Vertiginous worlds| the baroque in Dickens and Proust

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VERTIGINOUS WORLDS:
THE BAROQUE IN DICKENS AND PROUST

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Of those elements which compose our personality, it is not the most obvious that are most essential. In myself, when ill health has succeeded in uprooting them one after another, there will still remain two or three, endowed with a hardier constitution than the rest, notably a certain philosopher who is happy only when he has discovered in two works of art, in two sensations, a common element.

—Marcel Proust
INTRODUCTION

During a visit to Venice in 1844 Charles Dickens wrote his friend John Forster: "The wildest visions of the Arabian Nights are nothing to the Piazza of Saint Mark, and the first impression of the inside of the church."¹ When Marcel Proust's narrator of Remembrance of Things Past finally voyages to Venice he also writes: "After dinner, I went out by myself, into the heart of the enchanted city where I found myself wandering in strange regions like a character in the Arabian Nights."² That Venice's iridescent, sun-washed colors and maze of canals should recall the scenes of eastern tales is not surprising, however, for Dickens and Proust the Arabian Nights held greater imaginative importance than the casual analogy of real and fictional scenery. The book of oriental tales was one of the works that Dickens and Proust most loved as children. Their fictional characters also express


² "The Sweet Cheat Gone," Remembrance of Things Past, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Frederick A. Blossom (New York: Random House, 1934), II, 836. All references are to this edition. Hereafter this book will be referred to as SCG; volume and page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
this love. David Copperfield's memories of his childhood include

"a little room" where his father

had left a small collection of books...From that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe, came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy and my hope of something beyond that place and time—they and the Arabian Nights...³

During his second visit to Balbec Marcel tells his mother "that, to surround myself with memories of Combray...I should like to read again the Thousand and One Nights."⁴ As Marcel suggests, not only do these tales bear with them remembrances of childhood, they also keep alive the childhood sense of wonder so important to both novelists. Thus Sissy Jupe, one of the few characters in Hard Times to retain her childhood fancy, reads to her father "about the fairies...and the Dwarf and the Hunchback, and the Genie..."⁵ The Arabian Nights remained a favorite with Dickens and Proust throughout their lives and a major source of literary allusion in their works. Furthermore, the book furnished a model for the ways they structured their novels. They

³ Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (New York: The New American Library, 1962), p. 65. All references are to this edition. Hereafter this book will be referred to as DC; page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.

⁴ Marcel Proust, "Cities of the Plain," Remembrance of Things Past, II, 169. Hereafter this book will be referred to as CP; volume and page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.

⁵ Charles Dickens, Hard Times, ed. by George Ford and Sylvestre Monod (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.), p. 37. All references are to this edition. Hereafter this book will be referred to as HT; page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
were enamored of the organic form of the Arabian Nights, in which the seed of an image produces an infinite number of others and in which the movement of the narrative is always cyclical. Dickens rehearsed the same movement in David Copperfield when David and Steerforth "make some regular Arabian Nights of it" (p. 101): "It was a tiresome thing to be roused, like the Sultana Scheherazade, and forced into a long story before the getting-up bell rang..." (DC, p. 102). As Angus Wilson points out:

The Arabian Nights Entertainments are constructed on the basis of Sultana Scheherazade's nocturnal narrations which are, in the most literal sense, compulsive, for by leaving the Sultan each dawn in suspense she postpones the carrying out of his death sentence upon her. David Copperfield's dormitory stories are told under fear of losing the patronage of his hero, Steerforth.6

Marcel feels the same pressure. As he imagines the creation of his masterpiece he muses:

If I worked, it would be only at night. But I should need many nights, possibly a hundred, possibly a thousand. And I would live in the anxiety of not knowing whether the master of my destiny, less indulgent than the Sultan Sheriar, when I interrupted my story in the morning, would permit me to take up the continuation of it the following morning.7

Most importantly, however, perhaps no book exemplifies the baroque vision more completely than the Arabian Nights; and this dizzying


7 Marcel Proust, "The Past Recaptured," Remembrance of Things Past, II, 1120. Hereafter this book will be referred to as PR; volume and page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
fictional perspective is the ingredient which most closely binds two authors so dissimilar in other ways. Dickens and Proust re-create a vertiginous world. Following the Dickensian hero through the black labyrinths of London or Proustian characters along the decadent ways of Paris, the reader is reminded of anfractuous eastern passages, just as Marcel, following Charlus, thinks of

the old Orient of the Arabian Nights that I had been so fond of; and, little by little losing myself in the network of dark streets, I thought of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, seeking adventure in the remote quarters of Bagdad. (PR, II, 951).

Jorge Luis Borges defines the baroque as "that style which deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its possibilities and borders upon its own caricature..." The parenthetical phrase here is important, because the baroque world is one of impossibilities: space is infinite, but must be filled (thus Scheherazade's stories jump from real to imaginary places in an effort to cover all space); this attempt to populate space involves a maximum of detail, a characteristic baroque narrative device. A sumptuous dinner in Our Mutual Friend hints at the myriad of objects spanning the baroque universe:

Specimens of all the fishes that swim in the sea surely had swum their way to it, and if samples of the fishes of divers colours that made a speech in the Arabian Nights and then jumped out of the frying-pan, were not to be recognized, it was only because they had all become

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8 Quoted by John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," The Atlantic, 22, No 2(1967), 34.
of one hue by being cooked in batter among the whitebait.\footnote{9}
Marcel, hearing Vinteuil's sonata played by a quintet, says that "like a ray of summer sunlight which the prism of the window disintegrates before it enters a dark dining room, \textit{it} revealed like an unsuspected, myriad-hued treasure all the jewels of the \textit{Arabian Nights}."\footnote{10}
Like salmon swimming en masse to the spawning ground, these objects filling baroque atmosphere duplicate themselves, multiply into more objects in a further attempt to occupy space. The form of the \textit{Arabian Nights} necessitates such reticulate growth: each story begets another, each theme its variant, each person his double.

Just as baroque space is overwhelming in its infinitude, baroque time menacingly speeds toward a moment of doom. Sissy Jupe's father forgets his own fatality "in wondering whether the Sultan would let the lady go on with his story, or would have her head cut off before it was finished" (HT, p. 46). And Pip, about to learn the true nature of his expectations, calls on an analogy from \textit{Arabian Nights}:

\begin{quote}
In the Eastern story, the heavy slab that was to fall on the bed of state in the flush of conquest was slowly wrought out of the quarry, the tunnel for the rope to hold it in its place was slowly carried through the leagues of rock, the slab was slowly raised and fitted in the
\end{quote}


\footnote{10}Marcel Proust, "The Captive," Remembrance of Things Past, II, 557. Hereafter this book will be referred to as \textit{Captive}; volume and page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
roof, the rope was rove to it and slowly taken through the miles of hollow to the great iron ring. All being made ready with much labour, and the hour come, the sultan was aroused in the dead of the night, and the sharpened axe that was to sever the rope from the great iron ring was put into his hand, and he struck with it, and the rope parted and rushed away, and the ceiling fell. So, in my case; all the work, near and afar, that tended to the end had been accomplished, and in an instant the blow was struck, and the roof of my stronghold dropped upon me.11

If fate is arbitrary in Arabian Nights, the stories are even more so; usually time is overcome and space connected through the sharply unexpectedness of coincidence. Genies whisk baroque heroes backwards and forwards in time, trample all barriers and produce all space in a single object, much as in Borges' contemporary baroque story "The Aleph" the narrator sees an opticle device "probably little more than an inch," which shows "all space...actual and undiminished."12 Marcel, undergoing his own magical experience of space transcended, alludes to the eastern stories:

I wiped my mouth with the napkin he had given me; but immediately, like the character in the Arabian Nights who unwittingly performs precisely the rite that calls up before him, visible to his eyes alone, a docile genie, ready to transport him far away, a fresh vision of azure

11 Charles Dickens, Great Expectations (New York: The New American Library, 1963), p. 337. All references are to this edition. Hereafter this book will be referred to as GE; page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.

blue passed before my eyes; but this time it was pure and saline and it rounded upward like bluish breasts. The impression was so vivid that the moment I was reliving fused with the real present and, more dazed than on that day when I wondered whether I was really going to be received by the Princesse de Guermantes or was everything going to crash about my head, I thought the servant had just opened the window toward the beach and everything called me to go down and stroll along the embankment at high tide...
(PR, II, 993).

He sees in the Arabian Nights exactly the kind of magical-mystical phenomenon which reveals the "realities" that have eluded Marcel for so long:

I should have liked to be a character in those Arabian Nights which I never tired of reading and in which, in moments of uncertainty, there arose a genie or a maiden or ravishing beauty, invisible to everyone else but not to the embarrassed hero to whom she reveals exactly what he wishes to learn (Captive, II, 553).

The baroque style, of course, developed in Western civilization. Yet its application to the tales of the near East serves to transcend cultures, just as Borges' definition of the terms extends the baroque out of the context of the 17th Century. It is quite apparent that baroque prose style has had a solid tradition up to the present time: in this century from Joyce's cyclical achievement in Ulysses to John Barth who aspires to rewrite "Burton's version of The 1001 Nights, complete with appendices and the like, in twelve volumes,"13 much as Kafka, writing in his diary about Amerika, decides, "It was my intention, as I now see, to write a Dickens novel..."14 Similarly, Proust


resurrects Arabian Nights:

It is quite true that, when one is enamoured of a book, one would like to create something exactly like it, but one must sacrifice one's predilection out of a truth which does not ask our preferences and forbids us to give them a thought. And it is only by following this truth that one happens occasionally to come upon what one abandoned, and, even while keeping them out of one's mind, to write the Arabian Nights or the Mémoires of Saint-Simon of another period (I, II, 11201).

Dickens and Proust obviously belong to this tradition. This thesis, concentrating on Dickens' later novels (with the exclusion of A Tale of Two Cities and The Mystery of Edwin Drood) and comparing them to Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, will examine some of the characteristics of a baroque style of fiction and demonstrate how these characteristics apply to Dickens and Proust. The investigation of the similarities of the two authors will begin with an examination of their methods of comedy and characterization—the areas in which critics have seen most room for comparison. But, above all, it will show that both authors belong to a tradition which fictionally views man's condition as one of alienation in a whirl of fatal time and clashing space. This view produces not only similar thematic considerations but also comparable narrative techniques employed to give coherence to the anarchic worlds they portray: to make their fictional universes manageable, Dickens and Proust develop a stylistic world of metamorphosis of character, space and time. Finally, both authors believe that the object of their search for harmony, for release from baroque madness, for redemption, originates somewhere in their pasts, especially in their childhoods, when order was not yet
intellectualized into the dualities which plague adults; when the self-unified being recognized the "essence" of things around him and could communicate with that essence; when time did not yet hold the sharp edge of death. In Proust this artistic grace is found in mysticism and memory; in Dickens, in archetypes and eidetic imagery.
CHAPTER I
LINEAL DESCENDANCY

People even went the length of seeking out, in an isolated past, men of independent talent upon whose reputation the present movement did not seem calculated to have any influence, but of whom one of the new masters was understood to have spoken favourably... It may be because certain artists of an earlier generation have in some fragment of their work realised something that resembles what the master has gradually become aware that he himself meant at one time to create. Then he sees the old master as a sort of precursor; he values in him, under a wholly different form, an effort that is momentarily, partially fraternal.

—Marcel Proust

The similarities between Proust's art and that of Dickens are not coincidental. Proust read Dickens both as a child at Illiers and as a lycée student. In fact he knew passages of Dickens by heart. The most complete biography of Proust notes that Bleak House and Great Expectations were among his favorite books, and "Proust was delighted when Lucien Daudet pointed out that the relationship

2 Maurois, p. 36.
between Magwitch and Pip resembled that between Charlus and Morel. In England Arnold Bennet and John Galsworthy recognized Proust as Dickens' "lineal descendant." Certainly Proust exemplifies late Victorianism in his imagistic use of fog, candles, mirrors and kaleidoscopes, and, more surprisingly, in the spasmodic presence of a certain conservative morality, as illustrated in the following passages, the first from Esther in Dickens' *Bleak House* and the second about Marcel's mother in *The Captive*:

I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could, to those immediately about me; and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself.

I do not go so far as to say that she was right in doing good only when her heart had first spoken, and in reserving for her own family, for her servants, for the unfortunate whom chance brought in her way, her treasures of love and generosity, but I do know that these, like those of my grandmother, were unbounded and exceeded by far anything that Mme. de Guermantes or Mme. de Cambremier ever could have done or did (II, 604).

However, Proust's most obvious borrowings from Dickens are in comic method.

One comic method in which Proust is almost Dickens' equal is satire; he is as capable as Dickens of deflating pomposity or

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5 Maurois, p. 301.

6 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1956), p. 80. All references are to this edition. Hereafter this book will be referred to as BH; page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
bringing to light the ridiculous in government and society. Perhaps his greatest satirical creation is the archetypal diplomat, M. de Norpois, reminiscent of a host of Dickens' characters. In his brilliant satire of government in *Bleak House*, Dickens creates a flock of abstract parliamentary Lords Boodle, Coodle, Doodle, Foodle and Noodle whose warring factions disrupt the government:

> England has been in a dreadful state for some weeks. Lord Coodle would go out. Sir Thomas Doodle wouldn't come in, and there being nobody in Great Britain (to speak of) except Coodle and Doodle, there has been no Government. (p. 427).

The capital "G" government is also one of M. de Norpois' concerns; during his hilarious conversation at Mme. de Villeparisis' Norpois tells Bloch that "efforts such as yours ought to be encouraged, and would be, if we had a Government." Norpois is the chronicler of an age he believes to be chaotic. In Mme. de Villeparisis' salon he "spoke to Bloch with great affability of the terrible, perhaps fatal period through which France was passing" (GW, I, 882). And warning young Marcel of the dangers of writing "otiose and byzantine" prose, he characterizes the time as one in which "we may be overwhelmed at any moment by a double tide of barbarians, those from without and those from within our borders." In these

7 "The Guermantes Way," *Remembrance of Things Past*, I, 882. Hereafter this book will be referred to as GW; volume and page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.

8 "Within a Budding Grove," *Remembrance of Things Past*, I, 363. Hereafter this book will be referred to as WBG; volume and page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
instances he recalls the Dickensian dinner when
my Lord Boodle, of considerable reputation with his party,
who has known what office is...tells Sir Leicester Dedlock
with much gravity, after dinner, that he really does not
see to what the present age is tending. A debate is not
what a debate used to be; the House is not what the House
used to be; even a Cabinet is not what it formerly was
(BH, p. 122).

Norpois' conversations are also reminiscent of the Dickensian party
which includes "the noble Refrigerator", Lord Lancaster Stiltstalking,
"a representative of the Britanic Majesty abroad": 9

'If John Barnacle,' said Mrs. Gowan, after the de-
generacy of the times had been fully ascertained, 'if
John Barnacle had but abandoned his most unfortunate idea
of conciliating the mob, all would have been well, and
I think the country would have been preserved.'

The old lady with the high nose assented, but added that if Augustus Stiltstalking had in a general way
ordered the cavalry out with instructions to charge, she
thought the country would have been preserved.

The noble Refrigerator assented; but added that if
William Barnacle and Tudor Stiltstalking, when they came
over to one another and formed their ever memorable coali-
tion, had boldly muzzled the newspapers, and rendered it
penal for any Editor-person to presume to discuss the
conduct of any appointed authority abroad or at home,
he thought the country would have been preserved (LD,
I, 354).

Norpois is also like Lord Stiltstalking in his inability to move
with the times: his conversation consists of an "exhaustive...glos-
sary of superannuated forms of speech peculiar to a certain profession,
class and period..." (WBG, I, 335); and a "predominant feature of

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9 Little Dorrit (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., n.d.),
I, 353. All references are to this edition. Hereafter this book
will be referred to as LD; volume and page numbers will appear in
parentheses following quotations.
his character" is that

in the course of a long career of diplomacy, he had become imbued with that negative, methodical, conservative spirit, called 'governmental,' which is common to all Governments and, under every Government, particularly inspires its Foreign Office. He had imbibed, during that career, an aversion, a dread, a contempt for the methods of procedure, more or less revolutionary and in any event quite incorrect, which are those of an Opposition (WBG, I, 334).

Lord Stiltstalking also lives in the past: "In the course of a couple of hours the noble Refrigerator, at no time less than a hundred years behind the period, got about five centuries in arrear, and delivered solemn political oracles appropriate to that epoch" (ID, I, 355). Like Lord Stiltstalking and Sir Leicester Dedlock, that "magnificent refrigerator" in Bleak House (p. 430), Norpois has the impermeable demeanor diplomats seem to think necessary: "M. de Norpois, while anything was being explained to him, would preserve a facial immobility as absolute as if you had been addressing an unheaving bust in a museum!" (WBG, I, 347). With Sir Leicester Norpois also shares the happy burden of a great name:

Sir Leicester Dedlock is only a baronet, but there is no mightier baronet than his. His family is as old as the hills, and infinitely more respectable. He has a general opinion that the world might get on without hills, but would be done up without Dedlocks (BH, p. 67).

Norpois is "an aristocrat of a certain type brought up from his cradle to regard his name as an integral part of himself of which no accident can deprive him..." (WEG, I, 334). The voices of both men shake "with a faint patriotic throb" (GW, I, 887). Sir Leicester even believes that "an interminable Chancery suit" is perfectly acceptable: "It is
a slow, expensive, British, constitutional kind of thing" (BH, p. 67).

In speech M. de Norpois most closely resembles the indomitable Podsnap of *Our Mutual Friend*. André Maurois recognizes that

the essence, the mainspring, of the Norpois style is this, that the diplomat will never allow himself to say anything that might possibly commit him irrevocably to any statement whatever. So precisely does he balance his sentences that they cancel one another out. At the end of any of his speeches we discover that he has said precisely nothing at all which could possibly be interpreted as a definite expression of opinion.\(^{10}\)

This style is especially apparent in Norpois' circumlocutions with Bloch about the Dreyfus case, when poor Bloch "would have been glad of details" (GW, I, 882). Maurois' definition can also be applied to Podsnap's style: "We know what Russia means, sir... We know what France wants; we see what America is up to; but we know what England is. That's enough for us" (OMF, p. 890). This ludicrous patriotism (To a visiting Frenchman Podsnap declaims, "We Englishmen are Very Proud of our Constitution, Sir. It Was Bestowed Upon Us by Providence. No Other Country is So Favoured as This Country" [OMF, p. 156]) is also evident in Norpois, who says, "Heaven be praised, France is not a South American Republic" (GW, I, 889).

Dickens' and Proust's ability to catch the nuances of speech attests to their imitative genius. In *Axel's Castle* Edmund Wilson suggests that Proust's social scenes cannot be matched outside of Dickens and that Proust learned much of his ability to heighten

\(^{10}\) P. 256.
character from Dickens:

Proust, like Dickens, was a remarkable mimic: as Dickens enchanted his audiences by dramatic readings from his novels, so, we are told, Proust was celebrated for impersonations of his friends; and both, in their books, carried the practice of caricaturing habits of speech and of inventing things for their personages to say which are outrageous without ever ceasing to be lifelike to a point where it becomes impossible to compare them to anybody but each other. 11

This comic method produces two fine fictional snobs—Mr. Turveydrop whose "high-shouldered bow" produces creases in "the whites of his eyes" (BH, p. 145) and Legrandin who makes "a profound bow, with a subsidiary backward movement which brought his spine sharply up into a position behind its starting point..." 12 But, most memorably, it creates the incorrigible Mr. Micawber, who has his French counterparts in Legrandin and Bloch. The following series of speeches—the first two by Micawber, the third by Legrandin and the last by the youthful Bloch—indicate the ability of Dickens and Proust to capture the ludicrousness of "elevated," exaggerated speech:

Under the impression...that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the Old Road... I shall be happy to call this evening, and install you in the knowledge of the nearest way (DC, p. 164).

My dear Copperfield...this is luxurious. This is a way of life which reminds me of the period when I was myself


12 Marcel Proust, "Swann's Way," Remembrance of Things Past, I, 95. Hereafter this book will be referred to as SW; volume and page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
in a state of celibacy, and Mrs. Micawber had not yet been solicited to plight her faith at the Hymeneal altar (DC, p. 415).

