Université de Montréal

Sideshadow Views

Narrative Possibilities in Charles Dickens's Late Novels

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Résumé de synthèse

Cet essai discute du rôle de l'hypothétique (ce qui ne peut être proposé que comme une hypothèse) dans les huit derniers romans de Charles Dickens et de la variété des moyens littéraires utilisés pour l'invoquer. Dans toute communication fondée sur le langage, les mots sont énoncés (et entendus) ou écrits (et lus), l'un après l'autre, dans l'ordre qu'exige la grammaire. La linéarité et l'ordre de telles séquences semblent refléter naturellement une temporalité et une causalité régissant les évènements représentés. En fait, ceci ne peut rendre compte que de leur nécessité et de leur chronologie. Je soutiens que les romans considérés recourent à des actions, des idées, des évènements, des perspectives, des voix, etc. hypothétiques, pour dépasser les limites imposées par le déterminisme apparemment inhérent aux structures narratives.

Dans les mondes fictionnels de Dickens, le présent n'est pas la simple conséquence du passé et ce qui arrive n'est pas seulement la conséquence nécessaire d'une cause suffisante. Ce qui se produit est souvent sans nécessité et aurait aussi bien pu ne pas se produire. Un tel évènement, quand il n'était encore qu'une possibilité, a été en concurrence avec d'autres possibilités jusqu'à ce que la chance décide de l'actualiser. Cette réalité contingente -- avec sa « charge » éthique, épistémologique et ontologique -- ne peut être représentée par le discours linéaire et chronologique de la téléologie. La représentation de la contingence exige l'insertion du réel et du spéculatif dans un tissu narratif composé de développements et d'évènements actuels et virtuels.

C'est pourquoi, dans les romans de Dickens, l'invisible peut être montré, le silence peut être éloquent et ce qui est en pleine vue peut demeurer secret. D'autres histoires possibles contribuent toujours à l'intrigue. À diverses jonctions du récit, les chemins non empruntés

pourraient avoir mené ailleurs. Des directions hypothétiques et des mises en intrigues imprécises définissent l'histoire aussi puissamment que les développements poursuivis.

Pour produire un monde de possibilités aussi complexe, Dickens, non seulement ne s'en remet pas à une supposée qualité mimétique du langage, mais il envisage aussi la réalité qu'il représente comme un fait naturellement littéraire. Il ne cache pas son art ; bien au contraire, avec une créativité et une fertilité étonnante, il déploie avec flamboyance son habileté à jouer avec le langage, avec une rhétorique luxuriante et avec une profusion d'intrigues potentielles. Tout ce qui constitue l'extravagante économie narrative de Dickens est exposé en permanence et est partie inhérente du plaisir procuré à ses lecteurs.

En introduction, je discute du recours de Dickens à l'hypothétique dans son interaction avec un important conflit idéologique de son époque, la confrontation de la téléologie créationniste avec l'indéterminisme existentiel de la théorie de l'évolution de Darwin. Dans les trois chapitres suivants, j'adresse la fonction de l'hypothétique dans les incipit de *David Copperfied*, *A Tale of Two Cities* et *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. J'examine ensuite comment, maintenant l'angoisse épistémique sur la réalité engendrée dans l'incipit, l'hypothétique se propage au travers du roman, soulevant les questions sans souvent y répondre. Je conclus que dans les huit derniers romans de Dickens -- et je suggère que cela est sans doute le cas pour le roman moderne en général -- le recours à l'hypothétique participe à l'acquisition d'une vérité littéraire, parce que, après tout, la littérature -- comme la science et la philosophie -- est une forme d'expérimentation avec la réalité.

Mots clés : Dickens, roman, littérature, réalisme, contingence, nécessité, hypothétique, évolution, téléologie, récit, discours, narration, intrigue

Abstract

This essay discusses the role of the hypothetical – that which can be proposed only as a hypothesis -- in Charles Dickens's last eight novels and the variety of literary means used to invoke it. In any language-based communication, words are uttered (and heard) or written (and read), one after the other, in the order that grammar demands. The linearity and order of such sequences seem to reflect naturally a temporality and a causality governing the represented events. In fact, this can only account for their necessity and their chronology. I argue that the novels under consideration make use of hypothetical and counterfactual actions, thoughts, events, perspectives, voices, etc., in order to overcome the limits imposed by the determinism apparently inherent to narrative structures.

In Dickens's fictional worlds, the present is not the simple consequence of the past and what happens is not only the necessary consequence of a sufficient cause. What happens is often without necessity and could as well not have happened. Such an event, when it was still only a possibility, competed with other unnecessary possibilities until chance decided its actualization. This contingent reality -- with its ethical, epistemological and ontological "payload" -- cannot be represented by the linear discourse of teleology. The representation of contingency demands the insertion of the real and the speculative in a narrative fabric woven out of virtual and actual developments and events.

That is why, in Dickens's novels, the unseen can be shown, silence can be eloquent, and what is in plain view can remain secret. Other possible stories always contribute to the plot. At various forks in the narrative, paths not taken could have led elsewhere. Hypothetical directions and indistinct emplotments define the narrative as powerfully as the developments that are pursued.

To produce such a complex world of possibilities, Dickens not only refuses to rely upon a supposed mimetic quality of language, but he also contemplates the reality that he represents as a natural literary fact. He does not conceal his art. On the contrary, with an amazing fertility and inventiveness, he makes a lavish display of his capacity to play with language, with rhetorical flourish and with potential lines of emplotment. Everything that constitutes Dickens's wild narrative economy is always on permanent display and is an inherent part of the pleasure procured for his readership.

In the introduction, I discuss Dickens's recourse to the hypothetical in its interaction with an important ideological conflict of his time -- the confrontation of the creationist teleology with the existential indeterminism of broadly Darwinian evolution theory. In the next three chapters, I address the function of the hypothetical in the incipits of *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. I then examine how, by sustaining the epistemic anxiety generated in the incipit, the hypothetical propagates across the novel, raising questions without often answering them. I conclude that in Dickens's last eight novels -- and, I suggest that this may also be the case in the modern novel in general -- the recourse to the hypothetical participates in the acquisition of a literary truth, because, after all, literature -- like science and philosophy -- is just another way to experiment with reality.

Keywords: Dickens, novel, literature, realism, contingency, necessity, hypothetical, evolution, teleology, narrative discourse, narration, intrigue

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Dedication

Umberto Eco and Tzvetan Todorov passed away within a few days of each other, in February 2017. I learnt -- from them and from all those named in my “Cited Works” section -- how to read. Whether my writing benefitted as well of their teaching, these pages must show.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Eric Savoy for his direction, encouragement and close reading. I must also thank Professor Robert Schwartzwald who led a Paris Seminar and a Dissertation Seminar that influenced deeply the direction I gave to this paper.

Abbreviations

DC	David Copperfield
BH	Bleak House
HT	Hard Times
LD	Little Dorrit
TTC	A Tale of Two Cities
GE	Great Expectations
OMF	Our Mutual Friend
MED	The Mystery of Edwin Drood

1 Introduction

I shall use "hypothetical" as a noun to designate something that can only be proposed as a hypothesis. The present essay will discuss the role of the hypothetical in novels and the variety of literary protocols and procedures used to invoke it. For this purpose, I shall adopt Paul Valery's definition of Literature, "*Literature is,* and cannot be anything else than a sort of extension and application of certain properties of language"[1] (Valéry 1440). Therefore, in order to address literature as a linguistic artifact, I shall borrow tools and concepts from branches of knowledge primarily concerned with language such as grammar and syntax, semiotics, rhetoric, narratology, pragmatics, logic, philosophy of language, etc.

1.1 The illusion of a single determination and the *possible-at-each-moment*

Valéry was primarily a poet; he found narrative fiction limiting in several respects and hoped that somebody would produce

> … *once* a work that would show at each of its *nodes*, the diversity that can appear to the mind and from which it *chooses* the unique sequence that will be given in the text. This would be substituting to the illusion of a single determination imitative of the real, that of the *possible-at-each-moment*… [2] (Valéry 1467)

[1] « La littérature est, et ne peut être autre chose qu'une sorte d'extension et d'application de certaines propriétés du langage. »
[2] « […] une fois une œuvre qui montrerait à chacun de ses nœuds, la diversité qui s'y peut présenter à l'esprit, et parmi laquelle il choisit la suite unique qui sera donnée dans le texte. Ce serait là substituer à l'illusion d'une détermination unique et imitatrice du réel, celle du possible-à-chaque-instant […] » -- (Unless otherwise indicated, translations from French are my own.) --

With all due respect to Valéry's regret, I shall argue that in the writing of novels "certain properties of language" are actually extended and applied to the representation of the "possible-at-each-moment" and that the genre actually resists "the illusion of a single determination." To that effect, I propose in this introduction, and shall accomplish in the subsequent chapters, a reading of Charles Dickens's late novels with which I shall identify the recourse to a wide range of literary devices and examine in detail their operation. I chose this corpus because the readership's appreciation and critical scholarship recognize it as representative of the English realist novel genre, at a midpoint between the end of Romanticism and the beginning of modernism. Borrowing from the conventions of the former and deviating from them into ways that anticipate the latter, Dickens's late novels gives evidence of the evolutionary process of literary conventions and devices.

Other authors in the same period could have been chosen for this work. However, quite apart from Dickens's standing in literary history and his role in the evolution of the novel, my choice is also justified by my appreciation of his exuberant language -- his constant play, his stylistic energy, his self-awareness. In short, all the things that make Dickens, Dickens, as opposed to, say, Thackeray or Trollope.

1.2 Evolutionary Processes

Just as any evolutionary process interacts with the changes in its environment, literary evolution determines and is determined by the evolution of ideology (here as in the rest of this essay, I am using the term "evolution" in a sense that strictly precludes a progressive teleology); thus, there is a relation between Dickens's creative works and Darwin's scientific project. Throughout the 19th century, novelists increasingly conjured up the shadows of narrative alternatives, different narrations and alternative storylines, in order to give deeper

resonance to and intensify their plots. As the storyline and the storytelling recognize the traces of some non-actualized outcomes, the novel allows itself to convey a wider range of possibilities and opens itself to a wider range of possible iterative interpretations. The increasing importance given in novels to non-actualized narrative embranchments -- sometime simple evocations, sometime more detailed suppositions -- correlated with the public's growing awareness of and interest in the evolutionary debate.

At about the time when the last instalment of *A Tale of Two Cities* was issued and a year before the beginning of the serial publication of *Great Expectations*, in November 1859, Charles Darwin released *On the Origin of Species*. The book was written in an accessible discourse and its argument was developed in a manner that appealed, beyond the scientific circles, to a very large popular readership. Its content was neither a surprise nor a revelation to the educated reading public at large and to novelists in particular. Darwin's book was received as a welcome and long awaited formalization of his side of the argument on the eve of the 1860 Oxford evolution debate. In June of 1860, Britain's most influential scientific and religious authorities met in Oxford to hear the Bishop of Oxford, "Soapy" Samuel Wilberforce debate Darwin's supporter, Thomas Henry Huxley ("Darwin's bulldog"), on the arguments developed in *On the Origin of Species*. Huxley got the upper hand and this widely popularized debate has become a mythologized event in the history of the war between science and religion. The topic of evolution and its contentious implications had been widely popularized since the middle of the 18th century through the discussion of the earlier works and theories of Linnaeus, Buffon, Lamarck and others. Still, Darwinian evolution raised an array of new, controversial and anxiety-provoking questions because it conceptualized an evolutionary process that was severed from the teleology of intention, design, and purpose. It ascribed the

primary role in the evolution of life to contingency and implied a reality without any purpose or design. Darwin used the mythical "Tree of Life," a metaphor, textual and graphical, still widely used in our time in many disciplines of life sciences, to illustrate his evolutionary view of the speciation process,

> As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these, if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all sides many a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever-branching and beautiful ramifications. (Darwin 100)

To extend Darwin's analogy, chance variations determined the many forks of the "Tree of Life" while natural selection was taking care of its pruning. The theory thus proposed various satisfying alternatives to the predominant teleological thinking while remaining strictly compliant with causality. Current science historians consider the process modelled by Darwin as a fundamental epistemological advance not only in the domain of life sciences, but also more generally in the understanding of system organization.

> Beside deterministic and stochastic systems, there seems to be room for at least one other type of dynamic system, which is closer to evolutionary processes and may therefore be called Darwinian. In such systems, the past history determines various possibilities for present state, among which the system will choose in response to external stimuli, such as changes in environment. (Ekeland 120)

Hence, between the occurrences of two successive stimuli, the system evolves in compliance with causal determinism. Yet, the stimuli, since they are external, have no *a priori* causal relation with this evolution and so act as contingent causes. Thus, if at any stage, a purpose to the system is inferred, in a later stage, this can be falsified.

> Each evolutionary stage looks like the final goal toward which the species was striving; but this illusion is shattered as the next stage sets in, and the "final"

> state is shown as one in an endless succession of states, a step in an aimless march to infinity. (Ekeland 120)

One of the major conceptual corollaries brought to the fore by this revolutionary thesis was that the actuality of a situation could not invariably be justified by its necessity. In other words, what in fact was the case, did not have to be, because indeed something else, just as possible, could have obtained as well. Darwin was fully aware of the challenges that his theory presented to the long-accepted corpus of beliefs promoted by natural theology, even in its most enlightened versions. Darwin could recognize the occasional action of some human intention; he refers to the selection of animal and plant species under domestic conditions in his chapter IV, but only to show how inefficient it is when compared to natural selection. For the most part, in his thesis, the teleological argument of superior design has clearly been superseded. As a broad consequence of the Darwinian project, the notions of determination and predictability in other fields of inquiry became open to revision. Even to the most mechanistic of determinists, Darwin could argue that his theory respected every tenet of causality. All the same, evolution is a process highly dependent upon very large and complex sets of initial and boundary conditions. Any minute change to initial conditions entails vastly divergent boundary conditions. Thus, although deterministic models are useful, if only for methodological reasons, chance can claim legitimately an agency, in deciding how far branches grow on the Tree of Life before they die or before buds, forks and new branches appear.

The repercussions reached far beyond the field of biology and I shall provide some bibliographical references when necessary, but for the most part, I shall limit my discussion of the epistemological impact of Darwin's work by adopting George Levine's perspective on

> Darwinian theory as a historically locatable response to questions about the sources of authority (religious, political, and epistemological), about the relation of the personal and the social to the natural, about origins, about progress, about endings, about biological and social organicism. (Levine 2)

Darwin's theory called for questioning received models of processes, and would influence the revision of all the philosophical and scientific foundations of what had been the dominant and largely naively deterministic worldviews, whether empirical or religious, materialist or idealist. Although extremely relevant to my argument, the appropriate illustration of this claim would require a very long detour far away from my topic into the history of sciences and philosophy in the last two hundred years.

1.3 A New Story Told Against the Grain of the Old Language

Among the difficulties that confronted Darwin's argumentation, one was of a linguistic -- or more precisely, of a discursive -- nature. Although "in the mid-nineteenth century, scientists still shared a common language with other educated readers and writers of their time" (Beer 4), this common language itself constituted an obstacle for Darwin as "[he] sought to appropriate and to recast inherited mythologies, discourses, and narrative orders. He was telling a new story, against the grain of the language available to tell it in" (Beer 3). Gillian Beer summarizes the issue, pointing to the "inherently" narrative quality of the theory itself: "Because of its preoccupation with time and with change, evolutionary theory has inherent affinities with the problems and processes of narrative" (Beer 5). To quote the philosopher that provided one of the epigraphs to Darwin's book, the source of the problem resides in the fact that "human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds" (Bacon XLV). This yearning for "order and regularity in the world" is a consequence of our cognitive shortcomings when we need to build a mental

model of what is happening around us. When we perceive a variety of events, especially when they occur in temporal or spatial proximity, we tend to suppose, at least as a first hypothesis, some causal relation among them. Narration is a natural expression of such aetiological arrangements. The stories we make up this way may be fallacious, but being falsifiable, their explanatory value is open to improvement. To tell his story, Darwin had to falsify the grand narrative of natural theology. Darwin was at a disadvantage; natural theology having shaped the prevalent language around key concepts of "design and creation. Darwin on the contrary was trying to precipitate a theory based on production and mutation" (Beer xviii). Furthermore, rather than confirming a reassuring "order and regularity in the world," Darwin was revealing that "instead of teleology and forward plan, the future is an uncontrollable welter of possibilities" (Beer xviii).

To address the difficulty presented by the unsuitability of the available language of natural theology, Darwin's explanation relied upon the expository dimensions of narrative that had attracted his attention in novels. Gillian Beer has established what *On the Origin of Species* owed to the influence of the novelists Darwin read. Charles Dickens's influence is particularly noticeable where Darwin's narrative differentiates the role of causality in evolutionary processes from the part it played in natural theology and in earlier evolutionist theories (Lamarck's most importantly). The latter was expressed in narratives where intention, that of God or that of some living creature, was "the *instrument* of change" (Beer 20). Intention would assign a consequence to each cause, reducing the complexity of nature to an "intelligible and cooperative world, in which succession is inevitable improvement" (Beer 20). Darwin was left with the same narrative conventions to promote the exact opposite -- that is, the role of chance in an environment devoid of purpose and unconcerned with human will.

Hence, he needed to draw from the existing literary corpus the structure and devices that would allow him to demonstrate that "the environment is not monolithic and stable: it is itself a matrix of possibilities … prone to unforeseeable and uncontrollable changes" (Beer 18). Dickens's novels, with their abundance of possible connections between situations and characters and of possible paths for the plot to follow, suggested such a "matrix of possibilities."

> The organization of *The Origin of Species* seems to owe a good deal to the example of one of Darwin's most frequently read authors, Charles Dickens, with its apparently unruly superfluity of material gradually and retrospectively revealing itself as order, its superfecundity of instances serving as argument which can reveal itself only through instance and relations. (Beer 6)

To illustrate "a theory which does not privilege the present, which sees it as a moving instant in an endless process of change" (Beer 10), Darwin finds in Dickens an actuality that occurs only briefly, preceded and followed by the suggestions of abundant potentialities.

> The organization of Dickens's novels shifts from the picaresque, which can include the random events of every day in the onward dynamism of the journey, to a profuse interconnection of events and characters so extreme as to seem to defy any overall meaning. (Beer 40)

In order to mediate between these two narrative poles -- the random and picaresque, on the one hand, and the extensive enmeshment of characters and events on the other -- Darwin called on a simple storytelling form, now sometimes called "just-so story," after Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* (1902), a most non-Darwinian collection of folk tales for children ("How the Camel got his Hump," "How the Leopard got his Spots," "How the Alphabet was Made," etc.). It is a basic aetiological narrative structure often found in folk tales relating creation myths (Kipling collected such tales). As a literary genre, in the controlled

environment of scientific and philosophical research and debate, the formulation of non-falsifiable hypotheses as "just-so" stories, allows for a form of valid inference to the best explanation. It is considered a legitimate reasoning tool as long as its validity is recognized as limited, for reason of non-falsifiability and logical inconsistency (otherwise, "just-so stories" become vehicles for ad hoc fallacies such as the promotion of pseudo-sciences and conspiracy theories). The recourse to "just-so stories" is common in the scientific debate and in its popularization. These narratives are frequent in disciplines such as evolutionary biology, geology, paleontology, archaeology, ethnology, history, etc., where documentary evidence is scarce and where reproducible experiment, even thought experiment, is difficult or impossible. As a literary genre, they remain widely popular in our day as is demonstrated the continuing and justifiable success of the writings of evolutionist authors such as S. J. Gould, R. Dawkins, D. Dennett, C. Morris and many others.

Darwin did not hesitate to call on this genre in order to convince his readership of the plausibility of some highly counter-intuitive possibilities. A good example of his recourse to "just-so" story is provided in *On the Origin of Species* where a full chapter is dedicated to the "Difficulties on Theory." One such difficulty is presented by the evolution of a complex organ, the eye, from the photosensitivity of some simple skin.

> To suppose that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree. (Darwin 140)

Nonetheless, through the following paragraphs, Darwin tells a convincing "just-so story" on how it is likely that eyes, actually, have been formed by natural selection. He first points to the

"much graduated diversity in the eyes" (Darwin 141) in some existing similar species. This graduation makes it easier to believe that small incremental changes could lead from "an optic nerve merely coated with pigment, and without any other mechanism" to "a moderately high stage of perfection" and from there to an even more sophisticated organ. Here's how Darwin tells his just-so-story:

> If we must compare the eye to an optical instrument, we ought in imagination to take a thick layer of transparent tissue, with a nerve sensitive to light beneath, and then suppose every part of this layer to be continually changing slowly in density, so as to separate into layers of different densities and thicknesses, placed at different distances from each other, and with the surfaces of each layer slowly changing in form. Further we must suppose that there is a power always intently watching each slight accidental alteration in the transparent layers; and carefully selecting each alteration which, under varied circumstances, may in any way, or in any degree, tend to produce a distincter image. We must suppose each new state of the instrument to be multiplied by the million; and each to be preserved till a better be produced, and then the old ones to be destroyed. In living bodies, variation will cause the slight alterations, generation will multiply them almost infinitely, and natural selection will pick out with unerring skill each improvement. Let this process go on for millions on millions of years; and during each year on millions of individuals of many kinds; and may we not believe that a living optical instrument might thus be formed as superior to one of glass, as the works of the Creator are to those of man?

In this just-so-story describing an evolutionary process, Darwin's supposition "that there is a power always intently watching" and his final reference to "the works of the Creator" demonstrate the difficulty to tell "a new story, against the grain of the language available to tell it in." The said "power" is described in the same sentence "carefully selecting" the best alteration and thus, it has a name: natural selection. As for the Creator, the whole paragraph has just demonstrated that he did not have anything to do with the process.

1.4 The Dialogue of Human Ideal and Human Experience

Darwin found the narrative devices appropriate to his purpose in the literary production of his time. I have mentioned in 1.2 that evolutionary processes -- in all forms of natural life and cultural production -- interact with the changes in their environment; literature and science are no exceptions, for their respective evolution determine and is determined by ideological transformations and by the advances of knowledge both conceptual and empirical. It is in the changing ideological environment of eighteenth-century Europe that both the modern novel and the modern evolutionary debate appeared and grew.

I have sketched only briefly the advances of the evolutionary theory up to Darwin's critical contribution; in the same manner, I shall now sketch some aspects of the novel's development in the same period. For that purpose, I will refer to Thomas Pavel's "own version of the history of the novel" that relies primarily "on the opposition between the individuals and the world as a whole, and the double edge of moral norms and ideals -- often self-evident, yet difficult to follow" (Pavel, 2013 299).

> The history of novel, far from being reducible to a struggle between the triumphing truth and the defeated lie, actually rests upon the age-old dialogue between the idealized representation of human existence and that of the difficulty to measure up to this ideal.[3] (Pavel, 2003 12)

[3] « L'histoire du roman, loin d'être réductible à un combat entre la vérité triomphante et le mensonge confondu, repose en réalité sur le dialogue séculaire entre la représentation idéalisée de l'existence humaine et celle de la difficulté de se mesurer à cet idéal. »

From this dialogue between moral conventions and empirically observed human experiences, an ethical proposition arises in the novel. However, rather than extracting from it a moral axiology, the novel considers this proposition from an ethnological perspective, exploring its impact on the development of human society and culture. The genre does not aim at depicting the progress toward a proposed ideal. Rather, it calls into question the adequacy of the ideal when human beings are confronted with the difficulties of inhabiting the world of common, average everyday circumstances. The novel insists on these events where the proscriptions and prescriptions in the ideal fail to guide the individual toward a way to be in and with the world, thus calling for the reassessment of the ideal.

> The novel is the first genre to question itself about the genesis of the individual and the instauration of the common order. It raises, above all and with a renewed acuteness, the axiological question of deciding if the moral ideal belongs to the order of the world.[4] (Pavel, 2003 46)

The world of the ideal and the world of human experience were to converge. This ambition to represent the conflicted relation between human ideals and human experience is evident in the tradition of the modern English novel. From Defoe to Scott, through Richardson and Fielding, from conduct books to historical novels, through novels of manners, the bildungsroman, sentimental and gothic novels, the realist novel's heroes, inspirational figures or sceptical

[4] « Le roman est le premier genre à s'interroger sur la genèse de l'individu et sur l'instauration de l'ordre commun. il pose surtout, et avec une acuité inégalée, la question axiologique qui consiste à savoir si l'idéal moral fait partie de l'ordre du monde. »

tricksters, were required to progress along a narrow path toward the ideal (moral, social, emotional).

The main problematic of the novel, the source of its ethical agency, was limited to the various configurations of the conflict between superior design and free will. The former would have the upper hand over the latter, as required by the *dispositif* of teleological intentionality. The term *dispositif* (borrowed from Deleuze and Foucault and sometimes translated as *apparatus*) denotes here sets of "agents of power such as the techniques, the strategies and the forms of subjection put in place by the power"[5] (Revel 24). English realist novels prominently feature power as an ensemble of processes supported by such webs of institutions, practices and discourses (legal, financial, political, social, and religious). Without even actually describing the institutions or their rules, Dickens repeatedly refers to such processes as the absurd workings of The Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit*, the opaque proceedings of Chancery in *Bleak House*, the oppressive social hypocrisy of the Voice of Society in *Our Mutual Friend* or the sanctimonious ranting of the Haven of Philanthropy in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Dickens, in using these names, sometimes allegorical, satirizes the "ideal" as a stale, obsolete and rigid ideology -- his own ideal, built out of hard experience and suffering, being one of empathy. It is such components to the *dispositif* that limit the possibilities opened to literary characters in these novels. Whether they progress successfully toward the ideal, or stumble comically into a more trivial midpoint compromise, heroes and heroines are offered many trials but few choices or opportunities to branch out along their road, or even to think

[5] « […] des opérateurs matériels du pouvoir, c'est-a-dire des techniques, des stratégies et des formes d'assujettissement mises en place par le pouvoir. »

about such deviation from the ideological prescriptions. Calling on the convenient aetiology of the "just-so story," convention dictated for the narrative to be fitted with a closure coherent with the implied finality. This was achieved through an apparently inescapable return to some appropriate, if not entirely harmonious, order (logically, ontologically, and epistemologically).

1.5 Conjuring Many Paths, Borrowing from Many Genres

The repeated teleological call to order required by convention grew to be more and more dissatisfying to novelists and their readership. However unconcerned realist novelists may have been with the scientific pursuits of Linnaeus, Lamarck or Darwin, the recognition of the primordial agency of contingency pervaded the spirit of the time as early as the late seventeenth century. It complicated characterization and novelistic emplotment in unexpected ways that, in fits and starts, broke with the conventional necessity of a harmonious ending. Events and circumstances could inspire multiple and equally plausible developments, each pointing -- at least hypothetically -- to a different unfolding of plot. Thus undermined, the authority of a superior global purpose could no longer sustain rigid and ineluctable course. The representation of fictional human experiences, of fictional characters' relation to their world, changed accordingly. One way to carry out this change was to invoke a set of virtual (possible) narrative paths. At each fork in the diegesis, a given combination of chance with a degree of free will, could result in a variety of coincidental events and deliberate actions, mental as well as physical. While such a combination would actualize and propel the story line and the narrative's thematic preoccupations, certain paths not taken would faintly linger in various, often incongruous ways. In *Great Expectations*, for example, we find such this lingering of untaken paths in Mrs. Joe's sudden and strange fondness for Orlick after the

assault that leaves her brain-damaged, in the surprising interest of Mr. Jagger for Bentley Drummle, and in Pip's eagerness at "tracing out and proving Estella's parentage" (GE, 403). I shall discuss later in more details the persistent presence of never resolved questions raised in these examples. All these episodes, some of them the subject of full chapters, suggest that something else may or might have been unfolding in the margins of the plot. They impose themselves as narratively relevant because of their dramatic nature and the critical agency of the characters they involve. Nonetheless, they are only partially, if ever, confirmed and are sometimes abandoned; yet, they contribute to undermining retrospectively any attempt at a global closure of the novel, thus leaving the fictional universe open to further evolution.

Charles Dickens's later novels provide many more examples of the operative presence of non-actualized alternative plots, thoughts and speeches, from *David Copperfield* (1850) to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). These novels, as canonical representatives of the period, showcase particularly well the diverse functions and ever-growing influence of the reference to the hypothetical on the representation of the actual; they illustrate how, in the literary field, the novel can extend the depiction of human experience beyond the limits imposed on narrative modes by linear structure and totalizing closure. This extension of the novel's domain of representation is supported by its capacity to overcome its own restrictions and formulaic conventions by borrowing the devices of other genres. Readers of Dickens's novels are familiar with his frequent recourse to satire (the dialogues involving members of the Barnacle family in *Little Dorrit*), melodrama (the death of Jo in *Bleak House*), comedy (any of Mr. Micawber's speeches in *David Copperfield*), tragedy & epic (several scenes in *A Tale of Two Cities*), etc. Such mixing of genres illustrates Mikhail Bakhtin's thesis that

> from the very beginning … the novel was made of different clay than the other

> already completed genres; it is a different breed, and with it and in it is born the future of all literature… A lengthy battle for the novelization of the other genres began, a battle to drag them into a zone of contact with reality. (Bakhtin, 1981 39)

Throughout its maturation period, the realist novel superseded or absorbed all other fictional (textual) narrative genres because of its ability to develop a maze of possible narrative paths. "Reality as we have it in the novel is only one of many possible realities; it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it bears within itself other possibilities" (Bakhtin, 1981, 37). In order to make room for alternative storylines, novels developed modes of conjuring up a variety of states of affairs. States of affairs make up worlds. Their definition can be logically inferred (Wittgenstein, "Tractatus" 1.1, p.5 & 2.04 & 2,063, p. 9) but for the sake of simplicity I shall propose, "to use 'state of affairs' to mean no more than possible fact" (Armstrong 429–440). A state of affairs, in the fictional world, is a combination of related narrated events, objects, circumstances, etc., which can be actual or not. A state of affairs is the way the world should be to confirm one's worldview. It is ontologically speaking possible but it may as well remain hypothetical forever. As an example, the final state of affairs in *Great Expectation*, implying the reunion of Pip and Estella, may or may not be the case (I shall come back to that example later).

Thus, as it addresses this multiplicity, the novel must ignore the requirement for consistency of form and subject matter that defines other genres; it can build its fictional world, the referent actualized by the narration, as the story decides its course. I shall examine how Charles Dickens's last novels achieve the composition of their dynamic "reality" by leveraging a profusion of hypotheses, from the apparently rational conjectures and speculations defining *The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield the Younger*

of Blunderstone Rookery, to the vividly sensational and phantasmagorical perspectives revealed under the pallid lights shed on the stage of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

1.6 Closure Does Not Govern Novel; Actuality Does Not Follow from Necessity

The consideration of events, including thoughts and feelings, that might happen in its fictional worlds allows the novel genre to steer clear of implying the necessity of what actually happens, however deterministic the authorial intent may be. Although the novel still respects causality, its closure is no longer the foregone conclusion, the commanding purpose foreshadowed all along by the narrative. Closure is often reduced to being no more than the last narrated consequence. It is chosen as the final state of affairs among some other possible ones and brought about only because the novel must end. It is the case for Victorian three-volume, thousand-page novels as well as for Edwardian hundred-page novellas (as demonstrated by the unsatisfying closures of *Little Dorrit* and *The Turn of the Screw*). Yet, if one considers the complicated interlaced and interconnected sequences of events that an ending is expected to knot together, any closure will prove to be a dissatisfying and arbitrary denouement.

D. A. Miller, in a study of novels by Austen, Eliot and Stendhal, contends that these authors "orient their text toward a 'utopic' state that is radically at odds with the narrative means used to reach it" (Miller, 1981, x). Miller's argument "is not that novels do not 'build' toward closure, but that they are never fully or finally governed by it" (Miller, 1981, xiv). The reason being that

> the narratable is stronger than the closure to which it is opposed in an apparent binary. For the narratable is the very evidence of the narrative text, while closure (as, precisely, the nonnarratable) is only the sign that the text is over… The otherness of closure suggests one of the unwelcome implications of the

> narratable -- that it can never generate the terms of its own arrest." (Miller, 1981, 266)

What Miller calls here the "narratable" is "the instances of disequilibrium, suspense, and general insufficiency from which a given narrative appears to arise" (Miller, 1981, ix). Gerald Prince defines it as "that which is worthy of being told; that which is susceptible of or calls for narration" (Prince, 1988, 56). Miller briefly touches on the example provided by Dickens's two published endings of *Great Expectations* (Miller, 1981, 273–275). I will discuss in more detail later the two possible narrative closures brought about by Dickens in both successive versions of the ending (not to mention its original unpublished one), neither of which clearly reunites Pip and Estella forever happily nor keeps them explicitly apart. This ambiguity is consistent with a novel about expectations rather than actualizations, at the same time as it is an expression of the resistance of the narration to a determination that the narrated does not justify; the narrated means here "the set of situations and events recounted in a narrative; the story (as opposed to the discourse)" (Prince, 2003, 57).

In its narrated form, such a set of situations and events is given temporal structure; this endows emplotment with an appearance of causality and determinism. The reason for that appearance was given in the earlier citation of Bacon who states that the human mind is prone to read more order and regularity in the world than there really is. In other words, we would like the world to be predictable. Narrative can satisfy this desire for order with various forms of foreshadowing, only one of which is prolepsis. By hinting at the future consequences of events, it intensifies the deterministic pull toward closure. However, the necessity of this unfolding can be undermined at the slightest suggestion that another course could take place; then, contingency has wormed its way in.

Being possible but not necessary defines an event or a situation as contingent. Foregrounding contingency in this manner underscores that actuality does not follow from necessity and that other narrative possibilities could allow the novel to bypass its assumed endpoint and to resist determinism. This does not imply that non-deterministic (casualist, anti-teleological) authorial intents drive all novels, but rather that a novel cannot impose its authorial intent as an inescapable, logical, and necessary interpretative framework to the reader. Even for an author as disciplined and organized as Dickens, even with the constraints of serial publication, extra-textual evidence (his letters, writing plans, successive drafts) shows that characters could have a life of their own and that plots could take surprising turns. I shall discuss later this phenomenon, which Bakhtin considered a characteristic of Dostoevsky's poetics. To promote the necessity of a final purpose, a novel with a deterministic intent must argue the congruity of such intent with what is actually happening in the fictional world. Nevertheless, the literary representation of such a combination of objects and events implies the confrontation with plausible alternatives. The evocation of the hypothetical does not undermine the actual; it only denies its necessity. Such surrounding of the actual storyline with hypothetical competitors can be found in most narrative forms and not only in the realist novel. The necessity of an occurrence is often resisted by the mention of other outcomes proposed as impossible. Even works driven by a teleological worldview (classic tragedy, medieval chivalric romance, French naturalism, socialist realism, etc.) will invoke alternative developments, if only to provide the intended actuality with a foil or to express the futility of resistance to the fatal agency. I shall provide some evidence for this argument in my later discussion of the Dickens corpus. To that effect, my approach borrows from critical works

about some other major realist novelists: these works provide discussions of the recourse to the hypothetical and to chance that are specific to the realist novel.

1.7 A Plurality of Independent Unmerged Voices and Consciousness

The first two authors, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy, are younger contemporaries of Dickens. Bakhtin, in his characterization of Dostoevsky's typical hero, remarks that "he does not fit wholly in the procrustean bed of the plot, which is in any case conceived as only one of many possible plots and is consequently in the final analysis merely accidental for a given hero" (Bakhtin, 1984, 84). Among other devices, Bakhtin proposed that this freedom from the plot resulted from a dilution of the authorial voice to the benefit of the characters; the multiplication of independent perspectives on the event generates alternatives to the event.

> A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his work is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Bakhtin, 1984, 6)

G. S. Morson, in a close reading of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, proposes to extend Bakhtin's concept of polyphony from characters to events. In Morson's model, possibilities emerge not only from character's discourses but also from their actions in a multiplicity of circumstances. "Just as the Dostoevsky of Bakhtin's description created a polyphony of characters, so Tolstoy created a *polyphony of incident*s. Not characters, but actions and events retain their radical autonomy in *War and Peace*" (Morson, 1987, 188). A historical novel, particularly one set in the tragic and crowded chaos of war, is a choice environment for the

multiplication of characters and incidents. As Aristotle famously noted, historiography tends to limit its scope to what actually occurred, but this limit is not imposed on literature.

> The difference between the historian and the poet is … the one tells of what happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen. For this reason, poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars. (Aristotle, 2000, 68–69)

Tolstoy is less concerned by universals than by hypothetical particulars left out of history.

> In his essay on *War and Peace*, Tolstoy wrote, "The historian is concerned with the results of an event, the artist with the very fact of an event" (Jub. 16: 10) He objected to the historian's practice of omitting from their narratives the range of possible results that were not realized… Fictional narratives, on the other hand, may be more successful … because they portray the way in which events appeared to their participants, who correctly saw many possible outcomes arising from a particular set of circumstances. At any given moment, Tolstoy repeatedly argues, numerous and diverse courses of actions are contemplated and various forces tending in manifold directions are operating. (Morson, 1987, 165)

Morson proposes to call "sideshadowing" the set of narrative devices that convey "in addition to actualities and impossibilities, a *middle realm* of real possibilities that could have happened even if they did not" (Morson, 1994, 6).

> In contrast to foreshadowing, which projects onto present a shadow from the future, sideshadowing projects -- from the "side" -- the shadow of an alternative present. It allows us to see what might have been and therefore changes our view of what is. In this way, sideshadowing restores our sense of the middle realm of possibility, for time itself becomes a succession not just points of actuality but also a field of possibilities. (Morson, 1994, 11–12)

Sideshadowing a situation comes down to consider it from a counterfactual conditional perspective as if a given aspect of the situation were different. The counterfactual conditional

proposition assumes the falsity of its apodosis ("if" antecedent), but leaves open the validity of the protasis ("then" consequent): if Oedipus had not killed Laius, then someone else might have killed him or he might not have been killed at all. A straight falsification of the actual "if" statement opens a field of possibilities in for the "then" statement. An example of such sideshadowing, that I shall discus later, is given in *Great Expectations* when Pip ponders over the difference it would make, considering any life, to have "one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been" (GE, 71). It is also the case for Reginald Wilfer, whose recourse to the counterfactual conditional proposition, "Ah me … what might have been is not what is!" is valued by the narrator of *Our Mutual Friend* as a "commentary on human life, indicating an experience of it not exclusively his own" (OMF 42).

Of course, in novels, the consideration of a counterfactual conditional situation does not always present itself in the if-then format. There are many literary devices that allow the actual to be falsified. For instance, a character can be contrasted with his doppelganger -- like Sidney Carton with Charles Darnay in *A Tale of Two Cities*: "he shows you what you have fallen away from and what you might have been!" (TTC 89) -- , or defined by what he is not, using what Robyn Warhol-Down named "narrative refusals":

> He had no net, hook, or line, and he could not be a fisherman; his boat had no cushion for a sitter, no paint, no inscription, no appliance beyond a rusty boathook and a coil of rope, and he could not be a waterman; his boat was too crazy and too small to take in cargo for delivery, and he could not be a lighterman or river-carrier. (OMF 13)

Another very rich field of possibilities is offered by conjectures about another person's interiority: "Little Dorrit had a misgiving that he might blame her father, if he saw [her shoes]; that he might think, 'why did he dine to-day, and leave this little creature to the mercy of the

cold stones!'" (LD 183) I shall come back to some of example and discuss some more of them in the course of this essay.

1.8 The Novel's Navigation Between Teleology and Undecidability

M.-A. Bernstein, in a dialogue with Morson, adopted the term and the concept of sideshadowing in the interest of critical precision: at issue is a clear identification and distinction between two opposite tendencies at work in novels. One insists that "what we need to recognize is the reality of underdetermination, the fact that events do not occur because of any logical or historical necessity" (Bernstein 4). The other affirms, "a triumphalist, unidirectional view of history in which whatever has perished is condemned because it has been found wanting by some irresistible historico-logical dynamic" (Bernstein 3). Bernstein analyzes how Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* (1939–1943) addresses the same literary issue as Tolstoy in *War and Peace* -- in essence, "the technical and epistemological problems raised by the narration of historical events whose outcome is already known" (Bernstein 98). It is of relevance to note that, in these novels by Tolstoy and Musil, the erosion of actuality by potentiality is especially stirring since it occurs in an environment solidly anchored in historical chronology and record. *War and Peace* was written fifty years after the battle of Borodino, and Musil started on *The Man Without Qualities* only a few years after the armistice of 1918, when the catastrophic actuality of the events in the months leading to the First World War, was still on every reader's mind.

> Because it is impossible for the reader to suspend his knowledge of the book's historical aftermath, the narrator will play upon that knowledge … to undermine that readerly self-confidence by confronting it with a dense network of voices and ideas whose complexity and heterogeneity make the assumption of a superior, because subsequent, vantage point impossible. There are so many

> plausible scenarios for the future sketched out … that the novel swarms with projections of contradictory possibilities. (Bernstein 98)

Bernstein's purpose is to argue "Against Apocalyptic History" (the subtitle of his book); hence, as he proceeds to the critical review of various novels, it could appear that he ends up filing them all under the two categories of either "apocalyptic" (of the order of the ultimate catastrophe) or "random, haphazard, and unassimilable contingency" (Bernstein, 4). Still, this not the case; all novels can find their place in a continuum between the two. The more assertively the necessity of an event is claimed, the more liable is this claim is to be questioned, if not by the text itself, then in the way we receive it.

> To keep the claim of both the event and its unrealized alternatives in mind may be more perplexing as a theoretical formulation than an ongoing act, and problems that critical habit and grammar often urge us to see cleanly divided are in practice usually vitally, and even messily, intertwined. (Bernstein, 8)

Even though several possible courses are or were possible, and one only will or would occur, their evocations comply with some systematic worldviews. A narrator's or a character's ideology influences the foresight or hindsight of what should or could happen (or has happened) and which path should or could be taken (or has been taken). In other words, indeterminism is no more absolute than determinism.

> Our idea of indeterminism is existential, claiming only that some or other transitions are indeterminate. This claim comes by straightforward existential generalizations from examples such as the coin flip-to-landing transition. There is no suspicious hasty generalization in sight. There is no attempt to cast doubt on the importance of deterministic transitions that fall under some law of nature. (Perloff & Belnap 585)

Determinism is required, if only for methodological reasons, to structure narratable events into a consistent narrative. As each event takes place, narration makes it the nexus of many

possible causes and effects, the point in time and space where what actually happens and the reasons for it are free of any necessity or predetermination. Contingency could be systemic (chance) or epistemic (our ignorance of the agency of some hidden variable). At each fork in the road, a choice is made to take the next step along one among many possible paths, all facing an open, undetermined future. Despite that, between two such random steps, the walk will follow some determined path, navigating "between the antithetical but twin reductionisms of teleological determinism and radical undecidability" (Bernstein, 7). Hence, the fictional world of realist novels is neither an absolutely necessary nor a completely random state of affairs; rather it follows globally causal laws punctuated by local indeterminate transitions, reminiscent of the Darwinian evolutionary process.

1.9 Pip in Love: The Combined Agency of Chance and Design

From this view of the world are derived some formal consequences for its literary representation. I have claimed earlier (in 1.7 and 1.8, quoting Bakhtin, Morson, and Berstein) that the apparent inevitability of events can be challenged, by devices as simple as the mention of an alternative or by the more complex perspective that a counterfactual conditional proposition opens. An example of the combined agency of chance and design is expressed in Pip's perspective on his falling in love with Estella as an inescapable, absolute necessity, "I should have loved her under any circumstances" (GE 394). This conclusion is reached at a time when Pip-the-narrator is fully knowledgeable of the delusional nature of Pip-the-character's hopes. In particular, he understands the consequences of the obsessive vengeful projects of Magwitch and Miss Havisham (and of their possible entanglement by Mr. Jaggers). Nonetheless, Pip romantically claims the unavoidability of his love for Estella, as if his destiny unfolded from the plan imposed by the power of some fatal decree. However, at the

same time and in apparent contradiction, he considers it to be only the consequence of an entirely coincidental, random cause: his introduction to Satis House.

> That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day. (GE, 71)

Dickens's metaphoric use of "the long chain of iron or gold" to figure a succession of necessary events, dark or bright, is mitigated, contradicted even, by the reminder of the casual forging of its first link. The defining quality of that day affirms the apparently deterministic nature of the connection. Pip was meant to fall in love with Estella upon meeting her and the day of that meeting came. Yet, Pip-the-narrator clearly invalidates his statement in a formal (and unusual) direct address to "you who read this," inviting the reader to envisage the counterfactual possibility of a temporal subtraction that would cancel out the actual; the "first link" may not have been formed. Miss Havisham could have selected other possible occasional male playmates for Estella such as Arthur Pocket (she tried) or Trabb's boy (a less likely but possible choice within the *dramatis personae* of this specific fictional world), which would have resulted in a very different novel. A possible emplotment, suggested by Pip much later and which I personally find plausible, is that the selection of Pip was recommended by Mr. Jaggers (despite Miss Havisham's vehement denial, which can be explained by her own purpose). This hypothesis, either confirmed or not, has the advantage of enhancing the depiction of both characters' respective influence without having the slightest impact on the actual unfolding of circumstances in any respect. The shadow of what could have been different is invoked here in direct contradiction to a committed deterministic affirmation; it

does not affect the actuality of what happened, but it resists its perceived necessity by reminding us that, more often than fate, "chance begets order" (Peirce, 2009, 190).

