Nation and Generation in *A Tale of Two Cities*

It is the interplay of the personal and the social, of the individual psychic development and the general political and economic evolution—with each "causing" and influencing the other . . .—that makes for the powerful social change that we call history.

Bruce Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*

Two Revolutions, one generational and the other political, determine the structure of *A Tale of Two Cities*. We require a combination of critical methods—literary, psychoanalytic, historical—to illuminate the novel’s complex structure and its impact on different readers. Lee Sterrenburg writes that Dickens’ vision of the French Revolution may be influenced by “a personal daydream only he can fully fathom. But he is able to communicate with his readers because he has rendered his daydream in terms of a publicly meaningful iconography.” Since *A Tale of Two Cities* is also a tale of two generations, the iconography of father-son conflict carries a particularly powerful social resonance.

Dickens’ novel was published in 1859, a year that Asa Briggs calls a “turning point” in the “late Victorian revolt against authority.” This revolt originated “in mid-Victorian society. What happened inside families then influenced what happened in many areas of public life later.” The major publications of 1859, from *The Origin of Species* and Marx’s *Critique of Political Economy* to Samuel Smiles’s *Self-Help*, stand poised between the anticipation of a later ideological revolt and the still-powerful memory of the French Revolution. That revolution and subsequent English social reform inevitably changed Victorian father-son relations. But the changing Victorian family, in turn, reshaped society. As much as any other work of 1859, *A Tale of Two Cities* demonstrates the correlation between family and nation, and it uses the language of psychological conflict and psychological identification to portray social upheaval and the restoration of social order.

Nation and generation converge in the earliest chronological event of *A Tale of Two Cities*, Doctor Manette’s story of the Evrémondes’ brutality (III, x, 303–15). The Evrémondes rape a young peasant girl, wound her brother, then summon Manette to treat their victims. When Manette tries to report these crimes, he is incarcerated in the Bastille. He writes a full account of his experience—damning the Evrémondes to the last of their race—and hides this personal history in his cell. Defarge finds the document and uses it as evidence against Charles Darnay, né Evrémonde. The events Manette describes, a microcosm of the larger narrative, trigger the major actions and reversals of the double plot. The rape itself implies social exploitation, a class-wide droit du seigneur. Conversely, one peasant’s attack on his master anticipates the nation’s reply to such abuse. The Evrémonde who raped the girl and murdered her brother will later run down a small child from the Paris slums, and as a result will be “driven fast to his tomb.” The retaliation denied one peasant, a generation earlier, is carried out by the revolutionary “Jacques.” Even the Paris tribunal at which Manette’s story is read reflects a struggle between parents and children: Manette has condemned his son-in-law to death.

Class conflict here reveals a hidden psychological conflict that recurs throughout the novel. Manette is taken at night and forced to witness the aftermath of a violent sexual assault. His abductors have absolute power, and any knowledge of their activities carries grave risk: “The things that you see here,” the Marquis warns young Manette, “are things to be seen, and not spoken of” (III, x, 311). Violence and sexuality, combined with a mysterious nocturnal setting and a dangerous observation, suggest a primal scene. Such scenes arouse anxiety about being
caught spying, and they invariably reflect parent-child conflict. The political significance of this drama intensifies its psychological meaning. Evrémonde’s absolute power, for example, resembles the father’s absolute power over his child. The novel’s virtual obsession with spying, its comic subplot, and its descriptions of revolutionary violence all further suggest primal-scene fantasies. But if we mistake this primal-scene reading for a full explanation of the novel, we only succeed in isolating one meaning and subordinating the others. We could as easily argue that the dominant class struggle—not simply in the novel but in Victorian history—is being expressed through the powerful language of childhood trauma: the nation is symbolized by the family; a national and historical struggle is made particular, and particularly vivid, through a personal and psychological narrative. The two explanations are not mutually exclusive. But to integrate them we must first analyze the whole work and locate the reader’s experience in the structure of the text itself. It can be shown that the psychological chronology of the Tale’s plot, turning as it does on Manette’s story, duplicates a psychological chronology common to the experience of most readers.

Manette’s story is the narrative equivalent of a trauma: it recalls an event that precedes all the other action of the novel and organizes that action, although it is not “recovered” until quite late in the novel. Modern psychoanalytic theory recognizes the retrospective quality of trauma, the way in which the individual reconstructs his past life to conform with present conflicts and thereby invests a past event with significance—some of it real, often some of it imagined. Manette’s document stands in a similar relationship to the larger novel: within the structure of the Tale it acts like a traumatic memory, reliving the significant antecedent events of the entire plot at the climax of Darnay’s second trial. The document reveals the combination of public and private acts that informs the narrative; it records the “primal scene” of the text itself.

Because Dickens makes this document the hidden nexus of the plot, it must bear a considerable weight of coincidence. The abused peasants are the brother and sister of Madame Defarge; Ernest Defarge was originally Doctor Manette’s servant; and Manette, before being rushed off to the Bastille, even meets his future son-in-law. Manette is sought out by the Marquise St. Evrémonde, who has “a presentiment that if no other innocent atonement is made” for the wrongdoing of her husband and brother-in-law, “it will one day be required” of little Charles (iii, x, 314)—a prophecy as remarkable as any of the “spiritual revelations” satirized by Dickens in the first chapter.

Like the story of Doctor Manette, the larger action of the novel turns on seeing what was never meant to be seen, an experience symbolized by the extensive use of a “Gorgon’s Head.” This mythical figure, which turned those who looked at it into stone, is now itself a “stone face [which] seemed to stare amazed, and, with opened mouth and dropped under-jaw, looked awe-stricken” (ii, ix, 120). The novel begins by opposing things hidden and things revealed. The passengers on the Dover Mail “were wrapped to the cheek-bones and over the ears, and wore jack-boots. Not one of the three could have said, from anything he saw, what either of the other two was like; and each was hidden under almost as many wrappers from the eyes of the mind, as from the eyes of the body, of his two companions” (i, ii, 4–5). And we are repeatedly aware of eyes, hundreds of eyes, at critical moments in the text, such as Darnay’s appearance at his London trial:

Everybody present . . . stared at him. . . . Eager faces strained round pillars and corners, to get a sight of him; spectators in back rows stood up, not to miss a hair of him; people on the floor of the court, laid their hands on the shoulders of the people before them, to help themselves, at anybody’s cost, to a view of him—stood a-tiptoe, got upon ledges, stood upon next to nothing, to see every inch of him. (“A Sight”—ii, ii, 58)

At Darnay’s second Paris trial, Dickens halts the action by a momentary frieze of staring spectators:

In a dead silence and stillness—the prisoner under trial looking lovingly at his wife, his wife only looking from him to look with solicitude at her father, Doctor Manette keeping his eyes fixed on the reader, Madame Defarge never taking hers from the prisoner, Defarge never taking his from his
feasting wife, and all the other eyes there intent upon the Doctor, who saw none of them—the paper was read, as follows. (iii, ix, 302)

The novel is filled with spies, from a hero twice accused of spying, to the comic spying of Jerry Cruncher, Jr., on his father, to the spy Barsad and “the great brotherhood of Spies” (ii, xxi, 211) who inhabit St. Antoine. Even the dead men, their heads on Temple Bar, remind us of “the horror of being ogled” (ii, i, 50). And the novel closes with an obsessive parade of violence, the revolutionaries worshiping the guillotine and previewing its victims at mass trials.