Like a nosegay which a traveller sends us from some land to which we shall never go again, come and let us breathe from the far country of your adolescence the scent of those flowers of spring among which I also used to wander, many years ago (SW, I, 96).

Believe me...and may the black Ker seize me this instant and bear me across the portals of Hades, hateful to men, if yesterday, when I thought of you...I did not lie awake weeping all night long (WBG, I, 564).

There are many other parallel types in Dickens' and Proust's great galleries of characters—the flirtatious, silly young girl, the loyal servant, the deadened society woman. In David Copperfield the "little blossom" Dora, to excuse herself from any lack of judgment, says repeatedly, "You know what a little thing I am" (p. 692), and uses her frivolity to boost David's morale:

'Then let me always stop and see you write.'
'I am afraid that won't improve their brightness, Dora,'
'Yes it will! Because, you clever boy, you'll not forget me then, while you are full of silent fancies...
'Please let me hold the pens,' said Dora. 'I want to have something to do with all those many hours when you are so industrious. May I hold the pens?' (p. 646).

The highly accomplished coquette Odette employs a similar rhetoric to beguile Swann in the first stage of their relationship:

I know I am quite useless...a little wild thing like me beside a learned great man like you. I should be like the frog in the fable! And yet I should so much like to learn, to know things, to be initiated. What fun it would be to become a regular bookworm, to bury my nose in a lot of old papers (SW, I, 151).

Besides her malapropisms and changeability, Proust's admirable
creation, Françoise, is endowed with a strong servant's loyalty: she shows great respect "not only for the family...but also for the stranger within our gates..." (SW, I, 22f); she sympathises "from the bottom of her heart, with the rigid chauvinism..." present in Marcel's father (SW, I, 85), and she has an inherent pride in her station because it reflects the glitter of her patrons—in the service of Aunt Léonie she feels superior "in the knowledge that the wealth of the mistress automatically ennobled and glorified the maid..." (SW, I, 81). The housekeeper of Chesney Wold, Mrs. Rouncewell, feels a comparable pride as she sits "as upright as the house itself" in the knowledge of the "antiquity and importance" of the Dedlocks—"Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock, my dear, are not fit subjects for joking," she admonishes her nephew (EH, p. 120)—and like Françoise she reflects the "rigid chauvinism" of her employer, so much so that her loyalties between patron and family are divided. Mrs. Rouncewell's mistress, Honoria Dedlock, also prefigures a character in Proust, the Duchess de Guermantes, although the Proustian creation is a much more three-dimensional character. Both women are centers of "fashionable intelligence," the most sought-after guests and the most perfect hostesses. These attributes serve to enhance greatly the positions of their gout-ridden husbands. Lady Dedlock did not have any family, but Sir Leicester married her for love and found that her qualities of "beauty, pride, ambition, insolent resolve, and sense" raised their home to "the top of the fashionable tree" (EH, p. 7). The Duc de Guermantes did not love his wife, but because she is "the most
beautiful, the most virtuous, the cleverest, the best-read member of the aristocracy" she is one whom

M. de Guermantes was only too fortunate to have found, who cloaked all his irregularities, entertained like no one else in the world, and upheld for their drawing room its position as the premier in the Fauborg Saint-Germain... Often moved to ill-humour against her, he was proud of her (GW, I, 1055).

Both women also suffer from ennui. Lady Dedlock is constantly "bored to death"; even in Paris she "has been bored to death. Concert, assembly, opera, theatre, drive, nothing is new to my Lady, under the worn out heavens" (BH, p. 116). As the Princess des Laumes, the Duchess tells Swann, "I find it quite boring enough to see the people I do know; I'm sure if I had to see people I didn't know as well...I should go stark mad!" (SW, I, 260), and assures her friend that "it's only when I see you that I stop feeling bored" (SW, I, 262). In fact Oriane de Guermantes in her later years "except for formal calls as few and infrequent as possible, no longer visited the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which, she said, 'bored her to death'..." (PR, II, 1083). This sense of a total lack of wonder in the two women is the symptom of a nihilism both share. For Lady Dedlock it proves physically destructive and fatal; for the Duchess it causes her to fall from the societal pedestal. Marcel remarks on her fatalism in a comparison with another dissatisfied woman:

Mme. de Guermantes, albeit at a far less advanced stage, showed the symptoms of the malady that was devouring Mme. de Citri. We have seen, moreover, that she had carried the germs of it from her birth. In fact, being more intelligent than Mme. de Citri, Mme. de Guermantes...
would have had a better right than she to this nihilism... (CP, II, 65).

Not only persons but whole social groups in Proust seem to echo those in Dickens. Edmund Wilson states that "there even seems distinguishable in the Verdurin circle an unconscious reminiscence of the Veneerings in Our Mutual Friend." Certainly both circles are comparable in the loyalty of the "faithful," in their "rallying around" their hosts and hostesses. Wilson also indicates the comparable roles played by Twemlow and Saniette: both are objects, articles of furniture, to be variously ridiculed, patronised or conciliated.

The manipulative aspects of Twemlow and Saniette introduce another narrative technique Proust shares with Dickens—the use of similes and metaphors for inanimate objects, plants and animals to develop character. The similarities in the use of animal imagery are especially striking. Animal imagery in Dickens is obvious: Uriah Heep is referred to as 12 different animals; Wholes as four, and Grandfather Smallweed as six (Phil Squod describes Smallweed as "a

13 *Axel's Castle*, p. 139.

14 In his old-fashioned graciousness and shyness, awkwardness in society and feeling of inferiority, Twemlow also resembles the Princesse de Parme, as evidenced in the following two passages:

When the first shock fell upon him, Twemlow twice skipped back in his neat little shoes and his neat little silk stockings of a byegone fashion, as if impelled to leap over a sofa behind him...(OMF, p. 23).

The Princesse de Parme jumped for fear of being knocked over. And it was in a choking voice, as though she were quite out of breath, that she now gasped: 'Zola a poet!' (GW, I, 1073).
leech in his disposition... a screw and a wince in his actions, a snake in his twistings, and a lobster in his claws" (BH, p. 359). Proust, on the other hand, is generally regarded as "passive," a describer of vegetation rather than animals. In his succinct and entertaining thesis on Proust, Samuel Beckett writes: "It is significant that the majority of his images are botanical. He assimilates the human to the vegetal. He is conscious of humanity as flora, never as fauna." Beckett is wrong: Proust is often conscious of humanity as fauna. As one critic points out, Proust's menagery, like Dickens', "consists primarily of birds, fish, and insects." In Dickens, for example, Uriah Heep gives "himself a jerk, like a convulsive fish!" (DC, p. 385), and Uncle Pumblechook has "a mouth like a fish" (GE, p. 32), as well as "fishy eyes" (GE, p. 76). In Proust M. de Guermantes' hand is described as "floating like a shark's fin by his side" (GW, I, 875), and at the opera Marcel is aware of the following fish-man:

The Marquis de Palancy, his face bent downwards at the end of his long neck, his round bulging eye glued to the glass of his monocle, was moving with a leisurely displacement through the transparent shade and appeared no more to see the public in the stalls than a fish that drifts past, unconscious of the press of curious gazers, behind the glass wall of an aquarium. Now and again he paused, a venerable, wheezing monument, and the audience could not have told whether he was in pain, asleep,

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16 Barbara M. Cross, "Comedy and Drama in Dickens," Western Humanities Review, 27, No. 2 (1963), 145.
swimming, about to spawn, or merely taking breath (GW, I, 744).

The favorite animal for both writers is the bird. In Dickens several characters are described as birds of prey: Gaffer Hexam is "an aroused bird of prey" (OMF, p. 17); Miss Mowcher, before she undergoes her metamorphosis of character, is a magpie (DC, p. 33); Mrs. Sparsit in Hard Times is "a bird of the hook-beaked order" (p. 147), and Grandfather Smallweed is "an old bird of the crow species" (BH, p. 282). Also, according to R.D. McMaster, "Most of the few amiable characters presented in animal imagery...are associated with birds." Such characters include Miss Flite in Bleak House and "Jenny Wren" in Our Mutual Friend, as well as the Misses Clarissa and Lavinia, Dora's irrepressible aunts (reminiscent of Marcel's Combray aunts):

They both had little bright round twinkling eyes... which were like birds' eyes. They were not unlike birds, altogether, having a sharp, brisk, sudden manner, and a little short, spruce way of adjusting themselves, like canaries (DC, p. 595).

Bird imagery is also abundant in Proust. During his first visit to Balbec Marcel notices a servant "very tall, plumed with superb black locks, his face dyed in a tint that suggested...certain species of rare bird." Watching the servant move about, Marcel is reminded "of one of those macaws which fill the big aviaries in zoological gardens with their gorgeous colouring and incomprehensible agitation"

17 "Man into Beast in Dickensian Caricature," University of Toronto Quarterly, 31, No. 3 (1962), 360.
Verdurin has "little bird-like eyes" and sits in her salon "perched on her high seat like a cage-bird whose biscuit has been steeping in mulled wine..." (SW, I, 157). The Proustian characters who receive the most ornithological attention are the Guermantes, "that mysterious race with piercing eyes and birdlike beaks..." (PR, II, 1072). The Princesse de Guermantes' first appearance to Marcel at the opera is accentuated by her bird-dress: "a great white flower, downy as the wing of a bird, fell from her brow (GW, I, 742), and "the soft halycon's nest which tenderly shielded the rosy nacre of her cheeks was—downy, dazzling, velvety, an immense bird of paradise!" (GW, I, 744). Oriane de Guermantes is constantly described as a bird: from Combray days Marcel remem-bers "the nose like a falcon's beak, the piercing eyes" (GW, I, 771); during her appearance in the courtyard of the Hotel de Guermantes she preens herself like a swan (GW, I, 734); at the opera she carries a swan's down fan and wears an aigrette which reminds Marcel "of the crest on the head of the bird" (GW, I, 751), and during the Duchess' walks Marcel glimpses various bird features—

Once it was not merely a woman with a bird's beak that I saw but almost the bird itself...She seemed naturally furred, like certain vultures...From the midst of this natural plumage, the tiny head arched out its beak and the two eyes on its surface were piercing-keen and blue (GW, I, 757f).

The Guermantes men are also described as birds. Robert de Saint-Loup's colouring, more marked in him than in any other of the Guermantes...gave him...such a strange plumage, transformed him into such a unique and priceless specimen
that one would have liked to own it for an ornithological collection; but when this flash of light transmuted into a bird also put itself in motion, in action, when, for example, I saw Robert de Saint-Loup come into a gathering where I was, he had such a way of throwing back his head gaily and proudly crested with its tuft of golden hair a bit thinned out, and such proud and coquettish suppleness in the movements of his neck—like no other human being—that, seeing the curiosity and admiration, partly social and partly zoological, which he aroused, you wondered whether you were in the Faubourg Saint-Germain or at the Zoological Garden, and whether you were watching some noble lord walk across a salon or some wonderful bird walk about in its cage. And with ever so little imagination, the bird's song lent itself to this interpretation as readily as did his plumage (PR, II, 877f).

Finally, the bird image is reincarnated in Robert's offspring:

That charming nose, slightly prominent like a bird's beak, had the curve, not of Swann's but of Saint-Loup's. The soul of that Guermantes was gone, but the charming head of that departed bird, with its piercing eyes, had come and taken its place on the shoulders of Mlle. de Saint-Loup (PR, II, 1112).

Animal imagery is often an ingredient of caricature, another method of characterization Dickens and Proust employ in common. E.M. Forster in his famous definition in Aspects of the Novel terms many of the characters in the Dickensian and Proustian galleries "flat." Flat characters, Forster says, "are constructed around a single idea or quality...The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence." For example, he suggests, Mrs. Micawber can always be associated with her own line, "I will never desert Mr. Micawber," and the Princesse de Parme can be summarized with the

Contrary to the prevailing opinion of his less astute critical readers, Forster is not derogatory in his use of the term flat characters. Forster states that "a novel that is at all complex often requires flat people" and suggests that "the outcome of their collisions parallels life" quite closely. Dickens, through his flat characters, Forster continues, "achieves effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow." In other words, caricatures, in having only one dimension, move in one indeterminate direction. They do not have the more complicated possibilities of direction found in round characters. Thus caricatures are unable to change course and avoid collision with other beings in the universe. Northrop Frye suggests that a flat character, or "humor" as he terms it, "can do only what his humour makes him do, and toward the end of the story he becomes the helpless pawn of a chess game..." In this way caricatures are excellent instruments for portraying the baroque universe. Furthermore, especially for Dickens, caricatures represent an intensification of a moment, the essence of a personality caught stationary in a single moment in time. Thus they become prime

19 Forster, p. 104f.
20 P. 108.
21 P. 109.
instruments for stopping and transcending the chaotic movement of time and space in the baroque world. For these reasons, it is necessary to examine more closely the substance and purpose of caricature in the Dickensian and Proustian worlds.
CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHIC PUNCH AND JUDY SHOW

To every man alive, one must hope, it has in some manner happened that he has talked with his more fascinating friends round a table or some night when all the numerous personalities unfolded themselves like great tropical flowers. All fell into their parts as in some delightful impromptu play. Every man was more himself than he had ever been in this vale of tears. Every man was a beautiful caricature of himself.

—G.K. Chesterton

A caricature is immediately recognizable upon his re-appearance. This is accomplished, as already noted, through his association with a "tag line" or with an animal or object. Recognition may also be triggered by certain characteristic gestures or acts—such as that of Mr. Micawber preparing punch—or by a predominant facial feature: all the Guermantes have prominent beaks; in Dickens noses, such as the Roman appendages of Mrs. Sparsit or Mr. Wopsle, seem to precede certain characters. Also caricatures are identified with and obsessed by particular personality traits, or as Frye suggests, "bound to an invariable ritual habit."¹ Thus caricatures can simply portray patterns of behavior: Mr. Turveydrop

¹ P. 56.
in *Bleak House* is "not like youth...not like age...not like anything in the world but a model of Deportment" (p. 145); and his counterpart in *Remembrance of Things Past*, Legrandin, is "the very pattern of a gentleman" (SW, I, 51).

Perhaps the most important aspect of caricatures—the one in which they most resemble primitive space, an infantile sense of time and uninformed memory—is their immobility: caricatures are seen in a certain point in time and they are not expected to, nor do they, change. G.K. Chesterton, one of the most ardent supporters of Dickens' caricatures, says that "all the moving machinery exists only to display entirely static character." Similarly of Proust, José Ortega Y Gasset writes, "The volumes...are composed of a series of pictures extremely rich in content, but static." Many of the characters are fixed, associated with certain locales, and without the inner workings which would enable them to move of their own volition. Instead, as Forster puts it, they are "little luminous disks of a pre-arranged size, pushed hither and thither like counters across the void or between the stars..." Another critic suggests that Dickens' characters belong to "a never-never land in a kind of

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4 P. 105.
eternity...There they all are fixed up forever like little twinkling miniatures fixed on snuffbox lids. In this way they form part of a mythology. They are divine because they are unaltered by time or circumstance. Chesterton writes: "It was [Dickens'] aim to show character hung in a kind of happy void, in a world apart from time—yes, and essentially apart from circumstance."

Such static creations have often come under attack. Detractors imply that caricature invites superficiality and incompleteness, and is predicated on exaggeration. Thus it presents a distorted view of humanity, or essentially a lie. Of course caricature is incomplete in that it does not portray multi-faceted personality. The purpose of fiction, however, is to give form to the formlessness of real life. Caricature, then, is necessary to represent fictionally, to present in manageable form, the idea of the absurd fragmentation Dickens and Proust feel is the condition of life. This form does not present superficiality. In the hands of master caricaturists, it presents a depth, pinpointed in one trait of character: the caricaturist gets to the core of his characters; he presents their essence. Sylvestre Monod remarks that Dickens' X-ray perception is so keen that even when a figure is reduced to two or three quaint features or gestures or phrases, they will not be gratuitous, they will much more probably be essential...It

5 George Orwell, "Charles Dickens," The Dickens Critics, p. 165.
6 P. 114.
is not because such aspects are not immediately perceived by everyone that they are unimportant or insignificant.  

Nor can the charge of exaggeration bear close scrutiny. Well aware of the accusations brought against him, Dickens believed that they were the result of his ability to see more than ordinary mortals. In fact, Dickens "reported the world very much as he always saw it," writes Monroe Engel. "Description of scenes and events in his letters sometimes sound exactly like passages of his novel." Furthermore, Dickens believed in the power of caricature to exaggerate "life in the direction of life," as Chesterton expresses it. Thus Dickens describes the following conversation about a portrait between Mrs. Lammle and Twemlow in *Our Mutual Friend*:

'Very good, is it not?'
'Charming!' says Twemlow.
'So like as to be almost a caricature?' (P. 462).

T.S. Eliot compares Dickens' characters with those of Dante: "Dickens excelled...in the creation of characters of greater intensity than human beings." His comparison is apt: like Dante, Dickens creates characters whose passions are held constant, persisting without

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10 P. 116.
11 "Wilkie Collins and Dickens," *The Dickens Critics*, p. 151.
initiating action; his caricatures present the intensity of a certain trait, concentrated without action in a world of divinity—whether that be a blissful eternity or a dark nether-world. Their dominant traits are so intensified, so forceful, that they leave no room for any others. Such characters cannot resist their passions; they are possessed, like Francesca, whose love possesses her without her ever having possessed it. When readers criticize caricature for exaggeration it seems they have no sense of mythology, no sense of their own ordinariness in being unable to perceive intensified essence; and, mostly, they seem afraid to see the reflection of their own absurdity. George Santayana writes:

When people say Dickens exaggerates, it seems to me they can have no eyes and no ears. They probably have only notions of what things and people are; they accept them conventionally, at their diplomatic value. Their minds run on in the region of discourse; where there are masks only and no faces, ideas and no facts; they have little sense for those living grimaces that play from moment to moment upon the countenance of the world. The world is a perpetual caricature of itself...12

Like Dickens, Proust has a great sense for those "living grimaces." Roger Shattuck refers to his "comic perspective of magnified realism:"13 and in his introduction to Remembrance of Things Past Joseph Wood Krutch places Charlus, Saint-Loup, the Duchess de Guermantes, Françoise and Mme. Verdurin "in the not very long list of characters who are

12 "Dickens," The Dickens Critics, p. 143.
more real than reality."¹⁴ Norpois and Legrandin can be added to this list. Both of these characters, Maurois points out, are also more real than they ever could have been in life:

From the interminable utterances of human beings the novelist chooses those that reveal character, just as the portrait-painter is always on the look-out for precisely that expression in his sitter which throws light on his deepest nature.¹⁵

Thus Proust, like his fictional Elstir, or "like Dostoievski, instead of presenting things in their logical sequence, that is to say beginning with the cause, shows us first of all the effect, the illusion that strikes us" (Captive, II, 645). Speaking to Albertine of Dostoievsky's characters, Marcel says: "They almost suggest, those buffoons, some trade or calling that no longer exists, like certain characters, in the old drama, and yet how they reveal true aspects of the human soul!" (Captive, II, 646). He could as easily have been speaking of Dickens: no one of Dickens' characters displays a complete human soul, but paneled side by side they display a splendid panorama of the human soul. In his own characterization, Proust attempts the same:

Like a geometrician who, stripping things of their perceptible qualities, sees only their linear substratum, what people said escaped me because what interested me was not what they wanted to say, but the way they said it in so far as it revealed their characters or their ludicrous traits... And thus the visible, reproducible charm of people escaped me because I no longer possessed

¹⁴ I, xv.

¹⁵ P. 258.
the faculty of confining my attention to it, like the surgeon who, under the glistening whiteness of a woman's abdomen, sees the internal disease gnawing away there.

It was of no use for me to go out to dinner, I did not see the guests because, when I thought I was looking at them, I was looking through them as with an X-ray (PR, II, 888).

