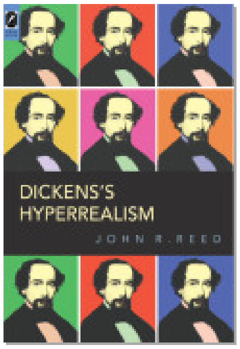
Notes



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NOTES

Introduction

1. Not everyone saw Dickens as a realist in the years before the term became commonplace. In an 1851 review, David Masson put Thackeray in the real school and Dickens in the ideal (Hawes, 137).

2. Jane Millgate places Scott in the Romantic tradition, but in a way that aligns him with Dickens's outlook. She writes that "in the movement from verse romance to prose fiction as embodied in the completed *Waverley* of 1814, Scott shifts from an initial romanticism of a very eighteenth-century kind to that much more nineteenth-century variety which perceives the imagination not as the enemy of knowledge and wisdom but as their very source" (57).

3. Lukács connects Dickens to realism through his criticism of capitalism in *Dombey and Son* (212).

4. In the 70s, Maurice Larkin linked realism with a greater concern for material reality as shaper of man, with an emphasis on such concepts as determinism, heredity, and environment (2ff). Such an approach suggests a different notion of realism (it does set out to mirror nature) than Franklin's.

5. Barthes discusses these traits of writing in *S/Z* (4).

6. I am certainly not alone in seeing Gaskell and Dickens in opposition in the matter of literary realism. Here is a passage from Laurence Lerner's introduction to *Wives and Daughters*. "Like all realists, Elizabeth Gaskell believed that environment forms character. No novelist would meticulously create the social medium in which his characters move and have their being if he did not believe it mattered. The romantic is more likely to see personality as formed, mysteriously, from within; nothing makes it clearer that Dickens was not, at the deepest level, a realist, than the metaphysical exemption from social influence that he gives to his really good and his really evil characters" (26).

Chapter 1

1. I wish to thank James Phelan and Audrey Jaffe for their advice that helped me to clarify the argument of this essay and also audiences at Wayne State University and the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, for their helpful questions and comments.

2. This quotation is taken from Dickens's preface to the Cheap Edition of *Oliver Twist* [1850], reprinted in the Clarendon Press edition 383.

3. He reasserted its existence in the preface to the Charles Dickens Edition of the novel in 1867.

4. But this dispute overlooks a more intriguing point that Umberto Eco explores in "The Strange Case of the Rue Servandoni." This essay in *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* asks, in Eco's own words: "What happens when in a fictional text the author posits, as an element of the actual world (which is the background of the fictional one) something that does not obtain in the actual world?" (100). More specifically, he is concerned with what happens when Alexander Dumas locates a clearly fictional place in a real historical setting—a certain street, for example, in seventeenth-century Paris. What difference does this make to the act of reading on the one hand, and what difference to the "real world" on the other? Though Eco touches briefly on the latter point, his real concern is with "the format of the model reader's Encyclopedia," his or her body of information available for interpreting *The Three Musketeers* (109).

5. Childers may be undervaluing the political project of deconstruction and oversimplifying the dismissal of written texts out of the realm of direct influence on the social realm, but he is not alone in his reaction. In a related approach, Gerald Dawson argues in *Soldier Heroes* that identity itself follows a similar pattern of agency. "As imagined forms, masculinities are at once 'made up' by creative cultural activity and yet materialize in the social world as structured forms with real effects upon both men and women" (22). Many commentators on deconstruction and postmodernism emphasize the movement away from the "real" toward the claustrophobia of the text. Christopher Norris offers this description of the trajectory from Foucault to Lyotard, Baudrillard, and the "apostles of postmodernity."

> As reality dissolved into the structures of discursive or textual representation, so the subject (after Lacan: the "subject-presumed-to-know") became just a locus of multiple shifting and transient subject-positions, or a specular reflex of the epistemic will-to-truth whose ubiquitous workings Foucault set out to expose. And from here it was no great distance to that stance of out-and-out cognitive scepticism—joined to an ultra-relativist position on issues of ethico-political judgment—which forms such a prominent (and depressing) feature of the current postmodernist cultural scene. (30)

Some time ago Terry Eagleton described the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism as "a shift from seeing the poem or novel as a closed entity, equipped with definite meanings which it is the critic's task to decipher, to seeing it as irreducibly plural, an endless play of signifiers which can never be finally nailed down to a single centre, essence or meaning" (138). Jonathan Culler's description of this same shift has a slightly different emphasis, but still stresses the increasing movement away from an acceptance of the text as referent to a "real" world and toward an emphasis upon the action of the text in and upon itself.

