CHAPTER I

2. "Prolegomena to the Analysis of Prose Style," in Style in Prose Fiction, Harold C. Martin, ed. (English Institute Essays, 1958), p. 6. In this essay, Ohmann analyzes the process of selection and ordering as an intuitive, primitive function of the human consciousness endeavoring to impose meaning on raw experience. "The perceiver," he explains, shapes the world by choosing from it whatever perceptual forms are most useful to him—though most often the choice is unconscious and inevitable. . . . the selections are initially free, in an important sense. . . . In these multifarious Ur-choices, these pre-verbal and verbal pigeon-holings, style has its beginnings. If the critic is able to isolate and examine the most primitive choices which lie behind a work of prose, they can reveal to him the very roots of a writer's epistemology, the way in which he breaks up for manipulation the refractory surge of sensations which challenges all writers and perceivers. In this Heracitean flux, and not in the elusive forms of thought, is the common source of all perceptions, all sentences, all prose. (p. 9)

3. Note how aptly this likewise describes Kant's "Intuitions."
6. The Problem of Style, p. 85.
7. Here I am indebted to John Romano for his discussion of closure/openness in Dickens and Reality (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978; for a more extended review, see "Bibliographical Essay"). Romano begins this particular discussion with the premise that all novels represent a "closed" world or system of some kind, if only in respect to form: to shape into form is to exclude the surrounding world. Yet the surrounding world is "reality." Dickens is an artist who, realizing the artificiality of the forms he has created, finds means of "exploding" them by the intrusion of some uncontrollable reality. If novels are in a sense "games" or "systems," such intrusions momentarily scatter or knock the pieces off the board. Then, as they themselves become a part of the form, some new "devastation" must occur: "the repeated devastations themselves become a metaphor. . . . for the vulnerability of any creation of human consciousness . . . to the disordering impact of actuality" (p. 20).
8. When the symbol is an analogy, the discrimination described makes no real difference. But when something like a white horse, for instance, is established as a symbol standing for tradition, then the rules of the game have been confusingly violated when it suddenly stands for something else—or for nothing at all beyond itself. This type of arbitrary symbol is, I think, quite absent from Dickens.


We find clear anticipation in *Pickwick* of that so-called symbolism represented in later work by the railway (said by some to hint at the ruthlessness of Dombey, by others at the change from commerce to industry which was to oust Dombey); by the fog, the caged birds, the dust-heap, and perhaps the river in *Our Mutual Friend.* Dickens uses one of Tennyson's favourite words to refer to the railway train in *Dombey*—he calls it 'a type of the triumphant monster, Death.' Mr. Wilson, who saw a more complicated symbolism in Dickens's characters, refers to such things as this as 'metaphors that hang as emblems over the door.' 'Emblems' is an excellent word to use, for they are not really symbols acting as signs for the total insights of the novels in which they occur. A symbol does not resemble what it signifies, as does—in some significant respect—an image or emblem. So it is a pity to use the term symbol, perfectly suited to indicating the function of, say, the idea of 'the wings of the dove' in James's novel, in reference to something which is so different in kind. "Emblem" justly indicates their traditional nature, and has, too, the additional merit of being Dickens's own word to describe, in *Pickwick,* a withered plant vainly watered by the wife of a prisoner in the Fleet—'too true an emblem, perhaps, of the office she had come there to discharge.' When Mr. Pickwick was greeted on his first arrival in the prison by the sight of a Dutch clock and a bird-cage, Sam Weller was quick to point out the meaning of these objects. 'Veels within Veels, a prison in a prison. . .' Dickens does not of course allow his emblems to arrest his narrative as does Bunyan. The dust-heap in *Our Mutual Friend* plays its part in the narrative very well; but it is clear that it is to bear from time to time a pejorative construction as an analogue for filthy lucre. That it is an emblem rather than a symbol is shown by the fact that its meaning (over and above that required in the fiction) is to be taken at some times and not at others. Dickens does not examine the merits of being allowed to inherit large unearned incomes, only the legality of so doing. Consequently the Harmon money comes in the end to the virtuous Rokesmith and Bella, its disagreeable origin, as emblematically represented, no longer felt to be disturbing. Obviously we cannot say, as we might say of the bullfight in *The Sun Also Rises,* for example, that it is a symbolic control enabling the author to reinforce the plot, for at times the analogue could, if remembered too long, actually oppose it. (pp. 38–39)

10. Although it has been customary to treat imagination and fancy as interchangeable when considering Dickens, I believe it is helpful to preserve Coleridge’s distinctions between these two imaginative faculties. In discussing imagination, Coleridge describes “that synthetic and magical
power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination." This power "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: the sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order. . . ." While imagination is "the Soul [of poetic genius] that is everywhere, and in each," fancy is "its Drapery." Fancy he describes as "no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association" (Biographia Literaria, chs. 13 and 14).

These distinctions seem admirably suited for considering the imaginative faculties of Charles Dickens. Imagination (a synthesizing power capable of fusing into a unity the "opposite or discordant," revealing itself through its ability to balance or reconcile sameness/difference, general/concrete, idea/image, individual/representative, new/old, emotion/order) is that faculty of the mind creating significance or meaning through its ability to fuse reports from its two sources of knowledge: the chaotic phenomena from the sense world outside, and the ordering concepts of the idea world inside. This imagination "invents" nothing: its images are limited to the multifarious but still finite "real" experiences of its owner. Its products have a coherent stability capable of unifying experience into a controlled interpretation of life: what in this study is referred to as Dickens's "mode of experience." Fancy, on the other hand, "no other than a mode of memory" that must "receive all its materials ready made from the law of association" yet ranges freely, unrestricted by bondage to Time and Space, which condition all experience in the "real" sense world. Fancy invents its images; its product, according to Herbert Read, is "fantasy," which is distinguished by objectivity and apparent arbitrariness, is notably expressed in the fairy tale, is primitive or at least innocent, dispenses with all logic and habit, and relies on the force of wonder alone. "Fancy and imagination," says Read, "are to be regarded as equal and opposite faculties, directly related to the general opposition of discursive and non-discursive thought" (English Prose Style [Boston: Beacon Press, 1963], ch. 9). The wonderful inventiveness of Dickens's fancy can easily conceal its complete dependence upon the controlling imagination that gives fantasy its tie with reality. The "apparent arbitrariness" of his fancy's products turns out upon analysis to be after all a "mode of memory," disguised as dream images mask their origins.