1.10 Figuring Contingency in the Language of Necessity

What is interesting here is not Dickens's (or Tolstoy's, or Musil's) argument in favour of a deterministic worldview or its contrary, as much as the figuring forth of this argument. How does the novel -- a narrative genre structured around temporality, causality, and design -- provide for the rendering of contingency? A (textual) narrative stream is the representation of a succession of events linked by causal relations. The perception of the narrative's organizing causality results from a combination of two activities. First comes the author's selection and organization of chronologically ordered events into a signifying narrative structure; then, the reader's own semantic and hermeneutic efforts. The description of this process is borrowed from Paul Ricoeur's "triple mimesis" model. For Ricoeur, any *mise en intrigue* (emplotment) is a form of *ad hoc* (just-so) story (Ricoeur does not use the terms *ad hoc* or "just-so"; however, I have justified their use earlier, in 1.3.) The *mise en intrigue* is no more than a comforting hypothesis on a possible causality and finality, "at best, it [the emplotment] provides the 'as if' specific to all fiction that we know to be just fiction, literary device. It is how it consoles in front of death"[6] (Ricoeur, 1983, 138). In the most simplistic configuration, or the narrating degree zero, two successive events are linked as a cause and a consequence.

[6] « Au mieux, elle [la mise en intrigue] fournit le "comme si" propre a toute fiction, artifice littéraire. C'est ainsi qu'elle console face à la mort. »

The latter can be in turn the cause of a subsequent consequence, and this pattern can be repeated into a linear chain until the closure is reached, "in short, emplotment is the operation that draws from a simple succession a configuration"[7] (Ricoeur, 1983, 127). This very simple arrangement provides the structure familiar to many non-fictional communications (administrative reports, legal argument, insurance claims, maintenance manuals). Because the non-fictional storyteller usually has a very specific point to make his whole story will be precisely designed to unfold accordingly to its intended closure, that is the demonstration and justification of that specific point. It is also the simple organization found in basic literary folk genres, such as nursery and proverbial rhymes and folk songs. It is from these genres that the examples of such basic narrative causal chains are provided:

> Hush-a-by baby / On the tree top, / When the wind blows / The cradle will rock. / When the bough breaks, / The cradle will fall, / And down will fall baby / Cradle and all (Newberry 39)

> For want of a nail the shoe was lost, / For want of a shoe the horse was lost, / For want of a horse the rider was lost / For want of a rider the battle was lost / For want of a battle the kingdom was lost / And all for the want of a horseshoe nail. (Franklin 22)

> Drove her ducklings to the water, / Every morning just at nine, / Hit her foot against a splinter, / Fell into the foaming brine. (Ash 70)

The "reality" probed by realist novels, however, is more complex than that of nursery rhymes, almanac poems or folk songs. The realist novel's goal is the mimetic rendering of

[7] « Bref, la mise en intrigue est l'opération qui tire d'une simple succession une configuration. »

such complicated states of affairs as make up the actual world. To summarily complement the definitions of "state of affairs" given earlier, (in 1.5, borrowed from Wittgenstein and Armstrong), I shall add a definition of "actual world" (inferred from two propositions by David Lewis),

> Whatever it may mean to call a world actual …, it had better turn out that the world we are part of is the actual world. What actually is the case, as we say, is what goes on here. That is one possible way for a world to be. Other worlds are other, that is unactualized, possibilities. (Lewis 5)

> Ours is the actual world; the rest are not actual. Why so? -- I take it to be a trivial matter of meaning. I use the word "actual" to mean the same as "this-worldly". When I use it, it applies to my world and my worldmates; to this world we are part of, and to all parts of this world. And if someone else uses it, whether he be a worldmate of ours or whether he be unactualised, then (provided he means by it what we do) it applies likewise to his world and his worldmates. (Lewis 95)

With its references to unactualized possibilities and individuals, this definition offers the advantage of including actuality as it prevails within the fictional worlds of novels and distinguishing it clearly from that of the authorial world. As will be discussed later, the actual world of David Copperfield is not the world of Charles Dickens, whatever similarities they may present. The reader -- just like Pip Pirrip, David Copperfield or any other fictional character even in non-realistic novels (say Alice or Gulliver) -- can take this definition to apply to the fictional worlds no matter how unrealistic the worldmates. In such an actual world, a given cause can be sufficient, necessary, or contributory to any of the multiple consequences it brings about and conversely, a single event can necessarily or possibly derive from many causes. Furthermore, there are also those deceptive correlative or coincidental occurrences that are so important in literary narratives and for which the identification of a

common cause is fallacious (I shall also discuss such examples). In short, the narrative organization required to represent events connected by such a variety of causes and consequences of diverse natures cannot appropriately be figured by the spatial analogy of a simple (causal, linear) chain.

1.11 Assigning Iffy Causes to Contingent Events

C. S. Peirce proposed that "reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable whose fibers may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected" (Peirce, 1993, 29). If Peirce's cable is an acceptable image for the structure of reasoning, I propose that narration -- or more exactly, the temporal process signified by the gerund, narrating -- resembles netting stitched up from strips torn out of complex meshes. In such a patchwork, it is not always possible to discern which of the possible causes (or combination of causes) is actually generative of which particular consequence (or combination of consequences), for any directly connected subset of events (or the narrative stream representing it). In this complicated lattice work, not all links are actualized. It may be that the arguments in favour of a specific state of affairs being the cause of a certain later situation will be revealed as purely hypothetical or even fallacious. Making sense of such linkages implies the sketching out of plausible emplotments in the web of events.

As an example of this indeterminacy of cause and effect along an array of multiple possibilities, we can consider the connections among the characters of *Great Expectations*. Abel Magwitch and Miss Havisham both have some critical influence on the development of Pip's great expectations and on Pip's and Estella's actual destinies. Nonetheless, Compeyson had an even more direct impact on the fate of Magwitch and Miss Havisham, and through

their respective plans, on the fates of Pip and Estella. We could also propose in the same manner Mr. Jaggers's agency in entangling the fortunes of the last four: he brought the infant Estella to Miss Havisham; he may have suggested that Pip be invited to Satis House, which Miss Havisham denies, but we do not have to believe her; he is in charge of the financial and legal interest of both Magwitch and Miss Havisham and is responsible for merging their separate plans into Pip's deceptive great expectations; finally, he is Pip's guardian. There are very few threads if any in the novel that are not tied to Mr. Jaggers. Other narrative trajectories, often started but not closed, involve less documented and more mysterious characters such as Molly, Orlick, Drummle and various relatives of Miss Havisham.

In part, the reader's immersion results from his accelerated awareness of many possible narrative chains and of his ensuing evaluation, valid or not, about the causal or contingent nature of the connections that appear, rightly or not, to prevail. For instance, a reader can share or simply notice Pip's mistaken feeling that Miss Havisham might have been the plausible source of his great expectations; still, she is not, although she lets him (and leads him to) believe that she is. Her machinations to ensure that Estella "can break his heart" (GE 59) could have been a sufficient cause for Pip's falling in love with Estella. Nevertheless, in the dramatic scene where Miss Havisham repents, her purpose is alleged to have only a redundant agency, for Pip's love of Estella is, supposedly, as I have already discussed, an unavoidable necessity:

> She was not kneeling now, but was down upon the ground.
> "O!" she cried, despairingly. "What have I done! What have I done!"
> "If you mean, Miss Havisham, what have you done to injure me, let me answer. Very little. I should have loved her under any circumstances. . . ." (GE 394).

In other words, from Pip's perspective, neither Miss Havisham's project (to steal Estella's "heart away, and put ice in its place" [GE 395] and turn her into a weapon for her own revenge on all men), nor the ambition of Magwitch, the "hunted dunghill dog" (GE 314) -- to get "his head so high that he could make a gentleman" out of Pip -- had any part in wrecking the greatest of all Pip's expectations. Among the causes of the collapse of his "poor dreams" (GE 408), the former was fallacious, the cause merely of Pip's "mistakes and wrong conclusions" (GE 332), and the latter coincidental. All the same, either of the two may have appeared to Pip a sufficient cause for a favourable outcome at several points in the novel.

The misreading of causal links can come from an unreliable narrator (here, Pip himself), or from the narrative trajectory of a character, or from a too immersed, too candid or prejudiced reader. For instance, what cause (or causes) precipitated "the formation of the first link on one memorable day" (GE 71) that brought Pip to Satis? "Uncle" Pumblechook, Joe Gargery's uncle (hence, Pip's step-uncle) took Pip to Satis House. As long as venturedPip's great expectations are alive (but not a second longer), Pumblechook will brag to be the "earliest benefactor and the founder of [Pip's] fortunes" (GE 415). In fact, and at best, his action may have only been one of many very minor necessary or simply contributory causes. A lowly tenant of Miss Havisham, Pumblechook never even met her and it was through a closed door that he had been summoned to bring someone to play with Estella. Whether Miss Havisham asked for anyone or specifically for Pip, is anyone's guess. Choosing Pip could have been Pumblechook's initiative or it could also have been Mr. Jaggers's recommendation. Pip suspects the latter which, Miss Havisham is too quick to deny,

> "Mr. Jaggers," said Miss Havisham, taking me up in a firm tone, "had nothing to do with it, and knew nothing of it. His being my lawyer, and his being the lawyer of your patron is a coincidence." (GE 355)

Miss Havisham invokes a coincidence and rightly so; whether Pumblechook was chosen at random by Miss Havisham, as she claims, or Mr. Jaggers thought it interesting to bring together Pip and Pip's benefactor's daughter (unbeknown to them and to Miss Havisham), "the formation of the first link" was a random event characteristic of the web of possibilities surrounding Mr. Jaggers, woven out of hypothetical threads that must remain a rich source of conjectures.

In the same manner, a possible event, such as an expected closure, might never occur, whether or not a number of causes might have precipitated it. Such is the case when Pip sees "the shadow of no parting from [Estella]" (GE 479), in the last sentence of the novel. Whether "another parting" won't take place because they will never meet again and "will continue [to be] friends apart," or, to the contrary, an ultimate everlasting reunion will take place subsequent to which no other parting will ever cast its shadow (because such a parting will never occur), the closure of the novel will remain forever uncertain. In a later edition, Pip sees "no shadow of another parting from her" (GE 503, n. 479). The same ambiguity remains as there may be "no shadow" because "another parting" does not take place, but it still cannot be inferred with complete confidence that a final reunion ever occurs.

1.12 Pip's Hypothetical Guess of Estella's Actual Thoughts

Just like actions, thoughts can be causes of events, for the possible evolution of states of affairs also derives from characters' mental activities. A character's thinking of any sort -- reasoning, daydreaming, hallucinating, guessing, empathizing, etc. -- can be directly expressed by the subject (actualized) or it can be the object of conjectures (hypothesized) by another character or by the narrator. For instance, on the occasion of his second visit to Satis House, Pip comes upon an unknown "pale young gentleman" (GE 90) who provokes him to a fight.

Pip beats him repeatedly and severely until the other throws in the sponge. As Pip leaves, he comes upon Estella,

> I found Estella waiting with the keys. But, she neither asked me where I had been, nor why I had kept her waiting; and there was a bright flush upon her face, as though something had happened to delight her. Instead of going straight to the gate, too, she stepped back into the passage, and beckoned me. "Come here! You may kiss me, if you like." (GE 91)

To the reader it is clear that Estella has been watching and become aroused by the fight. As for Pip, he was just expecting more of Estella's usual scorn for having inconvenienced her:

> I kissed her cheek as she turned it to me. I think I would have gone through a great deal to kiss her cheek. But I felt that the kiss was given to the coarse common boy as a piece of money might have been, and that it was worth nothing.

Pip's hypothesis about the reason, or rather about the meaning, of Estella's surprising kiss "given to the coarse common boy" (actually, she only allowed *him* to give *her* a kiss) is just one of many possible guesses, most likely a wrong one as we can judge -- and as Estella will, years later, partially confirm: "I must have been a singular little creature to hide and see that fight that day; but I did, and I enjoyed it very much" (GE 233). Pip's wrong assumption results from his experience and knowledge of Estella. When experience is not available to him, Pip can conjecture in the form of counterfactual statements, as he does to invoke the possibility of a life without great expectations:

> I used to think, with a weariness on my spirits, that I should have been happier and better if I had never seen Miss Havisham's face, and had risen to manhood content to be partners with Joe in the honest old forge. Many a time of an evening, when I sat alone looking at the fire, I thought, after all there was no fire like the forge fire and the kitchen fire at home. (GE 268)

In other words, what did not happen (Pip growing up to become a happy blacksmith) but could or should preferably have happened (from Pip's perspective) demonstrates increasingly its narrative plausibility. This hypothetical alternative thus achieves a degree of competitive spectral coexistence with what actually does happen (Pip meeting Miss Havisham). This leads Pip into a more complex counterfactual conjecture.

> Yet Estella was so inseparable from all my restlessness and disquiet of mind that I really fell into confusion as to the limits of my own part in its production. That is to say, supposing I had had no expectations, and yet had had Estella to think of, I could not make out to my satisfaction that I should have done much better.

In other words, the path not taken -- that of not having had any great expectations -- might have taken Pip to the same actual destination where he is desperately in love with Estella (regardless of whether he had become Joe the blacksmith's content and honest partner). As always, when it comes to Estella, the paths not taken by Pip lead to the same place as those he followed.

1.13 Inferring and Representing Someone Else's Mind

Such a narrative recourse to the invocation of non-necessary possibilities, even redundant ones, is not particular to Dickens. The realist novel underwent some major transformations during the century centred on Dickens's productive years. An important evolution concerns the manner in which the thoughts of someone other than the narrator could be first inferred and then represented. Early in the realist tradition, however omniscient a narrator could be, he was very rarely allowed to claim a direct knowledge of another character's interiority (the exception being the intrusive narrator claiming a mind-reading

privilege that I shall discuss later). As for a first-person narrator, probing directly another character's consciousness was an impossibility.

> While prolonged inside views were largely restricted to first-person forms, third-person novels dwelt on manifest behaviour, with the characters' inner selves revealed only indirectly through spoken language and telling gesture. (Cohn 21)

This observation comes from Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds*, which, throughout this essay, will be my main reference whenever I discuss *narrative modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (as her study is subtitled). In her introduction, Cohn points to the "supreme illustration of the paradox that narrative fiction attains its greatest 'air of reality' in the representation of a lone figure thinking thoughts she will never communicate to anyone" (Cohn 7). Cohn builds upon Käte Hamburger's earlier argument making the representation of interiority "the touchstone that simultaneously sets fiction apart from reality and builds the semblance … of another, non-real reality." Hence, rather than invalidate the actuality of the novel's world, the hypothetical (and impossible) exploration of someone else's interiority is accepted and expected as the very ground of that actuality. For, as Cohn argues, "narrative fiction is the only literary genre, as well as the only kind of narrative, in which the unspoken thoughts, feelings, perceptions of a person other than the speaker can be portrayed" (Cohn 7).

At the earlier stages of the realist novel, the revelation of one's inner thoughts remain the exclusive privilege of the thinking character in question and occurs only in reported conversation or in some kind of spoken or written monologue -- such as a confession, a soliloquy, a letter or a diary entry. What is not expressly said or written by the subject himself can only be advanced as a guess by the narrator. Cohn quotes, among others, the heterodiegetic narrator in Fielding's *Tom Jones*: "she never revealed this dream to any one, so

the reader cannot expect to see it related here" (Cohn 22) and the homodiegetic one in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, "our mind does not shine through the body" (Cohn, 3). Both narrator admit that they are at best guessing when and if it comes to describing what might be going on in "other minds." This does not mean that Fielding or Stern renounced the right to provide the reader with the expected view of a character's interiority; instead (as I shall argue later) whenever a novel denies itself this kind of probing, it usually suggests a hypothesis. In the citation from *Tom Jones* offered by Cohn, a "gentle sigh" betrays that the "never revealed" dream is "of no pleasant kind" and Tristam commits to "go some other way to work" to penetrate "the dark covering of uncristallized flesh and blood" that obscures "the specific characters of [our minds]" (Cohn 3).

This reticence to read minds lessened at the beginning of the nineteenth century as the narrator started to become less present and the interest shifted increasingly toward other characters; authors came up with new devices to proceed with what Cohn called psycho-narration, that is, the "narratized discourse representing a character's thoughts (as opposed to utterances), in the context of a third-person narrative" (Prince, 2003, 80). This increasing importance given to any character's psychology (which I shall discuss later) imposed a mimetic requirement on the description of the thinking process itself. Although, given these representational strictures, any representation of what and how someone else may be thinking remains necessarily hypothetical, it will be more transparently acceptable if it resembles the reader's own familiar practice. The creative challenge is twofold; first, the writing must achieve the portrayal of a mode of thinking that the reader can identify with his own; second, this portrayal must be displayed credibly, without raising questions about how anyone can account for someone else's thoughts. The empathetic similarity, in earlier novels, was

facilitated by the character's spoken or written expression of his thought process: it lay beyond question because no presumptive mindreading was required.

1.14 A Logic Complicated by Contingency and Modalities

The authors of such characters such as Quixote, Madame de Clèves, Werther, or Frankenstein's Creature are, of course, able to deal with complex ontological, epistemic or axiological predicaments, but literary convention limits them to reports in the first person. This constraint introduces some distance between the thinking process and its representation; it requires the utterance of well thought-out, grammatically correct sentences and the simultaneous extensive description of the situation of their enunciation; the combination of these demands thus hampers the rendering of the immediacy and intimacy of mental activity.

In keeping with the moral parameters of the genre, the reasoning itself was restricted to simple reflection within the frame of binary axiology: good or bad, right or wrong, true or false, etc., and even hypotheses formulated as more complicated counterfactual statements would not challenge the actuality of the state of affairs. For instance, for all its enlightened ratiocinations, at times even counterfactual, Frankenstein's Creature has an unambiguous understanding of the rejection it experiences. Its conclusion is an assumption based upon his intuitive feeling (as befit a Romantic being) about other minds. Its experiential knowledge prevents the creature from imagining how it might have been otherwise.

> If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them an hundred and an hundred fold; for that one creature's sake, I would make peace with the whole kind! But I now indulge in dreams of bliss that cannot be realized. (Shelley 169–170)

The counterfactual is here just the rhetorical and logical negation of the factual (the actual malevolence toward the Creature), and the consequence remains the same in either case:

whether benevolence or malevolence, it does not make a difference for the creature; it does not indulge in hypothetical speculation and it will return the same, either benevolence or malevolence, "an hundred and an hundred fold."

This logic was increasingly being contradicted by the growing recognition of the agency of contingency. The challenge to simplistic axiology and logic called for a closer representation of many interiorities, not only those that could emerge in the perfect grammar and syntax of the first-person report. To model the structure and processes of human judgment, psychological credibility required that some room be made for possibility, plausibility, questionability, propriety, temporality and any other applicable modalities. To take into account these other manners of experiencing, perceiving, thinking about, and being in the world, the realist novel increasingly started to invoke what had not in fact happened, but might, could, or would, in different conditions or for different reasons.

In this evolution of the recourse to the hypothetical and to the representation of thinking processes, Dickens falls into the middle of a creative continuum extending from Jane Austen to James Joyce. These authors are widely accepted as canonical bookends for the historical and cultural nineteenth century. In their work, narrators, characters and readers are led to figure out and to express things out by iterated interpretations of actual or hypothetical experiences. Some questions are raised that the unfolding of the plot only partially acknowledges while some spectral answers, evasively suggested by the context, announce new difficulties.

1.15 The Representation of Thinking Processes from Austen to Joyce

Jane Austen's romantic heroines, such as Emma Woodhouse in *Emma* (1815) and Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* (1817, but written ca. 1805), relentlessly produce

hypotheses in response to the challenges presented by their perception of their respective social, emotional, psychological, and cultural realities. Emma's and Catherine's very creative imaginations are the sources of unreliable assumptions which in turn orient their course of action through a succession of failures and re-evaluations. For Austen's heroines, the hypothetical is a source of embarrassment, even of mortification. Their imaginative hypotheses lead them to a final trial and thereby to the concluding revelation of the sanity of the actual. As an example, when Emma realizes that Harriet has some views about and maybe some hopes concerning Mr. Knightley, she can barely endure the shame and the self-ridicule that attend her recognition of her previous and mistaken assumptions,

> She was bewildered amidst the confusion… Every moment had brought a fresh surprize; and every surprize must be matter of humiliation to her. -- How to understand it all! How to understand the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself, and living under! -- The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart! … she perceived that she had acted most weakly; that she had been imposed on by others in a most mortifying degree; that she had been imposing on herself in a degree yet more mortifying; … (Austen, 1815, 284)

For Catherine Morland, a more self-aware and less assertive character than Emma, the source of an excessive disposition toward the hypothetical danger is literature. Younger than Emma, she does not likewise enjoy the benefit of financial independence and familial social prevalence, and therefore knows she must marry. She finds in sensation and romance novels a refuge from the pressures of the bleak prospect inspired by her insecure and marginal social standing. In her case, nevertheless, it happens that the hypothetical path offered by Gothic literature, however delusive it may be, allows her the small consolation of having identified correctly, albeit for all the wrong reasons, one of the novel's chief villains, her future father-in-law. If General Tilney is to be discerned to as the mean person he is, he might as well be

some sort of Montoni, straight out of castle Udolpho, and not just a banal greedy snob. "Catherine, at any rate, heard enough to feel that in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character, or magnified his cruelty" (Austen, 1817, 183).

While Emma confuses her imagined reality with the actual world, for Catherine, the bemplotment is just a playful embellishment of a rather drab perspective. In Austen's world, the heroine's, the detour through the excesses of the hypothetical is essentially a growing pains that prepare them to accept the prevalent norm. Their reaching a stage posited as that of their final growth allows for the sobering return to the immutable order of their fictional world, albeit at a somewhat different position, socially and emotionally. This accepted conclusion of their experiences, not consistent with the set of possibilities anticipated by these heroines, is figured in the novel by a conventionally happy narrative closure, the appropriate marriage. Consistent with Austen's larger moral and ethical economy, the hypothetical falls under what she understands as "sensibility," that which is opposed to "sense," reason, maturity, adult conduct and awareness. Although the hypothetical is an important aspect of "consciousness" in Austen, its narrative usefulness is limited: rather than opening viable alternatives, it acts more often as an ironic and negative foil of an actuality dictated by the proscriptions and prescriptions of the social conventions. In both cases, for Emma as for Catherine, this arrival at the mature equanimity required by social reality takes the form of an epiphany, albeit a more light-hearted one insofar as it belongs to a differently regulated and more forgiving universe than that of Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), the paradigmatically epiphanic fiction.

In *Dubliners*, the protagonists' emotional and perceptual incapacity and their moral paralysis set the stage for their apathy and failure. Although the circumstances give them a vivid and painful consciousness of other choices available to answer their desires, beliefs, hopes or ambitions, they passively resist the seduction of -- or remain oblivious to -- an actual opportunity for change. Despite this despondent denial, a final epiphany arises from the realization of the depth of their failure. Eveline (in "Eveline") stays in Dublin with her abusive father rather than following Frank to a new life in Argentina, "her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal" (Joyce 32). In "A Painful Case," Mr. Duffy shuns Mrs. Sinico's company, being afraid of the possibilities offered by her friendship and possibly her love. Upon learning of her death, he takes the measure of his loss: "He could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch his ear… He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone" (Joyce 99). In "The Boarding House," Mr. Doran, as a consequence of his reluctant decision to marry Polly, must choose between several equally conjectural self-justifications, each revealing a more mediocre alternative to his deserved entrapment. "His instinct urged him to remain free, not to marry, once you are married you are done for." "What could he do now but marry her or run away?" (Joyce 53) The latter choice would ruin his social and professional standing, "All his long year of service gone for nothing!" (Joyce 54) However, the former goes against his instinct that "urged him to remain free, not to marry. Once you married you are done for, it said" (Joyce 54). He finds Polly "a little vulgar," "he could imagine his friends talking of the affair and laughing" (Joyce 54). Before finally giving up, "he longed to ascend through the roof and fly away to another country where he would never hear again of his trouble" (Joyce 54). In his stasis, Mr. Doran will accept with a

passive resignation the best choice from among his paltry alternatives, as "the implacable faces of his employer and of the Madam stared upon his discomfiture" (Joyce 54).

For Austen, some paths are better not taken for reasons of social convention. Although contingency rearranges the players at the conclusion of her novels, the resulting order was still accepted as immutable by Austen's initial readership. In her fictional world, the hypothetical challenges a social order only to adjust it by small increments, rather than unsettle it. For Joyce, opportunities for change are missed, renounced or self-denied for a most unnecessary and possible cause: moral torpor. Compliance with social conventions is not for Joyce the final stage in the quest for intellectual maturity, as it was for Austen. The hypothetical alternatives opened in *Dubliners* to Eveline, Duffy and Doran indict their ethical submission to a stagnating order as the tributary cause of its perpetuation. The existence of other plausible narrative possibilities is not always as explicit as in these examples. Such alternatives are often hidden in the context from which they emerge as elements of the mimesis. They bring just a hint of contrast to what is actually happening by the means of certain narrative, discursive, and linguistic devices. I shall return now to Dickens for some examples.

1.16 Suspense, Recognition; Propagating the Hypothetical Echoes of the Actual

For instance, there are cases where the hypothetical was essentially required by the editorial policy of the mid-century serialized novel, with its long and complicated plots. This policy did not allow authors the freedom to focus too intently on the complexities of the interiority of a protagonist. The narratological economy of serial publication required that in order to hold the readership in suspense, each episode of a serial narrative -- in particular, but not exclusively, in sensation novels -- had to reach a cliffhanger. Authors had to hint at several plausible developments that could occur in the subsequent instalment. At such junctures, there

is no foreshadowing allowed. It would go directly against the device's purpose, which is the generation of anticipation itself rather than the anticipated event. Thus, the multiple plausible narrative possibilities that could follow the cliffhanger were not made explicit. Kept in suspense, the reader was called upon to produce his own hypotheses. Dickens often turned to this protocol of the serial trade. Yet, he did so not only to provide the required suspenseful closure to his instalments, but also for a completely different purpose: that is, right in the middle of a chapter, to undermine the perceived actuality of the state of affairs in the fictional world represented. The anticipation thus aroused was never fully satisfied by the subsequent revelation or by the turn of emplotment, as new possibilities unsettled or replaced the discarded ones.

Great Expectations offers many examples of such moments of anxious expectancy. They are distributed throughout the narrative, alternating with moments of unforeseen recognition. This process starts with the incipit. The novel opens on a "raw afternoon towards evening" in a "bleak place" (GE 3), a graveyard by the marshes, where an orphan is trying to unravel his identity from the inscriptions on his family's tombstones; suddenly, "a man started up from among the graves," seizes little Pip by the chin, turns him upside down, threatens to cut his throat and dictates his demands. The next day, Pip provides the escaped convict with some food and brandy and a file, stolen from his sister's pantry and from her husband's forge. A few pages and hours later, when his sister leaves the Christmas table to fetch a pie, the theft is about to be discovered and Pip starts for the door in panic:

> I ran for my life. But I ran no farther than the house door, for there I ran head-foremost into a party of soldiers with their muskets, one of whom held out a pair of handcuffs to me, saying, "Here you are, look sharp, come on! (GE 29)

Here ends the chapter, on a suggested conclusion (Pip's arrest) that, despite its plausibility, no reader can accept because it has been made too obvious. The following chapter confirms that the patrol merely needs the blacksmith to fix the handcuffs so that they can shackle the escaped convicts. This is a typical end-of-chapter cliffhanger, yielding only a rather bland outcome, albeit one not as disappointing as Pip's expected arrest would have been. The chapter continues with the account of the pursuit and final capture of a couple of convicts, one of them confessing to having stolen the food, brandy, and file, thus brings closure to the episode. The reader's possibly frustrated anticipation is soon forgotten, buried under the new questions emerging from the eventful report of the pursuit and the capture: who is the second convict? Why the hatred of the first convict against him? Why does the latter decide to exculpate Pip? Many other questions can be raised, propping a hypothetical narrative vault that will resonate anxiety throughout the whole novel. Not to be forgotten, these questions are periodically restated in some manner by some character or other (the "secret-looking man," Mr. Jaggers, Mr. Wemmick, Miss Havisham, Mr. Wopsle, Orlick), and sometimes partially answered, but the answers give rise to new doubts, new hypothetical paths.

One such instance, echoing our previous example, occurs a little later, when Pip visits the local inn with Joe. There they meet a stranger, "a secret-looking man," who happens to mention casually, "[t] he lonely church, right out on the marshes, with the graves round it!" and starts a conversation about escaped convicts (GE 73-4). Pip records that

> all this while, the strange man looked at nobody but me, and looked at me as if he were determined to have a shot at me at last, and bring me down … the glasses of rum and water were brought; and then he made his shot, and a most extraordinary shot it was… He stirred his rum and water pointedly at me, and he tasted his rum and water pointedly at me. And he stirred it and he tasted it; not with a spoon that was brought to him, but *with a file*… I knew it to be Joe's

> file, and I knew that he knew my convict, the moment I saw the instrument. I sat gazing at him, spell-bound. But he now reclined on his settle, taking very little notice of me, and talking principally about turnips. (GE 76)

As in the earlier episode, we are at a critical juncture in the narration (Pip's recent admission to Satis House, a social promotion, the beginning of his great expectations), and it is a threshold into some hypothetical path to be imagined by the reader. Still, in the narrative structure of a serial publication, this episode has a different function. Unlike the previous episode, this one occurs in the middle (not the end) of a chapter and the element of suspense is not promptly resolved -- and not, for this reason, a cliff-hanger. It stages a recognition, a sort of traumatic return of the repressed, forcing Pip -- who has just been admitted to the prestigious society of Satis House -- to remind himself

> of the guiltily coarse and common thing it was, to be on secret terms of conspiracy with convicts -- a feature in my low career that I had previously forgotten. I was haunted by the file too. A dread possessed me that when I least expected it, the file would reappear. I coaxed myself to sleep by thinking of Miss Havisham's, next Wednesday. (GE 77)

Here the potential revelation of Pip's ancient association with criminals shadows the actual confirmation of Pip's future association with the upper class. Both contexts -- criminal and gentility, personalised by Magwich and Miss Havisham -- will prove to be a rich source of suspense and recognition as they carry a web of facts unknown to both Pip and the reader. Episode after episode, they will intermix and exchange their status as actual or hypothetical according to the shifting needs of the narration.

1.17 Feeding the Hypothesis Engine

As we follow Pip-the-character through the circuits of dramatic irony instilled by Pip-the-narrator, we are driven to produce our own hypotheses about, and to anticipate the revelation of Pip's expectations and regrets. We can find such an example by returning to the episode mentioned above (1.12) when Pip meets in the garden a "young gentleman" who provokes him to a fight and Pip beats him up easily, repeatedly, and seriously. We have seen how for Pip the point of this incident -- and the reasons behind it -- are rather obscure. When the fight is over, Pip leaves the garden feeling "but a gloomy satisfaction in [his] victory" (GE 90). The reader then receives from Pip-the-narrator a hint as to the possible cause of this strange meeting when Pip-the-character comes upon Estella in the episode I have discussed earlier (1.16). We, as readers, may infer from Pip's report the reason that led the "young gentleman" to provoke Pip to a fight he was bound to lose badly, yet Pip, as we have seen, does not suggest any possible understanding of the event. The reason for this reticence, as I stated earlier, is that we are offered primarily the significant, meaningful parts of the story (the parts of the story that connote the story as a sign), those needed to prompt interpretation, to trace their signified object. A retrospective reading of the episode, as well as the better knowledge we later gather about Estella and the "young gentleman," let us infer that the incident was carefully set up by Estella, in compliance with her role as Miss Havisham's instrument of revenge on men. At the close of the novel, any hypothesis we may have ventured will support this inference, although it is not confirmed anywhere in the novel, even when the three characters involved grow very close and reminisce at least once about this event. As a side comment, I want to point out the questions that may be raised by the presence of the "young gentleman" at Satis House, and his compliance with Estella's plans, as one of

the spectral developments mention earlier -- albeit, one that will be finding a discrete closure much later in the novel.

It is not always the reader who is called upon to provide hypotheses; when dramatic irony fades and the narrator is deemed reliable or the character better informed, their conjectures can be accepted. The plausibility of a fictional world is inherently limited by the necessary indetermination of its reality. Mimesis is restricted to events selected by the author as sufficiently critical to conjure up their object, space, and time of narration. For instance, upon following Pip as he casts his eyes for the first time on Estella, we learn that she was "very pretty and seemed very proud" (GE 54) "and beautiful and self-possessed," (GE 55) and that she had a "fair young bosom … and pretty brown hair" (GE, 59). That is all we learn from the first representation of the physical aspect of the female protagonist of the novel (at least from Pip's perspective). Nonetheless, her presence is granted the importance deserved by her significant narrative function. Her character is plausibly assessed by what Pip infers from her behaviour when he is about to leave Satis House at the end of the chapter:

> She gave me a triumphant glance in passing me, as if she rejoiced that my hands were so coarse and my boots were so thick, and she opened the gate, and stood holding it. I was passing out without looking at her, when she touched me with a taunting hand. "Why don't you cry?" "Because I don't want to." "You do," said she. "You have been crying till you are half blind, and you are near crying again now." She laughed contemptuously, pushed me out, and locked the gate upon me. (GE 64)

A more exhaustive representation of Estella (precise physical description, medical history, education, etc.) could prove redundant and obscure the character's features most relevant to the story. On the other hand, significance can be added to the report of a character's actions and discourses if it is framed by some representation, necessarily hypothetical, of her pertinent

unshared thoughts and perceptions. This mental activity, be it explanation, judgment, questioning, is actually an interpretation of the narrated (the imitation of actions, the mimesis); by calling for interpretation, a representation reveals itself as a sign standing for something else or something more than just a succession of events.

1.18 From Mimesis to Semiosis; the Hypothetical Reveals the Narrated as a Sign

By bringing out the nature of the narrated as a sign, the text opens itself to the hypothetical propositions of what is signified. The realization of being in the presence of a sign -- and more immediately, in the network of the signifier -- invites conjectures about its meaning. In order to identify what the sign refers to, to supply the range of possible understandings -- initially concealed behind the straight description or narration, hypotheses must be generated. Thus, it is the production of the hypothetical that will turn mimesis into semiosis. Going back to our previous example, whether or not Pip second-guesses Estella correctly, he knows that her behaviour ("She gave me a triumphant glance in passing me") is not some meaningless provocation; he understands that something else is going on requiring analogical thinking ("as if she rejoiced that…"); it is a clue, an index of something else, maybe the sign that "she rejoiced that [his] hands were so coarse and [his] boots were so thick." Pip's analogy does not impose its meaning on Estella's behaviour: he just assigns to it a hypothetical referent, one among many other possible. Such a description or inference by Pip of Estella's mental activities can only result from prior conjectures; what is missing in the imitation of Estella's behaviour given by the narration needs to be hypothesized. Hence, in realist novels, as the narrators become becomes less knowing and less reliable, more scope is left to characters. The narrative mode shifts from first-person to third-person and introspection yields to the external apprehension, in this case, of the person Estella ("as if she…"). This

implies the expression of a tentative understanding of others' actions in the wider context of their motivations and intentions. It requires as well that the reader takes their discourses as actions, or speech acts -- What does the speaker's utterance, by itself, achieve? What is the utterance's effect on the hearer's action? Questions more or less explicitly formulated find their possible answers in the exploration of the hypothetical circumstances inferred from this necessarily incomplete perception of the working of someone else's mind.

In an earlier period, the exploration of someone else's interiority being deemed impossible or literarily inappropriate, the mysterious workings of a romantic sensibility had long been an acceptable excuse to make sense out of inconclusive experiences. Likewise, in realist novels, intuition remains operative; still, rather than channelling some undefined sentience, it is now to be informed by observation and insight. It is especially apparent in a narrative dealing primarily with a mystery (not necessarily a mystery novel) as it usually posits a single problem and calls for a single solution. A major part of the genre's interest resides in the very explicit display of the mode of reasoning of the mystery's elucidator, that is, his capacity at finding clues, identifying objects, events, facts, discourses as signs and interpreting them as such. For that reason, this thought process can be considered as a simpler version of the model that realist novels -- such as those by Conrad or James -- will report from an inside perspective and in the third person.

Some of the Western literature's earliest literary detectives are Sophocles's Oedipus (a tragedy), Voltaire's Zadig (in a philosophical tale) and E. A. Poe's chevalier Dupin (in mystery short stories); they would periodically display their mode of reasoning either to report the progress of their investigation or to justify their conclusion; they produced various

hypotheses which they sifted from a combination of some deductions and many inductive inferences. Peirce called this process abduction, that is

> the formation or adoption of a plausible but unproven explanation for an observed phenomenon… Abduction is followed by deduction to determine what specific evidence would prove such a hypothesis, then induction to extrapolate a general principle from specific findings. (OED s.v. "abduction")

The realist novel continued building on this early literary imitation of a thought process and extended it to the representation of the processes of production of more general open conjectures, that neither solicit nor refuse proof, such as idle speculations, meditation, moments of intuitive consciousness and empathy.

As an example of mind-reading, albeit still in the first person, we can consider how Dickens depicts what goes on in Pip's mind on his second visit to Satis House. Pip is received by Estella in the same manner as the first time. She brings him without any introduction into the presence of "three ladies and one gentleman" (GE 79). The description of this company stops at that. Estella has placed Pip in a corner where he "could see nothing of the room" (GE 79). However, there must be enough unreported clues in this environment to allow for Pip soon to venture a definitive guess as to the nature of this assembly: "Before I had been standing at the window five minutes, they somehow conveyed to me that they were all toadies and humbugs." How does Pip reach his conclusion? Sure enough, the shreds of their conversation overheard and reported by Pip soon after serve to confirm his assumption of their characters ("toadies and humbugs"). But Pip infers more than just that; he also realizes something that they could not have told him, "that each of them pretended not to know that the others were toadies and humbugs: because the admission that he or she did know it, would have made him or her out to be a toady and humbug." In other words, Pip judges that the

characters taking part in the scene -- because, as the saying goes, it takes one to know one -- are each aware of their common nature, as well as of the fact that they all share that knowledge, and that they all agree to pretend to ignore it. This means that Pip has been able to identify mentally with each one of them and perceive their complicit awareness of their contempt for each other and for themselves. Thus Pip-the-narrator reports that he has read the mind of the "toadies and humbugs" as they themselves were reading each other's mind. Although this is a rather negative outcome for an exercise in empathy, Pip has explored others' interiority; in fact, he has explored other individuals' minds as these individuals were themselves exploring each others' minds.

1.19 The Contribution of the Hypothetical to the Actual

The episode accounts for this probing transparently; we do not perceive Pip's mind-reading (of mind-reading minds) as a questionable happening. At other times, however, such reports from someone else's consciousness often accompany unresolved small mysteries (for example, Matthew Pocket's relation to Miss Havisham). Dickens's late novels offer many such perplexing occurrences with uncertain solutions. The point is that *Great Expectations* is not a mystery novel: no character is in charge of inferring the best explanation for the many such strands of narrative that lack beginning or closure as well as clear cause and effect (Mrs. Joe's surprising sudden fondness for Orlick, Mr. Jaggers's interest in Drummle). Such alternative happenings are invoked in realist novels to probe the fictional world and to outline its state of affairs. Unfolding in parallel with the actual plot to which they contribute some validation or contradiction, these alternative happenings are primarily material for the representation of characters' reasoning. These are critical to the apprehension of the narrative organization of the events; hence, they must comply with some logic that the author (and the

reader) assigns, with various modalities, to the thinking characters. Mental activities are diverse and therefore so are the functions of the recourse to hypotheticals. So far, I have discussed Pip's reliance on a candid and intuitive worldview (exaggerated by the dramatic irony of the narration) to guide his conjectures about the circumstances in which he is involved. At the opposite from Pip's speculative purpose, Mr. Jaggers turns to the hypothetical to impose his final view of the actual.

Mr. Jaggers is a lawyer. He presents his argument by setting out his opponent's own case in such a manner that, by submitting it to a relentless line of closed-ended questions, he can steer judges and juries toward his own desired conclusion. In other words, he presents a hypothesis that his opponent or audience cannot but admit as possible, because it is their own. For his own purpose, Mr. Jaggers reshapes this hypothesis appropriately enough, so that it does not appear fallacious or irrelevant. Then Mr. Jaggers -- through a tight sequence of questions that can barely be answered by anything other than yes or no -- seems to demonstrate that accepting the hypothesis implies the absolute impossibility of the adversarial position. For instance, Mr. Wemmick explains to Pip how, while defending a woman accused of the murder of a rival, Mr. Jaggers took the risk of accepting the prosecution's suggestion that she may also have killed her own child, which could lead to a more serious charge. The reason for Mr. Jaggers's decision was that, should the court decide to proceed with a formal consideration of the new accusation, it would need first to invalidate the case at hand,

> You set up the hypothesis that she destroyed her child. You must accept all consequences of that hypothesis. For anything we know, she may have destroyed her child… What then? You are not trying her for the murder of her child; why don't you? (GE 389)

Mr. Jaggers's tactics cannot be faulted. His rhetoric draws upon his ability to switch the qualifying modality of his logic as needed by his arguments. In this case, he switches from an epistemic logic to a deontic logic. He uses knowledge ("For anything we know, she may have…") to threaten the prosecution, already faced with a difficult case, with the legal obligation (" … why don't you?") to give precedence to an even more difficult one. Both Mr. Jaggers and his opponent rely upon the production of falsifiable inferences (induction) or untested hypotheses (abduction). What makes the difference is Mr. Jaggers's manipulative skills, served by a formidable rhetoric. He invests less in the coherence of his logos than in undermining the ethos of his opponent and leveraging the pathos of the jury. "'To sum up, sir,' said Mr. Wemmick, 'Mr. Jaggers was altogether too many for the jury, and they gave in.'" (GE 389) -- in fact, Mr. Jaggers takes a limited risk because he knows for certain that the baby's corpse could not be produced as the infant was Estella, already handed over to Miss Havisham.

Mr. Jaggers argues the hypothetical in order to unsettle, rather than falsify, any perception of validity or actuality of the adverse position. His method consists in introducing a qualifying modality to his opponent's conclusion. The opposing argument ends up being not wrong but just possibly wrong. This possibility leaves the conclusion of the argument open to any reversal Mr. Jaggers may later find convenient. He relies on the invocation of hypotheses designed to ensure the support of his argument by stirring up his listener to a faulty inference process. The first demonstration of this skill and of his "bullying interrogative manner" (GE 131) takes place at the local inn, when Pip is in the crowd enjoying Mr. Wopsle's public reading of the newspaper report of the trial of a "highly popular murder" (GE 130) case, hamming up heavily all the parts.

> The coroner, in Mr. Wopsle's hands, became Timon of Athens; the beadle, Coriolanus. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and we all enjoyed ourselves, and were delightfully comfortable. In this cosey state of mind we came to the verdict Wilful Murder. (GE 131)

Despite the comfortable unanimity in the pub in favour of this verdict, a stranger, Mr. Jaggers, takes Wopsle to task and exposes him mercilessly to the final contempt of his previously adoring audience. He has only three actual arguments, valid but banal and carefully formulated as threatening questions: "Do you know, or do you not know, that the law of England supposes every man to be innocent, until he is proved-proved -- to be guilty?" then "Do you know that none of these witnesses have yet been cross-examined?" (GE 132) and finally "Now, turn to that paper, and tell me whether it distinctly states that the prisoner expressly said that his legal advisers instructed him altogether to reserve his defence?" The agency of the three questions is less in the possible response they may receive than in the suggestion of possibilities they convey. The first question raises the possibility that the accused may be innocent; the second suggests that the witnesses may be unreliable; the third, that the accused is silenced by his own lawyers for some tactical purpose. At each question, Mr. Wopsle is taken aback by the aggressive tone. Then Mr. Jaggers immediately doubles him up by denouncing thunderously each hesitation as a refusal to answer,

> Out with it. Come! … Do you know or do you not know …? Don't evade the question. Either you know it, or you don't know it. Which is it to be? … Now! … Do you know it, or you don't know it? … What? You won't answer the question, yes or no? … Come, I only want word from you. Yes, or no?" (GE 131–132)

For this audience, Mr. Jaggers' intimidation tactic is certainly more operative than his argument. Each new application of pressure applied sways the opinion of the company further

against Mr. Wopsle, an act Mr. Jaggers routinely perform against the prosecution in front of judges and juries. Pip comments on Wopsle's demise as Mr. Jaggers pounds at him. At first "Mr. Wopsle hesitated, and we all began to conceive rather a poor opinion of him" (GE 131). Then, "We all began to suspect that Mr. Wopsle was not the man we had thought him, and that he was beginning to be found out" (GE 132). Finally, "We were all deeply persuaded that the unfortunate Wopsle had gone too far, and had better stop in his reckless career while there was yet time." As far as stage performance goes, the poor would-be thespian is no match for the lawyer. Nonetheless, there is more than theatrics to Mr. Jaggers' case against Wopsle. His point is that Wopsle was prejudiced in his mock sentence. Despite the fact that the witnesses were not cross-examined and that the accused reserved his defence, Wopsle did not allow for the possibility of his innocence, which the British law assumes until proven otherwise. Wopsle, the repressed thespian, is guilty of having no sense of the hypothetical, of lacking the imagination required of any would-be artist.