> In simplest terms, structuralists take linguistics as a model and attempt to develop "grammars"—systematic inventories of elements and their possibilities of combination—that would account for the form and meaning of literary works; post-structuralists investigate the way in which this project is subverted by the workings of the texts themselves. Structuralists are convinced that systematic knowledge is possible; post-structuralists claim to know only the impossibility of this knowledge. (22)

6. Whether we see Dickens in the realist tradition or in some intermediary mode between romance and realism, it is pretty clear that he shared certain aims with novelists of his time. As Michael Irwin writes in his study of description in nineteenth-century fiction, "[t]he typical Victorian novel requires you to look for significance in terms of a slowly emerging pattern of relationships between an immense variety of elements, some important, some trivial, some the product of the intellect, some of imaginative instinct. It says more because it contains more. The author may fall short of his conscious purpose, but he may also exceed it. In showing how he looks at the world about him he is likely to betray limitations and prejudices—who would not? But he also projects a view of life" (157). In projecting that view of life, most Victorian writers sought to affect the views of their readers as well.

7. F. S. Schwarzbach writes of the detailed journey made by Oliver and the Artful Dodger into London.

> The details of their route are scrupulously accurate—every street and turning is carefully and exactly named. And yet the effect is not, as one might expect, an enhanced sense of realism. The seeming precision is only on the surface: by naming the streets, and giving us no other detail about or description of them, the passage shatters their particularity and renders them virtually interchangeable. Reading the paragraph is like entering a maze, which is precisely what Oliver has done. This is the labyrinth of London. (46)

8. I would like to endorse Ruth Ronen's purpose of correcting the almost canonical theoretical perception of description as non-narrative. Along the way, she notes that description may serve many different narrative purposes. She describes description as "the territory of maximal reference and minimal significance" and notes that "the referentiality of descriptions, which is in itself a discursive convention, makes them generally devoid of meaning unless organized on a higher level" (282). With Dickens that organization took place consciously at the ideological level.

9. Carole Fabricant's *Swift's Landscapes* examines in detail Swift's idiosyncratic representation of real places, but does not pursue to any degree the philosophical or linguistic implications of his approach.

10. Richard Maxwell quotes a description of Jacob's Island from the *South London Chronicle* of 1 April 1890, indicating that the location's reputation persisted. Maxwell himself comments: "The willful mixing of rumor and fact is typical of Jacob's Island, a freak socially marginal to the great city yet strongly insistent, pulling the wanderer toward it" (90). In a footnote, Maxwell points out that Jacob's Island became identified with Dickens over the years. A celebration of the repeal of the Corn Laws was held in 1846 "on that highly interesting Spot, described by Charles Dickens." A newspaper

clipping of 1920 remarks that "the only visitors [Jacob's Island] receives from the outer world are the Dickensians. . . ." And a 1934 *Daily Mirror* article announced the demolition of Bill Sikes's house on Jacob's Island (Maxwell 341). Writing in the nineteen-forties, E. Beresford Chancellor was confident about Sikes's house: "The actual house visited by Sikes has been identified as being at the back of 18 Eckell Street in Metcalf Yard, now used as stables" (123). He offers no evidence for the identification. Not only is Jacob's Island identified with Dickens, but the expression "Dickensian," when applied to descriptions of certain kinds of poverty, tends to render them picturesque.

11. Wells's directions place Moreau's island in the region of the Galapagos Islands. Since Wells's novel deals with the attempt to speed up Darwinian speciation by surgical means, his directions for the island's location might have a sly, ironic point to make, something quite characteristic of the early Wells.

12. Lopes's *Foregrounded Description in Prose Fiction* makes a case for description's potential for major narrative functions, instead of consigning it to an inevitable background or subordinate role, as rhetorical tradition generally has done.

13. I can appreciate the pleasure derived from constructing a spatial design of the locations contained in a novel or in viewing such a design, but this is surely a pleasure separate from that of reading the text itself.

