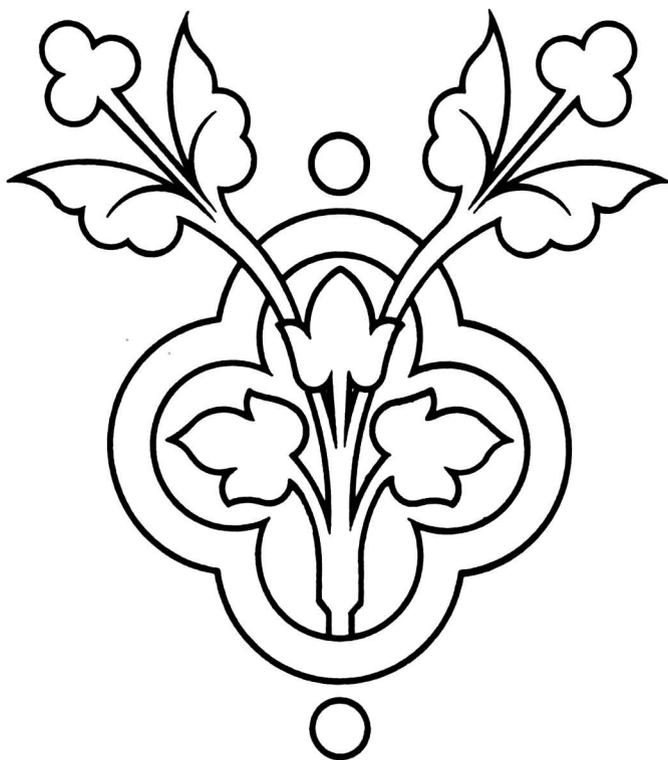


Portrait & Wings discussed

Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James

Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James
**THE IMPOSSIBLE
ROMANCE**

Ruth Newton and Naomi Lebowitz



University of Missouri Press
Columbia and London

Copyright © 1990 by
The Curators of the University of Missouri
University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Missouri 65201
Printed and bound in the United States of America
All rights reserved

5 4 3 2 1 94 93 92 91 90

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Newton, Ruth.

Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James : the impossible romance /
Ruth Newton and Naomi Lebowitz.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8262-0738-3 (alk. paper)

1. Fiction—19th century—History and criticism. 2. Literature—
Philosophy. 3. Values in literature. 4. Conduct of life in literature.
I. Lebowitz, Naomi. II. Title.

PN3499.N48 1990

809.3'034—dc20

90-32580

CIP

™ This paper meets the minimum requirements of
the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper
for Printed Library Materials, Z39.48, 1984.

Designer: Darin M. Powell

Typesetter: Connell-Zeko Type & Graphics

Printer: Thomson-Shore, Inc.

Binder: Thomson-Shore, Inc.

Typeface: Optima

To the keepers of our spirit and our history ↪

Roger, Al, Julie, Rachel, Paul, Joel, Judith

“Oh the impossible romance—!” The romance, for her, yet once more, would be to sit there for ever, through all her time, as in a fortress; and the idea became an image of never going down, of remaining aloft in the divine dustless air, where she would hear but the splash of the water against the stone.

The Wings of the Dove

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

xi

Introduction

1

1. Source and Solution

10

2. The Salvational Mode

45

3. Between Two Gospels

80

4. Suit and Service

120

5. Difficulties of Relationship and Form

162

Bibliography

213

Index

225

ABBREVIATIONS

We have used our own translations for foreign secondary texts and *Le Docteur Pascal*. The following abbreviations are used to cite primary sources.

CHARLES DICKENS

- BH* *Bleak House*. Edited by George Ford and Sylvère Monod. New York: Norton, 1977.
- CC* *A Christmas Carol*. Geneva: Edito-Service, n.d.
- DC* *David Copperfield*. 2 vols. Geneva: Edito-Service, n.d.
- DS* *Dombey and Son*. New York: New American Library, 1964.
- LD* *Little Dorrit*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.
- MC* *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1968.
- NN* *Nicholas Nickleby*. 2 vols. Geneva: Edito-Service, n.d.
- OMF* *Our Mutual Friend*. Edited by Stephen Gill. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.

ALESSANDRO MANZONI

- PS* *The Betrothed*. Edited and translated by Archibald Colquhoun. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1951.
(This edition is used except where a note cites *I Promessi Sposi*, edited by Luigi Russo [Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1980].)

EMILE ZOLA

- D* *La Débâcle*. Translated by Leonard Tancock. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972.

- DP *Le Docteur Pascal*. Edited by Jean Borie. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1975.
- G *Germinal*. Translated by Stanley and Eleanor Hochman. New York: New American Library, 1970.
- JV (*La Joie de vivre*) *Zest for Life*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956.
- O (*L'Oeuvre*) *The Masterpiece*. Translated by Katherine Woods. New York: Howell, Soskin, 1946.

HENRY JAMES

- A *The Ambassadors*. Edited by R. W. Stallman. New York: New American Library, 1960.
- PL *The Portrait of a Lady*. Edited by Leon Edel. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1963.
- WD *The Wings of the Dove*. Edited by J. Donald Crowley and Richard A. Hocks. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978.

GENERAL

- AK Leo Tolstoy. *Anna Karenina*. Translated by Rosemary Edmonds. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1954.
- DD George Eliot. *Daniel Deronda*. Edited by Barbara Hardy. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967.
- LI Honoré de Balzac. *Lost Illusions*. Translated by Herbert J. Hunt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971.

Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James

Introduction

José Ortega y Gasset predicted that the nineteenth-century novel would become unreadable because “it contains the least possible of poetic dynamism,” the same dynamism that the fiction of Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James engenders through the dramatic autonomy and collision of the historical and spiritual spheres: “The tension is very weak: the ideal *falls* from a very small height.”¹ Though we might question this prediction when we note the continuing popularity of Trollope, we cannot deny that in his work we find a diminution of moral weight. As Trollope proposes a question and solution for Mr. Crawley in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, we have no expectations of moral choices requiring inconceivable renunciations. His worthy Mr. Harding is no holy fool, though he calls himself a child. He lives very much in this world and is a far more credible character than Jarndyce, the Cheeryble brothers, or Mr. Brownlow, about whom we know very little, about whom there is very little to know; he settles into history because he has not been called upon to protest the epoch’s perversions. In an explanation of his refusal to accept the deanship, he confesses to his daughter and son-in-law, “I want the force of character which might enable me to stand against the spirit of the times.”² But Trollope himself does not have the vaguest desire to take such a stand, nor does he feel the frustration that ennobles George Eliot, whose broad scope and passionate purpose are put to use in an effort to redeem the history of the times.

Trollope is a good moralist and psychologist “by grace,” Henry James remarks, without “apparatus” and “effort,” and his narrative ease reflects his comfort in the world he inhabits. It is precisely this ease of integration that Raymond Williams distinguishes from Eliot’s

1. *Meditations on Quixote*, 163.

2. Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, 509.

restlessness. The “creative disturbance” that pushed her past the search for “the conventional happy ending where property and contentment can coexist and be celebrated” is, paradoxically, described by Nietzsche as an “English consistency,” a need to “cling to Christian morality”³ in order to secure the ethical and spiritual truths of a religion that had lost miracle and magic to the secular world. Struggling to find some way of investing religion’s spirit and ethics in a society she looked upon with both hope and mistrust, Eliot adopted a different strategy in each of her novels to repair a schism she was not yet ready to declare irreparable. Because she could never find a dynamic dialectic between society and the soul without seeking resolution of some kind, her novels are alternately restless and static, passionate and pontificating.

Nevertheless, most of us feel that Eliot’s compensatory powers make her works indispensable models of moral fiction. Since we find her willed mediation to be both satisfying and appropriate for the great narrative purpose of extending sympathies, we read James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* with the full expectation that the adventures Isabel Archer encounters in the Europe of her full romance will launch her into a higher destiny through suffering and enlightenment. Because we are aware that American novelists had traditionally lamented an absence of history and looked to Europe for such resources, it seems eminently natural and fitting to us that Isabel should go to the England of Gwendolen Harleth, where she can step into a “labyrinth of life” with “no clue” (*DD* 317), that same labyrinth Susan Stringham tells Milly they have entered (*WD* 120). And since this long lamented absence of history made American morality, in the words of Henry James, a “clue without a labyrinth,”⁴ we expect Isabel and Milly to find a mediating measure. Hungry for a history that could offer her fuller dramatic possibilities, and unaware that her American moral passion would sense its need for historical humbling, Isabel is enticed by the theater of romantic “histories within histories,” both public and private, in which Osmond and

3. James, “Anthony Trollope,” 239; Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, 84–85; Nietzsche, “Twilight of the Idols,” 515.

4. “Emerson,” 61.

Madame Merle perform their roles (*PL* 232). But the thick rich “moral air” (*WD* 290) permeating James’s scenes of exile, which promises the educated enlightenment of the lowered ideal, can deliver no such thing to her. In the end, the betrayal of her spirit by the “romance” of history assures that precipitous fall which James, like Dickens, Manzoni, and Zola, ordained for his protagonists. Because her consciousness is too high to be exhausted by history, Isabel’s desire to fulfill her promise to Pansy forces us to ponder her return to Osmond. We are at a loss to understand why at the beginning of her story, Milly must be lowered into the abyss from her Alpine peaks; why, at the end of her story, though she longs to remain in “the divine dustless air” and wishes “never, never to go down” (*WD* 266), she *must* be brought into the dust of history by treachery and revelation before she dies. We need to understand why Etienne could “find no words with which to calm La Maheude, who was shattered by the terrible fall from the heights of the ideal” (*G* 359).

Calvin Bedient seems justified in judging *Middlemarch* Eliot’s most successful work because it carries “the full burden of things as they are,” whereas in her other novels the real is overwhelmed by the ideal.⁵ But the acceptance by Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James of this full burden is only one term of the dialectical structure unique to their works. Motivated by what Manzoni termed that “bitter sentiment” born of the permanent contrast between “what is” and “what ought to be,” they lowered the fragile ideal directly into the ruthless chaos and chronicle of time and place, thereby securing, as Eliot could not, the independence of the numinous world.⁶ The exploitation of history in the definition of spiritual passion, so evident in the Catholic Manzoni, is the same strategy used by the melodramatist Dickens, the naturalist and mythologist Zola, and the moralist and “psychologist” James. In this respect, James’s complaint of a lack of seriousness in Dickens or a deficiency of life and craft in Zola will

5. *Architects of the Self*, 81. See also 69.

6. Letter to Claude Fauriel (1806) in Ulivi, *Manzoni*, 71. Francesco De Sanctis was the first critic to fully recognize and understand this strategy in Manzoni, and he remains the most perceptive reader of *I Promessi Sposi* to this day. See also his *Manzoni*, 74–79.

seem to be more an attempt to distinguish himself professionally from those who inspire him, than any rejection of the passion that inspires them all. We see this clearly in his patronizing remarks on Jane Austen, who surely must have greatly influenced him.⁷

The question of moral seriousness becomes more difficult today. From our perspective, the final apotheosis of Tom Pinch, whose holy character has survived the cruel hypocrisy and patronization of Martin Chuzzlewit and that “master architect” Pecksniff, appears to be a useless and sentimental outrage.

Thou glidest now, into a graver air; an air devoted to old friends and bygone times; and in thy lingering touch upon the keys, and the rich swelling of the mellow harmony, they rise before thee. The spirit of that old man dead, who delighted to anticipate thy wants, and never ceased to honour thee, is there, among the rest: repeating, with a face composed and calm, the words he said to thee upon his bed, and blessing thee!

And coming from a garden, Tom, bestrewn with flowers by children's hands, thy sister, little Ruth, as light of foot and heart as in the old days, sits down beside thee. From the Present, and the Past, with which she is so tenderly entwined in all thy thoughts, thy strain soars onward to the Future. As it resounds within thee and without, the noble music, rolling round ye both, shuts out the grosser prospect of an earthly parting, and uplifts ye both to Heaven! (MC 918)

We know too well that those who pay “a constant tribute to the ideal” (A 258) may often be mocked and patronized. Even the prudent Lambert Strether confesses to Miss Gostrey: “I’m not . . . in real harmony with what surrounds me. You are. I take it too hard. You don’t. It makes . . . that’s what it comes to in the end—a fool of me” (A 371). Yet, in the face of the irony that continually haunts her, Milly Theale, though she misreads Aunt Maud, speaks for all characters who cherish their spiritual estate when she says that “idealists, in the long run, I think, *don’t* feel that they lose” (WD 106). In this study, we will argue that “foolish” Tom is much more than a vessel for the spiritual and emotional needs of Dickens and his age. He is, in fact,

7. See Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 110.

the novel's organizing and activating agent, liberating both its spiritual and historical reality. And he becomes a novelistic organizer precisely because the sentimentality with which Dickens treats Tom Pinch is not only a benevolent convention of Victorian rhetoric, but the cry of a desperate man who takes things too hard and finds, in Kate Croy's words, "none of the peace of [his] condition" (*WD* 39). Seen in this light, the habitual categories and comparisons fall by the way. Let us suppose Tom's perch is absurd because Dickens did not really *want* him to fall from too low a height, that the novelist most often tagged a reconciler by coincidence, charity, burgeoning families and country cottages, used the conventions of comfort and sentiment not only as a Victorian but as a writer who found in hyperbolic excess ways of expressing his anger at the historical violation of his deepest desires for a wholeness that could be guaranteed by love rather than mockery. These sentimental and evasive apostrophic extensions of spiritual hope after loss, so much a mark of this novelist's text, testify to the grim realization that history can never free spirit from its pains and perplexities in time.

The unrivalled power and tension in the best works of Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James are derived precisely from the authors' imaginative experimentation with the dialectic structure of this perpetual opposition. Unlike so many other novelists of the nineteenth century who characteristically suffered assimilation to generic and historic conventions, they were able to endure the "internal disturbances" attendant not upon willed mediation but upon willed refusal of mediation. When mediation is the novelist's enemy, the real and the ideal must be forever at odds, a situation that challenges with dangerous bravado the safer assumptions of a society that does not want to see the two as enemies or as strangers. In the vast unmediated space between the physical and metaphysical spheres, so often considered places of aesthetic and moral *weakness* in the literature of these authors, we find the explanation for their full *power*, that poetic dynamism Ortega deemed lost to the century. The fall is steep, the price demanded excessive, the artistic risks vulnerable to bathos and absurdity.

Though no authors were less ideological, less drawn to open per-

suasion than these four novelists, they *believed* in their novels and in their belief. Dickens asserts in his Preface to *David Copperfield* that “no one can ever believe this Narrative in the reading, more than I believed it in the writing,” and he means this belief to be spiritual as well as literary. When informed by Balzac that he intended to write *Le Médecin de campagne* in a “religious genre,” Manzoni observed that such a work could not be one of “literary speculation” but of deep persuasion.⁸ Yet Milan Kundera, in a contemporary context of indifference to or conflation of moral, psychological, spiritual, and political spheres, believes only in his refusal to believe. He prefers to disregard the more earnest examples of the eighteenth-century novel in favor of the experimentally daring *Tristram Shandy*, which has the great advantage of escaping the destructive forces of history because it is “unserious throughout; it does not make us believe in anything: not in the truth of its characters, nor in the truth of its author, nor in the truth of the novel as a literary genre. *Everything* is called into question, *everything* exposed to doubt; *everything* is entertainment (entertainment without shame)—with everything which that implies for the form of the novel.”⁹

Kundera’s phrase “without shame” reveals the guilt we feel toward the morally serious novel of the previous century. He desires literature without belief, but for Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James there can be no literature without belief or desire, which are, in essence, one and the same. An artist will be able to render his work only in proportion to the depth with which “he feels his subject,” James contends, while acknowledging another school that considers the depth of the artist’s feeling to be contingent upon how finely he has rendered his work. The second attitude, claims James, was that of Flaubert, who wrote to George Sand: “I feel an unconquerable repugnance to putting on paper something from out of my heart.” To which Sand replied: “‘Not put one’s heart into what one writes?’ I don’t understand at all, oh! not at all! As for me, I think that one can not put anything else into it. Can one separate one’s mind from one’s

8. Quoted from Stefano Stampa in Ulivi, *Manzoni*, 324–25.

9. “An Introduction to a Variation,” *New York Times Book Review*, 6 January 1985, 26.

heart?"¹⁰ We register the irony that this may very well be one of Sand's weaknesses and Flaubert's strengths, yet we must honor the risk of narrative strain, arrest, suspicion, precisely at those points in which we feel lyric hope overriding psychological or moral change and assimilation, making its demands against a history that is deaf. However much we may wish to deny it, refusals of negotiation by these novelists swell the power of their novels to do more than history can do. A hope that will not lower itself to mediation cannot be worn down by the world. What is more, even as it may seem trapped by history, spirit finds a way to use its captor in order to reclaim its own territory and does so by challenging the traditional modes and textures of narratives that are amenable to adaptation and integration.

Finally, we might ask why writers as different as Dostoevsky and Conrad, who richly exploit the impossibility of mediation between heaven and history, consciousness and duty, romance and fact, should not belong to this company of novelists. The threat brandished by a cruel and unjust history could make believers, after all, of both the religious Dostoevsky, whose Alyosha uses his God to justify its absurdity (reversing Ivan's insistence that prayer be protest), and the skeptical Conrad, who clings to a necessary faith in the solidarity of illusion. But in the end their compelled persuasion frees their characters⁴ for action in the world without the burden of authorial fury and frustration. As for Chekhov and Turgenev, the melancholy beauty we feel in their works testifies not only to their sad recognition of the separation between reality and desire, but to their acceptance of it. We have chosen to focus our discussion on those novels that seem to encompass the broadest arc between earth and heaven, history and spirit. Because the supreme value James consistently puts on consciousness has been used most often to justify an immanent spiritual perspective, it was particularly important to select his two most "religious" novels, *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*.¹¹

Evaluative implications of terms like violation, possession, libera-

10. James, "Gustave Flaubert," 156; *The George Sand-Gustave Flaubert Letters*, ed. Stuart Sherman, 38, 39.

11. For an immanent interpretation of Milly in *WD*, see Rowe, *Henry Adams and Henry James*, 166-97.

tion, egotism, community, and dialectic, which are imposed on these texts by contemporary critics, take on an altogether different coloring when we derive them from their nineteenth-century setting, giving heroic stature to the author rather than the critic as preserver of the spirituality, flexibility, and dynamism of the novelistic form. Some theorists of the present day have explored in exciting ways the presence of affective ambiguities that trouble them in the writings of Dickens, but because they mistrust the powerful spiritual longing of the author for innocence and goodness in its sentimental guise, they tend to overvalue the subversive energies of the text, as they undervalue the very real history and experience of the nineteenth century that threatened both the novelist and the novel itself. John Kucich, for example, calls his study "aesthetic rather than sociological, atemporal rather than historical."¹² There have also been many stimulating discussions about the spontaneous and unrestrained energy of Dickens's humor, but we would like to free Dickens's spiritual energy from the castigation this humor visits upon his didactic and sentimental rhetoric, and restore it to full power and ingenuity in its argument against history.

Chapter 1 establishes the recognition by these four authors of the resistance of history to reform. Even if the possibility of perfect justice and happiness is a utopian chimera, the desire for perfect justice and happiness is as permanent and stubborn as fact. We characterize these novelists of unideological temperaments, who employ open dialectic to refute fixed persuasion, as bad citizens in a historical republic but as good citizens in the democracy of the spirit. This chapter does not take up the "politics" of James because there is so little of it, but we find the unmediated dialectic between history and heaven everywhere in his writings. Despite his oft-stated dissatisfaction with the international theme, it was history, both its lamented absence and its overbearing presence, that gave his works their necessary density.

In Chapter 2 we discuss the authenticity of religious passion in these novelists and the artistic and generic progression in the development of the salvational drama designed to preserve and exploit

12. *Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens*, 2.

that passion. Through this drama even those passages and characters so often regarded by modern readers and critics as visionary or sentimental “lapses” are thereby transformed into formal strengths.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how the structure of the salvational mode within the realistic novel is translated into the language and lives of the characters, placed unmercifully by their authors between physical and metaphysical spheres. The inhabitants of history can, paradoxically, use its customs and conventions in order to transcend time and place. In making difficult moral choices, they must learn to take into account both the gospel of Caesar and the gospel of Christ, to live in two realms at the same time—no easy task when we consider the extent of that division to be the abyss over which James’s Densher and Kate observe each other at the end of their story.

Chapter 4 explores the opposition of profession and charity that doubles and deepens the underlying opposition of history and spirit. While the lack of public power and profession can prove devastating to women in ways that do not reflect conventional wisdom in the reading of Dickens and James, powerlessness enables heroines to make choices where none seem to be available.

The final chapter argues that these authors consciously and inventively found ways of pressing the disruptiveness of personal temperament into the service of community and the form of the novel at a time when community and form were being threatened by aggressive and explosive historical developments. In such an epoch, the transcendental home at the end of the journey becomes more and more alluring. It is a measure of their courage and ingenuity that Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James were able to maintain, as their contemporaries were not, the unmediated dialectical tension through much of their literature, and to force their incorporeal angels, godfathers, and holy fools, with their supra-historical standards of conduct that is passionately good, to serve the novel more than the novelist. Today, when the structures of philosophy no longer encourage us to ask what constitutes a good life, when forms that feature a naked passion for virtue immediately evoke suspicions of bad faith, the novels of these authors remind us of spiritual possibilities that may still be wrested from history.

CHAPTER 1

SOURCE AND SOLUTION

Somebody's Theory and Nobody's Practice

When the young Henry James characterizes the early English novelists as “preachers” and “moralists,”¹ we might read in his epithets as much envy as condescension: in a world of communion between social and spiritual gospels, intrusive sermonizing would not detract from but contribute to the spontaneity and persuasion of character and scene. By Dickens's time and increasingly afterwards, however, as society and characters seemed fated to be organized or developed more by the metaphors they shared than by their morality, the set sermon would come to be viewed simply as an obstruction. No matter how accidental its origin and integration, Yorick's sermon in *Tristram Shandy* could still represent the general play between conduct and rhetoric. In *Bleak House*, however, Chadband's rhetorical burlesque has no influence on the world's actions and attitudes, and Jo, to whom he preaches, cannot even finish the Lord's prayer.

Well might the authors of spiritual longing seek the societal sanction of the eighteenth-century novelists, but they could not pretend to be Fielding's preacher, who considered the world malleable to conscience and open to promise; well might they have been tempted to dismiss the world altogether, but they could not pretend to be hellfire preachers who held out a greater promise in heaven. At the end of his career, Zola falls from grace as a novelist by using the set sermon in *Vérité* to blast those who preach, but in *Germinal*, Maheu, enraged by the sermon of the parish priest who predicts the triumph of the Church while Alzire is dying, does his own talking: “There's no need for so many words. . . . You would have done better to be-

1. Quoted in Edel, *The Life of Henry James*, 1:210.

gin by bringing us a loaf of bread." The novelist informs us calmly that the family was revolted by "the pointless cruelty of burdening Alzire with illness before finally finishing her off" (C 315–18). The Maheus do not have to be told that the kingdom of heaven envisioned by Richard Carstone is a cheat, though they are tempted, in a world of painful injustice, to believe in the visions of perfect justice that Etienne conjures up for them.

Through Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, who acknowledges the stubborn autonomy of the gospel of Caesar and the gospel of Christ, Manzoni defines the limits of reform, something Rousseau had not been willing to do when he harangued the citizens of the city from his country sanctuary. The anger and frustration that determine the tension and hyperbole in the literature of these authors and push them into new configurations of melodrama and the morality play arise from their recognition that reform is questionable in an age which demanded political solutions, that blame is diffused in an age which demanded a source for sin. Joseph Fradin notes the contradiction in a Dickens who seems simultaneously to advocate and remain skeptical of social progress, and Barbara Hardy recognizes that the contrast between Dickens's faith in private virtues and his "social despair" is precisely what distinguishes him from Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. But we would like to emphasize the *dynamic* opposition of these attitudes, expressed by Raymond Williams when he writes that Dickens "works more finely than anyone in his time the tension—often the unbearable tension—between orthodox ideas, the ratifying explanations of the world as it was, and the tearing, dislocating, haunting experience which the ideas, in majority, were meant to control."²

This confrontation produces a drama of such heartbreaking injustice that Proust was led to envy the unjustly accused Dreyfus his access to a court of law:

Alas, in the last ten years, we have all had many a sorrow, many a disappointment, many a torment in our lives. And not for one of us will the

2. Fradin, "Will and Society in *Bleak House*," 109; Hardy, *The Moral Art of Dickens*, 3; Williams, "Dickens and Social Ideas," 87.

hour strike that will change our sorrows into exaltations, our disappointments into fulfillment, and our torment into exquisite triumphs. I shall become more and more ill, more and more I shall miss the ones I have lost, and all that I dreamed of in my life will be farther and farther beyond my reach. But for Dreyfus and for Picquart it is not so. For them life has been 'providential' after the fashion of fairy tales and serial thrillers. That is because our suffering was founded on fact—on truths—physiological truths, human and emotional truths. For them, suffering was founded on error—judicial or otherwise. They are the only human beings for whom there are redress and restitution.³

These words are echoed in Isabel Archer's long meditation before the fire, as she interprets her life with Osmond: "She knew of no wrong he had done; he was not violent, he was not cruel: she simply believed he hated her. That was all she accused him of, and the miserable part of it was precisely that it was not a crime, for against a crime she might have found redress" (*PL* 350). The yearning of Proust and Isabel for a marriage between social and ontological justice is continually frustrated, as blame is infinitely deferred or diffused. In questioning the world's serious consideration of "the problems of guilt," Kafka writes to Milena that while it is natural to reproach and condemn, it is entirely unnatural and useless to locate blame firmly through rational analysis of the situation, and his example answers Isabel's questions exactly: "Of course you are to blame, but then your husband is also to blame and then you again and then he again, since it cannot be otherwise in the living together of human beings and the blame piles up in endless succession until it reaches the grey Original Sin. . . ."⁴

Because *Bleak House* is a novel in which blame is so obviously unfocused, A. O. J. Cockshut is led to overstate the contrast he finds between this book and the earlier novels of Dickens, in which he reads a strong and constant propensity to target character as cause in

3. *The Letters of Marcel Proust*, 153. We might surmise that Zola left his desk for the Dreyfus Affair precisely because he realized such justice was the only kind that was possible to secure in this world.

4. *Letters to Milena*, 193.

every calamity.⁵ But even in Dickens's earlier works, any propensity to focus blame is continually subverted by the inexplicable and energetic evil of Quilp, the evenhandedness of *Barnaby Rudge*, the mechanical laws of mercantile forces in *Dombey and Son*, the Protean authority of the Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Assurance Company (so very like that of the Chancery and the Circumlocution Office). A man who is called Montague Tigg or Tigg Montague with equal validity cannot be held liable. Yet there is no denying that we can note a dramatic widening of the dissemination of blame in *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*. The muddles and injustice of Chancery and the Circumlocution Office arise not only from the Lord High Chancellor, the Merdles, and all the indifferent public servants, with their unimaginative, ineffectual, impersonal, misguided theories of education, incarceration, sanitation and litigation, but also, and more extensively than in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, from the victims themselves, those who cannot stay away from history's false promises, who cannot forgo grudges and great expectations. Richard, Gridley, Tom Jarndyce, Sir Leicester and Boythorne feed the system with their thirst for vengeance and just deserts, and Gridley will "accuse the individual workers of that system . . . face to face," even "before the eternal bar!" (*BH* 193). Such litigiousness Zola's Bongrand calls "the madness of personality at its last resort" (*O* 395). When we learn that Dickens considered giving the title *Nobody's Fault* to *Little Dorrit*, we understand that he was thinking not only of the general evasion of responsibility, but of that infinite recession of guilt which Deneulin acknowledges in *Germinal*: "that everybody was to blame—the fault was general, centuries old" (*G* 264). Whereas Zola was able to shout "J'accuse" in the Dreyfus Affair, he could not do so in his novel.

However compassionate they may be, Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James cannot protect their protagonists from the persecution of such a history. On the contrary, they send them on hyperbolic flights, fill them with utopian visions, and drop them precipitously into despair. They push them into dramas of extremes and polarities

5. *The Imagination of Charles Dickens*, 63.

in order to express the rage they themselves feel at the impossibility of a victory over the world. La Maheude finds it “so wonderful to forget the sad reality for a little while! When you live like an animal, your head bent to the earth, you’ve got to have a little corner of dreams, where you can relax by treating yourself to things you know you will never have. And what really excited her . . . was the idea of justice” (G 137). Is it “possible to have become so unhappy just from wanting justice?” (G 359), she asks, but the “violent temper” of reality, Ortega reminds us, cannot tolerate the ideal.⁶

Although history does not listen to the prayers, protests or dreams of its citizens, it arrogantly demands of them full attention to its harsh requirements. Maurice’s deliberate refusal to heed history (*D* 740) costs him his life; for La Maheude it means the loss of her family. The false prophets—Pluchart, Etienne, the parish priest of *Germinal*, and Chouteau of *La Débâcle*—practice a conflation of politics and religion, and promise a heavenly city while refusing to pay tribute to the exacting god of the earthly one. In listening to Etienne, the miners feel the “religious anticipation of a miracle, the realization of an ideal, the sudden entry into the city of justice, that he had promised them” (G 318), and the Maheus drink in his words “with the blind faith of converts, like those Christians, in the first days of the Church, who expected the perfect society to be born on the dump heap of the ancient world” (G 137–38). Pluchart’s “eloquence had something of the pulpit about it, and the religious way of letting the ends of his sentences drop” as he builds for his audience “the immense cathedral of the world of the future . . . ; no new religion had ever made so many converts!” (G 200). Yet this was a religion that belonged entirely to history and the secular romantic humanitarianism of Zola’s day.⁷

The history that does not listen to its own actors creates a mirage in Milan as it establishes its rudimentary utopia in the midst of the famine of 1628 that preceded the plague. The magistrates “fixed a ceiling price for some commodities, threatened with penalties any-

6. Ortega, *Meditations on Quixote*, 163.

7. See Walker, *Germinal and Zola’s Philosophical and Religious Thought*, 63–72.

one refusing to sell, and issued other edicts of the kind." Then the Spaniard Antonio Ferrer, the Grand Chancellor, took over, saw that a fair price for bread was most desirable, "and thought—which is where he made his big mistake—that an order from him would be enough to produce it." A rough justice follows as the people demand bread at the fixed price, over the complaints of the bakers. "But with the magistrates threatening penalties on one side, and the people determined to be served on the other . . . complaining with those loud voices of theirs if any baker demurred, and threatening to take justice into their own hands (the worst justice there is in this world . . .)," Renzo is introduced to the kind of justice he himself threatened to pursue in order to regain Lucia (*PS* 185–86).

Ignoring the stark reality of these events, Ferrer and Renzo, like Pluchart and Etienne, tempt the crowd with the notion of perfect historical fulfillment. The Spaniard speaks "as if from a pulpit," calling for "Bread and justice!" (*PS* 208) amid acclamation, and Renzo is certain that the people can get their rights if they are heard: ". . . we ought to go on like this, until we've set all the other wrongs to rights, and made the world a decenter place to live in." Redress can be won by conflating politics and religion, as the prophets in *Germinal* had done, for this allows blame and blame allows retribution. All the evils of society, Renzo maintains, are caused by "a handful of tyrants who turn the ten commandments upside down, and go out of their way to find quiet, unsuspecting folk to do them all the harm they can, and then are always in the right" (*PS* 213–14). Manzoni comments with gentle irony: "How true it is that a man overwhelmed by grief no longer knows what he is saying!" (*PS* 45).

Though George Eliot pays tribute to a kind of scientific meliorism in her novel *Felix Holt*, we find in *Daniel Deronda* a turn toward the utopian state. Daniel interprets prayer as "a yearning to escape from the limitations of our own weakness and an invocation of all Good to enter and abide with us" (*DD* 416), but the trouble is that history accommodates him by leading him to the Promised Land, where he believes he can change the world. The dying Mordecai considers himself to be "only another prayer" which Daniel "will fulfill" (*DD* 638). Sir Hugo, who is wiser than his author in this instance, chides

the young man for looking "at politics as if they were prophecy" (*DD* 434). Prayers which are fulfilled do not protest but mediate. Clotilde's final vision of civilization on the march at the end of the *Rougon-Macquart* is, after all, only "a prayer, an invocation." While Daniel reaches his Promised Land, Doctor Pascal, like Moses, dies before reaching Canaan. The Promised Land of Dickens's characters turns out to be the swamplands of Eden. From "Eden," James's heroes and heroines sail to the romance of old Europe and discover treachery and corruption. Manzoni's *umili* (humble) wander through a plague-ridden and starving Milan, while Zola's crawl through the battlefields of Sedan or the underground tunnels of Montsou. Bonnemort tries to warn the miners, mesmerized by the visionary preachers who treat "politics as if they were prophecy," that "things had never been right and they never would be right" (*G* 233), but they do not listen. Since patience is "a hollow, a bitter word, for those who have not faith" (*PS* 89), as Fra Cristoforo tells Renzo, it is no wonder that those who promise justice as a reward for faith capture their audiences.

When Freud finds a "piece of unconquerable nature . . . a piece of our own psychical constitution"⁸ immune to programs and institutional reform, we are not moved as we are when John Stuart Mill comes to that revelation, for the former expected nothing else, whereas the latter expected redress and retribution, as he confesses in a well-known passage of his autobiography: "'Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?' . . . 'No!' At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down."⁹ Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James met such a revelation not with Freudian negotiation, but with anger. A "good citizen" would not, at the dinner table of Lord John Russell, give vent to his passion, as Dickens did,

8. *Civilization and its Discontents*, 33.

9. *Autobiography and Other Writings*, 81. See also Vronsky's understanding of the matter: "It showed him the eternal error men make in imagining that happiness consists in the realization of their desires" (*AK* 490-91).

eliciting these words from Meyerbeer: “Ah, mon ami illustre! que c’est noble de vous entendre parler d’haute voix morale, à la table d’un ministre” (Ah, my illustrious friend! How noble it is to let us hear you speak with such a high moral tone at the table of a minister).¹⁰ But for Dickens, who longed to be a citizen in a democracy of the spirit where ministers and programs would not prevail, neither England nor America could become “the republic of [his] imagination.”¹¹

In rejecting a Procrustean adaptation to a society of diminished expectations, these authors did not seek utopian escape. Dickens wrote to Macready in 1855, at the time of *Little Dorrit*, that he had “no present political faith or hope—not a grain,” a skepticism confirmed in him after seeing a reform bill that proposed improvements in education, public works, wages, and hours withdrawn by Lord Russell under pressure within a year of its introduction in 1854.¹² But such skepticism had been with him from his early days in the gallery of Parliament where, like his David Copperfield, he recorded the debates. David writes that he is “sufficiently behind the scenes to know the worth of political life.” He is “quite an Infidel about it, and shall never be converted” (*DC* 2:230), and Dickens seconds this sentiment in *Bleak House* by writing of the London slum, Tom-all-Alone’s: “In the midst of . . . dust and noise, there is but one thing perfectly clear, to wit, that Tom only may and can, or shall and will, be reclaimed according to somebody’s theory but nobody’s practice. And in the hopeful meantime, Tom goes to perdition head foremost in his old determined spirit” (*BH* 551–52). We question Humphrey House’s contention that Dickens’s inability throughout his career “to find a kind of political and social power, a government, which he

10. Quoted in Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2:846–47.

11. *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 62. “This is not the republic I came to see; this is not the republic of my imagination,” Dickens wrote to Macready from America in March 1842.

12. *Ibid.*, 269. See also Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2:822.

could approve," was a "problem,"¹³ since it seems to us that the novelist's realization of this inability proved to be a catalyst instead. That Dickens wrote *Little Dorrit* when the Marshalsea had already been closed, or *Bleak House* after legal delays had been reduced, or that Zola wrote *Germinal* after improvements in labor practices had been put into place, becomes irrelevant.

It is useless for Bernard Shaw to regret that "Marxism and Darwinism came too late" for Dickens and that it might have been better for him "to have been a Comtist." The novelist was willing to entertain the revolutionary possibilities of Darwin's natural selection without being convinced one way or the other. As for its threat to religion, "it may be just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that he created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws."¹⁴ But scientific and political structures could have no authority or influence in the novelistic world of Dickens's spiritual democracy, a point A. E. Dyson brings to our attention by noting the non-Marxist ending of *Dombey and Son*.¹⁵ Sol Gills's worthless old shares are redeemed, but not the fall of *Dombey and Son*, nor that of mankind itself.

The absence of blame and solution in the works of these novelists represents not evasion or political cowardice on their part, but rather a courageous refusal to enter into the strategies required by society and its institutions, the very thing that has puzzled critics working from such a perspective. Walter Bagehot appreciates the exposure of injustice and cruelty in Dickens and anticipates a redemption that is not forthcoming. Orwell attributes Dickens's avoidance of solutions to his unscientific mind which makes it difficult for him to support a period or program wholeheartedly: "He is hostile to the feudal, agricultural past and not in real touch with the industrial present. Well,

13. *The Dickens World*, 182.

14. "Great Expectations: An Introduction to Dickens's Novel," 57. See also Dickens, "Species" and "Natural Selection" in *All the Year Round*, 174-78, 293-99.

15. *The Inimitable Dickens*, 107.

then, all that remains is the future (meaning Science, 'progress' and so forth), which hardly enters into his thoughts." It is true that in a letter of 1843 to D. W. Jerrold, Dickens seems to reject the past by swearing that if he destroys himself "it will be in the bitterness of hearing those infernal and damnably good old times extolled,"¹⁶ and in describing the dispiriting blight of smoke stacks and mercantile madness he seems to reject the future. Yet in *Bleak House* he offers us the two Rouncewell brothers as representatives of the past and the future, both of whom are honorable, both of whom are admirable. If we view the manufacturer with a last name and the soldier with a first name together in the way John Kucich does, as an "emblem of permanent dislocation,"¹⁷ we discover once again the unmediated opposition between public and private worlds. Lest America seem the favored republic, we are given Elijah Pogram and Zephaniah Scadder; if England appears to answer our dreams, we are shown the Podsnaps and the Veneerings.

This combination of passionate voice and retreat from advocacy that we find in Dickens teases, as well, those critics of Zola who seek resolution in works like *Germinal* and *La Débâcle*. They cannot abide, Irving Howe justly notes, the real political ambivalence with which the novelist insists we must live.¹⁸ It makes no sense to issue broad regrets that he did not realize the necessary revolutionary costs of progress, that science was too peaceful to provide the forward thrust of change for which those of the rising class will fight, nor is it fruitful to hypothesize that the novelist could not have been a revolutionary because his belief in Darwinian growth was incompatible with specific political solutions. Zola would have found it difficult to admit, in public at least, speculates Jean-Albert Bédé as he squeezes the author into the role of physician to a sick society, that

16. Bagehot, "Charles Dickens," 194–95; Orwell, "Charles Dickens," 93; *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:481.

17. *Excess and Restraint*, 154. See also Eigner, *The Dickens Pantomime*, 148–54, 164, 178. He argues that the loss of the clown in his later works made Dickens vulnerable to the familiar accusation that he could point out problems but offer no remedies.

18. "Zola: The Poetry of Naturalism," 75.

the battle of Sedan had not changed anything, for this would have then cast into doubt all his novels before *La Débâcle*. In order to avoid sounding like a revolutionary, he was forced to continue to express in that book at least a faint hope in the Third Republic and in evolutionary progress.¹⁹ Yet nothing could be further from the truth. In *La Débâcle*, Zola lurches from fratricide to fraternity, from gore to Golden Age. Readers might want to interpret as a “law of progress” his periodic definition of history as “new forms and unprecedented events,”²⁰ but any close reading of works like *Germinal* and *La Débâcle* will show that the notion of historical and evolutionary progress is continually sabotaged by the intransigence and the persistence of the world’s dismal reality. Although Zola draws an extended and devastating picture of the corruption and the mistakes of the Second Empire, though he pits labor against capital, France against Germany, the anticipated reactions and allegiances are not forthcoming.

F. W. J. Hemmings attributes a loss of certainty in the issues of *La Bête humaine* of 1890 to the subversion of Zola’s faith in the march of reason by a thesis that contradicts it, but we find this ambivalence already in the pattern of alternate hope and despair in his earlier works, most notably *Germinal* of 1885. By firmly rejecting the role as founder or defender of any political system or religious doctrine in his notes for that novel, Zola leaves the field open to political interpretations of his work that are varied and contradictory. Philip Walker does not want us to be misled by what the French call “free indirect discourse” in the text and asserts that Etienne’s dream at the end of *Germinal* is Zola’s dream too.²¹ This is no doubt partially

19. See Bédé, *Emile Zola*, 23, 39. On Zola’s, see Fréville, *Zola: Semeur d’orages*, 78.

20. Walker, *Germinal and Zola’s Thought*, 76.

21. Hemmings, *Emile Zola*, 216 (see also 55, 182–83 for a discussion of revolution); Walker, *Germinal and Zola’s Thought*, 68. In *Mes Haines*, Zola admires the artist who stands alone and does not imprison his thoughts within a narrow circle of dogma (5). Although Walker argues that *Germinal* is a testament to Zola’s failure to find a permanent or coherent philosophical or religious faith (87–89), he recognizes the artistic use that Zola makes of the counterpoint between “positivistic and visionary elements” (95). See also Petrey, *Realism and Revolution*, 188–89.

true, but it is important to distinguish the artist who uses the dream novelistically from the character who does not. We should read Clotilde's assertion that "humanity, seen from a great height, would appear like a mechanism in motion, working in view of perpetual evolution" (DP 376–77) in light of Pascal's own doubts; not as a final affirmation of spirit, but as an affirmation of its strength in its never-ending battle with reality. Only in the novels after the *Rougon-Macquart* do we find the spirit of "science" and the reality of "science" in fatal synthesis. However much the novelist may long for a union of brotherhood and an evolutionary progress, he does not compromise his texts with his own desires, but invigorates them with the desires of his characters and the denial of these desires by history. Try as they might, his critics cannot make a good citizen out of Zola.

In the case of Manzoni, they do not even wish to do so. He is accused of being a Catholic propagandist and a priest, which would seem to make it impossible for him to be a novelist if we believe D. H. Lawrence's claim that "a theosophist cannot be a novelist. . . . A theosophist, or a Christian, or a Holy Roller, may be *contained* in a novelist. But a novelist may not put up a fence."²² The fact is that Manzoni's preachers do not consign sinners to hellfire, saints to heaven. They argue with history but dare not ignore it in the expectation of eternity. We might well ask whether a book of advocacy or tentatiousness would be read so variously by contrasting and antagonistic factions, for while *I Promessi sposi* was received generally with great enthusiasm upon publication in 1827, it was deemed Catholic and devout on the one hand and blasphemous on the other. Some found oppressive and reactionary the power of hierarchy and the limited vision of the humble in a time of turmoil and patriotic revolution, while others were offended by the fact that the peasants seemed to be more virtuous than the nobles. Lamartine and Dickens were enchanted, Stendhal repelled.²³ Yet Manzoni achieves in his art the kind of greatness that the Frankfurt school continually re-

22. "The Novel," 120–21.

23. See Archibald Colquhoun's biographical study of Manzoni in *PS* 618–19; and Dickens's 1844 letter to Samuel Rogers in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:189–90.

minds us has the property of bringing into the light whatever has been hidden and disguised by ideology. It is no small irony that his achievement has been distorted by the ideology of his interpreters.

This becomes evident when we consider the approach of one of the leading modern critics of Manzoni, Antonio Gramsci, whose comments have a contemporary ring more than fifty years after his death. It should be noted that Gramsci's arguments *against* the novelist have a way of working *for* him. There will be no more Catholic writers like St. Francis, Gramsci speculates, for since his time the Church's orthodox doctrine has dried up the religious lyric. But the poetry in passages of *I Promessi sposi* is very close to the lyricism of St. Francis. The critic goes on to observe that as the Catholic orthodoxy has become more complex and rigorous, it does not even trust so sincere a believer as Manzoni.²⁴ In its eighty-four years, *La Civiltà Cattolica* has published many articles on Dante but very few on the author of *I Promessi sposi*. Since Gramsci leads the group of critics who find Manzoni's conservative and Catholic "ideology" distasteful, it is surprising that he refutes his accusation of ideological writing by pointing out that the novelist has not been acceptable to the Orthodoxy. In fact, even in his own day Manzoni had difficulties with the Church; Rome forbade the sale of his novel on the grounds that the Father Provincial and Gertrude represented an attack on ecclesiastical and monastic institutions and their corruption, Don Abbondio a satire on the clergy. The Jansenist Monsignor Tosi never trusted fiction and tried to encourage Manzoni to write a sequel to his ecclesiastical treatise *Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica*, in which he had answered the attack that Sismondi launched in his massive history of the Italian republics.

As if this were not enough, Manzoni had to counter both the tenor of the times, which was more nationalistic than religious, and his own inability, despite his conversion, to overcome the enlightenment questioning of his early years. As a young man he had resented, during the sickness and death of his friend Fagnani Arese, "the *cruel* zeal of the Italians who 'take possession' of a man, 'who want to stuff

24. *Selections from Cultural Writings*, 336–37.

their manner of thinking into his body, as if he who has a head, a heart, two legs and a stomach, and walks by himself, cannot arrange things for himself and use what is within him as he wishes.'"²⁵ That he was a Jansenist and a man of the enlightenment, an ardent supporter of national unity (to which he contributed by his innovative work on the Italian language) but not of revolution, guaranteed that he would be misunderstood, for those who were fighting for national unity tended to be staunchly liberal and anti-Vatican. Giosu  Carducci's disgust with the od r of the Church in *I Promessi sposi* is well known, but what readers like Carducci and Luigi Settembrini especially resented was the political significance of the sanctity, the tone of resignation to God's will at the very time Italy was trying to rid itself of its foreign rulers and come together as a nation; in this regard, the novel seemed reactionary and unpatriotic to readers of the nineteenth century, as it does, in fact, to many readers today.²⁶ We should bear in mind, however, that from the nineteenth century on there has been a decidedly secular and liberal tendency in Italian commentary. The prescient Goethe, an important early admirer of *I Promessi sposi*, predicted that the novelist would have all kinds of trouble from the liberals, "although Manzoni has shown himself very moderate."²⁷

Strangely, the political awakening of Italy was accompanied by a resurgence of Christianity and its vocabulary; liberals could boast of religious as well as enlightenment figures in their ranks. Yet even here Manzoni was his own man. He was drawn to the Christian democracy of Romanticism but not to the popular mixture of Christian mysticism and German Romanticism, nor to the coupling of

25. Quoted in Zottoli, *Umili e potenti nella poetica del Manzoni*, 274.

26. For discussions of critics and critical topics in Manzoni studies, see De Michelis, *Studi sul Manzoni*, and Sapegno, *Ritratto di Manzoni ed altri saggi*, the latter an especially extensive survey of critical terrain. In De Michelis (18, 30), we read of Luigi Settembrini's attack on *I Promessi sposi* for its anti-patriotic message: How can one write a book in 1827, the critic asks, that praises priests and advises submission and patience, as if God wishes Austria to be in Venice and Lombardy? Carducci echoes this argument (De Michelis, 32).

27. Quoted in Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, 217.

religion and state espoused by De Maistre, nor to the brand of Catholicism that Chateaubriand represented, tainted, as it seemed to be, by aesthetic decadence.²⁸ The fact that he has been considered a romantic and a classicist, a liberal and a conservative, a poet, a poetic dramatist, and the father of verismo simply attests to the flexibility of his thought and art, a flexibility which allowed him maximum freedom for the grand sweep from history to heaven in his novel.

It is difficult to understand how any novel could be “progressive,” “conservative,” or “orthodox” that features the *impossibility* of reconciling historical document and the heterogeneous demands of its own subject matter, a problem that Manzoni discusses in his treatise *On the Historical Novel*²⁹ and that, in the larger treatment of the novel itself, he represents as the frustration of spirit in a world from which it is forced to take nourishment. As with critics of Dickens and Zola, those who do not recognize Manzoni’s tribute to history as the necessary payment for the rebellion of spirit against the world’s injustice do not do him full artistic justice.

Alberto Moravia does not even allow Manzoni his subject, but his criticisms, and those of evaluators like Gramsci, Scalvini, and Croce, are necessary to the whole consideration of the author as *preacher* rather than *novelist*. Typically, Moravia is convinced that Manzoni chose seventeenth-century Italy for his story because at that time “Catholicism informed all Italian life just as today Communism informs Soviet life.”³⁰ The motivating creative force for the novelist could not, in fact, have been a desire to challenge the enlightenment around him by a reactionary reversion to the Church. As he makes quite clear in a letter to his friend Claude Fauriel, he was interested in the seventeenth century for the dramatic possibilities of a *history* that offered an oppressive and foreign government with proscriptive

28. See De Sanctis, *Manzoni*, 4–6; Sapegno, *Ritratto di Manzoni*, 139; and Galletti, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 69–71, 151.

29. *On the Historical Novel*, 72.

30. “Alessandro Manzoni, or the Hypothesis of a Catholic Realism,” 197. Giovita Scalvani argues that Manzoni chose a period in which consolation could only be found in heaven and virtue was always religious (*Foscolo Manzoni Goethe: Scritti edite e inediti*, 220–23, 250–52).

edicts and laws, a society torn apart by opposing class interests, profound ignorance, and finally the plague. In his novel Manzoni grants the hegemony of the Church and challenges it at the same time. What motivates and inspires him is the tension between the historical forces and the spiritual forces, and his fundamental theme becomes an examination of the way in which man can live both historically and supra-historically. In chastising Don Abbondio, Cardinal Federigo distinguishes between the world's gospel, which insists upon being obeyed, and the gospel of Christ, which invites obedience (PS 391–92). He asks the parish priest to imagine a Church that would use the language of history rather than heaven: "That the appeals of the oppressed and the complaints of the afflicted are odious to the world is to be expected, for the world is like that; but not to us!" (PS 398). And Federigo is not speaking of a heaven outside the novel or history, but of a gospel which must make its way in the most brutal of times on earth. Far from casting a pall of monotonous and unchallenged Catholicism over the characters,³¹ the author throws the Church into the turmoil of history and challenges it to make its gospel heard.

With *Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica* Manzoni answers Sismondi's charge that Catholicism, by its very nature, leads to ideology by exaggerating the altruistic virtues of sacrifice and self-denial to the point that they become ascetic and excessive, resulting in a rigidity of doctrine that controls conduct and dictates sermons for the preacher.³² While confirming the importance of the Church as institution and support in his treatise, Manzoni honors the simple precepts of Christ. Though rigorous, the work is anything but inflexible, and when it becomes a source of lyricism for the novel, it serves as a reproach not only to a highly inflected historical society but to narrow and uncharitable readings of ecclesiastical doctrine. We

31. See Manzoni's letter to Claude Fauriel of May 1822 in Ulivi, *Manzoni*, 235–36. Giovita Scalvini describes the novel's atmosphere as "a temple which covers the faithful and the altar," rather than as a spacious vault of the firmament over the varieties of existence in the moral world (*Foscolo Manzoni Goethe: Scritti edite e inedite*, 221). See also Moravia, "Alessandro Manzoni," 217.

32. See De Sanctis, *Manzoni*, 260–66.

should note further that the Church is not, in *I Promessi sposi*, the intermediary between history and heaven, but is itself an actor in the midst of history. This is precisely what engenders the drama in the stories of Don Abbondio, Cristoforo, and Gertrude, the drama of an institution which expects its priests and sisters to live simultaneously within historical and ecclesiastical hierarchies on the one hand and in a kingdom without hierarchies on the other. It is not a simple demand, and Manzoni seems to doubt his ability to convince us that it can be done; at the same time, he understands what it is he must do. As he introduces Cardinal Federigo Borromeo in all his preternatural saintliness, he calls upon history to help, cautioning us that if his character's precepts seem too easy and automatic, we should keep in mind that "these things were said by one who actually practiced them" (PS 394). The reader, in other words, must believe in the cardinal's historical reality in order to believe in his purity and goodness.³³ History, while it frustrates the spirit, opens the door for it at the same time, and the turbulence we detect under the calm exterior of the text attests to the struggle of a spirit that is not only controlled but activated by fact.

By fusing politics and religion, something Manzoni never does, his critics miss the mark as surely as Zola's prophets and preachers, but it is Manzoni's narrative failures that most often lead them to false hermeneutics. There is no denying that the religious speeches standing isolated in the text and the awkward tableaux bringing the action to a halt resemble the set sermon. Moravia uses the term "Catholic Realism" to designate a kind of "propaganda" that assumes an attitude toward good and evil which is "extrinsic and sermonizing" rather than organic, moralizing rather than moral, a "propaganda" that smells to him of decadent conservatism.³⁴ It is more likely, however, that what appears to be sermonizing is caused by stylistic weaknesses and the proverbial difficulties of portraying characters who are "good" in a convincing manner. (We shall gain new appreciation for the tableaux, which frequently retard the narrative flow, when we

33. See Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, 71–72.

34. "Alessandro Manzoni," 217, 201–2.

trace their origin to the pantomime of melodrama that flourished after the French Revolution.) Like Moravia, Gramsci is less than generous when he does not entertain the possibility of other explanations in attributing Manzoni's reticent treatment of the relationship between Renzo and Lucia to Catholic doctrinal prohibitions rather than to inadequate narrative technique, personal reserve, antipathy toward Romantic excess, or to an interest in the broader and more unconventional resources history afforded him.

Because Manzoni's Italian literary heritage was poor in narrative prose tradition and rich in narrative and lyric poetry, it was as difficult for him to represent a tangible and credible Borromeo in the nineteenth-century manner as it was easy for him to indite the cardinal's musical utterance. His passionate poetry, inspired by the French preachers of the seventeenth century and the New Testament, helped him to fashion Borromeo into a worthy antagonist of document, whereas his history helped him to achieve a dramatic and traditional narrative of the plague. Moravia claims he wants to save the novelist's poetic passages from the novel's "Catholic Realism," yet it is this very poetry that the critic refuses to recognize as an authentic expression of Manzoni's religious sentiments. We would certainly agree with him that the simple beliefs of Renzo and Lucia constitute the true religion of the author, but we should keep in mind that the religious utterances of those higher up in the social and ecclesiastical scale that Moravia subsumes under the rubric of propaganda are derived from the spirituality in Manzoni's *Osservazioni*. More disturbing, however, is the way in which the critic reveals his own political bias by complaining that Borromeo is a baroque statue "under a gold and marble canopy at the heart of the Counter-Reformation Church."³⁵

Finally, there is a dangerous and reductive narrowing of the novelist's scope in Moravia's assertion that Manzoni would be astonished today to see an Italy that shares with the society he described "the vices he condemned and the virtues he highlighted," to see in "the collapse of the Risorgimento, which was swept away with much else by the disaster of Fascism," the disappearance of so many differ-

35. Ibid., 206.

ences between modern Italy and the Italy of *I Promessi sposi*.³⁶ Here the critic has unwittingly made the case for the author once again, for Manzoni would have been the last man to have been surprised by the patterns of repetition which history traces as it imprisons the spirit longing to be free of consequence and change. Throughout his life he supported and hoped for sensible legislative reforms, with the unalterable goal of a free and united Italy before him, but like Dickens, he had no illusions about the inevitability or permanence of progress.

A Democracy of the Spirit

While acknowledging the author's assertions of civic, domestic, and charitable virtues, Kucich notes that "in Dickens's novels . . . there seems to be a greater glee in dismantling the world of sense and the assertive behavior of others than there is in making direct counterassertions."³⁷ Although many contemporary critics have persuasively located the origin of the explosive violence of Dickens's narrative in private sexual and psychological drives and desires, it is important not to lose sight of public moral and spiritual persuasion, from which counterassertions *do* continually arise. Furthermore, the "dangerously double nature" of these assertions and counterassertions that Kucich finds everywhere in Dickens are less dangerous to the novel than they might at first appear to be, because the continual transpositions of the two gospels assure the survival of spirit while giving historical violence free rein.

Though they were cautious, skeptical, conservative citizens of the world, these four novelists, as citizens of world literature, conducted melodramatic experiments in rearrangement, reevaluation, and revolution by unleashing the very anarchy which so frightened them in their own times. Because Dickens could burn down Newgate³⁸ and Zola could set loose a raging mob while remaining exemplary cit-

36. *Ibid.*, 192–93.

37. *Excess and Restraint*, 7. For Dickens's affirmation of values, see also 4.

38. See Dickens's letter to Forster, September 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:377.

izens in the democracy of the spirit, they were able to sublimate their disruptive personal desires into a sturdy dialectical drama. When Etienne wishes for “a good plague [to] break out and rid us of all these company people who exploit us so!” (G 184) or Don Abbondio and Griso see the plague as a personal providence, they are not challenging events but adjusting to them. They have no eyes or ears for the “teachers in the swamp and thicket, and the pestilential air, who had a searching method of their own” (MC 597). But Manzoni, in writing to Fauriel, welcomes the plague precisely because it “has furnished the occasion for proofs of most shameful and consummate wickedness, to the most absurd prejudices and to the most moving virtues.”³⁹ What could be better for a novelist of unmediated dialectics than “public calamities and prolonged disturbances of any normal order,” which unfailingly bring “an increase, a sublimation of virtue” and, at the same time, “an increase, far more general in most cases, of crime” (PS 497)?