In a later chapter, Mr. Jaggers again brings up the hypothetical so that he may deny the actual: when pressed by Pip, he agrees to provide some answers regarding the origins of Estella. Weary of Pip's emotional reaction and of the possible consequences for Estella, his approach consists in advancing the revelations in the form of suppositions and simple hypotheses which he reserves the right to retract: "I'll put a case to you. Mind! I admit nothing" (GE 408). It is only once Pip has declared that he "quite understood that he expressly said that he admitted nothing" that Mr. Jaggers proceeds with his revelations, still carefully inserting the clause, "put the case that" before each of his most informative statements. He uses the expression fourteen times as he provides a complete exposition of the actual history of Estella, a history that will remain forever a secret to Estella. Still, at the close of his

rhetorically hypothetical account, he asks Pip and Mr. Wemmick to frame "very carefully" for themselves some honest hypotheses as to who would benefit from the revelation of this secret: "For whose sake would you reveal the secret? For the father? … For the mother? … For the daughter? …" As he is not one to rely upon the vagaries of imagination, Mr. Jaggers himself provides the excellent reasons for the secret to remain a secret, yet frames those reasons still as hypotheses on the possible consequences of a revelation.

1.20 Ambivalence and Contradiction in the Fictional Realist World

The examples of Mr. Jagger and Pip demonstrate that the hypothetical can both undermine and confirm the representation that a realist novel provides of a state of affairs. As we summon successive hypotheses, an uncertain actualization emerges from the alternatives that the text suggests. Depending upon the circumstances, we may judge Mr. Jaggers to be a mephistophelian manipulator or a skilful righter of wrongs. All the same, we may attribute to intellectual candor or moral weakness Pip's failure to cope with his expectations. This ambivalence results from the more nuanced response given by the realist novel to the increasing demand for a closer, deeper and more accurate representation of all aspects of actual human experience in its conflict with the prescriptions and proscriptions of the ideal: "In its various forms, it could portray complex human beings whose development and actions did not merely illustrate a pre-established set of norms and values" (Pavel, 2013, 261).

Earlier genres did not show such flexibility. The alternatives brought up by the questioner in Socratic dialogues always leads to the ironical destruction of his interlocutor's arguments. The hero of a chivalric romance has little choice; simply hesitating to step into the dwarf's cart or briefly flinching from the Green Knight's blow are signs of the knights' moral weakness. The conventions ruling these older genres remained aligned with strict binary

values. The recourse to conflicting styles to express opposing values was a formal convention, not an ironical undermining. Comic absurdity strengthens the wisdom of the eiron's argument; derision of their failures only reinforces Lancelot and Gawain's attachment to the chivalric code. "In accordance with this principle, rival tendencies -- serious and comic, idealist and derogatory -- coexist over the long term, fighting against each other and influencing one another" (Pavel, 2013, 261). In those older genres opposites describe the same state of affairs. Hence, one of the opposed terms must claim to be the actuality of the representation and the other must, in older genres, be a derogative confirmation of this description. In realist novels, however, the alternative to a claim of actuality about a state of affairs is the hypothetical alternative. In that respect, realism marks a different stage in the evolution of the novel:

> Situations that were assumed, as late as the eighteenth century, to be by definition comic or sordid -- the love life of a female servant, for example -- acquired a dramatic, even a tragic dimension in Richardson's *Pamela* and in the Goncourt brothers' *Germinie Lacerteux*, where they were described in a dignified style full of specific detail. (Pavel, 2013, 298)

The realist novel allows a wider perspective so that the character does not have to be reduced to a single defining feature treated in a single style. In order to follow a logic of coexisting opposites and to allow for the fertile conflict signified by their tension, the realist novel escapes the principle of bivalence (right-wrong, true-false, good-evil, etc.) and ascribes the contradictory aspects of the fictional world instead to the possible and actual. This undecidable perspective on the fictional world is maintained throughout the realist novel's evolution, and, particularly in Charles Dickens's later novels. As we shall see, Dickens's novels made such undecidability strikingly obvious from the start.

1.21 Incipits as Signposts of the Hypothetical

In what follows, I will use the term "incipit" to mean the opening of the novel in a rather general way; depending upon the need of the argument, it may refer to the opening words (phrase or clause), sentence, paragraph or even the first chapter. From the first pages of his novels, Dickens grants the same claim of plausibility to the emplotment of barely potential events as to the narration of actual events. This is an essential part of the author's technique and sets the tone, prefiguring the range of narrative possibilities that will preside over the development of the plot. The reader is most often introduced to the fictional universe through an entanglement of the familiar and the uncanny. This unstable environment announces how fuzzy the limits will be that separate the states of affairs that will obtain from their possible alternatives, which are at once never actual and never completely absent. The incipit acts as the inviting threshold into the text, whatever its genre (a tale, a police report, a sermon, etc.). It suggests, more or less seductively, what is to be found on the other side and sets the reader's expectations appropriately. However, in a work of fiction, something more is needed. As we enter the imaginary world, the knowledge we have developed of our own reality will be confronted there with imaginary experiences. The incipit must ease the transition from our actual context into the one staged for the novel. This is achieved in part by the promotion of some similarities between those worlds, which gratifies our need for familiarity, and in part also by arousing our curiosity for challenging but possibly rewarding differences. Using familiar tropes as lures, the incipit will often entice the reader to follow some not so humdrum path.

For instance, *Great Expectations* opens in the setting of a conventional sensation novel. In a graveyard by the marshes, an orphan tries to discover his origins by reading his

parents' and siblings' tombstones … and suddenly an escaped convict pounces upon him! The trappings of the sensational that are introduced here, at the same time as the theme of the quest for identity, will be sustained throughout the novel, blending together the sensation novel with a bildungsroman documenting Pip's formative years and ethical failures. In the same manner, the satirical tone of the opening context of *Hard Times* will frequently recur in a novel that satire by no means defines. It opens in a classroom scene. There, Mr. Gradgrind, the would-be fact-based rational social scientist and reformer, meets with "Girl number twenty." In front of the class, he makes her the lively butt of his patronizing and preachy utilitarian morgue. Confronting his contempt and possibly that of the rest of the class, the circus-raised Sissy Jupe is not ashamed to admit candidly that she likes flowers and find pretty their representations in carpets. The exchange could be introducing a possible picaresque and episodic variation on a common situation in such a type of novel: the send-up by a commonsensical servant or lady's maid of a master's dogmatism, snobbism, vanity, etc., with some Pickwick-versus-Weller-type humorous contrasts. Yet, as *Hard Times* progresses, it soon turns out to be a dark naturalistic account of pathetic destinies coming to grief in social and emotional collapse caused by a dogmatic adherence to a parody of utilitarianism.

Dickens's novels provide many such examples of openings that do not lead where expected. It is not a simple bait-and-switch operation. If they are meant to capture the reader's immediate attention, they are consistent with -- and awaken the interest for -- the themes that they introduce. Such is the striking vision of a megalosaurus waddling up Holborn Hill at the start of *Bleak House*, or the Sultan's orders "for the impaling of a horde of Turkish robbers, one by one" at the opening of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Those incipits claim for the novel a style rather than a genre, honestly or deceptively, indicating in which manner they may be

read, independently of what the novel's actual genre may be or may become. They are the author's first strategic move toward ensuring the reader's co-operation.

> … the text postulates the co-operation of the reader as a condition of actualization. We can state this in a more precise manner: *a text is a product of which the interpretative fate must be part of its own generative mechanism*; to generate a text means to implement a strategy taking into account the anticipation of the moves of the other -- as in any strategy. (Eco 65)[8]

Thus, an important part of the author's skill resides in his or her ability to take the reader beyond the limits of the genre expected. Literary conventions evolved in ways demonstrated in Dickens's later works by the suggestion of other possible ways of the world alongside the actuality of the fictional universes. Dickens developed a strategy aimed at what Eco calls a "Model Reader" (Eco 68), one that could actualize the text in a manner planned by the author himself; ideally, such a reader's interpretation would reflect the author's own creative intent. "To anticipate a Model Reader does not mean to only 'wish' one exists, but rather to construct one by acting upon the text. Hence, the text contributes to producing the competency it relies upon"[9] (Eco 69). The incipit plays a critical part in such a strategy. It presupposes the Model Reader's basic competency and builds on it. The Model Reader does not need to have a direct knowledge of the works of Burke or Carlyle to understand the situations, the themes, and the

[8] « […] le texte postule la coopération du lecteur comme condition d'actualisation. Nous pouvons dire cela d'une façon plus précise : *un texte est un produit dont le sort interprétatif doit faire partie de son propre mécanisme génératif* ; générer un texte signifie mettre en œuvre une stratégie dont font partie les prévisions des mouvements de l'autre—comme dans toute stratégie. »

[9] « […] prévoir son lecteur modèle ne signifie pas uniquement "espérer" qu'il existe, cela signifie aussi agir sur le texte de façon à le construire. Un texte repose donc sur une compétence mais, de plus, il contribue à la produire. »

emotions mentioned in the historiographical exposé on history and individual destinies that opens *A Tale of Two Cities*. Nor does he need more than a common understanding of compulsive passion popularized by romance, gothic, and sensation novels to absorb the rendering of the psychotic episode introducing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The incipit provides a sufficiently incomplete and intriguing denotation, calling for the reader himself to fill the gaps connotatively with the connotation as his own interpretative activity progresses.

Dickens's incipits -- his narrative beginnings -- encourage the reader's interpretation as they affirm, vividly and deceptively, that they introduce only conjectures about the fictional world being entered; they assert the uncertain. Furthermore, if the reader attempts to condense these speculations into a single actual conclusion by referring to his own experience of reality, the text will deftly resist and drive him rather toward the questioning of his own perception. Thus, great expectations will rise unexpectedly from a brutal encounter with an escaped convict in a dismal graveyard by the marshes; hard times tragically await the hard-nosed utilitarian that misses the fact "that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelf-intereth" (HT 390); there is no bleaker house than where the High Court of Chancery sits, and the metaphorical megalosaurus is not on Holborn Hill but in Chesney Wold, Lincolnshire; the murderous compulsion that may explain the disappearance of Edwin Drood could be hiding in the shadow cast on an oriental fantasy by an ancient cathedral. Dickens carves for his account a convincing narrative path into an entanglement of fictional facts and plausible uncertainties, starting with an incipit that suggests the many "possible ways in which anything can be supposed to have come about" (Peirce, 1892, 324). In the next three chapters, I shall examine in more detail how the hypotheses suggested in some of Dickens's incipits result in reiterated inquiries, leading in turn to a succession of new hypotheses spawned by the ambiguous

perception of an uncertain reality, thus confirming that “the whole fabric of our knowledge is one matted felt of pure hypothesis confirmed and refined by induction” (Peirce, 1901).

2 The Incipit of *David Copperfield*

2.1 David Copperfield, Author

David Copperfield is a fictional novelist's autobiography. There are well-documented biographical similarities between Charles Dickens and David Copperfield. The most important to my argument is that they are both writers. Among all of Dickens's protagonists, David is the only novelist. He is not simply a first-person narrator, like Pip Pirrip or Esther Summerson. Rather, at the time of the writing of his autobiography, he is already a recognised successful professional author of fictions. In this chapter, I shall discuss the relation between Charles Dickens's and David Copperfield's literary projects, their acts of writing; the former having already taken place -- resulting in the novel *David Copperfield* -- and the latter, about to unfold from its incipit.

I shall argue that the situation created by an author writing about another author -- who resembles him -- writing about himself, allows for the creative entanglement of three authoring instances, the actual author, the author narrating, the author narrated. I shall discuss some aspects of the hypothetical narrative environment that results from the confusion of their worlds. Each represented constituent of this context benefits from the alternation, conflation and confusion of the three deixis -- the three narrative instances, their situation in time and space. I shall identify and define a certain narrative device deployed by Dickens to move between the three worlds and to shape the hypothetical resulting universe.

This device is a variation on a narratological figure that Gérard Genette called "narratorial metalepsis." It applies to the narrative situation where narrative instances (author, narrator, character, in some cases also the reader) move into another narrative level. In the more blatant examples, metalepsis is

> this deliberate transgression of the framing level … when an author (or its reader) introduces himself in the fictional action of his story or when a character of this story interferes with the author's or reader's extradiegetic existences[10] (Genette, 1972 360).

The name "metalepsis" is borrowed from a rhetorical figure associated with "*prolepsis, analepsis, syllepsis,* and *paralepsis*"[11] (Genette, 1972 244) -- all these figures having in common that they imply a change of level of sort: temporality (analepsis, prolepsis), meaning (syllepsis) or expression (paralepsis). There are also other figures applicable to the representation of shifting narrative positions -- I will show later how the hypotyposis is applied in a certain episode. I suggest that a form of metalepsis is at work in the combined interventions, throughout the novel, of the author Charles Dickens, the writing author David-the-narrator and the author-in-development, David-the-character. Although there is no transgression of narrative level, the conjunction of the various expression of their presence brings about a "manipulation … of this particular causal relation that joins, in a way or another, the author to the work, or more generally, the producer of a representation to the representation itself"[12] (Genette, 2004 14).

I propose to consider that such a "particular causal relation" exists between the narrated (defined in 1.6) and the narrating -- that is "the signs in a narrative representing the

[10] « […] cette transgression délibérée du seuil d'enchâssement […] lorsqu'un auteur (ou son lecteur) s'introduit dans l'action fictive de son récit ou lorsqu'un personnage de cette fiction vient s'immiscer dans l'existence extradiégétique de l'auteur ou du lecteur. »

[11] « […] *prolepse, analepse, syllepse* et *paralepse* »

[12] « […] manipulation […] de cette relation causale particulière qui unit dans un sens ou dans l'autre, l'auteur à son œuvre, ou plus généralement le producteur d'une représentation à cette représentation elle-même. »

narrating activity, its origin, its destination, its context" (Prince, 2003 57). As a consequence, I suggest extending the definition of the narratorial metalepsis, so that it can apply to any occurrence of confusion between these two levels. The influence of the narrated on the narrating is obvious, if only for the fact that events must occur before they can be emploted. I shall discuss in a later chapter (5.5) how the narrating act can in turn influence the narrated.

Before focussing on the incipit of *David Copperfield*, I shall provide some examples of my "weak form" of metalepsis, where the narrating and the narrated levels are confused (rather than transgressed). As I mentioned earlier, the novel is about a novelist writing a novel about a novelist (himself). Strangely, this fictional autobiography of a professional writer is rarely about his art or his creative development. The novel acknowledges the importance of literature at critical junctures in David's life. Yet, if his relation to literature is recognised for its role in his life experience, it is primarily for its influence on his social and professional development -- his survival from child abuse, his achievement of financial independence -- , never for his artistic progression. The novel remains throughout a bildungsroman and sometimes approaches the domain of the künstlerroman.

David meets with literature at an early age, when, practically abandoned by his helpless mother to the cruel control and abuse of his stepfather, he overcomes despair through reading novels:

> I believe I should have been almost stupefied but for one circumstance. My father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs… From that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe, came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time, -- they, and the

> Arabian Nights, and the Tales of the Genii, -- and did me no harm; for whatever harm was in some of them was not there for me; I knew nothing of it. (DC 66)

It should be noticed that this last quote starts with "I believe…" in the simple present, marking it as part of the narrating -- using the simple past "I believed" would have placed it in the narrated. All that follows from "My father…" is in the simple past of the character's actions. Thus, both the narrator's and the character's temporalities are present in the passage, in the apposition of the narrator's present belief -- in the character's hypothetical "stupefaction" -- to the character's actual past actions (or thoughts). The former does not concern the latter: the narrator hypothesises on the possible mental state of the character at the time, not on what he did. Still, because of their juxtaposition, the narrator's belief (an unrelated hypothetical proposition) transmits a nuance of hypotheticality to the character's memories (however representative of the past actuality they may be). This process of transmission of uncertainty from the narrating to the narrated, amplifying the hypothetical natures of remembrances, is repeated in the rest of the passage, when David, a semantic reader, finds solace in books, reading to achieve deep immersion and strong identification:

> It is curious to me how I could ever have consoled myself … by impersonating my favourite characters… I have been Tom Jones (a child's Tom Jones, a harmless creature) for a week together. I have sustained my own idea of Roderick Random for a month at a stretch, … Every barn in the neighbourhood, every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own, in my mind, connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them. I have seen Tom Pipes go climbing up the church-steeple; I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back, stopping to rest himself upon the wicket-gate; and I know that Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr. Pickle, in the parlour of our little village alehouse. (DC 66–67)

Here again, it is the contiguity of the narrator's immediate inconclusive mulling in simple present ("It is curious to me…") with the character's more assured reminiscence that gives its tone of hypotheticality to the whole passage. The whole episode is finally appropriated by the narrating, when its conclusion confirms it to be a metanarrative comment -- that is a comment "about narrative; describing narrative" (Prince, 2003, 51) -- : "The reader now understands, as well as I do, what I was when I came to that point of my youthful history to which I am now coming again" (DC 67). The syntaxial proximity of the actual (only suggested by temporality) of the narrating with the hypothetical (assumed because built on memories) of the narrated allows the narrator, in a direct address to the reader, to announce a return to a narrative account that was never left, but only rendered more conjectural. By bringing closer the narrator's and the character's worlds, a realistic degree of uncertainty is brought about, a reminding to the reader of the hypotheticality of any invocation of the past.

David's readings not only allow him to survive his successive ordeals, but the narratives, now ingrained in his memory, will make him a popular storyteller at boarding school, most of all winning for him the exploitative protection -- and the ambiguous friendship -- of the school's main bully, James Steerforth:

> [He] asked me if I had got that book? I told him no, and explained how it was that I had read it, and all those other books of which I have made mention. "And do you recollect them?" Steerforth said. "Oh yes," I replied… "Then I tell you what, young Copperfield," said Steerforth, 'you shall tell 'em to me. I can't get to sleep very early at night, and I generally wake rather early in the morning. We'll go over 'em one after another. We'll make some regular Arabian Nights of it." … What ravages I committed on my favourite authors in the course of my interpretation of them, I am not in a condition to say … but I had a profound faith in them, and I had, to the best of my belief, a simple, earnest manner of narrating what I did narrate; and these qualities went a long way. (DC 103)

In this quote of pure narrated, upon discovering his interpretative and narrative qualities, David realises his ability to produce a literary work. More original creations are soon announced in a metanarrative comment suggested by a reminiscence of his time in child labour in London:

> I set down this remembrance here, because it is an instance to myself of the manner in which I fitted my old books to my altered life, and made stories for myself, out of the streets, and out of men and women; and how some main points in the character I shall unconsciously develop, I suppose, in writing my life, were gradually forming all this while. (DC 179)

We can notice at work a process similar to the one highlighted before: narrated past actions (expressed in simple past) -- "the manner in which I fitted my old books…" -- framed between its present declaration as a memory in the narrating -- "I set down…" -- and the analeptic justification ("how some main point … were gradually forming") of a proleptic metanarrative comment ("I shall unconsciously develop…"). There again, narrating and narrated are brought in a confusing proximity. The actuality of the narrated character's actions is toned down by being identified as a narrator's memory for the benefit of his critical remark on the narration (in a reminder that David-the narrator is an author and that David-the-character will be one).

David's later activities as an actual writer of fictions are at first only the subject of parenthetical asides such as mentioning that, to watch his (first) wife, he would lay his pen down, "for I wrote a good deal now, and was beginning in a small way to be known as a writer." (DC 652) or that, "as I was returning from a solitary walk, thinking of the book I was then writing -- for my success had steadily increased with my steady application, and I was engaged at that time upon my first work of fiction -- " (DC 672). When in the end, David becomes a successful writer, the fact is reported in the simple past of the narrated level:

> I laboured hard at my book, without allowing it to interfere with the punctual discharge of my newspaper duties; and it came out and was very successful. I was not stunned by the praise which sounded in my ears, notwithstanding that I was keenly alive to it, and thought better of my own performance, I have little doubt, than anybody else did. (DC 696)

It is at this point that David-the-character's professional achievement disclosure is interrupted by David-the-narrator's communication. He announces -- in the simple present of the narrating -- that there will not be any further information on the topic in this novel:

> It is not my purpose, in this record, though in all other essentials it is my written memory, to pursue the history of my own fictions. They express themselves, and I leave them to themselves. When I refer to them, incidentally, it is only as a part of my progress. (DC 696)

This is another of the narrator's metanarrative intervention: this novel is the story of his life; however, it will not include any discussion about the nature or the content of his work. Using almost the same words as Dickens in his preface -- which I shall discuss later -- David will let his "fictions" speak for themselves. Yet, for David-the-character, success was only the confirmation that he had reached a necessary stage in an evolutionary development process; he was meant to be a writer, not by a divine decree, but by the very Darwinian combination of "nature and accident." As opposed to a memory or a metanarrative remark in the present of the narrating, the actuality of this realisation takes place in the past, and is claimed as an actual narrated fact: "Having some foundation for believing, by this time, that nature and accident had made me an author, I pursued my vocation with confidence" (DC 696).

David Copperfield, both the narrator and the character, each at their narrative level will confirm their authorial intent. As said previously, their intent reflects that of Dickens, expressed in his successive prefaces (using a similar wording). The narration repeats that the

story will say nothing of the narrator's works -- which must stand on their own; this statement, in the narrating, frames the expression, at the narrated level this time, of the character's dedication to his art:

> In pursuance of my intention of referring to my own fictions only when their course should incidentally connect itself with the progress of my story, I do not enter on the aspirations, the delights, anxieties, and triumphs of my art. That I truly devoted myself to it with my strongest earnestness, and bestowed upon it every energy of my soul, I have already said. If the books I have written be of any worth, they will supply the rest. I shall otherwise have written to poor purpose, and the rest will be of interest to no one. (DC 849)

All the examples I have discussed in this chapter concerned writers writing about writers and writing. At no point the writer's instantiations mentioned (author, narrator, character) actually transgress the limit of their own narrative level: Dickens does not show up in the actions or discourses of his novel and as for David-the-narrator and David-the-character, they belong to the same narrative level. The transgressions operative in these examples do not occur between narrative levels. Rather, they are the frequent "contaminations" between the level of the narrating act and the level of the narrated event. Such a relation could be identified in any homodiegetic narrative. However, contrarily to simple narrators like say, Pip or Esther, who rarely comment on anything else that the narrated events, David, being a writer, comments on his own narrating act. That is how David Copperfield's autobiography starts.

2.2 Actual Narrator and Hypothetical Hero

The novel starts with a self-reflexive musing at the very opening of the novel: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (DC 13). This *David Copperfield*'s metanarrative incipit immediately invokes the hypothetical and the contingent by denying the reality and the

necessity of a hero reduced to being a construction from "these pages." This denial proceeds in several ways. First, it challenges the conventional necessity for a novel to reveal an identifiable hero. This consequence of the absolute determinism of the literary norm had been challenged before. In the ironical authorial mode, Jane Austen, playfully exposing the formula of the romantic novel, declares in *Northanger Abbey*'s incipit, the necessary heroic quality, no matter how unlikely, of Catherine Morland. "No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be a heroine" (Austen, 1817, 5). Furthermore, the teleological added necessity of matrimony imposes that "when a young lady is to be a heroine … something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way" (Austen, 1817, 8).

In the case of *David Copperfield*, not only is the necessity of a hero denied, but in addition, should this autobiography have a hero, this hero would not necessarily have to be the first-person narrator. Hence, this fictional autobiography may be relieved of two formal conventions of the genre: the first-person narrator may not be the hero and there may not be a hero at all. If there is one, it could be anyone; the possibility that there is a hero at all is neither expressly denied nor implied, which suggests that the role of the hero is a contingent narrative function. For instance, it will explain why James Steerforth, who appears to most readers as the novel's worst villain, will be the object of David's admiration to the end:

> No need, O Steerforth, to have said, when we last spoke together, in that hour which I so little deemed to be our parting-hour -- no need to have said, "Think of me at my best!" I had done that ever; and could I change now, looking on this sight! (DC 801)

David Copperfield's resistance to the heroic conventions (necessity of a hero, necessity of an autobiographical narrator to be the hero) as early as the incipit announces the displacement of the hero in favour of the protagonist. The representation of the states of affairs

in Dickens's fictional world (David Copperfield's actual world) will remain open to contingent narrative choices made among many suggested possible plots. These propositions concerning the hero are early manifestations in the narrator's discourses of the hypothetical nature of his current and past perceived realities. The final actualization, if it ever occurs, will result from a contingent choice in a field of possibilities. The narrator has precedence over the character when it comes to stating the actual and the hypothetical. David-the-narrator can provide all the facts concerning Steerforth despite David-the-character's blinding infatuation. The hero is or will be whomever the reader decides, based upon his or her interpretation of the state of affairs depicted by the author in its actual as well as in its hypothetical aspects. This announces the departure by later realist novels from the requirement to associate some noteworthy interest with the main character (who will have replaced the virtuous hero). In later realism, the narrative can be centered on anyone, however unexceptional he or she may be; it is a contingent choice conditioned only by authorial intent. This departure has not yet altogether taken place in *David Copperfield,* in which each character benefits from some exceptional feature. Yet, none of them are announced as the possible hero, starting with David himself. His metanarrative comment makes this clear despite the fact that he has no other story to tell than his own. This suggests that the hero of this novel may remain hypothetical because there is no need for one. The interest is more in the storytelling than in the story. Thus, the real hero is David-the-narrator, not David-the-character.

2.3 One's Life and the Story of One's Life

David raises the question of the "heroic" only to postpone the identification of heroic character: this perplexity has to do with the relations between David's two personae, narrator and character; they reside as well in the manners in which the author and the reader may be

relating to them. I have already discussed how the incipit of this fictional autobiography casts an immediate doubt on the conventional attribute of the first-person narrator, namely his "heroic" centrality to the story. By the very definition of this literary genre, the first-person narrator should be, if not the hero, at least the focal character or protagonist. Why should the opening sentence raise the hypothesis that this might not be so? The reason is that this incipit identifies being the hero of the *"story of his own life"* with being the hero of *"his own life."* In his early essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" [1920–1923] (Bakhtin, 1990), Bakhtin discusses the role played by the categories of "I" and "another" in the representation of the organization of human relations, in a way that suggests that Copperfield's apparent confusion may actually be an authorial expression of Dickens's ethical and ontological perspective on the self: one's consciousness of the other is the necessary condition to one's consciousness of one's own uniqueness.

The obvious difference between one's *own life* (the consciousness of one's life) and one's *story of one's life* is that the former is not a literary expression *per se*. Bakhtin's argument goes as follows: by itself, one's awareness of one's existence and experience, although a psychic and cognitive event, is not structured as an aesthetic representation of one's life; it is not a literary or even simply a narrative representation (although its temporal structure aligns it with narrative). Even in the privacy of our consciousness, our worldview is not arranged as a collection of narratives, let alone, as narratives with aesthetic value. Narratives are present in our way of constituting our self-consciousness, but our thinking is not exclusively structured by or even composed from narratives. Bakhtin expresses that fact with almost the same words as David-the-narrator: "my own existence is devoid of aesthetic value, devoid of plot-bearing significance… *I am not the hero of my own life*" [my emphasis]

(Bakhtin, 1990, 112). Thus, Bakhtin challenges the assumption that the autobiographical first-person author's expression should be the main structuring element of the narrative. "Neither in biography nor in autobiography does the *I-for-myself* (my relationship to myself) represent the organizing, constitutive moment of form" (Bakhtin, 1990, 151) The autobiographical narrator's expression of his self-perception anticipates and includes his perception by others, expressed as what he imagines would be their narrative of his life, and the narrator foresees this narrative based upon his understanding of their common ethical environment,

> My consciousness of a possible narrator, the axiological context of a possible narrator, organizes my acts, thoughts and feelings where, with respect to their value, they are involved in the world of others. Each one of these *constituents of my life* may be perceived within the whole of the narrative -- a narrative that is the *story of my life*; each one may be found on everyone's lips. (Bakhtin, 1990, 153) [my emphases]

Thus, for Bakhtin, this echo of the others' perception of the narrated self is a creative necessity. It is the device that gives voice to perspectives that the narrator can imagine but remain impossible for him to adopt (elsewhere, Bakhtin compares it to trying to look at one's own nape).

> Without these stories told by others, my life would not only lack fullness and clarity in its content, but would also remain internally dispersed, divested of any value-related *biographical unity* … my *I-for-myself* is incapable of narrating anything. But the axiological position of the other, which is so indispensable for biography, is the position closest to me: I immediately become involved in it through the others, *who are the heroes of my life* [this emphasis only is mine] and *through the narrators of my life*. (Bakhtin, 1990, 154–155)

Such an aesthetic expression of a human existence and experience can only be the result of several elements: dialogues among the cast that include the narrator-character, the other

characters voicing meanings sensed by the narrator but expressed as the comments of "a possible narrator" and, finally, the reader's own inferences from these dialogical confrontations.

This dialogical perspective on the narration of one's life applies to a first-person narrator such as David, who also happens to be occupying the author function, as someone concerned with the issues of literary representation and its aesthetics. I shall discuss later in more detail how David ensures the recognition of other characters' contribution by framing his novel between the accounts of two events in his life that he admits he cannot possibly report directly and therefore requires an account by others: his birth, "… I was born (as *I have been informed and believe*)" (DC 13), and his death, "O Agnes … when I close my life … may I … find thee near me *pointing upward*!" (882) (my emphases).

The perception of *one's life* as the *story of one's life* is effectively supported by a specific rhetorical device meant to conflate or confuse reality with its representation: the metalepsis, or more precisely -- to distinguish it from the narratorial metalepsis -- the "authorial metalepsis"[13] (Genette, 2004.10), a figure of speech remotely associated with metonymy. "One can attach to the *Metalepsis* the means by which a poet, a writer, is represented or represents himself as producing himself what he, after all, only tells or describes"[14] (Fontanier, 128). Authorial metalepsis identifies the representation of an action with the performance of the action itself. Recourse to authorial metalepsis grants the narrator

[13] « la métalepse de l'auteur »

[14] « On peut rapporter à la *métalepse* le tour par lequel un poëte, un écrivain, est représenté ou se représente comme produisant lui-même ce qu'il ne fait, au fond, que raconter ou décrire. »

the main agency over the narrated. If representing is performing, then it is irrelevant for the narrator to be or not to be the hero; David will dominate the novel, maybe not as a conventional hero (as in epic or romance), but as the homodiegetic narrative authority; he is the source of the actual heroism demonstrated consistently or occasionally by others such as Ham, Mr. Dick, Mr. Peggotty, Traddle or Mr. Micawber.

2.4 A Logic of Contingency

Dickens's recourse to authorial metalepsis -- in my extended definition of the device (see 2.1) -- foregrounds the ethical and ontological meaning of David's metanarrative challenge to the autobiography genre. As a rhetorical expression, it gives literary form to the question of the necessity of the autobiographical hero and of his identity. Thus, it reasserts Bakhtin's view of the "axiological position of the other, which is so indispensable for biography," so necessary to the constitution of the "*biographical unity* … my *I-for-myself*" reached "through the others, who are the heroes of my life and *through the narrators of my life*" (Bakhtin, 1990, 154–155). An appropriate logic allows for the contingency that not only could David either be or not be the hero (in any conventional sense of the word) of *his life* or of *the story of his life*, but furthermore, that the revelation of who this hero might be, if there is one at all, could itself be exposed as hypothetical. Contingency here is expressed by the temporality of futurity: "Whether I *shall* turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station *will* be held by anybody else…" (My emphases). To avoid the perplexing difficulties of a future contingent proposition, truth is set up as something to be revealed, if at all, later. The path toward that knowledge is represented as tentative, hypothetical, and contingent, rather than as necessary.

It is left to the reader to find out what it is exactly that "these pages *must* show" (my emphasis). In this last clause, the auxiliary "must" implies only an epistemic necessity. In logical terms, a proposition (a statement that may be true or false) is epistemically necessary just in case empirical evidence and ideal reasoning are sufficient to rule out its negation (Kment 4). To put it more simply, something is epistemically necessary for me if to the best of my knowledge and my understanding it could not be otherwise. In the case of David-the-narrator, his knowledge of what will constitute the narrated, that is the events that make *The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery* (the novel's actual title), is what provides the empirical background. Nevertheless, undetermined possibilities dependent upon the existence and the identity of the hero will emanate from the speaker's narrating perspective and performance rather than from his experience of the narrated. In other words, the contingency of the hero's existence and identity derives above all from David's knowledge of literature and its conventions -- a significant part of his perspective -- rather than from his "personal history and experience."

From early childhood, David-the-character is an avid reader of fiction and a storyteller; David-the-narrator is already a published author of novels. David's knowledge of what "these pages must show" results from his narrator's inductive generalization of what other particular instances of similar "pages" may have shown him (and the reader) before. Depending upon the context, "must show" should be taken as *surely* or *possibly* or *certainly* or *probably* or *preferably, etc.,* "these pages must show." Whatever the modal nuance applicable, this is not an answer, but rather the promise of the possibility of an answer, an answer for now at best suspended. The narrator "must" infer this answer from his writing as it unfolds (and the reader from his reading) or rather, considering the epistemic modality of "must," the narrator (or the

reader) "*surely* or *possibly* or *certainly* or *probably* or *preferably, etc.,* must" infer it. There might be an answer, but there is no commitment to that eventuality. Assessing the possibility of an answer and its nature will require some additional knowledge and this knowledge will not derive from direct evidence. If that were the case, then the narrator would have said, "these pages *will* show."

This effort to avoid the modal fallacy (which says that actuality implies necessity; what happens, had to happen) implies an understanding of epistemic necessity by the narrator, which is aptly summarized later in this first chapter by his father's aunt, Betsey Trotwood. Learning about the abductive reason of her late nephew (David Copperfield Sr.) for naming his house "The Rookery," she comments, "David Copperfield from head to foot! Calls a house a rookery when there's not a rook near it, and *takes the birds on trust, because he sees the nests*!" (DC 18, my emphasis). Seeing rooks' nests, David Sr. may hypothesize that there must be rooks; however, this is an indirect inference. Unlike a conclusion inferred from actually seeing rooks, "must" presupposes the presence of an indirect inference or deduction rather than of a direct observation" (Fintel & Gillies 351). Epistemic necessity is thus a product of a hypothetical reasoning, confirmed by the fact that "*must* carries an *evidential* signal, in particular it signals that the speaker has reached [his] conclusion via an indirect inference" (Fintel & Gillies 353).

Just like David Copperfield Sr. who "takes the birds on trust, because he sees the nests," should the narrator (or the reader) take the existence of a hero on trust because this is a novel? Should we take the narrator to be that hero on trust because it is his autobiography? This is not the case in realist novels, as their various modalities tone down any certitude and as a logic without necessity and an ontology without direct evidence generate a confusing

profusion of evidential signals. Only the consideration of the resulting hypothetical states of affairs will allow the reader to ascertain where among all possible worlds the novel has gone and, there, who the hero is.

> … all information about the world is information … about where in the space of all possible worlds the actual world is located. My total information about the world can be identified with the set of possible worlds that I cannot rule out on the basis of my empirical evidence and ideal reasoning. As I gather more and more empirical evidence, I can progressively narrow down the range of possibilities. (Kment 4)

Many hypotheses can be produced and much empirical evidence collected before any actual attribute from a character, even from an autobiographical narrator, can be inferred. Hence, what "these pages must show" is mostly the temporal and dialogical development of "narrative identities, that is, the sort of identity to which a human being has access thanks to the mediation of the narrative function" (Ricoeur, 1991, 73).

The concept of narrative as the conflation of the story told with the storytelling -- a concept I ascribe to Dickens as reflected in David-the-narrator's opening words -- is already hinted at in Bakhtin's concept of a hero discussed earlier (in 2.2). The character's identity, heroic or otherwise, will arise from the dialogue with the "stories told by others" -- it is this dialogue that gives one's life story "any value-related biographical unity" (Bakhtin, 1990, 154–155). Paul Ricoeur further consolidated this view by defining a representation of identity as a character's development resulting from the temporal dynamic of the narrated. David, narrator and character, will produce and emerge from his *History and Experience* -- as in the novel's title -- through both identification with and differentiation from the other. A product of the narrative, narrative identity, with its temporal markings, settles the apparent contradiction that arises from deferring the configuration of the narrated past to the future of the narrating.

> The person, understood as a character in the narrative, is not an entity distinct from its "experiences." Quite the contrary: she shares the regime of the dynamic identity specific to the narrated story. The narrative builds up the character's identity, that we can call his narrative identity, by building up that of the narrated story. It is the identity of the story that makes the character's identity.[15] (Ricoeur, 1990, 175)

Thus, by introducing at the same time the narrator and his hypothetical relation to the hero, the incipit reveals a challenge to the validity or the modality of the representation of his autobiographical narrator as well as of any other character possibly qualifying as a hero. We have seen how the protagonist first hypothesizes about *who*m the hero may be, if there *must* be one. I shall now add to these two sources of hypothetical consideration (identity and existence) a third modality that pertains again to the possible hero's identity in two additional senses, sameness and uniqueness (the opposite respectively of difference and generality). In the hypothesis that there will be a hero, whoever he is, another source of the hypothetical is *what* the hero could be, both the hero as narrative convention and the hero as personification of an ethical ideal. What *is* the sort of hero "these pages must show?" This metanarrative concern seems at first to be internal, the answer residing somewhere subsequent in the narration. Still, the final clause of the incipit says no more than "these pages must show." Thus, it cannot be a self-reflexive metanarrative, temporarily hiding an authorial knowledge soon to be revealed in

[15] « La personne, comprise comme personnage du récit, n'est pas une entité distincte de ses "expériences". Bien au contraire : elle partage le régime de l'identité dynamique propre à l'histoire racontée. Le récit construit l'identité du personnage, qu'on peut appeler son identité narrative, en construisant celle de l'histoire racontée. C'est l'identité de l'histoire qui fait l'identité du personnage. »

a metanarrative prolepsis. If that were the case, it would not allow for any qualifying modality and would not even defer the answer to any future possible agency. It would say "these pages will show."

This incipit highlights the contingent nature of both the future of the narrative act and the past of the narrated action. The hero's identity will emerge unfinalized, for the narrator, from his consciousness; for the character, from his action. For David, the narrator and author, the storytelling is about to start. The incipit is the threshold where the past character has become the present narrator, through the configuration of a choice of incidents, situations and experiences, some possible, some actual, and none of them necessary. The narrator is concerned with the future discovery of the hero (es); a concern relevant primarily to the literary norm, to the narration. On the other hand, the narrated about to be unveiled at the second sentence is given the value of the hypothetical, of the actual being reduced to its representation: "To begin my life with the beginning of my life…" (DC 13). The narrated is where any possible hero will develop his moral measure from the ethical environment suggested by the narrator's selection of events and their emplotment. In the narrated are prescribed the norms that will define the ethical standing of the characters and in particular of the possible heroes, their belief system being directly reflected in their discourse. *David Copperfield*'s characters (like, for Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's heroes) are "*not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse*" (italics in the original text) (Bakhtin, 1984, 7). Wayne Booth introduced Bakhtin's argument as follows:

> Heroes are no longer diminished to the dominating consciousness of the author; secondary characters are no longer encompassed by and diminished to their usefulness to heroes -- or to the author. Characters are, in short, respected as full subjects, shown as "consciousness" that can never be fully defined or exhausted,

> rather than as objects fully known, once and for all, in their roles -- and then discarded as expendable. (Bakhtin, 1984 xxiii)

This applies as well to Dickens's cast of characters; all the members of the Peggotty, Murdstone, Steerforth, Micawber families, and many other potential heroes or villains, will be revealed not only by their own discourse but also their own specific language (down to their lisp, accent, dialect and all). Booth's mention of "the dominating consciousness of the author" is not insignificant. Whatever confusion could arise from a novel which has for the narrator its author-function, albeit fictional and somewhat unreliable, there is no metanarrative or metafictional doubt that David is his author. He may channel the real author's voice, but it is an intent Dickens denies in his preface before anything is said and denies again in his own metafictional comment.

2.5 David's Incipit as a Mirror of Charles's Preface

David's narration starts with the impossible report of his birth ("… I was born (as I have been informed and believe)"; this comes just after a couple of metanarrative statements, including the novel's incipit:

> Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) …

In his metanarrative incipit David claims the literary nature of his project. In that respect, David mirrors another project, one expressed in all the book editions of *David Copperfield* and described in the author's preface. Dickens wrote two prefaces in 1850 and 1869 and at least one of them has always been published to open the book edition as an integral and essential paratextual component of the work. In both versions, Dickens declares that, at the time of

writing his preface in 1850, he must control a strong feeling of immersion that could lead him to superfluous comments on his work,

> I do not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from this Book, in the first sensations of having finished it, to refer to it with the composure which this formal heading would seem to require. My interest in it, is so recent and strong; and my mind is so divided between pleasure and regret -- pleasure in the achievement of a long design, regret in the separation from many companions -- that I am in danger of wearying the reader whom I love, with personal confidences, and private emotions. Besides which, all that I could say of the Story, to any purpose, I have endeavoured to say in it. (DC 11)

The 1869 preface to the "Charles Dickens Edition" repeats word for word the 1850 preface with the important addition of the following paragraph:

> So true are these avowals at the present day, that I can now only take the reader into one confidence more. Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is DAVID COPPERFIELD. (Dickens, 1869)

This fondness has often been attributed to some documented biographical similarities existing between Dickens and David and to some of Dickens's social and political engagements. In both prefaces, however, Dickens addresses only one single topic and it is not David, either as a character or as a narrator. What Dickens means by the capitalized "DAVID COPPERFIELD" is "this Book"; what he recognizes as his "favourite child" is the novel. "I do not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from this Book, in the first sensations of having finished it, to refer to it with the composure which this formal heading would seem to require." The character going by the same name, David Copperfield, is only one of a "crowd of the creatures of his brain." Both versions of the one-page preface convey the same clear

metafictional message and they are exclusively about Dickens-the-novelist's personal authorial experience and creative process.

> It would concern the reader little, perhaps, to know, how sorrowfully the pen is laid down at the close of a two-years' imaginative task; or how an Author feels as if he were dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world, when a crowd of the creatures of his brain are going from him for ever. Yet, I have nothing else to tell; unless, indeed, I were to confess (which might be of less moment still) that no one can ever believe this Narrative, in the reading, more than I have believed it in the writing. (DC 11)

Dickens, in the present tense that we shall also find in the first chapter title and the actual incipit, distinguishes his writing project, "a two-years' imaginative task" from some of its outcomes, the "crowd of creatures of his brain." It sets the conventional distance that separates the actual world of an author of fiction, the immersive world of the immediate situation of utterance of his literary discourse (his act of storytelling), from the story told, the forever fixed fictional universe created for his printed novel. The actual place where he can abandon himself to the real "pleasure in the achievement of a long design" is kept apart from the fictional location where he yields to the "regret in the separation from many companions." Hence Dickens concludes that "no one can ever believe this Narrative, in the reading, more than I believed it in the writing." The denizens of David's world are Dickens's "many companions," and "the crowd of creatures of his brain" from whom he must tear himself away. The reason for this reluctant but resolute authorial disinterest is that there is nothing to add to the narrated, to "this Book" and to "the Story" ("all that I could say… I have endeavoured to say in it.") It is from the narration, "a two-years' imaginative task," the "achievement of a long design" that has arisen the creative exaltation. There is no desire expressed by Dickens to exercise what Booth called "the dominating consciousness of the

author" (Bakhtin, 1984, xxiii). On the contrary, the finished novel is a sort of Nessus tunic that the author must tear away. It is in the sideshadow of this cathartic separation, while "dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world," as he leaves the already narrated behind, that the author will be able to resume his practice of the narrative act.

> Instead of looking back, therefore, I will look forward. I cannot close this Volume more agreeably to myself, than with a hopeful glance towards the time when I shall again put forth my two green leaves once a month, and with a faithful remembrance of the genial sun and showers that have fallen on these leaves of David Copperfield, and made me happy. (DC 11)

The actual novel's incipit follows the preface. After having closely read this preface, we are now well aware of the nature of Dickens's relation to his novel; and this gives a more precise understanding of the incipit. David-the-narrator's metanarrative statement ("whether I shall turn out…") invites the hypothetical as it ascribes the possibility for the fictional writer to adopt two alternative and non-exclusive attitudes with respect to the production of his novel. There are two narratives starting in this incipit, each calling for its own authorial stance. First there is the story of the production of the novel, then there is the narrated content of *The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery* (the complete and rarely used title of the novel). The first story starts with the narrator introducing himself as the producer of "these pages," that is as a professional writer, an author, moreover, with a critical discourse on his own work (conjecturing about the necessity of the existence and the identity of a hero). This writer limits what he offers to interpretation to what can be read in or shown by "these pages" and nowhere else. This implies that the meanings which emerge from the narrator's creative act and from his life will depend more upon how

their respective stories (the story of the writing and the story written) are told than upon what they tell.

For the reader to figure out the text's meaning, two reading approaches are possible: critical and semantic.