Spying, like virtually everything else in this novel, has two meanings—one public, the other private. The official spies, like Barsad, are instruments of repression and representatives of the “fathers,” the men in power. But in other contexts, like the Cruncher scenes, children spy on their parents. In both cases spying expresses the Tale’s dominant conflicts. Thus the Gorgon’s Head witnesses much more than the murder of the Marquis: it sees the deadly struggle between two generations, which is climaxed by implicit filicide and patricide. Dickens anticipates the public murders of the Revolution while suggesting the private conflict of Charles Darnay through the subtle mixture of two plot lines.

First, the Marquis—Charles’s uncle, who is virtually indistinguishable from Charles’s father (“Can I separate my father’s twin-brother, joint inheritor, and next successor, from himself?” [ii, ix, 117])—runs down a child (ii, vii). When the Marquis returns home, the child’s avenger clings to the underpart of the Marquis’s carriage (ii, viii). The Marquis is vaguely uneasy when he learns that someone was seen hanging from his carriage, but by the end of the chapter his thoughts have shifted to his nephew. He inquires whether Charles has arrived and is informed “not yet.” Early in the next chapter (ii, ix), the Marquis believes he sees a shadow outside his window as he is eating, but the servants find nothing. And again, his vague uneasiness is replaced by an uneasiness over the arrival of his renegade nephew. Dickens’ description encourages us to feel one preoccupation merge with the other:

“Monseigneur, it is nothing. The trees and the night are all that are here.”

. . . the Marquis went on with his supper. He was half-way through it, when he again stopped with his glass in his hand, hearing the sound of wheels. It came on briskly, and came up to the front of the château.

“Ask who is arrived.”

It was the nephew of Monseigneur. He had been some few leagues behind Monseigneur, early in the afternoon. He had diminished the distance rapidly, but not so rapidly as to come up with Monseigneur on the road. (ii, ix, 113)

The nephew of Monseigneur arrives and dines with his uncle. Their genteel conversation reveals a deadly turn of mind, particularly on the part of the Marquis, whose face . . . was cruelly, craftily, and closely compressed, while he stood looking quietly at his nephew, with his snuff-box in his hand.

Once again he touched him on the breast, as though his finger were the fine point of a small sword, with which, in delicate finesse, he ran him through the body. . . . (ii, ix, 117)

However, Charles himself alludes to his uncle’s death—something the Marquis is quick to comment on:

“This property and France are lost to me,” said the nephew, sadly; “I renounce them.”

“Are they both yours to renounce? France may be, but is the property? It is scarcely worth mentioning; but, is it yet?”

“I had no intention, in the words I used, to claim it yet. If it passed to me from you, to-morrow—”

“Which I have the vanity to hope is not probable.” (ii, ix, 118)

But the Marquis, in his vanity, is mistaken. Before dawn, he will be “run through” in the very chambers where they speak, by the shadowy, gaunt figure who has moved in and out of his thoughts all day, trading places with his nephew.

The Marquis has desired the death of his nephew, and Charles, more covertly, has imagined the sudden death of his father’s twin. There is the suggestion, but never the realization, of both filicide and patricide. But the exchange between the Marquis and his nephew is framed by the murder of a child and the murder of the Marquis himself. The former symbolizes the Marquis’s murderous impulses toward his brother’s child, as well as the cruelty of the French ruling classes toward their dependents, like the
abuse witnessed by Doctor Manette eighteen years earlier. At the same time, the revenge that follows is both an actualization of Charles’s revenge against his father’s surrogate and a gesture that shows the French peasantry rising up to murder its rulers, as they will ultimately murder the father of their country in the revolutionary act of regicide. Dickens clarifies these connections when he describes the rumors that follow the capture of the Marquis’s assassin:

“. . . he is brought down into our country to be executed on the spot, and . . . he will very certainly be executed. They even whisper that because he has slain Monseigneur, and because Monseigneur was the father of his tenants—serfs—what you will—he will be executed as a parricide. . . . his right hand, armed with the knife, will be burnt off before his face . . . into wounds which will be made in his arms, his breast, and his legs, there will be poured boiling oil, melted lead, hot resin, wax, and sulphur; finally . . . he will be torn limb from limb by four strong horses.” (II, xv, 162)

That Darnay should flee such a country is hardly surprising, but the political reasons for flight are intensified by his personal desire to avoid the retribution prophesied by his mother for the sins of his fathers. And the futility of that flight becomes apparent with his return to France after the Revolution. Darnay’s fate is to be forced, against his conscious desire, into a deadly struggle with his fathers: his own father, his father’s identical twin, his father-in-law. Although Darnay and Manette learn to respect and love each other, their goodwill is repeatedly subverted by events. Charles’s marriage to Lucie nearly kills Manette, and Manette’s document in turn condemns Darnay to the guillotine. The characters seem to be moved by something larger than their individual desires, by the sins of a nation, which inevitably lead only to more sin, to an orgy of murder and retribution. The political meaning of these acts is intensified by a deep and persistent psychological theme, at times so perfectly merged with the political that one and the same act may be construed as personal revenge, patricide, and regicide.

