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THE DEVELOPMENT OF IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES
IN THE NOVELS OF DICKENS

DISSERTATION

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the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

VITA ........................................... 11

LIST OF DICKENS EDITIONS ...................... iv

INTRODUCTION .................................. 1

**Chapter**

**I. IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES IN DESCRIPTIVE PROSE: COLOR AND VERISIMILITUDE** .................................. 21

- Nature Description
- Man-made Landscape
- Perception and Consciousness
- Action Scene

**II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUE IN THE PROSE OF SOCIAL PROTEST: PERSUASION** 58

- Mock Epic Devices
- Imitation of Voices
- Symbolism, Imagery, and Diction

**III. IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES AS DRAMATIC ORGANIZATION: USES OF REPETITION** 77

- Essays and Stories
- Scene
- Narrative Episode

**IV. IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES AS STRUCTURE AND THEME IN SIX NOVELS** 121

- David Copperfield
- Great Expectations
- A Tale of Two Cities
- Hard Times
- Our Mutual Friend
- Bleak House

**APPENDIX** .................................. 257

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ................................. 261
A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF DICKENS' TEXTS

REFERRED TO WITH THEIR

ABBREVIATIONS


INTRODUCTION

Dickens has given us specimens of his skill in a kind of prose phantasy which Thackeray has not attempted ... Dickens ... for all his keenness of observation is more light in his method than Thackeray ... (1859)

Of Dickens' style it is impossible to speak in praise. It is jerky, ungrammatical, and created by himself in defiance of rules. (1882)

The final stress may fall on Dickens' command of word, phrase, rhythm and image: in ease and range there is surely no greater master of English except Shakespeare. This comes back to saying that Dickens is a great poet: his endless resource in felicitously varied expression is an extraordinary responsiveness to life. (1948)


Now when the universe of Dickensian scholarship seems to revolve harmoniously around the acknowledgement of Dickens as a major "poetic dramatist" or "prose poet", it is well to be reminded that some of his contemporaries were less charmed by the unorthodoxies of his style. As George Ford remarks, we have lost a sense of how "shockingly revolutionary" Dickens' prose seemed in his own time.


But while many Victorians found the style "mannered" and wild, especially when compared to the elegance and propriety of Thackeray's,
there were those, Masson foremost among them, who defended its originality as "imaginative" and "poetic". The Masson view, however, does not begin to predominate until the fairly recent upsurge of critical interest in Dickens. ³

³Masson's perspective was later bolstered by the commentary of Taine who stressed Dickens' imaginative qualities and referred to him as a poet. \[\text{Hippolyte Taine, Histoire de la Litterature anglaise 1863-64 (trans. 1871-1874), III, 192-193.}\] In 1920 Oliver Elton in Survey of English Literature re-enforced the view of Dickens as a "poet in essence" (216). But these views were maintained against the tide of a neo-classical revival in literary criticism, and the full appreciation of Dickens' artistic abilities awaited the recognition of his novels' symbolic and psychological complexity stimulated by Edmund Wilson's essay in 1940.

While most modern scholars might hesitate to compare Dickens' style with Shakespeare's, they are in substantial agreement with Leavis in his emphasis on Dickens' mastery of the poetic resources of language. As Ada Nisbet in her comprehensive research survey pointed out, Dickens' present stature depends upon his qualities as a poet and artist, but, she maintains, "Although every critic of Dickens has had something to say about 'Dickensian style' and a few ... have given it rewarding attention, no completely satisfactory or comprehensive study of Dickens' use of language has yet appeared." ⁴ Since her review article, there have appeared several full-length studies which deal centrally with aspects of Dickens' prose style, but much remains to be done. ⁵ Not enough specific attention has yet been given to the


⁵The most important studies are those of Axton, Marcus, Stoehr,
Monod, and Honan. Among these, that of William Axton must be singled out for its detailed and suggestive discussion of types of Dickensian prose and possible analogues in the Victorian theatre. Axton contends that Dickens' writings represent an adaptation of the "poetic" resources of the nineteenth-century theatre, particularly melodrama, to the novel. I will have further references to Axton in my study. Circle of Fire. Dickens' Vision and Style and The Popular Victorian Theatre. (Lexington, Kentucky, 1966.) Steven Marcus / Dickens: from Pickwick to Dombey. (New York, 1965.) has some excellent scattered commentary on prose techniques, especially on the use of set pieces which "are organized in a style which one can call poetic and which achieve their effects by a certain kind of repetition, subtle adjustments in rhythm and stressing certain objects or images with an intensity that we ordinarily associate with poetry." p. 296. Taylor Stoehr / Dickens; The Dreamer's Stance (Ithaca. 1965.) discusses the spatial quality of the novels, drawing on Joseph Frank's application of the poetic concept of "reflexive relation" to the form of the modern novel. p. 25. Sylvère Monod, whose study of Dickens was revised and translated in 1968 / Dickens the Novelist (Norman, Oklahoma, 1968) discusses many of the techniques, such as repetition, contrast, and musical effects, which figure prominently in Dickens' language after Dombey; and Park Honan has a brief highly perceptive discussion of the development of metrical prose in Dickens. Victorian Newsletter, No. 28. (Fall, 1965), 1-3. All of these will be referred to again in more detail.

nature of his "poetic" effects: how precisely does Dickens manipulate the rhythmic resources of language and for what ends?

This study will attempt a partial answer to those questions.

Focussing on descriptive prose in the novels, I hope to trace an evolution in Dickens' language - the development of an impressionistic prose of considerable creative distinction.6

6In the context of this study, "descriptive prose" is defined broadly to include certain types of authorial commentary as well as scene and narrative with a high proportion of descriptive effects. Description has been chosen as focus because it is usually a showcase for an author's "wordcraft."

It was difficult to attach a label to this style; various terms seemed appropriate but at the same time somewhat too exclusive or inclusive. As suggested by the opening quotations, readers have experienced the style as "poetic," but the vagueness of the term
limits its usefulness for my purposes: one doesn't know if intent or effect is denoted, whereas I hope to demonstrate a conscious manipulation of linguistic materials for specific effects. Moreover, a "poetic" prose could rest chiefly on suggestive images and diction; and while these are an important ingredient of Dickens' later style, they are usually subordinate to, or greatly dependent on, rhythmical effects.

"Rhythmic" comes closer to the proper emphasis, but this term would have to be stretched beyond its conventional meaning to include the different ingredients of the style. While the prose is distinguished by an increasingly subtle use of poetic meters, repetition, musical devices such as alliteration and assonance, and a host of other suggestive rhythms, it is also characterized by various experimental effects not usually comprehended under the term "rhythmic", such as incrementally developed images, imitative syntax, and other linguistic devices aimed at creating a sensual impact. Therefore, although it might be made to serve, a more inclusive label would be better. Certainly the style is oral and dramatic, but neither of these terms suggests the proper emphasis.

Perhaps "impressionistic" serves best. First of all it describes literally the intent of the style -- to make an impression. As I will discuss in detail later, the major impetus behind its development was the search for more effective means of reproducing the quality of a sensation, perception or experience -- its intensity, even its palpability -- so as to "prove it upon the pulses". Moreover, "impressionistic", more than "rhythmic" and "poetic" has connotations of deliberateness; it suggests technique and experimentation rather
than simply natural felicity. (Traced to its origins in the French school of painting, the term connotes a methodical attempt to use artistic "tools" so as to create a powerful and full suggestion of what would be experienced at a discrete point in time by a direct observer of a scene.)

The term "impressionism" has the additional advantage of having been applied to the modern novel. And for all the melodramatic inflation and metrical rhythms that link Dickens' style to the prose traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it has so much that is creative and new -- unconventional arrangements of syntax and truncation, for example -- that Dickens deserves to be seen as a precursor of those later novelists such as Crane, Faulkner, Joyce, Woolfe, and Conrad, whose style has been praised for its "impressionism."

"Impressionism" will be employed, then, although "rhythmic" will be used interchangeably when appropriate, and "poetic", "oral," and "dramatic" will often be understood.

The impressionistic prose, while it does not in all respects represent a radical departure from the style of the early novels, is a product of artistic maturation; and its development, therefore parallels a more general development in Dickens' career; his movement beginning with Dombey toward a symbolist method which rests on a "poetic" organization of his novels around symbolic motifs. Therefore, while I will illustrate the contrast between early and mature descriptive prose as well as the continuity, I will be primarily concerned with the various uses of impressionistic techniques. Hence, my discussion will focus on the later novels in which creative forms of language are used to produce verisimilitude; to persuade; to provide dramatic organisation in scene and episode; and at their most subtle, to dramatize
central thematic concerns.

It may be helpful to provide a context for the style by briefly suggesting its probable origins -- in Dickens' natural literary propensities and the forces which helped shape these, such as the prevailing prose tradition and his passion for reading and for the theatre; in his artistic aims; and in the special circumstances under which he published his novels.

From the beginning of his writing career, Dickens was intoxicated with the possibilities of language and took immense pleasure in manipulating it for his own entertainment and that of others. Together with his verbal orientation, he possessed what T.S. Eliot has described as an "auditory imagination" -- "The feeling for syllable and rhythm penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling." 8

8"The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism" (1933) in Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward (1953.), p. 94.

By some unconscious mental process Dickens compulsively translated the visual universe into an oral scheme, recording the rhythmic identities of things -- from the label on a box of breakfast tea to the most evanescent of human gestures. Anyone who has walked in a commercial neighbourhood in London will respond with inward recognition to the simple "translation" : To Let To Let To Let --
glared at me from empty rooms." (GE, 173). This verbal and rhythmic talent, then, is the sine qua non of the style. It was to be disciplined and refined, but its spontaneity and energy is the basis of the style's creativity and emotional effectiveness.

Scholars have suggested a variety of stylistic influences in the young Dickens. Harry Stone, in his study of Dickens' reading, notes the intensity with which Dickens read and re-read his favourites and the vividness with which he retained the words, phrases, images, and scenes which most impressed him. He re-read most frequently his early favourites -- Irving, Goldsmith, Defoe, Smollett, Fielding, Sterne, Le Sage, Cervantes, The Arabian Nights, and nursery tales -- but also Carlyle, Tennyson, and the Bible. Stone comments, "The importance of this close and reiterated reading and its power to enter with word, phrase, cadence, and image, let alone structure and method, into Dickens' very thought and expression is self-evident."

Another influence suggested by Stone is Dickens' youthful experience (typical of Victorian childhood) of memorizing and reciting under his father's prompting large numbers of highly rhetorical pieces such as passages from Addison's Cato, John Home's Douglas, Milton's Comus in its nineteenth century stage form, and perhaps Shakespeare.9

9"Dickens' Reading," unpubl. diss. (Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 1955), pp. 35-40; 61; 123.

Other critics stress the influence of eighteenth century prose on Dickens' style, not simply because of his devotion to the eighteenth century novelists, but because as the pervasive prose tradition in the early nineteenth century, Dickens, and other novelists
as well, could not escape its influence. Honan, for example, finds the source of Dickens' metrical 'habit' and rhetorical inflation in the eighteenth century schematic tradition of evenly cadenced prose (balance and antithesis) and in the "sensibility cult" which gave emotional utterances metrical heightening. 10

10Honan, pp. 1-2.

Elton sees the style as a legacy of the eighteenth century tradition of romance: "Dickens' habit of inventive fantasy along with the lyrical heightened prose begotten of it came down from the last age ... DeQuincey and the essayists had justified it and a few of the novelists." 11 Axton, on the other hand, thinks that the animus

11Elton, p. 205.

behind the style is nineteenth century theatre, and he cites parallels between some of Dickens' techniques and the stage, for example, a tendency to "scene setting" in opening installments, truncated dialogue that resembles scenario, a habit of ending episodes with tableaus, and the use of blank verse and melodramatic devices, such as invocation, apostrophe, soliloquy and asides to the reader. 12

12Axton, pp. 112-114 and passim.

One thing is certain: when Dickens erupted on the literary scene in the 1830's, there was no lack of models for rhetorically inflated prose.

The search for "sources and influences", however, is a
slippery one and ultimately less rewarding than a consideration of the more immediate forces which helped shape Dickens' prose development. To suggest answers to the question of what launched Dickens into his stylistic improvisations and modifications of prose conventions we must inquire into his artistic purposes as well as his special relationship with his audience.

There are two major determinants of Dickens' unique relationship to his readers. The more personal one was his great need to retain the charismatic image he had so easily established with Pickwick. As Edgar Johnson has pointed out, their love was his life. Like Scheherezade, Dickens sought to maintain a privileged position by ever improving his skills as an entertainer. To the end of his career, he never neglected his role of story teller (the public readings greatly re-enforced it), and this not so secretly cherished self-image did much to strengthen the oral quality of his prose. 13

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13 Some additional evidence for Dickens' preoccupation with oral effects is provided by Mrs. Tillotson's discovery that in the 1846 revision of Oliver Twist Dickens painstakingly substituted an idiosyncratic system of punctuation to enhance the oral quality of the prose and re-arranged passages of narration and description in a calculated pattern of balanced phrases and sentences, with an elaborate rhetorical pointing which amounts almost to musical notation... The punctuation in 1846 is heavy and suggests pauses for the voice rather than conventional syntactical relationship.


Dickens had another more disinterested and deeply serious purpose. He wanted to re-educate his readers to a sense of romance or, as he termed it, "Fancy". Like Carlyle and other Victorian social critics, he was disturbed by what he perceived as a serious spiritual malaise.
The "dreary, arithmetical" had permeated the life of his times, he complained, and as a consequence, people had become shrivelled and incapable of responding with love or pity toward their brothers. What was needed was a recovery of emotional spontaneity and joy. Like the great Romantics before him, Dickens believed in the power of Imagination to liberate the human spirit: "In a utilitarian age ... it is a matter of grave importance that Fairy tales should be respected. ... A nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun." 14

14 "Frauds on the Fairies" in Household Words (October 1, 1853). In the "Preliminary Word" to the first issue of Household Words, he sets forth his chief aim: to "tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast" and to "show to all, that in familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is romance enough, if we will find it out."

As his social concern deepened, so did his desire to revive his readers' imaginations. He was well aware of the stimulative effect of his language and its ability to provoke laughter and tears. However, with the maturing of his social and artistic consciousness came a new awareness of its potential. From Dombey on (some would argue Chuzzlewit) he begins a general refinement of his style: linguistic extravagances are disciplined and some of the rhetorical and sentimental conventions that had been his early medium for emotional appeal are purged. 15

15 I do not mean to imply that his later style represents a thoroughgoing reformation of his stylistic flaws and excesses. To the end of his career, Dickens remained capable of slipping into quite "bad" prose --- conventional, maudlin, rhetorical, and didactic. The fact that his artistic development is somewhat uneven should, not however, obscure its general brilliancy.
But most significantly, he creates new language forms the effect of which is to compel the reader into imaginative participation. His aim is to make his audience respond — not think, analyze, or even understand so much as experience. With a hatred of what he sneeringly calls the "DISSECTIVk" approach, he shapes his effects sensually rather than intellectually. The "method" of this stylistic experimentation, generally speaking, is to get as close as possible to the texture of experience by imitation or a kind of poetic intensification. 16

Dickens’ concern with achieving a vital immediacy made him sensitive to stylistic minutiae. In his never ceasing task of encouraging Fancy in HW contributions, he instructs one author that using present instead of past tense will "make it more fanciful." "I understand each phase of the thing to be always a thing before the mind’s eye .... Whatever is done, must be doing." We are told that as an editor he scrutinized all aspects of style — punctuation, grammar and even syntax. The evidence of the later novels suggests that he gave similar attention to his own writing. See P.A.W. Collins "Keep Household Words Imaginative," The Dickensian LII (Summer, 1956) 118; Gerald Giles Grubb, "Dickens' Editorial Methods", "Studies in Philology, XL (January 1943) 79-100.

Dickens’ interests in creating novels that would simulate the mutual experience of tale-teller and audience (he felt the presence of his audience during composition as much as he hoped they would feel his presence in the reading) and that would arouse readers to an imaginative participation were complementary and together encouraged his development of impressionistic prose techniques. Added to his delight with linguistic novelty and with theatrical effects, this dual impulse goes a long way towards accounting for a prose style the energy and verisimilitude of which are so intense that its effect is hypnotic rather than realistic.
However, the use of impressionistic techniques for structural purposes (one of the most interesting stylistic phenomenon in Dickens) is more directly related to his development of a symbolic method rather than to his concern with the truth of experience. Structural impressionism is also related to that peculiar mode of publication -- the novel in parts -- the special demands of which Dickens recognized at the outset of his career, before he had any idea of the complicated responses to them he was later to make:

"from the preface to the first edition of Pickwick, 1837."

The publication of the book in monthly numbers rendered it an object of paramount importance that, while the different incidents were linked together by a chain of interest strong enough to prevent their appearing unconnected or impossible, the general design should be so simple as to sustain no injury from this detached and desultory form of publication.... In short, it was necessary.... that every number should be to a certain extent complete in itself, and yet, that the whole twenty numbers, when collected, should form one tolerably harmonious whole, each leading to the other by a gentle and not-unnatural progress of adventure.

It is obvious that in a work published with a view to such consideration, no artfully interwoven or ingeniously complicated plot can with reason be expected.

Obviously Dickens had not forseen a novel such as Bleak House; and between Pickwick and Bleak House lies a quite radical transformation in his concept of the novel. "Adventure" became secondary to a far reaching social vision symbolically dramatized. With this shift, the problems of serial publication -- insuring that each part had sufficient interest and unity in itself and yet contributed to a harmonious whole -- were intensified. Tailoring the vision to the form (or shaping the form to accomodate the vision) caused Dickens much labor and even anguish. Time and again he complained of the "CRUSHING" difficulties of serial publication. And yet perhaps
Forster, passim. In a letter to a would be contributor to HW he explains that "there must be a special design to overcome that specially trying mode of publication ..." And he instructs her to "notice how patiently and expressly the thing has to be planned for presentation in fragments, and yet for afterwards, fusing together as an uninterrupted whole". Grubb, "Dickens' Pattern of Weekly Serialization," ELH, IX (June 1942), 1143.

we have that form to thank for the fact that his later novels have their special kind of dynamic coherence.

Dickens' problem essentially was to ensure that themes and motifs were not submerged by the welter of characters and incidents; that they were remembered from installment to installment, or at least could be easily resummoned; and, finally, that their development was psychologically and artistically consistent when the novel was considered as a whole. The core of his solution was the use of suggestive rhythms to identify, connect, and even wholly represent, thematic motifs. (The bulk of my discussion will center on this).

What can be said in general summary about Dickens' stylistic impressionism is that it is a product of natural inclinations and talents strengthened and modified by artistic purposes and the demands of a special mode of publication.

I have been referring repeatedly to Dickens' creative "impressionism" without providing more than a vague definition, largely because of the difficulty of indicating briefly and without illustrations its variety of types and uses. Because my study is organised around its uses, I want to note here some of the major elements so that the forms that chiefly characterize the style will not be lost sight of in the later emphasis on effects.
Even the casual reader of Dickens cannot help but recognize that various types of repetition are central to his style. One prominent Dickensian scholar suggested that the study of repetition in its various forms and purposes is one of "the fruitful directions of the future". Possibly nobody has yet tackled the subject because of its awesome dimensions: repetition affects plot, characterization, theme (within novels and across novels), and symbolic patterns, as well as language. Moreover, many of its manifestations are irrelevant and almost compulsive, leading readers to discount its artistic significance, viewing much of it, at best, as a harmless tic, perhaps resulting from a nostalgia for the repetitive patterns of nursery stories, and, at worst, an artistic abdication - an undemanding, uncritical method of writing.

But while repetition in Dickens may have unconscious origins (both Monod and Stone refer to the manner in which Dickens' repeated readings of his nursery favourites caused their language to become an integral part of his thought and expression,) and while some of its occurrences, especially in the early novels, are of dubious value, this should not detract attention from the highly significant role it plays in Dickens' mature artistry.

My study will be concerned only with linguistic forms of repetition. The types most frequently encountered are repetition of words, phrases, and clauses; refrain; running metaphor; incrementally developed images; and parallel descriptions. Linguistic repetition
serves two general purposes in the novels. It is used experimentally to enhance the vividness and verisimilitude of descriptive effects through imitation of sensations and perceptions. Whereas most novelists rely on modifiers to achieve those effects, Dickens tried to be more faithful to experience -- by recording repeated elements individually ("To let. To Let")

Second, and perhaps more important, forms of repetition have increasing structural importance in the novels beginning with Dombey. No one was more conscious than Dickens of the plethora of detail in his novels; he was constantly seeking to restrain his fancy so as not to overwhelm his major effects. Repetition proved a congenial means of imposing a degree of order on his sprawling creations -- of calling attention to similarities and parallels in a fictive world which had considerably more dissimilarities and idiosyncracies than most. (In this regard, repetition and contrast should be viewed as complementary techniques. Perhaps the preponderance of Dickens' impressionistic effects are constructed in terms of one or both of these methods.) Forms of repetition are used to achieve dramatic coherence in scenes, episodes, and chapters, as well as to highlight thematic strands through the course of a serial novel.

1 See Forster, pp. 273-278. In Dickens' words, "I work slowly and with great care and never give way to my invention recklessly but constantly restrain it and I think it is my infirmity to fancy or perceive relations in things which are not apparent generally."

2 Contrast in Dickens is not just a matter of style. He tended to perceive things in terms of polarities (natural forces are malevolent or beneficent; characters are inwardly harmonious or jangled; etc.); and this sense of contest, or struggle, stimulated the development of impressionistic means of embodying its dynamic.
In the later novels, repetition also serves thematic purposes more directly; it is often the basis for symbolic characterization and, in a few novels, for social satire.

"Imitative" syntax is a later development in Dickens. It consists in a manipulation of syntax or syntactical rhythms to simulate a sensation or perception etc. It is related, of course, to Dickens' efforts to increase the sensual and emotional immediacy of his prose. In its least complex forms, it adds color and vivacity while at its subtlest, it comes as close as language perhaps can to the full rendering of experience.

Other types of suggestive rhythms characterize the impressionistic style. Syntax frequently serves as a key to inflection, rhythms and punctuation being adjusted in unconventional ways to enhance the oral quality of the prose. Also, truncated prose (what Monod has termed "the disintegrated sentence") becomes increasingly prominent in the later novels. The truncation is often quite drastic: sentences are freed of their subjects and even of verbs and are governed by rhythmical rather than conventional grammatical considerations. This makes possible a briskly paced "cinematic" prose capable of comic, satiric, or dramatic effects. It is the basis for the satirical society scenes in Our Mutual Friend; dramatic action scenes, such as the pointillistic mob scenes in Tale and the chase episode in Hard Times; and passages which record the impact of experience on consciousness such as Carker's ride in which conventional syntax is waived so that the perceptual distortions of a mind under stress will be registered directly.
Another prominent rhythmic device is the incorporation of poetic meters (chiefly iambics) as well as Biblical and other archaic cadences. For the most part, these provide a dramatic medium for images, but they are also used as vehicles of mood and satire. Another development, concomitant with that of manipulated syntax, is Dickens' experimentation with musical devices such as alliteration, assonance and other types of onomatopoeic effects.

Diction in the early novels was often characterized by abstraction, archaism, circumlocution, triteness, and sentimentality. Much of this was later purged or controlled for comic and satiric purposes. In the mature novels, diction becomes poetically imaginative, at its best displaying a striking clarity and "justness". There are more coined words and expressions in the later novels. However, while in some types of later prose, such as nature description there is more particularizing detail, Dickens tended rather to rely on suggestive rhythms for concreteness and vividness than on an increased number of adjectival or adverbial constructions.

Imitative rhythms, repetition, and other impressionistic devices lay the groundwork for the development of ambitious narrative techniques which are among Dickens' most important contributions to the novel. For example, Dickens' theatrical urge and his dislike of being "dissective" led him to establish scene and set piece as a major narrative device. Developed as symbolized setting or poetic correlative, they became dramatic means of establishing a novel's dominant mood and motifs at its beginning and later of crystallizing important thematic concerns or aspects of characterization. Dickens
choreographed such scenes lavishly, using linguistic props and background rhythms for pacing, unity, and heightened emotional impact. His skillful deployment of such devices as refrain, rhythmic metaphor reiterated gesture, and contrapuntal rhythms helped make possible a totally dramatized scene.

Even more impressive than Dickens' development of scene is his use of rhythms and other impressionistic techniques as affective structure in the novel. Prefiguring modern writers (such as Crane, Faulkner, Joyce, and Woolfe) whose techniques are subjective and poetic and whose novels are dominated by spatial realities, Dickens learned to exploit the integrative powers of his rhythmic prose. Analogies with poetry and music are apt in describing the way in which he managed the interplay of rhythmic leitmotifs, achieving fugal and symphonic effects. In novels such as *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, rhythmic prose is a poetic medium for central images which develop in a reflexive relationship to each other and are finally resolved symphonically.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Hard Times*, and *Dombey*, the narrative is organised around polar symbols rhythmically identified and contrapuntually developed. In *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*, an even greater rhythmic complexity helps identify and balance narrative strands. These structural and thematic adaptions of impressionistic prose will receive detailed consideration in my study.

A final prefatory word should be added. The development of the impressionistic style should also be viewed within a broader context of Dickens' personal philosophy. Like Carlyle, he maintained a
powerful belief in the organic nature of things. The universe was a vast web of relationship uniting all objects animate and inanimate. There was no escaping the overwhelming contiguity of things.

The heroes and heroines of Dickens' fictive universe are those who are in tune with the natural rhythms which govern this scheme. They maintain a continuing contact with the spiritual reality which looms behind the veil of everyday existence. They affirm the brotherhood of all with its attendant moral responsibility. Above all, they do not "kick against the pricks", nor are they ambitious or infected with other false values of a materialistic society. Content, acceptance, and humility are their mark; and, as a result, they possess emotional wholeness lost to the others. The realm that they inhabit -- governed by "eternal verities" -- is more spatial than temporal in the sense that it is not affected by earthly impermanencies, is almost mythic. (I am thinking of characters such as Little Dorrit, Florence Dombey, Lucy, and Lizzie.)

Dickens' increasing commitment to his vision of reality with its strong social implications helped determine his stylistic evolution. It is no coincidence, I think, that in Dombey his first major attempt to dramatize this vision, we have as well the beginning of the "spatialized" symbolic method that is to predominate in the novels following. And that method, to a great extent, rests on the techniques I will discuss.

Moreover, Dickens' social critique as it is embodied in the novels of his maturity rests on a dichotomy that he both perceives and conveys in rhythmic terms. And that is the contrast between the mechanization and inward and outward cacophony that result from
urbanization and the harmonies of natural forces. In short, it is a contrast between the spontaneous and the mechanical -- the sea vs. the railroad; Florence Dombey vs. her father; the society puppets vs. Lizzie; Gradgrind vs. Sleary; Lucy vs. the revolutionary madness. The latter are harsh, abrupt, mechanical, spastic and compulsive (repetition plays a large role in their creation), while the former are characterized by soft, undulating, lyrical rhythms suggestive of that which is cyclical, eternal and harmonious.

In the final analysis, it may be said that given Dickens' talents, interests, literary aspirations, social commitment, and philosophy, his impressionistic style was as organic as his own conception of the nature of things.
CHAPTER I

IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES IN DESCRIPTIVE PROSE:
COLOR AND VERISIMILITUDE.

Dickens' early descriptive style, while it was not without
distinction, too often tended to be generalizing, diffuse, and
periphrastic, or, at the other extreme, sentimentally simplistic.
An uncritical acceptance of prose conventions, including the
eighteenth-century model of schematic prose, and his own penchant
for rhetorical inflation often led Dickens to fall in with the easy,
but tired patterns of a "period style." It is true that in Pickwick
and Oliver Twist where the prose is more directly faithful to its
eighteenth-century origins rather than to second-hand models,
descriptions are characteristically concrete and sensually evocative.
When he begins to be insistently "moral" in Nickleby, Old Curiosity
Shop, and Rudge, there is an increase in inflation, sentimentality,
and triteness. When, however, about the time of Chuzzlewit, his
critical sense is more systematically applied to his creative impulse,
we find the prose conventions beginning to be transformed into
something distinctly original and "poetic."

Nature description serves as well as any to illustrate the
quality of this development -- the shift from what was often
artificially balanced clauses and hackneyed diction to the variety and subtlety of suggestive rhythms and language. I will therefore examine this type of description in more detail than some of the others.

Nature Description, Early and Late

While it is evident that Dickens' descriptive strength did not lie in observations and evocations of nature, especially rural nature, it is also true that he was genuinely drawn to the pastoral. Even in his hackneyed nature passages a childlike energy of perception is often joined to a wistful nostalgia. The early descriptions, for example, are full of simple, brilliant images — green grass, bright sun, blue sky, sparkling waters, and perfumed flowers — all expressive of one's first sensual response to the beautiful things of the earth. Perhaps this is explained by Forster's observation that the rural Kent which Dickens was forced to leave as a child for a hard life in London became a fantasy idyl of innocence and pleasure which haunted his adolescent and adult life.

Forster, I, 11. Sylvere Monod /Dickens the Novelist, pp. 14-15 also speculates that Dickens' harsh adolescent life caused him to dwell obsessively on the idyllic life at Chatham and hence to miss the normal experience of being weaned from childhood.

It may be that the strength of Dickens' sentimentalized remembrance prevented him from "seeing" nature with artistic eyes for a good part of his career. It is not really until David
Copperfield, ironically the first sustained treatment of his own childhood, that he abandons hackneyed nature formulas and gives his descriptions particularizing detail and original poetic rhythms. This is not an overnight achievement, however, for the nature prose undergoes an intermediate development — the infusion of animism — which has important ramifications in all types of Dickensian descriptive prose.

A few passages will illustrate the most obvious characteristics of the early descriptions:

After Pickwick has "cross-examined solitude" as to who could continue to exist in the city after having experienced the country:

The rich, sweet smell of the hayricks rose to his chamber window; the hundred perfumes of the little flower-garden scented the air around; the deep-green meadows shone in the morning dew that glistened on every leaf as it trembled in the gentle air; and the birds sang as if every sparkling drop were a fountain of inspiration to them. PP, 109.

Who can describe the pleasure and delight, the peace of mind and soft tranquility, the sickly boy felt in the balmy air, and among the green hills and rich woods, of an inland village? OT, 235.

There was the little church, in the morning, with the green leaves fluttering at the windows: the birds singing without: and the sweet-smelling air stealing in at the low porch, and filling the homely building with its fragrance. OT, 237.

The sun came proudly up in all his majesty, the noble river ran its winding course, the leaves quivered and rustled in the air, the birds poured their cheerful songs from every tree, the short-lived butterfly fluttered its little wings; .... NN, 677.

The night crept on apace, the moon went down, the stars grew pale and dim, and morning, cold as they, slowly approached. OCS, 300.

The freshness of the day, the singing of the birds, the beauty of the waving grass, the deep green leaves, the wild
flowers, and the thousand exquisite scents and sounds that floated in the air .... OCS, 114.

... There were wild flowers to pluck -- the bright red poppy, the gentle harebell, the cowslip, and the rose .... there was the merry sunlight to hunt out, as it crept in aslant through leaves and boughs of trees, and hid far down -- deep, deep, in hollow places -- like a silver pool, where nodding branches seemed to bathe and sport; sweet scents of summer air breathing over fields of beans or clover; the perfume of wet leaves or moss; .... RR, 332.

In context, the passages have several similarities. In most, Dickens is moralizing about the virtues of the country, and, therefore, generalizing nature rather than describing a particular scene. Diction is often tritely sentimental; clauses are arranged in an artificial balance; and metered prose strives for a pseudo-poetic effect. Nevertheless, there is a genuine attempt to emphasize sensual detail. (Note especially the passage from Rudge.)

With exceptions, the nature description through Barnaby Rudge remains generally imitative of the sentimental nature mode which developed, or rather degenerated, from eighteenth-century models. Moreover, in the novels and Christmas books of the early forties, it is not uncommon to find landscape description in which pathetic fallacy and hackneyed rhythmic artifices produce Gothic effects reminiscent of graveyard poetry. The Old Curiosity Shop has several "picturesque" descriptions of ruin; and as late as Dombey and Son and The Haunted Man, there are similar stereotypical passages:

Hovering feebly round the church, and looking in, dawn means and weeps for its short reign, and its tears trickle on the window glass, and the trees against the church-wall bow their heads, and wring their many hands in sympathy. Night, growing pale before it, gradually fades out of the church,
but lingers in the vaults below, and sits upon the coffins.
And now comes bright day .... DS, 406.

When, in rustic places, the last glimmering of daylight died away from the ends of avenues; and the trees, arching overhead, were sullen and black. When, in parks and woods, the high wet fern and sodden moss and beds of fallen leaves, and trunks of trees, were lost to view, in masses of impenetrable shade. When mists arose from dyke, and fen, and river .... HM, 334.

However, during the same period, Dickens begins to shape rhetorical devices such as personification and pathetic fallacy into a more personal vehicle for his linguistic and perceptual exuberance. Dickensian animism, which has its beginnings as early as *Nickleby* and which occurs thereafter primarily in description of interiors, makes a full-scale appearance in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, where it joins with rhythmic devices to produce humorous or cozy pictorial effects. After its flowering in *Chuzzlewit*, the style declines, surviving chiefly in interior descriptions and ceremonial scenes where it is intended to embody good health, good cheer, and good fellowship. (It also lives on in the journalism, Christmas books, and stories.)

The lengthy description of a dying autumn day at the novel's beginning (represented below by brief excerpts) illustrates the quality of this essentially original descriptive style:

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2Forster cites this passage and the similar "winter walk" as examples of "first-rate description, original in the design, imaginative in all the detail, and very complete in the execution." (I, 292-3.)

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_The declining sun lights the landscape briefly..._ the stream which has been dull and sullen all day long, broke out
into a cheerful smile; .... The vane upon the tapering spire of the old church glistened from its lofty station in sympathy with the general gladness; and from the ivy-shaded windows such gleams of light shone back upon the glowing sky, that it seemed as if the quiet buildings were the hoarding-place of twenty summers, and all their ruddiness and warmth were stored within. .... On the motionless branches of some trees, autumn berries hung like clusters of coral beads, as in those fabled orchards where fruits were jewels; others, stripped of all their garniture, stood, each the center of its little heap of bright red leaves, watching their slow decay; others again, still wearing theirs, had them all crunched and crackled up, as though they had been burnt; .... the sun goes down ... the light was all withdrawn; the shining church turned cold and dark; the stream forgot to smile; the birds were silent; and the gloom of winter dwelt on everything. ... Then the village forge came out in all its bright importance. The lusty bellows roared Ha Ha! to the clear fire, which roared in turn, and bade the shining sparks dance gaily to the merry clinking of the hammers on the anvil. Out upon the angry wind; how from sighing, it began to bluster round the merry forge, banging at the wicket, and grumbling in the chimney, as if it bullied the jolly bellows for doing anything to order. And what an impotent swaggerer it was too, for all its noise; .... 7-8

Contrast is the controlling technique. In the first half, diction, images, and rhythms compare the momentary brightness of the landscape with the gloom which follows the sun's setting; in the second, the cheerful rhythms of the forge -- dancing sparks, clinking hammers, the song of the bellows -- are contrasted with the melancholy banging, bullying, and grumbling of the wind. Lavish use of personification and an exclamatory tone produce the "jolly" energy of the prose. While it may be excessively sentimental for our tastes, Dickens' descriptive zest results in a valuable by-product. Detail is fresh and evocative. The images of autumn berries like clusters of coral beads, trees in the center of a heap of bright leaves, and buildings as the hoarding place of twenty summers suggest that Dickens is striving for new and subtler means of representation.
Other "outdoor" descriptions in Chuzzlewit are in the tradition of coaching prose, but with a more deliberate rhythmic organization. The lengthy "winter walk" has an antiphonal use of rhetorical question and response and is punctuated at fairly regular intervals by the refrain "Better than the Gig!" or variations thereon. (See p. 190) A similar passage depicts Tom coach-bound for London. ("Yoho, down the pebbly dip, and through the merry water-splash, and up at a canter to the level road again. Yoho! Yoho!" 536) Both passages have an excess of metered prose and rhetorical coyness.

Although the set piece serves in a general way as prelude to the frosty Pecksniff household, this hardly justifies its length and involutions. Beginning with Dickens' next novel, Dombey, it will be rare to find a lengthy descriptive piece the function of which is not closely tied to theme or characterization. Passages of playful rhetoric will be relegated to the journalism and short fiction where Dickens continues to allow himself full descriptive rein.

David Copperfield represents a dramatic development in Dickens' artistry, one which is reflected in the nature descriptions as well as generally in the quality of the narrative voice. Most striking is the freshness and originality of particularizing detail and rhythms: either Dickens' eye is more mature or his recollection more vivid; and for once, his emotional commitment to his material leads him away from stale "poetic" meters to what Greene termed "delicate and exact poetic cadences, the music of memory."¹

¹Greene, OP. cit.

The new artistry is evident in a description such as the following:
The frozen particles of ice, brushed from the blades of grass by the wind, and borne across my face; the hard clatter of the horse's hoofs, beating a tune upon the ground; the stiff-tilled soil; the snowdrift, lightly eddying in the chalkpit as the breeze ruffled it; the smoking team with the waggons of old hay, stopping to breathe on the hill-top, and shaking their bells musically; the whitened slopes and sweeps of Downland lying against the dark sky, as if they were drawn on a huge slate! 

The effect is intensely sensual, the images making their appeal alternately to our touch, sight, and hearing. The final metaphor of visual contrast gains additional force from the rhythmic sweep of the passage, which moves from the narrator's bodily sensations in a gradual arc outward-to the chalkpit, the hill, and, finally, the horizon beyond. Subdued alliterative effects and the arresting "still-tilled soil" contribute to the poetry of the description.

In Copperfield, Dickens portrayed ocean rhythms with a poetic fidelity that he never again matched. The following sentence with its Miltonic cadence and its internal fall and swell, fall and swell, captures the quality of a sea's subdued upheaving. The animistic touch is both visually and orally suggestive:

... But they were both as grave and steady as the sea itself; then lying beneath a dark sky, waveless -- yet with a heavy roll upon it, as if it breathed in its rest -- and touched, on the horizon, with a strip of silvery light from the unseen sun. 351

The following excerpt from the storm scene aims at a breathless immediacy:

'Indulating hills were changed to valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its
towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds fell fast and thick; ...

Lest the reader receive merely a diffuse impression of crashing waves, Dickens keeps the focus on particular things: hills changing to valleys, valleys to hills; the perilous flight of the solitary storm-bird; the illusory cloud shore which directs our eye away from the shore to the horizon where all is in movement too. The description is a skillful blend of metaphor and realistic visual detail with effective use made of alliteration and action verbs.

In Great Expectations, too, the nature descriptions are skillfully drawn, Dickens' early interest in the effects of light on landscape and buildings persisted and in the later novels, he explores its nuances with the delicacy of an impressionist artist:

5In Bleak House, many poetic descriptions are inspired by light effects, for example: "Seen by night, from distant openings in the trees, the row of windows in the long drawing-room ... is like a row of jewels set in a black frame." (121) "... the separate shadows of bare trees gloom together in the woods, and ... the Ghost's Walk, touched at the western corner by a pile of fire in the sky, resigns itself to coming night ...." (118) "Through some of the fiery windows beautiful from without, and set, at this sunset hour, not in dull grey stone but in a glorious house of gold, the light excluded at other windows pours in, rich, lavish, overflowing like the summer plenty in the land." (142)

...The winking lights upon the bridges were already pale, the coming sun was like a marsh of fire on the horizon. The river, still dark and mysterious, was spanned by bridges that were turning coldly grey, with here and there at top a warm touch from the burning in the sky. As I looked along the clustered roofs, with church towers and spires shooting into the unusually clear air, the sun rose up, and a veil seemed to be drawn from the river, and millions of sparkles burst out upon its waters. From me, too, a veil seemed to be drawn, and I felt strong and well. 440
In such passages, Dickens' touch is absolutely sure. There are no unnecessary adjectives and no pyrotechnics - simply quiet control of rhythm and diction. In Great Expectations, as in most of the later novels, nature is often drawn as an extension, or reflection, of the mood or personality of a character. A considerable artistic distance lies between the playful animism of the Chuzzlewit passage and this poetic method of exploring thought and feeling.

As illustrated by the Copperfield passages, suggestive rhythms are a prominent feature of the mature prose, including nature descriptions. Even the repetitive sing-song of nursery tale is exploited for a variety of effects. In a description of a desolate river landscape in Great Expectations, repetition of simple phrases, heavy alliteration, and a final rhythmic "thud" evoke a surrealistic scene of weary sameness (its cadence and images recall "the Ancient Mariner"): 

...a little squat shoal-lighthouse on open piles, stood crippled in the mud, on stilts and crutches; and slimy stakes stuck out of the mud, and slimy stones stuck out of the mud, and red landmarks and tidemarks stuck out of the mud, and an old landing stage and an old roofless building slipped into the mud, and all about us was stagnation and mud.  

In general, then, the later nature description is particularized, "rhythmic" rather than metered, and metaphoric. Its metaphoric density is illustrated in the following brief passages, chosen from among many:

... and the sun, blood-red on the eastern marshes behind dark masts and yards, seemed filled with the ruins of a forest it had set on fire. OMF, 69

On such an evening ... when the fallen leaves of the few unhappy City trees grind down in corners under wheels of wind .... OMF, 372
The sensuousness of nature descriptions in such works as *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Edwin Drood* may be one way of trying to mitigate the darkness of their social vision. In these novels, Dickens seems more than ever preoccupied with images of renewal and fertility, both Christian and exotic:

> A brilliant morning shines on the old city. Its antiquities and ruins are surpassingly beautiful, with a lusty ivy gleaming in the sun, and the rich trees waving in the balmy air. Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods, and fields, -- or, rather, from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time -- penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life .... *ED*, 269

> On a healthy autumn day, the Marshalsea prisoner ... sat listening to a voice that read to him. On a healthy autumn day; when the golden fields had been reaped and ploughed again, when the summer fruits had ripened and waned, when the green perspectives of hops had been laid low by the busy pickers, when the apples clustering in the orchards were russet, and the berries of the mountain ash were ritemson among the yellowing foliage ... *ID*, 773

> The tide bore them on in the gayest and most sparkling manner, until they stopped to dine in some everlastingly green garden, needing no matter-of-fact identification here; ... then came the sweet return among delicious odours of limes in bloom, and musical ribblings; and, all too soon, the great black city cast its shadow on the waters, and its dark bridges spanned them as death spans life, and the ever-lastingly-green garden seemed to be left for everlasting, unregainable and far away. *ED*, 246-47

Such passages seem to glance back at the early nature descriptions with their sweet scents, green grass, and glorious sun. Like the early descriptions, they also have a kind of story book remoteness and magic combined with a moral intent (the city kills, nature heals). But whereas Dickens' early nature was child-like simplicity and joy,
the nature he invokes now in his autumnal mood is a more solemn
(and religious) force which promises a measure of renewal and escape
from fret. Moreover, if in some of the diction and images Dickens
has come nearly full circle, the rhythms reflect the naturalness
and ease of the mature style. The first passage from Drood gains
grandeur and solemnity from the organ-like measure with its haunting
strain of loss and sadness.

Despite the improved artistry of nature description in the
later novels, there are few passages which can rival the superb
descriptions of Chesney Wold in which Dickens displays near perfect
control of cadence and diction. In the following brief excerpt, for
example, assonance and alliteration yield soft onomatopoeic effects
(soft loppings ... crash and crackle); and an air of suspended
animation, or slow-motion, is produced by the separation of sentences
into brief, distinct phrases and clauses:

The weather, for many a day and night, has been so wet that
the trees seem wet through, and the soft loppings and prunings
of the woodman's axe can make no crash or crakkel as they fall.
The deer, looking soaked, leave quagmires, where they pass. The
shot of a rifle loses its sharpness in the moist air, and its
smoke moves in a tardy little cloud towards the green rise,
coppice-topped, that makes a background for the falling rain.
The view from my Lady Dedlock's own windows is alternately a lead-
coloured view, and a view in Indian ink. The vases on the stone
terrace in the foreground catch the rain all day; and the heavy
drops fall, drip, drip, drip, upon the broad flagged pavement,...

6See an excellent discussion of the poetic techniques of this
passage in C.B. Cox, "A Dickens' Landscape," Critical Quarterly,
II (Spring, 1960), 58-60.
Man-Made Landscape

A similar development in creative technique can be found in the descriptions of cities, towns, buildings, and interiors which thickly populate Dickens' novels.

Urban Scene    Cityscape was unquestionably Dickens' forte; he was gifted with an unusual sensitivity to its images and tempo. When his intent was purely descriptive, that is, when he used language to reflect the multiplicity of impressions that register on the senses of an alert observer, even his early urban descriptions were exceptionally fresh and vivid. But as with nature description, when his purpose was a moralizing one, the prose was muddied by artificially inflated rhythms and didacticism. It was not really until the later novels that he learned to convey his moral implicitly by means of suggestive rhythms and figurative language. The following excerpts of descriptions of industrial cities (from three distinct phases of his career) illustrate this. When his social indictment begins to be more vehement in The Old Curiosity Shop, the prose loses its earlier objectivity and sensuality. But by Hard Times, his indignation is under artistic control and the prose is again lucid and sensuous in the vein of Pickwick, but with the added dimension of metaphoric and rhythmic suggestivity:

As they rattled through the narrow thoroughfares leading to the heart of the turmoil of Birmingham, the sights and sounds of earnest occupation struck more forcibly on the senses. ... the whirl of wheels and noise of machinery shook the trembling walls. The fire, whose lurid sullen light had been visible for miles, blazed fiercely up in the great works and factories of the town. The din of hammers, the rushing of steam, and the dead heavy
clanking of engines was the harsh music which arose from every quarter. PP, 763

Advancing more and more into the shadow of this mournful place its dark depressing influence stole upon their spirits, and filled them with a dismal gloom. On every side, and far as the eye could see into the heavy distance, tall chimneys, crowding on each other, and presenting that endless repetition of the same dull, ugly form, which is the horror of oppressive dreams, poured out their plague of smoke, obscured the light, and made foul the melancholy air. On mounds of ashes by the wayside, ... strange engines spun and writhed like tortured creatures; clanking their iron chains, shrieking in their rapid whirl from time to time as though in torment unendurable, and making the ground tremble with their agonies. PCS, 313-314

It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next. HT, 20

There has been some discussion about whether this description is truly suggestive or merely entertaining. See especially Robert Garis, The Dickens' Theatre: A Reassessment (Oxford, 1965), p. 161. I personally find the melancholy mad elephant metaphor as effective an objective correlative as, say, the whirring of Binet's lathe in Madame Bovary, having, as it does, beneath the fantastic touch, a realistic visual equivalent.