14. Another variation on the *Old Curiosity Shop* syndrome occurred when the *Bookman* ran a special number on Mrs. Humphry Ward and included photographs of real homes that presumably were the originals for the estates described in Ward's novels. This attempt to "authenticate" Ward's fictions offers little that is helpful in the way of appreciating her achievement as a novelist, though it may reveal a great deal about how readers conflate authors and their texts, often with less interest in the text than in the author's relationship to a presumed reality. The information about Ward and the *Bookman* I have derived from a paper by Beth Sutton Ramspeck entitled "A Photo's Worth a Dozen Novels? Mary Ward in Turn-of-the-Century Gaze" at the Midwest Victorian Studies Association conference at Indiana University, April 27, 1996.

15. In *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind,* Searle explores in detail the underlying assumptions that support his view of intentionality.

Chapter 2

1. This chapter originated as a short essay by Susan Beckwith. I became a co-author and made extensive contributions to the original essay. Subsequently, I revised a good deal for inclusion in this book.

2. Lorna Martens's *The Diary Novel* examines this use of present-tense narration. The present tense was also often used clumsily to increase dramatic effect. In John Henry Newman's *Callista,* for example, there are many awkward shifts in tense where Newman seems merely to be attempting to heighten dramatic effect. Chapter 35 opens with the sentence: "We have already had occasion to mention that there were many secret well-wishers, or at least protectors of Christians, as in the world at large, so also in Sicca" (343). The next paragraph begins: "The burning sun of Africa is at the height of its power" (344). But the next is back to standard past-tense narration: "She too thought it was the unwelcome philosopher come again . . ." (344).

3. Janice Carlisle similarly notes that unconventional present-tense narration became commonplace in the late Victorian period especially among second-rate or

inexperienced writers (84).

4. Janice Carlisle and Randolph Quirk are two Dickens scholars who have noted Dickens's use of present tense. Carlisle sees its use in *Dombey and Son* as a means of achieving immediacy by drawing the reader more forcefully into the narrative (77, 85).

5. Early studies that concentrate on the relationships between providence and narrative include Leopold Damrosch Jr.'s *God's Plots and Man's Stories,* Thomas Vargish's *The Providential Aesthetic in Victorian Fiction,* and John R. Reed's *Victorian Will.* These scholars examine how writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Great Britain and elsewhere could assume on their readers' part a belief in a covert and sometimes apparent teleology in human affairs under the superintendence of a benign or baleful God. In many instances, novelists likened their own plots to the implicit tendency of Providence.

6. Sue Lonoff notes this peculiar reader response in *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers* (144).

7. This technique may serve two purposes: Rosemary Jann writes that "although authors using third-person narrators can accomplish this by limiting their omniscience, there is always a certain amount of conscious concealment of important information on the author's part that may try the reader's patience" (23), and Tzvetan Todorov points out, with respect to his formulation of point of view, that "the tenor of each piece of information is determined by the person who transmits it, no observation exists without an observer" (46). Thus Collins's use of several first-person narrators also serves to disguise any objective truth that an omniscient narrator would have to provide; the eyewitnesses who speak for themselves may distort a clue that is the key to the mystery. However, should this happen within Collins's structure of the narrative, neither the "editor" nor the author would be held to blame for this misinterpretation.

8. Martens deals with this particular point in her excellent examination of diary writing (5), but, oddly enough, though she mentions Miss Clack's diary in The *Moonstone,* she entirely overlooks the more dramatic instance of Marian Halcombe's in *The Woman in White.*

9. It is also possible for the diarist to record recollections and memories of more distant pasts. And, as an aside, I should also note that diarists record not only their own stories, but the lives (past and present) of those around them.

10. But what does it mean to end well? Where is the end that is well? Frank Kermode emphasizes in *The Genesis of Secrecy* that human life is played out with a sense that we are in the middle of events. He addresses this issue on the cosmic level, but it applies as well to individual lives. The person who writes an autobiography at the age of thirty comes to the end of things in her narrative and might even conclude that the story of her life has ended well. But the next few years might change that story considerably.

11. Although it is only tangential to my interests here, it is a note of some importance that Marian never speaks for herself outside of the medium of the diary. Hereafter, anything which she contributes is filtered through Hartright's narrative.