He also believes with Dickens that caricatures intensify rather than diminish life. He says of "the white-haired old hermit Legrandin had become...that I soon had of him as it were a caricature, more truthful and penetrating than if it had been a perfect likeness" (PR, II, 1046). Like Dickens, Proust develops characters with certain predominant traits which seem to blot out other features: "By the transposition of the senses, M. de Cambremor looked at you with his nose" (CP, II, 221); and Bergotte is

a common little thick-set peering person, with a red nose curled like a snail-shell and a black tuft on his chin...
The nose...did not appear to be in the slightest degree ashamed of itself, but stood out alone there like a grotesque ornament fastened on his face (WLG, I, 417).

Both the incidents described above involve first meetings with persons. Especially in the case of Bergotte, Marcel has formed a mental picture of a different sort of person, and, in his shock at the real Bergotte, the grotesque nose predominates. These meetings suggest another ingredient for the manufacture of caricature—objectivity. With his combined journalistic and artistic powers of observation, as well as his preoccupation with "the mechanical play of some part" of the face,16 Dickens keeps an artistic distance from

his creations. Similarly in *Remembrance of Things Past*, at precisely
those moments when either Marcel or Swann feels alienated from society
caricatures emerge in full force. Love-sick and a social recluse
for some time, Swann attends a soirée at the Marquise de Saint-
Euverte's: "It was society as a whole, now that he was detached
from it, which presented itself to him in a series of pictures"
(*SW*, I, 248). Swann mainly sees a collection of monocles—that of
General de Froberville is "stuck like a shell-splinter...in the middle
of a forehead" and appears "to Swann as a monstrous wound" (*SW*,
I, 250); that of M. de Bréauté is glued to the side of his head;
that of the Marquis de Forestelle is "incrusted like a superfluous
cartilege" (*SW*, I, 251), and that of M. de Saint-Candé represents
"the centre of gravity of a face" (*SW*, I, 251). Swann sees of Mme.
de Franquetot simply "her eyes starting from her head" (*SW*, I, 252);
Mme. de Cambremer's head is "transformed for the nonce into the
pendulum of a metronome" (*SW*, I, 252), and M. de Palancy "with his
huge carp's head and goggling eyes" moves "slowly up and down the
stream of festive gatherings, unlocking his great mandibles at every
moment as though in search of his orientation..." (*SW*, I, 251). During
the final social scene in *Remembrance of Things Past* Proust's characters,
on display in the salon of the Princesse de Guermantes, formerly
Mme. Verdurin, are most Dickensian. Marcel has been away for several
years and so is released from habit which keeps him from seeing es-
sence afresh. Also, right before entering the Princesse's salon,
he has undergone the mystical experience which will lead to his
becoming an artist. It is not accidental that after his conclusion that he must work for "the permanent essence of things" (PR, II, 986) he immediately presents a host of caricatures. On the heels of having discovered how to transcend time he discovers in his friends and himself the devastating effects of time and describes the gallery as caricatures. In this salon Bloch's nose, which has always been large and red, is now "swollen with a kind of chronic cold" (PR, II, 1035), reminding one even more of Micawber, and M. de Cambremer has developed red carbuncles on his cheeks, "which hindered him from opening freely his mouth or his eyes" (PR, II, 1040).

The most striking aspect of these caricatures is their mechanism. For example, Bloch has begun to sport a monocle and "the mechanical touch which this gave relieved his face of all the difficult duties usually imposed on a human countenance..." (PR, II, 1036), and the Princesse de Guermantes has "a metallic rattle in her voice" (PR, II, 1075). In David Copperfield Uriah Heep has a wooden, carved face, like a walnut, and he is a corkscrew and a scarecrow. In Great Expectations Mr. Wemmick's mouth is described as "such a post office of a mouth that he had a mechanical appearance of smiling" (p. 188); Miss Sarah Pocket is "a little dry brown corrugated old woman" who has "a small face that might have been made out of walnut shells" (p. 98), and Miss Havisham, as Dorothy Van Ghent points out, has been changed into a fungus in retribution for her "guilty aggression against life in using...Pip and Estella as inanimate in-
straments of revenge for her broken heart."17 In *Little Dorrit* Panks is constantly described as snorting and puffing like a steam engine. In *Our Mutual Friend* Chadband is always a vessel; Podsnap has hair brushes instead of hair; Lady Tippins is a "yellow wax candle guttering down, and with some hint of a winding sheet in it" (p. 461), and Twemlow is considered an article of furniture by the Veneerings who "put leaves in him" by adding guests (p. 21). The "dark" novel which has the most grotesque, mechanized caricatures is * Bleak House*, which contains the necrotic lawyer Vholes and Krook, whose personality, Van Ghent states, "has so developed its thing-constitution that it has become a purely chemical phenomenon, and the moment of Krook's death is the moment when his chemicals (largely gin) have finally consummated their possession of him."19 The most variously thing-like creature in the book, however, is Grandfather Smallweed, who is a clothes bag, a bolster with internal feathers, a doll and a puppet: he "does not present a very animated appearance, until he has undergone the two operations...of being shaken up like a great bottle, and poked and punched like a great bolster" (p. 220). Smallweed's attributes are echoed by two characters in Proust: M. d'Argencourt, who is "a limp rag tossed hither and yon" (PR, II, 1032), and, more strikingly, M. de Charlus, as evidenced by the following passages:

17 P. 217.
18 P. 216f.
When Judy has by these means set Mr. Smallweed up again in his chair, with a white face and a frosty nose (but still clawing), she stretches out her weazen forefinger, and gives Mr. George one poke in the back. The trooper raising his head, she makes another poke at her esteemed grandfather; and, having thus brought them together, stares rigidly at the fire (BH, p. 283).

In a carriage a man with staring eyes and bent shoulders was sitting, or, rather, was placed and was making a great effort to sit up straight, like a child who has been told to behave properly. Beneath his straw hat there showed a wild forest of snow-white hair, while from his chin there flowed a white beard, like the beards of snow on the statues of river gods in the public gardens. It was M. de Charlus... (PR, II, 986).

Mechanical aspects manifest themselves most aptly in portrayals of humans as dolls and puppets. Mr. Smallweed is described as both. At one point Mr. George takes Grandfather Smallweed by the throat and drags "him upright in his chair as easily as if he were a doll..." (BH, p. 227). In the Princesse de Guermantes' salon, Odette, having become her own caricature—the face of a coquette Elstir had once painted "had finally been developed by Time to the point of the most perfect likeness" (PR, II, 1042)—is more than anything a doll: her golden hair looks "somewhat like the disordered wig of a doll" and her face is "equally doll-like...with its fixed expression of surprise" (PR, II, 1052). Also, many characters move with such rigidity and awkwardness that they seem manipulated by strings. In David Copperfield Mr. Spenlow is "got up with such care...and so stiff, that he could hardly bend himself, being obliged, when he glanced at some papers on his desk, after sitting down in his chair, to move his whole body, from the bottom of his spine, like Punch" (p. 355). By placing Judy Smallweed and her grandfather to-
gather in so many scenes in which Judy pokes him into shape, Dickens suggests another Punch and Judy show. Also he describes Grandfather Smallweed as "a broken puppet" (EH, p. 220). To Marcel the Duc de Guermantes' house becomes a stage for a puppet show, "as though dinner were being held in a puppet-theatre of skilful mechanism where the belated arrival of a young guest set, on a signal from the puppet-master, all the machinery in motion" (GW, I, 1028). This puppet show is re-enacted at the last soirée at the Princesse de Guermantes'. There M. d'Argencourt undergoes a "transformation" into a "friendly caricature of himself":

relieved, as he was, of a conscious personality, he looked more like a jiggling doll with a false beard of white wool as I saw him tossed about and moved up and down in this salon as though in a jointly scientific and philosophic Punch and Judy show...A Punch and Judy show of puppets bathing in the immaterial colours of past years, puppets personifying Time, which usually is not visible and searches for bodies in order to become so and, wherever he comes across them, seizes them to shew his magic lantern on them (PR, II, 1033).

Watching the ludicrous movements of M. d'Argencourt, Marcel realizes "that the human being can undergo metamorphoses as complete as those of certain insects" (PR, II, 1032). Both Dickens and Proust render complete metamorphoses of character involving such a division of parts that characters finally become simply disembodied features or traits. By his later books Dickens has developed this technique or artistic surgery to its utmost effect, so that often characters become metaphors of their inhumanity: the Veneering's servant is "the analytical chemist", Mrs. Podsnap, a rocking horse. Certain
features become so strong that they seem to possess a character, to
the point of even causing him to do physical harm to himself: in
Bleak House Mr. Vholes seems to have dispossessed himself of flesh,
instead he warms "his funeral gloves" and checks the ringing of a
bell with "his long black sleeves" (p. 467); he "takes off his close
black gloves as if he were skinning his hands, lifts off his tight
hat as if he were scalping himself..." (p. 417). Similarly, Proust's
characters have reduced themselves to masks, such as "the horrible
ossified mask" Berma wears in her old age (PR, II, 1087); and voices
seem disembodied from the speakers, as though "uttered by an improved
phonograph..." (PR, II, 1048). The hotel manager during Marcel's
first visit to Balbec is conceived as a very ugly man, "a sort of
nodding mandarin whose face and voice were alike covered with scars..."
(WBG, I, 503). As Marcel becomes more and more frightened in his
strange surroundings, totally alienated in a world of whirling, dis­
connected objects, all that registers on his consciousness are "the
pustules excised from the face of the cosmopolitan manager" (WBG,
I, 505).

These Dickensian and Proustian caricatures, "caught by surprise
in the midst of a universal metamorphosis,"19 reflect the precarious­
ness and fragmentation of a baroque world. This "metamorphosis of
forms," as George Poulet points out, was one of the primary loves of

19 McMaster, 354.
the baroque poets of the 17th Century. It is appropriate at this point to discuss in more detail the various aspects of this vision of a fictional, illogical world of metastasis which Dickens and Proust inherit.

CHAPTER III
IMPOSSIBLE CONCATENATIONS

The fictional baroque world is one of madness; its greatest spokesmen are prophets of the irrational. If rationality lies in the laws of cause and effect, it is madness when anti-laws of chaos reign; the baroque world is all effect and no cause. If sanity implies the dominance of reality, it is madness to view illusion as predominant. If logic means finding rational connections between events, objects and persons, it is madness to conceive a world of coincidence. The laws of the baroque world are those of catastrophe and convolution. In such a world there can be no smoothly functioning organization; all matters are resolved in collision. And, above all, the dynamics of this world are based on the arbitrary movement of space and time: in a swirling mass of space, time precipitates fatality and serves to disconnect rather than unify the sphere. In such a world there can be no human condition except that of isolation.

The world of "disordered order," to borrow Cervantes' phrase, is perceived by the baroque fictional hero from the moment he becomes aware of the "identity of things," as Pip says in Great
Expectations. Pip's first awareness of the world, like the new-born baby's, is from an upside down position. He is visiting the graves of his parents when Magwitch picks him up by the heels, making Pip "go head over heels" (p. 9f). From then on Pip lives in a world of illusion and learns that in the baroque universe reality is usually the inverse of the apparent. As Proust writes:

We, see, we hear, we conceive the world quite topsy-turvy... This perpetual error... is precisely 'life'... We have of the universe only formless, fragmentary visions, which we complete by the association of arbitrary ideas, creative of dangerous suggestions (SCG, II, 785).

Thus Pip, manipulated by Magwitch, sees the church turn first one, then another way. On awakening Marcel "struggled in an unsuccessful attempt to discover: where I was, everything would be moving round me through the darkness: things, places, years" (SW, I, 5). And Stephen Blackpool tells Mr. Bounderby:

Look round town—so rich as 'tis—and see the numbers of people as has been broughten into bein heer, fur to weave an' to card, an' to piece out a livin', aw the same one way, somewhow, 'twixt their cradles and their graves. Look how we live, an' wheer we live, an' in what numbers, an' by what chances, and wi' what sameness; and look how the mills is awlus a goin', and how they never works us no higher to onny distant object—ceptin awlus, Death. Look how you considers of us, and writes of us, and talks of us, and goes up wi' yor deputations to Secretaries o' State 'bout us, and how yo are awlus right, and how we are awlus wrong, and never had'n no reason in us sin ever we were born. Look how this ha' grown and grown, Sir, fro year to year, fro generation unto generation. Who can look on 't, Sir, and fairly tell a man 'tis not a muddle? (HT, p. 114).

Stephen's image of a muddle suggests a world of uncercurrents, crosscurrents and criss-crossing paths. The labyrinth, one of the
most frequent baroque images, Barth writes, "is a place in which, ideally, all the possibilities of choice (of direction, in this case) are embodied, and must be exhausted before one reaches the heart..." Critics continually refer to the works of Dickens and Proust as labyrinthine. Shattuck mentions Marcel's "years of wandering in the labyrinth of delusion," and Van Ghent lists the labyrinths of Tom-All-Alone's, Gaffer Hexam's hovel and Grandfather Smallweed's parlor. This list could be greatly expanded. For example, in *David Copperfield* Mr. Micawber advises David that he "might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road" (p. 164), in other words, that he might lose his way; taking David home with him, Micawber impresses upon the boy "the names of streets, and the shapes of corner houses" (p. 165), so that David, like Hansel, shall find his way back in the maze; and to find the debtor's prison David is "to ask my way to such a place, and just short of that place I should see another place, and just short of that I should see a yard, which I was to cross, and keep straight on..." (p. 173). The London of *Bleak House* is also a maze: Esther's first impression of the city is of "the dirtiest and darkest streets that ever were seen in the world... and in such a distracting state of confusion that I wondered how

1 34.
2 P. 102.
3 P. 228f.
people kept their senses" (p. 22). In *Hard Times* the labyrinths of
London are transported to Coketown:

> 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...It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another... (p. 17).

J. Hillis Miller notes the use of the word "labyrinth" seven times in *Little Dorrit*, including the "labyrinth of a world" (I, 21) and "the gloomy labyrinth" of Mrs. Clennam's thoughts (I, 51): all the images attest to "the multiplicity of paths trodden by the sons of Adam" (LD, I, 141). In the London of this novel there is "nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to breathe but streets, streets, streets" (I, 32). In front of Bleeding Heart Yard there is "a maze of shabby streets, which went about and about, tortuously ascending to the level again" (LD, I, 151); and going to his old home, Arthur crosses by Saint Paul's and goes down

> at a long angle, almost to the water's edge, through some of the crooked and descending streets which lie (and lay more crookedly and closely then) between the river and Cheapside. Passing, now the mouldy hall of some obsolete Worshipful Company, now the illuminated windows of a Congregationless Church that seemed to be waiting for some adventurous Belzoni to dig it out and discover its history; passing silent warehouses and wharves, and here and there a narrow alley leading to the river... he came at last to the house he sought (LD, I, 35).

*Proust's Remembrance of Things Past* is a novel of "ways"—paths,

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roads, railroad lines—all of which the hero crosses in an attempt
to capture elusive reality. Following Charlus along the dark alleys
of Paris, the reader enters a maze as dark as that of Dickens' London,
and Venice is the most perfect labyrinthian symbol:

I had plunged into a network of little alleys, calli
dissecting in all directions by their ramifications the
quarter of Venice isolated between a canal and the lagoon,
as if it had crystallised along these innumerable, slender,
capillary lines. All of a sudden, at the end of one of
these little streets, it seemed as though a bubble had
occurred in the crystallised matter. A vast and splendid
campo of which I could certainly never, in this network
of little streets, have guessed the importance, or even
found room for it, spread out before me flanked with charming
palaces silvery in the moonlight. It was one of those
architectural wholes towards which, in any other town,
the streets converge, lead you and point the way. Here
it seemed to be deliberately concealed in a labyrinth
of alleys, like those palaces in oriental tales to which
mysterious agents convey by night a person who, taken
home before daybreak, can never again find his way back
to the magic dwelling which he ends by supposing that
he visited only in a dream (SCG, II, 836).

In vain Marcel searches again for the marvelous piazza, but he can
not recover it until he discovers the redeeming magic of memory.

These images of labyrinths suggest illusory space. Certainly
the frequent domination of reality by illusion is a strong feature
of the baroque. In Metamorphoses of the Circle Poulet suggests
that the baroque poets, especially through their multitude of bubble
images, reflect this illusory world: "If life is an illusion, it
is an illusion which prolongs itself. Its duration is rendered
tangible by the number of events that succeed one another." This
sense of life gives it an iridescent quality, "constantly renewed,
but always discontinued. "Iridescent" is one of Proust's favorite adjectives: he employs it at least five times in *Swann's Way*. He is obsessed with the transient qualities of life: what at one point Marcel thinks real is bound to change; perhaps the life of dreams, he muses is more real than waking life. In Dickens, people are not what they seem to be: Blandois "had a certain air of being a handsome man—which he was not" (ID, I, 12); Mr. Venus' "eyes are like the over-tried eyes of an engraver, but he is not that; his expression and stoop are those of a shoemaker, but he is not that" (OMF, p. 97); John Harmon dons a number of disguises to hid his real nature, much as Mr. Boffin takes on temporarily the appearance of a miser, and Bradley Headstone, entering an unreal world of a murderer, sees Riderhood reflected as in a kaleidoscope:

Sometimes he saw the man upon the bed by a red light; sometimes by a blue; sometimes he scarcely saw him in the darkness of the storm; sometimes he saw nothing of him in the blinding glare of palpitating white fire (OMF, p. 701f).

Shifting lights and colors are appropriately represented in Dickens and Proust by kaleidoscopic imagery. In Proust everything eventually breaks up to reform into new groups:

The kaleidoscope comprises not only society groups, but also social, political and religious ideas, which temporarily spread out more broadly through refraction in the large masses but nevertheless are shortlived, like all ideas whose novelty succeeds in deceiving only minds that are not very exacting as to proofs (PR, II, 1012).

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5 P. 21.
Uriah Heep, the Iago of *David Copperfield*, has kaleidoscopic eyes—first red, then green, and finally "every shade of colour" (p. 619).

In a world in which the dream, or nightmare, quality dominates, there can be no logical sequence of events. Barbara Cross, comparing Dickens with Proust, suggests that "within the jagged, bizarre, and abrupt world, the causal sequence of human choice and illumination are continually interrupted." Indeed, it seems that any instance of causal sequence is an exception, an accident. Cross continues:

No strict syntactical logic secures the felt rationality of the fictive universe. The anacoluthons, the loose connections, the jumps in perspective create an impressionistic and circumstantial texture. The odd details which bump against each other seem to have issued from the chaos of the immediate.

Speaking similarly of Proust, Beckett writes:

Proust's chronology is extremely difficult to follow, the succession of events spasmodic, and his characters and themes, although they seem to obey an almost insane inward necessity, are presented and developed with a fine Dostoievskian contempt for the vulgarity of a plausible concatenation.

The character in Dickens who seems best to embody this irrationality is Mr. F's Aunt in *Little Dorrit*, a mad woman who says the impossible during improbable times: none of her utterances has any connection with the concurrent dialogue. Jack Lindsay says she "stands for

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6 146.

7 144.

8 p. 62.
the surrealist clap of the absurd..."9 Developing Lindsay's idea, a later critic writes: "Mr. F's Aunt...is all the irrationality of the world...The old woman is at the heart of the book; she is the analogical center of the chaotic forces that pervade it..."10

Mr. F's Aunt also is a symbol of human isolation, another profound feature of the baroque world. Speaking of Bleak House in The Wound and the Bow, Edmund Wilson writes:

Friedrich Engels, visiting London in the early forties, had written of the people in the streets that they seemed to 'crowd by one another as if they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and as if their only agreement were the tacit one that each shall keep to his own side of the pavement, in order not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd, while it never occurs to anyone to honor his fellow with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest, becomes the more repellent the more these individuals are herded together within a limited space.' This is the world that Dickens is describing.11

Similarly Poulet in Studies in Human Time suggests that "the Proustian world is always to be an intermittent world."12 Characters are dis-associated from the objects surrounding them, as evidenced in the following passages, the first from Little Dorrit and the second from The Sweet Cheat Gone:


Through all the rooms he wandered, as he always did, like the last person on earth who had any business to approach them. Let Mrs. Merdle announce, with all her might, that she was at Home ever so many nights in a season, she could not announce more widely and unmistakeably than Mr. Merdle did that he was never at home (I, 452).