If the murderer of Evrémonde symbolically enacts Darnay’s violence and vengeance, then Sydney Carton enacts another side of Darnay’s character and pays for the hero’s aggression. Carton’s sacrifice is a convenient, if implausible, device to free Charles from the Bastille; it is also an attempt to solve an insoluble political dilemma. The revolutionaries justifiably overthrow their rulers, but their hatred leads to excesses that turn despised oppressor into sympathetic victim. The sins of the fathers are endlessly repeated, from generation to generation, and Dickens’ unrealistic solution creates a character who, Christlike, will sacrifice himself for the sins of all mankind. But Carton’s transformation from guilty scoundrel to hero also indicates a deeper, psychological transformation. This paradox of irreverence, having mocked and antagonized Mr. Lorry, now achieves a sudden closeness to the old banker. He notices Lorry crying over Charles’s plight:

“You are a good man and a true friend,” said Carton, in an altered voice. “Forgive me if I notice that you are affected. I could not see my father weep, and sit by, careless. And I could not respect your sorrow more, if you were my father. You are free from that misfortune, however.” (III, ix, 293)

For the first time in his knowledge of Carton, Lorry sees a “true feeling and respect”; once he decides to sacrifice himself, Carton becomes something like an ideal son and rediscovers his father in Lorry. Sydney then thinks back to his youth, and his dead father:

Long ago, when he had been famous among his earliest competitors as a youth of great promise, he had followed his father to the grave. His mother had died, years before. These solemn words, which had been read at his father’s grave, arose in his mind as he went down the dark streets, among the heavy shadows, with the moon and the clouds sailing on high above him. “I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.” (III, ix, 297–98)

These words dominate Carton’s subsequent feelings. He transforms his life by internalizing his father’s image, using Lorry as a surrogate: his earlier aimlessness dissolves and a new mission identifies him with the most famous—and self-sacrificing—of sons. Carton begins to achieve a sense of historical and personal identity, and the novel ends with Carton reborn through his namesakes, Lucie’s son and grandson. And with Carton’s newfound strength and
purpose, Darnay becomes “like a young child in [Carton's] hands.” Unconscious, Darnay is delivered to old Manette and Lucie and carried out of France like a sleeping baby (III, xiii). This sequence suggests that, as the hero’s double internalizes paternal authority and willingly sacrifices himself to it, the innocent hero may be reborn.

The British world of business offers a different, more pragmatic solution to father-son struggles. Samuel Smiles, a widely read apostle for the self-made man, speaks for a common British chauvinism when he contrasts England and France:

... [the English system] best forms the social being, and builds up the life of the individual, whilst at the same time it perpetuates the traditional life of the nation ... thus we come to exhibit what has so long been the marvel of foreigners—a healthy activity of individual freedom, and yet a collective obedience to established authority—the unfettered energetic action of persons, together with the uniform subjection of all to the national code of Duty.10

This description integrates independent action and submission to authority. Because Dickens’ France prevents such integration, unrestrained selfishness and anarchy tear the country apart. Although England has both unruly mobs and abundant selfishness, the British control the central conflict between sons and fathers, independence and authority.11 In a land of opportunity the individual submits himself to a generalized authority, which he then internalizes—at least according to Smiles and most other Victorians.12 The virtues of “promptitude,” “energy,” “tact,” “integrity,” “perseverance”—the whole list of ingredients in Smiles’s recipe for success in business—involves the same psychological dynamic: turn external tyranny into internal censorship and control. Self-Help opposes external help. Patronage, money, support in any form inhibit imitating one’s business “fathers” and, by struggle and hard work, repeating their success. Government itself is internalized: “It may be of comparatively little consequence how a man is governed from without, whilst everything depends upon how he governs himself from within.

The greatest slave is not he who is ruled by a despot ... but he who is the thrall of his own moral ignorance, selfishness, and vice” (Smiles, p. 3). The description fits Carton perfectly, at least until his conversion. Carton demonstrates his moral degeneration by willingly playing jackal to Stryver’s pompous lion. Their relationship in turn demonstrates the Victorian businessman’s divided personality: he hopes to rise in the world but he must never become a “striver,” particularly in a field like law, where one must appear unruffled, cool, above all a gentleman. Dickens’ social insight is conveyed by caricature and specifically by a psychological division that embodies an enforced social separation, not unlike the two sides to Wemmick in Great Expectations.

Smiles’s ideal is to rise gracefully, working hard but never seeming to toil or manipulate. He tells the story of an architect who, in spite of extensive education and training abroad, was forced to start humbly: “He determined to begin anywhere, provided he could be employed. ... he had the good sense not to be above his trade, and he had the resolution to work his way upward. ... he persevered until he advanced by degrees to more remunerative branches of employment” (pp. 208–09). Charles Darnay does the same:

... with great perseverance and untiring industry, he prospered.

In London, he had expected neither to walk on pavements of gold, nor to lie on beds of roses: if he had had any such exalted expectation, he would not have prospered. He had expected labour, and he found it, and did it, and made the best of it. In this, his prosperity consisted. (II, x, 123)

For Carton, however, such qualities are only “a mirage of honourable ambition, self-denial, and perseverance” (II, v, 85). He denies his own ambition and projects it onto the gross reality of Stryver.13

The two cities of Dickens’ Tale embody two very different public expressions of father-son conflict. In England, particularly in the world of business, repression is internalized: it becomes a psychological act rather than a political one. As public repression is diminished, internal aggression is brought under control, and the generation in power transmits its own authority—its own
image—to those who follow. In France, political repression is much stronger, as is the political retaliation of the oppressed. Dickens distorted the reality of the French Revolution to fit precisely into this liberal vision of the causes of revolution (and the need for a prophylactic reform), exaggerating the brutality and repression of the ancien régime and reducing the uprising itself to a nightmare of populist, radical reaction. Dickens' historical distortion clearly states the prevailing British liberal attitudes toward political repression and reform, toward the value of business and free enterprise, and, implicitly, toward the frequent, and frequently unconscious, struggle between fathers and sons throughout the century.

Jarvis Lorry is the ideal businessman. Business may be Lorry's defense against feeling, as he hints in his warning to Lucie that "all the relations I hold with my fellow-creatures are mere business relations" (I, iv, 21); but his thorough identification with his employer, Tellson's, endows him with a mercantile nobility. Fearing that Tellson's customers would be compromised by the seizure or destruction of documents—"for who can say that Paris is not set a-fire to-day, or sacked to-morrow"—he decides that he alone can protect their interests. His age and personal safety are not at issue: "... shall I hang back, when Tellson's knows this and says this—Tellson's, whose bread I have eaten these sixty years—because I am a little stiff about the joints? Why, I am a boy, sir, to half a dozen old codgers here!" (II, xxiv, 225). Lorry's language demonstrates not only his chivalry but also his clear filial relation toward his "House," which feeds him; his identification with Tellson's also gives him strength and, significantly, youth. At several points in this scene Darnay repeats his admiration for Lorry's "gallantry and youthfulness."