12. Dickens used present-tense narration elsewhere—in *Dombey and Son* and *David Copperfield,* for example—but his use of present tense in the three novels discussed here is systematic and extensive.

13. Carlyle made frequent use of present-tense narration in *The French Revolution,* thereby creating greater drama and what he himself regarded as a novelistic effect. Of course, Dickens claimed to have read *The French Revolution* many times and declared it a source for his own *A Tale of Two Cities.*

14. An extreme example of this penetration in cinema is *Last Year at Marienbad,* written by Alain Robbe-Grillet and directed by Alain Resnais.

15. What I am describing here using Benveniste's terms, Suzanne Fleishman explores in narratological terms, explaining that present-tense narrations are unstable because they erase the distinction between the two temporal planes of the past tense of narrated events and the time of narration.

16. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan accepts the idea of external and internal focalization (74ff).

17. See Genette's response to Bal in *Narrative Discourse Revisited,* chapter 12. Seymour Chatman offers different terms to clarify the process others lump together as focalization. "I propose slant to name the narrator's attitudes and other mental nuances appropriate to the report function of discourse, and filter to name the much wider range of mental activity experienced by characters in the story world—perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, emotions, memories, fantasies, and the like" (143). Manfred Jahn offers a means to adjust this difference within the concept of focalization by employing the concept of field of vision and presenting the idea of narrators at the windows of James's House of Fiction.

18. Another notorious instance is in chapter 32, when the narrator associates Krook's spontaneous combustion with the injustice of the British courts.

19. Of the 23 chapters, those already mentioned as well as those numbered 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 22 are in the past tense. The novel opens and closes (though we can never know if the later action would have been Dickens's intent) with a present-tense narration.

20. It would be interesting to consider the situation of the "implied" audience. This chapter deals only with the fact that Dickens has set up a narrative that is being told in the present tense by an unknown narrator. But to whom is this narrator speaking, for this is speech and not written text? Does not the present-tense narrator imply an immediate present-tense auditor? The device that this most immediately resembles is the aside spoken by a living actor to a living audience in the theater, and there is no question but that Dickens's use of present-tense narration in *Drood* heightens the drama. Several authors have dealt with problems of audience reception of present-tense narration from Genette on, but one of the most compelling is James Phelan's study of J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* where the instability created by simultaneous narration acts as a means of involving the reader in a double sense of complicity, first in the events of the story and then in the way that we are obliged to process them.

21. Robin W. Winks makes a similar comparison in *Modus Operandi,* when he states that "In football . . . the variables at any given moment are enormous. To the spectator, suspense arises as much from not knowing what must happen next . . .—the huddle allows one's doubts, like private detectives, to search out weaknesses in the game plan . . . the beauty in sport . . . arises from the persistence of doubt, and its mounting repetitious nature . . . living with ambiguity is not easy. Most people like their History [*sic*] clear and plain" (8). In the Victorian era the variables themselves were not even fully known and history was being eroded by a new revolution—one which questioned not just the structures, but the very foundations upon which people laid their lives.

22. Morson unwittingly supports this picture of the serial reader when he says, "spectators have to be *simultaneous* with the events they watch" (176). *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* dramatically confirms the open-endedness of serial publication because Dickens's death before the narrative was completed has turned the novel into a continuing memorial of such open-endedness.

Chapter 3

1. S. D. Powell calls attention to the well-established tradition of interest in Dickens's naming of characters in a long footnote, listing Elizabeth Hope Gordon as among the first to attempt to categorize those names (63).

2. Miller observes that this allusion to Halevy's aria compounds a pattern of other references to Jewishness, anti-Semitism, and so forth pervasive in Proust's narrative.

3. Harry Stone examines the intricacies of Dickens's practice of naming and calls it a "carefully calculated and artfully articulated system that gives up its secrets only to the initiate" ("What's in a Name?" 193). It is possible that naming had greater resonance in the nineteenth century than it does today, since naming was recognized as part of formal church practice. Michael Cotsell remarks in reference to a passage in *Our Mutual Friend* that the second question in the Catechism of the Church of England is "Who gave you this Name?", for which the answer is: "My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven" (173). The narrator makes direct reference to this situation in chapter 40 of *Bleak House,* when he notes that on the occasion of Woolwich's last birthday, "Mr. Bagnet certainly did, after observing on his growth and general advancement, proceed, in a moment of profound reflection on the changes wrought by time, to examine him in the catechism; accomplishing with extreme accuracy the questions number one and two, What is your name? And Who gave you that name? But there failing in the exact precision of his memory, and substituting for number three, the question And how do you like that name?" (666).