For I felt myself to be alone. Things had become alien to me...The town that I saw before me had ceased to be Venice. Its personality, its name, seemed to me to be lying fictions which I no longer had the courage to impress upon its stones. I saw the palaces reduced to their constituent parts, lifeless heaps of marble...This unremarkable place was as strange as a place at which we have just arrived, which does not yet know us—as a place which we have left and which has forgotten us already (II, 837f).

Also the characters are constantly discovering their alienation from other beings. Little Emily, having cut herself off from her family, finally realizes that she has irrevocably disassociated herself from the most rudimentary ties of humanity. Pleading for compassion from Rose Dartle, she receives the reply:

'What is there in common between us, do you think?'
'Nothing but our sex,' said Emily with a burst of tears (DC, p. 714).

On his deathbed Gridley calls for mad Miss Flite, the only person with whom he feels bound: "It is the only tie I ever had on earth that Chancery has not broken" (BH, p. 268). Proustian characters, "like the two ways of Combray" are "vase clos, discrete and hermetic."13 Marcel is painfully aware of his alienation: "Each of us is indeed

alone," he writes (GW, I, 943). Not only casual connections but
also ontological relationships seem destroyed. After her illness,
Esther Summerson is thankful that no one could look at her and look
at Lady Dedlock "and remotely think of any near tie between us"
(BH, p. 386). Esther cannot even communicate with her mother: once,
seeing Lady Dedlock in a theater, she feels "so wide asunder" from
her "that any link or confidence between us seemed a dream" (BH, p. 448).

However, in fiction, people must meet to produce action. In
the baroque world the ligature is arbitrary, a habit of plot, and
produces what Alan Wilde terms "a terrible parody of unity"14 be-
cause it is the unnatural result of coincidence, "the violent connection
of the disconnected."15 The use of coincidence, Van Ghent states,
is a reflection "of a thoroughly nervous universe."16 Dickens'
Victorian plots naturally revolve around coincidence. For example,
in Bleak House Lady Dedlock's discovery, flight and death are the
outcome of two seemingly slight incidents. First Lady Dedlock notices
the writing of her former lover, Captain Hawden:

> My Lady, changing her position, sees the papers on the
table—looks at them nearer—looks at them nearer still—
asks impulsively:
> 'Who copied that?'
> Mr. Tulkinghorn stops short, surprised by my Lady's
animation and her unusual tone (p. 10).

14 Van Ghent, p. 223.
15 Van Ghent, p. 223.
16 P. 222.
Lady Dedlock's response starts Tulkinghorn on his relentless pursuit of the law writer's identity and connection with Lady Dedlock. The second coincidence involves Mr. Guppy, who, in touring Chesney Wold, notices a picture of Lady Dedlock and makes an unconscious association with Esther. He also begins a search for secrets, and his discoveries lead to Lady Dedlock's death. Coincidence thus predetermines fate.

A false coincidence plunges Marcel into his captivity with and of Albertine when Albertine lies about her intimacy with the friend of Vinteuil's daughter:

These habits of life shared in common, this broad outline which defined my existence and within which nobody might penetrate but Albertine, also (in the future plan, of which I was still unaware, of my life to come, like the plan traced by an architect for monumental structures which will not be erected until long afterwards) the remoter lines, parallel to the others but vaster, that sketched in me, like a lonely hermitage, the somewhat rigid and monotonous formula of my future loves, had in reality been traced that night at Balbec when, in the little tram, after Albertine had revealed to me who it was that had brought her up, I had decided at any cost to remove her from certain influences and to prevent her from straying out of my sight for some days to come (Captive, II, 433f).

As in the case of Lady Dedlock, coincidence often implies ensuing fatality. The moment of coincidence seems to set objects and persons in faster motion, to speed up time, just as Lady Dedlock's death is hastened by her quick look at the law papers. Coincidence reminds one of the friable nature of things. Musing on the acquisition of the name of Saint-Loup by Gilberte, Marcel writes, "Everything that seems to us imperishable tends to destruction..." (SCG, II, 852).

The sense of constant destruction lends a feeling of predetermination
to the baroque world. Proust's characters, as Beckett suggests, are "victims of their volition, active with a grotesque predetermined activity, within the narrow limits of an impure world." As Marcel writes,

Everything was predetermined from the moment when, unable any longer to endure the idea of waiting until the morning to press a kiss upon my mother's face, I made up my mind, jumped out of bed and, in my nightshirt, went and sat by the window through which the moonlight came, until I heard M. Swann leave (PR, II, 1122).

In Great Expectations the meeting of Pip and Magwitch outlines the rest of Pip's life. After visiting Newgate with Mr. Wemmick, Pip is preoccupied:

I consumed the whole time in thinking how strange it was that I should be encompassed by all this taint of prison and crime; that, in my childhood out on our lonely marshes on a winter evening, I should have first encountered it; that it should have reappeared on two occasions, starting out like a stain that was faded but not gone; that it should in this new way pervade my fortune and advancement (p. 285).

The baroque world is endowed with a certain inevitability of disaster. Edgar Johnson sees in the world of Bleak House a sense of taut inevitability... The movement of Bleak House becomes a centripetal one like a whirlpool, at first slow and almost imperceptible, but fatefully drawing in successive groups of characters, circling faster and faster, and ultimately sucking them into the dark funnel whence none will escape uninjured and where many will be crushed and destroyed.18

17 P. 69.

18 II, 765.
This fatal drawing together is re-echoed in *Little Dorrit*:

And thus ever, by day and night, under the sun and under
the stars, climbing the dusty hills and toiling along
the weary plains, journeying by land and journeying by
sea, coming and going so strangely, to meet and to act
and react on one another, move all we restless travellers
through the pilgrimage of life (I, 31).

In this novel Miss Wade is the prophet of doom:

'In our course through life we shall meet the people
who are coming to meet us, from many strange places and
by many strange roads,' was the composed reply; 'and what
it is set to us to do to them, and what is set to them
to do to us, will be done...

'Your pretty daughter,' she said, 'starts to think
of such things. Yet,' looking full upon her, 'You may
be sure that there are men and women already on their
road, who have their business to do with you, and who will
do it. Of a certainty they will do it. They may be
coming hundreds, thousands, of miles over the sea there;
they may be close at hand now; they may be coming, for
anything you know, or anything you can do to prevent it,
from the vilest sweepings of this very town!' (ID, I, 28f).

Inevitability produces a noxious web from which few can escape:
Marcel muses, "Life is ceaselessly weaving other threads between
human beings and events, that life courses these threads with one
another and doubles them to make the weft heavier..." (PR, II, 1111).

In *Bleak House* Jo, the "rough outcast," is "strangely entangled...
in the web of very different lives" (p. 649): the web brings together
Richard Carstone and Miss Flite—"What a fatal link was riveting
between his fresh youth and her faded age; between his free hopes
and her caged birds, and her hungry garret, and her wandering mind"
(BH, p. 244).

The main symbol of the anarchic world of *Bleak House* is Tom-
All-Alone's:
It is a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out; without a pane of glass, without so much as a window-frame, with the bare blank shutters tumbling away from their hinges and falling asunder; the iron rails peeling away in flakes of rust; the chimneys sinking in; the stone steps to every door (and every door might be Death's Door) turning stagnant green; the very crutches on which the ruins are propped, decaying... (p. 74).

This property whose guts seem to have been blown out represents the baroque world at its most terrifying, the product of madness, disorder, illusion, coincidence and fatality. Much of Dickens' fictional world reflects holocaust: Lauriat Lane suggests Dickens' characters can escape it only by death.19 Utter chaos also dominates the Proustian world. Shattuck writes:

The entire body of the novel...methodically overthrows the vision of life Marcel enjoyed in Combray; only his mother and grandmother (to whom he lives in such a close relation that he sees them by cinematographic time) survive the universal disaster.20

Such a world seems not only unlivable but unmanageable. The purpose of the baroque artist is to employ various techniques to bestow coherence on anarchy, to order disorder. The techniques he employs are those of exhaustion: objects must lose their hostile inanimation to become tolerable; the infinite must be filled and made finite to be manipulatable; events must be repeated to present a theme, and persons must double and multiply to give themselves meaning.

19 The Dickens Critics, p. 10.
20 P. 59.
CHAPTER IV

TECHNIQUES OF EXHAUSTION

Thus, in a prolix, gently-growling, foolish way, did Plornish turn the tangled skein of his estate about and about, like a blind man who was trying to find some beginning or end to it; until they reached the prison gate. There, he left his Principal alone; to wonder, as he rode away, how many thousand Plornishes there might be within a day or two's journey of the Circumlocution Office, playing sundry curious variations on the same tune, which were not known by ear in that glorious institution.

—Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*

On first experience baroque space is frightening, a vast atmosphereless void in which planets and people move erratically and collide without warning. To make this atmosphere livable it must be endowed with certain spiritual, human qualities. In the early pages of *Remembrance of Things Past* Marcel writes of his room "which trembled with its effort to defend its frail, transparent coolness against the afternoon sun" (SW, I, 61) and describes "the resonant atmosphere that accompanies hot weather" (SW, I, 62). Dickens also develops this sense of animate atmosphere. As in Baudelaire,

Dickensian space quivers with the perfumes of memory:

To the sense of smell, the house was like a sort of bottle filled with a strong distillation of mews; and when the footman opened the door, he seemed to take the stopper out...
...At the inner-hall door, another bottle seemed to be presented and another stopper taken out. This second vial appeared to be filled with concentrated provisions, and extract of sink from the pantry (LD, I, 124).

In the same novel Dickens describes "something" quivering "in the atmosphere as if the air itself were panting" (LD, I, 2). Intangible substances such as fog or smoke swell in the atmosphere and assume flesh tones. In Our Mutual Friend "inanimate London" is a "sooty spectre," a "foggy sea": "The whole metropolis was a heap of vapour charged with muffled sound of wheels and enfolding a gigantic catarrh" (p. 467). Sometimes this animate atmosphere is alarming, as when Pip feels "the choking vapour of the kiln" creeping "in a ghostly way towards me" (GE, p. 455). The beginning paragraphs of Bleak House present perhaps the most famous passage on the insidious qualities of the London atmosphere:

Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun.

...Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats...fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck...

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look (p. 1).

Just as the atmospheres of Dickens and Proust seem laden with the memories of their occupants, objects in these fictional worlds reflect the pasts of their living co-habitants. In fact, Marcel
raises objects "to the dignity of a person since, like a person" they have "a past, a memory" (Captive, II, 578): "We alone can, by our belief that they have an existence of their own, give to certain of the things that we see a soul which they afterwards keep, which they develop in our minds" (WBG, I, 411). In *Little Dorrit* Dickens writes, "The wheeled chair had its associated remembrances and reveries, one may suppose, as every place that is made the station of a human being has" (I, 384). In undergoing metamorphoses objects lose their remoteness and inaccessibility. When Bella Wilfer, her father and future husband share a supper in the office of Chicksey, Veneering and Stobles, even that usually awesome and cold environment becomes congenial: "The two brass knobs of the iron safe...staring from a corner, like the eyes of some dull dragon, only made it more delightful" (OMF, p. 668). Young David Copperfield, in the happy days of his childhood, feels that the Gothic trees of Elunderstone not only talk to him but also converse with each other: "The elms bent to one another, like giants who were whispering secrets, and after a few seconds of such repose, fell into a violent flurry, tossing their wild arms about, as if their late confidences were really too wicked for their peace of mind..." (DC, p. 17). Proust ascribes this pleasurable humanization to "the anaesthetic effect of custom" (SW, I, 8):

Custom had changed the colour of the curtains, made the clock keep quiet, brought an expression of pity to the cruel, slanting face of the glass, disguised or even completely dispelled the scent of flowering grasses, and distinctly reduced the apparent loftiness of the ceiling (SW, I, 7).
Custom thus endows objects with life: "The door-handle of my room... was different to me from all the other door-handles in the world, in as much as it seemed to open of its own accord and without my having to turn it..." (SW, I, 8). Habit makes the church at Combray "a dear, familiar friend" (SW, I, 47); it reduces the strangeness of surroundings. Describing the hotel at Doncières, Marcel writes:

There remained of the old palace a superfluous refinement of structure and decoration...which...had in its long spell of leisure acquired a sort of life: passages winding about in all directions, which one was continually crossing in their aimless wanderings, lobbies as long as corridors and as ornate as drawing rooms, which had the air rather of being dwellers there themselves than of forming part of a dwelling, which could not be induced to enter and settle down in any of the rooms but wandered about outside mine and came up at once to offer me their company—neighbours of a sort, idle but never noisy, menial ghosts of the past who had been granted the privilege of staying, provided they kept quiet, by the doors of the rooms which were let to visitors, and who, every time that I came across them, greeted me with a silent deference...One tried not to disturb them, and one could not look without respect at the great drawing-room which had formed, far back in the eighteenth century, the habit of stretching itself at its ease (GW, I, 772).

Once Balbec and its environs become familiar to Marcel "the train itself appeared conscious of the part that devolved upon it, had contracted a sort of human kindliness;—patient, of a docile nature, it waited as long as they pleased for the stragglers..." (CP, II, 363).

However, humanized objects are not always pleasant. When a person finds himself in a strange situation or location, things around him become menacing and hostile. Marcel suggests that this phenomenon is the product of the temporary loss of narcotic habit:
"It is our noticing them that puts things in a room, our growing used to them that takes them away again and clears a space for us" (WBG, I, 506). Upon awakening Marcel is temporarily without ego and consequently without the aid of habit to orient himself. Then he becomes "convinced of the hostility of the violet curtains and of the insolent indifference of a clock that chattered on at the top of its voice as though I were not there..." (SW, I, ?). Marcel's most acute sensation of the hostility of things is in his hotel room on his first visit to Balbec:

Space there was none for me in my bedroom...; it was full of things which did not know me, which flung back at me the distrustful look that I had cast at them, and, without taking any heed of my existence, shewed that I was interrupting the course of theirs. The clock...continued without a moment's interruption to utter, in an unknown tongue, a series of observations which must have been most uncomplimentary to myself, for the violet curtains listened to them without replying, but in an attitude such as people adopt who shrug their shoulders to indicate that the sight of a third person irritates them...Having no world, no room, no body now that was not menaced by the enemies thronging round me, invaded to the very bones by fever, I was utterly alone; I longed to die (WBG, I, 506f).

The sensation here is not only of hostile objects, but also of aggressive ones which try to exclude the person from their province.

Dickens' Pip, returning to Magwitch with stolen food, is frightened by the atmosphere, the objects and the animals:

The mist was heavier yet when I got out upon the marshes, so that instead of my running at everything, everything seemed to run at me. This was very disagreeable to a guilty mind. The gates and dikes and banks came bursting at me through the mist, as if they cried as plainly as could be, 'A boy with somebody else's pork pie? Stop him!' The cattle came upon me with like suddenness, staring out of
their eyes, and steaming out of their nostrils, 'Halloa, young thief!' One black ox, with a white cravat on—who even had to my awakened conscience something of a clerical air—fixed me so obstinately with his eyes and moved his blunt head round in such an accusatory manner as I moved round, that I blubbered out to him, 'I couldn't help it, sir! It wasn't for myself I took it!' (GE, p. 23).

For Dickens "a guilty mind" is often the victim of this frightening intrusion into an alien world. Bella at the Boffins feels pangs of guilt for her mercenary nature; then "the brilliant furniture seemed to stare her out of countenance as if it insisted on being compared with the dingy furniture at home" (OMF, p. 360).

Sometimes the sense of estrangement from objects is temporary, reflecting the first shock of strangeness, as when Pip is first introduced to his lodgings in London: "A frowzy mourning of soot and smoke attired this forlorn creation of Barnard, and it had strewed ashes on its head, and was undergoing penance and humiliation as a mere dust-hole" (GE, p. 189). More often, however, the phenomenon is permanent, attesting to a generally diseased, demonic world. The famous opening paragraphs of Little Dorrit envision this permanent metamorphosis:

Everything in Marseilles, and about Marseilles, had stared at the fervid sky, and been stared at in return, until a staring habit had become universal there. Strangers were stared out of countenance by staring white houses, staring white walls, staring white streets, staring tracts of arid road, staring hills from which verdure was burnt away. The only things to be seen not fixedly staring and glaring were the vines drooping under their load of grapes. These did occasionally wink a little, as the hot air barely moved their faint leaves (I, 1).

In the same book the "debilitated" Clennam home is "wrapped in its
mantle of soot, and leaning heavily on the crutches that had partaken of its decay" and has never known "a healthy or cheerful interval" (LD, I, 200). The house is to remain so until it blows up. The London of the schizophrenic murderer Bradley Headstone is sinister, and its hostile attitude pervades the last of Dickens' completed novels:

The closed warehouses and offices have an air of death about them, and the national dread of colour has an air of mourning. The towers and steeples of the many house-encompassed churches, dark and dingy as the sky that seems descending on them, are no relief to the general gloom; a sun-dial on a church-wall has the look, in its useless black shade, of having failed in its business enterprise and stopped payment for ever...(OMF, p. 436).

In Bleak House Chesney Wold predicts the death of the Dedlock race:

Chesney Wold is shut up, carpets are rolled into great scrolls in corners of comfortless rooms, bright damask does penance in brown holland, carving and gilding puts on mortification, and the Dedlock ancestors retire from the light of day again. 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...Howls the shrill wind round Chesney Wold; the sharp rain beats, the windows rattle, and the chimneys growl. Hists hide in the avenues, veil the points of view, and move in funeral-wise across the rising grounds...(p. 305).

And at Tom-all-Alone's the humanized atmosphere is so foul and satanic that it is uninhabitable:

Darkness rests upon Tom-all-Alone's dilating and dilating since the sun went down last night, it has gradually swelled until it fills every void in the place. For a time there were some dungeon lights burning, as the lamp of life burns in Tom-all-Alone's, heavily, heavily, in the nauseous air, and winking—as that lamp, too, winks in Tom-all-Alone's—at many horrible things. But they are blotted out. The moon has eyed Tom with a dull cold stare, as admitting some puny emulation of herself in his desert region unfit for life and blasted by volcanic
fires; but she has passed on, and is gone. The blackest nightmare in the infernal stables grazes on Tom-all-Alone's and Tom is fast asleep (BH, p. 475).

These enlarged objects expanding in space illustrate another basic baroque technique, profuse detail. Poulet writes that baroque space must be occupied and furnished. Perhaps among the diverse categories of the Baroque art, there is none more important than the multiplicity of forms by which the architect, the painter, the sculptor, the poet feels compelled to fill the space that he deploys before him, around him or within him. This space extends itself inordinately beyond all forms, to make it evident, to give it, if only in imagination, some reality, it is necessary to fill it as full as possible with material objects, whose mission is less that of existing in themselves than of conferring on space which contains them the vastest possible power of envelopment and of encompassment. A crowd of figures encumbers the expanse; an infinity of details there disposes itself in tiers; a universal thrust traverses it...

And it is not forcing terms to maintain that in the furious deployment of forms which constitutes the most evident trait of Baroque art one must observe less a sign of the conquest of space by the mind, than of the impossibility for the mind finally to accomplish this conquest.¹

Certainly Dickens and Proust share the baroque view of the divinity of detail. David Copperfield writes:

I sit down by the fire, thinking with a blind remorse of all those secret feelings I have nourished since my marriage, I think of every little trifle between me and Dora, and feel the truth, that trifles make the sum of life (DC, p. 763).