Elsewhere in the novel, Dickens describes the peculiar business education provided by Tellson's:

When they took a young man into Tellson's London house, they hid him somewhere till he was old. They kept him in a dark place, like a cheese, until he had the full Tellson flavour and blue-mould upon him. Then only was he permitted to be seen, spectacularly poring over large books, and casting his breeches and gaiters into the general weight of the establishment. (II, i, 51)

Although the obvious satire here may temper Lorry's heroism, it is, for Dickens, comparatively gentle, and its humor softens the antagonism between the old and the young. Dickens is certainly not flattering in his appraisal of Tellson's—"very small, very dark, very ugly, very incommodious" (II, i, 49)—but his criticism of this dangerously antiquated operation is checked by a humorous acceptance, a feeling that, old-fashioned as it is, it produces good men, trust, honor. Smiles, too, stresses the heroism of banking:

Trade tries character perhaps more severely than any other pursuit in life. It puts to the severest tests honesty, self-denial, justice, and truthfulness; and men of business who pass through such trials unainted are perhaps worthy of as great honour as soldiers who prove their courage amidst the fire and perils of battle. ... reflect but for a moment on the vast amount of wealth daily entrusted even to subordinate persons ... and note how comparatively few are the breaches of trust which occur amidst all this temptation. ... the system of Credit, which is mainly based upon the principle of honour, would be surprising if it were not so much a matter of ordinary practice in business transactions. ... the implicit trust with which merchants are accustomed to confide in distant agents ... often consigning vast wealth to persons, recommended only by their character ... is probably the finest act of homage which men can render to one another. (pp. 224-25)

Through a characteristic reference to parents and children, Dickens equates Tellson's with England: "Any one of [the] partners would have disinherited his son on the question of rebuilding Tellson's. In this respect the House was much on a par with the Country" (II, i, 49). Compare this mild satire with the savagery of Dickens' attack on other bureaucratic strongholds, like the Circumlocution Office of Little Dorrit. The very name "Tell son" enjoins the paternalistic institution to reveal to its dependents the secrets of the House, although it takes a ridiculously long time to do so. Imparting secrets to a son resolves not only generational conflict but also the problem of spying. Wait long enough, the "sons" are implicitly advised, make the interests of the House your interests,
internalize the father's authority, and all things will become known.

*A Tale of Two Cities* has been consistently criticized for what Dickens himself called its “want of humour.” John Gross writes:

Above all, the book is notoriously deficient in humour. One falls—or flops—back hopefully on the Crunchers, but to small avail. True, the comic element parodies the serious action: Jerry, like his master, is a “Resurrection-Man,” but on the only occasion that we see him rifling a grave it turns out to be empty, while his son’s panic-stricken flight with an imaginary coffin in full pursuit is nightmarish rather than funny.

Young Jerry’s experience occurs in the chapter entitled “The Honest Tradesman” (II, xiv), and its comedy, which is indeed closer to nightmare, extends the “serious action” of the novel more thoroughly than Gross allows: “The Honest Tradesman” combines national, commercial, and generational conflict.

Above all else, Young Jerry is “impelled by a laudable ambition to study the art and mystery of his father’s honest calling” (II, xiv, 153). We see this particular scene through the boy’s own close-set, staring eyes, and the landscape reflects Jerry’s spying, his desire to see into the mystery of his father’s nocturnal expeditions: lamps “wink,” while the gravestones and the church tower spy in turn on the prying men and the peeping child. Jerry witnesses a peculiar form of “fishing”:

They fished with a spade, at first. Presently the honoured parent appeared to be adjusting some instrument like a great corkscrew. Whatever tools they worked with, they worked hard, until the awful striking of the church clock so terrified Young Jerry, that he made off, with his hair as stiff as his father’s. (II, xiv, 154)

The language amuses us in part because it is sexually suggestive, with its “great corkscrew” and the hair that stands up and stiffens. But such language also comically expresses Young Jerry’s ambition to grow up and become his father. His desire to find out what his father does and to emulate him inverts the novel’s dominant struggle: the identical appearance of the Crunchers defines their essential unity. Resemblance—sinister in the Evrémonde twins and dramatic and theatrical between Carton and Darnay—is here the comic assertion of a common identity. Jerry, Jr., is a perfect replica of his parent, and a perfect parody of the conservative ideal. At first annoyed by his child’s curiosity, Jerry, Sr., finally responds with favor because he realizes that this family succession offers no threat at all; the son will forfeit his own identity to take on his father’s: “There’s hopes wot that boy will yet be a blessing to you,” Jerry, Sr., says to himself, “and a recompense to you for his mother!” (II, xiv, 156).

The father’s pursuit of an “honest trade” has more than a mercantile meaning for his son, as Dickens’ ambiguous language suggests throughout this chapter:

There was a screwing and complaining sound down below, and their bent figures were strained, as if by a weight. By slow degrees the weight broke away the earth upon it, and came to the surface. Young Jerry very well knew what it would be; but, when he saw it, and saw his honoured parent about to wrench it open, he was so frightened, being new to the sight, that he made off again, and never stopped until he had run a mile or more. (II, xiv, 154)

The following morning, Jerry wakes up to see his father beating his mother on their bed for something that had gone wrong during the night, something attributed to her praying or “flopping tricks”—a term, like “Resurrection-Man,” that parodies both religion and sex. Jerry’s surname indicates his feeling for his wife, his desire to crunch her, and that mixed demonstration of sexuality and violence characterizes his language. “You have no more nat’ral sense of duty,” he tells her, “than the bed of this here Thames river has of a pile, and similarly it must be knocked into you” (II, xiv, 155).

Jerry’s language, like his mysterious nocturnal affairs, parodies the sexual violence of the Evrémondes’ rape described by Doctor Manette. In one sense the comic episode may be read as another primal scene: a boy spies on his father’s mysterious doings at night and later witnesses his father beating his mother on their bed; throughout, the language is both violent and implicitly sexual. At the same time, the comedy reproduces the combination of father-son conflict and social struggle present in Manette’s
story and traced throughout the novel. Yet because it approximates a primal scene so closely, the characteristic merging of violence and sexuality becomes here more grotesque than funny. Such language, like Jerry’s generally ambiguous behavior, strains the text and limits its comic effectiveness. John Gross observes that the resurrection theme cannot justify what Jerry does; however, the resurrection theme is itself subordinate to the larger thematic struggle between sons and fathers. The structure of “The Honest Tradesman” reflects the structure of the Tale: it is at once psychological and social, suggesting both a child’s vision of his parents’ sexuality and the historical nightmare of the French Revolution. The comedy revises the novel’s central conflicts and offers its own resolution. But that resolution cannot be sustained, and both the language and the setting of the comedy too strongly reveal the nightmare that informs it.