> The semantic or semiosic interpretation results from the process by which the addressee, faced with the linear manifestation of the text, fills it with sense. On the other hand, the critical interpretation tries to identify the structural reasons that allow the text to produce these semantic interpretations (or others)[16]. (Eco, 1990, 36)

The hypothetical will arise in both approaches, albeit in a different manner. In a semantic reading, the autobiography unfolds in its own actual world, as a work of realist fiction challenged only by possibilities deriving from the ambiguity and limits of narrative memory. The semantic reader reads the memoir of the *narrating* "I," accepting all of its claim to reality. In this reading the hypothetical comes from an effort to fill the gaps as a response to any ambiguity. Those same gaps are taken for granted by the critical reader who will focus on the reasons for a narrative strategy maintaining a temporal distance between the narrating "I" and his narrated self. He takes his cue from the narration and produces hypotheses about its distance from the narrated.

In both readings, the metanarrative declaration is a denial of any authority of a possible authorial intent outside of what "these pages must show." This may be of little consequence

[16] « L'interprétation sémantique ou sémiosique est le résultat du processus par lequel le destinataire, face à la manifestation linéaire du texte, la remplit de sens. L'interprétation critique ou sémiotique, en revanche, essaie d'expliquer pour quelles raisons structurales le texte peut produire ces interprétations sémantiques (ou d'autres, alternatives). »

for the semantic reader. It is otherwise for the critical reader, who reads prefaces and engages with the productive process of signification as much as with the meaning itself. In this critical reading, the confusion between life and its narrative representation may arise from a confusion between three actual and fictional authors' discourses: that of the actual author (Charles Dickens, in the preface), that of his narrating creature, David-the-narrator (also an author), and that of the narrated David-the-character (an author in the making). Whatever and whoever the hero of this novel will be, he will be an author, the hero of his novel (the story of his life) rather than of his own life. If the hero ends up being anybody else, then David would have been the narrator of someone else's heroic experience (plausible candidates could be Mr. Peggotty, Mr. Micawber, Traddle, Ham, and some others who are the effective conventional heroes of some episodes). Whatever other features and experiences Charles Dickens and David Copperfield may have in common, we can infer from the critical agency both ascribe to their respective text ("the Story" and "these pages") that David being a novelist is a deliberate and careful choice on the part of the author; no other Dickensian first-person narrator belongs to this profession. There is a clear parallel between Dickens's statement that "all that I could say of the Story, to any purpose, I have endeavoured to say in it" and David's metanarrative declaration in the actual incipit, " … these pages must show." Dickens endows "the Story" with the same responsibility David grants to "these pages." However, the relation of both authors to their respective reality cannot be the same.

2.6 The Limit of the Mirror Metaphor

In the story that David is starting to write, whether he is a hero or a witness to the hero, since his is the narrator he will come out his own narrative construct; the resulting genre remains an autobiography. This in itself manifests the agency of the hypothetical. Because one

does not write about oneself as about another, in order to write about both, the narrator, in this case a fictional author, needs to keep a controlling distance from his subjects, most of all from his other persona as a character. The metalepsis is the figure ensuring that the narrating "I" keeps control of the representation of the narrated "I" while they remain separate. The narrator cannot intervene alongside his narrated self; he can step into his own story only as an invisible ghost, to comment on it. All the same, building on this view of David's literary project as a shadow of Dickens's own, we must consider the fact that Dickens can simply end the novel and walk away from it while David cannot. There is a difference between the author and the narrator he created. For Dickens, the matter of how successfully he conveyed his authorial intent, if relevant at all, is a settled matter: the book is published and all he "could say of the story" he has "endeavoured to say in it." Anything more would be an expression of "personal confidence, and private emotions," a promotional or defensive metatextual intervention, a critical pressure on the reader's reception and judgment. Rather, the object of Dickens's simultaneous nostalgia and hope is the enjoyment of his own creative process; "the pleasure of the achievement of a long design" overshadows whatever "portion of himself" the author may have left in the fictional "shadowy world" made of "a crowd of creatures of his brain" and "instead of looking back… I will look forward … with a hopeful glance towards the time when I shall again put forth my two green leaves once a month."

Dickens can move on to his next novel. David-the-narrator does not enjoy such a creative freedom. Dickens's fictional world is David's actual world and he has nowhere else to go, timewise and spacewise. The only perceptible distance between the narrator and his character is temporal; it is the distance between the present of the narration, the narrated past, and the future of an anticipated but unrealizable closure. It is in this temporality that any

hypothetical happening must occur and that interpretative liberty will be accepted. The future remains strictly the tense of metanarration used in the incipit to defer the judgment on the success of the fictional literary project to the reception of the anticipated narration ("Whether I shall turn…"). The discrepancies between the author's stance expressed in the preface and its incongruous (because impossible) and specular reproduction by the narrator as a reproduction or trace, in this incipit deferred conclusion call attention to the fecund space where the *disnarrated* thrives.

The concept of "disnarrated," a noun coined and developed by Gerald Prince, is crucial for thinking about how the realist novel expresses hypothetical contingent plots:

> Phrases, and passages that consider what did not or does not take place ("this could've happened but didn't"; "this didn't happen but could've"), whether they pertain to the narrator and his or her narration ("You will suppose…") or to one of the characters and his or her actions ("I could easily have been…") constitute the disnarrated. (Prince, 1988, 299)

There is no disnarrated implied by Dickens's preface; only his own experience of the creation of the novel is relevant. He merely tells us about a novel he has finished and from which he now walks away. For David-the-narrator, on the contrary, the disnarrated constitutes the hypothetical part of his actual world; for him it is not just a fictional world in another book. Hence, the perspective of the narrator cannot mimic simply that of the author. The "reality" of the fictional world of Mr. Micawber, Uriah Heep, Mr. Dick, Betsey Trotwood, and in brief, the state of affairs represented in the novel is radically different from Charles Dickens's empiric reality. For David-the-narrator, however distinct from David-the-character he may be, it is not a fictional world and the distance from it is simply temporal. Even when the narrator tries to echo the author faithfully, the metafictional comment of the latter, can only be

replicated as metanarrative by the former**.** David cannot "get sufficiently away from this Book" the way Dickens can. What is simply "The Story" for the author becomes "my own life" for the narrator. The authorial stance, leaving behind the result of "a two-years' imaginative task," cannot be replicated by David, at least not perfectly. He certainly can leave behind the story of his life up to the imaginary moment of narration itself, but his world remains and his life goes on. The empiric world where Dickens produces his narration is not the fictional world he narrates. Nevertheless, there is for David a way to take leave of a world where his narration belongs as much as the narrated. For the readers, David's world will last as long as David narrates it. Hence, this world will cease to exist, at least for the reader, when David will stop the narration.

2.7 A Mirror Framed Between the Incipit and the Explicit

The only way for one to take leave of one's actual world is to die. The situation for a fictional autobiographical narrator -- in a realist novel -- is more complicated as he cannot die and write about it. To die while remaining a narrator, he must die in the future of his narration. In other words, in order to replicate his empirical author's intent, David-the-narrator must narrate, or at least imply, his own demise. That is the moment when he will close two "stories" in the last paragraph of the novel, that of the storytelling and that of his life. The former will meet with closure at the end of the writing, the latter at David's death. If ending the narration requires only to end the novel, ending the narrated (where the narrated is an entire life) requires the narrator to die and thus need to be deferred to some future. The story of the writing of his autobiography that started with the actual incipit, "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero …," will close with a simple statement, "And now, as I close my task, subduing my desire to linger yet, these faces fade away." The autobiography itself, which started with the

next sentence, “To begin my life with the beginning of my life …,” ends with “I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me, like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!” As narration and narrated converge, David will produce his own version of Dickens’s taking leave of the “creatures of his brain” at the end of his preface. However, it will take us through a rather long detour to the end of the novel, where any possible “taking leave” of the fictional world takes place, when the narration closes with the anticipated closure of the narrated.

> And now, as I close my task, subduing my desire to linger yet, these faces fade away. But one face, shining on me like a Heavenly light by which I see all other objects, is above them and beyond them all. And that remains. I turn my head, and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. My lamp burns low, and I have written far into the night; but the dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company. O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me, like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward. (DC 882)

Hence, as “these faces fade away,” David pretends to leave their (and his) actual world and claims that “realities are melting from [him] like the shadows which [he] now dismiss [es].” The similarity is obvious between the real and fictive authors’ poetics of distantiation and their relation to their respective literary worlds; they even use the same words (“dismiss,” “shadow”). If an autobiography ends at the culmination of its narration, the time and the space of the narration and that of the narrated should coincide exactly. This is not the case for an autobiographical account where the closing of the narrated period predates the closing of the narration. In such a case the end is in the past tense, as in *Great Expectations*: “I saw the shadow of not parting from her.” In our case the tense of the last clause is the present and the mood subjunctive. At the last word on the last page, David-the-narrator should have finally

come together with and become strictly identical to David-the-character. Their common actual world should not be perceived or accounted as fictional by the narrator, nor should the people there be figured by "shadows." All that separates the narrating-I from the narrated-I at that point is time, not their ontological essence.

As a major consequence, none of the familiar faces of their actual world should fade away into shadows and be dismissed, according to the definition of an actual world given earlier (in 1.10). In the last few paragraphs David has summarized the happy ends met by all the remaining characters and they are now all sharing with him the same state of affairs, the same reality on the same level (exchanging letters and visits).

That is, of course, the main difference between Dickens's perspective (that of an actual author) and that of David-the-narrator. Past his preface, anything Dickens writes is about a fictional world; in this particular novel he even abstains from any authorial comments or address pertaining to the author or reader's actual worlds. That is obviously not the case for David-the-narrator. Until then his distance from his narrated self resulted only from the time interval and the change of perspective imposed by the work of memory. This distance steadily diminishes as the narration progresses; at closure this distance should be reduced to nothing; both personae should now be perfectly conflated in the same final state of affairs, the actual world of now and here. This absolute identity between the narrator and the character is a logical and ontological necessity of this autobiographical closure. The parting that takes place between him and the denizens of his actual world, if only on the narrative level, presents us with the hypothesis that this world remains somewhat at a distance in the narrator's perspective. Because the narrated past has caught up with the present of the narration, any remaining temporal distance can only be in the future. At this point of convergence of

narration and narrated, the far side of the hypothetical narrative closure has been reached. The character is alive but the narrator has stopped writing. Whatever else happens will remains hypothetical because its temporality locates it in the ever after beyond the present of the narration, in the virtual incipit of some possible future sequel.

2.8 From Incipit to Explicit: the Long Shadow of a Short Preface

The oversight capability of the fictional author over his novel, even though it is framed as an autobiography, has some limits that prevent him from being considered a representation of the actual author. The association of the incipit with the closing paragraph of the novel composes a metanarrative frame for most of David's narrative. It also reflects the metafictional content of Dickens's preface in an attempt by the fictional narrator to replicate the empirical author's attitude toward his creation. We have seen that it is impossible for this frame to reflect the authorial stance correctly in its closure; the author of a fictional autobiography can move on to something else but his fictional narrator cannot. This impossibility of replicating the empirical situation in the fictional closure derives from the fact that the story and the storytelling of how one's life goes cannot exactly coincide. The narrator is aware of this fact, and this awareness may explain why he feels it a logical necessity to envision his own death to close his narrative. What may occur between the end of the narration and the anticipated end of the narrated is entirely hypothetical. The narrator's acknowledgement of this open future provides the reader with a surplus of interpretive freedom, in addition to the hypothetical already constitutive of the fictional world. A consequence of this new limit imposed upon "the dominating consciousness of the author" is to allow for all characters to develop as "*not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse*" (Bakhtin, 1984, 7).

Nonetheless, David-the-narrator provides with the incipit (the first sentence) and the explicit (the last three paragraphs) a coherent embedding frame to the novel. This frame is the reminder that we are reading a novel, not an actual autobiography. Paradoxically, David-the-narrator makes a point that can make sense only if coming from Dickens. Nevertheless, it is David that opens and closes the novel on metanarrative statements. The frame is consistent with Dickens's preface and its coherence is ensured on several levels. First, the narrative symmetry of the closure is ensured as the narration ends by announcing the end of the narrated; second, David's authorial ambition, announced in the incipit, is confirmed when he assimilates his worldmates from his actual world to literary characters, to "shadows which I now dismiss." Of course, we have seen that it is impossible for David to replicate Dickens's relation to his literary *dramatis personæ*, to his "shadowy world." David cannot distance himself from "a crowd of the creatures of his brain," because they are his actual worldmates. As the embedding frame attempts to repeat the authorial stance of the prefaces, it demonstrates Dickens's intent to project his relation to his work onto a fictional author.

It may be objected that the first sentence and the last three paragraphs make the operation of this frame rather elusive considering it embeds the eight hundred pages of a three-volume Victorian novel. It is most likely the case for a semantic reading, which would not likely consider, at the end, the prefaces or the incipit when reaching the explicit. Yet, there is at least one other example of this kind of stealthy frame meant to reflect the author's metanarrative intent while embedding the body of the work. Hugh Kenner notices, in two separate essays (the first and the last) of his book on *Ulysses*, that James Joyce starts and ends the (900 pages) novel with Homeric hexameters. It opens with "Státelý | plump Búck | Múllĭgan || came frŏm thĕ | stáirhéad | béarĭng |" (Kenner, 34) and closes on "Yés ănd his |

heart wás | góĭng lĭke | mád ánd || yés Ĭ săid | yés Ĭ will (|| Yés)" (Kenner, 147) -- "Yes" is an added stressed syllable appearing the 1921 edition. Kenner notes that "The letter of *Yes*, the last word, runs backward to *Stately*, the first. Joyce may never have noticed this…" (Kenner 155). Kenner does not assign this device to Joyce's intentional design, and I would not assign to Kenner my own conclusion, that these two Homeric hexameters embed the novel in its Odysseus reference, providing it with an elegant and subtle frame. The production by Joyce and Dickens of these discrete frames to their large books may not have been events of particular importance in their creative process; yet, both authors, still, have given careful attention to their form and their metanarrative content: Dickens restated in his two prefaces, twenty years apart, with more accuracy each time, the content of his incipit; as for Joyce, he introduced his hexameters one after the other in two separate editions.

Another objection could be that the operation of this frame, as a reflection of the preface, may escape the attention of most readers, since, actually, the novel was at first published without a preface as a serial. Furthermore, the OED defines the preface as "the introduction to a literary work, usually stating its subject, purpose, scope, method, etc." (OED "preface"). Thus, it should be expected that the preface would outline some aspects that Dickens felt to be characteristic of his intent. In this case, all the same, the relation between the prefaces (both of them) and the novel is not one of introduction, explanation, or information on the "subject, purpose, scope, method, etc." Rather, they proclaim the writer's love for the creative act and its creation rather than for the creatures that populate its creation. However difficult it may be for Dickens to break away from his "many companions," they are only "the crowd of creatures of his brain" in his fictional "shadowy world" that he will leave behind, looking forward "with a hopeful glance towards the time when I shall again put forth

my two green leaves once a month." What remains as Dickens's "favourite child," in his "heart of hearts" is the capitalized DAVID COPPERFIELD, neither the narrator nor the character, but the book. Such insistence from the author cannot but call our critical attention to the manner in which the fictional narrator attempts to mirror the author's preface.

The novel's metanarrative frame, from incipit to explicit, reiterates the preface's relinquishment of any critical comment about the novel. Whether the narrator's questions will find answers, "these pages must show", reflecting that all that the author "could say of the Story … [he] endeavoured to say in it."

Dickens's preface, by invoking at the same time both the "Story" and its closure, not only introduces but also points to the fictional authorial intent expressed in the metanarrative frame. Following on the author's preface and resembling it, the narrator in the incipit ("whether I shall turn…") is not really concerned with how his story ("… I was born…") will unfold from there; his interest is rather in how effectively the story will be supported by his narration (" … these pages must show"). Instead of embarking on the storytelling, the speaker comments on the possible outcome of his narration, expressing his authorial anxiety and critical perplexity regarding the reader's reception of his literary enterprise.

David-the-narrator, just like Dickens at the end of his preface, starts by stating a creative approach that leaves to the text itself the control of its reception by the reader; "these pages must show" is a claim for "these pages" to have the status of a literary work, the same status as Dickens's own "Story" or "Book": the narrative result of an "imaginative task," something more than a curriculum vitae, than just David's *Personal History and Experience.* By doing so, David-the-narrator replicates, albeit in a more specific manner, the author's own intention. Dickens and David-the-narrator both trust that the direction of their literary projects

can be inferred from their skilled representation of the succession of the states of affairs in their respective worlds.

2.9 The Hypothetical Beyond the Explicit

Ending the novel with the closure of the metanarrative introduced in the incipit leaves the resulting fiction open to different interpretations. We were expecting the end of a story and we are given only the end of the storytelling; thus, a vast field of hypothetical developments remains unnarrated beyond the physical end of the novel. The narrator keeps a conventional authorial control on his life's possible unfolding. Still, unless he can escape the limits set by the required plausibility of the realist novel, he cannot avoid ending his story without being reduced to a character. David-the-narrator could relinquish his narrative power and resign himself to settle as David-the-character and live happily ever after with Agnes at his side, among their family and their friends. At the close of *Bleak House*, this is exactly what Esther Summerson does. Her writing is supposedly a correspondence that she decides to end so that "I and the unknown friend to whom I write, will part forever" (BH 985). A reluctant narrator from the start, "as if this narrative were the narrative from *my* life!" (BH 40) she gives up any authorial authority over her now-blissful narrated world; she can now embrace it in its actuality and fully dedicate herself to her children, "dearest little pets … very pretty" (BH 989), her "darling … very beautiful" (Ada), her "husband … very handsome" and her "guardian … the brightest and most benevolent." Just the same, David is not a reluctant narrator; he is a novelist. He cannot settle for an ending that would see him abandon his authorial power and disappear among "the shadows which [he] now dismiss [es]" and "fade away" as a mere David-the-character. He is on the edge of the metalepsis, at the point where he wishes he could step out of the story of "his own life" to keep writing it. The only way for

him to keep open the possibility "to turn out to be the hero of [his] own life" is to suspend the fiction just before it forces him to be demoted to a simple character; in this way, he would imitate Dickens by remaining forever a writer, a unique instance of this ambition in Dickens's work.

We must remember the metalepsis at work which allows David to conflate *his life* with the *story of his life*. The closure of the narrated, of *his life,* is now deferred to a time beyond the closure of the actual narration, beyond the end of *the story of his life*, "when I close *my life* … when realities are melting … like shadows" (my emphasis). It will take place sometime in the future, at the death of David-the-character. Until then, from the reception point-of-view, the hypothetical (un)narrated is still capable of finding its narration. An immersed and imaginative semantic reader can conjure up for himself some future state of affairs where he will continue to hear the voice of David-the-narrator. This postponement -- a consignment to the reader of the task to elaborate the fiction -- should satisfy the reader's expectations of what could conventionally be dreamed of as occurring after the closing frame. It leaves open the perspective of more narrated and narration in the fictional world of David, Agnes, and their family and friends whose destinies David just recapitulated; the last chapter is titled "*A last Retrospect*"; its hypothetical counterpart is of the nature of a prospect, "when I close my life indeed." This situation strengthens the plausibility of his fictional world and therefore its actuality; it strengthens the effectiveness of the reader's immersion by suggesting its existence beyond the closure, as if this world were realistically independent from and not limited to the narrative, a "real" world rather than a mere mock-up, set, or stage for a work of fiction. In other words, if Dickens could not project onto David's narration a mimetic reproduction of his own tearing away from a finished creative process and literary project (the subject of his

preface), he nevertheless does allow for David-the-narrator to create and populate his own version of a possible and "shadowy world" that a reader is allowed to think animated forever. This time, David replicates the lively "crowd of creatures of [Dickens's] brain" using the hypothetical future instantiation of the "faces … most distinct to [him] in the fleeting crowd" (DC, 878).

Although "these faces fade away" (882) in the present tense of the end of the writing, they suggest future contingent narratives (Aristotle, 2006, 27–43) taking place beyond the impossible closure, after the narration has stopped. Hence, David-the narrator, like Dickens, can force himself out of his novel, while David-the-character remains available for future contingent adventures dreamed up by the reader. This perspective maintains forever an authorial distance between the narrator and his character, thus granting this narrator a hypothetical Dickensian authorial agency and authority, until the end of the last page and before heading toward any possible but never actualized closure -- that is when he must die. There have been earlier examples of such suspended closure; for instance, that is what Victor Frankenstein and his creature do in short succession to end their first-person narratives framed in Walton's letters. Although they give up the reporting, they remain in charge of the narration until their death (Shelley 238–244). That is the reason for the invocation of David's projected death in the last sentence; the rhetorical mode here is that of the analogy, and once again, the temporal orientation being futurity. It is not a narrative closure because it is a deferral to a time beyond the present of the narration and thus unnarratable: " … when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me, like the shadows which I now dismiss." As the narration closes, as "these faces fade away," the narrated is reintroduced, the narrator acknowledging "the dear presence, without which I were nothing," that is Agnes. Nonetheless,

this is only a descriptive return to the level of the narrated, not a narrative closure. Unlike Dickens, David will not and cannot "instead of looking back … look forward" to his next novel "with a faithful remembrance of the genial sun and showers that have fallen on these leaves of David Copperfield…" unless the reader decides to hypothesize such a sequel.

2.10 The Death of the Narrator, the Impossible Closure

Aside from this narratological and ontological context, there is also an axiological agent. A vanishing point on the final horizon of the novel can be anticipated when the narrator and the character finally come together, or can be expected to come together. David-the-narrator, coming closer to David-the-character (now a recognized novelist), has just finished summarizing the new starts for all the characters, in England or in Australia. Hence, as the narrated and the narration are about to intersect in the same present, neither has lost any of its narrative impulse. Rather than bringing the novel to a close, in the reverse of the incipit, this explicit complies with all that is required by literary convention and editorial policy: a book must end. The final chapter, "CHAPTER LXIV *A Last Retrospect*" (DC 878), begins with this admission, "And now my written story ends. I look back, once more -- for the last time -- before I close these leaves." It is only the "written story" that ends and what closes is the page that story is written on. In perspective drawing, the vanishing point is the representation of the point at infinity, on the horizon, where parallel lines meet. This provides a visual analogy for understanding why, in his preface, Dickens claims that "no one can ever believe this Narrative, in the reading, more than I have believed it in the writing… Instead of looking back, therefore, I will look forward" (DC 11). David-the-narrator can reproduce this authorial stand only in the unending effort to sustain what separates him from David-the-character.

The function of this attempted replication is to foreground that "there always remains an unrealized surplus of humanness; there always remains a need for the future, and a place for this future must be found" (Bakhtin, 1981, 37). This distance between both of David's personae acts as the ethical agency of an ideal and ultimate, hence hypothetical, self-actualization. This "surplus of humanness" to be finalized requires the fictional world to reach a state of affairs beyond description or narration and beyond closure -- a transcendent illusion, a totalizing vision of the world, at least in the realist novel.

In some non-realist genres, such as the medieval Arthurian romance, the consciousness of one's "surplus of humanness" can be achieved. However, even there the hero dies in ecstasy before giving out any details about the experience undergone. That is the case for Galahad as he ends his quest: "And since, sweet Lord, Thou hast fulfilled my wish to let me see what I have ever craved, I pray Thee now that in this state Thou suffer me to pass from earthly life to life eternal" (The Quest 283). The will to overcome this awkward gap in the account and the impossibility of the gap's representation together explain the need for the persistence of a narrative distance and the hypothetical narrative freedom allowed by an unsatisfying closure.

The critical reader is reminded retrospectively of the impossible identity between the states of affairs of the narrator's situation of utterance and the one accounted for in his narration. Dickens as an author decides the extent of "all" he says of the "Story" in the "Story." The explicit side of the frame allows David to remain the narrator of his own life, a privilege which allows him to remain in charge as he hovers above the many tragic, comic, romantic or ironic alternative heroic figures suggested in the novel. David-the narrator will forever enjoy the storyteller's view on his own life and world, "A Heavenly light by which

[he] see all other objects, is above them and beyond them all," and the critical reader is left to hypothesize about what more David could glimpse at in the sideshadows of and beyond his story. Our excursion to the end of the novel ends now with our understanding of why the distance between the David-the-narrator and David-the-character will reduce only asymptotically forever, some space always remaining. I shall now return to the actual incipit to take the measure of this distance at its initial maximum.

2.11 Ungrammaticalities, Uncertain Inductions, Hypothetical Conclusions

To give a foil to the salience of the hypothetical, from the incipit on, the reader is welcomed into the novel with a salvo of redundant and apparent certitudes. He has already guessed from the title on the cover that the story concerns a character named David Copperfield. Printed in large characters, the name "David Copperfield," is contrasted from the rest of the rarely used title that comes before the first page, *The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery*. It reminds the reader stubbornly that he is reading what is purported to be David Copperfield's autobiography. The title of the first chapter, *I am born*, further indicates that it is a fictional autobiography. To emphasize that this is only the beginning of the narration, not yet of the narrated or actual story, the present tense of the title persists in the principal clause at the end of the first sentence (started in future tense), the actual incipit, " … *these pages must show*" (my emphasis). As I discussed earlier (in 2.3), this is a consequence of the modal necessity implied by "must," but should also be understood as a deferral not to some future of the narrated action (a very rare occurrence in autobiography) but to later in the same present when the narration takes place, that is, later in the act of writing; the future determination of the hero resides in the time and the act of narration.

In their narration, David, Esther Summerson, Pip Pirrip, and other occasional first-person narrators will raise questions to which answers can be left out of the narrated. When this occurs, the narrated is used as an intertextual reference for the narration; borrowing from more reflective genres (Socratic dialogue, meditations, confessions, etc.), the story becomes a mere pretext to the storytelling. To discuss this point, I must momentarily stray away from our incipit (again). To catch Heep's swindle, to recognize Captain Hawdon under Nemo, to trace how Dorrit ends up at the Marshalsea, to confirm who Estella's father was, it takes the report of the thinking and the discourses (before even the account of their actions) of the likes of, respectively, Micawber and Traddle, Tulkinghorn and Bucket, Panks and Rigaud, and, of course, Jaggers. From induction to deduction, it is in the narration that they prove themselves masters at inferring the best explanation, drawing strictly from within the realm of the narrated and its disnarrated sideshadow. They proceed to their conclusion with a logic that they do not hesitate to adjust by taking into account any modality required in the context of the inference. Hence, their apparently impeccable logic does not show the perfection of a pure sequence of syllogisms as the hypothetical is often present in the premises. It could be argued that all those characters are articulate enough, specifically at some critical junctures where their thinking and final understanding are well served by their speech, direct or reported.

To force the narration to find its way through the maze resulting from the hypothetical conclusions of uncertain inductions, the structure of the narrated is designed with narrative ungrammaticalities. Those are "in a broad sense … any wording unacceptable in context" (Riffaterre, 1981, 240), particularly "traces left by the absent intertext, signs of an incompleteness to be completed elsewhere" (Riffaterre, 1980, 627). The fictional world is not any more readable than the actual one. Finding out who Nemo was does not clear the many

secrets of *Bleak House* and it is hard to say what Mr. Jagger means when he muses, " … if I was a fortune-teller… But I am not a fortune-teller… You know what I am, don't you? Good night, Pip" (GE 215). What is he, actually? Who does know? Certainly not Pip (or anyone else in the novel, except, maybe, Mr. Wemmick).

Hence, emplotting events to drive forward the narrated and feed the narration will not be a privilege reserved to the eloquent and ratiocinating logical or meditative narrative mind. Narration is not exclusively the result of the spoken or textual representation of the thinking process. There are other narrative agencies, and we must continue for a little while longer to stay away from the incipit to give some examples of them. For instance, the pair formed by *one's life* and *one's story of one's life* can be at times productively replaced by the pair *one's vision* and *one's description of one's vision.* In a manner similar to how metalepsis allows for the confusion of the representation of an action with the performance of this action, another rhetorical device, "Hypotyposis, *paints things in so vivid and energetic manner that it, so to speak, puts them under the eyes, and makes of an account or a description, an image, a picture or even a live scene*" [17] (Fontanier 390).

That is what Mr. Peggotty's discourse achieves. Mr. Peggotty is certainly neither eloquent nor analytical; he is not inclined to speculation and his expression is limited by the poverty of his speech. However, hypotyposis will allow him to produce a representation of an action that immerses himself and his audience in the actual direct perception of this action.

[17] « *L'*hypotypose *peint les choses d'une manière si vive et si énergique, qu'elle les met en quelque sorte sous les yeux, et fait d'un récit ou d'une description, une image, un tableau, ou même une scène vivante* »

When, despite his mangled syntax, approximate vocabulary, and strong accent, Mr. Peggotty reports Emily's tragic return travel to England, David remarks that

> he saw everything he related. It passed before him, as he spoke, so vividly, that, in the intensity of his earnestness, he presented what he described to me, with greater distinctness than I can express. I can hardly believe, writing now long afterwards, but that I was actually present in these scenes; they are impressed upon me with such an astonishing air of fidelity. (DC 731)

The mysterious agency recognized in the mentally handicapped Mr. Dick goes even further as an example of the plot being developed through a completely unspoken demonstration of pure and simple affection "which leaves the highest intellect behind. To this mind of the heart, if I may call it so, in Mr. Dick, some bright ray of the truth shot straight" (DC 629). Mr. Dick is endowed with "a subtlety of perception in real attachment" that is condescendingly compared by the narrator to that "borne towards man by one of the lower animals." As both David and his aunt are at a complete loss trying to mend in some way the troubled relation between Dr. Strong and his wife Annie, Mr. Dick's intervention brings to them "the only real relief which seemed to make its way into the secret region of this domestic unhappiness" (DC 629). Mr. Dick has no part in the account of his own operation, entirely focalized through and reported by the narrator who cannot describe Mr. Dick's intervention or explain its beneficial outcome. "What his thoughts were on the subject, or what his observation was, I am as unable to explain, as I dare say he would have been to assist me in the task" (DC 629). A complex shifting of empathetic perspectives turns a rather static and commonplace description of a situation of emotional miscommunication into an actual episode with a narrative momentum. The narrator describes the role and the action of Mr. Dick

through assumptions made from the point-of-view of each of the other participants to the scene,

> I dare say he rarely spoke a dozen words in an hour: but his quiet interest, and his wistful face, found immediate response in both their breasts; each knew that the other liked him, and that he loved both; and he became what no one else could be -- a link between them. (DC 629)

The tools of rhetoric and the psychology of mind reading allow the text's resistance to certainty. Empathetic inference, hypotyposis, and metalepsis are some of the literary means put at work "to produce an *effect of belief* (rather than of reality)" [18] (Bourdieu 68). The hypothetical emerges from the deliberately incomplete reflection of the actual in the narrated: "[t] he revelation finds its limit in the fact that the writer keeps in some way the control of the return of the repressed" [19] (Bourdieu 69). The "repressed" functions here as a metaphor for the possible alternatives faintly emerging to fill the gaps in the narrated.

There is also a specific narrative agency of the ethical ambiguity that impairs the inductive capability of first-person narrators such as David, Pip or Esther, since it multiplies the narrative possibilities offered to their discursive talent. Dickens allows David to enjoy the authority of his authorship until the end, while avoiding the paradox of a *narrative* metalepsis, "the intrusion into one diegesis of a being from another diegesis; the mingling of two diegetic levels" (Prince, 2003, 50–51) (as opposed to the *authorial* metalepsis, the rhetorical figure

[18] « produire un effet de croyance (plutôt que de réel). »
[19] « Le dévoilement trouve sa limite dans le fait que l'écrivain garde en quelque sorte le contrôle du retour du refoulé. »

defined and discussed earlier, in 2.2) where, in order to bring the story to its end, the homodiegetic first-person narrator would have to step out of the narration and into the narrated or out of the fictional world and into one of the "real" worlds, that of the author or that of the reader.

Narrative ungrammaticality and unreliability enable the storytelling to end while leaving open the story itself. The echo of the closing narration will support the immersion-prone semantic reader's imaginative activity, his fantasized continuation of the narrated, his hypotheses about the future of Esther in her new Bleak House, his conjectures of who turns out to be the hero of David's life. A virtual David-the-narrator will lend his voice to sustain the now familiar and satisfying narrative perspective. The semantic reader can fill in for himself the disnarrated details of the final and never obtaining state of affairs in David Copperfield's or Esther Summerson's worlds.

2.12 Hypothetical Past in the Present Tense

We are now reaching the second sentence of the novel and of the first chapter, titled "I am born" (DC 13). At this point, the only one being born is David as a fledgling writer on the edge of his authorial life. The title in the present tense conflates two intentions. As a chapter title, it summarizes the event related in the chapter, David's birth, both as a writer and as a character. As for the use of the present tense, it acts as the metonymic sign introducing the insistent alternation from the present of the narration to the past of the narrated throughout the novel as a whole, as well as chapter after chapter, each being titled in the same present: "I observe," "I have a change," "A light shines on my way," etc. The present is reserved to the narrator's discourse. The present tense of the chapter titles indicates what is being presented, made present, in the present of writing (and reading). Note also that the present tense seems

consciously to refuse the fact of "différance" (Derrida 38), "an economic concept designating the production of deferment and difference."[20] It seems to promise that meaning is present in the present. In short, the present tense argues against "re-presentation" and is echoed only in the narrating, more precisely in the performative parts of the chapter: "I record," "I need say," "I will only remark," etc. As discussed in our earlier (in 2.3) presentation of the constitution of the hero's identity in novels, referring to Bakhtin and Ricoeur, the relation between the present of narration and the narrated past confirms the relation between the discourse (the story of my life) and its subject (my life) and contributes to the definition of David's narrative identity both as a narrator and as a character. The hypothetical is here a resistance to deferment, a means to integrate the differences generated by ontological time and reflected by grammatical tense. Deferment and difference here both take part in defining who and what David is. Thus, any reader, semantic or critical, can now identify the space of the narrated as it is entirely accounted in a past tense: "I was born," "it was remarked, "I began to cry," etc. To the same effect, "I am born" could result from the linguistic contamination from the French "je suis né," which conflates a present perfect, as if "I am born" was associated with "[and now] I lay in my basket" (DC 24) found at the close of the same chapter, and a perfective past, as in "I was born … on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night" (DC, 13). Actually, rather than "Je suis né" this title is often translated in French using the "pure" historical present in a progressive aspect, "Je viens au monde" (Dickens, 1894, 1). This eliminates the possibility of "passé composé" by

[20] « ... concept économique désignant la production du différer, au double sens de ce mot. »

avoiding the polysemy arising from the fact that "né", just as "born," can be either an adjective or a participle. The former association participates in the deixis and the perspective that the narrator would expect from the new-born David-the-character; the latter can be read as a "historical present," actually a form of past, underlining the importance of a narrated life event. After an account of the day which exclusively uses various aspects of past tenses, this reading of the title finds its validation only in the last paragraph of the chapter as it returns to the historical present: "I lay in my basket, and my mother lay in her bed" (DC 24). The conflict between the temporality of narration and narrated would be explained in the same manner if we took the title "I am born" to be the rarely used perfective aspect for "I am now being born" (in the same way as Ms. Murdstone [DC 60], Mr. Peggotty [DC 592] and Mrs. Micawber [DC 814] use "I am come" rather than "I have come.") It would be the same if "I am born" were understood as one of the passive forms of the verb "to bear" denoted as "to bring forth" (OED, "bear").

Whatever the case is, "I am born" is a defamiliarizing take on the usual "I was born." The latter is used three times in this first chapter. Each of its occurrences distances the narrator further from the event of his birth by imbuing it with some uncanniness: "I was born (as I have been informed and believe)" (DC 13), "I was born with a caul, which was advertised for sale, in the newspapers, at the low price of fifteen guineas," and, the final and most uncanny instance, the metonymic summation of this impossible temporality, "I was born … a posthumous child" (DC, 14). Past this first chapter's title and his first metanarrative comment, David is offered his first opportunity to claim his quality as a narrator: "I record that I was born." He declares this authority in a few short introductory paragraphs which he himself recognizes as meandering, a narrator's privilege that he will often enjoy. In David's narrative,

contrarily to Esther Summerson's or Pip Pirrip's, metanarration is present. This is explained by the fact that David is a professional writer. The shifts in verbal voice, tense and aspect provide the narrator with devices allowing for the control of the reader's immersion and belief in the actuality of the scene. At the same time, largely as a result of the "meandering" tendency of the narrator, it also reasserts the narrated as a fertile ground for narrative past, present or future hypothetical developments. Beginning with the certainty claimed by the initial first person present perfect of the narrator, continuing through the present of the direct speech embedded in the mostly third person past of the reported account, and ending up with the uncertainty of the historical present assigned to the new-born character in his basket, we build up our interpretation of the scene while adjusting for the unstable temporality of its narration.

Thus, the semantic reader navigates between the separate temporality of David-the narrator and David-the-character, indifferent to the convergence of their worlds; he lends a meaning to the text as it unfolds. The semantic reader just immerses himself in the immediacy of the fictional actual world; he reads for the plot, especially enjoying the aspects of plot that denote intrigue and suspense. He reads at the level of events and is more interested in what is happening than in how his interest is produced. It is likely that he may have skipped the preface and read fast through any metanarrative part of the text. Nevertheless, even if he were able to avoid the expressions of the author's and narrator's intents, the metafictional undermining of the account of David's birth will force him to pause to evaluate and ponder the actuality of the reported events and speculate about their possible meaning.

2.13 Metanarrative and Metafictional Hypothetical

The authorial perspective is claimed in what could appear as the formal and peremptory statement of the obvious, "To begin my life with the beginning of my life" (DC 13). This is actually another and very subtle metanarrative statement of the narrator's own authorial intent that can be read as "to begin my narration with the beginning of the narrated." If we keep in mind the overarching influence of the conflation of life's story and life itself, the statement also carries a metafictional warning as to the hypothetical nature of what will follow. It continues in the imperiously credible tone of administrative confidence granted by the affixing of an official time-stamp on a nonetheless indirect report, "I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night." This statement is immediately subverted by the admission that it is nothing more than the result of the narrator's belief in hearsay; the declaration was performed by "the nurse, and by some sage women in the neighbourhood." The validity of this record is further weakened when the latter group is revealed believing in and relying upon the magic possibilities that superstition associates with being born at midnight on a Friday, that is "first, that I was destined to be unlucky in life; and secondly, that I was privileged to see ghosts and spirits."

Right from the opening, then, this leads the reader to wonder about the narrator's reason for taking the trouble of insisting on and then immediately undermining a narratively indisputable, poorly relevant, and rather mundane fact such as the main character's exact moment of birth. In effect, as we have seen, this beginning is not the actual beginning; it occurs in the second sentence of the novel after the first person homodiegetic narrator has paradoxically relinquished the quality of being "the hero of [his] own life." The reinforcement of this message explains why the second sentence contradicts the conventional introduction of

a central character; it marks the text as the unreliable register where the narrator's lending credence to a rumour about his birth is belatedly inscribed by the parodic "I record." By the end of the introduction, the author has established that he "can make no claim therefore to have known, at that time, how matters stood; or to have any remembrance, founded on the evidence of [his] own senses, of what follows" (DC 15). He thus announces, at the close of this first chapter, that much of the representation of his gritty fictional world, the actual as well as the hypothetical, is imported from "the land of dreams and shadows, the tremendous region whence [he] had so lately travelled" (DC 24), both a hypothetical place outside of the narrative where his (very real) aunt Betsey (temporarily) disappears and at the same time, in the real space of this account, "above the ashes and the dust that once was he, without whom I had never been," the place where David's father lies.

However, in this first chapter built on hearsay and a "shadowy remembrance," the narrator manages to introduce the vivid characterizations of his aunt Betsey Trotwood (and even mention her momentarily disnarrated husband), of his own mother Clara, and her servant Peggotty, with her own nephew (Ham), of Doctor Chillip and of the late David Copperfield Senior (in an exchange between his widow and his sister). The ambiguity of the perceptions does not prevent the suggestion of an accurate plot and a cast of well-defined characters. On the contrary, it is the accumulation of uncertainties, combined with the sharp outlines of the characters and the few details distilled about their past that will suggest the possible actualizing development that will see Betsey Trotwood, Peggotty, and Ham reveal themselves as heroic figures, and Clara as a tragic one. As we are told a very detailed story, we are reminded at every step of the account that it is nevertheless a strange shadowy world where mentions of ghosts and fairies deserve to be recorded, where a fetal caul is sold for its magical

property of protection from drowning (in this case the buyer, by principle, actually never goes anywhere close to water) and where an abductive logic dictates that one "takes the birds on trust, because he sees the nests" (DC 18). In other words, actuality is shaped by other possibilities it can never erase, however undefined the latter remain. From the entanglement of hypothetical and actual landscapes, "the land of dreams and shadows, the tremendous region whence I had so lately travelled … and the earthly bourne of all such travellers, and the mound above the ashes and the dust that once was he, without whom I had never been" (DC 24) arises "the shadowy remembrance" (DC 14) of one born "a posthumous child."

3 The Incipit of *A Tale of Two Cities*

In this novel, any perception of collective historical purpose is mitigated by the manifestation of individual motivation, free will and chance. An existential indeterminism rules over the apparent ebb and flow of history: similar causes can entail similar consequences until some radical upheavals brings about new causes and new consequences. The hypothetical arises in the incidents that determine each character's life, from the way in which possible but not necessary -- that is contingent -- courses of action are decided, justified only by common human impulsions.

I shall argue that the incipit of *A Tale of Two Cities* foregrounds prominently the contradiction between historical necessity and immediate contingency, between collective purpose and individual destiny.

3.1 A Tale, Not a Story, Not a History

In a historical novel, the hypothetical does not concern the verifiable real-world events of the past. The qualification of an event as historical requires its prior actualization, duly documented in accordance with an accepted historiographical methodology. Whatever may happen at the battle of Waterloo in a Stendhal or Thackeray novel should not contradict the attested political and military record. However, even within this constraint on fictional reality, literary characters (Stendhal's Fabrice del Dongo or Thackeray's Joseph Sedley) will establish the same relation to hypothetical possibilities as they would in any other fictional world. The same applies to the evocations in fiction of personages deemed historical. They can legitimately and credibly undergo imaginary or hypothetical experiences as long as these generally conform to the documented knowledge accumulated about them. This is the case for

Napoleon's interior monologue at Borodino in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or for Louis XI's conversations with Quentin Durward in Scott's eponymous novel.

Since the gaps in the historical record are many and wide, they provide a trove of possibilities for hypothetical speculation and narrative stagecraft. Yet, Dickens did not concern himself at all with the possibilities offered by the historical background. Of course, Paris, the Bastille, Versailles, etc., are featured in *A Tales of two Cities*. Even so, within this imperative spatial reference, no major historical figure will ever appear anywhere in the novel and specific events of the French Revolution (the march to Versailles, the storming of the Bastille, the September massacres) will be witnessed only through glimpses at the characters' street-level perspective. The title of the novel announces a "tale," not a "story" or "history." Thus, nothing in the prefatory matter (beside the illustrations) attaches the text to the historical genre prior to the heading "Chapter I -- The Period," which announces a temporal background different from the time of the writing or that of the reading. Actually, there are only twelve occurrences of the word "history" in the whole novel. Nine of those connote the meaning of "storyline" or "fabula", that is "the set of narrative situations and events in their chronological sequence; the basic story material…" (Prince,2003 29) or refer to the life story of a nonhistorical (i.e., a whole-cloth fictional) character (Doctor Manette, Ms. Pross). The three references to history as such concern the activity of the personified abstractions "Woodman, Fate" and "Farmer, Death," the ironical references to the historicity of George Washington compared to that of George III, and to the antique quality of Monsieur's furniture. Rather than history, it is against the background of what Dickens calls "this chronicle" that "myriads of small creatures" (TTC 7) mill about.

3.2 A Litany Rather Than a Chronicle

The term "chronicle" usually means "a detailed and continuous register of events in order of time; a historical record, esp. one in which the facts are narrated without philosophical treatment, or any attempt at literary style" (OED, "chronicle"). Such pure chronological records, supposedly untainted by any interpretative bias -- except for the bias in favour their inclusion in the chronicle -- were an early genre of historical writing. Nevertheless, as we shall see, what Dickens calls a chronicle resembles more a litany, "a succession or catalogue of phenomena, esp. unfortunate events" (OED, "litany"); it is an even earlier proto-narrative form, a list of events compiled with lower chronological demands. Dickens's incipit is a parodic chronicle of the year 1775. It presents history as the hypothetical emplotment of an apparently random sample of actual events, some of ludicrous irrelevance, some of tragic importance. The resulting jumble denies and mocks in advance any possible epistemological value to a historiography implicitly attributed to the "noisiest authorities" of the time. Hence, the narrator, rather than granting validity to a baseless grand narrative, will draw from the events marking individual lives an alternative representation of the circumstances and context of his story.

The narrator announces in the incipit his suspicion of prevalent historical judgments as the novel opens with what is perhaps the English literature's most famous combination of symploces and rhetorical anaphoras:

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way -- in short, the period was so far like the present period, that

> some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (TTC 5)

The accepted historical judgment on the period is qualified in the incipit as the bombastic discourses of "the noisiest authorities." To further undermine the acceptability of these discourses, they are given for documentary reference an incoherent litany that records the size of the King's jaw, the apparitions of the Cock-lane ghost and the first Continental Congress of the American colonies. No narrative medium, such as the realist novel, can give a rational meaning to such an incongruous collection. Furthermore, the mention of the censorship imposed upon any report of the works of "Woodman, Fate" and "Farmer, Death" makes any emplotment of this chronicle into a history even less likely,

> But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly, work silently, and no one heard them as they went about with muffled tread: the rather, forasmuch as to entertain any suspicion that they were awake, was to be atheistical and traitorous. (TTC 6)

All that the narrative can account for and give meaning to is the real or imaginary contingent unfolding of some individual lives among the "myriads of small creatures" (TTC, 7). In short, whatever the "noisiest authorities" may claim, lives go on.