4. Harry Stone examines the significance of Headstone's name in some detail ("What's in a Name" 198ff). Joel Brattin offers a close look at Headstone's name and more by way of a reading of Dickens's manuscript (147ff).

5. Viewing naming as an assertion of power is my suggestion, not Stewart's.

6. Michael Cotsell reminds us that Jenny Wren is a character out of nursery lore, notably as the partner of Robin Redbreast or Cock Robin. He reproduces a poem in which Jenny Wren falls sick and gets well, but is hostile to Robin Redbreast (140).

7. *David Copperfield* has attracted the most attention about naming among Dickens's novels. I refer here to two recent articles, one by S. D. Powell and one by Richard Lettis, both of which appeared together in *Dickens Studies Annual.*

8. Richard Lettis says that Brooks is a conventional British alias (75).

9. S. D. Powell has this to say about Dora's nickname for David:

> His willing acceptance of this name, however, and the narrator's refusal to criticize himself for it, should be an immediate tip-off that his attraction to Dora is wrongheaded, that the narrator recognizes as we do that "Doady" represents a step back from the mature freedom of "Trotwood" and the family that bestowed that name. (56–57)

10. Richard Lettis comments that nobody knows Littimer's Christian name (71).

11. Harry Stone shows how Dickens fits Murdstone into a similar larger pattern.

> "The notes, therefore, not only show Dickens carefully fashioning the name 'Murdstone,' but shaping the name and controlling the attendant imagery (and the motifs that the name and the imagery embody) so that each

> enriches and illuminates the other." ("What's in a Name?" 196)

12. I find J. Hillis Miller's reading of *Bleak House* compatible with my argument about Dickens's mode of incorporating his names into a larger network of imagery.

> *Bleak House* is properly allegorical, according to a definition of allegory as a temporal system of cross references among signs rather than as a spatial pattern of correspondence between signs and referents. Most people in the novel live without understanding their plight. The novel, on the other hand, gives the reader the information necessary to understand why the characters suffer, and at the same time the power to understand that the novel is fiction rather than mimesis. The novel calls attention to its own procedures and confesses to its own rhetoric, not only, for example, in the onomastic system of metaphorical names already discussed, but also in the insistent metaphors of the style throughout. (Introduction 29)

13. Juliet McMaster observes an interesting pattern of naming in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Whereas there is detailed naming in Quilp's side of the narrative, the naming is intentionally vague and general in Nell's, in keeping, she suggests, with the interests of a "generalized allegorical fable" (114). She also comments on Quilp's fascination with naming as an "almost fiendish device" (115).

14. Tom Lloyd examines some of the consequences of names in regard to Pip and Magwitch (104ff).

15. Cotsell notes that Dickens was given to this kind of naming, especially for voting constituencies—the most memorable, perhaps, being the town of Eatanswill in *Pickwick Papers* (144).

16. McMaster, again, notes that place names are particular where associated with Quilp, but unspecific when associated with Nell (116). Dickens uses a far different approach in *Hard Times,* beginning with the appropriate Coketown for the name of its chief city.

17. Harry Stone does not highlight the difference between Dickens's aims in writing and those of the realists, but his description of those aims is highly compatible with my own.

> What then can we conclude from the process I have just been tracing? Simply this: that Dickens's names are quintessential embodiments of what one sees everywhere in his art, a fusion of the wild, the portentous, and the fantastic with the rational and the everyday. His names, like his whispering houses, terrifying streets, primordial storms, and spell-casting witches are at once wildly expressionistic and improbable and profoundly real and ordinary. Dickens conveys with the same stroke the surface of things and the hidden springs of meaning. His world is discrete, tangible, and familiar, but also interconnected, fantastic, and mysterious. ("What's in a Name" 203)

Chapter 4

1. Juliet McMasters mentions the leitmotif of handkerchiefs in the novel, including

Bill Sikes's handkerchief that foreshadows his accidental hanging (47ff). John O. Jordan indicates that Dickens is true to the facts of his time in his "sociological" treatment of handkerchiefs, but also suggests that Dickens goes beyond realism. "As they reappear and pass from one context to another, handkerchiefs take on increasing thematic and figural significance in the novel" (6). It is just this movement from the real to the figural that I am arguing Dickens became conscious of and used more and more purposefully through his career.