Dickens manipulates both emotional conflict and its solution by “splitting” in the technical, psychoanalytic sense: his characters distance their emotions from an immediate, and disturbing, reality (thus Lorry’s remark to Lucie about his lack of feeling or Carton’s apparent ability to separate himself from everything except the “higher” emotions at the close); he divides a single ego into two (Carton/Darnay); and he splits the “object,” allowing one person (Charles’s uncle) to bear the brunt of the hero’s hatred or aggression toward Charles’s father. Conversely, Dickens’ use of doubles may suggest, not splitting, but reuniting something once divided or divisible: the comic identification of Jerry, Jr., with his father or the larger movement between London and Paris, which connects seemingly disparate incidents and persons and ultimately unites the two plots. Even in the famous rhetoric of the opening, the balanced opposites suggest their own ultimate fusion. The use of splitting in a work this long is too varied and extensive to justify simple praise or blame—splitting is primarily a descriptive term—but it should clarify the understandably divided critical assessment of the novel.

Fitzjames Stephen had originally called the book’s tone “thoroughly contemptible,” while Dickens thought it could be the best story he had written. Sylvère Monod makes a more balanced appraisal, noting the special intensity of the revolutionary passages but finding the origins of that intensity in a “personal interest” that breaks down the proper distance between author and subject. Monod at times seems to withdraw his approval, but he is simply reflecting the work’s contradictory quality: “Few would refuse to admit that the Tale is very much a contrived product,” he has recently written, “[or] that the contrivance is usually superb.” In addition to citing the lack of sustained comedy in the novel, critics have complained about the contrivance and sentimentality of Carton’s role and about Dickens’ oversimplification of a complex historical event. I have suggested that the failed comedy of the Crunchers derives, in part, from a failure to control, or sufficiently disguise, the primal-scene material implicit throughout the text. Dickens’ historical oversimplification reflects, as we have seen, a merging of family and class struggles that was both characteristic and
particularly problematic in the nineteenth century. Carton’s role, both as a “double” to the hero and as a melodramatic scapegoat at the close, develops the dual conflicts of the novel; indeed, much of the sentimentality of Carton-as-Christ is derived from his conversion, via Lorry, into the good son and the good conservative. Carton’s solution is that of any son—or class—that willingly accepts the pain or injustice inflicted upon it by parents or rulers, and such a solution is not particularly satisfying to most readers. In his peculiarly calm and heroic way, Carton stands for the ideals of conservative belief, in the family and the nation, but he finally assumes too many meanings and is required to connect too many threads of the novel. He suffers chronically from meaning too much in relation to too many other characters and themes and, like Manette’s document, unites too many incidents; he becomes more strained as he becomes more important.

Other kinds of splitting in A Tale of Two Cities far more successfully project the text’s central conflicts, precisely because they require no resolution. Dickens’ caricature of the lion and the jackal, for example, exploits an inherent, unresolvable tension in his social subject. The division of labor between Carton and Stryver powerfully suggests not only Carton’s divided self but the divided goals and morals of Victorian business. Divided imagery, like split objects, also contributes to the intense passages describing the Terror:

False eyebrows and false moustaches were stuck upon them, and their hideous countenances were all bloody and sweaty, and all awry with howling, and all staring and glaring with beastly excitement and want of sleep. . . . men stripped to the waist, with the stain all over their limbs and bodies; men in all sorts of rags, with the stain upon those rags; men devilishly set off with spoils of women’s lace and silk and ribbon. . . . Hatchets, knives, bayonets, swords.” And these images in turn anticipate the hellish dance of the revolutionaries:

They advanced, retreated, struck at one another’s hands, clutched at one another’s heads, spun round alone, caught one another and spun round in pairs, until many of them dropped. While those were down, the rest linked hand in hand, and all spun round together: then the ring broke, and in separate rings of two and four they turned and turned until they all stopped at once, began again, struck, clutched, and tore, and then reversed the spin, and all spun round another way. . . . No fight could have been half so terrible as this dance. It was so emphatically a fallen sport—a something, once innocent, delivered over to all devilry—a healthy pastime changed into a means of angering the blood, bewildering the senses, and steeling the heart. Such grace as was visible in it, made it the uglier, showing how warped and perverted all things good by nature were become. The maidenly bosom bared to this, the pretty almost-child’s head thus distracted, the delicate foot mincing in this slough of blood and dirt, were types of the disjointed time.

This was the Carmagnole. (iii, v, 264–65)

Both passages sharply juxtapose opposites: murder and celebration, ritual and anarchy, violence and delicacy. The dance itself is vividly sexual, orgiastic in fact; and witnessing a perverse “sport” more awful than any fight, an innocence now delivered into hell, intensifies the terror of this scene.

A Tale of Two Cities reflects the Victorian repudiation of sexual or powerful women by contrasting the dull but idealized heroine and her more dangerous, sexual counterpart: Madame Defarge is an almost mythically frightening woman with male strength, but she has as well an animal-like beauty:

... [a] beauty which . . . impart[s] to its possessor firmness and animosity. . . . a tigress. . . .

Such a heart Madame Defarge carried under her rough robe. Carelessly worn, it was a becoming robe enough, in a certain weird way, and her dark hair looked rich under her coarse red cap. Lying hidden in her bosom, was a loaded pistol. Lying hidden at her waist, was a sharpened dagger. Thus accoutered, and walking with the confident tread of such a character, and with the supple freedom of a woman who had habitually walked in her girlhood, bare-
foot and bare-legged, on the brown sea-sand, Madame Defarge took her way along the streets.

Many subsequent versions of Madame Defarge, in film and in illustration, have made her a witch. The Harper and Row cover to *A Tale of Two Cities*, for example, shows a cadaverous old crone, gray-haired, hunched over her knitting, with wrinkles stitched across a tightened face. The original “Phiz” illustration, however, brings out Madame Defarge’s beauty, her dark hair and her “supple freedom”; if we compare this with two later illustrations of Lucie, we realize that Madame Defarge is a strong, dark-haired version of the heroine. Characteristically, Dickens gives the Frenchwomen vitality, conveyed negatively as animality (“tigress”), and denies his heroine these qualities. The Frenchwomen infuse their vitality into the “fallen sport” of the Carmagnole, until they appear like “fallen women,” inhabiting a world of violence and overt sexuality. For Madame Defarge’s sister, aristocratic brutality extends even to violation. The clearest antecedent of Madame Defarge herself is her compatriot, Mademoiselle Hortense, from *Bleak House*. Hortense “would be handsome,” laments Dickens, “but for a certain feline mouth.... she seems to go about like a very neat She-Wolf imperfectly tamed” (p. 158). She is both attractive and frightening, and her violence is expressed by sexuality. When Bucket tells Hortense that Mrs. Bucket has helped to trap her, Hortense replies, “tigress-like”:

“I would like to kiss her!”... “You’d bite her, I suspect,” says Mr. Bucket.
“I would!” making her eyes very large. “I would love to tear her, limb from limb.” (p. 742)

Hortense virtually becomes Madame Defarge when she applies to Esther for service, and Esther finds that the “lowering energy” of the woman “seemed to bring visibly before me some woman from the streets of Paris in the reign of terror” (p. 320).

