IDEOLOGY AND THE NOVEL IN THE 1850s

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Preface

The slightly unusual arrangement of the following study requires a brief word of explanation. After the introduction, in which I attempt a few crucial definitions and briefly discuss the problem of periodisation which a study such as this necessarily raises, I postpone any substantial discussion of other theoretical issues until chapter five. This theoretical chapter thus comes after four chapters which might be called empirical, in which I look at four characteristic myths of the 1850s occurring in a range of 'literary' and 'non-literary' texts; and it falls before two further chapters, in which I look in detail at two major novels of the period, Little Dorrit and The Newcomes. This arrangement enables me to discuss theoretical issues in the light of the material presented in the first four chapters, and also to use this discussion as a basis for the more specifically literary analyses in the two final chapters.

I should also add that I have not interpreted the 1850s of the title with exact literalness, feeling free to discuss texts from the late 1840s and early 1860s. In addition, I have of course referred to some of the influences which shaped the ideological problematic of the decade providing the immediate focus for this study. It is not therefore a decade-study; but neither is it, for that matter, just a survey of a number of texts that all happened to be written at much the same time. What led me to choose the texts that I discuss was quite simply that they contained material relevant to the four myths that I have singled out for study, myths which are, in the forms in which they are narrated, historically specific. These myths were, in turn, only chosen after wide reading in the period had suggested their centrality and importance.

My thanks are due, first and above all, to Mr. W.F.T. Myers, whose combination of encouragement, generosity and severity made him the ideal research supervisor. Dr. R.K. Biswas read a large proportion of the manuscript at a critical stage, and I am grateful to him for the discipline of his painstaking and accurate comments. The members of the Marxism and literary criticism seminar will, if they ever read this study, recognize many of the ideas in it as ones that we first discussed together; I am grateful to them all, but especially to Susie, Isobel and Rick for providing in Leicester a milieu where such ideas could be regularly discussed. The staff of Leicester University Library have been unfailingly helpful and patient; while Mrs. Doreen Butler has remarkably managed to transform a hieroglyph into a legible typescript. My thanks to all.

A Note on Editions Used

In deciding which editions to use, I have tried to weigh the competing claims of consistency, historical authority, and ease of reference. Where there is a generally accepted critical edition I have used it, as with the Cabinet Edition of George Eliot's works; otherwise, I have either used first editions, as in the cases of Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley and other less well-known authors, or standard nineteenth-century editions, notably of Thackeray, Lytton and Lever. The two major exceptions have been Trollope and Dickens, where I have used the Oxford World's Classics and the Penguin English Library editions respectively; in both cases I felt that these modern editions provided texts of sufficient accuracy and such wide availability to justify the exception. In all references, both in the course of the study and in the book-list which follows it, the place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.

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INTRODUCTION

I

Ideology is a notoriously difficult word, and it can be used to cover a wide range of meanings. At one end of the scale it can mean no more than any coherent system of ideas; at the other end it expands to include virtually the whole of consciousness itself. One thing, however, is clear, that the use of the word is never neutral; it has always, since its original coining, implied an inadequacy, implied the presence of another discourse that would more adequately fill the conceptual space that the ideology in question was intended to cover.[1] This other discourse has been variously seen as the discourse of science, or as a certain common-sense empiricism, or as the formal order of art. Most tellingly in the English critical tradition, the opposition has been between ideology and the 'felt', 'lived', or 'experiential' concreteness of great literature. At all events, whenever the word is used there is the suggestion that beyond it is a vantage point from which its inadequacies can be measured.

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1. See George Lichtheim, The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays (New York, 1967), p. 3, for a somewhat different account of the same point.

In one very influential tradition, ideology is seen simply as delusion, a failure to see things as they really are. If I call this tradition positivist, I do not do so merely to berate it, but because it seems to be characteristic of positivism since Comte and Spencer to assimilate problems of knowledge to deficiencies of sight. There are three basic objections to this way of approaching the problem. In the first place, it assumes that access to the real is comparatively simple - one has merely to discard ideological delusions, remove the distorting spectacles, for reality to present itself for immediate consumption, its categories spontaneously available. On the contrary, the trend of post-positivist thought, of many different inspirations, has been to suggest that the appropriate categories for understanding the real are the product of a definite labour, both historical and theoretical, on pre-existing ideological categories. So while there clearly is a sense in which ideology can be understood as delusion, thinking of it exclusively in this way tends to suggest that access to the real is by contrast simple. The second objection is that thinking of ideology in this way tends to deflect attention away from the mode of ideology's functioning. Since ideology is some kind of delusion, it is too easily seen as delusive, as having no real existence and thus being insusceptible to analysis. How it works, how ideology convinces people of its truth, tends to be ignored in this tradition. A third difficulty, as to the function of ideology, what purposes it serves in the social formation, is one to which positivism has provided various answers.

One of the most plausible of these results from a combination of the ideology-as-delusion problematic with the Marxist analysis of the social formation in terms of class, for this positivist account of ideology has of course been as active inside Marxism as outside it, not least within

the works of Marx and Engels themselves.[2] What is new with Marxism, and what makes the combination such a powerful one, is the explanation for the deficiencies that it offers - that they are class-determined, functions of the class outlook of those who reproduce ideology or who suffer from false consciousness. Marxism can then claim for itself the status of science, providing the standpoint from which the inadequacies of ideology can be measured.

The difficulty with this schema is that its very inclusiveness tends to be its undoing, for Marxism itself falls under the axe of its own remorseless historicism. It too comes to be seen as ideology, the product of a particular class at a particular moment in history. One of the problems about which much of the discussion within twentieth century Marxism has revolved has thus precisely been some means of privileging Marxism - with or without science - over other competing systems of ideas.

Several alternative solutions to this impasse have been proposed. It could be asserted, firstly, that proletarian class-consciousness, thanks to the peculiar position of the proletariat in the relations of production, was somehow privileged to overcome the classic antinomies of bourgeois thought. This is of course Lukacs' solution in History and Class Consciousness, though it is doubtful to what extent it succeeds in the escape from the positivist problematic that it seeks.[3] This is largely because it leaves the problem of bourgeois and aristocratic

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2. They provide, for example, in The German Ideology, one of the most resonant metaphors for ideology as a deficiency of vision: 'If in all ideology men and their relations appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.' Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, translated by Richard Dixon and others (1975-), v (1976), 36.

3. George Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, translated by R. Livingstone (1971).

ideology much where it was, these ideologies being seen as number-plates carried on the backs of class-subjects, in Poulantzas' perhaps unduly derisive metaphor.[4] Another alternative is Gramsci's postulate of an 'absolute historicism', in which the class-character of Marxism is admitted and no extra-historical vantage-point is allowed to any one. Yet - and this analysis again relies on Poulantzas - there is in Gramsci the beginnings of a decisive shift away from the ideology-as-delusion problematic, in his notion of ideology as the 'cement' of a social formation. The metaphor is implicitly relational, for it suggests that ideology as a category is the site of class-struggle, and that particular ideologies are the result of such struggle. Any such ideology, in these terms, should be seen not as the simple expression of a class-subject, but as the result of struggle between the various classes in the social formation. But if all history is the history of class-struggles, one cannot talk of a time when ideology was not already the result of such struggle.

The other decisive advance of Gramsci is that he was the first person within the Marxist tradition to extend the notion of ideology beyond its application only to a coherent system of ideas - to cover, in short, those practices, conscious and unconscious, which have in other traditions been categorised as 'culture' or even as 'manners'. This extension is crucial, and has been taken up and theorised in one of the most suggestive attempts to break from positivist theories of ideology within Marxism, Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses'.[5] Althusser's main contribution is to have situated the study of ideology in the

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4. Nicos Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, translated by T. O'Hagan (1973).

5. In Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, translated by B. Brewster (1971).

problematic of the reproduction of the conditions of production, above all the reproduction of labour power with its various competences for the various posts in the division of labour. Ideology in this analysis depends upon the category of the subject which it calls into existence ('hails' or 'interpellates'[6]) through the various material practices and rituals of the state apparatuses, all of which function in ideology to a greater or lesser degree.

I wish to retain three principal notions from this brief discussion. First, that ideology is a relational term, it being the result of class-struggle in the ideological instance; second, that ideology is always adhominatory, or interpellant; and third, that since every social practice, to a greater or lesser extent, functions in ideology, none is possible without it - one must attach to the word ideology, in fact, a much wider range than that covered by any notion of it being merely a 'coherent system of ideas'.

A major difficulty remains, however; from what vantage-point, in the Althusserian scheme, is one to measure the inadequacy of ideology? Are we not in fact projected back into the positivist problematic, now given a relativist twist by the massive extension of the category's range? The difficulties with Althusser's own solution, in which a Spinozist

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6. This is the notion that E. P. Thompson, in 'The Poverty of Theory', singles out for particular scorn in a polemic anyway remarkable for its sustained level of scornfulness. The objection, in this instance does not seem to me to get beyond the level of name-calling (the notion is 'an absurd idealist invention'). Since the notion of interpellation will play a crucial role in the following study, I ought at once to state that I believe it is possible to use it without immediately being committed to full-blooded Althusserianism - one is not, for example, committed to believing that the subject exists exclusively in the categories of ideology. I hope that the usefulness of the concept, its scope and detail of application, will emerge in the course of the study; and I am not afraid to admit, especially in the light of E. P. Thompson's polemic, that this hope amounts to an admission that its usefulness will ultimately be historically verifiable. See E. P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (1978), pp. 365-367.

definition of science is counterpoised to ideology, are by now notorious,[7] not least for literary criticism.[8] Whether or not one finds this definition of science adequate, it is still possible to recognize that there is no absolute dividing-line between science and ideology, and it is certainly the case that one ideological position can reveal the inadequacies of another opposed position without itself providing a standard of truth. This is the model that seems to me to be most useful for literary criticism: that of conflicting ideological positions, placed in mutually contradictory relations, revealing each other's inadequacies, without being presumed to produce a synthesis in which 'truth' resides.

The problems associated with the word 'myth' are if anything yet more complicated than those associated with ideology, since the word has acquired such a range of meanings that it is doubtful whether it can be put to any useful analytical work at all. There is the pejorative sense, derived from the evolutionary positivist tradition in anthropology, which sees myth as a unit of false consciousness, which, though widely believed, is simply untrue. It ranges through a more neutral descriptive sense in contemporary anthropology, to a firmly positive sense in which myth comes to mean a life-enhancing archetype which expresses some essential truth about the 'human condition'.[9] At all events, what seems to disqualify the word from all but the most casual uses within

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7. See, in addition to The Poverty of Theory, L. Kolakowski, 'Althusser's Marx', Socialist Register (1971), pp. 111-128, and Paul Patton, 'Althusser's Epistemology; the limits of the Theory of Theoretical Practice', Radical Philosophy, 19 (Spring 1978), 8-18.

8. Some of the problems are tackled in Tony Bennett, Formalism and Marxism (1979), pp. 111-142.

9. Raymond Williams, in Keywords (1976), gives a brief but incisive history of these various uses.

Marxism is the uneasy relationship that it bears to ideology as a concept.[10] And yet there clearly is a need, outside the anthropology of primitive societies and antiquity, for a word for those recurring forms in which ideology manifests itself, and which to some extent have a history independent of the ideological systems in which they occur.

There has been, moreover, an attempt to make 'myth' useful in a sustained way for the analysis of bourgeois society, in Barthes' Mythologies, - an attempt in which there are some interesting parallels to Althusser's analysis of ideology.[11] Barthes convincingly argues that myth seizes upon the elements of other signifying systems, at once naturalizing, dehistoricizing, and depoliticizing them. His account of mythology is an intrinsically materialist one, inasmuch as it insists on the material reality of the mythological signifier which provides the basis for the ideological appropriation. Moreover, Barthes describes the adhominatory and interpellant character of this mythological speech, anticipating by a dozen years or so Althusser's more rigorous and systematic account of this effect.[12] A useful conjunction of ideology and mythology can thus be effected by a collocation of early Barthes with third-phase Althusser.[13] I would only wish to supplement Barthes' analysis of the mechanisms of mythology by emphasizing the importance of

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10. Indeed, Ben Halpern has argued, in '"Myth" and "Ideology" in Modern Usage', History and Theory, 1 (1960-1961), 129-149, that the study of myth and the study of ideology have run along mutually exclusive lines.

11. Roland Barthes, Mythologies, translated by Annette Lavers (1973).

12. Mythologies, p. 125.

13. I do not wish to underestimate the difficulties of such a collocation, the most notable being the difficulty of integrating a discourse whose success depends upon the security and ironic possibilities of a demythologizing subject, with a discourse whose success depends upon a critique of the category of 'subject'. But I do not believe the point crucially affects the argument here.

narrative for myth. Narrative is the essential condition of the rhetorical efficacy of myth, due to the experiential obviousness of its categories, its facility for transposition, elaboration and condensation, and the identification that it demands from reader or listener. This then is the definition of myth which is to be understood in all subsequent uses of the word in this study: myth is a unit of ideology which relies upon narrative to effect its rhetorical purpose, and which seizes the historically specific to render it natural and eternal.

II

Even though it may be possible to avoid the dangers of regarding ideology as the simple expression of a class-subject, it might seem that the study of the ideology of a single decade, or even the relations between ideology and the novel in a single decade, must become entangled in historicist notions. Does not such a study, especially if conceived as the study of a synchrony, inevitably involve one in the notion of a zeitgeist, an 'essential section' in which all the parts of the system are seen as the expression of its (spiritual) essence?[14]

The object of study here, however, is not a zeitgeist because even though I will isolate for study the articulation of various elements of the ideological system, this system is not conceived as the expression of the rule of a single class, but as the system of relations, at the ideological level, that exist between the various classes, arranged in a complex system of dominance. To describe this as a synchrony is of course no more than an analytical procedure, designed to isolate a

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14. For the objections to such an 'essential section', see Althusser and Balibar, Reading Capital, translated by Ben Brewster (1970), pp. 91-118.

particular object of study: it implies no denial that the system is in movement. The difficulty of thinking this movement registers the danger of hypostasizing this analytic object, in such a way that it is seen as a closed and self-sufficient system, with no past and no future. I hope to avoid this danger by emphasizing the historicity of the elements of the system that I shall study.

Raymond Williams has suggested 'residual', 'dominant' and 'emergent' as useful descriptive terms for the particular ideological positions of any period.[15] The triad of terms has the merit of situating the analysis upon the diachronic axis, while permitting one to think the synchronic or oppositional character of a system of dominance. Where there is a danger in using the triad it is in situating ideological positions exclusively along the diachronic axis, while of course they coexist within the ideological system; oppositional ideological elements can even coexist within the same text and produce various contradictions, compromises and inversions. The myths that I will study in the first section are all to a greater or lesser extent compromise formations of this sort.

The synchrony of the ideological system, then, can be conceived as a bricolage of elements from different systems, arranged in a complex relationship of dominance. These elements, as we shall see, are variously marked with their class origins, so that there is clearly a relationship between the disposition of the relationships in the ideological system, and the disposition of classes in the social formation. However, this relationship is clearly not one of simple reflection, since what to analytic hindsight appears as residual elements of previous hegemonic systems can well have a 'disproportionate'

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15. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (1977), pp. 121-127.

efficacy at the time. Similarly, emergent oppositional ideological positions can be ignored at the time of their emergence yet be of the utmost interest to the historian.

The dominant element in the ideological system of the 1850s was political economy; yet political economy was clearly incapable on its own of providing a hegemonic ideology for the bourgeoisie, and by the 1850s, the attempt to make Utilitarianism such an ideology had failed. There was thus a constant resort to other ideological positions (many of them surviving from the preceding aristocratic hegemony disrupted by the bourgeoisie) to supply the deficiencies of political economy as ideology. Some of these residual positions were in fact oppositional to political economy, while some existed in uneasy conjunction with it, and could even link up with emergent oppositional elements. An example of this complex dialectic can be seen in the fate of one version of the organic theory of society. The notion of society as an organism, apparently quite at variance with the atomistic views of society implicit in political economy, can be transformed by the apparent scientificity of the analogy (e.g. in Comte or Spencer) into a conservative defence of corporate capitalism, and equally can link up with genuinely oppositional positions to provide a model for some versions of socialism. In the course of these transformations, the relationship of the analogy to political economy remains problematic; in Spencer, for example, the mechanisms of classical political economy (principally competition) become transformed into a teleological evolutionism.

If this process can be seen most clearly in intellectual history, it is nevertheless equally at work in the less intellectually coherent areas of ideology that I describe as myth. The four myths that I discuss in the first four chapters of this study - the myths of self-help, fraud, charity and race - can all be seen as attempts to supply the ideological

inadequacies of political economy, and can equally be seen as compromise formations with other ideological positions. Each of course differs in the extent to which it expresses the fundamental concepts of political economy, and to what extent it compromises with other positions; and, as we shall see, each myth is inevitably narrated with different meanings in different contexts.[16] Thus in the case of the myth of the self-made man, perhaps the most familiar and certainly the 'purest' (i.e. most compatible with political economy) of the myths that I discuss, the myth can be seen as an attempt to correct the imbalance, within political economy, between the free movement of labour and the division of labour; from this perspective it is clearly immediately compatible with dominant bourgeois ideology, although already couched in the form that it is as an apologetic myth vis-a-vis a working-class ideology of the injustice of the existing division of labour. On the other hand, the myth is oppositional to a residual aristocratic ideology of hierarchy; though once again the myth is a compromise formation to the extent that it attempts to rework the categories of this ideology of hierarchy with such formulations as 'natural gentleman'. The continuing efficacy of the residual aristocratic ideology can be measured by the awkwardness of such formulations, despite the continued redrawing of the gentry line throughout the nineteenth century.

The myths that I shall discuss are partly attempts to supply the inadequacy of political economy as an explanatory and reconciliatory system in the face of the crying evils of triumphant capitalism - mass poverty and periodical slumps. This however is not its only inadequacy as a hegemonic ideology. Such an ideology informs its innocent readers of their personal and subjective responsibility for maintaining and

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16. Compare Jean-Pierre Faye's insistence, in Théorie du Récit (Paris, 1972), that every narration is necessarily a prise de position.

ensuring the survival of the existing state of affairs - it interpellates then, in short, calls them into being as subjects of that ideology.[2] Classical political economy fails to interpellate its readers in this way, however, since it is typically concerned with the analysis of economic movement and the consequent enunciation of laws. What the myths of self-help, discriminate charity, and fraud do, however, is to transform the 'truths' of political economy into moral categories, and thus to make them adhominatory in a way that classical political economy cannot be. What all these myths inform their believers is that it is up to you - you are responsible for changing your own situation, or for your failure not to do so, you are responsible for improving the situation of others. These myths thus provide a moralized version of political economy, a version which is only potentially present in its classical form.

Closely related to the moralistic character of these myths is their apologetic character. Here the especial importance of these myths in the 1850s is significant, for there is undoubtedly a transformation in the character of bourgeois rule around the mid-century. The 1850s, long venerated in historiography as the first decade of 'mid-Victorian prosperity', can better be seen as the first decade in which bourgeois hegemony remained unchallenged on the political front. After more than two decades of intense class struggle, the end of the 1840s at last saw victory for the bourgeoisie on two fronts - against the land-based classes on the one hand with the repeal of the Corn Laws, and on the other hand, with the final defeat of Chartism in 1848, against the newly emerged industrial working-class. Henceforth, for a decade and a half, the class-struggle was to be fought out not so much on the political as on the economic front, while the bourgeoisie's principal antagonist was to be the working-class, the aristocracy having been incorporated, not without continual friction, into the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Hence

the nature of the dominant ideology changed, losing many of its offensive anti-aristocratic features in order to ease the process of incorporation - though there clearly remained a great number of 'anachronisms', principally the limited suffrage and the predominantly aristocratic recruitment to the state apparatus, which had to be done away with before it could be claimed that the entirely rational bourgeois state had been achieved. But the main assumed antagonist, from the mid-century onwards, was to be the urban working-class. This accounts for the increasingly apologetic character of the dominant ideology, the change measured by the transformation of philosophic radicalism into a kind of conservatism.

A study of the ideological system of the 1850s as a synchrony, then, is possible provided that one gives due emphasis to the oppositional character of that system, and that one does not hypostasize the object of study by ignoring the diachronic axis.

CHAPTER ONE : THE MYTH OF THE SELF-MADE MAN

I

The ideal of self-help, Ivanka Kovacevic has written, is 'the moral concomitant of the economic principle of laissez-faire'.[1] The man most famous for popularizing that ideal, of course, is Samuel Smiles, whose Self-Help was published in 1859, though the principle of self-help had wide currency before that date.[2] What effectively found the success of Self-Help, and for that matter the other success manuals of the 1850s such as Men Who Have Risen, and Success in Life; A Book for Young Men, are the potted biographies in which the books abound.[3] Though these biographies cover a wide range of people, from many countries, ages, and conditions of life, they all essentially tell the same story - that

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1. Ivanka Kovacevic, Fact into Fiction (Leicester, 1975), p. 35.

2. Samuel Smiles, Self-Help (1859). There are in fact substantial changes between this edition and the edition of 1866, upon which subsequent editions are based. The principal difference was the inclusion of accounts of many self-helping foreigners, with a consequent toning down of the exclusively national tone of the 1859 edition. For ease of reference, all page numbers refer to the most widely available edition, that of 1905; any significant changes from the 1859 edition have been noted.

3. Anonymous, Men Who Have Risen (no date, but published in the 1850s from internal evidence); Anonymous, Success in Life; A Book for Young Men (1852).

given adherence to the self-helping virtues of hard work, thrift, and perseverance, success in life is assured. This is the sense in which the self-made man is a myth - not that there never have been 'men who have risen', but the actual social histories of such men, the real social and economic conditions which permitted this rise, have been blanked out, and an overtly ideological narrative has been substituted.

Narratives of men who have risen in the social scale are not of course new to the Victorian age; the story of the industrious apprentice, for example, is at least as old as Dick Whittington. But there are different ways of telling such stories, and the characteristic insistence, in the story of the industrious apprentice, upon hard work being rewarded by a grateful master, is not what characterizes the narratives of self-help. What is new in the Victorian period, apart from the greatly increased circulation of such narratives, is the insistence upon self-propulsion as the motive force for rising in society. This is what is so striking a feature of the self-help manuals, compared to the tales of a previous age - rewards are no longer to be conferred from above, but won by force of individual character.

The biographies of actual historical people are stripped of their specific historicity in order to carry a particular ideological message, authenticated in part by the very fact that they are the biographies of real people, presented with a mass of anecdotal detail and an abundance of invented dialogue. As historical method, it exactly resembles the moralized history of, say, A Child's History of England.[4] The ideological message can then be seen to arise naturally and spontaneously from the unchallengeable facts of the historical narrative. But for the method to succeed, techniques which are also typically the techniques of the

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4. Charles Dickens, A Child's History of England (1853).

novel have to be used: the invention of dialogue, the ascription of typicality, and the formal presentation of character for moralistic adhomination. The self-help manuals and the realist novel, in fact, share the same mode of discourse, the chief characteristic of which is the unchallenged reliance on narrative.

It is not therefore surprising to find narratives of self-help in a variety of novels in the 1850s, such as Geraldine Jewsbury's Marian Withers; Lytton's My Novel; Bleak House and Hard Times; Mrs Craik's John Halifax, Gentleman; Trollope's Doctor Thorne; and Lever's Davenport Dunn.[5] Before looking at how the myth appears in these novels in any detail, however, I want to establish a typical narrative of a self-made man, taking as a model Smiles' biography of George Stephenson.[6] I do not wish to imply, by taking things in this order, that the myth pre-exists the novels, or that this example has any greater authority or authenticity than the various novelistic narrations. On the contrary, novels propel and authenticate the myth just as much as the officially factual accounts; the advantage of taking Smiles' account is that the myth is told in a strikingly pure form.

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5. Geraldine Jewsbury, Marian Withers (1851); E.B. Lytton, My Novel, by Pisistrates Caxton; or, Varieties in English Life (1852; references to the New Edition of 1854); Charles Dickens, Bleak House (1852; references give chapter number and the page number of the Penguin English Library Edition), and Hard Times (1854; references give book and chapter numbers and the page number of the Penguin English Library Edition); Anthony Trollope, Doctor Thorne (1858); D.M. Mulock /Mrs Craik/, John Halifax, Gentleman, (1856); and Charles Lever, Davenport Dunn (1859).

6. Samuel Smiles, The Life of George Stephenson, Railway Engineer (1856; references to the 1858 edition).

II

Smiles' biography of George Stephenson tells the familiar story of Stephenson's passage from assistant pit fireman at Killingworth pit, to being the greatest railway engineer and contractor of his day. He progresses from fireman to engineer of various pit engines; from there, through a multitude of empirical improvements to his engines, to being engineer of the 'Rocket'; and from the building of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway to the railway boom. All this is told with gusto, and with evident delight and excitement in the mechanics of steam. The story yields some familiar and overt morals: doing a job well, for example:

> Whatever he was set to do, that he endeavoured to do well and thoroughly; never neglecting small matters, but aiming at being a complete workman at all points; thus gradually perfecting his own mechanical capacity, and securing at the same time the respect of his fellow workmen and the increased confidence and esteem of his employers. (p. 15)

Temperance: 'While other men of his class were idling in public-houses, he set himself down to study the principles of mechanics, and to master the laws by which his engine worked' (p. 31). But above all, the biography attempts to inculcate the virtue of perseverance, frequently quoting Stephenson's own advice to young men: 'Do as I have done - persevere!'.

Smiles is as overt about the rhetorical intentions of his biography - Stephenson is obviously presented as exemplary - as he was in Self-Help, published three years later on the strength of the success of the biography, though conceived as early as the mid-forties. He wrote in the fifth edition to the Life that 'the perusal of this book may not be without some salutary influence', and the point was well taken by his reviewers. As one of them wrote in the Westminster Review, 'the work cannot fail to be both popular and useful. Read extensively, as

we doubt not it will be, by young working men, the great lesson which it will inculcate among them will be ... the power of Perseverance'.[7] The book rapidly became popular, as indeed did Smiles's other books, as a prize in Mechanics' Institutes and other similar institutions for the lower-middle-class and aspirant working-class.[8]

If much of this moralizing is overt, it is only possible because the book is written within a set of unrecognized ideological assumptions. First, it is assumed that the centre, the source, of economic activity is the individual. It is his diligence, his energy and drive, which propel economic growth. The existence of large-scale economic forces is meanwhile ignored, giving the myth its ahistorical character. Thus the success of George Stephenson is seen in the same terms as the success of Lord Eldon, the mid-eighteenth century Lord Chancellor, whose rise is described in both Self-Help and Men Who Have Risen, though both occurred in quite different social and economic circumstances. But as the anonymous author of Men Who Have Risen writes,

> The character of Lord Eldon is one of singular value as an example; it is strongly marked, and admirably displays the power of talent to weave its own fortune, adroitly availing itself of circumstances rather than being dependent on them (p. 222).

In addition to ignoring the large-scale economic forces which make the self-made man possible, the myth blocks out the particularities of the social conditions of his beginnings. Remarkably little attention is paid by Smiles to the conditions of Stephenson's childhood or even of his young adulthood - yet presumably he did not spring, full-grown and ready-armed from the mouth of Killingworth pit. Indeed, whenever mention is made of local constraints on his formation, they appear in

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7. Westminster Review, 12 (1857), 214-234 (p. 234).

8. See Richard Altick, The English Common Reader (Chicago, 1963) pp. 188-194, for this assessment of the Mechanics' Institutes.

a fiercely unsympathetic light, like the drinking of his work-mates quoted earlier. There is no sense of how someone like George Stephenson could have emerged from the small mining communities of Northumberland, other than by resort to such magical conceptions as 'mechanical genius'; yet even this notion remains subsidiary to the overwhelming stress on the moral qualities of diligence and perseverance, so that in the ahistorical and acultural situation that Smiles describes, those members of the class from which the self-made man springs have only themselves to blame for not doing likewise.

So the myth of the self-made man, in the form of particular biographies ideologized in the name of self-help, functions both as an exhortation to the working-class and as an explanation of its poverty. As long as it is granted that the working-class, not as a class but as individuals, can succeed by their own efforts as many have done, then their continuing failure to do so is their own fault. This emphasis on the individual's responsibility to improve his own condition, and blameworthiness if he fails to do so, results from the moralized biographies of the success manuals rather than from any consciously argued propositions that they contain.

A further implicit ideological assumption relates to the social character of knowledge, denied at all points by the myth. Smiles writes that 'what the self-educated man learns, becomes more thoroughly his own, makes a more vivid impression upon his mind, and fixes itself more enduringly there' (Life, p. 17). This is not only a statement about the acquisition of knowledge. It also assumes that knowledge is a kind of individual property, an assumption which is later made explicit: 'Whatever Stephenson learnt, having been acquired by his own laborious efforts, was regarded by him in the light of an actual property' (Life, p. 149). The point is reiterated in Self-Help:

'Knowledge conquered by labour, becomes a possession - a property entirely our own' (p. 369). Knowledge becomes in a very real sense an individual capital, painstakingly accumulated and only to be expended with the expectation of a return. The utilitarianism of this assumption contradicts Smiles's concurrent eulogy of self-culture for its own sake; but it also militates against demands for a national system of education inasmuch as it contends that knowledge pursued under difficulties is intrinsically more valuable than knowledge more easily provided.

This notion of knowledge as property is closely paralleled in a passage of Herbert Spencer's Social Statics, in which an extreme commitment to laissez-faire entails opposition to any scheme of national education, since it would diseducate people by providing them with an artificial barrier between them and the real laws governing society.[9] The argument is comparable to Smiles' praise of the knowledge acquired by the self-educated man, valuable precisely because of the difficulties of acquiring it. In one passage, Spencer repeats the conventional account of technological improvements, where, in a chapter entitled 'The Right of Property in Ideas', he argues for an improved system of patents:

> To think that a sinecurist should be held to have a 'vested interest' in his office, and a just title to compensation if it is abolished, and yet that an invention over which no end of mental toil has been spent, and in which the poor mechanic has laid out perhaps his last sixpence - an invention which he has completed entirely by his own labours and with his own materials - has wrought, as it were, out of the very substance of his own mind - should not be acknowledged as his property! .... What a thick-skinned perception of justice does this show! (pp. 137-138)

The passage tallies at several points with the myth of the self-made man; first, it hints at the character-type of the 'poor mechanic' as inventor;

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9. Herbert Spencer, Social Statics; or, The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, and the First of them Developed (1851).

secondly, it repeats the magical and asocial conception of knowledge; and thirdly, it shares with Smiles, as we shall see, a polemical anti-bureaucratic edge, part of a larger anti-aristocratic radicalism ('the sinecurist').

The argument that self-help was not merely a heartless adjunct to laissez-faire therefore seems to me to be misplaced.[10] Of course Smiles' original intervention in Leeds politics in the 1840s was a Radical one; his original course of lectures on self-help did indeed propose large-scale improvements in the conditions of the working-class; and of course he was not opposed to municipal action on educational and sanitary matters. Even the fact that at this time Smiles was prepared to lend his aid to political causes like Complete Suffrage (though later he became quite disillusioned with political action), in no way invalidates the point that the premises of Self-Help were the same as those of an ahistorical and individualist political economy.

The Life of George Stephenson is the myth of the self-made man narrated at substantial length - a longer version of the potted biographies of Self-Help. Though it is true that Smiles retails the same moral as the success manuals - indeed, he provides their characteristic example - it is also true that he does so with far more tact, and with a far greater awareness of the moral's insufficiencies, than his usually anonymous predecessors and imitators. One such insufficiency we have noticed - that the myth entails a debased and asocial estimate of knowledge and education. Smiles is partially aware of this, and in opposition to this utilitarian view he is prepared to advance an ideal of self-culture for its own sake. But the concession carries little

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10. See, for this argument, A. Tyrrell, 'Class-consciousness in Early Victorian Britain : Samuel Smiles, Leeds Politics, and the Self-Help Creed', Journal of British Studies, 9 (May, 1970), 102-125.

weight in the face of the overwhelming urgency of all his tales that it is possible to succeed in strictly material terms, and that the practice of the self-helping virtues throughout life leads to very definite material rewards and comforts.

These implications of the myth, then, are pointed towards the working-class, and their objections to the injustice of the existing distribution of rewards in society. At the same time, the myth has a strongly anti-aristocratic thrust. To begin with, in the Life, there is a marked element of simple anti-aristocratic Radicalism: Smiles suggests, for example, that the obstructions of 'official England', especially Parliament, to the railways, and in particular their opposition to the London and Birmingham Railway, were simply venal, a desire by the land-owners to force up the price of land over which the railway was to pass. More fundamental than this, however, is that the self-made man presents a radical challenge to ideas of worth based upon descent, such ideas being the 'cement' of a rigidly hierarchical society. The self-made man, by contrast, insists that his worth be measured by his achievements, what he has won for himself by himself. Yet this claim, in the 1850s at least, is invariably marked by the vocabulary of the very hierarchical ideology which it challenges. Smiles claims, for example, that Stephenson's 'face, his person and his deportment at once arrested attention, and marked the Gentleman' (Life, p. 495).[11] Face, deportment and manner are insufficient titles to gentility in themselves, but they mark an inward quality of gentility, something inherent in Stephenson himself, who is, indeed, a natural gentleman. A 'gentlemanly manner',

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11. It is by no means certain that Stephenson would have relished this description of himself. One of the reasons that he sent his son Robert to Edinburgh University for six months only was that he did not wish to see him made into a gentleman. J. C. Jeaffreson, Life of Robert Stephenson, F.R.S., 2 vols. (1864), I, 55.

and the 'morals of a gentleman' had long been necessary adjuncts to the bare claim of social superiority, but they marked an opening through which many previously excluded classes could squeeze themselves into the empyrean of the gentry.

The myth of the self-made man, therefore, has both oppositional and supportive implications for important ideological positions in mid-Victorian Britain. The most radical and problematic area was the challenge it presented to ultimately aristocratic notions of gentility, and this area is explored at length in the novels. But a type of the self-made man can clearly be established - he is thrifty, persevering and sober, he defers gratification and painstakingly acquires knowledge - his history, in short, self-propelled and self-explanatory, is exemplified by George Stephenson. How is this myth narrated in the novels of the 1850s?

III

The opening chapters of Geraldine Jewsbury's Marian Withers (1851) provide a short history of the life of John Withers, the heroine's father, which is a neat and exemplary narration of the myth. John Withers and his nominal sister, Alice, are found, as children, begging in the street by a charitable lady. She takes them in, soon discovering their plaintive tale to be untrue; nevertheless, she helps John to become a workhouse apprentice and his 'sister' to be trained for domestic service. John learns to read in the workhouse, being particularly impressed by reading 'Whittington and his Cat'; he is also, exceptionally, taught to write as a reward for an act of unusual loyalty to his master. He has an inventive genius, is inspired with the thought of a better design for a cotton-spinning machine, and chooses penury in order to be able to perfect it. At one time his destitution is so severe that he

is nearly forced once again to beg, much to his repugnance - but he restrains himself, and immediately an opportunity presents itself for him to earn an honest penny. Eventually, after many setbacks, his invention is adopted by a manufacturer, he gets a respectable place as an overseer, and soon sets up in business on his own account. He prospers, marries an ineffective but genteel girl who imparts an air of refinement to his manner, is reunited with Alice, and though bereaved of his wife is left with a daughter.

He also becomes a model employer, with an almost paternal care for his workmen. In this he differs from other local employers, self-made men like himself but without his tender heart. He is extremely concerned, for example, that the working-classes should be educated, as a result of the importance of his own education and of his difficulties in acquiring it. Also crucial in the narrative of his rise is the moment when he refuses to beg - to accept charity, even when one is so hungry that a knotted rope round the stomach is necessary to deaden the pangs, would compromise one's status as self-made. John Withers, in short, is quite self-propelled, exemplified by his origin as a workhouse child with no antecedents and no history.

These opening chapters of Marian Withers, then, described by the authoress as 'a prologue to the play', present the myth of the self-made man in a clear and positive light. It is also presented as the typical history of the industrial entrepreneurs of the area near Manchester where the novel is set. A Mr Sykes, for example, repeats John Withers' tale of work-house to cotton-mill, though the accent in his case is on thrift rather than mechanical genius as the means of success: '"so I scraped and saved, and I worked early and I worked late; I lived - and lived as well as I could - on three shillings a week, and saved the rest. It's wonderful what may be got together by saving!"' (II, 20-21). He

tells this story in the course of a discussion with other entrepreneurs about the evils of joint-stock enterprise, which is condemned by all the self-made men as a species of gambling and as conducive to fraud - a significant point, to which we shall return in discussing the fraud in chapter two. Mr Cunningham, who represents culture and a wide education, comments on the conversation in the following terms:

> 'Undoubtedly ... a spirit of self-help does lie at the bottom of all success. Self-reliance is the backbone of all heroism of character. The spirit to work thoroughly at whatever has to be done, to grapple hand to hand with difficulties, and strangle them, instead of seeking to evade them, is the primeval stuff out of which men and demigods are made' (II, 22-23)

And later, in a private discussion with Marian about the men, he adds:

> 'These men have only recently emerged from the depths of privation and poverty - they have obtained wealth for themselves, and the power of increasing it to an unlimited degree - they are full of savage and vigorous life, like that with which the barbarians regenerated the old world, when Roman civilisation had run to seed. These men have the old barbaric strength of undisciplined life; they need educating, they need civilising; but they will change the face of the world' (II, 28-29)

These statements of Mr Cunningham are presented without irony and have the stamp of authorial authority. He makes them while arguing for cooperation between Capital and Labour, which he thinks the joint-stock principle, though imperfectly worked out, represents. One of the ways that this cooperation is to be brought about is through the mediation of 'cultivation', that is, of an educated and refined type of employer such as he himself later becomes. This education and refinement, however, are the property of another class - of the class that moves between the county and the London season, of the traditional landowning ruling class. Marian's own history, which makes up the bulk of the novel, is the story of her pursuit of that cultivation, her education finally being undertaken by Mr Cunningham and completed by his marrying her. The marriage symbolizes a reconciliation between the new employers

and the old gentry, which will enable a further reconciliation between Capital and Labour.

Marian Withers, then, revolves around the contradiction between bourgeois and genteel notions of worth, the former based on work and the latter on family and cultivation. There is no attempt to ascribe gentility to the self-made manufacturers of the novel - indeed one of its strengths is the particularity of the description of these men, not only in terms of dialect but also in terms of their households and the manufacturing processes that they employ. Cultivation and refinement will come to subsequent generations of manufacturers, it is assumed, without compromise to their ability to work. The novel thus remains committed to the positive evaluation of work that the myth of the self-made man entails but is also deferential to an alternative notion of worth based on gentility. Its whole impetus is therefore accommodatory; its project is to ease the acceptance of a new social class and to define a 'truer' and more moral conception of cultivation and gentle manners.

John Halifax, Gentleman (1856), the novel which established D. M. Mulock as a best-selling authoress, has a similar project, but the differences, contradictions and distinctions which mark Marian Withers are obscured in the later book. While both novels are addressed to the accommodation of a new class within an established genteel society, Geraldine Jewsbury does at least show specific class differences as difficulties to be overcome; her work is in part a social history. Both novels share the same class perspective, but John Halifax, Gentleman assumes as solved what is still problematic in Marian Withers. Geraldine Jewsbury, for example, makes no attempt to ascribe gentility to John Withers, and is at some pains to define and differentiate this notion in the course of the novel. The equivalent figure in the later novel is John Halifax himself, and as the title suggests, his status as a

gentleman is the premise on which the novel is founded. The reader's sympathy and identification with him is thus assumed, while the few difficulties that he encounters in being accepted by genteel society are only preserved to expose the immorality of certain sections of the aristocratic class. This hint of middle-class anti-aristocratic puritanism is little more than vestigial however; by and large the novel is bland enough to offend nobody.

In the first scene of the book, the narrator's father is interrogating John Halifax with a view to employing him:

> 'What have you worked at lately?'
>
> 'Anything I could get, for I have never learned a trade.'
>
> 'Would you like to learn one?'
>
> He hesitated a minute, as if weighing his speech. 'Once, I thought I should like to be what my father was.'
>
> 'What was he?'
>
> 'A scholar and a gentleman.'
>
> This was news, though it did not much surprise me. My father, tanner as he was, and pertinaciously jealous of the dignity of trade, yet held strongly the common-sense doctrine of the advantages of good descent; at least in degree. For since it is a law of nature, admitting only rare exceptions, that the qualities of the ancestors should be transmitted to the race, - the fact seems patent enough, that even allowing equal advantages, a gentleman's son has more chance of growing up a gentleman than the son of a working man (I, 10-11).

It is hardly surprising that this 'common-sense doctrine' should be hedged around with qualifications, for it in fact contradicts other important 'doctrines' in the book - notably that John Halifax is responsible for his own rise in the world. But though the novel blunts offensive implications of the myth for genteel conceptions of worth, it still cuts the other way, against the working-class: '... there was a rosy, healthy freshness in his tanned skin, which showed he loved and delighted in what poor folk generally abominate - water' (I, 18).

Potential contradictions of this sort are continually glossed over. The climactic moment in the first chapter - it provides the frontispiece in many editions - occurs when a little girl sees John Halifax from a nearby house, and touched by his hungry look, offers him a piece of bread from out of the door. She later becomes his wife. Yet a few pages later, he can be the centre of a contrasting little scene:

> 'Madam', said he, with a bow of perfect good-humour, and even some sly drollery, 'you mistake; I never begged in my life: I'm a person of independent property, which consists of my head and my two hands, out of which I hope to realize a large capital some day' (I, 18).

He has a point - he hasn't really begged in the first scene, only been the 'thoughtful' recipient of charity, though the scene has the interpellant power of a tableau of benevolence. The point is that the same boy is the centre of both these striking fictional images - the compassionate girl giving bread to the starving boy, and the ringing declaration made with consummate social poise and tact. D.M. Mulock characteristically manipulates her material to achieve such images, obscuring their contradictoriness by their familiarly evocative glare.

The ringing declaration of independence is the characteristic note of the self-made man; and the myth is faithfully narrated in the novel. The hero has a thirst for learning, but though he loves the poets, especially Shakespeare, the books that he acquires are of a more practical bent. He has a mechanical genius, and his room is adorned with a model of a cotton-weaving loom. He rises in his employer's trust by hard work and honesty; the climactic moment in his rise is when he saves the tannery from bread-rioters. For this he is duly rewarded by being made a partner in the firm; from there it is only a short step to becoming an entrepreneur in his own right, displaying his mechanical genius by the innovatory introduction of steam-power.

His success, however, poses substantial doctrinal problems; for, as I have noticed, there is a contradiction between advocating the practice of the self-helping virtues for their own sake, and the promise that they will bring rewards in this life anyway. It is an ambivalence noted by Robin Gilmour, who correctly writes of John Halifax that 'these achievements figure in the novel as themselves the reward of a lifetime's self-help: success is measured in terms of a breakthrough into a rigid social hierarchy.'[12] If this is the substantial drift of the novel, we are to measure it by the fact that John Halifax's domestic life is itself nominally deferential to a higher standard of value, religion. The death of a beloved daughter, for example, provokes pious assent from John Halifax; despite his wealth, he too is subject to the common perils of humanity, and his behaviour is still exemplary. His wealth, in short, is apparently not especially important. Once again D.M. Mulock manipulates her material with powerfully interpellant images to gloss over its contradictions.

The ultimate centre of interest in the novel, in fact, is John Halifax's domestic life. It is the organizing centre of values against which and around which the characters of the novel are grouped and judged. The myth of the self-made man is finally subordinate to a myth of domesticity for which it provides the material basis; but since we are to believe that this domesticity is ruled by moral rather than material values, the material rewards of self-help are nominally discounted. This then is the ultimate contradiction in John Halifax, Gentleman; the material rewards of self-help are at once preserved and deemed unnecessary.

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12. Robin Gilmour, 'Dickens and the Self-Help Idea', in The Victorians and Social Protest, edited by J. Butt and I.F. Clarke (1973), p.80.

IV

D. M. Mulock, then, narrates the ideology of self-help in such a way as to gloss over many of the difficulties that Geraldine Jewsbury's narration had exposed. A narration of the myth in a residually conservative context occurs in Trollope's Doctor Thorne (1858), a narration which leaves the notion of gentility entirely unchallenged.

Sir Roger Scatcherd is an oddity in the Barsetshire novels; an awkward, self-made man, who drinks himself to death and who assorts oddly with ecclesiastical dignitaries and landed gentry. Trollope's commitment to the squirearchy, in fact, provides the measure of his conservative characterization of Scatcherd. Scatcherd has made his money by contracting; he started as a mason, became a small contractor, took work in a larger way for the railways, and at length became one of the largest railway contractors in the country. His baronetcy was the reward for the prompt and efficient execution of a difficult government contract. All this, however, has occurred before the novel begins; it is only alluded to in order to found and authenticate the characterization of Scatcherd. What provides the real interest is the contrast between Scatcherd the drunken stonemason and Scatcherd the drunken proprietor of Boxall Hill.

The central point that Trollope makes about this rise is the dreadful damage that it does to the Scatcherd family. The only friend that Scatcherd has is Dr Thorne; he has no resources of cultivation to combat his loneliness and his isolation drives him to the bottle. His son also drinks himself to death as a young man; although expensively educated - indeed, because of his expensive education - he becomes quite dissipated. Lady Scatcherd too suffers from her rise in class, for though she is a baronet's wife she is obviously not really a lady, and her duties as lady of Boxall Hill only embarrass and confuse

her. She is nevertheless possessed of the most sterling qualities, is a loving wife and mother, and can be pronounced a fit companion for his niece by Dr Thorne. Clearly she would have been much happier if she had stayed in her own class.

This indeed is the general moral to be deduced from all the characterizations - that it is best to remain in the station to which we have been appointed. Yet Scatcherd's money provides the crucial means by which the thematic problems of the novel are resolved. The plot turns on the provisions of Scatcherd's eccentric will, by which the illegitimate daughter of his dead sister will inherit his wealth provided that his son does not reach the age of twenty-five. Unknown to Scatcherd, this illegitimate daughter is none other than Mary Thorne, the doctor's niece and the beloved of the son of the heavily mortgaged squire of Greshambury. The novel is mostly about the various moral problems raised by the opposition of marriage for love to marriage for money - generally money acquired outside the landowning class. Trollope has to tread a path between the extreme conservative position, that every marriage out of one's own class is a misalliance, and the extreme liberal position that only marriages of affection are to be encouraged. The two positions provide grounds for endless debate - is the hero right to court a plebeian millionairess? Is his sister right to contemplate marriage to a successful tailor? Is he right to marry a penniless girl for reasons of affection when he has a duty to save the estate by marrying money? Would he be selling himself if he did marry money? Trollope raises these questions only to resolve them magically by the provisions of the eccentric Scatcherd will. Mary Thorne is clearly an innate lady, even though she is a penniless bastard. If Frank Gresham were to marry her as he has promised, his estate will be hopelessly mortgaged. This irresolvable dilemma is solved by endowing her

with Scatcherd's money, thus enabling Trollope to mock the respect paid to money by 'blood', yet on a much deeper level than incidental satire, that of narrative, to pay it the greatest respect.

The Scatcherd wealth is then used to pay off the debts of the estate, and to return Boxall Hill - which was built on land originally belonging to the Greshams - to its ancestral owners. Could there be a more appropriate use for the new wealth of the self-made man, from the conservative point of view, than the restoration of an ancient patrimony?

Another conservative narration of the myth is offered in Lytton's My Novel, a much larger and more comprehensive novel than Doctor Thorne, and one which, though equally using the concept of the gentleman as a constitutive term, is more complicated in that it uses a double and in fact contradictory conception of gentility.

My Novel, by Pisistratus Caxton; or, Varieties in English Life, as its full title suggests, aims to give a panoramic survey of mid-century English life and manners. In fact its social range is very narrow: it presents an idyll of the English village, as well as an indication of an impoverished one, and a perfunctory picture of an industrial town, Screwstown, only showing it in so far as it is related to the surrounding county society. It also gives a picture of London derived more from eighteenth-century picaresque fiction than from any grasp of the actuality of mid-century London. The main ideological thrust of the book is to debunk the notion that 'knowledge is power'. To do so it employs the device of two contrasting careers; on the one hand there is the self-taught peasant Leonard Fairfield, who becomes a poet; and on the other there is the well-educated, intellectually brilliant, but impoverished gentleman Randal Leslie, who understands 'knowledge is power' to mean the knowledge of other people which enables one to scheme, dominate and rob. The latter's dastardly schemes are finally defeated

to prove the power of Christian love and forgiveness over the spirit of Intellectual Evil.

Since 'knowledge is power' was one of the watchwords of those committed to destroying the traditional powers of aristocracy and gentry, it is not surprising that Lytton should attempt to defuse it. Leonard Fairfield learns to believe a muted and uncontentious version of the phrase, when he realizes the power and influence of the books that he writes. Leonard Fairfield, in fact, is apparently the 'self-cultured' version of the Smilesian hero, the lower-class man who has raised himself to literary influence by teaching himself - though there is a perfunctory indication that the more familiar type is intended, since he early shows a 'mechanical genius' and patents a device for improving the steam-engine.

This apparent concession to the notion of innate gentility, a moral quality randomly diffused throughout society and characterized by sensitivity and a manner ever aware of the needs of others, is fatally compromised in My Novel, however. Leonard Fairfield, it ultimately transpires, is not really the son of a peasant but of the brilliant and gentlemanly politician Audley Egerton. Thus the very qualities that enabled him to succeed in life are explained by the real gentility of his descent.

Lytton, then, uses a formal device to defuse the ideological implications of one of his characterizations, a characterization that has a wide ideological currency outside of his novel. Another character in the novel, however, resembles the mythical self-made man more closely. He is Richard Avenel, Leonard Fairfield's uncle, a manufacturer in Screwstown. He covets a baronetcy, is an outrageous tuft-hunter, yet harbours reforming notions and complains of the aristocracy. He is moreover a very harsh employer, who, when he eventually buys land, becomes one of the harshest landowners in the district. His political

opinions also change on acquiring landed wealth, and he becomes fiercely defensive of the interests of the landowning class. This then, like Trollope's characterization of Sir Roger Scatcherd but still more schematic, is a conservative and hostile account of the self-made industrialist, which is yet flexible and cynical enough to suggest that such men pose no real threat to the established order because their own interests will ultimately undercut their radicalism.

Lytton's account resembles Trollope's also in showing little interest in the process of industrial enterprise - there is no attempt to demonstrate the mechanics of self-help. For both novelists the problem is accepting self-made men into Society - in both cases their rise being an accomplished fact, not a process to be described. Richard Avenel has made his fortune in America and returns to become a factory owner. The whole question of his social acceptability turns not on the moral qualities he may have displayed in making his own way, but on whether or not he is a gentleman. He himself is prepared to obscure his simple origins in order to ease his acceptance into county society, being prepared to play the Bully of Humility in private but not in public:

> 'Now,' continued the New Man, 'I'm not ashamed to have risen in life by my own merits; and I don't disguise what I've been. And, when I'm in my own grand house, I'm fond of saying, "I landed at New York with £10 in my purse, and here I am!" But it would not do to have the old folks with me. People take you with all your faults, if you're rich; but they won't swallow your family into the bargain' (I, 182).

However, his plans to keep himself aloof from his family are frustrated by his peasant sister, who finds her way to his grand house and falls upon his neck in the course of a <u>thé dansant</u> organized to ease his acceptance into county society. Though wishing to be able to repudiate her, he is forced to acknowledge her, and thus accidentally earns the approbation of the leader of county society:

> For however aristocratic this country of ours may be, and however especially aristocratic be the genteeler classes in provincial towns and coteries - there is nothing which English folks, from the highest to the lowest, in their hearts so respect as a man who has risen from nothing, and owns it frankly (I, 253).

And to prove the point, Sir Compton Delaval gives his emphatic approval to the recognition of Richard Averel as a gentleman:

> 'I can only say, for my part, that I am proud to rank Mr. Avenel amongst the gentlemen of the county, (here Sir Compton gave a sounding thump on the table,) and to thank him for one of the most brilliant entertainments it has ever been my lot to witness' (I, 253).

Lytton has it both ways in this scene. On the one hand Avenel is ranked amongst the gentlemen for acknowledging his sister, thus suggesting a moral definition of gentility and proving the openness of the upper ranks of English society; on the other hand, he did not really want to recognize her, and this ungentlemanly intention is of a piece with his other behaviour as a New Man. The stress on the openness of the English aristocracy is not an accidental one - the parson of Hazeldean, who speaks with the voice of quiet wisdom, was earlier moved to uncharacteristic enthusiasm on the subject:

> 'Indeed,' said the Parson, with imprudent warmth, 'it is not the character of the aristocracy of this country to keep people down. They make way amongst themselves for any man, whatever his birth, who has the talent and energy to aspire to their level. That's the especial boast of the British constitution, sir!' (I, 184).

Moreover, this emphasis on the openness of the aristocracy is combined with a sharply polemical edge against certain notions of gentility, which are at odds with the unselfconscious confidence with which the term is elsewhere used. Lytton writes of one character that 'He had been an only son - a spoiled child - brought up as "a gentleman"; that is, as a man who was not expected to turn his hand to anything' (I, 233); and on the other hand he can produce a description like this of Audley Egerton:

> And yet, though but little applauded by noisy cheers, no speaker seemed more to satisfy friends, and command respect from foes. The true secret was this, which Randal might well not divine, since that young person, despite his ancient birth, his Eton rearing, and his refined air, was not one of Nature's gentlemen; - the true secret was, that Audley Egerton moved, looked, and spoke like a thorough gentleman of England (II, 141-142).

Lytton is repeatedly prepared to extract as much rhetorical power as possible from deploying the term 'gentleman', at the same time as intermittently offering a critique of it. Every text is criss-crossed with the contradictory implications of the various ideological narratives on which it is built; My Novel attempts to resolve them by means of formal solutions to thematic problems. Leonard Fairfield the concealed heir of Audley Egerton; Richard Avenel outwardly a gentleman but to the reader's better knowledge a cad - these devices permit the text to enjoy an illusory ideological coherence.

V

The two texts of Dickens that I wish to consider, however, display a real fictional complexity which keeps such a threatening coherence at bay. They are Bleak House (1852) and Hard Times (1854), and I will be concentrating on Rouncewell and Bounderby.

