay, Diogenes - these are all devoted to her. She desperately needs parental love. She feels that loving her father as she does, she cannot fulfil her life unless she is loved by him. How can she gain this love? She believes, at one stage, that by learning what it is that other children do who are loved by their parents that she, by adopting their behaviour patterns, will gain her father's love. "Her father did not know...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. This became the purpose of her life..." (118).

Some of the tactics she turns over in her mind may seem morbid. At one point she wonders if Mr. Dombey would love her if she were to sicken and die, as Paul had done: "...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...for not having been able to lay open her childish heart to him..." (119). This seems to show an anxiety to be loved by the parent, rather than a need; there is a barely repressed hysteria present in that passage. What I think is happening here, as in so much of Dickens' presentation of Florence, is that he is showing not the emotions of the character which he has imagined in Florence, but the real-life emotions he experienced (or experiences, as we feel with Dickens that past, present and future all exist at the same time) as a child, and is easing those emotions onto Florence. There is a part of Forster's Life of Dickens where the novelist is telling him how lost and humiliated he felt by his parents' financial misfortunes, and that he realised he could never possibly become anything or realise the value he felt he had in himself. This comes out when he tells Forster how he felt when his sister Fanny won a prize at music college. "I could not bear to think of myself - beyond the reach of all such honourable emulation and success," he told Forster, "The tears ran down my face. I felt as if my heart were rent. I prayed, when I went to bed that night, to be lifted out of the humiliation and neglect in which I was. I never had suffered so much before. There was no envy in this." (120).

His eldest daughter Mary ("Mamie") Dickens said that her father had "such wonderful sympathy for all childish fears and fancies..." (121) but does he successfully realise this understanding in his treatment of Florence? Or is he sublimating his own fears and sorrows? If the motivation is sufficiently convincing in the novel, then the emotions shown in Florence

will make sense, however personal - to Dickens - their origin may be. Mr. Dombey loves his son (if "love" is here the right word) and rejects Florence. Florence loves him deeply and cannot make him see it. What are the reasons for Dombey's hatred of Florence? Dickens is here quite specific. As far as Mr. Dombey is concerned Florence is almost irrelevant (what was a girl to Dombey and Son?) and hardly counts as a human being at all. Probably the most piercing evidence of how much little Florence means to him is the fact that he orders Paul's tomb-stone to bear the inscription "Beloved and Only Child." (122). It is pointed out to Mr. Dombey that possibly he has made a mistake. "Where?" he asks. 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," Dombey answers. (123). What has happened here psychologists would recognise as vital in evidence: Dombey has "forgotten" Florence, he has rejected her and repressed her name; for him she has ceased to exist. (124). Florence incurs Dombey's implacable and deep-seated indifference because he sees her as a rival to him in Paul's affection, he is terribly disturbed by the boy's obvious love for his sister: it is obviously a characteristic of Dombey's at this stage in the story, that he cannot share anything with anybody. This is because, at this stage, he cannot really love anything or anybody, he is incapable of loving, beyond the idea of "possessing". He must have loved his first wife, in his way, and Dickens tells us what that way was: "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 a something gone from among his plate and furniture, and other household possessions, which was well worth the having, and could not be lost without sincere regret." (125). Inability to love often shows itself in possessiveness and jealousy. This is why it is so wounding for Dombey that his son does not recognise him: "...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... 'Floy!' he said. 'What is that?' 'Where, dearest?' 'There! at the bottom of the bed.' The figure lifted up its head, and rose, 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...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." (126).

He cannot understand love as he has no idea what love is, therefore he cannot understand Florence's love, either for Paul (which he resents as rivalry) or for himself (which he finds an affront). This is why the arranged marriage with Edith Granger is so weighty a part of the fable. It is checked out like a business transaction, her qualities and attainments are catalogued and double-checked. This is how a business deal is made, it is emphatically not how a marriage is made.

Thus Cousin Feenix with unintentioned accuracy and perception typical of his nature, strikes home with his little joke about the marriage between "an uncommonly fine girl with a man for whom she didn't care a button, but whom she accepted, on account of his property, which was immense." When Cousin Feenix's acquaintance in the House of Commons returned from a social gathering, Feenix tells the guests at Mr. Dombey's, "a man he knew, meeting him in the lobby of the House of Commons, says, 'Well, Jack, Jack, how are the ill-matched couple?' 'Ill-matched,' says Jack, 'Not at all. It's a perfectly fair and equal transaction. She is regularly bought, and you may take your oath he is as regularly sold.' " (127). Mr. Dombey intones amidst the general silence, "Very good." There is "a rapid glance from Edith towards Florence" but otherwise she remains "externally, impassive and unconscious." (128).

Love, immortal and immutable, is the message that the waves carry. It takes Dombey many years and major catastrophe to learn that. The world in which the action of this novel takes place, apart from the brightness given by the Toodles and the radiance of Florence, is essentially a darkened world, a gloomy, cavernous, tenebrous and grandly sordid world of which Dombey seems so thoroughly a part (the echoes suggested by his name are doom, sombre, and Carker's name suggest carcass and burden) and typically representative of that modern, money-world which Dickens was anxious to portray. Florence is natural, she is loyal, patient and loving, her actions are motivated and guided by natural instinct (Susan Nipper refers to her as "my own dear dove" (129) and when Florence leaves

home and flees to Cuttle, he advises her to eat and rest "like a angel." (130). Edith refers to her as "my bird." (131). Mr. Dombey, on the other hand, is un-natural, he is mechanical (his points move like those of a machine, and he creaks and ticks like a functioning mechanism) and Dickens gives us this in the way Dombey talks, his speech is un-flowing, awkward, artificial: this tone in his voice goes far beyond that acceptable Victorian formality commented on by Professor Brooks. (132). "I observed...and this concludes what I deem it necessary to say to you at present, Mrs. Dombey - I observed a moment ago, Madam, that my allusion to Mr. Carker was received in a peculiar manner. On the occasion of my happening to point out to you, before that confidential agent, the objection I had to your mode of receiving my visitors, you were pleased to object to his presence. You will have to get the better of that objection, Madam, and to accustom yourself to it very probably on many similar occasions; unless you adopt the remedy which is in your own hands, of giving me no cause of complaint ..." (133).

Florence's great task is to make him human, to so conduct herself that he becomes a person who can give love and receive love, so that - in short - he becomes a human being. Dombey is unable to do this because, like the new society, the changing society, of which he is a leading part, his behaviour is directed by the principle of the commodity market - buying and selling. What Dickens has done is shown what a man becomes when the whole of his life is so guided. Dombey stands before us a terrible and terrifying example of what materialistic, commercial man, Homo Economicus, actually is like. The words of

the modern psychoanalist and philosopher Erich Fromm are absolutely relevant here: "...the capacity to love in an individual living in any given culture depends on the influence his culture has on the character of the average person. If we speak about love in contemporary Western culture, we mean to ask whether the social structure of Western civilisation and the spirit resulting from it are conducive to the development of love. To raise the question is to answer it in the negative. No objective observer of our Western life can doubt that love - brotherly love, motherly love, and erotic love - is a relatively rare phenomenon, and that its place is taken by a number of forms of pseudo-love which are in reality so many forms of the disintegration of love..." (134). Florence has to break that mechanism, to pierce that armour plate of sophistication: we can see the strength of the enemy Florence has to overcome in those scenes at Mr. Dombey's mansion after the marriage. Here he is surrounded by his friends, or rather his cronies, bank directors, businessmen, eastern magnates, chairmen of public companies, among the female company is "an old lady like a crimson velvet pin-cushion stuffed with bank-notes, who might have been the identical old lady of Threadneedle Street, she was so rich, and looked so unaccommodating..." (135). Florence has already realised, in a dream, what a task the rescue of her father is going to be: "She dreamed of seeking her father in wilderness, of following his track up fearful heights, and down into deed mines and caverns; of being charged with something that would release him from extraordinary suffering - she knew now what, or why - yet never never being able to attain the goal and set him free..." (136).

But she does reach him, and purge him of his inhumanities. How does she do it? Not by any of the means she herself has previously canvassed, but by that indomitable innocence so typical of Dickens' divine children. We are shown, quite early on, the effects of Florence on Edith. The happy couple have returned, the housewarming party has been held. Dombey has had a terrible scene with his new wife because he does not think she exerted herself sufficiently to entertain the company. We are told of Edith's "ineffable distain and haughtiness" and her "cold inflexible resolve" against which he, Dombey, has no resource. (137). And then occurs a very important incident. Dombey is standing in the shadows and he sees Edith leave Florence's room some time after the scene described above: Edith has gone in to see Florence before retiring to bed. Dombey sees her on the stairs with a light and notes her face "so changed, which <u>he</u> could not subdue." (138). Florence has caused Edith's passion to change.

It is the power of Florence that really restrains her from embarking on a serious marital argument with Mr. Dombey in a later scene: "He saw her bosom throb, and saw her face flush and turn white. All this he could know, and did: but he could not know that one word was whispering in the deep recesses of her heart, to keep her quiet; and that word was Florence. Blind idiot, rushing to a precipice! He thought she stood in awe of him!" (139). Florence sees that the division between Dombey and Edith is widening and deepening (140) and she notices that Mr. Dombey is "hard, inflexible, unyielding" to Edith as to her. (141). Florence is aided in

her mission by those divine qualities which these children have in common but the strain is noticed upon her. (142). One source of her strength is that she does not grow beyond being a child, she retains the child's directness of vision, that penetration into the depths of things, that strength of innocence; after her father's accident she goes in the night to see how he is, fearing that he might be dead or dying, with "the same child's heart within her, as of old: even with the child's sweet timid eyes and clustering hair..." (143).

It is this strength beneath the slight exterior which causes Susan Nipper to say of her: "There never was a dearer or a blesseder young lady...and I ought to know a great deal better than some for I have seen her in her grief and I have seen her in her joy...and I have seen her with her brother and I have seen her in her loneliness...she's the blessedest and dearest angel is Miss Floy that ever drew the breath of life..." (144). Edith recognises these qualities in Florence when she says to her "I have no hope but in you!" (145). Florence seems to exert her power in the gentlest ways: "Edith, as if she fell beneath her touch, sank down on her knees, and caught her round the neck." (146). "Timid and retiring as her solitary life had made her," Dickens comments, "it had not embittered her sweet temper, or her earnest nature. A child in innocent simplicity; a woman in her modest self-reliance, and her deep intensity of feeling; both child and woman seemed expressed in her fair face...as if the spring should be unwilling to depart when summer came... But in her thrilling voice, in her calm eyes, sometimes in a strange ethereal light that

seemed to rest upon her head...there was an expression, such as had been seen in the dead boy..." (147). In a world of flux, of "progress", change, bustle, decay, sudden reverses, Florence seems to stand for the unchanging quality of human goodness: at the moment when father and daughter are finally reconciled, Dickens says: "Unchanged still. Of all the world, unchanged." (148).

Florence also had an additional source of strength in the fact that she realises her father's hatred of her is a conscious thing, it is assumed, not permanent; thus she believes if she can keep on long enough, she will be able to erase it. This she realises in the scene after Mr. Dombey's riding accident: "There was a cut upon his forehead... One of his arms ...was bandaged up, and he was quite white. But it was not this, that after the first quick glance...held Florence rooted to the ground... She had never seen his face in all her life, but there had been upon it...some disturbing consciousness of her. She had never seen his face in all her life, but hope had sunk within her, and her timid glance had drooped before its stern, unloving, and repelling harshness. As she looked upon it now, she saw it, for the first time, free from the cloud that had darkened her childhood. Calm, tranquil night, was reigning its stead. He might have gone to sleep, for anything she saw there, blessing her." (149). But when he has recovered, he once again adopts that fearsome <u>persona</u>, outwardly, at least, he is the same obturately unyielding, unloving father. Florence notices this: "The little interval in which she had imagined that she saw some small relenting in

him, was forgotten in the long remembrance of his coldness since and before, or only remembered as a sorrowful delusion." (150). She has seen him relaxed, when the mask slipped, and there he lay before her, a normal, warm, human being: she has seen him recovered, consciously re-adopt his coldness, but she clings to that memory of him as she had briefly seen him, and hopes that it may come again: "...as if the last time she had seen her father, had been when he was sleeping and she had kissed his face, she always left him so, and never, in her fancy, passed that hour." (151). This is after Florence has left home. She carries that image of her father with her as a sign of her hope that she may yet again see that transformation work on his features, and relax them into warmth and humanity.

Of course Dombey's hatred of Florence is deepened and strengthened by the relationship created between Edith and Florence; Edith does not love him (that is to say, in Dombey's understanding of the term "love" - she does not humble herself in abject obedience before him) but she loves Florence and they get on well together. This he cannot stand and does his best to destroy if he can. (152). It is when both Florence and her father are alone in the world that occurs the situation in which they can be reconciled. Florence is alone as she has left her home, she has lost Susan Nipper, she has lost Edith. Dombey has lost Carker, he has lost Edith, he has lost his wealth and business, Major Bagstock and his city friends have deserted him, his mansion is empty. He has bracketed Florence and Edith together, it is through Florence that

he is to forgive Edith. Florence's need to love him, to offer him all she could, was intense when she realised that his wife had left him: "But in his frenzy, he lifted up his cruel arm, and struck her, crosswise, with that heaviness, that she tottered on the marble floor; and as he dealt the blow, he told her what Edith was, and bade her follow her, since they had always been in league. She did not sink down at his feet; she did not shut out the sight of him with her trembling hands; she did not weep; she did not utter one word of reproach. But she looked at him, and a cry of desolation issued from her heart. For as she looked, she saw him murdering that fond idea to which she had held in spite of him, she saw his cruelty, neglect, and hatred dominant above it... She saw she had no father upon earth, and ran out, orphaned, from his house." (153).

She is now completely cast out, lost in a world that no longer cares for her: "Florence hurried away in the advancing morning, and the strengthening sunshine, to the City. The roar soon grew more loud, the passengers more numerous, the shops more busy, until she was carried onward in a stream of life setting that way, and flowing indifferently, past marts and mansions, prisons, churches, market-places, wealth, poverty, good, and evil, like the broad river side by side with it, awakened from its dreams of rushes, willows and green moss, and rolling on, turbid and troubled, among the works and cares of men, to the deep sea." (154). Here Dickens suggests, in the figure of Florence, modern man as the lost victim in his own vast and lonely city, unhappy, unadjusted, alienated from

his own kind, surrounded by bustling indifference, by a crowd of equally lost and aimless beings drifting or struggling through their lives without a sense of identity, association or purpose.

What does she find at the end of her flight? She finds the safety, love and security of the Wooden Midshipman. Florence, for the first time in her life, is fathered: "Better now, my pretty!" says Captain Cuttle, "Cheerily, cheerily; I'll go down below, and get some dinner ready. Will you come down of your own self, arterwards, pretty, or shall Ed'ard Cuttle come and fetch you?" (155). The careful, loving ritual of his preparing the dinner should be noted too, in the world of Dickens the preparing and partaking communally of hot meals is the outward and visible sign of an inner sanctity and warmth. Possibly the most beautiful section in this part of the novel is Cuttle's vigil over the sleeping Florence. (156). This shows what active and responsible love is: "Florence slept upon her couch, forgetful of her homelessness and orphanage, and Captain Cuttle watched upon the stairs. A louder sob or moan than usual, brought him sometimes to her door; but by degrees she slept more peacefully, and the Captain's watch was undisturbed." (157).

The relationship between Florence and her real father is now at its lowest: "Homeless and fatherless, she forgave him everything; hardly thought that she had need to forgive him, or that she did; but she fled from the idea of him as she had fled from the reality, and he was utterly gone and lost.

