London, Radical Culture, and the Making of the Dickensian Aesthetic
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T HIS BOOK, which is about Charles Dickens and the popular print and visual culture of nineteenth-century Britain, has been written almost entirely in India. My location in Delhi turned out to be very helpful not because it enabled me to sustain some shopworn postcolonial perspective but because it provided a context that helped to explain, in ways London no longer can, some of the central concerns of the Dickensian aesthetic: the fabrication of a language of opposition in a society characterized by deep disparities and the expressive possibilities of an internally fractured cityscape. For their interest in my engagement with these problems, their many illuminating suggestions, and also for their skepticism and the many, quite brilliant jokes that they improvised about “pedagogues” and “mug-pots,” I want to thank the following Delhitiites: Abhibsha Chakraborty, Arotiika Das, Arindam Sengupta, Ashok Bhattacharya, Baidik Bhattacharya, Deabashish Chaterjee, Debolina Dey, Maitrayee Roychoudhury, Nivedita Basu, Prasanta Chakravarty, Shilpi Malhotra, Swagat Sen, and Teja Varma.

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the technical errors that I was making, and gave me several specific and very serious suggestions about how I could take my work forward. Andrew’s letter turned out to be the beginning of an incredibly generous relationship that we sustain to this day. His comments on sections of this book and finally on the book as a whole helped me address several problems ranging from the specific and local to those related to the book’s structure and argument. Andrew’s continuing interest in the work of a person whom he had never met and who did not have any claim on his time represents for me that utopian impulse that has never really faded in academia. I want him to know that it was his commitment to keeping in touch with people working far away from the centers dedicated to the study of Victorian culture that kept this work going.

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Literature 54, no. 4 (March 2000): 480–502, © 2000 by the Regents of the University of California. I thank the University of California Press and Ashgate for permission to reprint.

The other figures that appear in this book gained a great deal from the professional skills of my nephew, Anshuman Sen, who produced high-resolution digital images from the frayed, old prints that I gave him. Other members of my family helped in the writing of this book simply by being who they are—individuals who respect other people's individuality. My eighty-seven-year-old father, who remains independent yet deeply connected to anything concerning me, has been a great source of strength over many years. My mother, whose bright and far-reaching optimism sustained me through many difficult periods, would, if she were here, have been proud of this book. So, I hope, will Polu and Milu—my scientifically minded children—who never let their skepticism over my activities get in the way of helping me out in a million specific ways. And I was really lucky to have met Nivedita when I was eighteen because without her friendship, support, and tolerance I would have sunk long ago.
In 1859, many years after he had established himself as the preeminent novelist of his age, Charles Dickens launched what would, for long afterwards, be considered the definitive edition of his novels. The novels that appeared as part of the Charles Dickens Edition were designed for posterity. Each reissued work took the form of a single, freestanding hardbound volume. Every volume, moreover, was embossed with gold lettering and carried a facsimile of Dickens’s signature inscribed across its red cover. Clearly Dickens was projecting his books into the future as stable, unified, and autonomous “classics,” authenticated by their author’s personal stamp.1

As it happens, the Dickensian novel has held its status as a classic long after the publication of the Charles Dickens Edition. In the twenty-first century, it enjoys all the prestige attendant on its longevity, and it is presented to modern readers as a unique and unified whole, to be read and enjoyed in its own right without the distracting influence of any extraneous material. Yet the ideas of unity and permanence were utterly alien to the format with which Pickwick Papers changed the dynamics of the nineteenth-century book market and which remained Dickens’s preferred mode of publishing until late in his career. Kathleen Tillotson and John Butt provide a clear description of the magazine-like monthly numbers with which Dickens and his publishers cut through the stranglehold that the three-decker novel and circulating libraries exercised over the production and dissemination of novels: “each monthly ‘part’ or number consisted of three or
four chapters, covering thirty-two pages of print, with two plates, and several pages of advertisements. It was issued in green paper covers and was published at a shilling, nominally on the first day, actually on the last day, of each month.”2 The emergence of the part issue—“the moment of Pickwick,” as N. N. Feltes has called it3—was part of a sales strategy that would work very successfully for Dickens and his publishers. But the salability of the Dickensian part issue was inseparable from the form—part novel fragment, part illustrations, and part advertisements—in which it was sold. The hybridity and open-endedness of the part issue should not be mistaken for simple and removable side effects of the monthly number’s publication conditions. On the contrary, the three segments of the part issue were often well coordinated, and they worked with a common set of expressive strategies to unfold as parts of a single field. Thus, as Richard Altick has shown, companies and individuals who advertised in the part issue often chose products that would synchronize with themes, events, or locations that may have appeared in a particular number.4 Indeed, Gerard Curtis has argued that advertisements were “part of the original reading process of the serial, an integral part of its framing device and of its effects.” To give Curtis’s own example, the advertisement for the Dakin Tea Company that appeared with the monthly numbers of Bleak House drew the viewer into a narrative of sociability based on tea drinking by using a set of visual techniques that were identical to those used by the cover design of the part issue, pictorially anticipating for the reader the story that was about to unfold.5

It would seem, then, that the transformation of Dickens’s novels into single-volume, internally integrated “classics” obscured not only the economic underpinnings of novel writing in nineteenth-century England but also the movement of expressive strategies across the disparate but contiguous discourses that constituted the original Dickensian part issue. The latter dynamic, indeed, energized the workings of a much larger entity—the nineteenth-century market for print and visual entertainment—and its hybridizing effects on the products of this market will prove essential for our understanding of the Dickensian aesthetic.

The market in which Dickens found his feet as a writer was characterized by its propensity to not just promote incessant movement of expressive resources across genres and media but also to destabilize demarcations between popular and high art. As Martin Meisel puts it:

After a period from the Restoration forward, of comparative cultural stratification, there was a considerable mingling and enlarging of audiences, in the early nineteenth-century, accompanied by an explosion, technologically
induced, of print and picture. The popular audience of print and picture consumers, reaching all the way from the palace to the city streets, came into its own in the nineteenth-century and found entrepreneurs to provide for it, by the penny and the pound.6

One way in which to gauge the extent to which the print market loosened both the social demarcations between the consuming public and generic distinctions between different cultural products is by tracking the transformations experienced by William Hogarth’s prints through the course of their extraordinarily long afterlife that extended well into the nineteenth century.

When Hogarth decided, in 1732, to “publish” a series of four pictures depicting a harlot’s declining career in London and to sell multiple, mechanically reproduced copies to a group of subscribers,7 he was consciously probing the print market for expressive and commercial opportunities that it might offer. But even he could not have anticipated the kind of afterlife that his prints were destined to enjoy. Produced in multiple copies, focusing often on the varied, everyday life of the city, Hogarth’s prints were, in any case, designed to circulate among a socially varied group of consumers.8 Moreover, the increasing popular appeal of Hogarth’s pictorial stories through the later eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries caused the artist’s ideas, plot patterns, and modes of characterization to proliferate across a range of disparate genres. The continuing popularity of Industry and Idleness (1747), for example, meant that nineteenth-century melodramas, pantomimes, and novels regularly absorbed and reactivated its plot patterns, characters, and, above all, its techniques of unfolding the city. About ninety years after the publication of Industry and Idleness, the author and illustrator of the best-selling Jack Shepherd (1839) declared that they had worked from Hogarth’s picture series in the attempt to produce what the author described as a “sort of Hogarthian novel.”9 Moreover, Jack Shepherd was itself adapted several times for the stage, and the claim made in a playbill of one of the adaptations demonstrates the enormous expressive possibilities that opened up for popular modes of articulation as they moved from one genre or medium to another. This advertisement claimed that Jack Shepherd would offer its viewers a panoramic version of Hogarth’s London, that is, it would unfurl across the large, three-dimensional space of the stage the London that Hogarth had inscribed in Industry and Idleness.10

The history of transformations experienced by Hogarth’s pictures throws into relief a basic feature of the nineteenth-century market for print and visual commodities: its propensity to encourage, not generic autonomy, but a process of hybridization. This hybridizing process is very clearly exempli-
fied in two texts that are representative of early nineteenth-century popular print culture and that will, moreover, figure prominently through the early chapters of this book.

The first, Pierce Egan’s *Life in London* (1822), is marked in a physical sense by the incessant intersection of genres and media that the print market promoted: its typography is full of attention-grabbing capitalizations and italics, its colored plates depicting sensational city scenes are very much part of its expressive repertoire, and it even contains the full music score for a popular song. In these circumstances it is not at all surprising that in his meandering, loud, and energetic invocation, Pierce Egan ranges across virtually the entire breadth of a stratified cultural field: he hopes to imbibe some of the properly literary talent which animated a “FIELDING, a GOLDSMITH, a SMOLLET, a STERNE, in their portraiture of ‘Life,’” but also to incorporate, within his book, some of the audience-gathering techniques perfected by “Cribb, admired hero of the stage” and “HONE the king of parodists!” Again, William Hone, who is brought together in Egan’s equalizing discourse with Fielding, was able, in *The Political House That Jack Built* (1819), to dredge out of radical pamphleteering a recipe for an instant bestseller and, in this way, to open up a large market for comic political journalism, precisely by hitching the popular appeal of antiruling class graphic satire to the radical “nursery rhyme.” Hone self-consciously emphasized the hybrid nature of the form that he saw himself as pioneering: the frontispiece of his best-selling radical pamphlet (fig. 1) depicts its two primary producers, Cruikshank and Hone himself, sitting on opposite sides of a table engaged precisely in the act of bringing together the effects of language and of drawing in a single text.

In what ways did the market’s propensity to move expressive strategies across diverse forms and media affect the practice of novel writing? Ainsworth Harrison publicly declared that *Jack Shepherd* drew much more on Hogarth’s picture series than on some properly literary tradition of novel writing. But the hybridizing trajectory within the nineteenth-century novel that Ainsworth’s work represented unfolded against the resistance of several writers and critics who were convinced that the influence of techniques that had originated in graphic caricature or the city sketches could only degrade the novel as a form.

One of the most interesting examples of such resistance is to be found in the work of William Makepeace Thackeray, interesting because Thackeray sought to insulate his novel writing from the corrupting influence of subliterary forms even as he earned his livelihood from the “low” parodies, squibs, and caricatures that he contributed to various magazines.
Hone and Cruikshank, being the vignette to "Facetiae and Miscellanies," 1828.