There has been some controversy over whether Rouncewell ought to be read as a positive characterization.[13] In fact, I doubt whether a less

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13. The debate - about whether or not Dickens is committed to the Ironmaster, and with him the new industrialism he represents - begins with a fine essay by G.H. Ford, 'Self-Help and the Helpless in Bleak House', in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, edited by Rathburn and Steinmann (Minneapolis, 1958), pp. 92-105. Trevor Blount, alas, does not imitate Ford's temperate tone in 'The Ironmaster and the New Acquisitiveness : Dickens's views on the rising industrial classes as exemplified in Bleak House', Essays in Criticism, 15 (1965), 414-427, where he argues that Rouncewell and the Iron Country represent a new tyranny which has risen up to replace the tyranny of Chesney Wold. This argument is adopted with some enthusiasm by David Craig (it is 'so searching and

(Continued)

qualified characterization can be found in the novel, and Rouncewell is clearly a self-made man in the classic mould: '"I have been an apprentice, and a workman. I have lived on workman's wages, years and years, and beyond a certain point have had to educate myself."' (Chap. 28, p. 452). Some fun can even be made out of his youthful inventive skills, the unfailing mark of 'mechanical genius': '... he took, when he was a schoolboy, to constructing steam-engines out of saucepans, and setting birds to draw their own water, with the least possible amount of labour; so assisting them with artful contrivance of hydraulic pressure, that a thirsty canary had only, in a literal sense, to put his shoulder to the wheel, and the job was done' (Chap. 7, pp. 134-135). This is indeed, as Dickens wrote in the Preface to the First Edition, to dwell on the romantic side of familiar things, for the humour of this passage, with its ludicrous disproportion of means to end, redeems the pat and familiar language of self-help ('put your shoulder to the wheel'), delighting in its own inventiveness as much as Rouncewell's. But, as with the novels by Lytton and Trollope, there is no narrative interest attached to the process of Rouncewell's rise; the focus of interest in his characterization is in establishing his worth vis-a-vis Sir Leicester Dedlock and

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13 (Continued)
complete that it should stand as the central interpretation of that novel') in 'Fiction and the Rising Industrial Classes', Essays in Criticism, 17 (1967), 64-74. Blount's rather eccentric view of the novel, however, is challenged by Anne G. Smith in 'The Ironmaster in Bleak House', Essays in Criticism, 21 (1971), 159-169; but she perhaps argues rather too exclusively from the extrinsic evidence of Dickens's non-fictional prose, without sufficiently challenging the argument from metaphor and image advanced by Blount. As a result she is belaboured by Blount in a vituperative reply, 'Dickens's Ironmaster Again', in Essays in Criticism, 21 (1971), 429-436, but he also attempts to extend the analysis of the metaphorical and symbolic uses of 'dirt', trying to attach the opprobrium from which it suffers to the Iron Country. Anne Smith closes the debate by adhering to the common-sense reading of the text that she had earlier advanced, in 'Dickens's Ironmaster Again Again', Essays in Criticism, 22 (1972), 218-220.

the world of Chesney Wold. His undoubted worth is a powerful measure of the worthlessness of that world.

In the chapter entitled, 'The Ironmaster', for example (chapter 28), he is presented in the following terms:

> He is a little over fifty perhaps, of a good figure, like his mother; and has a clear voice, a broad forehead from which his dark hair has retired, and a shrewd, though open face. He is a responsible-looking gentleman dressed in black, portly enough, but strong and active. Has a perfectly natural and easy air, and is not in the least embarrassed by the great presence into which he comes (Chap. 25, p. 450).

What this passage indicates, apart from positively establishing Rouncewell's presence, is his social ease with Sir Leicester. This is ultimately what is at stake in the interview between them; Rouncewell's ability to negotiate the interview both with courtesy to Sir Leicester while retaining his honourable pride authenticates his claim to a worth commensurate with the baronet's. The baronet's inability to recognize it, on the other hand, is the measure of the anachronism and social blindness of his class.

The confrontation of Rouncewell and Sir Leicester, in fact, involves a familiar kind of Radicalism, which is precisely similar to the anti-aristocratic Radicalism of Smiles. Part of that Radicalism involves the assertion of the intrinsic worth of classes, represented here by the Ironmaster, who have previously been excluded from social acceptance; and it also involves an attack on those members of the aristocracy who persist in seeing in that assertion a kind of revolutionism. Rouncewell's early mechanical genius, for example, had aroused in his mother, Sir Leicester's housekeeper, deep anxiety: 'She felt it with a mother's anguish, to be a move in the Wat Tyler direction: well knowing that Sir Leicester had that general impression of an aptitude for any art to which smoke and a tall chimney might be considered essential' (Chap. 7,

p. 135).[14] Sir Leicester is satirized for stupidly using Wat Tyler as an excuse for resisting change; Rouncewell's worth, which he has won for himself, amply demonstrates that stupidity.

Yet it seems to me that the Radicalism of the attack on Sir Leicester Dedlock is ultimately muted. While it is clear that the Ironmaster is endorsed as a self-made man, it is also the case that, as with My Novel and Doctor Thorne, the interest that he excites attaches more to his acceptance by Society than to the process of his acquiring independence. The text is unequivocal about the respect due to Rouncewell; but in posing the question in this way, it becomes equivocal about the respect due to Sir Leicester Dedlock. The housekeeper's devotion to him, for example, elicits respect of a sort incompatible with an exclusive commitment to self-help; as Rouncewell himself says of it, '"such an instance bespeaks high worth on two sides; on the great side assuredly; on the small one, no less assuredly"' (Chap. 28, p. 452). Dickens bends over backwards to be fair to Sir Leicester, and this position makes him unduly deferential to some of the claims of his class.

The kind of compromise which this deference entails can be gauged from the description of Rouncewell's home:

> an elegant house, in all the arrangements of which there is to be observed a pleasant mixture of the originally simple habits of the father and mother, with such as suited to their altered station and the higher fortunes of their children (Chap. 63, p. 904).

What this passage attempts to mediate is the domestic habits of two

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14. The reference to Wat Tyler is instructive. Dickens's attitude to the Peasants' Revolt, in A Child's History of England, is almost wholly sympathetic, and of Wat Tyler he writes that 'he was a man of a much higher nature and a much braver spirit than any of the parasites who exulted then, or who have exulted since, over his defeat' (Oxford Illustrated Dickens, 1958, p. 297). Wat Tyler, in fact, in some ways resembles Rouncewell, with his 'strong Saxon face'; and Dickens's attitude to mass popular action is notoriously equivocal.

different classes, while paying respect to both. Its lack of specifity and merely gestural quality can be measured by comparing it with the inventiveness of the passage describing Rouncewell's contrivance for a thirsty canary. Note, for example, the convenient compression around the word 'elegant', which though an (aristocratic) class word, aspires to be a classless word derived from the immutable canons of aesthetics - Rouncewell's 'natural and easy air' is worth recalling in this respect. The mediation attempted in this passage smooths away any of the difficulties of Rouncewell's assimilation - he is a man to be respected both because he possesses the self-helping virtues and because he can enjoy without embarrassment those domestic arrangements suited to his altered station.

This is not to obscure the fact that there is a general ethic of self-help and self-reliance in Bleak House, which indeed forms one of the bases for the attacks on the aristocracy and Chancery. There is, in this respect, an exact parallel between the situations of the penniless cousins of Sir Leicester Dedlock, and Richard Carstone. The same chapter which includes the confrontation between Rouncewell and Sir Leicester, also includes a description of the latter's relations:

> The rest of the cousins are ladies and gentlemen of various ages and capacities; the major part, amiable and sensible, and likely to have done well enough in life if they could have overcome their cousinship; as it is, they are almost all a little worsted by it, and lounge in purposeless and listless paths, and seem to be quite as much at a loss how to dispose of themselves, as anybody else can be how to dispose of them (Chap. 28, p. 447).

Their cousinship inhibits them from self-reliance in exactly the same way that Richard Carstone's interest in Chancery inhibits him from making his own way, which even he at first recognizes to be his responsibility: '"So I apprehend it's pretty clear," said Richard to me /Esther/, "that I shall have to work my own way"' (Chap. 9, p. 164). Since we know

that one of the first intimations that Sir Leicester received of the massive rent in the social fabric was the inability of Sir William Buffy to provide pensions for his cousins, the inextricable connection between Dickens's Radicalism and his commitment to self-reliance should be clear: not only are a parasitic aristocracy and Chancery massive obstructions to healthy and fulfilled emotional life, they are also extremely inefficient.

As we shall see in chapter three, parallel to this commitment to self-help and self-reliance, there is an equal and opposite commitment to charity in the novel. These two contradictory commitments, each founded by appropriate narratives, do not, I believe, temper each other to produce some (unstated) synthesis;[15] nor do they collide to produce the flat and gestural prose of the description of the Ironmaster's home; rather, they coexist in the novel as two elements of the ideological matrix which makes up the whole text.

Rouncewell's role in Bleak House is finally a marginal one, and for all that I have said about the strength of his characterization, it is ultimately tempered by a recognition of the ugliness of the Iron Country. Equally, though I believe Dickens equivocates over Sir Leicester Dedlock, decisively establishing his honourableness by his defence of Lady Dedlock, the ultimate image of him, served by the equally defeated Mr George, is one of defeat. Even despite the Iron Country, Rouncewell measures both the hidebound social obstructiveness of the one, and the scapegrace and ultimately fruitless virtues of the other. He provides, in short, a clear and positive endorsement of the myth of the self-made man, and as such an excellent introduction to Bounderby.

The point, however, in moving from one to the other, and from the Iron Country to Coketown, is not to discover if Dickens changed his mind

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15. As George Ford argues in the article referred to in note 13, above.

about the self-made man; it is rather to discover what kind of authenticity the myth enjoys in each novel, and with this its ideological power. It is worth saying, though, that I do not believe there is any real contradiction between the myth of the self-made man as endorsed in Bleak House and as attacked in Hard Times, because in the latter novel the myth is attacked in such a way as to leave some of its essential features unscathed. In short, an alternative narration is eventually substituted.

The process of Bounderby's acquisition of wealth and interest, like Rouncewell's, provides no diegetic interest in Hard Times. It does, of course, provide Bounderby himself with a great deal of matter for boasting. This in itself suggests the widespread ideological efficacy of the myth, for otherwise there would be little point to his boasts:

> A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility (I, 4, p. 58).

The 'Bully of Humility', a counter-type to the self-made man, is, as we shall see, not confined to Hard Times; the existence of the type, even in a text written five years before Self-Help, suggests the currency that the myth of self-help enjoyed.

Bounderby claims for himself, of course, the possession of the classic self-helping virtues. As a child, he says that '"I was determined, I suppose. I have been a determined character in later life, and I suppose I was then"' (I, 4, p. 59), and he loudly asserts his prudence and his perspicuity. What eventually emerges, however, is that his boasts are to a certain extent untrue; his final comic unmasking suggests an alternative narrative of his rise, which prohibits him from making the boastful and egregious capital out of his rise that he has made throughout the book. Some of the more offensive ideological implications of

the myth of the self-made man are certainly satirized; but the debunking, though it purports to lead from fiction (Bounderby's fictions) into 'truth', in fact rests upon another ideological narrative.

It is nevertheless apparent that some of the offensive ideological implications of the myth are powerfully satirized in Hard Times. One of those implications, as we have seen, was that the working-class was seen to be crudely responsible for its own poverty, since at least some members of that class had managed to rise out of it. Dickens singles this out for particular scorn, as

> ... among the fictions of Coketown. Any capitalist there, who had made sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, always professed to wonder why the sixty thousand nearest Hands didn't each make sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, and more or less reproached them every one for not accomplishing the little feat. What I did you can do. Why don't you go and do it? (II, 1, p. 152).

It is highly significant that this should be described as one of the 'fictions' of Coketown, the term occurring as it does in a work of fiction. The circulation of such fictions around Coketown resembles the circulation of myths that I am attempting to describe; to label them outright fictions, however, suggests at once a confidence in the alternative 'truthful' view of things, perhaps a certain distrust of the (fictional) literary enterprise on which Dickens is engaged, and with this an assertion of the privileged access to truth which the procedures of this novel at any rate ensure, in which somehow its own fictionality is cancelled.

Another ideological implication of the myth that Dickens attacks is the opportunity for chauvinist self-congratulation that it afforded. Smiles, for example, wrote in the Preface to the Life of George Stephenson (published two years after Hard Times), that 'strongly self-reliant, diligent in self-culture, and of indomitable perseverance, the characters of such men - happily numerous in England - are almost equivalent to

institutions' (p. vi). Smiles was clearly not the first to give such ideas currency, for Dickens had already written that

> it was one of the most exasperating attributes of Bounderby, that he not only sang his own praises but stimulated other men to sing them. There was a moral infection of clap-trap in him. Strangers, modest enough elsewhere, started up at dinners in Coketown, and boasted, in quite a rampant way, of Bounderby. They made him out to be the Royal arms, the Union-Jack, Magna Charta, John Bull, Habeas Corpus, the Bill of Rights, An Englishman's house is his castle, Church and State, and God save the Queen, all put together (I, 7, pp. 84-85)

The project of the text, in short, is to debunk this 'clap-trap' along with the other 'fictions of Coketown'.

Bounderby, moreover, insists on the way he was deprived, as a child, of all the usual accompaniments of childhood; since he wishes, as the Bully of Humility, to depreciate his own antecedents, he seizes upon and ludicrously exaggerates the experiential specificity of the childhood of other people. Thus when he accompanies Mr Gradgrind to Sissy Jupe's lodging, when the girl has been sent to fetch some nine oils for her father, he bursts out with, '"Merrylegs and nine oils, eh! ... Pretty well this, for a self-made man!"' (I, 5, p. 70), and he later repeats his expression of astonishment: '"Nine oils, Merrylegs, missing tips, garters, banners, and ponging, eh!" ejaculated Mr. Bounderby, with his laugh of laughs. "Queer sort of company, too, for a man who has raised himself"' (I, 6, p. 175). This figure works in several directions. First, by placing in conjunction a vocabulary that is esoteric, comic, and yet socially specifiable (to the circus), with Bounderby's generalized boastfulness, it draws attention to what is excluded in the process of 'raising oneself'. Secondly, it highlights the vacuousness and the extreme imaginative impoverishment of Bounderby in the relish with which he seizes upon this vocabulary to assault it.

It is Bitzer, however, who represents the extreme impoverishment

which an exclusive adherence to the self-helping virtues can lead. He is 'an extremely clear-headed, cautious, prudent young man, who was safe to rise in the world' (II, i, p. 150), and his anaemic determination to succeed provides a satiric reductio ad absurdum of the self-made man.

If Bitzer is the inevitable result of Gradgrind's system of education, Bounderby by contrast boisterously asserts his absence of any schooling at all, and, conformably as we have seen to the Smilesian narration of the myth of self-help, asserts his deprivation as an advantage: '"However, though I am not influenced by manners and station, Loo Bounderby may be. She hadn't my advantages - disadvantages you would call 'em, but I call 'em advantages - so you'll not waste your power, I dare say"' (II, ii, p. 162). Where the disadvantages of a lack of education can be seen as advantages is where self-help becomes ripe for optimistic evolutionism.

Dickens was not the only novelist in the 1850s to attack the boastful exaltation of obscure origins by the self-made man. There is, as I have suggested, a countertype in the Bully of Humility, who figures, for example, in Charles Lever's The Martins of Cro' Martin (1856).[16] Lever's project can be described as finding ways of resisting encroachments on gentlemanly modes of behaviour, and boastfulness is just such an encroachment.

> There are men who have a rugged pride in contrasting what they were with what they are. Their self-love finds an intense pleasure in contemplating difficulties overcome, obstacles surmounted, and a goal won, all by their own unaided efforts, and to such the very obscurity of their origin is a source of boastful exaltation. Such men are, however, always found in the ranks of those whose success is wealth; wherever the triumphs are those rewarded by station, or the distinctions conferred on intellectual superiority, this vain-glorious sentiment is unknown. An inborn refinement rejects such coarse pleasure ... (I, 227).

One of the characters in the novel comes in the latter category of one who has fought his way to intellectual pre-eminence - he is a future

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16. Charles Lever, The Martins of Cro' Martin (1856).

Lord Eldon rather than a future George Stephenson - and as such poses fewer problems for Lever's project than the industrial self-made man. But even those whose 'inborn refinement' protects them from Lever's disapproval do not escape Thackeray's satire; in a key text of the 1840s, The Book of Snobs, he attacks Crump, the University Snob, on grounds that precisely resemble Dickens's later attack on the Bully of Humility:[17]

> To do Crump justice, he does not cringe now to great people. He rather patronizes them than otherwise; and, in London, speaks quite affably to a Duke who has been brought up at his college, or holds out a finger to a Marquis. He does not disguise his own origin, but brags of it with considerable self-gratulation:- 'I was a Charity-boy,' says he; see what I am now: the greatest Greek scholar of the greatest College of the greatest University of the greatest Empire in the world.' The argument being, that this is a capital world for beggars, because he, being a beggar, has managed to get on horseback (p. 67).

While Lever might possibly have had Bounderby's boastfulness at the back of his mind - The Martins of Cro' Martin began publication in 1854, when Hard Times was published in Household Words - Thackeray obviously could not have done so; yet he isolated for attack precisely that 'fiction' that Dickens attacked, using moreover just such a man who, according to Lever, would be prevented from boastfulness by his 'inbred refinement'. The Bully of Humility, then, the countertype of the mythologized self-made man, also has a significant if more minor currency in mid-nineteenth century fiction.

In depreciating his own origins, Bounderby exaggerates one of the characteristics of narratives of self-help - their essential ahistoricism, or even their outright aversion to history or distortion of it. This is essential to the myth, as we have seen, in so far as it obscures the real social and economic forces that propel the entrepreneur, to the greater

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17. W.M. Thackeray, The Book of Snobs, By One of Themselves (1848), Centenary Biographical Edition.

glory of his own magical self-propulsion. Bounderby, naturally enough, carries this to ridiculous excess, so that to be abandoned in a ditch and left with a drunken grandmother typify the negative constraints on his upbringing. 'There's no family pride about me,' he says, 'there's no imaginative sentimental humbug about me ... and I call the mother of Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, without any fear or any favour, what I would call her if she had been the mother of Dick Jones of Wapping' (I, 6, pp. 74-75). Imagination and sentiment are of course excluded along with family and, more widely, history. What this quotation also points to is the characteristic rhetorical figure of Bounderby's speech - his enormous pride in his absence of pride.

For it is remarkable that in Hard Times, the most egregious character in the novel should be the one who not only uses the most consistently figurative language, but also is persistently described in the most metaphoric language. After Louisa has left him, for example, Bounderby resumes a bachelor life:

> In boastful proof of his promptitude and activity, as a remarkable man, and a self-made man, and a commercial wonder more admirable than Venus, who had risen out of the mud instead of the sea, he liked to show how little his domestic affairs abated his business ardour (III, 4, p. 266).

The comic excess of the image of Bounderby as Venus is an exuberance that Dickens very rarely permits himself in Hard Times; it is significant that this self-delighting style should be used most frequently with regard to a character who embodies and carries the 'fictions of Coketown'. The characterization of Bounderby is after all a satire, and at the heart of the satiric attack is the charge of hypocrisy: he is not really a self-made man at all, at least not to the degree his own boastful depreciation of his origins claims. Is it symptomatic of a certain drabness in the text that some of its most exuberantly metaphorical language should mark the point where a more modest version of the self-help myth should emerge?

Bounderby is eventually unmasked by Mrs Sparsit, who collars Mrs Pegler as an accessory to the Bank robbery and unwittingly confronts her with her own son. The story that she tells of Bounderby's upbringing, in indignant contradiction to Gradgrind's repetition of one of Bounderby's own boasts, provides that modest alternative version of the myth of the self-made man which remains unscathed by the text's larger satire:

> 'And my dear boy knows, and will give you to know, sir, that after his beloved father died, when he was eight years old, his mother, too, could pinch a bit, as it was her duty and her pleasure and her pride to do it, to help him out in life, and put him 'prentice. And a steady lad he was, and a kind master he had to lend him a hand, and well he worked his own way forward to be rich and thriving' (III, 5, p. 280).

So instead of magical self-propulsion, the agencies of parental love and a paternalistic master are invoked to explain Bounderby's rise; the latter typically the agency, as we have seen, in the myth of the industrious apprentice. The alternative narrative substituted for the offensive narrative of self-help proves to be a restatement of an older narrative which still enjoys considerable interpellant power.

Indeed, the myth of the self-made man had attempted to capture that efficacy by the tacit assumption that the various narratives of the industrious apprentice, from Dick Whittington onwards, were essentially narratives of self-help. The strategy was never entirely successful, as the uneasy and semi-parodistic references to the older narrative in Dombey and Son testify. The point here, however, is that the debunking of one myth is performed by reference to a narrative every bit as ideological.

If the text does not fall out of myth into 'truth', it obviously claims to do so. The exposure of Bounderby's boastfulness resembles the narrative procedures of Bleak House, where the apparently mysterious and inexplicable actions of the characters are explained by the resolution

of the mystery which has the value of the highest order of truth in the text. Just so in Hard Times, the exposure of Bounderby provokes the following authorial comment.

> Detected as the Bully of humility, who had built his windy reputation upon lies, and in his boastfulness had put the honest truth as far away from him as if he had advanced the mean claim (there is no meaner) to tack himself on to a pedigree, he cut a most ridiculous figure (III, 5, p. 281).

Bounderby's exclusion of the 'honest truth' is homologous with Coketown's exclusion of 'fancy'; but if, in opposition to the truth there are Bounderby's boastfulness and the 'fictions of Coketown', in opposition to 'fancy' is the world of 'fact', so that the text presents an effective opposition between 'fact' and 'truth'. This cannot simply be explained by assuming that Dickens has resorted to a Romantic epistemology, in which access to the higher truths of the spiritual world can only be gained by passing beyond the merely phenomenal - some such aesthetic is involved, but Dickens wishes also to insist on founding it on the honest truth, on humble attention to things as they are.

This last quotation is also concerned with the (apparent) opposition between Bounderby's boastfulness and aristocratic notions of pedigree. The relationship between Bounderby, and Mrs Sparsit and Harthouse, is clearly crucial in Hard Times. If Rouncewell's worth and dignity can only be assessed against Sir Leicester Dedlock, then the relationship between Bounderby and Mrs Sparsit can be described as a morose and bitter parody of it:

> If Bounderby had been a Conqueror, and Mrs. Sparsit a captive Princess whom he took about as a feature in his state-processions, he could not have made a greater flourish with her than he habitually did. Just as it belonged to his boastfulness to depreciate his own extraction, so it belonged to it to exalt Mrs. Sparsit's (I, 7, p. 84).

Here the relationship between the aristocrat and the self-made man scarcely reflects 'high worth on both sides', but rather consists of

a hypocritical mutual exaltation masking a ferocious mutual contempt which does not conceal the fact that each party to the transaction is necessary to the other, either financially or in terms of patronage.

The aristocratic figures in Hard Times, however, for all their cynicism, display much greater insight into the characters of Tom and Louisa Gradgrind, and the latter's relationship with Bounderby, than any of the other characters in the novel except Sissy Jupe. They can know things about the moral and emotional life, unlike Gradgrind and Bounderby, because they are not ideologically prevented from doing so; but it is perhaps possible to trace in this element of their characterization a vestigial deference to the old aristocratic hegemony of culture.

Rouncewell's quiet assumption of dignity is absurdly parodied in Bounderby's introduction to Harthouse:

> 'So now,' said Bounderby, 'we may shake hands on equal terms. I say, equal terms, because although I know what I am, and the exact depth of the gutter I have lifted myself out of, better than any man does, I am as proud as you are. I am just as proud as you are. Having now asserted my independence in a proper manner, I may come to how do you find yourself, and I hope you're pretty well' (II, 2, p. 160).

But whereas Rouncewell's assertion of his independence was legitimate, here this gaucheness and boorishness - which scarcely exhausts Bounderby's characterization[18] - mask a hypocritical dependence on and deference to the gentlemanly Harthouses and their ilk.

In a more general political perspective, the deference of the Gradgrind school is unequivocally described and attacked:

> /The Gradgrind school/ liked fine gentlemen; they pretended that they did not, but they did. They became exhausted in imitation of them; and they yaw-yawed in their speech like them; and they served out, with an enervated air, the little mouldy rations of political economy, on which they regaled their

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18. As Raymond Williams, in Culture and Society (1958), pp. 104-105, has argued.

> disciples. There never before was seen on earth such a wonderful hybrid race as was thus produced (II, 2, pp. 157-158).

If the attack on Bounderby leaves a more modest version of the self-made man unscathed, this passage equally leaves unscathed an unstated ('true') ideal of gentility, in opposition to the attack on the 'fine gentlemen'. Part of the satire here, after all, is humour at the Gradgrind school for aping their 'betters' - aping aspects of their betters which are vicious and absurd, indeed, but the 'hybrid race' is nevertheless ridiculous for being the result of social climbing. 'True' gentility, by contrast, is not the exclusive property of any particular class; indeed it is clear in this text that the social class that has traditionally laid claim to it has vitiated that claim by donothingism, backed up by a false version of gentility residing in pedigree. 'True' gentility is above all a moral quality, of which the standard in this text is Sissy Jupe.

The satire in Hard Times is thus directed against not only a false version of self-help but also against a false version of gentility, displayed above all by Harthouse:

> /He had/ a certain air of exhaustion upon him, in part arising from excessive summer, and in part from excessive gentility. For, it was to be seen with half an eye that he was a thorough gentleman, made to the model of the time; weary of everything and putting no more faith in anything than Lucifer (II, 1, p. 153).

The problematic nature of the text for mid-Victorian England is not so much the radicalness of its ideological positions as the tenuity of the social location for these 'true' versions both of self-help and gentility. If Bounderby is not a 'true' self-made man; if Harthouse, though a thorough gentleman, is not a true one; and if Mrs Sparsit, though a Powler, is not a lady; then who is? The question is highly pertinent, for if the realist novel is to retain its ideological force it has to maintain the typicality of its characterizations; by satirizing Bounderby

and Harthouse without providing comparably authentic alternatives of the 'real thing', Dickens effectively robs the myths of the self-made man and of the gentleman of their interpellant power.

In Bleak House, then, the characterization of Rouncewell explicitly endorsed the self-made man, not so much to carry the ideological implications vis-a-vis the working class which the myth entails, but to provide an alternative version of worth and dignity to that presented by Sir Leicester Dedlock. There is, moreover, a more general ethic of self-help in the novel, thwarted by the social institutions that preoccupy the text. In the later novel, however, the satirical attack on Bounderby as a self-made man is ultimately mounted in the name of a 'truer' but more modest version of the myth, thus permitting an assault on some of the more extreme ideological claims authenticated by the self-made man - in particular, the opportunity for chauvinistic self-congratulation, and for blaming the working-class for not having gone and done likewise. But the version of the myth which is left intact acquires, thanks to the narrative procedures of the text, the ontological status of truth, as indeed does a notion of gentility distinguished from its false version. Finally, the relationship between bourgeois and aristocrat, instead of being a relationship displaying 'high worth on both sides', is satirically portrayed as one of mutual need combined with mutual contempt.

VI

What conclusions, then, can be drawn from this survey of the various narrations of self-help in the 1850s?

In only two of the six novels that I have described does any substantial narrative interest attach to the process of raising oneself, namely, John Halifax, Gentleman and Marian Withers; and in the latter case the story of John Withers's rise in life merely provides a prelude

to his daughter's story. Even in John Halifax, Gentleman, self-help is subsidiary to an ideology of domesticity which is the real organizing centre of the novel. In the other novels, the making of the self-made man has either occurred before the opening of the novel, as in My Novel or Hard Times, or is briefly narrated, as essential matter, but takes place off-stage, as in Bleak House and Doctor Thorne. In the novel, therefore, the centre of interest is not so much the trials, values and successes of the self-helping process as the mediation of the self-made man as a type into an already existing social hierarchy. This is in striking contrast, not only to Self-Help and the Life of George Stephenson, but also to the success manuals that pre-date Smiles, and, seemingly, seriously diminishes the value of placing the novel alongside the straightforward self-help biographies. The juxtaposition of the two forms, however, especially in the light of this discrepancy, reveals some important formal characteristics of each.

This discrepancy can be explained in several ways. First, the very success and wide currency of the myth of the self-made man means that it can be established with sufficient authority merely by allusion. Secondly, the readership to which Smiles and the success manuals were addressed was working-class and lower middle-class, while that of the novel was more solidly middle-class. This can be inferred from the texts themselves - clearly you do not need to exhort people to raise themselves in life if they have already risen, and the success manuals do clearly function as secular tracts addressed to the materially unregenerate. But in the case of Smiles there is more circumstantial evidence for the kind of readership to which the lectures which formed the basis for Self-Help were originally addressed. Smiles was approached by a group of Leeds working-men to give a series of lectures in an institution that they were determined to run themselves, since they were dissatisfied

with the way that the existing institution of working-class education - the Mechanics' Institute - was run by other than working-class people.[19] They were complaining, in fact, of the way the Mechanics' Institutes had been transformed into lower middle-class institutions; perhaps a similar fate awaited the results of their own initiative, for Smiles' lectures are ineradicably petty-bourgeois in character. At all events, the presumed readership of Smiles and the self-help manuals was below the gentry line.

Equally, the readership of the novel is as much a literary as a sociological question - one does not have to resort to social history to establish it, since a presumed reader can be inferred from the text, indeed each text could be said to seek its appropriate reader. That is not to say that the relationship between implied author and reader will always be the same, even given a presumed readership that is sociologically congruous - Lytton, for example, though he might expect substantially the same class of readership as Dickens, is ready to write down to, patronize, and generally belittle his readership in ways that scarcely characterize Dickens's writing. Having said this, though, it is clear that despite a substantial petty-bourgeois overlap, the presumed readership of the novel is significantly 'higher' in class terms than that of Smiles and the success manuals. This explains in part the discrepancy between the two forms, for the crucial question that the confidently genteel middle-class reader asks of the self-made man is not, how can I emulate him?, but, how can I accept him? As we have seen, this is precisely the problem around which all these novels revolve.

The second explanation for the discrepancy relates more to the formal characteristics of the novel and the success manual. Novels intercalate

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19. See the Preface to the 1905 edition of Self-Help, and the article on Smiles by A. Tyrrell, referred to in note 10, above.

a number of myths, and attempt by a variety of means to give them an ideological coherence. The literary work which they perform upon ideology - in so far as they do perform any work, and do not simply narrate ideology yet again - is done by bringing form to bear upon form, so that they can genuinely claim to be novel. Novels are thus necessarily under an obligation to be complex which the success manuals do not labour under.[20]

In addition to a widespread myth of the self-made man, we also noticed a hostile counter-type - the Bully of Humility, of whom Bounderby is of course the outstanding example. This countertype is only possible given that he inhabits a society where raising one's social status is a subject for congratulation. However, as I have insisted in looking at Hard Times, Bounderby is a fraud, and his very fraudulence permits the survival of a modified myth of self-help. In fact, the myth of the fraud, which is the subject of the next chapter, is a widespread and potent myth in the 1850s, and is, as we shall see, quite commensurate with an ideology of self-help.

Finally, I suggested, when looking at Bleak House and Hard Times, that their problematic insertion into mid-Victorian ideology lay not so much in their assault upon characteristic mid-Victorian ideology, but in the absence of a social location for that ideology to be practised. The extent of Dickens's radicalism, in fact, is measured not by his repudiation of petty-bourgeois values but by his relentless pursuit of them - until it seems that there is nowhere left in England that they can be practised with a reasonable expectation of happiness. In this situation, short of actually abandoning the ideology, it becomes transformed into a mere modus vivendi in an otherwise intolerably degraded

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20. The literary-critical questions here raised are discussed at greater length in chapter 5.

world - self-help, in particular, being transformed into the simple obligation to hold oneself together, as Richard Carstone signally fails to do. If, unlike Dickens, Smiles and others were still confident of the appropriateness of self-help as a means of social salvation, Dickens's own repudiation of this faith anticipates more an existentialist conservatism than socialist solidarity.

The protagonist of Charles Lever's Davenport Dunn (1859) is certainly a man who has raised himself - he is a self-made man, though perhaps not in the classic mould. He has raised himself by dint of dealings in mortgaged Irish estates, and occupies himself in the course of the novel with vast speculations. In the melodramatic climax to the novel, however, he is murdered, and revealed to all the world as a cheat and a fraud. In this conservative narration of the myth, the self-made man is debunked at the behest of another equally ideological narrative, the myth of the fraud.

CHAPTER TWO : THE MYTH OF THE FRAUD

I

The most characteristic narratives of self-help occurred, paradoxically, when the age of heroic entrepreneurship was already over. By the 1850s, large sections of the British economy were already organized along corporate capitalist lines, and the joint-stock company was widely felt to pose a challenge to an ethic of individual responsibility - though the fact that the classic industries of the industrial revolution, textiles and iron, retained traditional forms of financing until the end of the century continued to give an apparent relevance to Smiles' exhortative economics.[1] The sense of threat was typically expressed in a demonology of fraud, and a wide circulation of narratives of fraud characterizes the history of ideology in the 1850s.

Moreover, just as self-help, in one of its phases, could be invoked to explain and justify widespread poverty, these various narratives of fraud provided some convenient explanations for the roughly decennial crises that marked the development of the British economy - and later the world economy - in the nineteenth century. This is not to argue

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1. S.G. Checkland, The Rise of Industrial Society in England (1971), p. 204.

that there were no frauds in the 1850s, or for that matter in the preceding decades, but that such frauds as occurred - or were exposed - provided the kernel of historicity around which the wider ideological explanation of crises accreted. In much the same way we saw how the actual histories of 'men who have risen' confirmed and authenticated the wider ideology of self-help.

The explanation of crises in terms of fraud depends, of course, on a wider explanation which blames speculation and a 'spirit of speculation' for the periodical collapse of the credit system. The criticism of the commercial system produced in this way is inevitably not a systematic one, but a partial and moral one - either the system itself is excused by scapegoating an individual, or limited forms of credit and capital raising are criticized in the essentially anachronistic terms of individual moral worth. The moral critique of the commercial system, made possible by explaining it in terms of narrative, could also be seen as sufficient because the period 1830-1860 witnessed a lag between pioneering economic and commercial institutions such as joint-stock enterprises and banking, and their appropriate legal forms, such as a realistic Companies' Act and limited liability; in this gap the opportunities for fraud were considerable, so that the very fact that there were a number of frauds connected with new economic and commercial institutions made those institutions particularly liable to a moral critique.

The period 1815-1860 saw a major commercial crisis once a decade, in addition to several Stock Exchange panics which did not develop into full-blown crises. All these roughly decennial crises, with the exception of the 1815 crisis which was caused by the special features of the transition from a war economy, followed the same pattern: a period of depression, resulting in the widespread availability of cheap money, the discovery of new areas of investment, either in foreign markets or new techniques

of production at home, or both, a speculative rush and massive over-trading and overproduction; a credit crisis and numerous entrepreneurial failures; massive under-employment and unemployment; a period of depression. These are the external features of the trade cycle, but they are themselves only symptoms of the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production - the antagonism between social production and individual ownership of capital, which demands a free market in capital and with it the haphazard patterns of investment that characterize the trade cycle.[2] If 'the renovation of the economy of Britain during the nineteenth century may be regarded, in one sense, as an act of continuous mobilization of capital',[3] then the remarkable and extreme fluctuations of that act of mobilization suggest that the evolution of a free market in capital was not unaccompanied by difficulties.

In looking at the successive elements of the trade cycle, it will be seen that the only point upon which a moral discourse can gain any purchase is at the point of speculation, even though speculation does not cause crises but is rather an inevitable feature of a free market in capital. Given this free market in capital - a necessary condition for capital centralization in mid-nineteenth century conditions - speculation was an inevitable feature of that process of centralization, the method of capital mobilization succeeding the period of primitive accumulation.[4]

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2. A free market in capital was of course the rallying cry for those who demanded an end to restrictions on capital movement. The end of unlimited liability, for example, was often compared to the abolition of the Corn Laws, and argued for in similar terms. See 'The Limited Liability Act of 1855', Westminster Review, 9 (1856), 34-51; and The Times, 7 August 1855, p. 9.

3. S.G. Checkland, Rise of Industrial Society, p. 189.

4. K. Marx, Capital, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul, 2 vols. (1967), II, 691-694 (Volume One, Part 7, Chap. 23, 2).

Two varieties of speculation can be distinguished - first, the over-extension of credit due to the discovery and penetration of a new market, as for example in the speculative rush for South American bonds in 1825, or in the massive over-trading with the United States of America in 1836-7; and secondly, speculation in new areas of production, notably in railways during the railway mania of 1845-7. Both types of speculation are only possible because they use stocks or bonds that can be bought and sold at a premium, and, as we noticed earlier, this ease of stock transferability only characterized very limited sections of the British economy until the end of the century. So entrenched, however, was the view that crises were caused by abuses of credit, that even when, as in the crisis of 1857, symptoms of widespread depression appeared in the non-speculative areas of British industry before the onset of the credit crisis, the official Report of 1858 nevertheless blamed the crisis on such abuses.[5] Since the traditionally financed areas of British industry were intimately connected, by the credit system, with all the other areas of the economy,[6] their depression actually contributed to the trade and monetary causes of the crisis; the explanation by credit abuse thus precisely reversed the actual chain of cause and effect.

Speculation, then, is a necessary condition of the centralization of capital in a free market. This process of centralization is an outstanding characteristic of the financial history of the years 1815-1860, and it was achieved above all by the joint-stock principle, which was pioneered by those enterprises, notably canals, railways, and the utilities, which were too large to have been financed by individual

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5. J.R.T. Hughes, 'The Commercial Crisis of 1857', Oxford Economic Papers 8 (1956), 194-222 (p. 218).

6. G.S. Checkland, Rise of Industrial Society, p. 191.

capital accumulation. Marx described the process thus:

> It is obvious, however, that accumulation, the gradual increase of capital by reproduction passing from a circular into a spiral form, is a slow process when compared with centralization, which needs but to alter the quantitative grouping of the integral parts of social capital. The world would still lack railways if it had had to wait until the accumulation of individual capitals had proceeded far enough to render the construction of a railway possible. Centralization, however, did what was necessary in the twinkling of an eye, by means of the joint-stock system. 7

Speculation was essential to this process of centralization, but it was facilitated by a legal and economic institution whose morality was hotly disputed and whose legal status was continually changing - the joint-stock company.

The legality of the joint-stock company, in fact, and the related question of limited liability, preoccupied much of the commercial legislation of the mid-nineteenth century. From the repeal of the Bubble Act in 1825, to the recognition of limited liability in 1862, was a period of legal confusion, in which the 'right' to 'freedom of incorporation' had to be vigorously fought for. In this respect, this period merely continued the history of the previous hundred years:

> In fact, the history of the business corporation or joint-stock company in England during the hundred years following the statute of 1720 [the Bubble Act] is the story of an economic necessity forcing its way slowly and painfully to legal recognition, against strong commercial prejudices in favour of 'individual' enterprise, and in the face of determined attempts of both the legislature and the courts to deny it. 8

The ideology of individual enterprise was much more powerful than a mere 'prejudice', however, and the association of fraud with joint-stock provided a powerful rearguard defence of that ideology in the face of successful corporate capitalism.

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7. K. Marx, Capital, II, 693.

8. B.C. Hunt, The Development of the Business Corporation in England (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 13.

Thus the process of capital centralization was essential for two principal reasons; first, in order to finance the economic infrastructure of canals, railways and utilities; and secondly, to establish a credit system which would enable capital to penetrate and conquer the world market. For the latter task, the old private banks were inadequate, developed as they were to meet the needs of primary capital accumulation. After 1825, a rash of joint-stock banks was established, and by the end of the 1850s, most of the old private banks had converted themselves into joint-stock institutions.[9] This incorporation of trading capital was not achieved without many failures, over-extensions, and outright frauds, for where the institution was new, correct principles of management were often not understood and the opportunities for sharp practice and fraud were considerable. The situation resembled the one which prevailed in railway direction, where the newness of the institutional form meant that insufficient control was exercised over the directorate.

The industrial cycle, then, was the necessary form of capital accumulation in the capitalist mode of production; this accumulation eventually produced the need for an economic infrastructure and the discovery of new markets. The financing of these necessary extensions in turn required new forms of capitalization and new legal forms to match them, such as joint-stock and limited liability; these made investment necessarily speculative. Given this situation, an ideological explanation of the trade-cycle, blaming crises on speculation and fraud, was possible, since speculation and the new institutions were so closely linked. Since those areas of growth in the economy which made the pace in the legal/financial sphere were the most easily speculable, it became possible to blame the new legal/financial institutions and their attendant abuses rather than the mode of production itself for periodic crises.

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9. S.E. Thomas, Rise and Growth of Joint-Stock Banking, 2 vols. (1934), I, 596.

I stress the availability of this ideology, not its universality; the period in fact abounded with different theories as to the causes of crises, and at the level of purportedly scientific analysis, political economy, though abuse of credit was the most popular explanation, there was no unanimity, since there were those who argued that crises were caused by over-production. Indeed, the explanation by speculation and fraud can be seen as the popularly ideological form of the explanation by problems of credit in political economy. J.S. Mill, for example, believed that crises were caused by such problems:

> There is said to be a commercial crisis, when a great number of merchants and traders at once, either have, or apprehend that they shall have, a difficulty in meeting their engagements. The most usual cause of this general embarrassment, is the recoil of prices after they have been raised by a spirit of speculation, intense in degree, and extending to many commodities. Some accident which excites expectations of rising prices, such as the opening of a new foreign market, or simultaneous indications of a short supply of several great articles of commerce, sets speculation at work in several leading departments at once. 10

This particular account is derived from the crisis of 1825; the circumstantial account that he gives of the crisis of 1847 stresses the high rate of loan-capital due to the enormous investment in railways, coupled with the high prices of cotton and corn. Mill's account, though purportedly complete, is disastrously insufficient at certain points - note the references to 'accident' and a 'spirit of speculation'. It is precisely at the latter point that the more popular narratives of speculation can gain entry. Although Mill does not need to resort to a demonology of fraud to complete his account, he, and others who analyzed crises in terms of credit-problems, left the door open to accounts of

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10. The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, edited by F.E.L. Priestley and others (Toronto 1963-), Volumes II and III, Principles of Political Economy, III (1965), 541-542. Originally published in 1844, it was the only one of Mill's books which he continually revised.

crises in which the 'spirit of speculation' has been personified and which are already half-way to a mythology of fraud. Household Words, for example, which characteristically attempted to provide explanations and information in a popular and imaginative form, carried this account of a commercial crisis:

> For, look you, once in every quarter of a century - sometimes more frequently - do the men, women, and children run stark, staring, raving, ranting mad. They have a MANIA ... Everybody goes crazed for shares. Lords, ladies, divines, physicians, chimneysweeps; all howl for shares. They buy, sell, barter, borrow, beg, steal, invent, dream of shares. Bank notes and prospectuses fly about thick as the leaves in Valombrosa; men are no longer mere human beings; but directors, provisional committee-men, auditors and trustees. 11

In this account, the actual terms of Mill's account of the 1847 crisis are repeated in a more overtly narrative form. The way is open for a mythology of fraud, because although the account apparently includes all sections of society, from lords to chimney-sweeps, in its condemnation, in fact those classes which made up the actual reading-public of Household Words are carefully excluded.

Who, then, is most likely to take up a mythology of fraud? Clearly, it is most attractive to those classes who have burnt their fingers in speculation but who are nevertheless disabled, from their position in the mode of production, from producing a systematic critique of it. Such contradictions are most easily resolved by resort to a mythology; as we shall see, the two principal narrations of the myth of the fraud differ according to the class-perspectives of their narrators.

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11. 'City Spectres', Household Words, 14 February 1852, p. 484.

II

The ideology of fraud was narrated extensively outside the novel; by Samuel Smiles, among others, both in the Life of George Stephenson and Self-Help. In the earlier book he wrote of the railway mania that 'the bad spirit which had been evoked by it unhappily extended to the commercial classes; and many of the most flagrant swindles of recent times had their origin in the year 1845' (p. 445).[12] He extends this observation to a general remark about commercial honesty in Self-Help:

> Although common honesty is still happily in the ascendant amongst common people, and the general business community in England is still sound at heart, putting their honest character into their respective callings, there are, unhappily, as there have been in all times, but too many instances of flagrant dishonesty and fraud, exhibited by the unscrupulous, the over-speculative, and the intensely selfish in their haste to be rich (p. 337).

Although untypical of Smiles, who is in general happier to dwell on the more attractive aspects of the 'business community', these quotations are typical of the ideology of fraud, in which fraud is castigated as caused by the 'haste to be rich', and measured by the plodding material advance of the self-helper whose character is his best credit. It is also worth noticing the important role played by the railway mania in this mythology, especially considering that the first legislative attempt to deal with speculative stock-jobbing occurred in the 1690s.[13] This ideology is authenticated by the narrative of the fraud, latent here but capable of being much more fully developed. For Smiles, this narrative is not the

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12. In this context, it is worth noting that Smiles's biography of Stephenson glosses over the close ties of friendship and business that bound Stephenson with 'King' Hudson. For an account of this relationship see R.S. Lambert, The Railway King, 1800-1871, A study of George Hudson and the business morals of his time (1934). In fairness to Smiles, however, it should be said that the relationship rather cooled in the two or three years preceding Stephenson's death, the years of the worst excesses of the Railway mania.

13. T. Hadden, Company Law and Capitalism (1977), p. 9.

typical narrative, while for Morier Evans, who shares the same ideological problematic, the narrative of fraud is the typical narrative of the 1850s.

D. Morier Evans was a financial journalist with a special interest in commercial crises, who published analyses of the crises of 1847 and 1857. He was also preoccupied with the phenomena of fraud and speculation, and he published two further books devoted to these subjects.[14] If he shares the same problematic as Smiles, the fact that for him the narrative of fraud is the typical commercial narrative of his day makes his perspective a much more pessimistic and indeed reactionary one than that of Smiles. Morier Evans dwells on the seamier side of capital centralization, arguing that the prevalence of frauds is a sign of the depreciation of moral values. He even goes so far as to suggest, in Facts, Failures and Frauds, that the death-penalty should be reinstated for fraud. In the same book, he argues, like Smiles, that 'it is with the railway mania of 1845 that the modern form of speculation may be said to begin' (p. 2), and he too contends that the rage for speculation has lowered the standards of commercial morality:

> The closeness with which one crime follows upon another, and the similarity of motive that lies at the bottom of them all, will sufficiently show that they do not represent the simple perverseness of individual natures, but are so many indices of a depreciated, and apparently bad, moral atmosphere that has of late pervaded the whole of the commercial world. The fact stands self-evident that the ruling passion is the grand desire to make money expeditiously, for the purpose of gratifying luxurious propensities, or of indulging in an imposing ostentation (p. 5).

The question that Morier Evans puts to the commercial world - is it honest? - is thus exactly the same as that put by Smiles, and though

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14. D. Morier Evans, The Commercial Crisis, 1847-1848 (1848); The History of the Commercial Crisis of 1857-1858 (1859); Facts, Failures and Frauds (1859); Speculative Notes, and Notes on Speculation (1864).

their answers are diametrically opposed, it is clear that the question is itself an ideological one, since the movements of capital on the money-market are intractable to a purely moral critique. The emptiness of the question can be measured by the fact that both Self-Help and Facts, Failures and Frauds were published in the same year, 1859, yet both arrived at exactly opposite judgments about the state of commercial morality. Morier Evans's prose is mythological, moreover, in precisely the way that I defined in the introduction, for it uses narrative to authenticate its ideological message. In the last sentences of the passage quoted, for example, there are two latent narratives, one of the secret sybarite, the other of the showy socialite; both are subsidiary to a grand narrative of the commercial world, which has become personified and is motivated by a 'ruling passion'. This is no more than a condensed form of the same discourse that runs through the mid-nineteenth century realist novel.

Morier Evans is also at one with Smiles in blaming speculation on the desire to get rich quick, measuring this desire by the less hasty methods approved by perseverance: 'Whenever we find ourselves under circumstances that enable the acquisition of rapid fortunes, otherwise than by the road of plodding industry, we may almost be justified in auguring that the time for panic is at hand'. But he is partly aware of the inappropriateness, or rather insufficiency, of 'mere moral warnings' in the face of crises. Instead of trying to find an economic solution, however, he recommends that his moral warnings should be backed up by legislation, which would 'cause the miseries of panic to fall most heavily on the parties who have most deserved to suffer them'[15] - how this is to be done, he does not specify. Recognizing, then, the

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15. History of the Commercial Crisis of 1857-1858, p. 1, p. 12.

insufficiency of his moralism, Morier Evans turns to the anachronistic attempt to use legislation to protect people from themselves, just the attempt derided by the Westminster Review and others in their campaign for limited liability and a free market in capital.

Morier Evans's sympathies are most with the small investor ruined by speculation and crisis - hence his correspondingly severe denunciation of the fraud. But to the extent that he shares the sympathies of this petty-bourgeois class, his texts, especially Facts, Failures and Frauds, and Speculative Notes and Notes on Speculation, are riven with a contradiction. This is that there are at once denunciations of speculation and guides to it, much as sixteenth century 'discoveries' of knavery also helped to initiate the uninitiated. The similarity goes further than that, indeed, for the mythology of fraud takes up the traditional literary types of knave and gull, a fact fully exploited in the novel, as we shall see. Morier Evans described his purpose in writing Facts, Failures and Frauds in this way:

> One great object, and one alone, induced me to engage in the task of selecting and arranging these remarkable histories, viz, to bring together a complete record of the astounding frauds and forgeries, with other attendant circumstances, which have of late so frequently startled the commercial community from their prosperity (p. iv).

The book is a compilation of the histories of several different kinds of fraud - from the story of Hudson, the railway king; to Sadleir, the banker and prototype of Merdle in Little Dorrit; to numerous embezzling clerks; to swindlers; and to outright bullion thieves. Not only did all these 'remarkable histories' occur in the 1850s, with the admittedly large exception of Hudson; but also all were concerned with new areas of economic activity - joint-stock banks, transferable shares, even the movement of the new Australian and Californian gold. All these heterogeneous frauds, including Hudson's questionably fraudulent transactions as well as the outright criminality of train-robbers, are lumped together

and denounced as representative specimens of the morality of the age. Morier Evans voices the hysteria of an historically superseded social class, yet his book is petty-bourgeois in character, and oscillates between aspiration to and rejection of the class above it; his moralizing thus inevitably remains impotent.

This contradictory position is especially apparent in Morier Evans's attitude to bankruptcy and failure. In Facts, Failures and Frauds he is concerned with dishonourable failures - people whose crimes catch them out. However, not all failures are dishonourable, obviously enough - in a commercial crisis, for example, many people fail through no fault of their own, and in his two books dealing with the crises of 1847-8 and 1857-8, Morier Evans lists many such cases. The laws relating to bankruptcy underwent considerable transformation in the mid-century, amounting to a liberalization of the law in an effort to keep pace with changing trading conditions, but Morier Evans was incapable of keeping abreast of these changes, harking back to an age when insolvency meant absolute dishonour. The contradiction between this attitude and that of the economic historian of the two books on the commercial crisis is finally irresolvable, but, significantly, he attempts to resolve it in Speculative Notes and Notes on Speculation by giving a fictionalized account of a typical bankruptcy. In this little story, a small trader, faced with the prospect of ruin because the railway has removed a lot of his trade, is persuaded by a slick modern lawyer to make a composition with his creditors. The trader feels uncomfortable about the scheme, but Morier Evans suggests that his reluctance is an anachronism, an example of old-fashioned rectitude.

John Lalor is another writer who attempted to subject the periodic crises of capitalism to a moral critique; his Money and Morals: a Book for the Times, was published in 1852. The economics of the book are

rather perverse; it argues that crises are caused by a glut of money created by widespread saving; but the relevant point is that Lalor attempts to subordinate economics to morality:

> The source of the disorder [periodic crises] lies in the highest, that is, in the moral, nature of man, which, if it is not raised and ennobled in proportion to the advances which he makes in wealth and intelligence, must continually produce new and more fearful varieties of disorganization. The effective remedy, therefore, can be only a moral one (pp. 97-98).

This is coupled to a condemnation of speculation couched in moral terms:

> Commerce and gambling run into each other by shades so gradual that it is hard to say where one ends and the other begins. Nevertheless, the distinction is as real as between black and white, which may join by a thousand intermediate shades, and the moral habits which they engender are as opposite as light and darkness (p. 80).

Lalor's project, in many ways the most interesting of the three described in this section, is to 'Christianize political economy'. In this respect, all three writers share not only the problematic in which the commercial world is approached with a question about its honesty, but more generally they share the problematic which attempts to subject political economy to morality. As we have seen, this problematic produces a mythologized history in the case of Smiles, and mythologized economics in the case of Morier Evans. Lalor resists mythology more consistently in so far as his book remains political economy. But since political economy purports to be scientific, and since to the extent that it is so it must recognize that its object is not governed by extrinsic moral categories, there is always the danger that other areas of social life will be seen as subject to the same amoral imperatives that govern political economy. This is a danger that Lalor recognizes but cannot escape:

> It is quite possible for me, for example, as an economist, to recognize and guide my conduct by the knowledge of the fact, that, with some slight exceptions, men are found to produce the greatest amount of wealth when they are perfectly free to exchange with each other the products

> of their industry; and yet at the same time to reject - nay, as I do, to loathe and spurn with my whole soul - the doctrine, that buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market is to be the supreme rule of action (p. 132).

This problematic in fact is characteristic of the mid-Victorian intellectual who rejects the hegemonic claims of political economy but remains deferential to the 'laws' considered eternally applicable to it. It was the very intractability of these laws to a solely moral discourse which meant that, wherever such a discourse could get any purchase, it should take the form of the mythology of fraud.

Lalor by and large eschews this mythology, though there is an element of it in his unsuccessful attempt to distinguish speculation from gambling. As for Smiles and Morier Evans, they narrate the ideology of fraud in two distinctive ways. Just as the story of the self-made man could be narrated in different ways to yield different ideological meanings - every narrative being necessarily a prise de position[16] - so each narration of the myth of the fraud also yields a different meaning. For Smiles, the fraud is a depradator on an essentially honest society; while for Morier Evans, he is representative of a dishonest or hypocritical society. As we shall see, every narration of the myth of the fraud in the 1850s takes up one of these two positions, the classic example of the fraud-as-representative-of-dishonest society being Carlyle's essay on 'Hudson's Statue'.[17]

III

To characterize the fraud as a metonymic representative of society at large has an air of radicalism that is not wholly justified - to denounce the fraud as a fraud at least suggests that the institutions

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16. See above, page 11, n.