In a pure descriptive vein, however, The Old Curiosity Shop has passages in which rhythm and diction are creatively managed, for example, the one which reproduces the somnolence of a small town on a hot afternoon:
Nothing seemed to be going on but the clocks, and they had such drowsy faces, such heavy lazy hands, and such cracked voices, that they surely must have been too slow. The very dogs were all asleep, and the flies, drunk with moist sugar in the grocer’s shop, forgot their wings and briskness, and baked to death in dusty corners of the window.

Even earlier, in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens sketched a market morning in Smithfield with the physical immediacy of the handheld camera. The figure is deliberately chosen, for Eisenstein has pointed to this scene as one which influenced early twentieth-century moviemakers in their development of a montage technique to embody dynamic urban tempos. As Eisenstein notes, the impact of the approach to London and Smithfield depends on an accumulation of realistic detail, a quickening tempo, and a "calculated transition from purely visual elements to inter-weaving with aural at first as indefinite rumble, growing to a roar and transferring us to a purely aural structure, concrete and objective."

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The lengthy piece begins with Sikes and Oliver moving through the dawn of a "cheerless" day. At first the description is marred by the dreary common place of the diction, but as Dickens becomes absorbed in describing the gradual increase of light to full day and as he sets them on the Bethnal Green Road, his intimate knowledge of London scene takes charge. The atmosphere becomes electric with a multiplicity of sights and sounds, culminating in the breathless cacophony at the center of Smithfield in which waves of pure sound seem to break over the reader:
... the whistling of drovers, the barking of dogs, the bellowing and plunging of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the grunting and squeaking of pigs, the cries of hawkers, the shouts, oaths, and quarrelling on all sides; the ringing of bells and roar of voices, that issued from every public-house; the crowding, pushing, driving, beating, whooping, and yelling; the hideous and discordant din that resounded from every corner of the market .... OT, 153

It continues to be a favourite technique of Dickens to lead the reader gradually from the periphery into the heart of a busy scene. With the seeing eye thus in motion, sense impressions accumulate in a steadily mounting but natural tempo. For example, a sensual panorama, less ambitious in scope but otherwise similar to that of the Smithfield passage, is dramatized in the gradual change from land to water as one approaches Captain Cuttle's lodgings:

It began with the erection of flag-staffs, as appurtenances to public-houses; then came slop-seller's shops, with Guernsey shirts, sou'wester hats, and canvas pantaloons .... These were succeeded by anchor and chain-cable forges, where sledge-hammers were dining upon iron all day long. Then came rows of houses, with little vane-surmounted masts uprearing themselves from among the scarlet beans. Then, ditches. Then pollard willows. Then more ditches. Then unaccountable patches of dirty water, hardly to be descried, for the ships that covered them. Then, the air was perfumed with chips; and all other trades were swallowed up in mast, oar, and block-making, and boat-building. Then, the ground grew marshy and unsettled. Then there was nothing to be smelt but rum and sugar. Then, Captain Cuttle's lodgings ... were close before you. DS, 110

As with nature description, the trend in the later urban scenes is toward increased experiment with rhythms and other musical devices, ranging from the simple to the complex. In David Copperfield, for example, a fairly simple syntactical device suggests the crush and confusion of a muddy London night; the breathless string of adjectives builds in rhythmic complexity to the final alliterated thud:
I felt as if I had come from the clouds, where I had been leading a romantic life for ages, to a bawling, splashing, link-lighted, umbrella-struggling, hackney-coach-jostling, patten-clinking, muddy, miserable world. DC, 224

In Dombey, a Carlylean technique — the presentation of an ordinary phenomenon from a new and surprising perspective — gives a dramatic sense of the disruption in Stagg's Gardens caused by the railroad. The cause of the upheaval is withheld until the end, while the reader is led to believe that he is viewing the scene of some great natural calamity. As with the Copperfield passage, skillful use of alliteration and assonance joined to an unrelenting tempo increase the drama:

The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its center. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here, a chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere; thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; Babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations; carcasses of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earth- quakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth; and mounds of ashes blocked up rights of way; and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood.

In short, the yet unfinished and unopened Railroad was in progress; and, from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilisation and improvement. DC, 59-60
When small-town somnolence is again described in Dickens' last novel, the self-consciousness of the alliterative effects is evident, particularly when compared to the more restrained Curiosity Shop description. Though exaggerated, the hissing, slightly menacing sibilants do create a quasi-surrealistic effect of echoing vacancy:

So silent are the streets of Cloisterham (though prone to echo on the smallest provocation), that of a summer day the sunblinds of its shops scarce dare to flap in the south wind; while the sun-browned tramps, who pass along and stare, quicken their limp a little that they may the sooner get beyond the confines of its oppressive respectability. ED, 23.

A discussion of urban scene should not fail to mention the celebrated opening of Bleak House -- an outstanding example of syntactical creativity. As critics have pointed out, the truncated prose -- there are no verbs, simply discrete noun phrases -- portrays a seemingly elemental world of objects, looming out of the fog and mire, but bearing little or no relation to each other. These pointillistic fragments of vision convey an impression of a world whose matrix is dissolved or dissolving.

Dickensian Interiors Another type of man-made scenery for which Dickens had a special gift is interiors. Those who value his "picturesque" effects suggest his affinity with the Dutch genre painters in lavishly detailed and richly colored descriptions of rooms and indoor scenes. Although this is not the only type of interior description in Dickens, the cozy, sensuous vein runs prominently through the novels. A roseate prose aimed at producing feelings of pleasure, comfort, and nostalgia, its origins lie in the
jolly festivities of inn, fellowship hall, and Dingley Dell in *Pickwick* (the analogue in nature description has already been discussed). Some of its mannerisms are curbed in the later novels, although animism and sensuousness remain its dominant twin impulses.

In an early example — the **Maypole at night** — sentimentality and intrusive meter are partially offset by the play with light effects:

> Blessings on the red — deep, ruby, glowing red — old curtain of the window; blending into one rich stream of brightness, fire and candle, meat, drink, and company, and gleaming like a jovial eye upon the bleak waste out of doors! Within, what carpet like its crunching sand, what music merry as its crackling logs, what perfume like its kitchen's dainty breath, what weather genial as its hearty warmth! Blessings on the old house, how sturdily it stood! ... It was not enough that one red curtain shut the wild night out .... In every saucepan lid, and candlestick and vessel of copper, brass, or tin that hung upon the walls, were countless ruddy hangings, flashing and gleaming with every motion of the blaze, and offering,... interminable vistas of the same rich color. The old oak wainscoting, the beams, the chairs, the seats, reflected it in a deep, dull glimmer .... **BR, 212**

Just as nature descriptions in Dickens' late novels seemed in some respects to look backward, so interior pieces in the last novels have a rich *sensuousness* and animistic effects reminiscent of early works:

> The host had gone below to the cellar, and had brought up bottles of ruby, straw-colored, and golden drinks, which had ripened long ago in lands where no fogs are, and had since lain slumbering in the shade. Sparkling and tingling after so long a nap, they pushed at their corks to help the corkscrew... and danced out gaily. **ED, 116**

—from the "fugue" of the "closet of closets," Minor Canon Corner — The pickles ... announced their portly forms, in printed capitals, as *WALNUT, GHERKIN, ONION, CABBAGE* .... The jams, as being of a less masculine temperament, and as wearing curl-papers, announced themselves in feminine calligraphy, like a soft whisper, to be *Raspberry, Gooseberry, Apricot, Plum,*
Damson, Apple, and Peach. ... oranges were revealed, attended by a mighty japanned sugar-box, to temper their acerbity if unripe. Home-made biscuits waited at the Court of these Powers, accompanied by a goodly fragment of plum-cake, and various slender ladies' fingers, to be dipped into sweet wine and kissed. Lowest of all, a compact leaden vault enshrined the sweet wine and a stock of cordials, whence issued whispers of Seville Orange, Lemon, Almond, and Caraway-seed. There was a crowning air upon this closet of closets of having been for ages hummed through by the Cathedral-bell and organ, until those venerable bees had made sublimated honey of everything in store; and it was always observed that every dipper among the shelves (deep, as has been noticed, and swallowing up head, shoulders, and elbows) came forth again mellow-faced, and seeming to have undergone a saccharine transfiguration. ED, 101

The descriptions nearly transport us back into the land of Pickwick, although the closet "fugue" has a perfected mellowness (perhaps overripeness) which testifies to Dickens' long habit of enshrining the artifacts of domestic life. This piece is his last apotheosis of food and drink as the balm of man's senses and spirit. The brilliant metaphor of sublimated honey marks it as mature prose. Dickens had used a similar image earlier in Copperfield ("the reverberations of the bells had hummed through the rusty armour of the Black Prince hanging up within the cathedral" 566), but it is more strikingly employed here, for it rounds off the "fugue" with a harmonizing chord so present to the reader's senses that he too undergoes the "transformation" and has the momentary illusion of being engulfed in that sweet interior where all fragrances mingle. The passage is remarkably uncomplicated by modifying words and phrases, basing its sensual appeal primarily on the suggestive power of names and simple nouns and adjectives (Raspberry, Gooseberry, slender ladies' fingers, Seville Orange, sweet wine).

The other type of interior description most often encountered
in the novels is that which reflects the personality of the owner. Initially, "correlative" interior is largely a gimmick for descriptive play, but it later develops into a more sophisticated means of dramatizing character. Its chief rhythmic technique is the running metaphor which sets the tone and organizes details, although other rhythmic effects, such as epigrammatic "point" are also frequent. 9

The epigrammatic piece is frequent in Dombey and is occasionally found in the later novels. Its characteristics are a sprightly rhythm based on antithetical effects, crisp diction, and a tone of comic irony. The description of Mrs. Pipchin's "castle" at Brighton is one example. DS, 93-4

Two early examples based on the same metaphor of hoarding aim at different effects. That one succeeds while the other fails probably reflects the difference in **Dickens'** early handling of comedy and melodrama:

In an old house, dismal, dark and dusty, which seemed to have withered like himself, and to have grown yellow and shrivelled in hoarding him from the light of day, as he had, in hoarding his money, lived Arthur Gride. Meagre old chairs and tables, of spare and bony make, and hard and cold as misers' hearts, were ranged in grim array against the gloomy walls; attenuated presses, grown lank and lantern-jawed in guarding the treasures they enclosed, and tottering, as though from constant fear and dread of thieves, shrunk up in dark corners. whence they cast no shadows on the ground, and seemed to hide and cower from observation. A tall grim clock upon the stairs, with long lean hands and famished face, ticked in cautious whispers;.... NN, 678

Miss Brass's cellar 7 It was a very dark miserable place, very low and very damp: the walls disfigured by a thousand rents and blotches. The water was trickling out of a leaky butt, and a most wretched cat was lapping up the drops with the sickly eagerness of starvation. The grate, which was a wide one, was wound and screwed up tight, so as to hold no more than a little
thin sandwich of fire. Everything was locked up; the coal-
cellar, the candle-box, the salt-box, the meat-safe, were all
padlocked. There was nothing that a beetle could have lunched
upon. The pinched and meagre aspect of the place would have
killed a chameleon. He would have known at the first mouthful
that the air was not eatable, and must have given up the ghost
in despair. OCS, 255-256

In the description of Gride's house, the animism is forced and
the rhythmic effects are overly theatrical. Alliteration is excessive
as is the balancing of adjectives, clauses, and phrases which results
in a sing-song effect (tall grim clock with long lean hands). There
is much redundancy and near redundancy (fear and dread; hide and
cower). The artistic immaturity of the description is glaring when
compared with the Curiosity Shop passage written little more than a
year later. Not only is the metaphor in the latter less insistent,
but diction and images are crisp, imaginative, and economical.

By the time of Bleak House, however, Dickens had learned
subtlety in the management of the melodramatic interior piece. In
the description of Tulkinghorn's chambers, stilted rhythms have been
replaced by the matter-of-fact tone of stage direction, and instead
of hackneyed diction and obtrusive running metaphor, there are
concreteness of detail and restrained metaphoric variations on the
theme of secrecy and closeness:

Like as he is to look at, so is his apartment in the dusk
of the present afternoon. Rusty, out of date, withdrawing from
attention, able to afford it. Heavy, broad-backed old-fashioned
mahogany and horsehair chairs, not easily lifted, obsolete
tables with spindle-legs and dusty baize covers, presentation
prints of the holders of great titles in the last generation,
or the last but one, environ him. A thick and dingy Turkey-
carpet muffles the floor where he sits, attended by two candles
in old-fashioned silver candlesticks, that give a very ins-
sufficient light to his large room. The titles on the backs of
his books have retired into the binding; everything that can
have a lock has got one; no key is visible. Very few loose papers are about. BH, 100

After Dombey, when Dickens' interest shifted away from description for its own sake, details in the correlative interiors are made increasingly subordinate to characterization. In some instances, character and setting are blended so as to mutually illuminate one another. One example is the opening portrait of Lady Dedlock and Chesney in the rain in which it is all but impossible to say whether character is exteriorized or landscape interiorized. The scene gains intensity and complexity through a final subtle rhythmic manipulation. Following the description of the Dedlock estate as a world without solidity, color, or life -- a world, like the London of the novel's beginning, which is dissolving into the elements and into death (see quote, my page 32) -- we are shown a woman "out of temper" but in a less ephemeral sense of one temper with her surroundings:

My Lady Dedlock (who is childless), looking out in the early twilight from her boudoir at a keeper's lodge, and seeing the light of a fire upon the latticed panes, and smoke rising from the chimney, and a child, chased by a woman, running out into the rain to meet the shining figure of a wrapped-up man coming through the gate, has been put quite out of temper. My Lady Dedlock says she has been "bored to death." BH, 6-7

Her lonely figure in the boudoir window confirms the negations of the gloomy landscape, and yet at the heart of that "deadened" world is the fragile, but shining image of the keeper's family. The construction of the sentence is intentionally paradoxical: the effect of the main clause describing 'My Lady's irritation is overwhelmed by the emotional impact of a detail in the landscape she is
viewing. Not only is the lodge scene described with great sensuality of image and diction, but its internal rhythm intensifies to what might almost be termed an ecstatic climax, so that the sudden shift in tone back to Lady Dedlock's mood comes as a small shock. Suspended syntactically, the scene momentarily asserts its images of fertility, relationship, and love against the predominating images of death. Lady Dedlock's irrational reaction to it and the parenthetical mention of her childlessness (which Dickens inserted in the original manuscript as a deliberate afterthought) give the portrait a dimension of mystery and portent. (In the context of later events, of course, the episode will be seen to have foreshadowed her tragedy. It is love and the family that Lady Dedlock has sinned against and there is a grim irony in her assertion that she is "bored to death" by them.)

In a parallel piece, Dickens uses the same syntactic technique, although more selfconsciously, to dramatize Lady Dedlock's boredom amidst the superabundant life of Paris. As in the first passage, life with its play, love, socializing, devotion, and entertainments enacts itself within a subordinate construction, while the sentence's main clause asserts Lady Dedlock's negation of its energy and purpose:

"Only last Sunday, when poor wretches were gay -- within the walls, playing with children among the clipped trees and the statues in the Palace Garden; walking, a score abreast, in the Elysian Fields, made more Elysian by performing dogs and wooden horses; between whiles filtering (a few) through the gloomy Cathedral of our Lady, to say a word or two at the base of a pillar, within flare of a rusty little gridiron-full of gusty little tapers -- without the walls, encompassing Paris with dancing, love-making, wine-drinking, tobacco-smoking, tomb-visiting, billard card and domino playing, quack-doctoring, and much murderous refuse, anirate and inanimate -- only last Sunday, my Lady, in the desolation of Boredom and the clutch of Giant Despair, almost hated her own maid for being in spirits."  

BH, 116-117
Sir Leicester is also dramatized in terms of his surroundings, as in the description of him bedridden with the gout. A stately poetic rhythm ("down the long perspective," "through the long line of windows," etc.); archaic diction; and regal imagery ("goodly," "flush of crimson and gold," "stately oaks," "Chase," "a-hunting") contrast paradoxically with the physically and spiritually shrunken state of the baronet. As a result, one achieves a glimpse into the inner man without losing sight of the incongruity between the style and the reality (Sir Leicester's faintly ridiculous helplessness):

And a goodly show he makes, lying in a flush of crimson and gold, in the midst of the great drawing-room, before his favourite picture of my Lady, with broad strips of sunlight shining in, down the long perspective, through the long line of windows, and alternating with soft reliefs of shadow. Outside, the stately oaks, rooted for ages in the green ground which has never known ploughshare, but was still a Chase when kings rode to battle with sword and shield, and rode a-hunting with bow and arrow; bear witness to his greatness. BH, 166-167

The correlative interior is sometimes used to dramatize euphemistically a character's sexuality. The passions of Lady Dedlock and Edith Dombey are often obliquely represented in the ambience of their chambers; and after Edith's elopement, the degradation of her position is mirrored in the shabby opulence of the Dijon hotel suite (see pp. 700-701). A more elaborate metaphor for sexual decadence is created in the description of Carker's house. His menacing sexuality, never directly portrayed, becomes almost palpable in the rooms' furnishings -- their voluptuous colors and textures and erotic books and art. The bird, frustrated and violent, is an obvious counterpart of its master and its swinging in the wedding ring hoop reflects the nature of Carker's designs on the Dombeyes:
... it is a house of refinement and luxury. Rich colors, excellently blended, meet the eye at every turn; in the furniture; on the walls; upon the floors; tingeing and subdued the light that comes in through the odd glass doors and windows here and there. There are a few choice prints and pictures too; in quaint nooks and recesses there is no want of books; and there are games of skill and chance set forth on tables -- fantastic chessmen, dice, backgammon, cards, and billiards.

And yet amidst this oppulence of comfort, there is something in the general air that is not well. Is it that the carpets and the cushions are too soft and noiseless, so that those who move or repose among them seem to act by stealth? Is it that the prints and pictures do not commemorate great thoughts or deeds, or render nature in the poetry of landscape, hall, or hut, but are of one voluptuous cast -- mere shows of form and color -- and no more? Is it that the books have all their gold outside, and that the titles of the greater part qualify them to be companions of the prints and pictures? ....

... A gaudy parrot in a burnished cage upon the table tears at the wires with her beak, and goes walking, upside down, in its dometop, shaking her house and screeching; but Mr. Carker is indifferent to the bird, and looks with a musing smile at a picture on the opposite wall.

... Perhaps it is a Juno; perhaps a Potiphar's Wife; perhaps some scornful Nymph ....

It is like Edith.

With a passing gesture of his hand at the picture .... An insolent salute wafted from his lips? No; yet like that too -- he resumes his breakfast, and calls to the chafing and imprisoned bird, who coming down into a pendant gilded hoop within the cage, like a great wedding ring, swings in it, for his delight.

Rhythmic Imitation of Perception and Consciousness

Related to Dickens' development of experimental rhythmic techniques for the delineation of character is his exploration of the quality of consciousness and individual acts of perception. These increasingly sophisticated descriptions belie the criticism that Dickens was only skilled in characterization of the surface. His attempts to record the impact of experience on consciousness were related to a desire for subtler means of character analysis, but above all to his abiding intent to involve the reader as directly and
sensually as possible. The recording of perceptual effects afforded
greater scope for experiment than did rhythmic description of
character and, hence, in these passages the syntactic variations
tend to be more original and complex.

Some of the best examples depict consciousness under stress —
either external or internal — with an emphasis on the resultant
perceptual distortions. An early example is the robbery scene in
which Oliver Twist is shot:

The cry was repeated — a light appeared — a vision of two
terrified half-dressed men at the top of the stairs swam
before his eyes — a flash — a loud noise — a smoke — a
crash somewhere, but where he knew not, — and he staggered back.

Presented in short, hurried fragments of perception, the scene is
vividly realistic, especially the ordering of sensations and Oliver's
brief vague perception of a crash somewhere, "but where he knew not,"
before he topples.

Perhaps the most ambitious of such pieces is the "fevered
vision" of Carker's final ride. In the chapter-long rhetorical tour-
de-force, rhythmic interplay dramatizes an hysterical state in which
details of the external panorama, sometimes blurred, sometimes
perceived with extra-ordinary acuteness, mingle with the internal
images that have unhinged Carker. The prose is highly impressionistic.
William Axton, who has given this passage close attention, notes the
extensive replacement of finite verbs with present participles and
other progressive verb forms; the heavy, abrupt punctuation; the
loose connectives; and the extended prepositional phrases which are
interrupted by other constructions — all of which help to suggest
hysteria.
Axton, pp. 238-246. In the scene's finale (Carker's death), syntactical elements create, as Axton has put it, "the effect of an hysterically heightened consciousness at the moment of death. The shift to passive voice marks the precise time of death and the shift in rhythms from jagged hammering to sweeping suggests the spinning forward movement of the train," p. 250. See DS, pp. 711-722

Another fevered consciousness is similarly portrayed in Hard Times. The disjointed impressions of Mrs. Sparsit (in a "limp and streaming" state) pursuing Louisa are obliquely represented in a description which collapses the details of the scene into a few dominant sensations and presents them in a brisk balance suggestive of a speeded-up movie sequence:

The seizure of the station with a fit of trembling, gradually deepening to a complaint of the heart, announced the train. Fire and steam, and smoke, and red light; a hiss, a crash, a bell, and a shriek; Louisa put into one carriage, Mrs. Sparsit put into another: the little station a desert speck in the thunderstorm. 195-96

In David Copperfield, in which, as I have mentioned, Dickens' depiction of ocean rhythms is unusually realistic and compelling, Ham's struggle to reach the shipwreck is presented from the viewpoint of the onlookers who follow his form with strained concentration:

And now he made for the wreck, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the rugged foam, borne in towards the shore, borne on towards the ship, striving hard and valiantly.... At length he neared the wreck. He was so near, that with one more of his vigourous strokes he would be clinging to it, -- when a high, green, vast hill-side of water, moving on shoreward, from beyond the ship, he seemed to leap up into it with a mighty bound, and the ship was gone! 607

The rising and falling rhythms are a vivid graph of his struggle. When he has neared the wreck, the dash suspends the action in a breathless pause before the crashing surge of the climax.
In the scene in which Pip beats out the fire in Miss Havisham's clothes, a dual perspective — the objective events and Pip's perception of them — is achieved by means of grammatical suspension. The sequence of Pip's actions is described first in a series of dependent "that" clauses and his unawareness of the actions asserted in the independent clause which follows. The dramatic weight of the passage falls on Pip's observation of the patches of tinder with the result that the reader perceives the initial actions as a series of rapid, blurred images which quickly shade into the still image of Pip considering the burning patches. The masterstroke is the focus on the quiet moment of shock following the violent event with its clarity of undirected perception. During the interval between Pip's awareness of the burning patches of falling tinder and the tinder no longer alight, he perceives the insects and the servants' arrival, but not yet the fact of what has happened:

That I got them coats off, closed with her, threw her down, and got them over her; that I dragged the great cloth from the table for the same purpose, and with it dragged down the heap of rottenness in the midst, ... that we were on the ground struggling like desperate enemies, and that the closer I covered her, the more wildly she shrieked and tried to free herself; that this occurred I knew through the result, but not thought anything I felt, or thought, or knew I did. I knew nothing until I knew that we were on the floor by the great table, and that patches of tinder yet alight were floating in the smoky air, which a moment ago has been her faded bridal dress.

Then, I looked around and saw the disturbed beetles and spiders running away over the floor, and the servants coming in with breathless cries at the door. I still held her forcibly down ... and I doubt if I even knew who she was, or why we had struggled, or that she had been in flames, or that the flames were out, until I saw the patches of tinder that had been her garments, no longer alight, but falling in a black shower around us. GE, 407-408
Dickens commonly used tricks of style to suggest the quality of ordinary acts of perception. Even a spurious trick can sometimes be colorful:

("You listen to this," said my sister to me, in a severe parenthesis.) GE, 25

In the storm scene in Copperfield, a more subtle use of parenthesis suggests the tendency to perceive irrelevant detail in moments of extremity:

David anxiously tries to catch sight of the wreck of the ship. "A half-dressed boatman, standing next me, pointed with his bare arm (a tattoo'd arrow on it, pointing in the same direction) to the left. Then, O great Heaven, I saw it, close in upon us!" DC, 605

Sometimes repetition is used to heighten the realism of perceptual detail:

... She presently stopped and looked at me again; and presently again; and after that, looked frowning and moody. GE, 97-98

Presently we lost the light, presently saw it, presently lost it, presently saw it, .... BH, 47

"You get me a file." He tilted me again. "And you get me wittles." He tilted me again. "You bring'em both to me." He tilted me again. "Or I'll have your heart and liver out." He tilted me again. GE, 3-4

In another case, a cinematic device restricts point of view so that Pip and the reader will perceive details in a dramatic order of climax:

Pip holding lamp over stairrail and looking down. Moving the lamp as the man moved, I made out that he was substantially dressed, but roughly; like a voyager by sea. That he had long iron-grey hair. That his age was about sixty.
That he was a muscular man, strong on his legs, and that he was browned and hardened by exposure to the weather. As he ascended the last stair or two, and the light of my lamp included us both, I saw, with a stupid kind of amazement, that he was holding out both his hands to me. GE, 319

In another passage in *Great Expectations*, the cramped maneuvering of Pip's boat among the docks is syntactically simulated:

Again among the tiers of shipping, in and out, avoiding rusty chain-cables, frayed hempen hawsers, and bobbing buoys, sinking for the moment floating broken baskets, scattering floating chips of wood and shaving, cleaving floating scum of coal, in and out, under the figure-head of the John of Sunderland ... and the Betsy of Yarmouth with a firm formality of bosom ... in and out, hammers going in shipbuilders' yards, saws going at timber, clashing engines going at things unknown, pumps going in leaky ships, capstans going, ships going out to sea, and unintelligible sea-creatures roaring curses over the bulwarks at respondent lighter-men; in and out -- out at last upon the clearer river, where the ship's boys might take their fenders in, no longer fishing in troubled waters with them over the side, and where the festooned sails might fly out to the wind. GE, 443

The sentence is divided into a string of phrases and made to seem even choppier by the punctuating refrain "in and out" and by alliteration in the first portion which produces harsh, jagged rhythms (chain-cables, hempen hawsers, bobbing buoys, broken baskets, firm formality). But a change is rung on the final refrain -- "in and out -- out at last" -- and the broken rhythm becomes a flow: the cadence of the final phrase is one of release and freedom.

**Impressionism in Action Scene**

Some of the dullest rhetoric in *Dickens* occurs in early descriptive scenes which involve a great deal of action or a large group of people. With some exceptions, notably the riot scenes in *Barnaby Rudge*, the wide-angle camera seemed to embarrass Dickens and he sought to compensate by means of syntactic contrivances which,
while they were intended to convey the sense of action and panaroma, were themselves stilted and hence unable to overcome the deadening effect of diction which was abstract and stereotyped:

\[
\text{a crowd beseiges the house in which Sikes is hiding.} \quad \text{Some called for ladders, some for sledge-hammers; some ran with torches to and fro as if to seek them, and still came back and roared again; some spent their breath in impotent curses and execrations; some pressed forward with the ecstasy of madmen, ... OT, 385}
\]

And still the riot went on. The debauchery gained its height; glasses were dashed upon the floor by hands that could not carry them to lips; oaths were shouted out by lips which could scarcely form the words to vent them in; ... some mounted on the tables, waving bottles above their heads, and biding defiance to the rest; some danced, some sang, some tore the cards and raved. Tumult and frenzy reigned supreme; ... NN, 673

\[
\text{on a ship to America} \quad \text{Here an old grandmother was crooning over a sick child, ... here a poor woman with an infant in her lap mended another little creature's clothes, ... Here were old men awkardly engaged in little household offices, ... and here were swarthy fellows.... MC, 241}
\]

\[
\text{scanning faces in a crowd} \quad \text{Some frowned, some smiled, some muttered to themselves, some made slight gestures, as if anticipating the conversation in which they would shortly be engaged, some wore the cunning look of bargaining and plotting, some were anxious and eager, some slow and dull; in some countenances were written gain; in others loss. OCS, 305}
\]

In the first two examples, although the rhythmic pattern is obviously intended to convey drama and excitement, the succession of neatly balanced clauses, all beginning with the indefinite "some," and the artificial language doom the descriptions to lifelessness. In the 

\text{Nickleby} \ text{passage, the style is further devitalized by the use of passive tense. The last two examples are fairly typical of the way in which the young Dickens often sketched his panoromas. The stylized syntax plus the lack of specific detail give the impression of a mechanical cataloguing.}
In general, in the early works, when Dickens could not dwell leisurely on an interior or outdoor scene, or when he had to forego the ordered perspective of a traveller moving through a particular scene -- he often fell back on a formula of enumeration in which more emphasis fell on stilted cadence than on observed detail, and in which no details stood out because all received equal emphasis. With some exceptions, it was not until later that he learned how to successfully dramatize an active panorama by focusing on selected objects or persons and rendering them impressionistically.

A comparison of mob scenes in Barnaby Rudge and A Tale of Two Cities illustrates this development. Not that the scenes in Rudge are ineffective, for massive use of detail and compelling rhythms make them outstanding in the canon of early descriptive prose. But while they illustrate Dickens' movement toward an impressionistic style, they also are hampered by the conventions discussed above. In the following excerpts, the quality of the details struggles against the artificiality of the syntax to bring life to the scenes:

After them, the dense throng came fighting on; some singing; some shouting in triumph; some quarrelling among themselves; some menacing the spectators as they passed; some with great wooden fragments, on which they spent their rage as if they had been alive, rending them limb from limb, and hurling the scattered morsels high into the air; some in a drunken state, unconscious of the hurts they had received from falling bricks, and stones, and beams; .... 375  

There were men there, who danced and trampled on the beds of flowers as though they trod down human enemies, and wrenched them from the stalks, like savages who twisted human necks. There were men who cast their lighted torches in the air, and suffered them to fall upon their heads and faces, blistering the skin with deep unseemly burns. There were men who rushed up to the fire, and paddled in it with their hands as if in water; .... 413
Occasionally Dickens manages more original rhythmic effects
despite the retention of some conventional syntax:

the destruction of the Maypole men darting in and out, by door and window, smashing the glass, turning the taps, drinking liquor out of china punch-bowls, sitting astride of casks, smoking private and personal pipes, cutting down the sacred grove of lemons, hacking and hewing at the celebrated cheese, breaking open inviolable drawers, putting things in their pockets which didn't belong to them, dividing his own money before his own eyes, wantonly wasting, breaking, pulling down and tearing up: nothing quiet, nothing private ... some yelling, some singing, some fighting, some breaking glass and crockery, some laying the dust with the liquor they couldn't drink, ... more men still -- more, more, more -- swarming on like insects: noise, smoke, light, darkness, frolic, anger, laughter, groans, plunder, fear, and ruin! 403

The excerpt, with its impressionistic flashes of vision, intensifying rhythms, and well-selected detail does succeed in dramatizing frenzy, but it is able to do so chiefly because there is a focus: the (semi-)consciousness of Willet who is forced to witness the desecration of his property. The scene mingles the sense impressions that break over his bewildered person with his reactions to them (smoking private and personal pipes, nothing quiet, nothing private, dividing his own money before his own eyes, etc.).

Similarly, the best of the riot scenes in Rudge are dramatically focussed rather than being a mere sampling of the crowd's activities. An example is the climatic storming of the prison, in which the outer door is the descriptive focus and the frenzied activity is directed against it as if it were a human adversary (See pp. 477-480.)

It is interesting to compare a similar scene written eighteen years later -- the storming of the Bastille in A Tale of Two Cities (excerpted very briefly below):
Saint Antoine had been, that morning, a vast dusky mass of scarecrows heaving to and fro, with frequent gleams of light above the billowy heads, where steel blades and bayonets shone in the sun. A tremendous roar arose from the throat of Saint Antoine, and a forest of naked arms struggled in the air like shrivelled branches of trees in a winter wind; all the fingers convulsively clutching at every weapon or semblance of a weapon that was thrown up from the depths below, ... 209

As a whirlpool of boiling waters has a center point, so, all this raging circled round Defarge's wine shop, and every human drop in the cauldron had a tendency to be sucked towards the vortex where Defarge himself, already begrimed with gunpowder and sweat, issued orders, issued arms, thrust this man back, dragged this man forward, disarmed one to arm another, laboured and strove in the thickest of the uproar. 210

With a roar that sounded as if all the breath in France had been shaped into the detested word, the living sea rose, wave on wave, depth on depth, and overflowed the city to that point. Alarm bells ringing, drums beating, the sea raging and thundering on its new beach, the attack begun.

Deep ditches, double drawbridge, massive stone walls, eight great towers, cannon, muskets, fire and smoke. Through the fire and through the smoke -- in the fire and in the smoke, for the sea cast him up against a cannon, and on the instant he became a cannonier -- Defarge of the wine shop worked like a manful soldier, Two fierce hours.

Deep ditch, single drawbridge, massive stone walls, eight great towers, cannon, muskets, fire and smoke .... 'Work, comrades all, work! Work, Jacques One, Jacques Two.... 210-211

The most obvious difference is the personifying of the mob as the hulking, spastic figure of Saint Antoine. While this device converts human beings into a literary abstraction, it has the paradoxical effect of making the portrayal more personal and vivid, partially because it provides a focus which can receive metaphoric elaboration and partially, as one critic remarks, because "behind the grim irony lies Dickens' deeper belief in the personification."12

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For instance, it is more effective to have a roar issue from the throat of Saint Antoine than from the "throat of the crowd": the superimposition of a beast's image on the mob is on a visual level more frightening and on a symbolic level more expressive of the loss of individuality and humanity engendered by mob action.

The mob scenes in Tale are, in all respects, more metaphoric than those in Rudge. In a fast succession of images, the crowd is a scarecrow, a forest, a boiling cauldron, a living sea. The metaphoric shifting is an important means of suggesting frenetic, inchoate activity.

Another means of creating a vivid impression of what is, in reality, a blurred panorama is the central focus on the Defarges at the vortex of the action. Dickens had tried to do something similar in Rudge with the figure of Hugh, but much less successfully. Here we are never far from the Defarges' elbows, overhearing the snatches of conversations and the orders shrieked out under fire.

Moreover, in Tale, Dickens used rhythms more systematically and more originally. The battle itself has a number of interlocking rhythms which provide intensity and climax: the massive rhythms of the living sea in its irresistible forward surging are woven into the impressionistic rendering of the sensations of the battle and the hurriedly glimpsed terrain (Deep ditches, double drawbridge, etc.). The pointillistic style prefigures that of The Red Badge of Courage.

The scene continues (beyond the excerpt) with prose fragments -- nouns and adjectives unconnected to verbs -- conveying vivid sense impressions ("Flashing weapons, blazing torches, smoking wagon-loads
of wet straw, ... shrieks, volleys, execrations, ... boom smash and rattling). Perhaps most imaginatively, the repetition of the refrain "but still the deep ditch, the single drawbridge" produces a counter-rhythm to the onward swelling of the mob, hence dramatizing the strength of the resistance and intensity of the struggle and leading to the almost ecstatic culmination:

A white flag from within the fortress, and a parley ... suddenly the sea rose immeasurably wider and higher and swept Defarge of the wine shop over the lowered drawbridge, past the massive stone outer walls, in among the eight great towers surrendered; 211
CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUE

IN THE PROSE OF SOCIAL PROTEST:

PERSUASION

Throughout Dickens' novels and journalism, rhetorical and rhythmic devices are consistently associated with passages of social criticism, so much so that one can speak of a distinguishable language of protest.\(^1\) In the early novels and the journalism, it tends to be conventional and obtrusive, but in the later works when Dickens' social vision has been more fully articulated, the language of protest becomes experimental and dramatically appropriate.

In all the social protest passages, early and late, Dickens had a dual concern which determined the techniques he employed: his primary goal -- to arouse his readers to pity and indignation, and, ultimately, action -- was, he believed, contingent on a secondary

\(^1\)To make the discussion of social criticism manageable and also relevant to my overall focus on descriptive prose, I have not dealt with protest in dialogue, characterization, or, for the most part, narrative. I have considered chiefly those passages in which Dickens speaks out directly, either in his own voice or that of a persona, against an abuse or social problem. Moreover, I have limited myself to the treatment of specific social abuses and have not included the more general satires of social attitudes, such as snobbery and various types of social irresponsibility.
object — to describe the abuse so that the reader was affected
without being horrified or disgusted. His solidude for the Victorian
sensibility is made explicit in an essay published in All the Year
Round:

I find it very difficult to indicate what a shocking sight I
saw in them / workhouse wards /, without frightening the reader
from the perusal of these lines, and defeating my object of
making it known. UT, 77

Trevor Blount, who has written several valuable essays on the topic­
aility of abuses treated in the novels, demonstrates that compared
to contemporary accounts, Dickens' pen was "chaste."

Dickens replaces circumstantial detail with a literary presenta­
tion that tries to poeticize his disgust, avoiding horrific
fact, but trying, through literary tact, to stimulate in us a
proper indignation. 2

2"The Graveyard Satire of Bleak House in the Context of 1850,"
RES, XIV (1963), 370-378.

The manner in which Dickens tried to "poeticize" his disgust
in the early novels and the journalism is through rhetorical in­
flation and euphemistic language. Characteristically, passages of
criticism are signaled by a break in the narrative tone; usually a
rhetorical intensifier, such as an apostrophe, invocation, or
exclamation, effects the shift into emotional high-gear. In the
passage itself, the diffuse emotionalism is largely a function of
strict rhetorical patterns, which attempt to be incantatory and
distancing, and a pseudo-poetic vocabulary the Latinisms and
allegorical devices of which further dissipate the impact of the
detail. Since the protest passages, despite later artistic modifications,
continue to be distinguished from narrative and descriptive prose by their emotionalism and pronounced syntactic patterns, I shall begin by examining a few characteristic early passages. Of all the novels, *Nicholas Nickleby* can claim the most obtrusive and didactic ones, for example, the lengthy description of Squeer's pupils, introduced by an exclamatory sentence which slows the narrative pace expectantly in an orchestral flourish:

But the pupils -- the young noblemen! How the last faint traces of hope, the remotest glimmering of any good to be derived from his efforts in this den, faded from the mind of Nicholas as he looked in dismay around! Pale and haggard faces, lank and bony figures, children with the countenances of old men, deformities with irons upon their limbs, boys of stunted growth ... all crowded on the view together; there were the bleared eye, the hare-lip, the crooked foot, and every ugliness or distortion that told of unnatural aversion conceived by parents for their offspring, ... there was childhood with the light of its eye quenched, its beauty gone, .... With every kindly sympathy and affection blasted in its birth, with every young and healthy feeling flogged and starved down, with every revengeful passion that can fester in swollen hearts eating its evil way to their core in silence, what an incipient Hell was breeding here! 89

The excessive balance along with the repetition of the expletive "there were" (a common device in early stilted panoramas), creates a cataloguing effect which adds to the lifeless stylization of the passage. The description is further removed from reality by trite melodramatic diction and the rhetorical devices of synecdoche and personification ("there were the bleared eye, the hare-lip," "childhood with the light of its eye quenched"). The inflated, nearly apocalyptic rhythms of the passage seem especially ludicrous because they interrupt a low-key, but vivid comic narrative which is immediately resumed after the final exclamation.

It would be easy to multiply examples of this type from the
from the early novels, but unprofitable. They are strikingly similar — baldly rhetorical, didactic, and euphemistic. Few of the novels have as many such passages as *Nickleby*, but as late as *Dombey*, all have at least one or two. In some instances, allegorical devices and Biblical echoes further elevate the tone and "poeticize" the subject, as in the lengthy digression on social ills in *Dombey*, this excerpt from which is characteristic:

> For only one night's view of the pale phantoms rising from the scenes of our too-long neglect; and from the thick and sullen air where Vice and Fever propagate together, raining the tremendous social retributions which are ever pouring down, and ever coming thicker! Bright and blest the morning that should rise on such a night; for men ... would then apply themselves, like creatures of one common origin, owing one duty to the Father of one family, and tending to one common end, to make the world a better place!

Protest prose undergoes an uneven development. The early style persists unmodified throughout the journalism. For example, the description which follows the comment from *AYR* (1855-) quoted at the beginning of this section bears a striking resemblance to the *Nickleby* passage. It too begins with a melodramatic apostrophe and builds to a similar climax:

> Of the sunken eyes that turned to me as I walked between the rows of beds .... Here, lay the skeleton of a man .... Here, lay a man with the black scurvy eating his legs away .... This bed was empty, because gangrene had set in .... That bed was a
hopeless one... the awful thinness of the fallen cheeks, the awful brightness of the deep set eyes, the lips of lead, the hands of ivory, the recumbent human images lying in the shadow of death with a kind of solemn twilight on them ... O Pangloss, God forgive you! UT, 77

In the final rhetorical flourish, the appeal to pity depends on the cadence, increasing in intensity to a period; on an incantatory effect produced by repetition of words and parallel constructions; and on euphemistic language which supposedly lessens the horror by generalizing and softening detail and by casting a veil of "poetry" over the scene. This is not to say that the passage is poetic or that it moves us in regions of sublime commiseration, but only that Dickens apparently judged that his audience would be so moved.¹

¹It is difficult to guess at how effective such passages were with Dickens' audience. Compared with the more subtle social criticism in the novels written at the same time, this selection seems like hack work. It may be, however, that they style is a function of Dickens' estimation of his audience. The journal pieces appeared in his publications Household Words and All the Year Round, both read by a mass audience. It may be that when his purpose was narrowly didactic, as in such essays as these, he "wrote down to" his audience in the sense of making his emotional appeals more conventional.

In the novels after Dombey, as overarching thematic concerns assume paramount importance for Dickens, it is rare to find passages of detachable social criticism: protest either tends to be conspicuously absent from a novel, as in Great Expectations, or, as part of a pervasive social theme, it is absorbed into plot and characterization (Bleak House, Our Mutual Friend, Hard Times). And although protest passages continue to make their appeal through intensified rhythms, the rhythms are more flexible and the prose is enhanced
by a number of creative stylistic features, such as irony, metaphor, fantasy, and voices. The hackneyed Latinate diction of the early style gives way to a more concrete, at times, colloquial vocabulary. The style, in general, becomes more oral and more dramatic.

This development, as I mentioned, is not an even one and in such novels as *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend*, there are recurrences of the early rhetoric. However, given the conventionality of that style, the amount of control and variety that Dickens achieved in his best protest prose is impressive.

**Mock-Epic Devices**

In the later protest prose, the quality of the satire reflects a matured perspective as well as increased artistic control. One type involves a mock-epic technique in which rhetorical devices such as apostrophe, invocation, and inflated simile - the ingredients of Dickens' melodramatic style - perform in new roles:

> The investment "contagion" As a vast fire will fill the air to a great distance with its roar, so the sacred flame which the mighty Barnacles had fanned caused the air to resound more and more with the name Merdle. *LD*, 542

> From a description of Tom-all-Alone's As, on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so, these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever, and sowing more evil in its every foot-print than Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years -- though born expressly to do it. *BH*, 167

The heroic rhythms and lofty diction of the first simile contrast ironically with the decidedly un-epic personages involved.
The effect of the second simile is less simplistic. Here the contrast between form and content, that is, between the dignity of the epic form and the harshness of the detail, elicits a mixture of pity and revulsion. The discord is made more powerful by its reflection in the internal rhythms of the sentence: cacaphony and melody vie with one another in the highly alliterated and assonant phrases ("ruined wretch", "vermin parasites", "crowd that crawls and coils and comes"); the bare hint of a Shakespearean allusion ("ruined shelters") and the lilting cadence of the phrase "where the rain drips in" add their incongruous poetry to the amalgam; and the strength of the opening rhythms is dissipated in the long string of phrases which loses momentum, gathers it, loses it, and finally runs out in the anticlimatic final phrase.

Mock-epic invocation, or apostrophe, is frequently used for satiric effect in passing references ("Say, Edith Dombey! And Cleopatra, best of mothers, let us have your testimony!