CHAPTER II

1. For instance, "The Child's Story" (Christmas story for 1852), which is frankly an allegory, is structured in this analogy:
Once upon a time a good many years ago, there was a traveller, and he set out upon a journey. It was a magic journey, and was to seem very long when he began it, and very short when he got half way through. . . . The whole journey was through a wood, only it had been open and green at first, like a wood in spring; and now began to be thick and dark, like a wood in summer. . . . And now the wood was yellow; and now brown; and the leaves, even of the forest trees, began to fall [etc.]. (CS)

2. To understand the role of these images in a totally conceived Weltanschauung, it might be instructive to note a common interpretation of the sea that Dickens avoids. The linear journey of life is never viewed as a sea voyage. People go off on sea journeys, to be sure, but most of these are literal. (Bella Rokesmith gives the idea a different figurative value when she explains to her husband that “there is a ship upon the ocean” bringing them a baby [OMF, bk. IV, ch. 5].)

It is further important to maintain a distinction between the literal and figurative uses of the river imagery, since people roam freely up and down the literal rivers flowing through Dickens’s novels and stories. But in the figurative sense, people never go back up the river: the “everlasting-grown garden” not only seems but is “left for everlasting, unregainable, and far away.” The point here is that Dickens’s use of commonplace images and analogies is selective and purposeful, marking not the thoughtlessness of common use, but the usage of concretely formulated thought.

3. See also chapter VII, which follows this allegory into the story of Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit.

4. The context here, as always, makes clear whether the literal or figurative imagery is applicable. For example, Mr. Guppy (see following discussion), while literally on the lower river, is figuratively on the upper river. Rogue Riderhood, on the other hand (see ch. III), while literally on the upper river is figuratively described in lower-river terms.

5. This “stream of life that will not stop” becomes in A Tale of Two Cities the footsteps of the downtrodden populace, which echo through its pages. Foreshadowed first on the quaint corner in London where Dr. Manette lived—“a wonderful place for echoes”—they trace the restless rebellion of the common people through its explosion in the bloody events of the Terror. Here in London, even the withdrawn corner of Dr. Manette “had begun to echo . . . resoundingly to the tread of coming feet. . . . Not only would the echoes die away, as though the steps had gone; but, echoes of other steps that never came would be heard in their stead” (T2C, bk. II, ch. 6). In France, the roadways are filled with a “myriad of small creatures,” pedestrians all, who watch and wait and finally act. The last chapter of the novel relates the events of the day when “The Footsteps Die out for Ever.” Twenty-three aristocratic heads are to roll on this day. In front of La Guillotine, a number of women “seated in chairs, as in a garden of public diversion,” knit busily. (Cf. the spectators at Sikes’s and Fagin’s deaths.) As the heads fall, the women count. “The murmuring of many voices, the
upturning of many faces, the pressing of many footsteps in the outskirts of the crowd, so that it swells forward in a mass, like one great heave of water, all flashes away" (bk. III, ch. 15). It is now all over.

(With the single exception in chapter IV, I have included all references to *A Tale of Two Cities* in the notes rather than at the appropriate places in the text to emphasize the pervasive and encompassing presence of Dickens's mode of experience in this late "historical" novel.)

6. Some twelve years after writing this observation, I came across this corroborative piece of testimony from Dickens himself in a letter to G. H. Lewes, assigned the probable date of 9 June, 1838:

With reference to that question of yours [unidentified] concerning Oliver Twist I scarcely know what answer I can give you. I suppose like most authors I look over what I write with exceeding pleasure and think (to use the words of the elder Mr. Weller) "in my innocence that it's all very capital". I thought that passage a good one *when* I wrote it, certainly, and I felt it strongly (as I do almost every word I put on paper) *while* I wrote it, but how it came I can't tell. It came like all my other ideas, such as they are, ready made to the point of the pen—and down it went. Draw your own conclusion and hug the theory closely. (Madeline House and Graham Storey, *The Letters of Charles Dickens* [Cambridge, MA: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965], I, 493).

Why it came "ready made to the point of the pen" can be referred to his mode of experience.

7. The "Surrey side" of the river carries special significance apparently even in this early work. Later, its relationship to a recurring Dickens use of it is *presumably* accounted for in a journalistic piece called "Down with the Tide" (February 5, 1853), in which Dickens discusses the use of bridges by suicidal persons. The story's narrator, a young reporter, receives a full macabre report from the keeper of Waterloo Bridge—a bridge favored by the desperate. After several vivid anecdotes, the reporter asks the keeper "if there were a favorite side of his bridge for this dreadful purpose? He reflected, and thought yes, there was. He should say the Surrey side." Crossing to the Surrey side, then, carries added suggestion of violent death, usually self-inflicted.

8. "Coaches," in contrast, seem to represent incursions into the actual world. For instance, the members of the Pickwick Club travel by coach through their contemporary world.

Coaches figure even more prominently in *A Tale of Two Cities* as they carry travellers along the highways between London and Paris as well as to other destinations in the troubled period before the French Revolution. Along those same highways and byways travel the "carriages" of "their Greatnesses," the aristocracy. These carriages, in contrast, encapsulate their occupants against the reality of the pedestrians (cf. note 5) lining their path—the "myriads of small creatures" whose eyes follow the passage of the carriages whirling recklessly past them. Today, for example, the Marquis is conveyed swiftly along the road between Paris and his country
château. He remains stonily indifferent to the child killed beneath the wheels of his carriage as it swoops around a street corner by a fountain around which peasants are gathered. Carelessly, he tosses a coin to the grieving father and reacts with cold anger when somebody sends it flying back into his carriage. Regarding the cowed group, he says smoothly: "I would ride over any of you very willingly and exterminate you from the earth" (T2C, bk. II, ch. 7).

The Marquis cannot foresee that the roads shared by travellers, pedestrians, and aristocracy—all intent on their own purposes—are the routes leading to the French Revolution. In this light, the name of the revolutionary figure known only as "a mender of roads" takes on heightened significance.

9. The implications of this indifference to time are developed in chapter IV.

10. David Copperfield has a related experience in recalling his youthful love for Dora (see ch. V). The initial impulse of the adult toward "contemptuous recollection" of the "lackadaisical young spooney" is succeeded by a deeper empathic look at himself.