Hence, the project of this novel will not claim any mimetic representation of the French Revolution; neither will it attempt the meshing of fiction and history. Rather, it will evoke, as with a theatrical backdrop but seen at some distance, just enough of the French Revolution to account plausibly for the real or imaginary conditions of existence of the individuals during the period. What is to come is foreshadowed by the punctual invocation of monarchies oblivious to the increasing and threatening agency of Fate and Death:

> . . . while the Woodman and the Farmer worked unheeded, those two of the large jaws, and those other two of the plain and the fair faces, trod with stir

> enough, and carried their divine rights with a high hand. Thus did the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five conduct their Greatnesses, and myriads of small creatures -- the creatures of this chronicle among the rest -- along the roads that lay before them. (TTC 7)

History will advance unremittingly, symbolized by the steadfast work of Death and Fate, from the barbaric tyranny of the *Ancient Régime* to the violent chaos of the French Revolution. Carlyle -- an influential reference for Dickens regarding the French Revolution -- viewed history as "an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being" (Carlyle, 1833 55). This randomness is reflected in the choice of the events in the chronicle of the year 1775; it is indicative of the contingency ruling over "the creatures of this chronicle" and what awaits somewhere "along the roads that lay before them."

To the biased and incoherent content of the pompous historical discourse of the noisiest authorities, Dickens will oppose the unfolding of individual lives and of hypothetical conjectures about other turns that destinies could have taken. Leonid Tolstoy will later justify this model (in his 1890 essay "Why do men stupefy themselves?"), giving it an explicit meaning:

> One may say that true life begins where the tiny bit begins -- where what seems to us minute and infinitely small alterations take place. True life is not lived where great external changes take place where people move about, clash, fight, and slay one another. It is lived only where these tiny, tiny, infinitesimally small changes occur. (Tolstoy, 81)

A life unfolding as a series of "minute and infinitely small alterations" may appear of very little narrative interest. In spite of that, thirty years before Tolstoy, Darwin had narrated in the most stimulating manner "the full effects of many slight variations, accumulated during an almost infinite number of generations" (Darwin 354). Tolstoy draws the same conclusion in

the field of human experience when he states that "true life is not lived where great external changes take place"; it echoes Darwin's conclusion that evolution "can act only by very short and slow steps. Hence the canon of "Natura non facit saltum."" (Darwin 346)

Consequently, the hypothetical will be offered with a fertile growing environment in the building up of the cumulative action of chance and free will at each instant, "Tolstoy envisages each ordinary moment as having a small measure of freedom" (Morson, 1998 156). This means that each moment offers the opportunity of a decision that reflects past experiences and considers future contingencies. In Morson's reading of *War and Peace*, "the lives of Tolstoy's heroes and heroines seem (as our own do) but one marvellous actualization out of an immense number of possibilities" (Morson, 1998 160).

Gillian Beer sees in Dickens's narrative approach -- "which can include the interconnection of events and characters so extreme as to seem to defy any overall meaning" (Beer 40) -- the model for the "unruly superfluity of Darwin's material,", giving "an impression of superfecundity without design … profusion indeed, is, as in Dickens, the argument: variability, struggle, the power of generation and generations" (Beer 42). As a result, Dickens's perspective on history is reflected in the many side-views that many individuals may catch of many minor incidents "along the road that lay before them."

3.3 A Matter of Time

The novel was published serially in thirty-one weekly instalments in Dickens's new magazine *All The Year Round (*and simultaneously in eight larger monthly issues under its own title) from April to November 1859. It had no preface. The paratext consisted then of the illustrations by Phiz (Hablot K. Browne) and the overall title, *A Tale of Two Cities* -- *In Three Books*, and a section title, "Book the First: Recalled to Life." The opening paragraph,

sometime printed as if versified ("It was the best of times/it was the worst of times, / … /it was the spring of hope, / it was the winter of despair"), is a public, oratorical discourse, not an intimate approach to the individual reader (as in *David Copperfield*). It is a discourse on a period and not an actual introduction to this period. From the sophistication of the rhetorical construction it can be inferred that it is an address to a generic reader in April 1859, and also any later one.

The first three anaphoras are in the third person and convey an emphatic oratorical posture of judgment, albeit one impossible to render. The contradictions between the clauses are more evocative of pairs of dissenting opinions than of single oxymoronic emphases. Temporality is the theme that dominates the semantic field ("time," "age," "epoch," "season") but no indication is given as to the actual date (and place) of the circumstances subtending the assessment of the period, the antecedent of "it" being tacit. The "we" appearing in the fourth anaphora is unlikely to be a majestic plural substituting for an "I," as the "we … all" in the following sentence confirms. It is a first deictic marker that reveals the presence of a speaker ("we") representing some group, the narrative "we … all," the association that includes a speaking "I," an addressed "you," and a disnarrated "them." The implied audience is composed of at least any reader of 1859 or later, for as long as Dickens expected the novel to be read and enjoyed.

The next clause states that "in short, the period was so far like the present period." The expression of analogy "so far like" points towards an undefined and non-represented term of comparison. It can be inferred to be the actual period of the writing or the period of any reading. A satirical intent is conveyed by the implicitly zeugmatic contrast between the two historical periods of the comparison. The poetic rendering of the uncertain "period," at first

drenched in the historical and metaphorical sublime of the incipit, “it was the best of times, … it was the winter of despair,” is deflated by a blunt return to the time of the utterance or to the time of the reading, a time assumed to be banal, a moment when people have the leisure to write or read serial novels. To be “so far like” any undetermined period, “the period” had to be particularly unexceptional and the extremes previously invoked to define the best and worst of times should be particularly insignificant. The oratorical effect is rendered by the means of the anaphoric framing of binaries. It is an odd device, at once totalizing, and evacuating all specificity and indeed the possibility of specificity. For everything is, in a sense, subverted from the beginning in terms of making a truth claim. The absence of any knowledge about the speaker calls for a hypothetical context of enunciation, one that would justify this comparison as a derisive judgment deflating any exceptionality that could be granted to the period. For the reader to make sense of this contradiction, he must divest these opening clauses of any possible ontological or epistemological content -- or indeed of anything beyond the rhetorical performance. Following the narrator, he must interpret them as the purely discursive and dialogic vehicles of some ideological bias. This ironical intent requires that some hypothetical interpretative community share the same opinion as the speaker, arising from a similar collective experience of the “period,” not only at the time of its initial occurrence but also at the time of the enunciation, in 1859, and as well as at any future time when someone would pick up and read the book. This perennial collectivity is what “we … all” stands for: an abstract group inspiring a sense of belonging to the individuals it includes and perpetuating itself beyond themselves -- a people, a nation, a culture, a religious affiliation, a lifestyle, a philosophical school, etc. As for the target of the irony, it is only revealed at the close of the

paragraph when the narrator or orator attributes to "some of its noisiest authorities" the speaker's justification for using "the superlative degree of comparison" to evaluate the period.

"We … all" now realize that the roaring address was assembled from the trite rhetoric usual in any partisan debates, when easily anticipated and entirely familiar judgments are pronounced on the historicity of a period, when it is always the best of times for the incumbents and the worst of times for their challengers. No information will be given to indicate the partisan affiliation of those "noisiest authorities" or their institutional authority (government, church, press) or the nature of their engagement (religious, political). In context, this information would be irrelevant to the point made by the incipit, which is a characterization and an indictment of the travesty of history. The narrator will continue by suggesting the process by which this travesty is produced from the biased emplotment of the chronicle.

3.4 How History Is Written

In other words, as high rhetoric satirizing rhetoric itself, thus evacuating or emptying it of any meaning in advance, the actual incipit sets forth a radically skeptical if only implicit criticism of historiography in a single sentence. The incipit does its work by stating that, in any time and place, there were, are, and will be authorities loudly asserting that it is the best and the worst of times. It could be paraphrased by stating, "this is how history is written." This paraphrase supports the purely discursive and metanarrative, hence non-narrative nature of an incipit constructed out of an assortment of highly narratable occurrences. The possibility of paraphrasing content is a "narrativity test," which answers the question, "how can the intangible be presented? Tangibility, or at least explicitness, it seems, can be given to the abstracted construct by writing it down as paraphrase" (Rimmon-Kennan 13). The proposed

paraphrase ("This is how history is written.") is about the narration (the historiography) and not the story (the history). The semantically dominant evocation of temporality ("time," "epoch," "season") never implies the chronology necessary to the organization of a plot; time is invoked primarily to introduce some accepted modalities of human judgment, axiological ("best," "worst"), epistemic ("wisdom," "foolishness"), doxastic ("belief," "incredulity"). Those modalities could be effective tools in the exploration of the actual course of events and in the production of hypotheses regarding a possible logic of history. Even so, when granted such rhetorical prominence for a satirical purpose, modalities can only point to the possible sources of ideological bias. The irrelevance of the modalities in relation to the questionable evaluation and decision process of the "noisiest authorities" explains why "it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever" (TTC 5).

Now that it has been completely emptied of any historical specificity, the period is finally identified as "the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five." It is the moment when England misses the "mere messages" foretelling a still hypothetical American Revolution while focusing its attention on the "spiritual revelation" of prophetic preaching and on the "rapped out" messages received through spiritualistic communications. The reference to France's national debt and to the extreme intolerance of the French state religion "under the guidance of her Christian pastors" (TTC 6) is the occasion for the proleptic presentation of the figures of "the Woodman, Fate" and of "the Farmer, Death."

> It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of France and Norway, there were growing trees, when that sufferer was put to death, already marked by the Woodman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards, to make a certain movable framework with a sack and a knife in it, terrible in history. It is likely

> enough that in the rough outhouses of some tillers of the heavy lands adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered from the weather that very day, rude carts, bespattered with rustic mire, snuffed about by pigs, and roosted in by poultry, which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution. (TTC 6)

This is a retrospective foreshadowing of a well-known event. At the time of the writing (ca. 1859), nothing was more certain than the fact that the French Revolution had occurred and it was rather obvious that there had been some good reasons for that, one of them, described in gory details in the previous sentence, being the 1766 barbaric torture and execution of the Chevalier de la Barre. Nevertheless, although the narrator implies that the state of affairs in the year 1775 is the actual cause for what would happen in 1789, he does not extend this certitude to the apparition of the two symbolic personifications. In the two sentences from this quote, the narrator infers only that "it is likely enough" that the Woodman was already marking the trees that would later provide the planks for the guillotine and that "it is likely enough" that Farmer was setting apart the tumbrils that would later carry the sentenced to their execution.

The opening clause of each of these sentences -- "It is likely enough" -- is in the gnomic aspect of the simple present tense while the rest of the passage is in the perfect and progressive aspects of the simple past. This means that, if the specifics about what -- "it was likely enough" -- Fate and Death were doing in 1775 are hypothetical, nonetheless, Fate and Death were proceeding as usual with their perpetual and continuous task:

> But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly, work silently, and no one heard them as they went about with muffled tread: the rather, forasmuch as to entertain any suspicion that they were awake, was to be atheistical and traitorous. (TTC 6)

This is a grim reminder that, for Fate and Death, "the period was so far like the present period." These agents are working now, as they will work in the future and as they worked before, particularly during the "period." I argue that here, "Fate" does not have to be understood as "unalterably predetermined from eternity" (OED, "fate" 1.a) but rather as "what will become of, or has become of (a person or thing); ultimate condition" (OED, "fate" 4.a). Thus, Death and Fate are both qualified as necessary agencies, a constant in the ebb and flow of history where the specifics of any period, 1775, 1859 or later, are only contingent. It does not follow from the permanence of their action that history would proceed along predictable cycles or toward a determined end. On the contrary, it means that for history, as for every evolutive process, there are "*laws in the background* and *contingency in the details*" (Gould, 290). Like evolution, history zigzags jerkily toward no defined end, just responding to its environment. The contingency of history has been figured by the earlier litany with its rich and odd hodgepodge of miscellaneous details and events of the period, some of historical significance (the first Continental Congress of the American colonies, the French national debt, and the execution of the Chevalier de la Barre), some of anecdotal or cultural interest (popular interest in the supernatural, criminal activities in London) and some gossips of no relevance at all (the size of the king's jaw, the comparative fairness of the queens' face in England and France).,

If it was not for the fact that the last instalment of *A Tale of Two Cities* was published a few days before the first publication of *On the Origin of Species*, one would be tempted to make a Darwinian out of Dickens. Still, one should be satisfied with the thought that -- for those among his readers interested in the ongoing evolutionary debate that had started long before 1859 -- , the works of "Woodman, Fate" and "Farmer, Death" could figure

appropriately the agency of chance and natural selection -- an idea that, in some quarter, was also anathematized as "atheistical and traitorous."

3.5 The Sublime of Teleology, The Blindness of Contingency

The narrator is actually making an epistemological point. Aside from the obvious fact that death and fate are inescapable, what we may know of this given period or any other, or of history in general, cannot be more than an unstructured collection of *a priori* contingent events, until a temporal anchor -- for example the mention of a date -- turns the enumerative litany into the narrative chronicle: "all these things, and a thousand like them, came to pass in and close upon the dear old year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five" (TTC, 7). While litany is an attempt to verbalize the paradigmatic perception (through the events included in the litany) of a state of affairs, the chronicle is an elementary syntagmatic representation (through the dating of the events). Affixing a time to the period implies that it has a past and a future, that it is inserted in a chronology; that a basic structure underlies what, at first, may appear as a jumble of unrelated facts. Even though this understanding may not go further than the feeling that, as the saying goes, "there is something going on," it is the recognition that there may be a story to tell: "The comprehension of action … goes as far as recognizing in the action some temporal structures that call for narration"[21] (Ricoeur, 1983 117–118). Thus, a simple time stamp -- "the dear old year one thousand seven hundred and

[21] « La compréhension de l'action […] va même jusqu'à reconnaître dans l'action des structures temporelles qui appellent la narration. »

seventy-five" -- can suggest that a causal organization underlies the events in the litany: "If, in effect, the action can be recounted, it is because it is already articulated by signs, rules, norms: it is always mediatised symbolically"[22] (Ricoeur, 1983 113).

It is the emplotment of those events into an account that will reveal some of "these things" as necessary, such as the symbolic works of Woodman and Farmer. Granted, the validity of this narrative historiographical approach has been considered objectionable; among others and more recently, "the French Annales group … regarded narrative historiography as a non-scientific, even ideological representational strategy" (White 31). However, historiographical correctness is not Dickens's concern. The objective of his incipit is to allow the reader to recompose the start of an actual narrative, the "tale," using temporality to turn the litany into a chronicle. From a list of facts to a sequence of events to a tale, "we thus follow the destiny of a time prefigured to a time refigured by the mediation of a time configured" 23 (Ricoeur 107–108 -- my emphases).

It is at the last sentence of the first chapter, significantly, that the narrator refers to the narrative that opens on the next page as a "chronicle." Time is the modality that brings to the fore the hypothetical choices that will define narrative: "Thus did the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five conduct their Greatnesses, and myriads of small creatures -- the creatures of this chronicle among the rest -- along the roads that lay before them."

[22] « Si, en effet, l'action peut être racontée, c'est qu'elle est déjà articulée dans des signes, des règles, des normes : elle dès toujours symboliquement médiatisée »

[23] « Nous suivons donc le destin d'un temps préfiguré à temps refiguré par la médiation d'un temps configuré. »

The chronicle is a chronological record with no narrative intent. In spite of that, the novel that starts on the next page makes abundant use of various forms of anachrony, "a discordance between the order in which events (are said to) occur and the order in which they are recounted" (Prince 5). The temporality displayed in the narrative is the opposite of the strictly sequential order expected of a chronicle. Particularly noticeable are the frequent analepses, in particular a prisoner's long framed narrative taking a complete chapter, and the final very complex counterfactual, hence hypothetical, reported speech in the proleptic explicit -- which I shall discuss later in more details -- , "If [Sidney Carton] had given any utterance to his [thoughts], and they were prophetic, they would have been these…" (TTC 389) followed by the vision of the actual future. Hence, the text that will unfold obviously cannot be a chronicle. Using the term, the narrator emphasizes that History, as the grand narrative pictured by the roaring incipit, cannot account for any of the paths taken by the "myriads of small creatures." In consequence, he does not call it history but a chronicle when he follows his characters on one of "the roads that lay before them."

In the dedication and preface which Dickens added to the first volume of the book edition, he confirms having relied only on first-hand reports on "the condition of the French people before or during the revolution" (TTC 397). Nonetheless, as far as the history of the French Revolution itself is concerned, Dickens defers modestly to one of the actual "noisiest authorities" of his time as "no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of Mr. CARLYLE's wonderful book." Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution* is a recognized source for *A Tale of two Cities*. In a letter to J.S. Mill (24/09/1833) Carlyle discloses the literary ambition of his historiographical approach for "the grand *work* of our era," its "grandest Drama," albeit one impossible to write:

> To me, it often seems, as if the right *History* (that impossible thing I mean by History) of the French Revolution were the grand Poem of our Time; as if the man who *could* write the *truth* of that, were worth all other writers and singers. (Carlyle 445)

Still, judging by how little presence is given to the actual history of the Revolution in Dickens's novel, Carlyle's work may have been an inspiration more for its admitted literary qualities (it should be expected from "the grand Poem of our Time") than for its historiographical validity. Dickens's intent was only "to add something to the popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time." His introduction achieves exactly that as it contrasts the sublime of teleology with the blindness of contingency, the grandiose history with the actual and hypothetical destinies of individuals.

4 The Incipit of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

When Dickens died, he had completed only twenty-three chapters of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. They had been published in six monthly instalments and six more were planned: twenty instalments were the standard for serial, it was to be a short novel. As required by the mystery genre, it summons numerous actual and putative events and suggests that they could be strung along many possible paths. This hypothetical diversity is amplified by the fact that this mystery novel was not finished. Its intended closure was to remain forever the object of a wide range of conjectures. To put right this situation, ever since Dickens's death and to this day, an international "Droodian" community of scholars, novelists and mystery buffs has been churning out countless alternative emplotments, prequels, and sequels to this incomplete text.

The mystery genre proceeds through the report of continuous investigations punctuated by astute detections. Concealed or overlooked facts are gradually revealed, by which the solution to the mystery can be inferred. It is the story of the making of a story; from the report of the crime's elucidation emerges the account of the crime's commission. The many details revealed are not just contributing to the "effet de réel. " In the mystery formula, details do not simply connote reality; they also signify possibilities. They are often important clues, denoting the actual or bringing up alternatives. The result is a sequence of abductions where every turn of the plot yields new hints, which result in the production of new hypotheses. In a process of successive inferences, these hypotheses are soon confirmed or falsified, refined to the best explanation, and new conjectures are produced.

Being unfinished, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is open to even more interpretations concerning both its intended closure and the overall authorial project. The semantic reader is

left to wonder about what happened to Edwin. Was he killed? If so, who did it and why? If he ran away, why and where? And in the end, who was to marry whom? The critical reader may speculate about what Dickens's literary project actually was. Was the mystery only meant as a virtuoso's exercise in the formula (which it certainly was) or was it also, as I shall argue, an experiment in new ways for the realist novel to bring up connections between events and characters, to explore interiorities, to reveal hidden motives?

4.1 Dickens's *Mystery*: Bringing Change to Psychological Description

In an often-quoted piece of "Droodiana," the 1906 article "'Edwin Drood' and the Last Days of Charles Dickens" in *Pall Mall Magazine (Vol. 37)*, Kate Perugini (Dickens's youngest daughter and, at the time, the wife of the illustrator of the unfinished novel) shares information and critical thoughts about her father's creative approach to his fifteenth novel. She reports that her aunt, Georgina Hogarth, had expressed to Dickens some concern about the actual fate of Edwin Drood to which Dickens answered, "I call my book the Mystery, not the History, of Edwin Drood." I have mentioned before the attention that Dickens dedicated to the choice of his titles, often assigning his text to a specific genre. Such was the case of the *Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield* (a "history") and of *A Tale of Two Cities* (a "tale"); many others of his texts were also given generic labels such as *Life and adventure*, *Drama*, *Goblin Story*, *Fancy for Christmas-Time*, *Fairy Tale*, *Progress*, *Christmas Carol, Tale of the Riots* and other *Ghost Stories*. Dickens applied the same careful consideration when deciding upon *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Among Dickens's notes was found "a separate leaf devoted almost exclusively to titles … the page records as many as seventeen possibilities" (MED xvi). The note is dated Friday 20 August 1869. At that time, Dickens was then on a reading tour and the importance he gave to this decision was reported by George

Colby, his tour manager: "the selection of the title merited a celebration, and … the novelist gave a little dinner, 'a sort of christening party'" (xvii).

Dickens's title choice reflected his decision to write a mystery. Several reasons for this choice can be considered. Was he motivated to experiment with the genre? Dickens had previously written articles, short stories and novels involving crimes and staging detectives in their steady pursuit of "the inductive process, and, from small beginnings, working on from clue to clue" (Dickens, 1850, 410). His later novels were centred around secrets and investigations. *Bleak House* (1852) featured prominently the work, methods and character of Inspector Bucket; *Our Mutual Friend* (1864), the somewhat less expansive Mr. Inspector. Other non-detective characters, lawyers in particular, displayed inquisitive skills: Mr. Guppy and Mr. Tulkinghorn in *Bleak House*, Mr. Pancks in *Little Dorrit* (1857), Sidney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Mr. Micawber and Tommy Traddle in *David Copperfield*, John Harmon in *Our Mutual Friend*. This is to say that Dickens, with his successful practice of the sensation novel, was already familiar with the staples of the mystery formula. The genre in itself, with its characteristics (the double narrative, the inductive reasoning, the process of abduction), was not presenting him with any creative opportunity or challenge that he had not addressed before. Hence, the decision to write a mystery was not based on the possibility that the genre would provide a new approach to literary creation.

Actually, according to Kate Perugini, the development and the resolution of the enigma at the center of the novel may have been of secondary interest for Dickens, who was more concerned by the exposition of a psychopathology. Whatever happened to Edwin, his possible murder or disappearance, was for the author a mere matter of storyline, barely relevant to his project. Perugini strongly doubted that "it was upon the Mystery alone that he relied for the

interest and originality of his idea." Rather, she was convinced that "The originality was to be shown … in what we may call the psychological description the murderer gives us of his temptations, temperament, and character."

> It was not, I imagine, for the intricate working out of his plot alone that my father cared to write this story; but it was through his wonderful observation of character, and his strange insight into the tragic secrets of the human heart, that he desired his greatest triumph to be achieved. (Perugini)

This raises the question of how an author of Dickens's creativity and originality meant to innovate in the area of "observation of character," "insight into the tragic secrets of the human heart" and "psychological description." In a letter to his close friend and biographer John Forster, written as he was embarking on the writing of the novel, Dickens states that he had come upon "a very curious and new idea for [his] new story. Not a communicable idea (or the interest of the book would be gone), but a very strong one, though difficult to work" (Forster 16,115). Foster reports that he would soon learn more about the difficulty of the work:

> The story … was to be that of the murder … the originality of which was to consist in the review of the murderer's career … its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted. The last chapters were to be written … all elaborately elicited from him as if told of another… (Forster 16,116)

Foster's confused indications about the intended narrative instance ("not he the culprit, but some other man," "elicited from him as if told of another") is not surprising. By 1870, the conventionally realist, or at least credible, report of some "other mind's" private thoughts implied that they had been, in some way and beforehand, shared or reported. For instance, a verbal confession should have been heard or, if written down in a diary or a letter, read. The direct experience of the thinking process by a first-person narrator or its explicit report by a

character long remained the only admitted sources of this intimate knowledge. The norms allowed by popular literature included the soliloquies, confessions, diaries and memoirs of tender hearts, great souls, tricksters and psychopaths, all in the first person. Dickens's entry in the mystery genre provided him the opportunity to escape conventional constraints by trying out new narrative and descriptive approaches to interiority.

4.2 The Case of Someone Else's Mind

An outsider's access to one's psychic activities had been for a while the subject of Dickens's experimentation with various literary devices. David Copperfield could share his own thoughts in the first person, but I have discussed previously how he could only infer those of Mr. Dick (DC 629) or Mr. Peggotty (731) from their speeches and observed behaviours. However, the narrator's report of Emma's thoughts (quoted in 1.15) secures the suspension of the reader's disbelief, which Austen greatly achieved by an artful recourse to free indirect style, passing it off as a conventional soliloquy spoken out loud.

The third-person narrator of *Bleak House* offers a very good example of compliance with the conventional proscriptions of omniscience. This narrator is aware of Sir Leicester's consideration for Mr. Tulkinghorn as "the steward of the legal mysteries, the butler of the legal cellar, of the Dedlocks," (BH 24); he is aware as well of Lady Dedlock's delusional "remarkable circumstance… She supposes herself to be an inscrutable Being, quite out of the reach and ken of ordinary mortals -- seeing herself in her glass, where indeed she looks so." Nevertheless, when this narrator attempts to peer into the inquisitive mind of Mr. Tulkinghorn, he recognizes the limit imposed on his omniscience, and the same restrictions seem to saddle Mr. Tulkinghorn's own capacity for psychological insights, "Has Mr. Tulkinghorn any idea of this himself? It may be so, or it may not… Therefore, while Mr. Tulkinghorn may not know

what is passing in the Dedlock mind at present, it is very possible that he may" (BH 24–25). Mr. Tulkinghorn is admittedly "An oyster of the old school whom nobody can open" (BH 158). The narrator fails to read into Mr. Tulkinghorn's mind, just as Mr. Tulkinghorn himself "may or may not know what is passing in the Dedlock mind." Anything learnt about Mr. Tulkinghorn's interiority remains hypothetical, inferred from the interpretation of his appearance, his behaviour and the suggestion of analogies undermined by the recourse to conditional and subjunctive moods, introduced by "as if" and "perhaps."

> There is an expression on his face as if he had discharged his mind of some grave matter and were, in his close way, satisfied. To say of a man so severely and strictly self-repressed that he is triumphant would be to do him as great an injustice as to suppose him troubled with love or sentiment or any romantic weakness. He is sedately satisfied. Perhaps there is a rather increased sense of power upon him as he loosely grasps one of his veinous wrists with his other hand and holding it behind his back walks noiselessly up and down. (651–652)

This "mise en abyme" clearly acknowledges the wider authorial difficulty presented by the opening of the mental "oyster" in realist novels. To open the mental "oyster" while respecting the convention of the impenetrability of an other's mind, mystery novels would require the culprit to speak in the first person, like James Hogg's narrating homicidal Justified Sinner or Frankenstein's soliloquizing murderous Creature. Even so, these two belong in an earlier Gothic genre, free from the conventions of the more rational realist novel. In a mystery, these types of discourses would go against the purpose of the formula since there would not be much room left for mystery if the murderer indicted himself in a confession or a soliloquy (although this has come to be the case in later mystery genres where mystery yields to psychology with a focus on the commission of the crime rather than its elucidation, and on the criminal or the victim rather than the detective).

Nonetheless, for novelists, the exploration of someone else's consciousness from the outside presented a new and important dimension for the literary depiction of reality (I have already and shall again rely upon the works of Gérard Genette and Dorrit Cohn on that subject). Despite the conventions of the early realist novel, with increasing frequency authors tried by various means to entice the reader to suspend his disbelief where mind-reading skills were concerned. In search of a realist representation of interiority, a number of authors in Dickens's time engaged in such exploration.

4.3 Begging for the Reader's Suspension of Disbelief

If Austen did not feel that she had to justify herself for depicting Emma's thoughts in free indirect style, Thackeray, more aware of conventions, asked the reader to take on trust that the narrator's omniscience granted him such a power to reveal "the tragic secret of the human heart," although he was ironic about mind-reading, "for novelists have the privilege of knowing everything" (Thackeray, 1848, 62).

> If, a few pages back, the present writer claimed the privilege of peeping into Miss Amelia Sedley's bedroom, and understanding with the omniscience of the novelist all the gentle pains and passions which were tossing upon that innocent pillow, why should he not declare himself to be Rebecca's confidante too, master of her secrets, and seal-keeper of that young woman's conscience? (192).

Interestingly, Thackeray later gave up this satirical stance when he proposed the logical validation of this novelist's "privilege," promoting it to a process of inductive inference by way of a scientific analogy. Experimental psychology still being in its fledgling stage, he called for the support of paleontology, by then a most prestigious discipline benefitting from wide popular and scholarly attention due to Darwin's work and the evolutionary debate.

> How can I tell the feelings in a young lady's mind; the thoughts in a young

> gentleman's bosom? -- As Professor Owen or Professor Agassiz takes a fragment of a bone, and builds an enormous forgotten monster out of it, wallowing in primeval quagmires, … so the novelist puts this and that together: from the footprint finds the foot; from the foot, the brute who trod on it; from the brute, the plant he browsed on, the marsh in which he swam -- and thus in his humble way a physiologist too, depicts the habits, size, appearance of the beings whereof he has to treat; … (Thackeray, 1855, K8463).

Later, the external narrator of Henry James's *The Bostonians* assumes unapologetically an internal perspective to report a character's uncertain or fallacious interpretation of his or her reality. He reverts to Thackeray's earlier tone of embarrassed irony to gain acceptance for his conjectures about the surface manifestations of interiority:

> If we were at this moment to take, in a single glance, an inside view of Mrs. Burrage (a liberty we have not yet ventured on), I suspect we should find that she was considerably exasperated… Mrs. Burrage -- since we have begun to look into her mind we may continue the process -- had not meant any one in particular; but a train of associations was suddenly kindled in her thought by the flash of the girl's resentment. (307)

Yet, at time, this narrator feels obliged to apologize (to the reader and to the character) for divulging feelings that Basil Ransom never expressed: "He liked his pedigree, he revered his forefathers, and he rather pitied those who might come after him. In saying so, however, I betray him a little, for he never mentioned such feelings as these" (199). Thus, the narrator departs from his heterodiegetical stance as he introduces himself in the story in the first person singular. To mitigate the incredibility of his mind-reading, he claims an actual relation with the character. Basil might have confided his thoughts, although he did not, the narrator admitting to the hypothetical nature of these confidences. In his later novels, James will even extend this narrative metalepsis to the reader, making him an explicit accomplice or witness to

his psychological exploration. In *The Ambassadors* (1903), the narrator calls repeatedly (about one hundred times) the protagonist "our friend," thus including the reader into the select circle of those with whom he can assertively share, without being challenged, his direct access to Lambert Strether's perspective, even on such intimate or transient thoughts as the following:

> … our friend fairly felt, while he prolonged the meditation I describe, that for himself even already a certain measure had been reached. It will have been sufficiently seen that he was not a man to neglect any good chance for reflexion. (84)

or

> The remark had been at first surprising and our friend's private thought, under the influence of it, temporarily blighted; yet we are able to add that he presently recovered his inward tone and that many a fresh flower of fancy was to bloom in the same air. (336)

It is important to notice that both Thackeray's and James's narrators have to break through a narrative level to obtain acceptance for their intrusion into the character's mind. In Thackeray's novel, it is through a direct address to the reader that the request is made to accept the omniscient or the scientific approach. James's narrator does the same but also adds a considerable innovation with his recourse to narrative metalepsis by introducing himself into the narrated (as the later non-confident of Basil) or by enlisting the reader into his own interpretative community in order to present (unopposed) "our friend" Lambert Strether's thoughts. In all cases, some metanarrative comments were required to introduce and to justify the description of a third party's consciousness.

Such an "inside view" was in the process of becoming a realist convention. Some changes to the literary norms were being brought about by these efforts; the representation by the narrator (or by a speaking or writing character) of someone else's thoughts was to evolve

into a realist literary practice, taken for granted and barely noticeable by semantic readers. They did not question the accounts of Emma's thoughts any more than they doubted her appearance, social standing, and actions. Novelists developed new literary devices in order to produce plausible statements about third party's interiority. What at first had just been suggested as uncertain assumptions (Thackeray's and James's justifications) would soon be asserted as credible hypotheses, so much so that they could be accepted as just another form of mimesis (Joyce's interior monologue). From Austen to Joyce, through Thackeray and James and many others, the representation of someone else's thoughts, using many possible combinations of voices, modes and distances, found ways to evolve from soliloquy to narrated speech to interior monologue -- "the nonmediated presentation of a character's thoughts and impressions or perceptions" (Prince, 2003 45).

4.4 Between Emma Woodhouse and Molly Bloom, John Jasper

I shall argue that, consistent with this evolution, and as proposed by Perugini, "the originality was to be shown" in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* by means of the internal perspective on one's own psychic activity. I shall discuss in a detailed manner how this is demonstrated in the incipit, as someone comes out of a state of drugged stupor complicated by the anxieties of and the conflicts between repressed and denied multiple selves. Dickens's treatment endows with a paradoxical "air of reality" the description of this stupefied figure thinking thoughts he dearly wishes never to communicate to anyone (to use Dorrit Cohn's words cited in 1.13).

Building on Perugini's opinion, I suggest that one of Dickens's intentions in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was to improve upon of a rather formulaic and popular genre such as the mystery novel by rendering the realistic internal perspective of a murderer's "temptations,

temperament, and character" (Perugini). In the incipit, Dickens overcomes the constraints imposed on the realist novel for the report of "psychological insights" and unveils in an unconventional way the instantaneity of the erratic operation of a consciousness. Although, in the period, the plausibility of such a transparent access could not be taken for granted, he adopts a complex perspective that produced a "realist" description of complex psychic processes. He creates devices to achieve the balance between the necessary internal focalization on the subject and the strictly external focalization of an objective and conventional narrator, whose report was scrupulously limited to no more than what he could see and hear. I shall discuss some of these devices, such as Dickens's recourse to free direct or indirect speech or thought (in a manner announcing the later interior monologue) and to hypothetical focalization. He manages creative ways to avoid resorting to unexpected or out-of-character spoken or written confession, as well as he stayed away from the unrealistic expediency of a narrator's omniscience. Although Dickens certainly aimed at producing a masterful illustration of the mystery genre, his incipit also demonstrates a formal intent. His creative effort was as relevant to the evolution of the mystery genre as it was to the evolution of the narrative perspective on interiority. The elucidation of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, had it ever occurred, might have situated the novel in the detective story continuum somewhere between the adventures of Auguste Dupin and those of Sherlock Holmes. I shall discuss how his incipit also locates it somewhere between *Emma* and *Ulysses* in the evolution of the representation of consciousness, as Dickens pushed forward into a territory where interior monologue and free direct style would soon prevail.

The first chapter of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is titled "The Dawn." It is appropriate as it is a beginning and because the action occurs at dawn. To facilitate my discussion, I shall quote first the whole paragraph and then cite again as needed each of the passages being analyzed. This analysis will pay particular attention to any elements providing some indication about whether the text represents a speech, a dream, or a train of thoughts, to whether the speaker is a narrator or a character, and to any indications concerning the situation of utterance in general.

> An ancient English Cathedral town? How can the ancient English Cathedral town be here! The well-known massive grey square tower of its old Cathedral? How can that be here! There is no spike of rusty iron in the air, between the eye and it, from any point of the real prospect. What IS the spike that intervenes, and who has set it up? Maybe, it is set up by the Sultan's orders for the impaling of a horde of Turkish robbers, one by one. It is so, for cymbals clash, and the Sultan goes by to his palace in long procession. Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and thrice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers. Then, follow white elephants caparisoned in countless gorgeous colours, and infinite in number and attendants. Still, the Cathedral tower rises in the background, where it cannot be, and still no writhing figure is on the grim spike. Stay! Is the spike so low a thing as the rusty spike on the top of a post of an old bedstead that has tumbled all awry? Some vague period of drowsy laughter must be devoted to the consideration of this possibility. (MED 7)

Rather than simply relying on the "novelist's privilege" and the gift of "inside view" that would allow represented speech to stand for thoughts, Dickens begins the novel with what appears as an unassigned direct speech uttered in an ambiguous situation of enunciation. The identification of the narrative instance is compromised by its uncertain perspective. What is reported could be silent thoughts magically ferreted out of the thinker's mind by an omniscient narrator; it could equally be a mind spoken out loud with an unstable distance blurring the

identification of the narrative mood. If the latter, the distance could reveal itself to be that of a reported free direct speech, the narrating perspective being external, omniscient or strictly objective. It could as well be the transposed silent stream of consciousness of an intradiegetic first-person narrator. Leaving possibilities open in this way, the author lets the reader infer context and meaning through a succession of hypotheses about the nature of the represented expression (whether speech, or thought), about who speaks or thinks and who reports, and about the general circumstances surrounding this utterance or thought. The visual perspective is clearly that of the speaker. Hence, if we can be sure that the focalizer is the speaker, we cannot yet draw any conclusion concerning the narrative instance and mode: the distance (how the speech is represented), the voice (the relation of the narrator or speaker to the story) and the perspective. We will find later in this first chapter that this ambiguity also afflicts the speaker; a retrospective incertitude will cause him to worry about his possible speech having been overheard and hoping it remained "'Unintelligible!'" (MED 10). Mystery arises as the incipit promises that some yet obscure designs remain hidden but may not be suppressed much longer. The suspense results from, first, a non-assigned utterance and second, from the progressive but jumbled discovery of its context. The anguish betrayed by the speech, the violence of its attempted suppression, and the fear of the sinister outcome implied are deployed from the first few lines and will persist throughout the novel.

4.5 The Nature of an Utterance: Soliloquy or Somniloquy

To explain how Dickens exploits the possibility offered by this ambiguous narrative mood, more must be said about interior monologue. James Joyce attributed the paternity of the device to Edouard Dujardin (in his 1887 novel *Les lauriers sont coupés*). Dujardin returned the compliment in 1931 in an essay about interior monologue in Joyce's *Ulysses*, providing it

with a belated definition (the following translation of Dujardin is borrowed from Levin's *Joyce*):

> The internal monologue, in its nature on the order of poetry, is that unheard and unspoken speech by which a character expresses his inmost thoughts (those lying nearest the unconscious) without regard to logical organization -- that is, in their original state -- by means of direct sentences reduced to the syntactic minimum, and in such a way as to give the impression of reproducing the thoughts just as they come into the mind.[24] (Levin 90)

This narrative mode had become commonplace in 1931, after the modernists had made it "the norm of psychological realism" (Cohn 76), the accepted convention for the verbal representation of the stream of consciousness (I shall come back to this topic later.)

Does this device account for Dickens's opening of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood?* The question deserves to be asked because the second half of the first chapter will show that the speaker is worried about the fact that his opening monologue may not have been interior. It begins with the complicated denial of the impossible and vivid perception of an otherwise existing and familiar site (the "old Cathedral"), by someone awaking from an opium dream. A second impossible vision undermines the initial mirage -- "There is no spike of rusty iron in the air, between the eye and it, from any point of the real prospect." This leads to the conjecture of an even more inconceivable prospect (the Orientalist scene of impalement and the fantastic parade). From an initial hallucination is inferred even more aberrant mental

[24] « Le monologue intérieur est, dans l'ordre de la poésie, le discours sans auditeur et non prononcé, par lequel un personnage exprime sa pensée la plus intime, la plus proche de l'inconscient, antérieurement à toute organisation logique, c'est-à-dire en son état naissant, par le moyen de phrases directes réduites au minimum syntaxial, de façon à donner l'impression "tout venant" » (Dujardin, 136-137).

imagery until it is explained by the interference of a real object -- "the rusty spike on the top of a post of an old bedstead." The completed opening utterance expresses the anxiety of a consciousness that the following paragraphs will show bent on the repression of some compulsion and harrowed by the fear of betraying it before it can be actualized. In other words, the speaker or thinker is concerned that he may or may not have expressed in the open, "his inmost thoughts (those lying nearest [his] unconscious)." The utterance may or may not have been "unheard and unspoken." If it was unheard and unspoken, then we must infer that from the start and without the mediation of a prying narrator, a secretive repressed interiority has been revealed in the instantaneity of its psychic activity. However, this remains hypothetical as it may have been spoken out loud. Dickens had previously used such an incipit, one which represents direct speech coming *in medias res*, in *Hard Times*, "'Now, what I want is, Facts.'" (HT, 1) All the same, in that novel, it was labelled as speech with quotation marks. Here, there are none. The immediate present tense suggests a time and the deictic "here," a place. Even so, these indications are not indexed to any actual frame. There is absolutely no temporal or spatial reference to the situation of utterance of this speech. In short, the hypothetical is required to make sense of what is being thought or talked about (it can be either) and of what is seen (if it is actually seen). At this point, we cannot yet decide if we are presented with an interior monologue, if the "direct sentences reduced to the syntactic minimum" are "unheard and unspoken." As I mentioned earlier, we share this ignorance of the place, time and nature (private or public) of the speech with the speaker (or thinker), John Jasper (for convenience, I use his actual name although it is not revealed in the incipit), for whom it is a major cause of anxiety. The utterance clearly "expresses his inmost thoughts (those lying nearest the unconscious) without regard to logical organization." He will soon

display his eagerness to repress and suppress this expression, and will spend the rest of the chapter trying to assess for himself if he spoke out loud and if anybody might have heard him. In a first semantic reading, in other words, we are left without any clue about the context of the utterance. None of the conventional pragmatic markers (intonations, gestures, facial expressions, place, time, etc.) can be identified that would help make semantic sense of this scene. However, a closer look at some ungrammaticalities will help us discover the content and intent below this apparently pure locutionary surface.

The passage starts with two anaphoric sequences. “An ancient English Cathedral town? How can the ancient English Cathedral town be here!” and “The well-known massive grey square tower of its old Cathedral? How can that be here!” The antecedent and the anaphora composing each sequence are marked respectively as interrogation and exclamation. The critical reader’s attention is alerted by two ungrammaticalities. First, there are no verbs in the referent; it is a nominal phrase where the punctuation alone signifies the interrogation. This first ungrammaticality triggers hypothesizing about the content and the context of the utterance. Second, the exclamatory sentences that follow have the perfect syntax of questions but again, punctuation indicates them as exclamatory. In other words, based upon usual syntax, the markings are inverted. To make sense of this situation, the semantic reader may intuit that the initial incomplete clauses (missing verb) are standing for the representations of not fully verbalized perceptions; words are affixed like labels to thoughts not yet mediated by language but definitely experienced as questions and confirmed as such by the marks. All the same, at this point, it cannot be decided if the opening questions are uttered or thought.

4.6 Empathy over Omniscience; Mind-reading as a "Character's Privilege"

The qualification of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*'s incipit as an interior monologue has been closely examined and partially dismissed by Harry Stone (1959) and Kathleen Wales (1984). Their contributions provide an important starting point to understand how Dickens managed his semantic reader's reception process. Harry Stone documented thoroughly, from *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the evolution of "Dickens's increasingly sophisticated attempts to examine and [to] represent the mind's flow and to recreate the immediacy of experience" (Stone 52). For the last novel, he considered that "such an opening would have been inconceivable in 1836, and its complexity is a measure of the change which occurred in both Dickens and the novel during the ensuing thirty-four years" (58). Nevertheless, Stone provides examples of what he deems to be actual instances of interior monologues in Dickens's other works taken over this period, primarily short fictions and magazine articles, from which he concludes that in the case of this incipit, Dickens stepped away from the device.

> Dickens sacrificed psychological verisimilitude for comprehensibility. He was perfectly capable now (as his previous experiments demonstrate) of representing Jasper's dream-waking state with the more powerful and appropriate technique of interior monologue and its accompanying intricacies of association, discontinuity, and privacy. (Stone 59)

For Stone, the two nominal interrogative phrases, "An ancient English Cathedral town? …" and "The well-known massive grey square tower of its old Cathedral?", are examples of "psychological verisimilitude" soon "sacrificed" for the "comprehensibility" expressed by the syntactically correct anaphoric interrogative reassertions which follow each of them and express the same content. There, argued Stone, Dickens stopped short of using interior

monologue and rather "chose to describe the image and thought processes … in clear and highly organized sentences" (Stone 59).

As we have seen earlier, the apparent propriety of these well-formed questions is compromised by their own ungrammaticality, the absence of the question marks replaced by exclamation points. This odd marking serves a pragmatic function: it transfers the exclamatory emotional content of the antecedents, maybe surprise or anxiety, to the anaphoras. This typographic addition of non-verbal information makes the anaphoras perform more than just ensuring the coherence of the theme "English Cathedral town." These anaphoras are more than the simple repetitions of their antecedents. If the former, sounding like hasty utterances, are meant as raw thoughts, the latter is not just a straight translation of thought into language, for the sake of "comprehensibility" as Stone suggests. Such a translation is not needed from a narrative perspective (soliloquies are frequent in Dickens's texts) and in any case the odd punctuation would undermine it. The faulty typographic marking actually provides the clauses with their pragmatic meaning, the illocutionary force inherited from the preceding exclamatory phrases. If the omission of the verb can figure a raw, pre-verbal feeling of surprise resulting from an immediate and surprising visual perception, the resulting phrase is also marked as an incredulous question. The correct sentence that follows is not just a spoken or written statement for the information of a listener or reader; it is not a simple translation from thought to language. It is a represented thought as well (spoken or not), but this time expressed as a rational response to rather than a repetition of the initial instant perception, and here, the exclamation mark preserves and amplifies the expression of astonishment.