FIGURE 1. George Cruikshank, frontispiece to *The Political House That Jack Built* (1819)
Thackeray’s dependence on magazine work was especially acute during the early and most difficult phase of his career, when he kept himself financially afloat by producing various comic pieces for *Punch*—a magazine whose very name connected it to the sort of slapstick comedy that Thackeray would find unsuitable for serious novels. But even after his dependence on comic journalism decreased, he defended the more commercially oriented and ephemeral forms of writing on the grounds that authors had the right to sell their wares in the market like other tradesmen. Indeed, in contrast to Dickens, who, in his public pronouncements, often subsumed the economic exchange that was taking place between author and reader within a rhetorically produced sociability, Thackeray frankly described the professional writer as someone who was driven not by the “irresistible afflatus of genius” but by the need to exchange his “literary artifact” for money.

Thackeray’s frequent use of the word “trade” to describe the exchange that took place between writer and reader, and his defense of “fugitive literature” against “the big book interest,” should not, however, be understood as a simple, objective attempt to “undercut,” as Peter Shillingsburg has suggested, “both the social snobbery and the mystical trappings of artist which some writers cultivated.” Rather, these positions express only one side of Thackeray’s deeply divided relationship with the print market. Thackeray may have believed that the print market was a fair regulating mechanism for the economic exchange that took place between an author and reader. But coexisting with his defense of writing as trade and his defense of those who produced “fugitive” literature in order to earn a living are the private anxieties about his own magazine writings that he expressed so often to his mother and to his friends. For example, in an 1841 letter to his mother, Thackeray confessed that he had not let anyone know that he was writing for *Punch* because, although it offered a “good pay . . . and an unrestrained opportunity for laughing,” it was a “very low paper.” Moreover, Thackeray’s “odious magazine work” not only compromised his social status but also demanded the kind of literary drudgery that was sure to “kill any writer.” The presence of the “writer” behind the “quill driver,” of William Makepeace Thackeray, whose artistic instincts cry out for expression in an unsympathetic print market, behind Michael Angelo Titmarsh, who floods this market with parodies and caricatures, would suggest a relationship with the print market so divided that Thackeray could sustain it only by formally splitting his authorial personality.

Thackeray self-consciously separated his novel writing from the kind of work that he did for *Punch* because he believed that the extravagant effects
of comic entertainment were fundamentally incompatible with the aesthetic goals of the novel as a work of “Art.” It was from this perspective that he sought to distinguish his own mode of novel writing from that of Dickens:

I quarrel with his art in many respects: which I don’t think represents nature duly; for instance Micawber appears to me an exaggeration of a man, as his name is of a name. It is delightful and makes me laugh: but it is no more real than my friend Punch is: and in so far I protest against him . . . holding that the Art of Novels is to represent Nature: to convey as strongly as possible the sentiment of reality . . . in a drawing-room drama a coat is a coat and a poker a poker; and not an embroidered tunic, nor a great red-hot instrument like the Pantomime weapon.\[18\]

In this well-known passage Thackeray formulates an opposition that will remain important through much of this book: he posits against the popular appeal of Dickens’s entertainment-oriented effects his own commitment to convey “the sentiment of reality.” Moreover, although in a maneuver that would enjoy a long afterlife, Thackeray conflates realism with “Nature,” he was always aware—as the many comments he made in his letters, prefaces, and even in his novels testify—that the realistic mode of novel writing itself worked with a very specific set of representational conventions. Without necessarily imputing aesthetic superiority to one or the other author, this book will often invoke the representational conventions that Thackeray identifies with the “Art” of novels in order to throw into relief a very different but equally powerful set of expressive strategies with which Dickens worked.

Implicit in the passage from Thackeray quoted above is a second criticism of Dickens’s mode of novel writing that has to do with the problem not so much of realism as of autonomy. Thackeray was not, of course, the first to argue that Dickens had degraded “the Art of Novels” by opening his own fiction to the influence of extraliterary forms such as pantomimes or satiric, political journalism. Indeed, as Kathryn Chittick has shown, the highbrow press refused, until after *Oliver Twist*, to even describe Dickens as a novelist.\[19\] Rather, the customary classification of Dickens’s early writing as magazine pieces or as periodical sketches inserted them in a promiscuous discursive field bereft of firm generic contours where expressive modes from a host of genres could have free play.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Dickens’s early reviewers echoed Thackeray in commenting (most often derisively) on the heterogeneous, subliterary expressive modes on which Dickens’s novels depended to achieve their most characteristic effects. The *Spectator*, striking a familiar note, compared
the topical satire that insinuated itself so often in Dickens’s fiction to the “passing hits of a pantomime,” while the *Edinburgh Review* commented that in *Pickwick Papers*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Oliver Twist* Dickens had “called in the aid of the pencil, and [had] been contented to share his success with the caricaturist.” Many years later, after Dickens had established himself as a major if not the preeminent novelist of his period, the quarterly press continued to remind the public of the generic promiscuity that Dickens’s schooling in the lower levels of print culture had encouraged in his novels. The Circumlocution Office passages in *Little Dorrit*, *Blackwood’s Magazine* complained, “betrayed a total want of art” and was “as inartificial as if [Dickens] had cut half-a-dozen leading articles out of an Opposition newspaper, and stuck them in anyhow, anywhere.”

As the phrasing by *Blackwood’s* suggests, the quarterly press often tended to constitute as “irregular” or “desultory” a mode of novel writing that was based on the constant interaction with various, often extraliterary genres. However, Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea that “the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries of its individual areas and not in places where these areas have become enclosed in their own specificity” might counterpoise against this emphasis on the formal integrity of the novel. From this perspective, the Dickensian novel could be conceptualized as a discursive formation which was characterized by a certain formal indeterminacy and semantic open-endedness and which was always capable of reactivating within itself expressive resources from the numerous popular genres and media that circulated in the nineteenth-century market for print and visual entertainment.

This book will be overwhelmingly concerned with what Dickens’s novels gained from two sub- or nonliterary representational traditions that flourished in the nineteenth-century market for print and visual entertainment. The first of these, which I will, following James Epstein, call “radical expression,” designates the literary and visual satire that entered the discursive domain through the work of such writers and artists as Thomas Paine, William Hone, William Cobbett, and George Cruikshank, and that continued to be an important presence in the print market of the late 1830s, despite the fragmentation of the radical journalistic tradition itself. As young men making their careers in the print market of the 1830s, Thackeray and Dickens would have access to the satiric techniques that developed in the radical journalistic tradition, irrespective of whether they shared the political goals of Hone or Paine. In these circumstances, it is rather surprising that few among the several literary critics and historians who write on the popular
radical satire of the early nineteenth century have attempted to connect this satire with the work of Dickens.26

The one exception (apart from an article of mine that appeared in the English Literary History27) has been Sally Ledger’s recent Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination (2007). Ledger breaks from the influential view that associated Dickens with the middle-class radical politics of the 1840s and 1850s.28 Instead, she connects the populist orientation that so often underpinned Dickens’s political pronouncements to the “language of radicalism” fabricated by an earlier generation of radical publicists in their endeavor to bring the masses excluded from the processes of an unreformed parliament into the political domain.29

The many specific connections Ledger makes between Dickens and writers like Cobbett and Hone is crucial to the argument that this book develops. My criticism of Ledger’s work, though, is that the “Popular” in her title brings together, in a relationship of unmediated continuity, political practices and literary effects, the political mobilization that Hone and Cobbett hoped to sustain through their pamphlets and Dickens’s novelization of “radical expression.”30 Thus, Ledger repeatedly argues that Hone and Dickens were part of a unified, continuous, “truly disruptive” political tradition and that Cobbett and Dickens shared a “similarly instrumentalist” view of writing.31 But Hone’s mobilizing pamphlets and Dickens’s entertainment-oriented novels worked in very different domains and were likely, therefore, to produce very different kinds of political effects. The bloody circumstance out of which The Political House That Jack Built had emerged and the prosecution that always threatened the radical publicists suggest that these publicists were also political organizers capable of confronting the state with serious mass protests. Dickens’s political satires, on the other hand, were not conceptualized as instruments for organizing the masses or for precipitating direct, bloody confrontations. Rather, the Dickensian novel was addressed to a respectable, predominantly middle-class audience, and it achieved its political effects gradually and indirectly in some corner of the mind of the reader who read Dickens in her leisure time for pleasure rather than for political education.

It would seem, therefore, that rather than embedding Dickens in any stable political project, popular radical writing and graphic satire worked their effects deep within the internal dynamics of his fiction. In order to uncover these effects, I will need to address not this or that political goal that Dickens may have shared with Hone or Cobbett but rather the ways in which radical expression helped to produce Dickens’s method as a novelist.
What were the series of displacements that transformed “the language of radicalism” from a powerful instrument of political mobilization to a socially acceptable, relatively nonthreatening mode of political entertainment? What exact visual and linguistic forms of radical expression were available to writers such as Thackeray and Dickens when they began their careers as writers? What possibilities did “radical expression” hold out for the novel form, for example, for its modes of characterization? In what ways did these modes relate to the increasingly normative protocols of realism? These questions will lie at the heart of this book’s engagement with the first of the two subliterary traditions that, it argues, helped to produce the Dickensian aesthetic.

A second tradition of representation that developed in the domain of popular rather than literary culture and that proved vital to the making of the Dickensian novel were the visualizations of London stretching all the way from Hogarth’s *Industry and Idleness* and the early nineteenth-century city sketches to the images produced, through the first half of the nineteenth century, by such technologically advanced forms as the panorama and the stereoscope.

These visual representations of London sustain, in varying ways, a common tension between, on the one hand, the attempt to grasp the city as a whole, to map and make accessible its far-flung locations and, on the other hand, to bring together these geographically and socially disparate locations in tense, discontinuous relationships. In Hogarth’s inaugural exposition, this tension probes, breaches, redraws, but also seeks to fortify the boundary between such interiors as the home or the workplace and the chaotic, dangerous life of the streets. Moreover, even as London became more organized through the course of the nineteenth century, the city sketch and the panorama sharpened their techniques of mapping the city, of probing into its hidden nooks and crannies, and of encouraging juxtapositions between these and the more respectable parts of the metropolis. By the mid-nineteenth century, the unstable diversity of the city—its propensity to fragment, but also to generate unexpected convergences—could be made to unfold across three- (rather than two-) dimensional space in the technologically sophisticated operations of the stereoscope.

Throughout his career Dickens engaged very seriously with, and often wrote about, Hogarth’s images of London as well as the expressive possibilities offered by the panorama and the stereoscope. These writings suggest that techniques originating in Hogarth’s prints or in the operations of the stereoscope not only influenced his representation of the metropolis but also produced a basic organizational orientation of the Dickensian aesthetic.
This orientation, inseparable from the synchronicity of the visual modes, relates to the unusual way in which time and space are arranged in Dickens’s novels. Thus, unlike realistic novels such as Thackeray’s—which are often driven by the transforming effects of time, especially on characters, rather than by dramatic shifts in social space—Dickens follows the visual forms discussed above by working with the social and spatial diversity of the city and with the tense juxtapositions that these make possible. The space-driven urban aesthetic that Dickens inherited from the visual forms would have a determining influence on such vital features of the Dickensian novel as plotting and characterization.