2. I offer a different approach to the description of Jacob's Island in chapter 1 of the present study.

3. Jakobson makes this distinction about literature, but his study of contiguous (metonymic) and similar (metaphoric) patterns of thinking and linguistic expression is based upon the clinical study of aphasia.

4. As mentioned in the text, J. Hillis Miller provides an excellent study of "Meditations in Monmouth Street" as a mode of metonymic description and then later indicates how this remarkable performance is based upon a convention. "The row of old clothes which Boz sees in Monmouth Street gives rise, however, to a wholly conventional narrative, the story of the idle apprentice" (*Sketches* 35).

5. Nancy Aycock Metz calls attention to the Analytical's relationship to the narrator.

6. Although I admire Kearns's arguments, I think that they are undermined to a large degree by the works that she chooses to treat as realist texts. Although she herself suggests that *Frankenstein, A Blithedale Romance, Wuthering Heights,* and much of Dickens do not really represent realism, she goes on to explore these works in detail. Moreover, she includes *Dracula* in the range of realism!

7. Miller contends against Jakobson's opposition of metonymy/prose vs metaphor/poetry, declaring there can be no such diagrammatic opposition (40). But Jakobson is not so hard and fast as Miller suggests, indicating that metonymy and metaphor are polarities on a continuum.

Chapter 5

1. Susan Horton captures this aspect of Dickens's writing:

> There comes to be in the reader of Dickens's novels, then, a powerful perception of meaning at the point at which the reader begins to see gestural, phrasal, behavioural predictability in Dickens's fictive world run directly up against Dickens's world in description, which turns out to be a world in flux, and always and ever in the process of transformation. (8)

2. J. Hillis Miller argues for a kind of utility for prosopopoeia, but as a speech act performed by an author/narrator, and an interpretation of that act by a reader, both of which result in making something happen. But I am speaking of the personifications within the diegesis—that is, the events and circumstances of the narrative.

3. Richard Lettis puts the tension in these terms.

> Faced with a choice between reality and imagination, Dickens usually chose the latter, but he distinguished between the imaginative and the ideal; obliged to choose between reality and unfounded ideality, he chose the real. (208)

4. Peter Brooks, like many other critics, is reluctant to classify Dickens as a realist, but finally includes *Hard Times* as a questionable example of the realist impulse, though he is disappointed in its lack of specific social detail. One of his observations about the novel fits in nicely with the passages I have cited from Horton and Kucich. He says that Dickens employs "the procedure of turning all issues, facts, conditions, into questions of style. *Hard Times* becomes, even more than Dickens's other novels, a drama of opposed styles, presided over by the quicksilver agility of the narrator's styles" (43–44). I would add to this that it is precisely through the mastery of style that Dickens retains control of his text in a way that realists cannot.

5. I discuss Dickens's nonrealist use of metonymy in chapter 4 of this study.

Chapter 6

1. Henry James, *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 49.

2. In "The Cup and the Lip and the Riddle of *Our Mutual Friend,*" *ELH* 62:4 (1995), 955–77, Gregg A. Hecimovich discloses a particularly sophisticated riddling technique in the novel. My approach resembles his in calling attention to a need for interpreting clues, but my focus is far different, concentrating on the way in which Dickens swamps his reader with information initially seeming to be redundant in the colloquial sense, but ultimately helping to deliver the novel's meaning more clearly. Both Hecimovich and I agree on Dickens's purpose of wanting to reinforce the significance of his narrative.