The plague in Eden makes a master of Dickens’s Mark Tapley, a servant of his Martin Chuzzlewit. It rushes through Milan “just as a vast, sweeping, wandering hurricane, which uproots and strips trees” (PS 423), leaving in its wake a world that is unrecognizable, a world, in fact, where there are no more classes, where the mighty and oppressed are in “rags and misery” (PS 433). As the collapse of the mine in *Germinal* propels worker and boss into an embrace, so the upheaval of the Franco-Prussian war in *La Débâcle* batters down perceived adversaries. Henriette looks upon the cemetery at Rémilly where “two trenches had been dug, and they all slept side by side, the Germans on the left and the French on the right, reconciled in the earth” (D 406). This same war allows Jean and Maurice to cross class barriers in their friendship and brings the former into a relationship of mutual love with Maurice’s sister, though at first he feels awkward: Whereas Henriette was “almost a grand lady . . . he had never been anything more than a peasant and soldier. He could only just about read and write. But later he felt somewhat reassured when he saw that she treated him without any pride, as an equal, and that

39. Letter of May 1822 in Ulivi, *Manzoni*, 235–36.

gave him the courage to show that he was intelligent in his own way, through his sweet reasonableness" (*D* 398).

Institutions are cleansed as society and history become their own plagues. In *La Débâcle*, the Second Empire is a sick body whose rotten limbs must be lopped off as the limbs of the French and German soldiers are hacked and severed. The High Court of Chancery is "most pestilent of hoary sinners . . . its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire . . . its worn-out lunatic in every mad-house, and its dead in every churchyard." The noxious fog that opens *Bleak House*, spreading the infection from Tom-all-Alone's outward, gives Tom and Jo a revenge that will do nothing for them but that will vent the anger of their author (*BH* 553). Manzoni's plague not only erases class distinctions, purges institutions, and destroys family structures, but as both physical and moral phenomenon, strongly reaffirms the presence of the two gospels. The bodies lie heaped up, making "the entire city seem like an immense charnel-house" (*PS* 498), as a plague of "unbridled . . . suspicions" proves its contagion. An anointer, thought responsible for spreading the disease, could be not only "a neighbor, a friend, or a guest distrusted; even those names that are the bonds of human love, husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother, became words of terror; and (horrible and infamous to tell) the family board and the nuptial bed were feared as hiding-places for the lurking poisoner." When Merdle's empire collapses in *Little Dorrit*, Dickens observes "That it is at least as difficult to stay a moral infection as a physical one; that such a disease will spread with the malignity and rapidity of the Plague; that the contagion, when it has once made head, will spare no pursuit or condition, but will lay hold on people in the soundest health, and become developed in the most unlikely constitutions . . ." (*LD* 627).

The order of society can be overthrown not only by war, plague, and famine, but by humor, which characteristically demolishes traditional categories. In the case of Dickens, it is capable of carrying all before it. "As long as low Yorkshire schools were entirely colourless and dreary," writes G. K. Chesterton, "they continued quietly tolerated by the public, and quietly intolerable to the victims. So long as Squeers was dull as well as cruel he was permitted; the moment he

became amusing as well as cruel he was destroyed.”⁴⁰ The author’s fury at the world’s indifference to his desire feeds the anti-institutional laughter that becomes a mocker of custom and a critic of history. Using the deformation of parody, Dickens can tease our persistent hopes with an Adamic Pecksniff, while preparing us for the deeper and more significant disappointment of America’s Eden, where Mark and the pestilential swamp replace Pecksniff as moralist.

Like humor and parody, revelations and visual shocks prove to be as effective as the forces of nature, disease, and war in uprooting and overturning. The surprising humanization of Sir Leicester is a case in point. In a scene that follows Balzac and prefigures Proust, Fashion inquires of Sir Leicester’s health on its rounds, before hurrying home to dress for the evening festivities. But Sir Leicester has been shaken by a storm of revelations and the sudden flight of his wife, freeing his spirit to move beyond his friends and their petty distinctions. In showing himself to be a gentleman of great honor and compassion while the Parliamentary cousins continue to pay tribute to class and institution, he now enters into a society in which he is no longer “the present representative of the Dedlocks” and “an excellent master” who “supposes all his dependents to be utterly bereft of individual characters, intentions, or opinions” (*BH* 78), but a man of suffering and humility, who forgives his lady and looks upon George no longer as a servant but as a solace. In his generosity, he rises to a democracy of the spirit: “Nothing less worthy can be seen through the lustre of such qualities in the commonest mechanic, nothing less worthy can be seen in the best-born gentleman. In such a light both aspire alike, both rise alike, both children of the dust shine equally” (*BH* 698).

The familiar accusations of patronization, condescension, and class cultism that are made against these novelists inevitably arise when we ignore the special tension between history’s distinctions and the spirit’s rejection of them. James Kincaid contends that Twem-

40. *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 201. Kucich, using Nabokov as model, distinguishes between satire, which is turned against society, and parody, which is “subversive of conventional sense” and diverted away from usefulness (*Excess and Restraint*, 7, 213–14), but in our dialectic opposition between history and spirit, parody plays a major subversive role aimed at society.

low reveals through his great outburst in *Our Mutual Friend* not a revolution or a change of heart, but a snobbery in the very language of Podsnappery, as he attributes Eugene's decision to "The gentleman's feelings of gratitude, of respect, of admiration, and affection." Kucich suggests that the outburst does not democratize, but, on the contrary, creates "a new standard for acquired gentility based on self-conflictual emotional autonomy, which can be manipulated as a cultural sign in a struggle for power."⁴¹ In another context, these are surely legitimate interpretations, but they are not serviceable in the context of a spiritual democracy. What we learn once more from this scene is that the power of Dickens's literature lies in the dramatic clash of two hierarchies. At the end of *Our Mutual Friend*, Twemlow defines *gentleman* for the Podsnap party "in the sense in which the degree may be attained by any man," yet throughout the novel he accepts the consequences and position that the historical hierarchy forces upon him.

Because Shaw does not acknowledge or recognize sufficiently how crucial is the division between the spheres of spirit and society to the deeper significance of every scene in Dickens's novels, he becomes irritated with the author's "Toryism," which encourages him to accept traditional and stable master-servant relationships joyfully and uncritically. George Gissing notes the paradox that while Dickens was a revolutionary morally, he was a conservative socially,⁴² and he is right as far as he goes. Mrs. Rouncewell is "humble" in her place, and Lady Dedlock is "high and distant" in hers (*BH* 662), but what he does not perceive is Dickens's despair over that "iron barrier" rising between them and the brickmakers' families, a division that Ada and Esther (unlike Mrs. Pardiggle) understand perfectly. "By whom, or how it could be removed, we did not know" (*BH* 99), Esther reports, but it is obvious to her and to Dickens that preachers and missionaries cannot remove an inch or an ounce of it.

Chesterton's observation that "Dickens is . . . snobbish in feeling it

41. Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter*, 239–40; Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction*, 270.

42. Shaw, "Hard Times: An Introduction to Dickens's Novel," 47; Gissing, *The Immortal Dickens*, 212.

so very funny that a draper's assistant should be eloquent"⁴³ ought to make us grateful, for only in recognizing society's power could the author desire so fiercely and so movingly to break it. The "little gentleman" in the blacking factory, humiliated by his social descent, misleads his co-worker about the location of his rooms. As a young man, he is pained that the Beadnells consider him an unworthy suitor for their daughter. But in sensing so keenly the disparity between reality and hope, Dickens makes the enemy go to work for him. Every scene of real patronization is met by a scene that insists upon individual worth. George's compassionate care for Gridley in his Shooting Gallery answers Chancery's patronization of Gridley as "The Man from Shropshire who amuses them." Skimpole's abominable behavior toward Jo and his betrayal of his profession is followed by the servants' concern for the outcast and by Esther's pleasure with that concern (*BH* 386), a pleasure that might in another context encourage condescension but here commands a generous reading. The patronizing of Tom by all the characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is countered by his salvational role in the end, and it is his salvational role we must bear in mind in answering the contention of J. Hillis Miller that the author "wants to present Tom as an attractive figure, but he cannot help betraying by his patronizing tone the fact that he would rather sympathize at some distance from such a character, than actually be such a person."⁴⁴ Dickens's so-called patronizing seems to be irony directed toward those who have no passion for heaven. "Thy quality of soul was simple, simple; quite contemptible, Tom Pinch!" (*MC* 692) is inspired by aspiration, not condescension.

It is a frequent critical assumption that Dickens's class sentimentality, which shows the poor as noble, exposes an unattractive class consciousness. Hippolyte Taine, one of the earliest and best of Dickens's critics, observes wryly that the novelist's "common people are like children, dependent, ill-cultivated, akin to nature, and subject to oppression. That is to say, Dickens extols them."⁴⁵ We have, in fact, no difficulty finding throughout Dickens's works examples of a real-

43. *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 51.

44. *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*, 122.

45. *History of English Literature*, 2:462.

ism in the depiction of the poor that shows them as anything but virtuous. Q. D. Leavis is right to direct our attention to the “human nature” in his novels which is more than what “the struggle for existence” has made it. It is human nature “with an added meanness . . . where the poor and uneducated show the same odious traits as the genteel.”⁴⁶ A brickmaker’s wife tells Esther that she can no longer offer shelter to Jo, “for if [her] husband was to come home and find him here, he’d be rough in putting him out, and might do him a hurt” (*BH* 382). Because of his profession, Neckett is scorned by the poor in Bell Yard, yet he is seen by the landlady as a responsible provider for his motherless children. Esther Summerson observes how a bride of the lower class shows a delicate sensitivity toward her illiterate husband. What had she to fear, she tells us, when “there was this nobility in the soul of a labouring man’s daughter!” (*BH* 447). If we are tempted to read this—and many have—as unconscious snobbery on the part of Dickens’s angel, we are reminded by Taine, in his remarks on the author’s common people, that Dickens’s sentimentality has the power of a kind of specifically English Christianity.⁴⁷ Esther is inspired *past* patronization. In a tribute to the universal appeal of Dickens, Bagehot indicates to us how the contemporary audience interpreted his attitudes and reminds us that we should not ignore the skill with which the novelist has juxtaposed the two gospels throughout his career: “There is no contemporary English writer whose works are read so generally through the whole house, who can give pleasure to the servants as well as to the mistress, to the children as well as to the master.”⁴⁸

In the preface to his *Nouveaux contes à Ninon* of 1874, written before the *Rougon-Macquart*, Zola seems to reveal epic and poetic needs in a tribute to the working class that sounds suspiciously like cultism: “Our peasants and factory-hands are the only men with the simple, stalwart bearing of the heroes of Homer. As soon as you turn to the upper classes . . . you are confronted with a modified variety

46. F. R. and Q. D. Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist*, 136.

47. *History of English Literature*, 2:463–64.

48. “Charles Dickens,” 160.

of humanity only, a mutation produced by civilized conditions.”⁴⁹ But by the time he arrives at *L’Assommoir*, he reminds himself in his preparatory scheme for the novel: “Do not flatter the working class nor blacken it.”⁵⁰ In *Germinal*, the poor fight with one another, sleep in the same beds, mother the baby who wails. The good Maheu insists on sharing his meager food with Lénore and Henri and is repelled by the unfairness of his larger share, yet he loses control as he grabs the infant from her cradle and throws her in anger to the mother’s bed. “Here, take her before I knock her brains out! Christ what a kid!” (C 18). These are not the Toodles or the Bagnets.

The miners, their wives and children are thin, white, sickly, crooked, and crippled, yet each of them has a distinct personality and morality. We find the same individuality in every class, whether privileged or poor, which sharply qualifies Zola’s promise in his preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin* that his books will represent broad movements, clashing forces of class and nation, the industrial surge, and the loss of religious faith—thereby shutting off personal and private triumphs or tragedies. It is not surprising that, like Dickens, Zola enriches morality by forcing it beyond the confines of unified class concepts, making it fully responsive to human complexity, for he knows that in order to transcend history and enter the “fraternal” communion of spirit he and his characters so desire, it is necessary first to unhook the individual from class, as Dickens does with Sir Leicester. The poor argue among themselves and are sometimes murderous toward one another within the very depths of their workplace, yet the crude Chaval shows moments of gentleness and Zacharie displays “an unexpected depth of tenderness” (C 383) for Catherine when she is trapped in the mine. Pluchart and Maigrat exploit the workers as much as the bosses do. Among those who rule, the Grégoires refuse a loan to Deneulin, and Hennebeau wants to profit from his ruin. Négrel cuckolds his uncle, who envies the

49. Quoted in Hemmings, *Emile Zola*, 200.

50. Quoted in Howe, “Zola: The Poetry of Naturalism,” 67.

easy sexual life of the lower classes. There is even a distinction between those corporate members who rule from Paris with little understanding of the workers' situation and those close to the scene who find everything more difficult and demanding. The miners, who resent their oppressors and respect them at the same time, recognize Deneulin "as a man of courage, always down in the stalls with them, always the first on the spot when an accident spread terror through the mine" (C 241) and Négrel as a man willing to risk his life for Etienne and Catherine. (Manzoni shows a similar pattern in depicting Ferrer as courageous in protecting the Commissioner from the crowd [PS 210].) The cold anarchist Souvarine has his personal tale and so does the soldier guarding the mine, whose corpse sets Etienne to musing what it will be like for the mother and sister as they search the horizon for his return.

Critics like Philip Walker can legitimately characterize the miners as "synecdochical embodiments of the general typological classes of workers to which they belong—the Rising Young Socialist Labor Leader, the Typical Worker, the Old Worker, the Firebrand, the Political Indifferent," but we should remember that when the surging mob is mowed down by soldiers' bullets it is the individual worker who falls, leaving behind a singular story. If we give a historical interpretation to the Maheu family as "a metaphor for the historical awakening of the proletariat," or to the relationship of Catherine and Etienne as "the struggle of revolutionary socialism to win the allegiance of the proletariat," or to the story of Deneulin as, according to Zola's notes, "the triumphant reign of money, big money, over . . . even the endeavors of individual capitalists," we should, at the same time, be alert to the necessary countermovement of the personal, the private, the spiritual. This clash of ideological vision and personal perception finds its center in Etienne, who as orator and preacher spews forth half-digested propaganda when he whips the crowds into a fury of false dreams. But in his human and private condition, he painfully sees each member of the Maheu family brought to misery by his public action. Finally, through his embrace of Catherine in death, his embrace of Négrel in life (the "universal embrace" of romanticism,

Hugo's "great kiss"),⁵¹ he moves above class and ideology before marching into them once more.

Naomi Schor recognizes the reader's anticipation of a class struggle when she deems "the most surprising aspect of Zola's double crowd structures" to be "the conspicuous absence of a novel built on the opposition of two very important crowds: the rich and the poor."⁵² Zola mentions the great opposition between labor and capital in his notes for *Germinal*, but in his text he shows that the very instability of class structure militates against programmatic assumptions. As a novelist, Zola may describe the miners as ants, the crowds as herds, but *he* never considers them as such; this is how they are viewed by others. Using the crowd as an ideological way of perceiving, he shows in the unit itself—the mob of screaming women who castrate Maigrat—the ultimate horror of history from which the individual cannot escape, the ultimate denial of brotherhood in the name of mass.

The myth that he celebrates as the emergence of the workers, Howe observes, "contains within itself the negation of that greatness."⁵³ Today's oppressors will be tomorrow's victims, the old order will be swallowed up by the new: "It was the death knell of small, private enterprise, a foreshadowing of the disappearance of individual proprietors who one by one would soon be gulped down to feed the insatiable hunger of the monster, capital, and swept away by the rising tide of gigantic companies" (C 364). By asserting that we must adopt contradictory attitudes toward the man who is oppressed, Chesterton proves both the inappropriateness and the irrelevancy of any oppressed-oppressor paradigm in interpreting an author who moves between the historical and the spiritual spheres:

We must insist with violence upon his degradation; we must insist with the same violence upon his dignity. For if we relax by one inch the one assertion, men will say he does not need saving. And if we relax by one inch the other assertion, men will say he is not worth saving. The opti-

51. Walker, *Germinal and Zola's Thought*, 7–9.

52. *Zola's Crowds*, 122.

53. "Zola: The Poetry of Naturalism," 65.

mists will say that reform is needless. The pessimists will say that reform is hopeless. We must apply both simultaneously to the same oppressed man; we must say that he is a worm and a god; and we must thus lay ourselves open to the accusation (or the compliment) of transcendentalism. This is, indeed, the strongest argument for the religious conception of life. If the dignity of man is an earthly dignity we shall be tempted to deny his earthly degradation. If it is a heavenly dignity we can admit the earthly degradation with all the candour of Zola. If we are idealists about the other world we can be realists about this world.⁵⁴

As a “conservative” and a “Catholic,” Manzoni is particularly vulnerable to the accusation of condescension. Critics note with distaste the apparent ease with which Manzoni accepts the limitations of the poor, their necessary resignation, their dependence upon those higher and mightier than they. In addition, the impression Manzoni gives of distancing himself from his characters, of placing the institutional hierarchy of the Church between himself and the humble, repels the modern secular reader and leads Gramsci to assert that the “people” could never appreciate a novel that seems “like a book of devotion, not a popular epic.” The humble have no inner life and are treated “with exactly the benevolence of a Catholic society for the protection of animals,” the critic argues. In support of this conviction, he wants to persuade us that “only the nobles have an inner life: Fra Cristoforo, Borromeo, the Unnamed and Don Rodrigo.” But in fact, Borromeo and Don Rodrigo can hardly be said to have an inner life at all, while *l’innominato* is an unnamed figure of melodrama whose inner struggles have all the psychological subtlety of a morality play. And do Cristoforo and Gertrude have a more complex inner life than Don Abbondio? Gramsci finds “an implicit *irony*” in Manzoni’s attitude toward his *umili*, a kind of “Catholic paternalism . . . which indicates the absence of a deep instinctive love for [his] characters,” and clearly it is this irony that he and Moravia object to when they accuse the novelist of patronizing Renzo, notably in the house of the unprincipled Azzecca-garbugli.⁵⁵

54. Charles Dickens: *The Last of the Great Men*, 194.

55. *Selections from Cultural Writings*, 296, 116, 289–92.

It should be evident to any reader of this scene, however, that the author is smiling not only at Renzo but also at the lawyer, who is certainly neither a gentleman nor a scholar. Furthermore, since Manzoni continually reminds us throughout the book of the importance of honor and responsibility in the enactment of professional duty, we cannot for a moment feel he would put Renzo at a disadvantage to a corrupt and incompetent lawyer in any significant way.

He not only teases and laughs at Renzo, Gramsci argues, but at all the common people in the book, "including Don Abbondio, Fra Galdino, the tailor, Gervasio, Agnese, Perpetua . . . and even Lucia. They are depicted as wretched and narrow people without an inner life." Yet we see how he makes fun of the lawyer, and just as surely of Don Ferrante and Donna Prassede. Moravia shows himself to be as pedantic as the don when he distinguishes between the irony Manzoni directs toward Ferrante's learning and the garbled learning of Renzo.⁵⁶ The important point about the author's irony is that it arises from a general attitude toward mankind and not a specific attitude toward class. In every rank there are the fools and the wise men, the vain and the modest, the responsible and the negligent, the strong and the weak, the generous and the selfish. At the wedding of Renzo and Lucia, the marquis was the soul of hospitality, but as Manzoni says with an irony absolutely dependent upon the two gospels: "The thought, I hope, has not occurred to anyone that it would have been simpler to make up one single table. I have described him as an excellent man, but not as an eccentric, as they would say nowadays; I have said that he was a humble man, but not that he was a prodigy of humility. He had enough to put himself beneath these good folk, but not enough to be on an equality with them" (*PS* 599).

Perhaps the most astonishing statement about this pioneering novel of verismo is Gramsci's agreement with Filippo Crispolti, who finds no significance in the fact that the humble play a leading role in *I Promessi sposi*, a claim originating in large part from an interpretation of Manzoni's attitude as "aristocratic" rather than "national-popular."⁵⁷ It is,

56. "Alessandro Manzoni," 221–23.

57. *Selections from Cultural Writings*, 292.

in fact, neither; it is Christian and realistic. Fra Cristoforo clearly recognizes the separation of Christian and historical conduct. In the *lazzaretto*, he weeps for “the oppressed here forgiving as they died” and for “the oppressors bewailing that they could not humble themselves before those they had oppressed” (PS 553). The *lazzaretto* becomes the arena of most brutal realism and of highest spiritual love and forgiveness. Moravia makes reductive what should be expansive when he claims that “Manzoni was unable to transfer judgment from the religious plane to the social plane precisely because of his conservatism, the fact that he himself belonged to the same class as the ‘scoundrels’ he was accusing.”⁵⁸ But the easy passage from verismo to poetry, from history to spirit, indicates that this is exactly Manzoni’s strength, and not only with characters who are humble or those who are aristocrats, but with characters of every class. Even the “saintly” Cristoforo finds, after his conversion, that he is a creature who lives very much on both the religious and the social plane:

People generally . . . like to picture the honest man facing the wicked with his head high, his gaze steady, his chest thrown out, and a ready tongue. In reality, however, many circumstances which rarely coincide are needed before he can take up this attitude. So the reader must not wonder if Fra Cristoforo, in spite of all testimony of his conscience, his firm belief in the justice of the cause which he had come to champion, and a feeling of mingled repugnance and pity for Don Rodrigo, found himself standing timidly and almost in awe in the presence of the same Don Rodrigo as he lounged there at the head of his table, in his own house and kingdom. (PS 65)

Since Manzoni was not a preacher but a novelist, he was not primarily interested in advocating the cause of the humble and down-trodden in the seventeenth century or the nineteenth century. Rather, in his readings he asked himself why there had been a peculiar silence throughout Europe on the part of historians concerning the

58. “Alessandro Manzoni,” 201.

state of the conquered in the face of the conquerors.⁵⁹ In the writings of Muratori, Ripamonti, Thierry, and Vico, he was able to find the material he needed for a structuring of a dialectic between conquered and conqueror that went far beyond documentation. The oppression of the Italian people in *I Promessi sposi* can hardly be read as a simple prefiguration of the contemporary situation in the Risorgimento. There were not only armies and governments and edicts and public policies to consider independently; they had also to be considered in the context of catastrophic famine and plague. Issues of class were not as important as the actions of men in history, the relationship of necessity to free will, the connection between temporal and eternal values. The solidity of history and the possibility of transcending that history led Manzoni to the genre of the historical novel. And he selected his history carefully, using the humble order of the Capuchins for his good churchmen rather than the powerful Jesuits of the seventeenth century.

He has written a story, in Cesare Angelini's words, "of the humble and of those who know how to make themselves humble." (The distinction between the two kinds of humility gives to Manzoni's novel that special kind of moral tension which is missing in Zola's great work, *L'Assommoir*.) But Moravia refuses to make this distinction in *I Promessi sposi*. In key passages of the book, the humble are persuaded to prostrate themselves before the powerful, he complains,⁶⁰ and Cristoforo does indeed advise Renzo that "the weak gain nothing by showing their claws" (*PS* 62). When the critic, however, accuses Manzoni of confusing two kinds of humility, Christian and political, it is he, in fact, who confuses them. Lamenting the pleasure the novelist appears to derive from the inferiority of the poor, Moravia, like other political interpreters, is especially distressed that the humble are compelled to pay respect to their unworthy rulers. But are Borromeo and Cristoforo unworthy of respect? What bothers him, clearly, is the social hierarchy that has been deliberately chosen

59. See Momigliano, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 162. See also Sapegno, *Ritratto di Manzoni*, 145–46.

60. Angelini, *Manzoni*, 102; Moravia, "Alessandro Manzoni," 224.

and delineated by the author; what bothers him is the separate and autonomous historical entity. In Boccaccio, he notes, the baker puts a powerful man to shame with a sharp phrase, whereas in Manzoni the tailor simply falls apart in front of the cardinal.

The resignation of the humble seems to culminate in Renzo's final recitation of the lessons he has learned, especially the avoidance of riots. Such a moral, Moravia argues, is hardly Christian. Jesus never backed off from making speeches in the street or from entering the fray: "He threw himself into riots, and preached in the streets; and the rest is known."⁶¹ Not only is it ludicrous to expect of Renzo what we find in Christ, it is subversive. The dramatic tension in the space between history and heaven flourishes because Renzo is *not* Christ, but a humble artisan within society. Borromeo uses Moravia's argument to more logical effect against Don Abbondio; the churchmen are, by and large, men of action who should not be afraid to go into the streets. Yet those who do not belong to the ecclesiastical ranks and must remain weak in the hierarchy of society do find their opportunity to be powerful in the Christian melodrama on the top of the mountain. The giant of Caesar's world, l'innominato, is brought to his knees before a frail, pure maiden, that very Lucia who was helpless in front of Gertrude and the *bravoes*. Renzo is powerless in front of society's government officials and its aristocracy, but when this hierarchy is overturned by riots, he steps forward to become his brother's keeper by saving an official from the fury of the mob. In the face of those who find the passivity of the humble intolerable, it is possible to counter with Giuseppe Belotti's comparison of the passivity of the peasants in *War and Peace* to their energy in Manzoni's novel: "In *I Promessi sposi* there is resistance to evil . . . and how!"⁶²

Finally, we must deal with the inevitable charge that Manzoni idealizes the poor. To an even greater extent than Dickens and Zola, he rejected the kind of cultish mysticism that made an "obligatory" connection between the poor and the good, despite the fact that it had been advocated by Abbé de Lamennais and his followers and

61. "Alessandro Manzoni," 224–25.

62. *Il messaggio politico-sociale di Alessandro Manzoni*, 210.

supported by the French social novelists of the 1830s. In writers like Hugo and Sand, there were “strong overtones of Socialism and ‘progressive’ Christianity” belonging to that tradition in Europe called by Maxime Leroy a “divinization of the people,” and it should be noted that the coupling of Christianity with the cause of the oppressed poor, as in Silvio Pellico’s *I miei prigionieri* of 1832, remained a common linkage throughout the Risorgimento.⁶³ It is particularly remarkable, therefore, that in the midst of such a tradition, Manzoni’s treatment of Christianity and the poor proves to be so unideological. Though it might be possible to make an argument for the partial idealization of Lucia, it is difficult to detect any in Renzo. Moravia displays a fundamental misunderstanding when he views Renzo and Lucia as idealized because they are figures who stand outside of history,⁶⁴ whereas it is evident, throughout the novel, that they are figures who are almost overwhelmed by history. It is significant that Manzoni moves the starkly ideal drama of Lucia’s angelic purity and l’innominato’s conversion to the top of a mountain, out of history and the plague, but it is equally significant that l’innominato comes down into history and that Lucia once more takes up the simple peasant life, with its folk sayings, country customs, and native dress. “Did I ever tell you I was bringing a princess back here?” Renzo asks when he senses the townspeople’s disappointment in the mundane. And Manzoni warns the reader about Bortolo too: “Perhaps you, reader, would prefer a more ideal Bortolo? If so, then all I can say is, make one up for yourself. This one was like that” (PS 511).

Because the characters in the novel are drawn so vividly in their individual historical rankings, dress, customs, fortunes, they can be characters of full moral worth in a transcendent democracy, where, in the words of Manzoni (that eminently Christian, not Catholic novelist), “The similarity we have as human beings is much stronger than the diversity of nations.” Answering those of contrary persuasion, De Sanctis finds the novel to be a healthy influence on the Italian people

63. Leroy, *Histoire des idées sociales en France* (Paris, 1946–1954), 2:442 (cited and discussed in Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850–1859*, 2:91–92). See also Wall, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 58.

64. “Alessandro Manzoni,” 217–23.

because it is not only eminently patriotic, but also eminently democratic and religious.⁶⁵ We should not, therefore, be surprised to learn that, like Dickens's works, *I Promessi sposi* was popular with every class.

The wide and persistent swings between earth and heaven, which sabotaged the stability of any hierarchy in these novels and threatened the stability of the novels themselves, had to be contained in a literary form generous enough to encompass violent and precipitous movement. Born in the upheavals of French history, and featuring, in the theater, its characteristic reversals of hierarchy, the democratic melodrama proved to be such a form.

65. Manzoni quoted in Momigliano, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 61. De Sanctis was answering those who claimed *I Promessi sposi* would be dispiriting for the Italian people (*Manzoni*, 272–73).

CHAPTER 2

THE SALVATIONAL MODE

The Religious Passion

In what John Bayley sees as a paradox, the contemporary literary critic flees from the very *factuality* that has defined and preserved his art. While Theodor Adorno has attempted to resolve this paradox by speculating that modern works of literature, as they “objectify themselves by immersing themselves totally . . . in the laws of their own forms,” are able to transform themselves into “the negative knowledge of the actual world,” other interpreters simply work with whatever global styles and structures they can free from time and event.¹ Elsa Morante’s novel, *La Storia*, unforgettably depicts the annihilation of the private world by the public world, and Italo Calvino reacts by banishing history from the pages of *Mr. Palomar*, in which a solipsistic “I” floats through a universe of its own making. The personal and the social can no longer be held in creative tension because they have mutual appetites, and, like the gingham dog and the calico cat, they eat each other up.

In his notebooks for his late novel *Paris*, Zola joyfully speculates that “the social movement is bound to absorb the religious movement, the one will devour the other.”² Yet in an early essay, he confessed that “every powerful intelligence, recognizing in itself the need for truth and finding it nowhere, is obliged to create for itself a faith out of bits and pieces of faiths picked up all over the place.”

1. Bayley, “The Order of Battle at Trafalgar,” 1–17; Adorno, “Reconciliation under Duress,” 166, 160. Adorno is responding to what he considered Lukács’s ideological critical myopia. For a prominent example of those who base their theories on the ahistorical aspects of the novelist, see Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 15.

2. Quoted in Hemmings, *Emile Zola*, 268.

Through all the contradiction and confusion of the novelist's credos, Walker justly observes, Zola holds on to the conviction that "religion is the central feature of any civilization or of any individual personality, for that matter." We see evidence of it in the sacralization of his terms,³ in the prayers of his characters, and in his personal correspondence. Since he chooses science, which we deem to be a public force, both as the religion of the future and as a literary methodology, we might place him in the fortunate position of being able to push comfortably onward into the secular age, unburdened by nostalgia for a lost God. Or we might place him in that large group of writers who have found other gods to worship. But what we must distinguish through Zola's inconsistent theory and practice is the strong and unresolved dialectic between history and spirit that runs through his best work as surely as it does in the novels of Dickens, Manzoni and James. If we interpret his science as a monolithic force, we lose the resonance of *Germinal* and *La Débâcle*. This is the mistake that the influential critic Brunetière made in 1893 when, as a leader of the Catholic revival, he condemned naturalism and declared Zola's theories of science to be bankrupt.

We can avoid the confusion the novelist himself produces when he calls Balzac's work more social and his own more scientific by dividing his science into the *real* (facts, observation, naturalism, heredity, environment, fate) and the *spiritual* (life force, quest, nature, work, renewal, transcendence, brotherhood, altruism).⁴ It then becomes readily apparent that nature, for instance, can take its vengeance in the world of naturalism or render inspiration in the world of renewal. Fecundity is the miracle of burgeoning and birth, and it is also the uncontrolled reproduction of Desirée's animals, of the peasants and farmers in towns and fields, of miners copulating on the slag heaps. At the end of *La Joie de vivre*, Pauline attempts to protect the spirit of science from Lazare's historical pessimism. Refer-

3. See Walker, *Germinal and Zola's Thought*, 26, and his entire discussion of religion (23–27).

4. See Hemmings, *Emile Zola*, 38–39. Walker names Zola's three divine principles: life (fecundity, universal consciousness), love (the universal kiss, solidarity with man and nature), and work. See 32–33 in *Germinal and Zola's Thought*.

ring to his baby she remarks: "Perhaps he'll belong to a less foolish generation. . . . He won't accuse chemistry of spoiling his life, and he'll believe that it's possible to live even if you know you're going to die some day." Whereupon Lazare answers: "Pooh! . . . He'll have gout like father and his nerves'll be worse than mine. . . . Look how weak he is? It's the law of degeneration" (*JV* 60). But Dr. Cazenove does a much better job of it and underscores the important distinction between journey and journey's end in chiding Lazare as one of the modern men who has "nibbled at science" and found it unable to satisfy "that old craving for the absolute." You expect all the answers, he continues, but science is just beginning and probably will "never be anything but an eternal quest. And so you repudiate science, you fall back on religion, and religion won't have you any more. Then you relapse into pessimism. . . . Yes, it's the disease of our age, of the end of the century: you're all inverted Werthers" (*JV* 174). It is not a solution but the eternal *quest* for solution that identifies Zola's spirituality as the same insatiable and inappeasable desire that haunted Dickens, Manzoni, and James.

In order to give the Christian spirit its own dominion in an age that sought its dilution, these authors continually exploited the paradox that by paying tribute to history, by recognizing its power and complexity, by honoring its particularities of time and place, they could then pay tribute to a religious inspiration—of innocence and compassion, charity and justice, communion and life force—independent of history's cause and effect and invulnerable to its coercion. Even in the beginning of his career, when he took refuge from the ugliness of reality in poetry and romanticism, Zola understood this. In 1859 he published a kind of fairy tale, "La Fée amoureuse," in which, anticipating *Le Paradou*, the lovers are transformed into flowers. At the same time, however, he wrote the realistic story "Les Griottes de Provence," drawing from adventures he and his school friends had experienced in their youth with the working-class girls in Aix.

By accepting and describing the world as it is and in some cases by wallowing in it, he found a way to express his poetry and spirituality dramatically without falling into the easy consolations of Des-

jardin's fashionable neo-Catholicism, the mysticism that intrigued his disciple Huysmans, or the feckless fin-de-siècle weariness and boredom of his own Lazare Chanteau. What is evident from his impressive early work *Thérèse Raquin* to the last work of the *Rougon-Macquart* is that whenever the historical part of science predominates and closes off access to the spiritual, Zola's novels, vivid though they may be, fall into monotony and even foolishness. When the spiritual part of science, with its generosity, its life force, its visions of a Golden Age, is given equal measure, on the other hand, his work becomes morally and fictionally dynamic. The "exact observation," Zola himself wrote to Henri Céard, is never enough without "the leap into the stars."⁵

In James's work, where fact melts so quickly into metaphor, we can find historical solidity in the heavy air of Europe, with its patina of tradition, its Lancaster Gates, Matchams, Gardencourts, Venetian palaces and art museums. At Mrs. Lowder's dinner party, the American Milly sees her hostess grow "somehow more stout and more instituted and Susie, at her distance and in comparison, more thinly improvised and more different . . ." (WD 105). What resists this institutional stoutness, however, is a spiritual inspiration that Milly carries for James late in his career and to which he had paid tribute in a letter of 1873 to Charles Eliot Norton:

As to Christianity in its old applications being exhausted, civilization, good and bad alike, seems to be certainly leaving it pretty well out of account. But the religious passion has always struck me as the strongest of man's heart, and when one thinks of the scanty fare judged by our usual standards, in which it is has always fed, and of the nevertheless powerful current continually setting towards all religious hypotheses, it is hard not to believe that some application of the supernatural idea, should not be an essential part of our life.⁶

It is this appreciation of the spiritual that informs not only his fic-

5. *Correspondances*, 5:249. Even so magnificent a novel as *L'Assommoir* suffers from too small a leap.

6. *Letters*, 1:363.

tion but his criticism, for he understood that by determining its presence or authenticity in a work of literature, the reader determines the degree of dialectical vigor in that work. "The fact is that M. Daudet has not (to my belief) any natural understanding of the religious passion; he has a quick perception of many things, but that province of the human mind cannot be *fait de chic*," wrote James of the French author.⁷ Yet his own religious passion has been deemed "fait d'art" and "fait de conscience" by some, just as Dickens's has been judged a convenience and "fait de sentiment" by others. Nor has the simple Christian passion of Manzoni, twisted into "fait de Vatican," met a happier fate, while Zola's visions have most often been considered evolutionary twaddle and "fait de gigantisme." Anything is better than what Orwell took Dickens's "message" to be at first glance: "an enormous platitude: If man would behave decently the world would be decent."⁸ Precisely because *he* believed in it, however, Dickens asks us to believe in the advice Betsey Trotwood gives to her great nephew: "Never . . . be mean in anything; never be false; never be cruel. Avoid those three vices, Trot, and I can always be hopeful of you" (*DC* 1:267). James believed in the advice he gave to his nephew: "Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."⁹ Zola takes Pauline seriously and therefore expects the tortured Lazare to take her seriously, too, when he at last acknowledges the truth of her philosophy, that "nothing counts but kindness and cheerfulness, all the rest is just a nightmare" (*JV* 272). And Manzoni's humble boatman clearly speaks for his author when, refusing payment from Renzo, he poses the rhetorical question: "Aren't we down here to help each other?" (*PS* 126). Yet even the many readers who have recognized the spiritual dimension of these authors have been, like Dickens's own Mrs. Skewton, either reluctant or unable to articulate a diction of Christian virtue: "There! Shake hands with me. You're a very good old creature—full of what's his name—and all that. You're all affection and et cetera, an't you?" (*DS* 597).

7. "Alphonse Daudet," 237–38.

8. "Charles Dickens," 59.

9. As reported by Billy James and quoted in Edell, *Life of Henry James*, 5:124.

The sincerity of Dickens's rhetoric is called into question by John Kucich, who finds that "despite his supposed belief in moral speech," he always gives us speech that is artificial. All his language should be suspect, Kucich goes on to argue, because his mechanical formulas and style tend to circumscribe his characters, but more revealingly because so many of his devious characters "protest their sincerity." Even the speech of Dickens's good characters is subversive of itself. It is difficult for a critic as well versed in Freud as Lionel Trilling to accept simplicity, so he judges Dickens's relation to Christianity to be "a complicated one," whereas in all of his novels, we find it to be as unambivalent as the words of *The Life of Our Lord*, which he wrote for his children: ". . . I am very anxious that you should know something about the History of Jesus Christ. For everybody ought to know about Him. No one ever lived, who was so good, so kind, so gentle, and so sorry for all people who did wrong, or were in any way ill or miserable, as He was."¹⁰

We find this simplicity even in the skeptical Zola. Through all his mythic rhetoric and programmatic science, through his divinization of nature and the life force as a replacement for a God in which he no longer believed, through his hatred of priests and church doctrine, through his travesties, reversals, and hyperbolic expansions of biblical narratives, we hear the words he wrote to his friend Jean-Baptistin Baille in 1860: "If to be a Christian means to be a disciple of Christ, I openly take this name. His precepts are mine, his God mine."¹¹ The simple religious passion, the fierce yearning for purity and goodness, for innocence and peace, for brotherhood and Golden Age in the pages of these four authors will have to be given credence if we are to understand not only the *emotional* power of their novels but also their *formal* power.

Yet a serious problem arises for the contemporary reader, because a passionate desire for innocence is born of an equally passionate awareness of sin. How can we be persuaded today by the anguish of

10. Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 214; Trilling, *The Opposing Self*, 63; *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 167–70.

11. Quoted in Philip Walker, *Zola*, 36.

authors and characters whose guilt pushes them to seek salvation in the wholeness of innocence when, as Richard Gilman notes quite rightly, “secularism, whatever its public status, is the dominant mode of the imagination, or maybe it’s more accurate to say that the idea of transcendence, like the idea of guilt (which, Elizabeth Hardwick has remarked, is almost wholly absent from recent fiction) has flown farther away than we can reach”? Auden wonders why he is able to read *The Pickwick Papers* as an adult but could not do so as a child: “The conclusion I have come to is that the real theme of *Pickwick Papers* . . . is the Fall of Man.”¹² Whereas it is common to judge Dickens’s books progressively, from the simplicity of the morality play to a dark psychological complexity, it is, in fact, his craft and not his theme that becomes more complex. Fall and redemption, the quintessential matter of the morality play and central also in the works of James and Manzoni, is as powerful in *Our Mutual Friend* as it is in Dickens’s first novel.

The biblical and mythic patterns of fall and redemption, growth and decay, reemergence and rebirth, are equally prominent in Zola’s *Rougon-Macquart*,¹³ but they are transposed. The travesty of Christ’s inspiration, preaching, temptation, repudiation, crucifixion, and resurrection in Etienne’s story represents the author’s typical strategy of inversion, which gives him the freedom to vent his own bitter disappointment and anger at history’s betrayal of spirit. Though he forces a fatal synthesis in *Travail*, he keeps his dialectic unmediated in *Germinal* through his mimicry of the Christian pageant and his imitation of fall and resurrection in the narrative rhythms.

In describing the dialectical tension of nineteenth-century novels, major critics have recently attempted to liberate the alternation of fall

12. Gilman, “Salvation, Damnation and the Religious Novel,” *New York Times Book Review*, 2 December 1984, 58; Auden, “Dingley Dell and the Fleet,” 69.

13. See Turnell, *The Art of French Fiction*, 134. Apocalyptic destruction and messianic hope are most exaggerated, though by no means most effectively exploited, in his late novel *Travail*. Walker discusses Greek and Roman mythological influences in *Germinal* and *Zola’s Thought*, 60–62, and the influence of geology in chapter 4.

and redemption from its matrix of traditional Christianity by using secular pairings that are both immanent and unrestrictive: anarchic language and the besieged imagination, the real and the metaphysical, expenditure and restraint, violence and passivity, realism and revolution, heterogeneity and homogeneity, rupture and repair, presence and absence, meaning and non-meaning, transgression and wholeness, loss and conservation, consciousness and repression, political emergence and suppression, desire and sacrifice, fulfillment and renunciation.¹⁴ But in the restless aggressiveness of public history and the passionate longing of private spirit we find the source of a disruptive turbulence that pushed Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James into new ways of engaging these disturbances and, at the same time, of protecting their novels from their own therapeutic manipulation.

Northrop Frye reminds us that “the mainspring of melodramatic action” is primarily “obsession,”¹⁵ and the repetitive patterns of antitheses, polarities, contradictions, and oxymoronic juxtapositions in the texts of these four authors sustain his observation. But melodrama, which became a dominant literary form in the nineteenth century, is also characterized by something quite the contrary of obsession, an ideal elasticity that could accommodate the continual invention and hybridization of forms that Georg Lukács significantly considers symptoms of personal dissonance.¹⁶ Furthermore, within the span of its characteristic exaggerations and polarities, from the real to romance, from surface to depth, from the substantial to the insubstantial, from the humble to the sublime, there were opportunities for full moral expression. In his description of Manzoni’s art, Hugo von Hofmannsthal gives us an idea of how melodrama could be creatively exploited as a romantic counterforce to realism and, at the same time, as a conveyor of the religious passion that inspires the

14. See, for example, Kucich’s introduction to *Excess and Restraint*; Eigner, *The Metaphysical Novel in England and America*; Stewart, *Dickens and the Trials of Imagination*; Kaston, *Imagination and Desire in the Novels of Henry James*; Petrey, *Realism and Revolution*; Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax*; Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*; and Bataille, *Visions of Excess*.

15. *The Stubborn Structure*, 237.

16. *The Theory of the Novel*, 72–76.

salvational drama: "In every emotion there is a consciousness of limits . . . yes, even a joy over the limits . . . at the same time at every moment a surmounting of all barriers is possible, and a simple passionate abandonment to God's infinity."¹⁷

The story of melodrama starts for us in the romance, from which it is derived, and the real, to which it is opposed, but the problem from the beginning, of course, is that definitions of romance and the real are notoriously capricious and expedient. The French press in the 1820s considered the terms to be "practically interchangeable," and James, as we know, found it "as difficult . . . to trace a dividing-line between the real and the romantic as to plant a milestone between north and south."¹⁸ Further difficulties develop when we consider that whereas in nineteenth-century England, novelists had to continually redefine realism in relation to the intricacies of the Reform Bills and the scientific theories of Darwinism, in nineteenth-century France they measured realism against the tangled legacies of political revolution and restoration. Realism in America, the "great unendowed, unfurnished, unentertained and unentertaining continent,"¹⁹ on the other hand, could hardly be defined at all in a history that was merely prologue. But in addition, this historical deprivation of the New World adversely affected that romance which was starved for old objects and dependent upon realism as a counterforce. Whereas James absorbed the atmosphere of religious sin from Hawthorne, he clearly could not be inspired by Hawthorne's conceit

17. "Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*" 416–17. Kucich describes the Dickensian melodrama, so often criticized as the worst and most excessive aspect of his literature, as the presentation of "violence within a closed form" (*Excess and Restraint*, 38).

18. Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, 13; James, Preface to *The American*.

19. From James's letter to Grace Norton, *Letters*, 1:428–29. See also James, "Hawthorne," in *A Storied Land*, 2:60; and James, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, 280–81. In "The Negative Structures of American Literature," *American Literature* 57 (March 1985): 1–22, Terence Martin examines those passages of "negative rhetoric" in American literature that catalogue the absence of the substantial in America. For an illuminating discussion of genre evolution, see Ralph Cohen, "A Propaedeutic for Literary Change," *Critical Change* 13 (Spring 1983): 1–18.

of a moonlit room in the Old Manse as a “neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairyland, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other.”²⁰ James needed, in his dialectic of history and spirit, the permanent separation of the two. As an American, however, he did have the advantage of being able to take some liberties in his definitions, whereas the European novelists, in an established tradition, had to be more sensitive to their readers’ generic expectations and were careful not to jeopardize them.

Fortunately, the unmediated dialectic makes such definitions unnecessary, for when the novel moves between polarities, romance need be judged only in relation to realism, and realism in relation to romance. If we keep this in mind, much of the delicate maneuvering and definition of terms becomes irrelevant. The kind of reality James finds in seemingly insubstantial phenomena like the epiphanic “visual shock” is so dependent upon physical positions and gestures in the world of history and society, Carren Kaston argues, that it can substantiate the novelist’s reputation “as a founder of realism.” Though his books appear to have so little of what his brother William called “this colossal universe of concrete facts,” they do have that “air of reality” Henry designates “the supreme virtue of a novel,” giving us an important resistance to romance in the “awful bewildering,” the “surprises and cruelties” that William cherished. Such a recognition of reality allows us to qualify the kind of aestheticizing Leo Bersani adopts in contending that in James’s novels, “the reality of a thing depends on the quality of the treatment it gets.”²¹

Though we count on melodrama to carry the romance through the realistic novel, it can surprise us by seeming to validate realism at the

20. “The Custom-House,” Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, in *The Scarlet Letter and Other Tales of the Puritans*, ed. Harry Levin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 38. See also Hawthorne’s preface to *The Marble Faun*.

21. Kaston, *Imagination and Desire*, 58–59, discusses the visual shock as representative of the surface of realism; William James, “Pragmatism” and “The Meaning of Truth,” 18; Henry James, “The Art of Fiction,” 14; Bersani, *Future for Astyanax*, 138. See also McKee, *Heroic Commitment in Richardson, Eliot and James*, 292.

expense of romance. The theme of the interconnectedness of all men, for instance, which is illustrated in so arbitrary a fashion through the Dickensian plot, would appear to serve romance as a dramaturgical and religious convenience,²² yet melodramatic plots that use connection shamelessly can plead the case for realism by making the absurd and the historically implausible poetically plausible. "The coincidences . . . are of too cosmic an order to belong in the category of the fortuitous," writes Steven Marcus of Dickens's universe, "and in a world where there is no accidental population, no encounter can be called a coincidence,"²³ an observation equally appropriate for the encounters on the battlefields in *La Débâcle* or in the plague of *I Promessi sposi*. The reality of London is made vivid by the melodrama of improbability and surrealism, just as the reality of the plague is enhanced by the chance encounter of Rodrigo and Renzo in the *Iazzaretto* and the eerie harvests of the *monatti*. This is a far cry, however, from saying that chance and logical progression, realism and surrealism, are one and the same. Although they must be seen in relation to one another, the romance and the real are always autonomous in the best works of these authors. For this reason, we must be wary of the kind of observation Rocco Montano makes, that in *I Promessi sposi* the "clothing, the forelocks of the braves, the tabernacle, the alleyways, the government proclamations: all are part of a configuration in realistic terms of a metaphysical drama,"²⁴ because such comments tend to blur the strong separation in Manzoni's writing between realism and romance. In the long run, melodrama manages to preserve the dialectic of romance and the real through Chesterton's paradox: that only when Dickens gave free rein to his imagination could he create characters we believe in, whereas a strict realistic definition would not strike us as probable at all.²⁵

In the view of Jerome Meckier, the common impulse of the Victorian novelist to move toward reassurance by staking out a claim for realism arose in answer to the intellectual and political insecurities

22. See Cockshut, *Imagination of Charles Dickens*, 185.

23. *Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey*, 78–79.

24. *Comprendere Manzoni*, 123–24.

25. *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 133.

of the period,²⁶ but in the case of these four novelists, the opportunity to tell their deep and passionate stories in full lyric voice would seem as compelling a reason to establish a reliable and resistant reality. Recognizing the apparent melodramatic implausibility of character and conduct in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens announces in his introduction that men and women like Sikes and Nancy *do* exist. His story "IS TRUE," he proclaims, and even finds reassurance in the very fact of its being doubted, which simply proves to him that it "needed to be told." Dickens conscientiously answers G. H. Lewes's accusations that spontaneous combustion (which Zola also uses) is not scientifically possible, assuring us in his introduction to *Bleak House* that he has done extensive research on the subject and that he does not "wilfully or negligently mislead [his] readers." He carefully defines realism against other realisms by taking pains to point out, in the same introduction, that the Chancery section and the case of Gridley are "substantially true." He visits prisons, schools, factories, workhouses, America, all to nail reality to the floor by document, which in turn will enable him to move on to the "romantic side of familiar things" without drawing murmurs of disbelief, dismay, or disappointment from his public.

Zola, too, traveled to the oppressive sites of realism. Like all "naturalists," he never tired of consulting technical and scientific papers and books, of studying the processes of work. Defending himself against accusations of insincerity in *Germinal*, he wrote to Francis Magnard in 1885: "People accuse me of filthy imagination and of premeditated lies about the poor, who have filled my eyes with tears." There is only one way to answer the charges: "To each accusation I could reply with a document." Yet he knows he can make this bold declaration because, in the same year, he wrote his well-known letter to C  ard declaring documented truth to be a springboard to the stars.²⁷ That Zola used his romanticism against his realism is much more significant than that Flaubert and Bruneti  re called him a romantic or that James found his realism to be an "imitation of observa-

26. *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction*, 7.

27. *Corr  spondances*, 5:254.

tion." In fact, the entire series of the *Rougon-Macquart* can be seen as a continual dialectic between history and spirit, the real and the romance. The importance of the dialectic of mode becomes clear to us when we study the novels that do not successfully maintain it. In *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, le Paradou is isolated by a wall from the real world as securely as the mountain fortress of l'innominato, but whereas l'innominato steps down vigorously after his conversion into a thick history swirling around the foot of the mountain, Serge kneels in a dark church, spinning out his musings and miseries as the book loses the outside world. Even more damaging to the dialectic, Albine of *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret* (like Angélique of *Le Rêve*) perishes at the first whiff of reality. In *Le Docteur Pascal*, the real world of the doctor's practice fades away under the bright idealistic light of la Souleïade, and the history Pascal attempts to recreate, the history Félicité attempts to save, is one of paper. But in novels like *Germinal* and *La Débâcle*, which succeed precisely because they are dialectically dynamic, we find the romance and the real of equal strength. Here Zola has finally discovered that perfect form he had been seeking in his youthful speculations with Baille and Cézanne.

To a greater extent than either Dickens or Zola, Manzoni spent time and energy establishing his realism, and for this he needed historical document. Scrupulously he defends the use of "fictional" characters by noting the "historical" ones, of "fictional" events by pointing to "historical" sources. Throughout his text he authenticates his facts, perhaps all the more carefully since his notion of history as a way to truth was in great part shared by the Italian Romantics, with whom he identified himself. (In his letter to the Marchese d'Azeglio, *Sul romanticismo*, he makes it clear, however, that he has no sympathy for Romantic mythology or the mysticism more characteristic of the German movement.) Grounding the history in his novel upon the documents of Ripamonti, Rivola, Muratori, and Gioia, he often quotes from them verbatim, to the regret of more than one reader, and extensively exploits the records of customs, clothing, and institutions not only of the mighty but of the humble. Tonio, for example, stirs "a small mess of grey polenta" made of maize with a wooden spoon and pours it into a beechwood bowl (*PS* 84). Manzoni's real-

ism, so essential for his romance, earned for him the title “father of verismo,” yet this son of the Enlightenment developed a salvational form that has encouraged readers at various times to consider his novel Gothic, romantic, Catholic, and fabulous.

The continual revisions of *I Promessi sposi* reveal to us Manzoni’s linguistic ambitions, but they also indicate Manzoni’s profound difficulties in coming to grips with the permanence of two truths while thirsting for the simplicity of one. In his *Lettre à M. Chauvet*, he holds on to the hope that the truth of history and the truth of poetry might not be irreconcilable; in *Sul romanticismo*, he moves on to a recognition of their stubborn independence; and finally, in his treatise *On the Historical Novel*, he appears to accept the impossibility of any synthesis.²⁸ But what was exhausting for Manzoni was invigorating for his novel. In his narrative text he was able to dramatize the two truths as warring gospels and to generate adventure and inspiration from the opposition of modes. Fredric Jameson rightly sees parallel genres in *I Promessi sposi*: one of romance and salvation (belonging to Lucia), containing “material for a Gothic novel . . . and providing the narrative apparatus for the development of a semic system of evil and redemption”; and the other of the real (belonging to Renzo), wandering “through the *grosse welt* of history.” But the opposition of the romance and the real lends itself to further alteration in a generic parallel suggested by De Sanctis. He reads Manzoni’s realism as a strategy for defending the form of the novel, and for protecting the “bourgeois world” of Renzo and Lucia from incursions by a vestigial idealistic epic, personified in the figures of Borromeo and l’innominato, “extraordinary and fleeting apparitions, meteors that illumine and pass, leaving behind them stupefaction and admiration.”²⁹ Man-

28. See Bermann, Introduction to Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, 23–33. The treatise, written between 1828 and 1850, was meant, in part, to answer Goethe’s criticism of his novels’ historical interpolations and disquisitions. Bermann puts the concept of historical realism in perspective by pointing out that to Manzoni, Thierry was a scientific historian, whereas to the structuralist Barthes, he is the “chief theoretician” of the nineteenth century’s illusion of history (51). She refers the reader to Barthes’s *Le discours*.

29. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 143; De Sanctis, *Manzoni*, 81.

zoni was too inventive and too desperate, however, to use his “ideal” figures as guardians of the dying epic. Instead, through them he introduced the new form of the salvational drama within the chronicle of the plague.

Melodrama and The Morality Play

We regard melodrama in these novelists to be the necessary bridge between the romantic and the salvational because, in Peter Brooks’s characterization, it is “the principal mode for uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe in a post-sacred era.” As the traditional hierarchies and bastions of society and Christendom crumbled, conventional literary genres originating in and answering to such a world became useless. But through the upheaval of the French Revolution, the kingdom of spirit could exploit history to strengthen its own power in its continual struggle with events, for the French melodramatic theater that flourished after the Revolution was democratic not only in the nature of its audiences, but in the staging of overturned and reversed hierarchies. The dramatic form borrowed elements from the epic, legend, and history, but principally, Brooks speculates, from its most closely related genre, the novel, which featured such melodramatic staples as “persecuted women, struggling to preserve and impose the moral vision.”³⁰ Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James redeemed this debt by giving the melodrama back to the novel. Dickens’s morality play, Edwin Eigner argues persuasively, surely took a great deal from the Christmas pantomime that fascinated him his entire life, but Brooks reminds us that pantomime was an integral and generating part of melodrama.³¹

We may legitimately speculate that Manzoni drew inspiration from this French melodrama in the post-revolutionary Paris of his early manhood. As the “desacralization” of culture proceeded, the

Though drawn from historical sources, Gertrude and l’innominato belong to the Gothic and Romantic modes.

30. *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 14–16, 43. Brooks’s post-sacral melodrama has been central to our generic argument.

31. Eigner, *Dickens Pantomime*; Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 86–87.

French theater, with its romantic complement of virgins, ogres, conversions, reversals—all its grand gestures and antagonisms—might well appear to be a sacred stronghold capable of preserving the Christianity history had rejected and the vulnerable novel of religious passion.³² From melodrama as well as from the Greek drama, Manzoni could derive the tableaux for his salvational villains and saints, and the chorus chanting a hymn of forgiveness in support of Cristoforo's hymn of contrition (*PS* 57). From classical and biblical mythologies, Zola constructed his own sacred pageants, and in *The Wings of the Dove*, James's tableau as morality play features Milly's innocence surrounded at Lancaster Gate by sinister faces, hands, jewels, words, names, forks, flowers, servants, walls, furnishings, ". . . all touches in a picture and denotements in a play" (*WD* 99).