DS, 462

"Say, good M'Choakumchild ..." HT, 7), and in more deliberate constructions. Deriding the "charity" of the Pardiggle and Jellybys whose sentiments are intrigued only by the heathen of far-off lands, Dickens has the unromantic native Jo stand muster for their inspection. The rhythmic description builds toward this climax:

Homely filth begrimes him, homely parasites devour him, homely sores are in him, homely rags are on him; native ignorance, the growth of English soil and climate, sinks his immortal nature lower than the beasts that perish. Stand forth, Jo, in uncompromising color! From the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head, there is nothing interesting about thee. HH, 685
The balance of clauses creates a tension which is partially resolved in the ironic apostrophe ("stand forth ... "). The satiric point is then emphasized rhythmically in the sudden reversal of expectation after the flourish of the cliche "From the sole of thy foot": the bursting of the rhetorical bubble mocks the hollowness of "far-sighted" romanticism. Another well-known passage which uses mock epic rhythms is the apostrophe to "mighty Shares" in Our Mutual Friend. Here repetition, droning catechism and choral incantation imitate the drugged stupidity of the deifiers of shares:

Have no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners; have Shares. ... Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. Has he any principles? Shares. What squeezes him into Parliament? Shares.... Sufficient answer to all; Shares. O mighty Shares! To set those blaring images so high, and to cause us smaller vermin, as under the influence of henbane or opium, to cry out night and day, "Relieve us of our money, scatter it for us, buy us and sell us, ruin us, only we beseech ye take rank among the powers of the earth and fatten on us! " 108

A more profound (and unsettling) use of invocation is found in an equally familiar passage in Bleak House:

Come night, come darkness, for you cannot come too soon, or stay too long, by such a place as this! Come, straggling lights into the windows of the ugly houses; and you who do iniquity therein, do it at least with this dread scene shut out! Come, flame of gas, burning so sullenly above the iron gate, on which the poisoned air deposits its witch-ointment slimy to the touch! It is well that you should call to every passer-by, "Look here!" 115

Here Dickens' horror and indignation find an adequate vehicle in the classical invocation, the stately cadence of which is laced with Shakespearean and Biblical echoes. It is ironically appropriate that the phrasing recalls Lady Macbeth's invocation to "thick night,"
for both ask that darkness hide death, although Dickens wants the death scene both shut out and called attention to ("Look here!"). More than satire is involved in this marriage of epic form with the London graveyard topic. The dignity of the form lends solemn import to the delineation of the abuse, and it also helps to euphemize the details. With distancing epic technique and with

As Mr. Blount has shown (pp. 370-371), London burial practices were a barbarism and the poor, who were forced to live near the cemeteries, suffered the most from them; they were not only unwilling witnesses of gruesome mutilations, but they had to breathe foul-smelling, disease-laden air. The poison which arose from decaying corpses improperly buried was, in fact, a slimy acrid pollutant which filled the mouth and the nose.

It is interesting to compare a more realistic, although toned-down description of the same graveyard which is given late in the novel by Esther:

"At last we stood under a dark and miserable covered way, where one lamp was burning over an iron gate, and where the morning faintly struggled in. The gate was closed. Beyond it, was a burial-ground -- a dreadful spot in which the night was very slowly stirring; but where I could dimly see heaps of dishonoured graves and stones, hemmed in by filthy houses, with a few dull lights in their windows, and on whose walls a thick humidity broke out like a disease." 614

metaphor (the fantastic figure of "witch-ointment"), Dickens was able to assault his readers' sensibilities without risking offending them with overly explicit details.

Imitation of Voices

Author Persona As early as Oliver Twist, Dickens had played with the author persona, but in only a few novels, notably Bleak House, Dombey and Son, and Our Mutual Friend, did he develop the technique
with sustained consistency and effectiveness. 6

6By "author persona," I refer to an authorial speaking voice whose appearance in the novel is marked by a consistency of tone and perspective. The author-character (David Copperfield, Pip) is not considered under this category. In the three novels mentioned, the author persona is rhythmic, both in its individual appearances and in its regular deployment throughout the narrative. This will be discussed in a later section. Here I am concerned with the manner in which the persona is used for satiric and sympathetic effects in protest passages; hence, Dombey is not included in the discussion.

The function of the persona in Bleak House and Our Mutual Friend is similar to that of the Greek chorus. Aloof from the action, it is free to address itself to the characters or the audience. Its tone is characteristically godlike, the accents expressive of profound compassion and cosmic irony. In a sense, it is a transmutation of the rhetoric of earlier protest, for it too intrudes on the action to make a direct emotional appeal which can be didactic, sentimental, and overinflated. It is, however, less so and, more importantly, it is dramatic and original.

In Bleak House, where the persona furnishes an important emotional perspective on the action, its occurrences mark nodal points in the development of the novel's social theme. For example, to give emotional emphasis to his indictment of society's indifference to its dependents, Dickens as chorus catches up a phrase from the dialogue and echoes it on a cosmic scale, exploring its human implications:

"My instructions don't go to that," replies the constable.
"My instructions are that this boy is to move on."
Do you hear, Jo? It is nothing to you or to anyone else, that the great lights of the parliamentary sky have failed for some few years, in this business, to set you the example
of moving on. The one grand recipe remains for you -- the profound philosophical prescription -- the be-all and the end-all of your strange existence upon earth. Move on!

You are by no means to move off, Jo, for the great lights can't at all agree about that. Move on! 202 7

7 The terms "philosopher" and "philosophy" are standard items in Dickens' vocabulary of social protest, as they are in Carlyle's. They are always used derisively, and while sometimes aimed at Utilitarianism, as in Oliver Twist and Hard Times, they are also applied to officialdom in general, or to anyone in a position of responsibility who evades it. "Philosophy," in Dickens' vocabulary, equals evasion, hypocrisy, expediency, cant, irresponsibility; it applies to any institution which substitutes abstractions, systems, or theory for action and humane concern.

The syntactical rigidity and Latinate diction of earlier protest passages have given way here to the easy accents of a speaking voice. Color and emotional heightening are provided by the rhythmic repetition of the phrase "move on" and a restrained balancing of clauses.

The technique of addressing Jo directly (cf., "Stand forth, Jo") and commanding him centerstage to be observed by the lords and gentlemen (and readers) who have been unaware of his existence has its own logic. Jo's character and function in the novel are such that he cannot be presented from within; but to be a successful demonstration of the TYPE of poor neglected by officialdom and private do-gooders alike, he must be brought into dramatic confrontation with this audience. The persona acts as mediator between the two, combining in his tone an active sympathy for the one and a reproach for the others. When Jo slouches to Nemo's burial place and sweeps the step in inarticulate tribute to a friend, Dickens adds
his voice (rather unnecessarily) to highlight the boy's redemptive sincerity which had been ridiculed by the inquest officials:

Jo, is it thou? Well, well! 'hough a rejected witness, who "can't exactly say" what will be done to him in greater hands than men's, thou art not quite in outer darkness .... 116

When his small, insignificant life has finally slipped away, the persona draws his funeral cortège majestically past the officials and "samaritans," whether they will or no:

Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day. 119

The funeral repetition of "dead" is a muffled drum salute as the boy's chapter closes with the reminder that he was but one of many.

In Our Mutual Friend, Dickens, perhaps trying to repeat his success with Jo, uses a persona as choral mediator between Betty Higden and the authorities, but he lacks his earlier control and the episodes are overinflated, sentimental, and didactic. Still, despite its excesses the persona does give the Higden episodes a unity they might not otherwise have had. In the beginning, Dickens alternates scenes dramatizing Betty's independence with the persona's sarcastic addresses to the "Lords and Gentlemen and Honourable Boards" who are responsible for the Poor Law institutions which haunt Betty and finally drive her to her death. The addresses become a distinctive strand which, when Betty has embarked upon her pilgrimage, counterpoints the epic devices used to dignify her flight. For example, as she comes upon people whose lives have been wrecked by the workhouse and hears accounts of starvation, the persona comments:

All such things she would hear discussed, as we, my lords and
gentlemen and honourable boards, in our unapproachable magnificence never hear them, and from all such things she would fly with the wings of raging Despair. 480

On balance, it cannot be claimed that Dickens became particularly skillful in the manipulation of the author persona, although his use of it in later novels to give drama and unity to passages and episodes of protest should not go entirely unappreciated, especially since the introduction of a speaking voice resulted in greater naturalness of diction and rhythm.

Erlebte Rede Since Dickens was an inveterate imitator of voices, it is not surprising that in the passages of social criticism there is a fair amount of erlebte rede—third person narration which retains the stamp, or linguistic idiosyncracies, of an individual's speech. Since scholars have dealt generally with this,

I will merely note that the technique is used for both satiric and sympathetic effects, as was the case with the author-persona. For example, in describing the social structure of Coketown, Dickens cleverly satirizes the town potentates (who would make their pompous, shortsighted generalizations about the laborers) by preserving their accents (including Bounderby's) in a passage which itself imitates the officiousness of a fact-finding committee report:

Then came the Teetotal Society, who complained that these same people would get drunk, and showed in tabular statements that they did get drunk, .... Then came Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, ... who could, on occasion, furnish more tabular
statements derived from their own personal experience, ... from which it clearly appeared -- in short, it was the only clear thing in the case -- that these sane people were a bad lot altogether, gentlemen; that do what you would for them they were never thankful for it, gentlemen; that they were restless, gentlemen; that they never knew what they wanted; that they lived upon the best, and bought fresh butter; and insisted on 'ocha coffee, .... HT, 22

When Dickens used erlebte rede to dramatically represent the viewpoint of the downtrodden and inarticulate, and hence evoke pathos, the results were likely to be sentimental or faintly ludicrous. In one instance, he combines the third-person perspective with Jo's in an amphibious sentence which can neither swim nor crawl:

It must be a strange state, not merely to be told that I am scarcely human (as in the case of my offering myself for a witness), but to feel it of my own knowledge all of my life. BH, 168

Because of Dickens' extraordinary mimetic ability, the addition of "voices" added considerably to the vivacity and color of social criticism, although unlike the persona device which was used as a means of unifying protest motifs within a novel, the effects of imitated speech were strictly local.

Symbolism, Imagery and Diction

A variety of dramatic and rhythmic effects distinguishes the best of the later social protest from the earlier rhetoric. In the later works, it is uncommon to find passages in which the tone is sharply distinct from that of the narrative context and one of the reasons for this is the increased use of integrative symbolism and imagery. Whereas imagery in the earlier passages was negligible and ad hoc, so to speak, it is used in the later works, as Dickens would put it, to make the blood of the novel flow through the
episodes of social criticism.

The well-known Sunday evening sketch in London sketch in *Little Dorrit* illustrates as well as any this artistic advance. The two major symbolic patterns of the novel — imprisonment and contagion — are brilliantly forecast in the contrasting place descriptions which open the novel: the quarantine, the polluted prison, and the imprisoning sun of Marseilles assume greater thematic significance in their juxtaposition with the London scene of corresponding imprisonment and pollution.

In Sunday in London, (see *LD*, pp 32-34) Dickens protests Evangelical Sabbath restrictions by dramatizing a scene from which nature, health, and enjoyment are excluded. Images of prison and pollution interplay. People jailed in houses are "condemned" to look at streets in a "penitential" garb of soot. All public amusements are "bolted and barred"; people are interred in "pits of houses" where they gasp for air. They can want nothing, the persona sardonically remarks, but a "stringent policeman." The confinement is made more hideous by the unwholesomeness of the city: the air is "close and stale"; a bell is tolling "as if the Plague were in the city and the dead carts were going round." There are fifty thousand lairs where fair water becomes polluted overnight. In the heart of the city is a "deadly sewer ... in place of a fine fresh river."

One of the surprising achievements of the piece is its dramatization of a lifeless scene. People are excluded, but bells, streets, and houses are given a maniacal animation. A skillful use of alliteration, assonance, and repetition makes the physical
presence of these objects overwhelming:

It was a Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of dissonance, sharp and flat, cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows in dire despondency. In every thoroughfare, up almost every alley, and down almost every turning, some doleful bell was throbbing, jerking, tolling, .... Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to breathe but streets, streets, streets.... 32-33

Even the relationship between the "jailers and the "jailed" is dramatized - by means of a house metaphor. Arthur, at the center of the brooding scene, is surrounded by "ten thousand responsible houses" who frown heavily on the streets and fifty thousand lairs whose inhabitants pant for air and relief. Not only do sixty thousand unhappy houses pressin on him, but miles of miserable houses stretch "far away towards every point of the compass," while at their center the deadly sewer ebbs and flows. The scene is rounded off with a sardonic question in which diction and rhythm give ironic emphasis to the oxymoron:

What secular want could the million or so of human beings whose daily labour, six days in a week, lay among these Arcadian objects, from the sweet sameness of which they had no escape between the cradle and the grave -- what secular want could they possibly have upon their seventh day? 33 [italics mine]

Control and experiment are evident throughout the passage, from the opening where Dickens selects words whose sounds suggest brooding and gloom (gloomy, close, stale, melancholy, penitential, soot, steeped, souls, dire, despondency, doleful, bell, throbbing, tolling) to the ending where he plays with intonation and tempo:

At the quarter, it [a bell] went off into a condition of deadly-lively importunity, urging the populace in a voluble
manner to Come to church, Come to church, Come to church! At the ten minutes, it became aware that the congregation would be scanty, and slowly hammered out in low spirits. They won't come, they won't come, they won't come! At the five minutes, it abandoned hope, and shook every house in the neighbourhood for three hundred seconds, with one dismal swing per second, as a groan of despair.

As is suggested by this piece, dramatization, whether by means of scene or linguistic manipulation, is a distinguishing characteristic of the late social criticism. In Nicholas Nickleby (218) a lengthy didactic passage lectures on the "disciples of charity" who need the romance of far-off objects to stimulate their compassion; in Bleak House the same point is made dramatically when Jo sits down to eat his dirty bit of bread on the doorstep of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. (168) In Oliver Twist (p. 35) a slum is described vividly but reportorially; in Bleak House, it is personified as the nightmare-haunted Tom-all-Alone's (see especially, 175-76); and in A Tale of Two Cities as the ragged, starved, vinous, and demonic Saint Antoine.

In Hard Times, Stephen Blackpool's imprisoning habitat is registered upon the reader's pulses through the slowly increasing weight of a marathon periodic sentence. The tension increases as each phrase brings the reader nearer the "last close nook" until he feels as bricked in and suffocated as Stephen:

In the hardest working part of Coketown; in the innermost fortifications of that ugly citadel, where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in; at the heart of the labyrinth of narrow courts upon courts, and close streets upon streets, which had come into existence piecemeal, every piece in a violent hurry for some one man's purpose, and the whole an unnatural family, shouldering, and trampling, and pressing one another to death; in the last close nook of this great exhausted receiver, where the chimneys, for want of air to make a draught, were built in an immense variety
of stunted and crooked shapes, as though every house put out a sign of the kind of people who might be expected to be born in it; among the multitude of Coketown generically called "the Hands," -- a race who would have found more favour with some people, if Providence had seen fit to make them only hands, or, like the lower creatures of the seashore, only hands and stomachs -- lived a certain Stephen Blackpool, forty years of age. 58

The later social criticism, then, is more dramatic, more symbolic, and more rhythmic; and its language is more allusive and more original. A striking contrast in diction is seen in two descriptions of London burial grounds, the first from Mickleby, the second from Bleak House:

... a poor, mean burial ground -- a dismal place, raised a few feet above the level of the street, and parted from it by a low parapet-wall and an iron railing; a rank, unwholesome, rotten spot, where the very grass and weeds seemed, in their frowsy growth, to tell that they had sprung from paupers' bodies,.... And here, in truth, they lay, parted from the living by a little earth and a hoard or two -- lay thick and close -- corrupting in body as they had in mind -- a dense and squalid crowd. Here they lay, cheek by jowl with life: no deeper down than the feet of the throng that passed there, every day, and riled high as their throats. Here they lay, a grisly family all these dear departed brothers and sisters of the ruddy clergyman who did his task so speedily when they were hidden in the ground! NN, 814

they bear off the body of our dear brother here departed to a hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene, whence malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our dear brothers and sisters who have not departed; while our dear brothers and sisters who hang about official back stairs -- would to Heaven they had departed! -- are very complacent and agreeable. Into a beastly scrap of ground which a Turk would reject as a savage abomination, and a Caffre would shudder at, they bring our dear brother here departed, to receive Christian burial.

With houses looking on, on every side... with every villainy of life in action close on death, and every poisonous element of death in action close on life -- here, they lower our dear brother down a foot or two: here, sow him in corruption, to be raised in corruption: an avenging ghost at many a sickbedside: a shameful testimony to future ages, how civilization and barbarism walked this boastful island together. BH, 115
The conventionality of the Nickleby diction yields in *Bleak House* to a less common place Biblical phraseology, the savagery of which reflects the greater intensity of Dickens' social indictment. Whereas the earlier passage makes a sardonic reference to the "Christian" treatment of dead paupers, the second passage uses the same burial service phrase "our dead brother here departed" as its central rhythmic device, thus bringing the language of Christian benevolence and ritual into shocking juxtaposition with the obscene reality of the burial. The clash is further emphasized by a diction pattern which counterpoints the Christian and the barbarian: our dear brother/ obscene churchyard, beastly scrap of ground, Turk and Caffre reject as savage abomination/ Christian burial sown in corruption/ raised in corruption shameful/ testimony civilisation/ barbarism.

Dickens' greater mastery is reflected in the "controlled fury" of the *Bleak House* passage. I borrow the phrase from Mr. Blount to use as summary because it is a succinct description of the artistic advancement which distinguishes the later social criticism from the earlier.
CHAPTER III

IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES AS DRAMATIC ORGANIZATION:
USES OF REPEATITION

Dickens' preoccupation with mirroring the truth of sensation and experience, as I have tried to illustrate in the first chapter, was an important impetus behind his impressionistic descriptive style. His desire to persuade his readers of the need for social reforms prompted experiments with impressionistic techniques which would move their emotions without horrifying or disgusting them. Even greater than these two aims in its generative influence on his style however, was Dickens' concern with organic, or dramatic, unity in the novel which sprang from several sources and manifested itself in several ways.

First, and perhaps foremost, it is related to his awareness of the difficulty of the serial form which he had chosen — his often acknowledged need to find unifying devices which would insure that minor as well as major motifs were remembered from issue to issue and that their development was psychologically and artistically consistent when the novel was considered as a whole. This problem, Dickens realized, was rendered even more acute by his abundancy of detail which made it imperative that he develop means of effectively organizing and balancing his themes. His efforts to adapt the wayward
form of the serial novel to his social vision resulted in a symbolic method in which impressionistic techniques help create or emphasize pervasive symbolic motifs. This, however, is the matter of the next chapter.

Another source of his interest in dramatic unity was his passionate love of the theatre which prompted him to use stage effects experimentally in the novel, with the result that more and more of his material was "dramatized" rather than "narrated" or "described." This theatrical "urge" accounts for his development of scene (and set piece) as a major thematic vehicle. To insure that the dominant impression of scene was vivid and memorable, Dickens employed musical and "cinematic" devices (refrain, rhythmic metaphor, reiterated gesture) which either brought the scene into sharp dramatic focus or created an incantatory lingering effect.

In this chapter, I will examine some of these methods by which brief narrative units (essays, stories, scenes, and episodes) are given dramatic structure. Essentially, a consideration of structural impressionism, with few exceptions, turns out to be a consideration of forms of repetition. I have already discussed ways in which repetition enhances the vivacity and literalness of descriptive effects. Its structural uses, however, are even more striking and significant.

Beginning around the time of Dombey, when Dickens began to be more premeditative about his art than previously and when he began to shape his novels symbolically, we find forms of repetition (words, phrases, clauses, parallel descriptions, rhythmic metaphor,
refrain, reiterated gesture, etc.) serving important structural and thematic purposes. From this point, he was more conscious in his use of repetition to impose a degree of order on the sprawl of incident and character by calling attention to similarities, to create a memorable pervasive "voice" and to give dramatic coherence to scenes and episodes as well as tie together the thematic strands of a novel. One has the sense, for example, that at the time of *Dombey* Dickens gained an increased awareness of the artistic potential of repetition, for this novel makes greater structural use of refrain and other musically reiterated motifs than almost any other -- as if Dickens were reveling in its possibilities. Whether or not the repetitive techniques were conceived of in advance and consciously mapped out or whether they developed in the process of writing is of minor importance. What is significant is the control with which they are employed. In the Christmas stories of this period, too, repetition makes important structural contributions; and from this time on, it is an indispensable element in Dickens' canon of narrative techniques.

**Essays and Stories**

**Refrain and Other Musical Repetition**  
In some of Dickens' stories and descriptive essays, structure, as well as mood and theme, is highlighted by a refrain, or a similar musically deployed motif. A well-known example is the announcement of the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come which marks the stages of Scrooge's ordeal and regeneration. In *The Haunted Man*, counterpointed refrains function as affective structure. As Harry
Stone comments in his excellent essay on that tale:

Dickens uses fairy-tale repetition to enhance the atmosphere of enchantment and unify the story -- the repetition of the curse "the gift that I have given, you shall give again, go where you will" becomes a magical refrain which gathers suspense until the climax and reversal when replaced by the refrain "Lord, Keep My Memory Green" which has been developed contrapuntally throughout the story.\(^1\)

\(^1\) "Dickens' Artistry: The Haunted Man," South Atlantic Quarterly, LXI (1962), 498.

A similar fairy-tale structure is used in The Cricket on the Hearth. The cricket in the story is a magic intermediary which clears troubled visions and presides over the final harmony. Its chirruping is musically reiterated - in the beginning to dramatize the domestic bliss of the Perrybingle family and then seemingly to parallel the stages of suspicion which threaten the marriage. (The chapters, entitled "Chirp the First," "Chirp the Second," and "Chirp the Third," depict the darkening shadow on the hearth, against which at times the cricket seems to be asserting the influence of happy memories, but with which at other times it seems to merge: "Oh shadow on the Hearth! Oh truthful Cricket! Oh perfidious Wife!"

\(217\) When the cricket in fairy shape has restored both John the Carrier and Bertha the blind girl to the clear vision of their hearts, its music once again blends with that of other household objects in a celebration of untroubled bliss. In the course of the tale, minor refrains are used to highlight subordinate motifs; for example, Caleb, Bertha's father, croons to himself the metered lament "Have I deceived her from her cradle, but to break her heart at last."
Although a story such as "Cricket" will not bear the weight of much analysis, it is interesting to observe that Dickens does not use the storybook elements haphazardly. Rather, he invests the central motif with a certain amount of ambiguity, using it to generate suspense and pull together the several strands of the narrative.

**Running Metaphor**

One of Dickens' characteristic methods of organizing descriptive passages is a running metaphor. Occasionally, especially in the later journalism, such a metaphor provides the basic organization for an entire essay. In "Chambers," for example, dirt and dust, as emblems of sterility and desolation, are extended metaphorically through the piece. Beginning with a dusty padlocked trunk outside a set of chambers, the essay moves into a general consideration of the "depressing institution" of Gray's Inn:

Can anything be more dreary than its arid Square, Sahara Desert of the law, with the ugly old tiled-topped tenements, the dirty windows, the bills To Let, To Let, the door-posts inscribed like gravestones, the crazy gateway giving upon the filthy Lane,... The dry hard atom-like Appearance of the whole dust-heap?...

Imagination floats over the fulness of time when the stair cases shall have quite tumbled down -- they are daily wearing into an ill-savoured powder,... when the last clerk shall have engrossed the last parchment behind the last splash on the last of the mud-stained windows, which, all through the miry year, are pilloried out of recognition in Gray's Inn-lane. UT, 138

As is characteristic in this type of descriptive article, once the dominant mood is established, Dickens recounts a number of more or less illustrative anecdotes. The stories in this piece all have to do with the dreary loneliness of the Inns, and several revolve around the dust metaphor: there were the chambers of Parkle which were so dirty that the Uncommercial used to amusedly "print himself off" on the articles of furniture by lounging against them, yet his
friend Parkle held the unshakeable conviction that "they ... \(\text{were}\) not like chambers in one respect, you know; they ... \(\text{were}\) clean."

There was Parkle's neighbor living in chambers so dusty that they reminded the Uncommercial of a "sepulchre" and holding it against life as a major grievance that there was so much dust in London. Announcing one evening that he was going out of town to rid himself of "the monotony of all the streets, streets, streets -- ... and the dust, dust, dust!" he retired to his rooms and hanged himself.

In the conclusion, dust and dirt images give way to the related images of dryness. Chambers, the Uncommercial remarks, have a special kind of loneliness which is unequalled, even by apartment houses, where at least at one time, there have been family festivals, children, courtships, and marriages: "- the many waters of life did run musical in those dry channels once; -- among the Inns, never." (147)

"Arcadian London" is built around contrasting metaphors, one of them again dust as an emblem of commercial and professional London. The Uncommercial takes lodgings in the city during the Long Vacation and after brief forays into the "wilderness" and "extensive tracts of the Great Desert" overcomes the feeling of isolation; letting loose the "original savage" in him, he begins to revel in the freedom and freshness of "Arcadian London." From this point, the predominating metaphor is Arcadia: the air is pastoral; the milkwomen take on a "shepherdess" character; those inhabitants who have remained fall into the relaxed and happy ways of "Arcadian simplicity"; and the Uncommercial sees the metropolis as having fallen into an "autumnal Golden Age." The "primitive state of manners" which has "superseded
the baneful influences of ultra civilisation" is a great improvement. People drop their affectations and come out freely in their own characters: the stuffy Beadle relaxes with his wife in public and pompous medical assistants openly and unreservedly court their sweethearts ("Everybody loves, and openly and blamelessly loves").

The Uncommercial makes it clear that the "dust" of London is primarily a state of mind created by its world of fashion and business. "... it is a delicious triumph to me to go into the club and see the carpets up, and the Bores and the other dust dispersed to the four winds." (165) In the final sentence, he laments that:

The iron age will return, London will come back to town,... and the wheels of gorgeous carriages and the hoofs of high-stepping horses will crush the silence out of Bond-street -- will grind Arcadia away, and give it to the elements in granite powder. (168)

Thus, the dust metaphor provides an ironic frame: initially, London during vacation is perceived as a desert, but finally, it is an Arcadian mirage which will be swept away into dust and the true desert reestablished when the vacationers return.

A less successful essay, "An Old Stage-Coaching House," describes a coaching town which has been "killed" by the railroad. So many of the details are forced into the cast of this dominant idea that the metaphor soon loses its effectiveness. For example, "the innkeeper's girl was a mournful young woman, with one eye susceptible of guidance, and one uncontrollable eye: which latter, seeming to wander in quest of stage-coaches, deepened the melancholy in which the Dolphin was steeped." (241) "the Dolphin's Head ... everywhere expressed past coachfulness and present coachlessness."(242)
Shopkeepers had "'Prentices" trickle water on their pavements.  "It looked as if they had been shedding tears for the stage-coaches, and drying their ineffectual pocket-handkerchiefs." (242-34) "The church bells said, in a petulant way, ... WHAT's-be-come-of-THE-coach-ES!" (244) and a stonebreaker is working "by a grass-grown milestone, which looked like a tombstone erected over the grave of the London road." (248)

All in all, while the structural uses of repetition in the short pieces have some originality, they are generally overdone or of very minor interest. Nowhere in the journalism does Dickens achieve the creativity of structural effect with repetition that he does in the novels. In turning to those now, I will discuss two related types of narrative units which are shaped by repetitive devices -- scene and episode -- and postpone until the next chapter a consideration of repetition as a technique of pervasive narrative motif.

**Scene**

Dickens' sense of the theatrical was well developed when he began his career, but as his artistry matured, he became increasingly interested in enhancing dramatic effects wherever possible. As a result, scene emerged as a paramount narrative technique. Most of the grandly orchestrated set pieces, for example, occur in the novels beginning with Dombey, but even on a less ambitious level, ordinary scene is made to carry more and more thematic weight in the later novels. The elaboration of scene, in turn, led Dickens to the creation of techniques that would impart vividness and strengthen the scene's
dominant impression. His use of refrain and reiterated gesture are two of the most successful.

**Refrain**  If, as I have said, the use of refrain came effortlessly, almost compulsively, to a writer steeped in nursery story and fairy tale, this is not to say that Dickens, even in the beginning, was unconscious of the effects that could be achieved with musical repetition. As early as _Oliver Twist_, we find refrain functioning as devilish incantation to dramatize an irrational human impulse (see italics below) In the "Stop thief" passage, the rhythmic punctuation of the scene with the ragged cry, creating simultaneously a sense of the wild excitement of the hunters and the panic of the hunted, has an almost physical impact.

"Stop thief! Stop thief!" There is a magic in the sound. The tradesman leaves his counter, and the carman his wagon; .... Away they run, ... and streets, squares, and courts, re-echo with the sound.  
"Stop thief! Stop thief!" The cry is taken up by a hundred voices, .... ... a whole audience desert Punch ... and, joining the rushing throng, swell the shout, and lend fresh vigour to the cry, "Stop thief! Stop thief!"
"Stop thief! Stop thief!" There is a passion for hunting something deeply implanted in the human breast. One wretched breathless child ... "Stop thief!" Ay, stop him for God's sake, were it only in mercy! (67) (first italics mine)

Occasionally in the early Dickens refrain is used for melodramatic effect. In the overwrought Gothic scene in which Rudge has a delusion that his crime is being publicly proclaimed, the style is untypically rather Poe-like:

Rudge hears the alarm bell in the Warren which the rioters have set afire. [Italics]  
It was not the sudden change from darkness to this dreadful light, it was not the sound of distant shrieks and shouts of triumph, it was not this dread invasion of the serenity and peace
of night, that drove the man back as though a thunderbolt had struck him. It was the Bell. ... He clutched his hair, and stopped his ears, and travelled madly round and round; ... still, the Bell tolled on and seemed to follow him -- louder and louder, hotter and hotter yet, ... But louder than them all -- rising faster far, to Heaven -- ... pouring forth dreadful secrets after its long silence -- speaking the language of the dead -- the Bell -- the Bell! ... everything was steeped in one prevailing red; the glow was everywhere; nature was drenched in blood; still the remorseless crying of that awful voice -- the Bell, the Bell! .... BR, 409

In what was probably the most fearfully anticipated scene of Dickens' early career, the death of little Nell, he employed a simple, but majestic refrain to effect the emotional catharsis that he and his readers felt was their due after the long months of anxious involvement. At the climactic moment, Dickens seems to have heard the echoes of far greater poets, for the bird image recalls Lear and the refrain itself is remarkably similar to the Miltonic lament in Lycidas (For she is dead/For Lycidas is dead). Although Dickens obviously fails to achieve the moving restraint of Milton (especially in respect to meter and diction), he seems to know instinctively how to handle the refrain so as to evoke the awful hush of a death scene. Sentences are short and simple and their pathos heightened by the ritualistic iteration of the chant:

For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.
She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead.
Her little bird -- a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed -- was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless for ever.

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. ... OCS, 499-500
Not until *Dombey and Son*, as I mentioned, does refrain come into its full maturity as a scenic device. Two of the novel's best known scenes -- Dombey's train ride and Carker's flight -- achieve their special poetic quality to a considerable extent from manipulated refrains. Since these passages have not gone unnoticed by scholars, I will limit my own comments and refer the reader to two of the most detailed discussions, those of William Axton (pp. 226-255) and Steven Marcus (pp. 296-297). Marcus, who notes that in *Dombey* Dickens makes the set piece into a major novelist device, characterizes the style of these passages as "poetic" that is achieving their effects by "a certain kind of repetition, subtle adjustments in rhythm and stressing certain objects or images with an intensity that we ordinarily associate with poetry." (296) Axton, whose discussion deals explicitly with the syntactical rhythms of the two scenes, agrees with Marcus that the novel has an extraordinary coherence which results from its major symbols -- the railroad and the sea -- having a powerful rhythmic identity.

I would point out by way of elaboration that the first piece is constructed so as to establish the railroad's rhythm memorably, thus insuring that the reader will hear its echoes, as well as its countervailing rhythms, when they occur thereafter in the novel. The individual segments of the passage follow the same pattern: the rhythmically hard-driving description of the journey is sandwiched between antiphonal refrains. "Away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle" establishes the strident "progressive" music of the railroad. Then follows the description -- flashes of vision,
the rhythm simulating that of a train's gradual acceleration, the speed with which they appear and disappear emphasizing their insignificance in terms of the "remorseless" monster which devours them. Then, the kaleidoscopic scene is interrupted by the second refrain -- "like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death!"

-- and in the fall of its rhythm the ominous journey's end is forecast:

\[ \text{a brief excerpt, see pp. 262-264} \]

... away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, through the fields, through the woods, through the corn, through the hay, through the chalk, through the mould, through the clay, through the rock, ... like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death!

Through the hollow, on the height, by the orchard, by the park, by the garden, over the canal, across the river, where the sheep are feeding, where the mill is going, where the barge is floating, where the dead are lying, where the factory is smoking, where the stream is running, where the village clusters, where the great cathedral rises, where the leak moor lies, ... away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, and no trace to leave behind but dust and vapour: like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death!

The railroad rhythm, which throughout the novel is associated with linear time, hence with progress, but also with destruction, decay, and death (as contrasted with the spatial or cyclical rhythms of the ocean associated with immortality, the flow of love, etc.), echoes powerfully in the episode of Carker's flight. The visionary terror motif, the scene's central emblem, is introduced in such a way as to recall immediately the earlier train ride:

Some other terror came upon him quite removed from this of being pursued, suddenly, like an electric shock, as he was creeping through the streets. Some visionary terror, unintelligible and inexplicable, associated with a trembling of the ground, - a rush and sweep of something through the air, like Death u: on the wing. 711

In addition, a parallel between an important refrain in the latter scene -- "Away with him upon the dark road -- whither?"
(with variations) -- and the earlier phrase "Away with a shriek"
further strengthens the correspondence between the two trips. The
flight episode's overall structure is also similar to that of
Dombey's ride: bits of fractured vision pass by in a fevered monotony,
with a variant of the phrase "It was a fevered vision" introduc­
ducing each new segment and the subordinate refrain "and still the
same monotony of bells and wheels, and horse's feet, and no rest"
occurring at increasingly frequent intervals. The reiteration of
the first variation serves to keep the focus on the passenger's in­
ternal nightmare, while the pattern of the variations as a whole
suggests that the traveller's mental activities, despite their
disorder and fluctuations, are gradually running down as Carker
becomes resigned to a vague sense of personal fate:

\[ an \text{ attempt to suggest the pattern by excerpt of the refrains, but see passage, 716–722. } \]

It was a vision of long roads; ... again of long, long roads, dragging themselves out, up hill and down, to the treacherous horizon.

... Of the morning, noon and sunset; ... of galloping away again, upon the long, long road, ...

Of never sleeping, but sometimes dozing ...

It was a fevered vision of things past and present ...

A vision of change upon change, and still the same monotony of bells and wheels, and horse's feet, and no rest ... and still the same monotony of bells and wheels, and horses' feet, and no rest. A vision of tending on at last, ...

Of rolling on and on, ...

A troubled vision then, ... Of the monotony of bells and wheels and horses' feet being at length lost in the universal din and uproar. ... Of the restoration, as he travelled on towards the sea-coast, of the monotony of bells and wheels, and horses' feet and no rest.
Of sunset once again, and nightfall. Of long roads again, and still the old monotony of bells and wheels, and horses' feet, and no rest.

As I have mentioned, the refrains in these scenes have an overall thematic significance. In the novels after Dombey, however, it is more common for refrain to function solely in terms of its own scene.

In Bleak House, refrain joins with other melodramatic devices in the stagey, but suspenseful Tulkinghorn murder. The method of the scene is poetic indirection, or contrast: the focus is not on the victim, but on the still night enfolding his neighbourhood, the city, and the world beyond.²

² For each time that Dickens depicts a violent death directly, there are at least twice as many examples of indirect treatment. The violent death scenes of Nancy and Carker are well handled, but their method is exceptional, and it is far more characteristic to find Dickens falling back on his favourite technique of contrast for such events; or recalls the murder of Tigg by Jonas, Merdle's suicide, the death of the Marquis, and Gaffer's drowning. In Bleak House itself, no less than four violent or horrible deaths are indirectly portrayed -- those of Nemo, Krook, Tulkinghorn, and Lady Dedlock.

The scene's tranquility is shattered once -- violently, briefly -- by the report of an unseen pistol and then the silence descends again and we know no more until the morning's discovery. The method is particularly appropriate for the death of the man whose life has been founded on secrecy and silence, the only successful violation of its privacy this final one.

The voice of an author-persona controls the development of the scene. Its tone is a peculiar blend of mockery and something like an impersonal pity. (If Tulkinghorn doesn't altogether deserve his fate,
it is at least fitting that nothing saves him from it; but when Dickens had to deal death to any character no matter how questionable his moral credentials, he nearly always invested the moment with some sense of metaphysical solemnity.) The first segment of the episode is organized around the repetition of the phrase "Don't go home" which forms an ominous counter-rhythm to Tulkinghorn's unconscious progress towards his chambers.

Clear of the room / Lady Dedlock's / he looks at his watch, ... There is a splendid clock upon the staircase, famous as splendid clocks not often are, for its accuracy. "And what do you say," Mr. Tulkinghorn inquires, referring to it. "What do you say?"

If it said now, "Don't go home!" What a famous clock, hereafter, if it said to-night of all the nights that it has counted, ... "Don't go home!" ... "Why, you are worse than I thought you," says Mr. Tulkinghorn, muttering reproof to his watch. ... What a watch to return good for evil, if it ticked in answer "Don't go home!"

He passes out into the streets, and walks on, ... The high chimney-stacks telegraph family secrets to him. Yet there is not a voice in a mile of them to whisper, "Don't go home!"

Through the stir and motion of the commoner streets; ... nothing meets him, murmuring "Don't go home!" Arrived at last in his dull room, ... there is no new significance in the Roman's hand tonight, ... to give him the late warning, "Don't come here!"

With Tulkinghorn retired within his chambers, the focus shifts to a panorama of the moonlit night, thereby making a suspenseful connection between Lady Dedlock and Tulkinghorn and evoking by means of poetic diction and rhythms (including the repetition of the phrase "a still night") the slowly pulsing tranquillity that the gunshot will shockingly disturb.

The refrain "Don't go home" occurs also in a scene in Great Expectations which attempts to reproduce the quality of discomfort peculiar to trying to fall asleep in unfamiliar surroundings with
a troubled mind. Having received the mysterious note from Wemmick "DON'T GO HOME," Pip rents a room for the night in the disagreeable Hummums. The worrisome injunction repeats itself insistently through the long anxious night ("Whatever night-fancies and night-noises crowded on me, they never warded off this DON'T GO HOME. It plaited itself into whatever I thought of as a bodily pain would have done.") and culminates in a nightmare elaboration:

When at last I dozed, in sheer exhaustion of mind and body, it became a vast shadowy verb which I had to conjugate, Imperative mood, present tense: Do not thou go home, let him not go home, let us not go home, do not ye or you go home, let not them go home. Then, potentially: I may not and I cannot go home: and I might not, could not, would not, and should not go home; ... GE, 371-72

In the same novel, a refrain-like variation provides rhythmic pacing for a scene in which hostilities between Mrs. Joe and Orlick lead to a fist fight between Orlick and Joe. Throughout the rapidly escalating verbal skirmish -- Mrs. Joe hysterical, Orlick dully vicious -- sounds a low, persistent appeal for peace: "('Let her alone,' said Joe.)" "('Let her alone, will you?' said Joe)" "('I tell you, let her alone,' said Joe.)" Joe's quiet command (The parentheses giving visual emphasis to its ineffectuality) marks off the stages of the conflict, and after he is forced to resolve it physically, his philosophical resignation marks the return to the status quo ante bellum "On the Rampage, Pip, and off the Rampage, Pip; -- such is Life!" (116)

In A Tale of Two Cities, when refrain is used as a scenic device, it sometimes has overarching thematic implications as in Dombey. I have discussed its function in the pointillistic Bastille
scene ("Deep ditches, double drawbridge"). It functions quite differently in the insistently "lyrical" scene in which Lucy recalls her imprisoned father from spiritual death to life. In respect to the novel as a whole, Lucy's characterization — soft feminine virtues emblematic of domestic tranquillity — is offered as a counterbalance (albeit precarious) to the revolutionary madness: she represents a haven in the storm, continuity in a wildly disoriented world. Her role as healer and comforter is established in this early scene with her father. The lullaby ("weep for it, weep for it," its intensity incremental, finally releases the paralysed emotions of Dr. Manette. (See quote and my later discussion p. 169ff.)

In *Our Mutual Friend*, another scene in which a life is salvaged by feminine strength centers around chant-like repetition. When Lizzie rescues Eugene from drowning, prose rhythms help to dramatize the ratter-of-fact courage of her action (see discussion, p. 214) while the reiteration of her murmured prayer emphasizes the other traits for which Dickens esteems her: her concept of herself as a humble instrument of God and the self-abnegation of her love for Eugene. Unfortunately, what is intended as a dramatic device is merely ludicrous: implausibility and sentimentality of its diction and syntactical patterns:

\[
\text{\underline{when she first sees a bloody face in the water}} \]
Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, and grant, O Blessed Lord, that through thy wonderful workings it may turn to good at last. To whomsoever the drifting face belongs, be it man's or woman's, help my humble hands, Lord God, to raise it from death and restore it to someone to whom it must be dear.

\[
\text{\underline{when she fully perceives it is Eugene she has rescued}} \]

Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, enabling me, without a wasted moment, to have got the boat afloat again, and to row back against the stream! And grant, O Blessed Lord God, that through poor me he may be raised from death, and preserved to someone else to whom he may be dear one day, though never dearer than to me! [OMF, 663,664]

The use of refrain as a scenic device in the novels contributes principally to dramatic unity: it strengthens unity of tone, it often provides an internal order of climax, and it usually imparts a vividness which in turn contributes to the force of the scene's impression. However, as in some of the examples discussed, scenic refrain can also carry echoes of larger thematic concerns, that is, its rhythm can be an extension of narrative motifs.

Gesture Motif A functionally related, but more original device which serves as dramatic underpinning for scene is more restricted than refrain as thematic vehicle, but perhaps more effective from a purely theatrical standpoint. This I will call the rhythmic, or reiterated gesture motif. The background of this technique is Dickens' early and continuing interest in gesture as an expression of personality or state of mind. Especially in the early novels, he likes to use the idiosyncratic gesture not only as comedy, but also as a shorthand means of suggesting inner dimensions of characters not particularly amenable to subjective treatment; one recalls, for example, how the painfully frustrated nature of Newman Noggs is externalized in his compulsive knuckle-cracking. It was not surprising, then, that Dickens made further explorations of the dramatic possibilities of gesture.

As it develops, the structuring of scene around reiterated gesture serves a larger purpose than simply to make manifest
unarticulated feelings and motives.

This is an important part of it certainly, and being able to express subjective material in the shorthand of gesture allows Dickens considerably more freedom for what we would today term "cinematic" maneuvers, such as rapid cutting back and forth between action and reaction or focussing on objects in the environment which are a clue to the scene's import. But even beyond this, the gesture motif, like a well-chosen theatrical prop, provides a dramatic center around which the characters can be deployed, thus helping to crystallize the central significance of the scene. Moreover, the repetition causes us to anticipate a climax or resolution, and as a result, we pay close attention to the scene's progression and hence receive a sharp and lasting impression.

Sometimes the gesture motif is simply an elaboration on a body movement (most often involving the hands) and sometimes the gesture is connected with an object which takes on symbolic significance. An early example of the former type is a scene in which Pecksniff tries to force his attentions on Mary Graham, his lechery expressing itself vividly in his fondlings of her captive hand. The lengthy scene is structured so that the physical contact between them is a persistent counterstatement to the flow of unctuous moral rhetoric. Moreover, the physical struggle lends urgency to the verbal debate. The tone of the encounter is unmistakably established by means of the hands metaphor. When Pecksniff first comes upon Mary on her walk, he kisses his hand to her. She repulses his attempt to take her arm:
"Release me, Mr. Pecksniff. Your touch is disagreeable to me."

His touch? What? The chaste patriarchal touch which Mrs. Todgers ... had endured, not only without complaint, but with apparent satisfaction!  

He retaliates by forcefully capturing her hand and this motif of sexual aggression is elaborated on with vivid explicitness:

... in his disengaged hand, catching hers, he employed himself in separating the fingers with his own, and sometimes kissing them, as he pursued the conversation ... 

She tried to disengage her hand, but might as well have tried to free herself from the embrace of an affectionate boa-constrictor ...

... Pecksniff, examining the rings upon her fingers, and tracing the course of one delicate blue vein with his fat thumb ...

"Ah, naughty hand!" said Mr. Pecksniff, apostrophising the reluctant prize, "Why did you take me prisoner! Go, go!" He slapped her hand to punish it; but relenting, folded it in his waistcoat to comfort it again ...

"No, no," resumed Mr. Pecksniff, chafing the captive hand reproachfully, ... "And did she think," said Mr. Pecksniff, with a playful tightening of his grasp. "that she could! ..."

"No," said Mr. Pecksniff, "I am not angry. I say so. Neither are you." There was a beating heart beneath his hand that told another story though ...

She wept so bitterly now, ... that he thought it prudent to unclasp her waist, and hold her only by the hand ...

... he stopped, and holding up her little finger, said in playful accents, as a parting fancy:
"Shall I bite it!"
Receiveing no reply he kissed it instead; ...  

Dickens was apparently pleased with the technique, for in his next novel he employs it several times, using it, for example, in two "disclosure" scenes, one melodramatic and one comic/pathetic. In both, the unconscious gesture dramatizes an intensifying, but
stifled emotional reaction which culminates in a crisis of anguish. When Florence overhears comparative strangers discuss her father's rejection of her, the gentle pitying tones seem to bring home the truth to her as previous events had not, and her emotional turmoil is reflected in her unconscious destruction of the flowers she had been wreathing. Dickens no doubt also intended the flower motif as a poetic correlative of the girl herself -- innocent beauty cast away. The scene's focus shifts back and forth between the overheard conversation and the physical reaction of Florence to what she overhears (illustrative excerpts from the latter only cited below):

Florence has been wreathing flowers in the arbour when she overhears the conversation in a nook nearby. She gathers the flowers, preparing to go, when she is held by the tones of the speakers...

Her tone of voice arrested Florence, who had started from her seat again; and held her fastened to the spot, with her work hastily caught up to her bosom, and her two hands saving it from being scattered on the ground...

The flowers that Florence held to her breast began to fall when she heard those words, so wonderingly spoken. She held them closer; and her face hung down upon them...

More of the flowers that Florence held, fell scattering on the ground; those that remained were wet, but not with dew; and her face dropped upon her laden hands...

More flowers strayed upon the ground, and those she yet held to her breast trembled as if a wintry wind were rustling them...