George Orwell calls Dickens' "profuse, overflowing quality" rococo: "Everything is piled up and up, detail on detail, embroidery on embroidery."² Where Orwell errs, however, is in terming Dickens'
"florid little squiggle on the edge of the page" unnecessary detail. The baroque artist views detail as indispensable to coherence. As Van Ghent comments apropos of Dickens,

Everything has to be mentioned...for, assuming that there is coherence in a world visibly disintegrated into things, one way to find it is to mention everything...Nothing must be lost, as it is doubtless essential to the mysterious organization of the system.4

Perhaps the area in which the use of detail is most apparent in Dickens and Proust is in descriptions of food. Shattuck compares Proust to Homer in his propensity to use "images of eating and culinary enjoyment, as if the surest way of knowing a thing is to eat it, or at least to pick it up and smell it."5 Dickens' enjoyment of the meal is readily ascertainable. In David Copperfield, for example, the Micawbers are constantly enjoying repasts, even in the direst of circumstances, and in Great Expectations Pip's theft is of food prepared by his sister for the Christmas feast, "consisting of a leg of pickled pork and greens, and a pair of roast stuffed fowls. A handsome mince pie had been made yesterday morning...and the pudding was already on the boil" (p. 30). Culinary pleasures are almost as numerous in Proust: Françoise takes great pains to prepare for M. de Norpois a "cold beef, spiced with carrots, cooked...upon enormous crystals of jelly, like transparent blocks of quartz" (WEG, I.

3 P. 160.
4 P. 220.
5 P. 5.
351), followed by a "pineapple and truffle salad" (WB, I, 352); and at Doncicières Marcel enjoys meals such as "a fish cooked in wine... which... stood out in relief on a bed of bluish herbs... surrounded by a circle of satellite creatures in their shells, crabs, shrimps, and mussels..." (GW, I, 798). Dickens and Proust become so immersed in their fictional banquets that they try to exhaust the possibilities of food and produce exuberant, Whitmanesque lists, as in the following two examples, the first an adventitious paragraph from Little Dorrit, the second among Marcel's early remembrances of Combray:

They walked on with him until they came to a dirty shop window in a dirty street, which was made almost opaque by the steam of hot meats, vegetables, and puddings. But, glimpses were to be caught of a roast leg of pork, bursting into tears of sage and onion in a metal reservoir full of gravy, of an unctuous piece of roast beef and blisterous Yorkshire pudding bubbling hot in a similar receptacle, of a stuffed fillet of veal in rapid cut, of a ham in a perspiration with the pace it was going at, of a shallow tank of baked potatoes glued together by their own richness, of a truss or two of boiled greens, and other substantial delicacies (I, 268).

We would still be found seated in front of our Arabian Nights plates, weighed down by the heat of the day, and even more by our heavy meal. For upon the permanent foundation of eggs, cutlets, potatoes, preserves, and biscuits... Françoise would add... a brill because the fish-woman had guaranteed its freshness; a turkey, because she had seen a beauty in the market at Roussainville-le-Pin; cardoons with marrow, because she had never done them for us in that way before; a roast leg of mutton, because the fresh air made one hungry...; spinach, by way of a change; apricots, because they were still hard to get; gooseberries, because in another fortnight there would be none left; raspberries, which M. Swann had brought specially; cherries, the first to come from the cherry-tree...; a cream cheese, of which in those days I was extremely fond; an almond cake, because she had ordered one the evening before; a fancy loaf, because it was our turn to 'offer' the holy bread. And when all these
had been eaten...a cream of chocolate...would be laid before us, light and fleeting...(SW, I, 54).

These foods, of course, are accompanied by their various smells, just as in the Wilfer home the "perfume" of rum, "with the fostering aid of boiling water and lemon peel, diffused itself throughout the room" (OMF, p. 59). Smells are important not only to furnish detail, but also because they are so inextricably bound up with memory. Recalling his early days at Blunderstone, David remembers a "dark store-room...in which there is the smell of soap, pickles, peppers, candles, and coffee, all at one whiff" (DC, p. 25). Similarly, Marcel's memories of Combray are entwined with the various odors in Aunt Léonie's store-room:

Smells natural enough indeed, and coloured by circumstances as are those of the neighbouring countryside; but already humanised, domesticated, confined, an exquisite, skilful, limpid jelly, blending all the fruits of the season which have left the orchard for the store-room, smells changing with the year, but plenishing, domestic smells, which compensate for the sharpness of the hoar frost with the sweet savour of warm bread, smells lazy and punctual as a village clock, roving smells, pious smells...The air of those rooms was saturated with the fine bouquet of a silence so nourishing, so succulent that I could not enter them without a sort of greedy enjoyment...(SW, I, 38).

Another baroque technique to fill the infinite, to instill coherence in the world, is repetition. This technique—whereby man is duplicated in various spheres, events repeat themselves, themes recur—suggests the idea that there are common elements in the world which, when recognized, constitute an illusion of unity. Marcel tells Albertine, "The theatre of the world is stocked with fewer
settings than actors, and with fewer actors than situations" (CP, II, 187); and remarking on the similarities between two men at Mme. de Villeparisis' he muses on the general application of psychological and physical laws—"An identical expression lights the eyes of different human animals, as a single sunrise lights different places, a long way apart, which have no connexion with one another" (GW, I, 878). To elucidate the general application of these laws, repetition is necessary:

A novelist might, in relating the life of his hero, describe his successive love-affairs in almost exactly similar terms, and thereby give the impression not that he was repeating himself but that he was creating, since an artificial novelty is never so effective as a repetition that manages to suggest a fresh truth (WBG, I, 671).

The repetition of the various, agonizing stages of love is very strong in Proust. Marcel's first love is his mother. Later Albertine's nightly kisses counterpoint the motherly kisses he longed for as a child at Combray. Marcel's love for Albertine recalls that of Swann for Odette "with important variations" and M. de Guermantes' later love for Odette recalls Marcel's for Albertine (PR, II, 1100). Swann is prophetic in cautioning Marcel about the ensuing repetition of jealousy: "After a little while he will force his mistress to live like one of those prisoners whose cells they keep lighted day and night, to prevent their escaping. And that generally ends in trouble" (WBG, I, 429). But Marcel does not heed this warning and proceeds to imprison Albertine to keep her free of any lesbian involvements, just as Swann previously had watched over Odette to ensure "that the horrible thing which, she had told him, she had
done 'two or three times' might be prevented from occurring again" (SW, I, 279). This imprisonment of the loved one occurs simultaneously with a certain "strange" stage of love in which, as with Swann, the personality of another person becomes so enlarged, so deepened, that the curiosity which he could now feel aroused in himself to know the least details of a woman's occupation, was the same thirst for knowledge with which he had once studied history (SW, I, 210).

This becomes Robert's obsession with Rachel, "whom he felt that he would never really know, as to whom he was perpetually asking himself what could be her secret self, behind the veil of eyes and flesh..." (GW, I, 821). It is also Marcel's mania, first with Gilberte—"At once it was as though a wall had sprung up to hide from me a part of the life of Gilberte" (WBG, I, 443)—then with his mother, who Marcel realizes can have "a separate life" (WBG, I, 492), and, finally and constantly, with Albertine.

The repetitive nature of love is also developed by Dickens, especially in David Copperfield, where David's marriage to Dora echoes the relationships of his mother and father, his mother and Mr. Murdstone, Betsy Trotwood and her husband, and Annie Strong and Jack Maldon. However, perhaps the novel which most successfully exploits the technique of repetition is Bleak House, and the most important reiterated theme is that of spontaneous combustion. Krook's first appearance announces his spectacular death: his breath issues "in invisible smoke from his mouth, as if he were on fire inside" (p. 39). In death Captain Hawdon "has a yellow look in the spectral darkness of a candle that has guttered down, until the whole length of its
wick (still burning) has doubled over, and left a tower of winding sheet above it" (p. 104). When Krook explodes there is no doubt that his death represents what Dickens thinks must happen to Chancery:

The Lord Chancellor of that Court, true to his title in his last act, has died the death of all Lord Chancellors in all Courts, and of all authoritites in all places under all names soever, where false pretences are made and where injustice is done...It is the same death eternally—inborn, inbred, engendered in the corrupted humours of the vicious body itself, and that only— spontaneous combustion, and none other of all the deaths that can be died (p. 346).

Chancery will burst into flames not only from its own corruption, from its totally unnatural chemical make-up, but also from the fire it has started: it has been roasting its victims for years. Tom: Jarndyce, the original plaintiff in the ill-fated suit, saw his life "roasted at a slow fire" (p. 41) and then blew his brains out. Gridley has "been dragged for five-and-twenty years over burning iron" (p. 162). Richard's face shows something terrible and smouldering in his youth: "'There's combustion going on there!'" Jobling says of him. "'It's not a case of Spontaneous, but it's smouldering combustion it is!'" (p. 422). Miss Flite is burned into pristine madness so that she sits in court in her pinched bonnet with her documents, "principally consisting of paper matches and dry lavender" (p. 3). And Tom-all-Alone's, a property of the court, inevitably will explode:

"Twice lately, there has been a crash and a cloud of dust, like the springing of a mine, in Tom-all-Alone's; and each time, a house has fallen" (p. 167f). No person can escape the disaster. The Smallweeds are being "consumed in the slow growth of this family tree..." (p. 219).
Phil Squod is blackened and maimed. Caddy Jellyby can produce only an enfeebled deaf-mute child. Chadband's head smokes so much after he has eaten "that he seems to light his pocket-handkerchief at it, which smokes, too, after every dab..." (p. 274). The black dye of Vholes' suit steams "before the fire, diffusing a very unpleasant perfume..." (p. 467). Even Esther cannot escape: her good looks are burned out by the disease which kills Jo.

A baroque technique similar to that of repetition is the use of doubles. In order to feel less alienated, a person can conceive of his counterpart in another sphere. Poulet states that "moved by a profound need for unity" Proust presents beings which "draw near... duplicate themselves, increase tenfold, become apparent in a variety of appearances..."^6 Dickens also uses doubles to provide unity in his fictitious, chaotic universe. Robert Morse suggests that Dickens employs "doubleness" in Our Mutual Friend "in much the same way that a composer will unify all movements of a symphony by repeating the same tone relation, interval, harmonic progression, or family of notes throughout the work..."^7

There are several narrative devices Dickens and Proust share to portray doubleness. One is mirrors. The Lammles, hiding behind false goodness, see their true natures reflected in the mirror (CMF,

^6 "L'Espace Proustien," my translation, La Nouvelle Revue Française, 11, No. 3 (1963), 453.

^7 "Our Mutual Friend," The Dickens Critics, p. 207.
Lady Dedlock looks into the mirror to see Hortense, her violent, murderous double (BH, p. 123), and in Proust Albertine watches her lesbian doubles reflected in the mirror of the ballroom of the casino at Incarville (CP, II, 146). Another device is mistaken identity. Lady Dedlock dons Jenny’s clothes so that at her death, when Esther says, "I saw before me, lying on the step, the mother of the dead child" (BH, p. 615), the meaning is double: within the clothes of the woman whose child actually dies is the woman who always believed her child to be dead. In Proust Marcel mistakenly takes Gilberte for the prostitute Mlle. de l’Orgeville. Later he finds his mistake was not as far-fetched as it had seemed:

And indeed on the day when I had passed her in a doorway, albeit she was not Mlle. de l’Orgeville, the girl whom Robert had met in houses of assignation (and what an absurd coincidence that it should have been to her future husband that I had applied for information about her), I had not been altogether mistaken as to the meaning of her glance, nor as to the sort of woman that she was and confessed to me now that she had been (SCG, II, 868).

The most famous dopplegänger motif in Proust, however, is Gilberte-Albertine. Gilberte writes her "G" so much like an "A" that Marcel is even persuaded that he has received a telegram from the dead Albertine. Often doubles are seen side by side in order to mirror a secret part of a character's personality. In David Copperfield the prostitute Jenny is seen following Emily like a "black shadow" and the distance absorbs "their figures into itself" (p. 330), foreshadowing Emily's own fall into disgrace. The lesbian Miss Wade of Little Dorrit stands looking at Tattycoram, whom she will bring down
into her own level of bitterness, "as one afflicted with a diseased part might curiously watch the dissection and exposition of an analogous case" (I, 30). In *The Guermantes Way* Saint-Loup's mistress is hailed by her prostitute friends and suddenly Robert beholds

at some distance from himself another Rachel, outwardly the double of his but entirely different... In short, Rachel had for a moment duplicated herself in his eyes, he had seen, at some distance from his own Rachel, the little 'tart' Rachel, the real Rachel, assuming that Rachel the 'tart' was more real than the other (I, 830).

As Poulet points out, Proust's characters not only duplicate themselves, but also increase tenfold. This process of multiplication is another baroque technique. Marcel writes:

I can think of nothing that can so effectively as a kiss evoke from what we believe to be a thing with one definite aspect, the hundred other things which it may equally well be since each is related to a view of it no less legitimate. In short, just as at Balbec Albertine had often appeared to me different, so now, as if, wildly accelerating the speed of the changes of aspect and changes of colouring which a person presents to us in the course of our various encounters, I had sought to contain them all in the space of a few seconds so as to reproduce experimentally the phenomenon which diversifies the individuality of a fellow creature, and to draw out one from another, like a nest of boxes, all the possibilities that it contains, in this brief passage of my lips towards her cheek it was ten Albertines that I saw... (GW, I, 979).

In *Our Mutual Friend* Dickens refracts John Harmon into four different persons: first Julius Handford, then John Rokesmith, then the "oakum-headed, oakum-whiskered man on whom Miss Pleasant Riderhood had looked" (p. 405), and finally himself. The important aspect of this method, however, as Poulet indicates, is that it only
approximates reality. In The Metamorphoses of the Circle he writes:

In the presence of space everything which occupies space shrinks or decays. Multiplication becomes division, mass a plurality of parts. Space filled is immeasurably surpassed by space unfilled.

...Every form comes to life in [space], and in its springing into life affirms an individuality which distinguishes it from all others; but all have an equal originality, so that discrete multiplicity finds itself spread throughout space, without ever being able to identify with it, nor form in itself a homogeneous mass.

Proust also recognizes the inadequacy of multiplication to achieve coherence:

For what we suppose to be our love, our jealousy are, neither of them, single, continuous and individual passions. They are composed of an infinity of successive loves, of different jealousies, each of which is ephemeral, although by their uninterrupted multitude they give us the impression of continuity, the illusion of unity (SW, 1, 285).

Instead of returning the envisioned world to one of primary unity, then, the baroque techniques—beginning with the impossible attempt to fill space and continuing through the various divisions of forms—serve to fracture further that universe into totally disparate forms. Furthermore, these techniques, represented in their extreme by multiplication, imply a correlative sense of fatalistic time:

At every instant the preceding form gives way to the following form. A new instant is born in the fading of the anterior instant. Thus each moment, like each drop of water which reflects the prism, avers to its own parti-

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8 "L'Espace Proustien," No. 3, 450.

9 P. 16.
cular existence beyond the death of all other instants. Other instants, in their turn, precipitate themselves toward life and toward death. And this perpetual birth and death have the effect of forming a temporal universe wherein all instants live their instantaneous life, but are never able to constitute a continuous web of duration.10

Such destructive time obliterates any sense of unity and makes the baroque world even more unbearable. Obviously time must be defeated and transcended in order for one to escape the baroque whirlpool of disaster. However, for time to be transcended it must be metamorphosed from the innocent timelessness of childhood through the fatal, disparate moments of adulthood to a final unifying power stemming from memory and artistic creation.

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CHAPTER V
POETRY OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE

Since the appearance of the first volumes of *Remembrance of Things Past* critics have naturally been interested in Proust's ideas about time. Shortly after Proust's death and before the last volumes were published, Ortego y Gasset examined "Time, Distance, and Form in Proust." In another early work Beckett recognized the essential nature of Proustian time and with his usual perspicacity labeled it "that double-headed monster of damnation and salvation."¹ Since then critics have continued their copious investigations of Proust's "two complementary aspects of time."² Until recently, however, studies of Dickensian time have been sparse.³ This is understandable since, as John Henry Raleigh writes, "There is little if any in Dickens of the elaborate speculations on time that we associate...with

¹ P. 1.
² Shattuck, p. 110.
³ Recent critics who have examined temporal concerns in Dickens include J. Hillis Miller, John Henry Raleigh, George Ford and K.J. Fielding.
Proust..."4 Despite his paucity of "elaborate speculations" on the subject, however, Dickens is pre-eminently concerned with various aspects of time; and his works show the seed of the kind of preoccupations which Proust develops.

David Copperfield is perhaps the novel which shows most clearly Dickens' ideas on time. If the beginning of the Proustian novel, as Poulet suggests, marks a moment preceded by no other,5 the same phenomenon begins David's life: "It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously" (p. 13). The early pages of David Copperfield deal with innocent time, which Raleigh describes as "that peculiar sense of timelessness that pervades certain periods of childhood..."6 Children are unaware of the pitiless aspects of time and are unaware of its passage. Except for agonizing moments at night, Marcel at Combray lives in this innocent time: he reads for whole afternoons, oblivious to the time, dallies on walks to the annoyance of his temporally-oriented elders, and believes that he and Combray will always remain the same. Marcel's sense of time is stated by his precocious friend Bloch:

I never allow myself to be influenced in the smallest degree either by atmospheric disturbances or by the arbitrary divisions of what is known as Time. I would

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6 136.
willingly reintroduce to society the opium pipe of China or the Malayan kriss, but I am wholly and entirely without instruction in those infinitely more pernicious (besides being quite bleakly bourgeois) implements, the umbrella and the watch (SW, I, 70).

David, playing with Emily at Yarmouth, has the feeling of days sporting by "as if Time had not grown up himself yet, but were a child too, and always at play...We made no more provision for growing older than we did for growing younger" (DC, p. 47f). As David suggests, time does "grow up", and such innocent time belongs exclusively to the province of childhood; those persons who attempt to frame their mature lives around such concepts of time are objects of ridicule, as is Skimpole in Bleak House: "Time is no object here. We never know what o'clock it is, and we never care" (p. 45). As Miller points out, Skimpole has remained as a child by evading "the constant metamorphosis of ordinary human temporality by not having any object in life, by refusing to choose a project and carry it out by voluntary action through time."7

At Combray Marcel becomes unconsciously aware of another aspect of time, its mechanical nature. Such time simply measures the passage of hours, usually without any hint of doom. In Aunt Léonie's household the walks are reserved for afternoons, lunch is at a certain hour except on those delightfully unique Saturdays, and dinner is always ready at the same time unless the Guermantes walk delays it. Such time is comforting, the product of habit. But when the routine

7 P. 183.
deadens creativity, as it did for Arthur Clennam as a child, time becomes oppressive. Thus *Hard Times*’ major them is the mechanical nature of the world:

Time went on in Coketown like its own machinery: so much material wrought up, so much fuel consumed, so many powers worn out, so much money made. But, less inexorable than iron, steel, and brass, it brought its varying seasons even into that wilderness of smoke and brick, and made the only stand that ever was made in the place against its direful uniformity...

Time, with his innumerable horse-power, worked away, not minding what anybody said, and presently turned out young Thomas a foot taller than when his father had last taken particular notice of him...

Time passed Thomas on in the mill, while his father was thinking about it, and there he stood in a long-tailed coat and a stiff shirt-collar...

Time, sticking to him, passed him on into Bounderby’s Bank, made him an inmate of Bounderby’s house, necessitated the purchase of his first razor, and exercised him diligently in his calculations relative to number one.

The same great manufacturer, always with an immense variety of work on hand, in every stage of development, passy Sissy onward in his mill, and worked her up into a very pretty article indeed (p. 69f).

Marcel also realizes this deadening aspect of mechanical time. Such time will make him indifferent to Gilberte, and this indifference will also be "in a real sense, the death of ourselves, a death followed, it is true, by resurrection but in a different ego, the life, the love of which are beyond the reach of those elements of the existing ego that are doomed to die" (WBG, I, 510). Regulatory time then has the double aspect of comfort and destruction. As we become more aware of our existence in temporality, time becomes a burden, a ponderous, mechanical push toward death. Each moment announces its own death; the universal thrust becomes a thrust toward the inevitable. In Mr.
Gradgrind's observatory there is a "deadly statistical clock...which measured every second with a beat like a rap upon a coffin-lid" (HT, p. 73).