When Henrietta Stackpole warns James's Isabel that she lives "too much in the world of [her] own dreams," that she is "not enough in contact with reality," the reality she describes for Isabel is one that, in its beginning, sounds very much like the traditional reality of George Eliot, "the toiling, striving, suffering" humanity to which she should pay heed. But unexpectedly this striving humanity modulates into a higher key, as Henrietta adds, "I may even say *sinning*, world that surrounds you" (*PL* 185; our italics). In order to move into this salvational drama, James must welcome the very romanticism that endangers his heroine, but he does not allow the stern realism of American Puritanism to punish it. Rather, he uses Mr. Cabot's description of Transcendentalism as "that remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan grounds"³³ to lead him to a more benevolent conception. Because Isabel's concern for a sinning world is not retributive, her romance is turned into salvation in a way Emma Bo-

32. In addition, the works of Beaumarchais opened up to the melodrama a rich field of domestic disaster, the primacy of the family unit, the importance of disguised and revealed familial connections. The Gothic novels and historical romances of Sir Walter Scott were, of course, important influences upon Manzoni.

33. "Emerson," 20. See Ruland, *Storied Land*, 2:20, where Wentworth Higginson defines American Puritanism as a stern realism that society demands at the expense of Romanticism, whose "moral bracing" will be softened by "poetry and passion" in a happier and more generous age.

vary's never could be. "It would be impossible to have a more romantic temper than Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*," wrote James in his well-known preface to *The American*, "and yet nothing less resembles a romance than the record of her adventures." This is because Flaubert punishes temperament by tenor, whereas James not only educates Isabel's tenor and temperament, but redeems them through his salvational morality. The naming of her mistakes as "generous" ones exempts her from the punishment Flaubert's Emma must endure and makes her eligible for heroism.

In *The Warden*, Trollope mocks the novel by a caricatured Dickens named Popular Sentiment, which features thunderous accusation and denunciation, damnation and salvation, all the exaggerated motives and motions of melodrama unloosed by an undisciplined imagination. Such a work stands in marked contrast to his own novel, which works comfortably within history and features misunderstandings resolved through clarification and acceptance. Difficulties and embarrassments eventually evaporate because they find some solution in a society which, though it may be sick from time to time and in need of correction, represents the forces of right in a conflict of manners and morals that runs strongly through the tradition of English fiction.³⁴ But those authors who cannot be reconciled with society must gratify their frustrated desires by staging what Brooks calls a "heightened and hyperbolic drama" that transpires "within a context of 'realism' and the ordinary."³⁵

Although the critic finds this same drama in Balzac and in James, it seems to arise from different motivations and take on different burdens in the two authors. While Balzac infiltrated an immoral and mediocre society in the guise of theatrically villainous manipulators like Vautrin and Cousine Bette, James educated his most moral characters to a spiritual grace that had no use for the satisfaction of a power which was parasitic upon a public it despised. Spirituality could flourish only by resisting an autonomous reality, but in the morality play, the existence of this indispensable world was ques-

34. See the discussion of Trollope's *Warden* and Dickens in Meckier, *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction*, chapter 2.

35. *Melodramatic Imagination*, ix.

tionable. To compensate for the dangerous loss of palpability, Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James set up a surrogate by making an *equivalence* between the brutal fact of history and the inexplicable and stubborn persistence of evil. We might contend that the hyper-significance of their texts, which for Brooks signals the retreat of the sacred, also signifies the author's desperate effort to keep the novel from becoming a mere register of pathos and scorn by refusing to exploit, as Flaubert had done, the impotence of art and the materials it feeds upon.

Critics have described creatures like Quilp as demons of an arbitrary, violent, and exultant release, as embodiments of our nightmares, as expressions of repressed sexuality, but what is important to remember is that, in a salvational mode, such creatures can only live in a world that resists projection and the aesthetic release of energy from morality. Though they have escaped the context of history, they are asked to assume, in combat with good, the reality of history in order to make the adversarial struggle as substantial and dramatic as the battleground of Sedan. Since the unmediated Manichean drama of good and evil serves as the analogue of the broader irreconcilable conflict between history and spirit, the romance and the real, it should not surprise us that good is as dependent upon the existence of evil as spirit and romance are upon historical particularity: "When we have defined and isolated the evil thing," writes Chesterton, "the colours come back into everything else. When evil things become evil, good things, in a blazing apocalypse, become good." Milly's virtue, Christof Wegelin reminds us, comes into its shining glory only when it recognizes evil.³⁶

As Trollope objects to Dickens's morality plays and counters them with his own moderate truth and tone, he gives up the richness and complexity of multiple theaters of conflict: the drama of the traditional novel, in which French and German soldiers fight historical wars and dream of brotherhood, the drama of the salvational mode within that novel, in which idealized Manichean opposites—dark

36. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 204; Wegelin, "The Lesson of Spiritual Beauty," *WD* 523.

and fair, devilish and angelic—fight spiritual wars, and the drama of generic modes in which the traditional and the salvational stand in opposition. Novels that do not embrace these sets of antagonisms will have that “emptiness and thinness” leading to the “vulgarity” James regretted in the French.³⁷ He regrets, too, that William Dean Howells’s work showed “so constant a study of the actual and so small a perception of evil,” by which he means that the novelist is curtailing the material at his command.³⁸

When critics make a sharp distinction between the one-dimensional morality play of Dickens’s early works and the psychological complexity of Dickens’s later so-called “dark” works,³⁹ they set the stage for a reading that paradoxically relinquishes the complexity guaranteed to the traditional novel through the simplicity of the salvational mode. It is neither psychological subtlety nor mysticism, but something akin to romance and melodrama that is the source of the irrational power of these novels. James’s familiar definition of romance—“this rank vegetation of the ‘power’ of bad people that good get into, or *vice versa*”—and the equally familiar characterization of James’s world that Theodora Bosanquet gives us—“a place of torment, where creatures of prey perpetually thrust their claws into the quivering flesh of the doomed, defenseless children of light”⁴⁰—can help us to understand why Isabel falls into the grip of Osmond and Madame Merle, Milly into the talons of Kate Croy, Little Em’ly into the power of Littimer and Steerforth (whom Agnes calls David’s bad angel). Agnes herself is threatened by Uriah Heep, who writhes on top of her coach, “as if he had her in his clutches and triumphed” (*DC* 1:461), and Jonas Chuzzlewit claims his prize. Just as surely, Jarndyce, the Cheerybles, Sir Luke, Milly, Fra Cristoforo and Borromeo, Agnes Wickfield, Esther Summerson, and Lucia take bad

37. Conversation with Sydney Waterlow in Rye, quoted in Edel, *Life of Henry James*, 5:383–84. Such idealized oppositions are especially notable in *WD* 262, 301, 303.

38. Quoted in Ruland, *Storied Land*, 2:65.

39. See, for example, Gold, *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralists*, 156.

40. James, “Preface to *The American*,” in *The Art of the Novel*, 37; Bosanquet, *Henry James at Work*, 32.

people into *their* power by borrowing from romance and extending their influence through salvational gifts. It is essential that readers who have little patience with Dickens's godfathers, holy fools, and angels recognize them to be, in Northrop Frye's categorization, those guardian spirits or wise old men who work miracles that are indispensable to the idealized world of the romance and represent the pure innocence and virtue of the morality play. Kucich attributes "the many Christian interpretations of Dickens" to the vague and universal guilt induced in the reader by his melodrama, which functions effectively when the relationship between hero and villain remains "shadowy." Since this tends to keep us from discovering that the real origin of guilt lies in "desires for radical liberation, for the release of violence and death," the critic argues, we are happier to view Dickens's melodrama as a morality play in which the conservation of good will overcome the violence and expenditure generated by evil.⁴¹ But Dickens's morality play, rooted firmly and solidly in the Christian context of sin and redemption, is of a different sort: there is no shadowy relationship between good and evil, no victory or defeat for one or the other.

We view the irrational Quilp, who shall be cruel when he likes, as the necessary antagonist both morally and structurally of the angel, who must be good whether she likes it or not. Carol Christ observes of *Pippa Passes* that "in a world where God seems noticeably absent, little girls cannot go around singing 'God's in his heaven, / All's right with the world' without creating a sense that the resolutions brought about in this way are poetically and morally unearned."⁴² But the salvational mode makes this possible. The difficulties for these novelists are formidable indeed, as they try to even the odds for the angels in a Manichean battle that, unlike pure melodrama, may destroy an individual villain, but can never rout the villains. The forces of darkness are notoriously bright and vivid, and the forces of light are dull and colorless. Everything about paradise is remote and insubstantial; everything about the inferno is present and palpable.

41. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 151; Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 52.

42. *The Finer Optic*, 87.

To the Protheros in Rye, James wrote: "I have really been down into hell and stayed there for months since I saw you. . . ."43 The Prince of Darkness marshals his power in Kate Croy, whose cleverness grows "infernal" (*WD* 193), and in Madame Merle, who "stupefies" Isabel by her "deviltry" (*PL* 427). How can Dickens expect his domestic innocents to be a match for Quilp, Jonas Chuzzlewit, and Littimer? When he moves Uriah Heep from the historical fact of the poor-house to the supra-historical morality play, he forfeits the pity we might otherwise feel for that character but gives him an unassailable power and ambience.

If they seem reluctant to recognize spiritual passion for what it is in these authors, critics seem equally reluctant to recognize a passion for good that is the same as a belief in it. The inability of Dickens to make Nell as interesting and entertaining as Quilp (to say the least) leads Garrett Stewart to speculate that Dickens has put more of himself in Quilp than in Nell. In the view of Graham Greene, "the rage of personality is all the devil's" in James's work, and he concludes from this that the novelist "had a stronger belief in supernatural evil than in supernatural good." He admires Dickens for making a virtue of his inability to believe in the saintliness of *Oliver Twist* by writing a novel that is as memorable as a nightmare, where "ineffective goodness makes its last stand in a condemned world." Noting the falsity of Rose Maylie's language, J. Hillis Miller concludes that the novelist's "real allegiance . . . may be . . . to the dark world, the world which he so fears is the real and only world that he writes novel after novel whose dramatic action is the attempt to escape it."44 The inauthentic speech of Rose Maylie and of *Oliver Twist* seems to us, however, simply to be a sign of the artistic difficulties inherent in the depiction of the good. The action and drama of "novel after novel" depends not upon Dickens's and James's *allegiance* to evil, but upon their *recognition* of evil and on their immense, powerful and creative yearning for the heavenly world that evil frustrates.

43. Letter of June 1910 quoted in Edel, *Life of Henry James*, 5:444.

44. Stewart, *Dickens and the Trials of Imagination*, 97, 99; Greene, "Henry James: The Religious Aspect," 43, 44, and "The Young Dickens," 85-86; Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*, 80.

If evil is “an ugly and rebellious genie,” as Uriah is characterized by David Copperfield (*DC* 2:374), or if, in the shape of Souvarine, it is a “man, larger than life,” who makes Etienne’s “hair stand on end” and freezes him “with a religious fear” (*G* 382), can it be resisted by a mere prayer, a hope? This is the question Joseph Fradin asks as he studies *Bleak House*. Because the devil “is everywhere” in the novel, we must believe in him, whereas “since [Esther] makes claims which the novel does not render, we have to take [her] word for God.”⁴⁵ But the morality play and myth in which Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James chose to take their last stand did offer a possibility for that balance of powers so absolutely vital to the dialectical novel. In a war of *ambience*, the contagion of good is as mysterious and inexorable as the contagion of evil. Uriah Heep’s sinister atmosphere can be resisted by Agnes Wickfield’s own emanations, which are so strong that they pervade “even the city where she dwelt” (*DC* 2:154). Lord Mark’s emanations can also invade a city and affect its very climate. But even in a Venice where “the weather had changed, the rain was ugly, the wind wicked, the sea impossible, because of Lord Mark” (*WD* 328), Milly’s spirit is his match.

In Lord Mark, however, we see an added danger. Evil can be as intractable and effective as the solidity of historical fact and event, but because it cannot be seen, it can more easily deceive, increasing its capacity to harm. By moving into the morality play, Lord Mark seems to Kate not to have lost power but to have augmented it, a recognition that might have given a warning to Isabel about Osmond had she come to it. Instead, she painfully discovers that “these shadows” which “were a part . . . a kind of creation and consequence, of her husband’s presence” (*PL* 350) had power to hurt her beyond her historical reckoning. Earlier, Osmond’s unhistoric presence fools Mrs. Touchett, who remarks: “There’s nothing of him” (*PL* 277), as if the world they shared were one and the same. But if evil is deceptive, so is good, and its blessings are as surprising and subtle. When the kind Peggotty cleans David’s room “with a good deal of bustle,” making the sounds and raising the conspicuous dust of moral his-

45. “Will and Society in *Bleak House*,” 98.

tory, she seems to do so little in comparison to the angel Agnes, who cleans “without any bustle at all” (*DC* 2:95). Pauline walks “so gently that her little feet seemed to skim over the floor” (*JV* 34), and when Florence takes refuge in Solomon Gills’s back parlor, she quietly fills Captain Cuttle’s pipe and mixes him a grog without the effort of apprenticeship.

The democracy of melodrama, which like the morality play feeds the salvational drama, also evens the odds by its reversal of hierarchies. The defenseless maiden Lucia can triumph over the mighty l’innominato. But these victories are not the victories of romance, in which Renzo would slay the dragon and free the pure maiden from the evil monster in the fortress. They are the victories of the salvational drama, in which the pure maidens, Lucia and Milly, who should be rescued, are instead the rescuers. Esther Summerson wields the same power. She is lowered into the world as an orphan of sin, but she rescues Charley, inspires Caddy, succors Jo, and blesses, like Lucia and Milly, through her presence. No less Christ-like and salvational is Florence Dombey, who hopes “that patient observation of [her father] and trust in him would lead her bleeding feet along that stony road which ended in her father’s heart” (*DS* 419), and indeed they do.

In this regard it seems to us that James’s Maggie is less interesting than Isabel and Milly, and *The Golden Bowl* less resonant than James’s two other great stories of betrayal. The signs in his last novel alert us to a salvational confrontation. Both the Christian connotations of chapter 36 and the device of the visual shock encourage us to seek out the spiritual landscapes we had previously found. From the garden of temptation and doubt, Maggie looks at the figures in the smoking room and feels the full horror of evil for the first time in her life. As we anticipate the melodramatic extensions of a salvational drama, what we want are the abysses Milly wanted (*WD* 120), her Alpine views and ridges, her high Venetian chambers. What we find are surfaces, patterns, stratagems, interiors. In place of a humbled Isabel or a dovelike Milly, we are given a heroine who understands the situation and devises the plans she must pursue in order to save those she loves. Like Milly, she will renounce “the rights of resent-

ment" appropriate to outraged innocence, but whereas Maggie thereby wins back her prince, Milly gives up these rights when she can get nothing in return and becomes salvational in a way Maggie cannot be. Mrs. Stringham is a good reader when she sees Milly as "a Christian maiden, in the arena, mildly, caressingly, martyred" (*WD* 209). Maggie's renunciation does not lead, as Milly's does, to spiritual victories and conversion, but to acceptances, compromises, and arrangements. By maintaining that although Maggie and Isabel both keep their marriages, Maggie, unlike Isabel, ends up with more than the form, Kaston aborts the salvational dimension.⁴⁶

It is crucial for the reader to detect the crossover point from the traditional to the salvational mode because modes are the vehicles by which salvational and saved characters can negotiate their passage from history to spirit and back again. We should learn to recognize the realism of Manzoni's plague as both meaning and method in order to be prepared for Lucia's ascents and descents, as she changes from peasant girl to inspiring angel, from perfect angel to common wife. While the historical brutality of the plague unfolds in a restrained and documented narrative below, a timeless spiritual drama bursts forth in a free and passionate lyricism above. When the timid Lucia is carried melodramatically to the mountain, she becomes a holy icon; her enemy, once the petty tyrant Rodrigo, is now the proud l'innominato, a legendary figure, "compelling, strange, and fabulous" (*PS* 299). No social hierarchy or historical narrative can hold such nameless creatures; they must inhabit the high chambers of the air and speak through prayer and conversion. But when Lucia steps back into realism, she becomes ordinary once more, while the giant of the mountain throws himself at the feet of Borromeo.

It is possible to regard *The Wings of the Dove* as a narrative about how Kate, Densher, and Milly learn or refuse to learn to recognize and accept the move from realism through romance to the salvational mode. In such a case, the gulf over which Kate looks at Densher at the end of the story becomes a chasm that is as taxonomic as it is thematic. How Isabel moves from romance to the salvational

46. *Imagination and Desire*, 60.

mode through her recognition of realism is, in fact, the very subject of her book. At the beginning of her adventures, the appearance of Lord Warburton inspires her to confess joyfully: "Oh, I hoped there would be a lord; it's just like a novel" (PL 27). Whereupon melodrama's romantic lord Osmond sweeps her off to his castle. But her romance is not destined to be the kind that Dickens conjures up to transfigure the realism of his liaison with Ellen Ternan, for in his version, he dispels the opposition of modes. To Mrs. Watson he writes:

Realities and idealities are always comparing themselves before me, and I don't like the Realities except when they are unattainable—*then* I like them of all things. I wish I had been born in the days of Ogres and Dragon-guarded Castles. I wish an Ogre with seven heads . . . had taken the Princess whom I adore. . . . Nothing would suit me half so well this day, as climbing after her, sword in hand, and either winning her or being killed.⁴⁷

Isabel must see that the romantic ogre and Dragon-guarded Castle of *The Portrait of a Lady* are real before she can become salvational, in her Roman communion with all sufferers, in her concern for Pansy, and in her capacity as Angel-Deliverer to Ralph.⁴⁸

It should be evident to every reader that the transformations in Dickens's characters occurring when they move from mode to mode have more to do with religious abruptness than with the psychological and social progression in George Eliot's works,⁴⁹ but the tran-

47. Letter of December 1857 quoted in Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2:911.

48. See Welsh, *The City of Dickens*, chapter 11. Isabel's salvational role persuades us to read with some reservations Welsh's contention that the nineteenth-century angel is not only a comforter and healer, but a potent angel of death.

49. Jerome Meckier posits a rivalry between the popular theories of gradual and catastrophic process during the Victorian period (*Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction*, 249–50). Gradualism was represented by writers like Eliot who were influenced by Lyell and Darwin and the Reform Bills, and catastrophism was favored by writers like Dickens who were influenced by Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution*, the Chartists, and in Dickens's own case, the traumatic reversal of the blacking factory in his childhood.

sitions in James's novels are often disguised by intricate, complex passages that are not what they seem. Isabel Archer's soliloquy in chapter 42 of her story has all the appearance of logical and psychological analysis when, in fact, discoveries burst in upon her consciousness, as Brooks has noted, in the form of the ominous signs of visual shocks, confirmed fears, and shudders of recognition rather than rational progression. The logic here is not so much sequential as it is revelatory and comes close to the "salvational logic of the romance narrative" that Jameson finds in the unhistorical part of Manzoni's novel. Those critics who wish to explain Densher's behavior in rational terms are, like Charles Thomas Samuels, likely to find him "almost a moral moron," his conversion unconvincing. It can only be described in the way *l'innominato's* is described by those who witness it: as a miracle.⁵⁰ This is what Brooks calls the drama of the "moral occult," transpiring in the theatre of primal forces of "light and darkness, salvation and damnation." And, he argues persuasively, only if we pay attention to this drama and accept it as one of intense struggle toward virtue, as a sacrifice the character makes to the ideal, will we be able to understand the important Jamesian theme of renunciation, unfolding in a realm that is entirely personal and inward.⁵¹

When readers attempt to give this sacred mode a secular analysis, as they are so likely to do in contemporary readings, they are bound to be repelled and unconvinced by Isabel's decision, Tom's meekness, and Milly's great gesture. They have more understanding for Julien Sorel than for Tom Pinch, more for Graham Greene's alcoholic priests than for Cristoforo and Borromeo, more for Meursault than for the converted Merton Densher. In characterizing the renunciations of these repressed heroes and heroines as indulgent and excessive unto death, critics look for interpretations that are more agreeable to the modern psyche. We take the Christian virtues in these novels, however, as genuine signs of the spiritual and as important guarantors of reality. However far removed from spirituality, however public

50. Samuels, "A Flawed Hymn to Renunciation," 578. See also the discussion of Manzoni in Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 132.

51. *Melodramatic Imagination*, 5-6.

that reality might seem, its very existence depends upon the inward drama. By assenting to the author's spiritual desire, we discover a reality in the novels that is redefined and enriched. In such a case, the terrible and apparently meaningless spiritual self-sacrifices of the characters should not be depressing but, on the contrary, exhilarating.

For this reason, we cannot agree with those who find the effect of surplus sacrifice and virtue acceptable in *Oliver Twist* but detrimental to the moral stature of the more developed paragons of goodness like Florence Dombey and Milly.⁵² In the novels of unmediated dialectic, there cannot be a surplus of conventional virtue and romance anymore than there can be a surplus of evil and reality, for oppositional terms continually stimulate and deepen each other. Because it is in the very nature of melodrama that moral natures declare themselves to each other openly, that goodness assert itself with surplus virtue and villainy with surplus and aimless violence,⁵³ Mark Tapley's exaggerated self-abnegation should be viewed not as a masochistic obsession but as a benign parody of virtue's declaration, a parody that Dickens exploits in order to be able to love shamelessly what he holds most dear and to challenge, as Mark does at every turn, the history that is bent on defeating them. This benign and self-effacing mode of rhetoric is as powerful and as Dickensian as Quilp's more eruptive and biting rhetoric.

The Very Centers of Their Stories

By allowing Dickens to exploit freely the fear we have of a Quilp who seems no longer to be under the control of his author or of any rational limitation,⁵⁴ the salvational mode transforms what might seem to be novelistic difficulties and weaknesses into melodramatic tributes to the power of goodness and innocence. The iconic figures

52. See Carlisle, *The Sense of an Audience*, 24–25; and Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction*, 211.

53. See Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 36–44; and Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 47–48, 68.

54. See Dyson, *Inimitable Dickens*, 28.

create novelistic advantages by embodying the idea of moral perfection that Iris Murdoch describes as a “producer of order.” The passive vessel who has nothing to *do* but has “to be with great intensity”⁵⁵ can now be viewed as an active salvational agent in the midst of history while holding the line between purity and sentimentality. These airy aspirations, “specimens” of apparent inaction, are more than the common nineteenth-century models of priestess, guardian angel, and universal nurse.⁵⁶ Although they would retard the novel on the traditional plane, they become in the salvational mode the very centers of their stories and the organizing principles of their novels. Clotilde not only nurses Pascal, but suckles a messiah who represents the future of the entire *Rougon-Macquart* and, by salvational extension, the world. Dickens’s Lizzie Hexam and Zola’s Henriette do not let themselves be defined by the exemplary phrases of “heroine,” “brave devoted girl” (*OMF* 824), or world comforter but use these designations as salvational tools and passageways. Like Milly, they wash their patients “but the more clean” (*WD* 329). It is the unsalvational and, in the end, ineffectual Kate Croy, “a brute about illness” (*WD* 215), who has no use for the nurse and priestess template.

A. E. Dyson notices that *Bleak House* contains an inordinate “number of virtuous characters, far more than Dickens presented in such numbers elsewhere.”⁵⁷ This is true, to a large extent, because of Esther’s magnetism, the same James refers to in describing Milly as a Rhinemaiden who creates “all round her, very much that whirlpool movement of the waters produced by the sinking of a big vessel,” making “immersion inevitable” (preface to *WD*). But significantly, Milly is also the architectural stimulus for James. It was “Infinitely interesting to have prepared and organized [and] . . . to have constructed, for Drama essentially to take possession, the whole bright house of her exposure” (*WD* 14). If we turn to *Notes of a Son and Brother*, furthermore, we read that “everything that took place

55. *The Sovereignty of Good*, 62. Percy Lubbock describes Milly this way (*The Craft of Fiction*, 175).

56. See Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women*, 307.

57. *Inimitable Dickens*, 157.

around" Minny Temple "took place as if primarily in relation to her and in her interest." To infer from Esther's passivity that "*Bleak House* is a novel without a center," as Robert Donovan does, therefore, seems unjustified. When he notices "no single character to whom the events of the story happen, or with reference to whom those events are significant,"⁵⁸ he is reading with the traditional novel in mind. But in the salvational drama it is quite the reverse, for Esther is not simply a cause of goodness in others; those who encircle her irresistibly take their tone from her in the same way they do from Tom Pinch. With dramatic irony, James has Kate envy Milly her historical monetary power when it is all along the salvational power she is describing: "We're of no use to you—it's decent to tell you. You'd be of use to us, but that's a different matter" (WD 170).

It is not difficult to understand why the exaggerated saintliness of Pickwick, Brownlow, Garland, and the Cheerybles, combined with their detachment from the world, make them seem to Humphrey House "dreary, unctuous monsters."⁵⁹ Although they are the model of the salvational godfathers, in the early novels of Dickens they are not yet embedded deeply enough in the world of action and argument and do not acknowledge the historical autonomy of those they benefit. As a result, they are as manipulative with others as Dickens is with them. A godfather like Jarndyce, on the other hand, is powerful in history precisely because he gives to those around him a proper space. Though he sponsors Richard, he insists that his ward should use his own will. Manzoni's Cristoforo leaves Renzo and Lucia to their destiny by seeming to desert them through much of the novel, but he has inspired them with his religious guidance to such an extent that, though they wander blindly through history, they never lose their spiritual way. As the century progresses, spirit, upon which the godfather must depend, weakens under the world's assault. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Ralph makes it possible for Isabel to choose her own destiny, which is both disastrous and salvational at the same time, but when we reach *The Wings of the Dove*, Sir Luke can do

58. James, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, 509; Donovan, "Structure and Idea in *Bleak House*," 39.

59. *Dickens World*, 51.

little more than sit by and comfort. Nevertheless, he and Susan Stringham still perform the important task of preserving a community as they become Milly's "family," and it is this communion, in the end, that Milly extends to Densher.

Since the saving power of the godfathers in the historical world depends upon their simplicity, it is a mistake to make Jarndyce more complex than he is.⁶⁰ We are jarred by the difficulties and dangers he introduces with his proposal to Esther, but Woodcourt rescues and preserves him for his salvational role. In equal measure, the worldly power of the holy fool depends on his salvational constitution. Because he cannot see complexities, Mr. Dick, the simpleton in *David Copperfield*, is able to resolve a major misunderstanding, which the twice-born are unable to do. The holy fool is not aware of inconsistencies, nor do they concern him. When Merry Pecksniff comes to Tom after she has been destroyed by Jonas Chuzzlewit's evil, Tom is "sorry to hear her speaking in her old manner. . . . Yet he did not feel it a contradiction that he should be sorry to see her so unlike her old self, and sorry at the same time to hear her speaking in her old manner. The two things seemed quite natural" (MC 655). As he attempts to console her, he wonders if "she had tried to kneel down at his feet, and bless him" (MC 657). As for the angels, Lucia produces strange and wondrous effects upon both worldly and legendary villains, Nibbio and l'innominato, merely by her presence, just as the mere presence of Esther and Milly make Caddy and Densher feel so awkward that they seek ways of improvement and absolution (BH 168, WD 315).

The Tom Pinch who is dismissed as a patronized and sentimentalized character—loved unwisely and too well by his author—is, in truth, a strong and enabling Tom Pinch. He is not only the standard for an innocence and benevolence that attracted readers as different as Howells and Santayana, but is a greater success in the historical world than we would expect, sustaining the novel itself and supporting Fred Kaplan's representation of sentimentality as a daring and ultimate stand against the "claim of history governed by mechanical,

60. As Grahame Smith tries to do in *Charles Dickens: Bleak House*, 30–31.

rational, deterministic or pragmatic forces" in the defense of the ideal.⁶¹ Keeping this in mind, let us move to the scene in which Tom rides through the country toward Salisbury and observe how its structure is determined by the holy fool:

It was not only the married people and the children who gave Tom Pinch a welcome as he passed. No, no. Sparkling eyes and snowy breasts came hurriedly to many an uppercasement as he clattered by, and gave him back his greeting: not stinted either, but sevenfold, good measure. They were all merry. They all laughed. And some of the wickedest among them even kissed their hands as Tom looked back. (*MC* 119)

Now contrast this with Mr. Carker, who cannot escape fast enough from the crowd that surrounds his carriage "with upturned countenances and outstretched hands." In this "host of beggars—blind men with quivering eyelids, led by old women holding candles to their faces; idiot girls; the lame, the epileptic, and the palsied" (*DS* 796), there are no sparkling eyes or snowy breasts, nor do the wickedest among them kiss their hands. Tom can gather his "sacred community" both from the traditional novel and from the salvational drama because he is able to control fearlessly, as Carker cannot, the oppositional paradigms of history and spirit, of evil and good.

If declaring virtue brazenly gives power to the good, declaring nothing makes it indomitable. The greatest gift melodrama gives to the salvational mode appears to be a novelistic paradox, namely, what Brooks characterizes as the "text of muteness." (We should recall that pantomime, so important in the late eighteenth century, was from the beginning a strong element of melodrama.) As M. M. Bakhtin contends that "the speaking person and his discourse" define the novel as novel,⁶² so we might propose that it is the mute character and his silence that define the salvational drama within the novel. Since the antagonism between speech and silence is simply a variant of the larger one between history and spirit, it demands a

61. *Sacred Tears*, 6.

62. Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 62 (see also 4, 191–92); Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 332.

broader analysis. By using a psychological method appropriate to historical behavior in interpreting Isabel's strange and troubling inability to express her anger and her even stranger pity for those she should despise, Kaston reduces the power of the spiritual. The critic is led to the conclusion that like Alice James, Catherine Sloper, and Claire de Cintré, Isabel suffers from a typical Jamesian absence of self; for the character and the author, renunciation is preferable to revenge.⁶³ The argument is reasonable because there are places in the text that support this reading. After all, in the convent, Isabel, who is coming into her knowledge, could "have said something that would hiss like a lash" if Madame Merle had spoken to her, but she closes her eyes and "the hideous vision dropped" (PL 451). Later, in the same passage, is it James or his heroine who tells us that she would never accuse or reproach Madame Merle, "*perhaps* because she never would give her the opportunity to defend herself" (our italics). She recognizes that "*it might* have been a great moment for her, for it *might* have been a moment of triumph" (our italics). But so many conditional tenses, such inexplicable behavior, should tell us that the text of muteness is at work. What logical or psychological methods cannot explain, the salvational mode makes clear: a battle of emanations is unfolding in silence as Isabel watches Madame Merle visibly losing courage in front of her (PL 450).

It is this text of muteness that gives us a further understanding of Esther's discomfort in her role as narrator. When Dickens forces her to speak and, even worse, to speak of herself, he sabotages her salvational power, which lies entirely in silence. The verbose Mrs. Partridge has no effect on the brickmakers' wives and families, but Esther's quiet comfort and concern find a way to their hearts. The trouble with Esther, as William Axton justly contends, is that she is not allowed to think, though she is "possessed of the shrewdest insights and finest discriminations of anyone in the novel."⁶⁴ But it is just as troublesome for her that she is not allowed to be mute, for muteness guarantees her virtue in her salvational role, whereas a

63. *Imagination and Desire*, 49–51.

64. "The Trouble with Esther," 553.

melodramatic declaration of her virtue does not. She is forced to preserve her salvational power indirectly, by developing strategies that deny the independence of her judgment and her historical presence—indicting Vholes by comparing him to her guardian, for instance (*BH* 541), or hooking her judgments onto Caddy's (*BH* 167). Only at those rare times when she delivers Dickens's opinion does she seem comfortable in her speech (e.g., *BH* 151, 286, 474). But for all her narrative difficulties, Esther functions effectively in the novel because it is finally not her speech she depends upon but her silence. That she is often unaware of this adds poignancy to her humming all the tunes she knows, working "in a desperate manner," and talking and talking "morning, noon, and night" when she sees Ada wrapped in sadness (*BH* 605).

Milly offers us, in her own being, an excellent example of the conflict between the text of history and the text of salvational muteness. She is a troublesome and helpless creature when she is both body and spirit, both desiring and patient, both "pathetic" and "god-like." She cannot be an American girl in love with Densher and a divine spirit with whom Densher is in love.⁶⁵ Only when she understands her salvational destiny does she understand the need to be silent. She asks no questions of Densher; she makes no protest. In silence she turns to the wall and changes everything. Far from forcing her out of the novel, as Bersani suggests, James augments her power through the ultimate silence of death. By memory and munificence, she actively shapes the destinies of those who stay behind. Densher and the verbal Kate honor her influence as they destroy, unread, the words the Dove has written.

History is argument, indoctrination, noise, naming, protest; it punishes its silent citizens who cannot find a passage to the spiritual world. Jo is tortured by Chadband's rhetoric, Mr. Jellyby is given a grandchild who is deaf and dumb, Richard is rewarded with a mouth full of blood when he attempts to answer the unanswerable, Zola's humble miners are treated more severely than the orators in *Germinial*, and the unknown soldier Gutmann in *La Débâcle* is per-

65. See Samuels, "A Flawed Hymn to Renunciation," *WD* 576–77.

mitted his death only after painful hours of groaning inarticulately from a tongueless mouth (*D* 412). History punishes in a more insidious manner, however, by perverting the virtue of its enemy. Its false silence shapes *Bleak House*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Wings of the Dove* as Tulkinghorn, the magistrates of Chancery, Krook and the Smallweeds, Madame Merle, Osmond, Kate, and Densher practice a game of secrets, whose resemblance to spiritual silence they exploit in an attempt to trap and control those who are vulnerable to the mystery of the spirit.

In history, "silence is the unbearable repartee" representing "the deafness of the god."⁶⁶ In the salvational drama, however, silence represents the presence of God. It is a silence that empowers the passive individual beyond any historical expectation, and it is what Cardinal Federigo attempts to explain to Don Abbondio when he warns the parish priest that he cannot hope to win by using the wiles of his enemies. Those strategies belong to a different world. The salvational drama, which requires its players simply to "love and pray," is able to thwart "the forces of evil," which "can threaten and can strike, but . . . cannot command" (*PS* 395). The few simple and holy words Manzoni's Lucia emits echo thunderously in l'inno-minato's ears, conjuring up for him a picture of the maiden not as "a prisoner" or "a suppliant," but as "one dispensing grace and consolation" (*PS* 326). The noisy Martin Chuzzlewit, who has made his pilgrimage from the false and empty rhetoric of Pecksniff to the false and empty rhetoric of America, honors the speechless holy fool, whom he has patronized and chided:

And when he spoke of Tom, he said God bless him; and the tears were in his eyes; for he said that Tom, mistrusted and disliked by him at first, had come like summer rain upon his heart; and had disposed it to believe in better things. And Martin took him by the hand, and Mary too, and John, his old friend, stoutly too: and Mark, and Mrs. Lupin, and his sister, little Ruth. And peace of mind, deep, tranquil peace of

66. For an interesting discussion of silence in *Bleak House*, see Stewart, *Dickens and the Trials of Imagination*, 133–36. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 145.

mind was on Tom Pinch. . . . There is not a blessing on earth that Tom would not have bestowed on them, if he could. (MC 888–90)

Tom is not a “tactician of escape” seeking an asylum for his imagination by praying through his wordless music as Stewart suggests,⁶⁷ nor is he allowed by his creator to return to heaven. On the contrary, he leads Martin to the world that has always been there for those who are able to see, knowing instinctively what others must learn, that the salvational drama can thrive only if there is a realism that resists it.

67. *Dickens and the Trials of Imagination*, 178–80.

CHAPTER 3

BETWEEN TWO GOSPELS

The Power to Will

Although the drama of realism and the drama of salvation define the poles between which the characters in these novels must travel, the terrain winds through a history thick with event and heavy with long-established customs and ethics. In this material matrix, contemporary oppositional terms reassume their older meanings: separateness and non-separateness signify exile from or belonging to community; aggression and conservation become will and humility, duty and charity, performance and passivity. Yet even these traditional oppositions push against the very confines of the novel. Dickens, Manzoni, and Zola join James in requiring of their readers the quality of attention called for in the preface to *The Wings of the Dove*: "It is greatest, it is delightfully, divinely great, when we feel the surface, like the thick ice of the skater's pond, bear without cracking the strongest pressure we throw on it." Zola moves us from a hill overlooking the battle to the bloody center of clashing forces, Manzoni from the valley of the plague to l'innominato's castle, James from Alpine views to Lancaster Gate, Dickens from Jo's broom at the base of St. Paul's to its dome and cross, from the Dedlock mansion, fixed in class and period, to the "cathedral arches" of the branches outside (BH 498). Everything we look upon attentively in their work yields further meaning; the particularities of event and place send us toward a greater and more distant destination. We welcome these polarities because we have been made to see that the full resonance of the objective surface, which hosts history, cannot be appreciated without a continual reference to depth, which nourishes spirit, just as depth and spirit cannot give forth their full meaning without surface and object. Bold and melodramatic perspectives paradox-

ically stimulate the finest of moral realities and represent the poetic span whose pragmatic uses are celebrated by Ortega: "The intuition of higher values fertilizes our contact with the lesser ones, and love for what is near and small makes the sublime real and effective within our hearts."¹

The novelists of this study might have been able to use gentle persuasion on their readers to adopt and cherish a broad and hyperbolic vision, a longing and desire for expansion, but they must use coercion on their characters, weary of fate and mired in the thick of predicament and crisis. Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James were sterner moralists than that quintessential moral novelist, George Eliot. Dorothea, after all, is given a second chance, whereas Isabel must return to Osmond and work out her destiny. Gwendolen Harleth can promise to try to be good, but heroes and heroines who are transformed in the novels of these four authors have to be good. Allowed neither the historic tentativeness of Gwendolen nor the utopian certainty of Daniel Deronda, they must learn to live permanently in the space between history and spirit. Filled with love and pity, their creators nevertheless compel characters to see above the hordes and horrors of history while offering them no guidance. Far from writing a script, as George Eliot does for Daniel Deronda, they ask their protagonists to make their own excruciating moral choices, to find their own way in the night. But on such a darkling plain, how can the characters interpret and relate what they see? When Lambert Strether looks at Paris, he finds that "what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next" (A 57). Though l'innominato is given the necessary visual sweep, he is left restless in his ignorance by his chronicler as he watches the approach of Lucia's "toy carriage" with pounding heart: ". . . he stood at the window some time with his eyes fixed on the coach, already getting much larger; then he raised them towards the sun, which was just at the very moment hiding behind the mountain; then up at the clouds scattered above it, which from brown had changed almost in a moment to flame. He drew back,

1. Ortega, *Meditations on Quixote*, 45.

closed the window, and began pacing up and down the room with the step of a traveller in a hurry" (*PS* 313).

"The tide that bore us along," wrote Henry James to Rhoda Broughton in 1914, "was then all the while moving to *this* as its grand Niagara—yet what a blessing we didn't know it." The soldiers in *La Bête humaine* discover that history takes the form of a driverless and relentless locomotive in the night, and in such a case can we do anything else but hang on and try to enjoy the scenery, as James advises?² But Zola's soldiers and miners, hopelessly at the mercy of "nature's vast, impassive machine," which squashes them like "carefree insect[s]" (*D* 312) on the battlefield or like "plant-louse[s]" (*G* 33) between the rocks of the mine, cannot even hang on and enjoy the scenery. So dominated is the Maheu family by its surroundings that the rocks drink the blood of Bonnemort's father (*G* 11), and Bonnemort's laugh sounds "like the screech of a badly oiled pulley" (*G* 9). This is the dark side of Zola's pantheism, which regards all animate and inanimate entities in the universe as one. Yet we must recognize that the novelist made important adjustments in his work, from *Thérèse Raquin*, which housed, in his own words, "persons completely dominated by their nerves and blood, devoid of free will," to the more dynamic *Germinal*, in which he reduced the forces of inheritance and environment, giving the will a place in which to exercise the few options it might have. In the later novels of the *Rougon-Macquart*, Zola expects his characters to mount a challenge, despite the fact that his heroes, in his words, are "those who are not heroes."³

Isabel Archer is aware that "history [is] full of the destruction of precious things" and that "if one were fine one would suffer" (*PL* 458). As an aesthetic version of the author, Mrs. Stringham can decide "with piety and passion" (*WD* 80) to avoid acting upon Milly in order not to spoil the perfection of that angel, but James, who loves her with as much ardor, cannot afford to allow "piety and passion" to lie dormant on the page. He must exploit them by giving his angel a

2. *Letters*, 4:713. See also letter to Charles Eliot Norton, *Letters*, 1:362–63.

3. Quoted in Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn*, 340.

fate that exposes her to fact, that shows no mercy to spirit. Nothing seems so wrenching as the destruction of the young, beautiful, and innocent. In his preface to *The Wings of the Dove*, the author secures this painful inevitability in the historical world, where we are continuously tormented by “the need that life should, apart from her infirmity, present itself to our young woman as quite dazzlingly liveable.” The drama is to come from her realization of what she must give up in full view of all that she has. At the same time, James calls upon her, as one with “the power to be finely aware and richly responsible,” as one with a nature that is “acute,” “intense,” and finally “complete” in the midst of those of more limited natures (see preface to *The Princess Casamassima*), to wrest places for the spirit from her history and her destiny.

Bakhtin contends that one of the novel’s “basic internal themes” is “the hero’s inadequacy to his fate, or his situation. The individual is either greater than his fate, or less than his condition as a man,”⁴ but such formulas cannot accommodate the need to be adequate to two fates, the one that history dictates and the one that spirit invites. The problem, in any case, is that in order for characters to be able to struggle with their limitations, they must be severely affected by them (preface to *The Princess Casamassima*) without being either overpowered or overpowering in relation to their destinies. In these novels, the historical will may generate transformation or arise from transformation, but it is always in dynamic relationship to humility. Destinies must be appropriate to the capacities of those who have the will to challenge them, as they must be for those who, challenged by history, undergo a conversion that frees the will. Luigi Russo understands the importance of matching measures in noting that l’innominato can be a great convert only because he was a great pervert, whereas the petty Don Rodrigo has no capacity for greatness of any kind.⁵ (This is precisely where so many critics feel James

4. *Dialogic Imagination*, 37.

5. *Personaggi dei Promessi Sposi*, 230. Like many critics, Giovita Scalvini questions the immanence of l’innominato’s conversion, but he also wonders why Rodrigo is not given the same grace by Manzoni (*Foscolo Manzoni Goethe*, 246–47).

runs into trouble with Densher, who seems to them too small for his conversion.) Gertrude has a large consciousness, which cannot be reconciled with the attempts of critics to view her as a victim of determinism. Manzoni offers her the opportunity to “rebel completely” precisely because he knows and has convinced the reader that she has the capacity for such extreme action: “The wretched woman tried every way she could to evade the horrible command—every way, except the only sure one, which was always there open in front of her. Crime is an exacting, inflexible master, against which no one can be strong unless he rebels completely. *This Gertrude could not bring herself to do; and she obeyed*” (PS 306; our italics). For the same reason, James holds before us the strength of Kate’s demonic will and the possibility of options by acknowledging her heroic stature in the preface and by distributing Densher’s many tributes to her throughout the text.

Because the drama of individual choice and responsibility takes on recognizable patterns as the will acts upon history and is activated by history, we should not be surprised to find the seventeenth-century scourge in *I Promessi sposi* following the same course as the Montsou miners’ strike of the nineteenth century, in which “not one of the mines was guarded by soldiers—a perfect example of fatal carelessness at the hour of danger, of the stupidity that inevitably accompanies catastrophe, and, in short, of every error a government can make when it is ignorant of the facts” (C 257). It is the acknowledgement of these facts that represents the law of history for Manzoni as well as Zola, and it is this acknowledgement that the citizens of Milan refuse to make in Manzoni’s narrative of the plague. Because he recognized the facts, the good Doctor Settala was able to help others and to honor his profession, even though he shared some of the prejudices of his age. Churchmen could not have been effective spiritual leaders had they not first understood, in the midst of the scourge, the necessity of a hospital for the dying, relief for the hungry, and shelter for the homeless. The reality of the plague, from which Renzo recovers, literally renders him immune from history and frees him to move through the city in an attitude of charity while he searches for Lucia. Humble though he is, in no way “superior to the

ideas of the age" (PS 182), he is given the capacity to improvise his own narrative in defiance of his surroundings. Sir Walter Scott, who was able to separate his character's individuality from the historical color and customs that filled his novels, had indeed been a good literary model for Manzoni.⁶

Those who challenge history learn to use its binding conventions and forms for their own higher purposes. Whereas Gwendolen's uncle in *Daniel Deronda*, a man of the church, succumbs to society and its vocabulary by advising his niece to marry her fortune in the name of duty (DD 178–79) and Gertrude's father in *I Promessi sposi* unfeelingly follows the dictates of custom and economics, Cardinal Federigo donates money to a nobleman about to place his daughter in a nunnery, thereby freeing her for a life of her own choosing. Manzoni wishes "that we could more often see such excesses of virtue, so free from the prevailing opinions (every age has its own), so independent of the general tendency, as the one which, in this case, moved a man to give four thousand *scudi* so that a young girl would not become a nun" (PS 336). It is important to note that by *cooperating* with the historical and societal custom of his day rather than by *rebellious* against it, Federigo reverses the consequences, as everything in the spiritual sphere reverses the direction of history and society. "He who does anything because it is the custom, makes no choice," John Stuart Mill tells us,⁷ but he who does anything without taking custom into consideration can make no choice because he has no material for his will. Fra Cristoforo uses society's conventions to enhance his rebellion, turning determinism into a weapon for the army of God. He had always had "the idea of becoming a monk . . . such being a very common way of getting out of difficulties at the time. But what might have remained a mere notion for the rest of his life, became a resolution as the result of an incident which was the most serious of any that had yet happened to him" (PS 49). Not only does a deadly affair of honor typical of the period propel him toward change, but it transforms the very *nature*

6. See the comments of Sandra Bermann, editor, and her quotation of Georg Lukács in Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, 11.

7. "On Liberty," 406.

of a profession; the idea of the monastery serves no longer as a protection from history but as a protest against it. Like Federigo, Cristoforo uses historical fact for the fulfillment of spiritual desire: "The plague breaking out in Milan gave him a chance of doing what he had always desired: to give his life for his fellow-creatures" (PS 548). In this way, circumstances that promise no opportunity for moral choices can yield their deterministic grip.

It is possible, in fact, for the reader to help the characters in their struggles by exploiting with them the novelistic vocabulary. We can readily see what happens when a word like "brotherhood" in *I Promessi sposi* or *Oliver Twist* carries only the historical meaning of a group of men or boys who band together for safety and strength. Among these thieves and villains, the "point of honor" is a powerful shibboleth, and it, rather than love, defines conventional bonding. Even when he wishes to, l'innominato cannot withdraw from the consequences of his actions, for that "would have meant losing face before a friend, before a minor accomplice" (PS 305). He will find no liberty or even anarchy in breaking the big laws; he will simply find the small laws.⁸ And only when he is able to recognize the small laws of history and custom as such, will he be able to recognize the big laws that he has defied in his proud freedom. The lord of the mountain will interpret the word "brotherhood" now as something quite different, a term immune to the pressures of society. It will mean neither the brotherhood of Rodrigo and Fagin, which imprisons because it remains ineradicably in history, nor the brotherhood of utopia in the speeches of Slackbridge and Pluchart, which deceives because it promises an escape from history. With such a definition, l'innominato's conversion enables him to use history as a Christian, to go down into the world of consequence without being ruled by it.

We can observe the same interpretative changes in the word "connection." For Deneulin and Etienne, it holds only its consequential aspect. "Everything's connected. A far-off shock is enough to shake the whole world. . . ." Famine in India, a falling off of orders from

8. See Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 142.

America, encourage a depression: "Frightened by the general depression, the Company, by cutting down its output and starving its miners, had found itself at the end of December without a single lump of coal . . . in its yards. Everything was connected with everything else; infection spread from afar . . ." (*G* 66, 306). When Dickens makes his famous query on the word in *Bleak House*, he is taking advantage of the collision between narrative and historical necessity, on the one hand, and spiritual freedom on the other:

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 the world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together! (*BH* 197)

It has been noticed that Dickens was influenced by the satirical exposure of historical definitions which Carlyle offers in *Past and Present* when he writes of an Irish widow who, suffering from typhus-fever and rejected by charitable establishments in Edinburgh, pleads with her fellowmen: "'I am your sister, bone of your bone; one God made us: ye must help me!' whereupon they answer, 'No, impossible; thou art no sister of ours.' But she proves her sisterhood; her typhus-fever kills them: they actually were her brothers, though denying it!"⁹ It is a proof Jo provides in the same way, and it is this vocabulary that works against the familiar observation that Dickens's characters, alienated and living in a world of their own, speak past each other. In the midst of the plague, in the fevers of Eden or London's cholera and smallpox, on the battlefields of Sedan and in the mines of Montsou, connection carries its double meaning with full resonance.

The legalese in Guppy's declaration of love to Dickens's Esther Summerson provides not only amusement but evidence of his perpetual limitation in never being able to cross over from one set of

9. *Past and Present*, 205–6.

terms to another. Manzoni's humble Renzo, on the other hand, has the two sets at his disposal, which gives him the possibility, however weak he may seem, of protesting against history. Lucia is amazed by his audacity in interpreting the proscriptions of the Church, as he tries to persuade her that a promise to the Madonna is not binding. "Oh, Lord! What are you saying? . . . How've you learned to talk like this?" she asks, whereupon Renzo distinguishes between the Christianity of historical institution and the Christianity of spirit: "I'm talking like a good Christian; and I think better of the Madonna than you do; for I think she doesn't want promises that injure other people" (PS 563–64).

It is not enough to recognize with Sallie Sears that James's moral dynamics consist of "mutually exclusive possibilities and negative alternatives" leading inevitably to "some major sacrifice, capitulation, or surrender" or with Carren Kaston that James always prefers renunciation in the "dialectic of mastery and submission." James himself, in a letter to Howells about the ending of *The American*, acknowledges that "the interest of the subject was for me . . . its exemplification of one of those insuperable difficulties which present themselves in people's lives and from which the only issue is by forfeiture—by losing something." As he teaches his readers and his characters to transform the evaluative implications of words like "sacrifice," "service," "capitulation," and "surrender," James gives them the capacity to regularly and dramatically turn negative dilemmas to narrative and spiritual blessings and opportunities, that prospective promise William James wanted philosophy to vigorously embrace.¹⁰

When Isabel first bestows her love and fortune on Osmond, the religious vocabulary is trapped in the world of society and custom; her "Christianity" is misguided precisely because it had not been preceded by a clear perception of either her personal or public his-

10. Sears, "Kate Croy and Merton Densher," WD 554; Kaston, *Imagination and Desire*, 10; Henry James, *Letters*, 2:105; William James, "Pragmatism" and "The Meaning of Truth," 53. Virginia C. Fowler concludes that Isabel's "realization of the mutual exclusivity of marriage and freedom becomes the bitterest revelation of all" (*Henry James's American Girl*, 76).

tory. The authors, more compassionate than sadistic, are at liberty to tighten the moral pressure around the individual because they assume the readers of their novels will keep in mind at all times the continual move from one vocabulary to the other. In his introduction to *The Portrait of a Lady*, Leon Edel judges Isabel's choice to be an indication that she "is a prisoner of her constituted self," that "she has been the helpless victim of her own intelligence."¹¹ Such an interpretation is both incomplete and reductive, for whereas Edel sees her only as a historical victim, James sees her also as a spiritual victor.

The "technical premises of realistic fiction," Leo Bersani contends, militate against inventiveness. Isabel's "dream of freedom has been defeated by the limited range of possibilities for being free available to the realistic imagination." But when the critic suggests "Isabel and James can no longer imagine to what concrete use her desire to be free might be put," that Isabel must return to Osmond because the kind of novel in which she is the heroine dictates this conclusion, he fails to appreciate the full advantage of this return for the spiritual life. There are many critics who justifiably understand Isabel's return to be a kind of victory over the self, a liberation from romanticism and false idealism, but we should continue to follow her as she enters the community of sufferers. Kaston comes to the conclusion that it is neither Ralph nor Isabel, but Osmond who "takes control of the novel and of Isabel herself" at the end of the story.¹² It is our conviction, however, as we watch Ralph and Isabel looking at things together, that *their* imaginations are in control. Isabel can no longer become a prisoner of Osmond because, although he has not changed, she has. Had Isabel continued in her disastrous marriage simply because adjustment to society demanded of her a sacrifice to duty, she would not have been able to make a protest. But once she has moved into a communion with other sufferers beyond history's con-

11. *PL*, xx.

12. Bersani, *Future for Astyanax*, 67; Kaston, *Imagination and Desire*, 43. There are, to be sure, many critics who consider James's renunciations to be spiritually and novelistically enhancing. See especially Kaston's citing of Dorothea Krook's discussion (11–12).

ventions, her choice becomes an active decision that defies and creates. In such a case, the character need not be afraid of choice grimly narrowed. Although her marriage is not transformed, it becomes an agent of transformation.

We are not surprised that James's insistence upon Isabel's return to Osmond elicits the same criticism that J. Hillis Miller and Pamela Hansford Johnson level against Dickens: that he frees his characters from society or tradition and then places them back into their old position, thereby "simply reaffirm[ing] a traditional and narrow morality" as if he is "constantly putting out a hand to touch his shackles and make quite sure, with a sigh of relief, that they were still secure." But what may at first seem historically dispiriting becomes spiritually enhancing, what may seem at first historically restraining becomes spiritually liberating. In his last speech, Manzoni's Renzo touches his shackles, reaffirming "a traditional and narrow morality" by swearing he will not "fasten a bell to [his] feet before thinking of the consequences." With "a sigh of relief," he agrees to remain within a history he cannot change, yet his conclusion carries with it the knowledge that there is available to him a limited but genuine freedom that keeps him from becoming imprisoned by the very society that locks him into a hierarchy.¹³ As he begins a more prosperous life, it is a relief for him to feel his shackles precisely because he senses that in order to draw upon the deeper spiritual resources he has acquired during the plague, the ring of custom and tradition must securely encircle his ankle.

It is the recognition of convention and not the bargaining with it that gives these characters the courage of their convictions. In this regard, we agree with Orwell that the novel seems naturally to be "a Protestant form of art . . . a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual," for there can be no bargaining with heaven to relieve the pressures of choice. The novel of argument and will can-

13. Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*, 221; Pamela Hansford Johnson, "The Sexual Life in Dickens's Novels," 194. Renzo's conclusion is often compared to and derived from *Candide's*, and of course, Voltaire was a great influence upon Manzoni; nevertheless, there is a tension in *I Promessi sposi* between history and spirit that does not define the tone of *Candide* in the least.

not encompass that “notion of a debit and credit account kept with individuals by the Almighty,” which Luther swept away with his mighty hand,¹⁴ nor does it want Providence as its partner or its guide. Although a large portion of the critical “matter of Manzoni” is taken up with voluminous discussions of providence, it is clear that *I Promessi sposi* is Christian and not Catholic or Jansenist insofar as providential compensations play little part in the moral material of a narrative requiring virtue without rewards and choices without grace.¹⁵ The works of the monks, Manzoni’s chronicler tells us, deserve to be remembered, “particularly . . . those which are not undertaken for a reward” (PS 481). The full significance of Borromeo’s advice to his clergy lies in the injunction that within a pitiless history, they must act as if consequences were irrelevant and heavenly compensation imminent: “Be ready to abandon this mortal life, rather than abandon this family, these children of ours; go out and meet the plague lovingly as if you were going to a reward or to a new life, while there is one soul to be saved for Christ” (PS 496). Manzoni uses the conditional in a more explicit way than Ripamonti, from whom this passage is drawn,¹⁶ because he wants to be certain that his priests will keep the idea and not the reality of heaven in mind as a standard for their conduct on earth. Such a position offers a way of protesting the necessary earthly sentence and, at the same time, honoring it.

To be good without expectation of reward is a notion difficult to understand for the *umili* of this earth. La Maheude wonders why,

14. Orwell, “Inside the Whale,” 246; William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 348.

15. Momigliano calls the novel “an epic of Providence” (*Alessandro Manzoni*, 225), and De Sanctis calls Providence a “secret actor” (*Manzoni*, 357). Especially helpful in keeping the power and intervention of providence and God in perspective is Ulivi, *Manzoni Storia e Provvidenza*, 163–86. Although Manzoni appreciated the religious writings of Bossuet and his emphasis on divine providence, he found too little space for the individual’s free will in his concept. See also Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, 18; and Galletti, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 311, 346.

16. “Andate con amore incontro alla peste, come a un premio, come a una vita, quando ci sia da guadagnare un anima a Cristo” (*I Promessi Sposi*, edited by Luigi Russo, 599 and footnote; our italics).

despite her husband's exemplary behavior, he does not have an easier time of it. Renzo and Lucia not only call upon God and providence for help, but look to them for recompense and punishment (e.g., *PS* 200–201, 268, 374). It does not surprise us that Zola will not allow providence a foot in the door, but it is important to emphasize that the Catholic Manzoni did not open the door to providence in his novel, critical opinion to the contrary. There is no evidence that would lead us to suppose, as Russo does, that the economic deprivations of the famine are expanded by the idea of divine punishment.¹⁷ Manzoni could, in fact, accept no definitions and explanations that would nullify the force of free will, the opportunities for choice, the call for responsibility. Yet the providential spirit in *I Promessi sposi* leads critics like Momigliano not only to see its presence everywhere, but to make it the very author of the book: Manzoni is “without predilections for anyone because it is not he who moves the events, but a superior principle who is master of the intricacy of things and passions, who infallibly guides consequences according to imponderable premises.”¹⁸ This leaves us with a dreary determinism at a distance that cannot possibly offer a workable design in a novel which depends upon dialectical tension for dramatic and moral power. Whereas the childlike and innocent Lucia uses providence as an explanation of the way things turn out, it is surely misleading to place Renzo under the same rule by citing those passages which show him routinely calling upon a higher power in expectation of a quid pro quo ethics. His is another story. The humble protagonist can begin again in a more responsible position at the end of the novel not only because God watches over him, but because he has been able to influence his own history and even to relate it. Renzo finds comfort in his faith but never allows it to weaken his initiative.