The flowers were scattered on the ground like dust; the empty hands were spread upon the face, and orphaned Florence, shrinking down upon the ground, wept long and bitterly...

In a different mood, rhythmic gesture is used to reveal the comic/pathetic dimensions of the episode in which Miss Tox is rudely divested of her hone that Dombey might have a matrimonial
interest in her. One morning she is dreamily speculating about the banker when his sister Mrs. Chick arrives at her apartment, and to hide her embarrassment and anticipation, she busies herself among her plants with scissors and watering can. While this pretext conceals her fluster from Mrs. Chick, her snipping and watering activities (like a stage pantomime played to the audience, but concealed from some of the characters) register for the reader her inner fluctuations.

Thus to ward off Mrs. Chick's irritability and to bring her to more interesting subjects, Miss Tox accedes to her request to go on with her flowers and begins "to snip and clip among the leaves with microscopic industry." Perplexed by the force with which Mrs. Chick utters her dark hints, Miss Tox "put the little watering-pot on the table for the present, and sat down near it." As the hints become, as she thinks, more pointedly directed toward herself, "Miss Tox left her seat in a hurry, and returned to her plants; clipping among the stems and leaves, with as little favour as a barber working at so many pauper heads of hair." She continues clipping and listening with head bent down, but as the references become more aggressive, "Miss Tox stopped clipping; and with her head among the plants, listened attentively." But then as the truth begins to dawn on her, "Miss Tox's scissors gave a feeble clip or two; but Miss Tox's face was still invisible, and Miss Tox's morning gown was agitated."

Then with the announcement of Dombey's engagement to Edith, Miss Tox goes into a trance: "Miss Tox made no verbal answer, but took up the little watering-pot with a trembling hand, and looked vacantly
round as if considering what article of furniture would be improved by the contents. " The unfortunate Native entering the door at the moment of her swoon, she collapses in his arms and trickles the contents of the pot into his shoe. (See LS, 380-387.)

The gesture device makes possible here a totally dramatized scene, and much of the success of the episode is a function of objectivity of presentation: objectivity contributes to the comedy that results from the reader's full knowledge of situation and his expectation that a character's partial knowledge will lead to humourous misunderstanding; the comedy of reversal of expectations as a result of a sudden undesired revelation; and the comedy of a character's charades of self-concealment. The objective style is also appropriate to Miss Tox for whose vague, timid emotions a subjective analysis might have been too crushing. Aside from the rather crass slapstick at the end, the scene's emphasis on self-revealing gesture produces a gentle, insightful kind of comedy.

*Bleak House* has a scene reminiscent of Florence with the flowers in which reiteration of unconscious hand movements provides a patterned emotional emphasis. When Ada confesses to Esther her understanding of the gravity of Richard's problem, her hands fluttering unconsciously over the keyboard are the focus of Esther's observation; and in their movements she reads not only the depth of Ada's agitation, but also the firmness of her resolve.³ (See pp. 623-24.)

³In *Our Mutual Friend*, another sentimental scene of female
intimacy is handled similarly; the serious import of the playful conversation between Jenny and Lizzie about Eugene is carried by the rhythmically deployed image of Jenny's eye sparkling through the mingled tresses of the two girls. See pp. 328-331

A more ambitious use of rhythmic gesture is found in *Hard Times*. To emphasize the destructive selfishness of both Tom and Harthouse, Dickens sets up an encounter in which unconscious gestures both reveal their individual natures and project on a symbolic level their mutual exploitation of Louisa. The gesture motif develops fairly naturally out of the situation: in his pursuit of Louisa, Harthouse conceives the strategy of gaining her gratitude and trust by influencing her brother to treat her more lovingly. To that end, he has a "frank" conversation with Tom in Bounderby's rose garden. Tom, angry with Louisa for not using her sexual influence with her husband to get him money ("you know she didn't marry old Bounderby for her own sake,... but for my sake. Then why doesn't she get what I want, out of him, for my sake?"), is petulantly ripping off rose buds and tearing them to pieces while they talk. During the course of the conversation, he becomes more and more self-pitying and, hence, destructive:

He took to biting the rose buds now, and tearing them away from his teeth with a hand that trembled like an infirm old man's ...

He was almost crying and scattered the buds about by dozens ...

"Thank you," said Tom, shaking his head dismally, and chewing rosebuds ... (161-163)

At one point Tom has thrown the accumulated rosebuds into an ornamental pool where they float about as "a little surface island."
At the end of the talk, when Harthouse makes his sophistic appeal to Tom ("every man is selfish in everything he does, and I am exactly like the rest of my fellow-creatures. I am desperately intent ... on your softening towards your sister"), he (Harthouse) casually tosses over "a rose or two, as a contribution to the island."

As the scene unfolds, then, both Tom and Harthouse act out their different types of selfishness in their gestures as well as their words -- Tom's uncontrolled responses betray an extreme of childish indulgence, while the casual gestures of Harthouse reflect his smooth, studied egotism. Louisa, the victim of their selfish desires, is represented symbolically in the scene by the roses which are sacrificed to their whims. Moreover, the rose island provides a final ironic commentary on Harthouse's assertion that selfishness is the mainspring of human behaviour, for the bruised petal island, seeming to belie his claims for the primacy of egoism, "was always drifting to the wall as if it wanted to become a part of the mainland".

While the symbolism might seem somewhat forced, it serves Dickens' dramatic purposes in several ways -- not only does it highlight a thematic parallel between the two men, but the connotations of roses (beauty, purity, innocence) make it a sexual euphemism as well, and, finally, it is used to embody the author's perspective dramatically rather than didactically.

In Dickens' last novels, the gesture device is more openly theatrical and less weighted with symbolic accouterments. In *Edwin Drood*, Dickens uses it as rhythmic accompaniment to dialogue in the not overly-inspired manner of a Hollywood cinematographer. When the
secretive Jasper and his ingenuous nephew are reunited at the novel's beginning, their fire-side conversation about Rosa is given mysterious overtones by the nutcracker accompaniment:

"Two pairs of nutcrackers? Pass me one, and take the other." Crack. "How's Pussy getting on, Jack?"

**********
/ J. / "She can learn anything, if she will."
/ E. / "If she will! 'Gad, that's it. But if she won't?"
Crack! — on Mr. Jasper's part.

**********
/ E. / "But I ought to have caught that expression pretty well in Rosa's portrait, for I have seen it often enough."
Crack! — on Edwin Drood's part.
Crack! — on Mr. Jasper's part.

**********
/ E. / "If I don't find it on her face, I leave it there. — You know I do, Miss Scornful Pert. Booh!" With a twirl of the nutcrackers at the portrait.
Crack! crack! crack! Slowly on Mr. Jasper's part.
Crack! Sharply on the part of Edwin Drood.
Silence on both sides. [1] [ED, 17.

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[1] At a later point, Dickens seems to weary of this gimmick and cuts it short with a kind of playwright's stage direction:

Mr. Jasper quickly looks to his nephew for his rejoinder.
"Have you known hardships, may I ask?" says Edwin Drood, sitting upright.
Mr. Jasper quickly looks to the other for his retort.
"I have." [Neville]
"And what have they made you sensible of?"
Mr. Jasper's play of eyes between the two holds good through the dialogue, to the end. [77

The dramatic revelation scene in which Jasper learns of the parting of Drood and Rosa is performed in a manner of rhythmic pantomime combining verbal and gestural repetition. Built on contrasting measures, the scene unfolds antiphonally. Crewgious, in expressionless legal language, gradually discloses the details of the separation, beginning each stage of explanation with a repetition of the words
"this young couple". In response to each new detail, he observes Jasper's progressive agony express itself in a silent, dream-like choreography. (The scene is framed by Grewgious' noncommittal gesture of opening and shutting his hands before the fire as he looks fixedly at the spectacle before him.)

[scene greatly condensed]

... "This young couple, the lost youth and Miss Kosa, my ward, though so long betrothed, and so long recognizing their betrothal, and so near being married --"

Mr. Grewgious saw a staring white face, and two quivering white lips, in the easy chair, and saw two muddy hands gripping its sides. But for the hands, he might have thought he had never seen the face.

"--This young couple came gradually to the discovery ...." Mr. Grewgious saw a lead-coloured face in the easy-chair, and on its surface dreadful starting drops or bubbles, as if of steel.

"This young couple formed at length the healthy resolution of interchanging their discoveries, ..."

Mr. Grewgious saw a ghastly figure rise, open-mouthed, from the easy-chair, and lift its outspread hands towards its head.

"One of this young couple ..."

Mr. Grewgious saw the ghastly figure throw back its head, clutch its hair with its hands, and turn with a writhing action from him.

"I have now said all I have to say, except that this young couple parted, ...."

Mr. Grewgious heard a terrible shriek, and saw no ghastly figure, sitting or standing; saw nothing but a heap of torn and miry clothes upon the floor. 174-75

Whereas the theatricality of such scenes in Drood is largely an outgrowth of the novel's mystery story method, in Great Expectations the gesture technique is deftly incorporated into the narrative's comic texture. One will recall, for example, the scene in which Pip the snob with ill-concealed impatience and humiliation, watches Joe's ordeal with his hat as he juggles it and then retrieves it from its tumbles off the mantlepiece. The reiterated gesture is given a metaphoric elaboration:
Joe, taking it up carefully with both hands, like a bird's-nest with eggs in it ...

(Still with both hands taking great care of the bird's-nest)...

Joe, getting the bird's-nest under his left arm for the moment, and groping in it for an egg with his right ...

Joe backed from it, and held on by the bird's-nest ...

Aside from its farcical effect, the hat device is a way of immediately dramatising the changed nature of the relationship between the two men. Joe's clumsy gestures, initially indicative of natural unease in a strange situation, become clumsier as his bewilderment and self-embarrassment increase. As Pip later remarks, "I had neither the good sense nor the good feeling to know that this was all my fault, and that if I had been easier with Joe, Joe would have been easier with me." (225) It is a gauge of what Pip has become that during most of Joe's visit he is concerned almost wholly with externals: Joe's clumsy movements, his dress, the style of his speech. However, such is the power of Joe's affection and sensitive honesty that even Pip's snobbery is not proof against it, and the scene which began with Joe's clumsiness ends with the simple dignity of his loving gesture: "He touched me gently on the forehead, and went out." (227)

The comedy of repeated gesture is particularly suitable to scenes of Pip's childhood for several reasons. Not only is a child extremely attentive to the minuscule details of body movement or sensation, but because a child is less verbal than an adult, his emotions tend to have more acute bodily manifestations. In the well-known
Christmas dinner episode in which Pip suffers double agonies, first as the general object of moral admonition (with Joe his only ally) and later when the discovery of the missing “vittles” seems imminent, his covert gestures and Joe’s unobtrusive ones organize the scene, providing its comic pace and resolution. At the beginning of the dinner, Pip is quietly suffering in his role as moral butt, while Joe is acting out his role as silent comforter by spooning gravy to Pip in response to each barb. The lectures and Joe’s gestures are developed contrapuntally, as seen in the following extracts:

... Everybody then murmured “True!” and looked at me in a particularly unpleasant and personal manner ...
There being plenty of gravy today, Joe spooned into my plate, at this point, about half a pint ...
("You listen to this,” said my sister to me, in a severe parenthesis.)
Joe gave me some more gravy.
.............
"He was, if ever a child was," said my sister, most emphatically.
Joe gave me some more gravy.
.............
"No bringing up by hand then. Not a bit of it!”
Joe offered me more gravy, which I was afraid to take. GE, 24-26

When the time arrives for the brandy and porkpie, Pip’s earlier discomfort is forgotten in the dread of discovery and his agitation is expressed in compulsive gripping of the table leg. The repetition of this gesture keeps us aware of Pip’s mounting tension without slowing down, or unduly chopping up, the major action. (In fact, the “cinematic” device allows a fast cutting between action and reaction which contributes to brisk comic pace.) Finally, the gestures of Joe and Pip, which have been developed separately, come together in the climax. It is Joe’s consoling offer of porkpie (as he had earlier offered gravy) which snaps the last chords of Pip’s self-restraint:
"Have a little brandy, uncle," said my sister.

0 Heavens, it had come at last! ... I held tight to the leg of the table, under the cloth, with both hands, and awaited my fate.

... Always holding tight by the leg of the table with my hands and feet, I saw the miserable creature finger his glass playfully, ...

I held on tight, while Mrs. Joe and Joe ran to him.

... I knew he would be worse by-and-by. I moved the table, like a Medium of the present day, by the vigour of my unseen hold upon it.

... For the time at least, I was saved. I still held on to the leg of the table, but clutched it now with the fervour of gratitude.

... my sister said to Joe, "Clean plates -- cold."

I clutched the leg of the table again immediately, and pressed it to my bosom as if it had been the companion of my youth and friend of my soul. I foresaw what was coming, and I felt that this time I really was gone.

... I heard Joe say, "You shall have some, Pip." I never have been absolutely certain whether I uttered a shrill yell of terror, merely in spirit, or in the bodily hearing of the company. I felt that I could bear no more, and that I must run away. I released the leg of the table, and ran for my life.

The gesture motif appears in the novel's serious as well as comic episodes. It highlights the confrontation between Pip, Miss Havisham, and Estella when he tells them he has discovered the true identity of his benefactor and confesses his love for Estella. In this scene, Estella's calm, steady knitting is the emotional nexus; that is, the contained, passionless gesture gives dramatic definition to the relationship that has bound all three unhappily together. Scenically, the repeated references to the knitting bring the three actors in the tableau into sharp focus: Pip for the first time
passionately discussing the truth of their relationships; Miss Havisham on a settee at his feet, glancing from Estella to Pip, later, in drawing comprehension, her hand to her heart and a "ghastly stare of pity and remorse" on her face; and Estella, at times wondering at the intensity of Pip's emotion, but for the most part unmoved and matter of fact.

Throughout the scene, Estella's gestures assert more forcefully than her words the truth of what she says about herself:

All this time, Estella knitted on ...

Preserving her unmoved countenance, and with her fingers still going, Estella shook her head ...

Looking at me perfectly unmoved and with her fingers busy, she shook her head again ... GE, 362 ff.

When Pip later recalls this scene, he thinks of "all her looks and tones, and the action of her fingers while she knitted." (371) It is the strength of that memory that finally forges the last link of association as he recognizes that a certain action of fingers of Jaggers' housekeeper is like Estella's action of knitting.

What is striking about these scenes from Great Expectations is how intensely visual they are: the reader has the illusion that the events have actually played themselves out before his eyes, that this is theatre, not narrative scene. (That is why I have used the term "cinematic" so frequently.) The gesture motif is, to a great extent, responsible for the visual impression that we receive; for the rhythmic concentration on the minutiae of body movements compels the reader's attention, and in the carryover he receives a sharper impression of the total scene than he otherwise might have.
Moreover, the device provides a central focus around which the elements of the scene coalesce.

As I have tried to show, the use of refrain as a scenic device also has the effect of producing a more vivid impression, but the impact of refrain, like that of music, is more subjective and more diffuse than the visual impression produced by gesture. Refrain helps to body forth the inner rhythms of a scene so persuasively that we "experience" its mood.

The distinction between music and theatre is not an inappropriate one for the difference in effect of the two techniques: with refrain, as with music, we are projected into a mood or scene, experiencing it from within; in theatre, the subjective is projected outward, in gesture and words.

**Narrative Episode: Refrain and Rhythmic Metaphor**

When a narrative episode extends beyond a single scene and includes different types of prose (narration, description, dialogue), or when its parts are separated by unrelated material, unifying techniques are more crucial than in scene. The pronounced mnemonic qualities of refrain and related types of repetition make these especially appropriate devices, and with Dickens' preclivity for repetitive effects, it is not surprising to find them functioning as poetic organization in extended episode. Not only is refrain used to provide overall coherence by creating and sustaining a mood, but, in cases in which the conclusion of an episode is separated from its earlier part, refrain, by virtue of its ability to stick in the
memory and carry with it a lingering, if vaguely sketched impression of its context, is an economical and vivid technique for recalling the mood and theme of what went before.

In Dombey, for example, a frequent technique is repetition of a melodic passage. While these "refrains," generally speaking, are a feature of the authorial voice (the rhythmic nature of which is strongly marked throughout the novel) and therefore have tonal similarity, they are differentiated enough to mark their episodes as highly memorable moodpieces.

Particularly effective are two lengthy accounts having to do with the deterioration of Dombey's house, literal and symbolic. In the episode entitled "Florence Solitary" which describes the spell of blight that falls on Dombey's house and the life in it after Paul's death, an incantatory refrain, like the repetition of a fairy-tale curse, exerts its mood over the narrative detail. There is a new kind of poetry in its delicate lyricism and judicious use of poetic meters to suggest dreary monotony:

Florence lived alone in the great dreary house, and day succeeded day, and still she lived alone; and the blank walls looked down upon her with a vacant stare, as if they had a Gorgon-like mind to stare her youth and beauty into stone.
DS, 296, also 298, 301

The refrain occurs three times, framing the episode and setting off the description of the house's decay from the account of Florence's gentle round of activities which shed a light on "the solitude and gloom".

5The lyrical meters (chiefly trochaics and iambics) make the refrain stylistically reminiscent of Tennyson's Mariana
poems (both published earlier); the parallels also extend to theme and descriptive detail; both Florence and Mariana, deserted by a loved one, lead lonely lives in dreary houses, haunted by thoughts of the one who has deserted them. In Mariana's "of the north" "dreamy house" moss, mildew, and rust have conquered the exterior, while inside, hinges creak and mice shriek in the wainscoting; in Florence's too, there is rust on ironwork; grass and "scaly crumbling vegetation" on roof and windowsill; creaking floorboards; mildew and mould on walls; and rats squeaking behind the panelling. The crucial distinction, however, is that Florence's love is hopeful and looks forward to eventual reconciliation, while Mariana's is nihilistic.

At the novel's climax, another mournful poetic refrain announces the house's fatal decline. This governs the first segment of the episode which treats Dombey's final fall from fortune and pride — first, indirectly through the metaphor of his ruined house and, finally, directly in a Shakespearean lament scene. The ruined state of the "great house" is introduced by a passage, the last line of which functions subsequently as refrain to mark off the successive stages of the house's abandonment:

Changes have come again upon the great house in the long dull street, once the scene of Florence's childhood and lonliness. It is a great house still, proof against the wind and weather without breaches in the roof, or shattered windows or dilapidated walls; but it is a ruin none the less, and the rats fly from it. DS, 767 (Italics mine)

This memento mori strain runs through the largely comic account. For example, in the first movement of the house segment, servants' gossip provides a comic commentary on events which have transpired in the great house. This has parallels with comic servant interludes in Elizabethan drama, in which thematic parallels are demonstrated. Cook is moral spokesman for the group ("How are the mighty fallen!"); but behind her wise pronouncements and the general sense of the company of having borne the shock with great resignation are the same egocentricity, pride of status, and desire for gain that have precipitated the ruin of their master. ("if we are not true to ourselves, nobody will be true to us.")...\textquote[Tealinson]{does not}
think it over-respectable to remain in a house where sales and such-like are carrying forwards.

of the house's last days as an insistent reminder of its brooding master -- within the house but dramatically absent from its activities. Throughout the first segment, then, while the house is center stage, we are kept aware that his parallel drama is quietly enacting itself in the wings, so that when the spotlight turns to him, we can believe the extent of his change.

The scene moves from the gossiping of the servants to glimpses of the house under siege by creditors and sale cataloguers, and back to the servants feasting, preparatory to hastily clearing themselves off. With their departure, the refrain is repeated ("The house stands, large and weather-proof in the long dull street; but it is a ruin, and the rats fly from it"), assuming now an ironic edge.

The narrative then focuses on the gradual desecration of the house as its items are ticketed, pawed over, bid on, and carted off. (This part of the episode is itself divided into stages marked by a repeated phrase: "The Capital Modern Household Furniture, etc., is on sale."/"the Capital Modern Household Furniture, etc., is in course of removal." 772) And at length, when "none of the invaders remain," "The house is a ruin, and the rats fly from it." The unfurnished house now echoes the self-interested chatter of Mrs. Chick and Mrs. Pipchin, talking past one another, until finally they both depart and "The house is such a ruin that the rats have fled, and there is not one left."

With the parasites gone, the house, though bleak and empty,
reverberates with the soft whispers of Polly Toodle and Miss Tox, sympathetic attendants on the master of "the ruined house that the rats have fled from." Now that the house is stripped of its pomp and show and the wheel of fortune has reached its lowest point, the stage is set for Dombey's repentance and regeneration, and accordingly the scene centers on "the ruined man" himself.

This portion of the episode -- the novel's climactic moment -- is governed by a refrain which was introduced hundreds of pages and incidents earlier -- in the scene of violent rejection when, shortly after Paul's death, Florence had made a courageous attempt to reach out to her father and had been spurned with all the force of Dombey's hatred for the daughter he now saw as his son's successful rival and his own in relation to that son. The passion of the encounter is given memorable shape by a forbidding refrain which incorporates

\begin{quote}
7In using this term, I do not mean to imply an artistic judgement about the quality of the prose in this episode (which seems to me on the whole only slightly better than inferior), but only to call attention to the undeniable incantatory effect of the refrain and the other Gothic devices.
\end{quote}

the images that have been developed through the scene with incremental force. Repeated references to the dropping rain, the moaning wind, and the shuddering trees make the oppressive atmosphere palpable, so that when the lament is repeated years later, the original drama enacted in that room springs into the memory whole:

\begin{quote}
It was a wet night; and the melancholy rain fell pattering and dropping with a wearied sound. A sluggish wind was blowing, and went moaning round the house, as if it were in pain or grief. A shrill noise quivered through the trees.
\end{quote}
Florence, awake in this night, has only thoughts of love for her father.
There was nothing in the dropping of rain, the moaning of the wind, the shuddering of the trees, the striking of the solemn clocks, that shook this one thought...

She creeps to his room and observes him at his desk.
The rain dripped heavily upon the glass panes in the outer room, where he had so often watched poor Paul, a baby; and the low complainings of the wind were heard without. But not by him....

She appeals to him, he rejects her cruelly, she utters a cry.
Let him remember it in that room, years to come. It has faded from the air, before he breaks the silence. It may pass as quickly from his brain, as he believes, but it is there. Let him remember it in that room, years to come!

Coldly he escorts her to the stairs, she ascends sobbing, once looking back as if to return.
Let him remember it in that room, years to come. The rain that falls upon the roof; the wind that mourns outside the door: may have foreknowledge in their melancholy sound. Let him remember it in that room, years to come! 238-240

The important thematic motif of Florence's nighttime pilgrimages to her father's door (thereafter secret), is rhythmically reinforced at a crucial point later on when during the troubled days prior to Edith's elopement, Florence creeps again to her father's bedside. The brief scene centers on an insistent refrain which finally incorporates a syntactical echo of the earlier scene:

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

Awake doomed man, while she is near. The time is flitting by; the hour is coming with an angry tread; its foot is in the house. Awake!

She leaves.
He may sleep on now. He may sleep on while he may. But let him look for that slight figure when he wakes, and find it near him when the hour is come! 565-566

And when that hour with all its implications is finally upon
him in the ruined house, the first refrain summons up the haunted memory of the past:

And the ruined man. How does he pass the hours, alone?
"Let him remember it in that room, years to come!" He did remember it. It was heavy on his mind now; heavier than all the rest.
"Let him remember it in that room, years to come!" The rain that falls upon the roof, the wind that mourns outside the door, may have foreknowledge in their melancholy sound. Let him remember it in that room, years to come!
He did remember it. In the miserable night he thought of it; ...
Oh! He did remember it! The rain that fell upon the roof, the wind that mourned outside the door that night, had had foreknowledge in their melancholy sound. He knew, now, what he had done ... 777

The episode dealing with the death of Mrs. Skewton at Brighton is lengthier and has more diversity of character and incident than the house episodes, but like them, it too has a tonal unity based on refrain. It begins with a lyrical passage, which scans like poetry:

All is going on as it was wont. The waves are hoarse with repetition of their mystery; the dust lies piled upon the shore; the sea-birds soar and hover; the winds and clouds go forth upon their trackless flight; the white arms beckon, in the moonlight, to the invisible country far away. 536

The images immediately recall earlier rhythmically reinforced images associated with the death of Paul: the voice of the waves and the invisible region beyond the horizon that Paul questions Florence about (103) and thereafter ponders through the remainder of his short life.8

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8See especially, pp. 158; 182:

"Oh! could he [Dombey] but have seen, ... the slight spare boy above, watching the waves and clouds at twilight, with his earnest eyes, and breasting the window of his solitary cage when birds flew by, as if he would have emulated them, and soared away!" 158
At his own \( Paul's \) bedroom window, there were crowds of thoughts that mixed with these, and came on, one upon another, like the rolling waves. Where those wild birds lived, that were always hovering out at sea in troubled weather; where the clouds rose and first began; whence the wind issued on its rushing flight, and where it stopped;..." 182

The episode, which describes the sojourn in Brighton culminating in the death and funeral, has two rhythmic threads running through it -- the repetition at key points of the opening passage and repeated reference to the voices of the waves in their varying relationships to the major characters.\(^9\)

\(^9\)This latter consideration of image motif does not fall within my scope here, but let me note parenthetically that the novel's thematically important concept of the voice of the ocean is given further definition in this chapter. The sea is nothing less than the fullness of life (including immortality), but its message is restricted by individual limitations and expectations. Thus, Florence is receptive to the full complexity of its message "and finds that all her life and hopes, and grief, since \( Paul \) ... have a portion in the burden of the marvellous song." (536) Toots too hears the requiem of Paul in the waves and also the echo of his own adoration of Florence. But the others are self-excluded from the mystery: the Doctor hears only "Gentlemen, we will now resume our studies"; Mr. Feeder "hears the waves informing him ... that Doctor Blimber will give up the business"; for Mrs. Skewton "the murmur of the ocean has no soothing word," only unknown terror; her friends who attend the funeral "are deaf to the waves"; and Edith, standing alone and listening to the waves, has, as reply, "dank weed cast up at her feet, to strew her path in life within." pp. 540-545

The passage is repeated in entirety just before Mrs. Skewton is struck by the stroke. There is a reference to one of its images in the rhythmic passage which announces her death ("Draw the rose-colored curtains. There is something else upon its flight besides the wind and the clouds. Draw the rose-colored curtains..."
close!"), and it is repeated again in its near entirety at the close of the episode.

It might be properly asked why Dickens chose to surround Mrs. Skewton's horrible death with poetic images. Perhaps a partial explanation is that he thought it appropriate at this point in the narrative -- before the precipitation of the tragedy, but after events in the marriage have made it inevitable -- to pause for a poetic summary of earlier themes. He reminds us, for example, that as witnesses to Skewton's dying, we are in "the same theatre" as before with Paul, but with what a difference! Perhaps in the chapter's contrasts, present and recalled -- the restless self-will of Edith and her mother as compared with Florence's and Paul's acceptance of death and loneliness as an inevitable portion of "the marvellous song," we are meant to draw the lesson that happiness (or rather Carlylean "blessedness") is a function of being able to accept with grace and humility the limitations life places on human desires; or, conversely, that life is made hideous or tragic in proportion as human wills battle circumstance or attempt to extend their dominion (in the novel's terms, as they "make an effort"). Skewton obscenely defies age; Edith proudly defies her husband; Dombey attempts to exert ownership privileges over the people in his life; and all represent an acme of unhappiness.

Other less elaborate uses of refrain-like repetition as episodic unifier in Dombey include the account of Paul's frigid christening party which is framed and punctuated midway by musical passages of great similarity:
It happened to be an iron-grey autumnal day, with a shrewd east wind blowing.... and when he looked out through the glass room, at the trees in the little garden, their brown and yellow leaves came fluttering down, as if heblighted them. 59

It was a dull, grey, autumn day indeed, and in a minute's pause and silence that took place, the leaves fell sorrowfully. 52.

It was a bleak autumnal afternoon indeed; and as she walked, and hushed, and, glancing through the dreary windows, pressed the little fellow closer to her breast, the withered leaves came: showering down. 58

And, of course, who has forgotten Dr. Blimber's ponderous welcome as echoed by the clock -- "how, is, my, little, friend? how, is, my, lit, tle, friend?" -- which sets the tone of Paul's reception at Blimber's academy?

The episodic use of refrain is never again as frequent as in Dombey. In a fairly obvious way, it unifies the final Sydney Carton episode, beginning with his night walk through the streets of revolutionary Paris during which (unknown to the reader) he formulates his resolve to substitute himself for Charles Darnay. He recalls words from his father's burial service ("I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord"), which give him strength, and through that long night "the words were in the echoes of his feet, and were in the air." (308-9) Many pages later, at the episode's conclusion (and the novel's climax), Carton ascends the guillotine and the Biblical phrase is repeated (369), endowing the sacrifice with even greater dignity by recalling the night in which he sought to find the courage and humility for this act.

In a quite different episode -- the death of the disreputable
water rat Gaffer Hexam, refrain is used to satirize rather than sanctify. Early on the night of the search for Gaffer, Wrayburn overhears Lizzie call to her father in tones, alarmed, but lyrical:

"Father, was that you calling me?" And again, "Father!" And once again, after listening, "Father! I thought I heard you call me twice before!" OMF, 155

Later when the body has been retrieved and laid on the shore, the author-persona turns the girl's words against the corpse. In the mock invocation, rhythmic devices and archaic phraseology create a quasi-solemn tone for the enforcement of the moral:

Father, was that you calling me? Father! I thought I heard you call me twice before! Words never to be answered, those, upon the earth side of the grave. The wind sweeps jeeringly over Father, ... Then, in a rush, it cruelly taunts him. Father, was that you calling me? Was it you the voiceless and the dead? Was it you, thus buffeted as you lie here in a heap? Was it you, thus baptised unto Death, with these flying impurities now flung upon your face? Why not speak, Father? Soaking into this filthy ground as you lie here, is your own shape. Did you never see such a shape soaked into your boat? Speak, Father, Speak to us, the winds, the only listeners left you! 164

Finally, if Dombey marks the point at which Dickens developed refrain into an important narrative technique, Chuzzlewit has intimations of what is to come. A combination of refrain and expanded metaphor controls the development of the courtship of John and Ruth. The (stickily sentimental) episode is based on rhythmic alternation and counterpoint and juggles several motifs. The dominant one is introduced before the romance begins. Ruth waiting for Tom in Fountain Court, is depicted as the easily favoured rival of the Temple fountain:

Ruth, coming briskly up, with the best little laugh upon her face that ever played in opposition to the fountain, and beat it all to nothing. ... The Temple fountain might have leaped up twenty feet to greet the spring of hopeful maidenhood,
that in her person stole on, sparkling, through the dry and dusty channels of the Law; .... 657

Thereafter, Dickens is free to elaborate the metaphor, treating the fountain both as a general commentator on the budding relationship between Ruth and John and as Ruth's alterego. Hence, when John first pursues Ruth, Dickens cuts back and forth between her coy feints and maneuvers and the fountain's expressions reflecting her genuine emotions. At the same time, he introduces the second motif -- a sentimental apostrophe -- thus:

Oh! foolish, panting, frightened little heart, why did she run away!
Merrily the tiny fountain played, and merrily the dimples sparkled on its sunny face. John Westlock hurried after her. Softly the whispering water broke and fell; and roguishly the dimples twinkled, as he stole upon her footsteps.
Oh! foolish, panting, timid little heart, why did she feign to be unconscious of his coming!

...trying to throw up her eyebrows carelessly, and pout her rosy lips, as if she were the coolest and most unconcerned of little women.
Merrily the fountain plashed and plashed, until the dimples, merging into one another, swelled into a general smile, that covered the whole surface of the basin. 658; 659

This harmonising continues until the dinner at John's when a third motif is introduced -- the spiteful fairy -- which plays a brief threatening counterpoint to the first two before it is neutralized in the triumphant finale. John's land-lady, the fiery-faced matron in the crunched bonnet, thereafter referred to as "Fiery-Face," displaying cold disapproval of Ruth (as likely to deprive her of a customer) casts her shadow over the courtship. The first act of the episodes closes, then, with the three motifs firmly established. Chapters later, it resumes with the proposal and marriage. The
fountain "refrain" introduces it and the familiarity of the rhythms immediately recalls what has gone before. (Although the fountain passage is altered each time it occurs, the format and key diction remain the same, hence, its similarity to refrain.)

Brilliantly the Temple fountain sparkled in the sun, and laughingly its liquid music played, and merrily the idle drops of water danced and danced, and peeping out in sport among the trees, plunged lightly down to hide themselves, as little Ruth and her companion came towards it. 780

As the proposal nears, the second motif reasserts itself — "Oh, rapid, swelling, bursting little heart" — and the persona begins in earnest to exorcise the evil Fiery-Face as matters approach their blissful climax: "Fiery-Face, provide yourself! The usual wages or the usual warning. It's all over, Fiery Face. We needn't trouble you any further." (783) and finally, at the close of the solemnities, "If these be follies, then Fiery Face go on and prosper! If they be not, then Fiery Face avaunt! But set the crunched bonnet at some other single gentleman, in any case, for one is lost to thee for ever!" (789)
CHAPTER IV

IMPRESSIONISTIC TECHNIQUES AS STRUCTURE
AND THEME IN SIX NOVELS

Thus far we have watched Dickens using impressionism creatively for fairly limited effects — to make descriptions come alive, social protest persuade our emotions, and narrative units cohere. However dramatically convincing his techniques are in such contexts, their success is overshadowed by the more ambitious uses of impressionism in the creation of narrative leitmotif or theme. It is in the later novels — where Dickens organises a complicated narrative by means of a rhythmic symbolic pattern — that his powers as an "impressionist poet" have their fulfillment. As I hope to show, the most appropriate analogy for the manner in which he develops these patterns is a musical one.

One use of impressionism, best illustrated in David Copperfield, Great Expectations, and the Chesney Wold episodes of Bleak House, may be termed the "romantic leitmotif." This consists in a skilful employment of poetic meters, suggestive rhythms, and other poetic techniques to emphasize crucial image clusters. Such devices create an intensified and highly memorable medium for the crystallization of important themes. In the "biographical" novels (David Copperfield and Great Expectations) such passages sum up stages of psychological
development and dramatize emotional responses so deeply rooted that they cannot be directly articulated by the retrospective narrator. The romantic leitmotif by incremental force and musical interweaving of its separate strands poeticizes these novels and deepens their theme.

In *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Hard Times*, where Dickens' themes were conceived in terms of a single dramatic contrast, the impressionistic development is one of counterpoint or fugue. The novels' polar symbols are dramatized in terms of character groups which are rhythmically identified. In *Our Mutual Friend* and *Bleak House*, in which narrative motifs are more varied and complicated, the impressionism might more appropriately be termed "symphonic." Rhythms are used not only to identify contrasting character groups and motifs, but also to create multi-dimensional characterizations; to satirize through imitative rhythms and rhythmic pacing; and to manage a complex interplay of narrative motifs and perspectives, keeping them in balance and distinguishing their strands not only so that the reader can follow the development of each, but also so that he is made aware of their relationship to the larger thematic context.

No single explanation for the evolution of impressionistic narrative patterns is sufficient. Certainly Dickens' desire to overcome the limitations of the serial novel by achieving a compelling form of thematic organization is a very important one. We should not, however, overlook such contributing factors as his poetic impulse (witness the increase of "pure poetry" in the language of the later novels), and his almost intuitive commitment to the principle
of contrast which found its stylistic embodiment in rhythmic counterpoint.

Whatever the reasons for the style, the subtest forms that Dickens' impressionistic prose achieves are found in the narrative patterns of the later novels; it may be largeley on these that claims for his being, in Leavis' words, a "master poetic dramatist" will rest. (italics mine.)

In David Copperfield and Great Expectations, the single narrative perspective and the biographical content (which lends itself to a chronological development) make the problem of overall design far less complicated than in the panoramic novels. The essential

1The form is also the least disruptive of continuity between part issues. In Great Expectations, which was issued in weekly parts, the matter of recall was perhaps easier than in any other Dickens' novel.

continuity in each is provided by the tone of the narrator's voice.

Both novels fall into the category of the bildungsroman; and in which their emphasis, therefore, is on the manner in which events act on or modify the central consciousness. The point of view is a complicated superimposition of the narrator's matured perspective on the stages of his youthful perceptions. As the perspective ranges back over the past, it fixes on images and other sensations associated with psychologically crucial events. In Copperfield, these memory associations, which are recurrent and strongly stressed, form an impressionistic pattern which complements the chronological narrative structure. Much of the coherence of this superstructure derives
from the use of poetic meters to emphasize and to connect the memory
images and scenes. Roughly one-third of the novel's chapter endings
are in a poetically-heightened key and contain major image clusters.²

²I will discuss separately the lyrical "Retrospective" chapters
which make a special contribution to the impressionistic structure
of the novel.

See Monod, Dickens Romancier, p. 493, who observes that begin­
ning with Chuzzlewit the final lines of D'ckens' chapters tend to
have an elevated, solemn tone and symbolic or mysterious value.
"This device," he notes, "raises the tone of the narrative and stresses
the structural unity of the chapter," and "has an analogy to the
rhymed couplet heralding the end of a scene in Elizabethan drama."
While generally agreeing with Mr. Monod, I would point out that this
is much truer of some novels than others, and where it is prominent
the device is probably serving more complicated purposes than those
he describes.

The final paragraph of the first chapter introduces what
will be the characteristic tone and images of the end-passages. I
have further emphasized its pronounced cadence by casting it into
stanza form:

I lay in my basket,
and my mother lay in her bed;
but Betsey Trotwood Copperfield
was forever in the land
of dreams and shadows,
the tremendous region whence
I had so lately travelled;

and the light upon the window
of our room
shone out upon the earthly bourne
of all such travellers,
and the mound above the ashes
and the dust
that once was he,
without whom I had never been.

(17-18)

At the outset of Copperfield's biography, life is perceived as
a dark pilgrimage whose beginnings foreshadow its end: originating in a land of dreams and shadows, it runs a murky course before flowing again into that "tremendous region." The seeds of one of the novel's major image patterns are contained in this passage. Disappointments, unquiet and chimerical dreams, losses, and death all plague the course of David's life, bringing him finally to near despair, until, through suffering, his vision clears and he achieves the discipline and inner peace that transform the dark pilgrimage. But until David learns that Agnes is the rock on which his love must found itself, his personal attachments all fail him, either through circumstances or his misguided perception of them. The supportive images are those of shadows, phantoms, uneasy dreams, death, lonely pilgrimages, and blindness. The Agnes motif is steadily, but less insistently, developed in terms of images of light (tranquil brightness, stained glass windows, etc.); and in the novel's final pages, the two strands merge.

Marking off important stages in David's emotional development, the impressionistic end passages use metrical effects to surround the images with a poetic halo. Their tone minglest reflective melancholy with something like restrained self-pity. (The mood is akin to that of the newly awakened dreamer: the dream preserved in its brilliant clarity, there is a yearning to be re-united with it,
as well as the recognition of irrevocable separation from it.) In these passages, the novel's double perspective is perhaps most delicate in its mingling of the immediacy of the youth's emotion with the mature man's nostalgic evocation of it. The imagistic end-passages occur at fairly regular intervals in the novel, and they tend to climax a middle chapter in a part division. (Final chapters in an issue usually conclude with an event). Their effect, as we will see, is incremental.

The second such passage marks the beginning of David's friendship with Steerforth. The image of the sleeping Steerforth, which will occur twice more in the novel, is emphasized by metrical effects and by hints of Steerforth's future embedded in images which recall those of the birth scene (moonlight, veiled future, shadowy picture, dreams):

I thought of him very much after I went to bed, and raised myself, I recollect, to look at him where he lay in the moonlight, with his handsome face turned up, and his head reclining easily on his arm. ....No veiled future dimly glanced upon him in the moonbeams. There was no shadowy picture of his footsteps, in the garden that I dreamed of walking in all night. (75)

David's first felt loss is the separation and estrangement from his mother caused by the Murdstones and then the irrevocable loss of her in death. His memory of the last sight of her living, as she saw him off after a particularly unhappy school holiday, is presented in a rhythmically intensified image at a chapter's close:

I was in the carrier's cart when I heard her calling to me I looked out, and she stood at the garden gate alone, holding her baby up in her arms for me to see... So I lost her. So I saw her afterwards, in my sleep at school -- a silent presence near my bed -- looking at me with the same intent face -- holding up her baby in her arms.(100)
This passage has less in common metrically with the first two, but it shares some rhythmic characteristics -- syntactical repetition, or parallelism (So I lost her, So I saw her / No veiled future, There was no shadowy picture), and a kind of oratorical final cadence or euphonious fall (the beginning of the final phrase is stressed and the following cadence / dactylic or iambic  \ is quietly conclusive). Both devices have a distancing effect which is tonally appropriate to a summarizing memory image or reflection.

In David's memory image of his mother, she is stripped of all Murdstone associations, in fact, of all individual characteristics, and "frozen" in her unambiguous elemental role as mother. (Her silent, intent presence also suggests the ghost of one murdered.) That her loss represents to David the loss of his own babyhood is reinforced at the close of the next chapter in an image the final phrase of which is solemnly cadenced:

The mother who lay in the grave, was the mother of my infancy; the little creature in her arms, was myself, as I had once been, hushed forever on her bosom. (109)

Her death represents not so much the severing of a personal relationship as the culmination of an untimely separation of David from an intimate aspect of himself. Irrevocably deprived of his baby dependency and of sharing with a parent the emotions and memories that connect one with early pleasure and security, he is abruptly and unpreparedly forced to begin his pilgrimage alone.\footnote{Even though the Murdstones succeed in drastically altering David's relationship with his mother, the strength of their old bond persists and asserts itself in unexpected ways. For example, when}
David returns home for school holidays and enters his house "God knows how infantine the memory may have been, that was awakened within me by the sound of my mother's voice in the old parlour, when I set foot in the hall. She was singing in a low tone. I think I must have lain in her arms, and heard hersinging so to me when I was but a baby. The strain was new to me, and yet it was so old that it filled my heart brimful; like a friend come back from a long absence."

(90)

Another stage in David's loss of childhood occurs when he is sent away from Blunderstone. As the curtain falls on the scene of his early life, his feeling of loss and separation is dramatized in a haunting image:

Behold me, on the morrow, in a much-worn little white hat, ... behold me so attired, ... sitting, a lone lorn child ... in the post chaise that was carrying Mr. Quinion to the London coach at Yarmouth! See, how our house and church are lessening in the distance; how the grave beneath the tree is blotted out by intervening objects; how the spire points upwards from my old playground no more, and the sky is empty! (124)

Similar to the earlier passages in its images, parallelism, and final cadence, the piece is deftly managed so that the emotional emphasis falls not on the mother's grave, which is quickly blotted out, but on the empty sky, bereft of the church spire which had dominated the landscape of David's childhood. The departure from Blunderstone confirms that David has lost an important directional signal -- the support that children derive from a stable family relationship and physical environment. An orphan, cast off and adrift, he is not to know the adult guidance that might have shielded his adolescent vulnerability and helped him avoid some of the pain that his "undisciplined heart" is to cause him. David will not truly regain his bearings until he discovers his love for Agnes. Then, the
church spire, as well as the orphan traveller, will be recalled in a broader symbolic context. At the time of Dora’s death, Agnes whom David has always associated with religious symbols (stained glass, a better angel, a rock, a heavenly light) assumes a new importance for him, and the image of her announcing the death he carries in memory during his subsequent absence from England as his new beacon, replacing the childhood spire: "That face, so full of pity, and of grief, that rain of tears, that awful mute appeal to me, that solemn hand upraised towards Heaven!" (587)

In a lyrical passage toward the end of the novel, after their love has been mutually revealed, the journey image recurs in a softened quasi-religious setting which suggests that the pilgrimage was, after all, divinely guided:

The early stars began to shine while we were lingering on, and looking up to them, we thanked our GOD for having guided us to this tranquility.

We stood together in the same old-fashioned window at night when the moon was shining .... Long miles of road then opened out before my mind; and toiling on, I saw a ragged way-worn boy forsaken and neglected, who should come to call even the heart now beating against mine, his own.5 (658)

5This is not an end passage, but the prose of the entire chapter is heightened. Moonlight here is serenely benevolent, not the obfuscating force it has been in David’s past.

Backtracking, we resume with a period of intense suffering during David’s life at Murdstone and Grinby’s, lightened only by the Micawbers, and culminating in his flight. When he at last reaches the safety of his aunt’s and spends his first night in her comfortable house, his past and future rise before him in a dream-like
end-passage in which earlier images are poetically fused (moonlight, the vision of his dead mother, dreams, and the pilgrimage which has both earthly and celestial reference, i.e. the solitary places under the night sky, but also the shining path of moonlight along which his mother approaches and he himself travels as he floats into dreams):

After I had said my prayers, and the candle had burnt out, I remember how I still sat looking at the moonlight on the water, as if I could hope to read my fortune in it, as in a bright book; or to see my mother with her child, coming from Heaven, along that shining path .... I remember how I thought of all the solitary places under the night sky where I had slept, and how I prayed that I never might be houseless any more, and never might forget the houseless. I remember how I seemed to float, then, down the melancholy glory of that track upon the sea, away into the world of dreams. (158)

The rhythm is a softly gathering one, enforced by repetition (I remember ... I remember, etc.) and the final iambic cadence. Both rhythm and images are suggestive of the sober mood with which the familiar (which is already fading into a dream-like unreality) is left behind and a new, more hopeful phase of existence entered upon.