THIS BOOK will frequently refer to William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, and, to a lesser extent, *The Newcomes*. I should clarify, though, that this is not really a comparative work on Dickens and Thackeray. It neglects several features of Thackeray’s fiction including those that may be thought of as nuanced elaborations of issues that interested Dickens as well. For example, I don’t really engage with the way credit works in *Vanity Fair* to produce unexpected social intersections or with the internal depth that Thackeray manages to give to the world of the aristocracy even while exposing this world as moribund and parasitic. Moreover, a nuanced comparison between the ways in which Thackeray and Dickens responded to the aristocracy would require, for example, researching the relative similarity of positions that they took on the aristocracy’s domination of the bureaucracy. I have not engaged with these problems because Thackeray’s relevance to this book is inseparable from and limited to the effects that his self-conscious rejection of the resources of print and visual entertainment had on his novel writing and to the light that this sheds on the distinctiveness of the aesthetic choices that Dickens made.

Unfortunately, this orientation may draw my book inadvertently into that long-established tradition of scholarship that locks the two greatest male novelists of Victorian England in a rigid binary relationship. This tradition, moreover, has often used the Dickens–Thackeray opposition to privilege one author at the expense of the other. I have no interest in constituting Thackeray as Dickens’s discredited other. Both Dickens and Thackeray found in the novel form the means of elaborating perspectives on, for example, the aristocracy that were underpinned by as many similarities as differences. Moreover, it bears reiteration that this book does not engage with various features of Thackeray’s writing that it would need to bring into play if it were a properly comparative study of Thackeray and Dickens.
Rather than comprehensively comparing the fiction of Thackeray and Dickens or embedding them hierarchically in some putative scale of literary value, my concern is primarily with the making of the Dickensian aesthetic. Thackeray becomes part of that concern because nineteenth-century critics regularly held up his novels as examples of that realism that Dickens never managed to achieve. Thus, if I juxtapose Dickens’s caricaturized representation of Tite Barnacle against Thackeray’s psychologically complex portraiture of Pitt Crawley, it is not in order to assert the superiority of the one over the other but to show that each character came out of a specific set of aesthetic choices that, working within a set of constraints, became capable of producing specific effects. The purpose of this book will have been served if it is able to demonstrate that the expressive resources of various popular subliterary forms that came together in Dickens’s work produced a novelistic aesthetic whose methods were different from those encoded in what Thackeray described as the “Art of Novels” but which were capable of producing effects just as powerful as anything achieved in the great realistic tradition of the English novel.
Dickens, Thackeray, and “The Language of Radicalism”

In a letter to Mrs. Brookfield, written a few months before he resigned from *Punch*, Thackeray declared that he found it impossible to “pull in the same boat” with a “savage little Robespierre” like Douglas Jerrold. Thackeray’s outburst is significant for what it reveals not only about his overt political opinions but also about his relationship with certain techniques of representation that my “Introduction,” following James Epstein, described as “radical expression,” and that Thackeray associated above all with Jerrold.

When Thackeray first joined *Punch*, Jerrold dominated the journal and sought to sustain, within an expanding print market, the sort of radical political satire that had gained such popularity through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In these circumstances, Thackeray himself had little option but to provide for the magazine the parodies and caricatures that fed “the quickening and widen ing of interest in public matters and public men, brought about by the agitation which had preceded the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832 and continued after its enactment.” Yet he was also deeply conscious of the artistic limitations of journalistic sarcasm, although he publicly defended his early political satire as a legitimate means of earning his livelihood. These limitations were evident for Thackeray, above all, in the way that the radical journalists represented the elite. Indeed, one way in which to chart more precisely Thackeray’s responses to this problem is by focusing on the silences as well as the emphases that
underlie the two long essays he wrote on artists whose work not only overlapped with his early career but also represented the elite from the differing social standpoints that Thackeray associated with journalism, on the one hand, and “literature,” on the other. In the first of these—a two-part essay on Cruikshank—Thackeray creates around the figure of the illustrator a powerful sense of nostalgia for a much-loved world full of fantastic prints and illustrations that Thackeray’s aging generation was losing. In this way, Thackeray touches on the transforming effects of time—a problem that he was to explore with great sophistication in his fiction—but he also commits himself to a certain sympathy for even the kind of political caricature that had seemed to embarrass him in his letters to friends such as Edward Fitzgerald:

Knight’s, in Sweetings’s Alley; Fairburn’s, in a court off Ludgate Hill; Hone’s, in Fleet Street—bright, enchanted palaces, which George Cruikshank used to people with grinning, fantastical imps and merry, harmless sprites,—where are they? . . . Slop, the atrocious Castlereagh, the sainted Caroline (in tight pelisse, with feathers in her head), the “Dandy of Sixty” who used to glance at us from Hone’s friendly windows—where are they?3

This well-known description is so sympathetic that even radical historians have quoted it as a historically accurate account of the milieu in which political prints of the early nineteenth century were produced and disseminated.4 Thackeray’s representation, however, also seeks to smoothen and render as easily negotiable the disjunction between the middle- and upper-class readers for whom he was writing and the plebeian milieu for which Cruikshank produced his political caricatures. More specifically, in Thackeray’s nostalgic recollection of what he projects as a lost world, the militant artisanal communities that gathered around the works of Cruikshank and Hone become “grinning, good natured mechanics,”5 and Cruikshank’s brutal caricatures of the most powerful politicians of the Regency “merry, harmless sprites.” This means that Thackeray’s representation erases not only the confrontationist context in which Cruikshank’s political prints were produced but also the representational modes by which this confrontation with the political elite was expressed.

If Thackeray felt it necessary to evade any analysis of a central feature of Cruikshank’s political caricature—its propensity to represent the political elite from the point of view of the excluded—it was because he believed that Cruikshank’s social location made it impossible for him to produce artistically viable images of the upper classes. Indeed, in a second essay on
his colleague John Leech, Thackeray sharply criticizes James Gillray and, by implication, the brutal caricatural technique which Cruikshank was to bring into the domain of radical journalism precisely on the grounds that the “garret . . . or a tavern parlour” could never emerge as valid observation points for the representation of “public characters.” On the other hand, as a “social painter” who belonged to “the world which he depict[ed] and native to the manners which he portray[ed],” Leech was properly positioned to delineate realistically the details of what Thackeray, addressing his upper- and middle-class readers, describes as “your house and mine.”

Thackeray’s privileging of Leech over Gillray and, by extension, over Cruikshank is important for my purposes because it has implications for the distinction that Thackeray made between journalism and literature, and it looks forward ultimately to Thackeray’s own movement away from “magazinery” to what he saw as the more properly literary vocation of novel writing. More specifically, Thackeray’s comments on Leech, taken in conjunction with his increasingly contemptuous attitude toward the sort of radical satire that appeared in the early numbers of *Punch,* may be seen as part of an ongoing polemic in which Thackeray pits a novelistic aesthetic, based on closely observed, realistic delineations of the social and political elite, against a popular tradition of political representation that developed continuously from Paine to Jerrold and that was predicated on, as Thackeray sarcastically remarked, looking “up at the rich and the great with a fierce, a sarcastic aspect, and a threatening posture.”

The language of radical satire, which Thackeray believed to be incapable of producing that nuanced realism that he associated with literature, was an integral aspect of Dickens’s staple writing. Indeed, in an article entitled “Modern Novelists: Charles Dickens,” the *Westminster Review* argued that Dickens’s authorial tone was inextricably bound up with those high-pitched political debates of the reform years which had sustained Jerrold’s strident sarcasm as well, and “Modern Novelists” concluded with a suggestion that Thackeray would presumably endorse: that by seeking to cater to the tastes of the overpoliticized masses Dickens had perverted “the novel from a work of art to a platform for argument and discussion.”

The *Westminster Review* is right not only in situating Dickens’s early career in the lower rungs of the market for print entertainment but also in suggesting that Dickens (unlike Thackeray) absorbed the language of radical politics into the expressive system of his novels. However, the *Westminster Review’s* condescension toward those forms of novel writing that do not qualify as “work(s) of art” obstructs what might have been a more productive and historically informed inquiry into the relationship between
“literature” and what it vaguely describes as a “highly popular treatment of politics.” Indeed, it is possible to demonstrate that the “reactivation” of radical expressive modes in Dickens’s fiction was not the first or only example of the interaction between literature and popular politics, and that early radical publicists such as William Hone and Thomas Wooler would certainly have contested the separation that Thackeray and the Westminster Review seek to effect between the popular radical writing and what could be properly described as literary. Just now, though, my focus will be on the uninterrupted process of displacements and reactivations by which radical expressive modes became uprooted from the mobilizing texts that had originally sustained them, but continued to lead an active, if reified, existence in the entertainment-oriented Dickensian novel.

One way in which to track this movement is by focusing on what Iain McCalman has called “the Rabelaisian” strands that coexisted within radical journalism with the more austere, rationalist modes characteristic of Paine and Carlile. It was the extensive use that journalists like Hone, Wooler, and Davison made of literary devices such as exaggeration, parody, caricature, rhyme, and meter that made the language of subversion not so much solemn as entertaining and salable.

A very good example of a mobilizing text that might, at the same time, be seen as a landmark in literary entertainment was William Hone’s The Political House That Jack Built. The Political House was very much an exercise in political mobilization, provoked as it was by the Peterloo massacre. On the other hand, it was also cast as a parodic political nursery rhyme. This allowed Hone to combine colloquialisms, parodic reaccentuations, and the familiar rhythms of nursery rhymes to achieve a mode of political articulation whose most productive afterlife was to unfold in the pages of Punch and in the novels of Dickens rather than in a newspaper like Northern Star or a book such as On Liberty. Moreover, The Political House was, in a very basic sense, coproduced by Cruikshank, and the combination of Cruikshank’s etchings and Hone’s letterpress not only inaugurated a format that would prove very successful in the market for print entertainment but also set into motion an interactive relationship between visual and linguistic satire—a process that was to affect the Dickensian aesthetic in significant ways. Above all, The Political House did not just anticipate a recipe for a best seller—it turned out itself to be an instant best seller. First published in 1819, The Political House sold 100,000 copies even at the relatively high price of one shilling.