11. Certain terms signifying this monotony are repeatedly encountered in descriptions of marshes: weary, dreary, bleak, dismal, and melancholy will be seen to interplay in many ways, both obvious and subtle.

12. A striking example of the non-discursive method in operation. By mentioning the absence of mounds, he brings them into the imaginative picture.

13. On another occasion, an interesting interchange between David and Steerforth reminds the reader of the deadly marsh monotony. Aunt Betsy has sent David to Yarmouth to think over what he wants to do with his life.

"Why, she reminds me, Steerforth," said I, "that I came out on this expedition to look about me, and to think a little."

"Which, of course, you have done?"

"Indeed I can't say I have, particularly. To tell you the truth, I am afraid I had forgotten it."

"Well! look about you now, and make up for the negligence," said Steerforth. "Look to the right, and you'll see a flat country, with a good deal of marsh in it; look to the left, and you'll see the same. Look to the front, and you'll find no difference; look to the rear, and there it is still."

I laughed, and replied that I saw no suitable profession in the whole prospect, which was perhaps to be attributed to its flatness. (DC, ch. 23)

14. Note how Lizzie's shiver has been dissociated from her to become the depersonalized shudder attached to the general picture.

15. Similar fusions occur in two places in A Tale of Two Cities. Both relate to the story of the Marquis. On the evening of the day his carriage runs over the child (see note 8), it passes at sunset through the village near his château. Striking "brilliantly" into the travelling carriage, the setting sun
has “steeped [its occupant] in crimson.” Glancing at his hands, the Marquis
is unconcerned by their hue: “It will die out,” he says, “directly.” As the
carriage slides down over the hill, sun and Marquis “go . . . down together”
(T2C, bk. II, ch. 8).

The other fusion is more complex and subtle. In the village near the
château, “pedestrian” figures at all times cluster around the fountain for
necessary refreshment. As both punishment for the death of the Marquis
and as a warning to the rebellious populace, his murderer has been hanged
on a gallows raised for the occasion “forty feet high” beside the fountain—
“and is left hanging, poisoning the water” (bk. II, ch. 15). Then, one black
night, “the château began to make itself strangely visible by some light of
its own . . .” A flickering streak soars higher and higher. Stone faces,
awakened, stare out of fire. “The mender of roads, and two hundred and
fifty particular friends, stood with folded arms at the fountain, looking at
the pillar of fire in the sky. ‘It must be forty feet high,’ said they, grimly;
and never moved” (bk. II, ch. 29). One fancies that the red pillar of fire has
stained the waters of the fountain into a torrent of blood.

16. These analogies relating the destruction of human beings to that
of trees are the first of many references to the relationship to be found
throughout this study. The whole complex analogy will be most fully de-
veloped in chapter VIII.

17. The death-related meanings of the “arched” bridge attach to other
arched things. References to “arching trees,” the arch of a cathedral, or the
“arched thoroughfare” of the next quotation set vibrating the affective
meanings of the lower-river configurations.

18. A comparable staining works as a leitmotif throughout A Tale of
Two Cities. It is 1775. In the street before the wine shop of Monsieur
Defarge in the Paris suburb of St. Antoine, a large cask of wine has been
dropped and broken, spilling its red contents everywhere. Suddenly, scav-
geners appear, to kneel down, make scoops of their hands, dip in the
puddles with little mugs or head kerchiefs, “while the wine game lasted.”
Then they are quickly gone, and fingers rake the area back into a gridiron
pattern. But the stains are everywhere. The wine has stained the ground of
the narrow street, has stained many faces and naked feet, and has stained
the hands of the man who saws the wood. Now someone has “scrawled
upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees—BLOOD. The
time was to come, when that wine too would be spilled on the street-stones,
and the stain of it would be red upon many there” (T2C, bk. I, ch. 5).

19. Although showing is by no means inherently superior to telling,
when Dickens entrusts his meaning to the non-discursive imagery, to add a
discursive explanation lessens its artistic effectiveness.

20. Why not a “light”? The substitution of the fire image deserves men-
tion, for fire creates both light and heat. As the lighthouse promises safety,
the fireplace promises a warm sanctuary against the threatening elements.
Both promises are cruelly deceptive here.
21. And yet not so displaced either, since "coke" is the direct product of a long-ago marsh.

22. Cf. the view of Mr. Podsnap, who has a very froglike aspect: "the world got up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past five, and dined at seven. Mr. Podsnap's notions of the Arts in their integrity might have been stated thus" (OMF, bk. I, ch. 11).

23. Could Eliot have had this passage in mind when he has Prufrock say: "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas"?

24. Dickens substitutes his own marsh word for Pope's less pointed "slow": "A needless Alexandrine ends the song / That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along" ("An Essay on Criticism," ll. 356–57).

25. Note the echoing variants on the "bleak place" that Pip uses to describe the marsh (GE, ch. 1).

26. Since Lincolnshire covers a territory at one time actually marshland, we are not permitted to forget that the Dedlock place is situated there, though no point is made of the same fact in reference to its neighbors.

27. The only reference to this subject I have been able to find appears as the postscript of a letter to Angela Burdett-Coutts, dated October 30, 1852 (#159 in Edgar Johnson, The Heart of Charles Dickens, New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1952): "I think of doing something about the Thames Police, and had some of the Toll takers at Waterloo Bridge at the office yesterday to put some questions to them about their experience of Suicide. Their answers were rather curious. Almost all the attempts are by women—a man quite a rarity." Although Johnson adds as a footnote: "Dickens does not seem to have written anything on this subject" it was, as a matter of fact, published on February 5, 1853, as "Down with the Tide." If, as I now suspect, the interview referred to was the main source of information for the article, the fortuitous adaptation of details to his mode of experience is readily accounted for: they were entirely products of his imagination rather than partly reports of observation.