Providence in *Bleak House* serves in the same way, as a comfort to those, like Esther, who do not depend upon it. Whereas Richard accuses it of active interference, she praises it as divine essence. Her

17. *Personaggi dei Promessi Sposi*, 361.

18. Momigliano, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 222.

citing of Jarndyce as one of “uncommon character,” who has “resolutely kept himself . . . outside the circle” (*BH* 463) of Chancery, is somewhat unfair to Richard, since his guardian is not a character called upon to struggle, but to be. Yet it is Jarndyce himself who makes it quite clear that the individual will must work within, and only within, a recognized history. It is this very history he honors by acknowledging to Esther that Rick’s indecision and weak character are partly the products of “that incomprehensible heap of uncertainty and procrastination on which he has been thrown from his birth . . . Chancery, among its other sins, is responsible for some of it” (*BH* 151). Rick should trust in providence, Jarndyce maintains, only if, at the same time, he trusts in his own will, his own efforts (*BH* 162).

In his discussion of Dickens, Miller equates taking responsibility for making the self to taking responsibility for arranging the very world we inhabit.¹⁹ But Jarndyce knows that the self which can arrange the transcendental world cannot arrange a world of enterprise. Nor can it be, like Dr. Pascal, the progenitor of the human race with the power to declare “I am Adam, he who names. Pass me my notebooks, I will announce the names.”²⁰ The trick is to improvise a fate and yet remain subject to the novel’s time, hour, and roughest day. But James’s novels, unlike his prefaces, Bersani justly observes, “dramatize the difficulties of living by improvisation” and may awaken in us a longing to escape the terrible burden of “inventive freedom.” Clearly, we must depend upon the “mighty will” that James celebrated in his notebook entry of August 6, 1884.²¹ Even for Milly, with “chance grimly narrowed,” it is a crucial historical determinant in her spiritual odyssey.

To lock the limp protagonists of Dickens into the social context of the century, in which men like Eugene Wrayburn and Richard Carstone became literary commonplaces, leads us away from the more important interest Dickens had in self-sustainment. To extract the

19. *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*, 334.

20. Michel Serres’s characterization in *Feux et signaux de brume*, 57.

21. Bersani, *Future for Astyanax*, 132–33; *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, 30.

will from its social context, on the other hand, makes it vulnerable to aestheticizing. Karen Chase argues that in order to save the innocents, those who are incapable of saving themselves, weak and fragmented as they are, Dickens “responds by transforming the problem of the individual into a problem for the configuration. . . . The pertinent question becomes not, how must an individual act?, but how may a pattern be arranged?” The egos are split up into many characters who themselves form doubles of polarities and parallels of moral traits: “In place of a strong unified ego, Dickens offers a moral cluster, an alliance of fragments who together possess a range of response not available to the individual.”²² Such a pattern not only sacrifices the will and its historical material, but impoverishes the drama of self-division so basic to the novels of Dickens.

The Stage and the Chamber

Raymond Williams identifies *Dombey and Son* as a transitional novel that follows the general pattern of nineteenth-century literature in its movement from a morality shaped by personal faults and virtues of the soul to one that is determined in large part by society and its institutions.²³ Although it is possible to find a progressively expanding public world in the works of Dickens, it seems to us that he, and the other novelists of this study, were traveling against the general direction of the literary practice of their day. They could not afford to yield up an inch of territory claimed by the salvational drama of conversion that moved from public performance to solitary soul-searching and self-division.

Bakhtin calls the novel the perfect form for the kind of moral development that divides the self yet integrates it: “A crucial tension develops between the external and internal man. . . . Coordination breaks down between various aspects: man for himself alone and man in the eyes of others. This disintegration of the integrity that an

22. *Eros and Psyche*, 103–4, 38.

23. *English Novel*, 44–45.

individual had possessed . . . combines in the novel with the necessary preparatory steps toward a new, complex wholeness on a higher level of human development."²⁴ Such a definition must be qualified, however, by a reminder that in the deepest novels of these four authors, the argument between history and spirit is never finished. This is the problem with Robert Caserio's final picture of Densher as a fully integrated being. Strengthened by a new wholeness, James's protagonist is able to contravene not only Kate's will, but also Milly's. He has become, in his completed form, the source and substance of the goodness that is "fidelity to one's desires and truth to the transformations they create. Merton's action instances a goodness that is truth: truth to one's essential reality."²⁵ In arguing that this truth is moral regardless of the kind of object Densher desires or the nature of the character who receives his truth, however, the critic does not pay sufficient tribute to spiritual sources and historical events.

When Bersani describes Densher as moving from "one spiritual allegiance to another," he seems to have forgotten that, while Densher's allegiance to Milly is a spiritual one, his allegiance to Kate lies all in history. Because the moral self-justifications Densher uses seem "flabby" to the critic, because he cannot believe in Densher's spiritual transformation, he calls the conversion a "creative strategy" that removes Densher, as death has removed Milly, from a painful novel. Kaston is also suspicious. In discussing *The Portrait of a Lady*, she speculates that the ambiguities James introduces cast doubt on the purity of the renunciations and invite his "central characters to imagine themselves out of melodrama."²⁶ The aftermath of conversion and transformation, however, belongs to realism's history and melodrama's spirit. Far from being a strategy of escape, Densher's conversion and renunciation permit him to return to a history that had become intolerable. Even Milly stays squarely within the novel, while her image and her gift, bringing as much anguish as peace, haunt history and serve to challenge the comfortable arrangements

24. *Dialogic Imagination*, 37–38.

25. *Plot, Story, and the Novel*, 216–22.

26. Bersani, *Future for Astyanax*, 144, 153, 156–57; Kaston, *Imagination and Desire*, 62.

of the world.²⁷ The moral weight of the book would be reduced were we to believe that Densher did not face a lifetime of spiritual torment, of hope for redemption from his social brutality. Neither he nor Martin Chuzzlewit should find the peace of their conditions after their conversions, though Densher goes to church and Martin takes a bow on the proscenium of comedy's stage.

Although self-division seems to be everywhere in these novels, we should distinguish between the division of Martin Chuzzlewit, which generates a new self, and the division of Pecksniff and Sairey Gamp, which feeds on itself. The opposition of history and spirit is the drama appropriate for the conflict between the public and the private self, but Pecksniff's self-alienation is characteristic of a public performance that is never modified. The patronization he displays not only to Tom but to the parts of his own body is a familiar signal to us that there is no self at all. He draws "off his own gloves and warm[s] his hands before the fire, as benevolently as if they were somebody else's, not his" and warms "his back . . . as if it were a widow's back or an orphan's back or an enemy's back, or a back that any less excellent man would have suffered to be cold" (MC 85–86). His body is an ironic exemplification of his apothegm that there is nothing personal in morality, while the burden of the entire novel is that everything about morality is personal.

Significantly, Esther finds the dusty papers and bundles of Chancery over which the egotistical Richard pores to be "like dusty mirrors reflecting his own mind" (BH 611), a reflection quite different from the active image of her own mirror self. We recall that her first act as she steps from the coach to her new life is to glance into the looking glass Guppy holds for her. Throughout her stay at Bleak House, she carries on a dialogue with her reflection. Her refusal to look for her other self in the mirror during her convalescence represents not only a desire to shut out the ravages of her disease, but the reluctance to discover once again that she has not achieved the perfect integration she was seeking in her fever when she had vainly tried to reconcile

27. Kaston argues that Milly's final giving represents an effort of will that fails because of the predominance of other imaginations, but we see it as an act of salvation (*Imagination and Desire*, 22).

the different stages of her life, "at once a child, an elder girl, and the little woman I had been so happy as" (*BH* 431). In the end when Allan wants to assure her that history has left no marks upon her, he asks her if she ever looks in the glass, whereupon she replies: "You know I do; you see me do it." Since Allan knows she does, he asks for our benefit, that we may recognize the necessary education of the Bildungsroman and the necessary refusal of mediation in the salvational novel. The saintly Fra Cristoforo makes certain he carries his historical self with him as he enters the religious world by assuming the name of the man he has killed, and l'innominato will face permanent evaluation as he sees "that new self which had grown so alarmingly all of a sudden . . . rising to judge his former self" (*PS* 324). The memory of childhood prayers forces him to understand that the abyss between his old self and his new is like the abyss he had put between his childhood and his sinning state; his conversion creates in him "a longing to attain to a new conscience by works of expiation, to a state nearer that innocence to which he could never return" (*PS* 380). Densher, too, will carry an "inward ache" (*WD* 284–85), like Esther's "painful unrest," inside him. As the novel progresses, he begins to be torn between Kate and Milly, body and soul, London and Venice, England and America. He has brought back new eyes from Venice and sees "a young man far off and in a relation inconceivable, saw him hushed, passive, staying his breath, but half understanding, yet dimly conscious of something immense and holding himself painfully together not to lose it. The young man at these moments so seen was too distant and too strange for the right identity; and yet, outside, afterwards, it was his own face Densher had known" (*WD* 369). As he drags the anguish of his old life behind him, he will come to recognize the permanent schism between what is and what might be.

The move inward toward transformation or conversion necessitates a liberation from performance, the perpetual public dance of the egotistical self. Yet the problem of extricating the self from public theater becomes complex if there is a perception that the stage signifies freedom. The end of the strike in *Germinal* means to Etienne the same as "the end of his role," and the end of his role means "the

destruction of his ambition, the return to the brutalization of the mine and the humiliations of the life of the village" (G 305). At Lancaster Gate, Kate Croy cooperates for the sake of her future freedom, knowing she "was to dress the part, to walk, to look, to speak, every way to express, the part, so all this was what Kate was to do for the character she had undertaken, under her aunt's roof, to represent" (WD 204). The problem is further complicated by the inability or reluctance to recognize the very existence of performance. After all, it takes a fearful and willed surrender of control to know "when we deceive or violate ourselves."²⁸ It is a humiliation James visits upon Isabel when he gives the very unspiritual Mrs. Touchett the ability to reveal to her, after she confesses her point of view to be American, that she is playing a role: "'My dear young lady,' said Mrs. Touchett, 'there are as many points of view as there are people of sense to take them . . . American? Never in the world. . . . My point of view, thank God, is personal'" (PL 60).

Densher seems to have become unaware that he has accepted the role Kate assigns him as he observes her from his stall, playing out "the artistic idea, the plastic substance, imposed by tradition, by genius, by criticism, in respect to a given character, on a distinguished actress" (WD 204). Milly, too, has half-willingly accepted the role that Kate has chosen for her: "She should have to be clear as to how a dove *would* act" (WD 172). And although Densher's perception of her as an American specimen disappoints her sense of self (WD 191), her desire makes her willing to engage in the game of relationship with him, understanding that "they really as it went on saw each other at the game; she knowing he tried to keep her in tune with his conception, and he knowing she thus knew it. Add that he again knew she knew, and yet that nothing was spoiled by it, and we get a fair impression of the line they found most completely workable" (WD 323). It is important to note James's irony, which makes of the unworldly Milly more of a realist than the pragmatic Kate pre-

28. In a letter to Thomas Sargent Perry in 1863, James writes: "We know when we lie, when we kill, when we steal; when we deceive or violate others, but it is hard to know when we deceive or violate ourselves" (*Letters*, 1:46).

cisely because, like Esther, she has access both to the game, which she recognizes as such, and to the spirit.

In these novels, only those who are willing to give up public performance can experience moral expansion. Because Dickens *requires* "moral solitude" of his protagonists, Karen Chase's contention that he created an abundance of characters in order to remove the pressure from the single self in its solitary anguish²⁹ could prove misleading. Novels of change and conversion make such correctives unnecessary, for by willing a loss of self, a self is gained, and by recognizing self-division, integrity is achieved. Dickens puts ultimate pressure on his characters, in fact, by radically isolating them and shows no mercy for the anguish of Martin Chuzzlewit, Esther, Scrooge, and Eugene Wrayburn. While we may note that the presence of Mark Tapley, Lizzie Hexam, Charley, and the Christmas Ghost seem to relieve the solitary self, fever cuts off most consciousness of their companionship, and Scrooge enters his childhood scenes without support.

The self must first give up its relation to society. "What will they think of me?" is the leading question for the performer on the stage, but it is no longer relevant in isolation, and it is fitting that Isabel, who later must come into this solitude, has difficulty imagining the forever fixed Madame Merle divorced from her circle, for "she existed only in her relation, direct or indirect, with her fellow mortals. One might wonder what commerce she could possibly hold with her own spirit" (*PL* 165). Isabel, who is "too fond of admiration" and likes "to be thought well of" (*PL* 185), discovers the truth of Henrietta's warning that she could not lead a romantic life and please others at all times, that she "must often *displease* others." And this is precisely what Densher recognizes when he exclaims: "What a brute then I must be! . . . To have pleased so many people" (*WD* 363). Alone in his castle, surrounded by family portraits, Rodrigo never ceases to ask what others will think of him, the question l'innominato, in his solitary castle room, finally relinquishes. The inability of

29. *Eros and Psyche*, 128.

Mr. Dorrit to cross from public to private personality is vividly depicted in chapter 18 of *Little Dorrit*. When he is freed from prison, he refuses to renounce his part as Father of the Marshalsea and is unwilling to recognize others in any but their old roles. The danger posed by those who cannot change is that they cannot allow others to change. Mr. Dorrit is thus outraged by the "liberties" John Chivery takes in his easy and friendly manner beyond the institutional walls. The youth, dwelling in a democracy of the spirit, expects to be embraced; instead, he is seized by the collar. In order to put things right, Young John must move back to the public theater and assure Mr. Dorrit that he "never thought of lessening the distance" between them.

Whereas Madame Vionnet chooses to remain on the stage even after her role has been exposed, because it was "easier to keep than to abandon" (A 338), Lady Dedlock, though she may wish to abandon her role, is not able to do so. After her flight from Chesney Wold, the mirrors of her dressing room, which were "accustomed to reflect" her appurtenances "when they were a portion of herself," take on "a desolate and vacant air" (BH 693), encouraging us to conclude that she has retired from the stage. After all, Milady had played her true self once previously when she spoke to Esther in the few "natural and private moments of her life" (BH 450). In the end, however, even when she is asked to assume her "own terrible algebra,"³⁰ she moves toward death in disguise; for too great a portion of her life she had played a role that required her to be bored and depressed rather than enraged and rebellious.

The move from public theater to private chambers gives us a reading of Levin's renewal and growth in *Anna Karenina* altogether different from the moral and spiritual changes that the characters in these novels undergo. His story may lure us into thinking he is a man caught between history and spirit, for he has been chided by Oblonsky for wanting too desperately the mediation of the ideal and the real and for feeling the unrest that comes from the knowledge he cannot have it (AK 55–56). Furthermore, Levin learns lessons that demonstrate the futility of blame and argument, the injustice of judg-

30. See letter to Grace Norton of 28 July 1883 in James, *Letters*, 2:424.

ment; if not cast with the restless protagonists of these novels, he would seem to be available, in his tolerance, for the role of holy fool. Yet he not only knows he cannot be the good man he wants to be, he accepts this philosophically. What crucially distinguishes Levin and Tolstoy from the protagonists and authors of these novels, in fact, is the absence in them of a kind of violent *rage* against history, that rage which can never be assuaged or tamed. Levin's "conversion" does not have to be melodramatic, his transformation unbelievable or sudden, because though he moves from the crowded salons of the city to his empty country house, he has not really moved from the theater to his solitary rooms. Since he has never been on the stage, never performed in a role, he does not have to relinquish a public world and is in this way radically different from Densher. When Oblonsky tries to give him a part in the theater of politics by telling him he is "a regular reactionary," Levin refuses to comply: "I have never considered what I am," he says. "I am Constantine Levin, that's all" (AK 187). He has won his victory before the struggle. But Kate's analysis of Densher proves the intensity that rage requires: "Your attitude, my dear, is that you're afraid of yourself. You've had to take yourself in hand. You've had to do yourself violence" (WD 393). In his attempt to explain the inexplicable, Densher can only confess that "something has snapped, has broken in me, and here I am" (WD 372).

Although these authors believe fervently in the historical will, they are compassionate enough to help emancipate those characters who seem worthy but fixed in their roles. Karen Chase justly recognizes Dickens's obsessive doubling and multiplication, his splittings and oppositions, as strategies for moving his actors from the stage into their private rooms. "What Tulkinghorn is to Leicester, Hortense is to Lady Dedlock. . . . The violent collision, when it comes, occurs not between husband and wife, but between their former surrogates, leaving the Dedlocks eligible for our sympathy," but more important, rescuing "Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock as moral figures; she sacrifices, and he forgives."³¹ In fact, it is Esther, as coauthor and

31. *Eros and Psyche*, 100–101.

narrator of private virtues, who is able to perform the necessary task of springing her characters free from the roles that Dickens, as the narrator of public institution, has imposed on them. In her portions of the novel, the man from Shropshire becomes the pitiful and angry Gridley, the bored and icy Lady Dedlock becomes a wounded mother.³² But for all of Esther's creative powers, neither she nor Dickens can free from institution and convention the fixed characters who identify themselves through their performance.

We might imagine that no author would have more trouble than Zola in liberating his characters from their controlling environments. After all, he himself thanked Jules Lemaitre for a review that defined the entire *Rougon-Macquart* series as "a pessimistic epic of human animality."³³ Yet Mouquette and Alzire defy their confinement, and in the confrontation of workers and manager at Hennebeau's house, the humble Maheu speaks with a strange new voice bursting from within him, a voice of protest inspired by dreams of justice, brotherhood, and compassion. Irving Howe, who calls this learning of speech by the mute a central myth in *Germinal*, links it to the birth of a collective consciousness and to the books' more general myth of emergence in its various guises. The transfiguration brought about by the discovery of words he considers to be "at least as morally significant as that of the individual protagonist gaining access to self-knowledge in the earlier nineteenth-century novel." By acknowledging the never-ending conflict between the stern reality of history and the myth which that history spawns, Howe's reading accommodates both earthly and transcendental forces as it rescues Zola's flexibility and unpredictability from Lukács's constricting ideological bias. The mysterious gift of articulation, something like the thunderclap of conversion, opens a passageway to a world beyond time while endowing the workers with that historical will that enables them to move from oppression to rebellion.

If for Howe speech-act is myth, for speech-act critics it is theory.

32. See Fradin, "Will and Society in Bleak House," 95–96; and Chase, *Eros and Psyche*, 115–16.

33. Quoted in Walker, *Germinal and Zola*, 21. Zola is characterizing Lemaitre's description of his work.

Joining those who try to strengthen the historical will that Nietzsche deemed weakened by the Christian habit of transcendental referentiality, Sandy Petrey transforms the opposition of free and disciplined words into an opposition of political hegemony without access to the spirit. As the miners enter Hennebeau's house conscious of their humble position in society's hierarchy, they note the heaviness of the room's furnishings, the retarding action of the thick carpets. Once Maheu finds his voice, however, it is the workers who seem to take control of the scene. Objects that had appeared substantial melt away. When Hennebeau regains the upper hand, the room returns to its material and bourgeois substance. A dialectic that ties the novelist's visionary impulse as firmly to historical revolt as it ties his document to historical reality carries neither the elasticity nor the complexity that Howe's mythic reading can give us.³⁴ Zola's melodrama is denied its poetic span, and his characters their opportunities for expansion.

We can see evidence of the characteristic melodramatic reversal between those fixed in history and those capable of growth, by observing how Maheu's voice, in surprising him, releases him from his role, whereas Etienne's voice, in surprising him, makes him an irredeemable actor. His resurrection from the mine offers him, however momentarily, a possibility of leaving behind conventional ranks and roles as he embraces Négrel and leaves Montsou with visions of mythic emergence from the fields around him. But we know from Dr. Pascal's history that he cannot use this gift. In the long run, only those who are able to move from history to spirit, from theater to room, from will to humility, will be able to find a way to use whatever means the author gives them to transcend their harsh histories.

The Power to See

John Harmon and Eugene Wrayburn open themselves up to death by drowning, Kucich suggests, as a way of liberating themselves

34. See Howe, "Zola: The Poetry of Naturalism," 65–69; and Petrey, *Realism and Revolution*, 5, 163–201.

from their confining roles without having to be assertive. This is a characteristic pattern of conversion, a catalyst for those whose will is dormant. Once the performance has been relinquished, the "Annihilation of Self" (Selbsttödtung)³⁵ can take place. It is the necessary final step and a kind of preliminary death. Even if Isabel Archer "had no near prospect of dying," she must act as one would when facing death, "to make her peace with the world—to put her spiritual affairs in order" (PL 398), and she does so at Ralph's deathbed. Densher tells Kate he is dead (WD 332) before he finds the courage to go on, but at Lancaster Gate, as Dorothea Krook justly notes, there is an "incapacity to confront death," and this incapacity, represented by the images of performance or the effort of denial, "is the final measure of the coldness, ruthlessness and egotism of the worldly world figured here."³⁶ Aunt Maud chooses to envision Milly's passing as a play "that made people cry, in the pit or the family circle" (WD 368), whereas Densher has left the stalls and found "his own theater, in his single person," no longer taken with "The mere aesthetic instinct of mankind—!" (WD 347). It is the capacity to face death alone that separates Densher from Lancaster Gate and allows him to move toward Milly. Martin and Esther both look death in the face, and the face of death haunts l'innominato in the night, "springing from within him" (PS 304). His avoidance of the "moral solitude" that both Pascal and Balzac understood to be so frightening to mankind (*Penseés* and *LI* 654) is what compels Maurice, in *La Débâcle*, to rush off to Paris in order to find "peace in the heart of the crowd" (*D* 462). The peace he does find is not the peace that promises new life, but simply death at the hands of Jean. The important thing about the death of the self is that it is a herald of life, but not of life everlasting; rather, it promises the expansion of spirit to those who have the capacities to use their sorrow as the business of the world continues. The death that assures the possibility of a new historical life also guarantees that the novel will remain vital with its central tension intact. Once death preserves and petrifies, the novel must accept the resolution of fantasy and sentimental consolation.

35. Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 167; Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 152.

36. "Milly's and Densher's Ordeal of Consciousness," WD 543.

In the chambers of the spirit, the will, whose governance is characterized by exertion, gives place to humility, whose effectiveness can be guaranteed only by inaction. This is a humility that does not criticize and prove reality by protest, but simply by being. Through the giving up of self, it answers the guilt incurred by the action or inaction of will in history and promotes a clarity of vision that cannot be won in the world of time and place. It is this vision that reads and interprets the signs of what Brooks calls the "morally legible universe" opened up by melodrama.³⁷ Paradoxically, the humility gained in passivity can reinvigorate and encourage the activity of the will. It most often engenders and is engendered by a transformation or conversion precipitated by traumatic events like sickness or loss, but it can also be encouraged through what Barbara Hardy distinguishes as a "glaring instance," which transforms the characters by forcing them to see, by means of a negative counterpart, not what they have done but what they are.³⁸ When Scrooge sees what he is and how far he has strayed from his childhood innocence, he is reborn and shouts exultantly that he is "quite a baby."

Since it is vision that marks the moral growth of the individual, it is not surprising that what determines the capacities and capabilities of characters to evolve beyond role or to refuse role altogether can be measured by how much *visual truth* they are able and willing to bear. As his story begins, Etienne comes upon Le Voreux and tries "to pierce the darkness, tormented by both the desire to see and the fear of seeing" (G 9), a pattern that will hold steady throughout his life as he moves between the blindness of his own needs and fears, and the sudden revelations of the way things really are with the Maheus. As long as Isabel Archer refuses to know, she will dream of riding in "a swift carriage, of a dark night, rattling with four horses over roads that one can't see" (PL 144), whereas Esther rides toward her final discovery in the dark of night noticing streets and narrow archways, corners, offices, inns and public houses, dense neighborhoods, kilns, the river with its docks

37. *Melodramatic Imagination*, 201.

38. *Moral Art of Dickens*, 55.

and basins, warehouses, swing-bridges, masts of ships, sailors, and policemen.

Not only learning to see, but learning to *want* to see is the lesson of the twice-born in these novels. As Isabel shrinks from “raising curtains and looking into unlighted corners” (*PL* 171), so Milly, before her angelic transfiguration, pulls the cover of Kate’s scenario “up to her chin” (*WD* 180). It was best not to know, as long as there were things she did not want to know (*WD* 241). Milly’s moral struggle is nullified if we accept Krook’s strange contention that she has a passion for self-knowledge. Kate’s strategy and her unKantian argument that it would benefit the victim as well as the perpetrators are entirely dependent upon Milly’s reluctance to know. And it is precisely this avoidance of self-knowledge for such a large part of the novel that makes Milly vulnerable to the risk of being looked upon, in the words of Charles Thomas Samuels, as “a young girl who couldn’t get her man” and who succumbs to a “sentimental death in Venice.” The critic even reminds us that her “final generosity, whatever else it may produce, wrests Densher from her rival.” Caserio considers Milly, who has learned her fate from Sir Luke, to be a creature “as fiercely purposeful and grasping, as committed to an intrigue and action that leave behind conventional good and evil as Kate is.”³⁹ But these observations stop crucially short in the dramatic process. Once she sees clearly the *fact* of her victimization, as real in James as it is in Zola, once she recognizes history as the Judas who betrayed her earlier sister Isabel, once she, like Isabel, looks squarely at the truth of who deceived her and how she was deceived, she understands that the role James and his characters had forced upon her no longer belongs to the stage. As a dove she has been sent into history to suffer with its sinners and to free them if she can. Earlier she had been cast as an “angel with a thumping bank account” (*WD* 214), but when she can admit to herself her “desire, credulity, vanity,”⁴⁰

39. Krook, “Milly’s and Densher’s Ordeal of Consciousness,” *WD* 540; Samuels, “A Flawed Hymn to Renunciation,” *WD* 578; Caserio, *Plot, Story, and the Novel*, 222.

40. Samuels, “A Flawed Hymn to Renunciation,” *WD* 578.

she can become an angel who is able to use her historical account in a Christ-like renunciation, giving freely that very money which has defined the roles of Densher and Kate.

As long as the ideologies of romanticism and egotism are vulnerable to correction and evolution, characters like Isabel and Martin Chuzzlewit can leave their roles and release others from theirs by learning new ways of seeing. But the incorrigible egotists feed on the definitions they give others and are characterized by a deadly vision that initiates a process like James's definition of romance, whereby the good and bad fall into one another's possession. It is a process that changes the romantic gardens Isabel dreamed of in her grandmother's house and the gardens that had made her a princess at Gardencourt into the "small garden-plot" she became for Osmond: "He would rake the soil gently and water the flowers; he would weed the beds and gather an occasional nosegay. It would be a pretty piece of property for a proprietor already far-reaching" (*PL* 355). She is one of his objets d'art (*PL* 254), as Caddy Jellyby is "only pen and ink" (*BH* 169) to her mother. The insidious aspect of this proprietary manipulation is that it can be practiced not only by those who possess but, unwittingly, by those who are possessed. Isabel realizes that her romantic notions differed little from Osmond's perceptions of people: "The finest—in the sense of being the subtlest—manly organism she had ever known had become her property and the recognition of her having but to put out her hands and take it had been originally a sort of act of devotion" (*PL* 352).

In an oft-quoted exchange, Madame Merle explains to Isabel that clothes, houses, furniture, and books are expressions of the self. (Dickens graphically illustrates this notion through Pecksniff, who defines himself by his surroundings more brashly than Madame Merle, hooking everything in his house to his own person through the possessive pronoun—my girls, my works, portrait of myself, my bust, books I have scribbled, my chamber [*MC* 135–36].) Isabel listens to Madame Merle and demurs: "Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; everything's on the contrary a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. Certainly the clothes which, as you say,

I choose to wear, don't express me; and heaven forbid they should!" (*PL* 172–73).⁴¹ Yet, in her *romantic* perception, her possessions turn out after all to be definitions, her fortune "a part of her better self; it gave her importance, gave her, even to her own imagination, a certain ideal beauty" (*PL* 190). Until she can attain a vision that not only liberates objects and people from her, but liberates her from objects and people, she will be no more authentic than Osmond or Madame Merle.

This is made more difficult by the possessive vision that can radically change reality for others. In chapter 9 of *Dombey and Son*, Mr. Brogley's threat of repossession sends the distraught Walter Gay into the streets, where the daily sights which were so familiar to him, even the citadel of the spirit, have suddenly been transformed: "Everything seemed altered. . . . The broker seemed to have got hold of the very churches, for their spires rose into the sky with an unwonted air" (*DS* 131). In the same novel, Carker, in his dark flight, "groundlessly afraid even of travellers" and taking "no notice of the actual objects he encountered," distorts reality with his own "fevered brain," controlling and defining its shapes by the imposition of his anxieties and rage (*DS* 795–96). Once again let us compare Carker to Tom, who, in sharp contrast, does not impose upon the world but simply observes it. As he rides to Salisbury he is not afraid of travelers but greets them and is greeted by them. Each item of Mark Tapley's clothing is "visible to [Tom's] rearward observation" (*MC* 119). In town, "Mr. Pinch regarded everything exposed for sale with great delight, and was *particularly* struck by the itinerant cutlery" (*MC* 124; our italics). He carefully distinguishes one item from another and gives individual worth to jewelers' shops and bookstores, where he reviews those children's stories that are always a reliable touchstone of deep emotion in Dickens. As he returns from Salisbury he observes the moon on the hoarfrost "and everything looked exquisitely beautiful" (*MC* 130–31). It is odd, Garrett Stewart points out, that the myopic Tom Pinch should be chosen by the novelist to record "the most minutely detailed landscapes and cityscapes in his writing." As

41. For a comparison with Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, see Rowe, *Henry Adams and Henry James*, 32–34.

a holy fool, he should be strange in appearance but can have no designs on reality. Dickens chooses him to support Iris Murdoch's important judgment that "the greatest art is 'impersonal' because it shows us the world, our world and not another one, with a clarity which startles and delights us simply because we are not used to looking at the real world at all."⁴²

When Mr. Pinch looks at everything around him, he is "particularly struck," whereas Tulkinghorn "looks up casually, thinking what a fine night, what a bright large moon, what multitudes of stars!" (BH 584). His adjectives are not refining but generic; his ceiling is allegorical and his boxes have "transcendent names" (BH 119). Tulkinghorn and Pecksniff not only patronize the other characters in their novels, they patronize reality itself by attempting to control it. Mr. Dombey's will to mold destiny in the shape of his own egotistical desires leads him to rush over the history of the present, allegorizing it into the future when his son will become head of the firm. As a result, Florence and Paul are forced to regress even further into dreams of heaven and reunion with their mother. Yet, instead of allegorizing the present like their father, the children live it, suffer it, animate it. Mrs. Toodle comforts Florence by telling a simple and moving story of personal pain and hope in which the child can find her mother. If stories rise toward heaven, they are nevertheless intimately related to people and their immediate needs. It is the relationship between objects and people, between nature and its inhabitants, that a free vision discovers and engenders.

Osmond, Ralph tells Isabel, does not feel a "relation to things—to others" (PL 286), and it is precisely this relationship to which Tulkinghorn and Pecksniff are blind because their vision is never particularized, never independent of imposition. Pecksniff places his own moralizing upon the stars, smothering whatever he observes with the dead weight of habit, rhetoric, inauthenticity: "When I look up at those shining orbs, I think that each of them is winking to the other to take notice of the vanity of man's pursuits. . . . Oh! do not

42. Stewart, *Trials of Imagination*, 177 (see 173–78 for subtle and interesting distinctions between the different kinds of vision Tom has at his disposal); Murdoch, *Sovereignty of Good*, 65.

strive and struggle to enrich yourselves, or to get the better of each other, my deluded friends, but look up here, with me!" (MC 760). In Esther's vision, by contrast, things are given both independence and relation as she observes a storm from Boythorn's lodge:

It was grand to see how the wind awoke, and bent the trees, and drove the rain before it like a cloud of smoke; and to hear the solemn thunder, and to see the lightning; and while thinking with awe of the tremendous powers by which our little lives are encompassed, to consider how beneficent they are, and how upon the smallest flower and leaf there was already a freshness poured from all this seeming rage, which seemed to make creation new again. (BH 228)

She knows that the true meaning of a thing is indeed, as Ortega writes, "the highest form of its coexistence with other things."⁴³

Tom's vision, like Esther's, relates objects to the life of the spirit, but not at the expense of reality. This becomes clear after he has been disabused about Pecksniff. On his return to Salisbury, his eye remains as keen as it had previously been:

. . . though it was the same market of old, crowded by the same buyers and sellers; . . . fair with the same display of rolls of butter, newly made, set forth in linen cloths of dazzling whiteness; green with the same fresh show of dewy vegetables; dainty with the same array in higgler's baskets of small shaving-glasses, laces, braces, trouser-straps, and hardware; . . . still it was strangely changed for Tom. (MC 628–29)

His disappointment in his "master" is crucially related to the objects he sees, but he honors both sentiment and surroundings. As he plays the organ, encircled by the realities of stone and wood and glass, he demonstrates how the particularities of the world yield up the universal relation of all things:

As the grand tones resounded through the church, they seemed, to Tom, to find an echo in the depth of every ancient tomb, no less than in

43. *Meditations on Quixote*, 89.

the deep mystery of his own heart. Great thoughts and hopes came crowding on his mind as the rich music rolled upon the air, and yet among them . . . were all the images of the day, down to its very lightest recollection of childhood. The feeling that the sounds awakened, in the moment of their existence, seemed to include his whole life and being. . . . (MC 126)

Esther's hymn to nature and Tom's music work because the deep sentiments are controlled by strong witnesses of impassive but careful and loving observation.

While Renzo and Lucia memorize their environment and establish close community ties, Don Abbondio, wrapped up in his fearful self, is characteristically blind to the nature around him and indifferent to his parishioners. As he rides on his mule, he sees only what threatens him, the bravo's straddling the wall in menacing manner. Manzoni opens his novel with a description of the Lecco district in extravagant and luxurious detail and then deliberately places in the very center of that picture a man who cannot see one twig, crag, or peak of nature separated from himself. It is obvious that the country priest is possessed by his surroundings and feels none of that "love of things" (*l'amore delle cose*) which De Sanctis finds so characteristic of the author: the facial and sartorial peculiarities and customs, the utensils and food of the humble, the landscapes of lakes and mountains, the vegetation native to the region.⁴⁴ For his amusement and release from care, the egotist may even choose to compose his own surroundings. Skimpole expatiates on slaves on American plantations: "I dare say they are worked hard, I dare say they don't altogether like it, I dare say theirs is an unpleasant experience on the whole; but they people the landscape for me, they give it poetry for me, and perhaps that is one of the pleasanter objects of their existence" (BH 227).

If we subscribe to Kierkegaard's criticism of Rousseau, that he drove a wedge between Christianity and reality by making himself the source of virtue rather than the agent of virtue, we gain a new

44. Manzoni, 104. See similar comments about Dickens by Taine in *History of English Literature*, 2:439.

perspective on the way in which egotism deforms the world. Mrs. Pardiggle's spectacles "rest with curious indifference" upon the "beauties of the prospect" (*BH* 95), and Mrs. Jellyby's "handsome eyes" have "a curious habit of seeming to look a long way off. As if . . . they could see nothing nearer than Africa!" (*BH* 37). Manzoni's Donna Prassede prides herself on doing good while tending "not to see the reality behind the facts, or to see realities that were not there at all" (*PS* 386). As they become their own virtue, these women are busy perpetrating a radical separation between goodness and reality and are incapable of understanding the vital connection between vision and morality so imperatively stressed by Iris Murdoch:

. . . the authority of the Good seems to us something necessary because the realism (ability to perceive reality) required for goodness is a kind of intellectual ability to perceive what is true, which is automatically at the same time a suppression of self. *The necessity of the good is then an aspect of the kind of necessity involved in any technique for exhibiting fact.*⁴⁵

We cherish the amusement that Skimpole, Sairey Gamp, Pecksniff, and Don Abbondio afford us, but their failure to suppress self and their inability to perceive the facts lead to a deficiency of empathic imagination that gives rise to most of the evils mankind endures. Great artists of human nature and the human scene prevent this radical disjunction of compassion and perception through the disciplined impersonality of their vision, but the Deneulin girls in *Germinale*, minor artists though admirable in many ways, impose their personal needs on the terrible destruction of the landscape, which has brought so much misery to others, by observing it through their undisciplined vision: "Jeanne, who always carried a sketch pad with her, was inspired by the horror of the theme and had started to draw, while Lucie, seated beside her on the wreckage of a railway car, was uttering cries of delight and finding it all 'stunning'" (*G* 395). This artistic and romantic egotism leads Claude Lantier to consider his dead child a fascinating model (*O* 312–13) and inspires Skimpole to

45. *Sovereignty of Good*, 66.

shed tears as he sings of an orphan, while feeling nothing but disgust for the real Jo.

In doing its own work against the habitual poverty of imagination, reality uses suffering as a catalyst, while “suffering and doubt,” as Zola reminds us, beget a love for “naked, living reality.”⁴⁶ Jarndyce comes into the room where the Neckett children are raising themselves and the *sight* of them brings forth the cry: “For God’s sake look at this!” (*BH* 188), after which he proceeds to give them help and to see that they are cared for. This sequence of actuality and action explains why Manzoni believed he had written a Christian work precisely “because it seemed to him he had written a work of objective truth.”⁴⁷ The stark factuality of the plague in *I Promessi sposi* dramatically demonstrates reality’s correction of failed imagination as it elicits “a cry of horror and terror . . . wherever the cart passed; a prolonged murmur could be heard wherever it had already gone by. . . .” If the plague is a thing that is “more believed in” after it is seen (*PS* 486), Isabel’s romance “was a thing to believe in, not to see—a matter of faith, not of experience” (*PL* 161). Only after her dream dissolves before her eyes can she believe in what she sees and know it is a world freed from her own needs, a world others see as well, for at Ralph’s bedside, she and her cousin, with mutual compassion, “were looking at the truth *together*. ‘He married me for the money,’ she said” (*PL* 470; our italics). The suffering that brings her communion with Ralph forces her to see her history, as it dramatically forces Densher to see Milly’s: “The *facts* of physical suffering, of incurable pain, of the chance grimly narrowed, had been made, at a stroke, intense. . . . The clearance of the air, in short, making vision not only possible but inevitable . . .” (*WD* 347; our italics). Such a clearance of the air is indifferent to what it reveals. Isabel’s mental suffering shows her the deceitfulness of her gardens, whereas Esther’s physical suffering, blinding and ravaging, returns her to the world where “every breath of air, and every scent, and every flower and leaf and

46. Quoted in Walker, *Zola*, 60. Zola suspected that Gustave Doré had “never known that life of suffering and doubt which makes one deeply love naked, living reality.”

47. Zottoli, *Umili e potenti*, 248.

blade of grass, and every passing cloud, and everything in nature [was] more beautiful and wonderful to me than I had ever found it yet" (*BH* 443).

The stepping back into history is both a moral and novelistic imperative, and this burden is insisted upon clearly and unmistakably by all of these novelists. It is at this point that we differ with the recent critics of immanence, who, by rejecting the move outward, reject the great drama and scope of a dialectic between a world that belongs to society and a world that belongs to the soul. Caserio does recognize, in James's late novels, a connection between goodness and action, which he designates as a progression to "plot" from the earlier tendency toward "picture," but this same pattern can already be found in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Isabel, following a course similar to Densher's, leaves her "pictorial" scene before the fire to join that band of universal sufferers, to walk freely among the Roman ruins into a "sense of the continuity of the human lot," with eyes that move easily "from the less to the greater" (*PL* 423). The critic rightly concludes that James considered a passive life to be "a blow to civilization, to the fortunes of human community,"⁴⁸ and it is this new community that both Isabel and Densher will try to preserve through their goodness.

Alexander Welsh maintains that Dickens's use of the phrase "passed along," in describing the progress of the two protagonists at the end of *Little Dorrit*, marks them as sojourners in the earthly city, yet not of it,⁴⁹ but we find it more significant that the novelist repeats the word *down* five times before Clennam and Little Dorrit "pass along" in sunshine and in shade. They are not to await a heavenly future, nor are they to be simply sojourners in the earthly city, but are "to go

48. Caserio, *Plot, Story, and the Novel*, 222. Kaston asserts that the Jamesian turning inward to a "heightened awareness of the self . . . delivers a character aware principally of other selves" (*Imagination and Desire*, 3). Brooks argues that the ending of *WD* brings no sacred community, as exemplified in the split between Kate and Densher and their individual consciousness (*Melodramatic Imagination*, 193), but Densher's moving on in the pattern of Isabel seems more than justified by his conversion.

49. *City of Dickens*, 118.

down into a modest life of usefulness and happiness." If the reader does not consider the return to history compulsory, he will undoubtedly disturb the novel's crucial bipolar balance, and this is exactly what happens to one critic who assumes that by the time Dickens wrote *Little Dorrit*, "he had completely slipped out of history into allegory."⁵⁰ A comparison between Dickens's novels and Zola's *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, however, proves this judgment inadequate. Whereas Amy Dorrit and Clennam, Ruth Pinch and John, may seem to walk through an enchanted city, they reenter the world with firm step, working within society vigorously and effectively. Serge and Albine, on the other hand, walk with airy steps through pathless, flowered meadows but lose their way in their return to society.

No longer in solitude, l'innominato pays a "spectacular homage to virtue" in a melodramatic demonstration of "its power and effect,"⁵¹ as he comes down from the mountain and falls into the arms of Cardinal Federigo. But the return can also be a quiet stepping back into the stream of life in the way of Clennam and Little Dorrit, of Esther and Allan. The failure of his panacea has cured Docteur Pascal of his "last pride as a medical healer," and he now makes his rounds every morning, thinking of himself only as "a schoolboy who spells, who looks for the truth always, even as it recedes and enlarges" (*DP* 326). Love has taught him what his books have not, that while working and waiting for the new humanity, he must belong to the old one. The Rougon-Macquart family, for all its degeneration, can no more be dismissed than the lifework of Zola himself. In novels that exploit the full drama of dialectical tension, every lesson that humility painfully teaches places new burdens and challenges upon the learner, requiring not only an expanding field of vision but of action.

Murdoch rates humility, which frees us from "the avaricious tentacles of the self," as that "most difficult and central of all virtues,"⁵² and it is no wonder that the winning of this virtue through a hyperbolic humbling and demeaning admission of inadequacy by the

50. Lukacher, "The Dickensian 'No Thoroughfare,'" 310.

51. See Brooks's description of melodrama in *Melodramatic Imagination*, 25.

52. *Sovereignty of Good*, 95, 103. See also William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, lectures 9 and 10.

proud hero and heroine should make them finally adequate to their fates. Milly understands that Sir Luke's staying represents "an immense surrender to her immense need" (WD 349), and Isabel, in her last scene with Ralph, asks for help: "It was the first time she had alluded to the need for help, and the words shook her cousin with their violence. He gave a long murmur of relief, of pity, of tenderness . . ." (PL 381). But no one in these novels experiences a more precipitous fall from pride to humility than l'innominato, who will wait at Borromeo's door like a beggar until the cardinal gives him an audience: "I need to talk to you; I need to listen to you, to see you. I need you" (PS 349).

Such an exaggerated humbling is decidedly not the vice born of an exaggerated and indulgent extension of virtue, so decried by Sismondi. Rather, it is a virtue that gives new vigor and efficacy to conduct in the historical world. History demands that the sufferer exploit sorrow, as James advised Grace Norton to do: "[Sorrow] wears us, uses us, but we wear it and use it in return; and it is *blind*, whereas we *after a manner see*" (our italics).⁵³ There can be no clearer indication that sorrow engenders vision. Lady Dedlock's remorse is "useless" (BH 452) because she cannot use it as a transforming agent. Even when Zola's Lazare stops feeling sorry for himself, he finds in the outside world only fresh sources of depression (JV ch. 7), whereas in nursing Madame Chanteau, Pauline's compassion swells in "the face of such sorrow," and she is instilled with an overpowering desire to "relieve the sufferings of others" (JV 151). She regrets her loss of maternity, yet as she takes Lazare's baby on her knee and attends to his needs, she weeps not only for herself but for the suffering of all living beings (JV 271).

The really deadly combination is the one Sidney Carton embodies, that of a "high idealism and eroded willpower," which Dyson justly considers "a classic formula for unhappiness in life."⁵⁴ Isabel triumphs because she is able to use her will to transform her fatal idealization of self and story into an imagination of others and their

53. Letter to Grace Norton of July 1883 in *Letters*, 2:424–25.

54. *Inimitable Dickens*, 221.

stories. Mrs. Touchett, on the other hand, who has plenty of will, has no idealizing capacity that can lead her toward compassion. For this reason, Isabel finds herself pitying Ralph's mother her "want of regret, of disappointment," the same exclusion from suffering Clotilde and Pascal pity in their neighbor M. Bellombre. It seems unmistakable to her that Mrs. Touchett "would have found it a blessing to-day to be able to feel a defeat, a mistake, even a shame or two. She wondered if she were not even missing those enrichments of consciousness and privately trying—reaching out for some aftertaste of life, dregs of the banquet; the testimony of pain or the cold recreation of remorse" (PL 465–66).

As traditional Christian virtues in the world are charged with the task of keeping reality from the grasp of allegory, abstraction, convention, and patronization, they should remain forever open to correction and refinement. Great artists, great minds, Ortega reminds us, help us

to avoid confusing goodness with the material observance of legal rules which have been adopted once and for all. On the contrary, a person appears moral to us only when he tries, before any new action, to renew immediate contact with the ethical value itself. When our acts are decided by virtue of intermediary dogmatic prescriptions, the essence of goodness, exquisite and volatile as the most refined perfume, cannot descend upon them. Only from the vivid and ever new intuition of perfection can this perfume fall directly on our acts. Therefore any moral code which does not include among its injunctions the primary duty of being always ready for the reform, the correction, and the expansion of the ethical ideal will be immoral.⁵⁵

With confidence Isabel had told Caspar Goodwood that she wanted to choose her own fate, to go beyond "what other people think it compatible with propriety to tell" her (PL 141), but paradoxically, she is "ground in the very mill of the conventional!" (PL 470) until she subjects her habit of judging "only from the outside" (PL 77) to the necessary reassessment.

55. *Meditations on Quixote*, 37.

In this process, that most suspicious of all indulgences, self-pity, becomes a surprising enabler. G. B. Giorgini notes in a biography of his father-in-law that Manzoni could not speak of his childhood or school years without a tone of compassion mixed with hatred and fear,⁵⁶ yet this sorrow for his own past nourished the novelist's generous Christian spirit. Dickens was notably tender toward the bruised child he had been. The tone of *David Copperfield*, in fact, is almost unrelievedly one of self-pity, but it manages to evoke in its generosity a full realization of other lives. The moral correction and expansion of the ethical ideal teaches Dickens's Mr. Wickfield that the exclusive mourning that he continually directed toward himself and his dead wife had prevented him from having "some part in the grief of all who mourned. Thus the lessons of my life have been perverted! I have preyed on my own morbid coward heart, and it has preyed on me" (*DC* 2:172). These are the same lessons that have been perverted in Mr. Dombey, whose proud self-pity is mortally offended by the sign of mourning on Mr. Toodle's cap:

To think of this presumptuous raker among coals and ashes going on before there, with his sign of mourning! To think that he dared to enter, even by a common show like that, into the trial and disappointment of a proud gentleman's secret heart. To think that this lost child, who was to have divided with him his riches, and his projects, and his power and allied with whom he was to have shut out all the world as with a double door of gold, should have let in such a herd to insult him with their knowledge of his defeated hopes, and their boasts of *claiming community of feeling with himself*, so far removed. . . . (*DS* 298–99; our italics).

The inclusiveness of Christian forgiveness and compassion, which flourishes in the freedom of the unmediated dialectic, shrivels from embarrassment in the modern novel, as it had in the French novels of Stendhal and Balzac. We ought to compare Dickens's Little Dorrit and Tom, Manzoni's Lucia, and James's Milly not to Balzac's Eve and

56. Ulivi, *Manzoni*, 36. Miguel de Unamuno traces the path from self-pity to universal pity in *The Tragic Sense of Life*, 137–38.

David but to his d'Arthez, in order to understand how much more Christian the melodramatic authors of this study are than the melodramatic author of *Lost Illusions*. The incorruptible d'Arthez tells Lucien that he regards "periodic repentances as a great hypocrisy . . . for repentance is then only a bonus given to evil deeds. Repentance is a virginity which our souls owe to God: a man who twice repents is therefore a reprehensible sycophant" (*LI* 453). Lucia, on the other hand, tells the incomparably more sinful l'innominato that "God forgives so much for one deed of mercy" (*PS* 318). (Dickens himself had written to Miss Coutts that he would forgive the penitent fallen woman in *Urania Cottage* any number of failures.)⁵⁷

Because Tom Pinch is once-born, he comes by his freedom to move from one sphere to the other naturally, yet this freedom is the same that the twice-born have achieved through tribulation. To those who have struggled, his virtues are both exemplary and analogous. Though the stories of Tom and Lucien were published at the same time, the latter thinks of nothing but the sweetness of reappearing "in society [to] take a spectacular revenge" (*LI* 326) against Mesdames d'Espard and de Bargeton, whereas Tom feels not a trace of vengeance. When he observes that Pecksniff's statue (and the man himself) has been removed from the old city and from his life, he "was far from being sage enough to know that, having been disappointed in one man, it would have been a strictly rational and eminently wise proceeding to have revenged himself upon mankind in general, by mistrusting them one and all" (*MC* 629). At a later date, Freud declared that "The time comes when each one of us has to give up as illusions the expectations which, in his youth, he pinned upon his fellowmen, and when he may learn how much difficulty and pain has been added to his life by their ill-will."⁵⁸ For Tom that time never comes. As a holy fool, he plays out the highest, uncritical Christian generosity in his imitation of Christ, all the time leading those around him toward a fuller life in *the world as it is* through his compassion and forgiveness.

57. Letter to Angela Burdett Coutts in *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 196.

58. *Civilization and its Discontents*, 59.

CHAPTER 4

SUIT AND SERVICE

Profession and Charity

In the relationship between profession and charity, we find an interesting and important variation of the dynamics between history and spirit that tightens the tension between the world of reality and the world of desire. The conflict is not, as we might expect, *between* profession and charity but *within* them, within the part of each that moves toward public system and the part that moves toward the private individual. Whenever profession does not stand in a position from which it can criticize system, whenever it seeks a harmonious relationship with community and society at the expense of individual expansion, it becomes institutionalized. On the other hand, whenever profession encourages personal and particular commitment to duty, responsibility, productivity, honesty, and skill, it resists system by its self-sustainment and serves not only the individual but the community at large, as it embodies what we have come to think of as civic virtues. Dickens's Woodcourt represents the period's new interest in public health, but his professional strength is his very defiance of public system.

We can divide charity in much the same way as profession. That part using society's projects and programs becomes Mrs. Jellyby's or Mrs. Pardiggle's missionary zeal—impersonal, uncritical, and exploitative. Individual charity, on the other hand, is critical and rebellious, reluctant to conform and eager to serve. It is precisely the fear that system and institution might dictate and dominate morality that inspires these authors to place so much emphasis upon the notion of an individual profession resisting the distortions of its setting and an individual charity altogether separated from it. We need to remember that, like history and spirit, profession and charity define them-

selves in their relation to one another. For characters in these novels, caught between reality and hope, a high regard for the virtues of professionalism and a deep commitment to personal charity represent the strongest possibility for the conduct of a good and creative life, but as we might expect, the strength of one part at the expense of the other invariably leads to a dangerous imbalance. Historical profession, which depends upon the energy of will, provides a *basso ostinato* of public ethics and injunctions, while spiritual charity, which depends upon the resignation of humility, sings over it an aria of tolerance, forgiveness, generosity, and affection.

Those critics who agree with Barbara Hardy that conversions in the Victorian novels have, by and large, a *social* orientation might certainly expect secular professions in these novels to have the same orientation. Yet it is the *religious* orientation of profession that distinguishes Dickens from his contemporaries. This does not mean, however, that the charity in his novels should be given the overpowering religious orientation that Lionel Trilling assigns to *Little Dorrit* as he judges "the whole energy" of the book to be "directed to the transcending of the personal will, to the search for the Will in which shall be our peace."¹ We should bear in mind that Little Dorrit goes down with Clennam "into the roaring streets," a move anticipated in Switzerland, when she descends from the balcony of her hotel. In healing and marrying Clennam, in taking responsibility for her brother and Fanny's children, she has shown that her personal will is as assiduous as her spiritual denial of personal will. Dickens sets "practical humility" as a goal for Clennam, who should be certain to place "his feet on Earth" and not "mount on wings of words to Heaven. Duty on earth, restitution on earth, action on earth; those first, as the first steep steps upward" (*LD* 368). Even Manzoni's men of God must remain professionally active in history while in the spirit of their profession, they protest system through charity. This represents an important departure from the position of the author's Conte di Carmagnola, who could escape activity in a history full of

1. Hardy, *Moral Art of Dickens*, 27; Trilling, *Opposing Self*, 64.

inequities and injustices only by relinquishing his earthly hopes for a higher home in heaven.²

Manzoni reads history through profession by demonstrating the failure of responsibility in every level of society during the plague. Renzo harangues the city crowd, characterizing the problem of the famine that precedes the plague as one of *professional* responsibility. We must “tell all the mayors to do things properly; . . . And order the lawyers to pay some attention to the poor and raise their voices to defend the right.” Ferrer should command those whose job it is to see that edicts are carried out to fulfill their obligations (PS 215). We learn that a general failure of professional will has encouraged personal irresponsibility in the citizens. No longer able to deny that the disease had spread through careless practices, they were still unwilling to admit it, “which would have meant confessing at the same time to a great deception and to a great responsibility; they were more inclined than ever to find some other cause for it, and to accept the first that was suggested” (PS 482). Individuals were adroit in avoiding the edicts of the Tribunal, which were inadequate both in number and execution (PS 430–31). Doctors refused to take clear warnings seriously and when accounts reached the Tribunal, they were too vague and too late. The *monatti* purposely spread the infection they recognized as all too real in order to increase their business, and looting was widespread (PS 497–98). Fear stilled the voice; the sick went unreported and unrecorded, “undertakers and their superiors were bribed, and junior officials of the Tribunal itself, deputed to visit the corpses, issued false certificates at a price” (PS 476–77).

The general indifference toward civil obligations, we have seen, engenders endless diffusion of blame. The governments that conduct the Franco-Prussian war in *La Débâcle* are not accountable. Jean bitterly complains that it drives him crazy to think he and his cohorts are “getting killed for other people when those other people are somewhere quietly smoking their pipe” (D 299).³ In *Germinal*,

2. See Chandler, *Alessandro Manzoni: The Story of a Spiritual Quest*, 30.

3. See Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 140: “Where, then, is that same cunningly devised almighty Government of theirs to be laid hands on? Everywhere, yet nowhere.”

Hennebeau feeds hierarchy and institution through a deliberate professional limitation that parcels out responsibility, refusing to consider Maheu's complaint because "I'm just an employee like you, and I have no more to say in this matter than the least of your boys. I get my orders, and my job is to see that they are properly carried out" (C 178).

For the avoidance of obligations, perhaps the most seductive institution is the Church. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, the nun who cares for Pansy finds assurance in the fact that "le couvent n'est pas comme le monde" (PL 196), but it *is* like the world for Gertrude and for Cristoforo, who are never excused from their duties or their charity. High office does not shelter the individual—far from it. When Federigo Borromeo understands that the poor cannot pay with surplus crops in a famine, he decides to become the responsible party. "Will you please get a list of [the debts] and settle them," he tells the village priest (PS 376). The cardinal finds six clergymen, divides them into pairs, organizes relief, and buys and distributes corn (PS 430–31). In his central scene, he scolds Don Abbondio for representing the fatal irresponsibility of the individual who uses institution to avoid rather than fulfill duty. Whereas Don Abbondio takes advantage of system, Dickens's Gridley is frustrated by it. He is "told, on all hands, it's the system. I mustn't look to individuals. It's the system. I mustn't go into Court, and say, 'My Lord, I beg to know this from you—is this right or wrong? Have you the face to tell me I have received justice, and therefore am dismissed?' My Lord knows nothing of it. He is there to administer the system" (BH 193). Although Gridley has not the will to transcend system, at least he recognizes the deadly evasion and displacement of it. But Richard Carstone cannot even come to this revelation. So identified with system and mission is he, so devoid of self-sustainment, that in a stunning reversal he makes of the individual an institution, confessing to Mr. Vholes that he now looks upon Jarndyce as "the embodiment of that suit; that, in place of its being an abstraction, it is John Jarndyce" (BH 486–87).