The very high sales achieved by a radical pamphlet such as The Political House suggests that the demarcation made by one of the greatest historians
of the popular press between “the journalism of a community or a move-
ment” and “market journalism” based on more efficient production and dis-
tribution and incomparably higher levels of capitalization was, in fact, never
absolute.13 It is true, of course, that the commercial press irrevocably broke
up the community of radical readers in the process of creating a larger, more
diffuse, entertainment-seeking audience and, indeed, the movement of rad-
ical satire from the mobilizing pamphlet to the Dickensian novel also implied
the uprooting of this satire from real political struggles. On the other hand,
it is equally true that radical journalism contributed very significantly to the
shaping of the nineteenth-century market for print entertainment. Indeed,
the radical journalists themselves often emphasized this. Thus, Hone him-
self was to claim that the illustrated pamphlets that he produced during the
1820s had “created a new era in the history of publication”:

By showing what engraving on wood could effect in a popular way, and
exciting a taste for art in the more humble ranks of life, they created a new
era in the history of publication . . . They are parents to the present cheap
literature, which extends to a sale of at least four hundred thousand cop-
ies every week . . . Besides this . . . my little pieces acquainted every rank
of society, in the most remote corner of the British dominions, with the
powers of Mr. George Cruikshank, whose genius had been wasted on mere
caricature till it was embodied in my ideas and feelings.14

Hone’s anxious egoism is characteristic of many plebeian writers seeking to
assert, to a hostile middle-class audience, their contribution to the making of
culture, and it should not obscure the substantive point that he was making:
that he and other radical journalists (whom Hone characteristically does
not acknowledge) had generated formats, expressive resources, modes of
articulation which, once they began circulating in the print market, would
attract large sections of proreform middle-class readers. In other words,
Hone seems to be reflecting, from the hindsight of a decade, on the his-
tory of displacements and reactivations by which such imaginative modes of
political expression as caricature would move from militant artisanal poli-
tics into an expanding economy of print entertainment that would service
ever increasing numbers of middle-class consumers. What Hone does not
comment on in this passage is that radical expression in the 1830s and ‘40s
would inevitably have to contend with the demands of respectability. In fact,
this tension between radicalism and respectability is visible across an entire
sequence of works, from the journals produced by those radical writers who
survived the 1830s15 through to the early numbers of Punch.
Chapter 1

The tension between radicalism and respectability that runs through the early numbers of *Punch* has conventionally been attributed to the prolonged personal antagonism between Jerrold and Thackeray. But while Jerrold’s work did, in fact, prove to be an important conduit by which the expressive strategies that had developed in the work of Hone or Cobbett would move to Dickens’s fiction, it is possible to relate the radical slant in *Punch* not just to Jerrold’s personal influence but also to certain preexisting traditions of representation or, to adapt Roger Chartier’s more precise formulation, to a “preknowledge” that readers of *Punch* would have of certain conventions through which political satire was most effectively articulated. In “Texts, Printings, Readings” Chartier argues:

people read books with previously gained knowledge that was easily evoked in the act of reading. This knowledge was gained from the recurrence of coded forms, from the repetition of themes, and from the books’ images . . . This “preknowledge,” as it were, was mobilized to produce comprehension not necessarily in conformity with that desired by the producer of the text or the maker of the text . . .

Certainly many *Punch* readers worked with the “preknowledge” they had of the literary forms or artistic tropes that underpinned radical expression and that the most recent source of this were the radical newspapers and magazines. Hone’s pamphlets, which had continued to circulate in their original as well as modified forms throughout the 1820s and ’30s, had generated many conventions of representation that were to remain part of the standard repertoire of political satirists throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Clearly, therefore, *Punch* was depending on the “comprehension” that radical representational conventions would produce among its readers, when it deployed the nursery rhyme as a vehicle for political satire or used the allegory of the “political house” or the political menagerie as a site from which it could launch its satiric commentaries on politics and politicians. On the other hand, however, *Punch* was also refashioning these radical tropes so that they would not offend the sensibilities of the increasing number of middle-class readers that the magazine was gathering around itself. For example, *Punch* followed the parodies of Hone in using the nursery rhyme form as the vehicle for its antiaristocratic satire in a mock primer that it devised for Queen Victoria’s children. But *Punch* not only maintained a consistently respectable tone due to the royal nursery; it also used this respectability to contain any excess in content that might offend middle-class tastes. This maneuver by which *Punch* sought both to exploit
the expressive possibilities of radical satire and at the same time to contain these possibilities is evident again in the way that it dealt with a second radical trope: the political menagerie. Here again, *Punch* was following the lead of a pamphlet by Cruikshank and Hone in its use of zoomorphism as a means of political demystification. Significantly, however, the element that disappears in the movement from the woodcuts of Cruikshank in *The Political Showman* (1821) to the visual satire of *Punch* is the violence that Baudelaire associated with early English caricature. Thus, unlike Cruikshank’s deeply disconcerting representations of the Lord Chancellor as a crocodile, the Duke of Wellington as a scorpion, and the king himself as a water scorpion, the creatures who inhabit an etching like Richard Doyle’s “The Opening of Parliamentary Pie” (1847) have the bodies of birds but faces that are untouched by the venomous distortions of the caricaturist.

The respectablizing trajectory that diffused the more brutal effects of radical satire for the increasing number of middle-class readers that *Punch* was beginning to attract would alter the basic character of the magazine after the 1840s, shifting its focus from the political to the social. Moreover, Thackeray rode this trajectory, and his movement from the caricatures and parodies that he half-reluctantly produced for the early numbers of *Punch* to the more nuanced social observations of *The Book of Snobs* looked forward to a novelistic aesthetic that would be fundamentally hostile to the methods of the radical publicists. On the other hand, Dickens produced no graphic caricatures and only the occasional political doggerel, and he was never a full-time employee of *Punch*. Nevertheless, the Dickensian novel was deeply implicated in the process out of which *Punch* had emerged: the redeployment of radical expressive resources for the production of a certain kind of political satire that would attract a very large, entertainment-seeking, and socially diverse group of consumers. This should call attention to the politically restrictive influence that the print market—and especially the powerful middle-class consumers within this market—exercised on Dickens’s fiction. But it should also help to conceptualize the early numbers of *Punch* and especially the work of Douglas Jerrold as the conduit through which certain strands of radical expression found a continuing, if reified, existence in the novels of Dickens. It is on these strands and on the transformations that they experienced while moving from Hone to Dickens that I will now focus.

The first and most basic of these strands would be what Gareth Stedman Jones called “the language of radicalism” and Kevin Gilmartin later termed “a style of political opposition.” One important strategic orientation of the radical “style” would be to constitute as a community all those who were debarred from the processes of an unreformed parliament. Thus, Paine often
used the “present tense and the pronoun ‘we’” to underline the experience of political exclusion that he shared with his readers and, in this way, to generate, as Olivia Smith has argued, “the illusion that he and [they] share the activity of constructing an argument.” Moreover, as William Hone demonstrated during his 1817 trial for blasphemy, Paine’s discursively constituted community could be transformed into a material force capable of exerting real pressure on decisions taken traditionally only by those who wielded power. During his extended trial, Hone used his knowledge of how parody worked in English literature to demonstrate, with great wit and irreverence, that the court could not convict him for blasphemy without at the same time convicting some of England’s greatest writers, artists, and politicians. Indeed, during the process of defending himself, Hone demonstrated how some of the most characteristic resources of radical expression—laughter, parody, and irreverence—could be used to transform the public domain of the court into a site of political mobilization. After successfully mobilizing the very large audience who had gathered in the court into the kind of community designated by Paine’s “we,” Hone pitted this community not only against his notoriously intolerant and conservative judge but also against the much larger problem of censorship. In the 1810s and ’20s, however, mobilizing activities of publicists like Hone were very far from being painless. The “radical style” may have produced politically conscious communities capable of confronting the government, but it also attracted very severe penal retributions from an intolerant and insecure state.

In contrast, Douglas Jerrold, whose work may be said to represent the more improvisational and imaginative forms of the “radical style” during the 1840s, made his name writing for a magazine whose commercial success was based on its ability, on the one hand, to avoid anything that might attract legal or punitive action and, on the other, to sustain the interest of a large, subscribing readership. Therefore, Jerrold’s propensity to position himself among the plebeians while commenting sarcastically on, for example, the Duke of Wellington’s moral exhortations to the poor, was certainly indicative of the greater rights of expression that the radical journalists had fought for and won, and of the state’s increasing capacity to accommodate dissent. But Jerrold’s tone and position would also suggest that the radical division between “us” and “them” could now be used freely in relation to the large, politically diffuse, socially disparate reading audience that *Punch* was gathering around itself. In this sense, Jerrold’s essays operated within the economy of print entertainment, although they seem, in terms of their tone and orientation, to continue the radical journalistic tradition of the 1820s. More specifically, their significance lay not so much in their continu-
ing ability to sustain radical movements as in their role in redistributing radical expressive energies within the many popular forms that emerged out of the print market of the early nineteenth century. Indeed, Jerrold—as so many of his contemporaries realized—had as much in common with Dickens as with Cobbett.\(^\text{29}\) In fact, it is possible to see in Dickens’s frequent use of “us” a novelistic site capable of sustaining the point of view of the excluded, the completion of a process by which the language of radicalism transformed itself from an instrument of political mobilization to a powerful expressive resource within the Victorian period’s dominant form of print entertainment: the novel itself.

There was a dinner party given in the Harley Street establishment, while Little Dorrit was stitching at her father’s new shirts by his side that night; and there were magnates from the Court and magnates from the Lords, magnates from the Bench and magnates from the Bar, Bishop magnates, Treasury magnates . . . all the magnates who keep us going and sometimes trip us up.\(^\text{30}\)

Unlike the journalism even of someone like Jerrold who directed his attack against a specific, real-life political adversary, the subjects of Dickens’s discourse—the people to which it refers—have become fictional “nobodies”:\(^\text{31}\) mere simulacra that would, at best, absorb and diffuse the antagonism that Dickens’s readers might have felt toward real-life politicians and bureaucrats. However, the movement from Paine’s “we” to Dickens’s “us” suggests not only dissipation but also continuity; not only the fictionalization of politics but also the politicization of fiction. In this sense, it is important to pick up in Dickens’s “us” “the stylistic aura” of “the language of radicalism,”\(^\text{32}\) to be alert to the effects that the discursive strategies of the radical style were to have on Dickens’s representation of those great objects of the radical discourse: the processes and people associated with power. Did this discursive confrontation with the establishment imply that Dickens had appropriated for the novel form at least some of the radical publicist’s capacity for political mobilization? The answer, as will become evident later, is that despite major transformations in effectiveness and context, the language of radicalism did not entirely lose its mobilizing charge as it moved from Lord Ellenborough’s court, where William Hone had defended his right to parody the ten commandments, to the virtual space of novels like *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*.

But what were the exact expressive improvisations and rhetorical strategies that drove the language of radicalism? The question is important
because it has not really been addressed in the only exhaustive account of Dickens’s artistic debt to the radical literature of the 1820s. Instead, Sally Ledger’s *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* subsumes within the general category of satire, the complicated and even contradictory ways in which radical writers and artists, in fact, engaged with the discourses of power.