Lucie, by contrast, is the perfect Victorian female, the ideal home companion, a loving stereotype. She achieves blandness by playing *both* child and mother (and largely skipping anything in between), so that she is all things to all generations. Darnay acknowledges that Lucie’s love for her father is “an affection so unusual, so touching... that it can have few parallels”:

“when she is clinging to you, the hands of baby, girl, and woman, all in one, are round your neck. ... in loving you she sees and loves her mother at her own age, sees and loves you at my age, loves her mother brokenhearted, loves you through your dreadful trial and in your blessed restoration. I have known this, night and day, since I have known you in your home.”

Her father sat silent, with his face bent down.

Most readers, unfortunately, do the same.

Dickens’ violent and passionate Frenchwomen characterize not only the Carmagnole but virtually every set scene of the Revolution: “The men were terrible, in the bloody-minded anger with which they looked from windows, caught up what arms they had, and came pouring down into the streets; but, the women were a sight to chill the boldest” (p. 212). While the rape of Madame Defarge’s sister dramatizes the exploitation of personal “wealth,” Madame Defarge turns beauty into power and violence, finally into terror. Her revenge is all the more awful because it reverses the sister’s helplessness—or, more generally, the assumed passivity of Victorian women and of the lower classes. Madame Defarge is more implacable than her husband; her closest ally is a woman who personifies revenge; and the most murderous and frightening figure of all is “the figure of the sharp female called La Guillotine” (p. 259). The Frenchwomen embody Dickens’ political moral: the more violently you exploit and distort in one direction, the more violent and distorted will be the reaction. And Dickens frames his moral with the language of procreation and violation: “Sow the same seed of rapacious license and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind” (p. 353).

Throughout his career, Dickens split both his hero and the hero’s loved ones, particularly in a setting of generational conflict. Monks, the villainous half-brother of Oliver Twist, and Uriah Heep and Steerforth in *David Copperfield* establish a pattern of the hero’s guilt and expiation that would later define the essential relationship between Carton and Darnay. In *Oliver Twist* there is also a simple parental choice—Brown-
low or Fagin—that becomes far more complex in David Copperfield, when David, in his first marriage, seems to behave like his hated stepfather, Murdstone.29 Dickens makes a more complex use of split egos and split objects in A Tale of Two Cities, although he handles splitting most successfully in the novel that immediately follows: Great Expectations extensively uses alter egos, and its action is built around Pip's developing relationship to his various fathers—Joe, Jaggers, Magwitch. By returning to the first-person narrative of David Copperfield, Dickens united—internalized—the conflicts that were externalized in A Tale of Two Cities and never satisfactorily reunited at its close. Pip is both Darnay and Carton, he is both heroic and guilty, and he even experiences the complex conflicts of the Victorian world of business, as described here in A Tale of Two Cities.30

Edgar Johnson has written that "A Tale of Two Cities has been hailed as the best of Dick-ens's books and damned as the worst. It is nei-

ber, but it is certainly in some ways the least characteristic. . . ."31 This essay tries to show, on the contrary, that in A Tale of Two Cities Dickens is concerned with two connected themes that preoccupied him throughout his career: the generational and political conflicts he repeatedly expressed through the technique of splitting. However, because that technique is used so pervasively in A Tale of Two Cities, it makes the novel seem uncharacteristically concentrated in style and, at times, uncharacteristically strained or humorless. The novel's particular combination of individual psychology and broad social concerns thus accounts for its unique qualities, its intensity, and its failures. A Tale of Two Cities dramatizes two dominant conflicts of the Victorian age—and of our own.

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Notes


4 In James and John Stuart Mill: Father and Son in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 7–8, Bruce Mazlish writes:

Industrial and scientific revolutions, along with political ones, posed a problem of cultural transmission that was new in its intensity and placed an enormous strain on parent-child relations. In the nineteenth century the most dramatic form this took was in a heightened sense of father-son, i.e., generational, conflict. Much attention has been given, and rightly so, to class conflict at this time as a mechanism of social change. I am suggesting that generational conflict is at least of equal importance.

5 All quotations from Dickens' works are from the New Oxford Illustrated Dickens (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947–59). All citations to A Tale of Two Cities are given parenthetically by book, chapter, and page.

6 Freud wrote that, if very young children witness parental intercourse, "they inevitably regard the sexual act as a sort of ill-treatment or act of subjugation: they view it, that is, in a sadistic sense." He first used the term "primal scene" in the Wolf-Man case (1918), affirming that the child equates intercourse with parental aggression: the scene arouses the child's sexual excitement and leads to anxiety and guilt (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 24 vols., trans. and ed. James Strachey et al. [London: Hogarth, 1953–64], v, 585; vii, 196; xvi, 7–12; abbreviated hereafter as SE). An excellent modern discussion of the concept of the primal scene and its

7 Norman N. Holland's recent work, particularly Poems in Persons (New York: Norton, 1973) and 5 Readers Reading (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), demonstrates the personal base in all critical acts and the need for a more sensitive appreciation of reader response. Murray M. Schwartz argues convincingly that any interpretation describes something neither entirely within us nor "out there" in the apparently objective text, but in an intermediate space, the "transitional" space defined by the British psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott ("Where Is Literature?" College English, 36 [1975], 756–65). I am not persuaded, however, that each critic need describe in detail his psychological interaction with the text. In this essay, to locate the reader's experience "elsewhere" (in the text itself) does not constitute a "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (Schwartz, p. 760). It is, rather, an attempt to generalize not only from my personal reading of the novel but from my understanding of a larger psychoanalytic and historical dynamic. I try to locate within the text a structure that seems to provoke a common response in many readers through different historical periods.