17. T. Carlyle, 'Hudson's Statue', Latter-Day Pamphlets (1850; page references are to the Centenary Edition of Carlyle's Works).

or legal forms that he has cheated are in themselves honest. There is thus a constant danger of this narration of the myth slipping into the safer version of the fraud as depradator on a basically honest society, and this is a danger that Carlyle has to avoid. Moreover, that a writer like Morier Evans could subscribe to this harder version of the myth should make it clear that the radicalism of Carlyle's essay is a radicalism of a reactionary cast.

In the essay, Carlyle excoriates at some length the project of the citizens of York to erect a statue to Hudson. The gist of the argument is that a people can be judged by the men they honour; in setting out to honour this false hero Hudson, the English people have shown how little they are worth:

> The practical English mind, contemplating its divine Hudson, says with what remainder of reverence is in it: 'Yes, you are something like the Ideal of a Man; you are he I would give my right arm and leg, and accept a potbelly, with gout, and an appetite for strong waters, to be like! You out of nothing can make a world, or huge fortune of gold. A divine intellect is in you, which Earth and Heaven, and Capel Court itself acknowledge; at the word of which are done miracles. You find a dying railway; you say to it, Live, blossom anew with scrip; - and it lives, and blossoms into umbrageous flowery scrip, to enrich with golden apples, surpassing those of the Hesperides, the hungry souls of men' (pp. 256-257).

The brunt of the argument is thus directed against Universal Suffrage; for by the practical suffrage of their money, which they have invested in Hudson's scrip, the English have testified to their total inability to rule themselves.

Rather than having a statue erected to him, Hudson should have been sunk at the bottom of a coal-shaft; or, as another alternative, Carlyle pictures his fate were the millennial time of a true aristocracy come:

> Heroic men, the sent of Heaven, once more bore rule: and on the throne of kings there sat splendent, not King Hudson, or King Popinjay, but the Bravest of existing Men; and on the gibbet there swung as a

> tragic pendulum, admonitory to earth in the name of Heaven, - not some insignificant, abject, necessitous outcast, who had violently, in his extreme misery and darkness, stolen a leg of mutton, - but veritably the Supreme Scoundrel of the Commonwealth, who in his insatiable greed and bottomless atrocity had long, hoodwinking the poor world, gone himself, and led multitudes to go, in the ways of gilded human baseness; sinking temporary profit (scrip, first-class claret, social honour, and the like small ware), where only eternal loss was possible ... (p. 273).

This tone of almost hysterical denunciation recalls D. Morier Evans; in Carlyle's case the rant increases in volume as he imagines his audience to recede. The extreme violence of the image of the gibbeted Hudson suggests how much is to be pinned on him as emblematic of the false gods of this earth. It is an image that will recur in the fictional narrations of the myth of the fraud.

The violence of the essay, then, condenses around the figure of Hudson, but its drift is against the worship offered to him by all members of society. That he was in fact something of a fraud is not essential to Carlyle's argument - if anything, it rather weakens it. Not all investment in scrip is necessarily fraudulent, and it is the very existence of rich speculative investment that is at fault. Yet it is only the exposure of Hudson that has made the whole exercise in excoriation possible. If the essay were about a statue to Brassey, say, it might have had more bite; indeed, Carlyle does ask of all the heroes of England as represented by their statues, 'Are these your Pattern Men? Great Men? They are your lucky (or unlucky) Gamblers swollen big. Paltry Adventurers for most part; worthy of no worship; and incapable forever of getting any, except from the soul consecrated to flunkeyism' (p. 262). In answer to the essay, the flunkies could legitimately retort that they had been cheated.

This condemnation of society as 'flunkeyism' should be read in conjunction with the 'Society' sections of Little Dorrit. It is one

of the points of the essay which connects with Dickens's Radicalism, and is indeed a trace of Carlyle's own earlier Radicalism, of his youthful derision of 'Gigmanship'. Carlyle's position was of course idiosyncratic; but the fact that potentially contradictory attitudes should coexist in the same essay is not merely indicative of that. It also suggests what the narrative of the fraud is able to resolve, Carlyle's simultaneous commitment to the notion of an aristocracy and his deeply frustrated awareness of the absence of one. The frustration of this position is discharged upon Hudson, but the discharge is only possible given the imaginary gratification which the narrative of Hudson's hanging permits.

In a sense Carlyle's essay has done something of a disservice to a small matter of social history. Hudson's name obviously dominates the Railway Mania of the 1840s, but in the seven novels of the 1850s that I will be looking at in this chapter he is the immediate prototype of only two of the frauds. For all his significance as a symbol of a society devoted to luxury and ostentation, Hudson was not the only such figure. Thackeray, Dickens and Trollope all centre on banking or insurance frauds - indeed, Thackeray wrote The History of Mr. Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond before the Railway Mania - and Hudson's own significance receded with the memory of the Mania. When Trollope came to write The Way We Live Now in the early 1870s, Hudson was by then an almost forgotten figure.[18] Hudson's significance as a representative figure, in short, is best understood as part of a wider ideology of fraud.

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18. 'There was a time when not to know him [Hudson] was to argue one's self unknown; now he is only a tradition', The Times, 16 December 1871. Quoted by R.S. Lambert, The Railway King, p. 275.

IV

In Geraldine Jewsbury's Marian Withers, it will be recalled, there was a lengthy discussion which turned on the opposition between self-help and joint-stock. The discussion was between several self-made Lancashire cotton spinners and Mr Cunningham, an intellectual and sympathetic gentleman, the former attacking joint-stock companies, and the latter defending them, at least in principle:

> The conversation turned upon the joint-stock companies, which were then the ruling mania of the day.
>
> 'I have no faith in them,' said John Withers; 'they are all just schemes for making everybody rich without working; they have taken the place of the lotteries, where everybody hoped by putting a bit of paper into the wheel to see it come out the ten-thousand pound prize at least. It is a bad look-out for a country when the people of it take the notion of getting rich in a hurry; it is trying to cheat nature into working miracles, and getting things without paying the price for them. It may seem to answer for a while; but pay-day will come at last, and find them out, like the day of judgment, when they least look for it. There is nothing but hard work that does not deceive a man; if he sticks to that, he finds the good of it in the end, though his back may be half broken before it comes.'
>
> 'Ay, that's true enough, Mr. Withers,' said Higginbottom. 'The worst thing in these joint-stock companies is that the shareholders lose all thought of working themselves, but trust to the directors juggling with their money, so as to make two and two into five, whilst the directors, though perhaps they may none of them be rascals on their own account, yet when they all come to act together, their conscience evaporates, for one gives in to another; one is squeamish in this, while the other is squeamish in that, so that any kind of rascality gets done amongst them; and if they are called to account, there's the "Board" to come upon, which is just like trying to catch "Nobody", - who, along with the Cat, has done all the mischief since the world began. I, for my part, can see no good in going partners with all the world; I am just for a fair stand-up fight in business, each of us to fund for ourselves: "a fair field and no favour"; that is my motto.' (II, 15-17).

The project of the novel, as we have seen, is to wean these men away from such a narrow concern with their own interests into attitudes in which class cooperation will be possible. So Mr Cunningham counters

the arguments of Withers and Higginbottom by claiming that 'vicious as the working, and as the effects of some of these joint-stock companies may be, still they contain a principle that will gradually reorganize the whole machinery of society. Cooperation will gradually take the place of competition' (II, 23). The novel is thus a progressive one; it seeks to outmanoeuvre the manufacturers' embattled commitment to self-help and with it their hostility to joint-stock.

Marian Withers in part functions as social history; it aims to present a hitherto neglected or misrepresented social class to the novel-reading public. It is also an overt roman-a-these, by which I mean a novel which includes an argument about life or society which is only incidentally related (or even contradictorily related) to its own narrative procedures. Such novels are usually characterized, as in this case, by substantial sections of unmediated 'non-fictional' discourse, like the argument quoted above. But even this discourse relies upon narrative for its authority; Higginbottom, for example, provides a short story to explain how responsibility is evaded in a joint-stock company. (It is just this evasion of responsibility that Dickens centres on in Little Dorrit, of course, the novel originally called 'Nobody's Fault'.) The ideology of fraud, then, which in a modified form enters into the 'non-fictional' sections of Marian Withers, already enjoys a widespread circulation 'before' or 'outside' the novel, since it can be evoked so confidently here; and since it relies upon narrative, it provides just these possibilities for plot, character-types and hermeneutic encodings which the novel demands. Several novels of the 1850s make use of these possibilities, thus further propelling and authenticating (within certain limits of repetition) the myth of the fraud.

Indeed, one such narrative possibility occurs in the course of

Marian Withers itself. Towards the end of the novel, John Withers's enterprise is threatened by a credit crisis; it almost looks as though all his hard-won gains are going to be lost. This is how the crisis is described:

> The aspect of commercial affairs was at that period peculiarly gloomy. Country banks were breaking in all directions. The different joint-stock companies which had sprung up like mushrooms, were exploding and causing ruin and desolation, as if they had been powder-mines. Firms that had been considered beyond suspicion were everyday declared insolvent; - no one knew any longer whom to trust, nor who would be the next to go (III, 99).

In this novel, the storm is weathered; the crisis does no more than deepen the temporary estrangement between John Withers and his daughter. But the possibility is nevertheless there, that a crash which causes impoverishment - one of the stock fictional devices of the nineteenth-century novel - might occur. Because the (averted) crash in here specifically linked to joint-stock companies, it takes up the previous 'non-fictional' discussion and reinforces it. Since these stock devices carry a powerful emotional and moral charge, there operates a kind of exchange in which the power of the stock device is given a particular ideological direction, while the ideology is authenticated by being 'lived', if only vicariously, by the reader.

Written in the same year as Marian Withers, and providing a more extended narration of the myth of the fraud, is The Gold-Worshippers, by Emma Robinson.[19] Like its northern contemporary, this is a three-volume novel whose circulation was restricted to a few years in the circulating libraries. It is however much thinner than Geraldine Jewsbury's tale, its moralism effectively exhausting its characterizations, all of which are simply types, their names announcing their

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19. The Gold-Worshippers; or, The Days We Live In. A FUTURE Historical Novel (1851). By the Author of Whitefriars /Emma Robinson/.

characters. Thus there is an Alderman Gullibull, who is a large city merchant gulled into railway speculation; a Mrs Sparkleton, a socially brilliant but silly widowed aristocrat - who is gulled likewise; a Lord Fitzhauton, a proud and raffish aristocrat who has married Gullibull's daughter for money; and so on. The only character in the novel who does not carry his character printed on his visiting-card is one Mr Humson, who, as the 'Napoleon of Steam' and the 'bubble monarch', is obviously a simple transcription of Hudson.

Humson is described with precisely the physical characteristics of his prototype: 'A broad-set, stout, plebeian figure, with a fat, oily visage, a good-natured, jolly smile, and so corpulent that he waddled as he entered at his brisk pace - and behold the Mammon of our day!' (II, 27). If the physical characteristics are taken straight from Hudson, the whole characterization is put in a strongly Carlylean context:

> Rank, beauty, fashion, wealth, all bending in homage before the crowned imposture of the day, what wonder the climber grew giddy at length on his elevation, and, as sailors phrase it, lost his head? The idol was certainly worthy of his worshippers; and if, like other false gods, he was obliged to resort to fraud and deception to keep up the illusion of his power and supremacy, surely the crawling priests and frequenters of the temple were more to be despised and contemned than the object of their adoration! (II, 29-30).

What is the status of this both as fictional characterization and social history? From the slightly deformed name and the physical characteristics, Humson is plainly to be read as Hudson, this being one of the points at which the novel claims the authenticity of social history ('a FUTURE historical novel'). But in the process of characterization this character acquires certain attributes derived from literary discourse - Emma Robinson is necessarily certain of his motives, for example - which are then re-exported to function as explanations for the real, historical Hudson's behaviour. There is thus a series of exchanges of authority between the fictional and the supposed 'real' history, from which a

discourse emerges with the authority to give a generalized moral denunciation of society.

Humson, however, though a fraud and an impostor, is by no means the only one in the novel. There are two other frauds as well, the first being Humson's sidekick, Mr Lawless: 'He was not a merchant, he was not a clerk, he was not a professional man, he was not a gentleman ... /he/ was a commercial gamester, a penniless adventurer' (II, 22-23). This is a type that often recurs in the more aristocratic narrations of the myth, but even here we can note the extreme unease generated by the inability to place Lawless in a simply definable social category. The second fraud, on the other hand, Mr Rustisaw, is Gullibull's old and trusted clerk, and he too embezzles funds for speculating on the railways, thus providing the immediate cause of Gullibull's failure. When even such as Mr Rustisaw can embezzle and then levant, it becomes clear just how widespread the disease of railway-speculation is, and with it social corruption.

The plot eventually becomes remarkably convoluted, displaying the various rascally intrigues of the aristocratic characters, and providing numerous opportunities for the base-born heroine, Charity Green, to show her intrepidity and moral courage. She is at length rewarded by marriage to the old attorney, Bagshawe, who alone has remained untouched by the fever for speculation. The various narratives of the novel are ultimately centred on this Cinderella story, the social situations of hero and heroine suggesting its nature as petty-bourgeois wish-fulfilment.

Yet also present in this text is an aristocratic worry that fraud and speculation in railways are depradations on aristocratic capitals.[20]

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20. I am here using 'aristocratic' as an adjective to cover both the nobility and the gentry. The usage is awkward but the alternatives seem worse ('gentle'?). The question is discussed further in the following chapter.

Mrs Sparkleton is ruined just as much as Mr Gullibull. More generally, implicit in the general denunciation of society as bowing down before a false god, is the assumption that there are true gods who are worthy of worship: '[Society] had no apology, and asked none, for its idol-worship, but money! It was not charmed with eloquence, fascinated with beauty, won by great services, to deify' (II, 30). The novel, in short, is split by contradictions, which are 'resolved' in the simple ideological coherence of an uncomplicated typology and the narratives of fraud.

It is scarcely sufficient, therefore, to ascribe a class perspective ('petty-bourgeois') to a novel to complete its analysis. Not only is this class-perspective formally inscribed in the novel, but it can also co-exist with elements derived from a quite different class-perspective. This is as true of an unsophisticated and jejune fiction like The Gold-Worshippers as it is of a highly complex and comprehensive novel like Little Dorrit. In the next section I will discuss four novels where the class perspective is more predominantly aristocratic.

V

The Caxtons was Lytton's first attempt at the quiet domestic style of his later novels.[21] It belongs with his two panoramic novels of the 1850s, My Novel (1853) and What Will He Do With It? (1858) - for that reason it can justifiably be included in a study of the novel in the 1850s. The project of the novel is moralistic; its tone is homiletic throughout and the novel could conveniently be compared to a genre-painting. It is relevant to this chapter in two respects; firstly in the character of Jack Tillets, the hero's maternal uncle, who is a compulsive speculator and company promoter; and secondly in the financial

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21. Lord Lytton, The Caxtons, A Family Picture (1848).

embarrassment caused to the Caxton family by the failure of one of Jack Tillets's speculative ventures.

Tillets is a self-styled philanthropist, constantly deluding himself as well as others about the success of his various schemes. To this extent he is not strictly a fraud, though there is something so ludicrously impossible about his schemes for them to verge on the fraudulent. The particular scheme in which he persuades Mr Caxton senior to invest is the establishment of a daily paper to propound the latter's eccentric views; in the event he uses the money to set up a paper called 'The Capitalist' which is no more than a guide to speculative ventures. The paper is established on joint-stock principles; it fails; and Jack Tillets flees to Australia considerably in his brother-in-law's debt. The particular nature of Lytton's project can be gauged from the fact that when Tillets is in Australia he abandons his delusions of philanthropy and makes a fortune by looking to the main chance; only in this way is he able to do the honourable thing and repay what he owes. Lytton is suspicious of those who style themselves 'philanthropists', contending that only by looking to one's own interest can the general interest be served; but, conveniently, he only permits this cynical economic liberalism to operate freely in Australia.

The failure of 'The Capitalist' nearly brings the Caxton fortunes to ruin - so it provides an opportunity for the display of the various domestic virtues for which the family is pre-eminent, even if they are practised somewhat eccentrically. Thus the ironic stoicism of the father; the right-thinking disinterestedness of the brother; and the fortitude and enterprise of the son and hero, can all be displayed to advantage. At the end of the novel all this virtue is suitably rewarded by the repayment of the debt, and the return of the hero from Australia with a small fortune made in sheep-farming. The two moneys combine to

provide for the purchase of a small estate and the settlement of the family as small landowners.

The ideology of fraud, then, is not central to The Caxtons; the speculator is not a major character in the novel, though he does provide one of the turning-points of the plot. The speculator, in fact, depradates a small aristocratic capital - in much the same way, the villain in My Novel, who is also fraudulent in so far as he presents a deceptive moral surface, acts as a potential depradator on the squirearch Hazeldean. This is the characteristic narration of the myth of the fraud in the more aristocratic novels of the decade. For Lytton, the depradator is really incidental to the even tenor of English life; the speculator as a type is not typical of English morality. The extent to which society is shown to be in thrall to the speculator and the fraud thus provides a precise measure of an author's disaffection.

A text which shares the class-perspective of The Caxtons, but where the operations of fraud and speculation provide the main narrative interest - and thus at one or two points shares the radical disaffection of The Gold-Worshippers - is Catherine Sinclair's Sir Edward Graham; or, Railway-Speculators.[22] This novel gives the typical narration of fraud as depradator of aristocratic capitals, as the plot of the novel reveals.

Sir Edward Graham, an upright and honourable ex-soldier, has been fooled into marriage with an irredeemably vulgar and malicious woman. She is somehow in the power of her blackguard cousin, Sir Fitzroy Percival, and his villainous henchman of dubious social origin, Mr Thornton. Under their influence she secretly speculates on the railways with Sir Edward's money; after a railway crash it appears that the money is irretrievably lost and that Sir Edward, with his two children by a former marriage, is

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22. Catherine Sinclair, Sir Edward Graham; or, Railway Speculators (1849).

ruined. However, it is eventually revealed that the influence that Sir Fitzroy Percival enjoyed over Lady Graham sprang from a clandestine marriage; since she was never therefore legally married to Sir Edward, he is not responsible for her debts, so this revelation saves him both from bankruptcy and an intolerable wife.

The bulk of the novel is taken up with the conversation of the aristocratic characters, especially Sir Edward Graham's children, and their close friends, the family of Admiral Grey. This family life is exemplary:

> ... the pure, calm, and healthy felicity of a home such as Rockingham /the family seat/; the chief happiness of which, great as it was, consisted in an energetic spirit of usefulness,[23] in a continual consideration of each other's feelings, in benevolent actions, in literary pursuits, in sound rational conversation, and in cheerful, intelligent piety (II, 263).

The book provides a medium for the display of the high moral worth, animation and good sense of the social order exemplified by this family life, and, by the device of the clandestine marriage, gives this social order an imaginary way of resisting the depradations of speculator and rogue.

Sir Edward Graham, whose voice in these matters is hardly to be questioned, pronounces the definitive moral judgment on speculation:

> 'I know nothing, and desire to know nothing, of railways except the price of my first-class ticket to London. In fact, Lady Graham, I would almost as soon stand on the rails and face the engine at speed as buy a single share, for in my opinion a railway speculator can scarcely be an honest man' (I, 262).

The class-character of this moral discourse is equally explicit: '"No gentleman can be a gentleman, who finesses in railways, still less could any lady be a lady"' (I, 264). This pronouncement is of a piece with

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23. Which is displayed above all in charity, the subject of the following chapter.

Sir Edward's distaste that a man like Mr Thornton, who is plainly not a gentleman, should be admitted into gentle company under the auspices of Sir Fitzroy Percival. Speculation, in short, as well as being a species of gambling and thus in itself immoral - and conducive to fraud - is also vulgar; Lady Graham is extremely vulgar and Mr Thornton's social origins are very uncertain. At length he proves both his vulgarity and his fraudulence by levanting with his gains when the crash comes.

The threat posed to the aristocracy and the gentry by speculation and fraud is thus as much moral as financial - a fear again voiced by Sir Edward Graham: '"This new and most degrading whim among gentlemen, of speculating, will ruin at last the honourable character of our English aristocracy!"' (III, 322). Here the text approaches an aristocratic nightmare, in which the aristocracy is morally disabled by speculation. It is only a transient fear, but it is present in the text and is the point of entry for the more generally denunciatory texts such as The Gold-Worshippers or Little Dorrit.

Sir Edward Graham also demonstrates the possibility for hermeneutic encodings that the myth of the fraud permits. It is in the nature of the fraud to be other than what he seems; this disjunction between appearance and reality provides a variety of different possibilities for the narration of the myth in the novel, each implying a different relationship between text and reader. The fraud can, for example, be revealed 'privately' to the reader from the start, but his 'general' exposure postponed to the denouement; or hints can be dropped at intervals in the text that some kind of fraud is being practised, confirmed at the final exposure; or the revelation can be kept as a surprise. A fourth logical alternative, which I have not encountered in the novels of the 1850s, would be for the fraud to be revealed to the

reader but never exposed. It is the second alternative, in which a mystery is proposed to the reader which has to be interpreted, that is the method of narration chosen in Sir Edward Graham, as it is in Little Dorrit ('Mr. Merdle's complaint'). At intervals throughout the text Lady Graham blanches when a fall in railway shares is announced in the paper; or she is surprised in conference with Sir Fitzroy Percival and hastily hides a collection of documents; or she is observed stealing away to place letters secretly in the post-bag. It does not take too much perspicuity on the part of the reader to interpret these signs correctly (indeed, as we shall see in the case of The Newcomes, Thackeray can play on the possibility of such skilful or habitual readers); when the technique is used with greater skill, as in Little Dorrit, it can become a powerful method of formal organization.

This method of narration is revelatory; it eventually gives the reader access to a 'higher' or more 'real' level of truth than that presented by the deceptive surface of the fraud. The method of narration thus provides authentication in the experience of reading the text for one of the fundamental interpellant presuppositions of the ideology of fraud - that it grants access to the final level at which the mysterious workings of social life can be explained.

Though it provides the main narrative interest in Sir Edward Graham, the narration of the myth of the fraud is not the main purpose of the novel. As we have seen, fraud is not presented as representative of English society, but as depradatory on the gentry and aristocracy whose manners are displayed for the reader's admiration and imitation. In this respect the novel is no more than an elaborate book of etiquette. In The Three Clerks, though the aristocratic character of the victims is not so marked, the fraud similarly functions as a depradator; the two novels are structurally similar, for in both English society suffers

no fundamental attaint from being preyed upon.[24]

The Three Clerks tells the stories of three clerks in the Civil Service who marry three sisters. One of them, Alaric Tudor, the brightest of the three and a high-flyer, is led on to financing his ambition by dealing in shares. Finally he gets so embroiled that he uses a trustee's money to speculate; when the inevitable crash comes the embezzlement is discovered, and he is tried and convicted of fraud. He is forced to emigrate and to make a fresh start in Australia.

The evil genius in this scheme is the Honourable Undecimus Scott, M.P., the main instigator in the speculative schemes that tempt Alaric Tudor, and the man who lures him into fraud. He does so on two occasions; first when Alaric Tudor has to make a government report on a Cornish mine - Undy Scott introduces him to a Cornish stock-jobber who induces him to buy shares in the mine, a move which gives him an undeclared interest in producing a favourable report. There are thus three fraudulent characters in the novel: Alaric Tudor himself, who, though the only one actually convicted of fraud is in most ways really a victim; Undy Scott, the villain, apparently a gentleman but who has forfeited his claim to gentlemanly status by his immorality; and Mr Manylodes, the Cornish stock-jobber, who is obviously not a gentleman at all. This is how he is described:

> He was a small man, more like an American in appearance than an Englishman. He had on a common black hat, a black coat, black waistcoat and black trousers, thick boots, a coloured shirt, and very dirty hands. Though every article he wore was good, and most of them such as gentlemen wear, no man alive could have mistaken him for a gentleman. No man, conversant with the species to which he belonged, could have taken him for anything but what he was. As he entered the room, a faint, sickly, second-hand smell of alcohol pervaded the atmosphere (p. 97).

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24. A. Trollope, The Three Clerks (1858. References to the World's Classics Edition, 1978).

Since America is notoriously the home of sharp practice in business, the resemblance to an American is scarcely surprising; nor is it surprising that Manylodes should be of indeterminate social class, for as we have seen this characterizes the potentially fraudulent stock-jobber. Trollope is as ready as Lytton or Catherine Sinclair to use the simple categories of gentility as constitutive categories of the text; he is perhaps less emphatic about them (there is no table-thumping to give force to the description, as we saw in My Novel[25]), but is equally interpellant - that 'no man alive', for example, can only mean none of Trollope's readers. The ascription of typicality to Manylodes is also important; he is the typical and unmistakeable representative of the species Cornish stock-jobber, and after this introduction the reader will be able both to recognize and avoid him, especially given the almost emetic distaste of the description.

Manylodes is introduced to Alaric Tudor under the auspices of Undecimus Scott, the real villain of the piece. This pairing of blackguard aristocrat and fraudulent cad also figured, as we have seen, in Sir Edward Graham. Having trapped Alaric Tudor into buying shares in the mine on which he has to report, Manylodes has served his purpose and does not reappear in the novel. The interest switches to Undy Scott, who lures Tudor into becoming trustee for his niece, and then into buying worthless shares with the niece's money. By refusing to pay back the money when an exposure is threatened, he is the effective cause of Tudor's ruin, but he is not legally responsible and escapes the legal consequences.

The fact that he escapes the legal consequences is itself significant, but Trollope does not hesitate to pile (fictional) retribution on him.

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25. See page 35 above.

Chapter forty-four opens with a humorous foregrounding of the fictional nature of the text, in the manner of Thackeray:

> /Undy Scott/ has indeed been the bad spirit of the tale, the Siva of our mythology, the devil that has led our hero into temptation, the incarnation of evil, which it is always necessary that the novelist should have personified in one of his characters to enable him to bring about his misfortunes, his tragedies, and various requisite catastrophes (p. 528).

The basic thesis that I am advancing in this chapter is precisely this; that in the novel, or more generally by means of the narratives circulating in ideology, misfortunes, tragedies and catastrophes can be blamed on individuals. It is true that Trollope does not go on to add that they should be seen rather as effects of a particular social system; however, he does apparently achieve an urbanity not unlike his model, Thackeray's - the very fact that the fictional process has been humorously foregrounded seems to suggest a consciousness of the inadequacy of these novelistic procedures. Any such suspicion is quickly dispersed as the chapter proceeds, however; it continues with a prolonged comparison between Undy Scott and Bill Sykes, in which it is suggested that there are mitigating circumstances for the latter which make his hanging a matter of regret:

> Yes, I hang Bill Sykes with soft regret; but with what a savage joy, with what exultation of heart, with what alacrity of eager soul, with what aptitude of mind to the deed, would I hang my friend, Undy Scott, the member of Parliament for the Tillietudlem burghs, if I could but get at his throat for such a purpose! Hang him! Aye, as high as Haman! (p. 531).

He goes on to say that by comparison with Bill Sykes, whose hanging would be performed merely to protect society, to hang Undy Scott would serve as a deterrent: 'But if I could hang Undy Scott, I think I should deter some others. The figure of Undy swinging from a gibbet at the broad end of Lombard Street would have an effect. Ah! my fingers itch to be at the rope' (p. 531).

This extraordinary outburst recalls Carlyle's outburst about hanging Hudson, where the contrast is also one between a hanged man as victim of circumstance and a hanged man as deliberate villain. As in Carlyle, the image of the gibbeted fraud condenses the rage and frustration which is not released through a 'normal' narrative development, in which Undy Scott would reap his just deserts. The image also releases all the frustration that has built up at the moral collapse of Alaric Tudor so that Undy Scott, in a word, is scapegoated, and the official world of the three clerks, along with their social order, is thereby absolved.

But the question remains; why did Trollope opt for this narrative development rather than choose one in which Undy Scott's punishment is more condign? What 'really' happens to him is merely that he is expelled both from his Club and from Parliament, the former apparently entailing the greater disgrace. Trollope even admits that he could have hanged him if he had wanted to, 'had I drunk deeper from that Castalian rill whose dark waters are tinged with the gall of poetic indignation' (p. 531). He is not hanged, however; the reader is simply left to imagine 'how at last his wretched life will ooze out from him in some dark corner, like the filthy juice of a decayed fungus which makes hideous the hidden wall on which it bursts' (p. 538). It seems to me that here, characteristically, Trollope is having his cake and eating it; on the one hand he is touching on a potentially radical attitude, in which the real villain escapes while his cat's-paw is punished (compare modern crime stories in which Mr Big is never caught); and on the other hand he substitutes for the averted nemesis as much obloquy as his vitriolic pen can muster.

For all that it touches on a potentially radical attitude, and for all that it echoes Carlyle, The Three Clerks in general provides a safe narration of the myth of the fraud, in which the fraud is comfortably

ejected from English society without doing too much damage. (This is in marked contrast to The Way We Live Now, written fifteen years later. In the later novel the fraud is indeed representative of a corrupt society, and Trollope is clearly radically disaffected from that society. The fact that his disaffection should take the form of a persistent and unrelieved moral discourse should prevent us from too readily assuming that this radical disaffection is necessarily progressive.) Charles Lever's Davenport Dunn, by contrast, apparently provides a more radically denunciatory narration of the myth, though any apparent radicalism in the text is vitiated by the inertness with which Lever deploys the conventional narratives and stereotyped characterizations.[26]

Davenport Dunn is a large and panoramic novel, set both in Ireland and in Europe. It falls into two halves, the first concerned with the schemes and machinations of Davenport Dunn himself, the second with those of the villainous Grog Davis, who eventually murders Davenport Dunn. Even from this it can be seen that the novel is not organically plotted; Lever performs the minimum literary work in arranging the various ideological narratives which he deploys in the text.

Davenport Dunn himself, as I noted at the end of the last chapter, is a self-made man; but he has not made his money out of engineering or cotton, he has made it out of dealing in encumbered Irish estates. He has been active in promoting the sale of such estates to a new class of gentry who could own the land without being burdened with debt.[27] In the process he has ruined an ancient Irish family, the Kellets of Kellet Court, out of revenge to a slight they put on him when he was

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26. Charles Lever, Davenport Dunn (1859).

27. Here Lever resumes the theme of his earlier novel, The Martins of Cro' Martin (1853), which is concerned with the decline of the old Irish gentry as a major political force. The novel is discussed further in chapter 3, below.

a poor boy. The characterization is intended as a picture of a financial magnate of gigantic proportions; he promotes joint-stock banks and vast speculative schemes, notably one intended to transform the Glengarrif estates - on a beautiful bay near Bantry - into a spa and resort. Significantly, despite his base birth and the fundamental fraudulence of the scheme, the Glengarrif family are obsequious in their behaviour towards him, just as Government courts him. He personifies, in fact, the 'spirit of the age'.

The characterization combines traits of at least three of the frauds that Morier Evans deals with in Facts, Failures and Frauds - namely, Hudson, John Sadleir M.P., and Leopold Redpath, a clerk for the Great Northern Railway who defrauded them of large sums by means of fictitious stock transfers. He lived in princely style until the frauds were discovered in 1856, and is actually mentioned in Davenport Dunn as 'Leopold Redlines'. Davenport Dunn's fraudulence is modelled both on him and on Sadleir, who was also, of course, the immediate model for Merdle in Little Dorrit. Sadleir too had first come to prominence as a lawyer dealing in encumbered Irish estates; he too was involved in joint-stock banking and was courted by Government, being at one time a Lord of the Treasury. The scale of Dunn's operations is modelled on Hudson.

The novel, then, claims the authenticity of social history; but far from being a simple transcription of 'reality', what it takes up are, necessarily, the categories most readily available to it, namely the ideological categories of the myth of the fraud. Lever performs very little literary work on this ideology, using it in much the same way as he uses the conventional 'literary' characterizations and narratives - the haughty aristocrat, the intrepid heroine, the villainous but courageous rogue, the heroic soldier in the ranks who turns out to be

a peer, and so on. This mass of conventional and ideological material - much of it residual in Raymond Williams's sense - is simply strung together with little sense of potential contradictions.

The kind of inert and conventional handling of the material that Lever uses can be gauged from the following extract, necessarily rather a lengthy one; it occurs after Davenport Dunn has been murdered and his fraudulence exposed to the world:

> The whole interest of the world was turned to the ... astounding news that society had for years back been the dupe of the most crafty and unprincipled knave of all Europe, that the great idol of its worship, the venerated and respected in all enterprises of industry, the man of large philanthropy and wide benevolence, was a schemer and a swindler, unprincipled and unfeeling ...
>
> Of the vast numbers who had dealings with him, scarcely any escaped: false title deeds, counterfeited shares, forged scrip abounded. The securities entrusted to his keeping in all the trustfulness of an unlimited confidence had been pledged for loans of money; vast sums alleged to have been advanced on mortgage were embezzled without a shadow of security. From the highest in the Peerage to the poorest peasant, all were involved in the same scheme of ruin, and the great fortunes of the rich and the hardly-saved pittance of the poor alike engulphed. So suddenly did the news break upon the world that it actually seemed incredible. It was not alone a shock given to mercantile credit and commercial honesty, but it seemed an outrage against whatever assumed to be high-principled and honourable. It could not be denied that this man had been the world's choicest favourite. Upon him had been lavished all the honours and rewards usually reserved for the greatest benefactors of their kind. The favours of the Crown, the friendship and intimacy with the highest in station, immense influence with the members of the Government, power and patronage to any extent, and, greater than all these, because more widespread and far-reaching, a sort of acceptance that all that he said and did, and planned and projected, was certain to be for the best, and that they who opposed his views or disparaged his conceptions were sure to be mean-minded and envious men, jealous of the noble ascendancy of his great nature. And all this because he was rich and could enrich others! (II, 682).
>
> What a moral strain did not the great monitors of our age pour forth - what noble words of reproof fell from Pulpit and Press upon the lust of wealth, the base

> pursuit of gold! - what touching contrasts were drawn between the hard-won competence of the poor man and the ill-gotten abundance of the gambler. How impressively was the lesson proclaimed, that patient industry was the nobler characteristic of a people than successful enterprise, and that it was not to lucky chances and accidental success, but to the virtues of truthfulness, order, untiring labour, and economy, that England owed the high place she occupied amongst the nations of the earth. All this was, perhaps, true; the only pity was, that the Paean over our greatness should be also a funeral wail over thousands reduced to beggary and want! (II, 683).

In these passages, Lever reproduces the ideology of fraud at length and with banal inertness; at the same time, he reproduces with it those conventional character-types that are the common currency of a rigidly hierarchical society ('the highest in the peerage' to the 'poorest peasant'). In addition, the passage depends upon the opposition between 'patient industry' and 'successful enterprise', which, though doubtless overstated here (I doubt if any ideologist of self-help, for example, would wish to repudiate 'enterprise', which by the mid-nineteenth century had already acquired its modern connotation of boldness, and was beginning to be approvingly linked with 'private'), is just the opposition which measures petty-bourgeois resistance to speculation. Lever, in fact, narrates the ideology of fraud in both its typical forms; Davenport Dunn is at once the depradator on traditional hierarchical society, and the 'spirit of the age', the man courted by all because 'he was rich and could enrich others'. The passage amply demonstrates the danger that is always present in the myth of the fraud - because they are two narrations of the same basic narrative, the fraud-as-representative-of-fraudulent-society is always in danger of slipping into the safer fraud-as-depradator-on-honest-society.

The potentially contradictory nature of this prose can be seen in the use, in <u>propria persona</u>, of the phrase 'hardly-saved pittance of the poor', which reappears in a parodic context as the 'hard-won

competence of the poor man'. Lever, in short, makes the easiest and most opportunistic uses of the various ideological narratives that are available to him, echoing Carlyle at one point (though his Carlyle might have come to him through Little Dorrit), and Morier Evans at another, with no regard for their compatibility and thus producing a text which is both ideologically and fictionally incoherent.

Davenport Dunn appeared at the end of the 1850s, when Lever was well past his best and anyway failing in popularity. The very fact that a novelist in his position, once popular, but now somewhat embittered at his failing success with the public, could take up the ideology of fraud, suggests its wide currency in the decade. Indeed, the novel could probably not have been written if Little Dorrit had not been published; it was Dickens's text, which I will discuss in Chapter Six, which gave the myth of the fraud at once its most authoritative and most problematic narration. Davenport Dunn represents that moment in the circulation of the narrative of fraud when it has lost the authentically challenging radicalism of, for example, The Gold-Worshippers, and entered the stock of conventional narrative lines readily available to any novelist.

VI

To summarize the arguments of this chapter, we can see that an ideology of fraud which blamed the recurrent crises of capitalism on fraud and speculation was widely available in the 1850s, because of uncertainty about new legal and financial institutions evolved in the course of rapid capital centralization. This ideology was characteristically narrated in two versions, a petty-bourgeois version tending to the more radical 'fraud-as-representative-of-fraudulent-society', and an aristocratic version tending to the safer 'fraud-as-depradator-on-honest-society'. The class-character of these alternative narrations of the myth is only

tendential, however; there are several contradictory examples, and anyway it was very easy for the first and more disaffected version to slip into the safer second version.

Secondly, though the myth of the fraud was widely narrated both outside and inside the novel form, it was in the novel that its narrative possibilities - especially for hermeneutic encoding and the exposure of frauds - could be most fully exploited. The ideology of fraud anyway took up some fairly ancient narrative procedures, such as the gulling of a victim;[28] the novel could take up and fill out these possibilities for characterization. However, since in the process of 'fleshing out' the _personae_ of the narrative with typical characterizations the novel inevitably suggested that these protagonists were its real movers, the novel gave further authority to the fundamental interpellant presupposition of the ideology of fraud - that the workings of the economic sphere were ultimately tractable to a purely moral discourse.

The ideology of fraud is also narrated in two major novels of the 1850s, _The Newcomes_ and _Little Dorrit_. In these novels, as we shall see when they are discussed at greater length in chapters six and seven, the status that the myth enjoys cannot be discussed outside of a recognition of their formal complexity. In these instances, the final meaning that the narration of fraud yields can only be understood in conjunction with the other narratives that the text intercalates.

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28. See below, chapter five, pp. 189-191.

CHAPTER THREE : NARRATIVES OF CHARITY

I

Marcel Mauss, in his analysis of the gift in traditional society, has proposed a description of it as a 'total' social act, at once economic, juridical, moral, aesthetic, religious, mythological and socio-morphological.[1] With the transformation of traditional society into class-society it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain this unity of the gift - to keep together the elements of personal sacrifice on the part of the donor, with the economic function, and with the ideological function of social control. The various narratives of charity in the 1850s all attempt to reunite, in ideology at least, the unity of the gift; but all have to defer, to a greater or lesser extent, to the apparent interdiction placed upon wholesale charity by the science of Political Economy.

One such narrative occurs in Herbert Spencer's Social Statics, in which, in a chapter on the Poor Laws, Spencer proposed their abolition.[2]

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1. Marcel Mauss, The Gift, translated by I. Cunnison (1954).

2. Herbert Spencer, Social Statics, chapter twenty-five. All quotations are from the first (1851) edition, which Spencer later substantially revised.

Spencer was perhaps anachronistic to make this proposal at so late a date, for the position goes straight back to the classic arguments of Malthus and Ricardo - that the existence of poverty is a spur to industry, while Poor Laws are an encouragement to idleness. Spencer's contribution is to give the argument an optimistic evolutionist twist:

> The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong, which leave so many 'in shallows and in miseries', are the decrees of a large, far-seeing benevolence (p. 323).

In this evolutionist version of the 'unseen hand', to leave the imprudent, the idle and the weak to their fate is to ensure the better adaptation of the human race; to attempt to relieve them by institutional charity is but false philanthropy.

Poor Laws, moreover, prevent the operation of the faculty of sympathy, which is to effect the transition of society from a state of savageness to a state of civilization. They amount to doing charity by proxy - Spencer can even describe them as 'hush-money' (p. 316). They dry up the natural impulse to charity which an individual application might well excite:

> Commiseration, pleading for at least an inquiry into the case, would most likely have prevailed; and, in place of an application to the board of guardians, ending in a pittance coldly handed across the pay-table to be thanklessly received, might have commenced a relationship good for both parties - a generosity humanizing to the one, and a succour made doubly valuable to the other by a few words of consolation and encouragement, followed, it may be, by a lift into some self-supporting position' (p. 320).

Spencer then is far from ruling out charity as such; just insisting that it must be founded on real individual sympathy. Further, he insists on the necessity of making discriminations between the deserving and the undeserving poor:

> Now it is only against this injudicious charity that the foregoing argument tells. To that charity which may be

> described as helping men to help themselves, it makes no objection - countenances it rather. And in helping men to help themselves, there remains abundant scope for the exercise of a people's sympathies. Accidents will still supply victims on whom generosity may be legitimately expended. Men thrown upon their backs by unforeseen events, men who have failed for want of knowledge inaccessible to them, men ruined by the dishonesty of others, and men in whom hope long delayed has made the heart sick, may, with advantage to all parties, be assisted. Even the prodigal, after severe hardship has branded his memory with the unbending conditions of social life to which he must submit, may properly have another trial afforded him (pp. 325-326).

So Spencer proposes that judicious charity is the proper sphere for the operation of the faculty of sympathy; and though the argument may sound distinctively Spencerian, it in fact derives closely from Malthus, who also advocated the gradual abolition of the Poor Laws, but was no less than Spencer an advocate of discriminate charity. A chapter of the Essay on Population is devoted to charity, and in it Malthus suggests that the impulse to charity is a natural passion like the sexual one, and has to be controlled and directed in just the same way:[3]

> As moral agents, therefore, it is clearly our duty to restrain their indulgence ..., and by thus carefully examining the consequences of our natural passions, and frequently bringing them to the test of utility, gradually to acquire a habit of gratifying them only in that way, which, being unattended with evil, will clearly add to the sum of human happiness, and fulfil the apparent purpose of the Creator (II, 363-364).

At work in this passage is an assumption of a debilitated and dissociated passional life - gratification can only be permitted after long and careful deliberation, and then it adds to the sum of human happiness not in its own gratification but in that of the person on whom it is spent. The passage depends, in fact, on the assumption of a divorce of the intellect from the passions, so that when this version of human personality is transferred to the engagement with poverty, it entails

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3. T. Malthus, An Essay on the Principle of Population, sixth edition, 2 vols. (1826). The chapter, 'Of the Direction of our Charity', is Book IV, chapter X.

a permanent contradiction between the responses of the head and the responses of the heart. The opposition is also present in Social Statics, but where Malthus compares impulsive charity to passion, especially sexual passion, for Spencer one of the terms of the opposition is given in the more intellectual form of the 'faculty of sympathy'.

Thus Malthus does not advocate that no-one should practise charity, he simply advocates that such charity should be discriminate. The discriminations, moreover, are not only to be made between the recipients, but also and most importantly in the breast of the donor. Both reasons are at work in the following passages where, after arguing that indiscriminate charity such as the Poor Laws tends to pauperize its recipients because it can be relied upon as a recurrent resource, he continues:

> But it is far otherwise with that voluntary and active charity, which makes itself acquainted with the objects which it relieves; which seems to feel, and to be proud of the bond that unites the rich with the poor; which enters into their houses, informs itself not only of their wants, but of their habits and dispositions; checks the hopes of clamorous and obtrusive poverty, with no other recommendation but rags; and encourages, with adequate relief, the silent and retiring sufferer, labouring under unmerited difficulties (II, 366-367).

He goes on:

> It is almost exclusively this species of charity that blesseth him that gives; and, in a general view, it is almost exclusively this species of charity which blesseth him that takes; at least it may be asserted that there are but few other modes of exercising our charity, in which large sums can be distributed, without a greater chance of producing evil than good (II, 368).

These passages, and the passages that I have quoted from Spencer, are mythological. They depend upon narrative and entail a typology; charity has become personified in the sympathetic but keen-sighted District Visitor, discriminating gently but firmly between the 'clamorous and obtrusive' and the 'silent but suffering', and calling down blessings on her head as she helps the victims of accident, fraud and blameless

ignorance to help themselves. In the Malthusian narration, to the extent that charity plays a central ideological role in his system, this plot and these types have a substantial message to transmit - they have to sanctify the social relations between rich and poor, to make it plain that while in general the poor have only themselves to blame, the rich can help them in their poverty by grace of a free act of generosity and sympathy. The success of this mythological discourse as an interpellation - for it is to be recuperated by the reader in exactly the same way as realist fiction - depends upon the real historical existence of charitable people, from private individuals up to institutionalized District Visitors; but at the same time as providing the necessary kernel of historicity around which ideology can accrete, such people were at the same time acting out an ideology of charity, confirming it and depending upon it simultaneously.

The arguments of Spencer and Malthus are not, of course, couched only in these mythological terms. They are also the arguments of a rudimentary social science. But the mythology provides essential support when the 'scientific' argument shows signs of strain - in particular, when its class-character becomes especially apparent. The support lent by narratives of charity is to obscure, in the very act of recognizing a significant difference, the exploitation of one class by another.

Spencer was not alone in giving an optimistic slant to the arguments of Malthus. J.S. Mill, in his Autobiography, recalled how the group of Philosophic Radicals gathered around the first Westminster Review in the late 1820s were as agreed over the Essay on Population as over any of the tenets of Bentham, yet were also agreed in seeing in the operation of the 'preventive check' - i.e. the possibility of voluntarily preventing the growth of population from reaching the limits of subsistence - a possibility of hope for the labouring classes.[4] But

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4. J.S. Mill, Autobiography (1873), p. 105.

both this argument and Spencer's merely altered the emphasis while retaining the terms of Malthus's argument - namely, that social life was subject to 'unbending conditions'. This was a fundamental assumption of post-Ricardian Political Economy, that it dealt in fixed and eternal laws; this assumption provides one of the terms of the problematic which governed all the narrations of charity in the mid-nineteenth century.

The other substantial term of the problematic was provided by an ultimately aristocratic ethic of charity - one which aspired to that unity of the gift of which Mauss wrote. The advocacy of charity as an appropriate response to poverty is the hallmark of paternalist government, and will inevitably recur in any social system which stresses the responsibilities of the governors for the governed. All the various narrations of charity fall somewhere between this residual aristocratic ethic of charity and the bourgeois science of Political Economy - including the narration that Malthus provides. The narration which had perhaps the widest currency in the 1850s was the myth of discriminate charity, of which Spencer provides a representative example in the passages that I have quoted; in making the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor it provides a way of negotiating between the two otherwise contradictory terms of the problematic of charity.

Malthus's advocacy of discriminate charity was rather forgotten in the ensuing debate - his name became a byword for 'hard-hearted Political Economy', and the substantial thesis of the Essay on Population was reduced to a narrow argument: all forms of alms-giving were injurious in the long run.[5] The complexities of Malthus's position - at once a founding father of Political Economy and a country parson, the

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5. Harriet Martineau has described how he was made an object of abuse for this and other doctrines. Autobiography, second edition, 3 vols. (1877), I, 211.

vigorous defender of the landowning class and their Corn Laws who could argue in his economics that society needed a nonproductive consuming class - these complexities dictated the terms in which the narrative of charity could appear in his work, but did not save him from a reputation meaner than he perhaps deserved.

This reference to 'hard-heartedness' introduces the line of attack most persistently employed in the nineteenth century against (narrowly understood) Malthusian arguments. This was the approach to the facts of poverty which stressed the heartfelt sympathetic response and which refused to recognize the boundaries that Political Economy tried to impose upon the feeling heart. This whole ethic of charity, however, left the fundamental arguments of Political Economy unscathed, since it proposed, at best, to minister to the victims of social laws whose operations it did not pretend to understand, leaving their elucidation, indeed, precisely to the Political Economists - in any case, it was an ethic of distribution and not of production. Even an ethic of indiscriminate charity, supported by appropriate narratives, though it might escape the problematic of Political Economy, scarcely provided any critique of it; for to fall out of the myth of discriminate charity was not necessarily to tumble into 'truth' - it was more likely to land one in the equally mythological land of inexhaustible benevolence.

II

Discriminate charity is a way of negotiating between a paternalist ethic of charity and the bourgeois science of Political Economy. This in no way implies that the social relations of the countryside - the most obvious arena for the practice of charity - were still 'feudal' in the mid-nineteenth century; on the contrary, as a matter of social history the transformation of feudal into capitalist social relations

began at least as early in the countryside as it did in the towns. But the surface continuity of life in the countryside permitted an extreme mystification of rural social relations, by which paternalistic and even sentimental feudal ways of thinking could survive in the ideology of the landowning class. Consequently, an ethic of charity seemed particularly appropriate there, so it is in the large group of novels set in the countryside that the most characteristic examples of narratives of charity are to be found.

It is perhaps not surprising that a novelist inspired by the Oxford Movement, that last great attempt to assert the primacy of the Church of England and to resist the encroachments of liberalism, should have written a novel which has parish-work and Christian charity as its main centre of interest.[6] About The Daisy Chain the first biographer of Charlotte M. Yonge wrote that 'it is difficult to say to how many girls [the heroine Ethel May] was an inspiring example of conscientious usefulness. To speak plainly, she made girls want to do parish work, and to do it from its highest motives.'[7] With the exception of the special case of Trollope's The Warden, The Daisy Chain is the only novel that I will consider in this chapter in which charity provides one of the main narrative strands.

To say that the tone of The Daisy Chain is moralistic is scarcely adequate to the case. The novel presents in extreme form what is a formal characteristic of all realist fictions - its characters, and the details of their characterization, are to be taken as moral examples. More, they are to be taken to heart by the reader; he is to examine his own conscience in the light of those examples and to press the lessons

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6. Charlotte M. Yonge, The Daisy Chain (1856).

7. Christabel Coleridge, Charlotte May Yonge (1903), p. 184.

home to his own bosom.[8] In the novel, the May family, the family of a doctor in a small country-town, left motherless by an accident in the first chapter, provides types of different moral qualities and problems for the reader to recognize and identify with. The whole novel is occupied in developing their characters, showing the moral crises that they go through and the various self-disciplines that they have to practise. Outstanding among these is that practised by Ethel May, who as a girl of sixteen conceives the grand idea of evangelizing the nearby village of Cocksmoor, which is in a state of acute moral decay due to the absence of Church and curate. But Ethel is an awkward, impulsive and tactless girl, and she has to learn to become a prudent manager and housekeeper, activities which are very uncongenial to her, before she can be considered ready to embark seriously on her important work.

This order of priorities - domesticity first - is emphasized by her elder sister Margaret, who, after the death of their mother, has become the spiritual centre of the home. Commenting on Ethel's plans, she says:

> 'Do you know, mamma and I were one day talking over those kind of things, and she said she had always regretted that she had so many duties at home, that she could not attend as much to the poor as she would like; but she hoped now we girls were growing up, we should be able to do more' (p. 85).

To make the point even more explicit, she continues, '"If we are not just the thing in our niche at home, I don't think we can do much real good elsewhere"' (p. 86). Ethel does discipline herself to learn the necessary domestic virtues; and at length she sees her efforts for

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8. The critical convention by which the reader is always masculine seems particularly inappropriate here. As the quotation from Christabel Coleridge suggests, The Daisy Chain is especially addressed to 'girls', but this is more than a mere extrinsic fact about the text's consumption. Since the interpellant power of narrative depends, in part at least, on identification by the reader, and since rural charity is offered as a characteristic of ladylike femininity, to refer to the reader as 'he' is actually to militate against a recognition of these important facts.

Cocksmoor rewarded by the building of a Church, endowed by the deceased lover of her crippled sister.

The desire to evangelize Cocksmoor, however, is only the spiritual motive for the various acts of charity that the May family performs in Cocksmoor. In fact they are engaged on a charitable mission - taking blankets and food to the wife of a victim of accident - when they learn of their mother's death. The visit to the woman's cottage provides an archetype for the District Visit, and is the kind of visit that underlies the passages from Malthus and Spencer that I have quoted. Ethel goes into the cottage and sees this:

> The poor woman was sitting by the fire with one twin on her lap, and the other on a chair by her side, and a larger child was in the corner by the fire, looking heavy and ill, while others of different ages lounged about listlessly. She was not untidy, but very pale, and she spoke in a meek, subdued way, as if the ills of life were so heavy on her that she had no spirit even to complain (p. 24).

Ethel distributes her charities, and makes her great resolve about Cocksmoor, the first step of which is to try to encourage the inhabitants to go to Church. But she rapidly finds that her first charities are misunderstood, and that the inhabitants of the village are ready to lie and wheedle in order to get gifts out of her. Only the firmness and tact of her sister Flora teach her that her charities have to be distributed carefully and with discrimination.

We have here a typical paternalist narration of charity. First, the extreme passivity of the recipients is remarkable - they are 'heavy', they 'lounge', they are 'listless', 'meek' and 'subdued', they have 'no spirit'. By contrast, the donors move to the village and back again - they are the instigators of any activity that is going forward. The recipients, moreover, are potentially if not actually dishonest, and only begin to behave in an upright manner when it is clear that their tricks are seen through. To ensure an adequate degree of control over

the recipients, in fact, charity best takes the form of goods rather than money - that way the donors can be sure that it is used for what it is intended.

The charity that the May family practises at Cocksmoor, then, is potentially discriminate; all the inhabitants of the village are suitable objects for charity, but it must be distributed in a way that ensures they are not 'spoilt'. This danger represents the deference that is paid in the text to the fear that haunted Political Economy, namely that recipients of charity were pauperized by it; in this paternalistic narration, the danger is couched more explicitly in the vocabulary of social control. The point is emphasized by the arrival of a new squire at another nearby village, Mr Rivers, who though undoubtedly a gentleman-like man, has made his money by trade. The fundamental goodness of Mr Rivers and his daughter is indicated by the fact that 'they have been giving away beef and blankets at a great rate this Christmas' (p. 138); but there is something wrong with their charity, for as the brother of the village vicar tells Doctor May,

> 'Those Riverses are open-handed. They really seem to have so much money, that they don't know what to do with it. My brother is ready to complain that they spoil his parish. It is all meant so well, and they are so kind-hearted and excellent, that it is a shame to find fault, and I tell Charles [the vicar] and his wife that their grumbling at such a squire proves them the most spoilt of all.'
>
> 'Indiscriminate liberality?' asked the Doctor. 'I should guess the old gentleman to be rather soft!' (p. 200).