The fatal beat of this clock, however, is apparent only to the narrator. The characters in Hard Times have only premonitions of ineluctable time: Louisa moves "step by step, onward and downward, towards some end, yet so gradually, that she believed herself to remain motionless" (p. 127). Similarly in Our Mutual Friend Eugene has little sense of impending fate, nor does he know what that fate is, only the passing of Riah "like the ghost of a departed Time" (p. 452) hints at ensuing catastrophe. Marcel also has a faint foreshadowing of destiny when soon before Albertine's death he utters "the word death, as though Albertine were about to die. It seems that events are larger than the moment in which they occur and cannot confine themselves in it" (Captive, II, 660). But these glimpses are rare. For the most part Dickensian and Proustian characters remain uninformed about the workings of time: one of its effects, Marcel writes, is "that poetry of the incomprehensible" (PR, II, 1095). As much as the characters in Dickens gaze into the fire seeking clues to the future they remain unenlightened:

It seemed as if, first in her own fire within the house, and then in the fiery haze without, [Louisa] tried to discover what kind of woof Old Time, that greatest and longest-established spinner of all, would weave from the threads he had already spun into a woman. But his factory is a secret place, his work is noiseless, and his Hands are mute (HT, p. 73).

Nor can any other object reveal time's secrets, certainly not
Tulkinghorn's watch on the night of his death:

He looks at his watch, but is inclined to doubt it by a minute or thereabouts. 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 off, to this old man of all the young and old men who have ever stood before it, 'Don't go home!' With its sharp clear bell, it strikes three-quarters after seven, and ticks on again. 'Why, you are worse than I thought you,' says Mr. Tulkinghorn, muttering reproof to his watch. 'Two minutes wrong? At this rate you won't last my time' (BH, p. 502).

Under normal circumstances only crises of revelation can disclose time's inexorability. Marcel relates that from early childhood he "had lived along from day to day with an unchanging conception of myself and others" (PR, II, 1035). His first realization that he "was not situated somewhere outside the realm of Time, but was subject to its laws" (WBG, I, 369) occurs when his father, with unconscious cruelty, says, "He is no longer a child":

My father had suddenly made me apparent to myself in my position in Time, and caused me the same kind of depression as if I had been, not yet the enfeebled old pensioner, but one of those heroes of whom the author, in a tone of indifference which is particularly galling, says to us at the end of a book: 'He very seldom comes up now from the country. He has finally decided to end his days there' (WBG, I, 370).

The second incident, as Beckett points out, is when Marcel comes back from Doncieres to see his grandmother:

In consequence of his journey and his anxiety, his habit is in abeyance, the habit of his tenderness for his grandmother. His gaze is no longer the necromancy that sees in each precious object a mirror of the past. The notion of what he should see has not had time to interfere its
prism between the eye and its object. His eye functions with the cruel precision of a camera; it photographs the reality of his grandmother. And he realises with horror that his grandmother is dead, long since and many times...8

Finally in The Past Recaptured the ravages of time are irrevocably felt by Marcel. After the shock of recognizing "the stout lady" as Gilberte, he says, "One starts out with the idea that people have remained the same and one finds them old" (PR, II, 1050). Arthur Clennam undergoes a similar sensation when he sees his old sweetheart again after an absence of many years:

Most men will be found sufficiently true to themselves to be true to an old idea. It is no proof of an inconstant mind, but exactly the opposite, when the idea will not bear close comparison with the reality, and the contrast is a fatal shock to it. Such was Clennam's case. In his youth he had ardently loved this woman... Ever since that memorable time, though he had until the night of his arrival, as completely dismissed her from any association with his Present or Future as if she had been dead... he had kept the old fancy of the Past unchanged, in its old sacred place...

Flora, always tall, had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath... Flora, whom he had left a lily, had become a peony... Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly... Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now (ID, I, 168).

Marcel's main discovery in the last pages of Remembrance of Things Past is, of course, that no one escapes time. We are constantly time's victims; time has us "in his grip" as Dickens writes in David Copperfield (p. 491), in a "double harness of past and present," as Proust expresses it (SCG, II, 726). And it also harnesses the future. Dickens

8 Beckett, p. 15.
uses several conventional symbols to convey time's fatal thrust. First there is the clock. Arthur Clennam, visiting his doomed home, sees a "large, hard-featured clock on the sideboard" and remembers it, much as the Gradgrind children must remember the "deadly statistical clock,"

as

bending its figured brows upon him with a savage joy when he was behind-hand with his lessons, and which, when it was wound up once a week with an iron handle, used to sound as if it were growling in ferocious anticipation of the miseries into which it would bring him (ID, I, 37f).

Time's most ravaged victims have clock-like countenances: Magwitch has a mechanical clicking in his throat and Hortense, "something in her dark cheek beating like a clock" (BH, p. 558). Another image of finality in Bleak House is the forefinger: "Through the placid stream of life, there glides an undercurrent of forefinger" (p. 539).

The allegorical Roman painted on Mr. Tulkinghorn's ceiling points at his murderer as well as the dead body, and Sir Leicester, hearing the news of his wife's secret from Inspector Buckett, "sits like a statue, gazing at the cruel finger that is probing the life-blood of his heart" (p. 551). But the most conventional of Dickens' temporal images is the river, which moves from its childhood of creeks to the great sea of death: in the London of Our Mutual Friend

from the bridge you may see the young river, dimpled like a young child, playfully gliding away among the trees, unpolluted by the defilements that lie in wait for it on its course, and as yet out of hearing of the deep summons of the sea. It were too much to pretend that Betty Higden made out such thoughts; no; but she heard the tender river whispering to many like herself, 'Come to me, come to me! I am the Relieving Officer appointed by eternal ordinance to do my work; I am not held in estimation ac-
cording as I shirk it. My breast is softer than the pauper-
nurse's; death in my arms is peacefuller than among the 
pauper-wards. Come to me!" (p. 558).

In David Copperfield Martha identifies with the river:

It comes from country places, where there was once no harm 
in it—and it creeps through the dismal streets, defiled 
and miserable—and it goes away, like my life, to a great 
sea, that is always troubled—and I feel that I must go 
with it (p. 678).

David and Mr. Peggotty find Martha by the river, contemplating suicide.

Similarly Arthur Clennam, bothered by similar thoughts, looks at the 
river, "and he thought—who has not thought for a moment, sometimes—
that it might be better to flow away monotonously like the river, and 
to compound for its sensibility to happiness with its insensibility 
to pain" (LD, I, 226).

The river represents nature and divinity, both indifferent and 
measured:

Let the heart swell into what discord it will, thus plays 
the rippling water on the prow of the ferry-boat ever the 
same tune. Year after year, so much allowance for the 
drifting of the boat, so many miles an hour the flowing of 
the stream, here the rushes, there the lilies, nothing 
uncertain or unquiet, upon this road that steadily runs 
away; while you, upon your flowing road of time, are so 
capricious and distracted (LD, I, 216).

The river presents an escape from human time, a time which is neither 
steady nor monotonous; it is arbitrary; its speed is relative to the 
person, age, circumstances and setting:

In some stages of his manufacture of the human fabric, the 
processes of Time are very rapid. Young Thomas and Sissy 
being both at such a stage of their working up, these 
changes were effected in a year or two; while Mr. Gradgrind 
himself seemed stationery in his course, and underwent 
no alteration (HT, p. 71).
One critic suggests that "human time thus defies scientific analysis and measurement; contracting and expanding at will, mingling before and after without ordered sequence, it pays little heed to ordinary logical relations." At the moments of greatest anxiety, arbitrary time assumes an alarming speed, a frightening exigency; the future becomes extremely menacing: Lady Dedlock feels "a terrible impression" steal over her "that from this pursuer, living or dead...there is no escape but in death" (BH, p. 574). Her pursuer is Tulkinghorn, but for Lady Dedlock Tulkinghorn embodies time. Proust writes of time's "fatal slope"; time is what "hurries the universe along" (PR, II, 1063). During the final soirée in the novel Marcel describes the Duc de Guermantes as "clinging frantically to each minute and hurried along in a tragic whirlwind" (PR, II, 1102), and the Princesse de Nassau's star-like eyes, like an astronomical clock carved out of an opal, marked successively all those solemn hours of a far distant past...Even when she was near the door, I thought she was going to break into a run. As a matter of fact, she was running toward her grave (PR, II, 1075).

Time, of course, propels her: "The moments of the past do not remain still; they retain in our memory the motion which drew them towards the future, towards a future which has itself become the past, and draws us on in their train..." (SCG, II, 726). Marcel sees in each instant, Poulet indicates, his own death, "since the instant is

is inevitably going to be annihilated by another."10

This annihilative process is frightening when realized, and we instinctively fight against it. Thus Proust attests to a long resistance, desperate and daily renewed, to a fragmentary and gradual death such as interpolates itself throughout the whole course of our life, tearing away from us at every moment a shred of ourselves, dead matter on which new cells will multiply, and grow (WBG, I, 510).

The problem in Dickens and Proust is how to make this resistance effective. In his study of Victorian time, Jerome Buckley writes of Dickens: "Aware always of temporal relations and responsibilities, no adult can contrive or decree the release from time that the child habitually enjoys. Yet the desire for transcendence remains..."11 In their search for eternal youth Dickensian characters literally try to arrest time by stopping the clocks: Mrs. Clennam tries "to stop the clock of busy existence" (ID, I, 384), and Miss Havisham leaves everything, including the time of twenty minutes to nine on the clock, exactly as it was that horrible moment when she learned of her lover's flight. Pip remembers that he "felt as if the stopping of the clocks had stopped time in that mysterious place, and while I and everything else outside it grew older, it stood still" (GE, p. 140). The irony of Satis House, however, is that it does not remain as it was on the bridal day; it decays:

I saw that everything within my view which ought to be

11 P. 137.
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 like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose had shrunk to skin and bone. 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 (GE, p. 67).

Miss Havisham's attempt to arrest time is in vain, like Mrs. Clennam's effort, an infirmity representative of "mental unhealthiness" (ID, I, 384).

Obviously another method must be found to transcend time. Such a method must also take space into consideration since for Dickens and Proust time is a dimension of space. In Bleak House George, returning to Chesney Wold, feels "the two periods of his life so strangely brought together across his wide intermediate space..." (p. 605). Marcel at the end of Remembrance of Things Past decides to make perceptible "the form of Time" (PR, II, 1121); thus in Swann's Way he describes the church at Combray as "a building which occupied, so to speak, four dimensions of space—the name of the fourth being Time..." (I, 46). To escape temporality, then, it is necessary that space be conquered; hence space must also undergo a metamorphosis. First regarded as a huge negative force dividing isolated, enclosed elements, then as an unpredictable arena for collision, space finally must be totally eliminated in order that
harmonious connections and timelessness be brought about.
Before thir eyes in sudden view appear
The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
Illimitable Ocean without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and hight,
And time and place are lost; where eldest Night
And Chaos, Ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal Anarchy, amidst the noise
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.

—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Baroque space is an unfathomable void. An individual caught in this swirling mass is immediately apprehensive, without a locale to fix himself, to center his ego: "The being deprived of place is without universe, without hearth, without fire nor location." As Poulet so admirably demonstrates in "L'Espace Proustien" the most remarkable instant of dislocation of sensibilities is the moment of waking: "We have slept too long, we no longer exist," Marcel writes (Captive, II, 464). In sleep we have no fixity of place, no intrinsic identity; we are detached from beings, things and permanence. Awakening involves the tremendous effort of re-orienting ourselves and refinding our egos through memory. Poulet writes:

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Vertigo of images. The world, as the awakened sleeper discovers it, is indeed a world of things, but of interchangeable things, in which nothing is attached to one particular point of space or duration; a world of things doubtful rather than necessary.\(^2\)

The most vivid example of this sensation is in the opening pages of *Remembrance of Things Past*. Not only do these paragraphs represent the first moment of an arbitrary time, but also the first fixation of being in space—the refinding of selfhood:

I lost all sense of the place in which I had gone to sleep, and when I awoke at midnight, not knowing where I was, I could not be sure at first who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and flicker in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute of human qualities than the cave-dweller; but then the memory, not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived, and might now very possibly be, would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being, from which I could never have escaped by myself: in a flash I would traverse and surmount centuries of civilisation, and out of a half-visualised succession of oil-lamps, followed by shirts with turned-down collars, would put together by degrees the component parts of my ego (*SW, I, 5*).

Poulet calls this feeling "the anguish of solitude."\(^3\) Cross suggests that Dickens' characters also feel "the 'naked terror' of solitude" when they are "cut off from past and future, from family, job, and health."\(^4\) When David Copperfield is on the way to the hell of Murdstone and Grisby's he passes through chaos and looks back

\(^2\) *Studies in Human Time*, p. 292.

\(^3\) *Studies in Human Time*, p. 294.

\(^4\) 148.
on his childhood locale dwindling in the distance as if he were losing his own personality:

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 upward from my old playground no more, and the sky is empty! (DC, p. 161).

Similarly his trek from London to Dover is the most frightening experience of his life. While on the road he has no personality; the creatures he meets are enormous, fantastic people who further enhance his sense of alienation. Nowhere else in the novel is there a character as mad and alarming as the "goroo" man who buys David's jacket. Not until David reaches his aunt's house does he regain a self and begin "my new life, in a new name, and with everything new about me..."

A remoteness had come upon the old Blunderstone life—which seemed to lie in the haze of an immeasurable distance" (DC, p. 221). David's experience is like Esther's who, lying ill, feels "whirled in unfathomable space": 5

I lay ill through several weeks, and the usual tenor of my life became like an old remembrance...In falling ill, I seemed to have crossed a dark lake, and to have left all my experiences, mingled together by the great distance, on the healthy shore (BH, p. 370).

Esther's task, like Marcel's and David's, is to put together the component parts of her ego, to find the stability of a sphere.

Since between locations there is no individual existence, a person must be associated with a place to feel ontologically secure.

5 Cross, 148.
And conversely a person confers individuality on the location, gives to places an aura of uniqueness. The worlds of Dickens and Proust consist of unique microcosms, again reflecting the baroque imagination. In an attempt to make coherent chaotic space, the baroque artist treats the abstract as concrete; the effort is to make the universe more manageable, more portable, by reducing it to a minimum:

The writers of the Baroque period cannot help but be fascinated by this resemblance between the infinitely large and the infinitely small. As the macrocosm is represented by the microcosm...so the immense sphere of the universe can be rediscovered, reduced, but curiously like, in objects which men's science engineers, in order to reproduce, on a small scale, cosmic space or solar time...If there is an immoderate movement by which the mind stretches to the limit of things, there is the inverse movement by which these limits are shortened and coincide with the natural limits of the human mind.6

Elsewhere Poulet writes: "The Proustian macrocosm encloses a small number of microcosms...The Proustian universe is a universe of small pieces, of which the pieces contain other universes, which also, in their turn, are pieces."7 Each individual represents a microcosm:

There are huge organised agglomerations of individuals, which are called 'nations'; their existence simply repeats on an amplified scale the existence of the component cells of a human being)...(PR, II, 924).

Bergotte is described as "a tiny planet that offered a prophetic image of the greater" (Captive, II, 507), and Marcel writes of Charlus: "I seemed to be discovering, accompanied by its satellites, a planet

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7 "L'Espace Proustien," No. 2, 244.
at a wholly different period of its revolution..." (Captive, II, 522).
Similarly Miller suggests that Our Mutual Friend consists of "a plurality of worlds"; each character is "the unique possessor of a circumambient world which is spatial and temporal." The same could be applied to Bleak House where Esther Summerson as a child "lived a life apart" (p. 191). Social groups and institutions are also microcosms, "every drawing room being a fresh universe" (WBG, I, 654). In Dickens, Mr. Jarndyce complains of Chancery:

We are always appearing, and disappearing, and swearing, and interrogating, and filing, and cross-filing, and arguing, and sealing, and motioning, and referring, and reporting, and revolving about the Lord Chancellor and all his satellites... (BH, p. 72).

In the same novel the world of fashion is also a little planet:

It is not a large world. Relatively even to this world of ours, which has its limits too (as your Highness shall find when you have made the tour of it, and are come to the brink of the void beyond), it is a very little speck. There is much good in it; there are many good and true people in it; it has its appointed place. But the evil of it is, that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun (BH, p. 6).

Each orbit of society has its own center. In Proust one group revolves around Oriane, another around Mme. Verdurin, another around Odette, who has a "little world whose sun she was..." (WBG, I, 468). In Dickens Lady Dedlock is the "centre of Fashionable Intelligence"

8 P. 291.

9 Miller, p. 283.
and rather is "intent upon the perfect working of the whole little orderly system" of which she is center (BH, p. 403).

It is common in Dickens, as in Proust, for inhabitants of such microcosms to view their tiny spheres as all-important. In Little Dorrit "the country" is simply "another word for the Barnacles and Stiltstalkings" (I, 354). This prejudice is extremely strong in Podsnap:

Mr. Podsnap's world was not a very large world, morally; no, nor even geographically: seeing that although his business was sustained upon commerce with other countries, he considered other countries, with that important reservation, a mistake, and of their manners and customs would conclusively observe, "Not English!" when, PRESTO! with a flourish of the arm, and a flush of the face, they were swept away. Elsewise, the world got up at eight, shaved close at quarter-past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past five, and dined at seven (OMF, p. 151).

This attitude, of course, reflects a false sense of the world, as though there were no other worlds except the microcosm in which one lives. With much skepticism Mrs. Rouncewell acknowledges that "there may be a world beyond Chesney Wold that I don't understand" (BH, p. 65). Even if there are other worlds, there seem to be no connections, no communications, among them. Each locale is mutually exclusive; rather is "a little world apart in the midst of a great world..." (SW, I, 513). There is in the baroque world a sense of extreme spatial discontinuity. The vision Marcel has as a boy is that the Médorlises and Guermantes ways are "sealed vessels—between which there could be no communication of separate afternoons" (SW, I, 104). Similarly there is "no connection between the 'little nucleus' and
the society which Swann frequented" (SW, I, 146). In Dickens, 
Steerforth, with reverse prophecy, says of the inhabitants of Yarmouth, 
"Why, there's a pretty wide separation between them and us..."(DC, 
p. 299). The inhabitants of these microcosms try to protect this 
vision of the world; they believe in their impenetrable isolation: 
Lady Dedlock "supposes herself to be an inscrutable Being, quite out 
of the reach and ken of ordinary mortals..." (BH, p. 9). The reason 
for this protectiveness is the apprehension of baroque space. Dis­
tance seems impassable, without power of connection or unification. 
Even those elements which should unify seem to fragment further the 
world into "innumerable atomically isolated pieces": the railroad 
in Hard Times does not connect, but divides "Coketown from the country 
house" (p. 157), and Stephen Blackpool sees between his people and 
Mr. Bounderby "a black unpassable world!" (p. 156). In Bleak House, 
as Miller points out, 

objects and people are more separated by the fog than 
linked by it. The fog, a fog that is both a physical 
mist and a spiritual blindness, forms an opaque barrier 
between any one place and any other...Things are visible, 
outlined in the fog, but nothing is related to anything 
else.11

However, as Miller suggests, the microcosms are only "precariously 
safe" because, although frightening, space is traversable; places

10 Miller, p. 164. 
11 P. 163. 
12 P. 187.
and people do come together. Gilberie says to Marcel:

'If you like, we might go out one afternoon, and then we can go to Guermantes, taking the road by Meseglise, it is the nicest walk,' a sentence which upset all my childish ideas by informing me that the two 'ways' were not as irreconcilable as I had supposed (SCG, II, 865).

The question is how to bring these seemingly independent spheres together. Dickens writes:

What connexion can there be, between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabouts of Jo the outlaw with the broom, who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the churchyard-step? What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together? (SH, p. 167).