At the end of the next chapter, when it is settled that David will begin a new life, he remarks "The two things clearest in my mind were, that a remoteness had come upon the old Blunderstone life ... and that a curtain had for ever fallen on my life at Murdstone and Grinby's." Then, with a rhythmic finality, he attempts to exorcise from his memory the evil dream of the warehouse existence:

Whether it lasted for a year, or more, or less, I do not know. I only know that it was, and ceased to be; and that I have written, and there I leave it. (170)

When Steerforth unexpectedly enters his life again, David's
happiness is expressed in a cadenced chapter-end passage which once more combines Steerforth and dreams. The images, produced by a dream logic which mingle recent stimuli (the Caesar play he has just seen and the friend he has just reencountered), reveal a deeper psychological truth about the heroic mold into which David has cast Steerforth:

Here, among pillows enough for six, I soon fell asleep in a blissful condition, and dreamed of ancient Rome, Steerforth, and friendship, until the early morning coaches, rumbling out of the archway underneath, made me dream of thunder and the gods. (226)

The image of the sleeping Steerforth recurs just before his elopement with Emily in a chapter-end passage of theatrically heightened prose. The narrator’s tones are more passionate here than when the image is repeated at the time of Steerforth’s death; for, then, the loss, although fresh, is in some measure accepted:

He was fast asleep; lying, easily, with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

The time came in its season, and that was very soon, when I almost wondered that nothing troubled his repose, as I looked at him. But he slept — let me think of him so again — as I had often seen him sleep at school; and thus, in this silent hour, I left him.

—Never more, Oh God forgive you, Steerforth! to touch that passive hand in love and friendship. Never, never more! (337)

The end-passages take on a new lyricism with Dora’s entrance into David’s life. A particularly striking one, the diction and rhythm of which suggest comparison with Dylan Thomas, must have had a special appeal for Dickens, for he jotted it down complete in his notes for that number (it was rare for him either to write an entire passage in advance or transcribe one into his notes from the manuscript). The one change that he made in the text
"in retrospection" becomes "in one respect") seems to have been for the sake of the rhythm:

What an idle time! What an unsubstantial, happy, foolish time! Of all the times of mine that Time has in his grip, there is none that in one retrospect I can smile at half so much, and think of half so tenderly. (376)

Thus, the loss of Steerforth seems partially offset by the growing romance, but the hint of misplaced love sounds a countermeasure in another end-piece. Agnes' calm, "pure" light contrasts with David's blindness and, by extension, with the world of moonlight and dreams that has been his milieu:

And how she spoke to me of Dora ... and round the little fairy figure shed some glimpses of her own pure light .... Oh Agnes, sister of my boyhood, if I had known then, what I knew long afterwards! --

There was a beggar in the street, when I went down; and as I turned my head towards the window, thinking of her calm seraphic eyes, he made me start by muttering, as if he were an echo of the morning:

"Blind! Blind! Blind!" (398)

As the marriage relationship begins to reveal the disparities between the two and as Dora's physical decline continues, the lyricism changes to a minor key and seasonal images emblematic of loss and death are introduced. As Dora's death approaches, this imagery combines with elegaic rhythms in an end-passage, which appears complete except for the final prepositional phrase in the chapter notes of the "memoranda." (The inclusion in the notes of this passage and the "happy time" one seems to suggest the importance Dickens attached to them as distillations of the quality
of a crucial life episode.)

... one night, when ... my aunt had left her with a parting cry of "Good night, Little Blossom," I sat down at my desk alone, and cried to think, Oh what a fatal name it was, and how the blossom withered in its bloom upon the tree! (535)

With Dora's and Steerforth's deaths, the images and rhythms of the end-passages darken. In the sleeping Steerforth image at the end of the storm chapter, the rhythm mirrors David's painfully complicated emotion at the sight of his dead friend:

And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children -- on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind -- among the ruins of the home he had wronged -- I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school. (607)

The passionate crescendo, constructed in fragments so that after each fall the emotional pitch is heightened (as if uttered by a voice struggling with rising emotion), echoes David's recognition of all that has been lost -- the innocent, hopeful childhood of Emily (implicitly he mourns too his own lost innocence) and the Peggotty home itself whose relationships have been irretrievably disrupted by Steerforth. But in the much quieter, almost anticlimactic rhythm of the final image, there is a tender fullness of emotion which overpowers the sense of loss and betrayal. When David sees Steerforth once more in the sleeping position which recalls his early idealization of his friend, it is as if the knowledge of experience is supplanted by the love. In the solemnity of the final cadence, David relives what he and Steerforth once were (or, rather were perceived to be in his innocence) and at the same time acknowledges the end of an epoch of his life. 7
At the end of the following chapter, the death seems less personal, more an emblem of the general darkness which has fallen on David's world. The dirge-like rhythm rests on a number of musical effects: an iambic cadence, the final phrase of which receives emphasis from striking anaplectic and spondaic variations, alliteration and assonance (the latter stressing the brooding "deep-bend" vowels -- "broken" "mother" "moaning"); and gothic diction ("dreary" "leaden" "moaning" the repetition of "darkened").

I went through the dreary house, and darkened the windows. The windows of the chamber where he lay, I darkened last. I lifted up the leaden hand, and held it to my heart; and all the world seemed death and silence, broken only by his mother's moaning. (612)

The only rent in the canopy of darkness that descends on David's life is the glimpse of Emily and her uncle bound for a new life in a new land. Images of light and darkness combine in this end-passage to make the tableau seem both larger than life and dreamlike -- a brief projection against a background of blackness:

Surrounded by the rosy light, and standing high upon the deck, apart together, she clinging to him, and he holding her, they solemnly passed away. The night had fallen on the Kentish hills when we were rowed ashore -- and fallen darkly upon me. (620)

From this point, the dominant imagery of the novel is that of light struggling to overcome darkness, as David struggles to discipline his sorrow and resign himself to an un consummated earthly
love of Agnes. While he has been brought to near despair by the
extremity of events in his personal life, his desolation is really
an intensification of the major problem of his life: how to cope
with loss and disappointment. This epoch in his life is summed up in the
Byronic description of his travels abroad, which is constructed
around the familiar imagery of loss, dreams, and darkness. The end

The following illustrates both the use of images and the
artificial "romantic" quality of the prose:
"There are some dreams that can only be imperfectly and vaguely
described; and when I oblige myself to look back on this time
of my life, I seem to be recalling such a dream .... Listlessness
to everything, but brooding sorrow, was the night that fell on my
undisciplined heart. Let me look up from it -- as at last I did,
thank Heaven! -- and from its long, sad, wretched dream, to dawn."
(621)

passages reflect his struggle. When he returns to England, his
resignation is expressed in a passage the tone of which recalls
the finality with which David the retrospective author drew the
curtain on certain other crucial epochs of his life:

And home was very dear to me, and Agnes too -- but she was not
mine -- she was never to be mine. She might have been, but
that was past! (625) cf

\[\text{Furdstone and Grinby's} \] I only know that it was, and ceased
to be; and that I have written, and there I leave it. (170)

\[\text{courtship and marriage}\] I have stood aside to see the phantoms
of those days go by me. They are gone, and I resume the journey
of my story. (485)

David's newly achieved self-discipline is a significant step
in his maturing and it is important that he accomplished this alone
(albeit with Agnes' inspiration) and against the strong current of
his desires. However, the shadows on his life do not clear until
his love finds expression and acceptance. In the novel's last chapters, the light and dark imagery reaches a grand crescendo. For example, David, after reading a letter from Agnes exclaims, "I felt that the night was passing from my mind, and all its shadows clearing." (622) In the chapter entitled "A Light Shines on My Way," he declares his love: "New thoughts and hopes were whirling through my mind, and all the colors of my life were changing." (657) In the novel's final passage -- a full stop performance notably deficient in the metrical subtlety of other end-passages -- major images are harmonized:

> And now, as I close my task, ...these faces fade away. But one face, shining on me like a Heavenly light by which I see all other objects, is above them and beyond them all. And that remains.

> I turn my head, and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. My lamp burns low, and I have written far into the night; but the dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company.

> Oh Agnes, Oh my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward! (669)

The loss motif is resolved by David's acceptance of life's impermanence, bolstered as he is by the earthly constancy of Agnes' love as well as its promise of a more perfect love to come. In his words, the lonely way is now lit by a"Heavenly light." Through this and the exorcism accomplished by his writing, he claims he is able to "dismiss" the shadows of his earlier life, that is, he is freed from their associations of guilt and pain. That the process has not been as easy or successful as he would have us believe is suggested in the urgency of the final utterance which, hymnlike, attempts to blend or subdue all discordant measures.
The four Retrospective chapters spaced through the novel (XVIII, XLIII, LIII, and the final chapter) summarize significant periods of David's life: schooldays (love and war); love and courtship; Dora's illness and death; and life with Agnes. Their method is poetic evocation, or distillation, of a segment of the memory stream. Various impressionistic techniques attempt to reproduce the emotional quality of the period.

The style of the first piece is representative of the others. An artificial lyrical prose, rich in sensations, almost Keatsian, it is a kind of crystal ball evocation of a time past. The palpability of remembered sensations transports the author David back to the actor David (without his being completely submerged in his earlier self):

A moment, and I occupy my place in the Cathedral, where we all went together, every Sunday Morning, assembling first at school for that purpose. The earthy smell, the sunless air, the sensation of the world being shut out, ... are wings that take me back, and hold me hovering above those days, in a half-sleeping and half-waking dream. (208)

The present tense (with boyish interjections) creates within the context of the merged perspective a kind of nostalgic immediacy ("Whispers reach me of Miss Shepherd having said she wished I wouldn't stare so, and having avowed a preference for Master Jones -- for Jones: a boy of no merit whatever!" 209). The dream atmosphere, or the effect of viewing something through a veil of time, is enhanced by the elimination of most transitions and other logical connectives. What we are offered are brief images and vignettes which flash into the ball and then yield to others.
The predominating imagery of the Retrospectives is the same as that of the novel as a whole with a stress on the dream, shadow, and phantom motifs, for example, the frame of the second Retrospect:

Let me stand aside, to see the phantoms of those days—courtship—go by me, accompanying the shadow of myself, in dim procession. (479)

I have stood aside to see the phantoms of those days go by me. They are gone, and I resume the journey of my story. (485)

Another example is David's marriage day which is presented as a "flustered, happy, hurried dream." The description of the wedding proper is strikingly similar in rhythmic technique to the dream vision of Carker's ride: in both cases, the perspective is that of a feverish consciousness on which sensations are registering with a curious blend of superacuteness and haziness. The snatches of vision are conveyed in parallel syntax, the effect of which is intensifying and incantatory ("A dream of their coming in with Dora ... Of the clergyman and clerk appearing ... Of Miss Lavinia ... being the first to cry ... Of our kneeling down together, side by side ... Of their whispering, as we pass ... Of them being a breakfast ..."

The Dora (blossom) and Agnes (beacon) motifs play into the Retrospects also, and the one which deals with Dora's death combines a number of important image strands. The moon, emblem in David's life of the dream-like nature of existence, presides over the scene. At the chapter's end, the image of Agnes' upraised hand is prophetic of what she will be to David, and the fall of darkness heralds the forces of inner dissolution against which, with her inspiration, he
must contend.

—that face, so full of pity, and of grief, that rain of tears, that awful mute appeal to me, that solemn hand upraised towards Heaven!

"Agnes?"

It is over, darkness comes before my eyes; and, for a time, all things are blotted out of my remembrance. (587)

In the final Retrospect, as I have mentioned, the Agnes and journey motifs are resolved. The Retrospects, then, are of a piece with the novel, both thematically and stylistically. Their general purpose is to condense the description of a time period without sacrificing its emotional intensity. Although their rhythmic, or poetic, quality is more concentrated and varied, they are otherwise like the end-passages in their use of suggestive rhythms in combination with recurrent images.

In summary, then, what can be said about the nature and function of impressionistic prose in the novel? To have isolated the end passages and Retrospects for discussion in this connection was somewhat artificial, since the prose of *David Copperfield* in general is characterised by what is for Dickens a new delicacy of tone. My purpose, however, was to discuss what I see as a distinct stylistic phenomenon — the fairly regular occurrence (at chapter ends and in special sections) of poetically heightened passages, the aim of which seems to be to create a memorable medium for the novel's dominant imagery. The rhythms of these passages are characteristically iambic, although other poetic meters are also used for special effects (e.g., spondaic or anapestic for dirge-like or elegaic measures). The most pronounced rhythmic similarity of the passages is their final cadenced fall (a phrase whose stress is initial) which contributes a distinctive
melancholic solemnity. The passages' "distanced" effect is also a product of diction and syntax which is often archaically or Biblically lofty: "all things are blotted out of my remembrance"; "the earthly bourne of all such travellers"; "the dust that once was he, without whom I had never been"; "behold me on the morrow"; etc.

The images which float through this medium are those which I have discussed at length: the lonely pilgrimage or journey, sleep, dreams, death, dark, light, shadows, moonlight, etc. They are introduced; they reappear, sometimes in concert with others, sometimes fused, sometimes counterpointed; the strands separate; then merge again; until finally at the novel's end, they blend in a grand synthesis. It is a musical development. Or, borrowing a term transferred from poetry to novel criticism by Joseph Frank, one could say that the images are managed so as to stand in "reflexive reference" to each other.

The end-passages together with the Retrospects, then, function as emotional foci in which powerful utterance is given to the impressions, desires, and anxieties which most deeply affected the boy David (often at a barely conscious level) and which so modified his experience that they are keys to an understanding of the nature of his development. The metrical prose emphasizes the images while it connects them in an ultimately meaningful pattern.

The passages also contribute to the special quality of the novel's perspective: the much praised tone which results from the superimposition of David's mature perspective on that of his
younger reactions -- a tone dreamy, remote, nostalgic, and mournful, as well as vivid, intense, and suggestive of vulnerability. Cadenced images evoke distanced, but powerful emotional states and are an important ingredient in the 'dream method' by which David explores his life.

It might be argued that the 'design' of these passages is nothing more significant than that they occur at chapter endings, (or, in the case of the Retrospects, in 'set pieces') where one might expect to find summary scenes and slightly elevated prose. Although I do not want to insist that what I have described was consciously planned, I think the evidence indicates an unusual pattern which is unlikely to be accidental. The fairly uniform spacing of the passages through the novel, the interplay of recurrent images therein, the similarity of rhythms and their differentiation in intensity from the general prose style -- all point to an artistically significant pattern.  

That Dickens reserved this particular type of metrical prose for images of important emotional value to David is suggested by comparison with a chapter-end passage dealing with a death which did not deeply affect David. In the description of Barkis' death, both the image and the prose are low-key: "And, it being low water, he went out with the tide." (343)

Finally, it is the manner in which these passages illuminate the novel's major themes which argues for their significance: the boy David sees through a glass darkly; childish illusions and the lack of a firm center make his life one of shadows, dreams, fantasies, and nearly unbearable losses and disappointments. It is only after bitter
experience and his recognition of the worth of Agnes' love that
his vision clears, and he gains self-reliance and a measure of
serenity. It is tonally appropriate that in looking into the
crystal ball, the retrospective narrator whose vision now com-pre-
hends more than the earthly prospect of troubled dreams, sees
images of his old self float in and out of ken, luminous and yet hazy,
seeming to belong to somebody dear to him, but long dead.
Great Expectations, far more economical than Copperfield in its use of character and incident, achieves a striking unity from the force of its narrative alone, but like Copperfield, it too has a poetically heightened image pattern which helps develop one of the critical themes—Pip's secret fantasy life, revolving around his love for Estella and compounded of guilt, shame, terror, pride, and desire, which for a long time distorts his personal relationships. Subtle heightening calls attention to the images.

His fascinated love for Estella tempts him into the original sin for which he forfeits the Edenic life of the forge and inherits the post-lapsarian ruined garden of Satis home. As with Adam, the sin is not the love (of Eve-Estella) itself, but the allowing oneself for the sake of the loved one to fall into and rest in what one knows to be a condition of error. It is Pip's snobbery and disregard for the feelings of those who love him, his awareness of his guilt, and yet his persistence in it for which we hold him accountable. Given his sensitive, private young nature, it is difficult to see how an experience as imaginatively dazzling as Estella in Satis House could have done other than transform his desires, and, in a certain sense, alienate him from his old order of experience. It seems, therefore, more truthful to judge him not for the feelings of desire and shame (over which he had little control initially) but for the fact that he knowingly made others suffer along with himself.

significance to Pip and to their interrelationship in his emotional life: conjointly they provide the reader with an important indicator of the deep springs of his behavior which, despite his self-awareness as retrospective narrator, he himself is not completely conscious of. For, as he tells us, his love for Estella is the clue by which he can be followed into his "poor labyrinth" and because that love is so deeply rooted as not to be eradicable ("You are part of my
existence, part of myself"), those parts of the narrative which deal
directly with it (despite his attempt to be analytical) are in the
deepest sense romantic and non-critical.

This is illustrated by a qualitative difference in descriptive
style. Whereas the prose which deals with other aspects of Pip's
experience (e.g. his pre-Havisham boyhood and his life in London)
is characterized by comic irony or circumlocutionary eloquence
(both creating a comic-sympathetic perspective), the descriptions
involving his relationship with Estella are poetically heightened,
often melodramatic. Because Pip has outgrown his boyhood
sensitivity and extravagances, he can recall his sufferings at the
hands of his sister and the village alders and the excesses of his
early life in London with a detached sense of their comic absurdities.

The merging of actor and retrospective-narrator perspective
is somewhat more subtle even than in Copperfield. See, for example,
the Christmas dinner scene in which Pip suffers the double torment
of adult abuse and inner terror at the prospect of being exposed as
a thief. Note the modification of the boy's perspective by means
of comic-ironic language in a passage such as the following:
"Among this good company I should have felt myself, even if I hadn't
robbed the pantry, in a false position. Not because I was squeezed
in at an acute angle of the table-cloth, with the table in my chest,
and the Pumblechookian elbow in my eye, nor because I was not allowed
to speak (I didn't want to speak), nor because I was regaled with
the scaly tips of the drumsticks of the fowls, and with those obscure
corners of pork of which the pig, when living, had had the least reason
to be vain. No; I should not have minded that if they would only have
left me alone." (2u)

He never attains to the objective-ironic perspective when describing
his infatuation and the sense of criminal guilt and social shame it
provokes; and by this token, we gauge the depth and significance of
those emotions.
The negative and positive poles of Pip's fantasy life, linked through his love of Estella, are the shadowy terror of criminal complicity which haunts him and the shadowy unreality of Satis House which attracts him. Our first glimpse of his imaginative life is his fearful, guilt-provoking encounter with the convict on the marshes. (This scene gains force as a defining event when we understand how Pip's life with Mrs. Joe has fostered his acute sense of himself as culprit and victim. All the warmth and reassurance of Joe's fireside companionship cannot offset this, since Pip rightly perceives Joe as a fellow victim.) Estella in Satis House is the experience that transforms Pip's aspirations and perceptions, alienating him from the simple life of the forge and raising for him the now omnipresent specter of his uncultivated and "criminally" tainted background. (Thereafter, though the narrative moves to London, it continues to oscillate between that city and Satis House, the marshes, and the forge, just as Pip's ordeal and development move on that symbolic axis.) The alteration wrought in his psyche by the experience in Satis House orphans Pip anew, for unable to share the experience, even with Joe, he is adrift with his fantasies and doubly vulnerable to their distortions.

The manner in which Pip's emotional life is affected is highlighted by impressionistically developed images, several of which are the same as those found in Copperfield and in Esther's personal narrative in Bleak House: shadow, mist, and darkness vs. sunlight; or, more generally, obscurcation vs. illumination. Pip's development can be measured by his slow shifts of perception.
in regard to the several shadows on his adolescent existence: the shadows of the marshes with their suggestion of common criminality, the artificial shadows of Satis House which dazzle him and seem to hold the promise of all he desires, and the disquieting shadow that, crossing his consciousness at intervals, vaguely hints that there is some important connection between these two worlds that he struggles to keep apart.

In the opening scenes on the marsh, the animistic description is not only in keeping with a child's overwrought response to a threatening situation, but it calls attention to certain impressions which are to abide with Pip subconsciously, generating subtle pressures or flashing intimations in future situations. The deeply personal terror that the marshes hold for Pip is crystallised in three descriptive passages, which recreate his state of mind when he first experiences his aloneness, when the convict has presented him with the horrifying injunction, and when the convict has disappeared aboard the prison ship leaving him with a powerful impression of generalized evil and an uneasy sense of implication:

At such a time, raw afternoon towards evening, I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Phillip Pirrip, late of this Parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried ... and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes, and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry was Pip (2)

The marshes were just a long black horizontal line then, as I stopped to look after him; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet as black; and the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines
intermixed. On the edge of the river I could faintly make out the only two black things in all the prospect that seemed to be standing upright; one of these was the beacon by which the sailors steered ... the other a gibbet, with some chains hanging to it which had once held a pirate. (5)

By the light of the torches, we saw the black Hulk lying out a little way from the mud of the shore, like a wicked Noah's ark. Cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains, the prison ship seemed in my young eyes to be ironed like the prisoners. We saw the boat go alongside, and we saw him taken up the side and disappear. Then, the ends of the torches were flung hissing into the water, and went out, as if it were all over with him. (39)

In the first two passages, the childlike syntax—repetitious and coordinate—along with the imagistic emphasis on blackness and on the geometrical severity of the landscape, lift the scenes out of the realm of realistic description into the surrealism of a child's nightmare. The syntax generates a sustained excitement which prevents the reader's attention from fixing on details and, hence, calls more attention to the central images. In the first example, the sweep of the descriptive focus from foreground to more and more remote background and then unexpectedly back to dead center gives a dramatic emphasis to "the small bundle of shivers"; in the second, the emphasis falls on the beacon and gibbet which emerge starkly out of the simplified scene. In the third passage, a different type of rhythmic heightening sets off the image of the prison ship. Rather than generating tension in preparation for a key image, Dickens

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12 Especially in the latter two passages, the predominance of blackness touched with red (in the sunset colors and in the flash of torches against black sky and water) conjures up a storybook atmosphere which is complemented by the references to pirates and the wicked Noah's ark.
gives the image a direct rhythmic statement: "Cribbed and barred and moored by massive rusty chains" -- brittle sounds and a gloomy alliterative effect in a steady trochaic meter set the tone for the scene's fadeout which moves with the inexorable pace of a nightmare.\(^1\)

\(^1\)See Honan, p. 3, who comments on this passage as representative of Dickens' later style in which metrical cadences, absorbed in paragraph rhythms, call attention to crucial images and in so doing achieve "their greatest psychological pertinence."

Perceived, then, by sensibilities quickened by childish terror, these images will lurk forever in neglected corners of Pip's consciousness, giving off associative vibrations in surprising contexts. Nor will they be forgotten by the reader for whom they are an early touchstone to the contradictions of Pip's adolescent reactions.

These scenes and images cluster around one pole of Pip's early experience and involve intense feelings of fear and guilt. The other pole, the experiences which begin when Pip first sets foot in Satis House, also has its identifying images, centered primarily in physical descriptions of Satis House and its garden. In Pip's first impression from the courtyard, the clauses strung together with "and," the rhythmic sweep of the description as it ranges toward the visual horizon, and the references to shrill wind and ships' rigging all harken back to the earlier marsh scenes. While it is natural that Pip perceives the new in terms of the familiar, the prose also generates a subtle suggestion of association between this prospect and the earlier one which will later be expanded:

The brewery buildings had a little lane of communication with
it [courtyard]; and the wooden gates of that lane stood open, and all the brewery beyond stood open, away to the high enclosing wall; and all was empty and disused. The cold wind seemed to blow colder there than outside the gate; and it made a shrill noise in howling in and out at the open sides of the brewery, like the noise of wind in the rigging of a ship at sea. (55)

The rhythmic heightening and gothic imagery of the passage prepare us for the description of Miss Havisham which follows:

... I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress,... and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. ... Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out if I could. (57)

The repetition and parallelism of the stylized prose convey the impact of the grotesque vision on an observer nearly mesmerized by wonder and dread. The imagery is of death and decay within the framework of the ghastly and unnatural.  

But the vision of Estella which will transform Pip's perception of Satis House from grotesque to picturesque is already working its magic. Before his first visit is concluded, while walking in the ruined garden, he begins in imagination to blend her grace and beauty with the gothic surroundings in pleasing fancies (see passage, p. 63). These are abruptly ended by the terrifying apparation of Miss Havisham hanging by the neck.

14. Whereas blackness was a conduit of dread in the marsh scene, here dread is inspired by the exclusion of daylight, the artificial glare of tapers, and the unnatural brightness of fevered eyes.
in the deserted brewery. It is not unreasonable to see in this vision -- which will appear to Pip again -- the image of the gibbet which, under the strain of a new and overpowering experience, flashes out of Pip's unconscious as a premonitory signal that a fearful shadow hangs over this house and its inhabitants.

However this may be, the warning goes unheeded, and the impressionable and love-struck Pip is increasingly dazzled by the unnatural light of Satis House. (As Pip the author muses: "What could I become with these surroundings? How could my character fail to be influenced by them? Is it to be wondered at if my thoughts were dazed, as my eyes were, when I came out into the natural light from the misty yellow rooms?" 96) By the time Pip has ended his service for Miss Havisham and begun his apprenticeship with Joe, he has been "spoiled" by Satis House, which has not only supplanted "the old ways" but made them hateful to him as well.

During this period, Pip is preoccupied with his fantasies of Estella and Miss Havisham. These descriptions are romantically heightened by means of sensuous imagery and rhythmic devices such as repetition and parallelism, as seen in the following example:

Whenever I watched the vessels standing out to sea with their white sails spread, I somehow thought of Miss Havisham and Estella; and whenever the light struck aslant, afar off, upon a cloud or sail or green hill-side or waterline, it was just the same. -- Miss Havisham and Estella and the strange house and the strange life appeared to have something to do with everything that was picturesque. (110)

In the description of one of Pip's annual visits to Satis House during the years of his apprenticeship, the stylised prose is reminiscent of that of his first impression, but so altered an
observer is he now that the ghastly elements which frightened the uninitiated boy pass unnoticed or are softened down, while the overall tone is one of romantic yearning:

So unchanging was the dull old house, the yellow light in the darkened room, the faded spectre in the chair by the dressing-table glass, that I felt as if the stopping of the cleeks had stopped Time in that mysterious place, and while I and everything else outside it grew older, it stood still. Daylight never entered the house, as to my thoughts and remembrances of it, any more than as to the actual fact. It bewildered me, and under its influence I continued at heart to hate my trade and to be ashamed of home. (126)

At this stage of Pip's adolescence, the unnatural has nearly supplanted the natural, either robbing the latter of its ability to please or enhancing its appeal by imaginative transfusion: at the height of Pip's bemusement, the disturbing outlines of the grotesque have blurred and it is perceived as the picturesque. Moreover, the latent fairytale elements in his fantasy image of Satis House become explicit as events convince him that Miss Havisham has destined him for Estella, and she becomes "fairy godmother."

It is in this romanticised state that Pip leaves home for London, determined to groom himself for the role of fairy prince. On the morning of his departure, however, the mists rise from the village and he has a sudden perception of his vulnerability (similar to that of the novel's opening scene) and a burst of love for the old and familiar that he has lately scorned. Clauses strung together with "and" emulate the welling of a child's self-pity:

But the village was very peaceful and quiet, and the light mists were solemnly rising, as if to show me the world, and I had been so innocent and little there, and all beyond was so unknown and great, that in a moment with a strong heave and sob I broke into tears. (162)
The image of clearing mists poetically heightened is to recur at frequent intervals carrying with it painful intimations of the reality Pip has abandoned until gradually it replaces the shadow images of the existence he has chosen to idealize. In various guises, it is the controlling imagery of the remainder of the narrative.

Pip, however, is now embarked on the painful, enchanted days of his "expectations," and the narrative centers on the drama of his love and his efforts to become a gentleman.

Though his life is in London, Satis House remains a narrative focal point and the visits that Pip pays there, as well as time spent elsewhere with Estella, are rich in romantic prose. For example, in conjuring up pictures of Miss Havisham's plans for him, Pip imagines that

She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a-going and the cold hearths a blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin -- in short, do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess. (234)

The house becomes "the rich attractive mystery" of which Pip is the hero, and when Estella returns to it from Paris, it basks in the reflected glory of her even more dazzling beauty. One passage of many will serve to illustrate the quality of cadence and imagery in these descriptions:

"We walked round the ruined garden twice or thrice more, and it was all in bloom forme. If the green and yellow growth of weed in the chinks of the old wall had been the most precious flowers that ever blew, it could not have been more cherished in my remembrance." (241)
During this period, however, the image of the rising mists, which on the morning of Pip's departure for London made him unexpectedly mourn the lost life of the forge and village, recurs twice and with it the same sad feeling of regret for the contentment that might have been if he had never seen Estella. The melancholy of these passages is a dark thread in the romantic time.  

Nor is this vague sense of regret the only check on Pip's roseate dreams of this period. Another counterpoint to the rhapsodic descriptions is the mystifying, and dimly foreboding, sensation that time and again in unexpected moments takes Pip by surprise. Although he is unaware of it, these "dim suggestions," or "ghosts," are triggered by impressions similar to those which he unconsciously has absorbed during the tense encounter with the housekeeper at Jaggers' dinner table -- a certain expression of Estella's face, a flash of her hand, a sudden glare of gas, and a strong but undefined sense of puzzlement and dread comes over Pip ("What was the nameless shadow which again in that one instant had passed?") See pp. 240, 241, 267, 273.

I turned my head aside, for, with a rush and a sweep, like the old marsh winds coming up from the sea, a feeling like that which subdued me on the morning when I left the forge, when the mists were solemnly rising, and when I laid my hand upon the village fingerpost, smote upon my heart again. (253)

Leaving the village after his sister's funeral, once more, the mists were rising as I walked away. If they disclosed to me, as I suspect they did, that I should not come back, and that Biddy was quite right, all I can say is -- they were quite right too. (289)

On one visit to Satis House during the period of "courtship," other mists begin to clear, revealing a glimpse of the painful knowledge that Pip has been disguising from himself. In a lengthy
passage, Pip sees behind the fairy godmother mask, although he cannot yet admit the full implications of his perception and still believes that Estella is eventually destined for him. The strained rhetorical patterns of the description recall those of Pip's first encounter with Miss Havisham (cf. quote, my page 149. "I saw ... I saw ...") 17 The correspondence calls attention to Pip's

17 A number of scenes which dramatize Pip's perceptions or recognitions in regard to the Estella/Satis House theme have similar rhetorical patterns. In addition to these two, one should compare, for example, the scene in which Pip realizes that Jaggers' housekeeper is Estella's mother. )p. 396)

shift in perception. Moreover, in his changing state of mind, some of the enchantment fades from the familiar room and objects. (From this point, the daze of light imagery is displaced in the Satis House passages by shadow imagery, while at the same time the clearing mist imagery is pointing the way to the reestablishment of natural light.)

I saw in this ... that Estella was set to wreck Miss Havisham's revenge on men .... I saw in this, that I, too, was tormented by a perversion of ingenuity, even while the prize was reserved for me. I saw in this, the reason for my being staved off so long .... In a word, I saw in this, Miss Havisham as I had her then and there before my eyes; and I saw in this, the distinct shadow of the darkened and unhealthy house in which her life was hidden from the sun.

The candles that lighted that room of hers were placed in sconces on the wall. They were high from the ground, and they burnt with the steady dullness of artificial light in air that is seldom renewed. As I looked round at them, and at the pale gloom they made, and at the stopped clock, and at the withered articles of bridal dress upon the table and the ground, and at her own awful figure with its ghostly reflection thrown large by the fire upon the ceiling and the wall, I saw in everything the construction that my mind had come to, repeated and thrown back to me. (308)
Pip clings still to shreds of hope and although he refers to Satis House as "the memorable old house that it would have been so much the better for me never to have entered, never to have seen," it isn't until he has made his declaration of love to Estella and has been told of her plans to wed Drummle that the shadow finally blots out all hope, seeming to darken the universal frame: "All done, all gone! So much was done and gone, that when I went out at the gate, the light of day seemed of a darker color than when I went in." 18 (368)

18 The rhythm and diction of Pip's declaration to Estella are similar to earlier passages in which his fancy dwelt on her. Compare, for example, "You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since -- on the river, on the sails of the ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets. You have been the embodiment of every graceful fancy that my mind has ever become acquainted with." (368)

Pip sees Satis House once more before its destruction, but it is Satis House without Estella and his bright hopes, and the ruin which once appeared to him pleasantly picturesque is now perceived through the veil of bitter experience -- the village landmarks, Satis House, its garden, and Miss Havisham herself now seem sunk in a permanent winter of cold dark ruin:

... the rocks, as they hovered about the grey tower and swung in the bare high trees of the priory-garden, seemed to call to me that the place was changed, and that Estella was gone out of it forever. (400)

And could I look upon her without compassion, seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed ...? (404)

By the wilderness of casks that I had walked on long age, and on
which the rain of years had fallen since, rotting them in many places, and leaving miniature swamps and pools of water upon those that stood on end, I made my way to the ruined garden. I went all round it: round by the corner where Herbert and I had fought our battle; round by the paths where Estella and I had walked. So cold, so lonely, so dreary all!

The effect of the rhythms and diction is melodramatic, but compelling. (In the final passage, the rhythm and imagery of the opening phrase nearly misled one into reading it as an invocation or adjuration rather than an adverbial phrase of place.) Pip, whose vision of Satis House was once wildly idealized, has now swung to the other romantic extreme, leaving the reader to suspect that this, too, will pass. And, indeed, his compassion for Miss Havisham (and for the convict whom he is about to accompany abroad at this time) are the beginning of an important moral and emotional regeneration. In retrospect, this episode will be seen as a shadowy nadir from which he finds his way through sacrifices and suffering to a balanced maturity.

19Pip's "humbling" is the beginning of his humanization, which, however, is not accomplished until he has been subjected to ordeals by fire and water which call on his deepest reserves of compassion and love. He saves the mistress of Satis House from incineration, in a macabre sense becoming the "fairy prince" by dragging the cloth off the table and with it "the heap of rottenness in the midst, and all the ugly things that sheltered there." Lured by Orlick to the limekiln in the marshes, he enters his heart of darkness (a personal hell of fire and brimstone) and emerges a stronger man. (That he does this for the sake of Provis, the one most responsible for his childhood horror of the marshes, is a measure of his moral progress.) Having survived the ordeals by fire, Pip has yet to suffer through the escape and capture by water of Provis and the agony of the trial and Provis' final illness. He has to discover through the puzzling links of association the secret of Estella's parentage and arrive at the point at which he lovingly tells Provis, the scourge of his younger life, that his daughter lives, and that he (Pip) loves her. He has to suffer the loss of his fortune, the near loss of his life, the loss of Biddy and of the possibility of resuming his life in the
village. All this, with its attendant effects, has to happen before the meeting in the ruined garden can take place.

The final segment of the narrative from Pip's rejection by Estella through his various trials is governed by the imagery of gradually clearing mists and the displacement of artificial light and shadows by the restorative powers of natural light.

For example, when he is surrounded by the dense white vapour of the kiln in the darkened room with Orlick, Pip sees more clearly than ever before, as images of the past flash with fantastic vividness through his brain (see pp. 431-434). After his rescue, weakened by his wounds, and his anxiety, Pip agonizes through a long day and night, imagining that the escape will fail. But, as the appointed morning comes and he watches dawn break on the Thames, the spectacle of nature renewing itself strikes a sympathetic response. The nightmare appears to be over and he can finally begin to be active on behalf of the man he has come to love. The striking description is dominated by the veil/light metaphor (see my earlier discussion p. 29 for full quote):

...the sun rose up, and a veil seemed to be drawn from the river, and millions of sparkles burst out upon its waters. From me, toe, a veil seemed to be drawn, and I felt strong and well. (440)

Shortly after Provis' death, Pip falls into a fever which, in rendering him physically helpless, makes it possible for him to be nursed as a child and to respond with a child's simplicity of perception and openness of affection. First perceived by Pip as the vapour of the limekiln which comes between him and the creditors
who visit his chambers, the fever also recalls for the reader the mists that have plagued his life.

When Joe's tender nursing and nature's restorative powers have brought Pip through, the two men eagerly anticipate their first outing:

And Joe got in beside me, and we drove away together into the country, where the rich summer growth was already on the trees and on the grass, and sweet summer scents filled all the air. The day happened to be Sunday, and when I looked on the loveliness around me, and thought how it had grown and changed, and how the little wild flowers had been forming, and the voices of the birds had been strengthening, by day and by night, under the sun and under the stars, while poor I lay burning and tossing on my bed, the mere remembrance of having burned and tossed there, came like a check upon my peace. But, when I heard the Sunday bells, and looked around a little more upon the outspread beauty, I felt that I was not nearly thankful enough -- that I was too weak yet, to be even that -- and I laid my head on Joe's shoulder, as I had laid it long ago when he had taken me to the Fair or where not, and it was too much for my young senses. (474-5)

In this dramatization of Pip's brief return to a state of childhood, the simply sensual imagery and quasi-Biblical rhythms contribute to the tone of almost mystic excitation. (This description has parallels with the nature passages discussed earlier which suggest the directness and intensity of a child's relationship to nature.)

Pip's recovery proceeds under the auspices of Joe and the "bright, warm sunlight" of Temple Gardens. When it is complete, he makes another journey back to the village, but unlike the others, this is a return in a real sense, for his purpose is to propose to Biddy and resume a better life at the forge. He is a sincere, but deluded Adam trying to reclaim Paradise. The supportive imagery of this section is sweetly and simply Edenic, all fragrant green limes,
white thorns, midsummer winds, blue sky, and larks. The prose rhythms, too, are simple and only gently elevated by a Biblical flavouring. The following brief excerpt is representative:

The June weather was delicious. The sky was blue, the larks were soaring high over the green corn, I thought all that countryside more beautiful and peaceful by far than I had ever known it to be yet .... my heart was softened by my return, and such a change had come to pass, that I felt like one who was toiling home barefoot from distant travel, and whose wanderings had lasted many years. (485)

This is the idyllic nature of childhood, but just as childhood is irretrievable as a state of existence, so Biddy, the unfallen Eve, is not for Pip whose experiences have separated him forever from her innocent sphere.

Though there are many who wish that Dickens had stuck to his original ending, the revised conclusion, though it may lack the psychological consistency and artistic restraint of the original, is nevertheless carefully worked out in terms not only of the narrative's psychological patterns, but also of its dominant imagery. In fact, it is "truer" than the original in the sense that it winds up the major image strands. It is a kind of tone poem in which moon and mist interplay as a rhythmic correlative of the lovers' meeting. (Appropriately, the two met not as children might in the innocence of sunlight, but in the ruined garden by moonlight in the full and chastened wisdom of their maturity, Stella's proud eyes now showing a "saddened softened light."

A cold silvery mist had veiled the afternoon, and the moon was not yet up to scatter it. But, the stars were shining beyond the mist, and the moon was com'ng, and the evening was not dark. I could trace out where every part of the old house had been, and where the brewery had been, and where the gates, and where the casks. (491)
Thus Pip encounters the remains of Satis House for the last time, and his mood after the lapse of years is tranquil and meditative. Whereas on his last visit the weight of his despair had made the landscape funereal, now the ruin is seen in a sober but balanced perspective, and although the afternoon is veiled by mists, there is light beyond and the promise of greater brightness.

As the encounter with Estella unfolds, the rising of the moon is developed as a rhythmic emblem, with hypnotic repetition contributing to the dream-like movement of the scene:

The moon began to rise, and I thought of the placid look at the white ceiling, which had passed away. The moon began to rise, and I thought of the pressure on my hand when I had spoken the last words he had heard on earth. (491)

The manner in which Pip recalls his last words with Provis indicates that his love of Estella has not merely "withstood" the knowledge of her parentage; it has, in a sense, been deepened by the measure of his love for her father.

The silvery mist was touched with the first rays of the moonlight and the same rays touched the tears that dropped from her eyes. (491)

Estella's tears are redemptive and show Pip that she has moved far beyond the earlier Estella who had no heart to understand tears.

I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her. (493)

In the gentle melancholic iambics of the final passage, the major symbolic motifs of the novel coalesce: mists and shadow, light and clearing, and images of Eden. The broad expanse of tranquil light promises to shelter no illusions for the pair whose love
is now based on a full knowledge and acceptance of what they have been and of what they are.
Whereas in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* prose rhythms are used to underscore key imagistic effects, in *A Tale Of Two Cities* and *Hard Times* rhythmic devices, most prominently repetition, are more directly thematic. In these works, rhythms do not merely accentuate symbolic patterns; they help to create them.

It may be helpful by way of preface to point out what distinguishes these two novels in general purpose and method from other Dickensian novels, for therein are the clues to why Dickens found the direct and extensive use of rhythmic techniques especially appropriate. Both novels were issued in weekly, rather than monthly, numbers. They are the shortest of his completed novels. In both, Dickens found the problems of condensation enormous and struggled mightily to provide each number with sufficient variety and interest without overwhelming the effect of the whole. Moreover, in both

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20 See Forster, Vol. 2. *Hard Times* was the first novel written for weekly issue since *Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* were written for Master Humphrey's Clock, but the portions for *Hard Times* were even briefer. After a few weeks he wrote "The difficulty of the space is CRUSHING." (120) And later about *Tale*, "Nothing but the interest of the subject, and the pleasure of striving with the difficulty of the form of treatment ... could else repay the time and trouble of the incessant condensation." (281)

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novels, his purpose is more limited and objective than perhaps in any other of his works. In *Hard Times*, he is concerned with presenting a restricted moral fable and in *Tale* with recreating the human significance of a particular historical episode. Consequently, his usual variegated cast of characters and range of episode are scaled down, thus producing a narrowed focus and more
vivid (and simplified) episodic contrasts. Contrast is at the heart of both novels, as with most of his others, but rather than achieving it through a canvas crowded with idiosyncratic characters and leisurely incident, Dickens, working within limits imposed both by space and by artistic purpose, relies on more economical means, specifically, on representative, or symbolic, character groupings and on the suggestive resources of language itself. He himself commented on the difference in method in Tale: "...I set myself the little task of making a picturesque story, rising in every chapter, with characters true to nature, but whom the story should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue." (Forster, II, 281)

It is a story of incident, then, intent on dramatizing the fateful intersection of individual lives with a convulsive historical event. The characters are less particularized than is usual for Dickens, and they play out their roles not so much in a setting of everyday circumstance as against the backdrop of history and its cosmic framework.

The historical aspect of the theme dramatizes what Dickens perceives as the inevitability of violent social upheaval when want and other forms of injustice and oppression have ravaged a society over a long period of time. "Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms." (365) Humanity brutalized will finally assert itself brutally on its own behalf; and in the ensuing struggle the social fabric will be painfully torn and for a time
the entire universal frame will seem threatened. When the old is destroyed, moreover, the new order will for a time impose its own forms of oppression, but this too will pass and finally there will emerge a new civilization struggling to be truly free. In his "hindsight" vision of a populist society expiating for past evils, Dickens finds historical justification for the violence that he believes was a natural, albeit painful, birth. (See p. 370) But while he is optimistic about historical cycles, he is not at all so about the possibilities for individual intervention in the revolutionary process. Revolutionary madness is stronger than any force of moderation (the mob is all; the individual nothing) and reasonable men who are drawn in will in all probability be perverted or, more likely crushed. Darnay, no doubt in other times an epitome of the successful man of action, acts on a courageous but deluded impulse and finds himself powerless, escaping destruction only by a trick. 21

21"Then that glorious vision of doing good, which is so often the sanguine mirage of so many good minds, arose before him, and he even saw himself in the illusion with some influence to guide this raging Revolution that was running so fearfully wild." 238

Dr. Manette's cracked ego is badly shattered again by the failure of his influence to save his son-in-law from mob justice.

What hope then have individuals caught up in a revolutionary process? How can they best conduct their lives? The novel addresses itself to these questions by attempting to demonstrate that when public values are under attack, private values assume greater significance than in normal times. Not only does the fragility of the social fabric
point up by contrast the strengths of the individual's spiritual resources, but the chaos of the times forces a turning inward to the solace of personal relationships. It is within this context that the true heroism of the novel is enacted -- in the loving, self-effacing service of Lucie's life (and Lorry's) and in Carton's sacrifice. Such acts of love are truly redemptive, for in the midst of chaos they sustain life by preserving a sense of its truer proportions and its best possibilities. Until such time as the triumphs of the new social order begin, the heroism of the hearth (humble in itself, but capable of inspiring lofty acts, such as Carton's) is the best there is.

These are the novel's general thematic concerns. They are developed through incident and character, but more specifically through their rhythmic organization around two dominant poetic emblems -- Storm and Rest, polar symbols representing contrasting life forces (the former includes a variety of destructive forces: disruption, discord, frenzy, compulsion, hate, fear, irrationality, anarchism, aggression; the latter, forces of creativity and stability: continuity, concord, tranquillity, tolerance, love, trust, rationality, conservation, etc.) The emblems, while they sometimes function directly as image or symbol, are for the most part dramatized in terms of contrasting character groups with identifying rhythms: Lucy and those under her influence vs. the Defarges and their revolutionary compatriots. (The pervasive resurrection motif while it is connected with Lucy's group, should really be viewed as subsuming both groups, for Dickens' overall perspective is one of historical inevitability within the Christian framework of personal salvation, a perspective that he no doubt wisely leaves unexplored
and ambiguous.) The symbolic centers, then are developed in terms of the opposing character groups rhythmically identified.

This works in several ways. Sometimes the rhythmic focus is on a character's habitual actions (and, therefore, his essence, in the novel's terms); sometimes the emphasis is given to an important event or incident, involving several characters (often these are built on a vivid counter-pointing of character rhythms. I will have more to say about these dramatic intersections later); and sometimes rhythmic techniques are used to highlight a key image, or image cluster, identified with one group, and having a counterpart in the other (for example, Lucy's weaving of the golden thread/Madame Defarge's knitting of the dark fateful one).