Eventually the daughter, Meta Rivers, is trained to become more discriminating in her charities, thanks to correct religious teaching, and to self-discipline such as 'learning plain needle-work and doing it for her poor people'. She becomes 'so useful amongst the cottagers at Abbotstoke' (p. 342).

Unlike the whole Cocksmoor episode, these scenes at Abbotstoke do not provide an extended narrative. The charities of the Rivers are

an indication of their essential goodness; their indiscriminateness indicates that they are not yet thoroughly members of a landowning class that will not spoil its tenants. To pass successfully across the gentry line, Meta Rivers has to learn that the mere distribution of beef is not enough, but must be accompanied by an element of personal sacrifice. The charities of the Rivers, and the manner in which they are performed, thus function as notes of their gentility and of their (concomitant) moral worth. This points to one of the major characteristics of the myth of charity in the novel; though it is only occasionally able to provide sustained narrative interest, it is always able to appear as an attribute of the dramatis personae. You can judge a character by the charities that he does.[9]

The substantial interest of even the Cocksmoor scenes, moreover, is not in the physical well-being of the recipients of charity, so much as in the moral state of the donors. Consequently, even where charitable activity provides an extended narrative, it is subordinate to the overwhelming moral discourse. One of the 'truth-speaking' characters in the novel remarks:

> '... how Cocksmoor had been blessed to Margaret - I think it is the same with them all - not only Ethel and Richard, who have been immediately concerned; but that one object has been a centre and aim to elevate the whole family, and give force and unity to their efforts' (p. 583).

So charity is not only an outward and visible sign of inward moral worth, it is also conducive to it. The reader has been told as much at the very beginning of the novel, when Dr May is first described: 'ardent, sensitive, and heedless, with a quickness of sympathy and tenderness of

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9. This is touched upon in a limited way in Margaret Mare and Alicia C. Percival, Victorian Bestseller : The World of Charlotte M. Yonge (1947). However, it has wider implications: 'When she does touch on such [i.e. social] problems, it is generally because she wishes to show how they reacted on a character she is describing, rather than from a burning desire to expose social injustices to the general gaze' (p. 83).

heart that was increased, rather than blunted, by exercise in scenes of suffering' (p. 8). Dr May himself often tends poor patients for nothing, and the exemplary nature of this is, naturally, insisted upon - 'that daily work of homely mercy, hoping for nothing again, was surely the true way of doing service' (p. 212).

The Daisy Chain is a roman-a-these, whose purpose is to get girls interested in parish work and boys interested in the missions (an aspect of the novel that I have not touched upon). The novel bears the marks of Keble's inspiration - it is high Church, high-minded, and high Tory. Though the May family are gentlefolk, they are not especially rich and are certainly not aristocratic. Their comparative poverty is important - it suggests that the kind of morality that they exemplify is universally available, and that their saintly domesticity is universally appropriate. This is perhaps the ultimate interpellation of the novel, and, as we have seen, it is crucially dependent upon narratives of charity.

Charitableness as an attribute of the dramatis personae is apparent also in Catherine Sinclair's Sir Edward Graham. It will be recalled that the function of this novel was to provide models of aristocratic conversation and animation, and to indicate how this model order of landowners is to be distinguished from vulgar imitations. They are to be recognized principally by their method of charity, which, in contrast to the indiscriminate and impulsive charity of vulgar outsiders, is both discriminate and systematic.

Much of the novel is set at Rockingham, the home of Admiral Grey and his family. I will recall how it is described, the description itself evoking a recurrent ideology of the country house - compare Fanny Price's thoughts from Portsmouth on life at Mansfield, though in Mansfield Park this ideology is mediated through Fanny and thus cannot be read 'straight' as one can read this description:

> ... the pure, calm, and healthy felicity of a home such as Rockingham; the chief happiness of which, great as it was, consisted in an energetic spirit of usefulness, in a continual consideration of each other's feelings, in benevolent actions, in literary pursuits, in sound rational conversation, and in cheerful, intelligent piety' (II, 263).

The nature of these 'benevolent actions' is made quite clear; Mrs Grey and her daughter Charlotte have organized an elaborate system of parish visiting, which includes account-keeping, regular subscriptions from the recipients, and so on. Charlotte Grey is described as she is engaged in its management:

> Charlotte's elegant figure and graceful head were silently bent over a small ledger, in which she was diligently inserting an inventory of clothes and blankets, evidently to be sent out on some charitable mission. They were arranged in large masses on the table beside her, where piles of worsted stockings, duffle cloaks, blue-flannel petticoats, printed frocks, printed books, tracts, and Bibles were carefully consigned to a large basket, after being duly counted, priced, and registered' (II, 69-70).

The enterprise is carefully and systematically organized, but the ability to conduct such a scheme in no way detracts from Charlotte's elegance and grace; in fact, charitable work of this kind is a mark of her appropriateness as a heroine.

While Charlotte is thus engaged, her brother starts a discussion of the different types of charity by telling an anecdote: '"I met Jim Bourke yesterday, staggering home drunk with the whisky that Lady Didcot, with her usual carelessness whether she does good or harm, had given him the money for, saying she never can refuse a beggar"' (II, 20). To this his father replies:

> 'It is calculated that, in London alone, 100,000l is annually spent in giving to street-beggars and to begging-letters ... No wonder that such vagrants abound, when there is so great a premium upon the trade. A labouring man can scarcely now afford one meal a day to his family; a pauper, living on the parish-rates, receives two good meals every day; and a prisoner in jail has three; - therefore, you see, the two most comfortable pursuits for the poor are begging and stealing' (II, 70-71).

This may be a very crude version of the 'less eligibility' principle; but I think the point is sufficiently established that discriminate charity of the sort practised by Charlotte Grey mediates between this and a more widespread ethic of charity.

The most tell-tale response to this conversation, however, comes from the irredeemably vulgar Lady Graham. After Charlotte Grey tells how she has managed to reform drunkards by her method, Lady Graham remarks about it:

> 'It seems so hard-hearted to let them toil on week after week with such little trumpery deposits, and not to give them a surprise occasionally by completing the entire sum. How I should enjoy that! While you are so cool and methodical, Charlotte, I am all impulse and imagination. But the sight of that drunken wretch yesterday would disgust me with human nature for a month!' (II, 71).

Lady Graham's unfitness to be the wife of Sir Edward Graham has already been established; her claim to 'impulse and imagination' here, even though it may be as much a sign of affectation, is yet another example of her vulgarity.

The anecdote of Jim Bourke and Lady Didcot - neither of whom appear anywhere else in the novel - is thus embedded in the more extended procedures of characterization in the novel. This little story could be described as an elementary unit of mythology, and it retains its ideological efficacy even though its meaning can be integrated at the 'higher' level of characterization. The fact that charity is an attribute of the dramatis personae does not mean that it is exclusively so.

The dramatis personae in Sir Edward Graham are offered as types, and the fact that the attribute of charitableness - established by the alternative narrations of discriminate or indiscriminate charity- should be attached almost exclusively to women is itself significant. There is nothing surreptitious about this building of a type of genteel femininity, for the text is explicit on the subject. There is another

discussion of charity in the novel, in which Lady Graham's indiscriminate dole of halfpence to beggars is contrasted with the work of the Mendicity Society. Admiral Grey concludes the discussion by saying that '"certainly the most beautiful ornament of any woman is what, in general, naturally belongs to them, - a principle of unselfishness"' (III, 307). Charity, then, is an activity principally appropriate to women, though not uniquely so; the type of femininity that is offered is authenticated by embedded narratives which together add up to a characterization.

The type, moreover, is current in the fiction of the 1850s. In Lytton's My Novel, for example, which as we saw was in fact a highly ideologized version of pastoral - an idyll of the eccentric British squirearchy - the sister of the squire of Hazeldean is an elderly spinster who is always on the look-out for a husband, but,

> Miss Jemima was indeed one of the most kindly and affectionate of beings feminine; and if she disliked the thought of single blessedness, it really was from those innocent and womanly instincts towards the tender charities of hearth and home, without which a lady, however otherwise estimable, is little better than a Minerva in bronze (I, 32).

The whole mythology of charity is invoked in this passage to attach an ideology of femininity to a particular character, as well as to reinforce that ideology with the particularity of that character. Moreover, just as, in Sir Edward Graham, an ideal of femininity was offered explicitly and self-consciously, so here this narrative of 'hearth and home' is told with a polemical edge, militating against the competing narrative of feminism implicit in 'a Minerva in bronze'.

In an earlier novel, The Caxtons, Lytton had dealt more fully with the subject of charity, but the narration he gives is caught between the competing claims of sympathy and Political Economy. He develops a contrast between the charitable styles of Albert Trevanion, a statesman and political economist, and Sir Sedley Beaudesert, an old-fashioned

and gentlemanly aristocrat who comes into a great fortune. While Trevanion underwrites hospitals and improvements, he has 'a great contempt for individual charity. He rarely puts his hand into his purse - he drew a great cheque on his bankers' (p. 109). Sir Sedley Beaudesert, on the other hand, is an impulsively charitable man and is even something of a soft touch. Lytton's sympathies are if anything with Sir Sedley Beaudesert, but that does not mean that he is ignorant of the laws of Political Economy - the limits of action in the novel are in fact entirely circumscribed by them. When Sir Sedley inherits his vast property, for example, he finds it impossible to lower his rents as he would wish because that would mean that his smaller neighbour squires would have to follow suit and they would be ruined. '"No man can tell how hard it is to do good,"' he laments, '"unless fortune gives him a hundred thousand pounds a-year, and says - 'Now, do good with it!'"' (p. 251). There is thus an explicit contradiction in the text - and it is recognized as being one of the burdens of the landowning class - between sympathetically endorsed impulsive charity and the laws of Political Economy. While many resolved this contradiction by narrations of discriminate charity, for Lytton it is resolved by resort to the equally mythological type of the bemused landowner who would do good if only he knew how.

Of all the novels in a rural aristocratic setting, the one which is perhaps least deferential to the laws of Political Economy is Charles Lever's The Martins of Cro' Martin, written when Lever was past his heyday as a popular novelist. He explains his intentions in writing the novel in his 'Apology for a Preface' - he wished to provide a picture of the new social conditions that obtained in Ireland after the Catholic Relief Bill of 1829, and to describe the demise of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy as a major social and political force. The most striking

character in the novel is the heroine, Mary Martin, who has never left the desolate west of Ireland; in a highly coloured and romantic portrait, she is presented as a wilful and domineering girl, who yet devotes herself to her people, riding around the countryside at all times and in all weathers doing such acts of charity and bravery that she wins the hearts of her tenantry. She is contrasted with her Aunt Dorothea, a type of the proud and haughty aristocrat who has no love or sympathy for her dependants. The implication is clear - if all landowners took their responsibilities as seriously as Mary Martin, and stayed on their estates instead of gallivanting about in foreign parts, then their social and political ascendancy would not have been challenged.

Yet even here at Cro' Martin, in this wild and isolated outpost, this romantic and virtually uneducated girl is driven to make at least some discriminations. While distributing her doles, we are told that 'to inculcate habits of self-reliance she was often driven, in violation of her own feelings, to favour those who least needed assistance, but whose efforts to improve their condition might serve as an example' (I, 11). Even Lever, then, whose very project can be described as finding ways of resisting encroachments on aristocratic and gentlemanly modes of behaviour and conceptions of responsibility, finds it necessary to defer to a middle-class ethic of self-reliance. Moreover, this ethic, as we have seen, provides essential support for Political Economy in its apologetic aspect. Lever's deference to it, however, is clearly not central to his social philosophy - if his confused panoramic display of heterogeneous social types can be dignified by such a title. Mary Martin's charities are really of the indiscriminate sort - part of an outmoded aristocratic economic organization which entails not only charity as a duty but also the responsibility of the aristocracy to initiate such activity as road-building and draining. The deference

to self-reliance, however vestigial, is nevertheless necessary to negotiate between contradictory class-positions, thus giving the novel a wider potential readership.

The Martins of Cro' Martin, then, reproduces the structures that I elucidated in the analysis of The Daisy Chain and Sir Edward Graham. Its conservatism - or perhaps more simply, its datedness for the 1850s - can be measured by the fact that Mary Martin's deference to discriminate charity is scarcely more than perfunctory. It is also made against the current of her own feelings, and this opposition between the impulses of sentiment and the hard facts of economic life structures the debate about charity in a homologous way to the opposition between an ethic of charity and Political Economy. In Lever's novel, the heartfelt sympathetic response occurs in conjunction with a dated aristocratic ethic of charity and responsibility, and is opposed not so much to discriminate charity as to no charity at all - in the character of Aunt Dorothea.

Finally, Charles Reade's It is Never Too Late to Mend also provides a narrative of charity in a rural setting.[10] This is the novel which made Reade's reputation, and it is of course most famous for its bitter indictment of the 'single and solitary' system of prison management. The chaplain of the prison is first introduced to the reader, however, as the curate of a country parish, where his energetic style of charity is contrasted with the rather listless style of the (recently disappointed) heroine:

> Susan was charitable. Every day it had been her custom to visit more than one poor person; she carried meal to one, soup to another, linen to another, meat and bread to another, money to another: to all, words and looks of sympathy; this practice she did not even now give up [i.e. after the hero has left for Australia], for it came under the head of her religious duties: but she relaxed it. She often sent to places where

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10. Charles Reade, It is Never too Late to Mend (1856. References to the 1857 edition).

> she used to go. Until George went she had never thought of herself; and so the selfishness of those she relieved had not struck her: now it made her bitter to see that none of those she pitied, pitied her. The moment she came into their houses, it was 'My poor head, Miss Merton; my old bones do ache so' (p. 47).

The extreme listlessness of the recipients of charity in The Daisy Chain has here become downright selfishness; but this behaviour is a function of the behaviour of the donor - when Mr Eden, the curate, accompanies Susan on her visiting round, he manages to inject energy, humour and sympathy into the recipients. They do not wheedle him.

This section of the novel is really only preliminary to the events in the prison - it serves to establish Mr Eden's credentials with the reader. Just as Susan's style of charity indicates her state of mind, Mr Eden's style indicates his essential strength of character. Thus these episodes are primarily to be integrated at the level of characterization, without detriment to their ideological efficacy at their own level of specificity.

III

To say that an ethic of charity was ultimately aristocratic in character, is in no way to suggest that it was exclusive to the aristocracy.[11] Indiscriminate charity in a rural setting, such as that described by Lever in The Martins of Cro' Martin, was certainly so; but the urban District Visit was proposed as an appropriate response to widespread urban poverty for the middle-class.

In a chapter entitled 'The Deformation of the Gift', in Outcast London, G.S. Jones has argued that the remarkable and novel geographical separation and mutual isolation of classes in nineteenth-century London made the traditional methods of social control, including charity,

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11. For further discussion of this term, see below, pp. 134-135.

increasingly difficult.[12] Relying on Mauss's analysis of the gift in traditional society, which I referred to earlier, he argues that when the gift is depersonalized, as it necessarily was in Victorian London, it loses its defining features: the elements of voluntary sacrifice (on the part of the donor), prestige, subordination and obligation. He further argues that the characteristic middle- and upper-middle-class response to the social crisis of the 1860s was to return to moralistic solutions to a problem defined as 'pauperism' - he instances the formation of the Charity Organization Society at the end of the decade, and the charitable schemes of Octavia Hill. The common features of such schemes were a militant campaign against indiscriminate alms-giving, and a variety of plans to introduce the gentry into personalized discriminate charity. As Jones comments,

> For, on the one hand, the poor were to become 'manly' and 'independent' through the practice of thrift and self-help. But, on the other hand, these very qualities were to be produced by the establishment of an urban deference community, in which the relations between rich and poor would be braced by personal ties of obligation and dependence. The casual poor were to be recreated both in the image of Bentham and in the image of Coleridge (p. 268).

Jones's argument seems to me to provide an illuminating context for charity in the 1850s as much as the 1860s - indeed, the terms in which the debate was conducted by the Charity Organization Society descended more or less unchanged from the days of Malthus and Ricardo. They are the terms, for example, upon which, after the Napoleonic War, the Mendicity Society was founded. It aimed to rid London of the impostures of sturdy mendicants by providing its subscribers with tickets instead of money, which could only be redeemed after each case had been investigated. Similarly, the work of the Charity Organization Society was to

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12. Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society (Oxford, 1971).

some extent anticipated by the numerous associations, both local and metropolitan, which were established in the 1830s and 1840s for promoting district visiting in London, and which continued in the 1850s.[13] To be sure, the calls for an end to indiscriminate alms-giving reached a crescendo in the 1860s, but they emerged from the same problematic which had structured the debate for some time before then.

The aims of one such metropolitan society were described in the Quarterly Review in 1855:

> ... to promote the formation of local societies where they do not previously exist, and to collect funds for the purpose of aiding the various parochial societies, when the local contributions are insufficient .... Those societies endeavour to introduce all the machinery - including penny clubs, clothing clubs, and provident societies - which in rural neighbourhoods has been found so effectual to improve the condition of the poor, and they supply the most powerful means that have yet been devised to revive the parochial system in London. [14]

The difficulties of this project can be inferred from the non-existence of such societies in many areas - vast tracts of London simply did not have a gentry who could put it into practice. But the attempt to introduce methods of social control adequate in the countryside to London, is plain; the following passage, which continues from the last, makes the ideological nature of the project clearer:

> Above all, they are strongly impressed with the reformatory character which is distinctive of modern charity. Their object is to raise the moral not less than the physical condition of the poor ... by teaching

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13. Sampson Low, Junior, The Charities of London (1850). This gives an account of several such societies, the aim of which can be assessed from the title of the most successful metropolitan society, founded in 1844: 'Association for Promoting the Relief of Destitution in the Metropolis, and for Improving the Condition of the Poor, by means of Parochial and District Visiting, under the superintendence and direction of the Bishop and Clergy' (Low, Charities of London, pp. 126-127). This aimed to coordinate the work of the several local associations.

14. 'The Charities and the Poor of London', Quarterly Review, 97 (May - September, 1855), 407-450 (pp. 426-427).

> the poor to help themselves. They offer aid at the critical moment when some impending calamity threatens to sink the sufferer to a depth whence no subsequent energy can raise him. In sickness they provide medical attendance or tickets for the hospitals, and when debt or want of work combine to compel the workman to part with what little remains unpledged of his worldly goods, that he may qualify for admission into the work-house, they step in to save him from that last resource of his despair, whence he can issue only with character blemished, energies impaired, and destitution such as he never knew before. But the district-visitor is not the bearer of material relief alone. By the unwonted words of kindness he may often arm the sufferer with courage, and rouse him to exertion; he is ever on the watch to drop the seasonable word which may open to the mourner the highest sources of consolation, or point out to the fallen his true enemy, in idleness, drunkenness, or some besetting sin, which he must overcome before he can rise to comfort and respectability (p. 427).

The narrative related in this passage - indeed, the multiplicity of narratives embedded in the dominant narrative of the district visit - provides a fictitious coherence for the contradictions which it invokes. One such contradiction, in fact, between the opposed phrases 'want of work' and 'idleness', is scarcely resolved at all. In the passage, in short, the broken unity of the gift is reformed, so that the element of sacrifice is reunited with the element of social obligation and control. This is the narrative of charity most widely circulated in the 1850s, in more or less extended forms; and it is this narrative, as we shall see, that Dickens challenges in Bleak House.

The circulation of such narratives was especially intense at the end of the 1850s, with several accounts being published of district visiting schemes, such as Mrs Bayly's Ragged Homes and How to Mend Them, Ellen Ranyard's The Missing Link, or, Bible-Women in the Homes of the London Poor, and Mrs Sewell's Thy Poor Brother.[15] The schemes of course

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15. Mrs Bayly, Ragged Homes and How to Mend Them (1859) giving an account of an attempt to evangelize the Kensington Potteries, though the social side is emphasized more than the evangelical side; L.N.R. /Ellen Ranyard/, The Missing-Link, or, Bible-Women in the Homes of the London Poor (1859), which, as its title suggests, gives a more

(Continued)

all varied slightly, being at one end of the scale scarcely distinguishable from the missionary schemes of the London City Mission, and the first two suggesting that working-class women should be recruited as visitors, it always being understood that they were eventually to bring their clients into contact with the lady superintendents or parish clergy.[16] Such narratives, in similar fashion to accounts of missionary exploits, were at once offered as exemplary accounts of what had been done and of what needed to be done, simultaneously insisting on the success of what had been achieved and the immense labour that remained. This latter adhominatory project - go thou, gentle reader, and do likewise - was greatly helped by two reviews in the Quarterly Review, the first of which greatly praised the work of Mrs Bayly and Ellen Ranyard, and the second of which went on to advocate Church of England 'Deaconesses' to give such schemes permanent institutional form.[17] In so doing, the Quarterly further circulated the narrative of the urban district visit.

Perhaps the most interesting of these accounts is Mrs Sewell's, who claims forty years' experience of distributing charity to the poor. In doing so, she has been aware of two important constraints. The first

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15 (Continued)
evangelical narration; Mrs Sewell, Thy Poor Brother, Letters to a Friend on Helping the Poor (1863). This last authoress, Mrs Mary Sewell, writer of Stories in Verse (1861), was a convert to the Church of England from the Society of Friends. She is to be distinguished from Miss E.M. Sewell, High Church authoress of Amy Herbert (1844).

16. The Charity Organization Society is often credited with the first use of the non-pejorative word client for the recipient of charity, anticipating, it isclaimed, the usage of modern social work. I have found an earlier use in the Quarterly Review article referred to in note 17 below, which suggests that the usage springs from the schemes which predated the C.O.S.; in these schemes, the recipients were literally clients, since they operated on the principle of penny-a-week subscriptions for such goods as blankets, clothes and Bibles, offered at a reduced rate.

17. 'The Missing Link and the London Poor', and 'Deaconesses', Quarterly Review, 108 (July - October, 1860), 1-34 and 342-387.

is a doctrinal one, the question of Evangelical orthodoxy - does a course of charitable District Visiting entail the heresy that good works rather than faith are the means of salvation? She is happy to be able to answer no, since such a course is clearly a result of conversion and a fruit of the Christian life. But she is also aware of the Political Economic argument against indiscriminate charity, namely that it encourages the 'pauper spirit'; significantly, she proposes that charitable activity which is heartfelt and sympathetic rather than bare alms-giving as such, is sufficient to obviate this danger. Just as Malthus's narration of discriminate charity negotiated between Speenhamland and Political Economy, so Mrs Sewell's, sixty years later, attempted the same difficult passage - she repeats Malthus's solution with a different emphasis.

Thy Poor Brother serves particularly well to introduce novels that treat of urban District Visiting because Mrs Sewell not only uses narrative, but even fictions, throughout her series of letters. She adopts the use of fictions as a stratagem for describing her method of working, in order to avoid getting bogged down in the details of individual cases. But this stratagem also gives her a freer hand to organize the ideological implications of her text, the most important of which stresses the emotional, compassionate response in opposition to the response of the intellect, stresses personal, private effort in opposition to system and organization. Thus she tells us that 'Bare alms-giving, neither satisfies God nor man; the heart has cravings far keener than the body, which no soup-kitchen, no money-fund, no ticket system can possibly appease' (pp. 30-31). And later she asks, 'May I express, my strong conviction, that the increase of Committees and Societies is not now, our most pressing want, but the much wider extension of personal, private effort?' (p. 260). In addition to

this general orientation towards charity, Mrs Sewell is quite explicit about the manner in which the actual act of alms-giving should be done. She insists that 'With regard to lecturing and scolding, it is both unlovely and unjustifiable', and that 'calm expostulation and affectionate entreaty, are the harshest language we are warranted to use' (p. 18). In short, an ideal-type of the charitable visit emerges, which can be - and is, in this text - realized most successfully in a fiction.

This narrative of the urban district visit does not appear as widely in the novels of the 1850s as that of the rural visit. The classic instance is narrated in Thackeray's The Newcomes, which I will discuss in chapter seven, but it also appears in Kingsley's Hypatia,[18] which, as a historical novel set in fifth-century Alexandria, is not an obvious candidate for inclusion in a chapter devoted to attitudes to Victorian poverty - except that, as the full title of the novel suggests, the 'history' in the novel is explicitly modernized, so that the reader is to read full contemporary moral significance into all the characters and actions of the text. As Kingsley tells the reader, the book presents 'New foes under an Old Face - your own likenesses in toga and tunic, instead of coat and bonnet' (II, 377); so that when the hero of the novel arrives in Alexandria it is scarcely incongruous that he should be initiated into city-life in the company of a fifth-century district visitor:

> So Philammon went out with the parabolani, a sort of organized guild of district visitors ... And in their company he saw that afternoon the dark side of that world, whereof the harbour-panorama had been the bright one. In squalid misery, filth, profligacy, ignorance, ferocity, discontent, neglected in body, house, and soul, by the civil authorities, proving their existence only in aimless and sanguinary riots, there they starved and rotted, heap on heap, the masses of the old Greek population, close to the

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18. Charles Kingsley, Hypatia; or, New Foes with an Old Face (1853).

> great food-exporting harbour of the world. Among these, fiercely perhaps, and fanatically, but still among them, and for them, laboured those district visitors night and day (I, 112).

Here, in lurid colours perhaps, but described so that the reader can and ought to recognize it, is the poverty of London or Manchester; and here is that reader's duty, to labour like the parabolani of old. Scarcely disguised in this anti-historical novel, however, is another recognition for the reader to make, one with less activist implications - that for all our efforts, the poor are always with us.

In fact, less unmediated examples of the narrative of the urban district visit are relatively scarce in the novel in the 1850s, - perhaps for a reason that I will suggest shortly. More common, both in the novel and in non-fictional writing, are discussions of charity in general, which, though they depend upon latent narratives, do not give extended narrations of the charitable visit. Both narrations and discussions of charity are ruled by the problematic which permits charity to flourish in the interstices of the laws of political economy, tempering their rigidity but by no means abrogating them. This problematic governs even those positions which appear to be in opposition to each other. Thus in Mrs Gaskell's Ruth, there is an important though largely implicit ethic of charity exemplified by Mr Benson, a dissenting minister in a northern industrial town who takes in Ruth and provides for her when she is abandoned by her seducer.[19] Charity, and attitudes to charity, function in this novel especially as indications of character, but as we have seen, this by no means entails any diminution of their significance at their own level of specificity, as the following discussion between two partners in a business firm demonstrates:

> /Mr Bradshaw/ was for driving hard bargains, exacting interest and payment of just bills to a day. That

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19. Mrs Gaskell, Ruth (1853).

> was (he said), the only way in which trade could be conducted. Once allow a margin of uncertainty, or where feelings, instead of maxims, were to be the guide, and all hope of there ever being any good men of business was ended.
>
> 'Suppose a delay of a month in requiring payment, might save a man's credit - prevent his becoming a bankrupt?' put in Mr. Farquhar.
>
> 'I would not give it him. I would let him have money to set up again as soon as he had passed the Bankruptcy Court; if he never passed, I might, in some cases, make him an allowance, but I would always keep my justice and my charity separate.'
>
> 'And yet charity (in your sense of the word) degrades; justice, tempered with mercy and consideration, elevates.'
>
> 'That is not justice - justice is certain and inflexible. No! Mr. Farquhar, you must not allow any Quixotic notions to mingle with your conduct as a tradesman' (II, 192-193).

The reader's sympathies are clearly directed towards Farquhar in this argument, helped by a witness of the conversation, Mr Bradshaw's daughter, to whom Farquhar's arguments bring a glow of assent and sympathy. It might even be said that Bradshaw is almost a caricature of the hard-hearted businessman, and that Mrs Gaskell is loading the dice against him.[20] But in fact there is not really much between the positions of the two men - Bradshaw is prepared to condone discriminate charity 'in some cases', while Farquhar does not really entrench upon his position in any fundamental way, seeking only to temper its rigidity. It is a position characteristic of the compassionate liberal whose conscience is always haunted by arguments he dislikes but cannot refute. At all events, charity and the feeling heart are at worst irrelevant to trade

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20. Later, Bradshaw comments on Mr Benson, Ruth's patron, that 'he is just the man to muddle away his money in indiscriminate charity, and then to wonder what has become of it' (III, 183). As the reader of the novel is in a position to know at this moment that Benson has not 'muddled away his money', but has been defrauded of it by Bradshaw's erring son, this remark redounds sharply to his own discredit. Again, attitudes to charity serve as an index of character.

and only permitted to operate in that part of life not bound by its laws, or at best they can soften the impact of their operation.

Mrs Gaskell is broadly sympathetic to charity; Hollingshead, in a book written some eight years after Ruth, is broadly antipathetic to it, but both share the same problematic.[21] Ragged London in 1861 is written from an avowedly Malthusian perspective, and is partly aimed at typical objects of Malthusian attack, such as 'hospitals, asylums, charity schools, and other forms of permanent out-door relief' (p. 240). Hollingshead objects to these institutions because 'they show a class on one hand always ready to give, and they show another class - low, wanting in self-reliance and self-respect, demoralized by much charity - always ready to receive' (p. 240). Hollingshead continues in typical Malthusian strain -

> The most perfect poor-law; the most perfect administration of that poor-law; the most lavish charity can do nothing for them compared to the wonders of self-help. Let them defer their marriages for six or seven years, and they will turn their backs on strikes and starvation (pp. 241-242).

This then is the particular ideological orientation of the text - that indiscriminate charity, especially of the institutional variety, demoralizes the poor; is open to abuse; saps the spirit of self-help and self-reliance; and panders to the feelings of a class 'always ready to give'.

This ideological foreclosure, however, is postponed to the final chapter of the book, by which time Hollingshead has described such scenes of overcrowding, destitution and misery that the glibness of 'let them defer their marriages for six or seven years' stands in stark relief. Moreover, Hollingshead resorts to mythology to effect

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21. J. Hollingshead, Ragged London in 1861 (1861). The book is based on a series of articles and letters written to the Morning Post in January 1861.

his ideological foreclosure, as in the following passage which gives limited support to discriminate charity:

> The hard-hearted man, the cold-blooded political economist, the hunks, the gripe-all, are empty dreams. Business is business in every hole and corner, and no trade will ever be conducted upon sentimental principles; but, after the shop shutters are put up, the ledger is posted, and the till-money is counted, the large heart begins to do its work. We are certainly not suffering from too little heart in our social system, but perhaps from too much. The head, after all, is not the worst guide in works of charity, as those men find who have to analyze results. Benevolent people who act from impulse rather than reflection - warm-hearted, open-handed givers - are hourly pained by seeing their gifts misapplied, or their institutions fattening the class whom they were never intended to benefit (p. 239)

This passage is characteristic of mythology - it interpellates the reader by narratives, entailing a typology which the reader recognizes as representative. Moreover, it offers its narration in explicit competition with the hostile narration - such as that of Mrs Gaskell - of the 'hard-hearted man'. Yet it operates with much the same terms as the narrative of Ruth, for it too relegates charity to those areas of life not governed by the laws of trade. It is precisely this separation of business from the emotional life, with the homologous opposition between the head and the heart (though even after business hours the former must monitor the suggestions of the latter) which Mrs Gaskell found so constricting but which she could find no way of challenging.

IV

The relative scarcity of less unmediated examples of the narrative of the urban district visit in the novel can perhaps be explained by the publication, early in the decade, of Bleak House, which largely pre-empted the ideological space which such narratives attempted to fill.

For there can be little doubt about Dickens's attack on the world of organized philanthropy in that novel. Mr Jarndyce remarks, and the reader is given no reason to doubt him, that there are '"two classes of charitable people; one, the people who did a little and made a great deal of noise; the other, the people who did a great deal and made no noise at all"' (Chap. 8, pp. 150-151). Mrs Jellyby, Mrs Pardiggle, and Mr Quale clearly belong to the class of people who do a little and make a great deal of noise, while Mr Jarndyce and Esther belong to the class of people who do a great deal and make no noise at all.

However, there is more to distinguish the two classes of people than just the loudness or otherwise of their professions. They are distinguished above all by systematic and wholesale procedures on the one hand, and by sympathetic and individual help on the other. The contrast is most clearly seen in the contrasting manners of Mrs Pardiggle, and Esther and Ada, in their visit to the brickmaker's cottage in Chapter eight. Mrs Pardiggle asks Esther and Ada to accompany her on one of her 'visiting rounds', about the suitability of which Esther is very uncertain. Not only does she have doubts about her own abilities for such a task, but she also sets before the reader an alternative ideal of charity which is clearly meant to carry assent: '... I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could, to those immediately about me; and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself' (Chap. 8, p. 154).

When the brickmaker's cottage is reached, Esther is equally explicit:

> Ada and I were very uncomfortable. We both felt intrusive and out of place; and we both thought that Mrs. Pardiggle would have got on infinitely better, if she had not had such a mechanical way of taking possession of people ... We both felt painfully sensible that between us and these people there was an iron barrier, which could not be removed by our new friend. By whom, or how, it could be removed, we did not know; but we knew that (Chap. 8, p. 159).

Esther makes a further comment on Mrs Pardiggle:

> I hope it is not unkind in me to say that she certainly did make, in this, as in everything else, a show that was not conciliatory, of doing charity by wholesale, and of dealing in it to a large extent (Chap. 8, p. 159).

The satirical attack on Mrs Pardiggle could scarcely be more open; her method of 'doing charity by wholesale' is presented as intrusive, unfeeling, and totally inappropriate. The tracts that she takes with her are unsuitable even for children, and her clumsiness is emblematic of her complete absence of tact, or respect for the 'light objects' of relations between people. There is a certain sectarian edge to this attack, of course - Mrs Pardiggle is clearly a High Church Anglican, her credo indicated by her familial attendance at Matins at 'half-past six o'clock in the morning all the year round, including of course the depth of winter', and by her list of duties: 'I am a School lady, I am a Visiting lady, I am a Reading lady, I am a Distributing lady' (Chap. 8, p. 152).[22] Thus the text at this point has a direct contemporary relevance, in view of the Anglican motivation behind such texts as The Daisy Chain, written just two years after Bleak House. This satire, however, is also integrated into another significant context in the novel, for Mrs Pardiggle is part of the world of organized philanthropy.

Esther and Ada continue their visit to the brickmaker's cottage after Mrs Pardiggle leaves. They approach the brickmaker's wife, who is nursing a black eye as well as a baby; as they do so, however, the

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22. This identification - which dates from Humphrey House - of Mrs Pardiggle with Puseyism, has been challenged by Valentine Cunningham in Everywhere Spoken Against : Dissent in the Victorian Novel (Oxford, 1975). Cunningham argues that despite the reference to Matins, Mrs Pardiggle's other activities suggest a Nonconformist identification. The argument seems to me to be unconvincing, as a glance at The Daisy Chain would show, though Mrs Pardiggle does belong to a connection of charitable organizations whose ethos is undoubtedly Nonconformist. So although Dickens's aim at Mrs Pardiggle is narrow, his scatter is wide.

baby dies. Their loving sympathy for the woman, their willingness to share her sorrow, is plainly offered as a way of removing the 'iron barrier' between 'us and these people'. It even gets the grudging respect of the 'very bad character' who is the father of the baby.

This whole scene of Mrs Pardiggle's visit can be described as providing an antitype of the District Visit - it is a hostile narration of the cottage visit exemplified by Ethel May's first visit to Cocksmoor in The Daisy Chain. The scene is more than just satirical, however. The text invokes another voice, that of the inmates of the cottage, the usually silent or whiningly deferential recipients of charity, to resist the overpowering monologue of Mrs Pardiggle. This seems to me to be a crucial moment, when the recipient of charity finally gets a voice which enjoys a real authenticity:

> 'I wants a end of these liberties took with my place. I wants an end of being drawed like a badger. Now you're a-going to poll-pry and question according to custom - I know what you're a-going to be up to. Well! You haven't got no occasion to be up to it. I'll save you the trouble. Is my daughter a-washin? Yes, she is a-washin. Look at the water. Smell it! That's wot we drinks. How do you like it, and what do you think of gin, instead! An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty - it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally onwholesome; and we've had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides (Chap 8, p. 158).

The speech continues with an extended catalogue of mock question and answer; by capping each of the questions purportedly put by Mrs Pardiggle with a crushing and unanswerable rejoinder, the whole Pardigglean enterprise is annihilated.

But Bleak House is not only the novel in which the recipient of charity is granted a voice; equally exceptional, and equally important, is the recognition of loving sympathy and support between the poor themselves. The most effectual help that the brickmaker's wife receives comes from her neighbour, a woman as poor and battered as herself.

Esther remarks - and here her narrative authority is indistinguishable from that of the text's other narrator - that 'I think the best side of such people is hidden from us. What the poor are to the poor is little known, excepting to themselves and GOD' (Chap. 8, p. 161). But the charities of the poor cannot enter the text in the same way as the charities of Esther or Mrs Pardiggle, for they cannot be known in the same way. Knowledge of them is gained through a different semiotic, outside the semiotic of the novel and entry to which is signalled by the capitalization of the letters of the Deity.[23] For the charities of the poor to be included in this novel would make it substantially different.

To describe Mrs Pardiggle's visit to the cottage as a hostile narration of the myth of charity is not, of course, a sufficient context on its own, for the visit is only an instance in a much larger context of argument in the novel. In an essay on Bleak House, Robert A. Donovan has argued that the way leading moral ideas, especially charity, are presented in the novel, is as follows: 'Dickens offers his main commentary, not by names or labels, certainly not by analysis, and not even by symbolic analogues, (though he uses them). His principal technique is the multiplication of instances.'[24] Though it is certainly true that the instances of charitable actions of one sort or another are multiple in the novel, the attack on the negative world of organized philanthropy is not without a savage analytical power. It is described as

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23. It is a measure of the exceptional nature of an earlier text, Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848), that such working-class solidarity can be a subject of novelistic interest, especially in the scene in which John Barton brings help to the Davenport Cellar, in chapter six.

24. Robert A. Donovan, 'Structure and Idea in Bleak House', E.L.H., 29 (1962), 175-201 (p. 200).

> an unsatisfactory company, where benevolence took spasmodic forms; where charity was assumed, as a regular uniform, by loud professors and speculators in cheap notoriety, vehement in profession, restless and vain in action, servile in the last degree of meanness to the great, adulatory of one another and intolerable to those who were anxious quietly to help the weak from falling, rather than with a great deal of bluster and self-laudation to raise them up a little way when they were down (Chap. 15, p. 256)

The text then is quite open and explicit about the kinds of values and activities that are to be weighed against this negative world, and it is not difficult to think of those people who are 'anxious quietly to help the weak from falling'. Apart from Esther with her expanding circle of duty, apart even from Mr Jarndyce whose benevolence reaches in all directions, there are Nemo's sympathetic charities to Jo, Mr Snagsby's never-failing fund of half-crowns, Richard Carstone's early generosity to Mr Skimpole and Miss Flite, and Alan Woodcourt's manner with the poor. What unites these instances is precisely their indiscriminateness - they do not aim 'to raise /the weak/ up a little when they are down', but are simply the unchecked and uncheckable responses of the heart.

This opposition, then, between the sympathetic response of the heart, and the systematic response of the dealers in charity by wholesale, is one of the oppositions that structure this text, organizing the multiple instances that I have just briefly listed. It is as important an opposition as that suggested by the derisive title of Chapter Four, 'Telescopic Philanthropy' - namely the opposition between responsibilities to those at home, and those far distant. Again the text is quite explicit; there is no mistaking the nature of the attack on Mrs Jellyby's philanthropy, and it is made explicit not only in Chapter Four, but repeated at intervals throughout the novel. My quotation comes from Chapter thirty-eight, when Caddy Jellyby reports to Esther that her mother thinks it rather absurd for her to marry a dancing-master;

Esther reflects that 'It struck me that if Mrs Jellyby had discharged her own natural duties and obligations, before she swept the horizon with a telescope in search of others, she would have taken the best precautions against becoming absurd; but I need scarcely observe that I kept this to myself' (Chap. 38, p. 593). Repeatedly in Bleak House, the standard by which the negative aspects of the world are measured - here, Mrs Jellyby's invented and self-aggrandizing duties to people far distant - is that of 'the natural duties and affections', the heartfelt sympathetic response.

These 'natural duties and affections' are part of the organizing core of the text, the system of positive values which can be called the world of 'true legitimacy'. The phrase comes from Mr Jarndyce's account of how he persuaded Mrs Woodcourt to accept Esther as a suitable wife for her son:

> 'Then, I told her all our story - ours - yours and mine. "Now, madam," said I, "come you, knowing this, and live with us. Come you, and see my child from hour to hour; set what you see, against her pedigree, which is this and this" - for I scorned to mince it - "and tell me what is the true legitimacy, when you shall have quite made up your mind on the subject."'
> (Chap. 64, p. 914).

Many accounts of the novel have cast doubt on the efficacy of this world of true legitimacy in Bleak House;[25] while I share the doubt, I want to suggest that the precariousness of its social location, though this can perhaps be over-emphasized, in no way casts doubt on its ontology.

There are several ways in the novel in which this is established. True legitimacy is congruous with the 'reality' which Lady Dedlock has so long suppressed and which finally bursts through with fatal consequences; it is congruous with the 'Terewth' that Chadband distorts and

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25. Stemming especially from J. Hillis Miller, Charles Dickens : The World of His Novels (Cambridge, Mass., 1958).

obscures from Jo; and it is congruous with the 'truth and justice' that have dissolved partnership with law and lawyers 'for ever and a day' (Chap. 55, p. 803). The question, then, is not as to the ontology of true legitimacy, but as to its efficacy in the world of Chancery and organized philanthropy. Several points need to be made here, I think. First, the hermeneutic and narrative procedures of the text do go a long way to establish legitimacy at the end of the novel: Lady Dedlock's secret is uncovered, Inspector Bucket reveals the true murderer of Mr Tulkinghorn, Esther marries Alan Woodcourt and Rose marries Watt Rouncewell. On the other hand, Chancery remains essentially untouched by these developments, as the mock denouement provided by the discovery of an 'authentic' Jarndyce will suggests. If such a will were to be accepted and acted upon by Chancery, then its procedures might be seen as eventually just, if a little cumbersome. But in fact Jarndyce and Jarndyce is consumed in costs - no justice can come from that tainted source.

There is a social location for the world of true legitimacy, however - it is in Bleak House, and in the second Bleak House to which Alan and Esther move. This is how the situation of this second Bleak House is described:

> Such a lovely place, so tranquil and so beautiful, with such a rich and smiling country spread around it; with water sparkling away into the distance, here all overhung with summer-growth, there turning a humming mill; at its nearest point glancing through a meadow by a cheerful town, where cricket-players were assembling in bright groups, and a flag was flying from a white tent that rippled in the sweet west wind (Chap. 64, p. 912).

The gesturally pastoral quality of this prose, which contrasts so markedly with the metaphoric inventiveness and specificity of the descriptions of Chancery, suggests the mythical quality of this landscape and perhaps also the invincibility of Chancery as a social institution. Similarly unspecified is the source of Jarndyce's wealth - surrounding the second

Bleak House is the landscape of that mythological land inhabited by prodigies of inexhaustible benevolence.

Which brings us back to the more immediate concern of this chapter, narratives of charity. I have been arguing that Bleak House is a polemical and iconoclastic novel, in which Dickens attempts to debunk prevailing narratives of charity and to substitute for them his own preferred narrative - especially that of heartfelt and sympathetic charity. Ultimately, however, the same problematic underlies all these narratives. For I propose a relationship of the following form - the world of 'true legitimacy' is to Chancery as the impulses of the heart are to the 'unbending conditions of social life'. In proposing such a relationship I give full weight to the assertion that Chancery stands as a symbol of English social institutions, of the irresponsibility of its religious leaders and of its ruling class. I take Chancery as including Tom-all-Alone's, as including its 'decaying houses' and 'blighted lands', and as including the 'wretched hovels in a brickfield, with pigsties close to the broken windows, and miserable little gardens before the doors, growing nothing but stagnant pools' (Chap. 8, p. 156). And I propose that the ultimate impotence of true legitimacy, understood as including the charities practised by Esther and Jarndyce and Snagsby, in the face of this Chancery world, is an effect of the ideological problematic that opposes simple impulsive charity to a social life bound by laws whose operation is inevitable. To assert, in the face of Malthusian stinginess, that the feeling heart knows no boundaries when confronted by the effects of those laws, is in no way to challenge them or their 'inevitable operation'. Rather, at a more fundamental level, it is to be ruled by them.

The impotence of 'true legitimacy' in Bleak House can be directly compared to the way that the self-helping virtues are presented in Hard

Times. In both cases, Dickens is deeply committed to authentic versions of these values, but suggests that there is no place in society for their effective operation, despite the loud homage paid to their false and meretricious versions.

V

Narratives of charity, then, are bound on the one hand by an ultimately aristocratic ethic of charity; and on the other by the bourgeois science of Political Economy. Since every narration is necessarily a prise de position, the narrative of charity cannot be told without adopting a position in the balance of forces between different sections of the ruling class; discriminate charity in particular aiding in the establishment of a hegemony which, though decisively bourgeois, nevertheless preserved substantial elements of aristocratic influence and ideology.

I have insisted on the word 'aristocratic', despite its bluntness, for a reason. This has been to try to avoid deferring to a widespread mystification of rural social relations, which sees them as 'integrated' or 'organic', and which sees charity as emblematic of this integration. The danger is especially acute in so far as the use of Mauss's analysis of the gift in traditional society - which sees it as a 'total' institution, at once economic, juridical, moral, aesthetic, religious, mythological and socio-morphological - might be thought to lend weight to such a mystification. The term 'aristocratic' helps to prevent an elision of traditional society with rural society, for in feudal and post-feudal rural social relations there is no such unity of the gift; Mauss's analysis nevertheless usefully establishes the connection between the religious (sacrificial) character of alms-giving and its function as a method of inducing obligation and, ultimately, social control. On a

cottage-visit, the donor expects no material return for his gift, but the obligation is nevertheless imposed and is realized in deference.

Though this also describes the project of the urban district visit, in the town, charity loses its aristocratic exclusiveness but remains a mark of gentility. In Outcast London, G.S. Jones has suggested that the particular ideological orientation of the Charity Organization Society can be accounted for by the class-character of its members, who were largely drawn from the upper professional class and who, having several years of training behind them, were committed to the values of self-help, but who did not wish for this work to infringe on their genteel status. I think that this argument can be extended to cover larger sections of the urban middle class. Because charity was a sign of gentility, it could be used as a method of establishing genteel status; sections of the middle class could use it to redraw the gentry line below them, where previously it had been drawn between themselves ('trade') and a gentry defined as a landowning class. Appropriate narrations of the myth of charity are thus useful in establishing the integrity of bourgeois hegemony, for the manoeuvre necessarily defines itself vis-a-vis the poverty of the excluded class.

The 1855 Quarterly Review article on the charities of London which was so enthusiastic for urban district visiting, explicitly offered this consolidation of the respectable classes as a further reason for supporting such charitable schemes:

> By uniting all in the common work of charity, they bring classes into communication who are apt to misunderstand each other, and they bring home the personal obligation of charity to the feelings of many who had hitherto considered it as the privilege or duty of the rich alone (p. 427).

But it was not only participation in the schemes which served to bring home this personal obligation, it was also narratives of the various schemes, so that frequent circulation of appropriate accounts was

essential to their continuance. As we have seen, such accounts necessarily used techniques which are ordinarily thought of as the domain of the novel - narratives and character-typologies; and they used a nominalized prose in which these categories are latently present. Since these techniques can only be sustained and extended in the novel, the novel is an essential field for their continuance; but also, in the novel, they can be attacked or satirized or reversed. The novel, in short, is one of the areas in which the competition between different narrations of the same story is conducted.

Indeed, the most substantial novel that I have considered in this chapter, Bleak House - and certainly the one that enjoyed the largest readership - was precisely the novel which gave the most hostile narration of the district visit. Since every narration is an inevitable prise de position, given a narration of such authority and widespread circulation as that of Bleak House, every subsequent narration must measure itself against the position adopted there, and this is as true of non-fictional narrations as fictional ones. The literature of charity in the mid-century abounds with touchy references, especially to Mrs Jellyby; but the alternative narrations of charity that are offered do not attempt to explode the terms in which Dickens's narration operates so much as to show that charitable activity is after all possible within those terms.

The satire on Mrs Jellyby operates, obviously enough, on the opposition between public and private duties. The references to Mrs Jellyby do not challenge this order of priorities - indeed, all accounts of charity are insistent upon it, especially if they are directed at women - but challenge the representativeness of the characterization. Thus Mrs Sewell, in Thy Poor Brother, writes that

> Charles Dickens' satirical description of the lady, who left her own family in ruinous neglect, whilst she was

> arranging plans for the conversion of the natives of Booriobolargar [sic] - though, for the most part, unjust, and unwarranted, is a hint in point, to those who prefer the excitement and eclat of public charity, to the exact conscientious performance of home and social duties (p. 152).

Similarly, the pressure of Bleak House can be felt very acutely behind the following passage from the same book:

> I see no objection whatever, to kind-hearted ladies having their working-parties, and sending 'frocks, handkerchiefs, and flannel petticoats to the black populations', but let them first see, that our poor old neighbour has not to end his days in a workhouse, and that his children are not barefoot in the street. We know the old adage 'charity begins at home' (pp. 213-214).

In the circulation of narratives, there are competing narrations, and Mrs Sewell is anxious here to win back some of the interpellant power which has been preempted by Dickens's overwhelmingly hostile narration. The fact that she can do so, however, within the terms of Dickens's narration, only challenging its typicality, suggests once again that Dickens's radicalism resided not so much in his principles but in his refusal to see any possibility for the operation of those principles in contemporary England.

Mrs Bayly, in Ragged Homes and How to Mend Them, was equally obliged to register and then discount the hostile representation of Bleak House in describing her own scheme for the improvement of the poor, which was to be achieved by a combination of Bible-readings, sewing-classes, and recipes for 'nourishing soup'. After describing her work to a friend in a letter, Mrs Bayly continues:

> Now, in alluding to this, you no doubt were influenced by the recollection of Mrs. Jellaby's [sic] celebrated establishment; and have been thinking, when you pay us your long-promised visit, whether you will be able to trace a resemblance in my children to the poor little neglected 'Peepy'; how much semi-cooked meat you will have to eat; whether the potatoes will sometimes be lost by being placed in the coal-skuttle, and so forth.

> After all that has been written and said, both for and against mothers of families being allowed to do anything besides 'minding their own business', it seems to me that the question resolves itself simply into this:- is the occupation in unison with home duties, and can it chime in with them? Or is it something that will direct the thoughts and actions into an entirely different channel? Now, although we may imagine it possible to work one's own mind up into a strong interest in some 'Borrio boolah Gha', it is rather too much to expect that the minds of those about us will be equally interested. But if you could see the great pleasure which my children derive from hearing about the society /i.e. her charitable society/, and working with me, you would be the first to beg me to continue it for their sakes (pp. 120-121).

While there can be no doubting the impact of the Mrs Jellyby sections of Bleak House, in the light of these responses (though Mrs Bayly seems less acutely aware of Mrs Pardiggle, since here and elsewhere in the text she sounds remarkably like her), the ease with which the satire can be out-manoeuvred indicates that it was the accuracy and not the terms of Dickens's narration that caused offence. When, moreover, it is recalled that these are the terms of women's oppression, and that there is a suggestion that Mrs Jellyby's non-domesticity is linked to her husband's sexual meekness, then these sections of the text look still less radical. In offering their alternative narrations, and in neutralizing Dickens's powerful narration, Mrs Sewell and Mrs Bayly were far from distorting Dickens's text, they were rather attempting to demonstrate that their own activities and those they advocated were quite defensible within the priorities he assumed.

Esther and Amy's refusal to continue with District Visits after their initial experience of one, however, is intractable to this kind of reconstitution, for it represents not only a critique of Mrs Pardiggle's District Visiting technique - with which Mrs Sewell, for one, would have entirely agreed - but also a refusal of any charity except that occurring in the natural course of one's daily life. It was this that provoked

the writer in the Quarterly article on the charities of London actually to offer an alternative denouement for the narrative:

> It is said that books lose half their usefulness because they cannot, like letters, be sent sealed to their address. Mr. Dickens's character of a district visitor might be profitably studied by those engaged in the same work of charity. Mrs. Pardiggle (for that is the woman's portentous name), restlessly active, harsh, unsympathising, coldly methodical, valuing herself on the quantity of work done, indifferent to the effect produced, exhibits in her own person all the faults which, in their combination, it is to be hoped are found in none, but each and all of which the district visitor should most carefully avoid. So far this negative instruction is most useful. But to those who are anxious to find some pretext for taking no active part in works of charity, this frightful example suggests the very excuse which their own timidity had already suggested, and which their indolence is so ready to accept, namely, that their interference would do more harm than good. And yet (we cannot forbear urging), according to the gifted novelist's own showing, Mrs. Pardiggle on the only occasion on which we are introduced to her company performs a blessed day's work; she persuades his two amiable heroines to accompany her on her visits, and there, from their own personal experience, they learn how much of comfort a few kind words can impart to the wounded spirit. If after making this discovery they neglect to turn it to account, we submit that Mrs Pardiggle's faulty performance is less culpable than their total neglect (p. 428).

This seems to me to be an exemplary piece of ideological criticism. In so far as the text is assimilable to the reviewer's own project, he follows it more or less faithfully, merely saying less wittily and with more unction what is already transparent in it. Where however the text cannot be assimilated, he immediately offers a possible alternative, refusing as 'culpable' the narrative conclusion that the text provides. This refusal of the text, moreover, comes not at the moment of Dickens's positive satire, but at the moment when the characters in the novel refuse to enter the rationality of organized philanthropy. The critic offers a negation of this negation, in which what has to be reestablished is not the terms upon which charity operates, but the illusion that charity can be beneficially practised in society as at present constituted. It is towards this essential conclusion that this would-be decisive re-narration of Bleak House points.