The professionals, effective, decisive, skilled, in the midst of churning social forces, would naturally appeal to the artist who stands aside as observer or remains at his desk as recorder. By living through

the *Rougon-Macquart*, James has suggested, Zola made up for arrears in life. (By the time he caught up with life, in the Dreyfus Affair and his affair with Jeanne Rozerot, his profession was in decline.) As “a lonely adolescent,” T. S. Perry records, James sat “on a window-seat reading while the rest of us were chattering”;⁴ as a young man, he watched others travel downtown to their businesses while he stayed at his desk. The Civil War found him at home while others marched to battle, and another war at the end of his life made him feel, as he wrote to Edith Wharton, “like the dulled *vieillards* in the old epics, infirm and helpless at home with the women, while the plains are ringing with battle.” Dickens, too, was a child apart. Like his thwarted George Silverman, he saw “others in the sunlight” while he himself was “always in the shadow looking on,” a shadow deepened by the Marshalsea, the very symbol of his father’s professional failure.⁵ Defining himself against that father, he became from the age of fifteen the consummate professional, whether he worked as law clerk, court stenographer, parliamentary reporter, recorder of speeches, novelist, or actor.

Only toward the end of his life did Manzoni participate in government, when he agreed to Cavour’s request that he become a senator. Although his refusal to accept any honors or positions from the Austrians might seem explanation enough for his rejection of public life, the fact remains that he did not participate in the patriotic activities around him, which were aimed at freeing and uniting Italy. It was painful for him “to be useless in a cause which is the very life spirit of a man,”⁶ painful to grow from an unloved and banished child into a man afraid to leave his house, to walk alone, a man fearful of crowds, subject to spells, a man who stuttered and was plagued by indecision, who shunned the pressures of national fervor and journalistic debate. How he admired the daring of his son Filippo when he was taken hostage by the Austrians. How he admired the versatility of his son-in-law Massimo d’Azeglio, who, Cesare Cantù tells us in his

4. Quoted in Edel, *Life of Henry James*, 4:209.

5. James, *Letters*, 4:715 (but James did participate in World War I by helping the wounded); Dickens, “George Silverman’s Explanation,” chapter 7.

6. Quoted in Momigliano, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 62.

Reminiscences, “could sing, dance, ride horseback, fence, play billiards, cards.”⁷ The spiritual men who could negotiate in Caesar’s world, his Borromeo and Cristoforo, represented his ideal.

But registering biographical inadequacies and irregularities can never be as instructive for us as an analysis of profession in the literature itself. Dickens admired soldiers and sailors, doctors, and policemen—especially the policemen of the new force coming into service with its modern procedures. However ambiguous a character Inspector Bucket is in other respects, he is the epitome of efficiency and professionalism. Those who pursued profession diligently *and* charitably he admired most. When Mr. Jellyby utters what are perhaps the most important and widely applicable words in *Bleak House*, “Never have a mission,” he intends to warn his daughter that she must avoid practicing not only her mother’s systematic charity but also her mother’s systematic profession. Caddy proves she has listened by showing Esther how she plays the piano for her husband’s dancing class in order to save expenses, prompting Dickens’s coauthor to observe with some irony: “I encouraged her and praised her with all my heart. For I conscientiously believed, dancing-master’s wife though she was, and dancing-mistress though in her limited ambition she aspired to be, she had struck out a natural, wholesome, loving course of industry and perseverance that was quite as good as a Mission” (*BH* 474).

While Caddy practices both profession and charity in her humble way, Squeers, M’Choakumchild, and Gradgrind practice neither. Dickens abhorred all who betrayed their professional trust (one would be hard pressed to name a character in the law profession who escapes his scorn), but those instrumental in shaping the child were particularly and memorably punished by his pen for their failures. In thinking of his old teacher Creakle, a sadistic incompetent who delighted “in cutting at the boys, which was like the satisfaction of a craving appetite,” *David Copperfield* becomes furious because he recognized him “to have been an incapable brute, who had no

7. Quoted in Ginzburg, *La famiglia Manzoni*, 113. Filippo could never again win his father’s admiration.

more right to be possessed of the great trust he held, than to be Lord High Admiral, or Commander-in-chief—in either of which capacities, it is probable, that he would have done infinitely less mischief” (*DC* 1:107).

George Orwell finds David Copperfield to be the only Dickens hero who did real work, and his work was the novelist’s own. The rest have “soft-hands” and belong to a type known as the “walking gentleman.” Dickens himself parodies this type in Rigaud, who convinces Cavaletto in prison that he is a gentleman because he has never done anything, never touched a broom, spread or rolled mats, taken out or gathered up games, or “put [his] hand to any kind of work” (*LD* 46–47). In developing his thesis, Orwell contrasts the adventures of Dickens’s heroes, which do not originate in their work, to the adventures of Trollope’s heroes, which do, but he fails to properly consider that Trollope is not trying to make a fundamental moral statement through profession, whereas Dickens most decidedly is. Humphrey House is closer to the truth when he contends that “nearly everybody in Dickens has a job: there is a passionate interest in what people do for a living and how they make do.” For his passive heroes, the eventual attainment of work is mandatory, and directly from that work comes “the whole flow and gusto of the writing.” House is right to restore the business of the characters to the center of the Dickens stage, but the flow and gusto, the very moral meaning of the novel, comes not so much from the job itself as from the attitude toward the job.⁸

Orwell does note that Dickens seems to disapprove “of young men who do not work . . . because they are cynical and immoral or because they are a burden on somebody else,” yet the essayist does

8. Orwell, “Charles Dickens,” 82, 88–89; House, *Dickens World*, 55, 57. Welsh rightly characterizes the difference between House and Orwell as depending upon whether work is considered moralistically or experientially (*City of Dickens*, 78–79). See also Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 182: “It is no coincidence that, although he championed work as a moral value, Dickens seldom celebrated it as an experience. His heroes and heroines—like all Victorian heroes and heroines who share the middle-class dream of a competence—are ultimately granted economic freedom and what Alexander Welsh calls ‘a radiant idleness.’”

not pursue the full implications of his observation and concludes that “if you are ‘good,’ and also self-supporting, there is no reason why you should not spend fifty years in simply drawing your dividends.” In this respect, the Dickens protagonist would seem to correspond to the fashion of the times, the “gentleman of independent means” who evokes “the strange, empty dream of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century middle bourgeoisie . . . a dream of complete idleness.” Because Orwell cannot find in Dickens the density and process of the job, which so intrigued Balzac and Zola, he concludes that the novelist seems far removed from the present scene by virtue of the fact that “he had no ideal of work.”⁹ But it was the ideal of work that so appealed to him and not the particularities. That Martin Chuzzlewit does not pursue architecture diligently and Pecksniff steals the architectural plans he is incapable of drawing are both extremely important in a consideration of Dickens’s definition of work, whereas the novelist’s failure to make either of them convincing architects is irrelevant to that consideration.

The social developments of the 1840s, which brought to the fore a new bourgeois ethic, transformed the “aristocrat” of romance into a man of self-sustainment and self-development who would be more suitable for realism.¹⁰ Carlyle can be heard clearly at the beginning of chapter 42 in *David Copperfield*, as the hero closest to Dickens promises himself “never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self; and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was,” a sentiment reversed by Richard Carstone, who finds his medical apprenticeship “monotonous, and to-day is too like yesterday and tomorrow is too like to-day’s.” (Zola’s Lazare makes a similar argument to Pauline and abandons one profession and project after another. As a representative of a later time in the century, he transforms Richard’s boredom into a fin-de-siècle ennui.) Esther answers Richard by pointing out that “this is an objection to all kinds of application—to life itself” (*BH* 208), inevitably extending

9. “Charles Dickens,” 94, 93, 95.

10. See Williams, “Forms of English Fiction in 1848,” 152.

the work ethic into a broader morality. It was one of Carlyle's fervent beliefs that we cannot know ourselves until we know what we can work at,¹¹ and what is truly significant about the contrasting attitudes of David and Richard is that they lead directly either to a knowledge of self and spiritual rebirth or individual stagnation and vulnerability to system.

Dickens is deemed by other critics to be uninterested in work because he rarely depicts the problems and movements of the working class in his fiction, though he discusses them in his journalism. The fact of the matter is, however, that in his fiction he is *not* interested in the politics of work because he *is* interested in assumptions about work. Despite his depictions of difficult labor conditions, the dire effects of lost educational opportunities, the misguided public programs that corrupt the Toodle's eldest son, and the utilitarian fanaticism which destroys the Gradgrind children, we find in his novels no advocacy for trade unions, workers' rights, or political radicalism. The circus people and Stephen Blackpool will continue to protest institution in personal ways.

If Dickens seems uninterested in the problems of work, he seems no more interested in the business of government and the machinations of politics, the critics complain.¹² It is true, as we have seen, that he remained skeptical of the efficacy of government, but this should not be taken to mean that Dickens cared little about the business of government. On the contrary, he cared desperately about it. At the same time, he was convinced that in government professionalism invariably turned into system and became unresponsive to individuals. That he chose to depict weak and corrupt functionaries without a corresponding balance of strong, responsible, and engaged professionals arose from his belief that those who could infiltrate institution in order to make a difference must first function outside institution. Whereas the individual who is rooted in acts of personal charity can become a professional, the professional Noo-

11. See *Sartor Resartus*, 134–35.

12. See Cockshut, *Imagination of Charles Dickens*, 150, for example.

dles and Doodles of Parliament will forever remain pure dilettantes, proud and relieved that nothing ever gets done.

It is one of Dickens's great ironies that the dilettantes create a need for the very professions they deride. Skimpole "never knew anything about money" and has "no idea of time" (*BH* 219), and neither does Richard. As a result, it is Neckett who must collect their debts, but though he is ostracized by his own people because of his work, "'He was punctual and diligent; he did what he had to do, sir,' said Mrs. Blinder, unconsciously fixing Mr. Skimpole with her eye; 'and it's something in this world even to do that'" (*BH* 190). Furthermore, Jarndyce argues, "the man was necessary" because of our lapses. "There was no harm in his trade. He maintained his children. . . . He might have done worse. . . . He might have undertaken to do it, and not done it" (*BH* 186–87). We can readily observe how Dickens typically shifts the emphasis from work to disposition. Richard and Skimpole could not be more antithetical to the careful, reliable, and competent Dickens, who wrote to his son Harry: "You know how hard I work for what I get, and I think you know that I never had money help from any human creature after I was a child."¹³ On the contrary, he supported his many and impecunious relatives—the only thing he ever inherited, he noted wryly. Monetary incompetence, which Dickens transferred so successfully from his own father to Micawber, can be reformed only in alliance with personal moral redemption. Micawber, who becomes a successful correspondent of the *Port Middlebay Times*, working in Australia with great dedication, skill, and success, pays off his debts, whereas Richard and Skimpole remain permanently in debt, unrepentant and unemployed.

A key area of confrontation in Dickens's novels centers on those who are professional and anti-system, capable of moral growth and depth, and those who are dilettantes, variants of the egotist, fixed forever within system. Skimpole is both an egotist and a child who does not take his profession seriously; he is, therefore, *a fortiori*, a man without generosity or compassion. Chevy Slyme in *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a false professional of system "whose great abilities . . . point

13. *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 169–70.

. . . towards the sneaking quarter of the moral compass" (MC 100). Although it is possible to find surprising moments of sympathy for the nonsystematic in Dickens's institutional characters, such as Ferdinand Barnacle's visit to Clennam in the Marshalsea (LD ch. 28), the exception proves the rule. The moral weight of profession is kept before us as a pattern of polarities; wherever we find a dilettante, we find a corresponding professional. Thus, in *Bleak House*, Richard and Skimpole are matched with Woodcourt, a highly responsible and compassionate doctor who honors a calling Skimpole dishonors and Richard rejects, while in *Little Dorrit*, Harry Gowan is matched with Daniel Doyce, an engineer and inventor who honors the art and effort Gowan disdains.

As the honorable professional, Doyce typifies the strength of self: "A composed and unobtrusive self-sustainment was noticeable in Daniel Doyce—a calm knowledge that what was true must remain true, in spite of all the Barnacles in the family ocean . . ." (LD 234–35), the same "amazing self-sustainment" (MC 588) we see in Mark Tapley (a later version, as Garrett Stewart points out, of Sam Weller).¹⁴ Both men have carefully separated themselves from system and are not deceived by the Circumlocution Office, the Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Assurance Company, or the Eden real estate scam, whereas Martin and Clennam must painfully learn the important lessons of self-sustainment. Daniel's advice to Clennam has typically as much to do with life as with profession when he assures him that he could be a "thorough workman" with training: "No man of sense who has been generally improved, and has improved himself, can be called quite uneducated as to anything" (LD 569). To Clennam, his workshop seems to have an air both "fanciful and practical" (LD 313). Business is direct, efficient, expeditious, the very antithesis of the Circumlocution Office, yet artistic expression, so allied with the inventiveness of charity, is given free rein. In this respect, Lionel Trilling is persuasive when he makes his singular observation about the very pragmatic Doyce: "Never before has Dickens made so full, so Dantean, a claim for the virtue

14. See Stewart, *Trials of Imagination*, 76.

of the artist, and there is a Dantean pride and a Dantean reason in what he says of Daniel."¹⁵

The familiar assumption that Dickens does not have any interest in the business of politics and the process of society leads A. O. J. Cockshut to make the astonishing statement that Dickens seems "very like his own Henry Gowan. He is making fun of everything because he has contracted out of the normal routine of life."¹⁶ But Henry Gowan resembles his creator no more than he resembles Doyce, though he calls himself an artist, "appeared to be an artist by profession, and to have been at Rome some time; yet he had a light, careless, amateur way with him—a perceptible limp, both in his devotion to art and his attainments." Doyce is not taken in. "An artist, I infer from what he says?" asks Clennam. "'A sort of one,' said Daniel Doyce, in a surly tone" (LD 249–50). Although Shaw brings to our attention Dickens's generally antipathetic treatment of artists, citing the examples of Skimpole, Gowan, and Pecksniff,¹⁷ it is their approach to their art or profession that arouses Dickens's antipathy. Skimpole plays the piano as casually and heartlessly as he practices the profession of medicine. Doyce, like Dickens, does not sneer at Gowan because he is an artist but because he is not a true artist. We should keep in mind that Tom plays the organ with such power he seems to unite heaven and earth and that Dickens himself was a professional in every word he spoke on stage or put on paper. His "amateur" theatricals were produced with exquisite care, whether he entertained audiences in mansions, in northern manufacturing cities, or in America. To S. Harford he wrote: "Do not suppose that the entertaining a distaste for such extremely light labour as reading and revising your own writings, is a part of the true poetical temperament. Whatever Genius does, it does well; and the man who is constantly beginning things and never finishing them is no true Genius, take my word for it." And to Emily Jolly he offers the counsel of hard work, adding: "I am an impatient and impulsive person myself, but it has been for many

15. *Opposing Self*, 64.

16. *Imagination of Charles Dickens*, 150.

17. "Great Expectations: An Introduction to Dickens's Novel," 54.

years the constant effort of my life to practise at my desk what I preach to you."¹⁸

"One has prayed and hoped and waited, in a word, to be able to work *more*. And now, toward the end, it seems, within its limits to have come. This is all I ask," James entered in his notebooks.¹⁹ Such a prayer would fall on deaf ears of dilettantes like Gowan. While Doyce "laboured hard, learned hard, and lived hard, seven years" (LD 233) in studying to be an engineer, Gowan tells Clennam that Doyce might not be able to "keep up the pretence as to labour, and study, and patience, and being devoted to [his] art, and giving up many solitary days to it." To which Arthur Clennam replies:

"But it is well for a man to respect his own vocation, whatever it is; and to think himself bound to uphold it, and to claim for it the respect it deserves; is it not? . . . And your vocation, Gowan, may really demand this suit and service. I confess I should have thought all Art did."
(LD 452–53)

This is precisely what Balzac's d'Arthez tells Lucien and Eliot's Klesmer tells Gwendolen. But whereas Gwendolen and Lucien are capable of making choices, Dickens's dilettantes are not, for their work reflects nothing but performance. Like Tolstoy's Vronsky, Gowan can only imitate what he sees in other painters (LD 358).²⁰

18. *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 307, 316.

19. *Complete Notebooks*, 114.

20. We might contrast eighteenth-century attitudes toward the professional and the amateur with those of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In chapter 20 of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, one of Dickens's favorite novels, the vicar's oldest son tells about the cold response his performing has evoked: "This was to me the more extraordinary, as, whenever I used, in better days, to play for company, when playing was my amusement, my music never failed to throw them into raptures, and the ladies especially; but as it was now my only means, it was received with contempt—a proof how ready the world is to underrate those talents by which a man is supported." Compare Macready's ambivalent attitude towards his own theatrical career and the embarrassment of Dickens's friends concerning the novelist's "undignified" taking up of the stage. In James's short story "The Real Thing," however, the scale has tipped permanently in favor of the professionals, who have a decided advantage over the amateurs. Today, alas, professionalism rages.

Since profession is so securely set in morality, it should not surprise us that the dilettante and the egotist resemble each other not only in their lack of integrity and professional seriousness, but in the harm they do to others. Carstone uses Ada and Jarndyce, Gowan makes Pet miserable, Skimpole betrays Jo, and Mr. Turveydrop enslaves his hardworking son. Significantly, the stuffed George IV gentleman views the professionals around him as nothing “but a race of weavers” (*BH* 175). Although his “deportment is beautiful,” he cannot be said to be a professional because “he don’t teach anything in particular” (*BH* 169), just as Pecksniff’s architectural business was a mystery about which one thing only was clear: “. . . he had never designed or built anything; but it was generally understood that his knowledge of the science was almost awful in its profundity” (*MC* 64), an awfulness that leads him to steal Martin’s plans.

Though there is little sense of “profession” in James’s literary works, however conscientious and consummate a writer he was at his own desk, the word dilettante remains for him a potent moral sign. Europe’s tolerance of leisure, in contrast to the single-minded obsession with professionalism and business in America, had the attraction of providing a less pressured atmosphere for moral development, a fact not lost on James’s father. “It is for the purpose of escaping this obligation to work that so many rich Americans come to Europe,” wrote Alexis de Tocqueville, “where they find some scattered remains of aristocratic society, among whom idleness is still held in honor.”²¹ But we know what the “amateur” can signify on the pages of James’s novels. Ralph equates the triviality of Osmond’s drawings—the only thing he does, and that so little (*PL* 204–5)—with the man himself, calling him “small” and a “sterile dilettante” (*PL* 286–87). Nor is Madame Merle more serious “Of painting she was devotedly fond, and made no more of brushing in a sketch than of pulling off her gloves.” She also embroidered, read, wrote, talked, and played the piano well. She “laid down her pastimes as easily as she took them up; she worked and talked at the same time, and appeared to impute scant worth to anything she did” (*PL* 164–65). Just as the egotist’s

21. *Democracy in America*, 2:160.

way of seeing imprisons, so the dilettante's attitude toward work imprisons. Robert Garis judges work in Dickens to be confining rather than liberating. The characters are "dominated by their tools" and lose "their freedom by enacting systematic mechanical processes which to a free eye are indistinguishable from compulsive tics."²² It is true that the egotist Tulkinghorn not only imprisons others but is himself imprisoned by his work. Lady Dedlock remarks that "he is indifferent to everything but his calling. His calling is the acquisition of secrets, and the holding possession of such power as they give him, with no sharer or opponent in it" (*BH* 451). On the other hand, Clennam is set free from an imprisoning childhood through his job with Doyce; he is no longer a case of arrested development in the Marshalsea or the world, but a productive member of society. Even the holy fool Mr. Dick escapes the limitations of his caricature by receiving a legal copying job from Traddles, and in a moving passage, David tells us that he will never forget as long as he lives how his friend went "about to all the shops in the neighborhood to change this treasure into sixpences, or his bringing them to [his] aunt . . . with tears of joy and pride in his eyes. He was like one under the propitious influence of a charm from the moment of his being usefully employed" (*DC* 2:112). Even Manzoni's Lucia shows that she appreciates the existential significance of work and Renzo's loss of it: "If that poor boy hadn't the misfortune to think of me, nothing that's happened to him would have come about at all. He's a wanderer on the earth. *They've cut him off from his livelihood*" (*PS* 404; our italics).

How work liberates and at the same time is inextricably bound to the moral life is one of the central themes in *Our Mutual Friend*. Eugene Wrayburn and Mortimer Lightwood both announce their distaste for the legal profession from the outset; coerced into a calling in which they have no interest and few clients, they are, indeed, gentlemen with "soft hands." "'I hate,' said Eugene, putting his legs up on the opposite seat, 'I hate my profession. . . . Then idiotic talk,' said Eugene, leaning back, folding his arms, smoking with his eyes

22. *The Dickens Theatre*, 133.

shut, and speaking slightly through his nose, 'of Energy. If there is a word in the dictionary under any letter from A to Z that I abominate, it is energy' " (OMF 62). In this, Mortimer concurs. Their lack of energy extends into their whole lives, as it does with Richard Carstone, and inevitably engenders carelessness with others. Eugene takes up Lizzie with the idea of enjoying an attractive diversion, but as she begins to have an influence on him, he is drawn to the idea of "doing anything in the least useful" by setting out to clear Lizzie's father (OMF 287). When at the end Wrayburn is willing to face down society's censure for his marriage out of class, he and his friend move into moral seriousness, typically represented through profession. Following Eugene's lead, Mortimer decides to help the Harmons in legal matters and "laid about him professionally with such unwonted dispatch and intention, that a piece of work was vigorously pursued as soon as cut out" (OMF 875).

Wrayburn has arisen from death by drowning in order to learn how to work, an ironic fulfillment of Garis's contention that "Dickens's incapacity for imagining meaningful work from the inside figures simply as an incapacity to die."²³ Wrayburn does "die" and does find work, reminding us again that the capacity to face death leads to growth. Martin Chuzzlewit journeys into death and once recovered, announces: "I will do anything, Tom, anything, to gain a livelihood by my own exertions. My hopes do not soar above that, now" (MC 811). Pip has faced the graveyard, the prison, and Magwitch's death; free now of his pretensions, he looks forward to working as a clerk in Herbert Pocket's office.²⁴ By contrast, Lazare in *La Joie de vivre*, obsessed with the death he cannot face, does not know how to use his fear to generate an opposing life force, as his creator does, and simply relinquishes work altogether.

This "life force" that Zola and his characters speak of in the *Rougon-Macquart* consists not only of spiritual, physical, and evolutionary expansion, but to a greater extent than we might suppose, of professionalism. And this professionalism flourishes under the shadow of

23. *Ibid.*, 133.

24. See Leavis and Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist*, 331.

institutions as avaricious and all-encompassing as those in Dickens: the department store, les Halles, the coal mines, the railway, the Bourse. It cannot be said that a character like old Quandieu in *Germinal*, so limited in his consciousness, can ever be liberated by his work or generate the life force that resists system. From his very birth he is a natural pawn who must remain honorable but uncritical as he stands "pigheaded, inflexible in his soldierly conception of duty, his eyes dimmed by the black gloom of half a century underground" (G 267). But in many of his novels, Zola tells us a great deal about the necessity of doing a good job, not only as a law of duty but as a means of creative freedom. Even the miner Maheu, who did nothing but hard manual labor, "had great respect for work well done, [and] was particularly taken with Etienne" (G 110). And he admires both life force and competence as he observes his fellow miners' "determination" under the most trying and pressing of circumstances, "strengthened by a soldierly spirit of sacrifice—a spirit that came of pride in one's profession and glory in the daily struggle against death" (G 208). After Claude Lantier is destroyed by a failure of self-sustainment at the end of *L'Oeuvre*, Sandoz cries out in defiance of society's crushing system, "allons, travailler," ("let's go to work") just as Dr. Pascal closes the *Rougon-Macquart* by declaring work to be his passion (DP 233).

So stern and joyless is Manzoni's attitude toward work that we might think it anything but liberating. Writing to his son Enrico in 1839, he advised him that he should be content if he could say not that "today I have done what I wanted to do, but what I ought to have done."²⁵ Nor does his famous letter to Marco Coen show a tolerance for professional preference. In 1832 he wrote to the young man that he would do well to become the banker his father wished him to be, rather than the poet he wanted to be. The world of commerce repels you, Manzoni argues, because you imagine yourself leading the exalted life of a man of letters, without regard for or observation of the common feelings of mankind, of the reason for things, of the essential conditions of society. A world without poets is a

25. Quoted in Ginzburg, *La famiglia Manzoni*, 173.

more satisfactory one than a world without bankers. Travel the path providence has laid down for you, not the one you might choose for yourself. You will derive immense satisfaction from doing your job well. With more knowledge of the real world, you will always be able to write later.²⁶ The letter takes on resonance in light of the deadly encounter that transformed Lodovico into Fra Cristoforo, a transformation brought about in large part by the pretention of his father, who “spent his last years in a continual state of worry and dread of being despised, without ever reflecting that selling is no more ridiculous than buying, and that for many years he had carried on the trade he was now ashamed of, in view of the public, and without any regrets. He had his son brought up like a nobleman . . .” (PS 48).

That Don Abbondio and Gertrude did not wish to serve the particular professions economic constraints forced upon them matters not a whit to Manzoni. The former, who “had been very willing to obey his parents when they wanted him to become a priest . . . had not . . . given much thought to the duties and noble aims of the office to which he was dedicating himself. To assure himself a way of living in some comfort, and to put himself in a class which was both strong and respected, had seemed more than sufficient reason for making such a choice” (PS 12). He disregards responsibility as cavalierly as Skimpole, throwing “a glance at the church . . . and mutter[ing] to himself, ‘It’s up to the people to look after it; it’s for them it’s there. If they’ve got any feeling for their church, they’ll see to it; if not, it’s their own lookout’” (PS 448). The confrontation between Cardinal Federigo and Don Abbondio focuses on the irrelevance of personal preference and is consistent with our understanding of the story of Gertrude, who is forced into the monastery against her will. It is the purpose of the novelist to demonstrate how profession can extricate those who pursue it both from history’s exigencies and from private and personal dissatisfactions. As his guide he chooses charity, which, in the last resort, can make fate itself a profession, a kind of

26. Letter of 2 June 1832 in Manzoni, *Lettere inedite e sparse. Prosa minore*, 371–77. Dickens’s letter of 1840 to S. Harford, a solicitor who wished to be a poet, offers an interesting comparison (*Selected Letters of Dickens*, 303–4).

“amor fati.” S. B. Chandler justly notes that Manzoni has no trouble imagining a way for Gertrude to be happy, since the Christian religion consoles by bending “the spirit to embrace willingly” what must be and turns the rash choice into a wise one through the sanctity and joy of a vocation.²⁷ This is precisely what Miguel de Unamuno calls “the religious attitude,” which encourages us “to make the occupation in which we find ourselves our vocation, and only in the last resort to change it for another.” Because we believe Dickens has the same attitude, we might qualify John Kucich’s assertion that “it is not work per se that Dickens hates but the restricted condition of mind that it represents.”²⁸

If there are many who do not take Dickens’s sentiments about profession seriously enough, there are even more who find his feelings about charity naive and sentimental. Yet we miss the richness of the double structure in these novels if we undervalue the importance of their *Christian* charity. It was not simply a fancy that made the physician Dickens’s favorite professional, but the fact that doctors and nurses most deeply satisfied his definition of a religious attitude. The contemporary habit of viewing the violence of the humor in the portraits of Skimpole and Sairey Gamp as an explosive expenditure of energy tends to conceal the target of that anger, the betrayal of the profession and charity of healing. Though Dickens, whose inventive and hyperbolic creativity in *Martin Chuzzlewit* has never been equalled, clearly wants us to delight in Sairey’s wonderful dialogues, he wants that delight to be shaded by the thought that nursing the sick is a calling that demands communion wafers, not “cowcumbers.” When critics lament the inconsistency of tone in the hardening of Skimpole as he turns Jo over to the authorities, they do not appreciate sufficiently Dickens’s fanatic devotion to profession and the depth of his spirituality. We should recall the passage in *Little Dorrit* in which doctor as Physician is so exalted he becomes like the “Divine Master” of all healing who “went, like the rain, among the just and unjust, doing all the good he could, and neither proclaiming

27. *Alessandro Manzoni: The Story of a Spiritual Quest*, 113–14.

28. Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, 271; Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 184.

it in the synagogues nor at the corner of streets" (LD 768). So works Woodcourt as he speaks gently to the brickmakers and their wives and tends to the poor, homeless, and nameless; so Esther describes her husband. In the shipwreck, Allan seems to walk on water as he pulls the drowning passengers from the deep.

Manzoni wants to make it clear that he reads historical and political profession with "the religious attitude" in mind. The chronicle speaks of Ambrosio Spinola, who was sent to govern for King Philip IV and died in bed, not in battle,

of chagrin and vexation at the reproaches, wrongs, and disappointments of every kind received at the hands of those he served. History has deplored his fate, and censured the ingratitude of the others. It has described his political and military enterprises with great diligence, extolled his energy, foresight, and perseverance. It might also have asked what he did with all these qualities of his when the plague was threatening and actually invading a population committed to his care, or rather to his mercy. (PS 474)

Manzoni expects his professionals to be Christians and his Christians to be professionals. When Borromeo expresses a wish to visit Lucia, residing at the time with the tailor and his wife, the village priest begs him not to trouble himself, as Lucia can be summoned. He clearly does not comprehend "that the cardinal wanted by this visit to pay homage to misfortune, to innocence, and to his own ministry at the same time" (PS 372; our italics). Borromeo's activity in the community is ubiquitous: he sends leftovers to a hospital for the poor, establishes an Ambrosian library, a trilingual college, a printing press for oriental languages, and a school for the three principal visual arts (PS 334). In striking contrast to Don Abbondio, what turned Fra Cristoforo's life and vocation into a blessing for himself and for all whom he helped was his charity, which permeated his every act and thought.

Zola's antagonism toward the representatives and dogma of the Roman Catholic Church culminates in *Vérité* but is clearly defined in the way the two priests of *Germinal* betray their profession through

their lack of charity. L'abbé Joire "came by, hiking up his cassock with the delicacy of a well-nourished cat; he was fearful of soiling his habit. He was a gentle little man who tried not to get involved in anything, so as to irritate neither the workers nor the bosses" (G 74). He is followed by L'abbé Ranvier, an embodiment of Christian socialism, who is "so carried away by his dream of the Church's final triumph," who has "such disdain for mundane facts, that he was able to go through the villages without alms and pass through that army of starving people with empty hands, himself only a poor devil who saw suffering as a spur to salvation" (G 318). Whereas l'abbé Joire, by not protesting history, allows his profession to serve system, the priest who follows him does not even see history, which makes profession impossible altogether. There is no doubt that in *Germinal* Zola "shows us the appalling uncharitableness" of his society through his priests and his "visiting committees." But in *La Joie de vivre* he shows us the blessed charity of St. Paul, divorced from system and differing little from the "new charity," as he calls it in *Le Docteur Pascal*, identified not only with justice but with that "altruism," the "love for others" that comes to those who have a "passionate devotion to life."²⁹

Charity not only pulls profession away from system, but it has the remarkable quality that it can make of life itself a profession. In an exchange with Jacob Marley's ghost, Scrooge remarks:

"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob. . . ."

"Business!" cried the Ghost, wringing its hand again. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all, my business." (CC 26)

Madame Merle understands that Ralph's *carrière* is simply to be an American expatriate, which "signifies absolutely nothing—it's impossible anything should signify less" (PL 169), whereas Isabel understands that Ralph's *métier* has been the living of a beautiful life. As

29. Walker, *Germinal and Zola*, 12. See page 18, note 121 for "new charity" and 7–8 for attitude toward charity.

Gabriel Nash tells us in *The Tragic Muse*, it is impossible anything should signify more; to be, to feel, to live is a *métier*.³⁰

Whether it is conducted in public or in private, the business of charity is always antipathetic to and subversive of system. Programs initiated by the Poor Laws typically fed institution, and so did the form of charity most favored in Dickens's day, the public occasion, which the novelist attended but parodied in his writings. Despite his many charitable activities in the public sector (he found Field Lane school for Miss Coutt's charitable plans and helped her with the establishment of Urania Cottage for wayward women, raised money for colleagues and for their widows and children, and generously participated in benefit readings, theatricals, banquets), it was precisely the kind of giving considered by many to do more harm than good, the small and personal act of charity, that most interested the novelist.³¹ For this reason, House's suggestion that the author's personal "man-to-man" benevolence represents his desire to retain the virtues of the old class relationships, such as master, apprentice, and journeyman, is misleading.³²

The entire concept of charity in the works of these four authors, in fact, draws its definition from the personal, the intimate, the domestic. Gestures that in public are the parading of a performing self must in private become the signifiers of the highest Christian charity, the giving of self. The look of an eye, the carriage of the body, the tone of a voice are coins of the spiritual realm. When Mrs. Pardiggle invades the home of the brickmakers with a voice that "had not a friendly sound . . . it was much too businesslike and systematic" (*BH* 98), Esther need say no more. Scrooge notes of Mr. Fezziwig that "his power lies in words and looks" (*CC* 43), and in the same tale, Bob is

30. James, *The Tragic Muse*, 31. See also James, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, 268. The reluctance of Henry James, Sr., to have his children choose one area of endeavour exclusively was caused in part by his fear that they would have no time for simply being and seeing.

31. See *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 42, 46, 66, 68, 125, 145; and Welsh, *City of Dickens*, 88, 94.

32. *Dickens World*, 67.

touched by his willingness to help Scrooge's nephew not "for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that . . . was quite delightful" (CC 87). Borromeo's charity was not only in what he gave but in "his whole bearing. Easy of access to all, he felt it a special duty to have a pleasant smile and an affectionate courtesy toward those who are called the lower classes, particularly as they find so little of it in the world" (PS 336).

Scrooge moves into the inexplicable and classless world of charity and out of the systematic world of deliberation, consequence, and patronization when he says: "There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all"; and again "I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all" (CC 37, 43). The coin Snagsby puts into Jo's hand habitually represents not a payment for services but a simple, personal gesture of generosity, whereas the coin Lady Dedlock puts into Jo's hand is payment for his services, a payment that blesses neither the giver, who shudders at the proximity of flesh, nor the receiver (BH 202). That both parties must be blessed in charity is perfectly illustrated by Dickens's parodic treatment of Skimpole's rationalization to Jarndyce and company: "I may have been born to be a benefactor to you, by sometimes giving you an opportunity of assisting me in my little perplexities" (BH 67), a notion which is turned right side up again when Esther later wonders at "The old conspiracy to make me happy! Everybody seemed to be in it!" (BH 437).

Surely the charity we think of as most Dickensian is that of the godfathers, who escape the onus of social dependency by inhabiting the world of the fairy tale. It has been argued that in Dickens's later novels, as the social context becomes tighter and more controlling and the fairy tale weaker, the power of personal goodness and spontaneous generosity diminishes.³³ This seems untenable, however, when we find, juxtaposed to the grim reality in his last completed novel, a fairy tale as strong as it has ever been in his works. *Our Mutual Friend*, we remember, features the natural goodness and gener-

33. See *ibid.*, 168; and Lucas, *The Melancholy Man*, 221.

osity of spirit that powerfully overcomes class structure while utilizing all the Christian symbolism at the authors' disposal. Fairy tales had the singular advantage of explaining a charity that Dickens knew could not be explained by history. Manzoni, with more dependence upon history, understood this too. As for James's *The Wings of the Dove*, any explanation of Milly's gift in terms of societal relationships or structures is doomed to failure. Even in Zola, where there is so little reason to expect charity and so few ways of expressing it, the exploited Mouquette gives her food, her body, her very life to others.

We have agreed with Orwell that the novel is closer to a Protestant than a Catholic form of art, and the novelists in this study seem to have followed that characterization. But however true this seems in the area of profession, it is not so in the area of charity. Here the novelists are closer to St. Paul than to Luther. This sheds an interesting light on Dickens's well-known dream of Mary Hogarth, who appeared to her brother-in-law after her death with the suggestion that perhaps the Roman Catholic religion was the right one for him. Like Zola, Dickens detested the servility of Catholicism and its rigid structure of dogmatic and codified creed, but he warmly embraced the Pauline virtues of the New Testament, that inclusive charity perfectly articulated by Fra Cristoforo in his final speech (reminiscent of *Little Dorrit*) to Renzo and Lucia:

"My children, I should like you to have a memento of the poor friar."
Here he took out of his pocket a little box. . . . "In here is the rest of that bread, the first I ever asked of charity, the bread you have heard me speak of. I leave it with you. Keep it: show it to your children. They'll come into a sad world and in sad times, in the midst of the arrogant and the high-handed. Tell them always to forgive; always. Everything, everything!" (PS 573)

Significantly, Cristoforo does not preach from the pulpit but gives his bread to a couple who will bring forth a family and establish a home in which virtue will flourish apart from public system and reward.

Charity becomes more problematic as a novelistic impediment than as an emotional embarrassment. Since it originates in humility and is therefore, by its very nature, reticent and unaggressive, novels

that depend upon it as a spiritual counterforce would seem to be courting trouble. Because it is unaffected by history, it has the license to be as active in its spiritual realm as will is in its sphere of influence, but what surprises us is that it becomes genuinely creative and productive as a powerful catalyst *within* history and makes of those who dispense it “*auctores of goodness*,” in William James’s phrase. He who treads the path of virtue, Dickens writes Emmely Gotschalk, “induces someone else to tread it.”³⁴ Such authors of goodness are not preachers who retard the narrative but quiet initiators who drive it forward. Charley tells Esther that although it was Jarndyce who helped the Neckett children, it “was all done for the love of you” (BH 299).

But charity and profession surprise us further as they become transforming, pragmatic, tough, compassionate, and progressive in the particular area of Dickens’s work that has previously been deemed to be passive, conservative, sentimental, antifeminist, and hopelessly Victorian. We should return to the familiar complaint of critics who regret a kind of social and cultural deficiency in Dickens’s novels,³⁵ which cannot be redeemed by recourse to an interior dialectic within Dickens himself. Rather, we must recognize that the very absence of politics, science, and art, in fact, kept uncluttered that antipodal model from the world of his childhood, the hearth and the streets of London, and rendered it a powerful organizing force for his literature. To his lifelong regret and resentment, “culture” was not school but the debtors’ prison, rented lodgings, and the blacking factory. In such circumstances, it was natural for melodramatic extremes to take hold in his mind; profession and home at their best represented a kind of salvation, at their worst a deadly betrayal. Surrounded by lower-class boys, he found work nothing but drudgery and humiliation. All this sharpened his determination to succeed in both home and profession, to establish these two points of security in a shat-

34. *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 273.

35. See House, *Dickens World*, 160, for example. For the interest in science, however, see Dickens’s “Species,” “Natural Selection,” and the entertaining attempt to explain Faraday in “The Mysteries of a Teakettle,” *Household Words*, 16 November 1850, 176–81.

tered universe. His early distinction as parliamentary recorder, his wild success as editor, journalist, and novelist, his obsessive setting up of households, culminating in the purchase of the very habitation in Chatham he and his father had built dreams upon years earlier, were all manifestations of this dedication.

The work of novelist offered Dickens an opportunity to bring profession and charity together without leaving the home whose appearance of invulnerability had deceived him earlier in his life and that could now represent both sanctuary and kingdom, peace and power. Like his David Copperfield, he could pursue a profession much like charity, by charity's hearth. Merely by writing *A Christmas Carol* at his desk, he could induce Thackeray to call the work a "national benefit" and Lord Jeffrey to exclaim that it had "fostered more kindly feelings, and prompted more positive acts of beneficence, than can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals in Christendom since Christmas 1842."³⁶

But Dickens took this a step further. Though David Copperfield's profession could manifestly wield great influence, Dickens's female narrator, Esther Summerson, could wield even more, not through her role as narrator but as housekeeper par excellence! One contemporary critic reads Dickens's narratives of families in *Bleak House* as "vicious, multiple satires" originating from his growing skepticism that family life could serve as a counterforce to society. It is, of course, possible to see the novelist's obsession with housekeeping as an expression of desperate holding on, but it is surely a sign of his passionate belief in the hearth as a spiritual power capable of resisting the public world and supporting the very house of fiction itself.³⁷ To understand how seriously Dickens's took these skills in his heroine and in himself, we have only to remember Skimpole's mocking use of Esther's administrative abilities compared to his own lack of them in playing his game of reversals. A fanatical keeper of order within his own home, Dickens left notes in the children's drawers when he

36. From John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, edited by J. W. T. Ley, 1928, quoted in Walder, *Dickens and Religion*, 121–22.

37. See Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction*, 216; and *Excess and Restraint*, 128.

found them untidy, kept careful accounts, purchased groceries, renovated homes, negotiated contracts and terms, arranged moving schedules, found temporary houses for his family on the Continent and in England, traveled extensively with his entire entourage, put on elaborate theatricals, produced joyous festival celebrations, and supported numerous relatives and charities.

Since Dickens not only cared passionately about housekeeping but was himself a consummate domestic manager, it is no wonder that he set about his self-exculpation in the matter of his divorce by accusing Kate of insufficiencies in housekeeping. Nor should we be surprised, since morality and profession are inextricably woven, that Kate was also accused of being a bad mother. Mrs. Jellyby is a terrible housekeeper and a terrible wife and mother; Mrs. Bagnet a perfect housekeeper and a perfect wife and mother. The first lesson Jarndyce sets up for Esther and Ada is one that demonstrates the importance of a well-run home, though in Esther's case, it is hardly necessary. The young women are sent off to Mrs. Jellyby's establishment, and at once Esther begins to tidy her room and make a fire, eliciting from Ada the praise that she could "make a home out of even this house" (*BH* 42) but drawing only disapproval from Mrs. Jellyby. In any case, the women come back to Jarndyce with the lesson correctly learned: "We thought that, perhaps . . . it is right to begin with the obligations of home, sir; and that, perhaps, while those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them" (*BH* 61). But domestic administration had to be tempered by domestic charity. Manzoni's old woman, who serves *l'innominato* and has spent her life in the castle home, represents the dangers of the one without the other: "The idea of duty, which lies like a seed in the hearts of all men, had developed in hers and become linked and associated in her mind with feelings of respect, of dread, and of servile devotion . . . and gradually there had faded from her mind almost all ideas of how human beings lived save within its precincts" (*PS* 312).

It is clear that the profession of housekeeping and the charity of housekeeping, practiced by "those delicate vessels" who carry "the treasures of human affection" (*DD* 160), are not ancillary but pri-

mary in a salvational structure. Since Dickens believed that “every home in all this land” was “a World, in which a woman’s course of influence and action is marked out by Heaven,”³⁸ it stands to reason that in novels of stark polarities the perversion of this action and influence is marked out by hell. “Ma’s ruinous to everything” (*BH* 373), Caddy laments in observing the drinking servants and the perpetual disorder, and David explains the problems of disastrous housekeeping to Dora:

The fact is, my dear . . . there is contagion in us. We infect every one about us. . . . It is not merely, my pet . . . that we lose money and comfort, and even temper sometimes, by not learning to be more careful; but that we incur the serious responsibility of spoiling every one who comes into our service, or has dealings with us. I begin to be afraid that the fault is not entirely on one side, but that these people all turn out ill because we don’t turn out very well ourselves. (*DC* 2:308–9)

Moral growth can be directly measured by domestic improvement. Bella Wilfer is a spoiled, petulant child and a terrible cook, but when she becomes a wise and tolerant woman, she marries John and quickly discovers “a perfect genius for home” (*OMF* 748). In dithyrambic ecstasy, Dickens lists each house and garden task she has accomplished (*OMF* 749), and even has her consulting “The Complete British Family Housewife,” while in *David Copperfield*, Dora’s dog Jip walks over the cookery and account books, wagging his tail, smearing and tearing up the pages (*DC* 2:252).

Zola makes the same connection of good housekeeping and morality. In *La Joie de vivre*, Pauline, like Esther, walks around quietly and efficiently with her keys, whereas Louise, like Dora Copperfield, hates housekeeping and characteristically yields her motherhood to Pauline. Maheu does odd jobs on Sunday, repairing the tub and pasting a picture of “the imperial prince, which had been given to the children, under the cuckoo clock” (*G* 119), unaware that he “in [his] small domestic sphere” could do “as much good,” Dickens

38. Letter of May 1849 to Angela Burdett Coutts in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 541–42.

writes a young correspondent, “as an Emperor can do in his.”³⁹ That the Maheu home is a model within the village tells us at once it is the moral center of the book. When Madame Hennebeau praises the Maheus for their domestic skill and the inspection committee finds Alzire to be a “lovely little housekeeper, with her dishtowel tied around her,” the family cannot help being “proud of it” (C 95) for all the horrible irony of the scene. Families that cannot have food on the table well-prepared and on time cannot live in peace or trust:

“La Levaque’s getting hers” Maheu commented tranquilly as he continued to scrape the bottom of his bowl with his spoon. “That’s funny—Boutloup said the soup was ready.”

“Ready my foot!” said La Maheude. “I saw the vegetables on her table and they weren’t even peeled!” (C 91)

Just as the washing of greens by Mrs. Bagnet is a synecdoche for the entire cluster of virtues that are central to the home,⁴⁰ so too is the peeling of vegetables. Maheu’s small garden is an extension of his house, and its bounty of “all their vegetables except for potatoes” tells us about the moral soundness, health, and life force of those who sow and sew. Denigrating remarks are made about the neighbor’s efforts, but Maheu, like Zola himself, “had a green thumb and even managed to raise artichokes, which his neighbors considered an affectation.” Levaque wants him to come for a beer and game of ninepins, but he decides “if he didn’t replant his lettuces, they’d all be wilted by the next day” (C 96). Maheu is as much a professional at home as he is at work.

We recall that Mrs. Jellyby had disapproved of Esther’s efforts at tidying her room on her first visit to that chaotic house, a disapproval Esther regrets, for she “had no higher pretensions” (BH 42). But in fact, Mrs. Jellyby is no fool and understands, consciously or not, that Esther would be capable of introducing into the house nothing short of a *moral revolution*. Dickens makes ambitious claims for house-keeping by believing that the profession *engenders* morality. When

39. Letter of February 1850 to Emmely Gotschalk in *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 272.

40. See the good Gretchen in Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 66.

H. M. Daleski states that "Dickens . . . far from being a revolutionary, is calling in *Bleak House* for nothing more subversive than a change of housekeepers,"⁴¹ he does not appreciate the full implications of his words. It was Dickens's fervent belief that housekeeping could be revolutionary in its immeasurable influence upon society and was not simply a safe, necessary, and suitable job in the service of those tired Victorian males who came home from the aggressive professional world of London. The moral influence emanating from the hearth was best disseminated by the domestic profession of housekeeping, which "associated itself with elevated responsibilities of all sorts and kinds" (MC 672), not the least of which was the sending of conscientious and compassionate individuals into the Circumlocution Offices of the world. It is for Dickens the loftiest profession in society.

In a quintessential novel of system and institution like *Bleak House*, Dickens sees to it that there are at least twenty-four different households, private units where individuals begin their practice of systematic or nonsystematic profession and charity. He demonstrates throughout his works not only that bad families mimic bad institutions, but that from bad families individuals move into institutional society and readily adapt themselves to its most harmful abuses. Conversely, good families will produce strong individuals who will become the responsible professionals within institutions, the lawyer who is upright and responsible, the judge in Chancery who is tolerant and generous to petitioners, the teacher who is patient and kind to the school children. Martin Chuzzlewit shows just how the lessons of home can ripple through society when, with some cheek, he lectures Elijah Pogram on the Americans' lack of manners: "From disregarding small obligations they come in regular course to disregard great ones" (MC 609). Carlyle's preaching, so influential on Dickens, expresses at high pitch the novelist's sentiments: "Reform, like Charity, O Bobus, must begin at home. Once well at home, how will it radiate outwards, irrepressible, into all that we touch and handle, speak and work, kindling ever new light by incalculable contagion,

41. *Dickens and the Art of Analogy*, 189.

spreading in geometric ratio, far and wide,—doing good only, where-soever it spreads, and not evil.”⁴²

Outside the house of fiction, Dickens feels no difficulty or embarrassment whatsoever when he urges the treasurer of Ragged School in Field Lane to initiate a program that would provide the boys with basins, running water, soap, and towels, in the conviction that washing before working is a lesson on the road to moral improvement. To Miss Coutts he insists that homemaking should be taught in Urania Cottage not only to make the girls adaptable to society once more, but to make them better morally. Mundane tubs, clothes, water, soap, and pragmatic lessons of discipline and professional training could open up the spiritual world to those who had been overwhelmed by history. Even within the house of fiction, he finds more than enough opportunities to praise outright the profession of housekeeping. Since Caddy is not a pure angel of the hearth but, as G. K. Chesterton puts it, “by far the greatest, the most human, and most really dignified of all the heroines of Dickens,”⁴³ it is easy for Dickens to show the moral influence of housekeeping upon her in a straightforward fashion: she becomes “better tempered” than [she] was, and “more forgiving” to her mother (*BH* 177) simply through her domestic training at Miss Flite’s. And though it may strain credibility that Bella Wilfer becomes “like a bright light in the house” (*OMF* 750) to her husband after she learns housekeeping, it is tolerable as a demonstration of moral development.

Yet the fact that Dickens so often had to resort to parody and travesty in order to make such exalted claims for housekeeping in his fiction should alert us to his sensitivity toward the expression of his passion and his belief. He finds a way of demonstrating the importance of domestic charity without embarrassment through his depiction of efficiency in Mrs. MacStinger, whose fanatical cleanliness in *Dombey and Son* is as harmful to good mothering and virtuous inducement as Mrs. Jellyby’s neglect of cleanliness. Mock pastoral cele-

42. *Past and Present*, 48.

43. “Characters in Bleak House” in *BH*, 945. From *Appreciation and Criticism of the Works of Charles Dickens and Introduction to Bleak House*, Everyman’s Library Series.

brates the blessed items and the keeper of the household; Cherry Pecksniff is the

staff and scrip, and treasure of her doting father—there she sits, at a little table white as driven snow, before the kitchen fire, making up accounts! See the neat maiden, as with pen in hand, and calculating look addressed towards the ceiling, and bunch of keys within a little basket at her side, she checks the housekeeping expenditure! From flat-iron, dish-cover, and warming-pan; from pot and kettle, face of brass footman, and black-leaded stove; bright glances of approbation wink and glow upon her. The very onions dangling from the beam, mantle and shine like cherubs' cheeks. Something of the influence of those vegetables sinks into Mr. Pecksniff's nature. He weeps. (*MC* 397–98)

Self-mockery and banter allow Eugene Wrayburn to name the flowers of his kitchen garden like a romantic poet and to suggest their revolutionary attributes:

“My dear, dear Mortimer . . . how often have I pointed out to you that its moral influence is the important thing? . . . See! . . . miniature flour barrel, rolling-pin, spice-box, shelf of brown jars, chopping board, coffee-mill, dresser elegantly furnished with crockery, saucepans and pans, roasting jack, a charming kettle, an armoury of dish-covers. The *moral* influence of these objects, in forming the domestic virtues, may have an immense influence upon me; . . . In fact, I have an idea that I feel the domestic virtues already forming.” (*OMF* 336–37; our italics)

The Woman Question

Once we are convinced that for Dickens the most exalted profession and charity can be found in the home, we are led to reconsider the “matter of women” in the nineteenth-century novel. However much we may wish today for a deeper and more sympathetic view of female subjugation, there is more sympathy and understanding in the pages of these novels than we are accustomed to believe. With Florence Dombey, Dickens is putting forth the proposition that in a

mercantile society emphasizing competition and business, women count as much as men because they nurture spirit and practice business with the utmost generosity and skill. There is no denying the acute injustice of Paul's school education (such as it is) in relation to Florence's self-education. The sister learns in order to help the brother. (Some might even find in this a personal retribution for the continuation of Fanny Dickens's education at the expense of Dickens's own.) Such discrepancies were at the heart of the Woman Question, which had for so long been debated. Nevertheless, the entire book argues that daughters and their business are the essential half of the equation that has on the other side sons and their business. And it argues further that those who enter the marketplace without the prior and primary benefit of a charitable hearth will fail to flourish as surely as little Paul. Profession asks for a broader definition that is not dictated by the market or those male bastions that care little for charity and take a dim view of women. *Dombey and Son* should certainly be read not only as an indictment of a mercantile world that turns people into things, but also as an encomium for a domestic world that prizes people as the essential good. And unlike Florence's father, Dickens is evenhanded with the sexes in considering the importance of the personal kingdom. After the damaging obsession with his son, Dombey learns to particularly value his daughter and granddaughter, and Betsey Trotwood must learn to overcome her strong predilection for girls as she protects and loves the grandnephew who had disappointed her at his birth.

However powerful a kingdom the home could be, the realization that domestic profession and charity were limited to the home presented a challenge to the novelist who did not want simply to portray angels or shrews at the hearth. That Dickens found only a partial resolution for the problem is evidenced by his creation of an astonishing variety of women with no place to go. In *David Copperfield* we read of those who pursue the domestic profession to perfection, those who fail miserably at it, and those who can find neither a domestic kingdom nor a place for themselves in society. There are those who choose to live alone, those who are forced to live alone, those who must live through their children, those who are destroyed

by male predators, those who find happiness in a marriage of minds (however disparate the ages), and those who cannot meet the demands of their husbands at any age: Betsey Trotwood, Dora, Miss Murdstone, David's mother, Rosa Dartle, Mrs. Steerforth, Mrs. Gummidge, L'il Em'ly, Agnes, Peggotty, Mrs. Micawber, Miss Mowcher, Annie Strong, Martha—each carries her own story. To interpret these limited or frustrating histories as manifestations of Dickens's misogyny, fear of sexual aggression, or craving for fantasy is inevitably reductive and unfair, for the novelist was all too aware of the dark side of housekeeping.

Even among the young, sweet innocent guardians of the hearth, we find rebellion. If Esther is "the most intelligent good woman that Dickens drew,"⁴⁴ she pays the price for it in her feverish dreaming and feels "inexplicable agony and misery to be part of the dreadful" flaming necklace (*BH* 432) that Carlyle names the "ring of Necessity whereby we are all begirt." Her dream seems justly interpreted by Alex Zwerdling and others as a cry for self-fulfillment, a longing to be free from communal duties and obligations. A conflict arises because "pleasing herself" is more painful to her than pursuing her duty. "Nothing in her childhood or young adulthood has prepared her to think she has a right" to self-indulgence or fulfillment.⁴⁵ After her illness, Jarndyce asks her to entertain Miss Flite, and although she is reluctant to do so, the ring of necessity pulls her into acceptance. Only when she invokes the therapeutic prayer from an old sad childhood birthday, "to be industrious, contented, and true-hearted, and to do some good to some one, and win some love to [herself] if [she] could" (*BH* 437), does she draw the spiritual sustenance necessary to lead her to an attitude that makes her thankful for her happiness and ready to be gracious and helpful to the old lady, in what Stewart calls a "homecoming from 'self-exile.'" Her struggle against duty is especially remarkable in an age that seemed to pay unquestioned homage to it;⁴⁶ Agnes Wickfield would never have experi-

44. Dyson, *Inimitable Dickens*, 172.

45. Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 79; Zwerdling, "Esther Summerson Rehabilitated," 53.

46. Stewart, *Trials of Imagination*, 191–92. Karen Chase argues that Esther

enced such a conflict. Esther belongs as much to the independent women of these stories as to those fantasies of desire by the hearth. Indeed, she is a transitional figure, as we shall see more clearly in the final chapter.

Just as Zola's Lazare is a later rendition of Richard Carstone, so his Pauline is a further, robust development of the uneasy angel Esther. Like Dickens's heroine, she talks to herself, but she can afford to have deeper self-doubts and resentments than Dickens's coauthor because she is not given her own narrative. When the doctor asks her how she remains so cheerful, her reply speaks of her effort: "Oh . . . I try and forget myself so as not to get depressed, and I think about other people, which keeps me busy and helps me to put up with my own troubles" (*JV* 175). Pauline is much more aware than Esther that she has been "born to help other people," as the doctor expresses it (*JV* 35). Like Esther, she is determined to win some love for herself, but whereas Esther seems to please everyone, Pauline often pleases no one. She is not only conscious of her self-sacrifice, but takes an "unconscious pride" in it (*JV* 177), and works hard on her saintliness, kneading and transforming her considerable jealousy and anger into altruism and love, conquering a streak of avarice by forcing herself to become more generous. Once she overcomes her ambivalences, however, she shows the same urge for self-annihilation as her predecessor by revealing that when "all her pride in renunciation had left her . . . she was willing for her loved ones to find happiness without her" (*JV* 207). For both these strong, angelic women, the family and the home, however important, provide their only outlet, whereas Lazare and Richard, who have neither the character nor the skill of the women, are free to try any number of options. Though Esther is a compassionate and able narrator, more alert and sensible than David Copperfield, she would never be offered his profession of novelist.

wants to expand her ring, to win some love for herself in the chain of being (*Eros and Psyche*, 130), and Kucich reasonably interprets Esther's dream as a death wish (*Excess and Restraint*, 126). See Kincaid, *Rhetoric of Laughter*, 175, for an extreme statement of the sinister aspects of duty, a word that serves to conceal "sadism, sexual perversion, weakness, or incapacity" even in characters as benign as David, Betsey, and Agnes.