CHAPTER III

1. Magwitch, returning years later to make himself known to Pip, and mistaking as a failure of memory Pip's reluctance to recognize him, tries to jog the young man's recollection with a dumb play that would have required an uncanny knowledge of Pip's perceptions on this occasion of their first meeting. Pip writes:

If the wind and the rain had driven away the intervening years, had scattered all the intervening objects, had swept up to the churchyard where we first stood face to face on such different levels, I could not have known my convict more distinctly than I knew him now, as he sat in the chair before the fire. No need to take a file from his pocket and show it to me: no need to take the
handkerchief from his neck and twist it round his head: no need to hug himself with both his arms, and take a shivering turn across the room, looking back at me for recognition. I knew him before he gave me one of those aids. (GE, ch. 99)

Except for the file (experientially shared by them), Magwitch's choice of details reflects that this emblematic image cluster was indelibly printed in Dickens's imagination to help define the convict.

2. Such a person is the Marquis, who fittingly lives in a stony château.

It was a heavy mass of building, that château of Monsieur the Marquis, with a large stone court-yard before it, and two stone sweeps of staircase meeting in a stone terrace before the principal door. A stony business altogether, with heavy stone balustrades, and stone urns, and stone flowers, and stone faces of men, and stone heads of lions, in all directions. As if the Gorgon's head had surveyed it, when it was finished, two centuries ago. (T2C, bk. 1, ch. 9)

On the morning after the Marquis is murdered, unusual activity in the village seems to promise some unusual discovery. “What did all this portend?”: “It portended that there was one stone face too many, up at the château. The Gorgon had surveyed the building again in the night, and had added the one stone face wanting; the stone face for which it had waited through about two hundred years” (bk. I, ch. 9).

Stony people are often recognized by their stony names: Murdstone, Headstone, Carstone, Jasper, Claypole.

3. Oliver needs a similar graphic instruction in order to follow an otherwise cryptic conversation with Charley Bates.

“It's naughty, ain't it, Oliver?” inquired Charley Bates. “He'll come to be scragged, won't he?”

“I don't know what that means,” replied Oliver.

“Something in this way, old feller,” said Charley. As he said it, Master Bates caught up an end of his neckerchief and, holding it erect in the air, dropped his head on his shoulder and jerked a curious sound through his teeth, thereby indicating, by a lively pantomimic representation, that scragging and hanging were one and the same thing. (OT, ch. 18)

4. A shift to be encountered much more subtly in the later portrayal of John Jasper.

5. Mr. Flintwinch, of Little Dorrit, is similarly described. This crablike old man has a “neck so twisted, that the knotted ends of his white cravat usually dangled under one ear” to give his features “a swollen and suffused look. . . . Altogether he had a weird appearance of having hanged himself at one time or other, and of having gone about ever since, halter and all, exactly as some timely hand had cut him down” (LD, bk. I, ch. 3).

6. The comparison with Flintwinch continues. Arthur Clennam has arrived at his mother's house “to find the door open, and Mr. Flintwinch smoking a pipe on the steps. . . . The smoke came crookedly out of Mr. Flintwinch's mouth, as if it circulated through the whole of his wry figure and came back by his wry throat, before coming forth to mingle with the
smoke from the crooked chimneys and the mists from the crooked river” (*LD*, bk. II, ch. 23).

As Arthur regards him, “Mr. Flintwinch, regarding the opposite house over the gateway with his neck twisted and one eye shut up, stood smoking with a vicious expression upon him; more as if he were trying to bite off the stem of his pipe, than as if he were enjoying it.”

7. Dickens’s obvious awareness of the primal elements here draws attention to the conspicuous role they play in the primitive river and marsh allusions. The way in which these elements appear in combination is particularly noteworthy (i.e., fire visually mingling with water to suggest blood; air and water mixing for fog, rain, snow, hail; water and earth combining into mud; earth and air mingling in flying particles of dust).

8. Echo insists that there must be some relationship between this flight, Miss Flite, the flightiness of Richard, and Lady Dedlock’s final flight.

9. It is interesting to note here once again how the associational non-discursive method works. Although it speaks of “departed” monsters, what the passage actually does is bring them in, comparing them to passions most inappropriate for the context, since the departed monsters were predominantly cold-blooded. Their real effect is to suggest the marsh.

10. It should be noted that the people described as related to the marsh by monotony have already been environmentally associated with it (see ch. II). The Lincolnshire place, Daniel Quilp’s counting-house, the Chancery Court, Coketown, and Cloisterham furnish the environmental backgrounds for each of these people respectively.

11. Dickens employs an effective device of punctuation here to enhance the feeling of undependable dream logic. A stricter logic would surely reverse the exclamation points and the question marks in these first four statements.

12. The full meaning of this allusion will not be clear until chapter V.

13. Late in the story, this association is made explicit. The haggard woman of the opium den, spying on John Jasper, is making inquiries about him. “Has he a calling, good gentleman?” ‘Calling? Yes. Sings in the choir.’ ‘In the spire?’ ‘Choir’” (*MED*, ch. 23).

14. This house interestingly fuses past, present, future to reinforce Durdles’s timelessness: an antiquated house built of stones from a remote past, to be finished, if ever, at some vague future time.

15. Compare the sensitivity of Fagin’s throat (et al.).

16. Earle Davis points out in *The Flint and the Flame* ([Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1963], pp. 191–96) that this practice of building a case to be destroyed with a surprise ending is one of the very few actual influences of Wilkie Collins on Dickens. Davis therefore also considers the strong possibility that Jasper would be proved innocent.

17. I suspect the passage means that Jasper suddenly realizes the triviality of “it,” his desire for his nephew’s death: a realization that will destroy the effectiveness of the opium dream.
18. Dickens’s marsh creatures belong with other Victorian aborigines (the antitheses of the romantic noble savage). Compare especially Browning’s Caliban.

CHAPTER IV

1. Despite its corruption, the city is the center of human society, the place for the traveller to throw his lot in with “the common stock of people.”

2. This idea is discussed in chapter VI.

3. In direct contrast, in *A Tale of Two Cities* a clue to Charles Darnay’s true character is given on his first appearance in the prisoner’s dock through his gentle relationship to plant growth. “He was quiet and attentive; watched the opening proceedings with a grave interest; and stood with his hands resting on the slab of wood before him, so composedly, that they had not displaced a leaf of the herbs with which it was strewn” (*T2C*, bk. II, ch. 2).