The reception of Bleak House among the 'unsatisfactory company' provides, then, a demonstration of how the circulation and recuperation of narrative interpellations operated, given a certain ideological field and the competition between different narrations within that field. The various, largely successful, attempts, to assimilate Dickens's text, demonstrate as much as the analysis of the novel itself, that to attack the myth of discriminate charity as exemplified by the District Visit is not to reconcile the contradiction between an ethic of charity and Political Economy which the myth seeks to mediate. That contradiction remains irreconcilable, and all narrations of charity, which cannot, by virtue of the very fact that they are narrations of charity, subvert either pole of the contradiction, necessarily remain trapped within it.

Note to Chapter Three

One novel of the 1850s deals with institutional charity, and though this is apparently somewhat different from the narratives of charity that I have considered in this chapter, it will be seen that the terms in which Trollope discusses this in The Warden are ultimately comparable to those which dictated the more frequently circulated narratives of charity.[1]

The tone of the novel is mock-heroic and profoundly accommodatory. What it attempts to accommodate is both a richly evocative and socially beneficent old order, represented by Hiram's Hospital, and a reforming spirit out to expose the abuses of that order. The accommodation is achieved in a text which is suffused with nostalgia for the passing paternalist order, and which loads the dice against assailants of that order by demonstrating their tactlessness and lack of appreciation for its niceties and subtleties, but which nevertheless defers to the rightness of the principles on which Hiram's Hospital is attacked.

The measure of the nostalgia can be taken by comparing the lovingly evoked tranquillity which characterizes the cloisters of Barchester at the beginning of the novel, with the desolation which descends upon the Hospital after Mr Harding resigns the Wardenship and the Bishop refuses to reappoint. It can also be seen in the recognition on the part of Bruce, chief of Hiram's pensioners, that the old days are gone forever:

> The hospital had to him been a happy home, but it could be so no longer. He had had honour there, and friendship; he had recognised his master, and been recognised; all his wants, both of soul and body, had been supplied, and he had been a happy man (p. 257).

The paternalistic and deferential nature of old-fashioned charity here becomes a subject for sentimental retrospect; the impersonal and

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1. Anthony Trollope, The Warden (1855; references to the Oxford World's Classics Edition).

mechanical administration of charity, which is to replace it, will clearly not be so conducive to Bunce 'recognising his master, and being recognised'.

Yet the old-fashioned administration of charity is shown to be corrupt, and is soon recognized as such even by the Warden himself. He finally remarks that

> 'My God knows whether or no I love my daughter; but I should sooner that she and I should both beg, than that she should live in comfort on money which is truly the property of the poor' (p. 219).

The rightness of the attack, led by the reforming Surgeon Bold, on this maladministration, is not in doubt; only whether it is really good manners.

But in the last resort, the novel is mock-heroic; it accommodates these contradictions in an ironic pose which recognizes that whatever the difference in principle between a traditional clergy and a reforming middle-class, at least all are gentlemen. In the purlieu of this secularizing humour, adjustments and realignments between different sections of the ruling class can be achieved with a minimum of friction. And who are the losers in this process of realignment? None other than the heirs of Hiram, Bunce and his co-hospitallers. Sad, but true.

CHAPTER FOUR : TYPES OF MANKIND AND REPRESENTATIVE FICTIONS

I

The circulation of narratives within ideology is one of the means by which its interpellant power is sustained. Equally important is the circulation of types recognized as representative, and though the novel is certainly the most important arena for their circulation, it is by no means the only one. Mid-nineteenth century anthropology and ethnology was equally reliant on the category of type, suggesting some important relations between the two areas.

It would doubtless be possible to write a history of the nineteenth-century novel in terms of the disintegration of the category of type. Such a history, which would start with Scott and end with James, would record both a progressive inclusion and a progressive exclusion - a progressive inclusion of more and more minutely detailed nuances of characterization, both moral and psychological, which lead the reader to recognize an individual; and a progressive exclusion of several classes of society from the areas of central interest in the novel. What would be described in such a history would be the replacement of a model of society which was hierarchical, and where the different

social classes could easily be distinguished, by a model of society where the only distinction - the distinction of gentility which brings with it the sympathetic interest of the reader - is to be decided by the presence or absence of, precisely, moral and psychological characteristics. It is thus perfectly possible for two different kinds of characterization to coexist in the same novel, a moral definition of gentility marking at once a social difference and a representational one. Such a definition of gentility, however, is inherently unstable, for all classes of society can lay claim to it. Hence the persistence, simultaneous with the moral definition and contradictory to it, of more old-fashioned definitions based quite simply on place in the social hierarchy.

A literature unashamed in its use of a typology is plainly compatible with confidence in the permanence of the existing social hierarchy, and with a psychology based on simple but strongly-marked divisions, such as a psychology of humours. In the novels of Scott, for example, the fixity of the character and social types is essential for the success of his obsessively worked and reworked central theme - the establishment of the legitimacy of the existing order of things. This very fixity of types, however, permits the use of improbable or romantic narratives, for the novels' success as social history is established by the typology - their verisimilitude is not threatened by improbabilities of plot. Whereas novels which seek to characterize individuals have to seek their representativeness in the sobriety and typicality of their narrative.

If I am right in suggesting a progressive exclusion, in the course of the nineteenth century, of several classes of society from the same kind of novelistic interest as that enjoyed by the (morally defined) genteel classes, then it should not be surprising to find, in mid-century, that characterizations which are to be understood as types are confined

to subsidiary, working-class or low-life characters. Such characters are assumed to be representative in a way which is qualitatively different from the representativeness of the main psychologically and morally nuanced characters. In the case of these latter characters, their representativeness functions by a process of self-recognition by the reader, a process entailing moral consequences, so that the reader is expected to recognize moral dilemmas, failings and successes as applicable to his or her own case. By contrast, in the case of characterizations of the non-genteel classes (or immoral aristocrats in certain petty-bourgeois novels), their representativeness depends upon their typicality, since it is assumed that the great majority of the social class or sub-group are essentially the same as the individual portrayed. The act of recognition on the reader's part is thus directed outwards, and functions by the recognition of difference rather than of identity; it is thus fundamentally a process of exclusion. What is at stake is the simultaneous recognition and repression of the fact of class-exploitation, for in a society of 'free' labour it is not permissible to think of a social hierarchy as fixed in the traditional manner - on the contrary, ideologically everyone has to be convinced that he has at least fair access to the means of production and the various posts in them. So the fact of class-exploitation is repressed, but reappears either as marked by a moral difference, which of course everyone has an equal capacity for overcoming, or as a difference in the mode of representation, frequently obscured by the proximity of two conflicting modes in the same text.

Thus in Charlotte Brontë's Shirley, two working-class characters function as types in a way reminiscent of Scott.[1] One of them is

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1. Charlotte Brontë, Shirley (1849. All references to the Thornton edition, 1899).

William Farren, a type of the honest Yorkshire labourer, described in these terms:

> Before gentlemen ... William was often a little dogged; with proud or insolent ladies, too, he was quite unmanageable, sometimes very resentful; but he was most sensible of, most tractable to, good-humour and civility. His nature - a stubborn one - was repelled by inflexibility in other natures ... (II, 7).

The typicality of this characterization is soon established by its being applied wholesale to a typical Yorkshire crowd: 'Yorkshire people are as yielding to persuasion as they are stubborn against compulsion' (II, 55). William Farren's characterization authenticates one of the reasons adduced for the rebelliousness of the Yorkshiremen who attack Moore's mill - they only do so because they have been harshly and uncharitably treated. His tractability and sensibility to good-humour and civility from his betters supports this romantic Tory account of Luddism. Equally, the other reason adduced for rebelliousness - that honest Yorkshire folk have been led astray by dishonest foreign agitators - is authenticated by a typical characterization, Moses Barraclough, who is a type of the drunken, canting, Methodistical agitator, an outsider in the district.

The two reasons combine to produce a 'middle class myth';[2] the point here, however, is not only the truth or falsehood of these characterizations, but that they are recognized in quite a different way from those of the main characters. Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone are so presented that the reader becomes inward with their moral and psychological dilemmas, whether by inference or omniscient narration; this very inwardness and the complexities it reveals aim to prevent the foreclosure of types. The novel is trying to win some free space for these characters as women, as individuals in their own right (Shirley refuses to be 'half-angel and half-doll'); so that while

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2. So described by E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working-Class (1968), p. 613.

their dilemmas can be seen as typical, they are not a simple function of their place in the social hierarchy.[3]

It is thus possible to speak of two kinds of typicality. The first, despite the individuality of the characterization, assumes the universality of its moral and psychological discriminations; while the second constructs a type whose characterization is assumed to be typical of a certain social class. It is with this second kind of typicality that I am interested in this chapter; but while its progressive rupturing in the course of the nineteenth century is a function of the changing ideological needs of a changing class society, I am not asserting a simple linear progression. Residual novelistic modes, as in the novels of Lever, can long survive the appearance of more progressive ones, and contradictory modes can appear in the same text, as in the early novels of Dickens, especially Nicholas Nickleby.

A type in this second sense, then, is a characterization which is assumed to be typical, or at least a typical variation of, a social class or regional sub-class. Such a characterization can be built because this class is assumed to behave essentially like an individual. Not only are such typologies very ancient, but in the mid-nineteenth century they were becoming increasingly residual. Moreover, they were heavy with the hierarchical, ideological and theological implications

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3. One only has to recall the often scandalized reception of Jane Eyre to realize that it was possible to resist such manoeuvres, and thus to refuse the text, by charging it with vulgarity, i.e. by relocating it in the social hierarchy by showing how it transgressed it. Even a review at pains to refute the Quarterly's anathema, that of James Lorimer in the North British Review, 11 (August 1849) 475-493, could vent suspicion and intimate limits by making Jane Eyre a type; he suggests that the 'true secret of her importance' is an alarming 'recklessness about right and wrong', one of the 'peculiarities of that class of young ladies, of which she has been recognized as the type, and which consequently is now beginning to be known by the epithet of "Jane Eyrish"', p. 488.

of this past. The metonymic figure which produces their representativeness, however, was, and remains, extraordinarily powerful, and this figure, though preeminently literary, was not confined to literature, as we shall see when we turn to the construction of types in anthropology and ethnology.

II

H.H. Odom has suggested that nineteenth century biology and anthropology used taxonomies organized around classifications of type.[4] The type is conceived as an individual, and races thus behave essentially like individuals. The point can be made more generally - type is an essential category for all pre-Mendelian classifications of race, and some notion of the permanence or recurrence of type is equally necessary for pre-Darwinian ones. Before considering the content of these typologies, therefore, some consideration of the ideological constraints operating formally on the construction of typologies is necessary. In what problematic are the various typologies to be understood?

The histories of the sciences of anthropology and genetics in the nineteenth century are marked by two decisive breaks. The first was effected by Darwin, shifting the ground upon which biology stood from one of permanence to one of adaptation.[5] The second decisive break was Mendel's, who first published in a vacuum in 1865, his work not being rediscovered until the end of the century. In post-Mendelian genetics,

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4. H.H. Odom, 'Generalizations on Race in Nineteenth-Century Physical Anthropology', Isis, 58 (1967), 5-18. The issue is also discussed by the editor in his introduction to Images of Race, edited by M.D. Biddiss (Leicester, 1979).

5. The concept of an 'epistemological break' is usefully applied to the history of genetics by Dominique Lecourt in Proletarian Science? The Case of Lysenko, translated by Ben Brewster (1977), especially chapter 4, 'The Theory of Heredity'.

the object of study has changed from the individual to the population. In the pre-Darwinian and pre-Mendelian texts that I will be citing, the pre-eminence of the category of type is explicable as a way of understanding the permanence or recurrence of specific similarities, and as a way of bridging the gap between specific character and populations.

The difficulty of adequately theorizing the various phenomena of heredity without the category of type can be gauged from G.H. Lewes' attempt to do so, in an article published in 1856.[6] Lewes begins with some very apt criticisms of contemporary ideas on heredity, explicitly rejecting the idea of the inheritance of specific type:

> Nature only knows individuals. A collection of individuals so closely resembling each other as all sheep resemble each other, are conveniently classed under one general term, named species; but this general term has no objective existence; the abstract or typical sheep, apart from all concrete individuals, has no existence out of our systems. Whenever an individual sheep is born, it is the offspring of two individual sheep, whose structures and dispositions it reproduces; it is not the offspring of an abstract idea, it does not come into being at the bidding of a type, which as a Species sits apart, regulating ovine phenomena (p. 138).

Having said as much, however, Lewes silently reintroduces the category when trying to explain some supposed factors which affect the 'law of variation', one of which is 'potency of race': 'the Danes, intermarrying with women of the East, always produce children resembling the European type; but the converse does not hold good when Danish women intermarry with the men of the East' (p. 155). This reintroduction of the term is symptomatic of the necessary role it played in discussions of heredity, so cannot merely be dismissed as inadvertent; indeed, the use of the term is never innocent, for it carries with it the ideological implications of its past.

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6. /G.H. Lewes/, 'Hereditary Influence, Animal and Human', Westminster Review, 10 (July-October, 1856), 135-162.

Type thus enables one to think specific differences, and racial differences, in a way which 'accounts for' many observed facts of heredity. But this category of a theoretical ideology has implications of a more practical ideological kind, as its use by many authors who gave an explicitly racial emphasis to their anthropology, demonstrates. Such authors enjoyed something of a publishing boom in the early 1850s.

If type was simply the innocent precondition for a system of classification, there would be little to argue with in the establishment of typologies. However, the category carries with it strong traces of its theological past, and in two ways. First, its meaning at times verges near to that of symbol, where an event can be seen as a 'type' of some more transcendent reality. Secondly and more importantly, types are conceived as fixed and eternal categories which have the imprimatur of theology. They can retain this second sense even when they are used in an explicitly anti-theological text such as Robert Knox's The Races of Men.[7] Here, the transcendentalism and eternalism combine to produce Knox's 'transcendental anatomy'; for Knox, the type of any particular race is that which expresses its most perfect form, and to which all the individuals of that race tend:

> ... for, as the human faculties are constituted to look for and admire the perfect form, so every deviation from this perfect form, the standard and type of which exists in every rightly formed mind, is regarded with a certain dislike. It is to this type that nature as constantly leans in carrying out the development of every individual; the law in fact of individuality; of species' (p. 35).

Despite the iconoclasm and heterodoxy of this text, it clearly shares the same problematic as theology, substituting however 'nature' for God. The problematic is constructed on the terms of fixity of species, so that even in this deliberately anti-religious text the following passage

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7. Robert Knox, The Races of Men; A Fragment (1851).

is possible: 'there must be a type laid down by nature; eternal; equal to all manifestations of form, extinct or living, or to come' (p. 429).

The Races of Men - and, indeed, most pre-Darwinian texts - is of course partly to be understood in the context of the debate between monogenists and polygenists, with the armies of the orthodox ranked under the banner of the former. In retrospect, it seems an irony of history that in arguing for monogenesis, the orthodox should have needed to produce arguments that should later seem comparable to those used by Darwinists in their heterodox arguments for the transformation of species. But the resemblance is only superficial. Monogenist arguments - e.g. respecting changes of complexion caused by climate - depend ultimately upon a notion of a moral economy, of the particular fitness of species to environment, which is quite a different notion from the Darwinian one of transformation of species. Some such notion of fitness of species to environment is also shared by polygenists; what distinguishes the two is more the insistence of the latter on the longevity and permanence of the existing arrangement.

The emphasis upon permanence is indeed the main argument advanced by the American ethnologists Nott and Gliddon, in their monumental Types of Mankind.[8] This is basically a massive commentary on the work of the craniologist Morton, who attempted to prove the permanence of the existing races of men by comparing the skulls of ancient Egyptians with those of present-day races. Nott and Gliddon extend the argument with a display of Egyptian and biblical scholarship, all tending to prove the permanence of the existing types of mankind.

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8. J.C. Nott, M.D., and Geo. R. Gliddon, Types of Mankind; or, Ethnological Researches, based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures and Crania of Races, and upon their Natural, Geographical, Philological and Biblical History. Illustrated by S.G. Morton's Papers (Philadelphia and London, 1854).

The argument is only possible because of the category of type. It is assumed that what is transmitted in reproduction is not a sum of randomly combining individual characteristics, but a type, which is anyway synonymous with species.[9] Type or species thus transcends the individual, and enjoys a permanence which can be 'proved' by comparing contemporary skulls with the records of ancient Egyptian monuments and the human skulls unearthed by palaeontology. However, we are not dealing here simply with the reification of a principle of classification, as though the classifiers had mistakenly and as it were inadvertently extended a category at which they had spontaneously arrived when confronted by the mass of empirical data; on the contrary, ideological constraints operate at two moments in the production of this typology. First, a typology guaranteed by theological conceptions is a highly appropriate method of classification for a self-consciously hierarchical society; and secondly, given this formal extension of a principle of hierarchical social classification to racial classification, the content of the typology is itself constrained by the ideological needs of different class societies. In the case of Nott and Gliddon, these ideological needs are especially overt - they were writing in the slave states of the United States, and while noting that to admit specific differences and superiorities between races does not justify slavery, they were quick to stress the immediate political and social implications of their work; namely, that statesmen should proceed by acknowledging the facts of Mongolian and negro inferiority, and should act cautiously in changing institutions where such facts are relevant.

The very overtness of this second moment of ideological motivation, however, should not obscure the more fundamental ideological implications

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9. 'It will be seen ... that we recognize no substantial difference between the terms types and species - permanence of characteristics belonging equally to both', Types of Mankind, p. 81.

of the construction of a typology as an explanatory system for heredity. In the Westminster Review, for example, which gave the book an enthusiastic review, no mention is made of its support for slavery, while the polygenist 'proof' is emphatically endorsed.[10] Once introduced into a racial context, the notion of type, and the related notions of permanence of type and reversion to type, rapidly becomes the key-stone of a variety of racist positions.

Type, then, is not only a term of a theoretical ideology, part of the pre-history of the science of genetics. When, in the manner of Knox or Gobineau, the category is extended into overtly racial explanations for human history, and for anthropology in general, the hierarchical implications of this term of a theoretical ideology are carried forward into the class society of capitalism.[11] The continually contested status of racism within bourgeois ideology is thus explicable, for it is at odds with the egalitarian implications of many elements of bourgeois ideology, notably political economy. J.S. Mill's persistent opposition to racial explanations of history and racist politics is of course central in this context. Eric Hobsbawm's account of Victorian racism seems to me convincing; in the Age of Capital he writes:

> Apart from its convenience as a legitimation of the rule of white over coloured, rich over poor, it is perhaps best explained as a mechanism by means of

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10. 'Types of Mankind', Westminster Review, 9 (January-April 1856), 356-386.

11. Gobineau also first published in the early 1850s. His Essai sur l'Inegalite des Races Humaines (1854), used the category of type, and Gobineau was aware of Morton's work; indeed, he used his classification of skull-sizes. See the Essai, chap. X, 'Certains Anatomistes attribuent a l'humanite des origines multiples', pp. 127-8 (1967 ed.), where he reproduces Morton's table but contests some of the details. Racial explanations for the course of human history thus received a massive boost in the 1850s, thanks to the almost simultaneous publication of the work of Gobineau, Nott and Gliddon, and Knox. The last is mentioned in the Westminster Review article on Nott and Gliddon.

> which a fundamentally inegalitarian society based upon a fundamentally egalitarian ideology rationalised its inequalities, and attempted to justify and defend those privileges which the democracy implicit in its institutions must inevitably challenge. 12

This quotation, however, is a useful reminder that racial explanations, in Europe especially, were advanced not only to legitimize colonial and imperial expansion, but also to legitimize class rule within Europe. In other words, racial difference was often perceived not only as the difference of colour, but also between and within various European nations. While it might be right to see such classifications as disguised class distinctions, this should not obscure the fact that, once residually hierarchical social typologies had been extended into racial classification, the resultant typologies had a sustained and vigorous efficacy of their own.[13]

Type is an essential category, then, in a tradition of 'scientific' anthropology and historiography, overtly and self-consciously racial, which gets energetically propelled by several texts published in the 1850s. In a slightly different sense, it is also an important category for quite another school of thought, usefully described by J.W. Burrow as 'evolutionary positivism'.[14] In this second tradition, which sought

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12. E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital (1975), p. 268.

13. This emphasis on the distinct efficacy of racial typologies is the main difference between my argument and that advanced by Douglas A. Lorimer in Colour, Class and the Victorians. English Attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century (Leicester, 1978). Lorimer argues in effect that racial prejudice was no more than disguised class prejudice; the hardening of attitudes after the mid-century resulted from the 'new mid-Victorian cult of gentility' and the decline of 'Nigger philanthropy' (p. 107). The argument, though useful in explaining the appeal of racial explanations to sections of the English middle class traditionally friendly to Evangelical images of the Negro, seems to me to ignore the underlying and far from 'new' congruence between social and racial typologies.

14. J.W. Burrow, Evolution and Society : A Study in Victorian Social Theory (Cambridge, 1966).

to bring history and society within the realm of science and to see them as subject to Natural Law, the evolution of man is seen as typified by the development of the individual. In this way the development of the individual becomes a type of the whole of human development. Currently existing societies are then distributed along the course of this individual development, to correspond with particular stages of it, each stage having its appropriate type of human being.

This fundamental methodological assumption is stated with characteristic turgidity by Auguste Comte, whose influence on English social thought really began to become substantial in the 1850s.[15] This is how it appears in Harriet Martineau's translation:

> The development of the individual exhibits to us in little, both as to time and degree, the chief phases of social development. In both cases, the end is to subordinate the satisfaction of the personal instincts to the habitual exercise of the social faculties, subjecting, at the same time, all our passions to rules imposed by an ever-strengthening intelligence, with the view of identifying the individual more and more with the species. In the anatomical view, we should say that the process is to give an influence by exercise to the organs of the cerebral systems, increasing in proportion to their distance from the vertebral column, and their nearness to the frontal region. Such is the ideal type which exhibits the course of human development, in the individual, and, in a higher degree, in the species. 16

Such a view of human development immediately yields a typology of 'the savage' and 'civilized man', which, though readily assimilable to a

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15. Harriet Martineau's translation and condensation of the Philosophie Positive was first published in 1853. Other important English reactions to Comte were that of Lewes, who also published an exposition, Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences, in 1853, and that of J.S. Mill, who thought that when he published his Auguste Comte and Positivism in 1865, the time was ripe for a critique rather than a straight exposition, since Comte was by that time sufficiently well known.

16. The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau, 3 vols. (1896), II, 301.

racial typology, is not necessarily congruous with one.[17] Comte's position is immediately comparable to Herbert Spencer's, who independently propounded views very similar to Comte's, views which took distinctive shape in the 1850s. Spencer also assumed as a methodological principle that the evolution of human society is typified in the development of the individual, and for him too this leads to a typology of 'the savage' and 'civilized man'. Perhaps both Comte and Spencer are best understood as trying to found their radicalism upon science;[18] in the course of the attempt, both produced typologies of 'savage', 'barbaric', and 'civilized' man which answered more closely to the needs of their own ideological projects in contemporary Europe than to any genuine attempt to understand the organization of primitive societies.

It is thus possible to separate, in the 1850s, two distinct schools of thought, one a self-consciously social ethnology, the other an evolutionary positivism, which both relied upon typologies of mankind and which inscribed themselves under the heading of science. The two schools were not entirely independent, and each offered competing explanations for the same phenomena. Thus Knox offered a history of the human race while Comte offered phrenology and Spencer a physiologically based psychology. But while the ethnologists produced typologies of 'the Negro' and 'the Aryan', or 'the Celt' and 'the Saxon', the evolutionary positivists tended more to a typology of 'the savage' and 'social man'. All have their counterparts in the novels of the 1850s.

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17. Comte kept a reasonably open mind on the subject of race as a factor controlling social development, merely listing it as one of three possible causes of social variation, the other two being climate and political action (see Martineau's condensation, II, 238). However, by cancelling psychology and substituting for it phrenology in a reductively materialist way, as in the passage quoted, he left the door open for racist craniologists of the Nott and Gliddon variety.

18. See J.W. Burrow, Evolution and Society, chapter 6, for this view of Spencer. Comte of course was a youthful disciple of Saint-Simon.

III

In The Savage in Literature, Brian Street has noticed how easily the classifications of race since Blumenbach could become the material for novelistic stereotypes.[19] Anthropology, in this view, provides ready-made characters. Now while it is of course true that novelists could be directly influenced by anthropology in their characterizations - and Street's example of Rider Haggard could be supplemented by Lytton and George Eliot - this general way of posing the problem seems to me to be mistaken. The notion is that novels reflect the intellectual climate of the age in a one-sided way, so that literary history becomes a hunt for sources and influences which effectively obscures the distinctively literary nature of the material being studied.

Lytton's use of ethnology will, I think, expose some of the problems of this approach. There is no doubt that Lytton was familiar with ethnological and phrenological writings; indeed, the book that the elder Caxton is writing - in the manner of the elder Shandy - in The Caxtons, amounts to a treatise on ethnology which advocates the mixture of races to raise the lower ones into 'nations of majesty and power' (p. 60). Unlike the elder Shandy's treatise, however, the reader is expected to take all this seriously, including the Lamarckian ideas of development propounded, which envisage rapid and permanent physiological 'improvements' to those races which suffer from 'the flattened skull and the ebon aspect' (p. 60).

This direct ethnological material, however, has a contradictory relation to the more directly novelistic material around which it is entwined. This is especially true of the Australian episode, in which

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19. Brian V. Street, The Savage in Literature : Representations of 'Primitive' Society in English Fiction, 1858-1920 (1975). See especially chap. 3.

Pisistratus Caxton wins his fortune in the Bush.[20] There is no question of a 'mixture of races' here, for the aborigines are sharply and hostilely typified, and referred to in such pejorative phrases as the 'war-whoop of the wild men'. The ethnology, in short, is not integrated into the fiction but at odds with it.

More could perhaps be made of Lytton's use of racial historiography, with which again we have evidence that he was acquainted.[21] The following passage from My Novel, for example, introduces a fight between two boys, one a peasant and the other an aristocrat:

> Aid me, O ye Nine! whom the incomparable Persius satirised his contemporaries for invoking, and then, all of a sudden, invoked on his own behalf - aid me to describe that famous battle by the stocks, and in defence of the stocks, which was waged by the two representatives of Saxon and Norman England. Here, sober support of law and duty and delegated trust - pro aris et focis; there, haughty invasion, and bellicose spirit of knighthood, and that respect for name and person which we call 'honour'. Here, too, hardy physical force - there, skilful discipline. Here - The Nine are as deaf as a post, and as cold as a stone! Plague take the jades! - I can do better without them (I, 101).

The heavy-handed mock-heroic in no way affects the typicality of these two characters, who are seriously offered as Saxon and Norman types. Far from demonstrating the influence of racial historiography, however, this passage could be quoted as a late narrative of the 'Norman Yoke',

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20. Coral Lansbury, in Arcady in Australia : The evocation of Australia in nineteenth-century English literature (Melbourne, 1970), gives an interesting if idealist discussion of this mythological material..

21. See his speech delivered at the Leeds Mechanics' Institution, 25 Jan. 1854, in The Speeches of Edward Lord Lytton, 2 vols. (1874), which offers a racial account of the progress of civilization, and includes such speculation as this: 'Out of all Europe there are only three great races which are in the full vigour of progressive life. The Great Germanic race - in which I include the kindred population of the Baltic, such as Sweden and Norway, and the populations, also kindred, of Belgium and Holland - the people of France, and the people of Great Britain (I, 175).

with the characteristics of the Norman suitably softened to suit Lytton's Whiggishness. The passage in fact provides its own authority (though Scott's Ivanhoe is perhaps not too far in the background), notably in the attributes ascribed to each character. This late and eminently literary narration actually provides authority for the superficially more substantial narrations of historians like Freeman.

In rejecting the one-sided influence of anthropology on the novel, however, I do not wish to be thought merely to be reversing the direction of influence. A theory along those lines is possible, of course. Type as a category of neoclassical literary theory and practice undoubtedly predates its use in anthropology, and it would be possible to produce examples of influence working in the opposite direction every bit as striking as the example of Rider Haggard.[22] I wish to propose a thesis, however, more fundamental than either of these two possible solutions - that the novel and anthropology share the same discourse, so that literary and anthropological types are effectively interchangeable, and enjoy a kind of double authority. Thus the anthropological type has to be established by literary means, while the literary (racial) type enjoys the authority of anthropology. Literature is as influential as anthropology or racial historiography in propelling a residual, hierarchical typology, applied to classifications of race, into the twentieth century, providing a spectacular example of uneven development which preserves ideological elements at odds with the classic development of bourgeois liberalism.

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22. One could recur, for example, to the influence of Scott's Ivanhoe (1820), whose casual retelling of twelfth-century English history in the old terms of Saxon and Norman influenced the French historian Thierry's Histoire de la Conquete Normande (1825). Thierry in turn influenced not only Matthew Arnold's views on ethnology; his racial historical explanations did not go unnoticed by Arthur de Gobineau either.

A comparison of 'the savage' in Spencer's writings in the 1850s, with the character of Jacky in Reade's It is Never Too Late to Mend, demonstrates the interchangeability of literary and anthropological types.

In Spencer's writings, especially Social Statics, the main focus of the argument is on contemporary England. The type of 'the savage' which emerges from his various publications in the 1850s, is therefore essentially a byproduct of his arguments about contemporary civilized man. Given his fundamental assumption that the development of human society is typified in the development of the individual, Spencer's aim is to push human society further along that developmental path from the savage to the civilized state. This means in particular the increasing diminution of the role of the state and of government in social life.

Spencer only advanced to his doctrinaire evolutionism in the course of the 1850s, however, and we should always be aware that the categories of his theoretical ideology, such as 'the savage', emerged under the pressure of very practical ideological objectives. What dominates his thinking is a conception of contemporary society formed on the model of the free labour market of capitalism. Because society has evolved to this stage, it is possible to see in surviving 'primitive' peoples what it has evolved from; and these primitive societies must display characteristics which are in many ways the opposite of contemporary society. Since all accounts of primitive society do in fact demonstrate the presence of such antitypical characteristics, the argument about contemporary society is 'proved'; or in other words, the ideological circle is closed.

The leading idea around which Spencer organizes his accounts of 'savage' life is the myth of the pre-social state. He assumes that primitive society is made up of an aggregate of individuals governed

by their predatory instincts; moral and social virtues are acquired as society progresses, by a process of adaptation, to a higher level. By contrast to savage life, advanced society demands men who possess self-control, the virtues of sympathy and morality, and the ability to look before and after. Such a view of social progress readily yields a typology, indeed depends on one; but it relies upon literary means to establish it, as in the following passage from Spencer's review of Bain:[23]

> When observing the differences between races, we can scarcely fail to observe also how these differences correspond with differences between their conditions of existence, and consequent activities. Among the lowest races of man, love of property stimulates to the obtainment only of such things as satisfy immediate desires, or desires of the immediate future. Improvidence is the rule: there is little effort to meet remote contingencies. But the growth of established societies having gradually given security of possession, there has been an increasing tendency to provide for coming years: there has been a constant exercise of the feeling which is satisfied by a possession for the future; and there has been a growth of this feeling so great that it now prompts accumulation to an extent beyond what is needful. Note, again, that under the discipline of social life - under a comparative abstinence from aggressive actions, and a performance of those naturally-serviceable actions implied by the division of labour - there has been a development of those gentle emotions of which inferior races exhibit but the rudiments. Savages delight in giving pain rather than pleasure - are almost devoid of sympathy; while among ourselves, philanthropy organizes itself in laws, establishes numerous institutions, and dictates countless private benefactions (I, 253).

The type of the savage implicit in this passage is a developed version of non-social man. He is feckless, with no developed sense of time; predatory, cruel, and, judging from other passages in Spencer,

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23. 'Bain on the Emotions and the Will', in Herbert Spencer, Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative, 3 vols. (1891), I, 241-264. The review was first published in the Medico-Chirurgical Review (Jan. 1860).

liable to mistreat his women and children;[24] cunning, servile, and especially so to brute authority. By contrast, the type of civilized man forms an antitype to this; he is prudent, with a developed sense of the importance of time; merciful and compassionate on principle, with a great respect for women and children; straightforward, self-reliant, and with no more than a proper respect for legitimate authority. He has highly developed moral principles, emotions, and reasoning faculties. Significantly, the passage turns on the equation of social life with the division of labour, with the silent assumption that the currently existing division of labour is the inevitable and only possible one.

Spencer's equation, incidentally, of 'savages' with the 'lowest races of man', does not imply that he was committed to some kind of physiological racial explanation for the difference between 'savages' and 'civilized men'. The text is an evolutionist one, but Lamarckian rather than Darwinian, so that it is possible to conceive of evolutionary change involving rapid and permanent physiological improvements thanks to the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Thus although elsewhere Spencer is capable of speaking of 'the small-brained savage' and 'the large-brained European',[25] his main argument is concerned with social and intellectual transformations only incidentally complicated by physiological explanations.

This type of 'the savage', then, has its conformation dictated by the problematic of Spencer's progressive evolutionism; a problematic,

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24. e.g. 'Scanning that aboriginal state of existence during which the aggressive conduct of man to man renders society scarcely possible, he will see not only that wives are slaves and exist by sufferance, but that children hold their lives by the same tenure, and are sacrificed to the gods when the fathers so will', Social Statics, p. 178.

25. The Principles of Psychology, 2 vols. (1890), I, 369. First published in 1855.

in short, of the extension of the rationality of the existing division of labour. It is the reverse of the type of civilized man, which is of course that of the solid bourgeois citizen, whose list of virtues is no more than a secularized version of the virtues of another 'typical' construction, this time of an 'ideal-typical' kind showing somewhat greater methodological self-consciousness - Weber's ideal-type seventeenth-century bourgeois of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

Having recognized this, however, another familiar type begs for comparison with that of 'the savage'. The labourer also is feckless, with no developed sense of time, cruel, and with a tendency to mistreat his women and children. The comparison is not exact, of course, but it is near enough for another writer in the same tradition as Spencer to make it the basis for a rudimentary sociology - G.H. Lewes in an article on 'Uncivilized Man'.[26] And since the development of the race is like the development of the individual, Lewes could also assert that the type of the savage resembles that of the child - 'Many of the things noticeable as characteristic of the savage are found lingering amongst ourselves, either in remote provinces, in uncultivated classes, or in children' (p. 39). All of which seems to confirm that the type of 'the savage' was produced more in response to contemporary ideological needs than as part of a genuinely scientific anthropology.

In what sense, however, does Spencer use 'literary' means to construct his typology? The passage that I have quoted from the Essays depends for its effect as argument upon the ability of abstractions to perform the function of personal nouns. Many of these abstractions - 'improvidence', 'tendency to provide for the coming

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26. [G.H. Lewes], 'Uncivilized Man', Blackwood's Magazine, 89 (January-June 1861), 27-41.

years', 'philanthropy' - can be grouped under the literary figure of personification; they have become the dramatis personae of a number of narratives. Now one way of stating this would be to say that Spencer is the heir of a certain eighteenth century tradition of general history, which proceeded deductively from general principles, rather than inductively from the particularities of history; and this is doubtless true. But the efficacy of this whole mode of argument depends upon the generalizing capacity of its discursive terms, its ability to use generalities which are at once universally applicable moral categories and the particularities of an individual characterization.

The character of Jacky in Reade's It is Never Too Late to Mend provides a striking comparison to the type of 'the savage' contemporaneously evoked by Spencer. He is an Australian aborigine, characterized by a short memory, even of such events as having his life saved by the novel's hero; he is very savage, with a thirst for revenge; and he has very undeveloped intellectual capacities, such that when he is given the hero's hut and sheep-run as a parting gift, he and his tribe sleep in the lee of the hut rather than inside, eat the sheep instead of tending them, use the furniture for firewood, and altogether amusingly demonstrate their primitive incompetence. The similarity with Spencer's typification is remarkable at times; Jacky is a brilliant tracker, with senses of sight and smell much more highly developed than the white men he guides across the Bush - compare a passage from Social Statics when Spencer speaks of 'that superiority of sight which enables a Bushman to see further with a naked eye than a European with a telescope' (p. 33). Plainly both must have derived this detail from a common source; the point however is that, with no evidence that Reade had read any Spencer (indeed for much of the

important material there was a chronological impossibility), Jacky exactly fills the bill as the type of savage described by Spencer.

There is, moreover, something extremely dangerous about him, not only because he is savage, but because his savagery is contagious. In one episode, for instance, he resumes his native name, Kalingalunga, and entertains the hero and two of his friends at his native village. The music of the revel is passionate and violent, rousing the instinctive passions even of the white men, so that their blood rises and they join the savage dance. The danger that Jacky represents, in other words, is that of <u>regression</u> on the part of his white employers.

If the presentation of this aspect of aboriginal culture is entirely hostile, however, there is one aspect of it which is positively presented - significantly enough, an aboriginal graveyard called Milmeridien (compare the flattering, faintly Ossianic overtones of this invention with the potentially absurd coining of Kalingalunga). It is significant, because aboriginal culture can only appear positively in a sentimental retrospect - the only beautiful aborigine is a dead one. Even this however, is destined to be erased: 'Hasty and imperfect as my sketch of this Jacky is, give it a place in your notebook of sketches, for in a few years the Australian savage will breathe only in these pages, and the Saxon plough will erase his very grave, his milmeridien' (p. 459).

It is plain, moreover, from a passage like this, that Jacky functions as a type of 'the Australian savage', and is to be understood as being typically representative of all such savages. It is here that the interchangeability of literary and anthropological types becomes apparent, for it is clear that for the characterization to enjoy that representativeness, it must bring with it some of the authority of anthropology. This is as much a matter of the recuperation of a text as its production; clearly the characterization did enjoy such

authority, as George Eliot's review of the novel demonstrates.[27] She found Jacky one of the most important elements of It is Never Too Late to Mend, writing that 'Jacky is a thoroughly fresh character, entirely unlike any other character frotte de civilisation, and drawn with exquisite yet sober humour' (p. 329). Just as the characterization of Jacky is praised for its originality, so H.B. Stowe can be praised in the same review for 'inventing the negro novel' (p. 326); this praise of originality carries with it the implication of authenticity, by which Jacky is offered and accepted as typical of Australian aborigines. In short, just as Spencer uses literary means to establish his typology, so a form which is properly literary carries with it the status of anthropology.

IV

There is, of course, one responsibility on the shoulders of literature, which anthropology does not share - the responsibility to be original. Types can congeal into stereotypes, and characterizations can be disparagingly dismissed as 'stock'. The novelist is thus under a permanent obligation either to break down the type in the direction of the nuanced individual characterization, or to discover new types, and thus to extend the social limits of the novel. In the process, the novelist extends the sympathies of the novel's readers; an outstanding example in the 1850s, noticed by George Eliot as we have seen, was H.B. Stowe's 'invention' of the negro novel. But Uncle Tom's Cabin is only an extreme example of a process constantly at work in the continuing production of realist novels - George Eliot's own discovery

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27. 'Three Novels', Essays of George Eliot, edited by T. Pinney (New York, 1963), pp. 325-334. First published in the Westminster Review (October, 1856).

of a new type for the novelist to work, the provincial tenant farmer, provides a more typical example of the process. Since a type has to be recognized as such, the category is one of the constitutive terms of the 'contract' between author and reader; Adam Bede was praised by one reviewer precisely for extending the range, and Mrs. Poyser in particular was praised as a 'new development of an old type'.[28] But any one type has only a certain life-span; after a time it will become recognized as conventional and mocked as a stereotype. To continue with the example of George Eliot and peasant life; in her article on the 'Natural History of German Life', she began by criticizing 'conventional' views of peasant life and insisting on the responsibility of the artist to depict the life of the peasantry truthfully.[29] Her own early novels are the result of that sense of responsibility, for in them she attempts to provide just such a truthful picture.

The extension of sympathy, however, obviously depends upon a positive type being presented in the novel, yet by sharing the category with hostile or pejorative narrations, the project is inherently unstable. Transformations of a positive into a negative type are simple; it is easy to see, for example, how close are the positive and negative types of 'the negro' in the mid-century. Compare the article on 'The Niger Expedition' written by Dickens in 1848, with Carlyle's notorious 'Nigger Question' written a year later.[30] Dickens's article, which is mainly

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28. Anne Mozley, in George Eliot : The Critical Heritage, edited by D. Carroll (1971), pp. 86-103 (p. 99). First published in Bentley's Quarterly Review (July, 1859).

29. 'Natural History of German Life', in Essays, pp. 266-299. First published in Westminster Review (July, 1856).

30. Charles Dickens, 'The Niger Expedition', Miscellaneous Papers, 2 vols. (Gadshill Edition, 1908), I, 117-135. First published in The Examiner, 19 August 1848. Thomas Carlyle, 'The Nigger Question', in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, 5 vols. (Centenary Edition, New York, 1899), IV, 348-383. First published in Fraser's Magazine (December, 1849).

concerned to deprecate the loss of English life which the Niger expedition of the early 1840s had occasioned, shows much the same attitude to Africa as that later suggested by the contemptuous reference to Borrioboola-Gha in Bleak House. But in it, he presents a positive type of the negro, speaking of 'a faithful, cheerful, active, affectionate race' (p. 119). Carlyle's article, by contrast, yields the following type:

> ... except when the soul is killed out of him, I decidedly like poor Quashee; and find him a pretty kind of man. With a pennyworth of oil,you can make a handsome glossy thing of Quashee, when the soul is not killed in him! A swift, supple fellow; a merry-hearted, grinning, dancing, singing, affectionate kind of creature, with a great deal of melody and amenability in his composition (pp. 357-358).

The coincidence between the two types is worth noting. Dickens's list of characteristics reappears in Carlyle's text in a hostile form - for 'faithful' read 'easily led', for 'cheerful' read 'merry-hearted' and 'grinning', for 'affectionate', read ... 'affectionate'. Just as the same narrative could be given opposed narrations according to the ideological position of the author, so here the same type appears in different forms. The change marks the difference between Dickens's still broadly 'abolitionist' position - albeit increasingly marked by Little Englandism - and Carlyle's advocacy of the reintroduction of coerced labour in the West Indies.

The rhetoric of Carlyle's essay is aimed above all at the philanthropists of Exeter Hall, the outstanding representative of the remaining English anti-Slavery movement. It is in the context of this movement that most of the debate specifically about 'the negro' is to be understood in the 1850s. As we have seen, many attempts to explain not only general world history but particularly European history in terms of race were made in mid-century, so clearly the debate about colour made up

only a small part of the larger debate about race. However, the terms provided by this larger debate permeated the anti-Slavery movement as well, so that it too assumed the legitimacy of racial typologies. The assertion of common humanity upon which the anti-Slavery movement depended - 'Am I not a Man and a Brother?' - was thus permanently threatened, even internally, by a constitutively racist discourse. Since, as we have seen, this racist discourse depends upon literary means to establish its authenticity, it is not surprising that the imbalance in the discourse of the anti-Slavery movement should be most apparent in the novel, for it is in the novel that the contradictory nature of this discourse reveals itself most startlingly.

This contradiction should not surprise us, since we have seen that in order for the novel to progress - and it is partly under an obligation to be novel - it has to extend its range of interest as well as to deepen its treatment of existing material, so that it has constantly to discover new representative types. Since race is so 'naturally' assimilable under the category of type, race itself becomes constitutive of the disposition of the novel's interest and sympathies. This novelistic disposition then carries out its own logic, which is often at odds with the conscious intention of the author. We can see this contradiction in four novels in the 1850s, beginning with the greatest anti-Slavery novel of them all, H.B. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin.[31]

Quite simply, the assertion of common humanity upon which the novel is founded, is repeatedly put at risk by the racial typicality of its characters. It is not simply that the book abounds with generalities

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31. Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly (1852). References to the John Harvard Library Edition, edited by Kenneth S. Lynn (Cambridge, Mass., 1962). I feel justified in including this American novel largely because of its enormous circulation in England, 'probably the greatest short-term sale of any book published in nineteenth-century England', R.D. Altick, The English Common Reader, p. 384.

about race of the following kind - '/negroes/ are not naturally daring and enterprising, but homeloving and affectionate', and, 'the African, naturally patient, timid and unenterprising ...' (chap. 10, p. 100); it is also that these generalities are authenticated by being founded on typical characterizations. Thus of Tom himself - 'Tom, who had, to the full, the gentle, domestic heart, which, woe for them! has been a peculiar characteristic of his unhappy race ...' (chap. 10, p. 98); or more obviously, when two of the characters are contrasted - 'They stood the representatives of their races. The Saxon, born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral eminence; the Afric, born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance, toil, and vice!' (chap. 20, p. 251).[32] In other words, the novel uses types who enjoy the double authenticity of literature and anthropology in the way that I have proposed. The use of these types makes the extension of sympathy, which founds the novel, constantly vulnerable, using as it does a discourse which is common to the novelist and her opponents.

Their contradiction can be seen most glaringly in the novels of Charles Kingsley. It is intensified by the explicitly racial historiography which he offers, as in the preface to Hypatia, published in 1853 just a year after Uncle Tom's Cabin. In this preface he attempts to justify the racial typology which forms the basis of many of the novel's characters; he does so in discussing the crisis of the fifth-century

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32. 'The Afric' in question is Topsy, who is unusual in the novel in that she is by no means as morally impeccable as the other slaves. Her moral character is a product of both heredity and environment, but combined in a Lamarckian way, so that the child acquires the moral qualities of its parents. Topsy does not, therefore, fall subject to the strictures that George Eliot was to make on the 'negro novel' - i.e. that it was no condemnation of the institution of slavery, indeed rather the reverse, to show its products as paragons of virtue. See her review of Dred, referred to in note 27, above.

Roman empire:

> The great tide of those Gothic nations, of which the Norwegian and the German are the purest remaining types, though every nation of Europe, from Gibraltar to St. Petersburg, owes to them the most precious elements of strength, was sweeping onward, wave over wave .... Those wild tribes were bringing with them into the magic circle of the Western Church's influence the very materials which she required for the building up of a future Christendom, and which she could find as little in the Western Empire as in the Eastern; comparative purity of morals; sacred respect for women, for family life, for law, equal justice, individual freedom, and, above all, for honesty in word and deed; bodies untainted by hereditary effeminacy, hearts earnest though genial, and blest with a strange willingness to learn, even from those whom they despised; a brain equal to that of the Roman in practical power, and not too far behind that of the Eastern in imagination and speculative acuteness (pp. xiv-xv).

It is no accident, of course, that there should be a coincidence between this type of the Goth, and the type of the mid-nineteenth century English gentleman, for as Kingsley casually notes a few lines later, the Goths are 'our race'. The type carries with it, however, a repellent undertone of respect for brute strength and, indeed, sheer brutality, which is at odds with the overtly Christian project of the novel.[33] Hypatia is an extremely bloodthirsty text; the heroine is torn to pieces by a howling mob led by fanatical monks, and this act is revenged by the butchery of the mob by the Goths. While the mob is presented with disgust and some fear, the calm brute force and discipline in butchery of the Goths and the Roman legions, themselves half-Gothic, provoke something little short of admiration.

A racial typology, then, is the basis of the novel's characterizations, and race distributes the reader's interest and sympathies in the

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33. Kingsley is not in favour of any Christianity of course. He has a sectarian axe to grind, and finds plenty of useful millstones in that happy hunting ground for sectarians, early Christianity. The most salient sectarian point concerns clerical celibacy - the 'fanaticism' of the monks is directly attributable to an absence of wives.

course of the novel. It purports to be Christian, and Christianity is explicitly lauded as a religion for all races. Thus a typical negress provides an example of Christian meekness, forbearance and patience - she lacks, in fact, the 'precious element of strength'. So just as the particular virtues of Christianity are appropriate to the negro because he is already meek and forgiving, so it is also suitable to the Goth as an antidote to his barbarian strength. But if this is the overt ideological project of the novel - to offer these Christian virtues as exemplary - the emphases of its narrative point elsewhere, for the reader's admiration and emotional release is achieved by the disciplined blood-letting that I have described. In the apparently comfortable conjunction of 'muscularity' with 'Christianity' is concealed a real contradiction between the violent and bloodthirsty climaxes of Kingsley's novels and his overt ideological intention.

This contradiction between the 'message' and the typical discourse which attempts to carry it, can also be seen in another of Kingsley's novels, Two Years Ago.[34] One of the characters in the novel, Marie, is an escaped quadroon slave, who can pass as a dark-skinned European. She is wooed by an American, Stangrave, but is always conscious of her negro blood as a 'taint'. Stangrave, meanwhile, has a prejudice against negroes. In one scene, Marie stands in front of a mirror and sufficiently 'distorts' her features to make her racial origin clear, clear enough to make Stangrave shudder. The scene is a powerful one, and the description of Marie's features intended to give emotional force to the consciousness of a racial 'taint'. Yet the overt intention of the novelist is to lead Stangrave to overcome his loathing and to dedicate his life to abolitionism.

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34. Charles Kingsley, Two Years Ago (1857).

Further evidence of the strain between abolitionist intention and the discourse made available by the novel, can be seen in the recurrence of the quadroon who could pass for white as hero or heroine. It is easier to extend the reader's sympathies if the racial difference is not too marked. Even Uncle Tom's Cabin exhibits this failure of nerve, for the two negro characters to whom any romantic interest attaches in the novel are George and Eliza Harris, a mulatto and a quadroon. In this context, Marie in Two Years Ago can be seen as a variant of a stock heroine of sensationalist fiction, described by Kenneth S. Lynn as 'the beautiful quadroon girl, sold in the auction block and condemned to a life of marvellously exciting hell'.[35] An example of this type occurs in Emma Robinson's The City Banker, but she is rescued by the hero before anything too marvellously exciting can happen to her.[36]

Finally, Reade's It is Never too Late to Mend provides a last example of this contradiction between intention and the discourse by which it is carried. The contrast between the presentation of the aboriginal graveyard and the grave of a white man reveals how race distributes the validities in the text; while Milmeridien is destined to be erased, over the white man's grave in the bush the following inscription is raised:

> 'Please don't cut down this tree.
> It is a tomb-stone.
> A white man lies below' (p. 413)

Yet this is the grave of a villainous and ruffianly man, whose character is sufficiently indicated by his name - Black Will.

Reade's project, however, is in part an abolitionist one, and he is scornful of skin-colour being used as a justification of slavery. One

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35. In his Introduction to the Harvard Edition of Uncle Tom's Cabin, p. ix.

36. /Emma Robinson/, The City Banker, or, Love and Money (1856).

of the most striking scenes of the book occurs when Hawes, the sadistic prison-governor, is reading Uncle Tom's Cabin at the same time as sadistically ordering his side-kick to increase the weights on his prisoners' cranks. In the very act of this cruelty he abuses Legree for his cruelty, and says of Tom:

> A man can but do his best black or white, and it is infernal stupidity as well as cruelty to torment a fellow because he can't do more than he can do. And all this because over the same flesh and blood there is the sixteenth of an inch of skin a different colour. (p. 193)

The somewhat lugubrious ironies of this scene, however, do not wholly work in an anti-racist direction; in one way they point to a Little Englandism analagous to the attitude increasingly adopted by, for example, Dickens in the course of the 1850s - that it is impious to waste your philanthropy on black people abroad when there are suffering white people in England.

We can see, then, that in several texts in the 1850s, the attempt to extend the sympathies of the reader by extending the range of fictional types, was subverted by the category of type itself, especially when type and race become synonymous terms. This contradictory process, I believe, can be related to the act of recognition by identity or exclusion discussed in the first section of this chapter. There, I argued that socially typical characterizations as practised by Scott and as persisting in the fiction of the mid-century, implied an act on the reader's part of recognition by difference, which legitimized social hierarchy. Effectively to extend the reader's sympathies, however, there must simultaneously be a recognition of identity, so that under the superficial differences of a characterization, can be recognized an essential similarity. This, most notably, is what

is attempted in the novels of H.B. Stowe and George Eliot.[37] The characterization must therefore, simultaneously, be established by the elaboration of socially and historically specific material - modes of dress, labour, dialect, physiognomy - and insist upon an underlying identity, an insistence which always threatens the specificity of the characterization, and is likewise always threatened by it. It is no accident, then, but intrinsic to the mode of characterization itself, that the recognition of identity is always subject to ideological rejection on the reader's part, who refuses to recognize 'someone like me' under the superficial differences.

The act of self-recognition, however, upon which the success of such a novel depends, is as ideological as the act of refusal. It implies that the only essential truths about 'human nature' are moral truths; by rejecting material differences as superficial and unimportant, it effectively cancels them. The reader's own sense of identity is thereby constituted, and he or she is interjected into a system of moral relations entailing a passive relation to those material differences. This suggests an important distinction between H.B. Stowe's novels and George Eliot's, contrasting the sensationalism of the former with the characteristic sobriety of the latter. The sensational incidents of Uncle Tom's Cabin function as a kind of alienation device, by which the reader's sense of identity is violently disrupted, and by which the reader is moved - it is hoped - to action against the institution of slavery. In George Eliot's novels, on the other hand, the habitually sober tone is only intermittently interrupted by sensational elements, which consequently pose no threat to the

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37. Such that Ann Mozley, in her review of the novel referred to in note 28 above, can describe Adam Bede as 'a steady protest against exclusiveness', because it upholds 'the claims and rights of humanity' (p. 37).

reader's sense of identity with the characters - they appear either intrusive or a relief, according to the reader's taste.[38]

V

The instability of typical representations of race can be seen most clearly in the mutations of the negro type as it appears in Thackeray's novels, from Vanity Fair through The Virginians to Philip. I discuss this series in my subsequent chapter on The Newcomes; here I wish to give two further examples of the way that race tended to prevent the extension of sympathy, impelling novelists towards the adoption of strange narrative devices in order to show non-English races in a sympathetic light.

The first example occurs elsewhere in The Virginians, in which Thackeray attempts to mitigate what is in general an overwhelmingly unsympathetic presentation of the American Indians.[39] They appear in the novel as the savage allies of both the French and the English in their wars in eighteenth century America; one of the two Warrington brothers is rescued from a scalping only to be captured by the French. He eventually escapes, and in describing his ordeal tells of how other captives were tortured to death by the Indians. The description provokes the following exchange between his brother Harry, himself, and another of his hearers:

> Harry strikes his fist upon the table, and cries, 'The bloody, murderous red-skinned villains! There will never be peace for us until they are all hunted down!'

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38. Thus Dickens, in a letter to George Eliot about Adam Bede - 'And that part of the book which follows Hetty's trial (and which I have observed to be not as widely understood as the rest) affected me far more than any other, and exalted my sympathy with the writer to its utmost height', Critical Heritage, p. 85.