There was no such being in the world." (158). Dombey will be ready for reconciliation only when he, too, feels all alone: even after losing Edith he is not fully broken, "...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... Shaken as he is by his disgrace, he is not yet humbled to the level earth... The tree is struck, but not down." (159).

Dombey is protected by his illusions: all his life his illusions have kept from him the wounding qualities of reality. It is this which has allowed him to act in the way he acted to his children, to Polly, to Edith. And it is this which has allowed him to be taken in by such beings as Major Bagstock. We have already seen that this wall of protecting illusion is beginning to crumble: "The world. What the world thinks of him, how it looks at him, what it sees in him, and what it says - this is the haunting demon of his mind. It is everywhere where he is... When he is shut up in his room at night, it is in his house, outside it, audible in footsteps on the pavement..." (160). This is important evidence. Dombey has never really cared before. Now he is beginning to care, beginning to notice other voices and regard other opinions, as well as his own. When Dombey's ruin is complete, Florence appears at his side, like magic, called up like a mythological figure by the inner necessity of events, without other narrative explanation: "He knew, now, what it was to be rejected and deserted, 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 sheltered him looked on him as a stranger; she alone had turned the same mild gentle look upon him always... She had never changed to him - nor had he ever changed to her - and she was lost." (161). And then, there she is, "he only saw his own reflection in the glass, and at his knees, his daughter!" (162).

Most critics find Florence and her part in the novel hard to take, and either avoid talking about her (163) or discuss her by hiding their obvious embarrassment as well as they can. (164). It is my view that these critical difficulties are partly self-generated: they are the result of trying the character of Florence and finding her wanting because she is here tried in the wrong court with inappropriate evidence. This is what happens when we try to see Florence as a "real" character; in this light, she fails, as she palpably isn't "real" - and, the argument goes, Florence doesn't succeed as a "real" character, therefore, Dickens has failed, his judgement has left him, his artistry has let him down etc. etc: "The contest for Mr. Dombey's soul requires no more of Florence than a perfect goodness and persistent affection... But the balance of the novel requires her to be prominent. A character conceived in terms of pure feeling, passive, innocent to the point of being almost 'incapable of her own distress', can hardly sustain this prominence..." (165). But of course Florence

isn't real; she is a divine creature, a fay being, an agent of perfection of another world, temporarily with us: she acts and has her being with a dream-like logic and rightness.

Significantly she is constantly associated with the idea of dream in Dombey and Son. After her conversation with Edith where she confessed that she knows she is no favourite child of Dombey's, "In her sleep...Florence could not lose an undefined impression of what had so recently passed. It formed the subject of her dreams... She dreamed of seeking her father in wilderness, of following his track up fearful heights..." (166). When Edith becomes estranged to her, Florence lives "in a dream wherein the overflowing love of her young heart expended itself on airy forms..." (167). When Edith runs away with Carker, Florence, "not knowing what she did, put on a shawl and bonnet, in a dream of running through the streets until she found Edith, and then clasping her in her arms..." (168). And when Florence runs away from the Dombey mansion and feels herself all alone in the world "She had indistinct dreams of finding, a long way off, some little sisters to instruct, who would be gentle with her, and to whom...she might attach herself..." (169). Cuttle has her room in the Wooden Midshipman's tidied up for her stay there, and Florence finds "everything about her as convenient and orderly, if not as handsome, as in the terrible dream she had once called home." (170). Cousin Feenix rounding off the story and commenting on the changes in life, says "all I can say is, with my friend Shakespeare...that it's like the shadow of a dream." (171). The last sections of the book, the scenes where Dombey, now broken by all that has

happened to him, is reconciled to Florence who simply materialises at the appropriate time, and where in Florence's hands he becomes a child and is nursed by her, these have the atmosphere and feel of dream: "She was always with him. He knew her, generally; though, in the wanderings of his brain, he often confused the circumstances under which he spoke to her... he would address her...as if his boy were newly dead... He rambled through the scenes of his old pursuits...sometimes for hours. He would repeat that childish question, 'What is money' and ponder on it... He would go on with a musing repetition of the title of his old firm twenty thousand times... He would count his children, - one-two-stop, and go back, and begin again in the same way... He remained like this for days and weeks... It was dimly pleasant to him now, to lie there, with the window open, looking out at the summer sky and the trees; and, in the evening, at the sunset. To watch the shadows of the clouds and leaves, and seem to feel a sympathy with shadows. It was natural that he should. To him, life and the world were nothing else." (172).

Through the agency of Florence, Dombey now comes to accept life and death: "one evening...when Florence and Walter were sitting in his room together, as he liked to see them...Florence, having her baby in her arms, began in a low voice to sing to the little fellow, and sang the old tune she had so often sung to the dead child. He could not bear it at the time; he held up his trembling hand, imploring her to stop; but next day he asked her to repeat it, and to do so often of an evening: which she did. He listening, with his face turned away." (173).

Is such a reconciliation possible in this world? Or is this the stuff of fairy-tale and dream? Dickens seems optimistically to suggest that such love and such triumph of love is possible, that such a dream may come true (174) if we become as little children. Dombey and Son is much more than "a plea for children; generally, for their right to be treated as individuals...and particularly, against the wrongs done to them in the name of education." (175). It is my belief that Dickens, in using the child figures of Paul and Florence, is shadowing forth the much more profound and searching moral point, as an appeal to us all, as an indication of the way Dickens felt the world was going: the world is becoming mechanical in head as well as hand, mechanism in all forms is replacing those warm and vital human sources of instinct and behaviour: money and mechanism are both dangerous delusions, destructive and unreliable. (176). What Dickens sets up as the true and positive standard are simplicity, love and naturalness. Mr. Dombey, the mechanical, monstrous, mammonist being is tamed by the natural Florence. The warning implicit in Dickens' handling of Paul is that in following the lights of mechanism and money-worship we may destroy what is best and fully human in ourselves, our hope of immortality. This is the message of the waves. The end of the novel finds Mr. Dombey on the sea-shore with Florence's two children, a boy and a girl: "And so they range away again, busily, for the white-haired gentleman likes to see the child free and stirring ..." (177).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CHILD, FATHER AND MAN (1850)

"I am within three pages of the shore; and am strangely divided, as usual in such cases, between sorrow and joy. Oh, my dear Forster, if I were to say half of what Copperfield makes me feel tonight, how strangely, even to you, I should be turned inside out! I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World."

Dickens in a letter to Forster, 21st October 1850.
Forster: Life of Dickens Book VI Chapter vii.

"The Present Time, youngest-born of Eternity, child and heir of all the Past Times with their good and evil, and parent of all the Future, is ever a 'New Era' to the thinking man; and comes with new questions and significance, however commonplace it looks: to know it, and what it bids us do, is ever the sum of knowledge for all of us. This new day, sent us out of Heaven, this also has its heavenly omens; - amid monitions, which if we cannot read and obey, it will not be well with us! No; - nor is there any sin more fearfully avenged on men and Nations... which indeed includes and presupposes all manner of sins: the sin which our old proud fathers called 'judicial blindness' - which we, with our light habits, may still call misrepresentation of the Time that now is; disloyalty to its real meanings and monitions, stupid disregard of these... This is true of all times and days..."

Thomas Carlyle: The Present Time, opening essay in Latter Day Pamphlets, dated 1st February 1850.

Such then, are the main parts of which this extraordinary novel is structured. In a letter to Forster in May 1848, Dickens wrote about the idea of finality in the development of society, finality with the feeling that we could not expect the society to absorb any new experience or further develop itself in any way. He was writing of China, and he says that he believes the Chinese just came to a full stop, whereas the western world is still progressing: "With all their patient and ingenius but never advancing art...with all their rich and diligent agricultural cultivation, not a new twist or curve has been given to a ball of ivory, and not a blade of experience has been grown. There is a genuine finality in that..." (1). Here he refers to the Chinese junk which had just come round the world and was to be put on display in London.

His attitude is a close parallel of his celebrated distrust of an admiration for "the good old days" - we think of his dummy bookcases at Tavistock House (The Wisdom of Our Ancestors - a seven volume set subtitled: Ignorance, Superstition, The Block, The Stake, The Rack, Dirt and Disease) and the constant reference in sarcasm to the cult of good old days (2); references he seemed incapable of checking: of the treatment of the insane "On the walls of some of the sleeping cells were the marks of what looked like small alcoves, that has been removed. These indicated the places to which the chairs, which patients were made to sit in for indefinite periods, were, in the good old times, nailed..." (3) and again "O shades of Mad Doctors with laced ruffles and powdered wigs, O shades of patients who went mad in the only good old times to be mad or sane in, and

who were therefore physicked, whirligiged, chained, handcuffed, beaten, cramped and tortured..." (4). In his article on the London Foundling Hospital in Household Words he says "In or about the Christian year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-two; a good old time, when England had had too much to do, through all the good old times intervening since the days of Pope Innocent the Third, to do anything whatever for Foundlings; in or about that year dwelt in London the gentle sea captain, THOMAS CORAM..." (5). Of crime and punishment in his times he wrote: "...it is made evident in Mr. Hill's book (6) that the amount of crime has decreased greatly since the good old times, because the predisposing and exciting causes...have decreased very much in strength. Highway robbery was once regarded as a gentlemanly, spirited amusement. Assaults upon watchmen were so regarded in the memory of many of us, but in the really good old times it was no great stain upon the youth even of a Chief Justice, if, like Sir John Popham (7) he sallied out at night as captain of a desperate band, to stop travellers on Shooter's Hill and pillage them. A Prince of Wales had been a robber on Gad's Hill (8) and for the benefit of noble burglars and highwaymen, a statute decreed that a peer of the realm or lord of parliament, on his first conviction of robbery, was entitled to benefit of clergy, even if he could not read (9) that a lord of parliament could read being in those days by no means a matter of course..." (10). In his article in Household Words on the Chinese Gallery in Hyde Park Place contrasted with the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace in 1851 he wrote that "in the comparison between the Great and Little Exhibition, you have the comparison between Stoppage and Progress, between the

exclusive principle and all other principles, between the good old times and the bad new times, between perfect Toryism and imperfect advancement..." (11).

Much is made of Dickens' attachment to the old days, with their associations of inns, coaches and pre-industrial innocence: but here he is furiously attacking an ungrounded faith in "the past" which he sees as a danger which entices us to stand still. We should recall Mrs. Skewton with her cult of "Merrie England": the finest example of this is in their expedition to Kenilworth Castle. "Oh!" cried Mrs. Skewton, with a faded little scream of rapture, "the Castle is charming! associations of the Middle Ages - and all that - which is so truly exquisite. Don't you dote upon the Middle Ages, Mr. Carker?" "Very much indeed," said Mr. Carker. "Such charming times!" cried Cleopatra. "So full of faith! So vigorous and forcible! So picturesque! So perfectly removed from commonplace! If they would only leave us a little more of the poetry of existence in these terrible days!" (12). She finally delivers herself of an apostrophe to Merrie England which would outclass even Kingsley Amis' horrific Professor Ned Welsh: "Those darling bygone times...with their delicious fortresses, and their dear old dungeons, and their delightful places of torture, and their romantic vengeances, and their picturesque assaults and sieges, and everything that makes life truly charming! How dreadfully we have degenerated!" (13).

Dickens is here attacking the cult of the Middle Ages which, quite rightly, we immediately associate with the Young

England movement and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. (14). The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, in some ways a natural development from the romantic cult of the middle ages, is seen by some to be the action of the aesthetic imagination turning in disgust from the increasing mechanization of the nineteenth century, a searching back into the past, to a "Middle Ages" which never, in fact, really existed, for solace for the spirit in the age of the steam-engine. (15). The Brotherhood, which was primarily the creation of William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais but also included Thomas Woolner, James Collinson, William Michael Rossetti and Frederic George Stephens. (16). The signs of the emergence of "Pre-Raphaelism" are clearly there well before the end of the eighteen-forties: Bulwer Lytton (The Last of the Barons 1843, Harold, The Last of The Saxon Kings 1848) Harrison Ainsworth (The Tower of London 1840, Old St. Pauls 1841, Windsor Castle 1843, etc.) Madox Brown's The Body of Harold Brought to William the Conqueror, cartoon, was exhibited at Westminster Hall in 1844. (17).

It is this idealization of the past, this "Merrie Englandisme" which, I believe, Dickens is objecting to in characters such as Mrs. Skewton and the red-faced gentleman in the blue coat in The Chimes who speaks of "such degenerate times as these!... The good old times, the grand old times, the great old times!... There's nothing now-a-days..." (18). The characters who align themselves with the past in Dombey and Son are shown to have made a dangerous allegiance: Sol Gills is a masterful emblem of antiquity, someone whom Time has passed by.

Consider the way he has fallen into debt and loses his business: "You've got some money, haven't you?" Captain Cuttle asks him, and gets the reply, "Yes, yes - oh yes - I've got some," returned old Sol, first putting his hands into his empty pockets, and then squeezing his Welsh wig between them, as if he thought he might wring some gold out of it; "but I - the little I have got, isn't convertible, Ned; it can't be got at. I have been trying to do something with it for Wally, and I'm old fashioned, and behind the time..." (19). He is later described by the novelist as having "the air of a half-witted person who had been hiding his money in a variety of places, and had forgotten where..." (20). He confesses of himself "I'm behind the time altogether...a long way. It's no use my lagging on so far behind it. The stock had better be sold - it's worth more than this debt - and I had better go and die somewhere, on the balance. I haven't any energy left. I don't understand things. This had better be the end of it..." (21). As he says this he points to his shop sign, the wooden midshipman, a symbol of byegone days, and says "Let 'em sell the stock and take him down...and let us both be broken up together." (22). Elsewhere Dickens has told us that the midshipman's uniform was "obsolete". (23).

We are constantly reminded in the scenes in Sol Gills' shop of the relentless passage of time by the pressing presence of all those ships' chronometers. Significantly, they are not very accurate: when Cuttle gives Walter Gay his watch he says: "Wal'r...a parting gift, my lad. Put it back half an hour every morning, and about another quarter towards the afternoon,

and it's a watch that'll do you credit." (24). He tells Walter Gay in the first chapter where we meet him, "...in truth this business is merely a habit with me. I am so accustomed to the habit that I could hardly live if I relinquished it; but there's nothing doing, nothing doing. When that uniform was worn," pointing out towards the little midshipman, "then indeed, fortunes were to be made, and were made. But competition, competition - new invention, new invention - alteration, alteration - the world's gone past me. I hardly know where I am myself; much less where my customers are." (25). Sol Gills then, seems to represent the good old days, and as he clings to the standards and practices of the old days we see him decline: but, we should notice that when he comes to terms with the present, and has regard to the future, he recovers, his investments come home, he goes into partnership with Cuttle, he is in step with the present and his future is personified in his nephew, Walter Gay who is married to Florence and a successful business man himself: "And how goes the Wooden Midshipman in these changed days? Why, here he still is, right leg foremost, hard at work...more on the alert than ever, being newly painted from his cocked hat to his buckled shoes; and up above him, in golden characters, these names shine refulgent, GILLS AND CUTTLE...they do say, in a circuit of some half mile round the blue umbrella in Leadenhall Market, that some of Mr. Gills' old investments are coming out wonderfully well; and that instead of being behind the time... he was, in truth, a little before it, and had to wait the fulness of time and the design..." (26). Gills has come to terms with the past, the present and the future: this is symbolised

by the famous bottle of Old Madiera. He gets this out to toast Walter Gay on his start at Dombey and Son's business. It is a "very ancient-looking bottle, covered with dust and dirt." (27). Walter exclaims "What are you about! that's the wonderful Madiera! There's only one more bottle!" (28). But Uncle Sol seems to know what he is doing, for he says "You shall drink the other bottle, Wally...when you have come to good fortune; when you are a thriving, respected, respected, happy man; when the start in life you have made today shall have brought you, as I pray Heaven it may! - to a smooth part of the course you have to run, my child..." (29). It is in this conversation when, with the old Madiera in his hand presenting all its associative links with the past, Sol Gills says "...the world has gone past me. I don't blame it; but I no longer understand it. Tradesmen are not the same as they used to be, apprentices are not the same, business is not the same, business commodities are not the same. Seven-eights of my stock is old-fashioned. I am an old-fashioned man in an old-fashioned shop, in a street that is not the same as I remember it. I have fallen behind the time, and am too old to catch it again. Even the noise it makes a long way ahead, confuses me...I am only the ghost of this business - it's substance vanished long ago..." (30). The last bottle of the Old Madiera is purposefully kept to celebrate the realization of the present to toast the promise of the future: "We won't drink the last bottle of the Old Madiera yet, Ned... Not yet." Sol Gills tells Cuttle that they must wait until Mr. Dombey and Florence are reconciled, then they will have something to toast with the old Madiera. He reads out to Cuttle the letter Walter

has left for Mr. Dombey. This letter refers quite specifically to the reconciliation of the past, present and future: "I do not think or hope that you will ever forgive me. There is nothing I expect less. But if an hour should come when it will comfort you to believe that Florence has someone ever near her, the great charge of whose life is to cancel her remembrance of past sorrow, I solemnly assure you, you may, in that hour, rest in that belief." (31). The Old Madiera is only finally drunk when past, present and future are balanced, when Florence has been accepted by her father and the little child welcomed by him as an emblem of the future, then "A bottle that has been long excluded from the light of day, and is hoary with dust and cobwebs, has been brought into the sunshine; and the golden wine within it sheds a lustre on the table..." (32). We note that the wine is drunk by Sol Gills, Captain Cuttle, Walter, Florence and Mr. Dombey, and as the glasses are chinked "there is a blithe and merry ringing, as of a little peal of marriage bells." (33).