In other words, the semantic reader is not invited to mull over the speaker's anaphoras' exclamatory antecedents (about the presence of the cathedral) and to decide whether they

should be confirmed or not. Nor are the interrogative anaphoras just straight questions about the actuality of the state of affairs (about how the cathedral could be here). The direct free speech utterances embedded in the midst of an undefined action cannot be reduced to their semantic content as they would be in a conventional soliloquy. They are not factual statements, either true or false; they are speech acts, successful or failed. To make sense of the anaphoras, pragmatics must override semantics, and we should consider them rather as reactions of denial or protest against what the antecedent perceptions imply, as in "[I deny or I protest the possibility] that the ancient English Cathedral town can be here!" In this manner, Dickens provides a psychological context to the utterance. The punctuation is, as it is often the case, a pragmatic indication, in this case of the speaker's resistance to his own perceptions as he gradually awakens and realizes that he was in a particular psychic state (narcotic stupor). We are witnessing his attempt to reject an illusion, to fight his unreliable perceptions. This is not Dickens's usual deployment of poetical and rhetorical language for the description of the opening environment (London in the November fog and mud, the year 1775 in England and France, a raw afternoon toward evening at a graveyard by the marsh, a classroom in Coketown, etc.). Rather, utterances are calling our attention on their pragmatic function and we are invited to take them as actions. Speech acts afford the novelist the possibility of dealing with someone else's thoughts as if they were acts.

In 4.2, I discussed how Mr. Tulkinghorn's interiority could be inferred only from his behaviour (BH 65–652). In the same manner, it is only John Jasper's visual perceptions (real and hallucinated) and his reaction to them (resistance and escape) that bring us one step closer to figuring out John Jasper's psychic processes. For narrative purposes, speech acts provide a proxy for physical actions. As speech, they are closer to consciousness than behaviours; as

action, they can be given the narrative function of physical events. Despite the limiting conventions, representations of characters' inner life are not an unusual feature of realist novels. Dickens's novels are remarkable for the fact that he did not limit these explorations of interiority to the simple interior soliloquy of the first-person or the omniscient narrator (although he often turned to it). While the convention did not extend the "novelist's privilege" to characters, a Dickens's narrator will often probe characters' minds as they, themselves are in the act of probing another character's mind and hypothesizing thoughts. Amy Dorrit visiting Arthur Clennam on a cold night tries to hide her inadequate shoes, having "a misgiving that he might blame her father, if he saw them; that he might think, 'why did he dine to-day, and leave this little creature to the mercy of the cold stones!'" (LD 183). Keeping a vigil at the bedside of a jailed and dying Abel Magwitch, Pip wonders if "[Magwitch] pondered over the question whether he might have been a better man under better circumstances" (GE 450). In Dickens's last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, Eugene Wrayburn, as he contemplates marrying Lizzie Hexam, debates the issue with the imaginary invocation of his father, "how would M. R. F. [My Respected Father] reason with the legal mind?" (OMF 679), and of his friend Mortimer Lightwood, "I wish I could stop the Lightwood peal, for it sounds like a knell" (681). Finally, as I discussed before, the awaking Jasper double-guesses his own hallucinated and split self.

Dickens depicts these characters' consciousness by revealing their counterfactual thoughts; Amy anticipates what Arthur might think if …; Pip wonders about what Magwitch would think, if …; Eugene speculates about what M.R.F or Mortimer might say if …; the dreamer's two voices explain away the spike. In this manner, Dickens, as a realist novelist, attempts to avoid the "novelist's privilege" in favour of the "character's privilege." The latter

is not less questionable by the convention. However, from the perspective of a realist novel's reader, putting oneself in someone else's shoes is a more common human experience than mindreading. Hence, this attempted mimesis of human empathy is more acceptable than omniscience.

4.7 Hypothetical Thoughts Expressed as Hypothetical Speech Acts

Whether or not Dickens was capable of using interior monologue, he managed to avoid the narrative stasis resulting from a god-like narrator's metanarrative intrusions or from a character's introspective soliloquies, both devices being too discursive to render the instantaneity and the fragmentation of the thinking process. Rather, Dickens represented it in the most conventional narrative manner, giving primacy to the Aristotelian mimesis of actions: "So the events, i.e. the plot, are what tragedy is there for, and that is the most important thing of all" (Aristotle 11). In this case, the event, Jasper's awakening, is composed of speech acts. All those hypothetical thoughts are expressed as hypothetical speech acts, illocutionary acts (Clennam's judgment; Magwitch's wish; M.R.F.'s and Mortimer's admonitions; the dreamer's denial) answered by actual perlocutionary acts (Amy's admission; Pip's recognition; Eugene's self-incrimination; the dreamer's concession). They are representations of things done, albeit with words and in the imagination of characters imagining what goes on in other characters' minds; in the dreamer's case, I contend that it is a confused double-guessing game between the two sides of a conflicted self.

As the first paragraph continues, the speaker (or thinker) shifts his focus. Having denied the possibility of the cathedral being there, the dreamer, to resist the reality of the spike, summons the fantasy. I must quote again a large part of the incipit:

> There is no spike of rusty iron in the air, between the eye and it, from any point

> of the real prospect. What IS the spike that intervenes, and who has set it up? Maybe, it is set up by the Sultan's orders for the impaling of a horde of Turkish robbers, one by one. It is so, for cymbals clash, and the Sultan goes by to his palace in long procession. Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and thrice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers. Then, follow white elephants caparisoned in countless gorgeous colours, and infinite in number and attendants. Still, the Cathedral tower rises in the background, where it cannot be, and still no writhing figure is on the grim spike. Stay! Is the spike so low a thing as the rusty spike on the top of a post of an old bedstead that has tumbled all awry? Some vague period of drowsy laughter must be devoted to the consideration of this possibility.

In this incipit, the reader witnesses the execution of a (self-addressed) speech act, actually, a sequence of actions. The utterance in the first half of the paragraph expresses Jasper's confrontation with, resistance to and the denial of both the hallucination (the cathedral) and the reality (the spike). In the second half of the paragraph, Jasper attempts to escape into an exotic fantasy and finally resigns himself to admitting the opium den's sordid reality. Dickens reports this series while negotiating the tight compromise necessary to simultaneously render the anxieties conveyed by the contrary aspects of the locutionary surface, the grotesque fantasies suggesting hypothetical illocutionary intents, and the violent reaction, consequence to the possible threatening nature of the perlocutionary content. Whatever Jasper think he may have said in his stupor (the utterance in the incipit, the locutionary act) may have been the involuntary performance of his admission of some guilt (the illocutionary act) that -- until proven "'unintelligible!'" -- he must consider to be the performance of a threat against him (the perlocutionary act).

Reality in the form of an unfamiliar "spike of rusty iron" betrays the nature of the deceptive image of the absent cathedral. The capitalized verb in the question (another

typographic pragmatic clue emphasizing a speaker's metalocutionary act), "What IS the spike…", marks the threshold into awakening and perceiving details of an actual physical environment, while the irrelevant "who has set it up…" is a last attempt to escape the grim reality of the "English Cathedral Town" and enjoy longer the experience of the opium dream. This gratification is related to the vision of a somewhat grotesque and baroque Orientalist fantasy. The vision seems familiar to the dreamer; it has been staged by "*the* Sultan," rather than "*a* Sultan" (my italics) and is perceived with a detailed and appreciative expression of excitement.

The familiarity of the vision is confirmed much later, in the last published chapter (XXXIII, "The Dawn Again"). There we learn that the vision of this hallucinated parade is the habitual climax of each of John Jasper's frequent visits to the opium den. Despite its title ("The Dawn Again"), this explicit is an accidental echo of the incipit ("The Dawn"); imposed by Dickens's death as the last, this chapter was not planned to conclude the novel. However, it is where the dream in the incipit is revealed as always following another dream. This other dream is never mentioned and never described anywhere in the novel but is just as familiar to the dreamer; it is the dream of a metaphorical and sinister journey.

> It was a journey, a difficult and dangerous journey. That was the subject in my mind. A hazardous and perilous journey, over abysses where a slip would be destruction. Look down, look down! You see what lies at the bottom there? (MED 259)

This dreamed journey figures an action still hypothetical and a desire repressed, absent from the incipit; it was necessary for it to occur each time before the oriental fantasy could start.

> Yes! I always made the journey first, before the changes of colours and the great landscapes and glittering processions began. They couldn't begin till it was off my mind. I had no room till then for anything else. (MED 261)

The figurative "hazardous and perilous journey, over abysses" is revealed as having finally been actualized.

> I did it [the journey], here, hundreds of thousands of times. What do I say? I did it millions and billions of times. I did it so often, and through such vast expanses of time, that when it was really done, it seemed not worth the doing, it was done so soon. (MED 260)

The conclusion from this detour in the last chapter is that the bewildered utterance that opens the novel has been reported only partially, as if caught in the middle, just before the experience of "the glittering procession" and after a possible account of the "difficult and dangerous journey."

What the narration reports is limited to the mirage, inspired by the dreamer's own episodic memory of his familiar cathedral, one that he knows to exist even if it cannot be there in that place. Then comes the vision of the impaled "horde of Turkish robbers" and finally the "great landscapes and glittering processions." Yet, in the end we know that the dreamer "always made the journey first" and our retrospective reading of the incipit shows the account of this prerequisite travel completely omitted. Was there a journey just a few seconds before the novel started? What was said? Did anyone hear it? Did the dreamer draw someone's attention on his sinister journey? These questions will remain open, until the last chapter, when we learn that, as Jasper feared, "there was a fellow-traveller" (261). This explains the anxiety of the dreamer as he wakes up, not knowing how much he may have revealed of his dark design and to whom.

4.8 Hypothetical Focalization, the Doubt About the Very Grounds for Doubt

After his "scattered consciousness has thus fantastically pieced itself together," (MED 7) the context of enunciation changes. The narrative voice is suddenly identifiable and stable;

an objective narrator with a strictly external perspective reports Jasper's survey of his environment. However, this new narrative instance and mode does not shed any light on the nature of the opening utterance. Neither the reader nor Jasper can be sure if it was thought or speech and, for Jasper only, if the journey was ever mentioned. Before returning to his "ancient English Cathedral Town," Jasper must verify that none of three other stupefied persons present in the opium den are aware of his secret journey. He will reassure himself of the fact by manhandling them until he is satisfied that whatever is said in an opium trance, by them or him, remains "Unintelligible!"

> There has been chattering and clattering enough between them, but to no purpose. When any distinct word has been flung into the air, it has had no sense or sequence. Wherefore "unintelligible!" is again the comment of the watcher, made with some reassured nodding of his head, and a gloomy smile. (10)

I have shown how Dickens changed his approach for his final incipit by renouncing his usual description to resort to an utterance. I shall now address another important difference. In his previous works, Dickens had a stable narrator delivering the customary description; the narrative discourse and its situation of enunciation were clearly defined. The two incipits we have discussed before anchor their opening narrative in a specific and recognizable context. *David Copperfield* starts with the well-identified metanarrative meditation of an autobiographer about to report his own birth. The omniscient narrator of *A Tale of Two Cities* set precisely the deixis relevant to his storytelling: the political, cultural and ideological situation in 1775 in England and France. The same applies to the other novels in the corpus considered. The sets and the events of their opening are introduced by a narrator avoiding any deictic or thematic ambiguity; for instance, *Bleak House* opens in "London. Michaelmas Term lately over… And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits

the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery" (BH 13–14); *Little Dorrit*, "Thirty years ago, Marseilles lay burning in the sun, one day… In Marseilles that day there was a villainous prison" (LD 15); *Hard Times*, "'Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts.' … The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom" (HT 1); *Great Expectations*, "MY FATHER'S family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip … long before the days of photographs … the marsh country, down by the river … on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening" (GE, 3); *Our Mutual Friend*, "In these times of ours … a boat of dirty and disreputable appearance, with two figures in it, floated on the Thames, between Southwark Bridge … and London Bridge … an autumn evening was closing in" (OMF 13).

The situation is quite different in the incipit of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Dickens introduces a new device, a contribution to the way, using Perugini's words, "the originality was to be shown." Although a description of a seedy opium den may have offered as much material as the mud and fog of London, the jail in sunny Marseilles or the graveyard by the marsh at dusk, Dickens does not rely here upon the evocative quality of a description of the environment. This time, mystery, in the form of suspense, enters the narrative by way of uncertainty about the context, the action, and who performs it. We may be listening to a first-person narrator's free direct speech or to an external omniscient third-person account in free indirect style. It could just as well be not utterance at all but a stream of thoughts, which complicates any inference about the reporting instance even more. Dickens arranges his first paragraph in a manner that prevents any immediate conclusion about the nature of the opening, about the identification of the speaker and of the narrative instance (they may be different and changing). Rather than offering the usual invitation to the reader's immediate

immersion into the narrative, Dickens defamiliarizes the narrative perspective and narrative mode, "making the familiar strange by impeding automatic, habitual ways of perceiving" (Prince, 2003, 18). This first paragraph suggests a possible disjunction between who narrates, who speaks, and who sees. The text is given some semantic attributes that point to various possible types of reported speech. However, any such qualification implies a different type of narrator and context of narration, which in turn triggers abductive cycles of speculation not only about what is happening, where and when, but also about who talks or thinks, who watches and who tells. Dickens arranges for mystery, the expected driving force of this novel, to spring from the ambiguous identification of both the narrative point of view and the viewer.

The various concepts from the classical narrative typology that we have used so far (distance, voice, perspective) help us to appreciate the function of Dickens's approach. Still, they do not entirely explain its nature and operation, due to the unstable quality of the narrative mood and instance. To figure this out, another type of narrative perspective may be considered: the hypothetical focalization. David Herman has proposed this concept to address

> … narratives whose interpretation provokes, in a more or less direct or explicit way, speculation about some non-existent focalizer. At issue, too, are narratives that prompt speculation about focalizing activity that someone who actually exists in the storyworld may or may not have performed. (Herman 309)

The conventional modes of focalization are not in contradiction with hypothetical focalization. If we refer to Gérard Genette's typology (Genette, 1972 194–200), to choose one among several other applicable categorizations, external focalization applies from the beginning of the second paragraph -- "Shaking from head to foot, the man whose scattered consciousness…" -- until the end of the chapter. Where the fit is more debatable is in the first paragraph where the reader can hypothesize two mutually exclusive perspectives. It could be

read as the dreamer's speech or stream of thought internally focalized by the dreamer himself (or by a narrator aligned with him) or it could be an omniscient perspective, Genette's "focalisation zéro." The situation clears up at the end of the first paragraph. There, the reader can set aside the ambiguity (without resolving it) and make sense of the situation, recognizing a transition from the dreamer's report in free direct style ("Stay! Is the spike so low a thing as the rusty spike …?") to the externally focalized narrator's account that occurs in the last sentence of the first paragraph, "Some vague period of drowsy laughter must be devoted to the consideration of this possibility."

This sentence marks the actual threshold into a possible apprehension of the context. If we choose to read it as free indirect style, then it must be taken as the first external narrator's comment (lexically contaminated by the dreamer's dazed state); else, if we read it as the dreamer's free direct speech, then it should be understood as a resurgence of the equivocation just skirted. Kathleen Wales decides for the latter; her argument is based on the remark that

> … while in substance and logic the nominal phrases *Some vague period of drowsy laughter must be devoted to the consideration of this possibility* must be the report of a narrator, we are still meant to feel close to the dreamer because of what appears to be the deliberate suppression of the agent… (Wales 237)

The logic called on by Wales is tempered by a doxastic modality -- that is, reasoning about beliefs -- that she justifies by

> the absence of any narrational introductory, parenthetic, or concluding clauses, such as "he thought," which might indicate the agent and the action of cogitation" and Dickens's "manipulation of tense functions" (Wales 235).

Wales can conclude after Stone that the incipit cannot be interior monologue since it is externally reported all along. However, she points to another device disclosing interiority in a similar manner. Her reading allows for a single narrator using "ambiguous narrative modes"

(Wales 237) as he switches the focalization from internal to zero to finally external until the end of the chapter, strictly reporting what he sees or hear, nothing more. Without disagreeing with Stone's conclusion, Wales remarks that the indeterminacy of the initial situation of utterance remains. If we assume a "fly on the wall" narrator from the start of the paragraph, then we must conclude that the dreamer spoke in his stupor: otherwise there could not be any external report. Still, we cannot make such an assumption (yet). Narrators do not have to be reliable, nor do they have to adopt a consistent perspective -- even less so if the narrator is or reports from the point-of-view of a character that is under the influence of opium.

All the same, we do not have to agree with Wales that the transition sentence "must be the report of a narrator." It could be the end of the dreamer's utterance (or thought) in free direct style, in which case Dickens would have relied not only upon "ambiguous narrative modes" but also on ambiguous narrative instances. This is a situation where hypothetical focalization complements the classical typologies by introducing virtual narrators with an extended and continuous range of focalization, thus offering

> new insights into narrative meaning by substituting for a discontinuous model based on the distinction between internal and external focalization … a continuous model in which a range of perspective-taking strategies are distributed along a scale. These strategies, any number of which may collocate in a given narrative, encode different degrees of certainty with respect to objects, participants and events in the storyworld. (Herman 310)

Herman, "rather than trying to write the grammar of doubt" (Herman 322), restricts himself to sketching the beginning of a possible typology of hypothetical focalization. It involves the hypothetical perspective of a hypothetical witness -- not necessarily a narrator or a focalizer, as I shall show later -- , explicit or not, and considers "the mode of focalization as ways of encoding epistemic modalities in narrative discourses." This applies to the case at hand, where

the dreamer's uncertain knowledge of the nature of his discourse (speech or thought, "'Unintelligible!'" or not) and his suspicion of the presence of a hypothetical witness (one of those present in the den, "a Chinaman, a Lascar, and a haggard woman," later actualized as the "fellow-traveller") "signals the doubt about the very grounds for doubt" (Herman 326).

4.9 Inhibition and Catharsis; The Polyphony of a Split Personality

If we accept Perugini's report that Dickens wanted to write "the Mystery, not the History, of Edwin Drood," then the mind-reading gift must be denied to the external narrator (this denial is an essential feature of the mystery genre), as it will be through the remainder of the novel. The narrator and the reader share the same knowledge -- limited by the realistic external focalization. As a consequence, from the incipit on, the buildup of suspense requires that the narrator introduces a character to the reader who is distinct from and inscrutable to the narrator. This character can express himself and suggests, in a mysterious enough manner, both his dark designs and his efforts at repressing their communication. The opening free direct speech can be received as the stream of thoughts of a first-person narrator. When the actual third-person narrator shows up, the retrospective understanding will depend upon how ready the reader is to accept as realistic the representation of a stream of thoughts by an external narrator, even when this stream is composed of speech acts. If he is not willing to accept it, he must conclude that an actual utterance, enunciated aloud, has been reported. Then the mystery resides in the obscure content of the speech (the locutionary act) and is reinforced by the subsequent speaker's actions to reassure himself that his speech or any report of it remains "Unintelligible!" Otherwise, the unstable and hypothetical focalization may allow for the immersed reader to experience what Wayne C. Booth called "a kind of 'sublimity of freed perspectives'" (Bakhtin, 1984 xx). The passage entangles into confusion two possible voicings

of the dream: on the one hand, the hypothetical dreamer's speech, and on the other, the partial account of an external narrator. Because of the instability of the narrative instance, with its variation of narrative distance and the shift of its narrative perspective, Jasper's split personality emerges from the polyphony of the dream scene. The incipit reveals, in voices coming from uncertain sources, a character torn between the inhibitions figured by the vision of "the ancient English Cathedral town" and the ambivalent, perversely rewarding exotic fantasies of mass impalement and resplendent procession.

We have heard Perugini's claim that in this novel, her father's "originality was to be shown" in his "observation of character," "insight into the tragic secrets of the human heart," and "psychological description." Dickens, from the first sentences, presents the reader with a vivid rendition of the depth and confusion of a tormented mind. Hypothetical focalization allows the cooperative immersed reader to skirt round the convention of mystery that frowns upon intrusion into another mind, without retreating into omniscience:

> In hypothetically focalized narratives, doubt attaches now to the status of narrative agents (are they there or not?), now to that of their thoughts and behaviour (do they do/think/perceive that or not?), now to that of their circumstances (is their world like that or not?) (Herman 326)

In this case, doubt manifests itself in the guise of a deliberately unstable narrative instance that can pass, but only briefly, as a first-person narrator. This unusual narrative device, at least in Dickens's work, instills mystery with the delivery of a hypothetical speech inflected through the speaker's fear of a possible listener. Bakhtin, in his typology of "Discourse in Dostoevsky," mentions the "internally polemical discourse -- the word with a sideward glance at someone else's hostile word" (Bakhtin, 1984 196). Although Jasper will finally be "reassured" that his possible discourse will remain "Unintelligible!" to his hypothetical

listeners (those actually present in the den), the expression of resistance, denial, and final submission are aligned with Bakhtin's characterization that "such a speech literally cringes in the presence or the anticipation of someone else's word, reply, objection" (Bakhtin, 1984 196).

What Dickens performs in his incipit is the transformation of the reader's reception of a sentence (a simple semantic unit), into the interpretation of an utterance (a complete pragmatic unit). This is achieved by providing throughout the chapter the material required to gradually infer a situation of enunciation, to apprehend the narrative context, and finally to elucidate the intermingled narrative instances: their respective perspective, voice, and distance.

> When one begins to hear voices in language, jargons and styles, these cease to be potential means of expression and become actual, realized expression; the voice that has mastered them has entered into them. They are called upon to play their unique and unrepeatable role in speech (creative) communication. (Bakhtin, 1986 121)

This progressive immersion into the fictional world as it is perceived from complex perspectives and apprehended in unassigned speeches and thoughts allows the transparent and unquestioned acceptance of a representation of psychic activity.

4.10 Erasing the Narrative Instance to Better Voice Interiority

For a short while -- the extent of the incipit -- the author is committed neither to the single internal perspective nor to the free direct style of an interior monologue. Nor does he need an omniscient narrator to report the sensory perceptions of a subject (or subjects) still unidentified. Thus exempt from the conventions ruling narrative instance and mode, he can sketch and weave multiple discourses into dialogues, responding or anticipating each other.

None of those speeches is clearly attributed and their confused combination accentuates the incoherence of the opium dream, progressively rearranged into the comprehensible fictional world on which the external narrator will establish his final control.

This fertile approach consists in the revelation of an interiority through the blending of narrative categories and conventions. It is present in other realist novels of the period (Bakhtin deems it pervasive in Dostoevsky's work). It became an important narrative feature in modernist literature, often alongside interior monologue, albeit without ever getting the same critical attention and acknowledgement. However, its manifestations have inspired various narratological observations, all recognizing the agency of a hypothetical (or undetermined) narrative instance. I have already referred to Bakhtin's conceptualization of "the word with a sideward glance," to Herman's hypothetical focalization, and to Prince's "disnarrated" (in my discussion of the incipit of *David Copperfield*). Genette has suggested a similar device that he calls "paralepsis." It is the delivery of knowledge not consistent with, or even impossible in the immediate narrative context (Genette,1976 200–204). His best examples are found in Proust, in episodes when the external "fly on the wall" objective first-person narrator suddenly reveals Swann's most intimate considerations (*Du Côté de chez Swann*, 1913) or reports Bergotte's dying thoughts (*La Prisonnière*, 1923). These well accepted and most effective narrative intrusion result from the narration's "polymodality" (Genette, 2007 204–218) -- shifts in, or multiplication and combination of focalizations, voices and distances, as those I have outlined in this incipit. Genette also provides earlier examples of paralepsis in Dickens's contemporaries such as Balzac (*La Peau de chagrin*, 1831), Flaubert (*Madame Bovary*,1856) and James (*What Maisie Knew*, 1897).

Analyzing the recourse to multiple and dynamic point-of-view in the incipit of

Flaubert's *L'éducation sentimentale* (1869), Henri Mitterand proposes the addition to Genette's typology of an "implicit focalization." This perspective includes both the focalizing character and the object he focalizes on, the line of sight being neither the narrator's nor any actual character's. The implicit focalizer does not share in the narrator's omniscience but offers a complementary perception to that of the focalizing character. Hence, the object considered is viewed from multiple points of view (narrator, implicit focalizer, focalizer) and "this triangulation forms the fundamental model of the Flaubertian topology, and, as it were, its narrative stereoscopy"[25] (Mitterand 47). Mitterand thus invokes a new presence in the text, "an anonymous gaze, implied… The ubiquity and alacrity of this eye are such that one cannot really assign it to a person, to an individualized actor. More than a witness, it is an eye-function…"[26] (Mitterrand 40–41). A similar sort of new narrative instance, manifesting itself beyond focalization, had been proposed earlier by David Hayman in his study of *Ulysses*, where he attributes to James Joyce

> … the evolution of a nameless creative persona or "arranger." I use the term "arranger" to designate a figure or a presence that can be identified neither with the author nor with his narrators, but exercises an increasing degree of overt control over increasingly challenging materials. (Hayman 84)

Hugh Kenner took up the concept enthusiastically, extending the arranger's influence beyond the simple organization of narration to the complete structure of the author's discourse at all

[25] « Cette triangulation forme le modèle fondamental de la topologie flaubertienne, et, si l'on veut sa stéréoscopie narrative »

[26] « un regard anonyme, implicite . . . L'ubiquité et l'alacrité de ce regard sont telles qu'on ne peut véritablement l'assigner à une personne, à un acteur individualisé. »

the levels where language may have some agency, making of *Ulysses* "the first book to be a kind of hologram of language, creating a three-dimensional illusion out of controlled interference between our experience of language and its arrangement of language" (Kenner 157). Hayman did not go as far, satisfied that "the arranger should be seen as something between a persona and a function, somewhere between the narrator and the implied author. One is tempted to speak of 'him' as an 'it,' … but also tempted to think of a behind-the-scenes persona…" (Hayman 122–123).

In the incipit of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the more we progress in the paragraph, the more this narrative shadow fades away. First, we begin to discern the free direct speech of a character, then the free indirect speech of a narrator borrows this character's language, and finally the external narrator takes over for the rest of the book. However, as we distance ourselves from John Jasper's interiority, we cannot immediately conclude whether we were sharing in the magnified rendering of a consciousness or just listening to its spoken expression. It is only in another instance of "mise en abyme," when we witness John Jasper's own efforts to get out of this exact same quandary, that we realize that it was actually the former (the rendering of a consciousness) and hypothetically the latter (its spoken expression).

4.11 The Stream of Consciousness as a Flow of Imagery

Stone and Wales establish convincingly that the incipit of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* does not prefigure the modernist form of the interior monologue as it was to be defined by Joyce and Desjardins and practised by many more. Even so, I contend that Dickens is here introducing a literary representation of a stream of consciousness, albeit not in the form of an interior monologue and only for the limited extent of an opening paragraph. Stone's argument that interior monologue would have been a "more powerful and appropriate technique" for the

representation of "Jasper's dream-waking state" assumes that interior monologue was already by then an established norm of psychological realism. This was certainly not the case, and even less so in popular literature. In spite of this, Stone admits that "in terms of using the images and associations of a character's consciousness as an important means of unifying and illuminating a novel, *Drood* is a step forward" (Stone 59). Even if not expressed by interior monologue, this use of mental imagery was an innovation for the period and a challenge for the reader of serial fiction. Wales notices in the period a new trend for incipits:

> … there appears to have been an increasing tendency as the nineteenth century progressed for novelists to exercise their reader's minds from the very first words. There was an implicit demand, from the density of symbolic reference, that more attention should be paid from the very beginning to the language of the novel and its significance in *that* context, and that less reliance should be placed on universal knowledge and on established opening conventions. (Wales 245)

Hence, in what Stone perceives as a regrettable compromise between verisimilitude and comprehensibility, Wales recognizes "Dickens's continuing interest in the inner life of his characters" responding to readers' demand for a more creatively challenging use of the resources of language. Stone's judgement may derive from the assumption that a stream of consciousness can be expressed only as an interior monologue, a consequence of Stone's definition of "mind's flow" and "interior monologue." However, in his opening paragraph, Dickens was attempting the representation of a psychic event commonly experienced but with no representation yet recognized by literary convention. His creative intuition was to give a discursive and narrative form to an expression of interiority that had not been yet identified or even named. Experimental psychology was then a young discipline and it would take another twenty years before William James defined and analyzed the "stream of thought" (renamed

"stream of consciousness" in 1892). Although Dujardin's novel was published three years before James's essay, he coined the expression "interior monologue" much later, in his 1931 essay. Nevertheless, Dickens describes a situation where inference of meaning is achieved both by the dreamer and, more importantly for my argument, by the reader, from the direct, instantaneous, and fragmented perception of the context rather than from identification with the perceiving consciousness or a possible narrative instance.

Dickens's insightful and original literary expression of a divided and repressed self reveals a psychological perspective that, in contemporary terms, is best described as conceptual blending. Cognitive scientists Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner define conceptual blending as the result of "the operations of identity, integration, and imagination," three psychic operations, "basic, mysterious, powerful, complex, and mostly unconscious" that they deem to be "at the heart of even the simplest possible meaning" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002 6). After Aristotle, James, Freud and many others (including language philosophers and literary theorists), contemporary cognitive sciences show a deep interest in "exotic examples of creativity, such as analogical counterfactuals, poetic metaphors and chimeras" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002 vi) and more generally for "analogy and its disreputable companions -- metonymy, mental images, narrative thinking, and, most unpalatable of all to the formally minded, affect and metaphor" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002 14). Conceptual blending is another such mental process, a "general cognitive operation on a par with analogy, recursion, mental modelling, conceptual categorization, and framing" (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998 1).

I shall provide a very simplified explanation of the concept before discussing how it accounts for Dickens's formal creativity. Analogy maps a source "mental space" (made of ideas, sensations, images, speeches, memories, knowledge, etc.) to a target mental space in

order to export inferences possible in the source to the target. Conceptual blending, like analogy, operates on multiple mental spaces (called input spaces), mapping their features and projecting selectively some of their specific analogies and dissimilarities into a generic space. "Running the blend" (Fauconnier and Turner's expression) takes place in the generic space when, from the consideration of possible relations between features captured from both input spaces, a new structure emerges, the blended space. It reveals new characteristics and new connections absent from or not noticeable in the input spaces.

In Dickens's first paragraph, the first input space consists of the hallucinated vision of the cathedral. When the spike is perceived, it is at first associated with this space. A second input space, the dream space of the oriental fantasy of impalement and parade, is invoked to explain the presence of the spike. The resulting generic space includes these three elements (the cathedral, the spike, the oriental fantasy). The dreamer "runs the blend," noticing that the cathedral and the spike cannot coexist in the first frame and that the events in the second frame, invoked specifically to justify the presence of the spike, occur without concern for its presence. From the impossible presence of the spike in the first frame follows its indifferent presence in the second frame and the conclusive statement, "Still, the Cathedral tower rises in the background, where it cannot be, and still no writhing figure is on the grim spike." Whether inspired by the dreamer's episodic memory or by his fantasy, the spike remains irrelevant to both sides of the dream, to both input spaces. The impossible justification of the indifferent presence of the spike in both input spaces imposes it as an ontological invariant, a necessary reality, to both the dreamer and the reader. Thus, the blended space unveils the only possible reality, that of the spike and its surroundings: "Stay! Is the spike so low a thing as the rusty spike on the top of a post of an old bedstead that has tumbled all awry?" The realized blended

space is the dreamer's actual environment, the opium den. Each of the three spaces can be associated with a fragment of John Jasper's "scattered consciousness." He is at once the choirmaster of the "old Cathedral," oppressed by the sterile respectability of his practice and also the "jaded traveller" who sublimates a compulsive desire into dreamed visions of unrestrained fantasies; and finally, resulting from "the blend," he is the opium addict who relies on his state of stupor to keep in check his two conflicted personae.

This cognitive operation runs below the level of consciousness and finds its material in the succession of mental images (the cathedral, the spike, the parade, the opium den) reported with a changing perspective and distance by an indistinct narrator. It invites immersion while at the same time preventing the conventional identification with a character or a narrative instance and deferring the determination of the context, because none of these are yet recognizable. From the reception of the flow of imagery and its extraordinary delivery emerges what we will in the end recognize as John Jasper's interiority.

Interior monologue was to become the conventional literary representation of the stream of consciousness. Interior monologue results from the application of the resources of language to the expression of pre-verbal, unstructured thoughts. It is to the rendering of visual perceptions that Dickens applies those same resources in the incipit of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. In the mind's process of ideation, the production of imagery and mental associations occurs at an earlier stage and lower psychic level than the fleeting and disorganized thoughts voiced by interior monologue. Nonetheless, Dickens achieved a vivid evocation of this primal phenomenon, evoking the mental events that combined into the foggy awakening from an opium stupor. As the subject sobers up, the text progresses from description (the vision of the

cathedral and the spike) to narration (the torture, the parade), from the report of unmediated visual perceptions to their interpretation, from the instantaneity of psychic interiority to the objectivity of external, unaligned perspective. Finally, when the uncertain recovery of immediate memory occurs (the crux of the chapter), the control of the narration has been passed to the "fly-on-the-wall" narrator.

For two paragraphs, the incipit has played its part as the delivery vehicle of the existence of a secret and of the exposure of a split consciousness, driven by compulsion and bent on its repression. Any hypothetical expression of the secret must remain "Unintelligible!" and the grotesque oriental fantasies that surround the secret must remain in the shadow of the well-known massive grey square tower of the old Cathedral. The interiority that was revealed only for a short moment will remain hidden for the rest of the novel. The incipit has given us readers a knowledge that the narrator and the other characters will only slowly acquire as they encounter John Jasper along his "hazardous and perilous journey, over abysses." Kate Perugini, discussing her father's authorial intent, had questioned whether, "it was upon the Mystery alone that he relied for the interest and originality of his idea." The incipit's answer is that the mystery in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is less about the secret itself than about what is by now, for us readers and only for us (those in the fictional world still have to find out), John Jasper's open secret, one of "only a few examples of the odd compromises that characters strike, like Freudian hysterics, between expression and repression. In some sense, therefore, the secret subject is always an open secret" (Miller, 1988, 205).

5 Across the Novel, From Incipit to Explicit

5.1 A Causality Ingrained with Contingency, The Novel as a Narrative Model.

In the discussion of the three incipits, I have put forward the argument that the modern novel gives a form to the tension between the need for a narrative model and the resistance to this need. The narrative model emerges from the sequential exposition of events. Musil (or rather Ulrich, the protagonist of *The Man Without Qualities*) contends that people "love the orderly sequence of facts because it has the look of necessity, and the impression that that their life has a 'course,' is somehow their refuge from chaos" (Musil 709). Thus, narrative order offers protection against the anxiety of "random and abstract thoughts" by asserting the causal fallacy:

> . . . the basic law of this life, the law one longs for, is nothing other than that of narrative order, the simple order that enables one to say: "First this happened and then that happened…" It is a simple sequence of events in which the overwhelmingly manifold nature of things is represented, in a unidimensional order, as a mathematician would say, stringing all that has occurred in space and time on a single thread, which calms us; that celebrated "thread of the story," which is, it seems, the thread of life itself. Lucky the man who can say "when," "before," and "after"! Terrible things may have happened to him, he may have writhed in pain, but as soon as he can tell what happened in chronological order, he feels as contented as if the sun were warming his belly. (Musil 708–709)

To some extent and paradoxically, it is the hypothetical that fulfills this wish for an orderly reality. The representation offered by narrative is linear and often chronological. To accept this representation requires that we hypothesize an underlying causal organization. In novels, it is to the falsification of this hypothesis that the hypothetical is applied.

Assuming a causal arrangement of the narrated is spontaneous in an empirical reading, and methodological in a critical one. In both cases, this deterministic hypothesis is necessary as a first approximation, to avoid the dead end of the "twin reductionism of teleological determinism and radical undecidability" (Bernstein, 7). It is a stepping stone into abductive reasoning. To satisfy our need for a causal apprehension of the fictional state of affairs, we start with the highly speculative production of a model. Then, we test the persistence and the coherence of the model as the context evolves and as new events and discourses must be considered. Any failure to account for a disruption caused by a fortuitous occurrence will be the occasion to resist and revise the model, or even to deny a need for it. These are the moments of reversal, the point at which expectations are falsified. Such are circumstances when the reader or a character (or both) realises that "what might have been is not what is!" (OMF 42) and when the character's plans and the reader's narrative model must be revised accordingly. It is what happens at each of Pip's disappointment: when he realises who is his secret benefactor, when he learns who Estella will marry, when he finds Biddy married to Joe. It is what happens when Bella Wilfer decides she cannot any longer remain "the most mercenary little wretch that ever lived in the world" (OMF 316), when it is finally found that Mr Merdle, "immensely rich; a man of prodigious enterprise; a Midas without the ears, who turned all he touched to gold" (LD 265) is finally found to be "simply the greatest Forger and the greatest Thief that ever cheated the gallows" (LD 743).

The narrative is organized as a succession of causal segments punctuated by chance events. When the general validity of the narrative model conjured up in one segment is undermined by the intrusion of the next contingency (an unexpected or incongruous, albeit possible event), the model must be reassessed to account for the incident. As it is the case in

evolutionary (Darwinian) processes, when confronted with disruptions brought about contingently, models must be reviewed to be adapted or to be abandoned. This demands a return to the hypothetical to produce new conjectures. To support my assertions about the relation among causality, contingency and narrative, I shall provide some information, borrowed from the fields of psychology, philosophy, and literary criticism. I shall then turn to the Dickens's corpus to illustrate this argument.

A narrative representation of the world always presents a distinctive causal aspect. To assemble our basic apprehension of the narrated world, if only for methodological reasons, we call, at first, on some measure of determinism. However, as Musil's Ulrich is aware, "the celebrated "thread of the story" is not "the thread of life itself." A psychologist, Daniel Kahneman confirms the fact that "people are prone to apply causal thinking inappropriately, to situations that require statistical reasoning" (Kahneman 77). He calls the consequence of this shortcoming the "illusion of causality" (Kahneman 76). Statistical reasoning allows to extract from actual information new hypotheses concerning possibility and actuality, about the causal or correlative nature of the relations between facts. Our brain is an "associative machinery" that

> … seeks causes. The difficulty we have with statistical regularities is that they call for a different approach. Instead of focusing on how the event at hand came to be, the statistical view relates it to what could have happened instead. Nothing in particular caused it to be what it is -- chance selected it among its alternatives. Our predilection for causal thinking exposes us to serious mistakes in evaluating the randomness of truly random events. (Kahneman114-115)

The modern novel provides a remedy to our "difficulty … with statistical regularities" when it brings the actual out of the hypothetical. The novel offers a narrative form to the shadowy and ever-present feeling gnawing away at our certitudes that "nothing in particular caused it to be

what it is -- chance selected it among its alternatives." Modern novels, like Ulrich's story of his life "no longer follow a thread, but instead spreads out an infinitely interwoven surface" (Musil 709).

Kahneman is interested in the decision process as well as in the part narrative representation plays in it. He uses the expression "*narrative fallacy* to describe how flawed stories of the past shape our views of the world and our expectation for the future. Narrative fallacies arise inevitably from our continuous attempt to make sense of the world" (Kahneman 199). Nonetheless, good stories can offer heuristic benefits. Kahneman reports rigorous experiments showing that "statistical results with a causal interpretation have a stronger effect on our thinking that noncausal information" (Kahneman 174). Furthermore, the same experiments also demonstrate that, where a causal interpretation is valid, a narrative presentation is the most efficient way to make the case for it. In other words, compelling statistical results (facts of sort) may be overlooked and not taken into consideration until presented as "surprising individual cases … because the incongruity must be resolved and embedded in a causal story" (Kahneman 174).

Hence, in general, we communicate better or we take better notice of information when it is presented in a narrative form. More specifically, because "there is a deep gap between our thinking about statistics and out thinking about individual cases" (Kahneman 174), to point out a causal link in the frame of a good story will go further than numbers in a table. It is a conscious step in "our continuous attempt to make sense of the world." It is the source of what we have called "just-so stories," the outcome of a stage in our probing of the world, the temporary result of our abduction effort. We have seen that "just-so" stories properly used can have an important heuristic and literary value (Darwin's conjectures inferred from his theory

in *On the Origin of Species* provide primary examples). Thus, when events are really associated through causal connections, their emplotment is the best way to outline this causality.

Against such a background of causality (whether actual or hypothetical), and because "any recent salient event is a candidate to become the kernel of a causal narrative" (Kahneman 199), contingency imposes itself as a salient feature of the resulting worldview. We take for granted that if the author deems an event narratable, "worthy of being told" (Prince, 2003 56–57), this implies that some causal relations are to be inferred between this event and one or more other narrated events. If we are not able to produce immediately such an inference as we read a narrative, rather than denying the narratability of the event, we will assume that some missing information may come later, and we will continue to hypothesize possible causes or consequences, deferring our conclusion to the eventual end of our abduction process.

However probable an event may be, its occurrence may nonetheless be unexpected. We are associative, not statistical machines. Our consideration of the hypothetical is often limited to only the most probable, in other words, to the unsurprising. Hence, actualization can prove uncanny. The more we take for granted a context, the more surprising its disruption will be. This fact, proven by contemporary psychology -- our inaccurate spontaneous estimation of probability -- confirms an early finding of classical literary criticism. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, considers as an important epistemological and ethical outcome of the narration the discovery of causal links between events: epistemological, because such a "recognition is a change from ignorance to knowledge" (Aristotle 71) and ethical because "learning is a very great pleasure" (Aristotle 61). Furthermore, "of all the forms of recognition," (Aristotle 79) the perception of a

cause is considered the best, because it "arises from the incidents themselves, when our amazement results from events that are probable" (Aristotle 79). Amazement results from the occurrence of the simply probable rather than from the inconceivable or fantastic. Because our inventory of the probable is lacking, some possibility will allow for an unforeseen reversal. Narrative provokes the amazement of recognition (*anagnorisis*) by drawing us to infer fallacious probable causes (*hamartia*, the error derived from ignorance) that a reversal (*peripeteia*, peripety, the reversal correlative of the recognition) will falsify. Thus, the reversal proves that the obvious may be fallacious. In any case, amazement, actual or anticipated, arise from the probable, that is, in the usual sense of the word, from what "may in view of present evidence be reasonably expected to happen or be the case" (OED "probable"). The more likely the context -- in our mind -- , the more amazing the outcome (or the more intense its anticipation).

5.2 Falsification of Simple Expectations

Following on Aristotle but discussing the novel rather than the classical tragedy, Frank Kermode points to the persistent and radical instrumentality of *peripeteia* in novels. He selects for his review a series of novels breaking away in some regard, intentionally or not, with what could be deemed, in their time, the conventions of the genre. They are works by Robbe-Grillet (*Les Gommes, La Jalousie*, *Dans le labyrinthe*), by Sartre (*La Nausée*, *Les Chemins de la liberté*), by Camus (*La Peste*) and by Dostoievsky (*The Idiot*). Kermode asserts: "All these are novels which most of us agree … to be at least very good. They represent in varying degrees that falsification of simple expectations as to the structure of a future which constitutes peripeteia" (Kermode 23).

An expectation is hypothetical; its falsification is just the actualization of another hypothesis -- I mean by "falsification," as Kermode does "The showing (something) to be groundless" (OED, "falsification" 2.a). Thus, two perspectives on the novel are offered by Kermode. First, the novel is the account of a causal chain of events running into its disruption by a chance occurrence; secondly, the novel is the report of a series of hypotheses about a sequence of events, one hypothesis being actualized by a chance occurrence. "Falsification of simple expectations as to the structure of a future" is another description of the fact that "amazement results from events that are probable." They are two views of the same phenomenon in the co-operation between the author and the reader. Kermode characterizes it from the author's perspective as a device used in his production process; Aristotle describes the operation of the same device from the point of view of the reader's reception.

This brings up the question of why the falsification of simple expectations as to the direction of the narration of a probable event should beget amazement (in "at least very good" novels) when "in fact we should expect only the most trivial work to conform to pre-existent types" (Kermode 24). Kermode observed this paradox, noting that

> the extremest revolt against the customs or laws of fiction -- the anti-novels of Fielding or Jane Austen or Flaubert or Natalie Sarraute -- creates its new laws, in their turn to be broken. Even when there is a profession of complete narrative anarchy … it seems that time will always reveal some congruence with a paradigm. (129)

This reasserts the fact that the hypothetical proposition of a model is a necessary stage in the process of making sense of narratives. The fact that such a paradigm will arise even from chaos ("complete narrative anarchy") is the consequence of the instinctive habit of the human mind described at the beginning of the present chapter: when in need of an explanation,

we call first on causality and determinism. I have already cited several times Bacon's observation that "human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds." We have also discussed the confirmation of this fact by cognitive sciences, which leads Kahneman to state that "we are prone to overestimate how much we understand about the world and to underestimate the role of chance in events" (Kahneman 14). When we face a familiar arrangement of circumstances, we apprehend it within some existing model. This approach is productive if the model is flexible enough to allow for the part played by contingency. If it does not leave any room for chance, the paradigm is unlikely to remain valid beyond the initial succession of occurrences. Furthermore, a conjuncture where contingency would have no part to play -- in which narrative unfolding is completely predictable -- would most likely not be worth the narration because it would not to provide the epistemological and ethical reward expected from any narratable experience.