As something that was committed to cutting through the consecrating symbolism of power with, as James Epstein said of Paine’s writing, “an irreverence that proved fundamental to [its] development,”\(^3\) the popular radical language was, indeed, in general, satiric. But it is also important to take into account the differences within radical modes of articulation caused by a tension lodged at the heart of the radical demystificatory project: that between the suspicion about the mystifying functions of icons, emblems, and metaphors and the riot of figures, analogies, and metaphors into which the radical discourse itself so often burst.

The suspicion that icons and emblems, metaphors and figures were vehicles of mystification was integral to English dissident thought since at least the beginnings of Protestantism, and it lies at the very heart of Tom Paine’s *The Rights of Man* (1791)—the document that, in a very real sense, inaugurated the radical journalistic tradition. Paine recognized immediately that Burke’s representation of the French Revolution achieved its most far-reaching effects through what W. T. J. Mitchell was later to call its rhetorical “extremism and excess.”\(^4\) Against Burke’s “pathless wilderness of rhapsodies” Paine generates a discourse based on “facts,” “principles,” and “data” within which the signifier would always be accountable to the signified, and the metaphor would be exposed as a “fraud” that enveloped its object in a mist of illusory connotations: “But, after all, what is the metaphor called a Crown, or rather what is Monarchy? . . . Does the virtue consist in the metaphor, or in the man? Does the goldsmith that makes the crown, make the virtue also? Doth it operate like Fortunatus’s wishing-cap, or the Harlequin’s wooden sword? Doth it make a man a conjuror?”

Paine’s deep suspicion of symbolic consecration as a means of sustaining “Mystery,” “craft,” “fiction,” “superstition,” and, ultimately, “the puppet show of state and aristocracy”\(^5\) was to remain a very powerful strand in radical thinking until as late as Dickens’s condemnation of the ceremonial unfolding of Chancery practice as “barbarous usages that the world has passed by.”\(^6\) Yet it is also true that many radical writers habitually deployed metaphors to counter symbolic consecration. They complicated Paine’s dream of a transparent language where the signifier would be completely accountable to the signified by engaging symbolically in what E. P. Thomp-
son calls “the contest for symbolic authority”—not just by stripping the consecrated object of its mystifying imagery but also by associating it with a new set of images; refiguring it as degraded or ridiculous.

The counterimagistic, allegorical techniques that developed within radical journalism enjoyed a particularly rich afterlife in the pages of those journals that operated during the 1830s and ’40s at the intersection of the profit-driven demands of an expanding print market and a continuing reform movement. Such journals found in allegorical displacements the means of articulating their proreform political concerns without attracting the censorship or taxation that a sharper focus on particular persons or events may have attracted. The allegorical mode, moreover, was capable of endless expressive improvisations and, in this sense, of keeping together a politically conscious but also entertainment-seeking audience. In the following extract from an early contribution that Douglas Jerrold made to *Punch*, the Harlequin’s ability to effect magical transformations is not contemptuously dismissed but made to drive an elaborately improvised and entertaining story about the Woky Poky Indians:

A throne changed into an armchair! Why, no one, save a Hampden or a harlequin, would think of such a trick. Besides if a throne were once turned into a chair—if such transformations were once begun, who could answer where it would end?

Once upon a time the Woky Poky Indians worshipped the Blue Monkey. Now, the said Blue Monkey had bands of gold about his head, a pearl as big as a swan’s egg in each ear, and a diamond that, if sold, would have kept the Indians and their families for half a century dangling from his royal nose—great was the adoration paid to the Blue Monkey. Now it came to pass that some thieves (republicans) despoiled the Blue Monkey of his gold, his pearls, and his diamonds, leaving the said Monkey in his wooden poverty and nakedness. What followed? Why not a single Indian bent his knee to the god—the gems were stolen, and with them the sacred odour of the idol; therefore every dark skin raised his tomahawk and, splitting the Blue Monkey into logs, the Indians made a fire of them, and cooked the goat’s flesh by their flames, and their embers, yams and bread.

Jerrold’s parable resonates at many levels against the extract from *The Rights of Man* quoted above. Both are centrally concerned with reducing to their basic material status the consecrating symbols that legitimize the arbitrary exercise of power. Moreover, both pick on the fantastic powers that the Harlequin enjoys on stage to describe the transformations that
metaphors are capable of bringing about in the commoner’s perception of the unfolding of state power. For Paine, however, the (thankfully unrealizable) power of the Harlequin’s bat has the potential to raise dangerous illusions; like the metaphor it is capable of overlaying the metal headgear that the goldsmith designs for the king with a bogus “virtue” that it does not in itself have. On the other hand, in Jerrold’s essay the transformatory power of the Harlequin’s bat (and of the metaphor) destroys the majestic aura of the throne by refiguring it as a wooden armchair. Indeed, like the pantomime itself, Jerrold’s technique thrives on transformations. Thus, Jerrold not only weaves around the object of demystification a range of counter-images but also rewrites the sanctifying protocols that surround the king (the blue monkey god) as an extended comic ritual that ends in an act of radical desacralization.

Jerrold’s political parable exemplifies, at a fairly elaborate level, the working of that familiar impulse toward literary improvisation that writers such as Hone and Wooler had sustained. This impulse, moreover, would enjoy a long afterlife in the relatively alien terrain of the Dickensian novel. Equally, however, the hyperboles, parodies, and allegories that drove the improvisational trajectory within radical writing would expose it to the charge of inaccuracy: a charge which would remain active all the way from the Quarterly Review’s sneering reference to Hone as “a poor illiterate creature,”40 to James Fitzjames Stephen’s accusation that Dickens’s propensity to exaggerate and caricaturize led to seriously distorted pictures of England’s public institutions. What the proestablishment press could not neutralize, on the other hand, was the radical style’s ability—exemplified in Jerrold’s piece—to destabilize the very discursive protocols on which official pronouncements based their legitimacy. Indeed, at its most creative, “the language of radicalism” engaged not only with the arguments made by an established politician or social thinker but also with the educated modes of writing that insidiously vested these arguments with a value that they may not, in fact, have possessed. A very good example would be the following (fairly typical) attack that Cobbett unleashes against Malthus:

The laws of nature [are] written in our passions, desires and propensities . . . Yes, say you: but nature has other laws, and amongst these are, that man shall live by food, and that if he cannot obtain food, he shall starve. Agreed, and if there be a man in England who cannot find, in the whole country . . . [a] shop, house, mill, barn . . . sufficient [food] to keep him alive, then I allow, that the laws of nature condemn him to die. . . .
“Oh!” you will, with Parsonlike bawl, exclaim, “but he must not commit 
robbery or larceny!” Robbery or larceny! What do you mean by that? Does the law of nature say anything about robbery or larceny? . . . So you will quit the law of nature now will you? (italics in the original)41

The aggression that drives Cobbett’s writing is directed at Malthus’s argument but also at what Raymond Williams has called, in a great but somewhat neglected essay, “the composed, quiet, and connected prose of the formally educated traditions,”42 and especially at the monopoly that this prose exercised in the production of public opinion. Put another way, Cobbett’s strategy is to throw into sharp relief a vital and naturalized function of the educated style: its ability to discredit and marginalize modes of articulation that do not or are not able to confirm to its protocols. Thus, Cobbett invades Malthus’s measured prose with all the accumulated resentment of those shut out from knowledge production by the discursive barriers of formal education. Rather than constructing a logical counterargument in the clear, unencumbered prose style that Paine would have approved, Cobbett draws on the colloquialisms, exaggerations, and hyperboles of popular radicalism to destabilize the legitimizing mechanisms of Malthus’s prose: its formal elegance, its rhetorically constructed illusion of logic, the truth effects that it achieves by the selective deployment of formal knowledge. What Cobbett creatively produces, thus, is a whole hybrid style within which Malthus’s ideas—ripped out of the authorizing context of the scholarly treatise—are rearticulated in colloquial language, and the dignifying inflections of Malthus’s official mode of address, entangled in a tone of absolute contempt, reduced to a “Parsonlike bawl.”

The techniques of satiric overwriting popularized by Cobbett and Jerrold proliferated in the market for print entertainment where Dickens and Thackeray found their feet as writers. The two novelists, however, responded in very different ways to the expressive resources made available by the language of radicalism. These differences had significant effects not only on the internal aesthetics of Dickens’s and Thackeray’s novels but also on the way that these novels were received.

Thackeray was, of course, adept at working with radical expressive modes, as the many antiaristocratic and antimonarchial caricatures and parodies that he contributed to Punch testify. However, Thackeray also argued that the satiric displacements that drove his magazine work were incompatible with the realism that ought to underlie what he described as the “Art of Novels.” Indeed, in the well-known 1849 letter, quoted earlier, Thackeray
follows Paine in invoking the conventions of the pantomime to describe the distorting effects of embellishments, exaggerations, and magical transformation on certain kinds of novel writing. Specifically, he criticizes the Dickensian mode for habitually turning “a coat” into “an embroidered tunic” and the poker into “a great red-hot instrument like the Pantomime weapon.”

For Thackeray then, the Painite suspicion of rhetorical embellishments moves from the domain of the political to that of the literary and is, indeed, made the basis of a system of novel writing that Thackeray associates with “Nature” and “the sentiment of reality.” It is not surprising, then, that Thackeray’s properly realistic representations of the elite, no matter how critical, would be based on the orchestration of details that he felt could be available to only those with direct access to the world of the upper classes. Moreover, Thackeray’s realism would demand that conversations among the socially sophisticated or the speech that a politician might make in parliament be naturalized, integrated seamlessly into the ebb and flow of their everyday lives, rather than be held up for public scrutiny.

In sharp contrast, Dickens self-consciously defamiliarized the language of power, representing it not as it really was but as it appeared to those excluded from its processes. Thus, Dickens worked with techniques that may be associated with Cobbett’s writing—repetition, magnification, exaggeration, parody—to expose and also to ridicule the ways in which languages of power drew upon their internal resources, on the socially sophisticated nuance or on the rhetoric of formality, to constitute themselves into those “practical metalanguage[s]” which, as Pierre Bourdieu argues, disguise semantic arbitrariness with an awe-inspiring formal rigor. The radical aesthetic that Dickens fabricated involved absorbing and redeploying, within the expressive system of the novel, those techniques of rewriting that Thackeray felt were appropriate for journalistic satire rather than literature. This would transform the novel’s representation of the languages of power: the sophisticated language that circulated in what Mrs. Merdle calls “Society” and the ceremonial discourses that came out of such institutions of the state as the law court or parliament. The activation of radical resources within Dickens’s novels would have consequences on the way the nineteenth-century critical establishment would receive these novels.