Major Bagstock is linked with an emphatic past, he lives perpetually in the reflected triumphs of memory and personal anecdote and invariably refers to himself as "Old Joe" (34) and is always telling his long-suffering hearers what the Duke of So-and-So said about him during some long-forgotten review or levee. At one point he seems to place himself in a world without time, an immortal being frozen in late middle age; "Damme, Sir," he says to Mr. Dombey after seeing that Mrs. Skewton was really mortally ill, "she never wrapped up enough. If a man don't wrap up...he has nothing to fall back upon.

But some people will die. They will do it. Damme, they will. They're obstinate. I tell you what, Dombey, it may not be ornamental; it may not be refined; it may be rough and tough; but a little of the genuine old English Bagstock stamina, Sir, would do all the good in the world to the human breed." (35). What he is telling us here is that he is not going to die, that he will go on forever, forever unchanged and unchangeable. Such is the Major's connection with the present and the future, with in fact, the real world of daily events, that when Mr. Dombey's affairs reach their catastrophe that he withdraws, and cannot believe in Miss Tox's loyalty to Dombey, living so permanently in the dream world of his own past he was incapable of seeing those qualities which Dickens tells us were present even in such an apparently insignificant creature as Miss Tox: "She is no chicken, but she has not grown tough with age and celebacy. Her heart is very tender, her compassion very genuine... Beneath the locket with the fishy eye in it, Miss Tox bears better qualities than many a less whimsical outside; such qualities as will outlive, by many courses of the sun, the best outsides and brightest husks that fall in the harvest of the great reaper." (36). The Major has charged his servant to watch the Dombey mansion as the rats fly from it and he is told by the Native that Miss Tox loyally visits there "and the Major has nearly choked himself dead with laughter. He is permanently bluer from that hour, and constantly wheezes to himself, his lobster eyes starting out of his head, "Damme, Sir, the woman's a born idiot." (37).

The Blimbers like wise represents an equally serious

inability healthily to link with past, present and future. There is above all his association with the dead languages, for Dickens, a moribund past (38): Dr. Blimber's chief educational fault, in the novelist's eyes, is that he fails to see that the needs and requirements of education change as times change, but as his academy students were made to "bear to pattern, somehow or other." (39). The associations given to Dr. Blimber's school are of damp, joylessness, and the stultifying effects of the classical past: the lessons the unfortunate boys endure are "stony-hearted verbs, savage noun-substances, inflexible syntactic passages, and ghosts of exercises..." (40). Dickens himself was, as Professor Edgar Johnson says, no classical scholar (41) and we may, in fact, infer the depth of his respect for the ancient languages by the fact that as a schoolboy at Wellington House he kept a white mouse as a pet in between the covers of a Latin dictionary from which the pages had been cut to form a nest for him. In the article he published on his schooling in Household Words in 1851 he discusses his memories of Latin lessons with little enthusiasm (42) but the classics in Dombey and Son carry with them connotations of morbidity and stagnation: we are told that Dr. Blimber's manner of reading was "determined, unimpassioned, inflexible, cold-blooded". (43).

In a very interesting way Dr. Blimber's academy is geared to serving also the immediate needs of the present, to the hideous neglect of future consequences: I am referring to the fact that this school is a recognised educational hot-house. "The young gentlemen were prematurely full of carking anxieties...

Under the forcing system, a young gentleman usually took leave of his spirits in three weeks. He had all the cares of the world on his head in three months. He conceived bitter sentiments against his parents or guardians in four; he was an old misanthrope in five...and at the end of the first twelve month has arrived at the conclusion, from which he never afterwards departed, that all the fancies of the poets, and lessons of the sages, were a mere collection of words and grammar, and had no other meaning in the world. But he went on, blow, blow, blowing in the Doctor's hothouse, all the time; and the Doctor's glory and reputation were great, when he took his wintry growth home to his relations and friends." (44). We see the tragic results of this neglect of future considerations in the long term effects on the pupils. There is, above all, Toots: who has gone through so much (in more senses than one) and having left off blowing in his prime he was, when Paul met him, at "licence to pursue his own course of study: which was chiefly to write long letters to himself from persons of distinction, addressed 'P Toots, Esquire, Brighton, Sussex' and to preserve them with great care." (45).

The association with automaticism and mechanism is strongly suggested by the constantly present permanently audible clocks at Doctor Blimber's: "there was no sound through all the house but the ticking of a great clock in the hall, which made itself audible in the very garrets..." (46). This links up with Mr. Dombey's "very loud ticking watch" which Florence is so conscious of: we may be sure that these time pieces, unlike those erratic chronometers in the Wooden Midshipman's were always

accurate - powerful symbols of the exact, pushing, progressive, materialistic, utilitarian world of the present.

The burden of Dombey and Son seems to me that we must not let the past hold us in bondage, nor be so taken up with the immediate needs of the present that we neglect the promise of the future: we recall that in the last few moments of his life, Carker, that epitome of the man of the moment, who has lived (and is to die) trying to have his eye on the main chance, Carker is utterly without a sense of relevance and connection: the way Dickens tells us this is very important. The actual words are "the past, present and future, all float confusedly before him, and he had lost all power of looking steadily at any one of them." (47). The chapter which had shadowed forth Mr. Dombey's marriage, and Carker's swindle is actually called "Shadows of the Past and Future" (48). The men of the present, of the modern, bustling, go-getting present, Dickens sees as particularly dangerous, they have no link with the past, and no consideration of the future (49) and for much of the time Mr. Dombey is a man of the present: the great spiritual crisis he experiences is really his essential involvement with the past, the present and the future, and his transformation, his change of heart, like Scrooge's before him, is a matter of realizing that he must take count of all three. Dombey, socially, matrimonially and financially a ruined and broken man, sits in the empty carcass of his fortunes, his mansion: the debris of his memory keeps him company: "For the night of his worldly ruin there was no tomorrow's run..." (50).

In the passage which follows we find the past and the future are considered "...that which he might have made so different in his past - which might have made the past so different, though this he hardly thought of now - that which was his own work, that which he could so easily have wrought into a blessing...that was the sharp grief of his soul." (51). He is thinking, significantly, of his child, Florence: like so many of Dickens' divine children, a potent emblem of hope for the future, as well as an indelible sign of what Mr. Dombey has done in his past: " 'Let him remember it in his room, years to come.' He did remember it! The rain that fell upon the roof, the wind that mourned outside the door that night, had had foreknowledge in their melancholy sound. He knew now, what he had done... He knew now, what it was to be rejected and deserted... He thought of her as she had been that night when he and his bride came home. He thought of her as she had been, in all the home events of the abandoned home. 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... In his pride - for he was proud yet - he let the world go from him freely. As it fell away, he shook it off..." (52).

In his doleful meanderings through the empty house he is given a vision of Florence, from the past, carrying Paul: "He almost saw it, going on before. He stopped, looking up towards the skylight; and a figure, childish itself, but carrying a

child, and singing as it went, seemed to be there... Anon, it was the same figure, alone, stopping for an instant, with suspended breath; the bright hair clustering round its tearful face; and looking back at him..." (53). As with Mr. Carker in his final moments, Dombey begins to lose his sense of time, his awareness of past, present and future: "He began to fear that all this intricacy in his brain would drive him mad; and that his thoughts already lost coherence as the footprints did, and were pieced on to one another, with the same trackless involutions... He did not so much as know in which of these rooms she had lived, when she was alone. He was glad to leave them, and go wandering higher up. Abundance of associations were here..." (54).

In his mind occurs that same idea we have seen before, that his two children are as one, he cannot separate them: "Many a morning when the day broke, his altered face, drooping face, drooping behind the closed blind in the window...pondered on the loss of his two children. It was one child no more. He re-united them in his thoughts, and they were never asunder ..." (55). He begins to think towards the future, although at this stage it is really postponement: "Dombey and Son was no more - his children were no more. This must be thought of, well, tomorrow. He thought of it tomorrow." (56).

When he contemplates killing himself, it is his realization of the need to consider the future, which finally brings his change of heart: he is watching his own face in the glass, a spectral, haggard, wasted likeness of himself. "Now it was

thinking again! What was it thinking?" (57). It is at this moment that he sees an added reflection in the glass, the face of his own daughter. Florence has returned to him, and with her the hope of the future, for she comes to tell him that she is a mother, the mother of a son, who will soon "call Walter by the name which I call you." (58).

Florence asks him to bless this child. We should also note that the child was born at sea, and recall the associations of the cradle of life, of time and immortality. What Florence says to her father now, at his moment of realization, relates to the past, the present and the future: she begs forgiveness for leaving him (the meaning of this is double-edged, really it is Dombey who should be asking forgiveness of her - this relates to what has happened in the past) and she says that when her child was born (the present) she knew what the love of parent for child was, and she concludes "oh say God bless me, and my little child." (59). The final seal is put on this by her telling him that her little son is called Paul and "I think - I hope - he's like - " (60), thus are past, present and future combined. It is Miss Tox who is used by Dickens to underline this: she is there to welcome Paul when he is born, she laments when he dies "Dear me, dear me! To think...that Dombey and Son should be a daughter after all!" (61) and she is shown to have a firm grasp of present realities when she refuses to abandon Mr. Dombey after his serious financial decline: "Miss Tox's sympathy is such that she can scarcely speak. She is no chicken, but she has not grown tough with age and celibacy. Her heart is very tender, her compassion very genuine, her

homage very real. Beneath the locket with the fishy eye in it, Miss Tox bears better qualities than many a less whimsical outside; such qualities as will outlive, by many courses of the sun, the best outsides and the brightest husks that fall in the harvest of the reaper." (62).

Mrs. Pipchin and the other staff have by this time fled the sinking merchantman, but Miss Tox brings food to Dombey's house day after day, and keeps watch with the loyal Polly. We should take note of the fact that the deserter, Major Bagstock, who left Dombey as soon as the signs of ruin appears, "nearly chokes himself dead with laughter" when he learns of her loyalty. When Dombey's heart begins to be moved by Florence's loyalty, Miss Tox reiterates "And so Dombey and Son, as I observed upon a certain sad occasion," said Miss Tox, winding up a host of recollections, "is indeed a daughter, Polly, after all." (63). Polly, for her part, remarks that Florence is a good daughter, too. "You are right," said Miss Tox, and it's a credit to you, Polly, that you were always her friend when she was a little child. You were her friend long before I was, Polly," she adds. (64). Miss Tox again shows her awareness of past, present and future when she refers to the young Grinder immediately after this, and says to him "and you're a good creature. Robin!" (65). He too is aware of his past and resolved to make amends by a better commitment to the future, as he says to Miss Tox after she has offered him employment as a servant, it is never too late for a "Indiwiddle to mend; and I hope to mend, Miss, with your kind trial; and wishing, mother, my love to father, and brothers and sisters, and saying of it." (66).

This cove's father, Toodle the engine driver, is an interesting piece of evidence in the time past, present and future structure: he is committed to the present, he tells Mr. Dombey in their first interview, "I'm a going on one of these here railroads when they comes into full play" (67) and we later see the relative prosperity which the work brings him; when the Dombey fortunes decline he is reluctant to allow Polly to frequent the abandoned mansion: "I tell you what, Poll, my dear," says Mr. Toodle, "being now an engine-driver, and well to do in the world, I shouldn't allow of your coming here, to be made dull-like, if it warn't for favours past. But favours past, Polly, is never to be forgot..." (68). His faith in the future is externalised in his obvious love and regard for his children: Dombey had commented that he was surprised that Toodle could actually afford to keep so many children: "I couldn't hardly afford but one thing in the world less, Sir," he tells Mr. Dombey. "What is that?" asked Mr. Dombey. "To lose 'em, Sir." (69).

Children, it might almost be boldly asserted, invariably body forth in Dickens' world, the faith in the future. In a speech at the conversazione of the Polytechnic Institution at Birmingham in February 1844 Dickens spoke of the future life and growth of the establishment in terms of this very personal child image: "The Polytechnic Institution of Birmingham is now in its infancy, struggling into life under all those adverse and disadvantageous circumstances which, to a greater or less extent, naturally beset all infancy...but I would much rather connect myself with its records now, however, humble, in its

days of difficulty and danger, than look back upon its origin when it may have become strong, and rich and powerful. I should prefer an intimate association with it now, in its early days and apparent struggles, to becoming its advocate and acquaintance, its fair weather friend, in its high and palmy days. I would rather be able to say to it, 'I knew you in your swaddling clothes... About your cradle nurses shook their heads...but up you shot apace, up, up, indomitable in your constitution...' " (70).

I have a much higher opinion of Dombey and Son than is, I believe, the fashion at this time, (71) and it does seem to me that here, in this novel, Dickens successfully handles the individual, personal, subjective theme of time and change (looking to himself, and drawing on his own experiences) and at the same time considers the effects of change, the balancing of past, present and future, as related to society as a whole. Change is a theme constantly referred to in Dombey. (72). "My dear Louisa must be careful of that cough," remarks Miss Tox to Mrs. Chick. (73) "It's nothing," returned Mrs. Chick. "It's merely change of weather. We must expect change..." "Of weather?" asked Miss Tox, in her simplicity. "Of everything," returned Mrs. Chick. "Of course we must. It's a world of change. Any one would surprise me very much...if they attempted to contradict or evade what is so perfectly evident. Change!... Why, my gracious me, what is there that does not change?..." (74). The vague Cousin Feenix hits upon the same theme, and unconsciously (I have no doubt) contributes to its reiteration: "...in regard to the changes of human life,

and the extraordinary manner in which we are perpetually conducting ourselves, all I can say is, with my friend Shakespeare - man who wasn't for an age but for all time, and with whom my friend Gay is no doubt acquainted - that it's like the shadow of a dream." (75). Captain Cuttle notices the element of change in the life he sees about him: "The Captain, having seen Florence and her baby for a moment, to his unbounded content, and having had a long talk with Walter, turned out for a walk; feeling it necessary to have some solitary meditation on the changes of human affairs, and to shake his glazed hat profoundly over the fall of Mr. Dombey..." (76). Mrs. Skewton, even she, is aware of the inevitability of change: 'My whole existence is bound up in my sweetest Edith; and to see her change from day to day - my beautiful pet, who has positively garnered up her heart since the death of that most delightful creature, Granger - is the most effecting thing in the world." (77). I think there is a noticeable and significant change of attitude here, something really new in Dickens' world; there is the recognition of the need for change, change in ourselves and change in society: this is not to say that Dickens now abandons the past and pledges himself to the idea of "progress" - but what is to be found here is the real acknowledgement that change is happening: business style changes, transport changes, people undergo change, affections change, we as individuals change. He now seems to admit the desirable possibility of change. (78).