To amplify this effect, alongside amazement, the novel appeals to the hypothetical to further the anticipation of amazement. In other words, as contingency unsettle causality, hypothetical diversion from the actual path (wherever it leads, if anywhere at all) widens the narrative horizon. The reason an insignificant happening (Tolstoy's "tiny, tiny, infinitesimally small changes.") is ground for narrative expansion is, in the scheme of Aristotelian "probable events," that there is always in the fabric of the narration, some defamiliarizing incongruity; otherwise, as we stated above, it would not be narrated. Riffaterre's ungrammaticality or Barthes's "narrative deviances … the means by which the … narrative opposes the idea that

we may have of a simple, linear, 'logical' narrative"[27] (Barthes 217), or Kahneman's incongruity that "must be resolved and embedded in a causal story" will trigger the falsification of what Kermode calls our "simple expectations as to the structure of a future." It calls our attention to the "tiny, tiny, infinitesimally small changes" that our emerging referential paradigm fails to capture and where contingency builds up the next reversal.

It is what happens when Pip builds a model whereby his great expectations are due to Miss Havisham's benevolence. That is also the case when Peggotty's incongruous reaction is noticed but not understood by young David, as they watch his mother taking a stroll with Mr. Murdstone:

> I recollect Peggotty and I peeping out at them from my little window; I recollect how closely they seemed to be examining the sweetbriar between them, as they strolled along; and how, from being in a perfectly angelic temper, Peggotty turned cross in a moment, and brushed my hair the wrong way, excessively hard. (DC 34)

In the same manner, Fanny Sparkler takes notice but do not think twice about Mr. Merdle's "odd" request:

> "So I am off," added Mr Merdle, getting up. "Could you lend me a penknife?" It was an odd thing, Fanny smilingly observed, for her who could seldom prevail upon herself even to write a letter, to lend to a man of such vast business as Mr Merdle. "Isn't it?" Mr Merdle acquiesced; "but I want one; … You shall have it back to-morrow" (LD 732).

[27] « […] les déviances narratives […] ce par quoi le récit […] contrarie l'idée que nous pouvons avoir d'un récit simple, linéaire, "logique". »

These "expectations as to the structure of a future" of a young widow and her son or those of a man of "vast business" are bound to be falsified. If nothing else was to be read in Peggotty's reaction or Mr. Merdle's request, the event would not be narratable. A nervous convulsive movement of the former or the possible pointing of a quill by the latter would have no narrative significance in the immediate circumstances. However, as ungrammaticalities (details incongruous in their context) they point to the beginning of David's trials and to Mr. Merdle's death.

Dickens, in his late works, weaves together actual and hypothetical narrative links to bring in amazement and its anticipation. It is the case in *Great Expectations* when Pip's interpretation of a given series of events and discourses often introduces at the same time an actual and a hypothetical outcome. As an example, several exchanges with Mr. Wemmick and Mr. Jaggers lead Pip to elucidate, through a first stream of deduction and induction, the mystery of Estella's origins. Yet, these same set of circumstances leads him to puzzlement and despair, through another stream of unsuccessful abduction when he tries to make sense of the relation among Mr. Jaggers, Estella and Bentley Drummle. At one point, Mr. Wemmick calls for Pip to pay attention to what he will see when he dines with Mr. Jaggers:

> "… When you go to dine with Mr. Jaggers, look at his housekeeper."
> "Shall I see something very uncommon?"
> "Well," said Wemmick, "you'll see a wild beast tamed. Not so very uncommon, you'll tell me. I reply, that depends on the original wildness of the beast, and the amount of taming. It won't lower your opinion of Mr. Jaggers's powers. Keep your eye on it."
> I told him I would do so, with all the interest and curiosity that his preparation awakened. (GE 199)

"After some weeks" (GE 202), in another meeting, Mr. Wemmick introduces inadvertently a new reason for Pip to wonder: the presence of a third guest (Pip infers that it will be Drummle) at Mr. Jaggers' dinner, yet to come:

> "So, you haven't dined with Mr. Jaggers yet?" he pursued, as we walked along.
> "Not yet."
> "He told me so this afternoon when he heard you were coming. I expect you'll have an invitation to-morrow. He's going to ask your pals, too. Three of 'em; ain't there?"
> Although I was not in the habit of counting Drummle as one of my intimate associates, I answered, "Yes." (GE 203)

When the dinner party takes place, the two narrative strands develop, one toward actualization (the mystery concerning Mr. Jaggers's housekeeper), the other toward infinite abduction (the mystery of Mr. Jaggers's interest in Bentley Drummle). Pip's observation of Mr. Jaggers's housekeeper contributes to the actualization thread as Pip produces the first hypothesis about Estella's origin: "I made a dreadful likeness of that woman, by causing a face that had no other natural resemblance to it than it derived from flowing hair to pass behind a bowl of flaming spirits in a dark room" (GE 210–211). In a later scene, as Mr. Jaggers comments for Pip's and Mr. Wemmick's benefit on the announcement of Estella and Drummle's impeding nuptials, Pip watches more attentively the housekeeper and validates his earlier intuitive hypothesis:

> I looked at those hands, I looked at those eyes, I looked at that flowing hair; and I compared them with other hands, other eyes, other hair, that I knew of, and with what those might be after twenty years of a brutal husband and a stormy life. I looked again at those hands and eyes of the housekeeper… And I felt absolutely certain that this woman was Estella's mother. (GE 386)

On the other hand, in these two same occurrences, Pip cannot make sense of Mr. Jaggers's ardent interest in Drummle: during the dinner party, "to my surprise, he seemed at

once to be principally if not solely interested in Drummle" (GE 209); moreover, the fact that he was "showing an interest in Drummle, … was quite inexplicable" (GE 211). When finally Pip expresses his surprise politely to his host, Mr. Jaggers answers him with only with a strange contradictory warning:

> " … don't have too much to do with him. Keep as clear of him as you can. But I like the fellow, Pip; he is one of the true sort. Why, if I was a fortune-teller -- " … "But I am not a fortune-teller," he said, … "You know what I am, don't you? Good night, Pip." (GE 215)

I have already cited this reference to fortune-telling and to the fact that neither we readers, nor Pip, narrator and character, have the faintest idea of what Mr. Jaggers thinks we know he is. We, like Pip, may hypothesize that the reason for Mr. Jagger's interest in Drummle could be a matchmaking assignment on behalf of Mrs. Havisham. However, it is soon made clear that neither of them approves of this marriage. On the contrary, Mr. Jaggers will later confide to Pip and Mr. Wemmick, upon the announcement of Drummle marrying Estella, that he considers Drummle an imbecile, a bully and, to Pip's horror, a potential wife-beater. For him, this union can only result in hostility, violence and final submission. Mr. Jaggers hopes that "the question of supremacy be settled to the lady's satisfaction" because obviously "to the satisfaction of the lady and the gentleman, it never will be" (GE 385). So, what could be the reason for his interest in Drummle? For Pip and most readers, the explanations will forever be left in the realm of the hypothetical. Mr. Jaggers's purpose will remain as undecidable as the actual reasons for Estella's marriage to Drummle. Despite the possibilities opened by some retrospective readings, both questions linger unanswered, adding to the uncertain outcome of the novel after the last meeting between Pip and Estella. Thus, the hypothetical operates in the narrative by entangling successful inferences (leading to the

recognition of Estella's origins) with complicated abductions (never explaining Mr. Jaggers's -- or Estella's -- interest for Drummle). The former brings about a rewarding amazement, the latter, a frustrated anticipation of amazement.

5.3 "The Fictions by Which We Order the World"

Most often, we draw all the inferences necessary to recognize and address an apparently banal state of affairs, as the saying goes, "without thinking." A familiar and predictable occurrence may apparently offer limited narrative possibilities. Nevertheless, the poetic rendering of the fog everywhere over London, of cobblestones stained with spilled red wine in a Faubourg Saint-Antoine street, or of the mist over the marshes surrounding a desolate graveyard, may conceal, foreshadow or symbolize more unusual events. We must go back to Peirce's proposition (already cited several times) reminding us that any apparent order accounts for and results from the action of contingency: "chance begets order." Causal and deterministic thinking, in its most simplistic form (the reliance on mechanistic causation) assumes a teleological order; still, it is a too obvious and fallacious order, tainted by an illegitimate degree of certainty that Peirce dispels:

> Those observations which are generally adduced in favour of mechanical causation simply prove that there is an element of regularity in nature, and have no bearing whatever upon the question of whether such regularity is exact and universal or not… Try to verify any law of nature, and you will find that the more precise your observations, the more certain they will be to show irregular departures from the law… Trace their causes back far enough and you will be forced to admit they are always due to arbitrary determination, or chance. (Peirce, 1892 331)

As we perceive how contingency complicates reality, we expect our fictions to account for it. Any of Peirce's "departures from the law" observed in nature are a "falsification of

simple expectations as to the structure of a future." Whether the falsified "structure of a future" was a scientific theory (pre-Darwinian evolutionism or creationism) or the promises of a narrative (Pip's great expectations), admitting to some "regularity in nature" is only acceptable as a necessary deterministic first step. Remaining aware of the fact that the regularity observed may be neither exact nor universal is what leads to new knowledge and -- after many detours into the hypothetical, through abductions, falsifications and inferences -- to the amazement brought about by *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. By providing a path to deduction or induction, the narrative may actualize or discard the hypothesis brought up. Of course, the conjecture can also remain forever undecidable, leaving the reader wandering through uncertain, aporetical abductive trails. Yet, the production of hypotheses, by itself, brings a different type of Aristotelean "change from ignorance to knowledge," albeit a change not strictly derived from learning, but rather from the attempt to learn through an abduction process.

Peirce's "irregular departures from the law," like Kahneman's "serious mistakes in evaluating the randomness of truly random events" and Kermode's "narrative chaos" showing "some congruence with a paradigm," reflect similar perspectives on the same determinant factor of our worldviews. This feature is the human mind's resistance to contingency, its instinctual struggle to accept irregularity, randomness or chaos as a reality of the world rather than a product of our failing perception or our ignorance. We are aware of this shortcoming: we are conscious of the fact that "there is a necessary relation between the fictions by which we order the world and the increasing complexity of what we take be the 'real' history of that world" (Kermode 67).

It is by suggesting a background of alternative evolutionary paths, with various degrees of probability and thus pregnant of a variety of amazing outcomes, that the novel can suggest the existence of a model. Rather than deriving consequences from causes in a single-threaded non-narratable mechanistic order, the actual narrative pattern emerges from a rich fabric of hypothetical threads, "something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet" (James, 1896 295).

Continuing with James's metaphor, "the figure in the carpet" can be revealed in various ways: by the contrast of its colours, by the shape of its contours, by the material of its yarn, etc. I shall briefly review how, in a similar manner, the hypothetical is deployed and spread at different narrative levels and by different means, beyond the three incipits I discussed, throughout the three novels. I shall then examine how the hypothetical contribution to these narratives is reflected in their resulting worldviews -- that is to say how the description of the fictional state of affairs is made more coherent by the integration of the possible occurrence of contingent events.

5.3 *David Copperfield*: The Reality of "The Things That Never Happen"

We have seen that, in the incipit of *David Copperfield*, the hypothetical arises from the narration, from the sustained confusion between a life and the story of a life, and more generally, from the distance between the experience of life (that of David-the-character) and the reporting of this experience (by David-the-narrator). I have already shown that it is not restricted to the incipit: as in any autobiography, the distance between these two instances subsists throughout the novel (and beyond). For the reader, the possible significance suggested in the account of the narrating-I will never coincide with the meaning that the narrated-I may extract from his own experience. Not only will their convergence be differed forever, but the

metanarrative perspective of David-the-narrator grants to the hypothetical, "the things that never happen," the same agency as it grants to the actual:

> I had thought, much and often, of my Dora's shadowing out to me what might have happened, in those years that were destined not to try us; I had considered how the things that never happen, are often as much realities to us, in their effects, as those that are accomplished. (DC 824)

The narrator is aware of the respective influence of what was and of what could have been. The fact that "the things that never happen, are often as much realities to us" is made more obvious when these things are mediated by narrative -- that is, when are instilled into the story of a life, the stories of the never actualized but possible other courses this life could have taken. In this case, it is produced by counterfactual reasoning. What Dora "shadowed out" as their hypothetical future life is falsified by her death and becomes the object of David's counterfactual reminiscence. Another counterfactual proposition is suggested by David's longing for a possible past life that never was, this time with Agnes, "what might have been between myself and Agnes" (DC 825). This last proposition misleads him to the fallacious conclusion of its impossibility "through the reflection that it might have been, I arrived at the conviction that it could never be" (DC 825).

David's metanarrative comments on the reality of what does not happen reasserts his awareness of the limited validity of retrospective reasoning: "these perplexities and inconsistencies, were the shifting quicksands of my mind" (DC 825). Complexity arises from the three temporalities involved in the situation: the past when Dora was alive, the later past when David (the character) reminisced about it, the metanarrative present when David (the narrator) draws his conclusion from both pasts. The narrator remembers the character remembering; "the shifting quicksands of [his] mind" are made of the "perplexities and

inconsistencies" of memories. As he will find out, the character is wrong, for the certitude of the impossibility of what "could never be," is just a spurious approximation of a low probability; "what might have been" may still happen and the low probability attached to this occurrence will make more intense the resulting amazement.

The narrator, at the time of the writing of the story of his own life, already knows that the character was wrong. However, we have seen him, from the incipit, confusedly denying the dependability of memories (starting with the report of his own birth). His remembrances, whether current, in the narration, or retrospective, in the narrated, are often disqualified. They are "shadowy" (DC 14), not "founded on the evidence of my own senses" (DC 15), a simple "impression … which I cannot distinguish from actual remembrance" (DC 24), biased nostalgia: "Can I say she ever changed, when my remembrance brings her back to life…" (DC 36), emotional: "dismal oppression of remembrance" (DC 69). Some memories must be repressed: "The remembrance of that life is fraught with so much pain… I only know that it was … and that I have written, and there I leave it" (DC 226), while other are deliberately self-delusive as when after "the discovery of [Steerforth's] unworthiness," David invokes the "remembrances of a cherished friend, who was dead" (DC 461).

Yet, memories, in particular childhood memories, provide abundant material for Dickens late novels. Reminiscence is the source of many hypothetical streams; that is where the speculative reasoning starts for David (DC), Esther Summerson (BH), Arthur Clennam (LD), Dr Manette (TTC), Pip (GE), John Harmon (OMF), John Jasper (MED), just to name a few. Although Dickens recognized memory's ambiguous agency, he did not elaborate a definite theory on its nature. He was aware of the distance between the remembering and the remembered selves and we have seen the efforts he deployed, as an author, to defer their

possible convergence (hence, the recourse to the conventions of the biography genre). Such a reserved stance had been long defended by Wordsworth, and reaffirmed just before his death -- as *David Copperfield* was published -- in the 1850 edition of his *Prelude*:

> "A tranquillizing spirit presses now / On my corporeal frame, so wide appears / The vacancy between me and those days, / Which yet have such self-presence in my mind / That sometimes when I think of them I seem / Two consciousnesses-conscious of myself, / And of some other being." (Wordsworth 76)

Still, whatever limits Wordsworth and Dickens assigned to the operation of memory, David Copperfield's fictional autobiography is based upon remembrances, not upon documented archives. Hence, after the incipit has thoroughly undermined the possible validity of the recollections, in the following chapter, in another metanarrative aside, the narrator must turn to humour to restore the semblance of reliability necessary for his literary project. It is by the tone of slight irony that David impart some soundness to memory with the proposition that men change but their memories remain:

> This may be fancy, though I think the memory of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose; just as I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy. Indeed, I think that most grown men who are remarkable in this respect, may with greater propriety be said not to have lost the faculty, than to have acquired it; the rather, as I generally observe such men to retain a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased, which are also an inheritance they have preserved from their childhood.
>
> I might have a misgiving that I am "meandering" in stopping to say this, but that it brings me to remark that I build these conclusions, in part upon my own experience of myself; and if it should appear from anything I may set down in this narrative that I was a child of close observation, or that as a man I have a strong memory of my childhood, I undoubtedly lay claim to both of these

characteristics. (DC 25)

Hence, David suggests that his own memories should be accepted as valid, either because events were imprinted with a photographic accuracy on the mind of the narrated-I ("a child of close observation"), or because the narrating-I has an unlimited memory-recall capacity ("a strong memory of my childhood") or because there is in him a single narrative instance that can "undoubtedly lay claim to both of these characteristics." This tongue-in-cheek claim of benefitting of an easy access to permanently stored and accurately preserved memories allows the narrator to deny ironically any distance between narration and narrated.

Modern cognitive sciences dispute the conception of memories as an emotional and cognitive invariant under the transformations life imposes on the mind. All the same, the idea was widely held at the time (although not by Wordsworth and Dickens). It had previously been formalized five years earlier (1845) without any ironical intent by Thomas de Quincey (and later enthusiastically promoted by Baudelaire):

> What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain? Such a palimpsest is my brain; such a palimpsest, oh reader! is yours. Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet, in reality, not one has been extinguished … as oftentimes there is in the grotesque collisions of those successive themes, having no natural connection, which by pure accident have consecutively occupied the roll, yet, in our own heaven-created palimpsest, the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain, there are not and cannot be such incoherencies. (De Quincey 28)

Half-century after David's facetious adoption of De Quincey's theory, Freud raised some issues pertaining to the reliability of memory in his closing comments on the case of the Wolfman. He considered as a problem of the case its reliance upon the report by an adult of his reminiscing of an earlier remembrance episode, at age four, of a primal scene experienced

at age two. Some convincing may be required to accept such memories as valid. Where De Quincey affirms, "in our own heaven-created palimpsest, the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain, there are not and cannot be such incoherencies," Freud is less assertive; still, to explain why these very early memories (of earlier memories remember much later) may be valid, he proposes, as a hypothesis, the existence of a human "instinctive endowment" (Freud 3595) like "the far-reaching instinctive knowledge of animals" (Freud 3595).

> This instinctive factor would then be the nucleus of the unconscious, a primitive kind of activity, which would later be dethroned and overlaid by human reason, when that faculty came to be acquired, but which in some people, perhaps in every one, would retain the power of drawing down to it the higher mental processes. (Ibid.)

Wherever memories come from and whether they are reliable or not, in *David Copperfield*, the hypothetical arises from the memory of experience rather than from experience itself. The hypothetical is not revealed in actions, but rather in their remembrances. Dickens addressed a fundamental question that he could only answer with a roundabout witticism. However, thus doing, to the benefit of literary narrative, David's conflation of the child's "close observation" with the adult's "strong memory" was a creative utilization of De Quincey's palimpsest; its ironical purpose anticipated Freud's own doubts (alleviated by means of "an instinctive factor") and Bakhtin's dialogic finalization (the remembered-I and the remembering-I as separate selves, combined but not merged in the unity of the event).

5.4 Authorial Authority, "The Tyranny of the Remembering Self"

Kahneman, for didactic purpose, personifies the two narrative agents, action and memory, as two selves: the experiencing self and the remembering self. This device helps him to explain how our actual judgment on our actions is solely limited by our memories of them:

> Confusing experience with the memory of it is a compelling cognitive illusion -- and it is the substitution that make us believe that a past experience can be ruined. The experiencing self does not have a voice. The remembering self is sometimes wrong, but it is the one that keeps score and governs what we learn from living, and it is the one that makes decisions. What we learn from the past is to maximize the qualities of our future memories, not necessarily of our future experience. This is the tyranny of the remembering self. (281)

"To maximize the qualities of our future memories" means that the experience of memory takes precedence over the memory of experience. Thus, only the recourse to the hypothetical can satisfy the "tyranny of the remembering self"; all there is to know about David's life (or anyone else's for this matter) is to be found in the story of his life. The story of a life, not its actual experience, is all that can ever be accessed. David-the-character is not the actual experiencing self; rather, he is a construction of the remembering self, David-the-narrator (and its dialogical others) who claims this control: "I have now recalled all that I think it needful to recall here … for, as I have elsewhere said, this narrative is my written memory" (DC 823).

From this literary perspective, hard proofs, documented evidences, testimonies, etc., contribute to the story only as recorded remembrances, and in literary production, it is the author who keeps the record; that is the case even for a fictional author, and more so if he coincides with the remembering self of a fictional autobiography. For the author, the outcome of a life experience is its literary account, the book; the reliability of the account is of a limited relevance.

In literary creation, because of the "tyranny of the remembering self," the hypothetical grants authority to authorship. Dickens will later confirm this view using "the book" as a hypothetical simile for the mind. If for David, the "the shifting quicksands of [his] mind" were

the cause of his "perplexities and inconsistencies," for Magwich, it is the figurative loss of a bookmark that causes his "confused way, as if he had lost his place in the book of his remembrance" (GE 346). This authority of authorship is a socially defining feature of David. In his final letter to David, "Wilkins Micawber, Magistrate" (DC 877) chooses, among the many reasons for the Micawber family to be grateful and pay tribute to David, first and only, his quality as a writer; he addresses the "soaring flight" (DC 877) of "THE EMINENT AUTHOR" (the capital emphasis is Micawber's) and thanks him for "the intellectual feast he has spread before us… Go on, my dear sir, in your Eagle course!" (DC 877).

Hence, this novel, David's story of his life, is first "the book of his remembrance," a book woven out the hypothetical threads of memory's "perplexities and inconsistencies" and "confused way." Nonetheless, it is an actual book; whether David is proven to be the hero of his own life is not the point, because *qua* author of this book, *de facto* his authorship gives him the authority to be the hero of the story of his life.

This authorial authority is real. A novel is a literary discourse; therefore, it contributes to the *dispositif* (the "apparatus," defined earlier as the ensemble of the "agents of power such as the techniques, the strategies and the forms of subjection put in place by the power"). To resolve the aporias presented by the fictional state of affairs, several alternatives in the combination of events and discourses will be implemented or suggested throughout an abduction process, in the writing as well as in the reading. Some of the narrative strands will promote the norms of the existing power structure. Still, some strands will resist it, in a rather ambiguous relation that results in a double bind. D. A. Miller describes the situation as "resistance both to disciplinary order and to an already venerable means of displacing and further developing this order: the notion of our simple 'liberation' from it" (Miller, 1988, xiv).

> … the story of David's liberation runs parallel to the story of his submission… The discipline from which he has escaped to become the "subject of the Novel" reappears in his own self-discipline… Mr. Murdstone's firmness and Mr. Creakle's unspared rod were not, it would appear, total losses… They stand behind David's victories in a succession of trials… But what seems to ensure this self-discipline most of all is writing itself. (Miller, 1988 217)

Thus, the author, as a contributor to the apparatus, exercises an actual (not only metaphorical) authority. In the case of this fictional autobiography, this authority reflects the tyranny of the remembering self over the experiencing self. The knowledge, whether hypothetical or not, acquired in the temporal distance separating the two selves, allows for the former to play with norms that the latter could only to submit to. Therefore

> writing is thus offered to us in *David Copperfield* as a socializing order from which the written self, always subject to omission, is separated, but with which the writing self, inevitably the agent of such omission, comes to be entirely identified. (Miller, 1988 217)

However, this double bind does not imply, as D. A. Miller seems to conclude, that the novel is an integral part of the *dispositif*, an ideological policing tool. On the contrary, I propose that the novel participates in the power relations in the resistance mode. The existence of the *dispositif* is justified by the freedom of those upon which power must be exercised. This freedom includes the capacity to invoke many hypothetical resistance paths and chose one:

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized. (Foucault, 1982 790)

The novel is a form of literary discourse. As such it may promote a norm on behalf of the apparatus, to supersede an older norm or to prevent the rise of a new one. Whatever the

case is, the novel will also, implicitly or explicitly, represent the resistance to the prevailing norm as a choice in "a field of possibilities." For Foucault, resistance is a necessary and defining constituent of the power relation, one "that is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power"[28] (Foucault, 1976 126). Resistances "are the other term, in the power relation; they are part of it as the irreducible opposite"[29] (Foucault, 1976 127). In consequence, when narrative threads and discourses contribute to a normative function, at the same time, they raise the possibility of challenging it.

As is the case for any form of existential indeterminism, the operation of the mechanisms and structures that define the apparatus can be resisted and undermined. Indeterminate transition shall disrupt and modify the norms. To make him a successful writer, the discipline that had been inflicted upon David concurred with a variety of experiences and a profusion of discourses; most of them were not consequences of the coercive pressure of the apparatus. Any power exercised by or in the novel requires the representation of those upon whom it is exercised and of their transgressive behaviours and discourses; for the apparatus, it is a permanent double bind,

> for, if it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight. (Foucault, 1982 794)

[28] « […] n'est jamais en position d'extériorité par rapport au pouvoir. »
[29] « […] elles sont l'autre terme, dans les relations de pouvoir ; elles s'y inscrivent comme l'irréductible vis-à-vis. »

Narration can be viewed as the production of hypotheses about both the operations of the power relations and the means of their disruptions. This explains how abduction allows David to eliminate one of the terms of the contradiction of the successive double binds he must address, whether by repression and denial (of his abandonment by his mother, of his betrayal by Steerforth, of his enslavement at Murdstone & Grinby), through counterfactual reasoning (about the reality of the things that never happen) or inferences (Mr. Dick and the cases of Mrs. Strong; Mr. Micawber, Traddle and the case of Uriah Heep, Ms. Mowcher and the case of Steerforth and Littimer).

Foucault states that "in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations." (780) Such an investigation is performed in and by the novel when it reflects the resistance of individuals and groups to the fictional *dispositif*, as they harvest the "field of possibilities."

5.5 Narrated's Loose-Ends and Narration's Cover-Ups

However, this perspective on the novel has some limits because there is a clear difference between what the novel is and what the novel does; between what happens in the novel and how that contributes to the prevalent power relations, whether at the time of the writing or at the time of the reading. *The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield the Younger*, the book itself, cannot change; all that Dickens "could say of the Story to any purpose, [he] endeavoured to say in it" (DC 11). What may change is the interpretation because from the time and place of the writing to those of any reading, the *dispositifs* are different. All the same, the constituents of the power relations that determine David's evolution are common to all bildungsromans (in David's case, sometimes a künstlerroman): knowledge, discipline, culture, competence, etc. These same constituents of

the genre are also contributing (albeit with varied agencies) to the power relations at work in the life stories of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, Mann's Tonio Kröger or Proust's narrator, Marcel. The stability of this set of constituents defines the genre and allows for some congruity in the understanding of the text by the various semantic readers and, although their range will be wider, the critical readings will also present some coincidence:

> … a text gives rise to infinite readings nonetheless without justifying any possible reading. If one cannot tell which one is the best interpretation of a text, one can tell which ones are erroneous. In the infinite semiosis process, it is possible to go from any node to any other node, but the passages are controlled by connexion rules that our cultural history has, to some extent, legitimized.[30] (Eco, 1990 129–130)

Thus, aside from the ambiguities of the emplotment, hypothetical developments of narrative can also result from the genre's "connexion rules." These "connexion rules that our cultural history has, to some extent, legitimized," are of a narratological order. Once the reader recognizes or assigns a genre to the text, the semantic as well as the critical reading will be directed by the rules of that genre. The choices for this assignment are limited; *Oedipus Rex* can be enjoyed as an early detective story or a classical tragedy but not as romance; Rousseau's *L'Émile ou de l'éducation*, as a very basic bildungsroman or a treatise on education. Yet, reading Kempis's *De imitatione Christi* as if it had been written by Céline (as suggested by Borges), while possible, would not qualify as interpretation but rather as

[30] « [...] un texte suscite d'infinies lectures sans pour autant autoriser n'importe quelle lecture possible. Si l'on ne peut dire quelle est la meilleure interprétation d'un texte, on peut dire lesquelles sont erronées. Dans le processus de sémiosis illimitée, il est possible d'aller de n'importe quel nœud à n'importe quel autre nœud, mais les passages sont contrôlés par des règles de connexion que notre histoire culturelle a en quelque sorte légitimées. »

"utilisation" (Eco, 1990 39–40) -- a recourse to the text for a non-hermeneutical, extra-textual purpose. As for *David Copperfield*, it is clearly and only a bildungsroman just as *A Tale of Two Cities* is a historical novel. I have proposed to read the former as the emergence of an author. David's awareness of the hypothetical nature of his memories allows him to report his social and emotional development as a learning cycle of confrontation with, resistance to and control over specific constituents of the apparatus (family, schooling, child labour, matrimony, bereavement, etc.).

In a historical novel, such as *A Tale of Two Cities*, the aura of actuality surrounding the background of historical events (that did happen in France and England between 1757 and 1794) often extends to the fictional stream (the stories involving Darnay, Manette, Carton, etc.). The hypothetical inserts itself in the speculation about the necessity of both history and stories and the nature of their interconnection. Discussing the specific agency of the hypothetical in a historical novel, I shall suggest that, added to the constraints placed upon the imaginary adventures by the historical backdrop, the genre imposes narrative structures that can influence the course of the narrated and its account in the narration.

As we have seen with the incipits discussed before, the rules of a genre (bildungsroman, historical, mystery) do not restrict the agency of the hypothetical. With the genre being assigned, a reading procedure is adopted that will comply with generic rules and reflect the pressures of the *dispositifs* (pressures on the writer as well as on the reader). In other words, the form (dictated by the rules) will influence both the creation and reception the content. As required by the genre -- but not necessarily by the fictional state of affair -- the form will also promote some specific expectations and their falsifications, thus forcing the narrative to take a detour through the hypothetical.

I have inferred from Foucault's remarks ("there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight" because "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free") that a novel, being a discourse, part and product of the *dispositif*, will both promote the norm and resist to it. This explains why, to produce a satisfying story, literary narration, submitting to the rules of the genre, must sometimes contradict the reports it narrates.

> "Positing the priority of events to the discourse which reports them, narratology establishes a hierarchy which the functioning of narrative often subverts by presenting events not as givens but as products of discursive forces or requirements" (Culler 172).

Jonathan Culler propose a particularly telling example provided by the most canonical work in a most canonical genre. In Sophocles's play *Oedipus Rex*, the case is that Oedipus may not have killed Laius. This possibility is explicitly raised, briefly pursued and then forgotten and dispelled without being proven or falsified. Culler argues that this path was abandoned because the rules of the classical tragedy genre called for Oedipus to be a parricide:

> The "whole action of the play" is the revelation of this awful deed, but we are never given the proof… Oedipus himself and all his readers are convinced of his guilt but our conviction does not come from the revelation of the deed. Instead of the revelation of a prior deed determining meaning, we could say that it is meaning, the convergence of meaning in the narrative discourse, that leads us to posit this deed as its appropriate manifestation. Once we are well into the play, we know that Oedipus must be found guilty, otherwise the play will not work at all; and the logic to which we are responding is not simply an esthetic logic that affects readers of literary works. Oedipus, too, feels the force of this logic. (Culler 174)

"The convergence of meaning" is the response of "the narrative discourse" to our previously discussed craving for "more order and regularity in the world" (Bacon XLV) than there really

is. This failing results in the fact that our spontaneous representation of the world "is simpler and more coherent than the real thing" (Kahneman 82). Whenever possible causes accumulate, we assume a degree of correlation among them that we take to be actual "convergence." This illusory correlation leads to us to infer a consequence neatly resonant with all the causes. This constructed consistence, in turn, gives an air of necessity to the contingency of these causes.

The accumulation of Tiresias's prophecy, Oedipus's confession of the killing an old man, the revelations that he is married to his mother and that he is Laius's son, are no more than circumstantial evidences when it comes to conclude he killed Laius. Just the same, because good tragedy would bring all the facts into an apparently near perfect causal order -- to satisfy both tragedy's demand for signification -- and our own demand for meaning, to "make sense" of it all, "Oedipus leaps to the conclusion, and every reader leaps with him, that he is in fact the murderer of Laius" (Culler 174).

> Oedipus's guilt or innocence has already been determined by a past event that has not yet been revealed or reported. Yet, the contrary logic in which Oedipus posits an act in response to demands of signification is essential to the tragic force of the ending. These two logics cannot be brought together in harmonious synthesis; each works to the exclusion of the other; each depends on a hierarchical relation between story and discourse which the other inverts. In so far as both these logics are necessary to the force of the play, they put in question the possibility of a coherent, noncontradictory account of narrative. (Culler 175)

Thus, Culler proposes that two contradictory logics are at work in narrative to comply with the demands of the genre. The first logic operates at the narrated level which tells us about a chain of events, a prophecy and its orderly accomplishment. The second logic, at the level of the narration, undermines this causality by introducing a new means to ensure the tragic end: the recognition of Oedipus's guilt. They are contradictory: in the former case,

Oedipus, Laius and Jocasta have no power whatsoever over their fate; it was decided and written long ago by the gods and spelled out in the well-known prophecy. In the latter case, Oedipus diverts the investigation intended for his exoneration to solve the mystery of his birth; upon learning that he is the son of Laius and Jocasta, he decides to admit the truth of the prophecy, hence, his guilt. Yet, if the incest is proven, the murder of Laius is not. Whether fallacious or not, this admission of guilt is Oedipus's decision and his implicit claim to a degree of freedom. In this logic, the narration brings in the agency of free will and opposes the narrated (the events necessary to the accomplishment of the prophecy). This in turn raises a different meaning, one that opposes the logic of events: Oedipus (as well as Laius and Jocasta) are not powerless objects of an inescapable destiny but rather moral subjects responsible for their choices and aware of their crime and their guilt (failed infanticide, incest, possible parricide).

From Culler's argument "that every narrative operates according to this double logic" (Culler 178) ensues that there is no definitive reading of a narrative. This view mirrors in narratological terms the double bind inside the *dispositif*. The power relations that work toward the institution of a norm promotes at the same time a "field of possibilities" for its transgression; in the same manner, cultural history that works toward the legitimization of narrative "connexion rules" to impose a meaning, performs, by the means of the two logics, the inversion of the agency of narration and narrated (that Culler calls discourse and story). Whether it is a loose end in the narrated or its attempted cover-up in the narration, the paradox will be exposed to both the semantical and critical reader, just as the possibilities offered by the double bind remain open to the free subjects of the *dispositif*.

5.6 History, the "Ever-Living, Ever-Working Chaos of Being"

In a historical novel like *A Tale of Two Cities*, the historiographical approach has a specific effect on the double-bind and double logic at work in the narrative representation of the fictional state-of-affairs. The backdrop history provides to the historical novel is not passive. Even the most scientific and rigorous research about a historical event must be reported in a narrative form. Therefore, as a narrative, the historical background of the novel must negotiate -- comply with, resist, transgress -- , the same norms as the fictional narrative it surrounds. Historiographies influence and are influenced by worldviews. For the novelist, the narratability of events as much as their historicity determines their presence in the novel. The ungrammaticalities marking the double-bind and double logic, inherent to the fictional narration, conflate with the specific incongruities resulting from the biases in the methodological and ideological approaches to the composition and emplotment of the historical backdrop. The hypothetical arises from the entanglement of the fictive and the historical context. New hypotheses allow the writer to deal at both levels with the additional perception of possible omissions, misunderstandings, fabrications, misrepresentation, etc., thus, to maintain or restore consistency to the narrative, and resist the course the genre may impose.

I have discussed how, in the incipit of *A Tale of Two Cities*, the hypothetical is insinuated in the narrated. It pervades the depiction of a state-of-affairs in such a manner that no proposition about the world that is presented can be decided. In that world, along a timeline with no dates, a preposterous historiography assembles odd events into a history ruled by the vagaries of fate and death, or rather, Fate and Death -- in this case, allegories with no definite vehicles at the primary level of signification. This incipit, mainly a rhetorical address,

undermines the *dispositif* it introduces, thus implicitly claiming the necessity of resisting it. At this point, the narrative has not started. The historical background announced has the authority of actuality: all the events mentioned did happen in the year 1775. Yet, in England and France from January 1751 (date of Damien's actual execution, the earliest one mentioned in the novel) to January 1794 (date of the fictional Sidney carton's execution, closing the novel), in 1859 in England (when Dickens wrote the novel) and anytime and anywhere a reading of the novel takes place, different power relations are at play. Here, the historical context of this novel offers the hypothetical specific opportunities to confront the double logic with a challenge to the necessity of the actual (could it have unfolded otherwise with a different outcome?) and to the validity of the assumed causalities (could other causes, or none, have brought about this outcome?).

Dickens's tribute in his preface to "Mr CARLYLE'S wonderful book," was most likely sincere. Long before he started working on *A Tale of Two Cities*, in a letter to John Forster dated June 1, 1851, Dickens claimed to be "reading that wonderful book the *French Revolution* again, for the 500th time" (Forster 10,312). Carlyle's book was not Dickens's sole historical source. Yet, as generally accepted and celebrated as a credible account of the events, it relieved Dickens from the task of piecing together a better one.

Dickens did not follow Carlyle on two major points. First, rather than the *Ancien Régime's* religious and moral failure, Dickens identified clearly the poverty and injustice as the main cause of the French Revolution: "cold, dirt, sickness, ignorance, and want, were the lords in waiting on the saintly presence -- nobles of great power all of them" (TTC 32). He did not view the revolutionaries' violence as purely cathartic; instead, without condoning violence any more than Carlyle did, Dickens sees it -- for the 1789 revolution -- as the retribution

expected from crowds with "voices of vengeance, and faces hardened in the furnaces of suffering until the touch of pity could make no mark on them" (TTC 229). As for the September 1792 massacres, he recognizes them to be in part the patriotic response to the invasion of France by the armies of the Coalition (Prussia, Hesse-Cassel, Austria and *émigrés*), the reaction of "a people, tumultuous under a red flag and with their country declared in danger" (TTC, 243).

Narrative representation, with the linear exposition of the apparent necessity of fictional actuality, is aligned with a deterministic aspect which can neither resist the action of a pervasive contingency, nor prevent the growth of a "field of possibilities," nor conceal the emergence of other hypothetical emplotments. Although romantic and religious influences often give Carlyle's writing a prophetic and teleological tone, determinism was not a guiding concept of his epic historiographical approach. He was aware that the same historical succession of events could result from multiple and complicated arrangements of causal relations, a complexity often akin to a random confusion that did not easily fit the linearity of the narrative accounts:

> It is not in acted, as it is in written History; actual events are nowise so simply related to each other as parent and offspring are; every single event is the offspring not of one, but of all other events prior or contemporaneous, and will in its turn combine with all others to give birth to new: it is an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being, wherein shape after shape bodies itself forth from innumerable elements. (Carlyle, 1833 55)

In effect, with the reservations previously mentioned on the assignation of causes and judgment on violence, Dickens's novel features prominently Carlyle's view of history as "an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being." Dickens's history does not advocate a general teleological intent and has no beginning or end. Nonetheless, causality remains the main

engine of his history; it is an immediate causality that assigns a sufficient cause to any event in a repeatable and consistent manner; the same cause will have the same consequence:

> … there is not in France, with its rich variety of soil and climate, a blade, a leaf, a root, a sprig, a peppercorn, which will grow to maturity under conditions more certain than those that have produced this horror. Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious license and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind. (TTC 384–385)

This does not imply necessity: if the consequence follows from a cause, this cause does not have to occur; thus, neither does the consequence. But the fact remains that the *Ancien Régime* did "crush humanity out of shape," and that cause "produced this horror." Dickens does not delve into alternative history. Whatever cause is pointed at is assumed necessary. The historical events of the period are given their full actuality and there is no hypothetical proposition of how things could have been otherwise. However, if the violence of the *Ancien Régime* explains the violence of the revolutionary terror, Dickens does not conclude that repetition is necessary.

Interestingly, this view of an open future implied by the possibility of this discontinuity (the present being like the past does not foretell the future) is expressed at the close of the novel, in a double manifestation of the hypothetical, simultaneously in the narrated and in the narration. As Carton steps on the scaffold, the narrator assigns to him hypothetical last thoughts and the tone of prophecy about the future of France and its revolution (as well as other matters pertaining to the private side of the character):

> I see Barsad, and Cly, Defarge, The Vengeance, the Juryman, the Judge, long ranks of the new oppressors who have risen on the destruction of the old, perishing by this retributive instrument, before it shall cease out of its present use. I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in

> their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out. (TTC 389)

This proposition recognizes the continuity of "the evil of this time and of the previous time," as well as the fact that the latter follows causally from the former (" … of which this is the natural birth"). Still, the necessity of any future repetition is denied by the affirmation of the extinction of evil (" … gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out").

Dickens's historical indeterminism is simply existential; it advocates causality while admitting the possibility of contingent transitions. Carton's hypothetical train of thought could have been reported as actually Carton's own (an already hypothetical occurrence in third-person narration). However, the narrator renounces his mind-reading privilege and makes sure we understand that these are not Carton's thoughts or words but rather that "If he had given any utterance to his [thoughts] … they would have been these" (TTC 389). Thus, the implicitly hypothetical nature of mind-reading is made explicit. What is reported in direct speech could have been presented as Carton's own words or as thoughts read from Carton's "transparent mind." Rather, it is emphatically expressed as a metanarrative comment, the content of which -- a future contingent proposition -- is an even more problematic and hypothetical. This recourse to the hypothetical displaces the prophecy from the narrated (the report of Carton's actual last thoughts or words) to the narration (the narrator's hypothesis on what Carton's would have said). With the transfers of the authorship from the character to the omniscient narrator, the latter takes ownership of the closure, just as he had demonstrated ownership of the incipit; both are his non-narrative direct addresses. This proposition ends with a rather sober and sombre evaluation of Carton's death as the fulfilment of his life: "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I

have ever known" (TTC 390). However, there is no narrative reason for a discourse on history by Carton; he is not "one of the most remarkable sufferers by the same axe" (TTC 389) who would use the occasion to give a final solemn and well-worded utterance to their political convictions. The hypothetical Carton is thinking only of the closure of his private life. It is Carton's desperate love for and absolute devotion to Lucie that leads him willingly to the scaffold:

> For you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything. If my career were of that better kind that there was any opportunity or capacity of sacrifice in it, I would embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you… O Miss Manette … think now and then that there is a man who would give his life, to keep a life you love beside you! (TTC 159)

Carton's sacrifice has a purely private reason. He has no Christlike intention of redeeming France and its people from the sins of the *Ancien Régime* and the Revolution. Therefore, the earlier hypothetical expression of an optimistic belief in a hypothetical end of evil is emphasized as being only the narrator's hypothesis about what could have been and what could still be. The recourse to the hypothetical is here a literary device allowing the narrator to conclude at the same time both his accounts of history and of the story.

5.7 "A Story of Incidents… Pounding the Characters in its Own Mortar"

We will never know (for sure or first-hand) what Sidney Carton, as he stepped on the scaffold, would have said, had he wanted to or had he been given a chance to say it. His last words will remain forever hypothetical, one such hypothesis being the explicit provided by the narrator. A hypothesis on Dickens's authorial intent could explain this situation. With the concern for historical validity addressed by his own interpretation of and his public reference

and deference to Carlyle's book, Dickens could concentrate on a challenge of a more literary order. In a letter on 25 August 1859, he shared with Forster that he intended writing

> a picturesque story … with characters true to nature, but whom the story should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue… I fancied a story of incident might be written … pounding the characters in its own mortar, and beating their interest out of them. (Forster 14964–14967)

If characters were to "be pounded in" and their interests "beaten out" solely by their behaviour rather than by dialogue, we can safely assume that Dickens was *a fortiori* also giving up on external interiority exploration. This commitment is only partially reflected in the novel; in effect, if actions sometime reveal a character's mind (as it is the case for Sidney Carton), dialogues and mind-reading remain informative and necessary aspects of composition as much as ever:

> To rely less upon character than upon incident, and to resolve that his actors should be expressed by the story more than they should express themselves by dialogue, was for [Dickens] a hazardous, and can hardly be called an entirely successful, experiment. (Forster 14987–14989)

However, even imperfectly executed, the intent remained operative and would even be reiterated at the metanarrative level. Early in the novel, the opening of the third chapter, "The Night Shadow," proposes a retrospective confirmation and generalization of the role of the hypothetical implied by the incipit. A first-person speaker intrudes in the narrative and asserts the impossibility of penetrating the minds of others; hence, raising doubts about the validity of narrative omniscience.

> A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other. A solemn consideration, when I enter a great city by night, that every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret; that every room in every one of them encloses its own

> secret; that every beating heart in the hundreds of thousands of breasts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it! (TTC 14–15)

From a narrative perspective, this is a unique *non-sequitur* intervention of this speaking-I. Its sense cannot be inferred from any relation to the actions that precede or follow. Yet, it takes its meaning when considered from a metanarrative point-of-view, as the storyteller's recognition of his limited ability to probe the "profound secret" of "human creature." The nature of the statement as an authorial manifesto is soon confirmed. In a novel rife with violence of all sorts, private murders, barbaric torture and mass executions, only a self-conscious writer with metanarrative concerns, as a narrator or as a focalizing character, could compare the inscrutability of souls to "Death," or even more telling, to a book "shut with a spring":

> Something of the awfulness, even of Death itself, is referable to this. No more can I turn the leaves of this dear book that I loved, and vainly hope in time to read it all… It was appointed that the book should shut with a spring, for ever and for ever, when I had read but a page… (TTC 15)

For this speaker, humans closed to his investigation are as dead. From this perspective, dead or alive, an individual is defined by the secret of his interiority, a secret never shared.