As we note the paucity of good lawyers, judges, clergy, magistrates, and teachers in Dickens's novels, we are led to conclude with Joseph Fradin that "the strong male personality" in his fictional world "has few public outlets for its energy which do not distort it."⁴⁷ Women, on the other hand, do not have any public outlets at all for their energy, and that deprivation is even more distorting for the strong female personality. It was this very "meanness of opportunity" that Dickens observed and addressed, a fact often lost in the attention paid to his "Victorian" disapproval of women in government and other professions of public trust. (After the failure of Booriaboola, Mrs. Jellyby sets her mind on Parliament, which immediately condemns the notion.) Suspicion is fueled when we learn that Dickens did not give his daughters any but the most perfunctory Victorian female education. Yet clearly he recognized the frustration capable women suffered in society and the perversions of personality that such frustration, turned inward, induced. Furthermore, he understood that most women did not even have the option of becoming a Cheeryble, Brownlow, or Jarndyce. By denying them full resources for the exercise of virtue and the possibilities of moral growth, society was denying them the comforts of profession and of charity.

We find the odious Tulkinghorn considering the mixed proposition that "there are women enough in the world . . . too many; they are at the bottom of all that goes wrong in it, though, for the matter of that, they create business for lawyers" (*BH* 200). Miss Wade and Edith Dombey, who have no business of their own, do in fact create business for others by becoming pieces of merchandise, objects for barter. Edith is sold by her mother and Merry Pecksniff by her father as surely as Louisa Gradgrind by hers. Miss Wade does not even have a mother or father. "Put her in a room in London here with any six people old enough to be her parents," says Mr. Panks, "and her parents may be there for anything she knows." Hers is the story of the female in Victorian society who is a plaything and victim of men, reduced to the humiliation of accepting Mr. Casby's dole "when she

47. "Will and Society in *Bleak House*," 105. House notes that Dickens does not, in his depiction of the failures of the ruling class, offer portraits of good lawyers, judges, bishops, or magistrates (*Dickens World*, 182).

can't do without it. Sometimes she's proud and won't touch it for a length of time; sometimes she's so poor that she must have it. She writhes under her life. A woman more angry, passionate, reckless, and revengeful never lived" (*LD* 595). As she attempts to save a young girl without prospects from the same patronization and rejection she has experienced, she herself is both manipulative and heroic. In arguing that Dickens indicts the Victorian patriarchal system, which Mr. Turveydrop represents in small, Richard Barickman is right to view as ironic the critical interpretation that faults Dickens for what he blames in society, the exploitation of women by men in the business of men.⁴⁸ This major motif in *Dombey and Son* appears in his other novels as well. The frustration of women enslaved is what David Copperfield observes in the writhing of Rosa Dartle; suppressed resentment flashes from her fierce looks, her gestures, her angry scar. Attracted to her and wary at the same time, as Dickens himself would be, David surmises she is thirty and desirous of marriage, and well she might be. Emotionally and physically marked and humiliated by the man she loves, frustrated by a society that grants her no status, she has nothing to do but wait for her faithless Steerforth and serve his mother.

Because sewing clothes for dolls and people, performing in circuses, teaching, acting, or serving cannot deliver security, the role of wife and homemaker might seem to be the only profession that can rescue the independent woman from disaster. It saves Ruth Pinch from her job as a patronized governess and snatches Harriet Carker out of a life of quiet sacrifice for her disgraced brother. But marriage is not the end of independence for them. However patronizing and self-serving we might find such attitudes today, David Copperfield does learn the truth of Annie Strong's warning that "there can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose" (*DC* 2:271). Not only can Dora not cook or run a house, she cannot think. This matters to Dickens and his protagonist more than either of them had imagined it would. David realizes painfully that it would have

48. "The Subversive Methods of Dickens' Early Fiction," 42. For a fine analysis of Edith Dombey, see Hardy, *Moral Art of Dickens*, 60–75.

been better "if my wife could have helped me more, and shared the many thoughts in which I had no partner" (*DC* 2:314). He tries to mold Dora's mind by reading Shakespeare to her, but her reaction is childishly apprehensive. The "old unhappy loss" (*DC* 2:253) and "the old unhappy feeling" (*DC* 2:313) are associated not only with childhood deprivations and domestic incompetence but with intellectual incompatibility. At the end of his story, he seems to have married an angel without body or mind. As vapid an icon as Agnes is, however, she has been not only a consummate housekeeper, but a judge with a far keener eye than David's for moral worth. If marriage delivers, it also destroys. Connubial "possession" is shown to be disastrous for Mrs. Turveydrop, whom her husband "had married [as] a meek dancing-mistress, with a tolerable connexion" and "had worked . . . to death . . . to maintain him in those expenses which were indispensable to his position" (*BH* 173), and marriage as buying and selling proves disastrous for Edith Dombey. It is not unreasonable to see Dickens as a pioneer in the depiction of frustrated women who are not even allowed the freedom and independence to make a profession of marriage.

The most extraordinary portrait of an independent woman in Dickens is Betsey Trotwood, whom Shaw dismisses as "a bachelor in petticoats."⁴⁹ Free both from society's dictates and from her author's projected needs and desires, she prefers living like a spinster to serving the weak man she had married long ago in the sacrificial way of Dickens's angels, though she still pities and helps him. In fact, she is determined to counteract the vulnerability of childish and dependent women like David's mother and Dora. Of course, Betsey is in some respects a fairy godmother, and as such she leads David to understand that her loss of money has been grievous, the kind of exaggeration her nephew calls "a pious fraud," interpreted by Victorians as "any falsehood told with a moral motive."⁵⁰ But she is also a modern feminist, and her defiance of custom speaks even to Lady Dedlock, as well as to Dora's aunts, who consider her "an eccentric

49. "What is the New Element?" 164.

50. Eigner, *Dickens Pantomime*, 54. Betsey Trotwood would be called, in pantomime, a "benevolent agent."

and somewhat masculine lady, with a strong understanding." David writes with appreciation of her sensitivity, for though she "occasionally ruffled the feathers of Dora's aunts, by expressing heretical opinions on various points of ceremony, she loved [him] too well not to sacrifice some of her little peculiarities to the general harmony" (*DC* 2:201). She walks briskly rather than riding to Putney and wears her bonnet as she wishes, not as custom dictates. With the holy fool Mr. Dick, she maintains a deep friendship and recognizes in him a wisdom others ignore. She rescues David by giving him love, a home, support, and advice, yet allows him to make his own mistakes, to be "blind, blind, blind." The comforting of the poor and the work of conventional charity were outlets for a strong single woman of independent means like Miss Coutts, but even in such work, it was easier for married women to find new opportunities for charitable expression through their husbands, as Esther Summerson is able to do through Woodcourt. For Betsey Trotwood no public office was attainable, and Dickens poses troubling questions simply by limiting a woman of her energy and resourcefulness to taking care of Mr. Dick, David, and the donkeys. Her profession, in fact, is forced into the domestic configuration once again.

To Gissing's observation that women's resentment of Dickens stemmed from his "unrivalled gallery of shrews and termagants," R. J. Cruikshank adds that such a gallery might represent the terrible cost of female subjugation.⁵¹ In a great number of nineteenth-century novels and plays, we are told of the price women paid in social, professional, and economic constraints, though it is important to emphasize what so many have denied, that Dickens was very much in that tradition. Even in Zola, where male bonding and power clearly predominate, we discover consideration of the constrictions in the lives of women. Pauline tells Lazare that she has learned a great deal of medicine by poring through his cast-off texts. When he suggests she should be a nurse, this woman who nurses almost everyone in the novel replies that being a nurse has no use. Had she been a man, she would have been a doctor. Instead, she must satisfy herself with

51. *Charles Dickens and Early Victorian England*, 147–48.

housework, taking care of others, and holding charitable audiences for the poor. As men, Christine in *L'Oeuvre*, Clotilde in *Le Docteur Pascal*, and the plucky "attractive, emancipated" Deneulin girls (G 364–65) might have been more serious artists.

James makes the best case he can for Kate Croy, despite her envy of Milly's wealth and her desire to possess it. After all, we have been shown the house she lives in with her penniless, unscrupulous father and a sister whom she finds to be an appalling example of "what a man . . . might make of a woman" (WD 41) in an impecunious marriage. Densher sees how much difference money would make for a woman like Kate: "What a person she would be if they *had* been rich—with what a genius for the so-called great life, what a presence for the so-called great house, what a grace for the so-called great positions!" (WD 397). Gender critics who read such novels as stories of women caught not only in the prison of society but of their own womanhood, might take heart from Isabel's fateful boast to Caspar Goodwood: "I'm not in my first youth—I can do what I choose—I belong quite to the independent class. I've neither father nor mother; I'm poor and of a serious disposition; I'm not pretty. I therefore am not bound to be timid and conventional; indeed I can't afford such luxuries. Besides, I try to judge things for myself; to judge wrong, I think, is more honorable than not to judge at all" (PL 141). Still, Isabel envies Lord Warburton's consoling access to public activity ("British politics had cured him"; PL 317). And Kate imagines "the way she might still pull things round had she only been a man" (WD 22). If *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Portrait of a Lady* were simply novels about women's independence, it would seem to be the professional who has a better opportunity for freedom. To Susan Stringham, "It made all the difference . . . over and over again and in the most remote connexions, that, thanks to her parents' lonely thrifty hardy faith, she was a woman of the world" (WD 84). She would not be forced to marry before she found it right, nor in *The Portrait of a Lady* would the emancipated Henrietta Stackpole, who for Isabel "was chiefly a proof that a woman might suffice to herself and be happy" (PL 55), though James had the difficult case of his sister Alice continually before his eyes.

But however sensitive James seemed to be to the difficulties women had in his time and place, he forces us to wonder why money does not seem to yield the anticipated power and freedom in his novels. By giving his heroine a fortune in *The Portrait of a Lady*, the author might conceivably have been attempting “to explore the actual possibilities open to a woman of her day,” as Virginia Fowler contends.⁵² In *The American Scene*, after all, the novelist recognizes the field of community and culture the American woman inherits by default from the American man and his singular obsession with business. She arrives upon a scene devoid of those “complications and dangers” so evident on the European stage. Though it was necessary to train herself for freedom, “she could develop her audacity on the basis of her security, just as she could develop her ‘powers’ in a medium from which criticism was consistently absent.”⁵³ But the author makes his heroines pay for their uncriticized freedom, as Milly learns the pain of rejection and Isabel the dangers of independent judgment. James’s sigh of relief that he had not been given Edith Wharton’s wealth and freedom—“such incoherence, such a nightmare of perpetually renewable choice and decision, such a luxury of bloated alternatives do they seem to burden life withal”⁵⁴—reflects Isabel’s anxiety about freedom’s requirements of choice and attention that her new fortune has imposed upon her. Isabel’s money, in fact, simply gives her an opportunity to enter into marriage “with charged hands” (PL 351), with the notion of bringing happiness to another. Far from rebelling against convention, she shows herself to be more conservative than Osmond’s sister and believes deeply in the sanctity of marriage. Clearly, these novels cannot turn upon monetary and professional opportunities or impediments for women.

Distasteful as it might be for us in the late twentieth century, Isabel becomes most powerful when she is most humiliated, and this renders her remark to Ralph upon the acquisition of her fortune richly

52. *Henry James’s American Girl*, 66.

53. *The American Scene*, 348–50. See also the conversation with Edwin Godkin in *Complete Notebooks*, 73–74. We should always bear in mind the difficulties Henry James had in imagining the professional world.

54. Quoted in Connolly, “Edith Wharton and Henry James,” 178.

ironic: "I'm not sure it's not a greater happiness to be powerless" (*PL* 190). Since there is no denying Isabel's profound discomfort with her new power, we might well agree with Carren Kaston that she is caught between a need for self-creation and a need for dependency, so vividly felt in the arms of Caspar. But we should not be misled into believing, as the critic does, that it is Osmond's imagination which wins out in the end.⁵⁵ The salvational mode not only makes triumphant what seems to be perverse, but shows Isabel that renunciation and sacrifice are not incompatible with self-authorship.

If we follow James's description of *The Bostonians* in his notebooks as a novel about "the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf,"⁵⁶ we would surely be justified in interpreting his ending to mean that at a certain time and place in history women could not win no matter what choice they made. But this is not what the novelist meant to say in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James positively shackle their heroines with a grim narrowness of opportunities because, when circumstances are most constraining, the salvational drama flourishes. It was therefore vital for them to create a frustrating climate antipathetic to negotiation and conducive to spiritual rebellion and enrichment. Contemporary critics may wish to politicize scene and subject in the stories of these authors, but they remain rooted in the dialectic of history and spirit. The protests of the characters had to be so passionate and calm, so violent and gentle, so energetic and passive, that only melodrama and the salvational mode could accommodate them.

55. See Kaston, *Imagination and Desire*, 5, 13–14, 21, 41, 45, 48–49, 54–58, 62, 136–79.

56. *Complete Notebooks*, 20.

CHAPTER 5

DIFFICULTIES OF RELATIONSHIP AND FORM

The Novel and the Novelist

The vision of the orphan Milly desperately holding out her arms to a society of 1902 as she is being pulled away from it is a vivid reminder to us that James, Dickens, Manzoni, and Zola were writing at a time when, according to Raymond Williams, “what was and is most creative in the novel—the open response to an extending and active society, the similarly open response to intense and unique and connecting feeling—encountered major difficulties: difficulties of *relationship* and so difficulties of *form*: difficulties that connect and disturb through all the rest of our century” (our italics). With community and form breaking up around them, novelists of religious passion faced a constant challenge to prevent what Garrett Stewart calls “the suicidal drift of private vision against which the imagination must try its best to hold out and be tried.”¹ We have no trouble recognizing compensatory forms and strategies from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day, when we arrive at the abdication of authorial voice and sympathy. It has become a common custom in contemporary criticism to see an author simply as an amalgam of discursive habits and the matter of literature as nothing more than unattached desire that moves inward and away from society. Leo Bersani characterizes the next step as a deconstruction that might cause the desiring self to “disappear as we learn to multiply our discontinuous and partial desiring selves.”² What an enticing and in-

1. Williams, *English Novel*, 139; Stewart, *Trials of Imagination*, xxii. See also Williams, *The Country and the City*, 155.

2. *Future for Astyanax*, 7. See also Bersani, 6; and Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 126.

calculable authorial relief! After all, the difficulty of keeping the desiring self from the text persuades Esther Summerson that she would be better off as spirit or paradigm: "It seems so curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of *my* life! But my little body will soon fall into the background now" (*BH* 27).

When James envies Balzac the fictional cases and predicaments that offered him a continual escape "from [his] own box,"³ he envies more than his escape; he envies the material available for the drawing up of an extending and active community that is no longer available to the author. We should pay heed to the tense Dickens uses as David Copperfield speaks about the comfort and innocence he had sought in his youth through identification: "It is curious to me *how I could ever have consoled myself* under my small troubles (which were great troubles to me), by impersonating my favourite characters . . . I have been Tom Jones (a child's Tom Jones, a harmless creature) for a week together" (*DC* 1:66; our italics). With the resource of community gone, the authors in this study turned, as we have seen, to an evolutionary form of the morality play in order to preserve both community and relationship. But the problem is that the morality play itself in its most extreme condition leads to a final explosive self-fragmentation, destroying the novel and the novelist it was meant to preserve.

When Grahame Smith judges *Bleak House* to be "one of the most rigorously objectified works in the history of the English novel,"⁴ he reminds us that Dickens represents in his work before *Our Mutual Friend* a stage between Balzac and the theatricalization of the desiring self. In the absence of that psychological and moral analysis so dear to George Eliot, the novelist must somehow embody psychological rumblings and conflicts in an objective world, and he finds a way to do this through a process of multiplication that increases as Dickens's career and the fragmentation of the world progress, rising to a frenzy in *Bleak House*. Selves split off from Esther like protozoa

3. "The Lesson of Balzac," 112.

4. *Charles Dickens: Bleak House*, 20.

in mitosis. Just as Dickens (his daughter Mamie tells us) would murmur to himself and make facial contortions in the mirror to conjure up "another," so Esther obsessively finds a reflected Esther. And soon other Esthers come upon the scene. By the inhabitants of Bleak House she is called Old Woman, Little Old Woman, Cobweb, Mrs. Ship-ton, Mother Hubbard, Dame Durden, "and so many names of that sort, that my own name soon became quite lost among them" (*BH* 90). During Caddy's illness, Jarndyce tells her that she has become "two little women, for his little woman was never missing," whereupon she resolves "to be doubly diligent and gay" (*BH* 604–5).

Not only does Dickens replicate his heroine, but he gives her a second narrative and a second history. By offering Esther an opportunity to experience a childhood different from her own, this time with a loving parental figure in Jarndyce, Dickens bestows upon her the privilege of acquiring "two entirely different images of herself," Alex Zwerdling notes with justification, "the rejected and the sponsored child, and these two identities engage in a long civil war for control of her psyche." All of this suggests a kind of desperate deliberation in the use of replication as a preserver of the dialectical novel and the extended society which makes questionable Jacob Korg's contention that Dickens's pairings are neither an artistic device nor a therapeutic service, but a kind of experimental rehearsal.⁵ Melodramatic methods of analogy, counterposing, reflecting, twinning, splitting, and multiplying prevent wish-fulfillment from destroying its very vehicle of expression by engaging it in a dynamic and contextual relationship.

Readers have doubtlessly grown tired of the obsessive naming and numbering of doppelgängers by literary interpreters, but it is appropriate and fruitful here to distinguish between the presence of an objective antithesis for Oliver in Dickens's early novel and a subjective one for Jasper in his last effort, because in so doing, we can trace a serious loss of representational options for the novelist. Neither the

5. Zwerdling, "Esther Summerson Rehabilitated," 45; Korg, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Bleak House*, 19. For a discussion of Dickens's device of offering "the possibilities of alternate lives and alternate ways of living," see Newsom, *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things*, 90.

conscious and self-irritated murderous instincts of Bradley Headstone (*OMF* 609) nor the unconscious corruption of John Jasper can be the real opposition to Oliver's wholeness and innocence. What J. Hillis Miller views in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as a "new departure," representing "a radical rejection of any possibility of the reconciliation of surface and depth, of 'celestial' and 'devilish'," is not radical in the way he assumes, for Dickens kept the "daylight world . . . precariously balanced over unfathomable abysses" throughout his career.⁶ What this last novelistic fragment represents is the radical completion of a treacherous turning inward for the Manichean battle, and it is intriguing to judge Dickens's self-destructive performances upon the stage, which made it impossible for him to finish an impossible task, as indications of an inner drama no longer able to be exorcised.

Embodying policeman and criminal in one man, Vautrin could stand as forerunner to teacher and murderer in Headstone, choir-master and putative murderer in Jasper. The differences, however, are crucial. Vautrin acts upon others rather than on himself because he still has a society to manipulate and to resist, whereas Dickens's tortured souls, though they sometimes act upon others, are so alienated from their society that they have no way to move outward. The pressure of the desiring self pushed Dickens toward a more extreme and dangerous position than that of Balzac, but the inner drama in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* seems no longer to be available for sublimation or exploitation. What constitutes Dickens's heroism is the Herculean and inventive effort to keep the tension between the public and the private intact in his work. We might well question the assumption that Dickens made a conscious decision in his later works to make up for the communal resources available to him in his early novels by turning to subjective possibilities within a single character.⁷ It would be the way, Dickens knew full well, to smother the salvational novel in a hermetic sealing of the soul. "The lyric mode

6. Charles Dickens: *The World of His Novels*, 321.

7. See Kucich, *Repression in Victorian Fiction*, 216. For Dickens's intensified risk-taking in transposing Ellen Lawless Ternan into Helena Landless, see Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 229.

[l'état lyrique],” as André Gide’s Edouard declares, must be both experienced and dominated,⁸ and the objective world is indispensable to this effort.

How strongly Zola was driven to set himself free from his dangerous imagination is suggested in *L’Oeuvre* by the hyperbole of Sandoz’s vision of a future in which man will be able to rid himself of the poetry that wears him out with its insatiable appetite. The present generation of artists, he tells Bongrand at Claude’s funeral, “is still too dirtied up with lyricism to hand down healthy works. It will need another generation, perhaps two, before men can paint and write logically, in the high and pure simplicity of truth” (O 393). Zola punished the poetic and idealistic temperament that had inspired the “embarrassing” *La Faute de l’abbé Mouret*, yet chose to end the *Rougon-Macquart* series with a novel closely resembling it. Manzoni, too, had to punish a passionate and unorthodox poetry that tormented the tranquillity of his religious belief. Pretending that such radical control of the imagination was more difficult in the work than in the author, he wrote: “A great poet and a great historian may be found in the same man without creating confusion, but not in the same work.”⁹ Such an inner conflict, however, proved impossible for the man to endure. Perhaps because he feared so deeply the anarchic lyricism of his soul, he walked away from poetry, from drama, and finally from fiction, into a kind of dry historicism and scholarship that served the dual purpose of punishment and protection.

Worn out by his need for continual vigilance over his lyrical expression, Dickens, who could “do nothing by halves,”¹⁰ wrote to John Forster: “You are not so tolerant as perhaps you might be of the wayward and unsettled feeling which is part (I suppose) of the tenure on which one holds an imaginative life, and which I have, as you ought to know well, often only kept down by riding over it like a dragon.” A man of extravagant control and extravagant passion, he

8. *Les faux-monnayeurs*, 304.

9. *On the Historical Novel*, 126.

10. Idle (Wilkie Collins) makes this fictional characterization of Dickens in “The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices,” Charles Dickens, 2:428.

confessed that it was his life's habit to repress his emotions after the rejections he suffered in his youth,¹¹ yet in his literature he lavishes his love on Tom and Ruth Pinch without a blush. Even if he sanctions his rhapsodic outbursts by the harshness of a preceding scene, he does not always manage to sublimate his passion into creative anger, and we are left with the deadly biblical cadence: "[Ruth] could not speak to him, but she loved him, as he well deserved. Even as he deserved, she loved him" (MC 846). Not even Tom deserves this.

Grim reality pressed ever more tightly around Dickens. Though he had shown the strength of his artistic control in *Our Mutual Friend* when he had the good curate Mr. Milvey, a man of many children and inadequate funds, question the desire of the kings and queens in the fairy tales for more children only from an *economic* point of view, he can no longer control the bitter disappointment he feels when his daughter Mary refuses to agree to a match with his friend. To Bulwer-Lytton he writes in 1866: ". . . what a wonderful instance of the general inanity of Kings that the Kings in the Fairy Tales should have been always wishing for children!"¹² How tempting the heaven in which children would not disappoint or die, in which Catherine Dickens would not be prolific, incompetent, and dumpy, but as virginal and angelic as Mary Hogarth. (Dickens seemed to think pregnancy was entirely Catherine's business.) In the perfect permanence of the world of angels, godfathers, and fools, time's ravages could be undone. Houses would stand safe forever, family hierarchies would never be breached, and most important, the sacred community would be eternally gathered before the hearth.

11. Letter to Forster, 1857, in *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 122. For the suppression of emotions caused by her earlier rejection of him, see Dickens's letter to Maria Beadnell Winter quoted in Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 183. See also Henry Fielding Dickens's description of his father's reluctance to show emotion to his children when they were grown (Johnson, 2:1101). For the balance between effusiveness and restraint in expression of emotions, see Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 241.

12. Quoted in Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2:1065.

The wholeness of heaven promised even greater relief in ending the torment of self-division. Martin Chuzzlewit expresses his own and Dickens's admiration for those who, like Mary, find that "endeavouring to be anything that's good, and being it, is . . . all one" (MC 299). Yet Dickens's daughter Katey felt it necessary to confess, at the end of her life, that despite her deep and abiding love for her father, he "was a wicked man—a very wicked man."¹³ The novelist was torn apart by the same conflict that raged in the more innocent Esther, a desire to help others at the sacrifice of personal pleasure and the urge to drive forward toward that one happiness missed in life. This battle became most clearly focused during the breakup of his marriage, when, Phyllis Rose contends, he perceived himself to be "self-sacrificing" instead of "self-indulgent."¹⁴ The obsessive need to argue his case declared the depth of his guilt and his passion for innocence. He wrote to Forster that his imaginative life must exact its price, yet he could not deny that "there is plenty of fault on my side." To Miss Coutts he also admitted that he was not blameless, asking her to look upon the mistake he had made early in his life with "charity and mercy," yet such sentiments did not stop him from defending himself publicly in *The Manchester Guardian* and on the front page of *Household Words*. Advising discretion, he heedlessly handed an explanation of his behavior to a friend that included a defense of Georgina and an unidentified Ellen—whose reputations had been sullied by unsettling rumors—and an imputation of Catherine's maternal incompetence. Shortly this found its way into the American press and back again into the London papers. In the wake of Catherine's displeasure over a mistaken delivery of a bracelet meant for Ellen Ternan to Tavistock House, he forced his wife to visit the young actress and sent a letter to Miss Coutts countermanding Catherine's request of a job for her brother. In the meantime, he had started a rival magazine, *All the Year Round*, which he (unaware of the irony) had wanted to call "Household Harmony."¹⁵

13. Storey, *Dickens and Daughter*, 219.

14. *Parallel Lives*, 172, 178.

15. Letter to Forster, 1857, in *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 122–23; letter to Miss Coutts of April 1860 quoted in Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His*

Dickens “was a man who could really have died of love and sorrow.”¹⁶ Yet because he felt Mark Lemon and Frederick Evans were intermediaries between Catherine and himself and because Lemon refused to publish his self-exculpating statement in *Punch*, he prohibited his children from seeing or speaking to either of his friends again. By ending Evans’s involvement in *Household Words*, Dickens drove the editor to sue him. The novelist who wrote movingly of forgiveness refused to attend the wedding of his son Charley to Evans’s daughter and became reconciled with his old friend Mark Lemon only at Clarkson Stanfield’s deathbed.

Such disparities between the real and the ideal are also evident in Manzoni. Mary Clarke wrote to Fauriel that the expression on the author’s face resembled the savior’s and she was tempted to throw herself at his feet as he walked through his house in mournful sorrow. In his life he tried to put on the mask of Christ in order to avoid being a man, for he had discovered, like Doctor Rieux in *The Plague*, that to be a man was infinitely more difficult than to be a saint. About goodness Manzoni wrote passionately, but he was a cold father who sent two of his daughters away to school in the kind of exile he had abhorred as a child, and then remained unresponsive to their pleading letters. Traumatized by the death of his beloved and pious wife Enrichetta, he absented himself from his children’s illnesses and deaths. For his own comfort, he exploited his son Pietro and encouraged his daughter Giulietta to marry one of his most ardent admirers, Massimo d’Azeglio, though she did not love him. (We should recollect Dickens’s guilt over his daughter Kate’s marriage to Wilkie Collins’s brother, whom he felt she did not love, in order to escape her father.)

Seeking an innocence he had never known, Manzoni was, like Esther Summerson, David Copperfield, and Florence Dombey, born guilty. After finishing his schooling, the budding poet went to Milan, Venice, Paris, and conducted himself in a way that made him trem-

Tragedy and Triumph, 2:951. Biographical details in this chapter are taken from Johnson and from Kaplan, *Dickens*. Kaplan cites doubtful origins for the story of the necklace (377), and Johnson refers to a bracelet.

16. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 82–83.

ble for the “sins” of his early manhood on his deathbed. Worries about immortality, about transgression, about foibles and backsliding plagued him. Doubts about God visited him in his youth, Niccolò Tommaseo tells us, as he struggled with his uncertainties by the deathbed of Abate De Breme, and they remained in the form of a religious rebellion that persuaded him to temporarily pull away from his mentors and his religious training. Though conversion came swiftly and suddenly, repentance lasted a lifetime, as it did for Fra Cristoforo, who carried the burden of his author. “Doubt kills me,” Manzoni confessed once to the Countess Maffei.¹⁷

Alfredo Galletti traces the contradictions in Manzoni to his early training in eighteenth-century rationalism and his conversion to faith and romanticism in his young manhood. His “inner disagreement manifested itself equally between a critical spirit and religious deference, between an inclination towards irony and the humility of the believer, between a certain negative and Voltairian instinct and the desire for moral perfection.” The tormented Manzoni sought redemption in a perverted and self-punishing masochism and hypochondria, never to be found in his novel, which caused him to regret what little good health he had. Writing to Cattaneo, he confessed that he was “almost ashamed” of the fact that while his wife and daughter were only slowly getting better, his health was sound once more, and to Fauriel he admitted that “the symptoms that are most evident (and especially virtually constant stomachaches) give me almost a pleasure in that they offer me a reason for a sadness and depression that would seem even more painful to me if I could not attribute them to a physical cause.”¹⁸

Though no one can doubt Tolstoy’s religious passion, he was, in comparison to Dickens and Manzoni, a man of historical compromise, as he shows us in *Anna Karenina*. When Levin becomes irritated with the coachman over a triviality, despite his vow to be a

17. Quoted in Galletti, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 461.

18. Cesare Beccaria’s account of Manzoni’s self-division quoted in *ibid.*, 24. For religious doubts and physical symptoms, see Ginzburg, *La famiglia Manzoni*, 46–47, 57–58, 88, 99, 144. For discussions and letters describing family disappointments and neglect, see 203, 207, 219, 231, 267, 272, 291–94.

more loving brother and husband, a kinder man to visitors and servants, he understands and accepts that there is no way for him to remain pure and innocent "once in contact with reality" (AK 836). Like Gwendolen Harleth, he can only try to be better. But when Dickens "wishes he had been 'a better father, and a better man'"¹⁹ and Manzoni recognizes the abyss between what he is and what he might be, they are not simply regretting their shortcomings; they are refusing to accept the inevitable fall from grace. An author of religious passion who yearns for spiritual innocence and historical revenge cannot be assuaged by wishing to be a better man, and as a result becomes more susceptible to the temptation of correcting life through literature.

But the debt that literature owes to life becomes a creative obsession that feeds on itself, as John Irving illustrates with Piggy Snead, a handyman from his childhood. Had he been kinder to Piggy in real life, his grandmother points out to him, he would not have had to write a story about him. Later Irving realizes "that the writer's business is both to imagine the possible rescue of Piggy Snead *and* to set the fire that will trap him."²⁰ The business of Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James was not only to save their characters from the fires they as novelists had set, but to save their characters from the redemption they as novelists needed. In the struggle to resist the temptation of exoneration and wholeness, tensions within the authors built up to the point of explosion, threatening to destroy the novelist with the novel. Yet the house of fiction they had built, the firm structure of history and spirit, of realism and the salvational melodrama, could contain these eruptions of the dark psyche and make them answer to their passionate desire for goodness and innocence. The holy fools, godfathers, and angels carrying this desire were charged with the responsibility not to idealize history but to protest it.

It is a common assumption that Esther Summerson does not succeed in this task. Inexplicably guilty like David Copperfield, she is asked to look after her own redemption and that of her author, creat-

19. To his daughter Katey, quoted in Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2:1152.

20. "The Making of a Writer: Trying to Save Piggy Snead," 3.

ing, thereby, all sorts of novelistic difficulties. In the complexity of narrative and autobiographical needs, Esther is more than what Robert Newsom calls her, an antidote for Dickens's morbidity.²¹ She *must* tell her story because Dickens *must* tell his; she *must* win some love for herself, because Dickens *must* win for himself that love he had lost as a boy and a young man. But if the task was difficult for Dickens, it was even more so for Esther. In chapter 10 of *Bleak House*, she speaks about the tribulations of being an author, the realization that there must always be a discrepancy between the tale she wishes to write and the tale she does write:

I don't know how it is, I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible, and I am sure, when I find myself coming into the story again, I am really vexed and say, 'Dear, dear, you tiresome little creature, I wish you wouldn't!' but it is all of no use. I hope any one who may read what I write, will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I can only suppose it must be because I have really something to do with them, and can't be kept out. (*BH* 102–3)

Since Esther is not able to tell her story, which arises from “elementary passions,” in a spirit that stands in “intellectual superiority to those passions,” as James advises, she cannot help her overconsciousness, nor can she be helped by Dickens's “secret prose,”²² to which she has no access.

Esther becomes a pivotal figure because she cannot be entirely

21. *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things*, 115. Marcus reminds us, however, that the performance of duty for the Victorians was a therapy as well as an ethical demand (*Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey*, 312–13).

22. James, “The Limitations of Dickens,” 161 (see Kaston, *Imagination and Desire*, 8–9, for a discussion of independence in Jamesian characters); Garrett Stewart calls Dickens's narrative of his own thoughts his “secret prose” (*Trials of Imagination*, 240). Although Q. D. Leavis's objection to Edmund Wilson's “Dickens: The Two Scrooges” as tying Dickens too closely to his characters and causing great critical damage thereby has some merit, there is reason to question her contention that Esther illustrates the ability of Dickens to imagine himself as a character quite the contrary of what he was himself. See Leavis and Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist*, 96, 158.

good and free of aggression, as Dickens's pure angels must be. While the dialectical novel demands of her a pure simplicity of virtue, we are forced to gauge Esther's goodness, as John Kucich points out, from the effectiveness of her self-control in her speech and actions. As a result, it is difficult for the reader, "constantly aware of how much Esther conceals from us, for fear of compromising herself," not to become suspicious.²³ Numerous critics have recognized that the independence Dickens gives to Esther, on the one hand, and the use he makes of Esther, on the other, could never be reconciled, as we see so vividly when he demands her service as a vessel for his innocence and threatens to put her in an impossible sexual situation with Jarndyce. (Annie Strong is allowed to marry her "father" because she does not have to work for her author, and by killing off a wife who is not suitable for David, Dickens allows his hero to marry "Mary Hogarth.") He runs the danger, in fact, of pushing his character into mutiny under the contradictory tug of this freedom and this exploitation. Almost overwhelmed, Esther grits her teeth: "'Once more, duty, duty, Esther,' said I; 'and if you are not overjoyed to do it, more than cheerfully and contentedly, through anything and everything, you ought to be. That's all I have to say to you, my dear!'" (BH 472). Yet despite all these difficulties, we should remember that she and Dickens are the narrators of one of the supreme novels in the English language. By managing to play off Esther's tortured private and spiritual narrative against his own confident public and historical one, the novelist reinforces the central dialectic in the book and keeps it dynamic.

Dickens came to wish toward the end of his life for tyrannical artistic control over his characters, and he confessed to a friend that his fondest dream would be "'to hold supreme authority' in the direction of a great theater, with 'a skilled and noble company.' 'The pieces acted should be dealt with according to my pleasure, and touched up here and there in obedience to my own judgment; the players as well as the plays being *absolutely under my command*'"

23. *Excess and Restraint*, 215–16. See also 126–31 for a discussion of Esther's difficulties.

(our italics).²⁴ Well aware of the difficulties the heroine of *Bleak House* had cost him, he could no longer trust his players. Never again, not even in *Bella*, would he allow so much inner conflict to those who were destined to be the keepers of his spirit.

Through all the years of his success, James was haunted by the "imagination of disaster." At his father's table, he "wholesomely breathed inconsistency and ate and drank contradictions," registered and lived out the disruptions and irresolution of his father's theories. Yet as an adult, James himself chose the painful role of exile his father had forced upon him in his youth. Behind a more refined and controlled exterior than Zola's, he nursed the same gigantic hunger for success. This passive and "unmasculine" angel of the family took "possession of the old world," and wrote to his mother that "it is time I should rend the veil from the ferocious ambition which has always *couvé* beneath a tranquil exterior; which enabled me to support unrecorded physical misery in my younger years; and which is perfectly confident of accomplishing serious things."²⁵

James's "use" of his friends brought him trouble. Edel, in his biography, implies that James may have felt as much remorse as grief over the suicide of Constance Fenimore Woolson. To William, whose tone of accusation he found "singularly harsh and unfair," he defended the character of Miss Birdseye in *The Bostonians*, declaring that except for a few minor details, he had not, as was widely believed, based her on Miss Peabody. He denies to his brother that he used J. A. Symonds for his story "The Author of *Beltraffio*," yet Edel maintains that James was not so innocent as he would like to believe, for he had heard plenty about Symonds from Edmund Gosse. He wrote to his parents from Rome: ". . . Mrs. Sumner and Miss Bartlett . . . lead that life and are of that turn that they rather tend to appropriate and absorb a likely young man: but they have had no more of me

24. Quoted in Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2:1151. Dickens's interest in and practice of mesmerism is surely an attempt at fulfilling this fantasy.

25. James, *A Small Boy and Others*, 124. Letter to his family quoted in Edel, *Life of Henry James*, 2:200; letter to his mother in Edel, 2:105.

than I find it convenient to give, for though they are very nice women, I am meant for better things."²⁶

James exploited more of what he saw than what he lived, but in literature he found strategies to restructure his life's inadequacies into a primary rather than a compensatory power. "You're an outsider," Kate tells Milly, "independent and standing by yourself. . . ." Milly compensates Henry for having been a boy who was not like others, by being able to do "lots that we can't" (WD 170). In a letter to his brother William, he could look forward to recovery from his injury so that he might regain his "natural lead" in his relationship with Minny and become "more active and masculine."²⁷ In his novel, however, Densher, who had so much in common not only with Morton Fullerton but with James as hotel child, world traveler, and passive partner "between petticoats," (we should recall that the narrator of the first American edition of *The Wings of the Dove* was Merton Densher), is allowed to prove his "natural lead" and to reject it without shame as he moves toward his spiritual rebirth. Henry could take his own revenge against history by giving Milly "straightway the measure of the success she could have as a dove" (WD 172) and the success he could have as an "angel."

At once humble and proud, tender and furious, Zola harbored side by side a passion for and a pessimism toward life, an attraction and aversion toward his fellow men. His inconsistency and spiritual struggles mirrored the inconsistency of the age, of which he was at once critical and proud to be representative. "Un écorché vif [skinned alive],"²⁸ crude and unprepossessing, with gigantic emotional needs and a raging desire to be heard, to be accepted, to be followed, he trumpeted his program of Naturalism to gain the attention of the world, and confessed to Flaubert that it was all a matter of public relations. Although he was a man of integrity, he wrote for any polit-

26. Letter to William in *Letters*, 3:68, 71; Edel in *Letters*, 3:72, note 1; letter to parents in *Letters*, 1:376.

27. Quoted in Edel, *Life of Henry James*, 1:233.

28. The phrase is from Henri Guilleman, "Un écorché vif," in Becker, ed., *Les critiques de notre temps et Zola*, 19.

ical journal that could bring him notice. He arrogantly pitied poets who had no audience, though in his youth he had been one himself. By writing *L'Oeuvre*, the highly acclaimed Zola damaged his close relationship with the Impressionist artists he had defended and led his old and dear friend Cézanne to drop his correspondence with him.²⁹

Taunted as a foreigner in the schools of his youth, humiliated by his double failure to pass the baccalauréat, by his terrible poverty and lowly copy job in Paris, searching for a faith that had betrayed him, Zola transformed himself, through and in his literature, from feckless exile to the immense power he professed he was to Vallès. To Baille he wrote in 1860 that he would get even with those who had tormented him, not through self-exculpation but by “crush[ing] them with my superiority,” by “mak[ing] them green with envy.”³⁰ Plagued by neurasthenia and guilt toward his wife, he purified and celebrated his illicit relationship with Jeanne by transforming himself into a larger-than-life biblical monarch, whose incestuous love for Clotilde becomes an Old Testament love for wife and sister, the love of Abraham and Isaac for Sarah and Rebekah. To James, Jean Macquart and le docteur Pascal resemble the figures “of our childhood’s nursery and schoolroom, that of the moral tale of Miss Edgeworth and Mr. Thomas Day,” but the distinction between Jean as morality play figure and Pascal as projection is crucial. As long as Zola’s conflicts are safely embodied in the strong, innocent, reliable Jean and the volatile, weak, ambitious Maurice, identification serves the novel well, but when his appetites, his self-doubts, his self-glorification, his guilt are played out in the fantastic Pascal, the novelist courts the danger noted by Henri Guillemin: “. . . Dr. Pascal is that invented character Zola would have wished to resemble . . .”³¹ Zola makes no

29. Walker cautions that Sandoz and Claude are not simply Zola and Cézanne, but a number of other figures as well (*Zola*, 176–77). Nevertheless, it is prudent to keep in mind that in his preliminary notes to the novel, Zola refers to Sandoz as “I.”

30. Profession to Vallès in Hemmings, *Emile Zola*, 37; letter to Baille quoted in Walker, *Zola*, 28.

31. James, “Emile Zola,” 190–91; Guillemin quoted in *DP* 437: “. . . le doc-

bones about the fact that Pascal is his mouthpiece. Exiled in London and using the pseudonym of "M. Pascal," he explains in an interview how he will use his hero: "People, especially abroad, have accused me of being a pornographer. This I shall refute through Pascal. It has been said that all my characters are rascals—people of bad lives. Pascal will explain that this is not so. I have been charged with a lack of tender-heartedness . . . ; Pascal will show that this is not so."³² In the works that followed, the man dominated the artist. By enriching his impoverished life with his love for Jeanne and their children, he fulfilled most ironically the fear expressed by his Claude Lantier, that "genius must be chaste; an artist must go to bed only with his work" (O 379).

Throughout the *Rougon-Macquart*, Dr. Pascal pulls ever closer to fantasy. In *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, after he leads Serge to le Paradou, he turns back to his study and practice. But at the end of the series, he is master and principal actor of la Souleïade himself. The protagonist must absolve his creator's sins by mythicizing his new sexual fulfillment while being called upon to defend his creator's literature, and it is a burden as heavy for Dr. Pascal as it is for Esther. But even here the novelist finds ways to create, in the salvational mode, the few scenes of artistic and moral power in this novel of fantasy and exoneration. Although Zola may become Pascal in order to increase his power, the character Dr. Pascal learns humility in the novel. Zola may wish to advocate logical rather than natural heredity (he declares that "Pascal's work on the members of his family is, in small, what I have attempted to do on humanity, *to show all so that all may be cured*"),³³ but Pascal learns that there is no certainty under the sun and falls passionately in love with his niece. The heir to the future is not his work but his baby. The last novel of the *Rougon-Macquart* expands into a salvational drama in a way

teur Pascal est cette créature inventée à laquelle Zola aurait souhaité d'être semblable. . . ."

32. Interview with R. H. Sherard in Introduction to *Doctor Pascal* by Ernest A. Vizetelly (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925), xii.

33. *Ibid.*, xi.

L'Oeuvre is unable to do. Sandoz-Zola reasons that at least Claude Lantier "acknowledged his impotence, and he killed himself," but Pascal-Zola accepts his failure and is deepened by it.

A Burden for the Novel to Carry

It is not difficult for us to gauge the disruptive quality of the sexual forces in these authors as they adopt strategies extraordinarily evasive even by nineteenth-century standards. Lawrence derides the hypocrisy of writers from "Apuleius to E. M. Forster," who are, of course, "phallic worshippers" trying to be "crucified Jesuses. What a bore! And what a burden for the novel to carry!"³⁴ The burden was particularly troublesome because, in this treacherous area, Dickens, Manzoni, Zola, and James could ill afford to strike bargains. The subject is treated extensively by contemporary critics, who are inclined to view sexual aggression variously as anarchic and avenging violence, undirected and directed transgression, uncontrolled loss and ersatz death standing in opposition to a conservative, pure, passive, stable, forgiving entity.³⁵ But whatever the nomenclature, one thing is certain: the novel could only survive if the opposing forces were kept in balance, and that meant taming the aggressor.

The exploitation of what John Stuart Mill called the "tiresome

34. "The Novel," 106. James senses that "a mistrust of any but the most guarded treatment of the great relation between men and women" arose in the nineteenth century (James, "The Future of the Novel," in *The Future of the Novel*, 39), whereas Lawrence locates the beginning of such mistrust in literature after Chaucer ("Introduction to These Paintings," 551–84). See also critics like Karen Chase (*Eros and Psyche*) and Alexander Welsh (*The City of Dickens*), who discuss the contrivances and measures used by Victorian authors, especially Dickens, to achieve purity and wholeness around the hearth.

35. See Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 12, 45. For a refinement of Georges Bataille's erotic oppositions, see Kucich's introduction (especially 10–13). See also page 100 of his study for an example of a model that allows the critic to keep the dialectic alive in describing the sexual manifestations of the Dickensian villain, who "must create a strong sense of boundaries in his victim in order to produce the sexual shock of penetrating those boundaries with his knowledge."

cant" that women are spiritual in ways and to a degree that men can never be was especially helpful in keeping the sexual at bay. Henry James called William's wife, who cared for her brother-in-law and her husband together in later travels and who followed William's adjuration to be at Henry's deathbed, "that dear eternal Heroine,"³⁶ which is what James's nameless and featureless woman seems to be as she worships at the "Altar of the Dead." Her spirit of Christian love and forgiveness proved to Stransom once again "that women have more of the spirit of religion than men." In his preface to *The Wings of the Dove*, James writes that "men, among the mortally afflicted, suffer on the whole more overtly and more grossly than women, and resist with a ruder, an inferior strategy"; in the novel, it is the "liberated" Kate Croy who pays a perverse homage to this "cant": "There are refinements—! . . . I mean of consciousness, of sensation, of appreciation. . . . No . . . men *don't* know. They know in such matters almost nothing but what women show them" (WD 75). The full irony of her statement is felt when Densher guarantees Milly's purity by sexually possessing Kate. In James's earlier novel, Isabel uses the momentary sexual loss of consciousness in Caspar's arms to purchase her salvation.

Since the problem of sexual violation was especially troublesome for the desirous male novelist, he had to be wary of the savagely sensuous female characters who served the novel rather than the author. The "feminine and alluring" Rosa Dartle, suffering the mark of guilt with an "air of wicked grace" like a "cruel Princess in a legend" (DC 2:279), was a constant danger for Dickens, whose sexual cravings, Michael Slater reasonably surmises, grew stronger whenever he saw "women as adult human beings rather than as children or as angels."³⁷ It was easier to deal with Esther's marked face, which could be magically restored, than with Rosa's, which had to remain stubbornly scarred. Women destined to serve both the novel and the author were pushed by their creator's need for innocence to a purity

36. Letter to William, *Letters*, 4:382.

37. *Dickens and Women*, 356. See Coleridge's remark that "it was the perfection of woman to be characterless," from "Table Talk," in Molly Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), 301.

so fine it bordered on extinction. Such etiolation was, it is well known, supported by the standards of the day, as it had been in the Romantic period. Appearing in white, like Zola's *Albine*, Milly is so without identity that at one point Densher announces he has invented her (*WD* 222). Ruth Pinch's little feet and Clotilde's supple arms, slender legs, and smooth throat are generic. Henriette has "the firm brow and brave eyes of the blessed stock that martyrs are made of," yet was also "a self-effacing Cinderella with the resigned look of a little housewife" (*D* 171). In Dickens's own journal, Wilkie Collins published the recommendation that "women . . . should have *no identity wholly their own*, no separate existence in themselves—this is treating of women in their natural state of alliance with men. If a woman (speaking generally) so allied, has any thought at all, except for her husband and children, she is nothing." Manzoni celebrates the delights of having such a wife in a letter to Fauriel: "We three are all very happy: this angelic creature seems made just for us; she has all my tastes, and I don't believe there is one important point on which her opinion differs from mine."³⁸

Since the bond of sisterhood was not only a moral marker but a sexual strategy for Dickens, Rosa, by taunting Em'ly, becomes both a moral outrage and a permanent sexual threat to the text and to her author. Though David Copperfield is drawn to her, he must keep his distance so that in the end he can ascend with Agnes Wickfield. Zola's male bonding serves the same protective purpose as Dickens's sisterhood, and we can see this most clearly in the example of Sandoz's refusal to invite Christine to his Thursday night *cénacles* because she was not married to Claude. Naomi Schor calls our attention to another useful tactic for erasing the differences between men and women. They become brothers, disciples, members of a crowd more often than sexual couples. The love Jean has for Maurice in *La Débâcle* is the identical and harmless love he has for Maurice's twin sister, Henriette.³⁹

38. Collins quoted in Slater, *Dickens and Women*, 325, from an article entitled "My Girls," in *All the Year Round*, published with the approval, we must assume, of Dickens himself; Manzoni letter in Ginzburg, *La famiglia Manzoni*, 25.

39. "Mother's Day: Zola's Women," 138–40. For moral taunting by Rosa of

The number and variety of “buffered marriages” in these works, the *ménages-à-trois*, the households of brother and sister, are simply staggering, and though they afford a relief for the authors, they seldom do so for the readers. Dickens was clearly as involved with Mary Hogarth as he was with her sister Catherine, whom he had married, and Catherine’s sister Georgina became the “mother” of his children. “It is necessary to . . . make clear that Charles Dickens,” Alexander Woolcott observes, “was so neurotically related to the double bed that any sister he might have married would have been the wrong one,”⁴⁰ and it is not surprising that the Furnival’s Inn arrangement remained his ideal, reaching a peak of sibling silliness in Tommy Traddles’s union with his fiancée and her bevy of sisters. Tom and Ruth Pinch behave like coy newlyweds, and though they allow Dickens to indulge safely in amorous banter, they are responsible for the most painful pages in their novel. We should recall that any sexual passion Manzoni might feel for Enrichetta, any sexual passion Lucia and Renzo might feel for each other, is strained through the purifying filter of the mother and that it is to Agnese, rather than to Renzo, that Lucia calls in her hour of greatest danger.

Like many writers of the Romantic and post-Romantic age, these novelists were deeply troubled by the problems of personal sin and guilt that sexual conflict generated. But even when Dickens and Zola fled into indulgent and regressive romance, they made it responsive to their literary needs by using it in opposition to their wayward desires. The marriage idylls imagined by Dickens in *David Copperfield* work dialectically by setting the stage for violation. The novelist may have had his childhood sweetheart Lucy in mind when he wrote that little Em’ly and David Copperfield

made a cloak of an old wrapper, and sat under it for the rest of the journey. Ah, how I loved her! What happiness . . . if we were married, and were going away anywhere to live among the trees and in the fields, never growing older, never growing wiser, children ever, rambling hand

Emily, see Slater, *Dickens and Women*, 370. For an explanation of female bonding as a pattern of control and release, see Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 129–30.

40. Foreword to Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, xi.

in hand through sunshine and among flowery meadows, laying down our heads on moss at night, in a sweet sleep of purity and peace, and buried by the birds when we were dead! (*DC* 1:176)

But Steerforth, who belongs to history, is waiting in the wings. When Paul Dombey, echoing words spoken by Little Nell to her grandfather, reveals to us that he wishes to leave behind the world of Dombey and Son forever, to “put [his] money all together in one bank, never try to get any more, go away into the country with [his] darling Florence, have a beautiful garden, fields, and woods, and live there with her all [his] life!” (*DS* 206), we know that his childhood, which belonged to the grimmest of history, has been taken away from him and that soon his life will be too. The sinister manipulative desires of Kate and Densher, Madame Merle and Osmond, Charlotte and the Prince, hover over James’s enchantment with Turgenev’s babes-in-the-wood, Marianne and Neshdanoff, who possess a “delicacy” of “enthusiasm” that precludes any “desire to possess each other, [who] in their moments of tenderest épanchement . . . only shake hands affectionately, like plighted comrades.”⁴¹

These *idyllic* “marriages,” belonging to a world of romance that can resist a contrary history, remain useful to the novel in a way not possible for the *ideal* marriages of Dickens. (It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss the author’s perfect domestic unions, like David Copperfield and Agnes, without recalling that in the same novel he shows himself to be sensitive and forceful as he describes a marriage of disparities in which the doll in the dollhouse destroys her surroundings.) Dickens’s matrimonial ideal was the same one Bella Wilfer describes to her family. The husband sits before the fire, relating his daily activities to his wife while she offers him warmth, comfort, attention, and love.⁴² As long as her husband comes home

41. James’s review of Turgenev’s *Virgin Soil*, in *Literary Reviews and Essays on American, English and French Literature*, 193–94.

42. For a description of Dickens’s ideal marriage, see letters to Mr. and Mrs. Dexter, March 1836 and January 1836, in Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 1:130. Kucich points out that as Esther moves into the sexuality of the second Bleak House, the first one is nearby to provide the stability necessary to control the excess (*Excess and Restraint*, 150).

to a Bella busy with her needlework “in her neat little room, beside a basket of neat little articles of clothing, which presented so much of the appearance of being in the dolls’ dressmaker’s way of business, that one might have supposed she was going to set up in opposition to Miss Wren” (OMF 813), there will be no aggression, as there most decidedly is in Jenny’s rhetoric. Nevertheless, we can measure the considerable pressure the author’s desire places on his characters by juxtaposing Bella’s proud representation of her home to her mother and sister as the most charming of dollhouses, where everything runs perfectly and prettily, delightfully and economically, with her confession to John, in the very act of writing her letter, that she wants “to be something so much worthier than the doll in the doll’s house” (OMF 746).

We do not think of the author of *Nana* as an architect of dollhouses, but in *Germinal*, Zola goes to extraordinary lengths to keep an asylum for innocence by moving the sex, which is rampant in the novel, from the home to the slag heaps and the mine. This makes more poignant and powerful the scene in which Hennebeau recognizes that his wife and Négrel have been lovers in his very bedroom. His torment, in fact, gives us some indication not only of Zola’s well-documented sexual jealousy, but of the pain his later violation of his own marriage must have cost him.

As long as Zola could exploit his generalized myths, he could transform his sexual aggression and jealousy creatively into a seeding of nature. When woman is not a raving Maenad or a victim, she is “a goddess, a force, fecund nature, life itself.” The *liebestod* of Etienne and Catherine leaves the dialectic open with its futile fulfillment, as the *liebestod* of Pascal and Clotilde does not. But though Zola failed to create that special oppositional tension within his “romantic fantasies,” he demonstrates an awareness of its value by setting up his more lyrical books in opposition to the brutally naturalistic books within his one gigantic novel, the *Rougon-Macquart*. We know that immediately after *Nana*, for example, he planned to write *La Joie de vivre*, featuring the virtuous Pauline, born in the same year as her corrupt antithesis.⁴³ *Le Rêve* and *La Faute de l’abbé*

43. See Jean Borie’s note in DP 401–2 (for page 235 of the text). Nowhere do

Mouret interrupt the inexorable progression of history and environment, and the series ends with the astonishingly unnaturalistic and undramatic idyll of *Le Docteur Pascal*.

The Transcendental Home

The disappearance of pastoral, variously regarded as the loss of a home for innocence, romance, and the imagination, was perhaps most destructive to the dialectical novel and to the relationships and forms upon which it was dependent. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the country still belonged to Balzac's David and Eve (*LJ*), the city to Vautrin and Lucien. Gradually, however, the corruption of the city began to encroach upon pastoral peace and purity, driving seekers of innocence to the hearth as a surrogate country and a last refuge from the surrounding armies of the public world. Whereas Balzac's Eve could not see the lights of Paris, Dickens's Esther could stand in front of Bleak House and see London's "redder light engendered of an unearthly fire, gleaming on all the unseen buildings of the city, and on all the faces of its many thousands of wondering inhabitants" (*BH* 380).

This inevitable loss of autonomy, unthreatening to novelistic communities like Barsey, was ominous for the communities of the salvational novelists. Only in allegory could independence still be retained. Scrooge returns to innocence simply by passing through a wall, where at once he stood "upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished" (*CC* 34). But Mr. Brownlow's idyllic refuge for Oliver is darkened by the shadows of London's underworld on its windows; Dickens's London slums find their rural analogue in the brickmakers' hovels, and the infection of the city moves into the country on contagious winds. Even on the peaks of Switzerland, the Marshalsea casts its shadows. James's provincial American innocence is menaced by European knowledge

we see the woman as goddess, nature, fecund force (as Borie characterizes Zola's mythic female) more than in *La Terre*. For the sequence of *Rougon-Macquart*, see Walker, Zola, 161.

and corruption, Manzoni's Virgilian pastoral is torn up by invading armies and the plague. In *La Débâcle*, the country retreat that Henriette provides for Jean is surrounded by the appalling crops and harvests of armed men and dead bodies, and in the same novel, Maurice fights in the city but is killed by his country "brother." The flourishing nature of the country in *Germinal* is discovered to be standing in the middle of the industrially inspired eternal spring of Tartaret with "its perpetually green grass, its beech trees with their endlessly renewed leaves, and its fields in which as many as three crops a year would ripen. It was a natural hothouse, heated by the fire in the buried depths" (C 245). And buried in the depths, Catherine changes the sounds of her entrapment into the music of rural landscape with running water, birds, crushed grass, and sun. To reconstruct the lost country, the artful Skimpole and Pecksniff, falsest of creatures, invent their own nature. In the shadows of Lincoln's Inn, Miss Flite sets up her garden with caged birds; in the Marshalsea, where a feverish Clennam invents his nature, Young John Chivery dreams of wedded bliss with Little Dorrit, conjuring up a pastoral paradise of trellisworks and canaries (LD 255–56).⁴⁴

The search for that lost paradise leaves its biblical, mythical, and allegorical markers along the way. Esther echoes *The Pilgrim's Progress* when, in her illness, she "seemed to have crossed a dark lake and to have left all [her] experiences, mingled together by the great distance, on the healthy shore" (BH 431). Martin's trip to America, which begins on God's highway, "so rough beneath the tread of naked feet" (MC 286), is a "Piljian's Projiss of a mortal wale" (MC 471), in the inimitable words of Sairey Gamp. He will encounter Giant Despair and the Slough of Despond in the New World's Eden, as Jean, Maurice, Silvine, Prosper, and Maheu encounter them across surrealistic battlefields and through underground tunnels. Martin's boat is called an "ark," and so is the Venetian palace of Milly, herself the dove who brings Densher proof of dry land. The Lowder group, who "had never yet boldly crossed to Boston" (WD 111), had no need

44. For a stimulating discussion of false and true pastoral in Dickens, see Stewart, *Trials of Imagination*, 155–58, 187, 198–201. Whereas our emphasis is on loss of community and innocence, his is on loss of asylum for the imagination.

for a pilgrimage because its members had no need for salvation, whereas for Milly and Susan, pilgrimage means a counter-sailing back to the labyrinth of Europe from the American colonies. As a provincial pilgrim, Renzo enters the labyrinthine streets of Milan without a clue, where he finds the houses piled on top of one another. "To walk in the city is a very sad pastime: the streets seem to me one of the ugliest works of man," wrote Manzoni,⁴⁵ yet the Paris labyrinth proved the novelist himself a pilgrim, as the city's crowds pushed him, swooning, into the church.