As he stands there, “some passing thought of the infamy and disgrace” for which this court has been reserved crosses his mind, “his face flushe[s], and his right hand pushe[s] the herbs away.” Later in the proceedings, when Miss Manette is charged to look upon the prisoner:

To be confronted with such pity, and such earnest youth and beauty, was far more trying to the accused than to be confronted with all the crowd. Standing, as it were, apart with her on the edge of his grave, not all the staring curiosity that looked on, could, for the moment, nerve him to remain quite still. His hurried right hand parcelled out the herbs before him into imaginary beds of flowers in a garden: and his efforts to control and steady his breathing shook the lips from which the colour rushed to his heart. (bk. II, ch. 3)

4. Compare the description of Mr. Lorry in *A Tale of Two Cities*: “Very orderly and methodical he looked, with a hand on each knee, and a loud watch ticking a sonorous sermon under his flapped waistcoat as though it pitted its gravity and longevity against the levity and evanescence of the brisk fire” (bk. I, ch. 4). He, too, is wearing Time as a man of precise and orderly control. But whereas Dombey’s watch is “pitted against” that of Dr. Parker Peps in the ensuing discussion, Lorry’s watch is in some kind of contest with the “brisk fire” that replaces “the feeble rays of the distant fire.” The full meaning of the fire imagery will be examined in chapter VIII.

CHAPTER V

1. Although Dickens almost invariably uses the masculine gender in his allegorical accounts, his interpretations are not as sexist as the practice might imply, but rather emphasize their probable self-reference. As will be demonstrated, girls as well as boys, women as well as men, suffer similar
effects from their experience in the childhood garden. For simplicity, Dickens's style is followed in this analysis in chs. V–VII, and in the summary in ch. IX.

2. Cf. the titles Dickens gives to the three “books” of Hard Times—“Sowing,” “Reaping,” and “Garnering”—in which he carries through the garden imagery.


4. The Doll's house is Dickens's emblem for the remembered lost home described by Arthur Miller in his essay, “The Family in Modern Drama,” (reprinted in Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism, Travis Bogard and Wm. Oliver, eds. [London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965]). Compare Miller's description of the universal experience:

It has been said often that the central theme of the modern repertoire is the alienation of man, but the idea usually halts at the social alienation—he cannot find a satisfying role in society. What I am suggesting . . . is that while this is true of our plays, the more or less hidden impulse antedating social alienation, the unsaid premise of the very idea of “satisfaction,” is the memory of both playwright and audience of an enfolding family and of childhood. It is as though both playwright and audience believed that they had once had an identity, a being, somewhere in the past which in the present has lost its completeness, its definitiveness, so that the central force making for pathos in these large and thrusting plays is the paradox which Time bequeaths to us all: we cannot go home again, and the world we live in is an alien place. (pp. 223–24)

5. For the significance of the crocodile book, see discussion in chapter III.

6. This scenario works variously into the novels. See particularly the discussion of Dombey and Son in chapter VI.

7. It is now possible to make greater sense of some of the images in the opium dream of John Jasper (see ch. III).


9. Dickens's preoccupation with betrayal of benefactors may account for his attachment to this old play. For another use of it, see Great Expectations, ch. 15: Pip's felt guilt here foreshadows his guilt over both Joe and Magwitch.

CHAPTER VI

1. Cf. Paul Dombey, whose capacity of soul is indicated by his ability to see such quadrupeds even when they aren't literally pictured: “He was intimate with all the paperhanging in the house; saw things that no one else saw in the patterns; found out miniature tigers and lions running up the bed-room walls, and squinting faces leering in the squares and diamonds of the floor-cloth” (DS, ch. 12).
2. These stories of children surrounded by tyrannical giants must strike a sympathetic chord of truth for any child or for any imaginative adult who recalls literally living in such a world.

3. Note how, in his developed use of “forcing,” “cultivating,” and “spoiling,” Dickens has restored to life the commonly used dead metaphors. “Spoiling” will receive treatment in chapter VII.

4. A singular example of giving reality to figures “existing” elsewhere on the time continuum. Where David remembers past figures, here a future figure exists.

5. It is difficult not to associate this emblem of Dickens with the Freudian concept of “fixation.” Both are related to the fairy-tale condition of “enchantment”: all natural processes are suspended until removal of the condition.

6. This road imagery figures prominently in *A Tale of Two Cities*, where it becomes a dominant motif.

7. For a complete discussion of the fire-fireplace configuration, see chapter VIII.

8. This horse symbolism also shines an amusing light on Mr. Pecksniff’s deficiencies in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In an early chapter, the reader is informed that Pecksniff

   kept a horse, in whom [his] enemies . . . pretended to detect a fanciful resemblance to his master . . . in his moral character, wherein, said they, he was full of promise, but of no performance. He was always, in a manner, going to go, and never going. When at his lowest rate of travelling, he would sometimes lift up his legs so high, and display such mighty action, that it was difficult to believe he was doing less than fourteen miles an hour; and he was for ever so perfectly satisfied with his own speed, and so little disconcerted by opportunities of comparing himself with the fastest trotters, that the illusion was the more difficult of resistance. He was a kind of animal who infused into the breasts of strangers a lively sense of hope, and possessed all those who knew him better with a grim despair. (*MC*, ch. 5)

Pecksniff, though innocent of any possible application to himself, seems to understand the horse symbolism. Inspired by a journey employing horse and carriage and by “a copious refreshment” from the brandy bottle, he philosophizes: “‘What are we?’ said Mr. Pecksniff, ‘but coaches? Some of us are slow coaches . . . some of us are fast coaches. Our passions are the horses; and rampant animals too’” (*MC*, ch. 8). If one remembers the earlier analogy, the passions of Mr. Pecksniff are far from “rampant.” (Cf. the similar treatment of Mrs. Skewton’s passions.)


As to the soul’s immortality then we have said enough, but as to its nature there is this that must be said: what manner of thing it is would be a long tale to tell, and most assuredly a god alone could tell it; but what it resembles, that a man
might tell in briefer compass: let this therefore be our discourse. Let it be likened to the union of powers in a team of winged steeds and their winged charioteer. Now all the gods' steeds and all their charioteers are good and of good stock [or, variably with another translator, "wholly good"]; but with other beings it is not wholly so. With us men, in the first place, it is a pair of steeds that the charioteer controls; moreover one of them is noble and good, and of good stock, while the other has opposite character, and his stock is opposite. Hence the task of our charioteer is difficult and troublesome. (p. 69)

Hackforth's commentary on this myth as "the vision of a poet" is particularly pointed in relationship to Dickens also: "For the most part the myth is the vision of a poet whose images are not disguised doctrine but spring from a non-rational intuition: the reader must therefore allow his rational and critical faculty to be suspended as he reads, seeking to feel with the poet rather than 'understand' him and turn his poetry into prose" (p. 72).