8 See particularly Ernst Kris, "The Recovery of Childhood Memories in Psychoanalysis," Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 11 (1956), 54–88; see also Joseph Sandler, "Trauma, Strain, and Development," Psychic Trauma, ed. Sidney S. Furst (New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 154–74. The Hampstead Research Group explains the term "retrospective trauma" in this way: "By this we mean that the perception of some particular situation evokes the memory of an earlier experience, which under the present conditions becomes traumatic. . . . The ego's sudden perception of . . . a link between present fantasy and the past memory may be a traumatic experience. Here the memory functions as a present perception" (Sandler, p. 164). Freud uses the terms "retrospective fantasies" (Zurückphantasien) and "deferred action" (Nachträglichkeit). For a full discussion of these terms and their history, see J. Laplanché and J.-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-Analysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973). Kris argues that "the further course of life seems to determine which [early] experience may gain significance as a traumatic one" (p. 73). Furst stresses the importance of this concept because "in some instances trauma can be diagnosed only in retrospect" ("Psychic Trauma: A Survey," Psychic Trauma, p. 32).

9 In an article on the "Medusa's Head," Freud writes that the horror of seeing a Gorgon's head is associated with the "horror" of sexual discovery (specifically a child's first view of female genitalia): Freud's interpretations here are readily connected with the primal-scene experience. At times he seems almost to be describing the particular horror experienced by young Jerry Cruncher, as I show later. "The sight of Medusa's head," writes Freud, "makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone" (SE, xviii, 273–74).


11 The mob is "a monster much dreaded" (II, xiv, 149) in England as well as in France. But the English version is softened by narrative point of view and by relatively mild defining images. We observe the English mob at the mock burial of Cly or the bloodthirsty crowd at Darnay's London trial through the disarming comic vision of Jerry Cruncher. But our impression of the French crowd is either unmediated or mediated in a more frightening way, as when Lorry, appalled by the awful scenes at the grindstone and desperate to prevent Lucie from witnessing them, intensifies the reader's own emotion (iii, ii). The British crowd at Darnay's trial is "ogreish" (ii, ii, 59), and on Darnay's acquittal its members are "baffled blue-flies . . . dispersing in search of other carrion" (ii, iii, 73). However ugly and disturbing, the metaphor suggests a diminutive and controlled menace, in contrast to the descriptions of the French mobs ("wolfish," "insatiable"). The French are more terrifying in their celebration of Darnay's initial release than are the English in hoping for a conviction; and when Darnay is finally convicted in France, the crowd raises "a sound of craving and eagerness that had nothing articulate in it but blood" (III, x, 315).

12 Weinstein and Platt argue that a critical change between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries turns on a "capacity for emotional withdrawal" manifested through the world of business: "business generally became the special province of men. . . . The relationship of father to son . . . became more conscious; centered in the ego, it was therefore capable of a higher degree of control. This control permitted critical examination of the father's position, and on this basis the first steps were taken toward the inclusion of the sons in the family structure" (Wish to Be Free, pp. 13–14). French society before the Revolution could not appropriately resolve the inevitable tensions of generational change: the choice was sharply drawn between passive acceptance of authority and active rebellion. (As we have seen, Darnay creates a false, third solution in attempting to flee his country and his fathers.) The postrevolutionary world of business could, however, resolve both national and family conflict within the psyche of the individual. Dickens' contrasting images of France and England, however crudely drawn, accurately reflect, respectively, the historical and social conditions for revolution and stability suggested by Weinstein and Platt. See also "On Social Stability and Social Change," in Psychoanalytic Sociology, pp. 91–122.

13 Dickens himself confirmed the connection between generational struggle and the Carton-Stryver episode of A Tale of Two Cities. Before 1856 Dickens had conceived of a story to be "centered on 'Memory Carton,' jackal to a legal lion, the action to span 'Two Generations'" (Collins, "A Tale of Two Novels," p. 342).

14 Hedva Ben-Israel, English Historians on the French Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), p. 98; William Oddie, Dickens and Carlyle: The Ques-
The revolutionary and love stories of the novel, not the transhuman." On this basis Miller is able to connect theme. He argues that it suggests a "direct contact with New York: Norton, 1965], p. 104).


The source material for A Tale of Two Cities reveals Dickens' unstated, and probably unconscious, conservative view of the family. Both Oddie and Goldberg show Carlyle's influence on Dickens and the influence of a shared culture, and a common iconography, on both men. Dickens had read one of Carlyle's sources, Mercier's Tableau de Paris, which describes the sacrifice of General Loisirolles, who assumes his son's place at the guillotine and dies for him. If Dickens conceived Carton's substitution for Darnay from this story, he has transformed the disguised iconography of revolution into a conservative parable. In Mercier's account, and in Carlyle's repetition of it, the father is sacrificed so that the son may live and grow; this supposedly real aggression to the "filial" revolutionaries while identification on the part of the audience, who can attribute that the son may live and grow; this supposedly real aggression to the "filial" revolutionaries while identification on the part of the audience, who can attribute the French people are oppressed, they merit Dickens' lavish sympathy for all the oppressed children of his novels. But when the French justifiably revolt, their aggression implies the ultimate atrocity—patricide—and must be repudiated.

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17 "A Tale of Two Cities is admittedly one of the most strained of Dickens' works, and [Fitzjames] Stephen has little trouble in exposing the mechanism of its grotesqueness which he does with sadistic relish" (George H. Ford, Dickens and His Readers [1955; rpt. New York: Norton, 1965], p. 104).

18 In Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), J. Hillis Miller sees another, larger meaning in the resurrection theme. He argues that it suggests a "direct contact with the transhuman." On this basis Miller is able to connect the revolutionary and love stories of the novel, noting the limitations of plot but noting, as well, Dickens' success "in seeing the act of self-sacrifice from the inside" (p. 248).

19 Schizophrenia is itself derived from the Greek term for a "splitting of the mind"; the term was first introduced into psychiatry by Eugen Bleuler in 1911. Freud was concerned primarily with the splitting of the ego, and he applied "splitting" (Spaltung) in a far more specific way than Bleuler. See particularly "Fetishism" (SE, xxi, 152-57); "An Outline of Psychoanalysis" (SE, xxiii, 144-207); "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense" (SE, xxvii, 275-78). See also Laplanche and Pontalis under "Schizophrenia" and "Splitting of the Ego." According to the theory of object relations, splitting is an essential reaction of the infant to ambivalence and anxiety. The infant splits its own emotions and projects them onto another person (or "object") and then internalizes the now split object. These theories were developed from Freud primarily by Melanie Klein; see particularly Contributions to Psycho-Analysis (London: Hogarth, 1948) and Developments in Psycho-Analysis, ed. M. Klein et al. (London: Hogarth, 1952). Robert J. Stoller's Splitting (New York: Dell, 1973) relies on Freud's definition: Stoller describes splitting as "a process in which the ego is altered as it attempts to defend itself" (p. xvi). However, Stoller's subtle and comprehensive case history of a multiple-personality patient also draws significantly on modern object-relational theory.