Abundance marks the allegorical redemption of Scrooge, as the ghost of Christmas Present transforms his stark and cold room into one whose hearth had "a mighty blaze . . . roaring up the chimney. . . . Heaped upon the floor to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth cakes, and seething bowls of punch" (CC 50–51). The pilgrim Renzo leaves "the ugliest works of man" and stumbles into the allegory of paradise, threatening the dialectic of the novel with resolution: "At about midday he stopped in a little wood to eat some bread and meat he had brought with him. As for fruit, there was more of that at his disposal along the road than he could eat—figs, peaches, plums, apples, as many as he wanted. All he had to do was to go into a field and pick them or gather them off the ground, where they lay as thick as hail" (PS 514). A far cry from the ashy fruit of Chancery! Northrop Frye reminds us that "the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the waste-land. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of male and female,"⁴⁶ all bricks and mortar of the transcendental home on earth. But Manzoni knows he must save his novel from allegory and carefully sees to it that Renzo reads paradise as a sign of renewal, not fulfillment, as he continues his search for Lucia. In the end, the city of Bergamo, which earlier had "seemed to [Renzo] to reek so much

45. Quoted in Momigliano, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 65.

46. *Anatomy of Criticism*, 193.

of flight, expulsion, and crime" (*PS* 247), proves to be not a new garden of Eden but a place suitable for the resumption of life.

As an American, Saul Bellow's Albert Corde believes in the Dickens pastoral:

We are used to peace and plenty, we are for everything nice and against cruelty, wickedness, craftiness, monstrousness. Worshipers of progress, its dependents, we reject the *horrible*—the same as saying we are anti-philosophical. Our outlook requires the assumption that each of us is at heart trustworthy, each of us is naturally decent and wills the good. The English speaking world is temperamentally like this. You see it in the novels of Dickens, clearly. In his world, there is suffering, there is evil, betrayal, corruption, savagery, sadism, but the ordeals end and decent people arrange a comfortable existence for themselves, make themselves cozy. You may say that was simply Victorianism, but it wasn't—isn't.⁴⁷

Yet when we finish a Dickens novel, we ask ourselves why we do not feel as satisfied with his family gatherings in the country— with Zola's brave new worlds, with Manzoni's resettlement—as we do with Tom Jones's country estate. We must attribute this directly to the permanent schism between reality and desire that cannot be papered over. No political solution was convincing for these authors, and no heavenly solution convinced them; when we are in history we have the hope of a heaven, and as we long for that heaven, we know we must return to history. That is why A. O. J. Cockshut imagines Dickens's endings to have been "invented by [a] tortured spirit" who was never at peace with himself and why Barbara Hardy finds his conclusions inorganic. What should we do with the Pecksniff girls, with the miserable inhabitants of Eden if, with Joseph Gold, we read *Martin Chuzzlewit* as a mediated comedy that moves "towards resolution by reconciliation and acceptance, by love in short" and in which "alienation, hostility and death must be overcome"?⁴⁸ David

47. *The Dean's December*, 199.

48. Cockshut, *Imagination of Charles Dickens*, 182; Hardy, "The Complexity of Charles Dickens," 47; Gold, *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralists*, 132.

Copperfield's new family cannot bring Ham back to life as Olivia was brought back to life in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, nor can it restore Emily's innocence. Esther's new Bleak House cannot restructure Tom-all-Alone's or restore life to Jo, Richard, Nemo, Lady Dedlock, and Jenny's baby, nor can it make Caddy's mute and deaf child speak and hear. The very hyperbole of the utopian endings tells us of devastating disappointment and deflation. After he has portrayed Bella Wilfer as a woman of real moral growth, Dickens returns to the fairy tale at the end of his last and gloomiest novel. Yet it would be well to interpret "Bella's exquisite toilette table," her "ivory casket," the jewels in that casket "the like of which she had never dreamed of," and the "nursery garnished as with rainbows" (OMF 848–49) not as tired and wishful signs of regression to earlier form so much as vivid reminders of how dark social reality had grown.

In fact, the endings in the novels of this study can never be inorganic because we have been led to believe that they are still actively engendering new veerings and reversals between history and spirit. Were the stories to continue, they would slam the country cottage and everyone in it back into the world of cause and effect. The cozy, domestic hearth of Renzo and Lucia in the restorative conclusion of their adventures seems to Ferruccio Ulivi to be surrounded by a dark night that warns us of the fickleness and transiency of life. Despite the fact that Manzoni ends his story with the establishment of a new home, Ezio Raimondi justly contends that "while there is an impression of having reached a peaceful epilogue, in obedience to renunciation, the secret discourse of the whole novel starts off again, drawing behind it the anguish of history, the inquietude of contradiction, the feeling of the absurd, as it may reach even the 'lowest' on the 'world' scale (if we remember the closing of Chapter 27)."⁴⁹ As Jean marches away from his nightmare in Zola's *La Terre*, hoping to defend the land of France he can no longer plow, he gives a parting "glance . . . at the infinite expanse of the rich plain of Beauce swarming with sowers, swinging their arms in the same monotonous ges-

49. Ulivi, *Manzoni*, 251; Raimondi, "I Promessi Sposi: Genesis and Structure of a 'Catholic' Novel," 152.

ture. Here were the Dead, there was the Seed, and bread would be springing from the Good Earth." Yet from Beauce he walks into the nightmare of *La Débâcle's* Sedan. Surviving that, he again moves into the future, "to set about the great, hard job of building a new France." The very title of *Germinal* epitomizes the argument between the history and pastoral.⁵⁰ As La Maheude descends into the shaft to continue the work of her decimated family, Etienne emerges from his living death with hope for the future of mankind. Yet, in the "fable" that ends the *Rougon-Macquart* series, we hear of his fighting in the Paris Commune of 1871 and of his subsequent trial and deportation to Noumea.

In discussing *The Wings of the Dove*, Sallie Sears finds the "formal resolution of the plot" James called for in his notebook to be "incompatible with the profoundly paradoxical nature of his vision of the source and meaning of human suffering."⁵¹ In his well-known preface to *Roderick Hudson*, James contended that "really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so."⁵² *Bleak House* completes its narrative in midsentence and stands as an interesting precursor of the technique in *The Portrait of a Lady* that James feared would invite the accusation he had left his heroine "en l'air." Whereas never again being what they were destroys the possibility of marriage for Kate and Densher, not being as they had been inspires Allan to tell Esther he could not love her better had she retained her old looks. James, writing at a later time, is able to move farther away from the conventional ending, but in neither book is there resolution. That is why when a "lady" asked William Dean Howells if he thought Kate

50. *The Earth (La Terre)*, 500. See Petrey, *Realism and Revolution*, 183. See also Walker, *Germinal and Zola*, 78–80, for a discussion of the distinction between the renewal of old and the creation of new forms in *Rougon-Macquart*, on the one hand, and the cyclical pattern—to which, Walker argues, Zola does not subscribe—on the other.

51. "Kate Croy and Merton Densher," *WD* 561.

52. *The Art of the Novel*, 5.

took money from Densher and married Lord Mark he replied: "Why should you care?"⁵³

How can the reader be satisfied with such endings if even one as unromantic and manipulative as Lord Mark refuses to accept the fate James has given Milly? He has imagined another history for her, of money and youth and invulnerability and happiness: "'Everything about you is a beauty. Besides which I don't believe,' he declared, 'in the seriousness of what you tell me. It's absurd you should have any trouble about which something can't be done. If you can't get the right thing, who can, in all the world, I should like to know?'" (WD 273). Sir Mark declares that it is absurd Milly cannot get what she wants, but precisely by choosing the most extreme and "absurd" scenario of dying doves and children, James, Dickens, Manzoni, and Zola are able to convince us that the ontological justice for which Proust longed is available to no one. Left in possession of the truth, Sir Luke can only declare that Milly has a "right to be happy" (WD 59) in a society that does not have such rights to give.

Clotilde realizes at the end of *Le Docteur Pascal* that "suffering humanity cannot live without the consolation of the lie," yet throughout the *Rougon-Macquart* Zola insists that suffering humanity also cannot afford to live without the truth. Although he had shown himself determined both to depict and to subvert the utopian dream from his early *Nouveaux contes à Ninon*, we do not wonder that the exhaustion of sustaining a life and an art poised between "an eternal doubt and an eternal hope" (DP 379) moved him, in his last unsatisfying works, to take possession of that elusive truth and justice. Perhaps in the renewal of his personal life, the obstinacy of reality yielded, leaving the field to the possibility of fulfillment. In any case, the author asks wearily in a letter of the 1890s: "After forty years of analysis, have I not the right to finish with a bit of synthesis?"⁵⁴

53. "Mr. Henry James's Later Work," WD 486.

54. Quoted in Levin, *Gates of Horn*, 366. In a letter to Octave Mirabeau, 29 November 1899, concerning *Les Quatre évangiles*, he wrote: "All of this is very utopian, but what would you have me do? For the past forty years I have been dissecting; I think I have a right to dream a little bit in my old age" (Walker, *Germinal and Zola*, 104n).

Whenever they leave the comfort of the sacred hearth, the characters will be treated roughly by the world of chance once again, but we, as readers, are grateful for that world. Although it is certainly legitimate, in the context of loss and conservation, for Kucich to describe the Dickensian energy “as the expression of a desire to annihilate separateness and everything that defines separateness—the world of sense, of personality, of money, of status, and of all worldly object and purpose,”⁵⁵ we should remember that it is precisely the conservation of a world filled with concrete and social detail that guarantees the preservation of community. It does so, paradoxically, by guaranteeing the preservation of the self, which in Dickens is strongly identified with that most worldly of objects, the house. The question of identity is solved, Robert Newsom justly notes, by answering the question “to what house do I belong?”⁵⁶ By its very title, *Bleak House* proclaims the importance of property, and in its opening pages, it introduces and underlines the vital relationship between identity and property. The gentleman in the coach asks the orphans, Esther, Richard, and Ada, who are “like children in the wood,” why they do not want to go there. Where? they inquire. “‘Why, wherever you are going,’ said the gentleman” (*BH* 24). The wards do not know where they are going because they do not know who they are, and they do not know who they are because they do not know where they are going. That two of Dickens’s narrators, Esther and David, are called by a number of different names in their stories and Pip begins his story by declaring his real name to be Philip Pirrip testifies not only to their own but to Dickens’s and Boz’s problem of identity.

Although Jarndyce wishes to keep the past a secret from Esther, her arrival at Bleak House signals the beginning of her names and her discoveries, and she moves on to another Bleak House in her final metamorphosis as Esther Woodcourt. Once David Copperfield is safely tucked away under Betsey Trotwood’s roof, he significantly assumes the name of Trotwood and prays “that [he] never might

55. *Excess and Restraint*, 10.

56. *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things*, 62; see also 63.

be houseless anymore, and never might forget the houseless" (DC 1:238). Dragged about from one domicile to another only to lose hearth and home at the age of twelve, Dickens reaffirmed his identity, so damaged in childhood, by finally purchasing the house on Gad's Hill that his "poor father used to bring me to look at" and say "that if I ever grew up to be a clever man perhaps I might own that house, or such another house."⁵⁷ The connection between house and identity goes a long way in explaining why it was so devastating for Henry James when, in 1899, his brother William, with whom he wrestled for his self-definition all his life, discouraged his purchase of Lamb House.

I Promessi sposi makes it clear that without a home, one's very existence is in doubt, as Rodrigo doubts the historical reality of the *umili*: "Who knows they exist? They're as good as lost to the world; they haven't even got a landlord;—they're nobody's people" (PS 166; our italics). Renzo, in fact, loses his name in exile, and a guest at the inn dismisses him with words similar to Rodrigo's: "People like that haven't a house or home" (PS 256). Only when he moves to a new place and establishes a family will he be free again to use his own name. We learn early in his story that Renzo looks upon the Lecco district, and especially the mountain called the "resegone," as his personal property, and Lucia's farewell to her home and landscape (PS 125) reveals the same relationship. Bernard Wall quite rightly locates the center of *I Promessi sposi* not in its love story but in its "marriage story," the establishment of a home, the belonging to a landscape, the drawing together of children and friends: "In the City of London they still measure [wealth] by shares in Indo-Chinese rubber or Ceylon tea, but for the Italian country-man property is not an abstraction in a bank; it is a house, a garden, a field that you can see."⁵⁸ As the novel begins with the farewell to home, so it ends when the Marquis gives property to the protagonists and when Ren-

57. Letter to William Woodley Frederick de Cerjat in *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 102. The irony has been noted that the purchase of the home coincided with the breakup of his own family.

58. *Alessandro Manzoni*, 46.

zo, Lucia, and Agnese “had for some time now grown used to considering the village they were going to as their own” (PS 600).

For Dickens, who confessed to Forster, in April of 1856, that it was strange “to be never at rest, and never satisfied, and ever trying after something that is never reached,”⁵⁹ home was certain to be a word “stronger than any magician ever spoke, or spirit answered to” (MC 620). Karen Chase tries to oblige him by discovering a transcendental home in his novels, “when the moral consciousness has found a community in which it can flourish,” enabling it “to make the long-sought movement towards retirement” through a “web of relationship that *completes it as an emotional whole*” (our italics).⁶⁰ It is the yearning for a web of relationship growing ever flimsier as the industrial revolution progressed that leads Dickens, despite Smike’s death, to establish a particularly inviolable and timeless fortress at the end of *Nicholas Nickleby*. The hero buys his father’s estate and alters it to accommodate the “three or four generations, all crammed together in the same house and constantly multiplying, like a bed of oysters.”⁶¹ We learn, in the conclusion of the novel, that “none of the old rooms were ever pulled down, no old tree was ever rooted up, nothing with which there was any association of bygone times was ever removed or changed.” To the childless and friendless Scrooge, nothing could be more poignant than the sight of a miner’s hut revealing “an old, old man and woman, with their children and their children’s children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire” (CC 64). Zola establishes his own miner’s family as he vents his rage at the deprivations of history in his characteristic way, by turning tradition into travesty—Bonne-mort works in the same mines his grandfather had worked in before him, the mines that had claimed the lives of his father, two of his uncles and three brothers, the mines that had twisted and crippled his legs and those of his grandson, the mines in which his grand-

59. Quoted in MacKenzie and MacKenzie, *Dickens: A Life*, 284.

60. *Eros and Psyche*, 45.

61. Orwell, “Charles Dickens,” 95.

daughter will be buried, and the mines La Maheude reclaims at the end.

Naomi Schor speculates that Zola's "surprising" colonialist positions, which were, in fact, not far from the positions held by the left of his time, arose from his "omnipotence fantasy which could only be satisfied by the creation of a personal army composed entirely of one's descendents."⁶² But this, in turn, originated in his yearning for extended community. Suffering the loss of a father as a small boy, without offspring until late in life, Zola as author and Pascal as family genealogist proceed to chart the course of generations. Fecundity and creation had always taken on gigantic and biblical proportions for the childless Zola. He confessed that Paris was like his big brother and relished both his monthly "Dinner of the Hissed Authors," and his dinners with his young disciples, whom he courted. At Médan and its extension to an island in the Seine called "Paradou," he gathered a family of followers, and in the *Rougon-Macquart*, he created a saga of generations.⁶³

The bachelor Henry James wished to find a community in England that he had not found in America, but to William, who, after all, had both a hearth and a university community, he wrote in 1872: "Life at home has the compensation that there you are a part of the civilization, such as it is, whereas here you are outside of it." In America, he had already lost one community to the Civil War, in which many relatives and friends had perished and by which the lives of his younger brothers had been blighted. His later trip to the United States for *The American Scene* confirmed that communities and neighborhoods were being shattered by New York skyscrapers and Newport mansions. In England he discovered a small community at Rye, and at the outbreak of World War I, "an immense community" in the entire nation, as he wrote to Edith Wharton. The aging man of letters surrounded himself with a group of young male disciples and more-than-friends. The "Angel" had become a Master and a lover manqué. And across the ocean, he had his American family of Wil-

62. Zola's *Crowds*, 139.

63. Biographical information from Walker, *Zola*. See 116–17 for information about the Hissed authors.

liam, Alice, and their children. To his brother he wrote: "I turn you over (in my spiritual pocket), collectively and individually, and make you chink and rattle and ring; getting from you the sense of a great, though too-much (for my use) tied-up fortune." On his deathbed he expressed to Alice a wish that one of his brother's boys should have connections in Europe: "You are their connection with England and Europe," she answered. Alice records the rest of their conversation:

"Yes, I know, and I should say, without being fatuous, with the future."

"With the future always. They will try to follow you."

"Tell them to follow, to be faithful, to take me seriously."⁶⁴

Yet these authors of religious passion knew that it was not only the soul's need and desire "ever to approach and never to arrive," as Unamuno tells us,⁶⁵ but the novel's need and desire as well. Only the dramatic violation of home could buy a transcendental home, only the dramatic violation of family could gain the security of the sacred community around the hearth. Dickens is allowed to end his story with two Bleak Houses precisely because the homeless and nameless Jo and Nemo have paid for them by the loss of their identities, which is to say, the loss of their home. The novelist places the very perfection of his vision at the novel's service. In a heavenly home, the fires are always lit, a dinner is always served, children are always at play. Bleak House belies its name with its flaming hearths, its meticulous order, its linen, rose leaves and lavender, windows and curtains, its "hospitable jingle . . . of preparations for dinner," comfort, warmth, the jolly face of Jarndyce (*BH* 63–64). This heavenly home encourages "an extending and active society," for each room has at least two doors through which family and friends are free to wander and converse. Its naked exposure to the elements simply proves its soundness, Jarndyce explains to Rick. When the east wind from London blows, carrying with it the reminder of orphans with-

64. James's letters to William in *Letters*, 1:313, 4:382; letter to Edith Wharton in *Letters*, 4:715–16; conversation with Alice quoted in Edel, *Life of Henry James*, 5:554.

65. *Tragic Sense of Life*, 256.

out homes, the master retires to the Growlery and shuts the door, preserving the rest of the house from contamination.

We know what Chesterton means when he writes that “the spirit [Dickens] at bottom celebrates is that of two friends drinking wine together and talking through the night. But for him they are two deathless friends talking through an endless night and pouring wine from an inexhaustible bottle.”⁶⁶ Indeed, in his last novel, *Bella Wilfer* creates an inviolable fairy-tale hearth for John and her father, when she fixes a meal for them “like the supper provided for the three nursery hobgoblins at their house in the forest” (*OMF* 673), a scene with all the security of Dickens’s childhood stories. The quintessential novelist of comfort celebrates the same spirit when he writes of his progress on *Dombey and Son* to John Forster: “By the bye, I hope you may like the introduction of Solomon Gills. I think he lives in a good sort of house.”⁶⁷ Shipshape and cozy in the middle of Victorian London, it represents an island of safety that protects its society of innocents from the ruthless manipulation of the marketplace. The inhabitants are behind the time altogether. No money changes hands in the shop, which stands between the hearth and the street. But the novelist remembers that the devil must be paid: Solomon Gills is “stunned” by the news of Walter’s being sent to sea, “which fell upon the little back-parlour like a thunder-bolt, and tore up the hearth savagely” (*DS* 246).

“I will never come back to the place of my home. Were I to return, I would do nothing but cry all day,” wrote Manzoni when he sold his father’s estate with its gloomy effects and memories.⁶⁸ At his birth, he was sent to a farm with his nursemaid, and subsequently lived only briefly with his putative father before going away to school. After a short stay in Paris in his early manhood, he established a new home and identity at Brusuglio with the very mother who had deserted him in his childhood and the saintly wife his mother had selected for him. Though his home seemed to promise him a second history and a personal affirmation, it did not prove to be the sanctu-

66. *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*, 66.

67. *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 329–30.

68. Quoted in Rinaldi, *L’arte di Alessandro Manzoni nei Promessi Sposi*, 156.

ary for which he had yearned. For his daughter Vittoria, it became a source of sorrow. She reminds her husband Bista, (Giovan Battista Giorgini), "to bring me back a branch cut from the Brusuglio path, where I passed so many beautiful years in my childhood, and so many sad ones after."⁶⁹ The conversion of Manzoni, Enrichetta, and Giulia was "a family festival" and "a family festival ends *I Promessi sposi*."⁷⁰ Yet this "safe" family festival would be subject to death's unrelenting invasions. The husband and father stood helplessly by while his wife and children were picked off the tree of life like cherries. Manzoni had anticipated it all in his historical narrative. The very thing that had most attracted him to Enrichetta was the knowledge that her family was noted for its harmony, charity, modesty, and good feeling, that she thought only of the house and of the happiness of her parents who adored her.⁷¹ Yet in his novel, he saw to it that every house was violated: Lodovico's, Don Abbondio's, Rodrigo's, Renzo and Lucia's, the Spanish overseer's, and even the convent. No domicile was safe from the plague, from looters who enter and sack "with impunity," from "bailiffs who did the same and worse," from nature run wild, and worst of all, from the suspicions of the mind, which imagine "the family board and the nuptial bed" to be "hiding-places for the lurking poisoner" (PS 498). In Romanticism, ruins did not speak of painful loss but of mutability. The invasion of nature in Turner's 1794 watercolor *The Interior of Tintern Abbey* is picturesque and sweetly melancholy. But when Renzo's small plot of earth is overgrown, choked by weeds and dying branches, it is a "desolation—worse . . . a blasphemy,"⁷² and it is blasphemous because a sacred community has been routed, a sanctuary has been desecrated by the *landsknechte* and the plague.

In his memories of his security in the villa near Geneva, where as a young child he lay, semi-invalid and safe, Henry James recaptures the evaluative power of depth that had already marked Isabel's return to Gardencourt: ". . . depth, depth upon depth, was what came out

69. Quoted in Ginzburg, *La famiglia Manzoni*, 223.

70. Colombo, *Manzoni e gli umili* 120.

71. See letters to Fauriel in Ginzburg, *La famiglia Manzoni*, 24.

72. Wall, *Alessandro Manzoni*, 46.

for me at certain times of my waiting above, in my immense room of thick embrasures and rather prompt obscurity, while the summer afternoon waned and my companions, often below at dinner, lingered and left me just perhaps a bit overwhelmed.”⁷³ The hotel child breathes in the air of place, listens to the music of voices and steps in the garden. Yet the thicker the embrasures, the deeper the room, the more horrifying the invasion. Milly’s high tower proves not as secure as James’s early high chamber had seemed to be. Densher ironically imagines Lord Mark’s penetration of the palazzo as worse than his: “You couldn’t drop on the poor girl that way without, by the fact, being brutal. Such a visit was a descent, an invasion, an aggression, constituting one or other of the stupid shocks he precisely himself had so decently sought to spare her” (*WD* 329). But James’s irony also depends upon the notion that those palaces, fortresses, towers, temples of Europe, whose permanence and solidity he compares to the “provisional” quality of the New York buildings in *The American Scene*,⁷⁴ could not keep out death any more than King Richard’s crown, nor could a fate worse than death be kept from Isabel in Osmond’s fortress.

For Zola, the establishment of Médan constituted the recovery of the home and identity he had lost in his youth through the death of his father. But if the arrival of his “second family” satisfied his desiring self as he finished the *Rougon-Macquart*, the journey in his great series never comes to an end. Etienne enters *Germinal* as a homeless wanderer, without identity or profession. After he is taken into Maheu’s dwelling at Montsou, he rises in importance until he not only belongs to the community but becomes its leader. Yet the typical dramatic inversion of Zola that makes of Etienne a Christ also makes him the principal agent in the violation of his new home, whose hearth the novelist manages to make magic even on a tight budget. We smell and taste La Maheude’s coffee, potatoes, onions, the greens from Maheu’s garden, the headcheese, the thick slices of bread, all of which intensifies the horror of famine’s invasion. For

73. *A Small Boy and Others*, 164.

74. *The American Scene*, 77.

Alzire, as for Gervaise in *L'Assommoir*, "happiness appeared . . . in the form of a warm house in which children played and ate as much as they wanted" (C 138). But if the Maheu's simple home is open to violation, so, too, is Hennebeau's and the secure and luxurious abode of the Grégoires. It is significant that the fire which destroys the last dwelling of the *Rougon-Macquart* comes not from its hearth, but from Félicité, who feeds it with those notebooks of Pascal that record an extended society.

Stewart considers fire-gazers like James's Isabel to be preservers of a lost pastoral asylum for the imagination, yet this "intimate monitoring of one's own fancies" turns out to be ultimately useless for the dialectical novel because it "becomes a closed-circuit imagination."⁷⁵ In the salvational mode, the fire-gazing must always lead outward to community, as Isabel's finally does. The hearth must feel the resistance of history, hear the cold winds blowing around the house, those very winds that encourage wholeness and gathering. The struggle is not ultimately for the self but for the group's integrity. Yet we know that the family unit gathering around the fire will be as vulnerable to invasion as the shelter that houses them. It was the loss of family and security that set up a life of longing in Dickens and his David, and it was the loss of family and security that haunted Manzoni as "the sorrowful absence of his whole life."⁷⁶ Although some of Dickens's orphans follow the pattern of traditional novels, transforming the curse of their condition to a blessing not only to themselves but to all around them as they join new communities and acquire new parents, there are others who, in a century where the patriarchal nuclear family unit reached its greatest measure of strength, are not only melodramatic and tragic exceptions in exile, but painful reminders of communal vulnerability in life and in literature. More painful reminders yet are Caddy and Florence, for "not an orphan in the wide world can be so deserted as the child who is an outcast from a living parent's love" (DS 366). Although the perverse benefits of freedom that orphanhood had bestowed on his cousins had charmed

75. *Trials of Imagination*, 170.

76. Ulivi, *Manzoni*, 413.

Henry James in his youth, they did not seem alluring to him as an adult. Like Mr. Jarndyce, he knew that in real life “the universe makes rather an indifferent parent” (*BH* 68). While brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, attempt to make sacred and whole the broken historical family, new breaches continually appear. Childish fathers require nurturing children, daughters are also wives and second mothers, children are mothers to other children, friends are sisters, second wives, guardians and spiritual fathers. It is significant that when Cristoforo breaks the hierarchy of his enemy’s house, he not only assumes the name of his victim, but also becomes a Capuchin brother and father. During the devastation of the plague, Manzoni tells us,

amidst so much confusion there were still examples of constancy and family piety to be seen: fathers, mothers, brothers, sons, husbands, supporting their loved ones, and cheering them on their way with words of comfort; and not adults only, for there were even little boys, even little girls, leading their younger brothers and sisters along, exhorting them to be obedient, and with all the wisdom and compassion of grown-ups, assuring them that they were going to a place where they would be cared for and cured. (*PS* 536)

In the very pit of death, Fra Felice movingly urges survivors to adopt the children orphaned by the seventeenth-century plague (*PS* 559). With full knowledge of the fragility of communities, he wants them to subject themselves once more to the disappointments and devastations of time and place, a fate we would imagine angels, godfathers, holy children, and fools could be spared because they have no history. Toots, inheriting money from a family we never see, is like Milly, the “heir of all the ages” (*WD*, 6). By definition, salvational characters are “in arrears of life.” Dostoevsky’s idiot has “lived less than other people and knows less about life than anyone,” and Henry James chooses to model Milly after the dead Minny Temple, whose “character may be almost literally said to have been without practical application to life. She seems a sort of experiment of nature—an attempt, a specimen or example—a mere subject without an object.”⁷⁷

77. Feodor Doestoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Henry and Olga Carlisle (New York:

Holy fools and godfathers can neither marry nor have children because they cannot afford the aggression of even so incorporeal a sexuality. (The marriage of the holy fool Toots is “of no consequence” and is possible only because it centers around his and Susan’s mutual reverence for the angel Florence, and because Susan herself is a grotesque of sorts.) Tom Pinch remains “sexually alone”; as Gold observes, he is “the whole man, married, in a sense, to everyone.”⁷⁸ Only in the fantasy of *Le Docteur Pascal* can a master, guardian, and lover have privileges that the godfather cannot be offered. Jarndyce’s proposal to Esther is untenable in a sacred community that gives the godfather to everyone, and we are relieved when he goes on to become “the fondest father” to Ada and child, Esther’s “husband’s best and dearest friend,” and their “children’s darling . . . the object of our deepest love and veneration” (*BH* 769). Anything that threatens his universality must be watched carefully, as Lady Dedlock herself seems to acknowledge when Jarndyce presents Ada to her: “You will lose the disinterested part of your Don Quixote character . . . if you only redress the wrongs of beauty like this” (*BH* 229).

Angels, too, though they marry, belong to everyone. They are, Jarndyce tells Esther, like figures from the fairy tales and verses of our nursery:

“You are clever enough to be the good little woman of *our* lives here,
my dear . . . the little old woman of the Child’s . . . Rhyme

Little old woman, and wither so high?
To sweep the cobwebs out of the sky.

You will sweep them so neatly out of *our* sky. . . .” (*BH* 90)⁷⁹

New American Library, 1969), 82; James, letter to William, in *Letters*, 1:223. Kucich finds Tom Pinch to be a character who manages “an escape from desire into the nonhuman so complete that he requires no real recompense in the novel to achieve fulfillment” (*Excess and Restraint*, 127), but in fact, holy fools neither escape nor achieve.

78. *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralists*, 141.

79. See Welsh, *City of Dickens*, 141–63. We might note that multiple roles of daughter, nurse, mother, housekeeper, and confidante leave the angels of the hearth no time for other kinds of recreation or procreation.

Esther assures us that she still has her old names and her old place by the side of Jarndyce (*BH* 769). Though angels have children, they never give birth. In *La Joie de vivre*, Louise goes through the agonizing pains of parturition, whereas Zola's saintly Pauline becomes the mother. As the novel comes to an end, the author tells us that his heroine "wanted to remain single so as to work for the deliverance of all mankind; and indeed she embodied renunciation, love of others, goodness extended to the whole of sinful humanity."

But authors of religious passion spare their sacred figures nothing. Free from history's horrors, they are lowered into the profane world of cause and event, charged with the task of reproaching society and redeeming its members. They are brutally exposed to the scorn and condescension of those who seek sequence and consequence, source and solution. Despite Milly's "funny" race, losses, gains, freedom, manners (*WD* 155), Kate and Densher, who do not recognize the full irony of their assessment that there is no one else in the world like her (*WD* 385), learn to take her seriously. Martin Chuzzlewit may have the impulse "to laugh at the recollection of Tom's extreme absurdity" (*MC* 264), but it is this absurdity that makes Martin take Tom seriously. It is not relevant to ask, as Dyson does, ". . . is Tom really Martin's equal in any meaningful sense?" Of course not; this is precisely his worth to the novel and to the reader. At their best, these imitations of Christ not only promote historical reevaluation, but in the midst of history's wars, also encourage spiritual peace, for in their "conduct that is passionately good," they represent what Unamuno calls the only "security and repose . . . obtainable in this life, so essentially insecure and unrepentful."⁸⁰

If history learns to take the salvational characters seriously, so does literature. Steven Marcus calls *Oliver Twist* a "new *secular* drama of salvation," arguing that however passive Oliver is, his behavior brings real redemption in a real world: "Oliver and his fortunes tend to justify the harsh world; and the world, by ultimately suiting the

80. Dyson, *Inimitable Dickens*, 88. Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, 262.

condition of his being to its promise, justifies Oliver, and his parents, and even itself."⁸¹ But in fact the world cannot be justified; Oliver's innocence has more to do with Christian grace than it has to do with social behavior. His good conduct does not buy status in the world but criticizes it. Though he has been saved and becomes what he has always been, a gentleman, he can neither find nor offer security in society's arrangements. The novel he inhabits is not a new secular drama but a new *sacred* drama of salvation that keeps the secular novel alive through its resistance to the grim reality around it.

The Uses of Death

We are all familiar with those nineteenth-century fantasies of death through which authors sought fulfillment of their desires for perfect innocence and communion. Dickens's personal regressive yearning is expressed in the opening passages of his *The Life of Our Lord*: "And as [Christ] is now in Heaven, where we hope to go, and all to meet each other after we are dead, and there be happy always together, you never can think what a good place Heaven is, without knowing who he was and what he did." Death promised not only release from historical self-division, from chance and change, but blessed reunion without loss. For Dickens, it would bring another Furnival's Inn, with Mary by his side, the children all small and full of promise, with no shadow of coming disappointment, no possibility of waking "to the life on earth" as there is in Tom's dream of his lost love Mary (MC 846). The novelist never relinquished the desire to be buried next to Mary Hogarth, but while he remained on earth, she could safely remain an angel in all her unblemished youthfulness. In heaven, she became a desire fulfilled in eternal

81. *Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey*, 87, 89.

marriage, mocking the frustration and aggression that history had imposed.⁸²

Heaven, on the other hand, promised Henry James the joy of an eternal *un*marriage, for, to his relief, Minny Temple had gone to a place “where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage!” Looking back on his youth, James remembered her as original and vivacious, yet, as he recalls her vivid personality, he sees her also as the pale flower of Albany cousins, making “it impossible to say whether she was just the most moving of maidens or a disengaged and dancing flame of thought.” Minny herself could not decide between history and spirit, whether to be in the kingdom of heaven that Christ had likened to a “child, in whose heart is no struggle, no conscious battle between right and wrong, but only unthinking love and trust,” or to welcome back “the old *human* feeling, with its beautiful pride and its striving, its despair, its mystery and its faith.” James decides for her. Minny Temple, he wrote to Grace Norton in 1870, “was a divinely restless spirit—essentially one of the ‘irreconcilables;’ and if she had lived to great age, I think it would have been as the victim and plaything of her constant and generous dreams and dissatisfactions.” Better to move her “from this changing realm of fact to the steady realm of thought.”⁸³

For the preservation of community and the novel itself, however, salvational novelists had to exploit death rather than indulge it. If a life that is passionately good can engender goodness in others by

82. See *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 36–39. Dickens wrote to his mother-in-law that he kept Mary’s ring on his finger “by day and night.” See also his letter of 1855 to Maria Beadnell Winter, reflecting popular sentiment, in which he “congratulates” her on the death of her baby, who had escaped from chance and change. *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 117. Concerning Dickens’s deathbed scenes, House argues that in an age that is turning from religion to humanism, the acceptance of death becomes more difficult and has a tendency to develop into an obsession (*Dickens World*, 132). See also David Grylls, *Guardians and Angels*, 27, on the joyful death and sainthood of children in literature used by the Wesleyan propagandists.

83. James, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, 283, 540, 542, 37–38; letter to Grace Norton in *Letters*, 1:231; letter to William in *Letters*, 1:226. See also letter to his mother in *Letters*, 1:219–21.

drawing a sacred community around it, the death of the passionately good, whether in the *Iazzaretto*, in a Venetian palace, or a Victorian bedroom, could do so as well. Moral writers of the eighteenth century, in their rich dialogues of sympathy and sentiment, were still able to assume that they could educate their readers to active goodness while preserving communities of love and sorrow. But these novelists had to impose their own dialogues upon their times, carried by communities of mourners and dying children. Because our age finds nothing attractive about sentimentality or, for that matter, a passion for goodness, Dickens's deathbed scenes, which teach virtue by inspiration and reproach, obviously create many difficulties for him. The problem is not only one of historical taste, however. There is a sense in the reader that the author is forcibly yoking opposites together, whereas, in fact, he is doing quite the contrary. In the theater of his deaths, Dickens staged a fair fight between history and spirit. The power Paul demonstrates in drawing the disparate members of history together during his illness and death serves not only the salvational needs of the novel, but like the power of Tom Pinch, the formal needs as well.

No longer believing in the communities of love and sorrow toward which the novelist moves the reader, we are prone to suspect that darker erotic and murderous urges lie hidden behind the sentimental scenes. Our suspicions charge the writer with bad faith and artistic ignorance. Communal longings are taken as illegitimate motives, as personal alibi and symptom. With Bersani, we are likely to look upon the "absolute pleasure" of death fantasies as a screen that hides from us their origins in the guilt and anger generated by the continual frustration of our persistent desires.⁸⁴ We cannot doubt that Dickens had his private demons to exorcise; they can be felt poking their forks through the text. But is it not the guilt and anger generated by the continual thwarting of *our* desires, *our* indignation with a history no longer able to be resisted or reproached, that we take out on Dickens, transforming the novelist from a heroic preserver of relationship and form into a manipulator of his anxieties and those of

84. *Future for Astyanax*, 6.

his readers? Ashamed to be seduced by belief, we choose to ignore its service to history.

In the context of the dialectical novel, sentimentality is anything but a beguiler and a deceiver. The guilt and anger at the source of these fantasies do not subvert the novel but sustain it. Paul Dombey's sister, Miss Tox surmises tenderly, "could not bear to be shut out from sympathy with such a sorrow, in such sad community of love and grief" (*DS* 261), while Florence's father, we recall, was dismayed by the notion that he and Mr. Toodle could belong to the same sad community. Exile defines the entire drama of James's *George Stransom* and reminds us of the perils we run if we forget this earth, this life: "There were hours at which he almost caught himself wishing that certain of his friends would now die, that he might establish with them in this manner a connection more charming than, as it happened, it was possible to enjoy with them in life" ("The Altar of the Dead"). The configuration of those who stand together and those who stand apart represents a dialectic of spirit and history that today would be called one of separateness and non-separateness.⁸⁵

The death that attracts a community of mourners is violently inverted, as we might expect, in Zola, as God rejects and is brutally rejected in the unmerciful deaths of the young. Yet even for these characters we find salvational destinies: they die, as Angus Wilson notes of the children in Dickens and Dostoevsky, so that we might live,⁸⁶ and they die so that the dialectical novel itself might live. The untimely deaths of Alzire, Jacques, Mouquette, Catherine, Bébert and Lydie, Milly, Ralph, Jo, Smike, Paul, and Jenny's and Cecilia's babies not only move us, they also castigate heartless men of business, manipulators, bad fathers and mothers, uncharitable teachers, managers, priests and preachers, philanthropists, *monatti*, irresponsible and uncompassionate officials, all those historical figures who do not recognize spirit. We might well ask how death can reprimand a history that has so voraciously fattened itself on our barbaric cen-

85. See Kucich's penetrating discussion of sentimentality, especially as a conservative force, in *Excess and Restraint*, 34–35, 52–57. The dialectic of separateness and nonseparateness is prominently used by Kucich.

86. "Dickens and Dostoevsky," 84n.

tury? The only death we seem to be left with is the one Zola's second Lazare cries out for in a libretto of 1893, written just five months after the hymn to life in *Le Docteur Pascal*: "It was so good, O Jesus, this deep, black sleep, this deep, dreamless sleep. . . . Live again? Oh, no, no, no! Haven't I paid with enough suffering my frightful debt to life? . . . and you would have me pay it twice. You would have me start all over again my term of pain on this sorrowful earth!"⁸⁷

The House of Fiction

The salvational mode represented the last happy home for an "extending and active" society. Dickens's novels had given shelter and comfort to James as a child, and now, as a critic, he wanted to respond with gratitude by protecting them from the fierce winds: "Happy the house of life in which such chambers still hold out, even with the draught of the intellect whistling through the passages." Dickens, who knew of nothing that could put his marriage right "until we are all dead and buried and risen," repairs David Copperfield's impossible marriage in the House of Fiction by having him set up his writing desk by the fire, as Janice Carlisle observes, surrounded by his children, his angel, and, presumably, that extended family, the large reading public, thus meeting handsomely the requirements of form and community: "Writing becomes an activity in which the novelist can grant himself the domestic happiness and concord that he bestows on Florence Dombey, David Copperfield, and Esther Summer-son. The imaginative home that Dickens and his reader come to inhabit is, therefore, another ideal model created by fiction and sustained . . . in every reading experience."⁸⁸

Although this transcendental hearth was fixed perilously in a

87. Quoted in Walker, *Zola*, 212. Utter extinction was the longing of many French followers of Schopenhauer of the period. See Walker, *Germinal and Zola*, 19–20, 87.

88. James, *A Small Boy and Others*, 68; *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 126; Carlisle, *Sense of an Audience*, 43.

genre Georg Lukács considered to be “an expression of . . . transcendental homelessness,”⁸⁹ there were still, in the nineteenth century, fragile possibilities for a gathering of a sacred community. But in the twentieth century, we cannot find a hearth in literature. Already on the eve of the First World War James was writing to Edith Wharton that history had made art impossible.⁹⁰ We have difficulty recalling the last dramatic and dynamic moment for the novel, when writers could still console us by revealing the true horror of the world as it is. The four authors of this study struggled mightily to keep the dynamic tension between history and spirit alive, with the full knowledge that history would have its victory, but they do not seem to be heroes in the aftermath of that victory.

“If you had seen Macready last night,” Dickens wrote to Kate, after a reading of *The Chimes*, “undisguisedly sobbing, and crying on the sofa as I read, you would have felt, as I did, what a thing it is to have Power.” Modern interpreters, fearful of losing their aesthetic distance by being duped, are suspicious of the author’s “strange” joy in this power, and attribute it to sadism, to a need for control, to a desire for abandonment, to anything that does not carry the burden of traditional values. But it is precisely the values of a shared community that persuade us to interpret the novelist’s enjoyment as power *for* his friend rather than *over* him. Hadn’t he himself written to Forster that he experienced “what women call ‘a real good cry!’” upon completing his own book? With this in mind, the contemporary picture of Dickens, which emphasizes the scheming and uncompassionate part of his storytelling, seems to us unbalanced. The anticipatory pressures at work in serial publication are hardly touched upon as we are told that Dickens took pleasure in torturing his characters by keeping them in suspense. The use of sarcasm in the service of broad correctives is put aside when we are told that his beloved salvational hero Oliver is treated as a butt and “vehicle for verbal wit” in the opening passages of his story and that the public is the target of sneering and aggressive humor in the opening of *Martin Chuzzlewit*.⁹¹

89. *Theory of the Novel*, 41.

90. James, letter to Edith Wharton in *Letters*, 4:715–16.

91. MacKenzie and MacKenzie, *Dickens: A Life*, 162, 159. See the discussion

But we are speaking of the novelist who chose to name one of his magazines "The Cricket" because it would allow him to "sit down" on his readers' "very hobs and take a personal and confidential position with them."⁹² Manzoni is already in his chair by the fire, bridging the separation between writer and reader with the colorful and common rhetoric of a teller of tales: Don Abbondio, "an earthenware pot forced to travel among a lot of iron ones" (PS 12), announces his fear and surprise through a face that looks like a "wet dishcloth," his pain through a face that looks like that of a man with "the dentist's pincers in his mouth" (PS 24–25). Sandra Bermann finds Manzoni's treatise "On the Historical Novel" to be "suffused with an extraordinary solicitude for the reader,"⁹³ and we find the same solicitude in his novel, where his readers are to be his traveling companions (e.g., PS 330, 422).

So great is their love for their characters that Manzoni and James must sometimes avert their eyes out of pity, and Zola's are "filled . . . with tears." Tolstoy writes in his notebook that Dickens's love for his characters makes them "the friends of all mankind: they are a bond of union between man in America and man in Petersburg." The novelist confirms this relationship and extends it to his audience in his speech at a banquet in Edinburgh: "I feel as if they had been real persons, whose fortunes we had pursued together in inseparable connexion, and that I had never known them apart from you."⁹⁴

What bothered Dickens, and James as well, about Thackeray was that he did not take this last opportunity for relationship and form seriously, but betrayed it by stepping out of his position within the community to comment ironically at the expense of the text and the character, violating the close attention and trust he had won from his

of Dickens's relation to his audience in Kucich, *Excess and Restraint*, 15, 30–32, 232. For the novelist's tone toward Oliver and the public, see Kucich, 206–7, and Kincaid, *Rhetoric of Laughter*, 138–39.

92. Letter to Forster, June, 1845, in *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, 344. See also letter to Frank Stone, 1857, in *ibid.*, 317.

93. Introduction to Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, 35.

94. Quoted in Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, 1:177; *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, 9.

reader.⁹⁵ Sand had accused Flaubert of being too arrogant in assuming that any failure of communication is the fault of the public rather than the author and asserted that the tale should be “a conversation between you and the reader.” Despite the despair James felt over the mediocrity of public taste, characterized by much elitist grumbling and defensiveness, particularly in letters to Howells, he nevertheless agrees with Sand and pays tribute to the mutual relationship of author and reader in his careful explanatory prefaces to the New York edition.⁹⁶ It should not surprise us, therefore, that the novelist was distraught over the indifferent reception of this edition of his works, a reception which, in closing off extending sympathies, precipitated his nervous breakdown.

It is difficult to imagine that only eleven years separated the co-narrators of *Bleak House* from Dostoevski's snarling underground man, who argues with his readers in his taunting apostrophes and calculated sentimentality. Yet it is this singular antagonism rather than the compassion, love and cooperation of community which has carried the day. The alienation of the reader that Kundera praises in *Tristram Shandy* Angus Wilson recommends as healthy for the future of the novel because it shakes the reader out of the torpor that formulaic repetitions have induced in him. This alienation, however, artists of religious passion had no inclination to encourage. They needed their readers as much as their readers needed them, whereas today, René Girard remarks, “the author still publishes his works, but to cover up his crime he does everything he can to avoid being read.”⁹⁷

The four authors of this study wanted to be read and to be loved. Like their salvational characters, they were married to everyone. By making their personal frustrations and anger with history, their personal passions for innocence and wholeness, work for them rath-

95. See Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2:616; and James, “The Art of Fiction,” 6, and “The Lesson of Balzac,” 115.

96. *George Sand–Gustave Flaubert Letters*, ed. Stuart Sherman, 354–55; James, letter to William Dean Howells, 1884, in *Letters*, 3:27.

97. Wilson, “Iowa Review Interview,” 269; Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 264.

er than against them, they built Houses of Fiction that have stood through the years, besieged though they might be by an ungodly history and by modern writers who are “unserious throughout,” who do not believe in the truth of their characters, or of themselves, or of the “novel as a literary genre.” Within their walls, around their hearths, we find preserved for all of us the deep and abiding spiritual requirements of form and community in an age that cannot find them, in an age that does not know how much it needs them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. London: Norton, 1971.
- Adorno, Theodor. "Reconciliation under Duress." In *Aesthetics and Politics*, translated by Ronald Taylor. London: NLB, 1977.
- Angelini, Cesare. *Manzoni*. Turin: Editrice Torinese, 1949.
- Auden, W. H. "Dingley Dell and the Fleet." In *Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Martin Price. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- Axton, William F. "The Trouble with Esther." *Modern Language Quarterly* 26 (1965): 545–57.
- Bagehot, Walter. "Charles Dickens." In *Estimations in Criticism*. London: Andrew Melrose, 1909.
- Baguley, David, ed. *Critical Essays on Emile Zola*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986.
- Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Banta, Martha. *Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972.
- Barickman, Richard. "The Comedy of Survival in Dickens' Novels." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 11 (1977–1978): 128–43.
- . "The Subversive Methods of Dickens' Early Fiction." In *Charles Dickens: New Perspectives*, edited by Wendell Stacy Johnson. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982.
- Barricelli, Gian Piero. *Alessandro Manzoni*. Boston: Twayne, 1976.
- Bataille, Georges. *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*. Edited by Allan Stoekl. Translated by Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitts and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
- Bayley, John. "The Order of Battle at Trafalgar." In *The Order of Battle at Trafalgar*. New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.
- Becker, Colette, ed. *Les critiques de notre temps et Zola*. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1972.
- Bédé, Jean-Albert. *Emile Zola*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.

- Bedient, Calvin. *Architects of the Self*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- Bellow, Saul. *The Dean's December*. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.
- Belotti, Giuseppe. *Il messaggio politico-sociale di Alessandro Manzoni*. Bologna: Zanichelli, 1966.
- Bersani, Leo. *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Charles Dickens's Bleak House*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- , ed. *Modern Critical Views: Charles Dickens*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Bosanquet, Theodora. *Henry James at Work*. London: Hogarth Press, 1924.
- Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Carey, John. *Here Comes Dickens*. New York: Schocken Books, 1973.
- Carlisle, Janice. *The Sense of an Audience: Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot at Mid-Century*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981.
- Carlyle, Thomas. *Past and Present*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, n.d.
- . *Sartor Resartus*. Edited by Frederick William Roe. New York: Macmillan, 1927.
- Casario, Robert L. *Plot, Story, and the Novel: From Dickens and Poe to the Modern Period*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Caserta, Ernesto G. *Manzoni's Christian Realism*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1977.
- Chandler, S. B. *Alessandro Manzoni: The Story of a Spiritual Quest*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974.
- Chase, Karen. *Eros and Psyche: The Representation of Personality in Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens and George Eliot*. New York: Methuen, 1984.
- Chase, Richard. *The American Novel and Its Tradition*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957.
- Chesterton, G. K. *Charles Dickens: The Last of the Great Men*. New York: Press of the Readers Club, 1942.
- Christ, Carol T. *The Finer Optic: The Aesthetic of Particularity in Victorian Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.
- Cockshut, A. O. J. *The Imagination of Charles Dickens*. New York: New York University Press, 1962.
- Cohan, Steven. *Violation and Repair in the English Novel: The Paradigm of Experience from Richardson to Woolf*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986.

- Collins, Philip. *Dickens and Crime*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968.
- Colombo, Umberto. *Manzoni e gli umili: Storia interna e fortuna critica*. Milan: Cinisella Balsamo, 1972.
- Connolly, Cyril. "Edith Wharton and Henry James." In *The Evening Colonnade*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.
- Croce, Benedetto. *Alessandro Manzoni: Saggi e discussioni*. Bari: Laterza, 1930.
- Cruikshank, R. J. *Charles Dickens and Early Victorian England*. London: Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1949.
- Daleski, H. M. *Dickens and the Art of Analogy*. London: Faber and Faber, 1970.
- De Michelis, Eurialo. *Studi sul Manzoni*. Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 1962.
- De Sanctis, Francesco. *Manzoni*. Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1965.
- De Simone, Joseph Francis. *Alessandro Manzoni: Esthetics and Literary Criticism*. New York: S. F. Vanni, 1946.
- Dickens, Charles. "George Silverman's Explanation." In *Selected Short Fiction*, edited by Deborah A. Thomas. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
- . "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices." In *Christmas Stories*. Vol 2. Geneva: Edito-Service, n.d.
- . *Letters of Charles Dickens*. Edited by Madeline House, Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and K. J. Fielding. 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- . *Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*. Edited by David Paroissien. Boston: Twayne, 1985.
- . *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*. Edited by K. J. Fielding. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.
- Donadio, Stephen. *Nietzsche, Henry James, and the Artistic Will*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Donoghue, Denis. "The English Dickens and *Dombey and Son*." In *Dickens Centennial Essays*, edited by Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- Donovan, Robert A. "Structure and Idea in *Bleak House*." In *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Bleak House: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Jacob Korg. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Dyos, H. J. and Michael Wolff, eds. *The Victorian City: Images and Reality*, vol 2. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.
- Dyson, A. E., ed. *Charles Dickens's Bleak House*. Nashville: Aurora, 1970.
- . *The Inimitable Dickens: A Reading of the Novels*. London: Macmillan, 1970.
- Eckermann, Peter. *Conversations with Goethe*. Translated by John Oxenford. Edited by J. K. Moorhead. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1951.

- Edel, Leon. *The Life of Henry James*. 5 vols. New York: Avon Books, 1953.
- Eigner, Edwin M. *The Dickens Pantomime*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- . *The Metaphysical Novel in England and America: Dickens, Bulwer, Melville, and Hawthorne*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Fanger, Donald. *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Fogel, Daniel Mark. *Henry James and the Structure of the Romantic Imagination*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.
- Ford, George H. *Dickens and His Readers: Aspects of Novel-Criticism since 1836*. New York: Norton, 1965.
- Fowler, Virginia C. *Henry James's American Girl: The Embroidery on the Canvas*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
- Fradin, Joseph I. "Will and Society in Bleak House." *PMLA* 81 (March 1966): 95–109.
- Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850–1859*, vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*. Edited and translated by James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1961.
- Fréville, Jean. *Zola: Semeur d'orages*. Paris: Editions Sociales, 1952.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. New York: Atheneum, 1967.
- . *The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society*. London: Methuen, 1970.
- Galletti, Alfredo. *Alessandro Manzoni*. Milan: Casa Editrice Alberto Coricelli, 1944.
- Garis, Robert. *The Dickens Theatre: A Reassessment of the Novels*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Giddings, Robert, ed. *The Changing World of Charles Dickens*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1983.
- Gide, André. *Les faux monnayeurs*. Paris: Gallimard, 1925.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman-Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Ginzburg, Natalia. *La famiglia Manzoni*. Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1983.
- Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. Translated by Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965.
- . *Violence and the Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1977.

- Gissing, George. *The Immortal Dickens*. London: Cecil Palmer, 1925.
- Gold, Joseph. *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralists*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. Edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Translated by William Boelhower. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Greene, Graham. "Henry James: The Religious Aspect," In *Collected Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951.
- . "The Young Dickens." In *Collected Essays*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951.
- Grylls, David. *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature*. London: Faber and Faber, 1978.
- Hardy, Barbara. "An Approach through Narrative." In *Towards a Poetics of Fiction*, edited by Mark Spilka. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977.
- . "The Complexity of Charles Dickens." In *Dickens 1970*, edited by Michael Slater. New York: Stein and Day, 1970.
- . *Dickens: The Later Novels*. London: Longmans, 1968.
- . *The Moral Art of Dickens: Essays*. London: Athlone Press, 1970.
- Hemmings, F. W. J. *Emile Zola*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.
- Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. "Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*." In *Gesammelte Werke: Prosa 4*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1955.
- Holland, Laurence B. *The Expense of Vision: Essays on the Craft of Henry James*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964.
- House, Humphrey. *The Dickens World*. London: Oxford University Press, 1941.
- Howe, Irving. *Politics and the Novel*. New York: Horizon Press, 1957.
- . "Zola: The Poetry of Naturalism." In *The Critical Point*. New York: Horizon Press, 1973.
- Howells, William Dean. "Mr. Henry James's Later Work." In *WD* 483–87. (From *North American Review* 176 [January 1903]: 126–31.)
- Irving, John. "The Making of a Writer: Trying to Save Piggy Snead." *The New York Times Book Review*, 22 August 1982, 3.
- James, Henry. "Alphonse Daudet." In *Partial Portraits*. New York: MacMillan, 1905.
- . *The American Scene*. Edited by Leon Edel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968.
- . "Anthony Trollope." In *The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*, edited by Leon Edel. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- . "The Art of Fiction." In *The Future of Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*. Edited by Leon Edel. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- . *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934.

- . *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*. Edited by Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- . "Emerson." In *The American Essays*, edited by Leon Edel. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- . "Emile Zola." In *The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*, edited by Leon Edel. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- . *Essays in London and Elsewhere*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1893.
- . *The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*. Edited by Leon Edel. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- . "Gustave Flaubert." In *The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*, edited by Leon Edel. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- . *Henry James: Letters*. Edited by Leon Edel. 4 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- . *The House of Fiction*. Edited by Leon Edel. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973.
- . "The Lesson of Balzac." In *The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*, edited by Leon Edel. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.
- . "The Limitations of Dickens." In *Views and Reviews*. Boston: Ball, 1908.
- . *Literary Reviews and Essays on American, English and French Literature*. Edited by Albert Mordell. New York: Grove, 1957.
- . *Notes of a Son and Brother*. In *Autobiography: "A Small Boy and Others," "Notes of a Son and Brother," and "The Middle Years,"* edited by Frederick W. Dupee. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- . *Partial Portraits*. New York: MacMillan, 1905.
- . *A Small Boy and Others*. In *Autobiography: "A Small Boy and Others," "Notes of a Son and Brother," and "The Middle Years,"* edited by Frederick W. Dupee. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- . *The Tragic Muse*. New York: Harper, 1960.
- . *Views and Reviews*. Boston: Ball, 1908.
- James, William. "Pragmatism" and "The Meaning of Truth," Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- . *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Edited by Martin Marty. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.
- Johnson, Edgar. *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*. 2 vols. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952.
- Johnson, Pamela Hansford. "The Sexual Life in Dickens's Novels." In *Dickens 1970*, edited by Michael Slater. New York: Stein and Day, 1970.