10. Mr. Gradgrind on this occasion cannot believe Bitzer's conduct.

"Bitzer," said Mr. Gradgrind, broken down, and miserably submissive to him, "have you a heart?"

"The circulation, Sir," returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, "couldn't be carried on without one. No man, Sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey relating to the circulation of the blood, can doubt that I have a heart."

"Is it accessible," cried Mr. Gradgrind, "to any compassionate influence?"

"It is accessible to Reason, Sir," returned the excellent young man, "And to nothing else." (HT, bk. III, ch. 8)

Reason has made it clear to Bitzer that he will be rewarded for returning Tom to Mr. Bounderby.

"If this is solely a question of self-interest with you — " Mr. Gradgrind began.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Sir," returned Bitzer; "but I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to, is a person's self-interest. It's your only hold. We are so constituted. I was brought up in that catechism when I was very young, Sir, as you are aware." (bk. III, ch. 8)

Finally in desperation Gradgrind makes a last bid for Bitzer's sympathy:

"Bitzer, I have but one chance left to soften you. You were many years at my school. If, in remembrance of the pains bestowed upon you there, you can persuade yourself in any degree to disregard your present interest and release my son, I entreat and pray you to give him the benefit of that remembrance."

"I really wonder, Sir," rejoined the old pupil in an argumentative manner, "to find you taking a position so untenable. My schooling was paid for; it was a bargain; and when I came away, the bargain ended."

It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase. Gratitude was to be abol-
ished, and the virtues springing from it were not to be. Every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico-economical place, and we had no business there.

"I don't deny," added Bitzer, "that my schooling was cheap. But that comes right, Sir. I was made in the cheapest market, and have to dispose of myself in the dearest." (bk. III, ch. 8)

CHAPTER VII

1. Cf. the "big head" of the Hindoo baby in a bottle in Venus's specialty shop.

2. This cavalier view of space accompanies the cavalier view of time, as we have seen.

3. This is an interesting sentence. Since Skimpole is clearly endowed with both a strong will and an immense power of business detail (though not in the usual sense), the concealed meaning must be that he possesses them for other purposes than "to throw himself into objects"—quite the contrary. They enable him to will away the whole world of objects where the thought is empty without the fulfilling deed, and yet to enjoy at his ease the comforts and pleasures of the world.

4. Another Wordsworthian echo?

5. This quality of "attaching importance to things" is, as we have seen before, a sign of attachment to life. At the other extreme is not only the carelessness of Harold Skimpole or Mr. Chadband, but also the boredom and indifference of Lady Dedlock or James Harthouse.

6. Such undiscriminating agreeableness asks for Alcèste's misanthropic comment: "The friend of mankind is no friend of mine."

7. A particularly ironic instance of the child used to evaluate the adult occurs in Bleak House, where Dickens uses his own words to pillory the uncouth Chadband. In the passage below, Chadband has grotesquely warped the innocence characteristic of childhood into the distinguishing characteristic of Jo, produced by him as a defense on all occasions: "I don't know nothink." On this occasion Chadband seizes upon Jo's protestation to deliver a typically high-sounding oration that heartlessly parodies the idea of the perpetual hope inspired by the innocent child in the idyllic garden:

"My young friend," says Chadband, "you are to us a pearl, you are to us a diamond, you are to us a gem, you are to us a jewel. And why, my young friend?"

"I don't know," replies Jo. "I don't know nothink."

"My young friend," says Chadband, "it is because you know nothing that you are to us a gem and a jewel. For what are you, my young friend? Are you a beast of the field? No. A bird of the air? No. A fish of the sea or river? No. You are a human boy, my young friend. A human boy. O glorious to be a human boy! And why glorious, my young friend? Because you are capable of profiting
by this discourse which I now deliver for your good, because you are not a
stick, or a staff, or a stock, or a stone, or a post, or a pillar.

O running stream of sparkling joy
To be a soaring human boy!

And do you cool yourself in that stream now, my young friend? No. Why do
you not cool yourself in that stream now? Because you are in a state of
darkness, because . . . (BH, ch. 19)

Chadband seems as oblivious to his societal responsibility for Jo’s ignorant
condition as is Jo himself.

8. It might be interesting to pursue this analogy in the tradition of the
artist as an outlaw in society.

9. The combination of the child heart and the fierce exterior surely
makes this a tag name.

10. This little parenthesis is important in helping to maintain the dis-
tinction Dickens wants made without undoing the character he has set up
for Boythorn. It is necessary that this protector of children should un-
hesitatingly show that his defense is not merely verbal (which would have
revealed him as no different from Skimpole, who considers the beneficent
thought as good as the deed); but it is also necessary for character consist-
tency that his extreme violence be shown, once more, as mostly verbal.

11. In David Copperfield, the Micawbers bear a family resemblance to
Mrs. Pocket. Whatever the case to be made for Micawber as a fictionalized
version of Dickens’s father, it seems indubitable that he is David’s father in
aerial architecture. In fact, both Mr. and Mrs. Micawber live in an aura of
great expectations. Mrs. Micawber can never quite get over the surprise
that marriage to Mr. Micawber is not the realization of what she was led to
expect for her future “when I lived at home with papa and mama.” She
bravely sets up the hopeful “Mrs. Micawber’s Boarding Establishment for
Young Ladies,” to wait for young ladies who never come, and shares her
husband’s perennial expectation that something is just about to turn up.
Surrounded by children who are “tumbling up,” constantly in debt (despite
his Polonian advice to David), Micawber is nonetheless, like Boythorn, re-
deemed by his child heart.

12. Iris Murdoch, in A Severed Head, fully exploits these humorous pos-
sibilities in the character of Martin Lynch-Gibbon.

13. Michael Kearns (see “Bibliographical Essay”) describes the process
by which a character must develop control of his own life by first wiping
the slate clean through withdrawal into his “own tremendous region.”

14. Cf. the utter simplicity of the view of the child David toward the
letters of the alphabet. The “characters” have turned from friendly to sin-
ister with the advance of the child from innocence to experience.