3. George Levine in his seminal *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from* Frankenstein *to* Lady Chatterley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) wrote that the realist effort was "the struggle to avoid the inevitable conventionality of language in pursuit of the unattainable unmediated reality. Realism, as a literary method, can in these terms be defined as a self-conscious effort, usually in the name of some moral enterprise of truth telling and extending the limits of human sympathy, to make literature appear to be describing directly not some other language but reality itself (whatever that may be taken to be): in this effort, the writer must self-contradictorily dismiss previous conventions of representation while, in effect, establishing new ones" (8). He also wrote that "the continuing literary problem that plagued realism from the start was the incompatibility of tight form with plausibility" (11). There is a long history in modern literary criticism of the interrogation of Victorian realism, beginning at least with Kenneth Graham's *English Criticism of the Novel 1865–1900.*

4. Information theory has found its way into so much of today's culture that an elaborate discussion of it here is unnecessary. It has even penetrated the natural sciences, affecting the discourse of such fields as genetics and microbiology, where there is much discussion about the transmission of "information" by chromosomal action. Friedrich Kittler demonstrates, in his essay "The World of the Symbolic," Jacque Lacan's use of information theory for psychoanalytic theory, and Umberto Eco, in *The Open Work,* applies what he prefers to call communication theory to music, making use of Leonard B. Meyer's "Meaning in Music and Information Theory." My understanding of information theory is derived largely from Jeremy Campbell's *Grammatical Man: Information, Entropy, Language, and Life.* Subsequent references appear in the text. Campbell gives an account of information theory based primarily upon the work of Claude

Shannon, but more recent theories provide some different perspectives on that work. Kittler quotes the following passage about what has been called "logical depth" at IBM.

> The value of a message . . . appears to reside not in its information (its absolutely unpredictable parts), nor in its obvious redundancy (verbatim repetitions, unequal digit frequencies), but rather in what may be called its buried redundancy—parts predictable only with difficulty, things the receiver could in principle have figured out without being told, but only at considerable cost in money, time, or computation. (152)

5. Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 1. Subsequent references appear in the text.

6. John Romano notes that Lightwood, in his first narration, is satirizing a specific kind of sentimental romance, but the story he tells nonetheless has real force (37). I can't agree with Romano's suggestion that Mortimer mirrors Dickens's own desire to discredit representational form, though I do agree that Dickens wishes to get beyond many conventions of the fiction of his day.

7. Redundancy is a notion familiar now in various areas of language and symbol study, such as linguistics and composition. A few examples include Jean-Claude Choul's "Redundancy as a Semiotic Principle," Alice Horning's "Readable Writing: The Role of Cohesion and Redundancy," and Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Redundancy and the 'Readable' Text."

8. This equation was invented by Ludwig Boltzmann; in it, S stands for entropy, k for a universal constant known as Boltzmann's constant, and W for the number of ways in which the system can be arranged (Campbell, 46).

9. Redundancy has been employed to examine literary techniques. Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* was an early example of its use in literary theory, and it shows up as well in Kittler's essays. However, the term, when applied to literary analysis, has varying meanings. James Phelan offers an illuminating approach, very different from my own, in his essay "Redundant Telling, Preserving the Mimetic, and the Functions of Character Narration," where he is concerned with the way in which an author must convey information to her readership which is redundant in her text. "Redundant telling occurs when a narrator gives an unmotivated report of information to a narratee that the narratee already possesses" (210). His examples are Browning's "My Last Duchess" and Sandra Cisneros's short story "Barbie-Q." Meir Sternberg uses the idea of redundancy as overwriting in *Expositional Modes and Temporal Order in Fiction* and *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading.*

10. The conference involved scientists associated with MIT's new Neuroscience Research Project and featured Roman Jakobson, who suggested the similarity between linguistic and molecular codes.

11. Tom Lloyd writes of the handkerchief: "It is invested with different meanings, yet it means nothing in itself as it passes from person to person; thus, it is emblematic of the system of disengaged signs on which society rests in *Bleak House.* Esther's gift of the handkerchief is a selfless act; around it, the mother builds a shrine with its "little bunch of sweet herbs" (*BH* 162), but for Lady Dedlock it suggests the child she has "discovered yet buried" (10).

12. I have mentioned only a few examples of a pattern of redundancy that is quite complex. Just one additional example indicates how the death and burial theme reveals

through family history, violence, and supposed revenants, broad social and political implications. I refer to the whole assemblage of references to the Ghost's Walk at Chesney Wold.

13. If anyone should doubt that Dickens knew full well how he was tightly structuring his novel and keeping it under his own control, his notes for chapter 6 make his intentions clear. In *The Companion to* Our Mutual Friend, Michael Cotsell indicates that Dickens wrote: "Back to the opening chapter of the book. strongly," that last word underlined three times (255).