In Dombey there is little recourse to the snug, unchanging, timeless and timid "olde worlde" which he had used in The Old

Curiosity Shop (the pastoral world), Barnaby Rudge (the world represented by Master Varden and the Maypole Inn) or Martin Chuzzlewit (the world of Todger's). The consolation of the Wooden Midshipman is quite another, the consolation is that even here there is the chance of change - Sol Gills has old investments which come out wonderfully well, we recall, and "instead of being behind the time in those respects, as he supposed, he was in truth, a little before it, and had to wait the fulness of the time...standing at his shop door...he don't appear to break his heart at customers not coming, but looks very jovial and contented..." (79).

We know that Dickens was interested, during the time he was working on Dombey and Son, in the idea of time and in characters who became, as it were, "time-locked": he wrote to Forster in July 1846, in the very letter in which he outlines the general ideas for Dombey and Son, about his ideas for a story on the subject of memory: "a man imprisoned for ten or fifteen years: his imprisonment being the gap between the people and circumstances of the first part and the altered people and circumstances of the second, and his own changed mind...I should like to know what you think of this one?" (80). This, of course, is the theme he was later to develop in Mrs. Clennam, Dr. Manet and Miss Havisham. This he sees as a great danger, a danger to human fulfilment, to be so frozen in a past moment of time.

He sees the need for the acceptance of change in himself as well as in society as a whole. From Venice he wrote a very

interesting letter in November 1844. He found that the wildest visions of the Arabian Nights were nothing to the glory of Venice, the opulent splendour of Venice, Dickens believed, was beyond the fancy of the wildest dreamer: "Opium couldn't build such a place, and enchantment couldn't shadow it forth in vision." (81). He discusses the idea of the past and the future, ideas which were on his mind as he saw the splendours of the past during his visit to Italy. Beneath the glory there was a world of nightmare, of "wickedness and gloom - its awful prisons, deep below the water, its judgement chambers, secret doors, deadly nooks, where the torches you carry with you blink as if they couldn't bear the air." (82). He described to Jerrold the cells "where the monk came at midnight to confess the political offender; the bench where he was strangled; the deadly little vault in which they tied him in a sack, and the stealthy crouching little door through which they hurried him in a boat, and bore him away to sink him where no fisherman dare cast his net..." (83). The tourist is shown these dreadful relics of the past by the light of torches "that blink and wink, as if they were ashamed to look upon the gloomy theatre of sad horrors; past and gone as they are, these things stir a man's blood, like a great wrong or passion of the instant..." (84).

There then follows a very interesting passage which tells us a great deal about Dickens' view of time and change at this period of his life: why should we lament the past? He asks, and be ashamed of the present? And doubt the future? We must see these things in relative proportion, not hold on to

what was bad in the past, or cling to that which is meritricious in the present and falsely promising in the future: to see what has value, needs vision and concentration: "And with these in their minds, and with a museum there, having a chamber full of such frightful instruments of torture as the devil in a brain fever could scarcely invent, there are hundreds of hundreds of parrots, who will declaim to you in speech and print, by the hour together, on the degeneracy of the times in which a railroad is building across the water at Venice; instead of going down on their knees, the drivellers, and thanking Heaven that they live in a time when iron makes roads, instead of prison bars and engines for driving screws into the skulls of innocent men." (85). We see here then that Dickens is accepting change, he sees the need of change and welcomes its benefits: the railways in Dombey are emblems not simply of destruction and retribution, but also as a symbol of social transformation. (86).

Here something very important is happening to Dickens. The old-fashioned, backward-looking novelist of coaching-days, wayside inns, winding country lanes and village church spires, the Dickens of the backward-glance, is giving place, however gradually, to a more forward-looking visionary. The function performed by the Wooden Midshipman in the symbolic structure of Dombey and Son is quite different to that of Todger's in Martin Chuzzlewit; Todger's stands for one of those "oh so quaint" corners which "time has passed by": "Surely there never was, in any other borough, city, or hamlet in the world, such a singular sort of place as Todger's... Among the narrow thoroughfares at hand, there lingered, here and there, an ancient

doorway of carved oak, from which, of old, the sounds of revelry had often come... To tell of half the queer old taverns that had a drowsy and secret existence near Todger's, would fill a goodly book... As to Todger's itself...it was worthy to stand where it did. There was one staircase-window in it ...which tradition said had not been opened for a hundred years at least..." (87).

The great thing about the Wooden Midshipman and all he stands for is that he is not only durable, but malleable too: he does not stand for a world of the past, frozen in an antiquated attitude. What happens to the characters associated with the Wooden Midshipman as the novel progresses shows us that clearly enough. Walter Gay associates himself quite deliberately with the new, the hopeful, the progressive. At the end we feel that he is going to make a better job of the firm than old Dombey himself. As a poet, Dickens presents this argument to us in terms of imagery: we have the rhythmic contrast between the flow and wash of the sea, eternal, immutable, immortal - and the vigorous, pushing resistlessness of the modern railway. If we read the novels of this period of Dickens' work chronologically, this idea will not surprise us; we have, of course, seen it before: "The voice of Time... cries to man, Advance! Time IS for his advancement and improvement; for his greater worth, his greater happiness, his better life; his progress onward to that goal within its knowledge and its view, and set there, in the period when Time and He began. Ages of darkness, wickedness, and violence, have come and gone: millions unaccountable have suffered, lived and

died: to point the way before him. Who seeks to turn him back, or stay him on his course, arrests a mighty engine which will strike the meddler dead... Who puts into the mouth of Time...a cry of lamentation for days which have had their trial and their failure, and have left deep traces of it which the blind may see - a cry that only serves the Present Time, by showing men how much it needs their help when any ears can listen to regrets for such a Past - who does this, does a wrong..." This is the Goblin of the Bell repremanding Trotty Veck for not being prepared to come to terms with Time. (88). The similarity with the leading themes of Dombey and Son needs little comment from me: the need to the purpose of advancing, the lack of patience with "merrie Englandisme", the use of the emblem of past, present and future - all these are dealt with in Dombey and Son.

At the end of The Battle of Life Dickens also indicates his involvement with the idea of Time, by claiming a personal acquaintance with this figure: "TIME - from whom I had the latter portion of this story, and with whom I have the pleasure of a personal acquaintance of some five-and-thirty year's duration..." (89). Dickens' words here suggest that he is becoming conscious of his age, of the passing of time: this moment in his life was a time for him to take stock of his position. The sales of Dombey and Son made him financially secure; as Forster says "from this date all embarrassments connected with money were brought to a close. His future profits varied of course...but there was always enough, and savings were now to begin." (90).

David Copperfield, with which this magnificent Dickensian decade ends, is a novel in which these several threads - time, memory, chance and fortune, the past, the present, the future - are all developed and recapitulated with great complexity. Here he is a successful and established writer, looking back into his past: "...I think the memory of most of us can go further back into such times than many of us suppose..." (91) and he describes the narrative as his "written memory". Again we note the use of the sea as an emblem of time and memory: "All this, I say, is yesterday's event. Events of later date have floated from me to the shore where all forgotten things will reappear, but this stands like a high rock in the ocean" he writes of the scenes of his mother's funeral. (92). During his courtship of Dora he says "Weeks, months, seasons, pass along. They seem little more than a summer day and a winter evening. Now, the Common where I walk with Dora is all in bloom, a field of bright gold; and now the unseen heather lies in mounds and bunches underneath a covering of snow. In a breath, the river that flows through our Sunday walks is sparkling in the summer sun, is ruffled by the winter wind, or thickened with drifting heaps of ice. Faster than ever river ran towards the sea, it flashes, darkens, and rolls away." (93). Of the night when Dora dies he says: "Ever rising from the sea of my remembrance, is the image of the dear child as I knew her first..." (94). Like Scrooge, Dickens in this book does not recall the past, but sees it done, it happens again before him: he is in the scene with his former self.

The structure of the book, which deals at one and the same

time with the past, the present and the future as well as that poignant sense of what might have been, that one friend he has never met, the structure of this performance is greatly strengthened by those four backward-looking chapters, A Retrospect (Chapter XVIII) Another Retrospect (Chapter XLIII) Another Retrospect (Chapter LIII) and A Last Retrospect (Chapter LXIV). He says several times that his past "haunts" him, and refers to the characters in the story as "phantoms". "Let me stand aside, to see the phantoms of those days go by me..." (95). Towards the end of the novel he passes Mrs. Steerforth's house: "...my mind could not go by it and leave it, as my body did; and it usually awakened a long train of meditations. Coming before me, on this particular evening...mingled with the childish recollections and later fancies, the ghosts of half-formed hopes, the broken shadows of disappointments..." (96). From the beginning of the novel Dickens has associated memory with the lingering, supernatural, durable presence: at Blunderstone with Steerforth: "...my occupation in my solitary pilgrimages was to recall every yard of thd old road as I went along it, and to haunt the old spots...I haunted them, as my memory had often done, and lingered among them as my younger thoughts had lingered when I was far away..." (97).

The sadness in this book, which has been often remarked on (98) is a result, particularly, of that sense of what might have been in life, that element of chance, the friend not met, the street not turned up, the decision not made: he is here handling what might be termed the "subjunctive" past: Dora has died, he sees Traddles making a career for himself and thinks

the treatment of the themes of the present and of the idea of change. (103). The flight to Dover seems to summarize David Copperfield's past (104) and from this point on the idea of the present and the future are strongly pressed. Miss Murdstone declares herself of the party opposed to change: "I belong to a family remarkable, I believe, for some firmness; and I am not the creature of circumstance or change..." (105). She is counterbalanced by Aunt Betsy who cautions David about being too handicapped by the ghosts of the past: "It's vain, Trot, to recall the past, unless it works some influence upon the present..." (106). David has soon to comment on the fortunate results of change: "On our way back, my aunt informed me how she confidently trusted that the life I was not to lead would make me firm and self-reliant...I saw her safely seated in the Dover coach...and when the coach was gone, I turned my face to the Adelphi, pondering on the old days when I used to roam about its subterranean arches, and on the happy changes which had brought me to the surface." (107). Mrs. Creakle told David as a young boy, on the day when she had to tell him his mother had died, that we must all learn the nature of change, but that we only could really understand it when we had become mature: "You are too young to know how the world changes every day...and how the people in it pass away. But we all have to learn it, David; some of us when we are young, some of us when we are old, some of us all times of our lives." (108). Despite his deep and terrible memories of poverty (109) which seem to linger in his mind even as he begins to succeed in life (110) the general guiding tendency of <u>David Copperfield</u> is certainly towards a freeing of oneself from the imprisonment

that he will never be able to declare his love to Agnes. "I gradually fell from the consideration of his happiness to tracing prospects in the live coals, and to thinking as they broke and changed, of the principal vicissitudes and separations that had marked my life. I had not seen a coal fire, since I left England three years ago: though many a wood fire had I watched, as it crumbled into hoary ashes, and mingled with the feathery heap upon the earth, which not inaptly figured to me, in my despondency, my own dead hopes. I could think of the past now, gravely, but not bitterly: and could contemplate the future in a brave spirit... She in whom I might have inspired a dearer love, I had taught to be my sister..." (99). There is in this novel a sense that memory is not to be tamed, it is a wild and willful agent which delights and disturbs as it waywardly decides: "As I rode back in the lonely night, the wind going by me like a restless memory...I was not happy; but, thus far, I had faithfully set the seal upon the Past..." he writes after seeing Agnes Wickfield. (100). This subjunctive mood in his treatment of time and memory runs right through the novel. "Don't you think, if I had had her for a friend a long time ago, Doady...I might have been more clever perhaps?" asks Dora about Agnes. (101). "My love!" David answers, "what nonsense!" "Do you think it is nonsense?" returned Dora..."Are you sure it is?" "Of course I am!"... "I wonder why you ever fell in love with me?" "Perhaps I couldn't see you, and not love you Dora!" "Suppose you had never seen me at all."... "Suppose we had never been born! said I, gaily." (102).

There are very strong links with Dombey and Son also in

in the past, an acceptance of change and the need to recognise the possibilities of the present. "...I make the most of the present time, you see," Agnes tells David. He begs her to be sure that what she does is wise: "For Heaven's sake, Agnes, let us not mistake each other after all these years, and all that has come and gone with them!" (111).

At the end of the book he says that he has now looked back for the last time. (112). At one stage he had found it hard to believe things and people were subject to change: "Early in the morning, I sauntered through the dear old tranquil streets, and again mingled with the shadows of the venerable gateways and churches. The rooks were sailing about the Cathedral towers; and the towers themselves, overlooking many a long unaltered mile of the rich country...as if there were no such thing as change on earth..." (113) he says of his visit to the memory haunted city of Canterbury. But as the novel nears its close we find David has achieved that awareness of the real relation and balance between past, present and future, and can see that he himself has, of necessity, changed: "In the beginning of the change that gradually worked in me, when I tried to get a better understanding of myself and be a better man, I did glance, through some indefinite probation, to a period when I might possibly hope to cancel the mistaken past, and be so blessed as to marry her. But as time wore on, this shadowy prospect faded... Whatever I might have been to her, or she to me, if I had been more worthy of her long ago, I was not now, and she was not. The time was past. I had let it go by...I had thought, much and often, of my Dora's shadowing out to me

what might have happened...I had considered how the things that never happen, are often as much realities to us, in their effects, as those that are accomplished. The very years she spoke of were realities now...I endeavoured to convert what might have been between myself and Agnes, into a means of making me more self-denying, more resolved, more conscious of myself, and my defects and errors..." (114). When David returns to England he comments on the evidence of change he sees around him (115) and at the close of the book when Mr. Peggotty calls to see him from his travels, David says "Time has changed me more than it has changed you..." (116).

Dombey and Son and David Copperfield are thus the two parts of the same argument: both deal with themes of time and change. Dombey and Son is concerned particularly and peculiarly with changes in society, David Copperfield with changes in Dickens' own mind and personality. As Dr. John Lucas says, "Dombey and Son is remarkable for the wonderful echoing patterns that build up a spatial vision of society caught at a moment of time, David Copperfield builds a temporal vision, for successive patterns persuade us of the ceaseless process of loss and renewal, change and continuity..." (117). Dickens has come a long journey since 1840: he has seen society change fundamentally and rapidly, he has portrayed those changes and responded to them: he has sensed change in himself and has sought to come to terms with his own past: this too he has portrayed. He was never to write so personally again. (118). His apprenticeship, his days as a journeyman, were over. By 1850 he emerged as a master. He now set himself the task of examining

Charles Dickens in 1849.

"I have a strong belief, that if any of my books are read years hence, Dombey will be remembered as among the best of them..." Letter to Forster dated September 1849.

Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

in depth the effects of change on the country and on the people of his birth.

For Britain, for Western society, the writing was on the wall, and I believe it is a just tribute to say that it was largely in Dickens' handwriting.