39. W.M. Thackeray, The Virginians (1859; references to the Centenary Biographical Edition).

> 'They were offering a hundred and thirty dollars a-piece for Indian scalps in Pennsylvania when I left home,' says George, demurely, 'and fifty for women.'
>
> 'Fifty for women, my love! Do you hear that, Mrs. Lambert?' cries the Colonel, lifting up his wife's hair.
>
> 'The murderous villains!' says Harry, again. 'Hunt 'em down, sir! Hunt 'em down!' (II, 29).

The relative strength of these two voices - the one hot and crude, the other cool and deprecating - effectively reflects the relative strengths of the hostile presentations of the 'savage' and the attempt to mitigate it.

George's story is made more interesting by having an Indian girl fall for him and help him in his escape. However, this episode, which might further mitigate the 'savage' type, is undermined in two directions. In the first place, she is not really an Indian, but only a 'half-breed'; and secondly, Thackeray deliberately explodes any notion of her being a Pocahontas-type by having George describe her thus:

> 'What think you of a dark beauty, the colour of new mahogany? with long straight black hair, which was usually dressed with a hair-oil or pomade by no means pleasant to approach, with little eyes, with high cheek-bones, with a flat nose, sometimes ornamented with a ring, with rows of glass beads round her tawny throat, her cheeks and forehead gracefully tattooed, a great love of finery, and inordinate passion for - oh! must I own it?'
>
> 'For coquetry. I know you are going to say that?' says Miss Hetty.
>
> 'For whisky' (II, 31-32).

After such a description, any serious attempt to interest the reader on the girl's behalf is effectively undermined; what sympathy she does evoke is in any case vitiated as effective sympathy for Indians as a whole by making her a half-breed.

If Thackeray deliberately plays with the reader's expectations of an Indian heroine - she is not going to be 'a dark beauty', or 'Diana

with a baby' (II, 31) - Kingsley, by contrast, avoids the problems of evoking sympathy for Indians by making his Indian heroine in Westward Ho! not a real Indian at all;[40] in other words, by making full use of the possibilities offered by the deformative narrative device which is little more than vestigial in The Virginians.

We have already seen how Kingsley's texts are characterized by a contradiction between abolitionist intention and racially typical characterizations. The contradiction reappears in Westward Ho! and is 'resolved' in the character of Ayanacora, an Indian princess discovered by Amyas Leigh and his fellow-adventurers in their search for the legendary city of Manoa:

> It was an Indian girl; and yet, when he looked again - was it an Indian girl? Amyas had seen hundreds of those delicate dark-skinned daughters of the forest, but never such a one as this. Her stature was taller, her limbs were fuller and more rounded; her complexion, though tanned by light, was fairer by far than his own sunburnt face; her hair, crowned with a garland of white flowers, was not lank, and straight, and black, like an Indian's, but of a rich glossy brown, and curling richly and crisply from her very temples to her knees. Her forehead, though low, was upright and ample; her nose was straight and small; her lips, the lips of a European; her whole face of the highest and richest type of Spanish beauty' (III, 54).

The solution to this enigma eventually emerges - Ayanacora is 'really' the daughter of an English man and Spanish woman, adopted by the Indians after being abandoned in the forest. Her eventual marriage to Amyas Leigh thus becomes less of a degradation to him; though he has to learn to overcome a violent prejudice against Spaniards, a prejudice itself supported by a number of unremittingly hostile narrations of Spanish and Catholic brutalities in the Americas. The conflict between narration and intention, in fact, is repeated at each level of the racial hierarchy.

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40. Charles Kingsley, Westward Ho! (Cambridge, 1855).

The novel depends, then, on a hierarchical racial classification, authenticated by typical characterizations. Making one character apparently an Indian while really a European allows Kingsley to interest the reader on behalf of the Indians without forfeiting his or her sympathetic identification. The device is the precise opposite of Thackeray's; in The Virginians the reader's expectations of a sympathetic Indian heroine are dashed by the hostile description, thus subverting the attempt to mitigate the otherwise hostile presentation of the savage; while in Westward Ho! Kingsley's paternalist concern for the American Indian can only be guaranteed by a non-Indian typification. The two characterizations are matching and opposite resolutions of the same matrix of conflicting ideological demands.

The coy reference to Ayanacora's nakedness in her description, moreover, suggests a further element in that matrix - she is in fact a reincarnation of Eve in Paradise, 'unabashed in her free innocence' (III, 55). She and the tribe she leads represent, in one of their aspects, a temptation to the pioneering Englishmen to abandon their life of struggle for a Paradisal state of inanition; except that in this overtly Christian text, we are definitely in a post-lapsarian world, and the temptation proves to be the work of the Devil, much like the Indians' religion itself. Even in their most beautiful form, then, savages are at best an illusorily alluring alternative to upright pursuit of duty.

VI

We have seen that the sympathetic recognition of identity by the reader is always threatened by the specificity of superficial details of characterization; when these are the specifics of racial difference, there is always the possibility that these natural facts (of physiognomy,

for example), will be seen as signifying cultural difference or inferiority. Typical characterizations, in other words, tend to reinforce the fundamental confusion which underlies the whole Victorian debate on race, the confusion between nature and culture, a confusion which cannot be explained within the terms of the mid-Victorian ideology of race because that ideology is founded on it.

It does not appear in the same way in all ideology, of course. With Nott and Gliddon, or Knox, history and culture are effectively cancelled in an attempt to found the legitimacy of the existing order of things upon race. For Comte and Spencer, on the other hand, race is one complicating factor among several possible natural causes which account for observed cultural differences arising in the course of human development. But in both apparently antipathetic traditions there is an assimilation of such observed cultural, social or historical differences to the realm of natural law which ultimately renders them insusceptible to change by human intervention.

Racism had a permanently contested place within bourgeois ideology, though due to the latter's uneven development, it was naturally to remain a central part of all attempts to provide legitimacy for class and imperial exploitation well beyond the 1850s. What we witness, in short, in the 1850s, is a moment when a particular social and political problematic, inherited from the past and increasingly residual as far as the metropolitan centres of Western society are concerned, is given a whole new legitimacy and efficacy by its extension and application to subject races, both in Europe and elsewhere. Types of mankind may no longer have appeared permanent within those metropolitan centres, but they were certainly to recur in the inglorious history of Imperialism.

CHAPTER FIVE : SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To discuss literary and non-literary texts together, under the related headings of myth and ideology, entails the assumption that many of the problems that I have discussed are not specific to literary criticism. In particular, the problem of the truth that can be distinguished in any text, and the closely related problem of literary value, is a problem shared by any sociological theory of ideology as well as literary criticism; with relation to the kind of material that I have been discussing, it has been usual to approach these problems under the category of 'convention'. There are in fact two opposed uses of the word in literary criticism, stemming broadly from realist and formalist aesthetics.

From the standpoint of realist aesthetics, the kinds of myth that I have discussed can be dismissed merely as delusions, barriers between the perceiving subject and the real conditions of existence which amount to severe blemishes on the work of literature, and which it is the task of great literature to subvert and replace by true representations of reality. As can be seen readily enough, this hostile account of convention is the exact counterpart of the positivist account of ideology, and it has at least as many variants, again some within Marxism.

It is not surprising, then, to find that the nearest thing to a Positivist novelist that England can claim to have produced, George Eliot, should have drawn on this notion of convention-as-delusion in her literary criticism. We have already seen how, in the 'Natural History of German Life', she criticized 'conventional' views of peasant life;[1] but implicit also in her criticism of 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' is an argument that such novels are silly simply because they are untrue.[2] The wit and verve with which she mocks them, however, and the plausible account she offers of the reasons why the authors should have produced such novels, in a sense obscure two further questions - why they should be untrue in the particular ways that they are untrue, i.e., what is the structure of these delusions, and why they should have the ideological efficacy that they enjoy. The argument, in other words, is much stronger on the genesis than the function of such conventional texts; they are written in the way they are because they are imitations of other works of art; or because they are doctrinally inspired; or because they are written out of female vanity, a result of the woefully inadequate state of female education. Expanded versions of the first two reasons - the third is very specific to the problems of women's education - provide the most frequently evoked explanations of artistic failure in this tradition of aesthetics: works of literature fail to represent reality either because they are copies of other works of art, which may have been true representations in their time, or because the author is ideologically (ideology-as-delusion) blinded to the facts. A further operation then rapidly becomes available to the critic; he can designate those parts of the work of literature

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1. See above, chap. 4, p. 167.

2. 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', in Essays, pp. 399-324. First published in the Westminster Review (October, 1856).

which are true to life, even in spite of the author's professed ideological leaning, and detach from them and condemn those parts which are deluded. This operation is most easily performed upon the novel, not merely because of its length but more importantly because the novel anyway intercalates various distinct fictional modes. If this is notoriously the strategy of Lukacs, it should be noted that in performing it he is only carrying out in a Marxist context an operation that is justified only in the terms of a very traditional aesthetic.

Quite apart from the doubtful legitimacy of this particular operation (and my objection to it has nothing to do with any notion of organic form), the whole aesthetic precipitates the critic into some severe problems, problems which are not confined to criticism of the novel but which, inasmuch as the dominant mode of the novel has been realism, are most acute there. The first is the problem of aesthetic value, which is to be confined to those texts which are subversive of 'conventional' illusions. One solution to this problem has simply been to reorder the categories, so that the term 'novel' is restricted to those texts which are characterized by 'demythification' and the dispersal of mystifying appearances by reality, while those texts where no such 'demythification' occurs are then reclassified as 'romances'.[3] Even leaving aside the simple problems of classification which such a procedure involves - in these terms, for example, Oliver Twist is a romance, Bleak House is a novel, and Dombey and Son a mixture of both - this solution fails to account for the fact that the overt procedures of 'demythification' in a novel can be accomplished in the name of a 'reality' every bit as ideological as that satirized. In

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3. This is the argument of Maurice Z. Shroder in 'The Novel as a Genre', in The Theory of Fiction, edited by Philip Stevick (New York, 1967), pp. 13-29.

Vanity Fair, for example - preeminently a novel rather than a romance in these terms - the destruction of Dobbin's illusions about Amelia does not merely give access to a 'reality' innocent of any adhominatory intention, but clearly has purposes on the reader every bit as great as the romantic illusions so heavily satirized. Moreover, it is scarcely possible to see why the novel so defined should be either more pleasurable or more worthwhile than the romance, except in the context of that deeply ideological concept, 'the end of ideology'.

The second, related, problem into which we are plunged by this tradition of aesthetics is if anything still more intractable - it is the problem of historicism, which to a greater or lesser extent bedevils any literary historian, but which becomes most acute when the critic is asked to condemn many period conventions as somehow delusive. In its broadest terms the problem is simply this - how can one account for the continuing success of works of literature from the past (though of course to describe them as such is already at least an anachronism) when they are written in terms which to the modern enlightened reader are simply wrong. The problem receives its classic statement - though not, alas! its classic solution - in the introduction to Marx's Grundrisse, where it is addressed to Greek art, especially the epic;[4] but even over a period of one century the problem already exists. A realist aesthetic classically attempts to solve it by a procedure remarkably similar to that for which I have just criticized Lukacs - by detaching elements of the text and labelling them 'conventional', and by consecrating the remainder as speaking in the language of eternal and extra-historical human values. In this procedure, however, the villain of the piece is not so much the author's personal ideological commitment as the spirit

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4. K. Marx, Grundrisse, translated by M. Nicolaus (1973), pp. 110-111.

of the age. The locus classicus around which this problem has been rehearsed in the criticism of the nineteenth-century novel is the death of Little Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop, the themes of the discussion being adumbrated as early as 1880 by Ruskin when he wrote that Nell 'was killed for the market, as a butcher kills a lamb'.[5] They are taken up by Gissing twenty years later when he attempted a defence of the scene by arguing that 'this pathos was true for them and for their day',[6] and this is the line that Kathleen Tillotson adopts when she writes that '[Gissing's] defence was on the right lines, the historical lines, for the response to such pathos must always be related to those changing things, manners and beliefs'.[7] The problem with this is that it leaves us precisely where we started. If one is committed to contemporary manners and beliefs, in this formulation, much of the literature of the past must remain a dead letter, but if one is committed to the manners and beliefs of the past one condemns oneself to anachronism. If both are seen equally as historical, then one's position is either relativist, or one is bound to seek a principle of artistic pleasure outside of the realist/historical aesthetic.

In fact, without such a principle, to be sought in the process of reading and which would thus vary according to the way the text was constructed, it is very doubtful whether any literary historical account of the novel which remains within the terms dictated by the problems of representation and 'values' can escape historicism. Thus even Raymond Williams' term 'structure of feeling' - though it should be said, after

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5. John Ruskin, 'Fiction, Fair and Foul', The Works of John Ruskin, edited by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (1903-1912), 34, 265-397 (p. 275).

6. Quoted by Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen Forties (Oxford, 1971), p. 49.

7. ibid., p. 49.

Marxism and Literature, that it no longer performs the same work that it did in Culture and Society[8] - remains entangled in the business of consecrating texts and marking out traditions. Yet the term does have the signal merit of pointing beyond the intellectual level to the powerful and often not fully conscious emotional investment in the 'conventions' that exist inside and outside of literature.

The third substantial critical problem into which one is projected by considering 'conventions' as simple delusions, is that it tends to produce a one-way theory of influence, in which the conventions which impede the critic's consumption of a text are seen merely as the result of the author's borrowing of ideological assumptions from outside literature. Thus, in the 'conventional' treatments of charity that I have discussed, it would be possible to explain the presence of this convention in literary texts as the result of an ideology of charity pre-existing the novel in Victorian society. What I hope that my analysis of that ideology has shown, however, is that it itself is dependent upon narrative, and that its interpellant efficacy is greatly increased the more its narrative categories are fleshed out in all the imaginary concreteness of the novel. Nor is it merely a question of 'concreteness' opposed to the 'abstractions' of ideology - for to pose the problem in those terms would be to reinstate that tendentious opposition between ideology and 'experiential' concreteness, so attractive to a certain tradition of English criticism. No, the fact is that both the fictional and the non-fictional texts share the same categories of discourse; modes of analysis usually thought proper only to literary texts are equally appropriate to 'non-literary ones', suggesting that any one-way theory of influence must be inadequate. In fact, such a

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8. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (1958), and Marxism and Literature (Oxford, 1977).

theory fails not only to recognize this literary quality of non-fictional prose, it equally fails to recognize the constitutively ideological nature of literature, seeing it rather as a 'pure' category into which ideology only enters as a degradation.

The final problem which I wish to discuss in connection with this realist account of conventions is indicated by the kind of criticism it generates - let us call it the 'subjects' genre of literary criticism, which singles out a particular subject of historical importance and describes how it is treated in a succession of literary texts. One of the main difficulties with this mode of criticism is that accuracy of representation tends to become the sole criterion of literary value, obscuring the ideological efficacy of 'conventional' treatments of the subject. This objection seems to be valid even to such a substantial and sophisticated contribution to the genre as P.J. Keating's The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction,[9] which makes a number of useful and important distinctions and suggests some illuminating categories for novels dealing with the working-class. However, because Keating assumes that accuracy of representation is the highest goal, he fails to answer an important question - why couldn't novels be accurate, even those novels written by authors whose sympathies were with their working-class subjects?

A further difficulty is that such studies tend to reproduce in an unexamined way the logic of the realist nineteenth century novel itself, with its various subjects 'worked up' and included in a novel. What could be more obvious than to 'unpack' the novel and consider the subjects in isolation? My objection to this procedure is not based on any conception of 'organic form', where what is objected to is that

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9. P.J. Keating, The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction (1971).

by isolating one element in a succession of novels, the essential unity of each individual work of art is neglected. Rather, the objection is to the procedure's silence on the organization of a text; and I use the word organization here, rather than organic, to suggest a shift from a centred to a decentred conception of structure. If one thinks of a text as organized, one can see the specific set of relations that exist between the various elements in it - which can be relations of contradiction, subversion, reinforcement or qualification, with varying degrees of formal sophistication. One is not, however, committed to thinking of these elements as co-existing in a spontaneous unity, and one can recognize that a sense of unity has to be constructed in the process of reading.

The difficulties with this type of criticism, however, are not exhausted when these shortcomings have been noticed. For it also ignores the work that a literary text performs upon ideology, which is only partly that of organizing its various elements. What the text works on is ideology, and not 'real conditions of existence', because the categories in which the subject lives - to some extent at least - are already the categories of ideology; the 'real conditions of existence' can only be arrived at by working on those categories.[10] Since these ideological categories presuppose the categories of narrative, as we have seen - and are thus to a greater or lesser extent already literary or fictional - the work that an explicitly literary text performs upon them is ambiguous. However, to take these categories as given is to remain trapped in ideology. An example would be the process of individuation and typification which has to be performed upon social classes for them to appear in a realist novel. As long

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10. For the concept of a literary text working on ideology, see Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology (1976), passim.

as this process remains uncriticized, it will remain to bind the critic in its ideological toils, one of the results being that the question of class relations is almost invariably posed in moral terms.

If these are some of the difficulties posed for criticism by a simple realist aesthetic, to what extent are they avoided by considering 'conventions' in formalist terms? The premiss of any formalist argument must be that literature - an individual text or the whole of literature - is autonomous, is organized according to its own formal laws and evolves accordingly. It will be seen immediately that some of the objections that I have made to a simple realist aesthetic are already couched in formalist terms; and it would seem at first glance as if formalism had a head start over a realist aesthetic in describing the formal organization of a text if only because its attention is fixed exclusively on that text and is not distracted by measuring it against another 'level' of reality. However, the difficulties of such a view very rapidly become apparent, as the following discussion will demonstrate.

In looking at the myth of the fraud in the 1850s, I have emphasized the specificity of the ideological conformation of that decade in producing a mythology of fraud. However, it would be possible to offer a formalist account of this historically so specific phenomenon, which would run something like this. The central importance of the fraud as a character, and of imposture as a situation, in the mid-nineteenth century novel, can be explained as the result of two main trends in the development of the laws of the novel. The first trend is the continuing attempt to find appropriate social types to flesh out the traditional categories of narrative, of which imposture is one. This has been demonstrated in Claude Bremond's reordering of the functions in Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, according

to which there are two possible narrative strings involving imposture:[11]

(a) Imposture → The dupe falls into the trap → success of the imposture.

(b) Imposture → The dupe falls into the trap ↓ refutation ---→ the imposture defeated. ↑ truth re-established

In this view, the stock-jobbing or banking fraud can be seen as the most appropriate social type for the role of the impostor, which is usually, though not necessarily, one of the roles taken by the villain. The second trend would be the facility with which the fraud or the financial imposture lends itself to the disjunction between appearance and reality which is the basis of the mystery novel. Even to describe it as a disjunction between 'appearance' and 'reality', however, is to give a description which is not in formal terms. It would be better to use the distinction discovered and elaborated by the Russian Formalists, between the fabula and the sjuzet, in which the fabula is the basic temporal-causal relationships of the plot, and the sjuzet its manner of presentation in the novel.[12] In the mystery novel, as for that matter in the detective novel, complete knowledge of the fabula is postponed until the end of the novel, when a retrospect enables the reader to make sense of all the details made available to him by the sjuzet. With the situation of the financial imposture, the techniques of the mystery novel can be applied to the facts of commonplace social life without resort to a great deal of clumsy machinery. The fraud in

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11. Vladimir Propp, The Morphology of the Folktale, translated by Lawrence Scott (Austin, Texas, 1968). Claude Bremond reworks Propp's functions in 'Le Message Narratif', Communications, 4 (Paris, 1964), 4-32, in an attempt to make them available for the analysis of all narrative, rather than Propp's own culturally specific narrative.

12. See Boris Tomashevsky, 'Thematics', in Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays, translated by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 61-95, where the terms are translated as 'story' and 'plot'.

the 1850s can thus be seen as the combination of two developments of quite traditional formal characteristics - the role of the impostor, which is one of the basic roles of narrative, and the disjunction between sjuzet and fabula, which is a narrative sophistication almost as old as narrative itself.

A formalist account of the mystery elements in Little Dorrit, something along these lines, has indeed been offered, and by no less an authority than Viktor Sklovskij.[13] By his account, the descriptions of the debtors' prison, the Circumlocution Office, and Bleeding Hearts' Yard - the preeminently 'social' elements of the novel - serve primarily as devices of plot retardation, but are perceived as belonging to the work of art almost by a process of contagion from the plot elements. This contagion accounts for how the mystery novel came to be used by the social novel. But merely to write down this account - and more generally, the whole formalist account of the fraud that I have offered - is to expose its inadequacy. As far as Sklovskij's account goes, though it does have the merit of underlining the sophistication of the narrative technique of Little Dorrit and its formal advances on the technique of the mystery novel, it is clearly inadequate in explaining the ideological efficacy of the Merdle plot itself, which Sklovskij merely lists as one of the parallel plot-lines of the mystery novel. More generally, the example of the fraud that I have given poses two questions, which are more general than that particular example. First, why should the traditional impostor/imposture strings in narrative have seized upon the financial fraud, or more generally, why should the formal laws of literature evolve in the particular ways that they do?

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13. Viktor Sklovskij, 'The Mystery Novel: Dickens's Little Dorrit', in Readings in Russian Poetics : Formalist and Structuralist Views, edited by C. Matejka and K. Pomorska (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 220-226.

Secondly, why should the ideology of capital centralization, and resistance to capital centralization, have seized upon these traditional narrative categories, or more generally, given that the complex ideological conformation of Victorian society found narrative such a congenial form, why should this have been the case? While the first question clearly cannot be answered solely in formalist terms - that is, without recognizing the limited autonomy of the literary instance - the second could not have been posed at all without formalist investigations into narrative.

Having accepted, then, the formal descriptions of narrative proposed by such as Propp and Bremond - though with the crucial qualification of their limited autonomy - how is one to answer the question of the efficacy of narrative for ideology? Is it only the experiential obviousness of its categories? Or is it something more fundamental, perhaps something to do with the very categories of language itself? Not surprisingly there is a powerful idealist tradition which pushes for the latter solution, asserting that it is impossible to know the unorganized reality outside of ideology (though this would scarcely be a congenial term), and that the only categories available to us, including the categories of narrative, are ultimately linguistic ones. In this view, the ubiquity of narrative in ideology is not something to be viewed with surprise, but only as repeating that most basic of all narratives, the sentence; and its apparent arbitrariness is not to be criticized, but to be rejoiced in. Literature is only the most self-conscious form of 'ideology', a form that relishes its own fictiveness and is constantly aware how provisional and arbitrary are its orderings, patterns, and closures. Futile, then, to attack the 'conventions' of literature, because all literature is conventional in a much more radical way than positivist criticism can imagine.

Now it is my contention that this view of literature, although it differs as an aesthetic theory from the realist tradition that I have discussed, in fact shares the same problematic with it. Both ultimately depend upon a play between literature and a reality which exists outside of it, and towards which it stands in various relations of reflection, distortion, blindness or the deliberate aversion of sight. As far as their aesthetic theories go, the canons of accepted texts that each tradition consecrates will tend to be complementary, or, where they do overlap, it will be for opposite reasons. The classic instance of the latter is the case of Joyce, whose radical questioning of the formal suppositions of the novel results in a disruption of its naturalizing significations. For the realist tradition this is deeply contestable, but where it is accepted it is conceived as a personal style through which the reader has to penetrate to reach the essential warmth and humanity within. For the formalist tradition, on the other hand, Joyce is the signal modern instance of the writer who rejoices in the play of significations that the arbitrary relation of signifies to signified permits - he has liberated the novel from the tyranny of extra-literary meaning.

This formalist tradition has had little success in the mainstream of Anglo-American criticism; with the decreasing influence both of Leavisism and the New Criticism, under the various guises of stylistics, structuralism and simple belles-lettrism, its success has been and will doubtless continue to be substantially larger. Fredric Jameson has noted of Russian Formalism that one of the ironies of its development was that a theory founded on the criticism of genetic historical accounts of literature ended up producing a series of literary histories.[14]

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14. Fredric Jameson, The Prison-house of Language : A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism (Princeton, 1972).

Similarly, the loosening-up of Anglo-American criticism has permitted the publication of literary history of a much more formalist kind, such as John R. Reed's Victorian Conventions.[15] Here, the lucky ambiguity of the word convention permits the passage from an old-fashioned historicism, in which the facts of social history are simply to be 'read off' in the novel, to a kind of formalist historicism, where the common elements of a variety of novels provide their own self-sufficient history independent of extra-literary history - Reed, for example, is prepared to categorize both the fraud and the intricate 'Providential' coincidences of the nineteenth century novel under the same heading of 'convention'. The objection to this kind of literary history is not that it fails to yield any useful insights - Reed's book is full of interesting and often daringly speculative judgments - but that it is ultimately uncritical of the relationships between the literary and extra-literary histories.

That this formalist criticism shares the same problematic as the realist tradition can be seen from a text often judged a harbinger of the break from traditional Anglo-American criticism, Frank Kermode's Sense of an Ending.[16] Kermode proposes a useful distinction between 'myth' and 'fiction', the latter being privileged by a knowledge of its own fictiveness. There is always a danger, according to Kermode, of fictions degenerating into myths, when they come to be believed as really true; his persistent example is the anti-Semitic myth. The very ugliness of the example points back to a theoretical awkwardness; though Kermode wishes to celebrate the fictiveness of fictions, he is

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15. John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions (Ohio University Press, 1975).

16. Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending : Studies in the Theory of Fiction (Oxford, 1968).

constantly looking over his shoulder and measuring them against reality nevertheless. It is doubtful whether anti-Semitism has ever produced a fiction in Kermode's terms, except arguably in the works of Thackeray; and even there it always teeters on myth. No, Kermode's distinction is useful as a short-term empirical one - to register the difference between Dickens and Thackeray, say - but it fails to register that fictions can always be read both as 'fictions' and as 'myths'; that the ideological efficacy of literature, in short, is ambiguous.

What then are we to conclude from this brief discussion of the two main opposed attempts to deal with the critical problems centred around the word convention? First, the inadequacy of both accounts in dealing with the genesis and transformation of 'conventions' reinforces the importance of recognizing the limited autonomy of the literary instance; a formula which is not merely a compromise but which does genuinely permit one to conceptualize literature as being transformed according to the laws of possibility specific to it, but also to recognize that the transformations are propelled by the structure of relations in the social formation. The problem of conceptualizing these transformations thus becomes a problem of conceptualizing the articulation of the various levels of the social formation one to another. But the problem of the articulation of the literary level (or 'series' to use the vocabulary once proposed by Jakobson and Tynyanor[17]) to the other levels

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17. In their famous 'Problems in the Study of Literature and Language', published in 1928 just before the abrupt cessation imposed upon the dialogue between Formalism and Marxism. Translated in Readings in Russian Poetics, edited by Matejka and Pomorska, pp. 79-81. Several writers, for example Ray Selden, 'Russian Formalism and Marxism: An Unconcluded Dialogue', in Literature, Society and the Sociology of Literature : Proceedings of the Conference held at the University of Essex, July 1976, edited by Francis Barker and others (University of Essex, 1977), pp. 93-104, have suggested that in these condensed and schematic theses, Jakobson and Tynyanor anticipated the kind of theoretical overview of the social formation deducible from Althusser's 'structuralist' Marxism.

of the social formation - principally the political and economic levels - immediately poses the problem of the ideological efficacy of literature, which the foregoing discussion has often thrown up without resolving.

The myths that I have discussed in the preceding four chapters are clearly interpellant in precisely the way that characterizes ideology: they can in effect be described as 'units of ideology'. But they also use literary means to establish their efficacy. The question is, what is the nature of this literariness, and to what extent is it historically specific to the nineteenth century? There is a further question, and that is, how does this conception of the literariness of ideology link up with the apparently contradictory notion of literature working on ideology since it is constituted by it? At this point difficulties with the category literary become overwhelming, and it is worth attempting a further definition in order to get them under control.

In talking of the 'literariness' of ideology, I refer to two things. In the first place, as I have emphasized throughout this study, the categories of narrative, including ultimately the dramatis personae, are especially attractive to ideology. This makes ideology literary only in the sense that modes of analysis developed in literary criticism are equally appropriate to it. 'Literary' narrations of ideological narratives, in this view, are only a special case of a much wider fact which arises from what might be called the narratability of ideology - since there is no narrative without a narration, no fabula without a sjuzet, it is impossible to get the narrative 'straight', without a 'version' which implies a relationship between narrator and reader or listener. This general characteristic of ideology, its narratability, means obviously enough that like narrative itself it is not restricted to the written word but can exist in many different forms.

The second sense in which it is necessary to speak of ideology as

literary is much more specific, referring only to an essential quality of 'non-fictional prose' that it is written in 'good English', or that it is 'well written', be its excellence either in its opaque beauty or in its transparent self-effacement. This second sense is not only specific to writing, it is also historically specific, and indeed has to be seen as the product of a very particular history, which in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came to consecrate the 'literary' qualities of a specific range of texts.

In attempting a very brief sketch of this history, it would perhaps be as well to start with a definition of what nineteenth-century prose is not: classical language. The definition comes from an early text of Roland Barthes:[18]

> Classical language is a bringer of euphoria because it is immediately social. There is no genre, no written work of classicism which does not suppose a collective consumption, akin to speech; classical literary art is an object which circulates among several persons brought together on a class basis; it is a product conceived for oral transmission, for a consumption regulated by the contingencies of society: it is essentially a spoken language, in spite of its strict codification (p. 55).

Classical language can be seen, in this view, as a language of class-solidarity, unworried about the exclusion of the lower ranks of society from access to its euphoria because it is unworried about the social hierarchy. This is not a state of innocence permitted under the increasingly bourgeois hegemony of the nineteenth century, for that

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18. Roland Barthes, Writing Degree Zero, translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (1967). Since I am attempting a sketch of a specifically English situation, it is obviously a disadvantage to have to rely not only on Barthes, but also on Renee Balibar, Les Francais fictifs : le rapport des styles litteraires au francais national (Paris, 1974), to which the essentials of the argument are owed. However, I believe that there are sufficient similarities between the French and English histories to justify the borrowing, provided that important differences, such as those between the two national systems of education, are never ignored.

hegemony depends upon an essentially egalitarian ideology. It also requires a national language, to which everybody has in principle equal access, though that access is in practice severely curtailed by unequal access to, and practices within, the educational state apparatus. The obvious model for this 'accentless' national language is precisely classical language. In thus providing a model for the universality of nineteenth-century prose, classical prose at once sustains and obscures the class-basis of nineteenth-century society. It is this 'universality', in fact, to which nineteenth-century prose aspires, which constitutes its literariness, for the whole process depends upon consecrating a definite body of texts as Literature, including works of both fiction and non-fiction. Clearly, as time goes by that body of texts is extended, its internal ordering thus modified, and some texts are challenged or rejected, in a continuous dialectic which periodically transforms literary style. But the process is not simply self-determining - since it is inherently marked by class-practices, it will change with changes in the balance of class forces.

'Good English', then, or well-written prose, is as marked by the cicatrices of class-conflict as spoken language; what characterizes it as Literature is its participation in the literary system which has a kind of parasitic relationship to the linguistic system. What distinguishes one type of writing from another is the attempt made to extinguish or to foreground this literariness, and this is as true of non-fictional prose as it is of the novel, as the consideration of a series like Meredith, Trollope, Ruskin and Smiles demonstrates. Clearly Meredith is literary in a way that Trollope is not, in the same way that Ruskin is literary while Smiles is not. But then Meredith and Trollope, inasmuch as they write novels rather than art-criticism or social-criticism or self-help manuals or industrial

hagiography, have been considered 'literary' in a way that neither of the other two authors were. Let us say that Ruskin and Meredith are both 'literary' because they have a style that draws attention to itself as 'style', as beautiful, whereas the style of Trollope or Smiles aims at a kind of transparency. Even this 'transparent' kind of writing, however, is deferential to the classical literary values of clarity, balance and poise, while the stylistic self-consciousness of Meredith or Ruskin scarcely subverts these values, for Meredith's style in no way reveals the fictionality of his novels, much as Ruskin's style comes as a kind of unlooked for addendum to his meaning, and does not suggest any difficulty in articulating it - and here the illuminating comparison is with Carlyle. So despite the marked and important differences within such a series, all ultimately depend upon a greater or lesser amount of play around a canonized style which gives privileged access to truth.

Given, then, that Literature as a system is a crucial determinant of non-fictional prose, which is read as 'truth' and is thus ideological, we are in a better position to see what are the transformations which the literary realist novel performs on ideology. I have described them as ambiguous, and I think the ambiguity is an ambiguity of reading. In the act of reading a literary text, there is, according once again to Barthes, an endless exchange between the linguistic system and the literary system: 'look at my words, I am language; look at my meaning, I am literature'.[19] But another sequence is equally possible, and is indeed demanded by the realist novel: 'look at my words, I am language; look at my meaning, I am truth, i.e. typical' - the extent to which the latter is subscribed to marking the success of the novel as ideology.

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19. Roland Barthes, Critical Essays, translated by Richard Howard (Evanston, 1972), p. 266.

There is, moreover, an equally endless exchange between the literary system and the 'truth' (ideology) system, though the way that exchange has been theorized is historically specific. This then accounts for the ambiguity of literary work upon ideology; the passage from 'how true!' to 'it's only a novel/poem/play' is lubricated by 'how beautiful!'.

However, the work done by literature upon ideology is also potentially disruptive. Precisely because of the narratibility of ideology, one of the privileged areas for the working out of the dialectic of ideological change in the nineteenth century is the novel; because the novel is laid under a charge to be novel, myths cannot simply be repeated indefinitely because their efficacy tends to decrease with their over-insistent repetition. Moreover, the novel is a complex form, which intercalates a number of myths, usually arranging them in some order of dominance. Because these myths are often contradictory, their ideological nature can thus be revealed, though equally it can be reinforced. Since this amounts to a potentially formalist criterion of value, it is worth considering the point a little further.

It seems to me that it is impossible to continue reading and working in literary studies without operating with some notion of value. The notion that I am proposing is one of the disruptive or subversive work performed upon ideology by the intercalation of contradictory myths in complex literary works; it is substantially different from the realist notion of value because I do not suggest that this subversion is performed at the behest of the overwhelming weight of experience, but at the behest of other formal elements of the novel which may themselves be equally ideological. As a criterion of value, moreover, this notion is quite different from a recognition of pleasure - one can, for example, recognize the gratifications offered by the narrative of a Trollope novel without making them a criterion of value. To recognize a disjunction

between what one values in a text and what one enjoys is in effect a recognition of alienation, and not merely from the novels of Trollope; the gratifications offered there are essentially the same as those offered incessantly and insistently by the narratives of contemporary mass culture.

In speaking of the contradictory quality of the realist novel, however, I wish to avoid that seductive notion of contradiction which suggests that thanks to the contradictory senses of two different elements of a whole, a third meaning emerges as a compromise between them - this notion of contradiction being, in fact, really only a more complex way of talking about unity or organism. It seems to me that the play of myth upon myth rarely produces that kind of tertiary meaning; indeed it is quite possible for contradictory narrations to coexist in the same text without being brought into conflict at all. Different texts, in short, display different kinds of organization, as we shall see when considering The Newcomes and Little Dorrit. In whatever way the ideological efficacy of myth is disrupted, however, I value those texts which manage this more than those which merely repeat myths to provide familiar and reassuring gratifications.

Furthermore, to maintain such a notion of value, one has to adopt some notion of meaningful authorial intervention in the ideological and literary matrix, otherwise one is incapable of giving a rational account of the difference between, say, Bleak House and Lady Audley's Secret. The two novels are formally similar; both intercalate potentially contradictory material; but only in Bleak House is that material disposed in a meaningful way.

In thus organizing the ideological material that constitutes it, the novel only makes more explicit what is already a fact of the ideological matrix, that it is itself already organized in a complex system

of dominance. I suggested in the introduction to this study that the dominant element of that system in the 1850s was political economy; I hope that subsequent chapters have enabled us to understand the relationships within the system more clearly. If the myth of the self-made man can be seen as the most compatible myth, supplying some essential support for political economy as a hegemonic ideology, the myth of the fraud can equally be seen as a result of the inadequacy of classical political economy in accounting for the phenomenon of corporate capitalism. The myth can be narrated in two principal ways, in either predominantly aristocratic or predominantly petty-bourgeois versions; though the former version tends to be the more comfortable fraud-as-depradator-on-honest-society, in the hands of Carlyle it can become genuinely oppositional to reassuring justifications for the existing order of things. The more radical version of the fraud-as-representative-of-fraudulent-society is, we have seen, always in danger of reverting to covert support for the dominant ideology by absolving the system in blaming the man. The point is that even the most radically oppositional versions of the myth are incapable of producing any coherent critique of political economy because all ultimately imply that it is possible to run the system well if only honest men were running it.

Similarly, we have seen that nearly all narrations of the myth of charity result from attempts to reconcile the ultimately aristocratic ethic of charity with political economy, thus trying to fill the ideological gap which political economy notoriously exposes when faced with widespread poverty.

All these myths are related to classic positions within political economy, providing it with an ideological efficacy which it would otherwise lack, though the extent to which they succeed in doing so depends on the way that they are narrated. Nevertheless, these myths

do not readily cohere amongst themselves. The most notable example of a potential contradiction between the myths that I have studied - a potential contradiction which can produce the subversive play of myth upon myth which, I have suggested, characterizes some texts - is that between the myth of charity and the myth of the self-made man, the one ultimately aristocratic in origin, the other a secularized version of the bourgeois Protestant ethic. This potential contradiction, which becomes manifest in a text like Bleak House, does not, it seems to me, produce a synthesis, a tertiary meaning which I have just objected to as being another way of talking about unity. Indeed, it cannot produce a synthesis, because it is the reflection of a discrepancy between the ideological needs of differently organized sections of the economy, still coexisting in the 1850s and not yet fully integrated into a unitary mode of production.

The three myths, of self-help, of charity, and of fraud, can be seen to exist in determinate relations to political economy, for all are ultimately addressed to the division of labour within capitalist society. Racist myths, however, which are either addressed to the division of labour on the margins of the capitalist state or attempt to supplant political economy as an explanatory system for the division of labour within it, will have a relationship to political economy of a different sort. In short, scientific racism recognizes the hegemonic inadequacy of political economy and attempts to circumvent it not by supplying its inadequacies but by replacing it with a set of alternative explanations - or at least by founding the capitalist division of labour on the securely natural 'laws' of physiology. Racism was a powerful emergent ideological position in the 1850s, destined to prove genuinely oppositional on the political level to the characteristic forms of bourgeois rule but to leave its economic domination unchallenged. Because it is

so comprehensively explanatory - even of world history - it is not so readily thrown into contradiction with other elements of the ideological system, however, unlike the other myths that I have studied. Therefore, even though it shares categories with the novel, like those other myths, it is not so readily disrupted by the formal organization of a text.

The first four chapters of this study are liable to the objections that I have subsequently made to the 'subject' genre of criticism; namely, that in isolating the treatment of a particular subject in a variety of different texts, they fail to recognize the literary work done upon ideology in a particular whole text. It seemed to me to be necessary, however - before turning to extended analyses of such whole texts - to establish the form of ideology upon which literature can be said to work.

One of the constitutive forms of ideology, I have argued, is myth; it is essential to recognize the widespread and enduring efficacy of myth in order to understand what work the literary text performs. Myths have a certain adaptability beyond the ideological systems in which they appear, though they are invariably related with different meanings in different contexts. They are especially successful as units of ideology because they use the experiential obviousness of narrative, and indeed its experiential truth (everybody knows or has heard of a self-made man, a fraud, etc.), as the bearer of an ideological message.

Since the totality of these messages does not add up to a unitary system, and since the literary text is situated within this potentially self-contradictory matrix, it is in a privileged position to reveal those contradictions. This is only possible because of the reliance of ideology in general upon narrative, and of 'non-fictional' writing upon literary prose; but given this reliance, novels like Little Dorrit and The Newcomes, as the following chapters will argue, can in their different ways subvert or distend the ideology which constitutes them.

CHAPTER SIX : LITTLE DORRIT

I

It has become too easy to speak of the contradictions in Dickens's work. Often the charge amounts to little more than one of inconsistency in his various social and political attitudes; more damagingly, it relates back to the discredited notion of Dickens as no more than a great entertainer, permanently disqualified from serious consideration by an irredeemable absence of intellect. In a sense, the twentieth-century critical rediscovery of Dickens has even connived at the very dismissive attitudes that it sought to combat, by characteristically stressing his imaginative power and range - there is still a case to be made for Dickens as an intellectual. This ready acknowledgement of inconsistencies and contradictions in his social and political attitudes, moreover, often drawing examples from the journalism and minor fiction, has partly obscured a more useful sense in which one can talk of 'contradictions' - as unresolved ideological tensions within the major texts.

In an article published over twenty years ago, G.H. Ford has convincingly argued that there are two conflicting ethics at work in

Bleak House;[1] on the one hand a middle-class ethic of self-help, and on the other hand, an ethic of charity described by Ford as 'ultimately conservative in origin'. The novel can thus be seen both as a satire of aristocratic laziness and of middle-class hardness; though at this point the argument rather stumbles. For what Ford ends up by assuming is that these two contradictory ethics temper each other, so that the contradiction is thematically resolved within the novel. On the contrary, it seems to me that both ethics are vigorously pursued, both supported by appropriate narratives and characterizations, and that they remain in a state of unresolved conflict. If this is true of Bleak House, it is also a fortiori true of Little Dorrit, for not only are both ethics present in the later text, the reader is still less required to put the contradictory elements together in an opposition tempering both.

An ethic of self-help, of course, needs to be founded on a narrative of self-help; and the principal such narrative in Little Dorrit is the story of Daniel Doyce. In his essay on the novel in The Melancholy Man, John Lucas has argued that 'Doyce is the image of Ruskin's ideal fusion of thought and labour in total creativity'.[2] He further argues that Doyce is an exception in the novel, a 'genius' in the Carlylean sense and that work for him has enriching possibilities that Pancks' labour, notably, lacks. The references to Carlyle and Ruskin are suggestive, but should not obscure the classic self-helping narrative which founds the characterization, nor the ethic of self-help and self-

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1. G.H. Ford, 'Self-help and the Helpless in Bleak House', in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad : Essays Collected in Memory of James T. Hillhouse, edited by R.C. Rathburn and M. Steinmann (Minneapolis, 1958), pp. 92-105.

2. John Lucas, The Melancholy Man : A Study of Dickens's Novels (1970), p. 280.

reliance for which Samuel Smiles is as good a reference as John Ruskin.[3] This is Doyce's history:

> ... he was the son of a north-country blacksmith, and had originally been apprenticed by his widowed mother to a lock-maker; ... he had 'struck out a few little things' at the lock-maker's, which had led to his being released from his indentures with a present, which present had enabled him to gratify his ardent wish to bind himself to a working engineer, under whom he had laboured hard, learned hard, and lived hard, seven years. [4]

Doyce, in fact, is the industrious apprentice with the mechanical bent, Dickens's preferred version of the self-made man; and he is specifically referred to by Clennam, after the Merdle crash, as 'the honest, self-helpful, indefatigable old man who has worked his way all through his life; the man who has contended against so much disappointment' (II, 26, 778). Nor are his self-helpfulness and self-reliance the only Smilesian elements in his characterization. His experience in the Circumlocution Office, in particular, with the accompanying comment that '"Mine is not a particular case. I am not worse used than a hundred others who have put themselves in the same position - than all the others, I was going to say"' (I, 10, 163), exactly parallels

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3. This conjunction of Ruskin and Smiles is less surprising than might at first appear. The first, 1859, edition of Self-Help, with Illustrations of Character and Conduct, was substantially revised for the 1866 edition, on which subsequent editions were based. The principal difference was the inclusion of accounts of many self-helping foreigners, with a consequent toning-down of the exclusively national tone of the 1859 edition; but more interestingly in the present context, an approving reference to Ruskin and his opposition to the dehumanizing effects of machines, was included in chap. X of the 1859 edition, but excluded from the equivalent chapter in 1866. If this opposition to 'mechanism' is taken along with the emphasis on self-culture and the development of all the human faculties - physical, moral and intellectual - then a different Smilesian synthesis can be glimpsed. But the reference to Ruskin is dropped after revision, and the attack on exclusively literary education rapidly becomes a mere suspicion of books as such.

4. All references to Little Dorrit are to the book and chapter number, followed by the page number of the Penguin edition, thus: (I, 16, 232-233). Hereafter they will immediately follow the quotation.

George Stephenson's experience of parliamentary officialdom,[5] and echoes the belief that there is a large class of potential national benefactors who are only prevented from being of service to their country by a bumbling bureaucracy. Doyce, in short, as well as being a Carlylean hero, is also a Smilesian one.

His enterprise, moreover, provides the social and economic solution to Clennam's career problems, and in very interesting terms. In the Doyce and Clennam partnership, there is no suggestion of the deadening separation of work from value that characterizes Pancks' 'business'; on the contrary, it clearly combines the values of work and imagination in a way that is unique in Little Dorrit. This is the way, for example, that the workshop is described:

> A communication of great trap-doors in the floor and roof with the workshop above and the workship below, made a shaft of light in this perspective, which brought to Clennam's mind the child's old picture-book, where similar rays were the witnesses of Abel's murder ... The patient figures at work were swarthy with the filings of iron and steel that danced on every bench and bubbled up through every chink in the planking ... The whole had at once a fanciful and practical air in Clennam's eyes, which was a welcome change (I, 23, 312-313).

This union of the 'fanciful' and the 'practical' is significant for Clennam himself, in view of the exclusion of fancy from his upbringing - an exiguity which almost threatens the whole passage, for a picture of Abel's murder is perhaps not an altogether felicitous childhood association, but is the only one possible in view of Mrs. Clennam's educational regimen. The union is also significant in a wider sense, however, for it marks the resolution of a range of thematic problems adumbrated in the text, organized around the opposition of 'business' to 'fancy'; the location of this union in a petty-bourgeois partnership

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5. See above, chap. 1, p. 22.

is a precise index of the social location of Dickens's sympathies.[6]

So Doyce provides the main self-helping narrative in the text (though there is also perhaps Mr. Meagles - '"I have been poor enough in my time I assure you, or I should have married Mrs. Meagles long ago"' (I, 2, 58)), and the Doyce and Clennam partnership provides a solution to many of its thematic problems. Doyce's characterization is one of the nodal points of the novel, summarizing as it does the virtues of self-reliance, individual responsibility and liability, and demonstrating the necessity of the performance of duty and the payment of debts. These virtues and duties are repeatedly stressed in the various narratives and characterizations of the novel, their importance underlined as much by parodistic versions of them which throw the true version into more accurate relief; though one such parody, Miss Wade, has a somewhat dubious success in this respect.

The main point, moreover, of the institutional satire in the novel - against the Circumlocution Office and the Marshalsea - is precisely that these institutions prevent the operation of the self-helping virtues. If Doyce can ringingly pronounce the Carlylean doctrine that '"You hold your life on the condition that to the last you shall struggle hard for it. Every man holds a discovery on the same terms"' (I, 16, 233), the main discovery of the Circumlocution Office is, famously, How not to do it. By the same token, what is wrong with the Marshalsea is that it destroys the will and capacity of its inmates to work hard, pay their debts, and generally help themselves. As

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6. In 'Community and the Limits of Liability in Two Mid-Victorian Novels', Victorian Studies, 17 (1973-1974), 355-369, N.N. Feltes convincingly demonstrates the importance of the fact that 'Doyce and Clennam' is a partnership, especially in the context of the contemporaneous debates about limited liability. Personal liability of one sort or another, so often stressed in the novel, has its economic analogue in this (increasingly outmoded) form of entrepreneurial organization.

Arthur Clennam discovers when he is mistakenly locked in and forced to spend a night in the Snuggery,

> It was evident from the general tone of the whole party, that they had come to regard insolvency as the normal state of mankind, and the payment of debts as a disease that occasionally broke out (I, 8, 128).

This capacity of the Marshalsea to destroy the self-helping virtues is most strikingly demonstrated in the characterization of Tip Dorrit, about whom the text runs: 'Wherever he went, this foredoomed Tip appeared to take the prison walls with him, and to set them up in such trade or calling; and to prowl about within their narrow limits in the old slip-shod, purposeless, down-at-heel way' (I, 27, 116). Tip, in fact, has been transformed by the Marshalsea into the precise reverse of the self-helping individual, indeed a parody of one. When he shows Clennam around the Snuggery, for example, he points out its resources with 'an awful enjoyment', 'generally tending to the deduction that the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise, was to come to the Marshalsea' (I, 8, 128). There is no doubt that though the irony here works to some extent against the pat self-helping moralism, it is directed principally against Tip - and with him the institution - for subscribing to such a ludicrously inappropriate idea. In addition, when Arthur Clennam pays for Tip's release from the Marshalsea, he determines to do so 'with as little detriment as possible to the self-reliance and self-helpfulness of the young man, supposing him to possess any remnant of those qualities: without doubt a very wide stretch of supposition' (I, 12, 181-182). This resort to discriminate charity - and with it a deference to the self-help ethic - is soon shown to be necessary; Tip possesses no remnant of the requisite qualities and is abandoned by Clennam as a suitable object for charity. Yet this is not to be the final word on the matter, for ultimately Amy will help her brother irrespective of whether she expects him to improve.

If public institutions are measured by their failure to provide scope for the self-helping virtues, 'business', on the other hand, is satirized from the opposite perspective, as providing a hideous parody of the doctrine of work and struggle resoundingly pronounced by Doyce. 'Doyce and Clennam', I have suggested, provides a resolution to the opposition between 'fancy', and all that that term includes, and 'business'. Under the heading of business is included not only the anachronistic Clennam 'House' with its blasphemous notions of self-suppression and punishment, but also Pancks' enforced business grind, bitterly conjugated as 'Keep me always at it, and I'll keep you always at it, you keep somebody else always at it. There you are with the Whole Duty of Man in a commercial country' (I, 13, 202). What is so really telling about this attack on business, however, is the recognition that it does provide the mechanism that keeps society going. As Pancks himself says of the tenants of Bleeding Heart Yard, 'Besides, if they <u>are</u> poor, you can't help it. You'd be poor yourself if you didn't get your rents' (I, 13, 197). The undoubted truth of this remark is one point at which the ideology of self-help and self-reliance begins to be challenged. Naturally the main gist of the satire is directed against the meaningless and exploitative character of Casby's business, concealed behind the mystifying pretences of benevolence and patriarchy which present the petty-bourgeois functionary as the villain rather than what he really is, a victim; but the recognition of the systematic nature of this exploitation, that the exploiters are 'kept at it' as much as the exploited, potentially challenges the way that 'Doyce and Clennam' is repeatedly thrown up as a solution to thematic problems of the text - the partnership indeed providing the ultimate destination for Pancks himself.

There is, then, a potential contradiction between the commitment to 'Doyce and Clennam' - an institution which, though vulnerable and something of an ideal, does nevertheless function and survive - and the recognition that for most people, including most people like Pancks, work provides no fulfilling resolution of work and fancy. This is the contradiction 'resolved' by Pancks' magical act of defiance, in which Casby's mystifying patriarchal locks are cut off and his exploitative character exposed. It is a highly complex and overdetermined scene. It exposes the 'true' exploiter - 'Pancks is only the Works; but here's the Winder!' (II, 32, 869) - an assertion that withdraws the earlier admission that it is the system rather than individuals who are to blame, an admission withdrawn under the intense pressure to blame <u>somebody</u>, and facilitated of course by the typifying and individuating procedures of novelistic representation. This exposure of the 'true' exploiter carries with it a declaration of the innocence of the petty-bourgeois class in the exploitative system. Secondly, the act asserts the possibility of humanly positive action despite all that an evil system can do, by way of education, to suppress it. Finally, it can be seen as a wish-fulfilling act of castration, in which the victim is not the son but the Patriarch himself, at last exposed as the real oppressor at the moment when the source of his potency is removed. The act is an eruption into this mature Dickens text of an earlier mode, the formal distortion marking the ideological tension that I have alluded to. To some extent, however, the very success of the device - which produced 'nothing but the sound of laughter in Bleeding Heart Yard, rippling through the air and making it ring again' (II, 32, 872) - masks the ultimate truth about it, that for all the gratification it affords, it changes nothing. It is not an impotent act as far as Pancks is concerned, for it releases him from bondage to Casby and propels him on his way to

'Doyce and Clennam', but it does nothing to end the dismal conjugation by which the Bleeding Hearts are kept always 'at it'.

There are, then, several points at which the ideology of self-help and self-reliance is met by a potentially contradictory recognition of its inadequacy. However, the ethic of personal responsibility that accompanies that ideology is nevertheless repeatedly stressed in the characterizations, so much so that it seems remarkable that people should ever have imagined this to be a 'determinist' novel. If anything it is anti-determinist, even in those characterizations which are most threatening to comfortable assumptions about guilt and innocence. Tattycoram's characterization, for example, though deeply disturbing to the ideology of benevolence and domesticity, is introduced by her description of her 'temper': '"I know I might keep it off if I only tried hard enough, and sometimes I do try hard enough, and at other times I don't and won't"' (I, 2, 65-67). Though there is more to Tattycoram's character than perhaps she herself realizes - Miss Wade finds it out at any rate - this nevertheless amounts to a fairly downright assertion of personal responsibility. Equally, when Fanny Dorrit attempts to justify her impending marriage to Sparkler, she tries to do so by saying that '"whether by disposition, or whether by circumstances, is no matter; I am better fitted for such a life than for almost any other"' (II, 14, 650), deliberately invoking two explanations which would absolve her of responsibility which she chooses to deny but which is nevertheless the more strongly asserted by the quiet contrast of her sister. The most emphatic assertion of personal responsibility, however, occurs with regard to Rigaud, the attempt by the 'philosophical philanthropist' to assert that he might be the 'child of circumstances' being thoroughly quashed by the smiling landlady at the Break of Day. Not only the details of the characterizations, but

the whole diegesis of the novel, providing as it does the nemesis of those who refuse to make reparation for past actions, amount to an assertion of individual responsibility; in conjunction with this assertion there is the repeated denial of the overwhelming power of circumstances in determining action - which is not necessarily the same thing.