The first method of connection, Poulet suggests, is movement, displacement in space, usually of persons who voyage through the landscapes of Dickens and Proust, but also, and more startlingly, through the motion of apparently stationary objects. Often this movement is pleasurable. As a boy Marcel sees "the back-gate of our own garden, which had come hand-in-hand with the familiar corner of the Rue du Saint-Esprit, to await us, to greet us..." (SW, I, 88). These objects move in a spirit of gregariousness, and the sense of harmony their displacement suggests inspires Marcel to write his essay about the steeples of Martinville which are joined by "a third, a dilatory steeple, that of Vieuxvicq" (SW, I, 139). Later, travelling in an automobile, Marcel again feels pleasure at the abolition of

13 "L'Espace Proustien," No. 3, 442.
distance:

It was easy to go in a single afternoon to Saint-Jean and la Raspelière, Douville and Quetteholme, Saint-Mars le Vieux and Saint-Mars le Vêtu, Gourville and Old Balbec, Tourville and Fétérne, prisoners hitherto as hermetically confined in the cells of distinct days as long ago were Méséglise and Guermantes, upon which the same eyes could not gaze in the course of one afternoon, delivered now by the giant with the seven-league boots, came and clustered about our tea-time their towers and steeples, their old gardens which the encroaching wood sprang back to reveal (CP, II, 282).

But more often than not, displacement creates anxiety. Poulet writes of this anguish: "How can one not lose his faith in life, when one perceives that the only fixity that one thought to find there—the fixity of places, fixity of the objects which are situated there—is illusory?"14 Objects meet in space with the violence of coincidence, the collision of contraries. Proust writes, "The coupling of contrary elements is the law of life, the principle of fertilisation, and... the cause of many disasters" (Captive, II, 454). This phenomenon, as Poulet suggests, "changes the laws of the universe,"15 and invites catastrophe and apprehension: one cannot calculate the movement of these locales; whereas the movement of planets is measurable since they revolve in fixed orbits, Proustian and Dickensian objects are like islands cut off from their routes.16 Proust recognizes their erratic trajectories: "Alas, the kaleidoscope eyes staring off into

14 "L'Espace Proustien," No. 1, 37.
15 "L'Espace Proustien," No. 3, 444.
the distance and shadowed with melancholy might enable us perhaps to
measure distance, but do not indicate direction" (Captive, II, 442).
And later he writes, "The stellar universe is not so difficult of
comprehension as the real actions of other people..." (Captive, II,
511). This law of convolution and catastrophe makes the following
Dickens' passage doubly ironic: "The fashionable world—tremendous
orb, nearly five miles round—is in full swing, and the solar system
works respectively at its appointed distance" (BH, p. 493). The
"fashionable orb" does not work like the solar system, and its un-
predictable movement perhaps justifies Sir Leicester's paranoia:

From the village school of Chesney Wold, intact as it is
this minute, to the whole framework of society; from the
whole framework of society, to the aforesaid framework
receiving tremendous cracks in consequence of people
(ironmasters, lead-mistresses, and what not) not minding
their catechism, and getting out of the station unto which
they are called—necessarily and forever, according to Sir
Leicester's rapid logic, the first station in which they
happen to find themselves; and from that, to their educating
other people out of their stations, and so obliterating
the landmarks, and opening the floodgates, and all the rest
of it; this is the swift progress of the Dedlock mind
(BH, p. 303).

The object of disaster in Bleak House, of course, is Lady Dedlock,
who says, "My course through it is the same. I have but one; I can
have but one" (p. 388). Her calamity is the result of her erratic
course. Proust writes, "A person is never like a straight highway,
but surprises us with the strange, unavoidable windings of his course
through life" (WBG, I, 672). Thus Lady Dedlock is led to irreconcil-
able, inconceivable locations: the brickmaker's house, the depths
of Tom-all-Alone's, and, finally, the pauper's graveyard. Unpre-
dictability shatters all pretensions at security: no sphere is safe; space is traversed with violence and disaster.

Movement in space, then, still involves anxiety. A second method of connection, whereby space is simply eliminated, is juxtaposition. Through juxtaposition, worlds that seemed remote become neighbors; distance is abolished: as Poulet writes, "The isolation of places succeeds to a kind of voisinage." This phenomenon delights Proust:

But after all the special attraction of the journey lies not in our being able to alight at places on the way and to stop altogether as soon as we grow tired, but in its making as intense as possible, so that we are conscious of it in its totality, intact, as it existed in our mind when imagination bore us from the place in which we were living right to the very heart of a place we longed to see, in a single sweep which seemed miraculous to us not so much because it covered a certain distance as because it united two distinct individualities of the world, took us from one name to another name... (WBG, I, 489).

This passage heralds Marcel's description of the train trip from Paris to Balbec, which provides him with an example of intensity in juxtaposition when, looking out the window at the rising sun, Marcel is confronted with night:

The morning scene gave place in the frame of the window to a nocturnal village, its roofs still blue with moonlight, its ponds encrusted with the opalescent nacre of night, beneath a firmament still powdered with all its stars, and I was lamenting the loss of my strip of pink sky when I caught sight of it afresh, but red this time, in the opposite window which it left at a second bend in the line, so that I spent my time running from one window to the other to reassemble, to collect on a single canvas the intermittent, antipodean fragments of my fine, scarlet, ever-changing morning, and to obtain a comprehensive view of it and a continuous picture (WBG, I, 497).

17 "L'Espace Proustien," No. 3, 443.
The voyage, however, whether by carriage, train or automobile, still involves a certain lapse of time which mellows the desired intensity. Even the telephone, representing "the sound of distance overcome" (GW, I, 810), is "not rapid enough" for Marcel (GW, I, 089). The best method for instantaneous juxtaposition lies in the mind, especially that of the artist:

A pair of wings, a different mode of breathing, which would enable us to traverse infinite space, would in no way help us, for, if we visited Mars or Venus keeping the same sense, they would clothe in the same aspect as the things of the earth—everything that we should be capable of seeing. The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universes that each of them beholds that each of them is; and this we can contrive with an Elstir, with a Vinteuil; with men like these we do really fly from star to star (Captive, II, 559).

The artist's imagination is born of memory, and the mnemonic faculty finally allows Dickens and Proust to transcend space. Poulet writes, "Thanks to memory, time is...not lost, and, if it is not lost, space is not either. Next to recovered time, there is recovered space."18 Thus Marcel exults when he feels "the fragment of landscape thus transported into the present" (SW, I, 141). Memory allows us to see "separate panels...exhibited side by side" (WBG, I, 606). For example, when Esther first sees her mother in church, a vague sensation comes over her so that as the preacher speaks she hears the voice of her dead godmother, thus juxtaposing the milieu of her childhood next to the one in which her mother now sits. However this phenomenon instills

18 "L'Espace Proustien," No. 2, 257.
Esther with more anxiety than pleasure since she knows only the effect and not the cause. For memory to inform the artist's imagination, it must lose its vague, fragmentary qualities and undergo metamorphosis into an instrument of redemption.
CHAPTER VII

THE MUSIC OF MEMORY

In this sort of nothingness or of night, which extends behind him, deep down within him, and which is called the past, the being in search of himself has now discovered certain luminous points isolated; pieces of landscape, fragments of his former life which survive the destruction of all the rest.

—Georges Poulet, Studies in Human Time

Proust is generally regarded as the novelist of affective memory, but Dickens was his percursor. Edgar Johnson, referring to a sentence in Oliver Twist, writes, "Such a passage shows that Proust was not the first novelist to be aware of the machinery of unwilled memory."¹ Graham Greene, writing of the same book, attests to Dickens' "music of memory that so influenced Proust."² So Pip's story begins with memory, "my first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things" (GE, p. 9). And for David Copperfield, as Miller suggests, affective memory "is not...a difficult or rare occurrence as it is for Marcel. Memories come easily..."³ Most important, although

¹ I, 183.
² "The Young Dickens," The Dickens Critics, p. 246.
³ P. 153.
Dickens again lacks a systematic approach to the mnemonic process, both novelists realize that the basis of their art is memory; memory is the agent which connects moments in time and places in space with the most intense ease; and their novels are monuments to memory.

In both Dickens and Proust, memory for the uninitiated, those unaware of its mystico-artistic capabilities, is, like space, isolated. As Proust writes, memory is "enclosed, immovable, arrested, lost, remote from all others..." (GW, I, 1003). Also it is confusing and vague. Confronted with wakened consciousness in the opening pages of Swann's Way, Marcel is aware of "shifting and confused gusts of memory..." (I, 6). Pip, watching Estella's hands as she knits, gives an "involuntary start"; not realizing that in Estella he recognizes his convict. After seeing convicts on the train Pip feels an "undefined and vague fear" which he realizes is "the revival for a few minutes of the horror of childhood" (GE, p. 250). The uninformed act of remembrance is also fragmentary. Proust compares memory to cameras: "Memory begins at once to record photographs independent of one another, eliminates every link, any kind of sequence from between the scenes portrayed in the collection which it exposes to our view..." (WBG, I, 657). Every memory, then, is a "detached and incoherent fragment of recollection..." (SW, I, 97). David Copperfield as a youth is constantly presented with a series of memories which he cannot collect into a whole; Esther, on seeing her mother for the first time says her face was "in a confused way, like a broken glass to me, in which I saw scraps of old remembrances..." (BH, p. 190); and Marcel, trying
to recall scenes of Combray, sees "no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background..." (SW, I, 33).

Memory in Proust and Dickens also is usually associated with a place. David Copperfield writes:

I don't know why one slight set of impressions should be more particularly associated with a place than another, though I believe this obtains with most people, in reference especially to the associations of their childhood. I never hear the name, or read the name, of Yarmouth, but I am reminded of a certain Sunday morning on the beach, the bells ringing for church, little Em'ly leaning on my shoulder, Ham lazily dropping stones into the water, and the sun, away at sea, just breaking through the heavy mist, and showing us the ships, like their own shadows (DC, p. 51).

So David associates "the smell of stables" with his first journey to school (DC, p. 81); Agnes always with a stained glass window he had seen as a child, and Ham with the beach of Yarmouth:

The face he turned up to the troubled sky, the quivering of his clasped hands, the agony of his figure, remain associated with that lonely waste, in my remembrance, to this hour. It is always night there, and he is the only object in the scene (DC, p. 453).

Arthur Clennam in the Marshalea Prison finds that Little Dorrit's presence is "equally inseparable from the walls and bars about him and from the impalpable remembrances of his later life which no walls or bars could imprison..." (LD, II, 331). Esther, as she searches for the fever-wracked Jo, has a premonition of her own disease and her resultant transformation:

I had for a moment an undefinable impression of myself as being something different from what I then was. I know it was then, and there, that I had it. I have ever con-
nected the feeling with that spot and time, and with every­
thing associated with that spot and time, to the distant
voices in the town, the barking of a dog, and the sound
of wheels coming down the miry hill (BH, p. 326).

"Memory is sedentary," Proust writes. Thus Gilberite is always remem­
bered in one of three spots: "a church in the Ile de France...the
path of a park along the Méséglise way...or else over the golden
morning brightness of a Parisian sidewalk" (PR, II, 1082). Similarly,
Marcel writes of Albertine:

Thus it is, calling a halt, her eyes sparkling beneath
her polo-cap, that I see her again to-day, outlined a­
gainst the screen which the sea spreads out behind her,
and separated from me by a transparent, azure space...
(WBG, I, 624).

Memory, then, as Ortega y Gasset writes, "is the spontaneous
growth of space itself..." In this way it has a connective function,
providing "a bridge between present and past":

Certain memories are like friends in common, they can
bring about reconciliations; set down amid fields starred
with buttercups, upon which were piled the ruins of feudal
greatness, the little wood bridge still joined us,
Legrandin and me, as it joined the two banks of the Vivonne
(GW, I, 825).

First memory connects moments in time so that the past "tra­
versing the lucidity of the subsequent epochs" (SCG, II, 764) enters
the present: Arthur Clennam, listening to his mother read, feels
years "fall away...like the imaginings of a dream, and all the dark
horrors of his usual preparations for the sleep of an innocent child...
overshadow him" (LD, I, 41); and as Miller writes of David Copperfield, "All David's memories are linked to one another. Any one point radiates backward and forward in a multitudinous web connecting it to past and future..." Also space separating people, events and places is eliminated. As Proust writes in Swann's Way: "I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed" (I, 35). Memory borne out of the herb tea has "transported" into Marcel's room "the bedroom of my Aunt Léonie and its wake, all Combray and the two walks, Guermantes way and Meséglise way" (PR, II, 998). In Great Expectations Pip writes that Magwitch

stood at the table drinking rum and eating biscuit; and when I saw him thus engaged, I saw my convict on the marshes at his meal again. It almost seemed to me as if he must stoop down presently, to file his leg (p. 348).

As memory is recognized for its connective capacity, it assumes a significance for the artist: it is found to contain elements which define it as an instrument of coherence and self-knowledge. The following passage from early Dickens introduces these several cognitive aspects of memory which Dickens and Proust later develop:

The boy stirred, and smiled in his sleep, as though these marks of pity and compassion had awakened some pleasant dream of a love and affection he had never known. Thus a strain of gentle music, or the rippling of water in a silent place, or the odour of a flower, or the mention of a familiar word, will sometimes call up sudden dim remembrances of scenes that never were, in this life; which vanish like a breath; which some brief memory of happier existence, long gone by, would seem to have awakened;

6 P. 155.
which no voluntary exertion of the mind can ever recall.?

First, conation cannot produce such memory. "Intellectual memory," Proust proclaims, is a travesty of the mystical recall the artist needs: "The pictures which that kind of memory shows us of the past preserve nothing of the past itself..." (SW, I, 33). The memory Oliver experiences is involuntary. Marcel says of his "moments bienheureux" at the end of The Past Recovered that "their first characteristic was that I was not free to choose them but they came to my mind pell-mell" (II, 1001).

Oliver's memories occur when Rose Maylie stoops over him and lets her tears fall "upon his forehead" (OT, p. 263). Thus the second aspect of such memory is that it is awakened by a certain outward sign. "That is why," Proust writes, "the better part of our memory exists outside ourselves, in a blatter of rain, in the smell of an unaired room or of the first crackling brushwood fire in a cold grate..." (WBG, I, 488). In Our Mutual Friend, Dickens writes, "The voice of the falling water, like the voices of the sea and the wind, was an outer memory to a contemplative listener" (p. 690). David Copperfield writes of his memories of Dora:

The scent of a geranium leaf, to this day, strikes me with a half-comical, half-serious wonder as to what change has come over me in a moment, and then I see a straw hat and blue ribbons, and a quantity of curls, and a little black

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7 Oliver Twist (New York: The New American Library, 1961), p. 33. All references are to this edition. Hereafter this book will be referred to as OT; page numbers will appear in parentheses following quotations.
dog being held up, in two slender arms, against a bank of blossoms and bright leaves (DC, p. 400).

And when he sees a ring of forget-me-nots on his daughter's hand, "there was a momentary stirring in my heart, like pain" in his remembrance of his first wife and a similar ring he had had made for her (DC, p. 490). In Little Dorrit the sound of church bells on Sunday reminds Arthur Clennam of "a long train of miserable Sundays...There was a legion of Sundays, all days of unserviceable bitterness and mortification, slowly passing before him" (I, 33f). When Arthur enters the home of his youthful sweetheart, Flora Finching, "those faded scents in truth saluted him like wintry breath that had a faint remembrance in it of the bygone spring" (I, 162). Smells also bring certain memories to Pip: "Biddy, having rubbed the leaf to pieces between her hands—and the smell of a black-currant bush has ever since recalled to me that evening in the little garden by the side of the lane..." (GE, p. 165f). However, memory itself does not reside in the black-currant bush or any other external stimulus: external objects are simply instruments for stirring awake something inside us. "Something within me," David notes, "faintly answering to the storm without, tossed up the depths of my memory, and made a tumult in them" (DC, p. 785). Thus Proust continues his discussion:

Outside ourselves, did I say; rather within ourselves, but hidden from our eyes in an oblivion more or less prolonged. It is thanks to this oblivion alone that we can from time to time recover the creature that we were, range ourselves face to face with past events as that creature had to face them, suffer afresh because we are no longer ourselves but he, and because he loved what leaves us now indifferent (WBG, I, 488f).
Involuntarily tapping the power of this oblivion produces memories which are extremely vivid. Thus Ham's death at sea is constantly and profoundly revisited upon David:

I now approach an event in my life, so indelible, so awful, so bound by an infinite variety of ties to all that has preceded it, in these pages, that, from the beginning of my narrative, I have seen it growing larger and larger as I advanced, like a great tower in a plain, and throwing its forecast shadow even on the incidents of my childish days.

For years after it occurred, I dreamed of it often. I have started up so vividly impressed by it that its fury has yet seemed raging in my quiet room, in the still night. I dream of it sometimes, though at lengthened and uncertain intervals, to this hour. I have an association between it and a stormy wind, or the lightest mention of a sea-shore, as strong as any of which my mind is conscious. As plainly as I behold what happened, I will try to write it down. I do not recall it, but see it done, for it happens again before me (DC, p. 779).

Involuntary memory is so vivid that, Poulet suggests, "the mind... sees surge unexpected and assuaging from the depths of memory the sensory equivalent." In other words, we can see, smell, hear, even touch the past. Each time he must record especially vivid memories—his childhood days, his school days, his mother's death, his marriage and Dora's death—David reverts to the present tense; his remembrance of his mother is so distinctly felt it "brings her back to life (DC, p. 36), and he writes of Emily daring the sea as a child: "The incident is so impressed on my remembrance that, if I were a draughtsman, I could draw its form here, I dare say, accurately as it was that day..." (DC, p. 46). Similarly, Pip, remembering Magwitch's sentencing

8 Studies in Human Time, p. 312.
writes: "The whole scene starts out again in the vivid colours of the moment, down to the drops of April rain on the windows of the court, glittering in the rays of April sun" (GE, p. 490). Such memory leaves out no detail. So Marcel, after his cup of tea, not only envisages all of Combray and its environs but also smells the odors of Aunt Léonie's home or the hawthorns along the walk, or hears the bells of the church. Also in Marcel's consciousness there linger the sounds of the memorable night his mother failed to kiss him:

Of late I have been increasingly able to catch, if I listen attentively, the sound of the sobs which I had the strength to control in my father's presence, and which broke out only when I found myself alone with Mamma. Actually, their echo has never ceased; it is only because life is now growing more and more quiet round about me that I hear them afresh...

(SW, I, 28).

David, remembering his mother's funeral writes:

If the funeral had been yesterday, I could not recollect it better. The very air of the best parlour, when I went in at the door, the bright condition of the fire, the shining of the wine in the decanters, the patterns of the glasses and plates, the faint sweet smell of cake, the odour of Miss Murdstone's dress, and our black clothes (DC, p. 138).

Memory thus has stripped down all the barriers of time and space.

It has made time incarnate; it has made the past palpable:

Even at this moment, in the mansion of the Prince de Guermantes, I heard the sound of my parents' footsteps as they accompanied M. Swann and the reverberating, ferruginous, interminable, sharp jangling tinkle of the little bell which announced to me that at last M. Swann had gone and Mamma was going to come upstairs—I heard these sounds again, the very identical sounds themselves, although situated so far back in the past...It must be, then, that this tinkling was still there and also, between it and the present moment, all the infinitely unrolling past which I had been unconsciously carrying within me...It was this
conception of time as incarnate, of past years as still close held within us, which I was now determined to bring out into such bold relief in my book (PR, II, 1123).

It is just such bold relief that David Copperfield attempts in his book:

How well I recollect the kind of day it was! I smell the fog that hung about the place; I see the hoar frost, ghostly through it; I feel my rimy hair fall clammy on my cheek; I look along the dim perspective of the schoolroom, with a sputtered candle here and there to light up the foggy morning, and the breath of the boys wreathing and smoking in the raw cold as they blow upon their fingers, and tap their feet upon the floor (DC, p. 130).

There is another aspect of memory which Oliver finds in his oblivion of sleep: as Dickens suggests, memory extends from before this conscious life; Oliver's memories are of a life he has never known. Proust shares this idea of a kind of racial consciousness. There is "an instinctive memory in the limbs," he writes. "Our arms and legs are full of sleeping memories of the past" (PR, II, 874). Marcel's grandmother feels "the presence within her of a creature which knew the human body better than herself, the presence of a contemporary of the races that have vanished from the earth..." (GW, I, 930). In a later book Proust writes:

We possess all our memories, but not the faculty of recalling them...But what, then, is a memory which we do not recall? Or, indeed, let us go farther. We do not recall our memories of the last thirty years; but we are wholly steeped in them; why then stop short at thirty years, why not prolong back to before our birth this anterior life? (CP, II, 273f).