APPENDIX A

MACREADY'S KING LEAR

"...I think I have told you sometimes, my much-loved friend, how, when I was a mere boy, I was one of your faithful and devoted adherents in the pit; I believe I was as true a member of that true host of followers as it has ever boasted. As I improved myself and was improved by favouring circumstances in mind and fortune, I only became more earnest (if it were possible) in my study of you..."

Dickens to Macready, February 27th 1851.

In the discussion of Barnaby Rudge and The Old Curiosity Shop I have already touched on the possible influence which Macready's performance of King Lear may have had on Dickens' imagination. It was one of the wonders of the age. The Dictionary of National Biography says that his impersonation of the aged king is "still held to be unrivalled." (1). Macready was the son of an unsuccessful theatre manager. He left Rugby to help his father and appeared as Romeo at Birmingham when he was seventeen. His first London appearance was as Orestee in an adaptation by Ambrose Philips of Racine's Andromaque in September 1816. Already he was beginning to show a penchant for romantic drama. His next success was in Isaac Pocock's Rob Roy (after Sir Walter Scott) in 1818. Macready became the acknowledged master of the English stage by his impersonation of Richard III at Covent Garden on October 25th 1819.

In 1825 he scored a triumph in the title role of Sheridan Knowles' William Tell and toured the United States and appeared at Paris before returning to London in 1830. In December of that year he acted the leading role in Byron's Werner (the romantic drama to end them all). In 1833 he played in Anthony and Cleopatra, Byron's Sardanapalus and gave his first King Lear. This was repeated the following year at Drury Lane and later at Covent Garden. What was it like? He was nervous at first but by the third Act he was in his stride and was loudly applauded. (2). Macready restored much of the original text. For the first time since Shakespeare's day, Gloucester was blinded on stage. (3). The parallel between Trent and Lear is clear enough. (4). Macready performed the role again in

January 1838 and 1839. These performances were seen by Dickens. His Cordelia was Helen Faucit.

This production had elaborate scenery and effects, thunder, lightning, wind, rain, - the full apparatus of "gothic" horror and it continued to be one of his greatest roles. A discriminating member of his audience later wrote of Macready's performance "it retained the peculiar character of age, representing the wanderings of infirm years, at that time of life when the passage from a healthy understanding to a disordered one is hastened by any additional weakening of the physical powers..." (5). John Foster Kirk has attested to the apparent sincerity of Macready's acting, the impression that he was not "acting" but actually feeling and experiencing the sufferings of Lear. (6). I believe that this was either consciously or unconsciously in Dickens' mind in creating the character of grandfather Trent.

The closeness to Lear is clear. A reviewer said of Macready that he produced "the imbecility and irritability of age - the failings and the feelings of the father - the remote and increasing encroachments of insanity - these things, with a psychological nicety almost unparalleled, were carefully set in strong relief, so that the individual Lear, choleric, mad, and forgiving - was exactly portrayed, the Lear of fact, but not the Lear in its ideal and purely poetic truth..." (7) and praised another element we recognise in The Old Curiosity Shop, pathos: "Mr. Macready can be the ideal of wretchedness. Misery, in its most abject form, finds in him a most willing

and accomplished representative. The heroic frequently proved beyond his aim or scope; but the human, in its utmost weakness, he could realise to perfection."(8).

Elsewhere Leigh Hunt has given us another possible clue to the touching family tenderness Dickens tries to show between Trent and Nell, when he says that Macready surpassed Kean in "the expression of domestic tenderness..." (9). Helen Faucit recalls that when Macready was ill and dying she visited him. He was asleep. He awoke and obviously remembered her. He was in great suffering and she was terribly moved by his expression, as it was the well remembered expression of his Lear waking after his torment: "I am old and foolish..." (10). It was generally acknowledged that Macready had no equal in romantic - dramatic parts and that he excelled in highly-coloured, nervous and restless roles, those which offered him the best opportunities to exploit his exceptional gifts in abrupt transitions and contrasts. (11). He had few talents in beautiful or graceful action and was physically not well-developed, but everyone who heard him agreed as to the exceptional merits of his voice, its variety, its good tone and its clarity. (12). He took a great deal of care in his productions. He prepared his own part with thoroughness, he was considered a bit of an "intellectual" actor in his day, and took immense pains with the actual presentation of the plays on the stage, with minute care for details and no pains spared for visual effects, employing some of the finest painters and designers of the day. Clarkson Stanfield (1793-1867) designed for Macready's 1838 production of Henry V. (13).

Before the end of the decade he had also appeared in Robert Browning's Strafford, Bulwer Lytton's Lady Lyons and Richelieu. The leading roles in these "dramatic" plays were well suited to his talents. In December 1840 he played Evelyn in Lytton's comedy Money under the artistic direction of Count D'Orsay. In other productions he had the help of Bulwer, Dickens, Forster, Maclise and W.J. Fox. (14). He became a really close friend of Dickens after the novelist had been introduced to him in June 1837. (15). Dickens dedicated Nicholas Nickleby to Macready and spoke at the banquet in Macready's honour on 20th July 1839 when Macready's term as manager of Covent Garden came to an end. (16). When Dickens went to America in 1841 Macready offered to look after the Dickens children. (17). He wrote to Macready in 1851: "I think I have told you sometimes how, when I was a mere boy, I was one of your faithful and devoted adherents in the pit; I believe I was as true a member of that true host of followers as it has ever boasted. As I improved myself and was improved by favouring circumstances in mind and fortune, I only became more earnest...in my study of you..." (18).

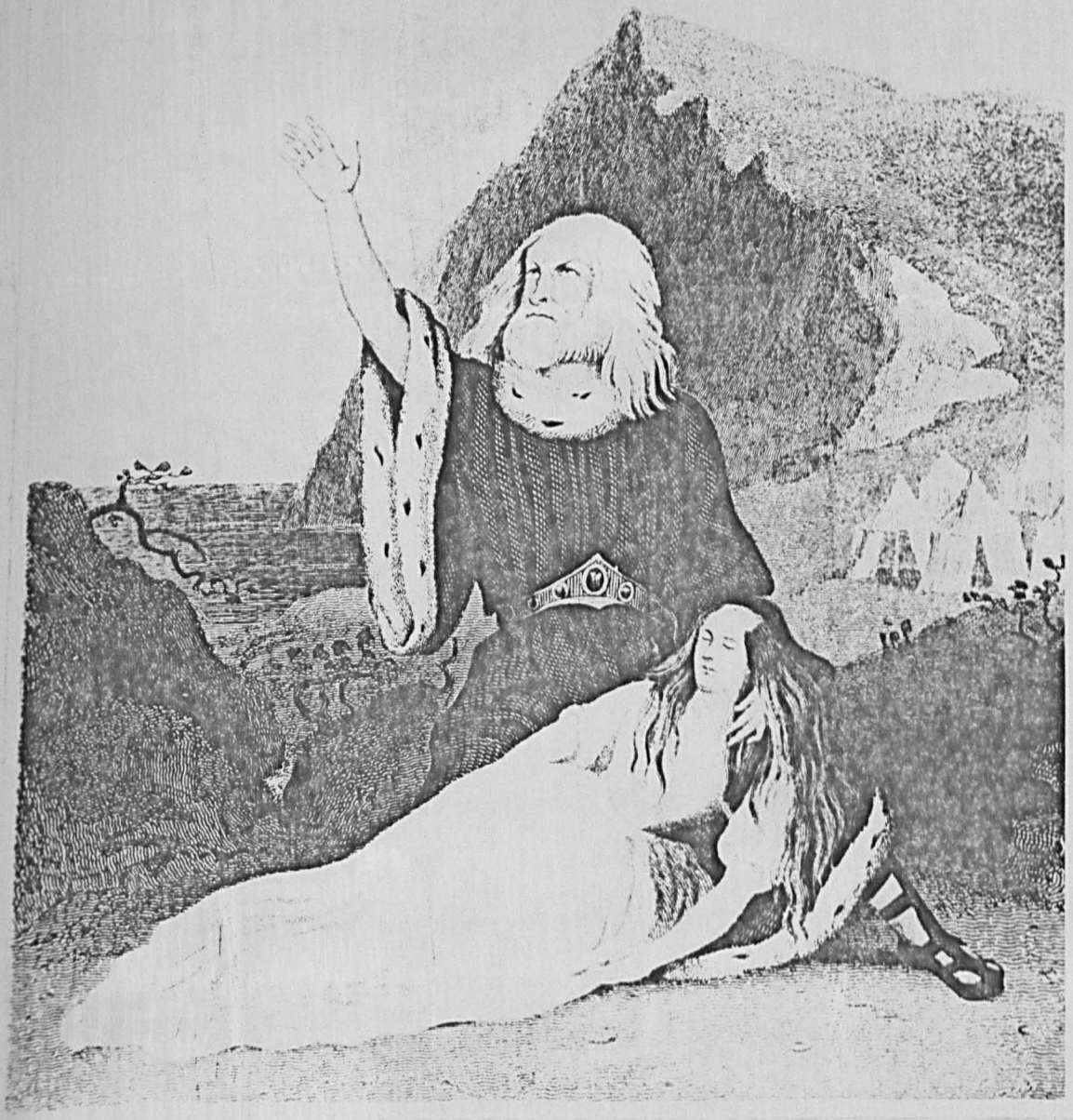
It has been claimed that Dickens owed Macready a great deal in the matter of verbal mannerism, especially in extremes of violent action, remorse after the committing of crimes, scenes in which "right triumphed and villainy met its just reward." (19) An obvious example would be the gathering together of the threads of the story and the exposure of Pecksniff in Martin Chuzzlewit: "Listen, hypocrite! Listen, smooth-tongued, servile, crawling knave!" declaims old Martin, "...when I was seeking him, you

Macready as King Lear: Helen Faucit as Cordelia.

Dickens wrote to Cornelius Felton in 1844 that he wished he had seen Macready play "Lear" - "It is stupendously terrible" Dickens said.

Dickens wrote to Macready in 1851: "I think I have told you... how, when I was a mere boy, I was one of your faithful and devoted adherants in the pit..."

Illustration in the collection at The Central Reference Library, Bath.



had already spread your nets; you were already fishing for him, were ye?..." (20). My concern here is not so much with what Dickens may have in general learned from Macready as an actor, how this experience affected Dickens' dialogue and so forth, what interests me in particular is the effect of Dickens' seeing Macready's production of King Lear on The Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge.

There has been some doubt as to whether Dickens actually wrote the notices of Macready's King Lear for The Examiner, but his authorship of Macready as King Lear, a review written in 1849, is now fully authenticated. (21). The point really is that both Dickens and Forster enthused about Macready's performance as the old king. Dickens was always full of praise for Macready's creation of the character of Lear. (22). Dickens wrote to Felton on 2nd January 1844 that he wished Felton could see Macready "play Lear. It is stupendously terrible," (23) and the play thus made a deep impression on him: he was influenced, I think, by the Cordelia of Helen Faucit to create a pure, good child who suffers under the irrationality of an old man; I am fairly sure that he was so impressed by Macready's presentation of Lear's insanity that he attempted something similar in Trent. The moral atmosphere of Lear, the primeval struggle between good and evil also spilled over into The Old Curiosity Shop. It is even possible, I think, to see Swiveller as a kind of Albany character, one who changes sides and leaves evil and becomes an instrument of the powers of good - his name would suggest a change of heart.

This is, obviously, another example of Dickens' putting to use traditional, folk-lore material and using such elements in narrative prose fiction. This may in part account for the strange and penetrating effect of the figures of Nell and Old Trent, that they were conceived by their author as an attempt in the same mould as the great archetypal figures of the old king and his loyal daughter. Dickens refers quite specifically to verbal mannerisms of Macready's in his Macbeth and Richard III (24) and Professor Marcus has suggested that the Macbeth and Crookback side of Macready may be strongly present in Quilp. (25). But I think it was Lear which, of all Macready's roles, really inspired him. The theme of Barnaby Rudge, we must also remember, is parenthood and family responsibilities. The atmosphere of Barnaby is often reminiscent of Lear. I am not claiming a kind of second-hand greatness for The Old Curiosity Shop by relating it to a dramatic masterpiece of another age; I am simply trying to account for some of the novel's deeper and more haunting qualities.

Macready played in America and Paris again later in the 1840's and took his farewell to the stage as Macbeth in 1851, at Drury Lane, in a performance which had - in his words - "a reality, a vigour, a truth, a dignity that I never before threw into my delineation of this favourite character." (26). Dickens was present at this performance. A banquet was arranged in the great actor's honour for Saturday 1st March 1851 at the Hall of Commerce. At this moving occasion Forster, Thackeray and Bulwer Lytton spoke as well as Dickens, who stressed Macready's goodness of character and the greatness of

his art. (27). "Many of those who now hear me were present..." the novelist said, "at that memorable scene of Wednesday night last...when great vision which had been a delight and a lesson, and...a support and a comfort, and which for many years has improved and charmed us, and to which we look back in elevated relief from the labours of our lives, faded from our sight forever..." (28). He went on to say he would not stop "to enquire whether it was a reasonable disposition in the audience of Wednesday night to seize upon the words;

> "And I have bought
> Golden opinions from all sorts of people
> Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
> Not cast aside so soon..."

quoting from Macbeth. (29).

But the rest of Dickens' speech leaves us in no doubt that those golden opinions were earned, not bought; and that their gloss was to last. (30).

APPENDIX B

THE DICK SWIVELLER SONG-BOOK

" 'This is a most remarkable and supernatural sort of house!' said Mr. Swiveller, as he walked into the office with the bill in his hand. 'She-dragons in the business, conducting themselves like professional gentlemen; plain cooks of three feet high appearing mysteriously from under the ground; strangers walking in and going to bed without leave or licence in the middle of the day! If he should be one of these miraculous fellows that turn up now and then, and has gone to sleep for two years, I shall be in a pleasant situation. It's my destiny' ..."

The Old Curiosity Shop Chapter 34.

The sources of the snatches of balladry are an interesting index of Dick's being. The first time we meet him he favours Fred and old Trent "with several melodious assurances that his heart was in the Highlands, and that he wanted but his Arab steed as a preliminary to the achievement of great feats of valour and loyalty." (1). The reference is to Burn's song:

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer.

The jumbled lines about the Arab steed are from the popular ballad by Thomas Haynes Bayly (1797-1839) with music by G.A. Hobson:

Oh, give me but my Arab steed,
My prince defends his right,
And I will to the battle speed
To guard him in the fight.

In trying to console Fred Trent, Richard Swiveller advises him to recall "the once popular melody" -

Begone, dull care! I prithee begone from me!
Begone, dull care, you and I shall never agree!

an anonymous ballad of the seventeenth century used as a military march. This was a favourite of Dickens' - he refers to it again in Edwin Drood. He raises objections to Fred's scheme of marrying him to Nell for old Trent's money by pointing out his commitment to Miss Wackles: "She's all my fancy painted her... She is lovely, she's divine." (2). This is from the ballad Alice Gray, with words by William Mee and music by Mrs. P. Millard. It dates from the early nineteenth century.

She's all my fancy painted her,
She's lovely, she's divine;
But her heart it is another's
She never can be mine.

Yet lov'd as man ne'er lov'd;
A love without decay;
Oh, my heart, my heart is breaking
For the sake of Alice Gray.

He exclaims over his dinner "Man wants but little here below" which is a quotation from Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield. This ballad, Turn, Gentle Hermit of the Dale is found in Chapter VIII of Goldsmith's novel, and contains the lines:

Then pilgrim turn, thy cares forego,
All earth-born cares are wrong;
Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.

This in itself is an echo of Young's Night Thoughts:

Shall our pale, wither'd hands, be still stretch'd out,
Trembling, at once, with eagerness and age?
With av'rice, and convulsions, grasping hard?
Grasping air! for what has earth beside?
Man wants but little; nor that little, long;
How soon must he resign his very dust,
Which frugal nature lent him for an hour... (3).