The method has the effect of generalizing rather than particularizing character. Lucie, for example, is the model of woman and mother in her most constructive aspects: she is a source of harmony, continuity, and consolation; a haven from stress; and, for the men who love her, a spiritual intermediary who, by helping release their best qualities from the grosser, inspires and regenerates. In a narrow sense, she is the Victorian "Angel in the House," but despite the sentimentalism of her portrait, Dickens succeeds in tapping a more profound (and traditional) concept of woman as spiritual force. For example, as I will discuss later, his treatment of Lucie bears some degree of comparison with Virginia Woolf's of Mrs. Ramsey. Madame Defarge, on the other hand, is woman crushed out of shape by environmental forces. In her, womanly qualities have been perverted
and in their stead are those of the vengeful warrior. The other characters, too, are representative: the Marquis is a cliché type of the effete, sadistic aristocrat and Darnay is his enlightened counterpart; Manette and Carton are illustrative in different ways of the fragility and yet durability of the human spirit (the former degraded by institutional oppression, the latter by life habits, yet both capable of regeneration through the agency of a woman).

In the short first book entitled "Recalled to Life," the major characters and images are rhythmically established. The first chapter impressionistically sketches the historical setting. The fate leitmotif is dominant -- in the rhythmic polarities, in the uses of repetition, and in the allegorical figures and archaic phraseology. For example,

It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of France and Norway, there were growing trees ... already marked by the Woodman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards, to make a certain movable framework with a sack and a knife in it, terrible in history. It is likely enough that ... there were sheltered from the weather that very day, rude carts bespattered with rustic mire ... which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution. But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly, work silently, and no one heard them as they went about with muffled tread. (2)

In the striking invention, Dickens traces the hideous implements of the revolution to their innocent beginnings in nature to impress the reader dramatically with the slow, quiet, but inexorable gathering of historical forces.

The fate motif is sounded again in the scenic episode that introduces Saint Antoine, where it blends with other threatening rhythms to presage a gathering storm:
The time was to come, when that wine too \[ \sqrt{\text{blood}} \] would be spilled on the street stones, and when the stain of it would be red upon many there. (27)

Hunger was pushed out of the tall houses, in the wretched clothing that hung upon poles and lines; Hunger was patched into them with straw and rag and wood and paper; Hunger was repeated in every fragment of the small modicum of firewood that the man sawed off; Hunger stared down from the smokeless chimneys, and started up from the filthy street that had no offal, among its refuse, of anything to eat; Hunger was the inscription on the baker's shelves .... Hunger rattled its dry bones among the roasting chestnuts in the turned cylinder .... (27-28)

For, the time was to come, when the gaunt scarecrows of that region should have watched the lamplighter, in their idleness and hunger, so long, as to conceive the idea of improving on his method, and hauling up men by those ropes and pulleys .... But, the time was not come yet; and every wind that blew over France shook the rags of the scarecrows in vain, for the birds, fine of song and feather, took no warning. (29)

Framed by the fate motif, the description proper of Saint Antoine adds its own menacing rhythms. Like "Sunday in London," the scene uses personification to create a dreadful animation without reference to human occupants. Hunger, the impersonal monster, stalks heavily through the scene, and under its pervasive influence, all details "flash out" the same stricken message. The illusion of a lowering presence is largely a result of anaphoric rhythms. Here, as in the Fog passage in Bleak House, the repeated word at the beginning of successive clauses not only dominates all other impressions, but also, by the lengths to which this is carried out, produces an increasing tension. The beat, made even more emphatic by the antithetical and alliterative effects in verb phrases which follow it (Hunger was pushed out of / Hunger was patched into; Hunger stared down / and started up), suggests a steadily approaching crisis, thereby setting the stage for the convulsive rhythms of the
onset of revolution.

The passage, of which the excerpt is a small portion, also introduces key images: it is obvious from the context that blood will figure prominently. Less obtrusive are the figures of sea storm, or tempest, and of Madame Defarge's knitting; the former will be the chief metaphor for the mob violence and the latter for cold-blooded vengeance.

Saint Antoine and the Defarges identified, the interest shifts to the reunion near Defarge's shop of Lucie and her father. In this scene, vastly different rhythms characterize the Lucie motif and its attendant images. Excerpts from her fairly lengthy (and tedious) appeal will give a sense of its quality:

"His cold white head mingled with her radiant hair, which warmed and lighted it as though it were the light of Freedom shining on him.

'If you hear in my voice ... if you hear in my voice any resemblance to a voice that once was sweet music in your ears, weep for it, weep for it! If you touch, in touching my hair, anything that recalls a beloved head that lay on your breast when you were young and free, weep for it, weep for it! If, when I hint to you of a Home that is before us, where I will be true to you with all my duty and with all my faithful service, I bring back the remembrance of a Home long desolate, ... weep for it, weep for it!"

She held him closer round the neck, and rocked him on her breast like a child.

"Good gentlemen, thank God! I feel his sacred tears upon my face, and his sobs strike against my heart, Oh, see! Thank God for us, thank God! '...

When the quiet of the garret had been long undisturbed, and his heaving breast and shaken form had long yielded to the calm that must follow all storms -- emblem to humanity, of the rest and silence into which the storm called Life must hush at last -- they came forward to raise the father and daughter from the ground. ... She had nestled down with him, that his head might lie upon her arm; and her hair drooping over him curtained him from the light. (43-44)"
For the sake of analysis, it is important to overlook the ultra-Victorian sentimentalism of the scene (complete with the sampler-like "Home") and concentrate on what Dickens is trying to accomplish.\(^\text{22}\)

In the earnestness of her emotion, Lucie presides over her father's "resurrection." Her role is polymorphous — she is child, mother, postulate, and spiritual guide — and the sacrament she administers is that of beloved memory images clothed in lyrical accents. The soothing yet compelling rhythms (those of a mother crooning to a frightened child) intensify until they finally conjure the healing tears.

This passage also introduces two of the key images (and a third lesser one) which will cluster around Lucy and her circle of influence — golden hair and thread; storm/rest; and tears. Lucie's golden hair undergoes a symbolic transformation in the course of the scene. It is this that Manette first responds to and when he compares it with the lock he has saved, it provides the link that arouses his memory. Mid-way in the scene, her hair seems to the on-lookers to warm and light him "as though it were the light of Freedom" and when he finally collapses exhausted in her arms, it curtains him from the light. It is a shield from the too sudden onslaught of reality as well as the promise of new life.

\(^{22}\) The (to us) painful sentimentalism in Lucie's portrait is mitigated if we can somewhat disregard the cliche substance of her speeches and respond instead to the poetry of her characterization — that is, to the lyrical rhythms and golden imagery which accompany her appearances.
Later in the novel the golden hair image is transmuted into the golden thread:

She was the golden thread that united him to a Past beyond his misery, and to a Present beyond his misery .... (75)

Thereafter, the hair and the thread images are developed separately, but relatedly, acquiring new connotations as Lucie's qualities are made increasignly manifest in her relationships and as the images are contrasted with other darker ones.

At the climax of the Manette "resurrection" scene, the metaphor of storm and rest occurs. Although it is not particularly relevant to this episode, it refers to the larger context (beyond that even of historical inevitability) within which we are meant to view the personal histories of the novel. Moreover, it connects the Lucie motif with the rhythms of universal harmony.

Finally, the weeping, here a cathartic, regenerative act, will assume significance later on in Carton's story. Because it is not developed rhythmically, I will not be concerned with it other than to remark that for Carton (and Dickens) weeping is connected with a pure spiritualized image of woman, hence, Lucie's tears on his behalf are intercessionary. In Carton's final vision, his sacrifice is sanctified by her tears. (See especially, pp. 370, 305.)

The Saint Antoine and Manette episodes are a juxtaposed contrast of life-stifling and life-restorative forces. The chapter (and Book I) ends in ambiguities that hover between the two. The knitting motif reappears in a rhythmically insistent manner the suggestions of which are far from innocent:

∫ the square is ominously deserted as the Manettes leave Saint
Only one soul was to be seen, and that was Madame Defarge -- who leaned against the door post, knitting, and saw nothing ....
Madame Defarge immediately called to her husband that she would get them "shoemaking tools," and went, knitting, out of the lamplight, through the courtyard. She quickly brought them down and handed them in; -- and immediately afterwards leaned against the door post, knitting, and saw nothing. (46)

As the coach moves out into the open night, the focus again shifts to the cosmic immensity with its suggestions of impersonal harmonies:

Beneath that arch of unmoved and eternal lights; some, so remote from this little earth that the learned tell us it is doubtful whether their rays had even yet discovered it, as a point in space where anything is suffered or done; the shadows of the night were broad and black. (47)

and back again to the occupants of the coach and Lorry's unspoken query: "I hope you care to be recalled to life?" and the old answer: 'I can't say.'" (47)

As if to somewhat resolve the ambiguity, Book II, set five years later, is entitled "The Golden Thread." Lucie, we are told, is the golden thread uniting her father to a past and present beyond his misery. The home that she creates for him in the quiet corner near Soho is described with a simple sensuality.

(A portion is quoted for its distinctive tone and images):

There were few buildings then, north of the Oxford Road, and forest trees flourished, and wild flowers grew, and the hawthorn blossomed, in the now vanished fields. As a consequence, country airs circulated in Soho ... and there was many a good south wall, not far off, on which the peaches ripened in their season.

The summer light struck into the corner brilliantly in the earlier part of the day; but, when the streets grew hot, the corner was in shadow, ... It was a cool spot, staid but cheerful, a wonderful place for echoes, and a very harbour from the raging streets.

There ought to have been a tranquil bark in such an anchorage, and there was. (87)
Sea imagery has already appeared unobtrusively in the London trial episodes and here too it blends naturally with the setting. It is not yet given to the inhabitants to know of the manner in which the brewing tempest will threaten their bark, but the images of haven and echoes carry suggestions that will ripen with events.

The echo image, in fact, takes on mysterious proportions well in advance of events. It is soon reintroduced with another motif in conjunction with which it looses some of its neutrality. In Miss Pross’ description of the Doctor’s pacing during his fits of gloom, the compulsiveness of the rhythm bears a relationship to "knitting, knitting" and the "Hunger" passage rhythms rather than to the quiet, soothing tempo of life in Soho:

"...Sometimes, he gets up in the dead of the night, and will be heard, by us overhead there, walking up and down, walking up and down in his room. Ladybird has learnt to know then that his mind is walking up and down, walking up and down, in his old prison. She hurries to him, and they go on together, walking up and down, walking up and down, until he is composed. ...In silence they go walking up and down together, walking up and down together, till her love and company have brought him to himself."

The corner has been mentioned as a wonderful corner for echoes; it had begun to echo so resoundingly to the tread of coming feet, that it seemed as though the very mention of that weary pacing to and fro had set it going.  

The passage contains an interesting authorial gloss on the power of repetition to simulate the quality of an experience: "Notwithstanding Miss Pross’s denial of her own imagination, there was a perception of the pain of being monotonously haunted by one sad idea, in her repetition of the phrase, walking up and down, which testified to her possessing such a thing." (93)

This passage leads into the well known "storm scene" in which a small group clustered around Lucy in her drawing room window watches the approach of a tremendous thunderstorm. The echoes are
now more openly menacing as their rhythms intensify and as the spectators respond to them. The scene is the novel's first dramatic intersection of rhythmic motifs. Symphonic in its construction, it weaves together contrasting themes (the dark, inexorable fate motif; the quiet, meditative Lucy motif; and the frenzied mob motif) and moves to a powerful climax:

'The rain-drops are still falling, large, heavy, and few,' said Dr. Manette. 'It comes slowly.'

'It comes surely,' said Carton.

They spoke low, as people watching and waiting mostly do; as people in a dark room, watching and waiting for Lightning always do.

There was a great hurry in the streets, of people speeding away to get shelter before the storm broke; the wonderful corner for echoes resounded with the echoes of footsteps coming and going, yet not a footstep was there.

'

'Is it not impressive, Mr. Darnay?' asked Lucie. 'Sometimes, I have sat here of an evening, until I have fancied -- but even the shade of a foolish fancy makes me shudder to-night, when all is so black and solemn ----'

The footsteps were incessant, and the hurry of them became more and more rapid. The corner echoed and re-echoed with the tread of feet; some, as it seemed, under the windows; some, as it seemed, in the room; some coming, some going, some breaking off, some stopping altogether; all in the distant streets, and not one within sight.

'... I told you it was a foolish fancy, but you asked for it. When I have yielded myself to it, I have been alone, and then I have imagined them the footsteps of the people who are to come into my life, and my father's.'

'I take them into mine!' said Carton. 'I ask no questions and make no stipulations. ’Here is a great crowd bearing down upon us Miss Manette, and I see them -- by the Lightning.'...

'And I hear them!' he added again, after a peal of thunder. 'Here they come, fast, fierce, and furious!' It was the rush and roar of rain that he typified, and it stopped him, for no voice could be heard in it ....

'Good night, Mr. Carton,' said the man of business. 'Good night, Mr. Darnay. Shall we ever see such a night again, together!'
Perhaps. Perhaps, see the great crowd of people with its rush and roar, bearing down upon them, too. (See full passage pp. 97-98)

We hear first in the stylised repetition of the Manette/Carton duet the fate motif, followed by the staccato rhythms of a hurried crowd, then the quiet, hesitating accents of the meditative Lucie motif, followed by an interplay between the staccato and the quiet motifs which builds steadily in intensity. In the finale, Carton's heroic defiance is heard against the orchestral flourish of the elements as the storm finally breaks. At the movement's close, the fate motif is restated in a quieter, but resonant tone. Repetition is used throughout, creating the poetic intensity of the "watching and waiting" passage as well as the frenetic hurry of "The footsteps were incessant" interlude (the urgency of which looks ahead to the spastic rhythms of the mob scenes).

The scene with its heavy note of foreboding and almost tangible intensity (half-revealing and half-concealing its significance) has a memorable effect. The image of Lucie, surrounded by the men in her life (for the time all safe within her magic circle), wondering about the vague threat that seems to loom in the echoes is a pivotal one, and later events and images will refer back to it. Moreover the scene prefigures the roles and relationships of the major characters as the future will fully unfold them. Lucie, a source of inspiration to three men, unable to avert the storm or shelter them completely, but destined to play a life-saving role for all; Darnay, the one whom even now she singles out; and Carton, taking on himself what seems to threaten her.

In Paris, events are quickening toward a crisis. The first act
of revolutionary violence is the death of the Marquis, an event precipitated by his wanton running down of a Saint Antoine child and his brutal confrontation with the crowd that gathers ("Monsieur the Marquis ran his eyes over them all, as if they had been mere rats come out of their holes." 105) The episode is heavy with the crowd's barely disguised defiance, and through it, the now ominous knitting motif is reiterated, culminating in an arresting restatement of the fate motif:

...the figure that stood beside him \( \text{the Marquis}_7 \) was the figure of a dark stout woman, knitting....
... not a voice, or a hand, or even an eye was raised. Among the men, not one. But the woman who stood knitting looked up steadily, and looked the Marquis in the face....
The father had long ago taken up his bundle ... when the woman who had tended the bundle while it lay on the base of the fountain, sat there watching the running of the water and the rolling of the Fancy Ball -- when the one woman who had stood conspicuous, knitting, still knitted on with the steadfastness of Fate. The water of the fountain ran, the swift river ran, the day ran into evening, so much life in the city ran into death according to rule, time and tide waited for no man, the rats were sleeping close together in their dark holes again, the Fancy Ball was lighted up at supper, all things ran their course. (107)

The recurrent focus on the woman knitting (i.e. recording the names of the doomed) in conjunction with the rhythms of fate and cosmic cycles (as in the earlier scene when a carriage left Paris for London) intensify by a kind of slow rhythmic accretion the sense of time running out. In the final sentence, poetic repetition stresses the pervasiveness of cyclical change; and the accumulation of the "change" images makes the temporarily static images of the sleeping rats (Dickens adopts the Marquis' "metaphor" for its shock value) and the lighted Ball seem suspended in a breathless tension. 24
In the lengthy episode of the Marquis' death, the method is poetic indirection. Neither the narrative nor its supporting rhythms express threat or violence directly. Rather, the emphasis is on vaguely foreboding cyclical rhythms (sunset, shadow); when the murder is accomplished, what is first revealed to the reader is the slow unfolding of the night; in the inevitable course of fate, the Marquis has been returned to the elements, and the unseen flowing of the fountains here recalls the early reference to the unseen work of the Woodman and the Farmer, as well as the running fountain in the square that witnessed the child's death.

"The fountain in the village flowed unseen and unheard, and the fountain at the chateau dropped unseen and unheard -- both melting away, like the minutes that were falling from the spring of Time -- ... Then, the grey water of both began to be ghostly in the light, and the eyes of the stone faces of the chateau were opened.... (122) ... 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.

It lay back on the pillow of Monsieur the Marquis." (124)

The next intersection of the revolutionary and Lucie motifs occurs when just after the announcement of Lucie's engagement to Darnay, his name is inscribed in the fatal piece of knitting. For the first time, the knitting is tied directly to the revolution and its bloody sequel. As Madame Defarge moves among the group of knitters, like a general on the eve of battle, the knitting rhythms become "quicker and fiercer" until the darkness, the drums, and the grouped figures of the women themselves become emblematic of a time which is fast closing in:

Darkness closed around, and then came the ringing of church bells and the distant beating of the military drums in the palace courtyard, as the women sat knitting, knitting. Darkness encompassed them. Another darkness was closing in as surely, when the church bells ... should be melted into thundering cannon; when the military drums should be beating to drown a wretched voice .... So much was closing in about the women who sat knitting, knitting, that they their very selves were closing in around a structure yet unbuilt, where they were to sit knitting, knitting, counting dropping heads. (181)
On this sinister note, a part division ends, but the next part opens in a different key. Entitled "One Night," the bridal eve communion of Lucie and her father is gently lyrical and thickly woven with images of tranquility born of sorrow. The opening passage and one that follows shortly are illustrative of the tome (phrasal repetition creates the gentle, slightly mournful musicality):

Never did the sun go down with a brighter glory on the quiet corner in Soho, than one memorable evening when the Doctor and his daughter sat under the plane tree together. Never did the moon rise with a milder radiance over great London, than on that night when it found them still seated under the tree, and shone upon their faces through its leaves.

In the sad moonlight, she clasped him by the neck, and laid her face upon his breast. In the moonlight which is always sad, as the light of the sun itself is -- as the light called human life is -- at its coming and going. (182)

Again Lucie is associated with natural rhythms in contradistinction to the compulsive knitting which a few paragraphs earlier Dickens described as "mechanical work," a "mechanical substitute for eating and drinking"; and again natural rhythms are associated with the encompassing cyclical theme, reminding us that all change, even the desirable change caused by marriage, has some element of pain connected with it.

Moonlight, traditional emblem of change, dominates the scene. Manette describes how during his imprisonment, it became the medium for the relief of his suffering. Under its softening influence, he was affected with a "sorrowful sense of peace" and the fantasy of his unknown daughter and the home which preserved his memory brought the "blessed relief of tears" and prayer. 25
The sentimentalized images recall the initial meeting of father and daughter. Despite the peaceful communion, an interview between Darnay and Manette on the wedding morning leaves the latter so shaken that for nine days after the wedding, he reverts to his obsessive state, hammering shoes: "He worked, and worked, and worked in silence." In a passage which recalls the women's attempt to substitute the work of the hands for eating and drinking, Dr. Manette later explains that in prison he had learned to substitute "The perplexity of the fingers for the perplexity of the brain." The two groups are again rhythmically contrasted and brought closer to their fatal collision in what is perhaps the novel's pivotal chapter. "Echoing Footsteps" presents the two motifs side by side and linked by the central image. The first portion is an intensely lyrical summary of the harmonious life Lucie creates for her family in the years before the outbreak of revolution in France; the second portion is a rhythmically suggestive account of the first raging of that revolution -- the storming of the Bastille. The image which bridges the parts undergoes a swift transformation as the lulling echoes in London yield to the menace and frenzy of those in Paris.

The success of the first part of the chapter is mixed: Dickens' attempt to rhythmically dramatize the passing of time and the quality of Lucie's life is marred by the bathetic treatment of Home and allied Christian Virtues. But the weaving together of central images and rhythms, and the rhythmic contrasts within the chapter are striking. Brief portions, selected for their rhythmic and imagistic content, are quoted below. (The narrative passages that alternate with them, which have been omitted, are tonally consistent)
Above all, it is the gentle undulating rhythm of the passage which portrays the tenor of Lucie's life:

A wonderful corner for echoes, it has been remarked, that corner where the Doctor lived. Ever busily winding the golden thread which bound her husband, and her father, and herself, and her old directress and companion, in a life of quiet bliss, Lucie sat in the still house in the tranquilly resounding corner, listening to the echoing footsteps of years...

Ever busily winding the golden thread that bound them all together, weaving the service of her happy influence through the tissue of all their lives, and making it predominate nowhere, Lucie heard in the echoes of years none but friendly and soothing sounds. Her husband's step was strong and prosperous among them; her father's firm and equal.... (264-265)

These were among the echoes to which Lucie, sometimes pensive, sometimes amused and laughing, listened in the echoing corner, until her little daughter was six years old...

(267)

But, there were other echoes, from a distance, that rumbled menacingly in the corner all through this space of time. And it was now, about little Lucie's sixth birthday, that they began to have an awful sound, as of a great storm in France with a dreadful sea rising.

On a night in mid-July, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine, Mr. Lorry came in late, from Tellson's and sat himself down by Lucie and her husband in the dark window. It was a hot, wild night, and they were all three reminded of the old Sunday night when they had looked at the lightning from the same place...

(208)

Headlong, mad and dangerous footsteps to force their way into anybody's life, footsteps not easily made clean again if once stained red, the footsteps raging in Saint Antoine afar off, as the little circle sat in the dark London window...

(209)

Now, Heaven defeat the fancy of Lucie Darnay, and keep these feet far out of her life! For, they are headlong, mad, and dangerous; and in the years so long after the breaking of the cask at Defarge's wine-shop door, they are not easily purified when once stained red. (216)

Several important images are elaborated in this chapter. The golden thread is amplified into the image of Lucy as the weaver of life itself -- a kind of enchanted fairy tale figure whose gentle creative powers are a counterpoise to the murderous capabilities of the wicked witch Defarge. The echoing footsteps, which foretell
the natural unfolding of events and which in the early years of Lucie's marriage have no threatening notes, midway in the chapter make their threat explicit. The transition is made by recreating the thunderstorm scene, then shifting from the echoes in Sohe to their source in Saint Antoine. Rhythmic prose highlights images first introduced in the opening Saint Antoine episode -- the rising sea and the red stain of wine/blood.

The parallels between this passage and one of a contemporary novelist are too striking to pass over. In the "Time passes"

There are also, of course, elsewhere in Dickens passages of poetic summary which bear comparison with this one, most notably, perhaps, "Florence Solitary" in Dombey and Son. In that passage, as in this one, an affinity with early Tennyson is also suggested.

section of To The Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf's theme and technique are similar. In luminous rhythmic prose, the deserted Ramsey House is described as it is exposed to the destructive shocks of time and history: to the elements, natural decay, loss of family, neglect, and war. But through it all the womanly (spiritual) force of the dead Mrs. Ramsey, present in the shawl she had once wrapped around a skull to comfort her child and in the image of her that the old cleaning woman and her family retain, holds things together. A more sophisticated Lucie, she shares her essential characteristics -- the almost magical power of weaving things together and creating continuity, the power to inspire others to express their best selves, and the ability to accept life as it is. Woolf's prose techniques are similar to Dickens'; she, too, uses repetition and other rhythmic
devices to suggest the texture of natural forces and cycles.

The use of rhythms to reproduce the frenzy of the revolutionary panorama in the second part of the chapter has been discussed earlier (see p. 55). I would note additionally the rhythmic framing of the episode by the fate motif (see quotes above) and the description of Madame Defarge's decapitation of the governor, which intensifies its horrific effect by contrasting a remorseless rhythm (hitherto applied to her silent presence "knitting, knitting") with the sudden violent action:

She stood immovable close to the grim old officer, and remained immovable close to him; remained immovable close to him through the streets, as Defarge and the rest bore him along; remained immovable close to him when he was got near his destination, and began to be struck at from behind; remained immovable close to him when the long-gathering rain of stabs and blows fell heavy; was so close to him when he dropped dead under it, that, suddenly animated, she put her foot upon his neck, and with her cruel knife -- long ready -- hewed off his head. (214-215)

The last chapter of Book II, "Drawn to the Loadstone Rock," develops the image representing the fatal attraction which brings the two groups into collision. It is introduced by another poetic summary passage with counterpointed images of revolution and peace:

In such risings of fire and risings of sea -- the firm earth shaken by the rushes of an angry ocean which had now no ebb, but was always on the flow, higher and higher, to the terror and wonder of the beholders on the shore -- three years of tempest were consumed. Three more birthdays of little Lucie had been woven by the golden thread into the peaceful issue of the life of her home. (229)

When Darney begins to succumb to the illusion that he can do something constructive in Paris, the process by which he ineluctably arrives at the decision to go is marked off by the rhythmic deployment of the loadstone image:
Yes. Like the mariner in the old story, the winds and streams had driven him within the influence of the Loadstone Rock, and it was drawing him to itself, and he must go. (237)

Yes. The Loadstone Rock was drawing him, and he must sail on, until he struck. (238)

The unseen force was drawing him fast to itself, now, and all the tides and winds were setting straight and strong towards it. ...'For the love of Heaven, of justice, of generosity, of the honor to your noble name!' was the poor prisoner's cry with which he strengthened his sinking heart, as he left all that was dear on earth behind him, and floated away for the Loadstone Rock. (2k0)

The internal rhythms of the passages, the repetition, and the sea imagery (which ties in with that of the revolution) give power to this variation on the fate motif.

When the portents have been fulfilled and Darney is locked into solitary confinement in Paris, the novel's polar rhythmic motifs for the first time are directly opposed in his struggle to conquer mounting hysteria and retain his sanity. Like Manette, he tries to substitute compulsive activity for compulsive thoughts, but in his disordered mental state the feared memory of the shoemaker keeps intruding itself. There also arises unbidden, almost magically, the image of his wife, as reflected in a stranger, to throw its weight into the balance of forces contending for him:

'Five paces by four and a half, five paces by four and a half, five paces by four and a half.' He prisoner walked to and fro in his cell, counting its measurement, and the roar of the city arose like muffled drums with a wild swell of voices added to them. 'He made shoes, he made shoes, he made shoes.' The prisoner counted the measurement again, and paced faster, to draw his mind with him from the latter repetition. 'The ghost that vanished when the wicket closed. There was one among them / other prisoners/, the appearance of a lady dressed in black who was leaning in the embrasure of a window, and she had a light shining upon her golden hair, and she looked like ... Let us ride on again, for God's sake, through the illuminated
villages with the people all awake! ... He made shoes, he made shoes, he made shoes .... Five paces by four and a half.' (252)

He is not to be as unlucky as his father-in-law, for he will have the real Lucie in Paris to sustain him through his imprisonment. When she arrives, she has a brief, but vivid (rhythmic) confrontation with Madame Defarge. Grateful to have received a note from Darnay, Lucie turns and kisses "one of the hands that knitted. It was a passionate, loving, thankful, womanly action, but the hand made no response -- dropped cold and heavy, and took to its knitting again." 261 When Lucie makes her plea for help, it springs from her intuitive concept of woman's nature: "'O sister-woman, think of me. As a wife and mother!'' (263)

The description of Lucie's vigils by the prison are slightly elevated, at times metered, to stress her supportive role against the backdrop of human destruction; again, her steadfastness is connected with the unchanging cycles of nature rather than the uncertainties of man's affairs:

In all weathers, in the snow and frost of winter, in the bitter winds of spring, in the hot sunshine of summer, in the rains of autumn, and again in the snow and frost of winter, Lucie passed two hours of every day at this place; and every day on leaving it, she kissed the prison wall. (272)

But around her the forces of the demonic continue to swirl with unabated fury; this violent cacaphony of the revolution is rendered in disjointed prose (see, for example, the frenzied grindstone scene p. 257). The Carnagnole episode explicitly contrasts the perverted anti-life forces with the innocence and tranquillity of nature. Lucie, at one of her vigils, becomes the captive center for a performance of the hideous dance. The passage's final image and
rhythm seem to hint of an eventual restoration of harmony:

...They advanced, retreated, struck at one another's hands, clutched at one another's heads, spun round alone, caught one another and spun round in pairs, until many of them dropped. While those were down, the rest linked hand in hand, and all spun round together; then the ring broke, and in separate rings of two and four they turned and turned until they all stopped at once, began again, struck, clutched, and tore, and then reversed the spin, and all spun round another way...

It was so emphatically a fallen sport -- a something, once innocent, delivered over to all devilry ... Such grace as was visible in it, made it the uglier, showing how warped and perverted all things good by nature were become...

This was the Carmagnole. As it passed, leaving Lucie frightened and bewildered in the doorway of the woodsawyer's house, the feathery snow fell as quietly and lay as white and soft, as if it had never been. (273-274)

The nightwalk during which Carton makes his decision to sacrifice himself for Darnay is another nexus of rhythmic images. As discussed earlier, the refrain "I am the resurrection and the life" is the controlling motif (see p. 117). The supportive imagery is of natural sequences: night yielding to sunrise, river tides running to the sea. Whereas the force drawing Darnay into involvement with the revolution was an impulsive and essentially destructive one, all nature seems to sustain Carton in his decision to sacrifice his life. In dramatizing this (as if to emphasize the contrast), Dickens draws on the same imagery that he uses to characterize destructive rhythms -- that of the sea and irresistible tides. But here "The strong tide, so swift, so deep, and certain, was like a congenial friend, in the morning stillness." (309) And when Carton watches an eddy that "turned and turned purposeless, until the stream absorbed it, and carried it on to the sea," he is strengthened in his resolve.27

27 The sunrise-river image is remarkably similar to the scene
in which Pip watches the sun illuminate the river and suddenly feels strong and well. In both passages, a brief communion between man and nature marks the beginning of a new life-phase.

For, unlike Darnay's, his sacrifice will make a difference; it will expiate the waste of his life by saving a more "necessary" one.

As in earlier episodes when Lucie was connected with the rhythms of natural forces, including death, Carton, too, is now beyond the fret of events, in harmony with the all-encompassing rhythms that promise peace.

While Carton is thus moving confidently toward his fate, Darnay in prison has reconciled himself to death, but the life force, now quiescent in Carton, is powerful in him even though he thinks he is done with the world. It reasserts itself in the form of lyrical images of Lucie and home:

But, it beckoned him back in his sleep, and showed itself in shining forms. Free and happy, back in the old house in Soho ... unaccountably released and light of heart, he was with Lucie again, and she told him it was all a dream, and he had never gone away. (343)

In the final chapter, the fate motif is strongly restated. One passage in particular recalls its first appearance, but with a twist:

Six tumbrils roll along the streets. Change these back again to what they were, thou powerful enchanter, Time, and they shall be seen to be the carriages of absolute monarchs, the equipages of feudal nobles, the toilettes of flaring Jezebels, the churches that are not my Father's house but dens of thieves, the huts of millions of starving peasants! No; the great magician who majestically works out the appointed order of the Creator, never reverses his transformations. (365)

In the impressionistic scene at the scaffold, the motifs are finally blended: the counting of the knitters, the footsteps and the great sea swell of the mob, and the greater life force of the
resurrection. In the affirmation of the latter, all dissonance is resolved:

... She goes next before him -- is gone; the knitting women count Twenty-two.

'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!' The murmuring of many voices, the upturning of many faces, the pressing on 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. Twenty-three. (369)

After the "trumpet crash" of the martyrdom scene, the novel closes in a more subdued key with the device of Carton's prophetic vision. Again, images of atonement, hope, and tranquillity are centered in Lucie. Just as the shining hair was the golden thread of continuity for the shattered Manette and the shining vision that sustained Darnay in prison, it is for Carton a promise of immortality, in Lucie's line of golden-haired menchildren who will bear his name and make it illustrious and beloved. (see pp. 370-371)
Hard Times, Dickens' "moral fable," and "tract for the times," is one of the least complex of his novels, and for this reason there is general agreement about the theme, although scholars fall into quite radical disagreement over the success of the style. Briefly stated, Hard Times is Dickens' indictment of the spirit of Utilitarianism and narrow materialism which he sees as a deadening influence on all facets of public and personal life; conversely, the novel is a plea for the Imagination and human kindness. The method is to dramatize Utilitarianism in the Gradgrind family and to show in their tragic history why and how the philosophy goes wrong. For emphasis, the novel has a positive model: Sleary's circus where kindness, vitality, and flexibility unite in a very real, albeit imperfect, community. Character groups, then, have a symbolic significance more direct even than in Tale.

The style of Hard Times has a marked economy of detail which scholars explain variously. Leavis, who characterizes it as "packed richness," refers again and again to Hard Times as a richly poetic work and cites it as evidence that Dickens is a master poetic dramatist second only to Shakespeare. Others explain the economy as a carefully planned and executed response to the limited space of weekly rather than monthly publication. Still others view the "economy" as an artistic abdication occasioned by Dickens' didactic purpose and the type of audience he was aiming at (a "tuppence rather than a shilling audience").

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Without trying to mediate between these views but simply taking stylistic economy as a given, I want to suggest that, in part, it is a method of dramatizing character, and therefore, because of the symbolic significance of character, theme.

Leavis notes at one point that in an appraisal of the novel "the final stress may fall on Dickens' command of word, phrase, rhythm and image ...." (297) Since he does not elaborate on this, I will. The development of the Gradgrind and Sleary groups is impressionistic; diction, images, even syntax, are appropriate to the qualities being emphasized. Because the two groups represent the symbolic poles of the novel, stylistic contrast, especially rhythmic contrast, is an important part of the characterizations. Economy of detail and simplicity of structure, then, can be seen as an aspect of the Gradgrindian character, while profusion of detail and involved syntax becomes an appropriate concomitant of the Sleary episodes.

The character rhythms are not complex, but they are worth examining for they represent a concerted attempt by Dickens to control syntactical rhythms not simply for local effects, but for a consistent effect throughout the novel. Because of the length at which I discussed Tale, I will limit myself to examining a few passages from Hard Times which are representative rather than try to trace the interplay of rhythmic motifs through the novel.

"Now, what I want is facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning: animals upon facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir! "
The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse room for the hard facts stored inside. ....

Thus the novel opens and thus Gradgrindianism makes its frontal assault on the reader. (The opening is in striking contrast to the introductory passages of almost all the other late novels in which mood is established by means of a "poetic" descriptive piece.)

The stultifying effect of the speech and the description is largely a result of blunt repetition (Facts...Facts...Facts...) and syntactical monotony, that is, mechanically balanced and repetitive clauses and phrases (the emphasis was helped by ... which was, etc.) The alliterative effects of sibilants and "d's" increase the dullness and heaviness of tone. Aside from the final burst of metaphor and simile (perhaps intentional contrast, but more likely irrepressible Dickensian verve), the passage has nothing striking in the way of diction or imagery. In fact, there is hardly a sensual impression to be had from the scene and it seems doubtful that a reader could later recall the speaker or the room in the way he recalls details from the opening of, say, Bleak House, Little Dorrit, Our Mutual Friend, or Edwin Drood. Dickens appears to be giving us a taste of what writing would be -- what life would be -- if Gradgrindianism prevailed and imagination fell forfeit to it.
This unadorned style -- redundant, stiff, plodding, and preeminently boring -- in the next two chapters introduces Thomas Gradgrind and his well-oiled "philosophical" household:

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, sir -- peremptorily Thomas -- Thomas Gradgrind. (2)

Mr. Gradgrind walked homeward from the school, in a state of considerable satisfaction. It was his school, and he intended it to be a model. He intended every child in it to be a model -- just as the young Gradgrinds were all models.

There were five young Gradgrinds and they were models every one. (8)

No little Gradgrind had ever seen a face in the moon; it was up in the moon before it could speak distinctly. No little Gradgrind had ever learnt the silly jingle, Twinkle, twinkle, little star; how I wonder what you are! No little Gradgrind had ever known wonder on the subject, each little Gradgrind having at five years old dissected the Great Bear like a Professor Owen, and driven Charles's Wain like a locomotive engine driver. No little Gradgrind had ever associated a cow in a field with that famous cow with the crumpled horn who tossed the dog who worried the cat who killed the rat who ate the malt, or with that yet more famous cow who swallowed Tom Thumb; it had never heard of those celebrities, and had only been introduced to a cow as a graminivorous ruminating quadruped with several stomachs ....

A very regular feature on the face of the country, Stone Ledge was. Not the least disguise toned down or shaded off that uncompromising fact in the landscape. ... A calculated, cast up, balanced, and proved house. Six windows on this side of the door, six on that side; a total of twelve in this wing, a total of twelve in the other wing; four and twenty carried over to the back wings.... (8-9)

The style is the man: a marked deficiency in structures of subordination results in redundancy and wordiness -- a perfect reflection of a rigid, deliberate, unimaginative mind. While most grade school children learn intuitively, or can be taught, to achieve some degree of grammatical complexity (cf. "He intended every child in his school
to be a model just as his own five children were models.," Gradgrind is a prisoner of his one-step calculative procedures. No imaginative leaps are possible for a mind which has trained itself merely to string together Facts. The only spark of vitality in the entire passage is provided by the rhythmic jingle of "The house that Jack built," a not so subtle tribute to the imaginative potency of nursery tales.

In the description of Gradgrind's house, repetition and formally balanced phrases combine with "arithmetical" diction to imitate the calculating cast of his mind. The effect of the description is not to create a visual impression, but to present a careful inventory such as Gradgrind himself would provide. 29

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29 In a similar manner, comic repetition is used in the descriptions of Bounderby's house and bank to parody the pompous materialism of the "Bully of humility." "... a red house with black outside shutters, green inside blinds, a black street door, up two white steps, BOUNDERBY (in letters very like himself) upon a brazen plate, and a round brazen door-handle underneath it, like a brazen full-stop." (64)

The Bank offered no violence to the wholesome monotony of the town. It was another red brick house, with black outside shutters, green inside blinds, a black street door up two white steps, a brazen door plate, and a brazen door handle full stop." (103)

"... Mr. Bounderby piloted the new acquaintance ... to the private red brick dwelling, with the black outside shutters, the green inside blinds, and the black street door up the two white steps." (117)

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As one would expect, Coketown, a creation of the system and a very "triumph of fact," mirrors the philosophy's worst flaws. Its life-stifling monotony and lumpishness are enshrined in imitative syntax, in particular in interminable coordinate structures and
repetition (see my earlier discussion and quotes, p. 34).

Soon after his introduction to the reader, Gradgrind has an unexpected and unpleasant confrontation with a world inimical to his own, when he finds his two eldest children peeping under the tent of Sleary’s circus... This initial collision of the world of Fact and the world of Fancy is echoed on the stylistic level in the contrast of the Gradgrindian prose with the exuberant, ornate language of the circus posters:

... Sleary himself, a stout modern statue with a money box at its elbow, in an ecclesiastical niche of early Gothic architecture, took the money. Miss Josephine Sleary, as some very long and very narrow strips of printed bill announced, was then inaugurating the entertainments with her graceful equestrian Tyrolean Flower-Act. Among the other pleasing but always strictly moral wonders which must be seen to be believed, Signor Jupe was that afternoon to "elucidate the diverting accomplishments of his highly trained performing dog Merrylegs." He was also to exhibit "his astounding feat of throwing seventy-five hundred-weight in rapid succession backhanded over his head, thus forming a fountain of solid iron in mid-air, a feat never before attempted in this or any other country, and which having elicited such rapturous plaudits from enthusiastic throngs it cannot be withdrawn." The same Signor Jupe was to "enliven the varied performances at frequent intervals with his chaste Shakespearean quips and retorts." Lastly, he was to wind them up by appearing in his favourite character of Mr. William Button, of Tooley Street, in "the highly novel and laughable hippo-comedietta of The Tailor’s Journey to Brentford." (10)

The contrasts are immediate and striking. Unlike the dry, spare precision of the Gradgrindian prose, the circus language flaunts its excesses and imprecisions. Chock full of superlatives and decorative exotic detail, the description aims at evocation rather than the conveyance of information. Whereas the Gradgrindian diction was functional and economical (there were no unnecessary modifiers), the Sleary poster boasts in extravagant circumlocutionary terms: "graceful equestrian Tyrolean Flower-Act," "elucidate the diverting accomplishments"
"rapturous plaudits," "enthusiastic throngs," "highly novel and laughable hippo-comedietta," to mention a few. While the Gradgrindian syntax was simplified, this is enthusiastically experimental. Probably Signor Jupe's weight-throwing feat is no more astounding to the senses in person than it is in description. The self-intoxicated Sleary language, then, most of it no doubt, authentic theatrical jargon of Dickens' time, is the antithesis of economy and relevancy. It is, however, intensely human in its expression of high-spirits and imagination.

The contrast is developed when Gradgrind and Bounderby undertake a visit to Sissy's father in Pod's End and find themselves face to face (and at a disadvantage) with the circus people. The visit is prefaced by a description of the public house where Sleary's troupe has put up; it is no accident that this follows close on the heels of the description of Coketown:

... underneath the winged horse upon the signboard, The Pegasus's Arms was inscribed in Roman letters. Beneath that inscription again, in a flowing scroll, the painter had touched off the lines:

Good malt makes good beer,
Walk in, and they'll draw it here;
Good wine makes good brandy,
Give us a call, and you'll find it handy.

Framed and glazed upon the wall behind the dingy little bar, was another Pegasus -- a theatrical one -- with real gauze let in for his wings, golden stars stuck on all over him, and his ethereal harness made of red silk. (25-26)

Shabby and gaudy (even by Victorian standards), the Pegasus's Arms with its Roman inscription and scrolls, its homey doggerel, and its staggering collage is nevertheless a genuine breath of fancy among the identical structures of Coketown. (cf. "All the public inscriptions in the town were painted alike, in severe characters of black and white.
The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both ..."21) Despite the light breath of parody in the depiction of the Pegasus's Arms, its touches are imaginatively appealing given the utter repression of Fancy in Coketown, and therein lies the special force of Dickens' indictment.

In describing the circus people and their habitat, Dickens falls into a style that is characteristic, but especially appropriate for this situation. In the excerpts below, one will recognize his rapid-fire descriptive style, loaded with detail, humor, verbal play and rhythmic contrasts.

He was dressed in a Newmarket coat and tight fitting trousers; wore a shawl round his neck; smelt of lamp-oil, straw, orange peel, horses' provender, and sawdust; and looked a most remarkable sort of Centaur, compounded of the stable and the play house. (27)

This gentleman was mentioned in the bills of the day as Mr. E.W.B. Childers, so justly celebrated for his daring vaulting act as the Wild Huntsman of the North American Prairies; in which popular performance, a diminutive boy with an old face, who now accompanied him, assisted as his infant son: being carried upside down over his father's shoulder, by one foot, and held by the crown of his head, heels upwards, in the palm of his father's hand, according to the violent paternal manner in which wild huntsmen may be observed to fondle their offspring. (27)

The father of one of the families was in the habit of balancing the father of another of the families on the top of a great pole; the father of a third family often made a pyramid of both those fathers, with Master Kiddermanster for the apex, and himself for the base; all the fathers could dance upon rolling casks, stand upon bottles, catch knives and balls, twirl hand-basins, ride upon anything, jump over everything, and stick at nothing. (32)

Here his daughter Josephine -- a pretty fair-haired girl of eighteen, who had been tied on a horse at two years old, and had made a will at twelve, which she always carried about with her, expressive of her dying desire to be drawn to the grave by the
two piebald ponies — cried, "Father, hush! she has come back!"
(33-34)

We know far more about these people than we need to know. For the briefness of their appearance, they have an unusual "roundness." This stems partly from the fullness of sensual detail — we are invited to savor the aroma of Childers as well as visualize him — and partly from Dickens' trick of working in irrelevant, but fascinating background material -- Josephine's will is disarming, but strictly speaking a nonsequitur. The characterizations, in which diction and rhythms make a major contribution, impress us with an unusual zest and fullness of life in the bright reflection of which the two outsiders appear pale and awkward.

The contrast is intensified when the groups begin to talk and the "philosophers" are thrown into confusion by what is to them unintelligible jargon. In their stiffly defensive responses and their inability to parry Childers' sarcastic thrusts, they appear laughably helpless, while the troupers' language has vitality, variety, and flexibility. In comparison with Gradgrind and Bounderby, Childers and Kidderminster are veritable Shakespearean clowns in their metaphor and pun-making ability:

"Bounderby" "Queer sort of company, too, for a man who has raised himself."
"Lower yourself, then," retorted Cupid. "Oh Lord! if you've raised yourself so high as all that comes to, let yourself down a bit."
"This is a very obtrusive ladi," said Mr. Gradgrind, turning and knitting his brows on him. "We'd have had a young gentleman to meet you, if we had known you were coming," retorted Master Kidderminster, nothing abashed. "It's a pity you don't have a bespeak, being so particular. You're on the Tight-Jeff, ain't you?"
"What does this unmannerly boy mean," asked Mr. Gradgrind,
eyeing him in a sort of desperation, "by Tight-Jeff?" (29)

"He is a runaway rogue and a vagabond, that's what he is, in English."

"It's all the same to me what he is or what he is not, whether in English or whether in French," retorted Mr. E. W. B. Childers, facing about. "I am telling your friend what's the fact; if you don't like to hear it, you can avail yourself of the open air. You give it mouth enough, you do; .... (30)

These types of stylistic contrasts are carried out through the novel, although it should be added that since the appearances of the circus people are few, the bulk of the prose is Gradgrindian. Some may think that in the final analysis, the style loses as it gains in relevancy, that is, too much is subordinated, or sacrificed, to the central characterization.