15. Although Dickens frequently permits at least a “limited-miracle”
ending (as in Hard Times), in Bleak House there is none. Nemesis continues
its leveling process until all the castles have been utterly destroyed: not one
builder of air castles survives into the aftermath.

16. This good and well-meaning man has encouraged his “Pet” to
remain a dependent child. One suspects that other doll-like girls have resul-
ted from a similar situation. Both Dora Spenlow and Flora Finching, for
example, are only children of doting fathers. Bella Wilfer of Our Mutual
Friend perhaps should have turned out the same way. As is true with other
blighting, however, people with sufficient inner resources of strength and
will can avoid its consequences.

17. An interesting tag name, combining the “flower” and the bird,
which will later return in the “Finches of the Grove” related to Pip’s sus-
pension in air castles.

18. One recalls the Christmas allegory, “Nobody’s Story,” in which both
a general anonymity and a specific individual are implied. When one also
notes that “Nobody’s Story” appeared less than two years before Dickens
began work on Little Dorrit, and recalls that Dickens had originally planned
a quite different name for his novel, the allegorical intent is even more
emphasized.

In a letter to the Honorable Mrs. Richard Watson, Dickens wrote in 1855:

Catherine tells me that you want to know the name of my new book. I cannot
bear that you should know it from anyone but me. It will not be made public
until the end of October: the title is:

NOBODY’S FAULT

Keep it as the apple of your eye—an expressive form of speech, though I have
not the least idea of what it means.” (The Letters of Charles Dickens, Mamie
Dickins and Georgina Hogarth, eds. [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons,
1879], I. 471)

This proposed title vibrates with ambiguous meaning. Is it meant, either
in fact or ironically, to absolve everyone from guilt for the conditions
and situations in the novel? Does it suggest that what is “Nobody’s Fault”
can not pin guilt on anybody specifically because it is really “Everybody’s
Fault”? Or does it suggest a weakness, like a fault in a rock, which can dam-
age a character? This last interpretation adds meaning to the “Nobody”
chapters, which do indeed explore Arthur’s weakness, and also could at-
tach to Mr. Merdle’s “complaint” as well as to the faults of other characters.

19. In Our Mutual Friend, this role is played by what would appear to be
an unlikely character, Jenny Wren. Although Lizzie Hexam might seem
more likely, when Eugene Wrayburn lies at death’s door after his mur-
derous attack, he understands that Jenny is the one person who under-
stands him and will be able to guide him. He therefore asks that she come
to his bedside. What Jenny understands is that, in his inability to make
a commitment to Lizzie, he betrays an indolence and self-centeredness
that relate him to James Harthouse and the doll-like figures like Harold
Skimpole who try to substitute play objects for life. She has refused to make him a doll, which he insisted was for his godchild, when a real woman is waiting for him. Now, with Jenny beside him, Eugene finds both strength and will to make the commitment needed to restore him to life.

20. As in the fairy tales where there is only one room into which one may not look, or only one thing which one may not do, or (even) one tree of which one may not eat. In each case, failure to meet the condition means losing a paradise predicated on innocence. In each case, the injunction is against knowledge.

CHAPTER VIII

1. The speculation that perhaps the dead are surveying the living, or that the unconscious have thought processes barred from onlookers finds repeated expression. Cf., for instance, the rapt attention of spectators trying to assess where Rogue Riderhood is as he lies unconscious and near death (see ch. IV); or the effort by John Jasper to penetrate the thoughts of his fellows in the opium den (see ch. III).

2. One meaning of this word—dead men don’t have memories—slides ambiguously into a second meaning: by now nobody remembers them.

3. Cf. the blowing dust from Egypt and the Far East of “Down With the Tide” (see ch. II).

4. In view of Dickens’s repeated invocation of ghosts in haunted house and haunted man, it seems only reasonable that some people might mistake his attachment to them for belief in their existence. Mrs. Trollope, for instance, drew upon herself the following stiff and ungracious note in response to her invitation to him to attend an occult visitation:

I was out of town on Sunday, or I should have answered your note immediately on its arrival. I cannot have the pleasure of seeing the famous “medium” to-night, for I have some theatricals at home. But I fear I shall not in any case be a good subject for the purpose, as I altogether want faith in the thing.

I have not the least belief in the awful unseen world being available for evening parties at so much per night; and, although I should be ready to receive enlightenment from any source, I must say I have very little hope of it from the spirits who express themselves through mediums, as I have never yet observed them to talk anything but nonsense, of which (as Carlyle would say) there is probably enough in these days of ours, and in all days, among mere mortality. (Dickins and Hogarth, Letters of Dickens, I, 466)


7. A still different variation on this theme is provided by Master Humphrey, who maintains a private dream world of air castles, but who simultaneously involves himself meaningfully in the actual world about him.
In the concluding section of *Master Humphrey's Clock* (weekly periodical, 1840–41), Master Humphrey describes the warm fireside at which he sits lovingly surrounded by imagined wife, children, and grandchildren until the clock strikes, and he returns to the actual world where “my chair is in its old spot, and I am alone. What if I be? What if this fireside be tenantless, save for the presence of one weak old man? . . . Let me thank Heaven that I can people my fireside with shadows such as these; with shadows of bright objects that exist in crowds about me; and let me say, “I am alone no more.”

8. Paul Dombey, similarly, sees in the fireplace a “ghostly puppet-show” reflecting his own life (see chapter VI).

9. The parallels between this scene (foreshadowed by Gradgrind’s unseen “cavernous eyes”) and Plato’s Myth of the Soul seem too striking to be accidental. In the following translation note also the *puppets* and *puppet show*, which would make the myth especially appealing to Dickens.

Next, said I, here is a parable to illustrate the degrees in which our nature may be enlightened or unenlightened. Imagine the condition of men living in a sort of cavernous chamber underground, with an entrance open to the light and a long passage all down the cave. Here they have been from childhood, chained by the leg and also by the neck, so that they cannot move and can see only what is in front of them, because the chains will not let them turn their heads. At some distance higher up is the light of a fire burning behind them; and between the prisoners and the fire is a track with a parapet built along it, like the screen at a puppet-show, which hides the performers while they show their puppets over the top. . . .