20 The use of one aspect of splitting—the "double"—has been noted extensively in literary criticism, and it is an important concept in the French school of psychoanalytic structuralism. Perhaps the best-known example is Jacques Lacan's study of "The Purloined Letter," in which Dupin and the Ministre D. are described as mirror images (see "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" Yale French Studies, 48 [1972], 38-72). Robert Rogers' A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1970) describes a variety of literary doubles, particularly in contemporary literature. Rogers, however, uses the term "splitting" either with specific reference to narcissism (pp. 18-30) or in a general sense as interchangeable with "doubling," "fragmentation," and "decomposition" (p. 4). Leonard Manheim applies the term "multiple projection" to A Tale of Two Cities in "A Tale of Two Characters: A Study in Multiple Projection," Dickens Studies Annual, 1 (1970), 225-37. Manheim effectively demonstrates the connection between what he calls the "novel's leading male character" (Carton-Darnay) and the Jekyll-Hyde feelings of the author, particularly over the affair with Ellen Ternan. His combination of psychoanalysis and biography has different explanatory assumptions and goals from my own, but his evidence and conclusions support the textual analyses of split objects here. Harry Stone traces the relations between psychological biography and one specific fictional pattern throughout Dickens' career in "The Love Pattern in Dickens' Novels," in Dickens the Craftsman: Strategies of Presentation, ed. Robert B. Partlow, Jr. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 1-20.
Other critics have analyzed doubling and splitting on broader social and moral grounds. Joseph Gold, for example, writes that in *A Tale of Two Cities* "the desire to analyze and integrate the damned and the redeemed in metaphor is the cause of the doubleness which is at the centre of this novel." See Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1972), p. 232. Georg Lukács sees a profound split—a total dissociation, in fact—between the moral-political and the personal-psychological dimensions of this novel. By using psychoanalytic concepts of splitting to discuss both personal and political aspects of the *Tale*, I am offering an alternative to Lukács's negative judgment; I am also attempting to explain more fully the successes and weaknesses—derived from a common source—that have prompted Lukács to claim that "Dickens . . . weakens the connection between the problems of the characters' lives and the events of the French Revolution" (The Historical Novel, trans. Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell from 2nd German ed. [Boston: Beacon, 1963], p. 243).

21 Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, "A Tale of Two Cities," in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1961), p. 45; letter from Dickens to F. J. Régnier (15 Oct. 1859), in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Walter Dexter (Bloomsbury: Nonesuch, 1938), iii, 125–26. Dickens wrote to Régnier, however, on first completing the book, commenting, "I hope it is the best story I have written." Philip Collins wonders whether Dickens meant to stress the word "story," because, notes Collins, it may have been "his best effort, as a story, but no one then, and surely no one since, has regarded it as his best novel" ("A Tale of Two Novels," p. 336).

22 "Some Stylistic Devices in A Tale of Two Cities," in Dickens the Craftsman, p. 185.

23 In spite of Fitzjames Stephen's obvious bias, he did identify the novel's major problems, Shaw simply dismissed the book as "pure sentimental melodrama from beginning to end" (Intro., *Great Expectations* [Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, 1937], p. vi), while Chesterton, who liked the *Tale*, echoed a common complaint that both Dickens and Carlyle represent the French Revolution "as a mere elemental outbreak of hunger or vengeance" (*Charles Dickens* [1906; rpt. New York: Schocken, 1965], p. 231). George Gissing was one of the first to call the book uncharacteristic in order to apologize for the sense of "restraint throughout." Dickens "aimed . . . at writing a story for the story's sake. . . . Among other presumed superfluities, humour is dismissed" (Charles Dickens [London: Blackie and Son, 1898], pp. 54–55). Gissing anticipated a now common criticism of the aging Queen Victoria.

24 His most vivid incidents and images, including the terrifying figure of Madame Defarge, who was based on the real-life Demoiselle Théroigne described by Carlyle. See Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, Vols. ii–iv of the Centenary Ed. of *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. H. D. Traill (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896), esp. ii, 254–55; iii, 288, 293; and iv, 154. Carlyle characteristically combines sexual and violent images in some of his most intense portrayals of revolutionary emotion: "Will Guards named National thrust their bayonets into the bosoms of women? Such a thought, or rather such dim unshaped raw material of a thought, ferments, universally under the female nightcap; and, by earliest daybreak, on slight hint, will explode" (ii, 250). See, generally, Bk. vii, "The Insurrection of Women," esp. ii, 251–54, 278.

25 Madame Defarge in "The Wine-Shop" (facing p. 160) resembles Lucie "After the Sentence" (facing p. 318) and during "The Knock at the Door" (facing p. 266): Lucie's expressions are naturally quite different, but the features of the two women are similar—both women are young and attractive. What appear to be mirror images of the two women are placed opposite each other on the wrapper of the original edition. Carlyle describes Demoiselle Théroigne as "brown-locked, light-behaved, fire-hearted" and as a "Brown eloquent Beauty . . . with the figure of a Heathen Goddess" (ii, 135, 264).

Madame Defarge begins to age soon after Dickens' death. The "Household Edition" (New York: Harper, 1878), for example, shows a square-jawed, muscular Madame Defarge, looking very much like a man, on the title page. She looks older, heavier, and uglier by the end of the novel (p. 154), but is at her worst on p. 79, where she bears a remarkable resemblance to the aging Queen Victoria.

26 This last passage is noted by Michael Steig and F. A. C. Wilson ("Hortense vs. Bucket: The Ambiguity of Order in *Bleak House*", Modern Language Quarterly, 33 [1972], 296), and they indicate that the image "points forward to Mme. Defarge." Hortense herself appears to have been modeled on Maria Manning, a murderer whose beauty and splendid mode of dress brought thirty thousand people to her execution. See Philip Collins, *Dickens and Crime*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 235–40.


30 Julian Moynahan and Harry Stone were the first critics to point out in detail the role of Orlick as heroic alter ego. — Moynahan, "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of Great Expectations," *Essays in Criticism*, 10 (1960), 60–79, a — Stone, "Fire, Hand, and Gate: Dickens'