The novel has other types of impressionistic prose which warrant a passing mention. Rhythms are used extensively for local descriptive effects and as such have been discussed elsewhere. The reader will recall the use of impressionistic syntax in the factory descriptions (p. 37); in the description of Stephen's bricked-in dwelling (p. 74); and in Sparsit's wild train ride in pursuit of Louisa (p. 48). Rhythms function as poetic organization in scenes such as the rose garden conversation between Harthouse and Tom (p. 100) and "The Great Manufacturer" chapter which is built on a metaphor combining the rhythms of Time and an assembly line (see pp. 83 ff). Nursery story rhythms are used both satirically and seriously; in a generalized way, they enhance the sense of the novel as moral fable.

Biblical rhythms, diction, and imagery are another important motif. Sometimes they reinforce the novel's positive values, especially Imagination conceived of as a liberating spiritual force. In a key
passage in which Reason and Fancy are rhythmically contrasted, the harsh insistency of the Reason motif beats against a lyrical evocation of the "garden" of childhood imagination infused with Edenic and other Old Testament diction and rhythms (see p. 181). At other times, the persona uses Biblical echoes for satiric contrast with the language of "economy": "[the dockowners] had been kind enough to take mighty good care of ... [their property]. So there it was, in the haze yonder; and it increased and multiplied." (102)

Biblical and archaic rhythms are found in the characterizations of Rachael, Stephen, and Jissy -- to idealize their simple humanity which cannot be perverted by systems. Words have absolute meanings for them, whereas for the demagogue Slackbridge they are merely tools with which to manipulate others. In his speeches, Biblical references are twisted to suit rhetorical ends:

Oh my prostrate friends, with the galling yoke of tyrants on your necks and the iron foot of despotism treading down your fallen forms into the dust of the earth, upon which right glad would your oppressors be to see you creeping on your bellies all the days of your lives, like the serpent in the garden .... (226-227)

On balance, the rhythmic motifs in Hard Times heighten thematic contrasts and add drama and immediacy, although one might wish that Dickens had found ways to vary the predominating Gradgrindian style.
In turning from *Hard Times* to *Our Mutual Friend*, we find a similarity in the use of suggestive rhythms for characterization, but a considerable difference in technical complexity. Monod, who has a thoughtful essay on the style of *Our Mutual Friend*, claims that compared with the later novels, it is more oral and more conscious of verbal effects. Noting a close adaptation of style to theme, he points out that since the theme is pessimistic, somber, and grotesque, it is fitting that the prose is denser, more nervous, and more esoteric than that found in most of the other novels.

It is certainly appropriate to call attention to the novel's verbal and oral effects; an extraordinary amount of emphasis — even for Dickens — is given to various types of linguistic play, fantastic and involuted figurative language, and rhythms. It can probably safely be said that the novel is more stylized than any other Dickens' novel and this is largely a function of its massive use of rhythmic motifs. *Our Mutual Friend* is Dickens' *Vanity Fair* and the puppets dance to different tunes. Rhythmic motifs are used to define characters and character groups as in *Tale* and *Hard Times*, but beyond this, they contribute to the novel's organization more formally and directly than simply through dramatic interplay and highlighting. Because of the difficulty of trying to deal with all the manifestations of rhythm in *Our Mutual Friend*, I want to...
discuss the most important character rhythms and then examine in some detail the manner in which the rhythmic vice of Society scenes affect the structure of the novel.

First, a few general words about theme. *Our Mutual Friend* is a touchstone of the mid-Victorian era, reflecting many concerns of observers of its moral, social, and economic practices. In the particular, influence of one Victorian social critic -- Carlyle -- is preeminent.

Although both *Hard Times* and *Tale* are indebted to Carlyle (the former was dedicated to him and the latter inspired by *The French Revolution*), the evidence of his influence is far stronger in *Our Mutual Friend*, in which many of the important themes of *Sartor Resartus* and *Past and Present* are echoed: the ennobling quality of work and the concept of Duty (The Boffins, Lizzie, Jenny, Betty Higden, Rumty, the Milveys, Riah, and Rokesmith are its models; Eugene and Venus are finally rescued by it); the corruption of society by an undue emphasis on the "cash-nexus" and social status (the parasitic society figures and the mere lowly predators, such as Gaffer, Rogue, Pleasant, Wegg, and Fledgeby, illustrate this); and the failure of Victorian institutions (both the Poor Law administration and the educational system come under attack). Moreover, it is interesting that the two moral conversions at the heart of *Our Mutual Friend* -- Bella's renunciation of her mercenary behavior and Eugene's escape from cynicism and idleness -- correspond to Carlyle's two-pronged attack on Mammonism and Dilettantism in *Past and Present*. 31
These, of course, are Dickens' themes in all the later novels. I am not suggesting that he consciously adapted Carlylean doctrines, but that the influence of Carlyle on him was profound and its manifestations in this novel are especially striking. There are also important differences. Dickens does not, for example, attach a mystical significance to work as does Carlyle. For Dickens, work is desirable because it promotes social and personal stability and because it fosters the development of responsibility and other humane values, but perhaps most important because the alternative to work is predaciousness and parasitism.

Recent scholarship has made much of the darkness of vision in Our Mutual Friend. The symbolism of the dismal swamp, dust heaps, and the polluted river illuminates a society infested with predators from top to bottom (from the high level investment circles to the world of the river rats); a universe in which the web of relationship is a web in the literal sense -- a battleground for predators and victims; above all, a society which is artificial and heartless, all spontaneity, imagination, and fellow feeling dried up by the single-minded drive for acquisition.

Too much emphasis can be given these image patterns, however, for they can lead one to overemphasize the elements of black comedy and, hence, view the novel as a despairing vision of an irredeemably corrupt society. Such an interpretation, in its preoccupation with poetic symbolism, would ignore important narrative concerns, for example, the two moral conversions and the rags-to-riches story of a girl whose virtues are rewarded with a social advancement which is highly unusual in its Victorian context. It ignores, too, the host of smaller creatures in the swamp who by dint of huge efforts manage to lead decent, meaningful lives (they are their brothers' keepers, although others aspire to be keepers of their brothers' goods).
Dickens' interest in depicting types of exploitation is far from exclusive; he is almost equally concerned with showing how in an exploitative society, one can preserve independence and integrity. The virtues that he illustrates with both negative and positive models are the familiar ones in his canon. Their dramatization here is distinctive, however, in the sense that they are far more hard-won than in earlier novels. The lives of such characters as Lizzie, Jenny, Betty, Rumty, and the young Boffins are severely circumscribed; their work and personal responsibilities are not only hard and disagreeable, but often degrading. Furthermore, there are no effective Santa Claus figures who salvage wrecked lives (the Boffins are too vulnerable themselves to fulfill this role). But while Dickens is no longer suggesting that individual benevolence will cure social ills, he still believes the solution will come, if it ever does, from individuals rather than from institutions. Moral conversion is possible -- Eugene and Bella illustrate this -- but until this happens on a much greater scale, until Victorian middle-class society "turns to in earnest," there is not much hope. In the meantime, one should take some heart from the knowledge that there are many who are fighting and winning the hardest moral battle of all -- the quiet daily struggle to stave off the myriad corrupting influences of a society without a spiritual core. An unusual illustration of this theme is provided by the Venus episode. The articulator of human bones takes an artisan's pride in his work until he is thrown off stride by his fiancée's disdain for his calling. He nearly makes a disastrous slip into dishonesty to retain her love, but when he finally resolves to live by his profession...
whatever the consequences, the ridiculous or comic elements of his portrait are eclipsed by the dignity of his decision. No matter what the scale or issues, the refusal to slip into the ways of the predator and the maintaining of one’s independence are, in the context of this society, courageous moral acts.

The creatures of this "dismal swamp" are, as I said, characterized by distinctice rhythmic "markings." In many of the characterizations, rhythms highlight or define dominant traits; for some characters, such as Podsnap, a rhythm is nearly the sum of personality; in other portraits, such as that of Jenny, contrasting rhythms reflect internal conflict and complexity. The character rhythms in Our Mutual Friend do not afford a simple positive and negative contrast, as in Tale and Hard Times, although one can speak of a general dichotomy between characters who have a vital inner life and are sometimes associated with a Lucie-like rhythmic motif -- i.e. Lizzie and Jenny, and dehumanized, vapid, or paralyzed characters who are depicted with jerky, insipid, or mechanical rhythms.

Rhythms other than the suggestive type I have been discussing are also part of the novel's characterizations. Perhaps more than any other Dickens' novel, Our Mutual Friend is crammed with fragments of nursery rhymes and stories, comic songs, ballads, limericks and other nonsense verse, proverbs, and literary allusions. Cleverness and wit, especially as embodied in verbal play of these sorts, is an important technique for suggesting the internal dimensions of characters without becoming subjective, or, as Dickens would say, DISSECTIVE. For characters like Wegg and the Lammles, words are a tool of trade, and cleverness is used to manipulate others for gain.
Eugene's cleverness is a means of manipulating himself, that is, of avoiding painful self-examination by hiding behind a mask of airy indifference. Jenny's wit is both a defense and a compensation.

Wegg, for example, quickly sizes up Boffin as a perfect patsy and sets about to manipulate his emotions. As skillfully as a demagogue works with words, he maneuvers in his realm of popular ballad and by "dropping into poetry" flatters Boffin or moves him to pity and sympathy. When Boffin first engages his services, Wegg honors him with a lugubrious contemporary song ("Beside that cottage door, Mr. Boffin") in which he inserts a fictive elder brother, which leaves the dust man "much impressed by this family circumstance, and also by the friendly disposition of Mr. Wegg, as exemplified in his so soon dropping into poetry." (49-50) When Boffin later offers to take him out of the stall business, Wegg, about to utter "My Benefactor," suddenly decides to play it in a different key:

"...Do not fear, Mr. Boffin, that I shall contaminate the premises which your gold has bought, with my lowly pursuits.

............
No need to be bought out sir. Would Stepney Fields be considered intrusive? If not remote enough, I can go remoter. In the words of the poet's song, which I do not quite remember: 'Thrown on the wide world, doom'd to wander and roam,
Bareft of my parents, bareft of a home,
A stranger to something and what's his name joy,
Behold little Edmund the poor Peasant boy.'

-- And equally," said Mr. Wegg, repairing the want of direct application in the last line, "behold myself on a similar footing!" (176-177)

But the "wits" of this "ligneous sharper" are dulled by his monstrous greed, and judging Boffin by himself, he becomes convinced that he has fallen into his trap. This delusion is expressed in an obsessive refrain, as Wegg degenerates into a comic-pathetic puppet being
thumped along to a mercenary tune: 32

32 The dehumanizing effect of greed is rhythmically treated elsewhere in the novel. The jerky Fledgeby is one example. Caffer's defensive catechism, rhythmically reminiscent of Shylock's "What is a Jew" speech, is another: "Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? This world. How can money belong to a corpse? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, claim it, miss it?" (4-5)

"He's grown too fond of money for that," said Wegg; "He's grown too fond of money." The burden fell into a strain or tune as he stumped along the pavements. All the way home he stumped it out of the rattling streets, piano with his own foot, and fortissimo with his wooden leg, "He's GROWN too FOND of MONEY for THAT; he's GROWN too FOND of MONEY."

Even next day Silas soothed himself with this melodious strain ... And all day long ... he still stumped to the tune: "He's GROWN too FOND of MONEY for THAT, he's GROWN too FOND of MONEY." (476)

As one might expect, the novel offers a diverse exhibit of types of obsessive or mechanical behavior. The society puppets will be discussed collectively, but one must single out Podsnap who, while he occasionally makes one of their number, has too much substance -- i.e., a solid core of dogma -- to be indiscriminately lumped with them. The Podsnap rhythms are unmistakable. Everyone recalls the "dignified conclusiveness" with which he settles disagreeable matters: "I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it!" (121) or the "comprehensiveness" of his world view which neatly sums up commerce and the arts: "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." (121)

His categorical pronouncements are always delivered "with a flourish of the arm and a flush of the face" in resounding assertions or
In the chapter which defines Podsnappery and relates the events of Georgiana's birthday party, several reprises of the Podsnap rhythm, mixed with incidental comic rhythms, remind us of the crushing weight of this institution. For example, a "Simple Simon" jingle mocks the hypocritical formalities of Podsnap and his wife:

Said Mr. Podsnap to Mrs. Podsnap, "Georgiana is almost eighteen."
Said Mrs. Podsnap to Mr. Podsnap, assenting, "Almost eighteen."
Said Mr. Podsnap then to Mrs. Podsnap, "Really I think we should have some people on Georgiana's birthday."
Said Mrs. Podsnap then to Mr. Podsnap, "Which will enable us to clear off all those people who are due." (122-123)

Dancing at the lifeless event is described in the following manner:

Then the discreet automaton who had surveyed his ground, played a blossomless tuneless "set," and sixteen disciples of Podsnappery went through the figures of --1, Getting up at eight and shaving close at a quarter-past --2, Breakfasting at nine --3, Going to the City at ten --4, Coming home at half-past five --5, Dining at seven, and the grand chain. (130)

After the party, as Podsnap stands smugly by his fireside, Dickens turns his rhythm more directly against him:

As Mr. Podsnap stood with his back to the drawing-room fire, pulling up his shirt collar, like a veritable cock of the walk literally pluming himself in the midst of his possessions, nothing would have astonished him more than an intimation that Miss Podsnap ... could not be exactly put away like the plate, brought out like the plate, polished like the plate, counted, weighed, and valued like the plate. That such a young person could possibly have a morbid vacancy in the heart for anything younger than the plate, or less monotonous than the plate; or that such a young person's thoughts could try to scale the region bounded on the north, south, east, and west, by the plate; was a monstrous imagination which he would on the spot have flourished into space. (135)

Hence, Dickens deflates his character by surrounding him with his own self-inflating rhythms; sometimes the satire is more direct, as
in the following:

... Mr. Podsnap went out to dinner, and to dinner, and yet to dinner, arm-in-arm with Mrs. Podsnap; settling his obstinate head in his cravat and shirt collar, much as if he were performing on the Pandean pipes, in his own honour, the triumphal march. See the conquering Podsnap comes, Sound the trumpets, beat the drums!  

While "respectability" makes automatons of the thriving commercial class, the teacher-training system is grinding out another type of "respectable" mechanized product. In Bradley Headstone, a passionate nature doggedly suppressed and a naturally slow, but earnest intellect subjected to a mechanical kind of training produces an explosive combination. The dull, repetitive rhythms of his descriptions are similar to those which introduce the less complex M'Choakumchild (see Hard Times, p. 7.):

Bradley Headstone, in his decent black coat and waistcoat, and decent white shirt, and decent formal black tie, and decent pantaloons of pepper and salt, with his decent silver watch in his pocket and its decent hair guard round his neck, looked a thoroughly decent young man of six-and-twenty .... He had acquired mechanically a great store of teacher's knowledge. He could do mental arithmetic mechanically, sing at sight mechanically, blow various wind instruments mechanically, even play the great church organ mechanically. From his early childhood up, his mind had been a place of mechanical stowage.  

Much later, when Bradley's passion has completely slipped its bonds and he is haunting foul quarters at night hoping to buy some information about Lizzie's whereabouts, by day he still manages to preserve his outward decorum and mechanically plays out his teacher role. The contrasts in his schizophrenic existence are emphasized by the juxtaposition of the early jingle with a description of his nighttime activities:
Up came the sun to find him washed and brushed, methodically dressed in decent black coat and waistcoat, decent formal black tie, and pepper and salt pantaloons, with his decent silver watch in its pocket, and its decent hair guard round his neck .... (525)

The incidental character of Miss Peecher is an entertaining vehicle for Dickens' satire of the educational system for lower-class children, engendered "in the light of the latest Gospel according to Monotony." Her mechanical habit of interrupting conversations with Mary Jane to drill her in grammatical niceties is the comic basis of her portrait. The rhythms of her introductory description are Bradley's declined in the feminine, dimunitive:

Small, shining, neat, methodical, and buxom was Miss Peecher; cherry cheeked and tuneful of voice. A little pin cushion, a little housewife, a little book, a little work box, a little set of tables and weights and measures, and a little woman, all in one. She could write a little essay on any subject, exactly a slate long, beginning at the left hand top of one side and ending at the right hand bottom of the other, and the essay should be strictly according to rule. (206)

The nursery rhymes, limericks, and allusions in the characterization of Eugene represent one of Dickens' most creative and integrated uses of this childhood material which runs so close to the surface in his own imaginative life. Eugene, a naturally witty man, has discovered that puns, rhymes, and allusions serve him well in affecting a careless social pose and evading the probing questions of his friend Lightwood, but he has failed to discover that he is also deceiving himself with his smokescreen of wit. Hence, paradoxically, the simplicity and ease of nursery rhyme express in Eugene's characterization a puzzling complexity and an extreme unease. We see him first at the Veneerings' party (at it, but not of it) responding to a casual conversational remark with a
prose version of a current limerick about an "old man of Tobago (p. 11); it is his way of expressing boredom and his distaste for the vacuity of the company. When Lightwood tries to have an "earnest word" about what is troubling him, Wrayburn pleads innocent to knowing anything about himself and takes refuge in a child's conundrum:

"You must take your friend as he is. You know what I am, my dear Mortimer. You know how dreadfully susceptible I am to boredom. You know that when I became enough of a man to find myself an embodied conundrum, I bored myself to the last degree by trying to find out what I meant .... The old nursery form runs, 'Riddle-me-riddle-me-ree, P'raps you can't tell me what this may be?' My reply runs, 'No. Upon my life, I can't.'" (270)

When Lightwood persists and touches on more sensitive matters, Eugene's relationship with Lizzie, he is charmingly evaded and rebuffed with a song, but not before he has uttered the questions that Eugene will not be able to shake off:

"My dear Mortimer, not that tone of melancholy reproach, I entreat .... How does that little old song go, which, under pretence of being cheerful, is by far the most lugubrious I ever heard in my life?

Away with melancholy,
Nor doleful changes ring
On life and human folly,
But merrily merrily sing
fal la! '

"Then what is to come of it? What are you doing? Where are you going?" (278-279)

The conversation ends in a conviviality of smoking, each of the men striking his key note:

"Ah Eugene! " said Lightwood ..."I would that you answered my three questions: 'hat is to come of it? What are you doing? Where are you going?"

"And, my dear Mortimer," returned Eugene ... "believe me I would answer them instantly if I could. But to enable me to do so, I must first have found out the troublesome conundrum long abandoned. Here it is. Eugene Wrayburn." Tapping his
forehead and breast. "Riddle-me-, riddle-me-ree, perhaps you can't tell me what this may be? -- No, upon my life I can't. I give it up!"

Over a year later, with the same company reassembled at the Veneerings for a social evening, Lightwood is again pressed in a trifling manner to entertain the guests with the sequel to his earlier story of "the man from somewhere." Eugene, more involved and hence more openly impatient with the company, sarcastically breaks in with another nursery rhyme:

"Pray don't be at the trouble of composing yourselves to listen," says Mortimer Lightwood, "because I shall have finished long before you have fallen into comfortable attitudes. It's like ——"

"It's like," impatiently interrupts Eugene, "The children's narrative:

'I'll tell you a story of Jack a Manory, And now my story's begun;
I'll tell you another of Jack and his brother, And now my story is done.'

--- Get on, and get it over!" (390)

After Lizzie's disappearance, Eugene surprises both himself and his friend with the amount of physical and emotional energy he invests in the search to locate her. For the first time, he admits to a desire for more knowledge about the "conundrum" with a seriousness that the gaiety of his nursery allusion can not disguise.

Asked by Lightwood if he cares for her, he replies

"... I thirst for information. What do I mean? If my taking so much trouble to recover her does not mean that I care for her, what does it mean? 'If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper, where's the peck,' etc.?'" (508)

A few minutes later, however, when Eugene has commissioned the disreputable Mr. Dolls to get information about Lizzie and Mortimer is reproaching him ("It is so deplorably underhanded ... It is so
Eugene evades a serious discussion by parrying Mortimer with a barrage of allusive word play:

"We have changed the subject!" exclaimed Eugene, airily. "We have found a new one on that word, scout. Don't be like Patience on a mantelpiece frowning at Dolls, but sit down, and I'll tell you something that you really will find amusing. Take a cigar. ... I light it -- draw one puff -- breathe the smoke out -- there it goes -- It's Dolls! -- it's gone, and being gone, you are a man again." (512-513)

"Observe the legal mind!" remarked Eugene, .... "Observe the dyer's hand, assimilating itself to what it works in, -- or would work in, if anybody would give it anything to do ..." (513)

"You charm me Mortimer, with your reading of my weaknesses. (By-the-bye, that very word, Reading, in its critical use, always charms me. An actress's Reading of a chambermaid, a dancer's Reading of a hornpipe, a singer's Reading of a song, a marine painter's Reading of the sea ...." (514)

After his interview with Lizzie by the mill (just before the attack), Eugene, struck by her earnest love and her vulnerability, as well as his own emotions, finally lets down his guard and begins to consider the conundrum in earnest. His "careless" aide tells him that she is in his power and would yield to him, while his serious emotions shame him in those urgings. The self-dialogue is rhythmically contrapuntal, the witty tone combatting the serious one which is characterized as the "Lightwood bells":

... how would M.R.F. reason with the legal mind? '... Are you less frightfully likely to become bored, marrying for no money and no station? Are you sure of yourself?' Legal mind, in spite of forensic protestations, must secretly admit, 'Good reasoning on the part of M.R.F; Not sure of myself.'"

In the very act of calling this tone of levity to his aid, he felt it to be profligate and worthless, and asserted her against it.

.......... "... I should particularly like to see the fellow tonight who would tell me so, or who would tell me anything that could be
construed to her disadvantage; for I am wearily out of sorts with one 'rayburn who cuts a sorry figure, and I would far rather be out of sorts with somebody else. 'Eugene, Eugene, Eugene, this is a bad business.' Ah! So go the Mortimer Lightwood bells, and they sound melancholy tonight." (660)

But again he subsided into a reminiscence of his first full knowledge of his power just now, and of her disclosure of her heart. To try no more to go away, and to try her again, was the reckless conclusion it turned uppermost. And yet again, "Eugene, Eugene, Eugene, this is a bad business!" And, "I wish I could stop the Lightwood peal, for it sounds like a knell." 661

Although Eugene's recklessness and passions may have carried the day had the attack not occurred (just before he is struck, he muses, "Out of the question to marry her, and out of the question to leave her. The crisis!"); his reformation afterwards is accelerated by his having already reached the point of taking himself seriously and admitting responsibility in this matter. The childhood rhymes which were a pastime and a pose for the old Eugene have an interesting counterpart in the childhood fancies of Jenny which assume paramount importance for the wounded "new" man (see later discussion, p. 2/9).

By contrast, in Lizzie's portrait, resolute, dignified rhythms are used to emphasize her physical as well as moral strength. In the opening scene -- two figures in a boat on the Thames, the one at his grisly fishing, the other watching him intently and responding expertly to his orders -- we see Lizzie in an archetypal situation which is repeated several times in the novel -- performing hard, disagreeable work (though never again 'his repulsive) uncomplainingly and well because it is her duty and because it benefits those she loves. The slow ritualistic quality of the first scene serves several purposes. It engenders a sense of mystery and satire (as the scene unfolds and the discrepancy between the heightened rhythms and the
nature of the endeavor becomes clear). But, in addition, the episode has elements of genuine dignity that are provided by the rhythmical treatment of Lizzie. The dramatization of her grace and skill, and above all the devotion to her father which has led her against the grain to develop that skill, contrasts vividly with the inane rhythms of the socially pretentious Veneerings which follow directly on the heels of the boating scene ("Mr. and Mrs. Veneering were bran-new people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London." etc.).

Lizzie is originally described as sunbrowned and dark, and later her physical characteristics form the basis of a lyrical portrait as Eugène unnoticed watches her by her fireside:

A sad and solitary spectacle, as shown him by the rising and the falling of the fire....
A deep rich piece of color, with the brown flush of her cheek and the shining lustre of her hair, though sad and solitary, weeping by the rising and the falling of the fire.

She started up. ... She opened the door, and said in an alarmed tone, "Father, was that you calling me?" And again, "Father!" And once again, after listening, "Father! I thought I heard you call me twice before!" (154-155)

Leavis would probably find in this as he found in the Sissy portrait a Lawrentian suggestion which Dickens failed sufficiently to develop. But while Dickens obviously intends a correlation between Lizzie's vitality and strength and her appearance, it is more likely that his framework rather than sexual vitality is the conventional Victorian contrast between the dark and fair heroine. It is the lighter Bella whose nature is passionate; Lizzie's vitality is rooted in spiritual strength, and her affinities with Lucie as mother and protector are clear in her distressed call to her father.

All of Lizzie's qualities -- physical and moral -- work together
harmoniously in her "finest hour" — her rescue of Eugene from drowning. In the memoranda notes for the novel, Dickens reminds himself to tie the scene in strongly with the opening scene, and he accomplishes this in part with suggestive rhythms and refrain. Throughout the episode, there are direct and oblique references to the past that has equipped her for this moment, for example, in her prayer, repeated once with variations:

Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, and grant, O Blessed Lord, that through thy wonderful workings it may turn to good at last! To whomsoever the drifting face belongs, be it man's or woman's, help my humble hands, Lord God, to raise it from death and restore it to someone to whom it must be dear! (663)

More effective than such references are the syntactical rhythms which create a sense of resoluteness and competency. A detective-novel tone of logical progression precedes her discovery of the floating body:

At length, she reached a part of the green bank, much and newly trodden, where there lay some broken splintered pieces of wood and some torn fragments of clothes. Stooping, she saw that the grass was bloody. Following the drops and smears, she saw that the watery margin of the bank was bloody. Following the current with her eyes, she saw a bloody face turned up towards the moon, and drifting away. (663)

When she perceives what is to be done, her sureness is dramatized by a rapidly paced prose which uses repetition, balanced phrases, action verbs, and a concentrated focus on her body movements to suggest both steadiness and speed:

She was away before it welled up in her mind, away, swift and true, yet steady above all — for without steadiness it could never be done — to the landing-place under the willow-tree, where she also had seen the boat lying moored among the stakes.

A sure touch of her old practised hand, a sure step of her old practised foot, a sure light balance of her body, and she was in the boat. A quick glance of her practised eye showed her even though the deep dark shadow, the sculls in a rack against the red-brick garden-wall. Another moment, and she had cast off
(taking the line with her), and the boat had shot out into
the moonlight .... (663) 36

36 Later, another reiterated phrase enhances this effect:
"Desperately, but not wildly .... She rowed hard -- rowed desperately,
but never wildly ...." (664)

Like Eugene's, Jenny's is a complicated unharmonized personality,
but one that is much more obviously a response to objective conditions.
M.R.F. may have been a baneful influence on Eugene, but Jenny's
depraved drunken father, the grinding poverty of her life, and her
lameness amount to a soul-crushing burden. Like both Bradley and
Eugene, Jenny has a two-sided nature, but unlike those two, her
sides find equal play; perhaps because she doesn't suppress either
her shrewish, spiteful side or her lyrical, childlike fancies, she
achieves an equilibrium they lack. Dickens understands her acerbic side
but makes it clear that the other is her "prettier and better state." (229)
(In her sharp-tongued mood, she has a little in common with
other puppet-like characters, such as Mrs. Wilfer, Mrs. Podsnap,
Tippins, Bradley, Fledgeby, and even Mr. Dolls, who exhibit spastic,
rigid, or otherwise uncontrolled behaviour. There is one reference
to Jenny's eyes and chin seeming to work together on the same wires.
(210) But although she is meant in some degree to demonstrate the
degrading influences of environment on character, her waspish wit
is also an important device of self-preservation, providing compensa-
tion as well as defense. Mental agility substitutes for the
physical abilities denied her and also serves as protection against
those she doesn't trust (witness her relationship with Bradley,)
Eugene, and Fledgeby) and as leverage over a reprobate, but easily cowed parent.

When Bradley and Charlie first come to visit Lizzie, Jenny greets them with a Forfeits jingle and with bitter little jibes about the neighbourhood children ("always skip-skip-skipping" and "imitating a person’s back and legs"); when Bradley appears to be taking too great an interest in Lizzie’s appearance, Jenny pointedly and rhythmically breaks in:

"Ah! Don't she, don't she? /'look well/' ... "I believe you, she does! But go on with your chat, one and all;
You one two three,
My com-pa-nie,
And don't mind me;"
--pointing this impromptu rhyme with three points of her thin forefinger. (212)

She greets Eugene too a few minutes later with a rhyme to which he is quick enough to respond:

.... Miss Wren suddenly broke off, screwed up her eyes and her chin, and looked prodigiously knowing. "Aha!
'Who comes here?
A Grenadier.
What does he want?
A pot of beer.'
--And nothing else in the world, my dear!" (220)

But when he returns to pry Lizzie’s address out of her, the battle of wits takes a sharper turn, as Jenny alternately parries his questions and gives off danger signals by chastising her father:

"And my charming young goddaughter," said Mr. Wrayburn, plaintively, "down in Hertfordshire ---
("Humbugshire you mean, I think," interposed Miss Wren.)

Ugh, you disgraceful boy! exclaimed Miss Wren, attracted by the sound of his chattering teeth, "I wish they'd all drop down your throat and play at dice in your stomach! Boh, wicked child! Bee-baa, black sheep!" (504)
"...He'd be sharper than a serpent's tooth, if he wasn't as dull as ditch water. Look at him. There's a pretty object for a parent's eyes!" (505)

"Eugene_H" *Are you so obstinate on the subject of a doll's dress for my godchild?"

"Ah!" returned Miss Wren with a hitch of her chin, "I am so obstinate. And of course it's on the subject of a doll's dress -- or address -- whichever you like. Get along and give it up!" (505)

When Jenny is not beleaguered and especially when she is relaxing with friends such as Lizzie and Riah, her wit loses its sting and becomes whimsical. She teases her "Lizzie-Mizzie-Wizzie" and delights in a verbal fantasy which makes Riah her fairy godmother. But there are other, rarer, times when she is changed into a joyful, "quite beautiful" creature by her transforming imagination. The fancy that created Jenny Wren out of Fanny Cleaver also enables her to hear birds and smell roses, fallen leaves, and May hedges in decrepit Smith Square. When she expresses her fancies, she becomes enraptured, her face and action "inspired and beautiful," and the prose becomes lyrical and chant-like, almost as if, as priestess of the imagination, she were magically invoking images. Witness her description of the ideal children who in her childhood came to ease her pain:

"... They used to come down in long bright slanting rows, and say all together, 'Who is this in pain? Who is this in pain?' When I told them who it was, they answered, 'Come and play with us!' When I said, 'I never play! I can't play!' they swept about me and took me up, and made me light. Then it was all delicious ease and rest till they laid me down, and said all together 'Have patience, and we will come again.' Whenever they came back, I used to know they were coming before I saw the long bright rows, by hearing them ask, all together a long way off, 'Who is this in pain? Who is this in pain?' And I used to cry out, 'Oh, my blessed children, it's poor me! Have pity on me! Take me up and make me light!'" (225-226)
In a scene which has many parallels with the Lucie motif in *Tale* (including the radiance of blonde hair and a variation on the "recalled to life" figure), Jenny performs her priestess-like function for Lizzie and Riah in the roof garden. Dickens tries to evoke the spiritual quality of imagination with lyric prose, including chant-like refrains and some unfortunate rhymes and meters. Telling Fledgeby that up there they feel as if they were dead, Jenny explains how she feels:

"Oh, so tranquil!" cried the little creature, smiling. "Oh, so peaceful and so thankful! And you hear the people who are alive crying, and working, and calling to one another down in the close dark streets, and you seem to pity them so! And such a chain has fallen from you, and such a strange good sorrowful happiness comes upon you!"  

She chides Fledgeby for calling Riah "back to life," commands him "Get down to life," and calls after Riah "Don't be long gone. Come back and be dead .... Come back and be dead, Come back and be dead."

Later, when Riah climbs back to them

... the call or song began to sound in his ears again, and, looking above, he saw the face of the little creature looking down out of a glory of her long bright radiant hair, and musically repeating to him, like a vision: "Come up and be dead! Come up and be dead!"  

In Jenny's role as "priestess" she comforts and heals as well. When she perceives that Lizzie is suffering over Eugene, she emphatically shares her pain and then invokes the aid of her children to comfort herself as well as Lizzie (Dickens again emphasizes the transformation):

"... Lay me down, lay me down. Don't go out of my sight to-night. Lock the door and keep close to me." Then turning away her face she said in a whisper to herself, "My Lizzie, my poor Lizzie! O my blessed children, come back in the long bright slanting
rows and come for her, not me. She wants help more than I, my blessed children!"

She had stretched her hands up with that higher and better look, and now she turned again, and folded them round Lizzie's neck, and rocked herself on Lizzie's breast. (330-331)

As Lizzie's skill saves Eugene from physical drowning, Jenny's helps to save him from spiritual drowning. The old Eugene who responded cynically to her descriptions of her fancies is shuffled off in the baptismal "drowning" and the dying man sends for her to nurse him and have her fancies by his bedside. So earnest and compassionate is her nursing that she is able to comprehend his slightest gesture, and she seems to be "an intrepreter between this sentient world and the insensible man." It is she who guesses the magic word "wife."

That Dickens finally sends Jenny the simple-minded Sloppy as a potential mate may seem a quixotic, or merely convenient, touch, but there is a real suitability in the choice. As she bullies and tests the gaping boy, one perceives that here is a creature who needs to be managed, cannot be hurt by her sharp edges (which are here to stay), and will return only sweetness and service. There seems every possibility that with the impressionable orphaned Sloppy to mother, both sides of Jenny's personality -- her acerbic domineering moods of sharp-tongued wit and her "healing" flights of lyric imagination -- will find expression and perhaps reconciliation.

Other characterizations with rhythmic elements could be mentioned, but it seems more profitable to pass on to the society scenes and examine their more complex rhythmic interplay.

In a novel of great stylistic variety, these scenes stand out for the distinctiveness and brilliance of their prose. The briskly
paced comic epigrammatic style has been used to characterize society elsewhere (the Merdle scenes, for example), but here there is a particular appropriateness of rhythmic pacing and language to the novel's structure and themes. The society figures, whose lives, with rare exceptions, do not intersect with those of the other characters, form a world apart, but they exert an influence over the larger world which is grossly disproportionate to their worth. Theirs is a world ruled by money, possessions, and social forms, and although they circulate in the investment sphere, they never accomplish or even attempt any genuine work. Nor is there any real change in this world -- only constant flux: figures absorbed into or ejected out of the group as shares change hands and booms or smashes occur. (Friendships are cemented with astonishing rapidity as Twemlow's confusion over who is Veneering's oldest friend illustrates.) The group has a life of its own which is unaffected by changes in its membership (the units of which are interchangeable anyway). Endless and meaningless social activity defines the society world, and the brilliance of the presentation is in Dickens' mastery of tempo and other suggestive rhythms in describing these revolutions: the party and club-going, the card-dropping and afternoon visiting, the phaeton tooling and quadrille-tripping and all the other keeping-up-of-appearances activities. Because this is a world apart and a world of appearances rather than substance in every respect, it is presented spatially and separately from the other narratives. The members of society are usually seen at dinner parties where the forms of their social intercourse, including their seating arrangements, the flow
of table conversation, and their other social games, determine the
descriptive organization. The characterizing rhythms are nervous, silly
and disjointed, reflecting the antic social dance and suggesting that
these people are not to be taken seriously, while a darker thread of
descriptive detail reminds us that they are grotesques in a more
menacing sense, for as moral and social arbiters they impose false
values under the flag of Respectability.

Society makes its appearance first on the heels of the intro­
ductive river scene, its silly rhythms and activities making the
first episode seem in contrast less disreputable since it at least
involved skill and endeavour. Thereafter, with two exceptions,
the society scenes occur at the end of the book divisions, and in
them, details of the novel's main narratives -- the Dustman's story
and Lizzie's story -- serve as grist for the gossip mill. The
positioning of the sections serves the dual purpose of heightening
the satire and of emphasizing moral changes taking place in charac­
ters of the main narrative, such as Bella and Eugene. Within the
group itself, one small, but not insignificant, change occurs when
Twemlow, who is confused and taken in by society on many points but
not corrupted by it, finally celebrates his moral "coming-out."
This affair is one of gradual evolution and at the novel's climactic
moment, it makes its weight felt against the crushing opposition of
Podsnappian Respectability.

............

The great looking glass above the sideboard reflects the
table and the company. Reflects the new Veneering crest, in
gold and eke in silver, frosted and also thawed, a camel of
all work. The Herald's College found out a Crusading ancestor
for Veneering who bore a camel on his shield ... and a caravan of camels take charge of the fruits and flowers and candles and kneel down to be loaded with the salt. Reflects Veneering; forty, wavy-haired, dark, tending to corpulence, sly, mysterious, filmy -- a kind of sufficiently well-looking veiled-prophet, not prophesying. Reflects Mrs. Veneering; fair, aquiline-nosed and fingered, not so much light hair as she might have, gorgeous in raiment and jewels, enthusiastic, propitiatory, conscious that a corner of her husband's veil is over herself. Reflects Podsnap; prosperously feeding, two little light-colored wiry wings, one on either side of his else bald head, looking as like his hair brushes as his hair, dissolving view of red beads on his forehead, large allowance of crumpled shirt-collar up behind. Reflects Mrs. Podsnap; fine woman for Professor Owen, quantity of bone, neck and nostrils like a rocking-horse, hard features, majestic headdress in which Podsnap has hung golden offerings .... Lastly, the looking glass reflects Boots and Brewer, and two other stuffed Buffers interposed between the rest of the company and possible accidents. (9-10)

Thus we see them first in the mirror's reflection, as if we were peeping through a one-way glass at a roomful of faintly interesting specimens, most of whom, having a suspicion they are being observed, are holding themselves aloof in their conceit or unease. And thus we will see them many times thereafter, ranged around the dinner table in their proper social order and deporting themselves in accordance with their place. (They are in a real sense defined by their ranking at table, and if through economic or social misfortune one is forced to vacate his place, his successor inherits its privileges and limitations.)

The brief descriptions allotted to each character occur again and again when the characters make future appearances, as if after this first sketch, nearly all there is to know about them is known and a reference to an "aquiline-fingered, richly jeweled hand" or to a "majestic rocking-horse" will recall them in their entirety. They are further depersonalized by the animal imagery which blends
amusingly with the richness of ceremonial garb. (The Veneering camel bedecked with silver and gold can hold his own for interest with most of the guests.)

The language of the passage is, for the most part, masterful. There is a new density of style that escapes turgidity and condenses details into a rich broth. The cadence and grammatical structure of some phrases look ahead to modern writers such as Faulkner, e.g. "a kind of sufficiently well-looking veiled-prophet, not prophesying."

Light satirical touches are created by archaic diction and syntax: "in gold and eke in silver"; "gorgeous in raiment and jewels"; "majestic head dress in which Podsnap has hung golden offerings."

As the dinner proceeds and people talk to each other or propitiate each other in the socially acceptable style, it becomes clear that there is a tacit dictum against being serious or injecting any meaning into the conversation. Style is all; and each participant is self-consciously aware of his own and others, so that Eugene and Mortimer as careless young bachelors must discourse in witty, languid, or cynical tones; Tippins must be indulged in her "gay charmer" role; the pontifications of Podsnap must be deferred to; Mrs. Veneering must submit either to being ignored or patronized and must generate lavish flattery or coy baby talk; and the Buffers are relied on to fill empty spaces and ask appropriate questions enthusiastically to prime the conversational pump, etc.

Hence, the story of "the Man from Somewhere," which will form the basis of the novel's main narrative and will touch the lives of many characters outside its immediate circle, becomes, in this context,
an amusing trifle, a vehicle for the display of Mortimer's dry mocking style, and a catalyst of witty interchanges among the other guests. (Although they are unaware of it, Mortimer's mockery is directed against the guests, not the personages of the story. There are subdued but distinct indications throughout the scene that both he and Eugene have inner chords capable of responding to the story's human drama.) Even after he has been teased into reciting it, Mortimer finds it an uphill battle to hold the attention of his audience. Tippins, who was most insistent, falls asleep, and Mortimer is forced into a continual search for different eyes to catch. The nervous twitch of this social dance is rendered in brilliant theatrical prose. The style is truncated -- subjects, sometimes verbs, are omitted to create a nervously accelerated pace. In the following example, a comic rhythm adds to the jingling effect (see italics):

"Dinner is on the table!"
Thus the melancholy retainer, as who should say, "Come down and be poisoned, ye unhappy children of men!"

Twemlow, having no lady assigned him, goes down in the rear, with his hand to his forehead. Boots and Brewer, thinking him indisposed, whisper, "Man faint. Had no lunch." ...

Revived by soup, Twemlow discourses mildly of the Court Circular with Boots and Brewer. Is appealed to, at the fish stage of the banquet by Veneering, on the disputed question whether his cousin Lord Snigsworth is in or out of town? Gives it that his cousin is out of town. "At Snigsworthy Park?" Veneering inquires. "At Snigsworthy,"

Twemlow rejoins.

In the dinner scene, the focussing is cinematic: the camera's eye sweeps around the table, making quick changes of direction, zooming in here and zooming out to seek another face. The effect of this constant jerky motion is that of animated cartoon or comic opera.
Humorous antiphonal effects are created by the quick flow of the conversation. The scene, which should be read in its entirety, is imperfectly illustrated by the following brief quotation, but one can see, especially in the format of the Buffers' comments, that Dickens is straining against the limitations of narrative prose (which has no mechanism for recording simultaneous events); he is, in truth, writing here for the stage:

"Tippins? But I am resolved to have the account of the man from Somewhere, and I beg you to elicit it for me, my love," to Mrs. Veneering, "as I have lost my own influence. Oh, you perjured man!" This to Mortimer, with a rattle of her fan.

"We are all very much interested in the Man from Somewhere," Veneering observes.

Then the four Buffers, taking heart of grace all four at once, say:

"Deeply interested!"
"Quite excited!"
"Dramatic!"
"Man from Nowhere, perhaps!"

And then Mrs. Veneering -- for Lady Tippins's winning wiles are contagious -- folds her hands in the manner of a supplicating child, turns to her left neighbour, and says, "Tease! Pay! Man from Tumwherel!" At which the four Buffers, again mysteriously moved all four at once, exclaim, "You can't resist!"

"Upon my life," says Mortimer, languidly, "I find it immensely embarrassing to have the eyes of Europe upon me to this extent ...." (11-12)

A passing remembrance of Mrs. Veneering, here induces Mortimer to address his next half-dozen words to her; after which he wanders away again, tries Twemlow and finds he doesn't answer, ultimately takes up with the Buffers, who receive him enthusiastically. (13)

Here, the Analytical Chemist ... concedes a little claret to the Buffers; who, again mysteriously moved all four at once, screw it slowly into themselves with a peculiar twist of enjoyment, as they cry in chorus, "Pray go on." (13)

When we see the group again, they are gathering for the celebration of a marriage. A similar format is used. The episode opens with a reprise of the "vapid Veneering" rhythm ("Mr. and Mrs. Veneering were bran-new people"), a giddy, breathless effect created by
repetition within a string of coordinate structures:

There is excitement in the Veneering mansion. The mature young lady is going to be married (powder and all) to the mature young gentleman, and she is to be married from the Veneering house, and the Veneerings are to give the breakfast. (107)

As the scene unfolds, it becomes clear that nothing has changed: Twemlow is still comically confused about who is Veneering's oldest friend; the characters are recognizable by their markings ("Veneering the veiled prophet," "Mrs. Veneering with ... each of her eight aquiline fingers looking so very like her one aquiline nose," "Mr. Podsnap, with his hair-brushes made the most of; that imperial rocking-horse, Mrs. Podsnap, majestically skittish"); and the clan from Duke Street to Belgravia is preparing itself for the festivities. Archaic diction and inverted syntax mock with pastoral coyness the wedding of the undewy pair. ("So, it has come to pass that the spring van is strewing flowers on the rosy hours and on the staircase"/ "After which, appears Sophronia" / "But, hark! A carriage at the gate") Then, in a brisk, truncated style, the degeneration of the festivities is recorded as the guests antagonize each other and stoutly refuse to be impressed by the Veneerings' reception, seeming "to unite in some vague utterance of the sentiment that the landlord and landlady will make a pretty good profit out of this." (114)

Society, which had a hard time staying awake over the story of the Man from Somewhere, is suddenly all attention when Boffin's wealth becomes a social reality. In the final chapter of Book I entitled "A Dismal Swamp," the predators of all social ranks zero in on their target, but the quickest reflexes are those of the
card-leaving society figures. The lightly comic animal imagery of the first scene becomes more menacing here:

And now, in the blooming summer days, behold Mr. and Mrs. Boffin established in the eminently aristocratic family mansion, and behold all manner of crawling, creeping, fluttering, and buzzing creatures, attracted by the gold dust of the Golden Dustman! (196)

The jingling rhythms of the card-leaving ritual are emblematic of the whole range of witless scrambling for social advantage:

Foremost among those leaving cards at the eminently aristocratic door before it was quite painted, are the Veneerings....One copper-plate Mrs. Veneering, two copper-plate Mr. Veneering, and a connubial copper-plate Mr. and Mrs. Veneering.... The enchanting Lady Tippins leaves a card. Twemlow leaves cards. A tall mustard-colored phaeton tooling up in a solemn manner leaves four cards, to wit, a couple of Mr. Podsnaps, a Mrs. Podsnap and a Miss Podsnap. All the world and his wife and daughter leave cards. Sometimes the world's wife has so many daughters, that her card reads rather like a Miscellaneous Lot in an Auction; comprising Mrs. Tapkins, Miss Tapkins, Miss Frederica Tapkins, Miss Antonina Tapkins, Miss Malvina Tapkins, and Miss Euphentia Tapkins; at the same time, the same lady leaves the card of Mrs. Henry George Alfred Swoshle nee Tapkins; also, a card, Mrs. Tapkins at Home, Wednesdays, Music, Portland Place. (197)

In "A Piece of Work" (Book II, chapter 3), we see the clan rallying around Veneering who has bought his way into Parliament but must maintain the pretense of campaigning. The frenetic, aimless activity (to the accompaniment of the refrain "We must work") principally involves the taking of cabs and going about, partly because it gives the participants the pleasant illusion that they are being particularly useful while indulging in their favourite pastime, and partly because in the world of "influence," this is the way that business is conducted. Veneering is charmed when Podsnap suggests giving Boots and Brewer a cab and "elated at this going about of Boots and Brewer, as an idea wearing an electioneering aspect and
looking desperately like business." (234) A more directly satirical comment is reminiscent of the Shares passage in both rhythms and theme (oscillations on mysterious business / taking cabs and going about):

More is done or considered to be done ... by taking cabs and "going about," .... Many vast vague reputations have been made, solely by taking cabs and going about. This particularly obtains in all Parliamentary affairs. Whether the business in hand be to get a man in, or get a man out, or get a man over, or promote a railway, or jockey a railway, or what else, nothing is understood to be so effectual as scouring nowhere in a violent hurry -- in short, as taking cabs and going about. (236)

Throughout this episode, a breathless prose imitates the Veneerings' witless fluster:

To whom /"Tippins_7 Mrs. Veneering incoherently communicates, how that Veneering has been offered Pocket-Breaches; how that it is the time for rallying round; how that Veneering has said, "We must work"; how that she is here, as a wife and mother, to entreat Lady Tippins to work; how that the carriage is at Lady Tippins's disposal for purposes of work; how that she, proprietress of said bran-new elegant equipage, will return home on foot -- on bleeding feet if need be -- to work (not specifying how), until she drops by the side of baby's crib. (235)

Finally, their energies and resources taxed to the utmost, the weary campaigners rendezvous, as they always do, around the Veneering dinner table where, flushed with wine, they end by lustily rallying each other:

"Many such days would be too much for all of us," says Podsnap; "But we'll bring him in!"
"We'll bring him in!" says Lady Tippins, sportively waving her green fan. "Veneering for ever!"
"We'll bring him in!" says Twemlow.
"We'll bring him in!" says Boots and Brewer. (236)

Therefore, the Analytical has orders to produce the cream of the cream of his bins, and therefore it falls out that rallying becomes rather a trying word for the occasion; Lady Tippins being observed gamely to inculcate the necessity of rearing round
their dear Veneering; Podsnap advocating roaring round him; Boots and Brewer declaring their intention of reeling round him; and Veneering thanking his devoted friends one and all, with great emotion, for rarullarulling round him. (237)

In the celebration of the Lammles' first wedding anniversary, which brings Book II to a close, satirical ritualistic devices are thicker than before. The camera shuttles back and forth between Twemlow dressing himself in Duke Street and Tippins arraying herself in Belgravia, while archaic diction and syntactic artificialities create a mock epic fanfare for the approaching anniversary breakfast. ("Howbeit, Twemlow doth at length invest himself with collar ...and goeth forth to breakfast."/"As he approaches the Lammles' door, drives up a little one-horse carriage, containing Tippins the divine." 386-7) The inflated importance of social ritual is further dramatized in the spatialized dinner scene:

Fledgeby has not heard of anything.

