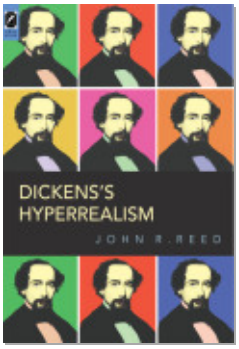
# Conclusion



# CONCLUSION

As Darío Villanueva has pointed out, realism can be viewed in many ways. It may be a worldview, an object of theoretical reflection, or a kind of art. At least since Plato, art forms have been seen as attempts at mimesis, the representation of actual existence. The trouble is that first we have to decide what reality is and then attempt to represent it. For Plato, the real was not necessarily the visible. The same was true for most medieval Europeans, where the spiritual was real and physical phenomena were transient. In Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi," the painter has mastered what we would call realism; he has held the mirror up to nature. But his superiors in the church disapprove, suggesting that a focus on physical details distracts one from the real purpose of art, which is to evoke the spiritual. Giotto is recommended to him as a model. So determining what is real is not as easy as it may seem.

Also, there is a difference between representing what is real and what is true. Again, for many people in many places and times physical appearances are an illusion and only the ideal is true. So, even in nineteenth-century England an author might feel she was writing the truth, though not depicting the world around her in realistic terms. We must also distinguish sincere writing from realistic writing. Any writer might be sincere, true, and realistic at the same time, but these various qualities may occur separately and be rendered by different manners.

The realism I refer to in this study is limited to the literary and artistic approach that emerged in the West in the latter half of the nineteenth

century. Villanueva makes the distinction between genetic realism, which assumes an external reality that can be objectively captured, and formal realism, which is more concerned with the relationship of the author and his text. For literary critics and creative writers today, both forms of realism involve creating the illusion of reality. But with nineteenth-century realism, writers and artists sought to pass that illusion off as a correct reflection of the way things are. My argument here is that Dickens did not accept that program. If one likes, one could say that he preferred the true to the real. He wanted to emphasize the human capacity to imagine. He wanted to heighten human experience through fancy.

In this short study I have tried to show that Dickens behaved like a maestro. He was the one in control; he directed the way his readers' imaginations should go. He wanted his art to show ultimately, if not immediately. In his early writing he was willing to expose his tricks directly, but he became more and more crafty in both senses of the word as he matured, until in his late works he purposely masked clues to a correct reading of his narratives. What I have done is to offer some evidence for his consciousness of this program by exploring his use of such nonrealist devices as personification, first-person narration, and typical or symbolic naming, but also by studying the way he uses realist techniques such as description, metonymy, and redundancy in a way that subverts or directly opposes the realist use of these techniques. Dickens's descriptions, metonymies, and redundancies reinforce his command over the reader, whereas the realist seeks to give the reader a sense that she is controlling her reading. If Dickens could tell Wilkie Collins that the writer in some ways imitated providence, in his own writing he often sought to become that providential power that creates the design, makes his subjects follow it, and discloses its form when it has been fulfilled. What is interesting to me is the incredibly skillful methods he employed to do this, and I hope I have illuminated some of them here.