Like ourselves . . . prisoners so confined would have seen nothing of themselves or of one another, except the shadows thrown by the fire-light on the wall of the Cave facing them, would they? . . .

Now . . . suppose one of them set free and forced suddenly to stand up, turn his head, and walk with eyes lifted to the light; all these movements would be painful, and he would be too dazzled to make out the objects whose shadows he had been used to see. What do you think he would say, if someone told him that what he had formerly seen was meaningless illusion, but now, being somewhat nearer to reality and turned towards more real objects, he was getting a truer view? . . . Would he not be perplexed and believe the objects now shown him to be not so real as what he formerly saw? . . . And if he were forced to look at the fire-light itself, would not his eyes ache, so that he would try to escape and turn back to the things which he could see distinctly, convinced that they really were clearer than these other objects now being shown to him? (The Republic of Plato, Francis M. Cornford, trans. [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981], pp. 227–29)

Louisa and Tom would seem to represent the enlightened and the unenlightened views. The remainder of the Platonic myth is equally striking in its parallels with Dickens’s belief, particularly in later references to virtue and knowledge.

10. Sleary’s circus and the fireplace would naturally merge together in their implications for the living soul.
11. Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* manifests striking parallels with Louisa Gradgrind, although at first he seems more to resemble James Harthouse.

During the English trial of Charles Darnay early in the novel, he is described as a “slovenly if not debauched” young man, “especially reckless in his demeanour” and with a “disreputable look.” Nonetheless, he bears an amazing likeness to the prisoner, which Darnay’s counsel, Mr. Stryver, uses effectively to confound a witness who has identified the prisoner. After the acquittal verdict, Darnay tries to thank Carton for his role in the successful outcome. “I neither want any thanks, nor merit any,” was the careless rejoinder. “It was nothing to do, in the first place; and I don’t know why I did it, in the second” (*T2C*, bk. II, ch. 4). He further declares, “I care for no man on earth, and no man on earth cares for me.”

This “idlest and most unpromising of men” works for Stryver. It soon appears that some of Stryver’s best ideas are really his. “You were very sound, Sydney, in the matter of those crown witnesses to-day,” Mr. Stryver observes. “Every question told.” Carton gives a “deprecatory grunt” by way of response. These two men have known each other since their school days. Stryver, “review[ing] him in the present and the past” says he is “the old seesaw Sydney. Up one minute and down the next, now in spirits and now in despondency,” his problem that “your way is, and always was, a lame way. You summon no energy and purpose” (bk. II, ch. 5). The narrator expands this assessment:

> Waste forces within him, and a desert all around, this man stood still on his way across a silent terrace, and saw for a moment, lying in the wilderness before him, a mirage of honourable ambition, self-denial, and perseverance. In the fair city of this vision, there were airy galleries from which the loves and graces looked upon him, gardens in which the fruits of life hung ripening, waters of Hope that sparkled in his sight. A moment, and it was gone. Climbing to a high chamber in a well of houses, he threw himself down in his clothes on a neglected bed, and its pillow was wet with wasted tears. (bk. II, ch. 5)

These complexities in Carton’s nature foretell that he will eventually be “Recalled to Life” (bk. I) in the most significant sense, though, like Louisa, he will be unable to claim personal happiness.

Meanwhile, he is “moody and morose . . . the cloud of caring for nothing, which overshadowed him with such a fatal darkness, was very rarely pierced by the light within him” (bk. II, ch. 13). He has been singularly stirred by Lucie Manette, despite the “cloud” about him. Her sympathy leads him to an attempt at self-clarification. “I am like one who died young,” he explains. “And yet I have had the weakness, and have still the weakness, to wish you to know with what a sudden mastery you kindled me, heap of ashes that I am, into fire—a fire, however, inseparable in its nature from myself, quickening nothing, lighting nothing, doing no service, idly burning away.”
Carton’s interactions with Lucie, Darnay, and their children develop his character. Originally, he describes Lucie as a “golden-haired doll.” Soon, however, he comes to love her so devotedly that, as he tells her, “there is a man who would give his life, to keep a life you love beside you!”” (bk. II, ch. 13). By the end of the story, Carton has effectively passed through the neoplatonic stages of love articulated by Peter Bembo and quoted in The Renaissance in England (Hyder E. Rollins and Herschel Baker, eds. [Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1954]): from the love of the particular to that love of the universal, which create the transcendent aura of the last pages when he is absorbed in the idea of the “Resurrection and the Life”: “I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”” (bk. III, ch. 15). Lucie might, then, be viewed as the anima guiding him.

Carton develops similarly in his relationship to Darnay, from indifference, through ambivalence (“Do you particularly like the man? . . . A good reason for taking to a man, that he shows you what you have fallen away from, and what you might have been! . . . Come on, and have it out in plain words! You hate the fellow” [bk. II, ch. 4]), to such identification with his double that he becomes an alter ego. When, in the final scene, Carton changes clothing with Darnay and sends him back into the world to restore him to life in one sense, he is simultaneously “restored to life” by his sacrifice. Psychoanalytically, his “bad” self dies, and his “good” self is freed to live.

So far as his own life-in-time is concerned, its fulfillment is limited like Louisa’s. Although Lucie was lost to him, “her children had a strange sympathy with him—an instinctive delicacy of pity for him. What fine hidden sensibilities are touched in such a case, no echoes tell; but it is so, and it was so here. Carton was the first stranger to whom little Lucie held out her chubby arms. . . . The little boy had spoken of him, almost at the last” (bk. II, ch. 21).

Carton’s change from the man of indifference to the man of total commitment is emblematized by his altered view of the meaning of the fire in the fireplace. As he gazes at the fire now, he suddenly “lifted his foot to put back one of the little flaming logs, which was tumbling forward. . . . His indifference to fire was sufficiently remarkable to elicit a word of remonstrance from Mr. Lorry; his boot was still upon the hot embers of the flaming log, when it had broken under the weight of his foot. ‘I forgot it,’ he said” (bk. III, ch. 9). His indifference to the fire threatening him signifies the difference between a life “idly burning away” and one committed to burning for the light and warmth of others—a far cry from the life burning away into ashes “quickening nothing, lighting nothing.”

12. A suggestion here of the undeviating monster to which he is related.

13. Note the distinction made here between the promise of persisting vitality in the “live-coals” and the reminder of death in the wood fire crumbling into ashes.