When he falls in with Fred's plan, and writes to reject Miss Wackles, he quotes some lines from The Beggar's Opera, slightly mangled: "when the heart of a man is depressed with fears, the mist is dispelled when Miss Wackles appears." This is a slight

perversion of a song allotted to Macheath in Act II:

If the heart of a man is depressed with cares,
The mist is dispelled when a woman appears;
Like the notes of a fiddle, she sweetly, sweetly,
Raises our spirits and charms our ears.

This is sung to the melody Would You Have a Young Virgin. To describe his love for Miss Wackles he says "she's like the red rose that's newly sprung in June - there's no denying that - she's also like a melody that's sweetly played in tune." (4). This is a slightly marred version of Burn's famous lines:

O, my Luve's like a red red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
O, my luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

When he says farewell to Miss Wackles, he has to do so in the manner of Byron, "My boat is on the shore and my bark is on the sea, but before I pass this door I will say farewell to thee." (5). This is a garbled version of Byron's verses to Thomas Moore:

My boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea,
But before I go Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee.

Dickens himself must have liked these lines, as he parodied them himself when he wrote to Maclise from Broadstairs: "My foot's in the house, My bath is in the sea, And before I take a souse, Here's a single note to thee." (6). He accuses Sophy Wackles of deceiving him, and avails himself almost word for word - of Tom Moore's words to do so. "Miss Wackles, I

believed you true, and I was blest in so believing, but now I mourn that e'er I knew, a girl so fair yet so deceiving." These lines come from one of Moore's prettiest Juvenile Poems written to the pathetic Scots air Galla Water:

Mary, I believ'd thee true,
And I was blest in thus believing;
But now I mourn that e'er I knew,
A girl so fair and so deceiving.
Fare thee well. (7).

Dick learns from Quilp that Nell and Grandfather have gone. "Has the sly old fox made his fortune then, and gone to live in a tranquil cot in a pleasant spot with a distant view of the changing sea?" (8). This is another song by Thomas Haynes Bayly, set to music by George Alexander Lee. Lee was a leading romantic tenor of the day, one of the stars of the Dublin Theatre until the mid eighteen twenties, when he came to London and conducted at several theatres and wrote the music for plays, ballads and songs. He died in 1851. Lee's music is typical of the light-romantic, drawing-room music of the Victorian period, and typical of Dick Swiveller's tone of voice. Come Dwell with Me opens:

Come dwell, come dwell with me
And our home shall be, home shall be,
A pleasant cot, in a tranquil spot,
With a distant view of the changing sea.

Richard Swiveller's association with this gay, innocent musical romanticism is further developed in the Glorious Appollers. The name of this convivial society comes from the glee Glorious Appollo by Samuel Webbe (1740-1816) who was secretary of the

Catch Club and librarian of the Glee Club. This club lasted until 1857 and their meetings were held at the Freemasons' Tavern. English ballad opera, romantic songs, comic ditties and popular operatic airs were typical of the kind of music Charles Dickens liked himself. (9). He sang duets with Fanny Ternan, Ellen's sister, who was one of the popular lyric sopranos of the day. Among the numbers they particularly liked were Mendelssohn's Fast, ah too Fast Fade the Roses of Pleasure and John Barnett's I Will Gather the Rose. Fanny's repertory included Balfe's Bohemian Girl, Rose of Castille, Saturnella, Flotow's Martha, Wallace's Maritana, Bellini's La Sonnambula, Norma, as well as English opera by MacFarren and Barnett and The Beggar's Opera. We move very much in the world of Swiveller here - "Let me Like a Soldier Fall", "I Dreamed I Dwelt in Marble Halls", "The Moon has raised her Lamp Above", "Love Smiles but to Deceive"; these might well be among the apparently unconscious effusions of Richard Swiveller. Dick fancies it was possible to find some news of the fugitives from Quilp. "I fancied it possible - but let us go ring fancy's knell." (10). This is from the casket scene of The Merchant of Venice.

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head,
How begot, how nourished?
Reply, reply.
It is engendered in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies
In the cradle where it lies.
Let us all ring fancy's knell;
I'll begin it - Ding, dong, bell. (11).

Weaving his way to Quilp's choice retreat in a semi-intoxicated condition, Dick laments his homeless life in a parody of John Parry's ballad The Poor Peasant Boy:

> Thrown on the wide world, doomed to wander and roam,
> Bereft of my parents, bereft of a home,
> A stranger to pleasure, to comfort and joy,
> Behold little Edmund, the poor peasant boy. (12).

He continues this vein in a comic parody of Moore's When First I Met Thee from the Irish Melodies, 1807-1834, with music by Sir John Stevenson. "Go, deceiver, go, some day p'r'aps you'll waken, from pleasure's dream to know, the grief of orphans forsaken." moans Richard (13), lines based on Moore's:

> But go, deceiver; go -
> Some day, perhaps, thou'lt waken
> From pleasure's dream to know
> The grief of hearts forsaken.

Dick, employed as Brass' clerk, tries to find out the name of the mysterious lodger: as he goes to leave Dick asks "I beg your pardon... When he who adores thee has left but the name - " (14). This is the opening line of another of Moore's Irish Melodies:

> When he, who adores thee, has left but the name
> Of his fault and his sorrows behind...

This bait does not succeed in catching the stranger, and he follows this by saying he cannot take the blame if any mistake should arise from not having the name. (15). "He is not to say it was his fault" said Dick still lingering. - "O blame not the bard-"(16). This is again from Moore's Irish Melodies, and is very appropriate to Dick's pretensions:

Oh! blame not the bard, if he fly to the bowers,
Where pleasure lies, carelessly smiling at Fame;
He was born for much more, in happier hours,
His soul might have burned with a holier flame.
The string, that languishes loose o'er the lyre,
Might have bent a proud bow to the warrior's dart;
And the lip, which now breathes but the song of desire,
Might have pour'd the full tide of a patriot's heart.

When Dick is consumed with curiosity about the situation of the small servant, he blames his inquisitiveness on his mother: "My mother must have been a very inquisitive woman; I have no doubt I'm marked with a note of interrogation somewhere. My feelings I smother, but thou hast been the cause of this anguish, my - " (17). These echo the close of the second verse of Thomas Haynes Bayly's ballad <u>We Met, 'Twas in a Crowd</u>:

The world may think me gay, for my feelings I smother,
O thou hast been the cause of this anguish, my mother.

While he tries to wheedle from Kit Nubbles the name of the single gentleman, he proposes a toast to Kit's mother. "An excellent woman that mother of yours, Christopher,... 'Who ran to catch me when I fell, and kissed the place to make it well? mother...' A charming woman." (18). These are lines from Ann Taylor (1782-1866) the writer of children's verses, sometimes known under her married name of Mrs. Ann Gilbert:

When sleep forsook my open eye,
Who was it sung sweet hushaby
And rocked me that I should not cry?
My mother.

Who ran to help me when I fell,

And would some pretty story tell
Or kiss the place to make it well?
My mother.

When Dick is working as Brass' clerk Quilp finds him in low spirits one day and assumes that this is the result of Sally Brass' ill-nature. "What's the matter?... Has Sally proved unkind? 'Of all the girls that are so smart, there's none like - ' " (19). This is an apt quote from Henry Carey (1693-1743).

Of all the girls that are so smart,
There's none like pretty Sally,
She is the darling of my heart,
And she lives in our alley.

It is strange how others in Swiveller's company seem willing to adopt his mode of expression.

Dick also associates himself with romance and legend when he tells the dwarf he had thought of running away: "Perhaps the bells might strike up 'Turn again Swiveller, Lord Mayor of London.' Whittington's name was Dick. I wish cats were scarcer." (20). He produces a brilliant impromptu verse to celebrate his demoralisation on hearing that Sophy Wackles has married Cheggs: "Her name is Cheggs now... Yet loved I as man never loved that hadn't wooden legs, and my heart, my heart is breaking for the love of Sophy Wackles." (21). This is another reference to Alice Gray. (22).

Yet lov'd I as man ne'er lov'd;
A love without decay;
Oh, my heart, my heart is breaking
For the love of Alice Gray.

Dick goes into mourning for the death of his love, and twists some of Moore's most famous lines to express his gushing melancholy: "It has always been the same with me," (23) he says, "always. 'Twas ever thus - from childhood's hour I've seen my fondest hopes decay, I never loved a tree or flower but 'twas the first to fade away. I never nursed a dear Gazelle, to glad me with its soft black eye, but when it came to know me well, and love me, it was sure to marry a market gardener.' " (24). These lines are a deliciously jumbled memory of one of the best loved of the ballads from Moore's Lalla Rookh (1817):

.... my hourly fears,
My dreams have boded all too right -
We part for ever part - tonight!
I knew, I knew it could not last -
'Twas bright, 'twas heavenly, but 'tis past!
Oh! ever thus from childhood's hour
I've seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never lov'd a tree or flower,
But 'twas the first to fade away.
I never nursed a dear gazelle,
To glad me with its soft black eye,
But when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die!

He and Chuckster greet one another with an impromptu Shakespeare recital, such morsals of enthusiasm being typical of the Appollos "and were indeed the links that bound them together, and raised them above the cold dull earth." (25). They then sing the popular duet All's Well, "with a long shake at the end." This is a duet from Dibden's The English Fleet (26). Sampson Brass

is another character who seems to be able to talk to Dick in his own special language, even quoting snatches of the appropriate popular and romantic songs where effective. In the scene where Brass cunningly interrogates Dick about the lodger he refers to Goldsmith's song When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly. (27).

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds, too late, that men betray,
What charm can sooth her melancholy,
What art can wash her guilt away?

This is so truly in Richard's manner that it is to the credit of Brass' wiles that he introduces it.

When Dick ends the first of many sessions playing cribbage with the Marchioness, he cannot do so without a lyrical flourish, borrowing heavily - and without acknowledgment - from Moore: "...I shall ask your ladyship's permission to put the board in my pocket, and to retire from the presence when I have finished this tankard; merely observing, Marchioness, that since life like a river is flowing, I care not how fast it rolls on, ma'am, on, while such purl on the bank still is growing, and such eyes light the waves as they run. Marchioness, your health." (28). This is a Swivellerisation of a part of Moore's When the Wine Cup is Smiling, an Italian air from his National Airs (1815):

When on one side the grape juice is dancing,
While on t'other a blue eye beams, boys, beams,
'Tis enough, 'twixt the wine and the glancing,
To disturb ev'n a saint from his dreams.
Yet, though life like a river is flowing,

I care not how fast it goes on, boy, on,
So the grape on its banks is still growing.
And love lights the waves as they run.

To further impress the small servant he enacts an extemporised drama: "dialogue" is obviously one of his strengths. "The Baron Sampsono Brasso and his fair sister are (you tell me) at the Play?... 'Tis well. Marchioness! - but no matter. Some wine there. Ho!... Do they often go where glory waits 'em, and leave you here?" (29). The reference is to Moore's Irish Melodies. The opening lyric begins:

Go where glory waits thee,
But while fame elates thee,
Oh! Still remember me!

He resorts to Byron when he takes his leave of the small servant: "Good night Marchioness. Fare thee well, and if forever, then forever fare thee well - and put up the chain, Marchioness, in case of accidents." (30). This is Byron's Fare Thee Well, a very popular part song at this time:

Fare thee well! and if forever,
Still forever, fare thee well:
Even though unforgiving, never
'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.

His lost beloved, Sophy Cheggs, nee Wackles, plays cards - Dick claims - in order to forget her love for him. "Cheggs' wife plays cribbage; all-fours like-wise. She rings the changes on 'em now. From sport to sport they hurry her, to banish her regrets, and when they win a smile from her, they think that she forgets - but she don't..." (31). This is a Swivelleronian rending of Thomas Haynes Bayly's lyric:

From sport to sport they hurry me,
To banish my regret,
And when they win a smile from me,
They think that I forget.

The song that he plays on his flute before going to sleep, Away With Melancholy, is sung to one of the loveliest melodies from Mozart's Die Zaubefloete.

After his change of heart, once he is truly committed to what is good and right, Richard sends some beer to poor Kit in prison. The gift could not be unaccompanied by verse, of course: "Drink of this cup. You'll find there's a spell in its every drop against 'gainst the ills of mortality. Talk of the cordial that sparkled for Helen! Her cup was a fiction, but this is reality'(Barclay and Co's.). If they send it in a flat state, complain to the Governor. R.S." (32). Here he quotes, with embellishments of his own, the opening lines of one of Moore's Irish Melodies:

Drink of this cup; you'll find there's a spell in
Its every drop 'gainst the ills of mortality;
Talk of the cordial that sparkled for Helen!
Her cup was a fiction but this is reality.
Would you forget the dark world we are in,
Just taste of the bubble that gleams on the top of it...

Recovering from his fever he murmurs in his sleep "Strew then, O strew, a bed of rushes. Here we will stay, till morning blushes. Good night, Marchioness." These are lines from the glee Oh Lady Fair, words and music by Tom Moore. Dickens must

have known this piece very well, he refers to it again in Great Expectations; it is sung by Wopsle and company to celebrate Pip's being bound apprentice to Joe. (33). Dick calls upon the resources of ballad opera when discussing the operation of the law after the discovery of Quilp's and Brass' villainy. "...Since laws were made for every degree, to curb vice in others as well as in me - and so forth..." (34).

Since laws were made for ev'ry degree,
To curb vice in others, as well as in me,
I wonder we hadn't better company
Upon Tyburn tree.

This pretty little song, which is usually omitted in productions of Gay's musical play nowadays, was sung to the traditional English air Greensleeves. When Dick hears that he has come into a small fortune on the death of his aunt his first thought is of what he can do for the Marchioness: "...please God, we'll make a scholar of the poor Marchioness yet! And she shall walk in silk attire and siller have to spare, or may I never rise from this bed again!!" (35). This is the opening of a ballad by Susanna Blamire (1747-1794) the "Muse of Cumberland" whose collected poems only appeared in 1842. Her work, which was marked by the accurate and sympathetic portrayal of Cumberland people and ways, was widely known through publication in magazines. The one Dick quotes from, The Siller Crown, is one of several she attempted in Scottish dialect, the most famous of which are the two beautiful songs, The Traveller's Return and What ails this Heart o' Mine. The Siller Crown opens:

And ye shall walk in silk attire,
And siller hae to spare,
Gin ye'll consent to be my bride,
Nor think on Donald mair.

This is the last example of Dick Swiveller's romantic lyricism: it seems that he has now become matured by experience, cured of his chronic and rather seedy whimsy, by fever and by close contact with reality; but he retains this tendency to poeticise. When he calls at the educational establishment to see how the Marchioness is getting on, the governess "looked upon him as a literary gentleman of eccentric habits, and of a most prodigious talent in quotation." (36). He christens the small servant "Sophronia Sphynx, as being euphonious and genteel, and furthermore indictive of mystery." (37). Such are the materials which Dickens uses to give Dick his peculiar utterance: what was the novelist's aim? He seems to have wished to create a character who - like the Fool in King Lear or Ophelia in the mad scene of Hamlet - speaks the mind, comments on the action by means of an assortment of traditional ballads, snatches of folklore, popular tradition and ancient song. With Dick there is marked difference, and I believe, a marked intention: Dickens seems to have intended to show a light-sentimental individual colliding with reality. The sources discussed above are evidence enough of Richard Swiveller's cast of mind. (38).

APPENDIX C

DICKENS AND THE AGE OF SWINDLE

Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat
When it's so lucrative to cheat.....
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

Arthur Hugh Clough: Decalogue (revised version).