Radical publicists were adept at working with not just linguistic but also visual satire. The groundwork for the popular political cartoon may have been laid by the ultraconservative James Gillray, whose horrific images of the revolutionaries in France both laid out the expressive parameters within which graphic satire would develop and demonstrated the effectiveness of political cartooning as a means of political mobilization. But by the first
decade of the nineteenth century, radical publicists were using the political cartoon so effectively in their demystificatory project that it was recognized as, in the words of one of their most powerful adversaries, “a deadly weapon.”44 It is exactly this political efficacy of the radical print that is dramatized in Coriolanus Addressing the Plebeians (1820) (fig. 2). Here, Cruikshank depicts King George as Coriolanus, seemingly standing firm against Cobbett, Carlile, Hunt, Wooler, and the rest. But among these radical plebeians two figures stand out. One is, in Jonathan Bate’s summary, “William Hone holding two clubs, one marked ‘parody’ and the other ‘man in the moon-house that jack built,’ and the other is George Cruikshank holding a folio marked ‘Caricature.’”45

The confrontation that Cruikshank was dramatizing should be taken seriously. A few months before the publication of Coriolanus, Cruikshank had demonstrated for a very large, predominantly plebeian audience how opposition to an act or policy of the government could be inscribed in the images of state dignitaries. In a devastating sequence of caricatures that he produced for Hone’s pamphlets Cruikshank expressed the popular anger with the Peterloo massacre and with the king’s marital behavior by portraying King George himself as a “dandy of sixty”—grossly overdressed, overweight, ridiculous in his attempts to appear young and later, in E. P. Thompson’s summary, “blind drunk in his throne surrounded by broken bottles in front of a screen decorated with satyrs and large breasted trollops” (fig. 3).46 Moreover, Cruikshank’s Coriolanus is concerned with more than caricature’s innate capacity to degrade its subject, or the increasingly public nature of the discursive space within which it was now operating. It is also a self-conscious celebration of the collaboration between caricature and the language of radicalism.

As it happens, Hone, whose satiric fabrications in language are, in Coriolanus, shown to complement Cruikshank’s caricatures, commented at length in a later work on the relationship between the caricaturist’s unalterable lines and the more abstract conjurations of language. Referring to a “sketch” of a parish beadle that he had just delineated in prose, Hone acknowledges that the beadle’s “corporeal lineaments are ‘borrowed’ (with permission) from a new caricature, if it be given so low a name by one of the authors of ‘Odes and Addresses to the Great.’”47 Interestingly, however, Hone’s interest in this particular caricature seems inseparable from its movement away both from the definitiveness which was associated in Romantic theories of representation (as W. T. J. Mitchell has shown)48 with the visual arts and from the easily recognizable subjects of political caricature. Dissociated from the particularizing compulsions (and energies) of an existence in
FIGURE 2. George Cruikshank, *Coriolanus Addressing the Plebeians* (1820)
FIGURE 3. George Cruikshank, from *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* (1820)
the theatre of live politics, Hone’s caricature exemplifies a mode of satiric articulation that is “broad and comprehensive,” being directed, not at a person, but at a “class.” One might argue, indeed, that Hone’s “universal parish beadle” hovers on the edge of what Catherine Gallagher has called “the figure’s alluring fictionality which stimulates our desire to witness palpable human fabrications ‘appear as independent beings endowed with life.’”49 Hone himself thinks of his beadle not as mere “caricatura” but rather as “a graphic satire of character”—an imaginary entity which, freed from the fixity of the line drawing as well as the stable referents of real life, strives for those more speculative, abstract effects of literature. Hone’s collaborations with visual caricature—from the improvisations in language with which he complemented Cruikshank’s devastating portraits of King George during the period 1819–21 to the caricature that he raised in his *Everlasting Calendar of Popular Entertainments* (1827) to a “graphic satire of character”—mark in an unexpectedly clear fashion the process by which the radical caricaturist’s capacity to inscribe popular resentments in the very physical image of a state official or dignitary passed into language. Here it remained a potential expressive resource even for discourses that were generated not by the pressures of active real-life politics, but by the demand for satiric, entertaining fiction. Indeed, Hone considers radical graphic caricature in relation not only to real political events or people but also to the novelistic problem of characterization.

As young entrants to the print market of the 1830s, Thackeray and Dickens inevitably encountered both visual and linguistic caricatures of the beadle, bureaucrat, or the Member of Parliament, but they related to these in very different ways. Thackeray’s relationship with the demystifying techniques of radical portraiture was far more paradoxical than that of Dickens: he produced graphic caricatures of monarchs that seem almost like continuations of Cruikshank’s portraits, but he was also committed to a mode of novel writing that would replace the mobilizing, collective orientation of radical portraiture with the psychological complexity, the dense internal detailing, in short the depth of the lifelike character. Thus, as in so much of his other magazine work, Thackeray found himself pushed by the demands for antiestablishment satire in the print market of the 1830s into producing a print like “Rex, Ludovicus, Ludovicus Rex” (1840) where the king, stripped of his royal regalia, is imaged as a physically pathetic specimen of humanity. On the other hand, the movement from “Rex” to, say, the younger Sir Pitt Crawley in *Vanity Fair* is precisely a movement away from a mode of articulation based on extraindividualistic public concerns to one that seeks to unfold a sharply individualized consciousness across time and
in relation to that taken-for-granted, almost unnoticeable orchestration of
details that would, in fact, be available only to those with access to the internal
world of an aristocratic Whig politician.

How did the techniques of radical graphic satire affect Dickens’s characteriza-
tion? One way to begin answering this question is by engaging with
Alex Woloch’s seminal work on characterization and especially with the
ways in which this might help in the understanding of the different, almost
opposed, ways in which Dickens and Thackeray articulate the relationship
between the inner lives of characters and the external social domain. Thac-
keray’s move in the direction of realistic characterization had been predi-
cated on a shift in emphasis from those external signifiers—the king’s regalia,
for example—that gave the figure its social or political identity, to the ways
in which the social unfolds within what Alex Woloch has called “the interior
life of a singular consciousness.” On the other hand, Dickens’s protagonists,
as Woloch himself demonstrates with great insight, are typically constituted
as weak subjects. They are “epistemologically and psychologically passive,”
subordinate to that which they observe. Indeed, in Dickens’s fiction “the
distribution of energy” is often so strongly weighted in favor of the scene
and against the viewer, that it “overwhelm[s] contemplation or understand-
ing itself.” The fourth chapter of this book will be more centrally concerned
with the extremely interesting connection that Woloch makes between the
Dickensian protagonist’s inability to sustain a full inner self and the fre-
etic, always changing cityscape where he or she so often operates. More
relevant for my immediate purposes, however, is Woloch’s argument that the
weak subject’s inability to sustain continuous inner contemplation results in
his converting “seeing into ‘sights,’ processes into substances.” For Woloch
this reflex is, in fact, symptomatic of Dickens’s own method that “consis-
tently replaces incomplete vision with distorted visibility, hardening a social
process into a substantive physical phenomenon.” Woloch argues that this
incessant transformation of “incomplete seeing into eccentric or obscure
sights” may be one of the reasons for the overwhelming presence of minor,
caricaturized characters in Dickens’s fiction.51

The significance of Woloch’s work on Dickens’s characterization lies in
that it simultaneously explains the weak subjective life of Dickens’s pro-
tagonsists and the incessant proliferation in his novels of caricaturized minor
characters. It is important, however, to think through the problem of observa-
tion that is so central to Woloch’s explanation, in relation not only to the
subjectivity of the observer or to the conditions in which observations occur
but also to a set of more historically determined and collective ways of see-
ing. Sketches by Boz, for example, assumes a certain agreement—especially
on political matters—between the point of view of Boz and those who read what he observes and describes. Thus, the opening lines of “A Parliamentary Sketch” invoke a certain taken-for-granted skepticism about parliament and politicians that Boz shares with his readers and that will determine every subsequent observation that he makes: “We hope our readers will not be alarmed at this rather ominous title. We assure them that we are not about to become political, neither have we the slightest intention of being more prosy than usual—if we can help it.”

The “we” in this sentence represents an observer very different from Pickwick or Pip, who are always liable, as Woloch shows, to be overwhelmed by the frenetic action of the world outside. More specifically, Boz here is constituted not as a weak subject but as a figure who has subsumed his individuality under the collective identity that he shares with his readers. For this reason, the caricaturized portraits of parliamentarians that Boz will present have to be understood not as products of “incomplete seeing,” but rather as ways of embodying that skepticism about politicians that is inherent in Boz’s observing position and is indeed encoded in the sentence with which he opens “A Parliamentary Sketch.”

Boz’s situation and observations in “A Parliamentary Sketch” point to the limits of any explanation of Dickens’s caricaturization that is based entirely on the internal dynamics of his novels: on the relationship between the protagonist and the external world that surrounds him and, at a deeper level, on the ways that these novels absorb and replicate within their character systems the historically constituted hierarchies of the social world outside. One way to address this limitation is by focusing on a discursive process to which Thackeray and Dickens related in differing ways: the movement of expressive resources across divergent genres and media. Thus, even Thackeray, who sought self-consciously to insulate his serious writing from the influence of low forms like graphic caricature, found it impossible to write about George IV without getting inundated by the visual details that Cruikshank had set into circulation:

But this George, what was he? I look through all his life, and recognize but a bow and a grin. I try and take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs, and a fur collar, a star and blue ribbon, a pocket-handkerchief prodigiously scented . . . and a huge black stock, underwaistcoats, and more underwaistcoats and then nothing.

What Thackeray seems to focus on is the pervasive influence that Cruikshank’s caricaturizing tropes exercised over every subsequent attempt at
representing George IV. Thackeray, who was committed to delineating characters in all their psychological complexity, would certainly find this influence restrictive. But Cruikshank’s satiric visual vocabulary—the “schemata” (in the parlance of art criticism) that he set into circulation could also be thought of as a “cultural legacy,” a total repertoire of potentialities available as much to subsequent novelists as to artists. From this perspective, the following caricature of a “doctor of civil law” in Sketches by Boz seems to have been produced not by the weak observing subject, as Woloch may have argued, but by Dickens’s redeployment within the novel of techniques of articulating public figures that radical visual satire had pioneered:

There was one individual who amused us mightily. This was one of the bewigged gentlemen in red robes, who was straddling before the fire in the centre of the Court, in the attitude of a brazen Colossus, to the complete exclusion of everybody else. He had gathered his robes behind, in much the same manner as a slovenly woman would her petticoats on a very dirty day, in order that he might feel the full warmth of the fire . . . We shall never be able to lay any credit as a physiognomist again, for, after a careful scrutiny of this gentleman’s countenance, we had come to the conclusion that it bespoke of nothing but conceit and silliness, when our friend with the silver staff whispered in our ear that he was no other than a doctor of civil law, and heaven knows what besides. (87–88)

Replicating within the symbolic system of language precisely those visual details of dress, body, and posture with which graphic caricaturists achieve their effects, this portrait exemplifies what William Hone had described as “a graphic satire of character.” Moreover, Boz’s mode of representation is inseparable from an observing position that comes very close to what the radical journalist Wooler would describe as that of the “crowd”: “While [folly] struts in the robe of office, it is unconscious of the ridiculous appearance which it offers to the crowd. It would render laughter high treason if possible. . . .”