14. J. Hillis Miller sees the river as representing "material otherness" to human beings, to which the mysterious depth of the human spirit is analogous, in *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels,* 318ff. He describes the river as a realm of death and transformation.

15. A complicated thematic pattern of captivity, imprisonment, and other forms of confinement winds its way through *Our Mutual Friend* to reinforce the same overall message stressed by those of water, dirt, and mud themes.

16. Michael Cotsell calls attention to a passage in the manuscript of *Friend* that is omitted in the proofs, which indicates that what is not found in the dust mounds is "what's good and true" (*Companion,* 75).

17. This scene interestingly brings together the water and earth motifs. Greenwich Hospital was the official retirement facility for invalids who had served in the Royal Navy. Gruff and Glum had obviously seen serious action, as his two wooden legs suggest, but he also hints at the mudworm Wegg with his one wooden leg. Unlike Wegg, the pensioner can be won over and raised up from the mud by the spectacle of love. Greenwich Hospital and the pensioner might have been in Dickens's mind because as he was completing *Our Mutual Friend,* an act of Parliament in 1865 allowed out-pensions to the pensioners, who would no longer be required to live on the grounds.

18. The concept of the death of the author, from Roland Barthes onward, along with the active fields of reader response and reception theory, among other critical approaches, necessarily plays down the masterfulness of the author. One imagines these theoretical approaches would have been anathema to a writer like Dickens, who exerted himself to retain as much control as he could over his texts, including his artist's illustrations for them.

19. Boffin's idealization of the lives of famous misers might be read as a playful inversion of Carlyle's assertion: "The history of the world is but the biography of great men."

20. Murray Baumgarten writes in "Fictions of the City," *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens:* "Like the detectives of the London Metropolitan Police, founded in 1829, whom he admired and wrote about in *Household Words,* Dickens teaches us how to decode that city world and navigate through its darker streets. His fiction trains us in keen and swift observation, careful judgment, and thoughtful commitment" (117).

21. Eco reminds us that information theory was not designed for analyzing works of art, but his endeavor in *The Open Work* is to demonstrate that a work of art can be analyzed like any other form of communication and information theory can assist in that endeavor (68). Eco also states that the meaning of a message "is a function of the order, the conventions, and the redundancy of its structure. The more one respects the laws of probability (the preestablished principles that guide the organization of a message and are reiterated via the repetition of foreseeable elements), the clearer and less ambiguous its meaning will be" (93). My position in this chapter is that Dickens increases the likelihood of his message being conveyed by redundant thematic elements, even as he tests

some of the conventions of the novel form. Those who have seen *Our Mutual Friend* as a disordered baggy monster, have, in my view, missed the message.

22. The importance of underrating and of controlling narratives takes some odd little turns in the novel. For example, when Jenny's father discovers Lizzie's whereabouts, young Blight brings him to Wrayburn at the Veneerings'. He sends in a note to notify his master. This is an important turning point in the narrative, for Wrayburn will now pursue Lizzie and be pursued by Headstone. But there is a possibility that this line of action might be prevented and the narrator hints at it in a self-reflexive manner. "Then the Analytical, perusing a scrap of paper lying on the salver, with the air of a literary Censor, adjusts it, takes his time about going to the table with it, and presents it to Mr. Eugene Wrayburn" (627). Nancy Aycock Metz has suggested in "The Artistic Reclamation of Waste in *Our Mutual Friend*" that the Analytical Chemist mirrors the narrator in various ways. Here he could be considered as a force capable of redirecting the narrative by refusing to deliver the necessary data to generate Wrayburn's next actions. As elsewhere in the novel, he does not interfere with the tale.

23. Dickens wrote a now-famous letter to Wilkie Collins on 6 October 1859, in which he likened the novelist's role to that of providence. I am not arguing that Dickens had a simple perception of ordered existence. I believe he felt it necessary to fight for such an order. But this order had less to do with the conventions of realism than with the adventures of the imagination. John Romano puts the case rather well when he writes, "Dickens' own epistemology, if it may be called one, seems indeed to have been that reality is forever escaping our grasp, forever going deeper than, forever superseding and outdistancing, the forms provided by the chasing mind" (46–47).