Dickens lived in what may with considerable justice be called The Golden Age of Swindles. George Augustus Sala records with what avidity Dickens always devoured the press reports of the latest frauds and swindles. (1). With an appetite for such news, Dickens could not have been born at a more appropriate moment. It was the age of swindlers great and small. Among the most famous is George Hudson, "The Railway King". (2). A contemporary cartoon shows us the perfidious Hudson as Leporello to John Bull's Don Juan, the unfortunate Elvira is Brittania. Hudson is pictured in the catalogue aria, and the catalogue he is holding is a list of Railway shares (3) - Great Western, South Eastern, Great Northern, Midland Counties, Eastern Counties, Great Grimsby, Brighton, Blackwall, Greenwich, Little Kensington. The original refrain "and in Spain, a thousand and three" is crudely parodied by "What he'll come to, you may guess". (4). In the same journal, appropriately later, he is portrayed as a train - going off the rails. (5). He resigned his control of the railway empire he had created and retired to the continent owing to questionable business and over-speculation in 1854. (6). His disappearance was tactful, as the total loss to the investors in his companies is sometimes estimated at £80,000,000. Hudson was admired, there should be no mistake about that. In an age which admired money-makers, he made money. When he died The Times said of him, he was "a man who united a largeness of view with wonderful speculative courage - the kind of man who leads the world." (7). There was also John Sadleir, the original of Merdle, who committed suicide in 1856 after the failure of his Tipperary Bank (8); and W.J. Robson, who was

arrested while on the way to buy Kenilworth Castle in 1856. (9). Robson was tried in November 1856 and convicted for offences totalling over £28,000 in connection with his Crystal Palace Company. (10). We must not forget Leopold Redpath (1813-1880) forger and philanthropist, who forged £150,000 worth of Great Western Railway shares (11); or James Townsend Saward (born 1799) otherwise "Jem the Penman" who was a master of forged banker's checks. Dickens carried an article about these masters of the swindler's profession, The Predatory Art - with their names thinly disguised - in Household Words. (12). This age seemed to have reached its apotheoses in the trial of the Bidwell brothers at the Old Bailey in 1873 on charges of uttering forgeries on the Bank of England to the extent of £100,000. (13).

But it was also the age which produced an endless series of speculators, swindlers and frauds of all kinds, which seems to reflect a sort of contemptuous familiarity with money. This tone is very well caught by Thackeray in The Diary of C. Jeames de la Pluche, Esq. James, footman in a respected family in Berkeley Square, astounds his master by expressing the wish to retire and live on his savings. "His master (we believe we may mention, without offending delicacy, the well-known name of Sir George Flimsy, of the House of Flimsy, Diddler and Flash) smilingly asked Mr. James what was the amount of his savings... Mr. Plush, with some hesitation, said he had been speculating in railworks, and stated his winnings to have been thirty thousand pounds. He had commenced his speculations with twenty, borrowed from a fellow servant. He had dated

The Railway Speculator "At Home".

The serving man who became rich and fashionable, "the great Railroad Cappitalist, who was to make Diddlesex the most prawsperous districk of the hempire..." here seen entertaining representatives from the law, the military, the church, the peerage, as well as tradesmen and members of the lower orders.

THE RAILWAY SPECULATOR "AT HOME;"

OR, MR. JEAMES

his letters from the house in Berkeley Square, and humbly begged pardon of his master for not having instructed the Railway Secretaries...to apply at the area-bell. Sir George, who was at breakfast, instantly rose and shook Mr. P. by the hand... We hear it stated that Mr. P. is of a very ancient family... He has taken apartments in the Albany, and is a director of thirty-three railroads. He proposes to stand for Parliament..." (14). Money was in the very air, a satiric column of 1843 commented on The Money Market: "The coffers of the Bank of England are fuller than ever of bullion (this) is the general belief, and indeed they must be overstocked, for we observed half a sovereign - to say nothing of some loose silver - lying carelessly on the chimney piece of the Bank parlour..." (15).

Reading the journals and newspapers of the time, one is struck with the ceaseless number of frauds and swindlers whose apprehension and trials are regularly reported, and by the amount of wild speculation, and frequent business failures, which also are an essential ingredient to the flavour of the age. (16).

Thomas Williams, a forger whose career reads like something out of Dickens (Heep comes immediately to mind) was tried on April 9th 1838. Williams was an attorney for one Jones Panton who died in May 1837. Williams had got Panton's signature to certain pencilled documents, rubbed out the pencilling and wrote out a will in which he benefitted considerably. (17). A year later there was a case of breach of promise and

Leporello Recounting the Railway Loves of Don Juan.
Elvira - Britannia
Leporello - George Hudson
Don Juan - John Bull.
Punch Volume XV (1848) page 247.

"Did you ever hear of Railway Scrip? I have. We made a pretty exhibition of ourselves about that, we feathered creatures! Lord, how we went on about that Railway Scrip! How we fell down, to a bird, from the Eagle to the Sparrow, before a scarecrow, and worshipped it for the love of the bits of rag and paper fluttering from its dirty pockets! If it hadn't tumbled down in its rottenness, we should have clapped a title on it within ten years, I'll be sworn..."
The Raven in the Happy Family, Household Words Volume I No.7, May 4th 1850.

LEPORELLO RECOUNTING THE RAILWAY LOVES OF

swindling, involving 36,000 francs. This trial caused immense public interest. (18). The same year saw the strange case of Thomas Shelford, who had attempted by false representations to get himself a position of importance on the Railways, a very clever attempt it was too, with excellent forged documents to support his claim that he had influence in high quarters. (19).

The case of Wood v. Goodlake, Helps and Others (1841) is again a trial which has a truly Dickensian tone. This was a dispute over a will, tried before the Privy Council Judicial Committee on August 16th 1841. The estate involved hundreds of thousands of pounds. The whole matter devolved on forgery and an added codicil. It was all very suspicious, and one notes with wry amusement that one of the lawyers involved actually had a Dickensian-sounding name - Chadborn, who was ultimately adjudged a fraud. (20).

The trial of Michael Shaw, Stewart Wallace, Patrick Maxwell at the Central Criminal Court in March 1841 brought to the notice of the English public a source of abuse in marine insurance not really resolved until the end of the century (mostly as a result of the one-man campaign of Samual Plimsoll). The Dryad had an overrated freight, the contents of the ship were forged and the vessel was deliberately destroyed with the result that the underwriters were defrauded of over £5,000. The accused were found guilty and got transportation for life. (21).

This case was almost as unsavoury as the trial in September

of the following year, of the Governor of the Bank of England v. Tompkins. These "Bills" were clever forgeries, the action arose on an advance the plaintiffs made to the defendant at his instance, 23rd September 1841. £11,000 was lent for one month on the security of eleven Exchequer Bills, of the supposed value of £1,000 each. Eight of them were forgeries. Lord Monteagle, Comptroller General of the Exchequer, said in evidence that "If there was nothing to throw any doubt upon this Bill, I should still have doubted whether this was Mr. Percival's signature..." At the same time, he added, "it is a better imitation than some I have seen..." The Jury found for the Bank of England, with damages of £8,000 plus interest of £340. (22).

The next year saw a respected clergyman tried for forgery. The Revd. W. Bailey D.D. was tried for the forgery of a promissory note for £2,875, an I.O.U. from Robert Smith, a well-known miser of Seven Dials. The Revd. Bailey was transported for life. (23). The same year also saw the comic case of a fraud and swindler who passed himself off as the illegitimate son of the Duke of Wellington. (24).

1843 brought one of the most sensational cases of fraud in the century, the late Baroness de Feucheres, Pinniger and Another v. Clark. This trial aroused tremendous public interest. It was a dispute over a family estate of over £500,000. The lady in question was an English-born girl of poor parents who became a careerist courtesan in Paris. She was left £500,000 by her lover, the Duc de Bourbon, who died in 1830.

She died in England in 1840 and this case was brought by her English relatives over the division of her estate. (25). In November of the same year another legacy dispute was resolved by litigation, once again there were forged documents. The estate came to over £200,000. (26). Alexander Beresford Hope v. Harmer and Others, tried in December 1844 was another celebrated legacy dispute, involving £50,000. (27).

The mid-eighteen-forties produced some of the best cases of fraud and swindle of this "Golden Age". Robert Bannister, who was arrested at Madeira on his way to the East, was a bankrupt who was tried for money frauds of over £17,000. He only got eighteen months of hard labour. (28). In the same year was another case of Bill swindling, Henry Gompertz, William Withan and Robert Withan were tried at the Qneen's Bench for having conspired to defraud one George Pitt-Rose of Bills of Acceptances to the amount of £17,000. (29). A comment on the times was offered by the case of Louis John Lemain who was tried at the Central Criminal Court in September 1845 for "feloniously forging...a signature to a certain deed and writing...with intent to defraud Thomas Ewan and Joseph Leman, and in another count...to defraud William Dethick and others..." It was said that "the case presented an instance of the species of frauds carried on by persons engaged in taking a fraudulent advantage of the mania for speculation in the railways, which at this period affected the whole nation..." (30).

The pattern was continued in the following years. In 1846 Captain William Richardson, Chairman of Tenbury, Worcester

and Ludlow Railway Company was brought up at the Mansion House charged with forging a cheque for £5,000 (31) and in the next year Ronald Gordan, late Secretary and Accountant to the Exchange Bank of Scotland was charged with breach of trust and embezzlement of nearly £2,500. He got fifteen years transportation (32) in January 1847. In October George Hayward and Francis Thomas Griffiths were both tried at the Central Criminal Court for forgery and banking frauds. (33). The same month saw the trial of William Wilmshurst. Five charges were substantiated against him for amounts of some £5,000. (34).

1847 was a year of financial crisis. (35). The financial disasters of 1847, though when we examine the actual figures they may seem trivial in themselves, do form in the aggregate a poor portrait of financial instability. Various business houses in London failed to a total of over £1,000,000,000 and provincial failures were more numerous. (36). It is curious to note that Dombey and Son, Dickens' truly commercial drama, was being serialised at this very moment, between October 1846 and June 1848.

At Winchester Assizes in 1848 a Mr. Bishop, manager of Christchurch Bank, was tried for embezzlement. He had borrowed money from the Bank to speculate on Railway shares, hoping to pay back his borrowings out of his winnings. It was a gamble which did not work, and he had to account for some £18,000. (37). The banking firm of Herries, Farquhar and Company were defrauded in 1849. (38).

"This was one of the many exposures which at this time took place, in the Law Courts, the Police Offices and the Court of Bankruptcy, showing the frightful extent to which the offence of Bill stealing was at this period perpetuated" comments an observer of the period, talking of the trial in January 1850, of Louis Joel for Bill discounting (39) and the trial of Walter Watts at the Central Criminal Court in May of the same year was even more of a cautionary tale. Watts was employed by George Carr Glyn, treasurer of the Globe Insurance Company. He was originally charged with embezzling some £1,400 but in the trial it came out that Watts had plundered his employer of over £80,000! (40).

And so it went on, one case after another, with human beings competing in a series of free-for-all competitions, of which money was the prize for which all strove. The mythical-symbolic world which Dickens creates in his fiction, seems then, to be based on some observations of the external world of reality.

If we take the major features of the political and social life of the early Victorian period, it seems that Dickens hardly concerns himself with them. There is little direct reference to the Anti-Corn Law League, the Oxford Movement, the problem of Ireland, The Eastern Question, the franchise, party politics, imperial affairs, Free Trade and so on. Dickens seems to concentrate, to be obsessed almost, with man's intoxication for money. This is present as early as Pickwick Papers and continues throughout his creative life.

For all the Kingdom of God on earth, the general cheerfulness of Pickwick Papers, in the background the signs of money-obsession episode in Chapter XL, where Pickwick finds himself in company with swindlers during his sojourn at the Fleet, there are some sharp comments on the easy nature of dishonest financial behaviour: " 'Ah!' said Mr. Smangle, 'paper has been my ruin.' 'A stationer, I presume, Sir?' said Pickwick, innocently. 'Stationer! No, no; confound and curse me! - not so low as that. No, trade. When I say paper, I mean bills.' 'Oh, you use the word in that sense. I see,' said Mr. Pickwick. 'Damme! A gentleman must expect reverses,' said Smangle. 'What of that! Here I am in the Fleet Prison... What then? I'm none the worse for that, am I?' 'Not a bit,' replied Mr. Mivins. And he was quite right..." (41). Pickwick later entertains these gentlemen with sherry and cigars, and before falling asleep he is conscious of Mr. Smangle's telling him some long and involved story in which "he had 'done' a bill and a gentleman at the same time." (42).

Amusing though he undoubtedly is, Jingle is also undoubtedly a swindler. He sells Miss Wardle for £120 - and that after a great deal of sordid bargaining. (43). A few pages later, we find Jingle passing himself off as Count Fitz-Marshall "...a gentleman of fortune" (44) and he has planned an elopement with a rich heiress, obviously intending to use her for her money. (45). When Pickwick eventually meets up with Jingle and Job Trotter in the Fleet, he is moved by Jingle's distress and gives him some money to buy food and drink. Dickens says that Pickwick really should have struck him, not

paid him "for Mr. Pickwick had been duped, deceived and wronged by the destitute outcast who was now wholly in his power..." (46). Of course the biggest swindle in the book is the legal swindle in the case of Martha Bardell, Widow v. Samual Pickwick. Dodson himself is a fine example of human behaviour programmed for the making of money by any possible means: "For the grounds of action, Sir" he explains to Pickwick, "you will consult your own conscience and your own feelings. We, Sir, we, are guided entirely by the statement of our client. That statement... may be true, or it may be false; it may be credible, or it may be incredible; but if it be true, and if it be credible, I do not hesitate to say, Sir, that our grounds of action, Sir, are strong, and not to be shaken. You may be an unfortunate man, Sir, or you may be a designing one..." (47).

Pickwick replies as honestly as he can, and of course his very honesty is used against him. "Well, Sir," said Mr. Pickwick, with considerable pain depicted on his countenance, "you will permit me to assure you, that I am a most unfortunate man, so far as this case is concerned." (48).

"I hope you are, Sir," replied Dodson; "I trust you may be, Sir. If you are really innocent of what is laid to your charge, you are more unfortunate than I had believed any man could possibly be..." and he goes on to say that if he had had his way he would have had the action brought against Mr. Pickwick for £6,000 and not a mere £1,500 Mrs. Bardell is prepared to settle for. Pickwick is shocked and angered; "Very well, gentlemen, very well...you shall hear from my solicitor...and

before I go, gentlemen...permit me to say, that of all the disgraceful and rascally proceedings..." Dodson, quite unmoved, asks him to go on, finish what he is saying, and calls in witnesses to hear him. "Perhaps you would like to call us swindlers, Sir... Pray do, Sir, if you feel disposed." "I do," said Pickwick, "You are swindlers..." (49).

In Oliver Twist the whole basis of the plot is the attempt by Monks and Fagin to swindle Oliver out of the fortune he is entitled to (50), and in Dickens' next novel the plot devolves on Ralph Nickleby's schemes to defraud his unfortunate son of his rightful inheritance, and marry the loathsome Gride to Madeline Bray in order to secure her fortune. There are other examples of Ralph's financial intoxication. There is, for example, the public swindle of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. This is a joint stock company which Ralph and other sharp operators hope to dupe the public with and reap a good harvest. His chief aide Bonney rushes to see Ralph in his office: "... there's not a moment to lose; I have a cab at the door. Sir Matthew Pupker takes the chair, and three members of Parliament are positively coming. I have seen two of them safely out of bed; and the third, who was at Crockfords all night, has just gone home to put a clean shirt on, and take a bottle or two of soda-water..." (51). Ralph is delighted, "It seems to promise very well..." "Pretty well!... It's the finest idea that was ever starter. United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. Capital, five millions, in five hundred thousand shares of ten pounds

each. Why the very name will get the shares up to a premium in ten days." "And when they are at a premium" said Mr. Ralph Nickleby, smiling. "When they are, you know what to do with them as well as any man alive, and how to back quietly out at the right time," said Mr. Bonney, slapping the capitalist familiarly on the shoulder... (52).