The ability to recapture these sensations of a hidden and pre-conscious past seems most prevalent in sleep, when we open up to

a return to childhood, the recapture of the past years, of lost feelings, the disincarnation, the transmigration of the soul, the evoking of the dead...retrogression towards the most elementary of the natural kingdom...all
those mysteries which we imagine ourselves not to know and into which we are in reality initiated almost every night, as we are into the other great mystery of annihilation and resurrection (WBGr, I, 617f).

In fact, "our actual awakening produces an interruption of memory" (GW, I, 956). Mnemonic sleep allows us to free ourselves from time and space:

Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. There is a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapped in perfect unconsciousness. At such times, a mortal knows just enough of what his mind is doing, to form some glimmering conception of its mighty powers, its bounding from earth and spurning time and space, when freed from the restraint of its corporeal associate (OT, p. 89).

Proust finally decides that this sleep-memory may be "another time" from that of waking life, and perhaps another life; in fact, it may be a state of timelessness: "Perhaps...the other life, the life in which he sleeps is not—in its profounder part—included in the category of time" (CP, II, 272).

Here Proust is hinting at what he will later realize, that memory can conquer time as well as space. Through this realization—that memory is the paregoric for baroque madness—the alienated man undergoes a metamorphosis into the artist. Both Dickens and Proust experience this metamorphosis in their realization that memory can reclaim a lost childhood of harmony from which their artistic visions are clarified.
CHAPTER VIII

THE SYMBOL OF RESURRECTION

I now recaptured, by an instinctive and complete act of recollection, the living reality. That reality has no existence for us, so long as it has not been created anew by our mind...

—Marcel Proust

"Proust's novel," Poulet writes, "is the history of a search: that is to say a series of efforts to find again something that one has lost. It is the novel of an existence in search of itself."¹ This lost "something" is selfhood. Like Proust, Dickens creates characters, Miller suggests, who "seek some way out that will make possible the achievement of true selfhood,"² a selfhood that is fixed and determined from childhood but was lost in adulthood. The search is to re-find this essence of being, when "one becomes...one's former self..." (CP, II, 309). The recapturing of essential self for both Dickens and Proust is accomplished through involuntary memory. "The only cognition of self that is possible," Poulet writes, "is re-

¹ Studies in Human Time, p. 297.
² P. 253.
To recognize oneself in a place, in a piece of music, in a sensation, is more than to regain this sensation; it is to rediscover there one's own being. J.K. Fielding suggests that David Copperfield's awareness is that "his sense of self chiefly depends on memory," and *Little Dorrit* "is also largely about the return to the scene of an unhappy and even wronged childhood to find freedom and fulfillment." In this context Miller mentions Lady Dedlock who, "in assuming at last the self she has been fleeing for so long,... achieves the only kind of freedom possible in Dicken's world, the freedom to be one's destined self." The only reality lies in the past; Little Dorrit's new life seems "all a dream—only the old mean Marshalsea a reality" (LD, II, 37). And in finding reality, essence, we undergo redemption. Memory in Proust, Poulet writes, "plays the same supernatural role as grace in Christian thought." Memory can revive a lost condition and offer a "point for our spiritual action"; that action is creation. As Edmund Wilson writes, "only in artistic creation may we hope to find our compensation for the anarchy, the

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3 *Studies in Human Time*, p. 313.
5 Fielding, p. 129.
6 P. 205.
7 *Studies in Human Time*, p. 297.
perversity, the sterility and the frustrations of the world."\(^9\)

The metamorphosis, through grace, of a man into an artist is clearly delineated in *Remembrance of Things Past*. If the redemptive process is less systematized in Dickens, it is no less evident. One critic writes of Pip:

> We see the boy first in his natural condition in the country, responding and acting instinctively and therefore virtuously. The second stage of his career involves a negation of childlike simplicity; Pip acquires his 'expectations,' renounces his origins and moves to the city... This middle phase of his career culminates in a sudden fall, the beginning of a redemptive suffering which is dramatically concluded by an attack of brain fever leading to a long coma. It is not too fanciful to regard this illness as a symbolic death; Pip rises from it regenerate and percipient.\(^10\)

Miller indicates several other redemptive acts in Dickens, notably in *Our Mutual Friend* where several drownings or near drownings represent regeneration:

> The descent into the waters of death is the last and most significant version of a constant motif in Dickens, a motif going back to *Oliver Twist*; the reaffirmation of one's given role after an interval of separation from it. This is Dickens' own special form of the theme of redemption.\(^11\)

The Dickens' novel which is most explicitly about the history of a spiritual (as well as secular) vocation, however, is *David Copperfield*. Just as Marcel writes of the re-finding of self, David, through his

\(^9\) *Axel's Castle*, p. 159.


\(^11\) P. 325.
memories, records his search for the secret of his artistic creation.

Like Pip, David at Blunderstone responds naturally and instinctively to the country. He has faith; he feels harmony in the world. Childlike faith, Dickens writes, involves "a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased" (DC, p. 25). It is easy for David to converse with nature unpretentiously, and he becomes involved with the rocks in their games in the high trees. Faith also involves wonderful powers of observation which enable the child to see all details, but in a unified whole: David, on his first visit to Yarmouth, takes in the multitudinous details of Peggotty's boat-house—"All this I saw in the first glance after I cross the threshold—child-like..." (DC, p. 41).

David's pleasant trip to Yarmouth, however, is an interlude of tranquility in his fall from grace, which has already begun with the appearance of Mr. Murdstone. When he observes Mr. Murdstone with David's mother, David's freshness is tainted, his equilibrium disoriented; his observations of totality fail him: "I could observe, in little pieces, as it were, but, as to making a net of a number of these pieces, and catching anybody in it, that was, as yet, beyond me" (DC, p. 33). Finally, like Pip, although with much less selfishness, David enters his stage of the "negation of child-like simplicity." He cuts himself off from nature; he loses his ability to see a unified, essential world; he even cuts himself off from memory: "I thought afresh of the grave in the churchyard, underneath the tree, and it seemed as if the house were dead too, now, and all connected
with my father and mother were faded away" (DC, p. 253). David writes about his sojourn in Switzerland:

I had no purpose, no sustaining soul within me, anywhere...I had come out of Italy, over one of the great passes of the Alps, and had since wandered with a guide among the byways of the mountains. If those awful solitudes had spoken to my heart, I did not know it (DC, p. 809).

Switzerland, however, provides David with his Wordsworthian experience with which he reclaims his lost essence:

I came, one evening before sunset, down into a valley, where I was to rest. In the course of my descent to it, by the winding track along the mountain-side, from which I saw it shining far below, I think some long-unwonted sense of beauty and tranquility, some softening influence awakened by its peace, moved faintly in my breast...

...All at once, in this serenity, great Nature spoke to me (DC, p. 809).

This "long-unwonted sense" stems from David's childhood when he could move harmoniously with the world. David becomes a new self, or rather regains his essential selfhood. He receives a letter from Agnes, and, at that moment "thought what I had been an hour ago!" (DC, p. 810). His mystical experience in Switzerland, ultimately

12 Compare Pip's move to the city when he forgets Joe and Biddy and does not communicate with them. In fact, after his first day in London, he seems to have been gone from them for many months: "The space interposed between myself and them partook of that expansion, and our marshes were any distance off" (GE, p. 201). Miller sees the same movement from harmony to gracelessness in Bleak House: "There was once evidently, long ago in the past, a time when things were orderly...From that point things passed eventually to a stage in which they were simply collections of broken objects thrown pell-mell together!" (p. 193).

13 This sense of regeneration in Dickens is not restricted to David Copperfield. Arthur Clennam comes out of his stupified de-
although not immediately, is to produce the story of his life: "This narrative is my written memory" (DC, p. 811). Also, in understanding the value of memory in transcending time, the real artist is born and in Switzerland David is able to write again: "The three months gone, I resolved to remain away from home for some time longer, to settle myself for the present in Switzerland, which was growing dear to me in the remembrance of that evening, to resume my pen, to work" (DC, p. 811).

Proust's famous revelation of the artist-self in The Past Recaptured is similar. It also climaxes a pilgrimage and its end marks the beginnings of Proust's narrative of written memory. In Swann's Way Marcel writes of "a time when I still had faith" (I, 325). This faith is "the feeling which makes us not merely regard a thing as a spectacle, but believe in it as a creature without par-

pression only at the appearance of Little Dorrit, who represents childhood faith and simplicity, and most important, a sense of reality borne from memory. Miller writes of this book: "The innocence of childhood is the one stage of life which escapes from the shadow of the prison. The purity of childhood is the only part of a man which is really worthy to be taken up into the 'morning without a night'" (p. 239). Esther Summerson's illness signifies the birth of a new person, not only in her altered looks or her subsequent discovery of a bit of lost childhood in her recognition of her mother, but also in a revitalized communion with nature: "I found every breath of air, and every scent and every flower and leaf and blade of grass, and every passing cloud, and everything in nature, more beautiful and wonderful to me than I had ever found it yet" (BH, p. 361). And Pip, after his redemptive illness and in his convalescence with Joe, finds himself a child again: "I fancied I was little Pip again. For the tenderness of Joe was so beautifully proportioned to my need that I was like a child in his hands...I would half-believe that all my life since the days of the kitchen was one of the mental troubles of the fever that was gone" (GE, p. 301).
... Thus objects are endowed with personality. As a boy along the Méséglise way Marcel smells the hawthorns and "these gusts of fragrance came to me like the murmuring of an intense vitality" (SW, I, 87). This is the speech of nature: "It was in no artificial manner, by no device of human construction, that the festal intentions of these flowers was revealed, but...it was Nature herself who had spontaneously expressed it..." (SW, I, 107). When the family is about to leave for Paris Marcel's mother finds her son standing in tears on that steep little hillside close to Tansonville, bidding a long farewell to my hawthorns, clasping their sharp branches to my bosom... 'Oh, my poor little hawthorns,' I was assuring them through my sobs, 'it is you that want to make me unhappy, to force me to leave you. You, you have never done me any harm. So I shall always love you.' And drying my eyes, I promised them that, when I grew up, I would never copy the foolish example of other men, but even in Paris, on fine spring days, instead of paying calls and listening to silly talk, I would make excursions into the country to see the first hawthorn-trees in bloom (SW, I, 111).

However, Marcel is not true to his word because he is soon beyond "the age when one has faith..." (PR, II, 985). Like David, he is hampered by an "undisciplined heart." Instead of understanding the "essence" of the world, Marcel soon lives with "mental images which have retained no trace of life" (PR, II, 994). When a stranger points out a belfry to direct Marcel on his way my memory need only find in it some dim resemblance to that dear and vanished outline, and the passerby, should he turn round to make sure that I have not gone astray, would see me, to his astonishment, oblivious to the walk that I had planned to take or the place where I was obliged to call, standing still on the spot, before that steeple, for hours on end, motionless, trying to remember, feeling deep within myself a tract of soil reclaimed from
the waters of lethe slowly drying until the buildings rise on it again; and then no doubt, and then more uneasily than when, just now, I asked him for a direction, I will seek my way again, I will turn a corner...but...the goal is in my heart...(SW, I, 51).

At Balbec, seeing trees which should juxtapose Combray in his mind, Marcel is unable to find the origin of his sensation:

My mind felt that they were concealing something which it had not grasped...I felt again behind them the same object, known to me and yet vague, which I could not bring nearer...Presently, at a cross-roads, the carriage left them. It was bearing me away from what alone I believed to be true, what would have made me truly happy; it was like my life.

...And when, the road having forked and the carriage with it, I turned my back on them and ceased to see them...I was as wretched as though I had just lost a friend, had died myself, had broken faith with the dead or had denied my God (WEG, I, 544).

Memory fails him. When he first sees the madeleine whose taste is to recall Combray he remembers nothing, "perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered..." (SW, I, 36). He no longer thinks of Albertine; she is "a road not lined with memories..." (PR, II, 898): "I should now have been incapable of resuscitating Albertine because I was incapable of resuscitating myself, the self of those days" (SCG, II, 833). Memories, as he states in The Past Recaptured, have "become a matter of indifference to me" (II, 901).

With indifference and ennui Marcel loses the ability to impart power to things: the hawthorns appeal to him but he does not respond (CP, II, 134). Finally, a weary and sick man, he thinks, "Trees...you have nothing more to say to me; my deadened heart no longer hears you" (PR, II, 983).
Then, soon after seeing these trees, Marcel has his moment of grace. His moments bienheureux—the sound of a spoon on plate, the feel of a napkin, the sensation of the uneven flagstones, the noise of a water pipe and the sight of François le Champi—transform him into a new being; the sensation is as pleasurable as that he had known when he had tasted the madeleine:

An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself (SW, I, 34).

The origin of this sensation is memory: "The being who remembers," Poulet writes, "finds he has become once more a being who once had faith."14 Realizing this, Marcel decides "to concentrate myself to this study of the essence of things, and to establish its true nature!.. (PR, II, 999), and he realizes that his artistic material is "nothing else than my past life" (PR, II, 1016). More importantly, he realizes "that the work of art is our only means of recapturing the past" (PR, II, 1015).

"Time regained," Poulet writes, "is time transcended,"15 and to make these moments of "pure time" permanent, there must be the work of art. Art presents essences, verities, "pertaining to a world more real than that in which I lived..." (WBG, I, 339). If we cannot

14 Studies in Human Time, p. 304.
15 Studies in Human Time, p. 320.
return to childhood, we can return to essence via art, which puts us once more "in contact...with the reality of life..." (SCG, II, 774). Furthermore, the work of art—because it represents permanence of essence, transcendence of time and elimination of space through memory—is the only way for man to transcend his chaotic, fragmented universe. As Edmund Wilson writes, he "makes a stand, in the only way which now seems possible, against the universal disintegration: by setting himself to reintegrate experience in a work of literature."16

Art is resurrection:

They buried him, but all through the night of mourning, in the lighted windows, his books arranged three by three kept watch like angels with outspread wings and seemed, for him who was no more, the symbol of his resurrection (Captive, II, 510).

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16 Axel's Castle, p. 186.
CONCLUSION

Erich Auerbach, writing of Dante's characters, says they represent "the intensified image of the essence of their being, fixed for all eternity in gigantic dimensions." Both Proust and Dickens attain this "intensified image of the essence" of experience.

For Proust, this essence exists in the timeless quality of memory; long-dormant essence is nourished by memory:

Let a sound already heard or an odour caught in bygone years, be sensed anew, simultaneously in the present and the past, real without being of the present moment, ideal but not abstract, and immediately the permanent essence of things, usually concealed, is set free and our true self, which had long seemed dead but was not dead in other ways, awakes, takes on fresh life as it receives the celestial nourishment brought to it (PR, II, 996).

Memory is the most important artistic instrument because it recaptures the sensation of a time when there were "true flowers", when everything "seemed to me more precious, more important, endowed with a more real existence than they appear to full-grown men. And between the earth and its creatures I made no distinction!" (SW, I, 120).

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Through memory images regain their "gigantic dimensions" of childhood:

Just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea (SW, I, 36).

Memory resurrects the child: "The first instant I angrily asked myself who was the stranger that came thus to cause me pain, and that stranger was my own self, the child I had been..." (PR, II, 1004).

On the other hand, essence in Dickens comes from a kind of imagery which is not dependent on memory. Dickens has retained the child's vision of "gigantic dimensions" and embues his characters with that vision. George Henry Lewes reports that "Dickens once declared to me that every word said by his characters was distinctly heard by him..."2 This near-hallucinatory phenomenon of viewing characters as entities separate from the artist, according to René Wellek and Austin Warren, is "eidetic memory," common to childhood, which consists of "neither after-images nor memory-images." In other words, Dickens "retains, and has developed an archaic trait of the race: he feels and sees his thoughts."3 Also, like a child, Dickens sees the

2 "Dickens in Relation to Criticism," The Dickens Critics, p. 66.

beings around him as archetypes rather than in the puniness of their myriad possibilities. He writes: "The child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter" (GE, p. 72). David Copperfield’s childhood world contains "fowls that look terribly tall to me, walking about, in a menacing and ferocious manner" (DC, p. 25), and the fruit in his garden is "riper and richer than fruit has ever been since, in any other garden" (DC, p. 27).

Writing of Dickens in comparison to Kafka, Mark Spilka notes: "They are not able to move freely, like other novelists, from infantile to adult perspectives; instead their sensibilities seem fixed at childhood levels of perception as if by permanent psychic damage." Spilka is quick to point out, however, that the concept of an arrested or childlike sensibility does not imply neurotic art...The arrested sensibility indicates a stance, a shaping point of view, from which the artist comprehends experience. His vision of the world is an aesthetic construct, a model of significant reality, and not a madman’s fancy.

Dickens’s stance is most evident in his characters, huge creatures who, like Dante’s Farinata, rise out of a hellish world, but with a mixture of delightfulfulness and grotesqueness—the attributes of a child’s world. And, like Dante’s inhabitants of hell, they remain intact, frozen in

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5 P. 63.
their dimensions; they remain outside any consideration of time or space; they don't change:

This was old Christopher Casby—recognizable at a glance—so unchanged in twenty years and upwards, as his own solid furniture—as little touched by the influence of the varying seasons, as the old rose-Leaves and old lavender in his porcelain jars (ID, I, 162).

Often they are ageless, or wreak havoc with chronology: Joe Gargery is "a larger species of child" (GE, p. 15); Grandmother Smallweed is a child, her grand-daughter Judy (just 15) "appears to attain a perfectly geological age, and to date from the remotest period" (BH, p. 223).

However, in remaining in their own Dantesque spheres of personality, these characters do not constitute part of a homogeneous whole. Dickens' universe remains fragmented. His later books—Bleak House, Little Dorrit and Our Mutual Friend especially—are monuments to a catastrophic, alienated world: connections remain non-ontological and haphazard. Proust, on the other hand, does find a personal key to continuity. Poulet suggests that "the Proustian being in the final count attains to this total structure of itself which human existence had lost after the Middle Ages."\(^6\) Proust's means to unity is memory and mnemonic prose, flowing like a river: he fits his "essences" into a rhythm of memory and analogy which produces the secret of coherence in an artistic world.

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Dickens—although his imaginative cosmology is much the same as Proust's, a world of labyrinths, chaos, illusion, alienation, coincidence and fatality—lacks the secret which permanently provides a steady, flowing cohesion. However, throughout his works Dickens seems to be hinting at that very Proustian experience which can produce the "total structure" of self. Surely it is partly the great emphasis on the healing power of memory in David Copperfield which makes Dickens write:

Of all books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favorite child. And his name is DAVID COPPERFIELD (DC, p. vii).

And, more important, Dickens realizes that memory is closely bound up with childlike faith. In Great Expectations Estella has no childhood, therefore no memory: "'You must know,' said Estella...'that I have no heart—if that has anything to do with my memory'" (p. 258). For Dickens it certainly does; his characters who have no strong or happy memories of childhood—like Arthur Clennam and Louisa Gradgrind—are left with "a light with nothing to burn, a starved imagination..." (HT, p. 10). But those characters—Little Dorrit and Joe Gargery, for example—who retain their childhood in adulthood, who realize the present through the past, retain a childlike vision analogous to that of Dostoevsky's divine idiot: "'I have found a pleasure,' returned Agnes smiling, 'while you have been absent, in keeping everything as it used to be when we were children'" (DC, p. 834). Be ye as little
children, Dickens seem to say, and in the truth of the imagination, if not in physical reality, one can live in the archetypal world of myth and unity:

This may be fancy, though I think the memory of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose, just as I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy. Indeed, I think that most grown men who are remarkable in this respect may with greater propriety be said not to have lost the faculty, than to have acquired it: the rather, as I generally observe such men to retain a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased, which are also an inheritance they have preserved from their childhood (DC, p. 24f).
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