Similarly, it is by positioning himself among those unable to comprehend the protocols of courts that Boz is able not only to cut through the hierarchizing operations of officialdom but also to privilege a petitioner’s disgusted response to the petty domination exercised by some nameless official over an intimate and detailed knowledge of that official’s everyday life. In this sense, this early sketch might help clarify the whole sequence of caricaturized figures who appear in Dickens’s fiction, from Bumble to Tite Barnacle, not as products of Dickens’s unique comic genius or as figures flattened
by the dynamic character systems that Woloch describes, but rather as dis-
placements within a certain form of entertainment-oriented fictiona
lizing, of a strand of radical satire oriented toward building around its irreverent
representations of those who wielded political power a community of the
excluded.

In their confrontation with the persons and processes associated with
state power, the radical caricaturists deployed not only the disfiguring tech-
niques discussed above but also that profusion of allegorical detail, which,
as Baudelaire suggested, was integral to the work of the English caricatur-
ists. The “art of the rebus and of the primitive ideographic script” had,
of course, always found expression in the insignia of the aristocracy and
in the emblems of the state, but it had also developed, through the early
modern period, as a burlesque of official heraldry. Moreover, although the
radical discourse itself sustained a considerable iconography which served
as targets for conservative satirists, a great deal of its expressive energies
was generated by the recognition that emblems, insignia, and symbols were
never merely “the trimmings of political culture, but often went to the heart
of what was ultimately at issue: how power at all levels of the state and civil
society was to be defined and exercised.”

Radical publicists disrupted the state’s consecrating symbols in many
ways: from burlesquing the general’s cocked hat or the judge’s wig in their
caricatures of these dignitaries of the state to generating full-blown counter-
emblematic reworkings of official protocols. The important thing, though,
is to locate traces of the counteremblematic techniques of radical satire in
the language of popular radicalism after this had moved from the mobiliz-
ing texts of the 1820s to the print market of the ’30s. At this level, too, the
work of Douglas Jerrold proves to be invaluable. Thus, an essay like “The
Order of Poverty” (1846) not only addresses itself directly to the problem
of what it sees as the arbitrary consecrating function of heraldry but also
self-consciously reactivates, within the symbolic system of language, some of
graphic satire’s most effective modes of demystification.

One obvious example of such reactivation is Jerrold’s use of juxta-
position as a means of demystification. Thus, Jerrold habitually uses the
synchronic possibilities of pictorial representation to generate disconcert-
ing juxtapositions—for example, to set off against the prestige that a royal
decoration confers the actual achievements of those who receive such dec-
orations. Moreover, the metonymic extensions through which counter-
emblematic graphic satire attains its most characteristic effects are not only
replicated but, in fact, find freer if more diffused expression in Jerrold’s
prose. Liberated completely from the boundedness of the physical image,
and from even a minimal commitment to visible similarity as the basis of association, Jerrold can find in the radical indeterminacy of the linguistic signifier the means of effecting drastic and unexpected transformations on the object of his satire. Thus, it is not the visible imagery of the “Order of the Thistle” but its very antiquity that serves as the basis of Jerrold’s destabilizing counterdiscourse. If the “Order of the Thistle” is very old it can, by a metonymic extension, be said to be as “old as asses” and then be made to sustain the full-blown counterimage of an asinine “nobility” that “browses” on thistles. This kind of radical refiguring of traditional imagery generates unlimited expressive possibilities in Jerrold’s prose: the idea of the “order” itself proliferates into many parodic orders—for example, the Order of the Golden Calf whose knights have discarded armor and helmet for “the magic mail of impenetrable Bank-paper.” Again, since the counteremblematic imagery that Jerrold fabricates in language exploits but is no longer tied to the synchronicity of the picture frame, it becomes capable of sustaining not just a wider range of comic improvisations, but also sequence and, ultimately—as Jerrold’s parable of the Woky Poky Indians testifies—narrative itself.

The movement of the emblematic techniques of visual satire into the domain of literary print culture had important implications for the Dickensian aesthetic. It enabled a novel like *Bleak House* not only to generate a counteremblematic discourse against the ceremonious unfolding of the Chancery proceedings but also to sustain, within the spatially unconstrained novel form, a narrative based on the metonymic extensions of visual caricature. It was this new set of expressive possibilities that came to the novel from visual satire that was to produce the single most inventive episode in *Bleak House*: the symbolic death of Krook—the grotesque mirror image of the Lord Chancellor himself—by spontaneous combustion.
Introduction

1. See Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens*, 1045. The Charles Dickens Edition might, as Peter Ackroyd puts it, “be seen as encompassing and defining a lifetime’s work. It was truly [Dickens’s] memorial. His last edition.”


10. See Meisel, *Realizations*, 277–78. In what is, in my opinion, the best account of the afterlife of Hogarth’s prints, Martin Meisel reprints the playbill.

11. Pierce Egan, *Life in London, or, the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq. and his Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom . . . in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822), 4. All subsequent references to *Life in London* are to this edition, and page numbers appear parenthetically in the text following quotations from it.

12. The following announcement with which Dickens launched the first cheap edition of his novels is fairly typical: “It had been intended that this CHEAP EDITION, now
announced, should not be undertaken until the books were much older, or the Author was dead—To become, in his new guise a permanent inmate of many English homes, where, in his old shape he was only known as a guest, or hardly known at all; to be well thumbed and soiled in a plain suit that will be read a great deal by children, and grown people, at the fireside and on the journey; to be hoarded on the humble shelf where there are a few books, and to lie about in libraries like any familiar piece of household stuff—must obviously be among the hopes of a living author venturing on such an enterprise” (quoted in Sutherland, Victorian Novelists, 35).


14. Ibid., 466.


17. There are numerous occasions where Thackeray makes this complaint. For an extended example, see his letter to Edward Fitzgerald, October 7, 1836, in Ray, Letters, vol. 1, 322–23.


19. See Kathryn Chittick, Dickens and the 1830s, 67–91.


23. See Collins, Dickens: Critical Heritage, 126. The Edinburgh Review, for example, wrote that Dickens’s “desultory” education was not “likely to train him to habits of grave and solid speculation” and that as a “comic satirist,” he had made it his business “to observe society in its irregularities and incongruities, not in the sum and total of its operations.”


25. Epstein, Radical Expression.


30. See Epstein, Radical Expression.
31. Sally Ledger, Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination, 2, 8.

Chapter 1

8. Ibid., 421.
10. Ibid., 417.
15. For instance, Richard Carlile, whose early work as an editor and publisher represented the hard-line, austere, rationalist strand within radical journalism, found himself forced to move, by the 1830s, to the sort of entertainment-oriented proreform political satire that would attract not just the older plebeian audience that had grown around radical newspapers but middle-class readers as well. In fact, in his Humorous Sketches—a journal that he ran with some degree of commercial success between 1833 and 1836—Carlile had already begun the process of relocating radical expression within the moral universe of respectability that Dickens was to complete. Remarkably, when Chapman and Hall sought to repeat the commercial success of Humorous Sketches, they hired not only Carlile’s illustrator Robert Seymour but also a young and relatively unknown Dickens as a junior collaborator. See Louis James, Fiction for the Working Man, 1830–1850, 27–29.
19. See Ledger, Dickens, 114, 142.
23. As I move from Cruikshank to Doyle and Leech, I am indebted to Richard Altick’s point about a certain softening of graphic caricature. See Altick, Punch, esp. 122–35.
24. As Ledger shows, Dickens contributed squibs to the *Examiner* during the 1840s. See Ledger, *Dickens*, 142.


29. The comparison between Jerrold and Dickens was, in Philip Collins’s words, a “critical commonplace of the period.” See Collins, *Dickens: Critical Heritage*, 271. Collins’s anthology contains many nineteenth-century essays that make this comparison.

30. Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 294. All subsequent references to *Little Dorrit* are to this edition, and page numbers appear parenthetically in the text following quotations from it.


38. For a more extended description of the “enactment, combined with various circumstances which made the real ‘news’-papers expensive luxuries” and the consequent rise of “periodicals devoted to dealing with affairs in a humourous fashion [that] did not rank with news journals and so, avoiding taxation, could be sold at a price below that which had to be demanded for taxed papers” see Jerrold, *Douglas Jerrold*, 4.


42. Raymond Williams, “Notes on English Prose,” in *Writing in Society*, 89.


47. William Hone, *The Every-Day Book; or, Everlasting Calendar of Popular Amusements*, *Sports, Past times, Ceremonies, Manners, Customs and Events*, vol. 2, 130.


51. Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, 19, 144, 149, 150.

52. Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 152. All subsequent references to *Sketches by Boz* are to this edition, and page numbers appear parenthetically in the text following quotations from it.
Notes to Chapter 2

56. Quoted in Ledger, *Dickens*, 49.
57. See Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art*, esp. 231.

Chapter 2

1. William Makepeace Thackeray, “Going to See a Man Hanged,” in *A Shabby Gentleman and Other Writings*, 114.
2. William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1980), 483. All subsequent references to *Vanity Fair* are to this edition, and page numbers appear parenthetically in the text following quotations from it.
3. On the way Paine uses the present tense and the pronoun “we” in order to constitute his readers into a community of participants, see Smith, *Politics of Language*, esp. 53–54. On Cobbett’s habitual use of the language of “us” and “them,” see Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, esp. 820–24, where Thompson makes brilliant stylistic distinctions between the writing of Hazlitt and that of Cobbett.
4. “This typical (generic) expression can be regarded as the word’s ‘stylistic aura,’ but this aura belongs not to the word of the language as such but to that genre in which the given word usually functions. It is an echo of the generic whole that resounds in the word.” See M. M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres,” in *Speech Genres*, 87–88.
10. As Trey Philpotts has shown, variations of “How not do it” circulated in many forms of writing, not all of which were satiric or radical. For example, Carlyle in *Past and Present* refers to the “Donothingism” of “the non working aristocracy” and he exhorts them to “Descend, O do nothing Pomp; quit thy down cushion.” But Carlyle’s style suggests a social location very different from that of Dickens: it suggests the isolation of the prophetic intellectual rather than embedding him among the excluded majority. See Trey Philpotts, *The Companion to Little Dorrit*, 134. Michael Cotsell suggests an extremely interesting contemporary source for Dickens’s satire on the Circumlocution Office. This is a satiric piece by Charles Buller entitled “Mr. Mothercountry of the Colonial Office” which appeared in 1840 and was reprinted in 1849. Mr. Mothercountry is modeled on Sir James Stephen, who served as the prototype for Tite Barnacle as well, and he has perfected “a complete art of irrelevant and apparently purposeless correspondence, by which he


12. See endnote 3, but also Philpotts, *Companion*, 141–44.


15. On the emergence of the upper-class “salon” as a major “chronotope” in the nineteenth-century European novel, see Bakhtin, *Dialogical Imagination*, esp. 246–47.