Another comment on Ralph's character is the nature of the relationship of Newman Noggs and himself. Mr. Bonney observes that Noggs is "a very remarkable man" (53) and Ralph answers, "Yes, poor devil... Though Newman Noggs kept his horses and hounds once...and not many years ago either; but he squandered his money, invested it anyhow, borrowed at interest, and in short made first a thorough fool of himself, and then a beggar. He took to drinking, and had a touch of paralysis and then came here to borrow a pound, as in better days... I had done business with him...I couldn't lend it, you know... But as I wanted a clerk just then, to open the door and so forth, I took him out of charity... He is a little mad, I think...but he is useful enough, poor creature, useful enough ..." (54). It is Ralph's use of the word "charity" which really damns him.

There is present in Nicholas Nickleby, even though it be only an inkling, a constant feeling in the background, a real sense of the evil of life, but the novel raises more issues than it resolves. Ross H. Dabney sums up the feeling of inadequacy we have in this performance: "...Dickens' concern with the relationships between love, marriage and money is strongly

evident. He accepts conventional resolutions of conventional conflicts between love and money; he allows his hero and heroine to have the best of both worlds; he does not press to an issue some of the social comments and criticisms he seems constrained to make..." (55).

In The Old Curiosity Shop the whole plot structure is put in motion by Trent's compulsive urge to make money. Mad though they seem to be, his motives - to make his grand-daughter into a lady - are basically good. It is his tragedy that his path leads to ruin. His almost-good intentions are balanced by the money greed of an overtly evil character, Quilp, who is also motivated by the desire for wealth, for possessions, and both figures immolate themselves on a pyre of bank-notes.

In Barnaby Rudge there are some ambiguities in Dickens' treatment of the money-urge. Edward Chester makes his fortune in the slave trade in the West Indies. Dickens does not condemn him for this, although in American Notes, written a year after this novel, he spends much effort in condemning slaving. After listing a catalogue of revolting and sickening examples of the cruelty of the slaves' situation he says "I could enlarge this catalogue with broken arms, and broken legs, and gashed flesh, and missing teeth, and lacerated backs, and bites of dogs, and brands of red-hot irons... But as my readers are sickened and repelled already, I will turn to another branch of the subject..." (56). He goes on to condemn the whole society of America as barbarous and bloodthirsty, from whom one should have expected to find slaving and cruelty. But about Edward

Chester making his fortune in the 1780's he says nothing to condemn slaving as a means of money-making. It seems that he admires Edward because he works to make his fortune, the nature of the work is not questioned. It is Edward's father, Sir John Chester, for whom Dickens reserves his scorn. Dickens scathingly describes Sir John's idleness, supercilious-ness, his elegant distaste for the common things of life, his paltry savings in not tipping waiters, his care to avoid warmth and good cheer, his deliberate alienation from people as he rides along. As Dickens' god is generosity, so meanness is his devil. Sir John Chester is mean, and that makes him villain enough, this brackets him with Dodson, Ralph, Fagin - and later, with Pecksniff, Carker, Henry Gowan. Thus it is quite true to say of Dickens at this stage that he "was evidently unable to think of serious villainy apart from the drive for money". (57).

Martin Chuzzlewit portrays a whole family group dominated by the will to get hold of wealth, and a society which, from top to bottom, is held together with the cement and seal of money interest. At the top there is Old Martin and his grandson, and Pecksniff's hopes to gain wealth by marrying one of his daughters to Martin; there is also Pecksniff's hope to marry himself to Mary Graham. There is the enormous swindle of the Anglo-Bengalee insurance racket. To this group are contrasted the good people, who are good - in Dickens' view - because they are not motivated by the lust for money: Mark Tapley avoids marrying Mrs. Lupin because he does not want her money, John Westlock, who falls in love with the pennyless

Ruth Pinch, and young Martin Chuzzlewit, who wants to marry a girl with no money.

The true devil in this story is Jonas Chuzzlewit, whom Dickens uses to demonstrate the lengths to which a human being may go in order to get hold of money. One critic has claimed that the Jonas sub-plot is irrelevant to the theme of the novel, that it "goes off on a tangent" (58) but Jonas is a symbol of the acquisitive principle. The Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan Company foreshadows the truly massive swindles in Little Dorrit, as Pecksniff - with his equal parts of religious hypocrisy and financial greed, seems to be a trial run for Chadband: "My friends, we are now...in the mansions of the rich and great. Why are we now in the mansions of the rich and the great, my friends? It is because we are invited; Because we are bidden to feast with them, because we are bidden to rejoice with them? Because we are bidden to play the lute with them, because we are bidden to dance with them? No. Then why are we here, my friends? Are we in possession of a sinful secret, and do we require corn, and wine, and oil - or, what is much the same thing, money - for the keeping thereof? Probably so, my friends." "You're a man of business, you are," returns Mr. Bucket. (59).

The Christmas Carol is a drama which symbolises the destructive nature of the urge to make money. "The common welfare was my business...the dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business..." the ghost of Marley tells Scrooge (60) and The Chimes deals with

the indifference of the well-to-do to the sufferings of the have-nots.

Dombey and Son is not really solely about the humbling of pride, but the de-personalisation of man by the contagion of money. A major element in the plot is Carker's swindling of Mr. Dombey. These themes are also present in David Copperfield, Barkis is obsessed by money, Murdstone is presented as a heartless money-maker, and Heep swindles Miss Trotwood and Mr. Wickfield. Dickens continued his attacks on money-worship, sharp-practice and swindles in his journalistic writings, there is a very detailed description of a massive banking fraud in Household Words. When the bank fails, after those who began it had reaped their fortunes, to some firms "it was no doubt distressing and inconvenient to a degree, to the Insurance Companies it was perhaps more so, while the young... Civilians ...considered it extremely hard to be ordered to pay up their accounts... But if it proved harrassing and annoying to all these, how was it with the poor friendless widows and orphans, whose all in this world had been engulfed within the fatal vortex of the banking mania..." (61). And we can add to this Dickens' characterization of Americans, in both The American Notes, and very largely in Martin Chuzzlewit, as a race of sharp dealers, ever ready to make a fast buck. (62). It seems in some ways that Dickens' view of the American obsession with money gain is really an extension of his view of his own countrymen, and that in the States he found the same disease in a more advanced stage.

In the later novels these same themes are even more explicit. In Hard Times we have that hideous representative of the doctrine of self-help, Bounderby, "...He was a rich man: Banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare, and a metallic laugh. A man made out of a coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him... A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man..." (63). The hellish environment of Coketown is a massive shrine to the fiery god, Mammon. A mainspring in the plot is Tom's theft from the bank, and the resultant martyrdom of Stephen Blackpool.

The central action of both Bleak House and Little Dorrit is a massive swindle. A glance at the original wrapper designs will show that the symbols of money, money bags and the sycophantic followers of wealth are present from the very start of Dickens' conception of the narrative.

Great Expectations is another sermon on the evils of money. With one exception, all the leading characters in this novel expect to gain something from life, something material, something they can bank, cash and spend. The expectations are really general, and not centred on Pip alone. The one exception is Joe Gargery, whom Dickens portrays as a good, almost simple, human being. In placing Joe in his environment we notice that Dickens makes great play with the familiar motives of hearth and home, Gargery is shown as a warm character, surrounded by warmth, cheer and domesticity. And we note that it is the good Joe Gargery who pays Pip's creditors; after he

has recovered from his fever it is Pip's wish to return to the warmth and good cheer of the old forge "The June weather was delicious. The sky was blue, the larks were soaring high over the green corn. Many pleasant pictures of the life I would lead there, and of the change for the better that would come over my character when I had a guiding spirit at my side whose simple faith and clear home wisdom I had proved, beguiled my way..." (64). Although not really central to the plot, there is also the attempted swindle of Miss Havisham by Compyson. (65).

The last novel Dickens completed, Our Mutual Friend, spells out once again the contaminating filth of money, it turns Bella into a spiteful Jade, the Veneerings into shallow social climbers, and we are shown that beings will murder one another to get hold of money. The symbol Dickens elects to represent money is a vast dust heap. (66).

There is continuity in Dickens' output, thematic threads which really connect the earlier and later novels. (67). The theme of the corrupting quality of seeking wealth is found in several of the heroes: the most obvious example is Pip, but there is also Martin Chuzzlewit, who seeks wealth and is regenerated only by suffering, there was, originally, Walter Gay, whom Dickens initially intended should "go to the bad" in seeking wealth; Richard Carstone's character disintegrates under the strain of his search for inheritance. Marriage is used by Dickens as an example of what people are prepared to do to gain wealth without work, we have Gride as an early example, and he is followed by Pecksniff and most significantly

of all, Dombey and Edith, where the parallel is unquestionably prostitution "Were this miserable mother, and this miserable daughter, only the reduction to their lowest grade, of certain social vices sometimes prevailing higher up? In this round world of many circles within circles, do we make a weary journey from the high grade to the low, to find at last that they lie close together... Say, Edith Dombey! And Cleopatra, best of mothers, let us have your testimony!" (68). Dickens frequently seems to equate money-making with evil. It is invariably only wicked characters who make money in Dickens' world, the "good" characters, who arrive in time to distribute gold and guineas to the hero and heroine - the Cheerybles, Jarndyce, Brownlow, Pickwick and company, already seem to have money, and there are no questions asked. For Dickens it was quite possible to have money and be good, but seldom could one be good and make money. The only exception to this seems David Copperfield, who does become successful, yet still remains the hero of the novel.

The figure of the philanthropist is an essential part of Dickens' philosophy of money: he must show that the making of wealth is synonymous with evil, his heroes and heroines therefore can have no part in such an activity; Dickens cannot leave them in poverty at the end of the novel, and therefore the gold-giving Father-Christmas figure enters in the closing pages in order for the hero and heroine to have it both ways. They abjure wealth, and wealth is their reward. This is certainly the pattern in the earlier novels, Mr. Brownlow, the Cheerybles arrive in time, old Trent's brother is unfortunately

just too late, but he is essentially a variant of the same theme. Even in as "late" a novel as Bleak House it is clear that Jarndyce is a figure of the very same mould. The belief in individual philanthropy, however incredible - and indeed, repulsive - to us of the twentieth century, was apparently firmly entrenched in Dickens' time, and in this respect he may simply be a true reflection of the consciousness of early Victorian England. The Times in 1843 carried an advertisement from a clergyman, for someone like the Brothers Cheeryble. The advertisement claimed that such people really existed. This was echoed by another journal which said that genius can create from ink spots, real flesh and blood as an answer to distress "Here is an invocation to Charity made in the name of the Brothers Cheeryble...things begotten by an ink-bottle, such, indeed, may the foolish think them; yet has the Revd. B.C. Post Office, Cambridge truer, wiser knowledge of the brethren... He knows them to be still moving about the world, shaking ten thousand hands that welcome them..." (69). The Revd. B.C. had advertised for any who have hearts like the Cheerybles to contact him. Even Dickens came to believe less and less the hope of individual philanthropy - witness the saddening motto which the painter Fildes took from Dickens as the basis of his Applicants for admission to a Casual Ward (1869) "Dumb, wet, silent horror, sphinxes set up against that dead wall, and none likely to be at the pains of solving them until the general overthrow..." (70). In 1870 Dickens confided his hope and belief that the division of classes would gradually cease, to which the Queen added her own prayers. (71). This point is very well discussed by Ross Dabney, but he is

reluctant to believe that Dickens looked very deeply into fundamental social causation, and was content to regard society superficially: he says that the young Dickens prized warmth and generosity above all things, that he glorified givers, spenders, hearty good-livers, the Pickwicks and the Cheerybles of this world, "the antagonists of these good men are unscrupulous lawyers, mean cheats, conniving and usurious misers... so far there seems to be a simple opposition between getters and givers..." (72).

The bad people seem to get their pleasure in the acquisition of wealth, and in making people unhappy, and doing them down. Conversely, the good people get their pleasure out of showering money about, and making people happy by helping them. I believe this is true only of Pickwick Papers, and even there we can find the occasional serious question being posed: there is Job Trotter's brother, for example, who fled to the United States because he was "too much sought after here" he will be safe there, because the Americans - already a symbol of avarice for Dickens - "will never give him up, when they find he's got money to spend..." (73).

In Nicholas Nickleby there are already signs of the scorn Dickens feels for money-grubbers, Mrs. Nickleby refers to Mr. Watkins "that your poor Papa went bail for, who afterwards ran away to the United States...he was very sorry he couldn't repay the £50 just then, because his capital was all out at interest, and he was very busy making his fortune..." (74). There is also the damning comment which is the basis of the relationship

between Ralph and his brother. "These two brothers had been brought up together...(and) had often heard, from their mother's lips, long accounts of their father's sufferings in his days of poverty, and of their deceased uncle's importance in his days of affluence, which recitals produced a very different impression on the two: for while the younger...gleaned from thence nothing but forewarnings to shun the great world and to attach himself to the quiet routine of a country life; Ralph the elder, deduced from the oft repeated tale the two great morals that riches are the only true source of happiness and power, and that it is lawful and just to compass their acquisition by all means short of felony... And Ralph always wound up these mental soliloquies by arriving at the conclusion, that there was nothing like money." (75). We are shown that Ralph put into practice money-lending at exhorbitant rates while still a schoolboy "his simple rule of interest being...'two-pence for every halfpenny' which...cannot be too strongly recommended to the notice of capitalists...and more especially of money-brokers and bill-discounters. Indeed, to do these gentlemen justice, many of them are to this day in the frequent habit of adopting it with eminent success." (76).

Egged on by his wife, Ralph's brother speculates with his money, and loses it. "Speculation is a round game; the players see little or nothing of their cards...gains may be great - and so <u>may</u> losses. The run of luck went against Mr. Nickleby; a mania prevailed, a bubble burst, four stock-brokers took villa residences at Florence, four hundred nobodies were ruined, and among them Mr. Nickleby." (77). There

is also the ironic exchange between Mrs. Nickleby and Ralph when he is discussing arrangements for Kate: "I am very much obliged to you ma'am... An absence of business habits in this family leads apparently to a great waste of words before business...is arrived at, at all." "I fear it is so indeed," replied Mrs. Nickleby with a sigh. "Your poor brother - " "My poor brother, ma'am...had no idea what business was - was unacquainted, I verily believe, with the very meaning of the word." (78).

Dabney is a fairly perceptive critic of Dickens' work, and his discussion of the relation between money, property and marriage in the novels is stimulating and accurate, but I cannot agree that there is little evidence in the early novels to suggest that Dickens had not really begun to work out his social philosophy of money. (79). Obviously Dickens did not see the world as divided between givers and getters; there must have been some consideration of where the money came from, and the actual cost of making money: "...one assumes," Dabney says, "that Dickens was concerned to work out the real evils of his society and to expose them. In Pickwick Papers, this is not true, except in a small way. It obviously is true in Hard Times, Bleak House, Little Dorrit, Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend..." (80). We move from Pickwick - where there is little evidence for Dickens' looking much beyond the surface of things - to Hard Times and the novels of the fifties and sixties. I maintain that Dickens clearly saw the springs of human nature and money-corruption much earlier than Hard Times. It is the money-swindle and money-getting themes which

hold together, not only Nicholas Nickleby and the following novels up to and including Dombey and Son, but these themes give a total coherance to Dickens' output, that this is a vital part of his vision of society.