Remarkably, however, the very same vocabulary of independence and self-reliance which is used so approvingly of Doyce, reappears in quite an opposite sense in the characterization of Miss Wade. Her face 'said plainly' that '"I am self-contained and self-reliant; your opinion is nothing to me; I have no interest in you, care nothing for you, and see and hear you with indifference"' (I, 2, 62). What are we to make of this stark contrast, when the language of self-reliance, invoked so positively in one context to 'make sense' of the narrative and founded by it, simply appears as an index of self-delusive emotional aridity in another? Several readings are possible. It could be argued that there is a sustained and explicit meditation about different kinds of self-reliance, behind the text, which enables the reader to distinguish Miss Wade's false kind of self-reliance from the true variety practised by Doyce - a reading which has the advantage of consistency but seems insufficient in so far as Doyce and Miss Wade are never brought into contrast with each other - never even meet, in fact. Alternatively, it could be argued that Dickens was simply unaware of the coincidence in vocabulary - an explanation which perhaps does more to flatter the reader's sense of his own perspicuity than explain much about Little Dorrit. A third possibility would be to argue that there is indeed a fully worked up contradiction, but that no resolution or tempered third term is offered, in which case Little Dorrit would be seen, in

William Myers's phrase, as a 'statement of political despair'.[7] The difficulty of choosing between these explanations is that to decide between them involves not only differences in reading but ultimately depends, in this case at any rate, upon intractable problems of the author's intention. Whichever reading is preferred, however, all imply tensions not only within the language of the novel, but given the resonance of this language, tensions also within the ideology of mid-Victorian England. An ethic of self-reliance and rugged individualism, in fact, is vigorously offered as appropriate in economic and social life, while a potentially contradictory ethic of benevolence, devotion to others and mutuality is equally vigorously affirmed in the sphere of private life.

In conjunction with an extended ethic of self-help and self-reliance, Little Dorrit also contains a powerful narration of the myth of the fraud. As I have argued in chapter two, this myth is perfectly compatible with - indeed it is partly demanded by - the ideology of self-help, and I have explained the demonology of fraud as an effort to come to terms with new forms of economic organization. In this novel, the contrast of the unlimited liability partnership to the speculative joint stock company is explicit and deliberate.[8] Whereas 'Doyce and Clennam', for example, has grown by dint of hard work and self-denial, when Merdle is exposed it is discovered that 'he had sprung from nothing, by no natural

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7. William Myers, 'The Radicalism of Little Dorrit', in Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century, edited by John Lucas (1975), pp. 77-104 (p. 100).

8. Not all joint stock companies are speculative, of course. It does not seem to me, however, that in Little Dorrit Dickens makes a clear distinction between the kind of purely speculative enterprise run by Merdle and the company that asks for legitimate investment. The precise nature of Merdle's business is left deliberately vague, suggesting a disenchantment with all forms of investment divorced from immediate personal involvement and responsibility.

growth or process that any one could account for' (II, 25, 776); and Doyce tells Clennam, before leaving on his foreign trip, that '"If I have a prejudice connected with money and money figures ... it is against speculating"' (II, 22, 736). The eulogy of self-help and the attack on speculation thus naturally go hand in hand.

The Merdle narrative is perhaps the foremost example of the 'fraud-as-representative-of-fraudulent-society' offered by the novel in the 1850s; nevertheless, the text is crucially ambivalent in its narration of the myth. There are in fact two distinct and opposed ways of viewing the speculative mania presented in the text. In the first view, in which the mania is described as 'worship' and in which Merdle becomes the centre of a range of blasphemous images, there is the positive assertion that all the worshippers are morally culpable in prostrating themselves:

> All people knew (or thought they knew) that he had made himself immensely rich; and, for that reason alone, prostrated themselves before him, more degradedly and less excusably than the darkest savage creeps out of his hole in the ground to propitiate, in some log or reptile, the Deity of his benighted soul.
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> Nay, the high priests of this worship had the man before them as a protest against their meanness. The multitude worshipped on trust - though always distinctly knowing why - but the officiators at the altar had the man habitually in their view (II, 12, 611).

There is here a distinct and unequivocal assertion of total social responsibility for Merdle-worship - though of course some sections of society are more culpable than others. Yet in the other image used for the speculative mania, there is the suggestion of at least a degree of innocence, for in an 'epidemic' you can scarcely blame the victims for falling ill. Clennam and Pancks, in fact, belong to a class of 'sufferers' who are explicitly excused from the accusation of culpability:

> Bred at first, as many physical diseases are, in the wickedness of men, and then disseminated in their

> ignorance, these epidemics, after a period, get communicated to many sufferers who are neither ignorant nor wicked. Mr. Pancks might, or might not, have caught the illness himself from a subject of this class; but in this category he appeared before Clennam, and the infection he threw off was all the more virulent (II, 13, 640).

The first view, of course, derives directly from Carlyle's Latter-Day Pamphlet on 'Hudson's Statue',[9] in which Hudson was presented as a false hero, the antithesis of the real heroic values; in just the same way Merdle is a false hero in Little Dorrit, diverting all the honours that should rightly go to Doyce (and which he earns abroad) onto his own unworthy self. Opposed to this prophetic denunciation of society as a whole, however, is the simultaneous wish to separate one class for particular blame - Society with a capital S - and to exculpate the rest.[10] Hence the contradiction noted between the two ways of seeing the phenomenon of Merdle worship.

This ideological tension also produces some deformations in the text, as we shall see. There is, however, an ambiguity in the myth of the fraud, deriving from the very use of narrative in ideology, which Dickens makes every effort to combat. The difficulty with the attempt to use the narrative of fraud in a discourse radically hostile to the institution cheated or defrauded by that fraud, is that in a sense the narrative leaves the institution unscathed: scapegoating the individual exculpates the system. This blunted and consolatory recuperation of the narrative is one that constantly threatens the

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9. See above, chapter 2, pp. 71-74.

10. A position which precisely parallels Dickens's contemporary political position. His membership of the Administrative Reform Association coincided with the writing of Little Dorrit; his understanding of the aims of the Association was, in one aspect, to end administrative disasters by ending the exclusively aristocratic recruitment to the state apparatus. See The Speeches of Charles Dickens, edited by K.J. Fielding (Oxford, 1960), pp. 197-208; and chapter 7, p. 245 n., below.

Merdle elements of Little Dorrit; the 'fraud-as-representative-of-fraudulent-society' is always in danger of teetering back into the safer 'fraud-as-depradator-on-honest-society', an effect deriving from the very narratability of ideology and the processes of individuation and typification that accompany it.

It is precisely this effect which Society is only too keen to encourage. As soon as Merdle is exposed as 'simply the greatest Forger and the greatest Thief that ever cheated the gallows'(II, 25, 777), then Society is very quick to retort that it too had been deceived. These are precisely the grounds on which it wishes to exculpate itself from the charge of having encouraged Merdle, and on which, for example, it can later readmit Mrs. Merdle to its ranks:

> As it seemed, however, essential to the strength of their own case that they should admit her to have been cruelly deceived, they graciously made the admission, and continued to know her. It followed that Mrs. Merdle, as a woman of fashion and good breeding who had been sacrificed to the wiles of a vulgar barbarian (for Mr. Merdle was found out from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, the moment he was found out in his pocket), must be actively championed by her order for her order's sake (II, 33, 873).

Society, in otherwords, is the most active propagator of the myth of the 'fraud-as-depradator-on-honest-society', and is the keenest to scapegoat not only Merdle, but also Clennam as an (apparent) first mover in the speculative rush. Dickens deliberately and explicitly rejects this narration, refusing to allow the reader any comfort it might afford.

It is, moreover, in confronting the possibility that Merdle can be discounted as a fraud that the novel is at its most disenchanted, and perhaps also at its bleakest. The voice of Society disclaiming responsibility for Merdle is never publicly challenged, and Society remains outside the providential processes of the plot which enact

the ultimate reinstitution of justice - the reader's (private) better judgment remains the only counterweight. This is also the case with the scapegoating of Clennam, which is never publicly exposed as absurd and wrong. Indeed, the very strength of the accusations of guilt which cluster about Clennam's head suggest the difficulty of successfully driving a wedge between Society and the rest with regard to culpability for Merdle. Clennam's guilt, and his sense of guilt, is one of the points around which the ideological tensions in the text condense. Why does he feel so guilty in the Marshalsea?

His imprisonment seems so appropriate - and therefore so oppressive - partly because of his lifelong sense of guilt induced by his religious upbringing, and by his sense of reparation to be done for some past misdeed of the Clennam house. Nevertheless, the guilt that he so publicly parades, inviting the storm of public abuse which the reader, with his inside knowledge, can so self-righteously scorn, seems disproportionate - after all, he nearly fades away because of it. Little Dorrit here provides a structure that is also reproduced in The Newcomes,[11] in which the hero of the novel is imprisoned for bankruptcy or debt, whereupon the reader can delight in the private knowledge of his innocence, despite the uninformed and malicious brayings of the contemptible. The point is that Clennam feels so guilty because in a sense he is guilty; not in the same way as the 'high priests of the worship', who recognized meanness and still worshipped it, but guilty nevertheless for wishing to rush to riches the easy way, for however honourable a motive - in fact, his desire to help Doyce amounts to a betrayal of him. Upon his imprisonment, not only Amy Dorrit but also Meagles and eventually Doyce are keen to assure him of his innocence;

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11. See below, chapter 7.

the reader is invited to share this reassurance by being granted privileged knowledge, an effect of the narration. These countervailing reassurances can be seen as attempts to repress a knowledge of Clennam's guilt which an alternative perspective yields.

Since Clennam, along with Pancks, represents the class to which Dickens is most committed, it is not surprising that a knowledge - or at least a suggestion - of his guilt should provoke such a reaction, nor that Clennam's own sense of guilt, which is the point around which these tensions compress, should be so intense. Clennam, and with him his class, have contributed to Merdle's success, nor is there ultimately any gainsaying Ferdinand Barnacle's airily cynical reply to Clennam's hope that '"/Merdle/ and his dupes may be a warning to people not to have so much done with them again"':

> 'My dear Mr. Clennam,' returned Ferdinand, laughing, 'have you really such a verdant hope? The next man who has as large a capacity and as genuine a taste for swindling, will succeed as well. Pardon me, but I think you really have no idea how the human bees will swarm to the beating of any old tin kettle; in that fact lies the complete manual of governing them. When they can be got to believe that the kettle is made of the precious metals, in that fact lies the whole power of men like our late lamented' (II, 28, 806).

Clennam and Pancks, in this view, are as much 'human bees' as any other speculators; the bitter recognition of the truth of this implies a disenchantment with the whole of social and political life.

The failure to controvert Ferdinand's view has other implications. Merdle's suicide may be seen as the appropriately just solution for a morally culpable individual, but what is finally recognized is the fact that this enactment of appropriate justice changes nothing. This makes this narration of the myth of the fraud qualitatively different from all other narrations of it in the 1850s. As we saw in chapter three, part of the function of such narrations was to act as warnings to the potential dupes of the fraud. In Little Dorrit, Dickens has built the

failure of this project into his narration, not only marking off his version from the others in ideological terms but also perhaps suggesting a disillusion with novel-writing as such. At all events, the novel provides a clear example of the characteristic dialectic of ideological progression, whereby an ideology repeatedly narrated is ultimately subverted by an alternative narration. It is this which distinguishes Dickens's use of the myth, it seems to me, every bit as much as the superior quality and range of his imagination.[12]

The narratives of self-help and of fraud, then, are both inserted into a compatible ideological discourse in Little Dorrit, though certain deformations are produced when that ideology runs up against potentially contradictory ideological positions. One such is the ideology of charity, which is extensively narrated in the novel, though not in altogether consistent ways.

As we have seen, when Clennam decides to help Tip Dorrit out of the Marshalsea, he contrives to do so 'with as little detriment as possible to the self-reliance and self-helpfulness of the young man' (I, 12, 181-182) - the classical problematic of discriminate charity. Subsequently, when he discovers that Tip has been so damaged by the Marshalsea that he will obviously never display any of the self-helping virtues, he declines to continue giving him money. This little series, then, entirely endorses the ideology into which the narratives of self-help and fraud were inserted.

What Clennam's charities to the Dorrit family most blatantly expose, moreover, is the 'genteel fiction' that they themselves so assiduously assert, a fiction of their own gentility which they have maintained despite the fact that Dorrit's only source of income apart from Amy

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12. For a statement of this latter position, see Graham and Angela Smith, 'Dickens as a Popular Artist', Dickensian, 67 (1971), 131-144.

is the receipt of charities. To become the recipients of charity, like working for one's living, is, in conventional terms, the unmistakable mark of degradation. Dorrit seeks to avoid this by masking the charities he receives as 'testimonials', and it is precisely this, the dispute about whether Clennam has treated him like a gentleman in refusing his 'delicately-worded appeal', which is the subject of Tip's argument with his father in chapter thirty-one, Book I. The exposure of this genteel fiction - like all exposures of genteel mystifications - is accompanied by a degree of embarrassment:

> Mr. Clennam had two things to do before he followed; one, to offer his testimonial to the Father of the Marshalsea, without giving pain to his child; the other to say something to that child, though it were but a word, in explanation of his having come there.
>
> 'Allow me,' said the Father, 'to see you down-stairs.'
>
> She had slipped out after the rest, and they were alone. 'Not on any account,' said the visitor, hurriedly. 'Pray allow me to --' chink, chink, chink.
>
> 'Mr. Clennam,' said the Father, 'I am deeply, deeply --' But his visitor had shut up his hand to stop the chinking, and had gone down-stairs with great speed (I, 8, 125).

This revelation of the real material basis which the 'genteel fiction' denies, however, is only partly subversive of the whole notion of gentility. What is absurd is as much the claim of the Dorrit family to gentility as the institution of gentility as such. It is possible to imagine a reader taking Dorrit as a false version of the real thing - a gentleman not present in the text but possible in life. Such a reading again suggests the ambiguous nature of literary work on ideology. At all events, the reader is clearly not to defer to the notion of gentility that Dorrit and family themselves uphold, which is indeed exposed as preposterous - but only for another, 'truer' version to be substituted for it, essentially a moral version to which all in principle

have access. Nevertheless, the strength of the satire on Society, and more generally on deference to outmoded notions of worth and value, seems to me to be crucially weakened by this covert, but formally inevitable, equivocation.

The point is underlined by the notorious and perennially embarrassing passage in which John Chivery accepts that he will never be Amy Dorrit's accepted lover:

> As she held out her hand to him with these words, the heart that was under the waistcoat of sprigs - mere slop-work if the truth must be known - swelled to the size of the heart of a gentleman; and the poor common little fellow, having no room to hold it, burst into tears (I, 18, 263).

This passage, it seems to me, marks a point beyond which the critique of gentility is not pursued. Its smugly compassionate and patronizing tone is based on an assumption of shared assumptions between author and reader, the chief of which is the moral definition of gentility. As we have seen, this is an assumption which makes gentility nominally available to everyone; the author is reluctantly led to admit here - the truth is dragged out of him, but it 'must' be known - that John Chivery, though capable of temporarily achieving gentility, is not capable of sustaining it. Gentility, then, provides the appropriate frame for judging character; it does so despite the fact that Dickens can show preeminently non-genteel characters such as Plornish and Chivery himself acting in ways marked by the greatest delicacy and moral courage.

Although crucially qualified, then, there is an attempt to undermine certain notions of gentility which is quite compatible with the critique of charity made by political economy. There is one episode which is yet more critical of the practice of charity, in which it is attacked as being no more than a form of competitive display and social control. Mrs. Merdle buys off Fanny Dorrit the dancer by gifts of jewelry and dresses; one of the forms of revenge planned by Fanny the heiress is

to outdo her in such gifts:

> 'And, with the blessing of fate and fortune, I'll go on improving that woman's acquaintance until I have given her maid, before her eyes, things from my dressmaker's ten times as handsome and expensive as she once gave me from hers!' (II, 6, 551).

It scarcely needs a Marcel Mauss to point to the motivated nature of gifts such as these.

Yet there is an ethic of charity operating in the novel which is explicitly shown to be at odds with political economy and the ideology of self-help. Clennam, for example, helps Cavaletto to a hospital after the accident in which his leg is broken; and Pancks later comments that '"It's pauperising a man, sir, I have been shown, to let him into a hospital?" ... And again blew off that remarkable sound'. To which Clennam coldly replies '"I have been shown so too"' (I, 23, 324-325). The discussion is not pursued, but there is something sufficiently enigmatic about Pancks' manner to suggest that even he does not wholly subscribe to an opinion subsequently shown by Cavaletto's hard-working efforts to be so ridiculous. A more significant moment, however, occurs while Mr. Plornish, 'in a prolix, gently-growling, foolish way', turns 'the tangled skein of his estate about and about, like a blind man trying to find some beginning or end to it' (I, 12, 184). In the course of his maundering monologue - nevertheless given some narrative authority by the erlebte rede in which it appears - many of the assumptions which underlie the ideology of discriminate charity are debunked:

> When a man felt, on his own back and in his own belly, that poor he was, that man (Mr. Plornish gave it as his decided belief) know'd well that he was poor somehow or another, and you couldn't talk it out of him, no more than you could talk Beef into him. Then you see, some people as was better off said, and a good many such people lived pretty close up to the mark themselves if not beyond it so he'd heerd, that they was 'improvident' (that was the favourite word) down the Yard. For instance,

> if they see a man with his wife and children going to Hampton Court in a Wan, perhaps once in a year, they says, 'Hallo! I thought you was poor, my improvident friend!' Why, Lord, how hard it was upon a man! What was a man to do? He couldn't go mollancholy mad, and even if he did, you wouldn't be the better for it. In Mr. Plornish's judgment you would be the worse for it. Yet you seemed to want to make a man mollancholy mad (I, 12, 183-184).

The realities of London labour, the miseries of sweated outwork and chronic unemployment, are all alluded to, and the pat moralistic reaction of condemning working-class 'improvidence' is revealed as inadequate. Discriminate charity, and the self-protective illusions which buttress it, do not survive this monologue, however 'gently-growling and foolish' - indeed, its very mimetic accuracy gives it greater evidential weight.

However, the more general ethic of charity - entirely free from any limitations imposed by worries about pauperization - is carried above all by Amy Dorrit. The narrative of her life, persistently providing charitable support for her family, for Pat Gowan, and ultimately for Clennam himself, founds a sacerdotal ethic that brooks no countervailing arguments made with an eye to results. Equally, Amy's history is an example which should be seen more as a gesture or a sign of what ought to be than as having the same presumed typicality of other narratives in the novel - of the narrative of Doyce's career, for example, or of the little narrative sequence of Clennam's charity to Tip.

Amy's more conventional charities, moreover - to beggars in Italy - are performed in a way which is equally contradictory to a muted ethic of charity. Though perfectly proper in themselves, they are not lady-like when accompanied by 'looking' - at least, not according to Mrs. General (II, 5, 530), for looking could endanger surface proprieties which are designed to keep the truth at bay, and to bolster the ideo-logical illusion that conventional charity provides in any way an

adequate response to the realities of social life. Too much contemplation of these realities, Dickens suggests, is deeply disturbing to its conventional illusions, its 'genteel fictions' and the 'surface' which its ideologues seek to erect. Extensive play is made in the novel on concepts of truth and fiction, and its main narrative procedures are ultimately revelatory; perhaps the revelation is the underlying ideological project present in the novel - a question to which we shall return. The point here, however, is that when charity is accompanied by contemplation of the reality of poverty, its inadequacies become more and more evident.

So there are simultaneously present in the novel narratives of discriminate charity, and narratives which suggest its inadequacy. The tensions thus created only occasionally surface in the text, as at Pancks' snort over 'pauperisation'; by and large they remain implicit. Nevertheless these tensions within the ideology of charity do exist, just as the tensions and contradictions between the ideology of charity and the other ideologies narrated in the text exist. At times such tensions remain latent, at other times they are overt and their implications are openly pursued; at yet other times the repressed contradictions force deformative 'resolutions'. One has to be careful, therefore, when using the term contradiction, not to assume that it can mean only one form of contradiction, or that such contradictions necessarily involve either resolution or, for that matter, the impossibility of resolution. Both possibilities occur in Little Dorrit, and the fact that contradictions are at least partially pursued as such provides part of the driving force of the text.

Perhaps Dickens himself provides the best comment on the way that the ideological matrix of the text is arranged, when he satirizes Lord Decimus Tite Barnacle's 'one indignant idea':

> My Lords, ... I am yet to be told that it behoves a Minister of this free country to set bounds to the philanthropy, to cramp the charity, to fetter the public spirit, to contract the enterprise, to damp the independent self-reliance, of its people (I, 34, 455).

This just about exhausts the ideological range of the novel as far as public life is concerned, and this exiguous material is offered in banal coexistence, without thought that it might be self-contradictory. The main point of the satire, however, is not directed at the cliches themselves, so much as at the fact that these cliches can be used to obfuscate and direct attention from the donothingism of the Circumlocution Office. It is their adhominatory power, in fact, rather than their substance, which is attacked, the passage thus providing a condensation of Dickens's larger procedures in the novel.

II

How then is this ideological material arranged? The first and most important way is through the embedding of the various narratives that I have discussed in the larger narrative of the novel. Thus the self-helping narrative of Daniel Doyce is anterior to the main action of the novel, being one of its founding narratives which act as deictic marks placing the main narrative. Similarly, the narratives of charity are largely subordinate to the purposes of characterization, and can be recuperated at that level. The Merdle narrative, on the other hand, provides a parallel narrative to the main plot of the novel, which is only linked to it with difficulty, although it too is a mystery plot, depending on the enigmatic disjunction between <u>sjuzet</u> and <u>fabula</u>. We have seen in Chapter Two that the myth of the fraud lends itself to this mode of narration; its founding assumption is the revelatory status claimed by the author of the novel, an assumption itself dependent upon a metaphysical notion of truth. It is this privileged

access to truth which in the last resort becomes problematical in Little Dorrit; the elaborate workings of the plot can be seen as an attempt to give coherence to intractably diverse material, including the Merdle episode and the Society sections.

Mr. Merdle's complaint is linked to the other parts of the novel in the following interesting way:

> Mr. Merdle's complaint. Society and he had so much to do with one another in all things else, that it is hard to imagine his complaint, if he had one, being solely his own affair. Had he that deep-seated recondite complaint, and did any doctor find it out? Patience. In the mean time, the shadow of the Marshalsea wall was a real darkening influence, and could be seen on the Dorrit Family at any stage of the sun's course (I, 21, 300).

Mr. Merdle's complaint is here linked to the Dorrit narrative by means of the main symbolic code running through the novel, this code being the other way by which its ideological material is disposed. The reader is asked to make a connection between the enigmatic complaint and the Marshalsea, suggesting somehow that Merdle, Society and the Dorrit family are all blighted in some similar way effectively symbolized by the shadow of the prison wall. The suggestion is given further weight by the recurrent identifying detail of Merdle taking himself into custody. The symbolic code - not limited to the prison-symbol of course - thus provides another would-be integrative level of meaning in the text, disposing its ideological material in a set of ambiguous relationships. Let us take these two integrative attempts in turn.

Forster has not been the only critic to complain at the elaborate plot of Little Dorrit. For him the detailed number plans and over-careful scheming were symptomatic of a loss of ease and power on Dickens's part since writing David Copperfield.[13] Subsequent critics

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13. John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens, 3 vols. (1874), III, 131-139.

- especially English ones - have also been much happier stressing the local felicities of the novel rather than its architectonics.[14] If, by contrast, there has been widespread emphasis on the symbolic range and power of the novel, this too has essentially ignored what the plot, as plot, does.

The original idea for the plot is a matter of record; Dickens wrote to Forster that

> 'It struck me that it would be a new thing to show people coming together, in a chance way, as fellow-travellers, and being in the same place, ignorant of one another, as happens in life; and to connect them afterwards, and to make the waiting for that connection a part of the interest.'[15]

This scheme is used at the beginning of both the Books of the novel; all the characters introduced in the first two chapters are subsequently shown to have some connection or interdependence with one another, while the matching chapter at the beginning of Book the Second (like Chapter Two, Book the First, entitled 'Fellow Travellers'), reverses the device, so that characters about whom the reader already knows the interconnections, are shown as meeting by chance, while travelling. But while Dickens, in writing to Forster, is explicit about his agency in making the connections, in the novel itself this agency has been replaced by one which is altogether larger. The connections between the various characters are certainly not accidental; the action of the plot, in fact, is providential.

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14. See, for example, John Wain's description of Little Dorrit as 'in essence, a plotless novel', 'Little Dorrit', in Dickens and the Twentieth Century, edited by G. Pearson and J. Gross (1963), pp. 175-186 (p. 175); and see also David Gervais, who, in 'The Poetry of Little Dorrit', Cambridge Quarterly, 4 (1969-1970), 38-53, is very severe on those critics who attempt to explicate theme and structure, without paying attention to local successes or failures in terms of tone, etc.

15. Life, III, 132.

It is providential inasmuch as the main enigma of the novel - the secret of the Clennam House and its connection with Dorrit's imprisonment - is finally revealed, thus suggesting the impossibility of keeping crimes secret. The fact that the author's agency, in arranging the details of the plot, is not referred to - unlike The Newcomes, as we shall see - means that these details are at the very least 'destined' (I, 9, 140); this, however, is only a provisional description of the workings of the plot, for destiny may be no more than a big word for a chance sequence of events, which enables those who use it, like Rigaud, to absolve themselves of responsibility and to justify their opportunism. When he meets up with Cavaletto again at the Break of Day, for example, he greets him with the words '"shaken out of destiny's dice-box again into your company, eh.? By Heaven! So much the better for you"' (I, 11, 175); his use of 'destiny' here can be seen as yet another indication of his moral worthlessness. The plot is providential, however, in a way which is much more specific than a general equation between plot and providence. The details of the plot in Little Dorrit consistently refer to two different levels of meaning, in which events, gestures, looks and confrontations have simultaneously an explanation in terms of the plot, and a metaphysical meaning.

This is particularly evident in the scenes between Rigaud and Amy Dorrit in Venice. While she is visiting Gowan's studio, he is standing as a model:

> His face was so directed in reference to the spot where Little Dorrit stood by the easel, that throughout he looked at her. Once attracted by his peculiar eyes, she could not remove her own, and they had looked at each other all the time (II, 6, 546).

This look is at once explained by Rigaud's knowledge that Amy Dorrit is the wronged beneficiary of the Clennam will, and as a kind of metaphysical polarity in the novel between himself and the heroine. The polarity is

there right enough; both Amy Dorrit and Mrs. Gowan feel towards him 'an aversion amounting to the repugnance and horror of a natural antipathy towards an odious creature of the reptile kind' (II, 7, 563); but Rigaud is also indicating the precise truth when, with 'a swagger personal to themselves', he managed to convey to them that '"I have a secret power in this quarter. I know what I know"' (II, 7, 563), for in addition to his inside knowledge about Amy Dorrit, he is also employed by Miss Wade to keep a malevolent eye on Mrs. Gowan. What is insisted on in this novel, in short - for it is equally characteristic of the mysteries that underlie the Clennam house, including Affery's 'dreams' and the very 'whisperings' of its structure - is that moral and metaphysical affinities and polarities have a basis in the facts of the narrative.

These narrative facts, towards a revelation of which the whole novel moves, provide a basis in 'fact' for the values flouted by Mrs. Clennam's impious version of religion, by Rigaud's innate evil, and by Merdle's fraudulence; all these things, in short, which are exposed and swept aside at the climax of the novel. Since the plot also provides an ultimate level of explanation linking all the various parts of society together, the exclusion of so many institutions from the final reinstitution of justice marks at once the complexity and pessimism of the novel. Dickens seems to be simultaneously suggesting that it is impossible to escape moral and social duties and obligations because they are founded on inescapable facts, and recognizing that society as it now is, and will be for the foreseeable future, does indeed manage to survive without recognizing or acting upon those duties.

Before considering this second, more pessimistic perspective - which radically interrogates and limits the consolatory ideological project embodied in the revelatory narrative procedures - it is important to

recognize how much is at stake. Ultimately it is the very access to a Truth founding and organizing the novel. In the course of the novel, Dickens refers to several different kinds of truth, or levels of reality, but each is gained in a way analogous to the way in which the ultimate narrative facts are revealed - by the dispersal of mystifying appearances in favour of a level of reality at which connection and coherence can be apprehended. Thus Physician has access to a reality which makes him an attractive man even to the denizens of Society: 'Where he was, something real was. And half a grain of reality, like the smallest portion of some other scarce natural productions, will flavour an enormous quantity of diluent' (II, 25, 768). Similarly, Doyce, by virtue of the moral qualities which are a more essential part of his genius than his intelligence, is enabled to penetrate to the physical laws upon which his invention depends despite the obfuscations of the Circumlocution Office; he has a 'calm knowledge that what was true must remain true, in spite of all the Barnacles in the family ocean, and would be just the truth, and neither more nor less when even that sea had run dry' (I, 16, 235). Even these physical laws are more than just that; they too are in a sense metaphysical; for in explaining the invention to Clennam, he

> 'showed the whole thing as if the Divine artificer had made it, and he had happened to find it; so modest he was about it, such a pleasant touch of respect was mingled with his quiet admiration of it, and so calmly convinced he was that it was established on irrefragable laws (II, 8, 570).

The ultimate level of reality referred to in the text, and the final secret which it can reveal, is indeed metaphysical, and it is evoked at the very beginning of the novel when Dickens writes of 'the hush /that/ was on the sea, that it scarcely whispered of the time when it shall give up its dead' (I, 1, 53). It is access to this reality - which is also Physician's reality - which enables judgments about characters

and their responsibility for their actions, finally to be made. This is not the only point at which the Day of Judgment is evoked. On one occasion, while Clennam is worrying about his own sense of guilt, he muses:

> What if his mother had an old reason she well knew for softening to this poor girl! What if the prisoner now sleeping quietly - Heaven grant it! - by the light of the great Day of Judgment should trace back his fall to her (I, 8, 129).

This particular Day of Judgment will come within the novel itself; the revelatory procedures of the narrative imitate the procedures of divine revelation, even though Mrs. Clennam is condemned for the impiety of trying to anticipate the procedures of divine judgment. Nor is this the only point at which the formal procedures of writing are analogous with divine prerogatives. Narrative omniscience, and with it the right to judgment, exactly resembles divine omniscience, even - especially - when it is renounced in favour of that higher power:

> Only the wisdom that holds the clue to all hearts and all mysteries, can surely know to what extent a man, especially a man brought down as this man had been, can impose upon himself. Enough, for the present place, that he lay down with wet eyelashes, serene, in a manner majestic, after bestowing his life of degradation, as a sort of portion on the devoted child ... (I, 19, 275).

The innermost secret of character rests with the knower of all secrets, who is scarcely likely to share his knowledge, though occasionally he can be conveniently invoked to confirm the narrator's own insights:

> /Amy Dorrit/ laid his head upon her bosom, put a hand upon his head, and resting her cheek upon that hand, nursed him as lovingly, and GOD knows as innocently, as she had nursed her father in that room when she had been but a baby (II, 29, 825).

Even the renunciation of the privileged right to judgment enforces the analogy, so that though there might well be an area of characterization to which the narrator has no access, we know that the kind of knowledge

which is hidden there is the same as that which is otherwise continuously revealed in the course of the novel. In general, however, the truths of both plot and characterization are made available to the reader, and resonate with a metaphysical dimension.

Access to truth, moreover, measures the 'genteel fictions' of the Dorrits, the 'affectations' and 'artful mysteries' of the 'gipsies of gentility' (I, 26, 360), Mrs. Merdle's pastoralism, Ferdinand Barnacle's 'humbug' (II, 28, 805), the 'conventional lights' in which people usually appear (II, 25, 768), and the 'wonderfully mythical position' and 'genteel mystifications' which Mrs. Gowan tries to nurse with respect to her son's marriage to Pet Meagles (II, 8, 576). There is a truth too to measure 'all the ethereal vapour, and all the moonshine' (II, 32, 865) which accrue to Casby along with his profits. It is truth, finally, to which reading the novel testifies, the reader's experience of it being authenticated by laughing and crying at appropriate moments, thus knowing it to be true.

The unifying plot of the novel, then, and the unravelling of its enigmas, can best be understood as an assertion of unity in society rather than as a representation of it. Thus when Grahame Smith writes that 'the details of plot, character, and action which make up the complex structures of Dickens's later novels reflect the web of financial interdependence that holds individuals and classes in modern society in a grasp as isolating as it is inescapable',[16] I believe that this radically misunderstands not so much the novel as its possible relations to the social formation in which it is produced. What the 'complex structures' reflect is the ideological project of Dickens, to 'unite' a society split apart by the centripetal forces of Mammonism, the

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16. Grahame Smith, Dickens, Money and Society (University of California Press, 1968), p. 221.

culpable ignorance and donothingism of the governing classes, and the fraudulent conventions of a false gentility. This unity is demonstrated by the providential relations of apparently unrelated characters, the literal truth of their moral and metaphysical affinities and polarities, and, not without bathos, the provisions of an eccentric will.

We are now in a better position to see just how much the very tenuity and convolutedness of the relation between the Clennam House and the Dorrit fortunes throws into doubt. In a novel in which much of what it treats - Society, the marriage of Gowan and Pet, Bleeding Heart Yard - anyway remains outside the providential processes of the plot, the relations revealed in the course of the narrative, upon which the assertion of unity and the access to truth depend, are extraordinary and untypical. Dickens provides, in fact, a parody of the denouement which the rediscovery of the long-lost will conventionally provides, a conscious refusal of the gratifications provided by that conventional ending - this is part of the significance of Amy Dorrit burning the will in the final chapter of the novel, an act reminiscent of the discovery of the 'true' Jarndyce will in Bleak House, discovered only to prove useless in reestablishing justice. More importantly, by at once giving the reader access to truths which retrospectively explain so much of the novel, and at the same time suggesting their precariousness, he allows him to recognize the simultaneous necessity for coherence and judgment and their irrelevance to what actually rules and organizes society. Dickens narrates the plot in such a way as to threaten the very possibility of moral and metaphysical coherence.

With it is threatened also the interpellative power of the myths of charity, self-help and fraud which are narrated in the novel, which all both support and are supported by notions of an access to a level of truth which provides unity and coherence. It is the very act of reading

the text as a whole, the very entering into the agreement by which the reader accepts the fiction, even if only temporarily, as truth, which is the final support of the many narratives which the text contains; and Dickens throws into doubt the status of the kind of truth to which the reader gains access in this act. The myths support the notion of an access to truth because they themselves act as authenticating devices, deictic marks which point the reader out from the novel and place him in the 'real' world where it is known that there are such men as Doyce and Merdle, and that the charitable acts of men like Clennam are everyday occurrences. Dickens finally threatens, in Little Dorrit, the possibility of linking these various authenticating devices into a coherent and 'convincing' whole.

III

Plot is not the only integrative device in the novel, however; another is the by now notorious symbolic system, explicated at such great and tedious length in academic criticism. If the very bulk of this exegesis has at length produced something of a reaction,[17] the

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17. Notable in this respect is John Carey's attack on Dickens's symbols in The Violent Effigy : A Study of Dickens' Imagination (1973). Carey is fundamentally antipathetic to symbolic writing as such, preferring writing which lets objects 'speak for themselves'. His book, however, can be seen as an attack by traditional English letters on the whole American critical idiom, inasmuch as Carey is especially harsh on critics - all American ones, by subaudition - who suggest 'banalities' for the meanings of symbols, singling out the prison symbol in Little Dorrit for especial disdain. Perhaps more significant, as representing a conscious break from organicist critical assumptions, is Jerome Beaty's article on the novel. 'The "soothing Songs" of Little Dorrit : New Light on Dickens's Darkness', in Nineteenth Century Literary Perspectives : Essays in Honor of Lionel Stevenson, edited by Clyde de L. Ryals (Durham N.C., 1974), pp. 219-236. Beaty rightly argues that 'most of the discussions of "organic writing" in the novel, at one time so popular, seem to assume a centre or "spine" running through an entire work, something to which all other elements, especially images, are more or less directly related' (p. 219 n.). The critique of such assumptions in criticism is salutary, though Beaty is not without organicist tendencies himself; but it masks the organicism in the novel, the prison symbol precisely aspiring to provide a unifying level of discourse.

assumptions that underlie it have perhaps been insufficiently criticized. Apart from the overtly ideological glosses on the prison symbol, ranging from the pietism of defeated liberalism in the Cold War which stressed the 'prison of this lower world' to petty-bourgeois liberal utopianism in the sixties which insisted that the symbol meant that 'society is a prison', the organicism of such criticism connived happily at the organicism of the text, providing for it a unity which its symbolic code could only aspire to give it. Such criticism, moreover, by 'closing' the meanings which the symbols encode, obscures their ambiguity; I have suggested in chapter five that it is precisely this ambiguity which characterizes the literary work done upon ideology, and the symbolic code in Little Dorrit is a fine example of this literary work.

The objection to the Marshalsea prison, as we have seen, was primarily that it prevented the operation of the self-helping virtues, especially the recognition of the vital importance of individual responsibility and the performance of duty. The use of the historic prison, however, already represents literary work done upon these ideological themes, dramatizing and individualizing them;[18] when the 'actual' prison becomes the source of a rich series of symbols and metaphors, the certainties of that ideology begin to be thrown into doubt. For just as in the case of the metaphor of the 'epidemic' used for the speculative mania, the metaphor of a prison suggests more the absence of responsibility on the part of its victims than their culpability. The use of the symbolic

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18. It is obviously significant in this context that, when Little Dorrit was written, the Marshalsea was no longer standing and that imprisonment for debt had been virtually abolished. Perhaps the one useful comment made by A.O.J. Cockshut in The Imagination of Charles Dickens (New York, 1962), is that since the Marshalsea had been pulled down when the novel was published, and yet the novel was still, despite being set in 1825, so obviously about the contemporary world, its readers were forced to see the use of the prison as more than a mere protest against imprisonment for debt (p. 143).

code thus opens out ideological foreclosures in the very material which it is attempting to bring within a wider coherence.

This is not to argue that the symbolic code is somehow free of ideological meanings - the glosses made upon it sufficiently demonstrate that this is not the case - nor do I wish to reinvoke that tendentious critical distinction by which the ideological elements of a text are condemned as a degradation while the remainder, effectively reduced to free-floating purple passages, is sanctified as the only repository of the truly literary. The prison symbol, preeminent among the symbols in the novel even if it does not represent its ultimate level of organization, can indeed be recuperated in ways entirely compatible with the ideology of self-help, but equally can resist such recuperations. The exchange from one such reading to another precisely marks the ambiguity of the literary work done upon ideology, which should be seen not so much as providing alternative and antipathetic ideological meanings within a text as loosening the grip of ideology upon the meanings available.

If the prison symbol is not the only one to be pursued at length through the course of the novel, it does differ from the other elements of the symbolic code - the voyage, the river, nature's 'soothing songs' - by being a markedly hostile symbol. The world that it symbolizes - essentially the institutions of society, if not society as such - is an ur-world, a negativity which the wider cosmological order of the other elements of the symbolic code attempts to subsume. Jerome Beaty is surely right when he argues that underlying the novel is the conventional cosmological order in which God's creation is seen as cyclical, while those who deny its fruitfulness and goodness are guilty of evil.[19] But

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19. In the article referred to in note 17, above.

just as the wider cosmological view is scarcely more than implicit in Little Dorrit (Beaty describes it as a 'circumference' or 'horizon'), so it can be seen as a gesture rather than an accomplished act. In this it resembles the plot of the novel, whose ability to give order to the radically decentred world of the novel is, as we have seen, severely compromised. The attempt to transform the 'shadow of the Marshalsea wall' into a support of that wider cosmological view, for example, when Clennam is rescued by Little Dorrit - 'As they sat side by side in the shadow of the wall, the shadow fell like light upon him' (II, 29, 827) - that attempt seems still-born, no more than a qualificatory footnote to the signification so powerfully established in the whole preceding novel. Just as Bleak House ultimately testifies to the impotence of 'true legitimacy',[20] so here what emerges is the inability of the beneficent cosmology to make sense of a hostile world.

There is thus an ambivalence about the 'fictional coherence' that replaces the 'ideological coherence' in this novel.[21] The point about any such coherence is that it is indeed fictional, since it cannot succeed in providing the coherence which the author's project demands. Dickens, by pursuing the categories of petty-bourgeois ideology, ends by excoriating the society in which he lives for failing to provide suitable institutions for their exercise, but himself provides a symbol for those institutions so powerful as to undercut the very ideology by which he measures them. His further project is, by means of plot and the invocation of a wider cosmological order, to give a coherence to those fractured representations, a coherence that would mirror a

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20. See above, chapter 3, pp. 131-134.

21. John Goode has elaborated this distinction in 'Woman and the Literary Text', in The Rights and Wrongs of Women, edited by Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (1976), pp. 217-256.

coherence in society which is asserted to be there. The profoundly problematic nature of his success testifies as much to his refusal of conventional gratifications as to any failure in intellectual consistency.

CHAPTER SEVEN : THE NEWCOMES

I

Henry James' description of The Newcomes as a 'large loose baggy monster' - starting-point for many discussions of the novel - is also a convenient place for me to start.[1] James' description - in which he includes, incidentally, Les Trois Mousquetaires and War and Peace - clearly points to the fact that whatever principles of organization inform The Newcomes, they are certainly not those in which James himself delighted, namely a 'deep-breathing economy and an organic form' (p.x). What then are those principles of organization, and are they comparable to those which organize Little Dorrit? How are the multiplicity of narratives that make up The Newcomes related to each other? Is there indeed an ultimately unifying level of discourse, or ought the novel to be described as decentred?

Three narratives - or rather two narratives and one group of narratives - are particularly relevant to this study: the story of Thomas Newcome the elder, the various narratives of charity, and the Bundelcund Bank episode. Let us take each of these in turn.

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1. In his preface to The Tragic Muse (New York Edition, 1909), p. x.

As we have seen, the myth of the self-made man has a distinct if somewhat uneasy relationship with the earlier myth of the industrious apprentice, from which it attempts to capture the interpellative power. The narrative element common to both is the rise of the poor man from poverty to riches; in the case of the industrious apprentice this narrative is articulated into an essentially paternalist ideological discourse, while with the self-made man it is articulated into the discourse of laissez-faire, stressing the self-propulsion of the narrative's protagonist. In The Newcomes, Thackeray uses or alludes to the earlier myth, which is so well known that scarcely more than allusion is necessary:

> Thomas Newcome, who had been a weaver in his native village, brought the very best character for honesty, thrift, and ingenuity with him to London, where he was taken into the house of Hobson Brothers, cloth-factors; afterwards Hobson & Newcome. This fact may suffice to indicate Thomas Newcome's story. Like Whittington, and many other London apprentices, he began poor and ended by marrying his master's daughter, and becoming sherriff and alderman of the City of London.[2]

Thackeray deviates from this well-known narrative by introducing another marriage, Thomas Newcome's marriage to Susan Mason, his childhood sweetheart. This however moves the narration still further away from the typical narrative of the self-made man, since the 'character' which Thomas Newcome coins by this disinterested gesture is not so much the character for honest trading which Smiles recommends, as a reputation for good-heartedness which stands him in good stead with - and wins customers in - the 'whole country side' (I, 2, 18).

This narrative of Thomas Newcome the elder is the founding narrative of the whole novel, since it describes and places the origins of the

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2. All references, both to The Newcomes and other works by Thackeray, are to the Centenary Biographical Edition (1911), and give volume, chapter, and page number, thus: (I, 2, 17-18). Hereafter they will immediately follow the quotation.

Newcome family. It is thus important that this narrative should be given in the version which is the most anodyne to hierarchical notions of gentility - effectively this narration of the rags-to-riches story is appropriate to a past mode of production. But however anodyne it is, it is clearly insufficiently so for the descendants of the elder Thomas Newcome, who provide an alternative narrative of the origins of the family, in which the founder, 'slain by King Harold's side at Hastings, had been surgeon-barber to King Edward the Confessor' (I, 2, 17). It is the fictitious character of this other narrative which is exposed by the authority of the 'true' narrative of Thomas Newcome - an early and small example of a characteristic procedure in the novel, in which one narrative is set off against another, exposing both its fictiveness and its ideological accretions.

The founding narrative of The Newcomes, then, is that of the industrious apprentice, the authority for which is established by allusion to a pre-existing system of narratives.[3] What is at stake between this narrative and the fictitious narrative of the barber-surgeon is obviously the gentility of the Newcome family; what Thackeray attempts in the novel as a whole is to substitute a moral definition of gentility for the narrowly conceived definition of gentility based on descent. This is most apparent in the discussion about his relations that Clive has with his father in Volume One, Chapter Seven; Clive's talk is described as 'candid prattle', and in it he remarks that while Aunt Maria is 'not the ticket', Aunt Ann is 'different, and it seems as if what she says is more natural'. He continues:

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3. The allusion is not merely to the Whittington story. We know from a letter that Thackeray wrote to The Times that 'the illustrated head-letter of the chapter /chapter 2/ was intended to represent Hogarth's industrious apprentice', The Letters and Private Papers of W.M. Thackeray, edited by Gordon N. Ray, 4 vols. (1945-1946), III, 321. Hereafter referred to as LPP.

> 'And do you know, I often think that as good a lady as Aunt Ann herself, is old Aunt Honeyman at Brighton - that is, in all essentials, you know? And she is not a bit ashamed of letting lodgings, or being poor herself, as sometimes I think some of our family --' (I, 7, 90).

This however leads into a discussion of the origins of the Newcome family. Clive tells his father:

> 'That time I went down to Newcome, I went to see old Aunt Sarah, and she told me everything, and showed me the room where my grandfather - you know; and do you know I was a little hurt at first, for I thought we were swells till then' (I, 7, 91).

What is evoked in this conversation, plainly enough, is the familiar opposition of a 'natural' manner appropriate to gentility to the ostentation of snobbery or false gentility. This does not radically attack the notion of gentility as such; rather, it reestablishes it more securely by making it apparently available to everybody. Clive, moreover, has to learn to be honest like his father; though the candidness of his prattle demonstrates at once his immaturity and his essential good-heartedness, his reticence in not being quite able to name what his grandfather did suggests some mistaken notions about the importance of being a 'swell' - his father, by contrast, is a 'true' gentleman. The narrative of Thomas Newcome, then, only undermines the traditional definition of gentility in so far as the latter is offered as the exclusive definition; the moral definition really only supplements it. This is how the Colonel closes the discussion:

> 'I think every man would like to come of an ancient and honourable race,' said the Colonel, in his honest way. 'As you like your father to be an honourable man, why not your grandfather, and his ancestors before him? But if we can't inherit a good name, at least we can do our best to leave one, my boy; and that is an ambition which, please God, you and I will both hold by' (I, 7, 91).

Thackeray's project in the novel can thus be described as incorporative; he attempts to provide, and to authenticate by the novel's narratives

and characterizations, definitions of worth which are available to the middle class, but which at the same time do not radically challenge the class-definitions of the traditional ruling class.[4] In this respect the novel is more deferential to residual categories than Little Dorrit, which is concerned with a more radical redefinition of the basis of worth.[5]

Clive's readiness to admit to the true story of the Newcome origins is an indication of his moral worth - indeed, subsequently in the novel, this readiness becomes something of a touchstone of a character's moral worth. Ethel, for example, demonstrates her new maturity when, in rejecting Farintosh, she is quite frank about the story, though previously she had 'liked to believe the prettiest story best' (II, 21, 292). Similarly, artistic integrity also functions as a kind of touchstone, and so it is especially significant that the other industrious apprentice in the novel, J.J. Ridley, should be an artist.

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4. Only at one point, to my knowledge, does Thackeray actually come to challenge the institution of gentility as such, instead of satirizing false versions of it. This is in his 'Concluding Observations on Snobs': 'I can bear it no longer - this diabolical invention of gentility which kills natural kindliness and honest friendship. Proper pride, indeed! Rank and precedence, forsooth! The table of ranks and degrees is a lie, and should be flung into the fire', Book of Snobs, p. 223. But this is no more than a rhetorical flourish, which scarcely undermines the other sections of the text.

5. It is worth noticing that both Thackeray and Dickens were members of the Administrative Reform Association, and both understood its aims to be greater than merely clearing up the kinds of bureaucratic muddle made notorious by the Crimean War. The aims of the Association, as far as Thackeray understood them, can be judged from the notes that he made for a speech (never delivered) which was to emulate Dickens's celebrated speech to the Association of 27 June 1855. In his speech, Thackeray argued for the extension of the franchise to 'quiet peaceful educated citizens', defined precisely as those who had armed themselves to defend London against the 'Disturbers of the Peace' on April 10th 1848, the day of the last great Chartist demonstration. LPP, III, 678-684. This incorporative political project, which can permit itself some humour at the expense of the 'august big-wigs' of the 'governing classes', exactly parallels the incorporative strategies of the novel.

He is coupled with Clive as the idle apprentice; this artisanal perspective on art is itself suggestive of Thackeray's aesthetic.

The most important index of character in the novel, however, is provided by the various charities that are performed throughout the novel. As we saw in chapter three, charity, and the narratives of charity that found it in fiction, act above all as an index of gentility, most frequently indeed of feminine gentility. We also saw that two narratives of charity predominated in the 1850s; an ultimately aristocratic narration which disdained to make discriminations between social inferiors, and a more negotiated version appropriate to an 'urban gentry' which insisted on discriminate charity. In The Newcomes, the former of these two narrations is predominant; there is a frequently narrated ethic of charity in the novel, which acts primarily as an index of gentility.

The most persistently charitable character in the novel is of course the Colonel himself; and he also ends the novel as its most conspicuous recipient of charity. His charity to his 'pensioner', Sarah Mason, does not merely provide an index of his character to the reader; it is so widely recognized that charity is an indication of a good heart that it becomes a possible credit to him during his election campaign - indeed, a potentially ironic undercutting of the whole ideology of charity can be seen to enter the text here.[6] There is no question, of course, but that the Colonel's charities are endorsed by Thackeray,

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6. The Colonel is introduced to the deputation of Liberal electors by Potts in the following way: '"... a man who is beloved in this place as you are, Colonel Newcome: for your goodness is known, sir. - You are not ashamed of your origin, and there is not a Newcomite old or young but knows how admirably good you have been to your old friend, Mrs. - Mrs. What-d'you-call-'em?"
"Mrs. Mason," from F.B.' (II, 31, 365).
The hypocrisy of all this is also exposed when Sarah Mason herself is paraded in a carriage at the hustings.

and are to be endorsed by the reader - even his charities to Charles Honeyman, who unlike Mrs. Mason is decidedly not an appropriate object for discriminate charity. The charity of the Colonel, in short, is of a definitely unworldly sort, a part of the system of values by which worldliness is to be measured, values largely left unstated in the text but occasionally made explicit as, for example, 'honest natural affections', 'truth', and 'life' (II, 33, 303). It is this unworldliness which ultimately defines the ambivalence of this text in asserting these values: it is a text which at once revels in describing worldliness and persistently satirizes it.

There are, moreover, recurrent allusions to the charities of many of the female characters in the novel, notably Laura, who 'tends the poor round about us' (II, 19, 252), Madame de Florac, who 'may or may not have done a great deal of good in her village' (II, 19, 241), and above all Ethel, whose conversion from worldliness is marked by her assumption of the duties of her station. If the previous two references were no more than allusions to activities which are understood and authenticated outside the text, Ethel's charities are narrated more fully, authenticating within the text the change in her character:

> Her charities increased daily with her means of knowing the people round about her. She gave much time to them and thought; visited from house to house, without ostentation; was awe-stricken by that spectacle of the poverty which we have with us always, of which the sight rebukes our selfish griefs into silence, the thought compels us to charity, humility, and devotion. The priests of our various creeds, who elsewhere are doing battle together continually, lay down their arms in its presence and kneel before it; subjugated by that over-powering master. Death, never dying out; hunger always crying; and children born to it day after day, - our young London lady, flying from the splendours and follies in which her life had been passed, found herself in the presence of these; threading darkling alleys which swarmed with wretched life; sitting by naked beds, whither by God's blessing she was sometimes enabled to carry a little comfort and consolation; or whence she came heart-stricken by the

> overpowering misery, or touched by the patient resignation of the new friends to whom fate had directed her (II, 24, 309-310).

This unamplified narration of the district visit is the occasion of a 'sermonizing' commentary, beginning at '... which we have with us always', and ending at '... born to it day after day', in which the greater interpellative immediacy is marked by the inclusive 'we' of the narrative voice.[7] This 'sermonizing' is of course founded on the authenticity of the district visit as a narrative (the relationship of 'story' to 'sermon' is explicitly foregrounded in this novel, a point that we shall be considering further), and the narrator is switched back to the more impersonal third person narrative by the phrase 'our young lady'.

There is no suggestion, however, that even if this narrative of the district visit had been given in a more amplified version, it would have invoked the categories of specifically discriminate charity - the characteristic categories of the urban district visit. If anything, the very extremity of the suffering described suggests that discriminations would be inappropriate. A northern industrial town, such as Newcome is meant to represent, was outside the limits of Thackeray's effective knowledge, and he has simply transferred Laura's and Madam de Florac's rural charities to an urban setting in a way that is little more than gestural - a hollowness suggested by the luridness of the 'darkling alleys which swarmed with wretched life'. It is also worth noting the stress laid on the lack of ostentation shown by Ethel on her rounds, comparable to Dickens's emphasis on unostentatious charity in Bleak House.

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7. 'Sermonizing' was a word used by Thackeray to describe the sections of authorial commentary in his novels, when he was apparently speaking in propria persona. In fact, these sections are often the ones where it is precisely the hardest to specify how much authority is to be credited to the narrative voice.

If the Colonel and Ethel provide the principal positive instances of charity in the novel, Barnes and Lady Clara provide specific contrasts to them. While the Colonel's charity to Sarah Mason was a credit to him at the hustings, Barnes cannot use the same ploy:

> In spite of his respectful behaviour to the gentlemen in black coats, his soup tickets and his flannel tickets, his own pathetic lectures and his sedulous attendance at other folks' sermons, poor Barnes could not keep up his credit with the serious interest at Newcome (II, 31, 386),

since 'the case against him was too flagrant'. Similarly, after her remarriage with Lord Highgate, Lady Clara's shame is so flagrant that her would-be charitableness is insufficient to counteract it:

> She would be kind, perhaps, and charitable to the cottagers round about her, but she fears to visit them lest they too should scorn her. The clergyman who distributes her charities, blushes and looks awkward on passing her in the village, if he should be walking with his wife or one of his children (II, 20, 269-270).