21. Ibid.


23. See, for example, Walter Bagehot who claimed that while describing the aristocracy, Thackeray’s “thoughts were never long away from the close proximate scene,” in Walter Bagehot, “Sterne and Thackeray,” *National Review* 18 (April 1864): 524.


26. Ibid., 194, 196, 197.

27. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 245. All subsequent references to *Great Expectations* are to this edition, and page numbers appear parenthetically in the text following quotations from it.

28. See Wood, 182.


30. See Baudelaire, “Some Foreign Caricaturists.”


35. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Collins, 1953), 320, 243, 41, 320. All subsequent references to *Bleak House* are to this edition, and page numbers appear parenthetically in the text following quotations from it.

36. As Henry Maine wrote, “It does not seem to me a fantastic assertion that the ideas of one of the great novelists of the last generation may be traced to Bentham.” Humphrey House, who quotes this in what was in 1941 a major revisionary book on Dickens, demonstrates the strong presence of ideas from philosophical radicalism in the content of Dickens’s criticism of the state’s institutions. See House, *Dickens World*, esp. 36–40.


38. Thus, the very cover illustration for the monthly parts of *Little Dorrit* featured a
political cartoon that stretched across the top and depicted Britannia in a bath chair, drawn by a set of effete idiots, and followed by a retinue of fools and toadies. This caricatural fragment in conjunction with the extended written text that follows it may be said to implicitly acknowledge the debt that Little Dorrit owed to the radical publicists.


40. In itself, Krook’s death cannot be thought of as a serious social intervention. More specifically, it could be argued that the sensational and fantastic nature of Krook’s death seriously compromises its effectiveness as an intervention for reform by sublimating whatever popular discontentment there might actually have existed about Chancery practice—providing the means of its release rather than channeling it for direct action. In an influential essay Jonathan Arac has, indeed, asserted that although Krook is “totally consumed he takes nothing with him.” What Arac does not take into account is that Krook’s death becomes an occasion for the author to step out of the domain of fiction and directly address his audience about the mess that incompetent administrators, arbitrarily catapulted to positions of power, make of England’s key institutions. See Jonathan Arac, “Narrative Form and Social Sense in Bleak House and The French Revolution,” Nineteenth Century Fiction 32, no. 1 (1977): 69.


42. Ledger, Dickens, 41.

43. Wilson, Laughter of Triumph, 240. For an extended description of Hone’s trial, see also 223–59.

44. Ibid., 232, 237.


46. See Chittick, Dickens and the 1930s.


50. In his Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, Leslie Stephen suggested a personal angle that motivated Fitzjames Stephen’s attacks on Dickens’s later novels: “The attack on the ‘Circumlocution Office’ was, I doubt not, especially offensive because ‘Barnacle Tite’ and the effete aristocrats who are satirized in ‘Little Dorrit,’ stood for Sir James Stephen and his friends.” This personal angle only throws into sharper focus the political and cultural threat that Dickens’s fiction posed to social circles inhabited by the Stephens. The passage from Leslie Stephen is quoted in Cotsell, “The Stephen Family.”


53. On the use that Hone made of Sterne’s character Dr. Slop, in his prolonged and innovative engagement with the influential conservative journalist, Dr. John Stoddart, see Wilson, Laughter of Triumph, esp. 136–42.

54. Thus, Stephen sought to pin the novel down to the subjectivity of an individual destiny and to those “ordinary domestic relations” within which such subjectivity could be constituted. In these circumstances it is not surprising that Stephen should argue that “using the novel to ventilate opinions” was to step outside its “legitimate province.” These
and similar ideas, scattered through the many articles on the novel that Stephen published in the *Saturday* and the *Edinburgh Review* between 1855 and 1858, suggest that the emphasis on “character” and on familiar domestic experiences that were to become key components of what was later to be designated the “realistic” aesthetic, developed in the course of the polemics that the quarterlies spearheaded against not only “idealism” and “sensationalism,” but also against the radical heritage of the popular Dickensian novel. The phrases quoted from Stephen appear in “Relation of Novels,” 95, “License of Modern Novelists,” 125, and “Relation of Novels,” 113.


**Chapter 3**

7. The political ramifications of the crowd have, of course, been extensively and insightfully discussed. What I am looking at is the significance of the crowd in popular representations of the city. On the politics of the “Tyburn crowd” see Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*.
10. In the second volume of his biography of Hogarth Paulson demonstrates that the tension between Hogarth’s fascination with the life on the streets and his moral condemnation of it was very much in evidence in the reception of *Industry and Idleness* as well. See Paulson, *Hogarth*, 290–91.
13. David Henkin, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York*, 12. As will be quickly evident to anyone who has read Henkin’s fine book, I am here merely redepolying a distinction that he first made.
15. Ibid., 102.

19. Ibid., xxiii.


23. Quoted in ibid., 137.


35. Quoted in ibid., 251.


39. Marcus, *Apartment Stories*, 37. As Kate Flint has shown, Dickens was familiar with the figure of Asmodeus. See Kate Flint, *Dickens*, 71.


42. Ibid., 26.


44. Ibid., 115. As de Certeau argues, “Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice.”

45. Ibid., 115.


Chapter 4

13. Ibid., 125.
17. An important exception is Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in America*. As will become quickly evident, Denning’s work has influenced my own reading of Lady Dedlock.
19. The privileging of the psychologically authentic character had begun in the pages of the great Victorian quarterlies themselves and it was Lewes himself who, in an article devoted significantly to Thackeray, made the distinction that was to remain normative at least for the next hundred and twenty years, between artists who drew their characters from “Life” and those who found their inspiration in “the phantasmagoria of the stage and circulating library.” About twenty years later, the young Henry James was articulating the assumptions of what was now a fairly well-developed critical tradition when, while launching a full-blown realistic critique against Dickens, he repeated Lewes’s distinction in his own terms. For James, since what Dickens offered was not human beings at all but “a community of eccentrics,” it would be appropriate to speak of him as a writer who produced not characters, but “simply figures.” The phrases from Lewes’s writing appear in G. H. Lewes, “Recent Novels: French and English,” *Fraser’s Magazine* 36 (December 1847): 687, and G. H. Lewes, Untitled, *Morning Chronicle*, March 6, 1848: 440.
21. Ibid., 150.
22. Ibid., 151.
34. Quoted in Royston Lambert, Sir John Simon and English Social Administration, 135.
35. Quoted in Hamlin, Public Health and Social Justice, 70.
41. Matthew Brown, Views and Opinions, 280.

Chapter 5

1. De Certeau, Practice of Everyday Life, 103.
4. Quoted in Best, Mid-Victorian Britain, 233.
5. For detailed accounts of this celebratory discourse as it unfolded during the late 1850s and ’60s, see Fielden, “Samuel Smiles,” and Harrison, “Victorian Gospel.”
7. I am aware, of course, that the articulation of social difference in Great Expectations—as in Little Dorrit—is ultimately contained within the work-oriented, self-improving ideology of the entrepreneurial middle class. This is, moreover, consistent with the long tradition of scholarship that, following the seminal work of Humphrey House, embeds the
“radicalism” that informs Dickens’s fiction as a whole to the ideological universe of the middle class. Thus the story of Pip’s improvement—his recognition of gentlemanliness as both emotionally impoverishing and economically parasitic—is consistent with the ideological impulse that produced a whole line of Dickensian heroes: David Copperfield, George Rouncewell, Daniel Doyce. However, like *Little Dorrit*, whose political orientation unfolds across two registers—on the one hand, as the entrepreneurial Daniel Doyce’s deeply critical but patient and reasonable response to the workings of an aristocracy-dominated bureaucracy and, on the other, as the more strident, fundamentally oppositional language of radicalism reactivated in the authorial comments on the Circumlocution Office—*Great Expectations* sustains a radical articulation of class divisions even as it seeks, through a range of discursive maneuvers, to reconcile Pip to Joe and to complete the story of the former’s growth into a humane, hardworking, productive, and reasonable member of official society. Joe may help to facilitate Pip’s rehabilitation but his function, through most of the novel, is to expose the limits of Pip’s gentlemanly personality. For an account of *Great Expectations* along the lines outlined above see Robin Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*; on *Little Dorrit* see William Myers “The Radicalism of *Little Dorrit*” in *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Lucas, pp. 75–105.

8. As Gallagher puts it, “Pip’s metropolitan environment not only fails to resemble the realized societies of Balzac’s Paris or Eliot’s Middlemarch, but also bears little likeness to Dickens’s normal London. Sparsely populated, with a higher-than-usual proportion of eccentrics, this is a milieu of the margins . . . .” See Gallagher and Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, 180.

10. Ibid., 103.
13. On the chronotope, see Bakhtin, *Dialogical Imagination*, 84.
16. Ibid., 103.
17. On the significance of the *mésalliance* as an expressive resource within the novel, see Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*, esp. 123–24.
18. As James Wheatly suggests, “Thackeray is at his best making this period of adjustment not only dramatically believable but very nearly the proper response to the life presented in the novel. A brief infatuation with the lower-class Fanny is presented as being in part an unconscious revulsion from so passionless a life . . . .” See James H. Wheatly, *Patterns in Thackeray’s Fiction*, 111. See also Anna Monsarrat, *An Uneasy Victorian: Thackeray the Man*, 233.
22. In an essay entitled significantly “Sexuality and Solitude” where he declares his intention to move from his study of “asylums, prisons and so on” to that of power relations as they unfold in the domain of subjectivity, Foucault is explicit in linking “technologies of the self” to sexuality. See Michel Foucault, in *On Signs: A Semiotic Reader*, ed. Marshall Blonsky, 367.
25. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 272. As will be quickly evident, I have drawn heavily on Foucault’s work for my analysis of criminality in *Great Expectations*.

Chapter 6

2. Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), 542. All subsequent references to *Our Mutual Friend* are to this edition, and page numbers appear parenthetically in the text following quotations from it.
15. For a fuller discussion see my introduction.


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