> My friend is dead, my neighbour is dead, my love, the darling of my soul, is dead; it is the inexorable consolidation and perpetuation of the secret that was always in that individuality, and which I shall carry in mine to my life's end. In any of the burial-places of this city through which I pass, is there a sleeper more inscrutable than its busy inhabitants are, in their innermost personality, to me, or than I am to them? (TTC 15)

Once delivered of this utterance, this speaker disappears forever from the novel. His comment brings up a question: how does one gather the knowledge that enables to characterize such a secret person as a friend, a neighbour, or a darling of our soul? Is there a way "a story of

incident might be written," or rather read, pounding "the secret that was always in that individuality" in its own mortar, and beating "that profound secret and mystery" out of them? The most likely answer is that we produce our own hypothetical picture of their interiority, based upon their stories, their actions and their discourses. Sometimes the production of the hypothesis is done openly (Carton's last words), but in some circumstances, narrative omniscience is not avoidable.

The speaking-I, someone most likely different from the narrator, perhaps the author himself, has explained here the reason why the narrator cannot abide by the authorial intent of staging characters defined only by their actions: as "busy" as they may be shown, their "innermost personality" will remain "inscrutable." All that can be inferred will be the product of our own interpretation of the character's actions, largely complemented by dialogues and the hypothetical outcome of double-guessing. Anything we think we may know about someone else's unshared or unreported thoughts is hypothetical.

When the narration switches back to the third person, in immediate contradiction to the point just made about the futility of probing hearts, we are told of the inner thoughts of Jerry Cruncher and we are invited to share the dreams of Jarvis Lorry. The former is very puzzled; the latter hypothesizes, in his dream, possible answers to a question we cannot understand, and "the answers to this question were various and contradictory" (TTC 17). In other words, despite the narrator's omniscient intrusion in their interiority, nothing of these two individuals' possible secret is revealed.

Progressively, throughout its unfolding, the novel "beats out" of Sydney Carton his "profound secret and mystery." The way this is performed reflects Dickens's efforts to creatively skirt round the difficulties presented by the authorial intent he had shared with

Forster. Carton is introduced with the description of his appearance and actions at Darnay's English trial. In the court room, on the lawyers' bench, next to the prisoner's counsel sits "another wigged gentleman with his hands in his pockets, whose whole attention … seemed to be concentrated on the ceiling of the court" (TTC 64). When the prisoner is brought in, "everybody present, except the one wigged gentleman who looked at the ceiling, stared at him" (TTC 64). After the informer and main witness gives his damning testimony, the prisoner's counsel starts questioning him; "The wigged gentleman sitting opposite, still looking at the ceiling of the court" (TTC 70). The trial proceeds, and the prisoner's counsel meets with more and more problems in his defence "when the wigged gentleman who had all this time been looking at the ceiling of the court, wrote a word or two on a little piece of paper, screwed it up, and tossed it to him" (TTC 76). Following this message, the defence changes its argument and the trial is turned around. As the jury retires and everybody wait for their return in great suspense,

> Mr. Carton, who had so long sat looking at the ceiling of the court, changed neither his place nor his attitude, even in this excitement. While his learnt friend, Mr. Stryver, massing his papers before him … glanced anxiously at the jury; while all the spectators moved … grouped themselves anew; while even my Lord himself arose from his seat … this one man sat leaning back, with his torn gown half off him, his untidy wig put on just as it had happened to light on his head after its removal, his hands in his pockets, and his eyes on the ceiling as they had been all day." (TTC 79)

Darnay will be acquitted. While waiting for the end of the jury's deliberations, Carton is the only one considerate enough to notice Lucie Manette's feeling of faintness and have her helped. He is perceptive enough to know that Darnay should be reassured that she has been taken good care of; he does it himself, understanding that the Manettes' and Darnay's closest

friend, the banker Lorry, is prevented by his misplaced sense of propriety to communicate with the accused. In case the reader would not notice, the narrator concludes that "this Mr. Carton took in more of the details of the scene than he appeared to take in" (TTC 80). Carton has saved the defence, the day and Darnay's head. However, only the reader and the lawyer Stryver know this. Stryver will take all the credit and Carton will remain apparently as indifferent to this fact as to the rest.

What we learn of Carton through the three chapters covering the trial is learnt mostly from his appearance and his actions, with the recourse to a few matter-of-fact spoken exchanges (which cannot be considered as dialogues) and without any noticeable mind-reading. So far, Dickens has succeeded; to use his own words in his letter to Forster, he has introduced Carton as a character true to nature of a story that expressed more than he should express himself by dialogue. In effect, Carton's apparent marked indifference, his concern for Lucie, his conflicted fellow feeling for Darnay (where Lucie is concerned), his judgmental understanding of Jarvis Lorry, are all hypothetical features of the character. None of them is ever spelled out in the text: they are conjectures that anyone can infer, by being present in the court room or by reading the account of the trial written by Dickens, a former court reporter of great talent. However, the day ends in more substantive dialogues between Carton, first with Lorry, then with Darnay. In these scenes, the only thing new learnt from the description of Carton's behaviour is his alcoholism. Other crucial information is delivered through dialogue: his fledging filial feeling to Lorry -- "You are as good as another … better I dare say." (TTC 86); his self-hatred -- "I never want any thanks, nor merit any." (TTC 88); "I am a disappointed drudge, sir. I care for no man and no man cares for me" (TTC 89); and his

dissatisfaction with the "terrestrial scheme" (TTC 87) -- "The greatest desire I have, is to forget I belong to it. It has not good in it for me -- except wine…" (TTC 87).

Yet, in this introduction to Sidney Carton, the complex psychological conflict created by the recognition of his doppelganger relation to Darnay cannot be given expression, either by the simple description of actions or by dialogues. Dickens refrains from doing it, in accordance with his "Night Shadows" speech on the inscrutability of souls, because it pertains to Carton's "innermost personality," to the "secret that was always in that individuality." Hence, to get around this difficulty without reading Carton's troubled mind, Dickens has him soliloquize about his double, of all places, in front of the mirror.

> "Do you particularly like the man?" he muttered, at his own image; "why should you particularly like a man who resembles you? There is nothing in you to like; you know that. Ah, confound you! What a change you have made in yourself! A good reason for taking to a man, that he shows you what you have fallen away from, and what you might have been! Change places with him, and would you have been looked at by those blue eyes as he was, and commiserated by that agitated face as he was? Come on, and have it out in plain words! You hate the fellow." (TTC 89)

Thus, Carton's deepest, most private conflict is brought out in the open. Nobody but the narrator can listen to Carton's monologue, and nobody can penetrate his brain. The sole purpose of a monologue delivered as an aside is narrative; it delivers information that cannot be delivered, at this point in the novel, by actions or dialogues. As such, the device is as unrealistic as any mind-reading and its outcome and just as hypothetical. However, it is a demonstration of Dickens's research of and experimentation with new ways to relinquish the mind-reading privilege.

5.8 Actual Speeches, Hypothetical Thoughts

So far, Carton's introduction in the narrative demonstrates some relative compliance with Dickens's intent (as stated to Forster) to give form to characters using stories, events, incidents, etc., rather than various forms of spoken or written utterances, or worse, thoughts. At the centre of this project, there would be the proposition that, in accordance with the norms of realistic representation, a more acceptable psychological description of a character should result from the report of his actions and a less credible one from what he says or from the supposition of what is going on in his mind. The former is deemed more realistic because actions can be perceived by the senses (viewed, heard, etc.) while the credit to be given to what someone says (liars like Heep or Barsad) or guessing what someone thinks ("tight, unopenable oyster" like Jaggers or Tulkinghorn), is necessarily hypothetical. However, the report of actions does not deliver an objective picture of the character; we are still left to infer this picture from the report. We must consider the limits of the narrator's senses and the possible biases plaguing his representation and our own interpretation. In the end, the description of a character resulting from the representation of his actions may be just as hypothetical as what we may infer from what he says or what we think he thinks. This undecidability of the fictional world may require that, depending upon the psychological feature investigated, different devices be applied to the elucidation of a character's interiority.

In Darnay's English trial chapters, most of what we have learnt about Carton's "innermost personality" came out of the description of his behaviours, including some inkling of his very private feelings toward Miss Manette. Still, beyond these three chapters, the centrality and extent of this passion that cannot be fulfilled or even allowed, is revealed mainly

in a conversation with Darnay and finally confirmed in a monologue in aside (a theatrical substitute for mind-reading or interior monologue).

Carton's sentimental aporia is restated five times by four different means: the descriptions of actions, two dialogues, a monologue, the dictation of a letter. The latter two are for the exclusive benefit of the narration and are of no consequence to the narrated. The first device, as we have already seen, is at work to suggest Carton's perplexing situation by the description of his actions (the contradiction between his display of indifference and his actions to ensure Lucie's welfare and alleviate Darnay's anxiety). Then, it is with some recourse to dialogue, in his discussion with Darnay, that it is implicitly expressed: "'That's a fair young lady to be pitied by and wept for by! How does it feel? Is it worth being tried for one's life, to be the object of such sympathy and compassion, Mr. Darnay?'" (TTC 88) In the same chapter, after Darnay's departure, the monologue in front of the mirror develop the same topic. Later again, more tellingly and with more dialogue, a whole chapter is dedicated to a visit with Lucie where Carton exposes to her his despairing conflict in a conditional counterfactual proposition:

> "If it had been possible, Miss Manette, that you could have returned the love of the man you see before yourself -- flung away, wasted, drunken, poor creature of misuse as you know him to be -- he would have been conscious this day and hour, in spite of his happiness, that he would bring you to misery, bring you to sorrow and repentance, blight you, disgrace you, pull you down with him. I know very well that you can have no tenderness for me; I ask for none; I am even thankful that it cannot be." (TTC 156)

He neither expects nor would allow his love for her to be reciprocated. His unexplainable self-loathing has taken him too far into debasement; any aspiration for him to change is to be assumed hypothetical: "I am like one who died young. All my life might have been"

(TTC 156). The best he can make of this hopeless situation is to declare to Lucie his commitment to an absolute dedication -- "For you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything." (TTC 159) With so much of his interiority being delivered through conversation and soliloquy, one could think, as Forster did, that Dickens gave up on allowing only the events narrated, rather than any discourse, to give shape to Carton's character.

It may also be the case that Dickens's professional and creative interest led him to mitigate his initial intent (to express interiority only through its external manifestations) and to experiment with every possible "realistic" narrative device that could achieve the purpose in a manner acceptable to the norm of the genre. This could explain the recourse to a rather original device used for the fifth restatement of Carton's dilemma: the dictation of a letter.

In the chapters preceding the scene where it occurs, Lucie and her entourage are in total despair and at a loss facing the most dramatic of circumstances: Darnay is about to be guillotined. The narrator then focuses his attention on Carton's actions, discourses and thoughts as he surprisingly takes charge. The narrative perspective on Carton, initially external, becomes briefly internal as he comes closer to the final execution of his daring and tragic plan. The transition takes place when Carton, ready to jump into action, must wait for the right moment. For the last time, he speaks out aloud and to himself. Like the earlier soliloquy in front of the mirror, this one allows the narrator to report a realistic -- albeit not necessarily reliable -- direct speech (rather than an unshared thought), the narrator complementing the communication with the description of its non-verbal part:

> "There is nothing more to do," said he, glancing upward at the moon, "until to-morrow. I can't sleep." It was not a reckless manner, the manner in which he said these words aloud under the fast-sailing clouds, nor was it more expressive of negligence than defiance. It was the settled manner of a tired man, who had

> wandered and struggled and got lost, but who at length struck into his road and saw its end. (TTC 325)

However, after that, suddenly, Carton's mind becomes transparent. Without the mediation of any of his actions or speeches, we are welcomed into his interiority and are presented with his private reminiscences of "being a youth of great promise," (TTC 325) of his parents' deaths, of the words read at his father's grave. As this meditation progresses, it grows into a full response to the earlier justification of Dickens's intent in "The Night Shadows" chapter. In this intrusion, a first-person speaker, upon entering "a great city by night" (TTC 14), observed "that every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret" (TTC 14); he concluded that "every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other" (TTC 15). On the contrary, as Carton roams Paris, he can share in and understand the secrets revealed by the life of this other "great city by night":

> With a solemn interest in the lighted windows where the people were going to rest, forgetful through a few calm hours of the horrors surrounding them; in the towers of the churches, where no prayers were said, for the popular revulsion had even travelled that length of self-destruction from years of priestly impostors, plunderers, and profligates; in the distant burial-places, reserved, as they wrote upon the gates, for Eternal Sleep; in the abounding gaols; and in the streets along which the sixties rolled to a death which had become so common and material, that no sorrowful story of a haunting Spirit ever arose among the people out of all the working of the Guillotine; with a solemn interest in the whole life and death of the city settling down to its short nightly pause in fury; Sydney Carton crossed the Seine again for the lighter streets. (TTC 326)

After this moment of epiphany, Carton's interiority shuts down again. The time has come for Carton to jump into action and for the narrator to return to his external perspective to account only for Carton's actions and discourses.

The episode takes place as Darnay, sentenced to death, waits in jail to be taken to the guillotine. We can infer from the hints distributed before by the narrator that Carton's plan, kept secret to all, is to take Darnay's place. Carton manages to visit Darnay in his cell and tells him that, at Lucie's request, he must do as he is told without questions. They exchange some of their clothes and Carton starts dictating a letter to Darnay. It is a subterfuge: while writing, Darnay is exposed to the vapours of a sleeping drug, passes out and is spirited away; Carton stays. Unbeknownst to Darnay, the letter dictated to him is hypothetically destined to his own wife. It is hypothetical for Darnay who cannot make sense of it and is not to ask. It is hypothetical for Carton who has no intention of ever sending it; it is what he would tell her if he could. The letter starts by reminding the unnamed addressee of Carton's earlier commitment and of his gratitude for the circumstances that give him the opportunity to fulfil his promise:

> If you remember … [31] the words that passed between us, long ago, you will readily comprehend this when you see it. You do remember them, I know. It is not in your nature to forget them… I am thankful that the time has come, when I can prove them. That I do so is no subject for regret or grief… (TTC 365–366)

The conclusion is a succession of three counterfactual conditional propositions, repeating the same protasis in the subjunctive mood "if it had been otherwise"; the first two apodoses expressed that nothing better could have been done with the rest of Carton's life; the last one, is left open:

[31] There is no ellipses in the actual letter; Carton's dictation is interspersed by reports of his manoeuvres around and his exchanges with Darnay to circumvent his suspicions while he puts him asleep. These reports are elided from the quote.

> … If it had been otherwise… I never should have used the longer opportunity. If it had been otherwise… I should but have had so much the more to answer for. If it had been otherwise -- (TTC 388)

It is Sydney Carton's letter; hence, no mind-reading is involved. Yet, it is not simply a letter; it is the dictation of a letter. Furthermore, that letter, an act of subterfuge, is not meant to ever be read by its addressee. Carton is the speaking-I (in this case a dictating-I). He talks about himself, and thus, there is no hypothetical mediation by a narrator. The situation of utterance, from the perspective of the realistic literary convention, is no less credible and acceptable than a monologue in an aside. Still, the content of the letter is the hypothetical proposition of what Carton would say if it were otherwise. At this juncture in the novel, Carton's love is a secret shared only with Lucie. The sacrifice of his life that he is in the process of performing is a secret for all (only revealed later by Darnay's recovered freedom). The content of the letter has no operative purpose. It does not bring up any new information. Carton has no intention of sending it and could have dictated something totally unrelated to the situation -- like the prayer for the dead that he recites that same day four times: "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord, etc." -- without changing anything to the course of the events.

What is achieved by the dictation of this letter is the focalization of the narrated situation through Carton's perspective, albeit without focalizing on him. The content of the letter undeniably represents Carton's deepest conviction, an element of his "innermost personality," that the authorial intrusion deemed inscrutable. Such an impossible scrutiny does not have to take place because the dictation is reported, not as someone else's thought, but rather as an action (albeit a discourse of sort), as one of the events in the scene exposed to the narrator's external perspective. It is the objective account of an action, not the hypothetical double-guessing of an interiority. It provides a substitute for the report of Carton's train of

thought. Dickens, had he claimed the novelist's mind-reading privilege, could have reported it as an interior speech in direct, indirect or free indirect style. Dickens had done so to express, a moment earlier, Carton's "solemn interest in the whole life and death of the city settling down to its short nightly pause in fury" (TTC 326).

Other conflicted interiorities are also explored in *A Tale of Two Cities* (Doctor Manette, Charles Darnay). In the discussion of the incipit of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, I quoted Dickens's daughter, Kate Perugini, asserting that it "was through his wonderful observation of character, and his strange insight into the tragic secrets of the human heart, that [Charles Dickens] desired his greatest triumph to be achieved." Dickens's literary ambition was most likely not to better Walter Scott or Wilkie Collins. He may have been less interested in mastering the conventions of the historical or mystery novel, or any other genre, than in developing and experimenting with different narrative devices for another purpose. The variations of narrative instance, distance and voice applied to the representation of Sidney Carton's interiority -- and, later, to John Jasper in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* -- were part of Dickens's research for new means of producing a more realistic psychological exploration. Across both novels, we find different approaches deployed to the same purpose, already mentioned in *Bleak House*: prying out the secret of the "tight, unopenable oyster" that is a human mind.

5.9 The Tendency of Narrative to Keep Going

I have already referred to D. A. Miller's opinion that in 19th century realist novels, "the closure is radically at odds with the narrative means used to reach it" (Miller, 1981, x). I have also discussed how this is confirmed by Culler's argument that narrative resists the causality suggested by the "convergence of meaning" and the implicit logic of the narrated, by

developing a contradictory logic in the narration. “The narratable lacks finality… The tendency of a narrative would therefore be *to keep going*, and a narrative closure would be … a ‘faire semblant. ’” (Miller, 1981 xi)

As far as Carton is concerned, *A Tale of Two Cities* comes to closure the moment he has Darnay taken away, unconscious, to safety. Then, passing himself for Darnay, he joins the other condemned for the last ride. Technically, the story is over. Carton’s recent mysterious dealings and his sibylline comments are suddenly explained. He has given his life so that Lucie may recover her husband and he has arranged for her escape to safety with family and friends. At this point, we reach a fork in the narrative. One branch will take the Manettes, Darnay and Lorry back to the safety of England; simultaneously, the other branch will take Carton to his death. Up to that fork, the narration was entirely in the past tense. It now switches to the present tense. The escape from Paris is a live report in the present progressive. The Tumbril ride from the jail to the guillotine is told in the historical present. The omniscient narrator leverages this tense to render the actuality of the event. He amplifies the reality effect as he hears “along the Paris street, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh” (TTC 384); he aligns his perspective with “the populace in the street,” (TTC 385), then with “the riders in the tumbrils” (TTC 385) and finally with individual witnesses and actors of the scene. The novel returns for its explicit to the past perfect, disturbing the immediate reality effect and setting the distance necessary to the coming hypothetical stance.

A Tale of Two Cities closes, or rather concludes, with the report in the direct style of what could have been Sidney Carton’s last speech. This report is a double conditional counterfactual and future contingent proposition. The speech is hypothetical in a twofold manner: first, because it is never uttered or written, and second, because its content is

hypothetical. Simply put, although Cartons did not say anything (thus falsifying the protasis), he could have, and, had he done so, he could have said what is reported (a hypothetical apodosis). Furthermore, the hypothetical speech being a prophecy, it is as problematic as any future contingent proposition, its only truth being that it may occur or not. I have already discussed the narrator's conjecture that it could have started with a prophecy about the future of France and its revolution. The rest of the proposed speech pertains to the private side of Carton. He might have said "I see the lives for which I lay down my life, peaceful, useful, prosperous and happy" (TTC 389) -- that is the lives of the Manettes, Darnay and Lorry. It is also proposed that he could have imagined Lucie having another son named after him, brilliantly redeeming his name and in turn bringing his own son, also named Sidney, to the place of Carton's execution and telling him his "story with a tender and faltering voice" (TTC 390). At this point we are two generations removed from the present moment of the execution. However, we already know that he will be fondly remembered three generations down, because, in an earlier prolepsis, Lucie's daughter is reported to have "told her grandchildren when she was a handsome old lady, that she heard [Carton] say 'a life you love'" (TTC 349) as he was leaving on his last mission (which settles, albeit only in small part, the truth value of the future contingent). What we witness here, in the account of Carton's heroic death and his purported prophecies, is a novel ending in repetition beyond what could be taken as its earlier *de facto* closures, thus showing a novel's tendency to "keeps going" (Miller, 1981 x).

As with any other passage of the novel, the ending must show some consistency with some parts of what has preceded. Yet, because of the nagging presence of the hypothetical, this end will always appear incongruous from some alternative perspectives. Narrative

consistency, another word for the Aristotelian plausibility, is a highly subjective measure that allows for any given novel a wide range of hypothetical closures. Still, the author must decide on how to end. To do so, he must make a choice among the various meanings arising from his text. It is a compromise that will leave aside some conflicting alternatives, and cover up, as best as possible, the paths not taken or forgotten. To decide what aspect of the plot consistency must be shown, the author will look back at what was going on before. "These retrospective determinations constitute … the arbitrariness of the narrative, that is not really the indetermination, but the determination of the means by the end … of the causes by the effects"[32] (Genette, 1969 94).

Dickens himself, in a letter to Wilkie Collins (on October 6, 1859, concerning *A Tale of Two Cities*) explains why he would rather avoid foreshadowing an unfolding too forcefully. He prefers, after proceeding with a "retrospective determination" -- which he calls "to shew with a backward light" -- to let a planned occurrence rise progressively above its suggested hypothetical competitors.

> My dear Wilkie, -- I do not positively say that the point you put might not have been done in your manner; but I have a very strong conviction that it would have been overdone in that manner -- too elaborately trapped, baited, and prepared -- in the main anticipated, and its interest wasted… I think the business of art is to lay all that ground carefully, not with the care that conceals itself -- to shew, by a backward light, what everything has been working to -- but only to suggest,

[32] « Ces déterminations rétrogrades constituent […] l'arbitraire du récit, c'est-à-dire non pas vraiment l'indétermination, mais la détermination des moyens par les fins […] des causes par les effets. »

> until the fulfilment comes. These are the ways of Providence, of which ways all art is. (Hutton 95)

Dickens rejects the single determination of "too elaborately trapped, baited, and prepared" events. He does not want to let "the care that conceals itself" fence the reader within a limited interpretative horizon. He strives for a narrative that does not enforce its meanings. The ground carefully laid is the hypothetical context from where the actual can be suggested by "a backward light."

The existence of acceptable alternative endings entails the corollary that other backward readings could be supported. Any such closure would also be satisfactory in some respects and problematic in others. Acknowledging this, brings about several questions: how relevant is the closure to the rest of the novel? Is there a difference between a problematic closure and an absent one? In what respect is an unfinished novel any different from a conventionally ended one? Or as suggested by D. A. Miller, and more generally, is any novel ever closed?

The fact is that, even at the end of apparently tightly finished novels, the reader is often left with his own hypothetical answers to the questions raised by the contradiction between the closure and "the narrative means used to reach it." I have discussed the hypothetical that remains beyond the end of *David Copperfield*; after the conventional wrap up dealing with the fates of the other characters, the narrator's closure echoes and answers the metanarrative comment raised in the incipit -- whether or not the fictional author turns out to be the hero of *his life*, he will assert his control over the *story of his life*. The authority of authorship allows him to close the narration and leave unnarrated the hypothetical narratable hereafter.

Bleak House, being made of two narratives, offers two closures. The omniscient narrator opens his story with a dynamic view of a London fit for the waddling of a Megalosaurus, where mud, smoke, rain and fog could not dampen the life energy of an ill-tempered, slipping and sliding, jostling crowd. This narrative ends with the gloomy survey of Chesney Wold turned into Lady Dedlock's mausoleum, its descent into stasis in the abandonment of "darkness and vacancy; with so little change under the summer shining and the wintry lowering; so sombre and motionless always" (BH 985). As for the mysteries surrounding "Jarndyce v. Jarndyce," which turn upon the reason for the involvement of most characters in the case (which, in turn, turns upon the exposure of Esther's origins) -- the early life of the Barbary sisters, Esther's mother (and her affair with Captain Hawdon) and Esther's godmother ("all but married once" to Mr. Boythorn) -- closure brings no real illumination, for "the story goes that, that Sir Leicester paid some who could have spoken out … but it is a lame story, feebly whispering and creeping about" (BH 981).

The novel ends with the closure of the other narrative, in a chapter aptly titled, "The Close of Esther's Narrative" (BH 985–989). It starts surprisingly with Esther's revelation that her narrative was, all along, her side of an exchange with a mysterious correspondent, mysterious even to Esther. "I, and the unknown friend to whom I write, will part for ever. Not without much dear remembrance on my side. Not without some, I hope, on his or hers" (BH 985). This last-minute change in Esther's situation of enunciation modifies our perspective on the structure of the novel. We find out now that Esther was, all along, addressing a narratee located at the same diegetic level as she -- and maybe also, one answering her. We thought we were reading a story composed of the alternating and complementary accounts of two narrators. We find now that there was a third party involved

in the story and in its production. Esther, from her first lines, had declared herself a reluctant narrator. Her writing was to be only the "portion of these pages," that is, a text sharing with another text the attention of a general readership. It let itself to be read as the lively memoir of a young woman somewhat playing coy; it is now revealed to be addressed to one distinct person. We must now consider that Esther reported her side of the story from a particular perspective, one designed to address and anticipate the specific discourse of a specific correspondent -- one important to her, if we judge by her parting "not without much dear remembrance on [her] side. Not without some, I hope, on his or hers." This is a different perspective than that of a narrative written with a "general audience" in mind. A communication has a purpose. The perspective of a direct address is always adjusted for its addressee. It could be a wide readership or a loosely defined implied reader. However, here it is a singular "unknown friend." Hence, the influence of this unknown but valued reader is certainly reflected in Esther's point-of-view. Without going to the extreme experience suggested by Borges, mentioned earlier (in 5.5), of reading Kempis's *De Imitatione Christi* as if it had been written by Céline, we may not have been reading what we thought we were reading. This is a metafictional reversal achieved by falsifying our expectations based upon the assumption of a genre. We may have been reading a hypothetically incomplete novel, focussed on Esther's and the omniscient narrator's reports, but we were ignorant of the agency of the "unknown friend." Perhaps, in that case, we also miss the third narrative made of his hypothetical answers to Esther. Yet, this new question does not obliterate any previous meanings we may have gathered from the novel. It just keeps *Bleak House* going on hypothetically, in the same manner as *Great Expectations* does, in the incertitude as to

whether Estella and Pip ever get together. In that regard, it is not only *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* that remains unfinished.

5.10 The Nonsense of an Ending

The abrupt ending of the unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is even more hypothetical, as it is entirely left to the reader's imagination. Even if one is not a fundamentalist Droodian, one must admit to some frustration when reaching the last non-closing page. However, the disappointment is short-lived. The semantic reader can find solace in realizing how easy it is to develop a profusion of hypothetical continuations and closures. The reason for this creative hypothetical fertility resides, first, in the fact that, if for any novel, the closure proves to be always unsatisfying and always competing with other hypothetical ones, it is even more the case for the abrupt ending of an unfinished novel. The second reason is that, more than other genres, mystery-based genres (Gothic, sensation, detective novels) offer in their exposition the material necessary for the reader to spark off conjectures that whether falsified or confirmed, can be gratifying. From that point of view, it is not because *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is an unfinished novel, that the hypothetical potential should be more present than in any of the other "finished" novels I have discussed. The fact that the text never confirms that Jasper killed Drood (or even that he was killed) does not make it more hypothetical than the ambiguous report of a possible reunion of Pip and Estella, the counterfactual prediction that Carton will "hold a sanctuary in [Lucie's and Darnay's] hearts" (TTC 390) or the groundless conclusion that Amy Dorrit and Arthur Clennam met with "happiness" as they "went down into a modest life of usefulness" (LD 859). We accept, albeit with some questions, these inconclusive endings. This openness will be accepted later in the evolution of the novel as a defining feature of the genre: we are left to our own speculations

when it comes to what could be figured in James's carpet, or revealed by his Aspern papers, or when we try to make sense of the spiritual emptiness and moral failure hidden under Conrad's Kurtz's or Nostromo's much praised charisma.

To explain the lesser relevance of closure in detective novels, Tzvetan Todorov remarks that "this novel does not contain one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation"[33] (Todorov 11). Todorov contends that this two-story structure is inherent to any narrative: one story maps the narrated, the other the narration. Yet, in most semantic reading, narrated and narration are entangled in a manner transparent to the empiric reader. Thus, Todorov asks: "How come, then, that the detective novel succeeds in making them both present, side by side?"[34] (Todorov 12). The answer, for him, resides in the

> particular status of the two stories. The first, that of the crime, is in fact the story of an absence: its most important characteristic is that it cannot be immediately present in the book … the second … is a story that has no importance in itself, which is only used as a mediation between the reader and the story of the crime.[35] (12–13)

It has so little importance that outside of the literary field -- for instance in a recreational, didactic or professional problem-solving context -- this elucidating narration is excluded as it

[33] « Ce roman ne contient pas une mais deux histoires : l'histoire du crime et l'histoire de l'enquête. »

[34] « Comment se fait-il alors que le roman policier parvient à les rendre présentes toutes deux, côte à côte ? »

[35] « […] statut particulier des deux histoires. La première, celle du crime, est en fait l'histoire d'une absence : sa caractéristique la plus importante est qu'elle ne peut être immédiatement présente dans le livre […] la seconde […] c'est une histoire qui n'a aucune importance en elle-même, qui sert seulement de médiateur entre le lecteur et l'histoire du crime. »

would go against the purpose. These non-literary genres omit this second story deliberately because their goal is to incite the reader to research and provide his own solution: recreational riddles expect answers; didactic case-studies invite analyses and propositions; technical reports are meant to support decisions. Their texts are carefully limited to the presentation of the evidence necessary for the reader to figure out a coherent and narratable resolution.

For the same reason, in novels of detection (Dupin, Holmes, Poirot) the second story is deemed unimportant from the solution of the mystery point-of-view (albeit not from the reader's perspective). This is because a convention of the genre requires that all the clues must be presented in the first story, in the narrated. In these novels, the detective does not have more clues than the reader. Both could theoretically proceed to the elucidating emplotment, to the second story's narration. Once Doctor Watson has reported all the details available about the crime, the reader knows as much as Sherlock Holmes and, like him, should be able to rebuild its unfolding. However, neither Watson nor the reader usually does and they anticipate with great interest Holmes's final explanation. Holmes's skill resides not only in his ability to produce hypotheses and inferences, but also in his storytelling ability. His narration not only reorganizes the clues to dispel the mystery, but it also includes numerous metanarrative comments about the process by which he reached the solution (and the reasons why Watson, Lestrade or the reader did not). In other words, in mystery novels, as opposed to murder-mystery riddles, the interest resides as much in the solution as in the narrative of the solution process. To further prove this point, some authors and critics have discarded the closure of canonical representatives of the mystery genre in favour of their own alternatives. Although their intent was somewhat parodic, the acceptability of the revised narrations they proposed confirms Todorov's assessment that the "[second] story has no importance in itself." For

instance, Pierre Bayard has offered some perfectly valid re-emplotments of Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (Bayard 1988) and of Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Bayard 2008). Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini's *The D. Case or the Truth About the Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1989) is an edition of the Dickens's novel interspersed with astute debates on the case between famous fictional detectives (Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, Jules Maigret, Philip Marlowe, Porfiry Petrovich, Father Brown, Lew Archer, etc.).

These works prove that any solution would do -- those of Bayard no less than those of Poirot or Holmes, those of Fruttero & Lucentini no less than those of any Droodian -- if the reader's expectations are falsified or confirmed in a coherent manner. Some Droodian enthusiasts read *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as a riddle to solve. They want not only to finish the book: they also want to find in the existing text the signs that point toward Dickens's own intended closure. Using Dickens's words from his letter to Collins (cited in 5.9), these readers consider that, in what has been published of the novel, all the relevant details "lay all that ground carefully, not with the care that conceals itself … but only to suggest, until the fulfilment comes." However, fulfilment will not come and the reader's duty is to "shew, by a backward light, what everything has been working to." The interrupted novel, deprived of a conventional closure, can go on forever and along many different paths, and some Droodians, investing a considerable ingenuity,

> have occupied themselves with suggesting -- or "proving," as so many of them thought -- what had been the author's intended ending. A bibliography by B.W. Matz published in The Dickensian in 1911 notes 82 such attempts, and Matz's daughter Winifred added a further 135 by 1929. (Wilson)

In the debates between master sleuths, related by Fruttero and Lucentini, on the novel's possible endings, these expert Droodians are divided in two categories: the Porfirians -- named after Porfiry Petrovich (the policeman from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*) and the Agathists -- of the Agatha Christie school of detective fiction. Porfirians take for granted that Jasper killed Edwin and their interest concentrate on the novel as a psychological thriller. They are interested in what goes on in the fascinating mind of John Jasper. His crime, like those committed by Rodion Raskolnikov, Julien Sorel or Tom Ripley, is less mysterious than his psyche. Porfirians are critical readers; they are aware that even when the case is solved, the world remains problematic. Eco would say of their type of reading that, as it ends, "We have settled our account with the story but not with the problems that it has given rise to"[36] (Eco, 1993 17). Agathists, on the contrary, infer from all the clues pointing so convincingly to Jasper's guilt that, obviously, he must be innocent. Agathists are empirical readers "reading for the plot," for whom "the narrative must tend toward its end, seek illumination in its own death. Yet this must be the right death, the correct end" (Brooks 103). The Agathist is more on Wilkie Collins's side than on Dickens's and does not mind being "too elaborately trapped, baited, and prepared" for the end if "the story, while untangling its own knots consoles itself and consoles us. The end [being] point for point the one expected.[37]" (Eco, 1993 17). However,

[36] « […] nous avons réglé nos comptes avec l'histoire mais non avec les problèmes que celle-ci a suscités. »

[37] « […] l'histoire, en résolvant ses propres nœuds, se console et nous console. La fin est point pour point celle que l'on attendait. »

Agathist are very specific in their reading: they search in the first story clues to the second (as planned by Dickens), just as some read the Old Testament as prefiguring the New.

The opposition between Porfirians and Droodians (or the opposition between critical and semantic readers) does not reflect the "old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident" (James, 1884 392). Henry James denied any possibility that either could be the exclusive centre of interest presiding over the writing or the reading of a novel: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" (James, 1884 392) What determines the mystery of Edwin Drood (his disappearance and most likely his murder) is Jasper's "criminal intellect … a horrible wonder apart" (MED 220), illustrated by the numerous incidents involving him related from the incipit to the unplanned final chapter. In a *dramatis personae* of more than twenty, it is Jasper (the character), his discourses and actions (the incidents) that provide the unity and the central thread of the novel.

Granting some authority to authorship, I conclude that Dickens was a Porfirian, if only for extra-textual reasons. His project, as shared with and reported by Forster, was convincingly foreshadowing the novel. Jasper was to kill Drood: "the story … was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle" (Forster 16,117). Jasper was to collapse upon learning that Drood and Rosa had split: "Discovery by the murderer of the utter needlessness of the murder for its object, was to follow hard upon commission of the deed" (Forster 16,120). Drood left Rosa, keeping with him the engagement ring: "discovery of the murderer … by means of a gold ring" (Forster 16,121). The novel, as even more incriminating clues are added, does not need another or a further ending, neither from a Porfirian nor from a semantic (albeit non-Agathist) perspective.

What distinguishes *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* from Dickens's preceding novels is not, as I have already argued, that his closure is made more hypothetical because it has not been formalized. The most glaringly missing element of closure is the one most readers, whether empirical or critical, could do without, one that later novels will often discard, that is the "'happy ending' on a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks" (James, 1884 382). What James derides here is a certain literary production aimed at a readership in search of what Eco called consolation. The ideology of consolation frequently -- not always -- underlies mass-produced popular works. To answer its demands, an author

> … will play on prefabricated characters, more acceptable and appreciated because they are known, and, in any case unsullied by any psychological penetration, like the characters in fables. As for the style, he will use prearranged solution, offering the reader the joys of the recognition of what is already known. Then, he will play with continuous iterations, to provide the audience with the regressive pleasure of the return to the expected, and he will distort, reducing them to clichés, the solutions far more creative from the earlier literature.[38] (Eco, 1993 18)

Eco considers that the narrative energy of this type of production is due to its staying as close as possible to pure narrated: "*fabula* in pure state, without scruples and free of problematic tensions[39]" (Eco, 1993 18). In such novels, the ending is "for many persons, like

[38] « […] il jouera sur des caractères préfabriqués, d'autant plus acceptables et appréciés qu'ils sont connus, et en tout cas vierge de toute pénétration psychologique, à l'instar des personnages des fables. Quant au style, il usera de solutions préconstituées, offrant au lecteur les joies de la reconnaissance du déjà connu. Puis il jouera d'itérations continuelles, afin de procurer au public le plaisir régressif du retour à l'attendu, et il dénaturera, en les réduisant à des clichés, les solutions autrement créatives de la littérature précédente. »

[39] « […] fabula à l'état pur, sans scrupule et libre de tensions problématiques. »

that of a good dinner, a course of dessert and ices, and the artist in fiction is regarded as a sort of meddlesome doctor who forbids agreeable aftertastes" (James, 1884 382). What James means by "artist in fiction" (as opposed to a simple "author" or "writer") is someone who does not shy away from the hypothetical and its problematics. For instance, Eco opposes Balzac to Dumas (without denying the talent of the latter): "not only the suicide of Lucien de Rubempré but even Rastignac's victory … will not seem consolatory. Rastignac triumphant will leave us much more bitter than d'Artagnan's serene death…"[40] We could say the same of Dickens and Collins (without denying the talent of the latter): not only the deaths of Magwich and Miss Havisham, but even David Copperfield's or Esther Summerson's victories … are problematic. Amy Dorrit, Esther Summerson or Lizzie Hexam, triumphant in their conjugal bliss, and David Copperfield, in his literary success, will leave us much more bitter than anything happening in *The Moonstone*.

What Dickens inspires in Droodians, whether Porfirians or Agathists, is not consolation. Even with a tightly wrapped up closure, Porfirian and Agathists would have speculated all the same, the former about Jasper's possible motives; the latter about the process by which Jasper's (or someone else's) guilt would have been proven. Porfirians wonder why "even a poor monotonous chorister and grinder of music -- in his niche -- may be troubled with some stray sort of ambition, aspiration, restlessness, dissatisfaction'" (MED 20). How does this frustration combine or conflict with "Jasper's self-absorption in his nephew

[40] « […] non seulement le suicide de Lucien de Rubempré mais même la victoire de Rastignac […] ne paraîtrons pas consolatoires. Rastiganc triomphant nous laissera beaucoup plus amers que d'Artagnan, mort sereinement […] »

when he was alive" (MED 219–220)? Is Rosa justified when she assigns Jasper's crime to "'the motive of gaining me!'" (MED 220)? As for Agathists, they can figure many alternative emplotments out of the facts of Jasper's "unaccountable sort of expedition" (MED 132) with Durdles, his interest in the action of quicklime, his near-admission to Rosa -- "had the ties between me and my dear lost boy been one silken thread less strong, I might have swept even him…"(MED 215) -- and, in a repetition of the incipit, his bringing a revealing closure to his opening dream, "When it comes to be real at last, it is so short that it seems unreal for the first time" (MED 261).

The unplanned ending -- or the unrealized ending -- of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* leaves a series of lingering questions. As we reach the last pages, we can only guess what could come after. This guess can be informed only with the ambiguous knowledge of what came before. We draw paths in the undisclosed terrain beyond the margins of a sketchy map. After all the possible circuits in and around the text have been followed, far from consolation, the reward received at the end of the hypothetical detour is the complicated experience of the perverse empathy with a murderer.

6 Conclusion

Dickens maintains throughout his later novels an epistemic anxiety as to the reality of the perceived context, albeit without denying the reality of this context. It is because characters are uncertain about the nature of their knowledge that we can follow them in their invocation of the hypothetical. I have mentioned David's wondering about the agency of what does not happen, Pip mulling over the consequence of removing a single day in the unfolding of a life, Carton's wishing it had been otherwise and R. Wilfer noticing that what might have been is not what is. I could have added Mrs Flintwich or John Harmon trying to entangle the real from the dreamed, and many others wondering about what really is and what could be or could have been.

The actuality of Dickens's world in his late novels emerges from the hypothetical, on counterfactual speculations triggered by what is not, by what does not happen, by what is not done or said and, in general, by what is not known. Robyn Warhol-Down considers that "the rendition of what might have been and yet *is not* does form … much of the substance of Dickens's narrative prose" (Warhol 46) She identifies this world as disnarrated: "In late and middle Dickens, disnarration becomes a dominant mode of narrative discourse, maybe even the dominant mode" (Warhol 49).

Disnarration is the proper mode under circumstances where more questions are asked than answered. The disnarrated is "the element in a narrative that explicitly consider and refer to what does not take place" (Prince, 2003 22). Whether it does not take place in the narrated or the narration, it cannot be represented but only probed and suggested. Abduction, a succession of trials and errors, is the probing tool. Each test follows from an hypothesis. From one inference to the next, leaving in the hypothetical realm what is better left disnarrated, the

novel progresses. What cannot be represented or only retrospectively, will be disnarrated. The disnarrated can be concerned with what is actual but not known or understood. Such is the case of spectacular actual incidents: Tulkinghorn's murder ("What's that? Who fired a gun or pistol? Where was it?" (BH 749), the collapse of Clennam House (What was that! Let us make hast in." (LD 827); the same applies to the opaque proceedings of oppressive institutions: Chancery (what was Jarndyce v. Jarndyce about?), the Circumlocution Office ("the great political science, How not to do it." (LD 702), and "that superb establishment, the Marshalsea Hotel!" (LD 110). At the opposite, moment of domestic privacy can also be subject to disnarration, as it is the case of Septimus Chrisparkle's Breakfast, a scene that "was pleasant to see (or would have been, if there had been any one to see it, which there never was.)" (MED 40).

Dickens addresses the anxieties and the need for consolation of his readership. In some respects, he abides by the rules of the popular novel -- as derided by James and characterized by Eco -- but in others it transgresses them creatively. The most significantly creative of these transgressions are demonstrated by his deployment of luxuriant hypothetical environments that surround and confront the prevalent social order and its moral norm with alternatives. Thus doing, Dickens late works confirm that the novel genre is an attempt to give a literary form to the conflict between the linearity and causality imposed by the narrative representation, and the limited extent of the paradigms it inspires (to model a convoluted and contingent reality); novels emphasize and relate the complexity that we only faintly perceive. Novels, intentionally or not, bring about the irregularity (the ungrammatical, the uncanny, the incongruous, the defamiliarizing), that will falsify our expectations, caused by our faulty understanding or our failing to consider the probability of alternative possibilities. The novel

compensates for this deficiency as "all novels imitate a world of potentiality, even if this implies a philosophy disclaimed by their authors" (Kermode 138).

It is such a world of potentialities that informs Dickens's understanding of an art imitating a providence that alludes rather than decides. It is what he expressed in his letter to Wilkie Collins on October 6, 1859 (already cited in 5.9), when he wrote:

> I think the business of art is to lay all that ground carefully, not with the care that conceals itself -- to shew, by a backward light, what everything has been working to -- but only to suggest, until the fulfilment comes. These are the ways of Providence, of which ways all art is. (Hutton 95)

I believe that this was an implicit expression of Dickens's existential indeterminism. By this I mean that Dickens's providence does not control the changes in the states of affairs, but rather providence reveals the world so that the artist can represent it. Reality being complex, its representation cannot be "overdone … too elaborately trapped, baited, and prepared -- in the main anticipated, and its interest wasted." It is a providence marked by contingency. The providential intervention assembles events loosely enough to figure out hypothetical causalities. It is this recognition of the hypothetical links between contingent occurrences that sets apart Dickens's novel, not only from the run-of-the-mill production of popular literature, but also from most canonical realist fiction. In any period, very little of any literary production survives.

> The majority of books disappear forever -- and "majority" actually misses the point: if we set today's canon of nineteenth-century British novels at two hundred titles (which is a very high figure), they would still be only about 0.5 percent of all published novels. (Moretti 207)

Yet, Dickens was a hugely popular author; he produced serial novels complying with the norms and using the devices of the favourite and prevailing genres of his time. However, his

novels cannot simply be labelled as Gothic, romance, sensation, mystery, etc. The constraints of serial publication, its episodic structure, its demand for frequent unfortunate disruptions, providential resolutions and final consolation did not prevent Dickens's novels from meandering creatively around their storyline in ways that the genre they borrowed from were not accustomed to.

Dickens, in his letter to Collins, insisted that the "business of art" -- that I take to be the art of literary realism -- did not require hiding its literary nature. For him, the production of mimesis -- "the representation or imitation of the real world in (a work of) art, literature, etc." (OED "mimesis") -- depended on composition and language and "not with the care that conceals itself." Dickens certainly does not try to conceal his art or indeed his artifice. At the opposite, in order "to shew, by a backward light, what everything has been working to," he relies on the permanent and lavish display of his amazing fertility and inventiveness with language, with rhetorical flourish, with potential lines of emplotment. So much so that Beer (as already quoted in 1.6) declares that Dickens -- "one of Darwin's most frequently read authors" (Beer 6) -- must be credited if the "new story" (Beer 3) told in *On the Origin of Species* found the appropriate organization and language for

> its apparently unruly superfluity of material gradually and retrospectively revealing itself as order, its superfecundity of instances serving as argument which can reveal itself only through instance and relations (Beer 6).

In short, everything that constitutes Dickens's wild narrative economy is always on display and in that inheres the great pleasure procured to his readership.

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