- Johnson, Wendell Stacy, ed. *Charles Dickens: New Perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982.
- Kafka, Franz. *Letters to Milena*. Edited by Willi Haas. Translated by Tania and James Stern. New York: Schocken Books, 1953.
- Kaplan, Fred. *Dickens*. New York: William Morrow, 1988.
- . *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Kaston, Carren. *Imagination and Desire in the Novels of Henry James*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984.
- Kincaid, James R. *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Korg, Jacob, ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Bleak House: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Krook, Dorothea. "Milly's and Densher's Ordeal of Consciousness." In *WD* 535–50. (From *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.)
- Kucich, John. *Excess and Restraint in the Novels of Charles Dickens*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981.
- . *Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Lawrence, D. H. "Introduction to These Paintings." In *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence, 1936*. Edited by Edward D. McDonald. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978.
- . "The Novel." In *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963.
- . *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963.
- Leavis, F. R. *The Great Tradition: A Study of the English Novel*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954.
- Leavis, F. R. and Q. D. Leavis. *Dickens the Novelist*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973.
- Levin, Harry. *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Levine, George. *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- . *The Realistic Imagination, English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Levy, Leo B. *Versions of Melodrama: A Study of the Fiction and Drama of Henry James, 1865–1897*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.
- Lubbock, Percy. *The Craft of Fiction*. New York: Viking Press, 1957.
- Lucas, John. *The Melancholy Man: A Study of Dickens's Novels*. London: Methuen, 1970.

- Lukacher, Ned. "The Dickensian 'No Thoroughfare.'" In *Modern Critical Views: Charles Dickens*, edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Lukács, Georg. *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki and Others*. Translated by Edith Bone. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1972.
- . *The Theory of the Novel*. Translated by Anna Bostock. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971.
- McCarthy, Mary. *Ideas and the Novel*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.
- . *On the Contrary: Articles of Belief, 1946–1961*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961.
- McKee, Patricia. *Heroic Commitment in Richardson, Eliot, and James*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- MacKenzie, Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie. *Dickens: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Manzoni, Alessandro. *Lettere inedite e sparse. Prosa minore*. Edited by Alfonso Bertoldi. Florence: Sansoni, 1967.
- . *On the Historical Novel*. Edited and translated by Sandra Bermann. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- . *Prosa*, vol. 1. Florence: Salani, 1965.
- Marcus, Steven. *Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965.
- Matthiessen, F. O. *Henry James: The Major Phase*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1944.
- . *The James Family*. New York: Knopf, 1947.
- Maude, Aylmer. *The Life of Tolstoy*. 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1929.
- Mazzamuto, Pietro. *Poetica e stile in Alessandro Manzoni: Commento alla Lettre à Mr. Chauvet*. Florence: Casa Editrice F. Le Monnier, 1957.
- Meckier, Jerome. *Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction: Dickens, Realism and Revaluation*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Autobiography and Other Writings*. Edited by Jack Stillinger. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.
- . "On Liberty." In *Autobiography and Other Writings*, edited by Jack Stillinger. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.
- Miller, J. Hillis. *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.
- Momigliano, Attilio. *Alessandro Manzoni*. Milan: Giuseppe Principato, 1962.
- Montano, Rocco. *Comprendere Manzoni*. Naples: G. B. Vico, 1975.
- Moravia, Alberto. "Alessandro Manzoni, or the Hypothesis of a Catholic

- Realism." In *Man as an End: A Defense of Humanism*, translated by Bernard Wall. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966.
- Murdoch, Iris. *The Sovereignty of Good*. New York: Schocken Books, 1971.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lectures on Literature*. Edited by Fredson Bowers. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.
- Newsom, Robert. *Dickens on the Romantic Side of Familiar Things: Bleak House and the Novel Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Twilight of the Idols." In *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press, 1954.
- Nisbet, Ada and Blake Nevius, eds. *Dickens Centennial Essays*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. *Meditations on Quixote*. Translated by Evelyn Rugg and Diego Marín. New York: Norton, 1963.
- Orwell, George. "Charles Dickens." In *A Collection of Essays*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954.
- . "Inside the Whale." In *A Collection of Essays*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954.
- . "Reflections on Gandhi." In *A Collection of Essays*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954.
- Petrey, Sandy. *Realism and Revolution: Balzac, Stendhal, Zola and the Performances of History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Porte, Joel. *The Romance in America: Studies in Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and James*. Wesleyan University Press: Middletown, 1969.
- Price, Martin, ed. *Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- Proust, Marcel. *The Letters of Marcel Proust*. Edited and translated by Mina Curtiss. New York: Random House, 1949.
- Raimondi, Ezio. "I Promessi Sposi: Genesis and Structure of a 'Catholic' Novel." In *Interpretation: Theory or Practice*, edited by Charles S. Singleton. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969.
- Rinaldi, Michele. *L'arte di Alessandro Manzoni Ne I Promessi Sposi*. Naples: Edizione "Anima-Pensiero," [1979].
- Romano, John. *Dickens and Reality*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- Rose, Phyllis. *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.
- Rowe, John Carlos. *Henry Adams and Henry James: The Emergence of a Modern Consciousness*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976.
- . *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.

- Ruffini, Francesco. *La Vita Religiosa di Alessandro Manzoni*. 2 vols. Bari: Giuseppe Laterza e Figli, 1931.
- Ruland, Richard, ed. *A Storied Land: Theories of American Literature*. 2 vols. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976.
- Russo, Luigi. *Personaggi dei Promessi Sposi*. Bari: Editore Laterza, 1962.
- Samuels, Charles Thomas. "A Flawed Hymn to Renunciation." In *WD* 574–80. (From *The Ambiguity of Henry James*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971.)
- Sandeen, Ernest. "The Wings of the Dove and The Portrait of a Lady: A Study of Henry James's Later Phase." In *WD* 507–20. (From *PMLA* 69 [December 1954], 1060–61, 1064–75.)
- Santayana, George. "Dickens." In *Men and Books*, edited by Malcolm Shaw MacLean and Elisabeth K. Holmes. New York: R. R. Smith, 1930.
- Sapegno, Natalino. *Ritratto di Manzoni ed altri saggi*. Bari: Editore Laterza, 1961.
- Sapegno, Natalino, G. Trombatore, and W. Binni, eds. *Scrittori d'Italia*, vol. 3. Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1962.
- Scalvini, Giovita. *Foscolo Manzoni Goethe: Scritti edite e inediti*. Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1948.
- Schor, Naomi. "Mother's Day: Zola's Women." In *Critical Essays on Emile Zola*, edited by David Baguley. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986.
- . *Zola's Crowds*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978.
- Sears, Sallie. "Kate Croy and Merton Densher." In *WD* 551–63. (From *The Negative Imagination: Form and Perspective in the Novels of Henry James*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968.)
- Serres, Michel. *Feux et signaux de brume: Zola*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1975.
- Shaw, Bernard. "Great Expectations: An Introduction to Dickens's Novel." In *Bernard Shaw's Nondramatic Literary Criticism*, edited by Stanley Weintraub. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972.
- . "Hard Times: An Introduction to Dickens's Novel." In *Bernard Shaw's Nondramatic Literary Criticism*, edited by Stanley Weintraub. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972.
- . "What is the New Element?" In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1958.
- Sherman, Stuart, ed. *The George Sand–Gustave Flaubert Letters*. Translated by Mrs. A. L. McKenzie. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1949.
- Slater, Michael. *Dickens and Women*. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1983.
- , ed. *Dickens 1970*. New York: Stein and Day, 1970.
- Smethurst, Colin. *Emile Zola: Germinal*. London: Edward Arnold, 1974.
- Smith, Grahame. *Charles Dickens: Bleak House*. London: Edward Arnold, 1974.

- . *Dickens, Money, and Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.
- Spilka, Mark. *Dickens and Kafka: A Mutual Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963.
- Stewart, Garrett. *Dickens and the Trials of Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Stone, Harry. *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.
- Storey, Gladys. *Dickens and Daughter*. London: Frederick Muller, 1939.
- Taine, H. A. *History of English Literature*. Two volumes in one. Translated by Henri Van Laun. New York: A. L. Burt, n.d.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. 2 vols. New York: Vintage, 1959.
- Trilling, Lionel. *The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism*. New York: Viking Press, 1955.
- Trollope, Anthony. *Barchester Towers*. New York: Rinehart, 1949.
- Turnell, Martin. *The Art of French Fiction*. New York: New Directions, 1959.
- Ulivi, Ferruccio. *Figure e protagonisti dei Promessi Sposi*. Turin: ERI, 1967.
- . *Manzoni*. Milan: Rusconi, 1984.
- . *Manzoni Storia e Provvidenza*. Rome: Bonacci, 1975.
- . *Il romanticismo e Alessandro Manzoni*. Bologna: Cappelli, 1965.
- Unamuno, Miquel de. *The Tragic Sense of Life*. New York: Dover Publications, 1954.
- Walder, Dennis. *Dickens and Religion*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981.
- Walker, Philip. D. *Germinal and Zola's Philosophical and Religious Thought*. Purdue University Monographs in Romance Languages, no. 14. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1984.
- . *Zola*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.
- Wall, Bernard. *Alessandro Manzoni*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.
- Wegelin, Christof. "The Lesson of Spiritual Beauty." In *WD 520–29*. (From *The Image of Europe in Henry James*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1958.)
- Welsh, Alexander. *The City of Dickens*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- . *Culture and Society: 1780–1950*. New York: Harper and Row, 1958.
- . "Dickens and Social Ideas." In *Dickens 1970*, edited by Michael Slater. New York: Stein and Day, 1970.

- . *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*. London: Hogarth Press, 1984.
- . "Forms of English Fiction in 1848." In *Writing in Society*. London: Verso, 1983.
- . "Social Criticism in Dickens: Some Problems of Method and Approach." *Critical Quarterly* 6 (Autumn 1964): 214–27.
- . *Writing in Society*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Wilson, Angus. "Dickens and Dostoevsky." In *Diversity and Depth in Fiction: Selected Critical Writings of Angus Wilson*, edited by Kerry McSweeney. New York: Viking, 1984.
- . *Emile Zola: An Introductory Study of His Novels*. New York, 1952.
- . "Iowa Review Interview." In *Diversity and Depth in Fiction: Selected Critical Writings of Angus Wilson*, edited by Kerry McSweeney. New York: Viking, 1984.
- Wilson, Edmund. "Dickens: The Two Scrooges." In *Eight Essays*. New York: Doubleday, 1954.
- Zola, Emile. *Correspondences*. Edited by Owen Morgan and Alain Pages, vol. 5 (1884–1886). Paris and Montreal: l'Université de Montreal-Canada and Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985.
- . *The Earth (La Terre)*. Translated by Douglas Parmée. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980.
- . *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*. Edited by Colette Becker. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1972.
- . *Mes haines: Causeries*. Paris: Achille Faure, Libraire-Editeur, 1866.
- . *Le Roman expérimental*. Edited by Aimé Guedj. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1971.
- Zottoli, Angelandrea. *Umili e potenti nella poetica del Manzoni*. Rome: Tumminelli, 1942.
- Zwerdling, Alex. "Esther Summerson Rehabilitated." In *Charles Dickens's Bleak House*, edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.

INDEX

- Aestheticizing: release of energy, 62; Mrs. Stringham as aesthetic version of author, 82; of will in Dickens, 94; aesthetic instinct, 104; critical distancing, 208
- Allegory, 109, 115, 117, 184; markers, 185; and redemption, 186
- ✓ *All the Year Round*, 168
- ✓ "Altar of the Dead, The," 179, 206
- ✓ *Ambassadors, The*, 4; Lambert Strether in, 4, 81; Madame Vionnet in, 100
- Ambience: as salvational power, 65, 66, 72–73. *See also* Angel; Godfather; Holy fool
- America: and Europe, 2–3, 16, 133, 160, 184, 185–86, 195, 198; James's international theme, 8; and England, 17, 19, 97, 168, 194; generic difficulties, 53–54; Puritanism, 60; rhetoric, 78; point of view, 98; manners of, 149
- ✓ *American, The*, 100
- ✓ *American Scene, The*, 160, 194, 198
- Angel: power of, 9, 63–68, 72–73, 74, 78, 106, 154, 171, 173, 175; as Deliverer, 69; of Death, 69*n*; angelic transfiguration, 106. *See also* Ambience
- Angelini, Cesare, 41
- Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Assurance Co., 13, 130
- Arese, Fagnani, 22–23
- Art: Dickens on art and artists, 130–32
- L'Assommoir*, 35, 41, 48*n*, 199; Gervaise in, 199
- Auden, W. H., 51
- Austen, Jane, 4
- Axton, William, 76
- d'Azeglio, Marchese, 57
- d'Azeglio, Massimo, 124–25, 169
- Bad faith: *See* Suspicion
- Bagehot, Walter, 18, 34
- Baille, Jean-Baptistin, 50, 57, 176
- Bakhtin, M. M., 75, 94–95
- Balzac, Honoré de, 6, 31, 46, 61, 104, 118–19, 127, 132, 163, 165, 184; *Le Médecin de campagne*, 6; *Lost Illusions*, 104, 118–19, 132, 165, 184; *characters*: Vautrin, 61, 165, 184; Eve, 118, 184; d'Arthez, 119, 132; Lucien, 119, 132, 184; David, 119, 184
- Barickman, Richard, 156
- Barnaby Rudge*, 13
- Barthes, Roland, 58*n*
- Bataille, Georges, 178*n*
- Bayley, John, 45
- Beadnells, 33; *See also* Winter, Maria
- Beadnell
- Beaumarchais, 60*n*
- Bédé, Jean-Albert, 19
- Bedient, Calvin, 3
- Bellow, Saul, 187
- Belotti, Giuseppe, 42
- Bermann, Sandra, 58*n*, 85*n*, 209
- Bersani, Leo, 54, 77, 89, 93, 95, 162, 205
- Bête humaine, La*, 20, 82
- Bible: New Testament, 27, 143; narrative, 50; patterns, 51; mythologies, 60; cadence, 167; monarch, 176; Old Testament, 176; markers, 185; fecundity, 194
- Bildungsroman, 97
- Bleak House*, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 56, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 76–77, 78, 80, 87, 92–93,

- 96–97, 100, 101–2, 104, 105, 107, 109–10, 111, 112, 113–14, 115, 116, 123, 125, 127, 129, 130, 133, 134, 138, 139, 141–42, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148–49, 150, 153, 155, 157, 158, 163, 164, 171, 174, 182*n*, 184, 185, 189, 191, 195, 200, 201, 202, 210; *characters*: Jarndyce, 1, 63, 73, 74, 93, 113, 123, 129, 133, 142, 144, 146, 153, 155, 164, 173, 191, 195, 200, 201, 202; Jo, 10, 30, 33, 34, 67, 77, 80, 87, 113, 133, 138, 142, 188, 195; Chadband, 10, 77; Richard Carstone, 11, 13, 73, 77, 92–93, 96, 123, 127–28, 129, 130, 133, 135, 154, 188, 191, 195; Sir Leicester, 13, 31, 35, 101; Gridley, 13, 33, 56, 102; Boythorne, 13, 110; Rouncewell brothers, 19; George, 31, 33; Mrs. Rouncewell, 32; Esther Summerson, 32, 33, 34, 63, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 76, 87, 92, 96–97, 98–99, 100, 101–2, 104, 105, 110, 111, 113–14, 115, 125, 127, 141, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 153, 153–54*n*, 182*n*, 184, 185, 189, 191, 201–2; Mrs. Pardiggle, 32, 76, 112, 120, 141; Ada, 32, 77, 133, 146, 191, 201; Lady Dedlock, 32, 100, 101–2, 116, 134, 142, 157, 188, 201; Skimpole, 33, 111, 112, 129, 130, 131, 133, 137, 138, 142, 145, 185; Neckett, 34, 129; the Bagnets, 35, 145, 146, 148; Caddy Jellyby, 67, 74, 77, 107, 125, 147, 150, 164, 188, 199; Charley Neckett, 67, 99, 144; Allan Woodcourt, 74, 97, 115, 120, 130, 139, 158, 189; Vholes, 77, 123; Mr. Jellyby, 77, 125; Krook, 78; Tulkinghorn, 78, 101, 109, 134, 155; Guppy, 87, 96; Mrs. Jellyby, 107, 112, 120, 146, 147, 148, 150, 155; Neckett children, 113, 144; Inspector Bucket, 125; Mr. Turveydrop, 133, 156, 157; Mr. Snagsby, 142; Miss Flite, 150, 153, 185; Nemo, 188, 195
- Boccaccio, Giovanni, 42
 Borie, Jean, 183–84*n*
 Bosanquet, Theodora, 63
 Bossuet, J.-B., 91*n*
Bostonians, The, 161, 174
 Brontë, Charlotte, 11
 Brooks, Peter, 59*n*, 59–60, 62, 70, 75, 105, 114*n*, 115*n*
 Brotherhood, 21, 37, 46, 50, 62, 86, 102
 Broughton, Rhoda: letter from James, 82
 Brunetière, Ferdinand, 46, 56
 Brusuglio, 196, 197
 Bulwer-Lytton, Edward George Earle, 167
 Bunyan, John: *Pilgrim's Progress, The*, 185
- Calvino, Italo, 45
 Cantù, Cesare, 124
 Capuchins, 41, 200. *See also* Catholicism
 Carducci, Giosué, 23, 23*n*
 Carlisle, Janice, 71, 71*n*, 207
 Carlyle, Thomas, 69*n*, 87, 108*n*, 122*n*, 127, 128, 149–50, 153; *Past and Present*, 87, 149–50; *Sartor Resartus*, 108*n*, 122*n*, 148*n*
 Carton, Sidney, 116
 Caserio, Robert, 95, 106, 114
 Catholicism, 22, 23, 24, 25; Manzoni as Catholic, 3, 21, 38, 43, 49, 92; Church, 10, 14, 22, 23, 24, 25, 38, 88, 123, 137; Catholic novel, 21, 58, 91, 143; doctrine, 22, 27, 50; Catholic Realism, 26, 27; churchmen, 26, 42, 50, 70, 84, 86, 91, 111, 121, 137, 143, 206; Catholic paternalism, 38; Catholic revival, 46; neo-Catholicism, 48; Zola on Catholicism and priests, 50, 139–40, 143; Dickens on Catholicism and Mary

- Hogarth's dream, 143. *See also* Preachers; Sermons
- Cattaneo, Gaetano, 170
- Céard, Henri, 48, 56
- Cézanne, Paul, 57, 176, 176*n*
- Chancery, 13, 30, 33, 56, 78, 93, 96, 149. *See also* Courts of law
- Chandler, S. B., 138
- Chase, Karen, 94, 99, 101, 153–54*n*, 178*n*, 193
- Chateaubriand, François René Auguste, 24
- Chekhov, Anton, 7
- Chesterton, G. K., 30, 32, 37, 55, 62, 150, 196
- Chimes, The*, 208
- Christ, 25, 42, 50, 51, 67, 91, 107, 119, 138–39, 169, 178, 198, 202, 203, 204, 207; messiah, 72
- Christ, Carol, 64
- Christmas Carol, A*, 140, 141–42, 145, 184, 186, 193; Scrooge in, 99, 105, 140, 141–42, 184, 186, 193
- Circumlocution Office, 13, 130, 149
- Civil War, 124, 194
- Clarke, Mary, 169
- Cockshut, A. O. J., 12, 131, 187
- Coen, Marco, 136–37
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 179*n*. *See also* Romanticism
- Collins, Wilkie, 166*n*, 180; brother, 169
- Community, 8, 9, 74, 75, 80, 111, 114, 114*n*, 120, 160, 162, 163, 167, 192–93, 194, 195, 197, 200, 201, 205, 207, 208, 211; communal duties, 153; extended society, 162, 164, 184, 185*n*, 194, 195, 199, 207, 208; communal resources, 165; communal vulnerability, 184, 185*n*, 199; separateness and community, 191; communion in death, 203; communal preservation, 204
- Condescension, 10, 31, 33, 38, 202. *See also* Patronization; Snobbery
- Conrad, Joseph, 7
- Contagion, 30, 147, 149, 184; infection, 30, 122, 184; contamination, 196. *See also* Famine; Plague
- Conte di Carmagnola, 121
- Conversion, 68, 83, 94, 102, 104–5, 121; Manzoni, 22, 170, 197; of Cristoforo, 40; of l'innominato, 43, 57, 70, 83, 83*n*, 86, 97; of Densher, 70, 83–84, 95, 114*n*; of Levin, 101; novels of, 99
- Courts of law, 11, 123. *See also* Chancery
- Cousine Bette, 61
- Coutts, Angela Burdett, 119, 141, 147*n*, 150, 158, 168
- "Cricket, The," 209
- Crispolti, Filippo, 39
- Croce, Benedetto, 24
- Crowds: in Zola, 28, 36, 37
- Cruikshank, R. J., 158
- Daleski, H. M., 149
- Dante Alighieri, 22, 130–31
- Darwin, Charles: natural selection, 18; Darwinism, 18, 53; Darwinian growth, 19; and Lyell, 69*n*. *See also* Evolution; Science
- Daudet, Alphonse, 49
- David Copperfield*, 6, 17, 49, 66–67, 74, 118, 125–26, 127, 129, 134, 147, 152–53, 156–57, 158, 163, 173, 179, 180, 181–82, 187–88, 191–92, 207; characters: David Copperfield, 17, 49, 63, 66, 125–26, 127–28, 134, 145, 147, 152, 154, 154*n*, 156–57, 158, 163, 169, 171, 173, 180, 191–92; Betsey Trotwood, 49, 134, 152, 153, 154*n*, 157, 157*n*, 158, 191; Littimer, 63, 65; Uriah Heep, 63, 65, 66; Agnes Wickfield, 63, 66, 67, 153, 154*n*, 157, 180, 182; Little Em'ly, 63, 153, 180, 180–81*n*, 188; Steerforth, 63, 156, 182; Peggotty, 66, 153; Mr. Dick, 74, 134, 158; Mr. Wickfield, 118; Mr. Creakle, 125–26, 199; Mr.

- Micawber, 129; Traddles, 134, 181; Dora, 147, 153, 156–57, 173, 182, 187–88, 207; Mrs. Gummidge, 153; Martha, 153; Mrs. Micawber, 153; Miss Mowcher, 153; Mrs. Steerforth, 153, 156; Annie Strong, 153, 156, 173; Rosa Dartle, 153, 156, 179, 180, 180–81*n*; David's mother, 153, 157; Ham, 188
- Death: of self, 103–4; facing, 104, 135, 136, 187; exploitation of, 203; Victorian, 204*n*, 205
- Débâcle*, *La*, 14, 19, 20, 29, 30, 46, 55, 57, 77–78, 82, 104, 122, 176, 180, 185, 189; *characters*: Maurice, 14, 29, 104, 176, 180, 185; Henriette, 29, 72, 180, 185; Jean, 29, 104, 122, 176, 180, 185, 189; Gutmann, 77; Silvine, 185; Prosper, 185
- De Breme, Abate Lodovico, 170
- De Maistre, Joseph Count, 24
- Democracy: of spirit, 8, 17, 18, 28–29, 31, 32, 43, 100; Christian democracy of Romanticism, 23; of class, 32; in *I Promessi sposi*, 44; in melodrama, 44, 67; in French theater, 59
- De Sanctis, Francesco, 3*n*, 43–44, 44*n*, 58, 91*n*, 111
- Desjardins, Paul, 47–48
- Devil: power of, 63–66
- Dickens, Charles. *See* particular works
- Dickens family: father, 124, 129; Henry (Harry) Fielding (son) 129, 167*n*; Catherine (Kate) Hogarth (wife), 146, 167, 168, 169, 181, 208; Fanny (sister), 152; Mary (Mamie) (daughter), 164, 167; Katey (daughter), 168, 169, 171*n*; Charley (son), 169
- Dilettante, 129–34; like egotist, 129, 133, 134
- Docteur Pascal*, *Le*, 21, 57, 72, 103, 115, 117, 136, 140, 159, 166, 176, 177, 178, 183, 184, 190, 199, 201, 206; *characters*: Docteur Pascal, 16, 21, 57, 72, 93, 103, 115, 117, 136, 176–77, 178, 183, 194, 199, 201; Clotilde, 16, 21, 72, 117, 159, 176, 177, 180, 183, 190; Félicité, 57, 199; Bellombre, 117
- Dollhouse, 182, 183
- Dombey and Son*, 13, 18, 49, 67, 75, 94, 108, 109, 118, 150, 151–52, 156, 182, 196, 199, 205, 206; *characters*: Sol Gills, 18, 67, 196; the Toodles, 35; Mrs. Skewton, 49; Captain Cuttle, 67; Florence Dombey, 67, 71, 109, 151–52, 169, 182, 199, 207; Mr. Carker, 75, 108; Mr. Brogley, 108; Walter Gay, 108, 196; Mrs. Toodle, 109; Paul Dombey, 109, 118, 152, 182, 205, 206; Mr. Dombey, 109, 118, 152, 182, 206; Mr. Toodle, 118, 206; Toodle's son, 128; Mrs. MacStinger, 150; Edith Dombey, 155, 156*n*, 157; Harriet Carker, 156; Toots, 200, 201; Susan Nipper, 201; Miss Tox, 206
- Donovan, Robert, 73
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor, 7, 206, 200, 210
- Dove, 67, 77, 98, 106, 175, 185, 190
- Dreyfus, Alfred, 11–12; Dreyfus Affair, 12*n*, 13, 124
- Dyson, A. E., 18, 72, 116, 202
- Edel, Leon, 89, 174
- Eden, 16, 29, 31, 87, 130, 185, 187
- Egotism, 96, 97, 109, 111–13; possessive vision, 107–14. *See also* Dilettante; Empathic imagination
- Eigner, Edwin M., 59
- Eliot, George, 1–2, 3, 11, 15, 60, 69, 69*n*, 81, 132, 163; *Daniel Deronda*: 2, 15–16, 81, 85, 132, 146; Gwendolen Harleth in, 2, 81, 85, 132, 171; Mordecai in, 15; Daniel Deronda in, 15, 16, 81; Klesmer in, 132; *Middlemarch*: 3, 81; *Felix Holt*, 15

- Empathic imagination, 111–13. See also Dilettante; Egotism; Pity
- England. See America, and England
- Enlightenment, 22, 23, 24, 58
- Europe. See America, and Europe
- Evans, Frederick, 169
- Evolution: evolutionary progress in Zola, 20, 21; Zola's evolutionary twaddle, 49
- Exile, 3, 80, 169, 186–87, 199, 206; self-exile, 153, 169, 174, 177
- Fable, 189. See also Fairy tales
- Fairy tales, 12, 47, 142, 143, 167, 188, 196, 201; fairyland, 54. See also Fable
- Fall of Man, 50–52
- Families, 30, 74, 145, 194–95, 200; of clergy and flock, 91; of the *Rougon-Macquart*, 177, 194, 199; of holy fools, godfathers, and angels, 200–202; extended, 207, 209. See also Community; Property; Violation
- Famine, 14, 41, 92, 122, 123, 198. See also Contagion; Plague
- Fauriel, Claude, 3*n*, 24, 29, 169, 170, 180
- Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, La, 46, 57, 115, 166, 177, 183–84; characters: Desirée, 46; Docteur Pascal, 57; Albine, 57, 115, 180; Serge, 115, 177
- "Fée amoureuse, La" 47
- Fielding, Henry, 10; *Tom Jones*, 163, 187
- Flaubert, Gustave, 6–7, 56, 60–61, 62, 175, 210; *Madame Bovary*, 60–61
- Forster, John, 166, 168, 193, 196, 208
- Fowler, Virginia C., 88*n*, 160
- Fradin, Joseph I., 11, 66, 155
- Franco-Prussian War, 29, 122
- Frankfurt school, 21
- Freud, Sigmund, 16, 50, 119
- Frye, Northrop, 52, 64, 186
- Fullerton, Morton, 175
- Gad's Hill, 145, 192
- Galletti, Alfredo, 170, 170*n*
- Gardencourt, 48, 107, 197
- Garis, Robert, 134, 135
- "George Silverman's Explanation," 124, 124*n*
- Germinal*, 3, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 29, 35, 36, 37, 46, 51, 56, 77, 82, 84, 86–87, 91–92, 97–98, 102–3, 105, 112, 122–23, 136, 139–40, 147–48, 159, 183, 189, 193–94, 198, 199; characters: Etienne, 3, 11, 14, 15, 20, 29, 36, 51, 66, 86, 97–98, 103, 105, 136, 183, 189, 198; La Maheude, 3, 14, 91, 148, 189, 194, 198; Alzire, 10–11, 102, 199, 206; Maheu, 10, 35, 102–3, 123, 136, 147–48, 185, 198, 199; Maheu family, 11, 14, 35, 36, 82, 105, 148; Deneulin, 13, 35, 36, 86; Chouteau, 14; Pluchart, 14, 15, 35, 86; Bonnemort, 16, 82, 193–94; Chaval, 35; Zacharie, 35; Négrel, 35, 36, 103, 183; Catherine, 35, 36, 183, 185, 206; Maigrat, 35, 37; Hennebeau, 35, 102–3, 123, 183, 199; the Grégoires, 35, 199; Souvarine, 36, 66; Mouquette, 102, 143, 206; the Deneulin girls, 112, 159; Old Quandieu, 136; l'abbé Joire, 140; l'abbé Ranvier, 140; the Levaques, 148; Bébert and Lydie, 206
- Gide, André, 166
- Gilman, Richard, 51
- Ginzburg, Natalia, 170*n*
- Gioia, Melchiorre, 57
- Giorgini, G. B., 118, 197
- Girard, René, 210
- Gissing, George, 32, 158
- Godfather: power of, 9, 73–74, 142–43, 167, 171. See also Ambience
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 23, 58*n*
- Gold, Joseph, 187, 201
- Golden Age, 20, 48, 50

- ✓ *Golden Bowl, The*, 67, 182; Maggie in, 67–68; Charlotte in, 182; the Prince in, 182
- Goldsmith, Oliver: *Vicar of Wakefield, The*, 132*n*, 188
- Gospels: of Caesar and Christ, 9, 10, 11, 25, 28, 30, 34, 39; of world, 25; warring, 58
- Gosse, Edmund, 174
- Gothic mode, 58, 58*n*, 60*n*
- Gotschalk, Emmely, 144, 148*n*
- Gramsci, Antonio, 22, 24, 27, 38, 39
- Great Expectations*: Magwitch in, 135; Herbert Pocket in, 135; Pip in, 135, 191
- Greene, Graham, 65, 70
- “Grisettes de Provence, Les” 47
- Grylls, David, 204*n*
- Guilleman, Henri, 175*n*, 176
- Hard Times*: characters: Gradgrind, 125; M’Choakumchild, 125; circus people, 128; Stephen Blackpool, 128; Louisa Gradgrind, 128, 155
- Hardwick, Elizabeth, 51
- Hardy, Barbara, 11, 105, 121, 156*n*, 187
- Hardy, Thomas, 11
- Harford, S., 131, 137*n*
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 53
- Hemmings, F. W. J., 20
- Hofmannsthal, Hugo von, 52–53
- Hogarth, Georgina, 168, 181
- Hogarth, Mary, 143, 167, 173, 203–4, 204*n*
- Holy fool, 9, 64, 74, 75, 78–79, 108–9, 119, 167, 171, 205. See also *Ambience*
- House, Humphrey, 17, 73, 126, 126*n*, 141, 155*n*, 204*n*
- Household Words*, 168, 169
- Housekeeping, 145–51, 153, 156, 157, 159. See also *Revolution*
- House of fiction, 145, 150, 171, 207, 211
- Howe, Irving, 19, 37, 102–3
- Howells, William Dean, 63, 74, 88, 189–90, 210
- Hugo, Victor, 37, 43
- Humor: of Dickens, 8, 30, 31, 138, 209
- Huysmans, J. K., 48
- Identity: See *Property*, as identity
- Ideology, 5, 8, 22, 25, 36, 37, 43, 45*n*, 102, 107
- Institution, 16, 18, 22, 25, 26, 31, 38, 48, 57, 88, 94, 100, 101, 120, 122, 128, 130, 136, 141, 149. See also *System*
- Irving, John, 171
- Italian unification, 23, 28, 124. See also *Revolution*
- James family: Billy (nephew), 49, 49*n*; William (brother), 54, 88, 144, 174, 175, 192, 194–95; ✓ Alice (sister), 76, 159; Henry Sr. (father), 141*n*, 174; Mary (mother), 174, 174*n*; Alice (wife of William), 179, 195
- James, Henry. See *particular works*
- Jameson, Fredric, 58, 70, 70*n*
- Jansenism: and Monsignor Tosi, 22; and Manzoni, 23; and *I Promessi sposi*, 91
- Jerrold, D. W., 19
- Jesuits, 41
- Johnson, Edgar, 169*n*
- Johnson, Pamela Hansford, 90
- Joie de vivre, La*, 46–47, 49, 67, 116, 127, 135, 140, 147, 154, 158, 183, 202; characters: Pauline, 46–47, 49, 67, 116, 127, 147, 154, 158, 183, 202; Lazare, 46, 47, 49, 116, 127, 135, 154, 158; Dr. Cazenove, 47, 154; Louise, 147, 202
- Jolly, Emily, 131
- Justice, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 102; injustice, 11, 18, 24; ontological, 12, 190; city of, 14; artistic, 24
- Kafka, Franz, 12

- Kant, Immanuel, 106
 Kaplan, Fred, 74, 169n
 Kaston, Carren, 54, 54n, 68, 76, 88, 89, 89n, 95, 96n, 114n, 161, 172n
 Kierkegaard, Soren, 111
 Kincaid, James, 31, 154n, 209n
 Korg, Jacob, 164
 Krook, Dorothea, 89n, 104, 106
 Kucich, John, 8, 19, 28, 31n, 32, 45n, 50, 53n, 64, 71, 71n, 103, 126n, 138, 154n, 165n, 167n, 173, 178n, 181n, 182n, 191, 201n, 206n, 209n
 Kundera, Milan, 6, 210
 Lamartine, Alphonse de, 21
 ✓ Lamb House, 192
 ✓ Lamennais, Abbé de, 42
 ✓ Lancaster Gate, 48, 60, 80, 98, 104
 Lawrence, D. H., 21, 178, 178n
 "Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices, The," 166n
 Lazzaretto, 40, 55, 205
 Leavis, Q. D., 34, 172n
 Lemaitre, Jules, 102, 102n
 Lemon, Mark, 169
 Leroy, Maxime, 43
Lettre à M. Chauvet, 58
 Lewes, G. H., 56
 Libretto of *Lazare* (1893), 206–7
 Life force: of Zola, 46, 47, 48, 50, 135–36
Life of Our Lord, The, 50, 203
Little Dorrit, 13, 17, 18, 30, 100, 114, 115, 121, 126, 130, 132, 134, 138–39, 143, 155, 185; *characters*: Mr. Dorrit, 100; John Chivery, 100, 185; Little Dorrit, 114, 115, 118, 121, 134, 185; Clennam, 114, 115, 121, 130, 131–32, 185; Rigaud, 126; the Barnacles, 130; Henry Gowen, 130, 132, 133; Daniel Doyce, 130, 132, 134; Pet, 133; Miss Wade, 155
 Little Nell, 65, 182
 Lukacher, Ned, 115
 Lukács, Georg, 45n, 52, 85n, 102, 208
 Luther, Martin, 91, 143
 Macready, William Charles, 17n, 132n, 208
 Magnard, Francis, 56
 Manichean: drama, 62–64; battle, 64, 165. *See also* *Morality* play
 Manzoni, Alessandro. *See* particular works
 Manzoni family: Giovan Battista (Bista) Giorgini (son-in-law), 118, 197; Filippo (son), 124, 125n; Enrico (son), 136; Giulietta (daughter), 169; Pietro (son), 169; Enrichetta (wife), 169, 170, 180, 181, 197; Giulia (mother), 180, 197; Vittoria (daughter), 197
 Marcus, Steven, 55, 172n, 202
 Marshalsea, 18, 124, 130, 134, 184, 185; Father of, 100
 Martin, Terence, 53n
Martin Chuzzlewit, 4, 13, 29, 33, 71, 74, 75, 78–79, 96, 104, 107, 108–11, 109n, 115, 119, 127, 129–30, 133, 135, 138, 149, 151, 167, 168, 181, 185, 187, 193, 202, 203, 209; *characters*: Tom Pinch, 4, 5, 33, 70, 73, 74, 75, 78–79, 96, 108–9, 109n, 110–11, 118, 119, 131, 135, 167, 181, 201, 201n, 202, 203, 205; Pecksniff, 4, 31, 78, 96, 107, 109–10, 112, 119, 127, 131, 133, 151, 155, 185; Ruth Pinch, 4, 78, 115, 156, 167, 180, 181; Montague Tigg, 13; the Merdles, 13, 30; Zephania Scadder, 19; Elijah Pogram, 19, 149; Mark Tapley, 29, 31, 71, 99, 108, 130; Martin Chuzzlewit, 29, 78–79, 99, 104, 107, 127, 130, 133, 135, 149, 168, 185, 202; Chevy Slime, 129–30; Jonas Chuzzlewit, 63, 65, 74; Merry Pecksniff, 74, 155, 187; Mary Graham, 78, 168, 203;

- Sairey Gamp, 96, 112, 138, 185;
John Westlock, 115; Cherry
Pecksniff, 151, 187
- Marx, Karl, 18
- Meckier, Jerome, 55, 69*n*
- Médan, 194, 198
- Meursault, 70
- Meyerbeer, Giacomo, 17
- Mill, John Stuart, 16, 85, 178
- Miller, J. Hillis, 33, 65, 90, 93, 165
- Mirabeau, Octave, 190*n*
- Mirror image, 96, 97, 100, 164. See
also Self-division; Self-theatricali-
zation
- Mission, 123, 125; missionary, 32,
120
- Mockery, 5, 61, 145; mocker, 31;
mock pastoral, 150–51, self-
mockery, 151. See also Pastoral
- Momigliano, Attilio, 91*n*, 92
- Montano, Rocco, 55
- Montsou, 16, 84, 87, 103, 198
- Moral choices, 1, 9, 81, 88*n*, 88–90,
91, 92, 93, 113
- Morality play, 11, 38, 51, 59, 61,
62–67, 163. See also Manichean
- Moral occult, 70
- Morante, Elsa: *La Storia*, 45
- Moravia, Alberto, 24, 26, 27, 38–39,
40, 41–42, 43
- Muratori, Ludovico, 41, 57
- Murdoch, Iris, 72, 109, 112, 115
- Muteness: text of, 75–78, 102; salva-
tional, 77. See also Pantomime
- Mystery of Edwin Drood, The*, 164–
65, 165*n*
- Mysticism: Christian, 23; as cult, 42;
of Huysman, 48; German, 57
- Myth: of emergence in Zola, 37,
102–3; rhetoric, 50; patterns of,
51, 51*n*, 66; Romantic mythology,
57; classical and biblical mythol-
ogy, 60; Zola's generalized, 183,
183–84*n*; markers, 185
- Nabokov, Vladimir, 31*n*
- Nana*, 183
- National unity: Italian, 23, 28, 124.
See also Risorgimento
- Naturalism, 46; Zola as naturalist,
56, 175, 183–84
- Newgate, 28
- Newsom, Robert, 164*n*, 172, 191
- Nicholas Nickleby*, 193; the Cheery-
bles in, 1, 63, 73, 155; Squeers in,
30, 125; Smikes in, 193
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 2, 103
- Norton, Charles Eliot, 48
- Norton, Grace, 116, 204
- Notebooks of Henry James*, 93, 132,
161, 189
- Notes of a Son and Brother*, 72
- Nouveau contes à Ninon*, 34, 190
- L'Oeuvre*, 13, 112, 136, 159, 166,
176, 177, 178, 180; characters:
Bongrand, 13, 166; Claude Lan-
tier, 112, 136, 166, 176*n*, 177,
178, 180; Sandoz, 136, 166,
176*n*, 178, 180; Christine, 159,
180
- Oliver Twist*, 56, 86, 164–65, 184,
198, 203, 209*n*; characters: Mr.
Brownlow, 1, 73, 155, 184;
Nancy, 56; Sikes, 56; Rose May-
lie, 65; *Oliver Twist*, 65, 70, 164,
184, 203, 208, 209*n*; Fagin, 86
- On the Historical Novel*, 24, 58, 58*n*
- Orphans, 67, 162, 191, 195, 199,
200
- Ortega y Gasset, José, 1, 5, 14, 81,
110, 117
- Orwell, George, 18, 49, 90, 126*n*,
126–27, 143, 193
- Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica*,
22, 25, 27
- Our Mutual Friend*, 32, 51, 72, 103,
134–35, 142–43, 147, 150, 151,
163, 167, 182–83, 188, 196;
characters: Veneering, 19; Pod-
snap, 19, 32; Twemlow, 31–32;
Eugene Wrayburn, 32, 93, 99,
103, 134–35, 151; Lizzie Hexam,
72, 99, 135; John Harmon, 103,
147, 182–83, 196; Mortimer

- Lightwood, 134–35, 151; Bella Wilfer, 147, 150, 174, 182–83, 188, 196; Bradley Headstone, 165; Mr. Milvey, 167; Jenny Wren, 183; Mr. Wilfer, 196
- Pantomime, 26, 59, 75, 157*n*; Christmas, 59. *See also* Muteness
- Paradou, Le, 47, 57, 177, 194
- Paris, 45
- Parliament, 17; Dickens and David as reporter, 17, 124; Sir Leicester's Parliamentary cousins and colleagues, 31, 128–29; and Mrs. Jellyby, 155
- Parody, 31, 31*n*, 71, 126, 141, 142, 150. *See also* Travesty; Satire
- Pascal, Blaise: *Pensées*, 104
- Pastoral, 150–51, 184, 185, 185*n*, 187, 189, 199. *See also* Mockery
- Patronization, 4, 31, 33, 34, 38, 74, 78, 96, 109, 117, 142, 156. *See also* Condescension; Snobbery
- Peabody, Elizabeth, 174
- Pellico, Silvio: *I miei prigionieri*, 43
- Performance, 97–103, 132, 141
- Perry, Thomas Sargent, 98*n*, 124
- Petrey, Sandy, 103
- Physician: as profession in Dickens, 138–39
- Pickwick Papers, The*, 51; Pickwick in, 73; Sam Weller in, 130
- Pilgrimage, 185–86
- Pippa Passes*, 64
- Pity, 116–17; self-pity, 118. *See also* Empathic imagination
- Plague, 14, 16, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 41, 43, 55, 59, 68, 80, 84, 86, 87, 90, 91, 113, 122, 139, 185, 197, 200. *See also* Contagion; Famine
- Politics: of James, 8; politics and religion, 14, 15, 26, 36; as prophecy, 16; political faith of Dickens, 16–19, 128, 187; political faith of Zola, 19–21, 102–3, 187; political faith of Manzoni, 21–25, 187. *See also* Myth; Revolution; Reform
- Portrait of a Lady, *The*, 2, 7, 12, 60, 61, 66, 67–69, 70, 73, 76, 78, 81, 82, 88, 89, 95, 98, 99, 104, 105, 106, 107–8, 109, 113, 114, 114*n*, 116–17, 123, 133, 140, 159, 160–61, 179, 182, 189, 197, 199; characters: Osmond, 2, 3, 12, 63, 66, 69, 78, 81, 88, 89, 90, 107–8, 109, 133, 161, 182, 198; Isabel, 2, 12, 60, 61–69 *passim*, 69*n*, 70, 73, 76, 81, 82, 88, 88*n*, 89, 90, 98, 99, 104, 105, 106, 107–8, 109, 113, 114, 114*n*, 116–17, 140, 159, 160–61, 179, 182, 197, 198, 199; Madame Merle, 3, 63, 65, 76, 78, 99, 107–8, 133, 140; Pansy, 3, 69, 123; Henrietta Stackpole, 60, 99, 159; Mrs. Touchett, 66, 98, 117; Ralph, 69, 73, 89, 104, 109, 113, 116, 117, 140, 160, 206; Lord Warburton, 69, 159; Caspar Goodwood, 117, 159, 161, 179
- Prayer, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16, 46, 66, 68, 78–79, 97, 132, 153
- Preachers, 10–11, 16, 21, 24, 25, 26, 32, 34, 36, 40, 42, 200; seventeenth-century French, 27. *See also* Catholicism; Sermons; Prophecy
- Prefaces of Henry James: to *The American*, 61, 88; to *The Wings of the Dove*, 72, 80, 83, 179; to *The Princess Casamassima*, 83; to *Roderick Hudson*, 189; to *New York Edition*, 210
- I Promessi sposi*, 3*n*, 15, 16, 21–29 *passim*, 36, 39–42, 43–44, 49, 55, 58, 60, 67, 68, 70, 73, 74, 78, 80, 81–82, 83, 84–86, 88, 90, 90*n*, 91, 92, 97, 99, 104, 111–16 *passim*, 119, 122, 123, 134, 137–38, 139, 142, 143, 146, 186, 188, 192–93, 197, 200, 209; characters: Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, 11, 25, 26, 27, 38, 41, 42, 58, 63, 68, 70, 78, 85–86, 91, 115, 116, 123, 125, 137, 139, 142; Renzo,

- 15, 16, 27, 38–43 *passim*, 49, 55, 58, 67, 73, 84, 88, 90, 90*n*, 92, 111, 122, 134, 143, 181, 186, 188, 192–93, 197; Lucia, 15, 27, 39, 42, 43, 58, 63, 67, 68, 73, 74, 78, 81, 84, 88, 92, 111, 118, 119, 134, 139, 143, 181, 186, 188, 192, 193, 197; Antonio Ferrer, 15, 36, 122; Fra Cristoforo, 16, 26, 38, 40, 41, 60, 63, 70, 73, 85–86, 97, 123, 125, 137, 139, 143, 170, 200; Don Abbondio, 22, 25, 26, 29, 38, 39, 42, 78, 111, 112, 123, 137, 139, 197, 209; Gertrude, 22, 26, 42, 58*n*, 84, 85, 123, 137–38; Griso, 29; Don Rodrigo, 38, 40, 55, 68, 83, 83*n*, 86, 99, 192, 197; l'innominato, 38, 42, 43, 57, 58, 58*n*, 67, 68, 70, 74, 78, 81, 83, 86, 97, 99, 104, 115, 116, 119, 146; Azzecca-Garbugli, 38–39; Don Ferrante, 39; Perpetua, 39; Donna Prassede, 39, 112; Agnese, 39, 181, 193; the bravoos, 42, 55, 111; Bortolo, 43; Dr. Settala, 84; Fra Felice, 200; Cecilia and babes, 206
- Promised Land, 15, 16
- Propaganda: Manzoni as preacher, 21, 26, 27; of Etienne, 36
- Property: as identity, 191–93, 194, 195, 196–97, 198. *See also* Violation
- Prophecy, 16; prophets, 14, 15, 26. *See also* Preachers
- Protestant: form of art, 90, 143
- Protheros, Sir George and Lady Fanny, 65
- Proust, Marcel, 11–12, 31, 190
- Providence, 29, 91–93, 91*n*, 137
- Psychology: psychological drive in Dickens, 28; simplicity of morality play, 38, 51, 63; analysis of Isabel, 69–70, 76
- Punch*, 169
- Quatre évangiles, Les*, 190*n*
- Quilp, 13, 62, 64, 65, 71
- Raimondi, Ezio, 188
- “Real Thing, The,” 132*n*
- Reform, 11, 28, 38; institutional reform, 16; reform bills, 17, 53, 69*n*; legislative reforms, 28. *See also* Politics
- Renunciation, 1, 52, 70, 76, 88, 89*n*, 95, 107, 154, 161, 202. *See also* Sacrifice
- Rêve, Le, 57, 183–84
- Revenge, 12, 13, 30, 46, 76, 119, 171; by Zola, 176
- Revolution, 21, 23, 28, 32, 52, 53; Darwinian, 18; costs of progress, 19; Zola as revolutionary, 20; Risorgimento, 27, 41, 43; French, 27, 59; Dickens's Twemlow as revolutionary, 32; revolutionary socialism, 36; housekeeping as revolutionary, 148–51; industrial, 193. *See also* Darwin; House-keeping; Myth; Politics; Reform
- Ring of necessity, 152–54*n*, 153
- Ripamonti, Giuseppe, 41, 57, 91
- Risorgimento. *See* Italian unification; Revolution
- Rogers, Samuel, 21*n*
- Romanticism: romantic humanitarism, 14; German, 23; “Hugo's great kiss” as “universal embrace” of, 36–37, 46*n*; Italian Romantics, 57; Transcendental, 60; Romantic standards for women, 180; sexual guilt in Romantic and post-Romantic writers, 181; Turner's *The Interior of Tintern Abbey*, 197. *See also* Coleridge, Samuel
- Rose, Phyllis, 168
- Rougon-Macquart*, 16, 21, 34, 48, 51, 57, 72, 82, 102, 115, 124, 135, 136, 166, 177, 183, 184*n*, 189, 189*n*, 190, 194, 199
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 11, 111
- Rozerot, Jeanne (Zola's mistress), 124, 176
- Russell, Lord John, 16, 17
- Russo, Luigi, 83, 92

- Sacrifice, 25, 70, 71, 88, 136, 161, 168, 180. *See also* Renunciation
- St. Francis, 22
- St. Paul, 140, 143
- Salisbury, 75, 108–9, 110
- Samuels, Charles Thomas, 70, 106
- Sand, George, 6–7, 43, 210
- Santayana, George, 74
- Satire, 31*n*, 87, 145. *See also* Parody; Travesty
- Scalvini, Giovita, 24, 24*n*, 25*n*, 83*n*
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, 207*n*
- Schor, Naomi, 37, 180, 194
- Science: Dickens's attitude toward, 19, 144, 144*n*; Zola's attitude toward, 21, 46, 47, 48, 50, 56. *See also* Darwin, Charles
- Scott, Sir Walter, 60*n*, 85
- Sears, Sallie, 88, 189
- Second Empire, 20, 30
- Sedan, 16, 20, 62, 87, 189
- Self-division: in novels of Dickens, 94, 96, 99, 163–64, 165; deconstruction of desiring self, 162–63; of Dickens himself, 165, 168; of Esther and Dickens, 171–74; of Manzoni, 170, 170*n*; of James, 174; of Zola, 175–78; relief from, 203. *See also* Mirror image; Self-theatricalization
- Self-sustainment, 93, 120, 123, 127, 130, 136
- Self-theatricalization, 163–64, 165; multiplication and doubling, 101, 162, 164, 176–78, 194, 202*n*; mesmerism, 174*n*. *See also* Mirror image; Self-division
- Sentimentality, 4, 5, 8, 9, 33, 34, 72, 74, 104, 106, 138, 144, 205, 206, 206*n*, 210
- Sermons, 10, 25, 26. *See also* Catholicism; Preachers; Prophecies
- Serres, Michel, 93*n*
- Settembrini, Luigi, 23, 23*n*
- Sexual strategies, 178*n*, 178–84
- Shaw, Bernard, 18, 32, 131, 157
- Silence. *See* Muteness
- Sismondi, Simonde di, 22, 25, 116
- Slater, Michael, 179, 180–81*n*
- Smith, Grahame, 74*n*, 163
- Snobbery, 32, 34. *See also* Patronization; Condescension
- Solitude, 99–100, 101, 104, 115
- Sorel, Julien, 70
- Soulejade, La, 57, 177
- Stanfield, Clarkson, 169
- Stendhal, 21, 118
- Sterne, Laurence: *Tristram Shandy*, 6, 10, 210
- Stewart, Garrett, 65, 78*n*, 79, 108, 109*n*, 130, 162, 172*n*, 185*n*, 199
- Subversion, 8, 13, 20, 31*n*, 42, 50, 141, 149, 190, 206; inversion by Zola, 51, 193, 198; alienation of reader, 210. *See also* Suspicion
- Sul Romanticismo*, 57, 58
- Suspicion, 7, 30, 50, 95, 155, 173, 205–6, 208–9; bad faith, 9, 205; sinister, 154*n*, 182. *See also* Subversion
- Symonds, J. A., 174
- System, 13, 120, 121, 123, 125, 128, 129–30, 134, 136, 140, 141, 142, 143, 149. *See also* Institution
- Tableaux, 26, 60
- Taine, Hippolyte, 33, 34, 111*n*
- Tartaret, 185
- Temple, Mary (Minny), 73, 175, 200–201, 204
- Ternan, Ellen, 69, 165*n*, 168
- Terre, La*, 188–89
- Thackeray, William Makepeace, 11, 145, 209
- Theater: French melodramatic, 59, 60; of society, 97–98, 99, 100, 101, 103–4; of death, 205
- Thérèse Raquin*, 35, 48, 82
- Thierry, Augustin, 41, 58*n*
- Third Republic, 20
- Tocqueville, Alexis de, 133
- Tolstoy, Leo, 101, 132, 170, 209; *War and Peace*, 42, 42*n*; *Anna Karenina*, 100–101, 170–71; Vronsky in, 16*n*, 132; Oblonsky

- in, 100–101; Levin in, 100–101, 170–71
- Tom-all-Alone's, 17, 30
- Tommaseo, Niccolò, 170
- Tosi, Luigi, Monsignor, 22
- Tragic Muse, The*, 140–41; Gabriel Nash in, 140–41
- Transcendental home, 9, 184, 186, 193, 195, 208
- Transcendentalism, 38. *See also* Romanticism
- Travail*, 51, 51*n*
- Travesty, 50, 51, 150, 193; rhetorical burlesque, 10. *See also* Parody; Satire; Subversion
- Trilling, Lionel, 50, 121, 130–31
- Trollope, Anthony, 1, 61, 61*n*, 62, 126; *Barchester Towers*, 61, 61*n*; *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, 1; *The Warden*, 61, 61*n*
- Turgenev, Ivan, 7; *Virgin Soil*, 182
- Turner, J. M. W.: *The Interior of Tintern Abbey*, 197
- Ulivi, Ferruccio, 91*n*, 188
- Unamuno, Miguel de, 138, 195, 202
- Utopia, 8, 14, 81, 86; visions, 13; state, 15; escape, 17; endings, 188; dream, 190
- Vallés, Jules, 176
- Vengeance. *See* Revenge
- Verismo, 24, 39, 40, 58
- Vérité*, 10, 139
- Vico, Giambattista, 41
- Victorianism, 187; novelists and novels of, 5, 55–56, 121, 178*n*; rhetoric of, 5, 157; conventions of, 5, 172*n*; theories of, 69*n*; and men, 149, 156; and women, 155; and sexual evasion, 178*n*, 179; in London, 196; and death, 204*n*, 205
- Violation: historical, 5; modification of terms, 7; of self, 98, 98*n*; sexual, 179, 181; of home and family, 195–200. *See also* Family; Property
- Visual shock, 31, 54, 54*n*, 67, 70
- Vocabulary transformations, 7, 86–90
- Voltaire, 90*n*, 170
- Voreux, Le, 105
- Walker, Philip, 20, 36, 46, 46*n*, 51*n*, 189*n*
- Wall, Bernard, 192
- Waterlow, Sydney, 63*n*
- Watson, Mrs. Richard (Lavinia), 69
- Wegelin, Christof, 62
- Welsh, Alexander, 69*n*, 114, 126*n*, 178*n*
- Wharton, Edith, 124, 160, 194, 208
- Williams, Raymond, 1, 11, 94, 162
- Wilson, Angus, 206, 210
- Wilson, Edmund: "The Two Scrooges," 172*n*
- ✓ *Wings of the Dove, The*, 2, 4, 5, 7, 48, 60, 66–74 *passim*, 77, 78, 80–84 *passim*, 93, 95–96, 97–98, 99, 101, 104, 106–7, 113, 114, 114*n*, 116, 143, 159, 175, 179, 180, 182, 185–86, 189–90, 198, 200, 202; characters: Milly Theale, 2, 3, 4, 48, 60, 62, 63, 66–74 *passim*, 77, 82, 93, 95–96, 96*n*, 97, 98, 104, 106–7, 113, 116, 143, 159, 160, 162, 175, 179, 180, 185, 190, 198, 200, 202, 206; Susan Stringham, 2, 48, 68, 74, 82; Aunt Maud (Mrs. Lowder), 4, 48, 98, 104; Kate Croy, 5, 9, 63, 65, 66, 68, 72, 73, 77, 78, 84, 95, 97, 98, 101, 104, 105, 106–7, 114*n*, 159, 175, 179, 182, 189, 202; Densher, 9, 68, 70, 74, 77, 78, 83, 95–96, 97–101 *passim*, 104, 106–7, 113, 114, 114*n*, 159, 175, 179, 180, 182, 185, 189–90, 198, 202; Sir Luke, 63, 73, 106, 116, 190; Lord Mark, 66, 190, 198; the Lowder group, 185–86
- Winter, Maria Beadnell, 167*n*, 204*n*. *See also* Beadnells
- Woolcott, Alexander, 181
- Woolson, Constance Fenimore, 174
- World War I, 124, 124*n*, 194, 208
- Zola, Emile. *See* particular works
- Zwerdling, Alex, 153, 164

University of Missouri-Columbia



010-501037282

umpress0036specs

MU Libraries
University of Missouri--Columbia

Digitization Information Page

Local identifier umpress0036

Capture information

Date captured	07/2013
Scanner manufacturer	Zeutschel
Scanner model	OS 15000
Scanning system software	Omniscan v.12.4 SR4 (1947) 64-bit
Optical resolution	600 dpi
Color settings	24 bit color
File types	tiff

Source information

Content type	text
Format	book
Source ID	010-501037282

Notes

Derivatives - Access copy

Compression	Tiff:compression: 1
Editing software	Adobe Photoshop CS5
Editing characteristics	
Resolution	300 dpi
Color	gray scale / color
File types	pdf
Notes	