"No, there's not a word of news," says Lammle.
"Not a particle," adds Boots.
"Not an atom," chimes in Brewer.

Somehow the execution of this little concerted piece appears to raise the general spirits as with a sense of duty done, and sets the company a-going. (388)

Veneering, M.P., on the right of Mrs. Lammle; Twemlow on her left; Mrs. Veneering, W.M.P. (Wife of Member of Parliament), and Lady Tippins on Mr. Lammle's right and left. (389)

Mortimer, a victim of one of the trifling rituals ("It is always understood among the initiated, that that faithless lover must be planted at table opposite to Lady Tippins, who will then strike conversational fire out of him" 389), is prodded by Tippins to give them the sequel to the story of the Man from Somewhere, but the increased disaffection of both bachelors is evident in Mortimer's
unease in assuming the jester role and in discussing Lizzie and in Eugene's barely suppressed ferocity at society's response to the story. The guest who most radically departs from his accustomed role, however, is the meek Twemlow, who being asked as a gentleman by Mrs. Lammle to involve himself in the risky business of saving Georgiana by exposing the Lammle's designs on her, engages himself and his honor emphatically.

Book III concludes with the "Social Chorus," assembled this time at the Veneerings for a "wondering" dinner devoted to a consideration of the Lammle's unexpected smash ("For it is by this time noticeable that, whatever befalls, the Veneerings must give a dinner upon it." 585). The scene ends as the increasingly gloomy Eugene is suddenly called out by Blight who has brought news of Lizzie's whereabouts; thus, a much earlier occasion is recalled when Mortimer and Eugene were called out on an errand that was to result in the first meeting with Lizzie.

At the novel's end, after Eugene's marriage and his "turning to," Society convokes itself again. Mortimer being one of the company, the subject of the marriage is instantly broached, and despite his efforts to back off the topic, Tippins soon has the assemblage resolved into a Committee of the whole House on the subject of Eugene's social renegadism. Everybody comes out strongly in his own character, which is to say that money and "respectability" nearly carry the day against Eugene, until Twemlow rises above his timidity in defiance of Podsnap:

...if such feelings [gratitude, respect, admiration, affection]
on the part of this gentleman induced this gentleman to marry this lady, I think he is the greater gentleman for the action, and makes her the greater lady. I beg to say that when I use the word gentleman, I use it in the sense in which the degree may be attained by any man ... (776)

These are courageous sentiments, indeed, when offered in the face of heavy counter opinion:

General sensation against the young woman. Brewer shakes his head. Boots shakes his head. Buffer shakes his head.

Podsnap "Then all I have to say is ... that my gorge rises against such a marriage -- that it offends and disgusts me -- that it makes me sick -- and that I desire to know no more about it." (774)

"These things are a question of beefsteaks and porter. You buy the young woman a boat ...." (775)

"Madness and moonshine .... A man may do anything lawful for money. But for no money! -- Bosh!" (776)

It is part of the novel's ambiguity that the Voice of Society is left momentarily speechless and discomfited, although far from silenced. Despite the information that the Veneerings will be smashed within the week and this particular social circle dissolved, we are left with the clear impression that the power of Society is not only intact, but accreting and that the only victories against such a force are gained in minor skirmishes such as these.
In *Bleak House*, rhythmic motifs are a central ingredient of the novel's complex texture, that is, they are employed both extensively and variously. They are not predominantly associated with character groups, nor are they used primarily to emphasise image patterns, as in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. The fairly simple rhythmic polarities that helped create a symbolic axis in such novels as *Dombey and Son*, *Hard Times* and *Tale*, are replaced here by complicated rhythmic interactions. *Bleak House* is a true compendium of the different types of impressionistic prose I have concerned myself with in this study.

Rhythms and other impressionistic techniques make important contributions to the novel's peculiar blend of satire, comedy, pathos, and gothicism.33

33 See, for example, my earlier discussion of impressionistic techniques in the novel's social criticism.

They have structural as well as thematic importance, functioning, among other things, as scenic devices, transition and episodic frame,

34 The chapter entitled "The Appointed Time" and the Nemo burial scene are outstanding examples. See Axton's discussion of the latter in which he demonstrates how contrasting rhythms are intricately employed in "a complexly orchestrated piece of dramatic irony which is at once pathetic, savage, solemn, and yet hugely comic." (208-9)

and tonal unifier.

The novel's rhythmic variety is not surprising, for *Bleak House* is a crowded novel in a sense that exceeds the usual application of that term to Dickens' novels: it is not only teeming with life from
the lowest to the highest level, but one of its major purposes is to demonstrate the inescapable interrelatedness of lives. In this world, people are continually colliding, whether they will or no, and the novel's single most important social message is that to deny that one is his brother's keeper is to invite catastrophe. (Like Carlyle's typhus-stricken Irish widow who appeals vainly to her fellow creatures for help and ironically "proves her sisterhood" when seventeen of them are infected by her and die, the neglected inhabitants of Bleak House's world "prove" their kinship: Jo's fever scars Esther, and the infested graveyard, symbol of society's denial of its responsibility, at last receives the haughty Lady Dedlock on its slimy step.)

To dramatize this organic view of society, Dickens manipulates the characters as if they were moving on the periphery of a huge web, at first in seemingly random directions, but increasingly as if they were being ineluctably drawn toward some center of crisis. Like Stephen and Bloom in Ulysses, who moving through the rounds of one day gradually close in on their fateful meeting, so the characters in Bleak House occasionally cross paths, veer off, run parallel courses, recross, nearly encounter, and so forth. This type of development demands adroit management. Added to this is the further complexity of two narrative perspectives (Esther's and the omniscient narrator's) with the concomitant necessity of keeping them in balance and distinguishing their motifs so that the reader can follow their development through the shifts as well as through the interruptions of serial publication. Small wonder that such narrative demands prompted some of Dickens' most complicated rhythmic effects.
In this discussion, I want to examine the Dedlock story as it centers on the family mansions, Chesney Wold and the Town House. This is only one of the novel's impressionistically developed motifs, although an especially well constructed and affecting one. The Chancery theme would repay similar consideration, for although its development is not as tightly knit, it too makes extensive use of rhythmic and other poetic techniques. For example, suggestive rhythms, poetic indirection, and other inflating techniques such as epic devices are used to characterize the novel's outcasts and their environment: Jo, Miss Flite, Tom-All-Alone's, the pauper graveyard, Krook and his shop, Nemo and his flat, etc. These serve two main purposes. In some cases, they are used to lend dignity to lives which society in general and Chancery in particular have denied significance to. The poetic treatment is Dickens' emotional "proof" that these are society's "dear brothers." The chief effect of the rhythmic techniques, however, is to satirize the social condition by throwing into bold relief the squalor of the ruined lives and the airy or hidebound indifference of those who are responsible. In some instances, the devices are used for dramatic emphasis, as in descriptions of the graveyard, Tom-All-Alone's, Krook's shop, Alan's Dantesque descent into the inferno of Tom-All-Alone's at night, and the discovery of Krook's "remains" in "The Appointed Time" episode. In other examples, such as the discovery of Nemo's body, the inquest, and burial, rhythmic interplay -- a solemn dirge-like motif played against the lively, careless bustle of the life in Cook's Court -- points an accusing finger at society's guilt through indifference.
There are several reasons why the Chesney theme deserves special attention. In his memoranda notes, Dickens refers to the two houses (especially Chesney) as if they were characters, reminding himself to "carry through" on them just as he reminds himself to pick up the Snagsby or the Tulkinghorn thread.\(^{35}\) The success of his intent is clear, for in the finished work, the Chesney Wold episodes, of a piece and skillfully handled so as to reveal their significance slowly, form a haunting poetic correlative. As I hope to show, the impressionistic treatment of the Dedlock story not only gives it an organic unity, but, more importantly, by enlarging its thematic suggestiveness, links it to the broader social perspective of the novel. In addition to its thematic centrality, the Chesney Wold motif also shows us Dickens in a richly poetic vein. Some of his most sensuous and delicately suggestive prose is found here. (Particularly striking are the experiments with chiarascuro effects.) This, coupled with the variety of rhythmic effects (repetition and refrain, imitative syntax, parallel description, incrementally developed images), makes the Chesney descriptions the most striking example of poetic reflexive reference in Dickens (perhaps in any pre-twentieth-century novelist).

In the novel's beginning, Dickens links the worlds of Chancery and Fashion, making clear that they are to be seen as part of a

single satirical perspective. In fact, Sucksmith, who examined the
memoranda and number plans, tells us that "In Fashion," which follows
the opening chapter "In Chancery," was interpolated after the first
number was completed, but before the second was written. Mr. Sucksmith
speculates, and I think accurately, that Dickens did this "because
his feeling for organic unity and his ironical vision combined to
insist that the worlds of Chancery and Dedlocks be linked as aspects
of a single satirical view. 'In Fashion' was altered from 'In the
Fashionable World' to make it parallel to 'In Chancery.'" (Sucksmith,
pp. 63-64)

In Dickens' words, "Both the world of fashion and the Court of
Chancery are things of precedent and usage; oversleeping Rip Van
Winkles" (6). Of Chancery, mired in its own waste, he says, "If all
the injustice it has committed, and all the misery it has caused,
could only be locked up with it, and the whole burnt away in a great
funeral pyre, -- why so much the better ...." (5) In the course of
the narrative, this is accomplished -- on the symbolic level of
Krook's spontaneous combustion and the real level of the consumption
of Jarndyce and Jarndyce in its own costs. The world of fashion is
described as one "wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine
wool," which "cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and
cannot see them as they circle round the sun." (6) In the course
of the novel, this "deadened" world, represented by the Dedlocks,
comes into violent collision with the larger worlds from which it has
insulated itself, but before that happens it undergoes a slow decay
as light and warmth are gradually withdrawn and the final shadows
deepen over it. In a sense, then, the dramatic center of the novel is
the parallel anatomies of two moribund traditions which continue
in their dying spasms to spread their sickness throughout the larger
universe.

The Chesney Wold theme actually functions on two levels, not only
in terms of the social satire, but also in the context of Esther's
search for her identity. On the first level, the characterizations of
Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock, as well as of their relationship are
emblematic of a larger social reality. Just as the relationship is
poisoned by Lady Dedlock's past and by Sir Leicester's insensitivity
to her emotional life, so too the aristocratic tradition in England
is decayed and hollow at core because of its spiritual corruption and
isolation from reality. Like Sir Leicester, it has failed to grasp
the significance of the industrial revolution and the rise of the
British middle class. (Sir Leicester is baffled and enraged by self-
made men like Rouncewell, who in managing to "get out of" their station
are, in his eyes, causing tremendous cracks in the framework of society.)

The aristocracy fosters, in Dickens' term, a "neo-Dandyism" which glosses
over the realities of the present while idealizing the fashions of the
past. The politics, the social customs, the very emotions of this class
are archaic and, hence, irrelevant.

The threats to the aristocratic tradition in the novel's terms
are two-fold. The gradual process of decay is dramatized as a loss of
vital spirits; its particular exemplification is Sir Leicester's
futile search for relief from physical discomfort. (We see him
characteristically huddling within his house in front of fires which
even in summer fail to ward off the cold and damp from his gouty limbs.) Coupled with the slow withdrawal of light and warmth is the ever-present threat of major catastrophe -- a sudden collision with a planet of which it has been unaware. This threat is embodied in Lady Dedlock's rejection of the falseness and sterility of her life which leads her into actions that place her social position and that of Sir Leicester in direct jeopardy. (Her restless shuttling between houses and between cities in a vain search for distraction parallels her husband's futile search for warmth and comfort.) The chief metaphors for the threat of catastrophe are images of the hunt (Lady Dedlock is being hunted down to death by "the fashionable intelligence" and by Tulkinghorn) and the encroaching shadow on her portrait at Chesney Weld.

In terms of the general social satire, then, the dominant images of the Chesney passages are light and warmth (sun and fires) opposed by shadow and damp. The predominating rhythms are derived from the characters, but generalized into the environment. My Lady's is a restless, nervous rhythm embodied not only in the prose, but also in the constant shifting of the narrative between Chesney and the Town House (and secondarily, England and Paris). 36

36 The shuttling of the Dedlocks is not merely an impressionistic device to dramatize restlessness. It also functions in the mystery plot and the general theme: it brings into contact characters who could not otherwise realistically meet, while at the same time emphasizing the mysterious interrelatedness of the inhabitants of the novel's universe.

In terms of *other's story, the images of the Chesney episodes
have a reversed meaning, for while the shadow is deepening on her mother, it is lifting for Esther. The discovery of the secret of her birth releases Esther from the feelings of guilt engendered in her by her godmother and enables her slowly to gain a measure of self-confidence. Chesney as seen through her eyes is a tranquil health-giving oasis. On this level of the narrative, the estate is a metaphor of fertility and its heir is Esther in her second Bleak House.

37 This deliberate ambiguity in the treatment of Chesney is compounded by what appears to be an unconscious ambivalence on Dickens' part: see my later discussion.

Chesney Wold is first presented in an impressionistic description intended as a companion piece to the opening description of Chancery on that muddy afternoon (see my discussion and quote p. 32).

While Chancery is "stuck in a mudbank," the place in Lincolnshire is dissolving into the elements. It is a landscape without shape or color, pervaded by a "general taste and smell" of death, and Lady Dedlock, who views it from her boudoir window, is an extension of it. (This particular description is an excellent example of Dickens' skill in dissolving the boundary between character and setting, "exteriorizing" character or "interiorizing" landscape.) As I mentioned earlier, the weary, hypnotic effect of the passage results from a skillful manipulation of linguistic materials -- of imitative rhythms and suggestive diction, including onomatopoeic effects. At the heart of the description is a striking rhythmic contrast which intensifies the "deadness" of the landscape and its viewer: throughout most of the
passage, sentences have a cadential sameness -- a brief rise and decided fall -- which creates the tone of a poetical catalogue.

Then, suddenly, at the end, the rising rhythm is heightened into a lengthy crescendo, as the image of the keeper's child is introduced (see discussion p. 43); the final fall, as the perspective shifts from the vitality of the child's world back to Lady Dedlock's, becomes, by contrast with the crescendo, more emphatic and foreboding.

Throughout the first chapter, the phrase "the place in Lincolnshire" with variations ("down at the place..." "up from the place...", etc.) is rhythmically prominent. It is not only a keynote here, but an important refrain in the Chesney episodes to follow. At the chapter's end (Lady Dedlock has fainted upon recognizing the handwriting of her former lover), the phrase, in iambic tetrameter, dramatizes the distance between the unhappy woman and well-intentioned but "jeweller-cottoned" husband, as well as recalls, in a final flourish, the gloomy rhythms of the episode:

"Better now," quoth Sir Leicester, motioning the lawyer to sit down.... "I have been quite alarmed. I never knew my Lady swoon before. But the weather is extremely trying -- and she really has been bored to death down at our place in Lincolnshire."  

In addition to the stylistic features discussed earlier, the tone of the chapter is further characterized by Gothic imagery (twilight, shadows, dreary weather, ghosts, mausoleums, etc.) and complementary rhythms ("And the heavy drops fall, drip, drip, drip, upon the broad flagged pavement," or the less obviously stylized cadence of "Therefore my Lady Dedlock has come away from the place in Lincolnshire, and has left it to the rain, and the crows, and
the rabbits, and the deer, and the partridges and pheasants."

When the Chesney motif is resumed several chapters later, the transition is effected rhythmically:

While Esther sleeps, and while Esther wakes, it is still wet weather down at the place in Lincolnshire. The rain is ever falling drip, drip, drip, by day and night, upon the bread flagged terrace-pavement, the Ghost's Walk. (62)

The first description is recalled in the stylized iambics of the opening clause and the repetition of phrases from the earlier piece.38

38 In the largely digressive passage which follows -- the fantasies of the livestock waiting out the bad weather and gloomy solitude at Chesney -- images of clover days recall the estate under an aspect of blooming life and activity which seems to exist only in memory. In the course of the novel, Chesney is only twice seen under the aegis of spring or summer weather and then, significantly, through Esther's perspective. While the description can be said to serve the general purpose of enhancing the contrast between what Chesney is and what it might be, it seems likely that Dickens was carried away by his descriptive "itch." Here, as on several other occasions, he seems to have let himself be guided more by the descriptive potential of a country estate than by his thematic purpose. "So the mastiff, dozing in his kennel, in the courtyard, ... may think of the hot sunshine, when the shadows of the stable-buildings tire his patience out by changing .... So the rabbits with their self-betraying tails, frisking in and out of holes at roots of trees, may be lively with ideas of the breezy days when their ears are blown about, or of those seasons of interest when there are sweet young plants to gnaw ...." (63)

The next time we see the estate, "it has left off raining down in Lincolnshire," and Chesney is brightening itself in anticipation of company. In this chapter, techniques of reflexive reference abound, tying together the fragments of this episode (in the beginning the descriptive focus shifts between Chesney being readied and the Dedlock's progress from Paris to London to Lincolnshire) and adding
incremental significance to images introduced earlier.

In the opening description, a parallel contrastive technique shows us Chesney in a new light and Lady Dedlock in an old. The details of the landscape in the rain are reincarnated in their sunny aspect:

...the broken arch of the bridge in the park is mended; and the water, now retired within its proper limits and again spanned gracefully, makes a figure in the prospect from the house. The clear cold sunshine glances into the brittle woods, and approvingly beholds the sharp wind scattering the leaves and drying the moss....

Athwart the picture of my Lady, over the great chimney-piece, it throws a bread bend-sinister of light that strikes down crookedly into the hearth, and seems to rend it. (116, cf. p. 32) Chesney in the sun is only somewhat more inviting than Chesney in the rain and gloom, for the brilliancy of the prospect is somewhat
tee dazzling -- sharp, brittle, and cold -- and the bar of light that strikes the portrait and the hearth bears an unconcealed menace.39

39The suggestion of illegitimacy in the word play "bend-sinister of light" is a mysterious touch similar to that of the parenthetical "(who is childless)" in the first description.

(At this point the prophetic shadow and the alternation of light and gloom on the estate are established as important motifs.)

A skillfully elaborated repetition announces the arrival of the entourage at Chesney at the moment that day is yielding to an ominous night. The descriptive insistence on coldness and sharpness now has a chilling effect:

Though the same cold sunshine, and the same sharp wind, my Lady and Sir Leicester, in their travelling chariot ... start for home. [from Paris],...
Through the same cold sunlight -- colder as the day declines, -- and through the same sharp wind -- sharper as the separate shadows of bare trees gloom together in the woods, and as the Ghost's Walk, touched at the western corner by a pile of fire in the sky, resigns itself to coming night, -- they drive into the park. (118)

The impressionistic sentence in which Lady Dedlock's spiritual state was implicitly contrasted with that of the keeper's family has a counterpart in the description of her boredom amidst the teeming life of Paris (see quote and commentary, p. 44). It is now clear that her ennui is independent of her surroundings and that the Gothic emanations at Chesney reflect her withdrawal and prophesy impending tragedy. 40

40 Other suggestive references to the first description are found in phrasal repetitions and resemblances. "Down in Lincolnshire" recurs as well as many less obvious similarities: compare, for example "She cannot, therefore, go too fast from Paris" with the earlier "Therefore my Lady Dedlock has come away from the place in Lincolnshire" both of which immediately follow the parallel dramatizations of her boredom.

In the same episode, we see Chesney Wold in the glitter of its social revival, but something is amiss; what looks like life hints of death. The means by which the falseness of appearance is suggested bear examination: 41

41 Unfortunately, Dickens does not let it rest with suggestion, but lectures the reader on Dandyism, his indictment of which is summed up by a figure highly reminiscent of the reference to fashion as a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton which cannot hear or see the larger worlds in purposeful motion outside its sphere: "There is perhaps more Dandyism at Chesney Wold than the brilliant and distinguished circle will find good for itself in the long run. For it is, even with the stilllest and politest circles, as with the circle the necromancer draws around him -- very strange appearances
may be seen in active motion outside. With this difference; that, being realities and not phantoms, there is the greater danger of their breaking in." (123)

/mirrors reflect/ the entire collection of faces that have come to pass a January week or two at Chesney Wold, and which the fashionable intelligence ... hunts with a keen scent, from their breaking cover at the Court of St. James's to their being run down to Death. The place in Lincolnshire is all alive. By day, guns and voices are heard ringing in the woods .... Seen by night, from distant openings in the trees, the row of windows in the long drawing-room, where my Lady's picture hangs over the great chimney-piece, is like a row of jewels set in a black frame. On Sunday, the chill little church is almost warmed by so much gallant company.... (121)

The vitality of the details is undercut in a variety of ways. The juxtaposition of the metaphoric "running down to Death" of society by the fashionable intelligence with the assertion that Chesney Wold is "all alive" is slightly unsettling because of its gratuitousness. The lavish sensuousness of the jewelled windows image is somewhat offset by another gratuitous reference to the portrait of Lady Dedlock with its darkly mysterious overtones and by the perspective -- not only is the focus remote but the allusion to the woods recalls their Gothic gloom. Moreover, the final qualification, although humorous, belies the appearance of full-bodied life -- "the chill little church" is "almost" but not quite warmed by the company.

In the next appearance of Chesney Wold, the invisible filaments that connect it with the larger world are mysteriously hinted at. The chapter juxtaposes three environments: Chesney Wold, in which Sir Leicester is royally ensconced with the gout; the "muffled and dreary" town house, between Chesney and which Lady Dedlock is restlessly flitting; and the slum Tom-All-Alone's. The episode begins
with a rhythmic imitation:

My Lady Dedlock is restless, very restless. The astonished fashionable intelligence hardly knows where to have her. Today, she is at Chesney Weld; yesterday she was at her house in town; tomorrow, she may be abroad, for anything the fashionable intelligence can with confidence predict. (166)

From her nervous activity, Dickens cuts to a scene in which a stately cadence and a scheme of archaic diction and images of royalty portray Sir Leicester goutstricken -- immobilized, but complacent -- in the rich comfort of the "Chesney Weld drawing-room (see my discussion and quote, p. 45)" From thence, to the dreary town house, and from thence to the dilapidated slum in which Jo lives (see my discussion p. 63). "What connection can there be," Dickens asks, "between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom ...?" (167) In the narrative that follows, the connection is seen to be one of subtle vibrations, for when Lady Dedlock's aimless activity becomes purposeful -- when she visits the grave of her lover with Jo as guide -- the repose of her husband, which was undisturbed by her restlessness, is unaccountably shaken: he fidgets and complains to Mrs. Rouncewell that "the rain makes such a monotonous pattering on the terrace, that he can't read the paper, even by the fireside in his own snug dressing-room," while the housekeeper remarks to Rosa that it is the step on the Ghost's Walk, never more distinct than that night. So it is in this delicately balanced universe, Dickens obliquely demonstrates; disturbances in one part cause repercussions in others, and even those muffled up tight in snug dressing rooms will be affected by them.

The next glimpse of Chesney offers a new perspective, Through
the innocent, and therefore objective, eyes of Esther and Ada, the
estate is seen in summer in all its lushness of color and detail.
In the absence of Lady Dedlock's troubled spirit and its emanations,
and before Esther has discovered her own involvement in the house's
history, 4 Chesney appears -- this one time -- in a tranquil

When Esther returns to Chesney to recuperate from the small-
pox and Lady Dedlock reveals herself to her daughter, Esther's trauma
is reflected in the Gothic images that darken her view of the estate.
The evening becomes gloomy, overcast, and sad; there are dark shades
and fitful flights of bats; windows are dark, "old stone lions and
grotesque monsters bristled outside dens of shadow, and snarled at
the evening gleam," deep voices (of wind, weathercocks, dogs, and
clocks) issue from the stables. Seized by the appalling thought that
it is she who is to fulfill the legend of the Ghost's Walk, Esther
runs in terror until the park lays "sullen and black" behind her.
See p. 390.

chiarascuro of light and shadow (rather than the extremes of damp
gloom and cold brilliance):

The house with gable and chimney, and tower, and turret, and
dark doorway, and broad terrace walk, twining among the
balustrades of which, and lying heaped upon the vases, there
was one great flush of roses, seemed scarcely real in its
light solidity, and in the serene and peaceful hush that rested
on all around it. To Ada and to me, that above all, appeared
the pervading influence .... (188)

After this, gloom redescends. When the place in Lincolnshire is
next seen, the waters are out again and the cold and damp defy the
fires that the best Dedlock timber can produce. Now Lady Dedlock's
desire to escape the boredom of the country is joined by the need of
Sir Leicester to escape the bone-penetrating damp (see pp. 296-297).
Throughout the narrative to come, they shuttle back and forth between
Chesney and London in an effort to flee the separate "enemies" that
pursue them and yet carry out their social duties.

An impressionistic contrasting description introduces the next Dedlock episode; by the chapter's end, its images of "dignified contentment" are dramatically reversed:

Chesney Wold is shut up, carpets are rolled into great scrolls in corners of comfortless rooms .... Around and around the house the leaves fall thick -- but never fast, for they come circling down with a dead lightness that is sombre and slow. Let the gardener sweep and sweep the turf as he will, and press the leaves into full barrows and wheel them off, still they lie ankle-deep. Howls the shrill wind round Chesney Wold; the sharp rain beats, the windows rattle, and the chimneys growl. Mists hide in the avenues, veil the points of view, and move in funeral-wise across the rising grounds ....

But the house in town, which is rarely in the same mind as Chesney Wold at the same time; ... the house in town shines out awakened. As warm and bright as so much state may be, as delicately redolent of pleasant scents that bear no trace of winter as hothouse flowers can make it; soft and hushed, so that the ticking of the clocks and the crisp burning of the fires alone disturb the stillness in the rooms; it seems to wrap those chilled bones of Sir Leicester's in rainbow-colored wool. And Sir Leicester is glad to repose in dignified contentment before the great fire in the library. (305)

The Gothic description of Chesney is reminiscent of inferior graveyard poetry, with literary conventions falling "thick and fast." Repetition and poetic meters create dream-like rhythms, while alliteration, personification, and even a trite "poetic" inversion heighten the dismal effect. (It is curious to find here a type of poetic rhetoric that Dickens satirizes elsewhere. Cf. in Martin Chuzzlewit, the literary lady's "Howls the sublime, and softly sleeps the calm Ideal, in the whispering chambers of Imagination." 521) Still, Dickens' sense for the particularizing detail mitigates the deadening effect of the conventions, and the second part further redeems the first with its delicately sensuous images and diction.
The "rainbow-colored wool" metaphor is not only striking in itself, but subtly recalls other references to Sir Leicester's "muffled" or "jeweller-cottoned" existence. Furthermore, although here it evokes an epitome of physical wellbeing, by the end of the chapter the soft, hushed "woolen" atmosphere has a different dimension; for, while Lady Dedlock is sobbing out her anguish in her bedroom, Sir Leicester oblivious, "basks in his library, and dozes over his newspaper."

"Words, sobs, and cries, are but air; and air is so shut in and shut out throughout the house in town, that sounds need be uttered trumpet-tongued indeed by my Lady in her chamber, to carry any faint vibration to Sir Leicester's ears; and yet this cry is in the house, going upward from a wild figure on its knees. (312)

The courteous, laissez-faire basis of this marriage has led to a tragic estrangement. Lady Dedlock is never to know the extent of her husband's devotion to her and he will not know her trouble until she is past his help.

When electioneering begins, the London season ends and Chesney is once more readied for the arrival of the family. Again, the transition is effected with an impresionistic play of light and shadow, and again, images of fertility are undercut. The setting sun fires the house with a brief warmth and glory, but as it recedes, the shadow on the portrait grows more menacing and when the moon is finally up, the "great house ... is like a body without life."43 (428)

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43 The season at Chesney Wold is summer, but we are not shown the estate in its summertime lushness. Instead, the scene is confined to the drawing-room where Sir Leicester, even in summer, "always has his own particular fire in the evening."
Through some of the fiery windows beautiful from without, and set, at this sunset hour, not in dull grey stone but in a glorious house of gold, the light excluded at other windows pours in, rich, lavish, overflowing like the summer plenty in the land. Then do the frozen Dedlocks thaw.

But the fire of the sun is dying. Even now the floor is dusky, and shadow slowly mounts the walls, bringing the Dedlocks down like age and death. And now, upon my lady's picture over the great chimney-piece, a weird shade falls from some old tree, that turns it pale, and flutters it, and looks as if a great arm held a veil or hood, watching an opportunity to draw it over her. Higher and darker rises shadow on the wall -- now a red gloom on the ceiling -- now the fire is out. (428)

The next episode of the Dedlock story is introduced by an evocative transition from Lincolnshire to Town. Again, there is a reference to the world of fashion's maintaining its distance from the rest of the solar system:

The place in Lincolnshire has shut its many eyes again, and the house in town is awake. In Lincolnshire, the Dedlocks of the past doze in their picture frames, and the low wind murmurs through the long drawing room as if they were breathing pretty regularly. In town, the Dedlocks of the present rattle in their fire-eyed carriages through the darkness of the night ... The fashionable world -- tremendous orb, nearly five miles round -- is in full swing, and the solar system works respectfully at its appointed distances.

Where the throng is thickest, where the lights are brightest, where all the senses are ministered to with the greatest delicacy and refinement, Lady Dedlock is. (492-493)

In the final line, Dickens links Lady Dedlock (on whom the hunt is now closing in) by means of a subtle rhythmic echo, to Chancery and the Lord Chancellor, an equally doomed personage. (Compare "The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest and the muddy streets are muddiest," etc. p. 1.)

In the final episodes (Lady Dedlock having fled the town house and disappeared into a wintry night, Esther and Bucket riding through the sleet in a nightmare search for her, and Sir Leicester, semi-
paralyzed by a stroke, attended by Mrs. Rouncewell and George),
the suspense is skillfully managed by a technique of poetic
indirection which is perhaps one of Dickens' original contributions
to the novel. Portions of Esther's narrative, a first-hand account

See p. 90 for other uses of poetic indirection in the portrayal
of violent event.

of the search, are intercut with scenes of the dismal town house
where a hopeful vigil is maintained for the sake of Sir Leicester.
By alternating between the feverish pace of the search and the intense
silences of the vigil, Dickens achieves a heightened drama that also
allows for reflection on the various dimensions of the crisis. In
the chapter "A Wintry Day and Night," the fatalistic motifs associated
with the family houses are mingled (e.g. the drip of the Ghost's Walk
sounds upon the roof of the town house, etc.); the effect is to
generalize the atmosphere of death and gloom and cast the crisis into
a broader framework: the shattering of Sir Leicester's personal life
becomes microcosmic of the collision of the insulated British
aristocracy with social realities, which was predicted in the novel's
beginning. 45

Dickens wants it understood, however, that Sir Leicester's
courage and loving generosity in meeting the crisis are personal
qualities rather than marks of class.

The dominant images are of gloom, shadow, cold, and damp, bravely
but futilely opposed by the warmth and cheer of tended fires.
Throughout the long day and night as Sir Leicester lies in the deepening gloom and then blackness of his chamber staring into the mist and sleet outside, he rouses himself only to command that "good fires" be lit in her rooms and all things be in a state of inviting readiness for her return, and "he brightens when a quiet pretence is made of looking at the fires in her rooms, and being sure that everything is ready to receive her." (602)

However, the shadow that in the past darkened Lady Dedlock's portrait at Chesney Wold has crept into the marrow of the town house:

Dark and cold as the wintry day is, it is darker and colder in these deserted chambers than in many a hut that will barely exclude the weather; and though the servants heap fires in the grates, and set the couches and chairs within the warm glass screens that let their ruddy light shoot through to the furtherest corners, there is a heavy cloud upon the rooms which no light will dispel. (597-598)

And the sound of the dripping that once disturbed Sir Leicester at Chesney Wold when his wife visited the grave of her lover invades the silence of the town house at the time, we may suppose, when the legend of the Ghost's Walk is completed and Lady Dedlock lies dead on the ground of that same cemetery:

It is falling still; upon the roof, upon the skylight; even through the skylight, and drip, drip, drip, with the regularity of the Ghost's Walk, on the stone floor below. (604)

In the penultimate chapter in the novel, "Down in Lincolnshire," we are back at the estate in "altered days." What was first a body in repose and then a dying body is now rapidly sinking into oblivion. Echoes of phrases, rhythms, and images convey memories of Chesney
in livelier times, but stylized syntax and diction suggest the rapid progress of rigor mortis and consign Chesney and its principal occupant to legend. Inversion and archaic diction, for example, create an effect as antiquated and yet dignified as Sir Leicester:

Up from among the fern in the hollow, and winding by the bridle road among the trees, comes sometimes to this lonely spot the mausoleum the sound of horses' hoofs. Than may be seen Sir Leicester -- invalided, bent, and almost blind, but of worthy presence yet -- riding with a stalwart man beside him, constant to his bridle-rein. (660)

A goodly sight it is to see the grand old housekeeper ... going to church on the arm of her son, and to observe -- which few do, for the house is scant of company in these times -- the relations of both towards Sir Leicester, and his towards them. (661)

Story book phrases combined with reminiscences add to the distanced romantic atmosphere:

In one of the lodges of the park; that lodge within sight of the house where, once upon a time, when the waters were out down in Lincolnshire, my Lady used to see the Keeper's child; the stalwart man, the trooper formerly, is housed. (660)

The images of light and shadow, warmth and damp are shaded off in the touching description of Sir Leicester, a lonely remnant in the dying light of his drawing-room:

The greater part of the house is shut up, and it is a show house no longer; yet Sir Leicester holds his shrunken state in the long drawing-room for all that, and reposes in his old place before my Lady's picture. Closed in by night with broad screens, and illumined only in that part, the light of the drawing-room seems gradually contracting and dwindling until it shall be no more. A little more, in truth, and it will be all extinguished for Sir Leicester .... (661)

At the chapter's end, Chesney Wold sits for its final portrait. The estate, which has been described earlier as in a "majestic sleep," in "stately repose" and (by Esther) in "undisturbed repose" has now sunk into "dull repose":
Thus Chesney Wold. With so much of itself abandoned to darkness and vacancy; with so little change under the summer shining or the wintry lowering; so sombre and motionless always -- no flag flying now by day, no rows of lights sparkling by night; with no family to come and go, no visitors to be the souls of pale cold shapes of rooms, no stir of life about it; -- passion and pride, even to the stranger's eye, have died away from the place in Lincolnshire, and yielded it to dull repose. (662)

Whereas the novel's beginning juxtaposed the Lincolnshire description with that of Chancery, here the death of Chesney is followed by a description of Esther's Bleak House, a higher incarnation of the Keeper's lodge which once put Lady Dedlock out of spirits, and, in an oblique sense, a hopeful heir to Chesney Wold.

In his final image of Chesney, Dickens seems to yield to a nostalgia for which the preceding episodes provide little rationale. There are only rare glimpses of Chesney which suggest the vitality he associates here with the time before Lady Dedlock's death. Moreover, he has made it clear that the passion and pride were hollow and that Chesney was afflicted with a mortal disease. Despite this clear intent, however, there have been points at which he has allowed sensuous descriptive touches (the play of sunlight and firelight, the lushness of the landscape) to overcome an effect of sterility, and in his final summation, too, Dickens may have been more influenced by the romantic possibilities of Chesney Wold than is entirely consistent with his overall development of the theme.

The "poetic impressionism" of the later novels represents a skillfull translation of natural talent into artistic method. This
"turning to account" of his rhythmic afflatus is a major element in Dickens' larger effort to bring the novel closer to theatre or oral tale, thereby breaking through some of the barriers that inhibit a direct experiencing of written narrative. In this regard, the method is closely allied to Dickens' hope that his writings would help to enlarge the sympathetic imagination of his audience. The impressionistic method is also related to Dickens' efforts to adapt the form of the serial novel to his symbolic mode of perception. In my discussion of Great Expectations, David Copperfield and Bleak House particularly, I have tried to illustrate some of the roles of impressionistic prose in the symbolic method.

The development of impressionistic techniques had the effect of minimizing, or compensating for, some of Dickens' stylistic weaknesses. By this, I do not mean simply that Dickens disciplined aspects of the earlier style, but that impressionism helped create a new dramatic balance in the novels in which stylistic weaknesses, while they were not altogether eliminated, were de-emphasized.

For one thing, the development of such techniques as author-persona and rhythmically-deployed symbolic character meant that Dickens' view was mediated dramatically, and, consequently, he had to resort less often to direct statement, which in the early novels had often involved doses of conventional rhetoric, didacticism, and sentimentality. Even when the latter elements occur in the mature novels, they are not as obtrusive as earlier, for they usually function within the context of an impressionistic motif which restrains or enriches them.
For example, the stereotypical characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* are poeticized by their rhythmic-symbolic treatment; in *Bleak House* impressionistic prose adds drama and thematic suggestiveness to the melodramatic characterization of Lady Dedlock and Chesney Wold; and in *Dombey and Son* the sentimentality of the Paul and Florence motifs and the melodrama of the Dombey and Carker motifs are nearly always attenuated, and in some cases are artistically controlled, by being developed in terms of the novel's major impressionistic symbols: the ocean, the railroad, and the enchanted house.

Impressionistic techniques also helped open areas for Dickens that as a young novelist he had attempted infrequently and unsatisfactorily. I am thinking in particular of the subjective exploration of character. Throughout his career, Dickens remained scornful of the "dissective" or analytic, approach although he became increasingly interested in personality complexities. Impressionism offered a means of portraying a character's psychic life, that is, of suggesting inner subtleties of personality, without being directly analytical. In *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, Dickens uses the medium of poetically heightened memory images to dramatize the secret sources of creative imagination -- the desires, vanities, shames and other psychic wounds -- in the narrator-protagonists David and Pip.

To the end of his career, Dickens never stopped growing as an artist, and for him this meant in part a continual search for new ways of presenting his materials dramatically. I have attached the general label of "prose impressionism" to this diversity of experiment
because it deserves to be examined and recognized as one of Dickens' major contributions to the craft of the novel.
APPENDIX

DICKENSIAN CONSTRUCTIONS

There is syntactical and other linguistic experimentation in Dickens that this study has not been able to consider. As example, I want to mention two interesting stylistic phenomena -- Dickens' development of a language of circumlocution with idiosyncratic syntactical constructions and his coinage of peculiar, often poetic, structures of modification.

Circumlocution, or periphrases, is at the very heart of Dickensian prose. It is a central ingredient of his style from the beginning, a familiar tic, occurring less frequently and with more purpose in the later novels, but never disappearing from his works. It is basic to many of Dickens' local comic effects and many of his famous characters, Micawber and Pecksniff to name two of the most obvious. It can also have thematic importance, for example, in Little Dorrit where not only the Circumlocution Office but many of the characters are imprisoned by, or imprison others with, circumlocutionary rhetoric and where a plaintalker -- Doyce -- is a hero.

It is unfortunate to have to touch on this important topic so superficially and in regard to only one of its aspects -- that is, its syntactical shape. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the quality of some characteristic circumlocutionary structures in brief scope is to go to a novel which is crammed full of the language of indirection. In Great Expectations, circumlocutions function not
only as incidental comic touches, but also as serious characterisation (Joe's language, for example) and as satire. A few examples will illustrate some of the syntactical peculiarities which appear to be pet constructions, for they occur often in Dickens' periphrastic rhetoric:

\[\text{crossed fingers are Joe's and Pip's sign that Mrs. Joe is in a temper} / \] This was so much her normal state, that Joe and I would often, for weeks together, be, as to our fingers, like monumental Crusaders as to their legs. (21)

Here Camilla put her hand to her throat and began to be quite chemical as to the formation of new combinations there. (87)

These extensive arrangements occasioned us to be cut off uncereemoniously in respect of breakfast; .... (21)

She was most noticeable in respect of her extremities; for her hair always wanted brushing, .... (43)

Two other favourite constructions are put in the mouths of characters where their comedy is gently satiric, pointing up the ludicrous results of putting on verbal airs or trying to enhance or disguise self-reference:

"Camilla, my dear, it is well known that your family feelings are gradually undermining you to the extent of making one of your legs shorter than the other." (85)

"Without expecting any thanks, or anything of the sort," resumed Camilla, "I have remained in that state hours and hours, and Raymond is a witness of the extent to which I have choked, and what the total inefficacy of ginger has been, .... (87)

\[\text{Pumblechook referring to himself in a newspaper column} / \] the youth's earliest patron, companion, and friend, was a highly respected individual not entirely unconnected with the corn and seed trade, .... (233)

"I heard there by chance," said Wemmick, "that a certain person not altogether of uncolonial pursuits, and not unpossessed of portable property ...." (373)
Dickens is fond of coining unusual adjectival and adverbial constructions, forming most of them by a process either of transposition or ellipsis. Often, for example, he detaches an adjective or adverb from one construction and attaches it adjectivally, and unexpectedly, to another:

- pigs plunging and grunting in the dirty distance OCS, 32h.
- in a restless, tormented mood Pip wanders the weary western streets of London GE, 666
- I stand by bolting furtive gooseberries DC, 20
- the turnkey taking an early comb at his hair ID, 91
- Mrs. Wilfer arrived at the table, she took her rigid seat OMF, 580
- the Reverend Septimus left off at this very moment to take the pretty old lady's entering face between his boxing-gloves and kiss it ED, 52

Other types of transpositions result in reversal of expectation, as when Dickens completes a grammatical series with a non-like element:

- Snagsby: "greasy, warm, herbaceous, and chewing " (BH, 101); or
- when he substitutes for one element of a cliche a related term:
  "cannibals with sharpened stomachs" (UT, 118).

Ellipsis, in varying degrees and with varying success, is responsible for many unusual adjectival and adverbial constructions:

- during the tempest at Yarmouth staggering along the street ... and holding by people I met, at angry corners DC, 601
- his strength lying in a slangular direction BH, 114  Ellipsis plus pun
- the Jurymen hang about the Sol's Arms colloquially BH, 114
- Snagsby has given Jo a half crown ... to whom the law stationer relates his joyful and woful experience, suppressing the half crown fact BH, 203
Snagsby keeping a secret from wife to know ... that he has ... to conceal, and hold fast a tender double tooth, which her sharpness is ever ready to twist out of his head; gives Mr. Snagsby, in her dentistical presence, much of the air of a dog.

... a bystander ... must have known at whom she was glaring, by seeing her refracted from the countenance of the beglared one.

An earlier paragraph identifies monks of previous centuries with Minor Canon Corner ... stone walled gardens where annual fruit yet ripened upon monkish trees, were the principal surroundings of pretty old Mrs. Crisparkle...

Dickens' compound adjectives, also products of ellipsis, range from the fairly commonplace eddy-chafed arches; a dark corner, river-washed; the water of the kennels, wind-dispersed; champagne-flushed; house encompassed churches to the more unusual and, for the most part, more awkward the gone-out fire; Jagger's thief-dreaded watch; self-flung-away creature; thief-and-rascal crowded passages; a charger, whip-corrected; the button-gleaming Sloppy; Mrs. Veneering, aquiline-nosed and fingered; time and damp-worn monuments; the dead water-gurgling waste of the night.
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___________. See also Ford entry.