So, although charity acts as an index of moral worth, and implicitly of gentility, it is insufficient on its own to counteract a flagrantly evil character. Again, characteristically, the narratives are paired, one either exposing or reinforcing another; such pairing clearly provides one of the formal principles of the novel.

So far, the charities that we have considered have been those of social superiors to inferiors, which tend to be appropriately performed by women. Charities between social equals, however, are most appropriately performed by men, but in this case, since the receipt of charity might be thought to imply a degradation, the actual handing over of the money is always the cause of an embarrassment, signalled in the text by a certain reticence, or only indicated by elaborately indirect hints. The embarrassment created by Clennam's 'testimonializing' Mr. Dorrit, indicated by unfinished speeches and linguistic reticence, is paralleled in The Newcomes by the elaborate postponements of the Campaigner when

she attempts to solicit charity from Pendennis (II, 34, 421). The text thus does not merely refer to the embarrassment, it creates it.

The question of degradation by receipt of charity finally becomes most acute with reference to the Colonel himself. Just as the distribution of charity marks a character's worth, so the way that the other characters react to the Colonel becoming a Poor Brother acts as a touchstone - the predominantly 'positive' characters are unperturbed by it, while the 'negative' characters, especially the Campaigner, consider it a degradation (II, 41, 482). It is nevertheless a touchy subject, and it is taken up persistently and insistently. Thus 'Pendennis' writes:

> I liked my host /Florac/ none the less, I own, because that one of the conditions of the Colonel's present life, which appeared the hardest to most people, affected Florac but little. To be a Pensioner of an Ancient Institution? Why not? Might not any officer retire without shame to the Invalides at the close of his campaigns, and had not Fortune conquered our old friend, and age and disaster overcome him? It never once entered Thomas Newcome's head, nor Clive's, nor Florac's, nor his mother's, that the Colonel demeaned himself at all by accepting that bounty ... (II, 38, 462),

and the passage is sealed by a quotation from Peele. This contrasts sharply with the Campaigner's attitude, who describes the Colonel's conduct as 'mean, and unworthy, and degraded' (II, 41, 482); with Mrs. Hobson Newcome, who considers it 'this humiliation, this dreadful trial for the Newcome family' (II, 38, 463); and with Barnes, who refuses to come and shake the Colonel's hand (II, 42, 502). In effect, these negative characters speak, and thus pre-empt, potentially hostile reactions from the reader - it is, as we say, a touchy subject.

The eventual destiny of the Colonel as a 'Codd' points once again to the ultimately residual ideology into which the narratives of the text are inserted - it is as though Mr. Harding, in The Warden, had ended the novel as one of the inmates of Hiram's Hospital. Clearly, Grey Friars has an important formal and sentimental role in the novel;

but the interpellative force of the closing scenes of the novel derive from more than this. It derives largely, in fact, from the continuing power of that residual paternalist ideology. For example, I find more moving than the Colonel's famous death-bed a moment earlier in the text, when Lord H. offers him charity; he relates the incident in this way to Pendennis:

> 'He knew of my pecuniary misfortunes, of course - and showed himself most noble and liberal in his offers of help. I was very much touched by his goodness, Pen, - and made a clean breast of it to his Lordship; who at first would not hear of my coming to this place - and offered me out of the purse of an old brother schoolfellow and an old brother soldier as much - as much as should last me my time. Wasn't it noble of him, Arthur? God bless him!' (II, 37, 452).

As I say, whenever I read this passage, describing a quite unpremeditated act of charity by a character who is no more than a cypher and who has only just been introduced into the novel, I find it moving; and at first I found this mystifying and even rather annoying. Perhaps, however, its very allusiveness, the very lack of preparation for it, are precisely the reasons why this should be so. What the incident does, in the most naked way, is to evoke for the Colonel and for the reader with him, the paternalist system of which charity is the sign; the reader enters a world in which his problems are solved for him, a benevolently ordered world in which his submission as much as his safety is measured by his tears. The nakedness of the interpellation is indicated by the use of the initial letter only for Lord H. - a usage unparalleled, to my knowledge, elsewhere in Thackeray's works - for the convention is quite contradictory to Thackeray's normal naming, which usually delights in fictionality rather than tries to erase it. The appearance of Lord and Lady H., in fact, mark the imminent conclusion of the novel, since they mark a point where it is attempted to knot the text back into life.

It is no accident, either, that charity of one sort or another should be most frequently performed or alluded to towards the end of the novel - quite simply, it is a foreclosing device, solving many of the novel's diegetic problems. The largest single act of charity in the novel, other than those between close relations, is Ethel's intention to pay Sophia Newcome's intended legacy out of her own income. The exposure of one hoary fictional device - the rediscovery of the long-lost will - is indeed effected, only to be replaced by an equally magical act of benevolence. Charity helps to produce the happy ending, but, while the fictionality of the happy ending itself is exposed as problematic, charity itself is not.

Or at least, only at one or two points is a potentially ironic undercutting of the ideology of charity effected. The first we have already noticed - the humbug spoken by Potts about the Colonel's charities to Sarah Mason. The ideological character of this humbug is exposed when Frederick Bayham makes such play with these charities at the climax of the election campaign in Newcome:

> 'Look at that shawl, boys, which she has got on! My belief is that Colonel Newcome took that shawl in single combat, and on horseback, from the prime minister of Tippoo Sahib.' (Immense cheers and cries of 'Bravo, Bayham!') (II, 31, 389).

Bayham's unending oratorical facility, of which this is only a fraction, is both enjoyed and exposed for its glibness; but this rhetoric is almost a game, where what wins the applause of the crowd is not the actual point being made but the skill and energy of the orator in making it - note that the crowd cry out 'Bravo, Beyham!', rather than 'Bravo, old Tom!'. Elements of contemporary ideology - charity to an old family pensioner, military prowess - are used almost as counters in a rhetorical game; in this playful perspective, the interpellative power of ideology can briefly be glimpsed.

Another point at which the ideological context for charity is momentarily recognized as such occurs earlier in the novel, when Lord Kew is courting Ethel and meditating on the nature of 'good women':

> Living as he had amongst the outcasts, his ideal of domestic virtue was high and pure. He chose to believe that good women were entirely good. Duplicity he could not understand: ill-temper shocked him: wilfulness he seemed to fancy belonged only to the profane and wicked, not to good girls, with good mothers, in honest homes. Their nature was to love their families; to obey their parents; to tend their poor; to honour their husbands; to cherish their children (I, 33, 440).

This ideological view of women, of which charity is a crucial element, is seen here as a mild self-delusion, ('he chose to believe ...', 'he seemed to fancy ...') and is given a specific social and psychological basis.

If it is possible to read this instance primarily as an indication of Lord Kew's character, and as part of the unfolding drama of his relationship with Ethel (who does not conform to his delusive image), this is clearly not the case in the next instance, which comes from a section of authorial commentary:

> It is at that pleasant hour /of dinner/ that our sex has the privilege of meeting the other. The morning man and woman alike devote to business; or pass mainly in the company of their own kind. John has his office; Jane her household, her nursery, her milliner, her daughters and their masters. In the country he has his hunting, his fishing, his farming, his letters; she her schools, her poor, her garden, or what not. Parted through the shining hours, and improving them, let us trust, we come together towards sunset only, we make merry and amuse ourselves (II, 11, 149).

While I would not want to put too much stress on this passage, the tone of which is no more than facetious, it is worth noting that the list of duties suitable for a country lady resumes the activities in which Laura, Madame de Florac, and eventually Ethel engage. In short, what is elsewhere in the text used as a mark of gentility and moral worth, is here,

if transitorily, mocked as no more than a time-killer, sanctified by the unctuous gloss of 'improving the shining hour'. This passage occurs in a section of authorial commentary; what might be seen as providing a unifying level of discourse here potentially undermines the force of other sections of the novel.

The various narratives of charity, then, generally operate as marks of worth and 'true' gentility, and are integrated into a residual ideological discourse, only occasionally and transitorily seen as ideological. This discourse provides some of the most powerful and nakedly interpellative moments in the novel, and equally helps to bring the text to foreclosure.

Let us now turn to the Bundelcund Bank episode, and see how the narrative of fraud is integrated into the novel.[8] Clearly, the myth

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8. There was in fact the pressure of personal experience behind Thackeray's account of the Bundelcund Bank; in 1833, when he was twenty-two years old and quite the young heir, he lost the major part of his fortune by the collapse of the Indian bank in which his money was invested. W.W. Hunter, in The Thackerays in India (1897), described the crash thus: 'The collapse of the banking houses in Calcutta, with their failure for seventeen millions sterling between 1830 and 1834, involved in one gigantic ruin the military and civilian families of Bengal' (p. 57). After this failure, Thackeray was left with a quarterly income of just twenty-five pounds. This traumatic incident obviously provided one of the immediate models for the Bank's failure in the novel.

However, Thackeray was also very much aware of fraud in other than this exclusively personal context. There is an early example of his work which is centred round a fraud in The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond (first published in Fraser's Magazine in 1841). This short novel was published at the height of the wave of insurance frauds in the late 1830s and the early 1840s, frauds which were partly responsible for the passing of the Companies Act of 1844 (see T. Hadden, Company Law and Capitalism, p. 14). The novel is concerned with the adventures of an ingenuous youth as a clerk in the Independent West Diddlesex Fire and Life Insurance Company. The company is run by a Mr. Brough, who is a religious hypocrite with scripture forever at his lips, but who is nevertheless prepared to sell his daughter in marriage to the highest bidder, invest the Company's funds in ludicrous speculative ventures, and induce all and sundry, including his penurious but faithful old servants, to invest their all in what he knows to be

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is narrated as 'fraud-as-depradator-on-honest-society', though the honest society here is that of the empire in India. This is how the Bank is described after its collapse:

> It was one of many similar cheats which have been successfully practised upon the simple folks, civilian and military, who toil and struggle - who fight with sun and enemy - who pass years of long exile and gallant endurance in the service of our empire in India. Agency-houses after agency-houses have been established, and have flourished in splendour and magnificence, and have paid fabulous dividends - and have enormously enriched two or three wary speculators - and then have burst in bankruptcy, involving widows, orphans, and countless simple people who trusted their all to the keeping of these unworthy treasurers (II, 32, 397).

Who are these unworthy treasurers? Rummun Loll is one of them, and we shall return to him later; the other two are 'the generally esteemed Charley Condor', the auditor who was indebted to the company for 90,000 l (II, 32, 398-399), and 'the revered Baptist Bellman', who 'had helped himself to 73,000 l more' (II, 32, 394). There is clearly no question here but that these are depradators, and the honesty of those who used the B.B.C. as an agency-house is not in doubt - indeed the fact that they are 'simple folks' is dwelt upon, this way of describing them amounting to a justification of the British empire in India.

However, the Bundelcund Bank is more than an agency-house; it is also explicitly referred to as a speculation (II, 13, 170), and to the extent that it is a speculative venture doubt begins to creep in about the honesty of those who invest in it, most crucially about the Colonel himself. Not only does he invest in the Bank, he also promotes it, leading Miss Cann, Miss Honeyman, J.J. and his father to invest their savings in it - 'all knowing that their Colonel, who was eager that his

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(8 continued)
a failing concern. In short he is a fraud; and the failure of his company forces Samuel Titmarsh to see that his real ambition should be in the cultivation of his family life rather than in the cultivation of fine friends and a fortune.

friends should participate in his good fortune, would never lead them wrong' (II, 10, 144). In view of what happens after the crash, it is important that the Campaigner should be seen to invest her money quite voluntarily in Bundelcund shares (II, 10, 144), for once again it is she who utters and thus pre-empts for the reader the opinion that the Colonel is in some way guilty over the Bundelcund Bank.

What then are the Colonel's motives for his involvement in the Bank? The text is quite explicit on this point, at least:

> Now this Bundelcund Banking Company, in the Colonel's eye, was in reality his son Clive. But for Clive there might have been a hundred banking companies established, yielding a hundred per cent. in as many districts of India, and Thomas Newcome, who had plenty of money for his own wants, would never have thought of speculation. His desire was to see his boy endowed with all the possible gifts of fortune (II, 13, 170-171).

In view of this it is ironic that the B.B.C. should be the occasion for a loss of frankness between the Colonel and Clive, and more generally between the text and reader. The loss of frankness between the Colonel and Clive persists until the reconciliation between them near the end of the election campaign (II, 30, 374-377), and is only finally removed after the failure of the Bank. Here we touch upon several of the novel's important thematic considerations, which the Bank episode effectively condenses. The partially delusive love of the Colonel for Clive expresses itself in the illusion that the Bank 'was in reality his son Clive' - it is in the nature of love to be in some way deluded about its object, and such delusions often produce still greater obstacles in the way of love's fulfilment. In just the same way Clive's marriage also occasions a loss of frankness between Clive and the Colonel because it reinforces the delusive idea that the Colonel has about Clive. The Bank episode also takes up the disjunction between business life and personal sentiment; the Colonel attempts

to operate upon principles of sentiment in the business world, with inevitable results. The question is, to what extent is he culpable in doing so?

For without doubt the Colonel persistently acts upon reasons of sentiment in his business dealings, not only because of his love for Clive, but also because of his hostility to Barnes which endangers the Bank's credit and leads him to engage in an expensive election campaign. Moreover, he refuses to sell out of the Bank while the going is good - but are his reasons here entirely honourable? There is, for example, an element of undoubted duplicity in his actions, notably in his attempt to bolster the bank's credit by lavish and frequent entertaining, the falseness of which is symbolized by the specious cocoa-nut tree, eyed so quizzically by J.J. (II, 25, 321). Perhaps even the Colonel's ignorance is culpable, and we are to agree with Barnes when he says that 'In business, begad, there are no friends and no enemies at all. I leave all my sentiment on the other side of Temple Bar' (II, 26, 334). A dark dream seems to haunt the text - that sentiment is not only impotent in the world of business, but even culpable.

In fact, we here approach one of the limits of the novel, which explicitly confesses its own ignorance of the details of the business world. That point on Temple Bar at which Barnes leaves his sentiment behind - presumably the same point at which he changes from the West End lounger into the purposeful City gent. (I, 6, 84-85) - is precisely the point beyond which the novel cannot follow him, because it marks the limits of 'private life' and the beginning of business where the sentiments of private life no longer operate. The deliberate vagueness in which the affairs of the Bank are left is thus doubly determined; not only does it provide, if only half-heartedly, a mystery element in the narration, it also indicates the limit of the novel's appropriate

sphere of interest:

> They had their establishment and apartments in the City; they had their clerks and messengers, their managers' room and board-room, their meetings where no doubt great quantities of letters were read, vast ledgers produced; where Tom Newcome was voted into the chair, and voted out with thanks; where speeches were made, and the affairs of the B.B.C. properly discussed. These subjects are mysterious, terrifying, unknown to me. I cannot pretend to describe them. Fred Bayham, I remember, used to be great in his knowledge of the affairs of the Bundelcund Banking Company. He talked of cotton, wool, copper,opium, indigo ... (II, 25, 319).

The comic inflation - 'mysterious, terrifying, unknown' - does not disguise the fact that we are here at the limit of the novel's appropriate sphere;[9] ultimately the success or failure of the Bank is an arbitrary event in the society of The Newcomes, before which the appropriate response is one of resignation.

But why, in that case, should the Colonel feel such remorse? And why should his innocence be so insisted upon? If Barnes's remark about leaving all sentiment at the other side of Temple Bar can be seen as a bad dream of the impotence of 'sentiment', there is also another, related, bad dream in the novel - that the Campaigner is right, and the Colonel is a fraud. Why else should he allow her to bully him so? Sentiment, it seems, is not only impotent; not even only at

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9. Compare the following passage from The Virginians (1859): 'The real business of life, I fancy, can form but little portion of the novelist's budget. When he is speaking of the profession of arms ... the novelist may perhaps venture to deal with actual affairs of life: but otherwise, they scarcely can enter into our stories. The main part of Ficulnus's life, for instance, is spent in selling sugar, spices, and cheese; of Causiducus's in poring over musky volumes of black-letter law; of Sartorius's in sitting, cross-legged, on a board after measuring gentlemen for coats and breeches. What can a story-teller say about the professional existence of these men? ... law, stock-broking, polemical theology, linen-drapery, apothecary-business, and the like, how can writers manage fully to develop these in their stories? All authors can do, is to depict men out of their business - in their passions, loves, laughters, amusements, hatreds, and what not - and describe these as well as they can, taking the business-part for granted, and leaving it as it were for subaudition' (II, 11, 101-102).

times culpable - it is also, for all the insistence in this text upon the frank and manly virtues, deeply vulnerable.

Around the narrative of the Bundelcund Bank and its aftermath, then, cluster a variety of thematic implications, some of them at odds with the main thematic thrust of the novel. The failure of the Bank provides the main diegetic turning-point in the second half of the novel; since the narrator explicitly disowns any knowledge of the workings of the Bank, it is appropriate that at times 'fate' should be invoked as a reason for the trials and misfortunes of Clive and the Colonel (e.g. at II, 41, 484). This fatalism, however, is by no means consistently upheld; it is notably at odds with another aspect of the Bundelcund Bank account, which is the narrator's frank acknowledgement of the novelistic nature of this narration of company fraud.

Immediately before the passage quoted above (p. 255), beginning 'It was one of the many similar cheats ...' occurs this passage frankly admitting the fictiveness of this narrative:

> ... how much more painful is that part of his /the Colonel's/ story to which we are now come perforce, and which the acute reader of novels has, no doubt, long foreseen! Yes, sir or madam, you are quite right in the opinion which you have held all along regarding that Bundelcund Banking Company, in which our Colonel has invested every rupee he possesses, Solvuntur rupees, etc. (10) I disclaim, for the most part, the tricks and surprises of the novelist's art. Knowing, from the very beginning of our story, what was the issue of this Bundelcund Banking concern, I have scarce had patience to keep my counsel about it; and whenever I have had occasion to mention the company, have scarcely been able to refrain from breaking out into fierce diatribes against that complicated, enormous, outrageous swindle (II, 32, 397).

This, then, is the reason why there has only been a rather half-hearted attempt to sustain a mystery about the Bank - because such 'tricks and

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10. Presumably a reference to Horace, Satires, II, i, 86: 'Solventur risu tabulae, tu missus abibi', translated by Wickham as 'In a tempest of laughter the tables will go to pieces. You will leave the court without a stain on your character.'

surprises', the stock in trade of the novelist, are exposed and questioned in this text. It is not that the whole myth of the fraud is being exposed here, since the text does claim representative status for the failure of the B.B.C. ('it was one of the many similar cheats ...'); what is essentially being disowned is the revelatory status which hermeneutic encoding confers on the novel.[11] The revelations of Mr. Merdle's complaint, for example, gives the reader and, by implication, the author who informs him, a privileged insight into the workings of Society - not of its details, but of how in principle it works. It is this privilege which the implied author here disdains (who is not Pendennis here, I think, since Pendennis is 'editor' of the Newcome 'memoirs', not the author of the novel The Newcomes - at any rate, there is clearly no ironic distancing of the narrator here); and in disdaining it, he puts his reader in a different relation to the adhominatory power of the ideology of fraud. The reader is not drawn in to the novel in the same way; he is allowed to keep his distance, so that the relationship to the ideology is altogether cooler and less intense. If the classic realist novel attempts to conceal its

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11. At all events, the abandonment of any admonitory claims for the novel seems wise, in the light of the history of the London and Eastern Bank. The Newcomes was published in part-issue between October 1853 and August 1855; the London and Eastern was established in January 1855 and failed two years later. D. Morier Evans commented on this failure that '... notwithstanding that there had been one or two serious failures of Oriental banks, banking in India was regarded as a mine of wealth, which only required to be worked with ordinary ability, combined with prudence and integrity, to produce large returns to those who embarked in it ... the adhesion, as contributories, of several officers of high position in both the military and civil services of the East India Company, at once gave to the concern a prestige of stability, which, but for the fraudulent conduct of those who were unquestionably trusted with the management, would in the end, no doubt, have commanded public confidence, and conduced to permanence and prosperity' (Facts, Failures, Frauds, pp.597-598). An interesting case, it would seem, of nature imitating art; not only in the fact of the failure, but also in so far as Morier Evans shares the ideological framework that underlies the narration of the B.B.C.'s failure.

ideological nature by pretending to a transparency of signs, then the foregrounding of these signs as signs, which occurs in this passage, at least partially disrupts the interpellation. This is clearly the case, for example, in the last phrase of the passage, 'fierce diatribes against that complicated, enormous, outrageous swindle', where the immediately preceding admission of the fictiveness of the novel makes this degree of moral outrage comically inappropriate. Of course the passage then modulates back into a section which, in so far as it claims the status of social history, is much more directly ideological ('... the simple folks, civilian and military, who toil and struggle ...'); perhaps the awkwardness of tone on 'complicated, enormous, outrageous' is no more than an indication of the difficulty of the transition from one kind of discourse to another. To admit this awkwardness, however, is not to defer to any Jamesian critique of Thackeray which would penalize him for authorial 'intrusions' of this sort; on the contrary, that awkwardness seems to me to mark the point where the text permits the reader a real degree of freedom.

Nevertheless, such moral outrage as there is has to go somewhere; it is mostly displaced on to the Campaigner, the virulence of whose characterization can be seen as a defence against piling that outrage on the Colonel. Some of it, however, centres on Rummun Loll, whose death immediately precipitates the failure of the Bank. Since this characterization is in fact no more than a racial type, it is worth looking at the status of such types in Thackeray's other novels as a way of gauging the weight that can be attached to Rummun Loll's characterization in The Newcomes.

Of all the major Victorian novelists, it is Thackeray who uses stock types most persistently. The types in his novels do not work in quite the same way as Scott's, of course, for they do not purport

to have the same social and historical authenticity. They rather claim to be morally authentic, though clearly there is ultimately a relationship, albeit a complex one, between this moral typology and a social typology. At all events, as the beginning of The Newcomes suggests, they ask to be read much in the manner of a fable by Lafontaine - with this essential difference. The reader is led to recognize in himself, and for that matter in the puppet-master of Vanity Fair also - just the same temptations and failings as the various characters. Hence the characteristic sensation in reading Thackeray's novels of having the rug pulled out from under one just when it seemed that some moral certainties had been established.

Thackeray's characterizations, then, depend upon a certain play with and around clearly established types, so that when I say that race is a constitutive factor in establishing those types, it is only to recognize that race does not provide fixed moral categories, because expectations and certainties about racial types in Thackeray's novels are just as likely to be subverted as any other. Nevertheless, race - be it Irish, Jewish or negro - does operate as a term in the novels which explains characters and distributes interests and validities.

The characterization of Miss Swartz, for example, in Vanity Fair, follows fairly closely the 'moderate' version of the negro type; she is 'of a very warm and impetuous nature', is a 'simple, good-natured young woman' (I, 21, 249), but is also vulgar and stupid. Simple hostile reactions to her are subverted by an incident in the novel when she is the only person to show any genuine sympathy for Amelia when she is in adversity. Yet her race is undoubtedly a taint, and one which Thackeray emphasized in his illustrations to the novel.[12]

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12. See the plate facing I, 242, and the vignette on I, 251, both of which emphasize Miss Swartz's race to the point of caricature.

(Continued .. ..

Race determines the nature and extent of interest that a character is expected to arouse in the reader, so that Thackeray can use Miss Swartz's race, and the attention paid to her by Society, as an index of social corruption - the Osbornes, notably, are prepared to overlook her colour for cash.

For all that, Miss Swartz remains within the pale of novelistic sympathy, so that her good nature is a useful counter by which to measure the moral worth of other characters. Even though this type closely resembles Carlyle's negro of 'The Nigger Question' - both types stress affectionate natures, stupidity and a love of finery - it is a far less hostile presentation than Carlyle's almost contemporaneous one. In The Virginians, however, published some ten years after Vanity Fair, this type gets transformed into the more definitely hostile version of Gumbo, and it seems legitimate to ask what had happened to Thackeray in between.

The obvious answer is that Thackeray paid two visits to America, and in the first of them, from November 1852 to April 1853, his attitude to race, John Sutherland suggests, had hardened.[13] Thackeray, unlike

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(12 continued)
In view of the fabular quality of Thackeray's art, most prominent in his illustrations, it is not surprising that his pictures of racial types should lend themselves to racial caricature. John Sutherland, in an article on 'Thackeray as a Victorian racialist', Essays in Criticism, 20 (1970), 441-445, has shown how Saintsbury excised a caricature Jew from his University edition of The Book of Snobs. See also the numerous racial caricatures that adorn Thackeray's letters; indeed, in one of them he writes that 'it would be good sport and practise to stop here /America/ for a month and draw negroes. Negroes and horses - negroes and mules - Negro boys - old women etc. They are endlessly picturesque.' LPP, III, 548. A similar fascination seems to have exercised Eyre Crowe, Thackeray's amanuensis on his first trip to America, who devoted a large proportion of his book With Thackeray in America (1893), to sketches of negroes. One plate is entitled 'Negro types', though, as might perhaps be expected from a future A.R.A., they are executed with greater skill than Thackeray's caricatures.

13. Sutherland makes the suggestion in the article referred to in the preceding note.

Dickens ten years earlier, was prepared to lecture in the slave states, and though he was never brought to endorse the 'peculiar institution', he plainly felt some revulsion towards the blacks who surrounded him in the South. This is how he expresses it in a letter to his mother shortly after he had arrived south of the Mason-Dixon line:

> I feel as if my travels had only just begun - There was scarce any sensation of novelty until now when the slaves came on to the scene; and straightway the country assumes an aspect of the queerest interest: I don't know whether it is terror, pity or laughter that is predominant. They are not my men and brethren, these strange people with retreating foreheads, with great obtruding lips and jaws: with capacities for thought, pleasure, endurance quite different to mine. They are not suffering as you are impassioning yourself for their wrongs as you read Mrs. Stowe they are grinning and joking in the sun; roaring with laughter as they stand about the streets in squads; very civil, kind and gentle, even winning in their manner when you accost them at gentlemen's houses, where they do all the service. But they don't seem to me to be the same as white men, any more than asses are the same animals as horses; I don't mean this disrespectfully, but simply that there is such a difference of colour, habits, conformation of brains, that we must acknowledge it, and can't by any rhetorical phrase get it over; Sambo is not my man and my brother; the very aspect of his face is grotesque and inferior. I can't help seeing and owning this; at the same time of course denying any white man's right to hold this fellow creature in bondage and make goods and chattels of him and his issue ... 14

Well, what does it mean to quote this letter to 'explain' the 'hardening' of Thackeray's attitude? Are we to explain the subsequent hostile presentation of the negro in the novels by his hostile perception of the negro in life? Are we to accept, in fact, his own invocation of overwhelming experience, which he 'can't help seeing and owning'? Surely to do so is merely to argue in a circle, to say that Thackeray

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14. LPP, III, 198-199. Thackeray, despite his reference to Mrs. Stowe here, actually had not read Uncle Tom's Cabin when he wrote this letter, if he ever did. He met and was favourably impressed by Harriet Beecher Stowe when he returned to England, and afterwards promised that he would 'buckle to Uncle Tom and really try to read it' LPP, III, 273.

was prejudiced because he was prejudiced. It would also be to ignore the very precise conformity of the negroes 'described' by Thackeray to the well-established hostile type, most recently and most notoriously propounded by Carlyle, and to ignore the traces of 'scientific' racial classifications in the physiognomic details (where did 'conformation of the brain' come from?) and the reference to specific difference. No, Thackeray 'couldn't help seeing' a type which pre-existed his voyage to America; experience, far from denying this ideological construction, merely confirmed it.

This is not to say that the voyages to America had no effect on Thackeray's perception of race - else why the change between Vanity Fair and The Virginians? Rather it is to argue that his experience in America extended and authorized attitudes to race predisposed to racism. As can be seen from the letter, moreover, this experience is mediated precisely in terms of recognition and exclusion, culminating in the refusal to identify with negroes and the rejection of the abolitionist 'rhetorical phrase' demanding that one do so. To answer 'no' to the question 'Am I not a Man and a Brother?' is not only symptomatic of Thackeray's personal attitude; nor even, indeed, of changes in the ideological conformation of mid-Victorian England; most significantly for the purposes of this argument, it is to exclude the negro from the gamut of novelistic sympathies, for the rhetorical phrase exactly resembles the question implicitly put by every new type sympathetically presented in the novel.

For example, Gumbo in The Virginians is a familiar type of the negro; he is 'greedy, idle, and told lies' (II, 16, 171), is faithful, emotional and a lover of finery. The fact that he is a servant is itself significant in determining the kind of interest he evokes: it is primarily comic, inasmuch as Thackeray's servants act as a kind of comic parody

of their masters. Race and class thus compound each other in distributing the novelistic validities. Gumbo is also sexually attractive to the female servants at Castlewood, provoking the following comments:

> There was no such objection to the poor black men then in England as has obtained since among white-skinned people. Theirs was a condition not perhaps of equality, but they had a sufferance and a certain grotesque sympathy from all; and from women, no doubt, a kindness much more generous. When Ledyard and Peke, in Blackmansland, were persecuted by the men, did they not find the black women pitiful and kind to them? Women are always kind towards our sex. What (mental) negroes do they not cherish? What (moral) hunchbacks do they not adore? What lepers, what idiots, what dull drivellers, what mis-shapen monsters (I speak figuratively) do they not fondle and cuddle? Gumbo was treated by the women as many people no better than himself ... (I, 20, 199).

Given the deftness of this passage, which nevertheless skirts round some highly-charged areas - there is a real sexual disgust in the mock crescendo, culminating in 'fondle and cuddle', which is not altogether defused by the parenthetical signalling that it is not all to be taken too seriously - given this deftness, it seems perhaps heavy-handed to insist that the rhetoric of the passage depends upon the assumption of racial inferiority. This is nevertheless the case, and the assumption is that much greater than the comparable assumption of a racial taint in the characterization of Miss Swartz in Vanity Fair. There, the assumption could always be subverted - or at least mitigated - by contrasting her genuine good-nature with the hard-heartedness of Amelia's white friends; here, though the racial taint is likewise used as a yard-stick, this time to measure feminine soft-heartedness, Gumbo is permanently excluded from consideration as a moral agent like writer and reader.

This is partly, of course, because Gumbo, unlike Miss Swartz, is a servant; typical servants do not provoke the recognition of identity which seals the moral definition of gentility, to which Miss Swartz might just be admitted. Thackeray returned to the genteel negro,

however, in his final completed novel, The Adventures of Philip (1862), and the fact that he provided the most violently hostile version of all his negro types suggests that, although race and class combine with Gumbo to exclude him from sympathetic treatment, by the end of Thackeray's career race on its own was sufficient to do so. He wrote the novel half convinced that he was written out, and conscious that in much of it he was merely reworking old themes. One such theme is that of the negro heir pursued by society despite the racial taint, only in this case Miss Swartz is transformed into Mr. Grenville Woolcomb, to whom Philip's first sweetheart is sold - though she herself is a willing enough lamb to the slaughter. Woolcomb, however, has none of Miss Swartz's redeeming features, nor are the epithets spared in his characterization - indeed, they go well beyond even the Carlylean type. His 'character for dulness, ferocity, penuriousness, jealousy, almost fatuity, was notorious to all the world' (II, 23, 369); he also is known for 'his fury, his jealousy, his avarice, his brutal behaviour' (II, 23, 370). The characterization in fact is so hostile that it risks no longer being recognized as typical of the negro, though it certainly aspires to such typicality.

The climax of the novel occurs during an election campaign. Philip orchestrates the opposition to Woolcomb's candidacy, his efforts culminating in 'a placard, on which a most undeniable likeness of Mr. Woolcomb was designed: who was made to say, "VOTE FOR ME! AM I NOT A MAN AND A BRUDDER?"' (II, 23, 374). Though this is later undercut by an ironic reference to it as 'our fine joke about the Man and the Brother' (II, 23, 375), it nevertheless stands as the comic climax to the final chapter of the novel; its crude distortion of the abolitionist rhetoric, pointed with all the subtlety of a Punch cartoon, a sad exception to the other subversions of Thackeray's fictions.

Given, then, that in his other novels, Thackeray increasingly refused to undercut the prevailingly hostile version of racial types, especially the negro type, how are we to read Rummun Loll? His type is clearly that of the clever and sexually attractive Oriental who fawns in the presence of his Colonial master; the characterization is not without the trace of sexual disgust that marks the type in Thackeray's novels, as this description of the behaviour shown to him at Mrs. Hobson Newcome's party shows:

> The heathen gentleman had gone off, and was seated by one of the handsomest young women in the room, whose fair face was turned towards him, whose blond ringlets touched his shoulder, and who was listening to him as eagerly as Desdemona listened to Othello (I, 8, 102).

There is no need to dwell on the racial disquiet, signalled here by the emphasis on the 'fair face' and 'blond ringlets'; what is at stake, in addition to the typicality of this characterization, is the fact that this racist characterization is one way of discharging the moral outrage caused by the Colonel's poverty and its immediate cause, the failure of the Bundelcund Bank. Rummun Loll can be scapegoated much more easily precisely because his characterization in no way extends or undermines the type.

Though Rummun Loll might be the ultimate formal scapegoat in the novel, yet he does not feel that significant - he only ever appears marginally. This is not only to say that he is a minor character, but also to recognize that the human agent responsible for the central diegetic turning-point in the text does not serve as a centre of interest in the novel, as Merdle does in Little Dorrit, but is relegated to its outskirts and only perfunctorily characterized. Is it necessary to insist that this relegation depends on the recognition by the reader of the typicality of Rummun Loll?

Before leaving the narrative of the specifically financial fraud,

it is well to notice that this is by no means the only fraud in the novel. Rummun Loll himself appears as an Indian prince at Mrs. Hobson Newcome's party, and is only one of many 'notabilities' who are all themselves frauds of one sort or another. Indeed, fraud is recurrently narrated in the novel, from Honeyman, whose chapel Sherrick describes as a 'speculation' (I, 26, 334), to Barnes Newcome who so touchingly lectures on Mrs. Hemans and the poetry of the affections. But if the obvious opposition to this fraudulence and hypocrisy is the frankness and plain-speaking of the Colonel and Clive, the results of these virtues, we have seen, are themselves highly problematic - the thematic implications of the various narratives do not sort themselves into any simple unity.

Those three narratives, with their echoes - the narrative of the industrious apprentice, of charity, and of fraud - are of course just three of the multiple narratives of The Newcomes. They all cluster around the narratives of the Colonel and Clive, Clive and Ethel, Barnes and Clara Pulleyn, Clara Pulleyn and Jack Belsize, and so on. To describe them as 'clustering' however, is at best a rather impressionistic way of describing the novel. It would be better to describe them as subordinate to the main narrative lines of the novel, but then, what are the main narrative lines of the novel? There are in fact several, none of which has any absolute priority, not even, I think, the narrative of Clive and Ethel. The various narratives do not simply exist side by side, of course; they are related in various ways, but in no way that ultimately centres or unifies the novel.

It would be possible, doubtless, to describe the absence of a prioritized narrative as an inevitable effect of the familienroman. If one sets out to write a novel about a whole family, then it is apparently inevitable that a variety of narratives are going to be

stitched together. Here, the illuminating comparison is with Lytton's The Caxtons (1849), another familienroman, whose plot ultimately brings the whole Caxton family together on a country estate, so that the prioritized narrative is that of the family itself, which forms a kind of dramatis persona in its own right. This is clearly not what happens in The Newcomes, where the various branches of the family, though of course related, represent different social positions.

In that case, could one say that the various narratives are united because they all occur in a social novel whose essential subject is not the Newcome family but society itself?[15] In this view, the various narratives will all be seen as somehow symptomatic of social virtues or vices, so that the novel's unity is to be sought at the level of their thematic implications. The various narrative juxtapositions, then, would be no more than devices for reinforcing this thematic unity - the most notable example of this being the paralleling of Ethel's relationship with Lord Kew and Clive, with Clara Pulleyn's relationship with Barnes and Jack Belsize. This line of criticism is more promising than the first, but it too suffers by being only partial. Such a line of criticism works well enough on the overt thematic material of the text - the marriage-market, for example - but remains blind to its implicit or taken-for-granted manoeuvres. Moreover, it seems to me to misread the novel to say that it is 'about society', because the whole social formation is simply not seen as a problem by Thackeray. It also is taken for granted - though Society, the Upper Ten Thousand,[16]

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15. As in, for example, Juliet McMaster, Thackeray : The Major Novels (Manchester, 1971), or Barbara Hardy, The Exposure of Luxury: Radical Themes in Thackeray (1972).

16. A phrase that Thackeray had become aware of on his first trip to America, before he wrote The Newcomes. LPP, III, 683.

might indeed be thought of as a conscious 'subject' for the novel. Of course the text takes up or alludes to themes, material and subjects which are social - how could it not do? - but society as such is not the ultimate subject of the novel.

Moreover, not only does such criticism misread the novel, it also colludes with it. In assuming the representativeness or typicality of the narratives - and with them, their dramatis personae - it leaves uncriticized the novel's ultimately preeminent moral discourse. Since the relationships between the characters in a novel are inevitably moral, and since changes in narrative direction are effected by moral and psychological decisions (indeed psychology is exclusively moral in this text), to see these characters and narratives as symptomatic of contemporary Victorian society is inevitably to subject that society to a moral discourse. What could be easier - or more seductive - than to condemn the inhumanity or the obsession with money of mid-nineteenth century England? And if only the individuals of that society had been more humane, more ready to acknowledge frankness and manliness rather than wealth and birth, then ... but I hope that the redundance of this line of criticism has become apparent. Without seeking to discover the ways by which a text is understood, and criticizing these, criticism inevitably condemns itself to such redundance. One of the ways by which The Newcomes is understood is precisely the assumed representativeness and typicality of its narratives and characters, to which we must soon turn.

Before doing so, however, it would be as well to resume some of the conclusions of this section of the chapter. The three narratives that I have considered are all articulated into a predominantly residual ideological discourse, they are all, that is, narrated in their most conservative versions. As such, they do not, even potentially,

contradict each other, in the way that we have seen the narratives of charity contradict each other in Little Dorrit. All three depend for their authenticity on allusions to narratives outside the text; but this is also the point at which their interpellant ideological power is potentially subverted, for the allusiveness of this text is as much to other fictions as to 'life'. The Newcomes, in fact - though not always or consistently - foregrounds its own fictionality, and this, together with the 'sermonizing' discourse which runs through the novel, establishes a perspective on at least some of the interpellations of the novel's main narratives. The search for a unifying principle in The Newcomes is thus in the last resort misplaced - what the novel indeed does is to throw the very possibility of finding such a principle into doubt.

II

The ascription of representativeness or typicality is an activity of reading, though a realist text not only invites such an ascription, it is its ultimate raison d'etre. The nature of a text's assumed representativeness is thus crucial, and it can be approached most easily in The Newcomes by considering the typicality of the characterizations. One of the things that makes this novel exceptional is that it explicitly deals with the nature of its own representativeness, notably in the extraordinary 'overture', unmatched in any other nineteenth century English novel unless it be Vanity Fair. What the overture does is to throw into relief the fictionality of the whole text, and the ways in which its meanings are recuperated in reading.

However, it may perhaps be an unfair imposition upon Thackeray to talk of the typicality of the novel's characters. Saintsbury, after all, praises 'the extraordinary creative powers of their creator in

the great English art of character, individualized, not typified';[17] later in the same book he partially excepts Henry Esmond from this judgment in the following interesting terms:

> His reality is of a rather different kind from that of most of his fellows. It is somewhat more abstract, more typical, more generalized than the reality of English heroes usually is. He is not in the least shadowy or allegoric: but he is still somehow Esmondity as well as Esmond - the melancholy rather than a melancholy, clear-sighted, aloof-minded man (p. 194).

In these formulations, the antithesis of 'type' is of course 'individual', but what differentiates the one from the other is not so much the complexity of the characterization as the context in which it is to be understood. The shift from the indefinite article to the definite article in the characterization of Esmond marks a shift - unique in Thackeray's novels, according to Saintsbury - from the syntagmatic order of the book alone to the paradigmatic order of character outside the book, so that Esmond challenges comparison as much with Jacques as with Lord Castlewood. The formulation which Saintsbury repudiates as untypical of Thackeray, however, describes exactly the mode of characterization in The Newcomes, in which the characters are indeed types, though to recognize this is not to entrench upon their 'individuality' - indeed it is exactly their individuality which authenticates the type. However, consciously to shift from individual to type is an activity of reading (and of criticism), so it is at this point that one can expect to find either collusion with or rejection of the ascription of typicality on the reader's part; criticism of the novel indeed reveals how contentious such an ascription is. So before looking at the kind of reading that the text itself anticipates, it seems worthwhile looking at criticism for evidence of the kind of typicality that the text enjoys.

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17. George Saintsbury, A Consideration of Thackeray (Oxford, 1931), p. 29.

The review of The Newcomes in The Times, which gives high though qualified praise to the novel, includes the following:

> His characters are not mere eccentricities, but the types and symbols of class varieties, though somewhat exaggerated by a sense of fun and humour. It is this which renders them available, like counters, to signify certain values - to be taken up, employed, or put aside at pleasure. They are generalizations as well as portraits, and it is this distinction which makes it remarkable that they should be coined with such profusion; for be it observed that they also bear indubitable marks of individuality, and a Gandish is no more to be confounded with a Smee, than Major Pendennis could be mistaken for Colonel Newcome.[18]

This reviewer is really having it both ways, because for him the characters are both types and individuals, and the fact that they can be both is 'remarkable' - though the confusion can be seen as a case of a powerful 'individual' characterization reinforcing its typicality. What is meant, however, by 'types and symbols of class varieties'? Are we here dealing with class in the sense of social class, or are we to take the subsequent reference to 'certain values' to mean that these 'class varieties' are moral classes - hypocrites as a class, or flatterers. In this review, clearly enough, it is predominantly the sense of social class that is intended, though there is a lingering ambiguity between the social and moral typicality which is quite crucial in understanding the nature of the characters' representativeness. At all events, in this review The Newcomes is comfortably assimilated as representing a cross-section of society.

By contrast, a more hostile American reviewer of the novel, while admitting the photographic representativeness of Thackeray's characters, denies that they are representative of human nature more generally:

> Yet let [these sketches] be rated at their just value, and pass for exactly what they are, - magnified daguerrotypes of a few prominent figures, not representative types of universal application; - the extreme

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18. From The Times, 29 August, 1855. In Thackeray : The Critical Heritage, edited by G. Tillotson and D. Hawes (1968), pp.223-230.

> results of club-life, aristocratic folly and egotistical wealth, as seen through the mephitic air of artificial society; not portraits of human nature as it unfolds under the free sky ... 19

This review thus admits the immediate social representativeness of the characters, but denies their universal typicality. It is not only that the characters are not possible 'under the free sky' of America, it is also that, under such a free sky, human nature unfolds itself to reveal distinct types which would indeed be universally applicable. But why should it be necessary to make this assertion? - precisely because the text does claim universal applicability, and the reviewer is exactly refusing this typicality. For The Times reviewer, the social range of The Newcomes does indeed extend to the horizons of society; while the American reviewer does not contest the representativeness of the novel's characters because Americans are excluded from it, but in the name of a universal human nature whose potentialities are suppressed by 'artificial society'.

There is thus a kind of unanimity between the two reviews, while both admit the social representativeness of the characters in the novel - though The Times review is also ambiguous about their moral typicality. The reviewer's ambiguity reflects a fundamental ambiguity in the novel itself, for in its uncertainty about whether or not its characters are moral types or social types - indeed they are both - there resides the ambiguity about whether the society it represents is a historical and therefore changeable phenomenon, or whether the novel is a picture of the world as it always has been, unchanged and unchangeable in its essentials. It is the oscillation from one perspective to the other, paralleled by Thackeray's oscillation from reformism to conservatism,

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19. H.T. Tuckerman, 'Mr. Thackeray as a novelist', The Christian Examiner (Boston, June 1856). In The Critical Heritage, pp. 259-264 (p. 264).

which is marked by the oscillation from the socially typical to the morally typical in the procedures of characterization. An interpretative criticism which pre-empts either of these possibilities thus not only fails to register a fact of reading the novel, but also is unable to account for other readings which the novel invites. This is not to offer this ambiguity of signification as the site of a 'free play of interpretation', but rather as the indication of a capitulation by Thackeray to the rationality of class society.

It is not then surprising to find that this ambiguity has produced an effect in modern criticism similar to that which is produced in criticism contemporary with the novel. In contradiction to Saintsbury's denial of typicality can be quoted Geoffrey Tillotson's recourse to a rather antiquated critical vocabulary, that of the 'ruling passion', to describe Thackeray's mode of characterization. For example, Helen Pendennis in Pendennis is for Tillotson 'a type of "sainted" jealous motherhood. On most occasions, ... the ruling passion rules with the quietest of despotisms'.[20] Tillotson's use of the word type is not considered, of course - indeed the category is perhaps used more often than not in this 'spontaneous' fashion - but the assimilation of typicality to the moral-psychological realm is clear enough. For Saintsbury, Thackeray's characters are individuals; for Tillotson, they are also types; and, as the overture of The Newcomes makes explicit, both are right.

The Newcomes begins, in the words of the critic invented to give voice to the objection, with a 'farrago of old fables' (I, 1, 4), in which there is nothing new, but all stolen from Lafontaine's fables. The narrator, moreover, immediately confesses as much, and says of the

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20. Geoffrey Tillotson, Thackeray the Novelist (Cambridge, 1954), p. 157.

critic that

> he is right sometimes; and the stories he reads, and the characters drawn in them, are old sure enough. What stories are new? All types of all characters march through all fables: tremblers and boasters; victims and bullies; dupes and knaves; long-eared Neddies, giving themselves leonine airs; Tartuffes wearing virtuous clothing; lovers and their trials, their blindness, their folly and constancy. With the very first page of the human story do not love, and lies too, begin? (I, 1, 5).

If this is a hint as to how to read the ensuing novel, there could scarcely be a more explicit ascription of moral and eternal typicality to its characters, it would seem. Yet the following paragraph, while it suggests that it carries on smoothly from the preceding one, actually rather disturbs its smug certainties:

> This, then, is to be a story, may it please you, in which jackdaws will wear peacocks' feathers, and awaken the just ridicule of the peacocks; in which, while every justice is done to the peacocks themselves, the splendour of their plumage, the gorgeousness of their dazzling necks, and the magnificence of their tails, exception will yet be taken to the absurdity of their rickety strut, and the foolish discord of their pert squeaking; in which lions in love will have their claws pared by sly virgins; in which rogues will sometimes triumph, and honest folks, let us hope, come by their own; in which there will be black crape and white favours; in which there will be tears under orange-flower wreaths, and jokes in mourning-coaches; in which there will be dinners of herbs with contentment and without, and banquets of stalled oxen where there is care and hatred - ay, and kindness and friendship too, along with the feast. It does not follow that all men are honest because they are poor; and I have known some who were friendly and generous, although they had plenty of money. There are some great landlords who do not grind down their tenants; there are actually bishops who are not hypocrites; there are liberal men even among the Whigs, and the Radicals themselves are not all Aristocrats at heart. But who ever heard of giving the Moral before the Fable? Children are only led to accept the one after their delectation over the other: let us take care lest our readers skip both; and so let us bring them in quickly - our wolves and lambs, our foxes and lions, our roaring donkeys, our billing ringdoves, our motherly partlets, and crowing chanticleers (I, 1, 6).

The paragraph begins with 'This, then, is to be a story ...' as though it was merely continuing the line of thought from the previous paragraph, but in fact the 'fables' that are listed in this paragraph are quite different from those of the previous one. There is a mixture of accepted and inverted fables put together as though they were the same; thus the 'jackdaws in peacocks' feathers' are immediately followed by the suggestion that peacocks are themselves more than a little ridiculous. The paragraph is marked by such switches of perspective, producing a vertiginous sensation while reading it; clearly there are no certainties in this reading.

When the paragraph modulates into social rather than moral categories, however - which is also the point at which it switches from narrative to 'sermonizing' - the 'conventional' images are exclusively inverted, so that the whole paragraph actually effects an inversion of the predominant sense of the preceding paragraph. Types and fables - which are anyway interdependent - would, if reproduced unchallenged in the novel of contemporary manners, suggest that 'there is nothing new under the sun', and one could fairly conclude that one's contemporaries were indeed no more than phenomenal forms of unchanging extra-historical essences. However, when the social categories are actually evoked, in this passage, the real complexity of the 'phenomenal forms' seems to close off that particular ideological avenue.

Although one has to be careful not to assume that what is announced programmatically in the overture is actually carried into effect in the novel at large, this shift within the overture does suggest a way of reading what follows. The characterizations proceed by the establishment and subsequent undermining of a set of conventional types; a certain amount of play is permitted around the traditional types so that the reader's recognition of them is continually being affronted

or stretched. It is not that the types are being dissolved in the direction of individual characterization; rather the play with the typifications is possible only because of a certain moral and social complaisance. The extension of sympathy which the undermining of the type invites is made in the name of a gentlemanly satisfaction with the world by and large as it is.

For when the inversions of typification made in the paragraph are examined, it becomes clear that the traditional typifications which are rejected - of 'grinding landlords', 'hypocritical bishops' etc. - are, with one important exception, radical (or Radical) types, and that they are here being inverted in a conservative direction. The dissolution of these radical types is effected in an ambience of overall satisfaction with the way things are conducted - mostly by good men trying to do their best - and this satisfaction even extends to the Radicals themselves, 'not all Aristocrats at heart'.[21] To undermine the conventional is not necessarily progressive; characteristically in this novel, ideology is exposed ideologically.

The overture does yet more than this, however, for ultimately the frank admission of the fabular quality of The Newcomes subverts the very authority not only of fable, but of narrative - 'story' - as a way of understanding human history and society. In doing so it anticipates the matching tail-piece at the end of the novel, which admits that anything can happen in 'fable-land'. From the very beginning of human history, men have understood themselves by means of fables and stories

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21. Compare the following passage from 'On Radical Snobs', Punch, 11 (1846), 59 - cut from The Book of Snobs. 'Perhaps, after all, there is no better friend to Conservatism than your outrageous Radical Snob. When a man preaches to you that all noblemen are tyrants, that all clergymen are hypocrites and liars, that all capitalists are scoundrels banded together in an infamous conspiracy to deprive the people of their rights, he creates a wholesome revulsion of feeling in favour of the abused parties, and a sense of fair play leads the generous heart to take a side with the object of unjust oppression', (p. 59).

comparable to contemporary ones - and subject to the same disabilities of conventionality and inadequacy. This, it seems to me, is the final context in which the novel can be read.

How far, though, does the novel as a whole permit this play around the typicality of the characterizations? And are all the characters in the novel types in the same mode of characterization?

At first sight it would seem easy enough to make a rough and ready distinction between the 'major' and 'minor' characters of the novel, in which only the latter are social types of the classic sort, while the major characters - the Colonel, Clive, Ethel, Barnes - are rather 'individuals' in Saintsbury's sense. There is no doubt of the typicality of the minor characters, such as Rummun Loll, the authenticity of whose characterization is established as much by its allusiveness to the type (which pre-exists the novel) as to its own credibility in the novel. There is another passing allusion to a racial type, that of the libidinous negro, in the description of the Clapham paradise at the beginning of the novel (I, 2, 23), and if this can be seen as the minimal end of the scale of typical representations, then perhaps Lord Kew or the Marquis of Farintosh should be placed at the other end of the scale - the fully fleshed out type, in this case of the young and wealthy aristocrat.[22] The major characters, by contrast, are much more importantly moral rather than social types; indeed they are not

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22. Indeed, we have Thackeray's own authority for the typicality of the Marquis of Farintosh. He told an American, in respect of this characterization, that he 'had studied the type of the high-bred, high fed, petted and not over-wise young-man-about-town with unusual care, and thought he had made a good picture of the class, but that the restrictions now put on the English novelists, wise and proper, no doubt, made it impossible for him to give the young fellow, as he actually is, as Fielding painted "Tom Jones", Smollett, "Roderick Random" or Paul de Kock, the "French Student", and therefore the picture must be incomplete' LPP, III, 102.

types in the same way at all, since they are not established as authentic characters by allusion to a set of typifications which pre-exist the text, but by the recognition on the reader's part of the truth (i.e. the typicality) of their moral and psychological complexities.

Moreover, these characterizations effectively establish new types, which by definition cannot be achieved simply by allusion to pre-existing ones, though at critical moments such allusions are useful in bolstering the authority of the new type. Thus the Colonel himself becomes a type of the English gentleman, and the difficulty of negotiating this typicality through his impoverishment is lessened by the reference to the 'man at arms' of Peele's poem, quoted when the Colonel's plight seems most extreme:

> 'A man at arms must now serve on his knees,
> And feed on prayers, which are old age's alms' (II, 38, 463).

(There is also a more facetious allusion to Belisarius (II, 34, 418), and in the titles to chapters thirty-three and thirty-four of the second volume. Here the point is to give a certain mock-heroic dignity or authority to the novel.) These new types, whose authenticity and typicality are primarily moral and psychological, are nonetheless genteel - here, in fact, is a prime instance of the redefinition of gentility in moral terms, which I have argued surreptitiously legitimizes the class-character of the social formation by making gentility - apparently - available to everybody. The procedure is only possible given the nature of the typifying mode of representation. The major characters are offered as models, either positive or negative, for the reader to recognize, against the allusively established hierarchy of socially typical minor characters.

This hierarchy is not entirely fixed or rigid; the play around the characterizations reflects not any 'mid-Victorian social mobility' or

loosening of class rigidities, but if anything a great degree of comfort within the hierarchy, which permits a degree of looseness at the joints. A good example is the characterization of Mrs. Hobson Newcome, the type of the notability-hunting, aristocracy-envying City merchant's wife. The characterization is socially and morally typical, for she represents at once the class of City merchants' wives and the moral qualities of ... what? - vanity and pride, perhaps? (the subtlety of the characterization does not entrench upon its typicality). She is described as 'a vulgar little woman, not clever nor pretty especially' (I, 8, 99), and her humbug is exposed when she is described descending to the dining room as 'Consummate Virtue [walking] down on the arm of the Colonel' (I, 8, 109). The introduction to the chapter in which these descriptions occur, however, is a rather cynical piece of sermonizing about the necessity of pushing on in the crowd, ending 'if your neighbour's foot obstructs you, stamp on it; and do you suppose he won't take it away?' (I, 8, 99). This piece of worldly-wise advice is offered as universally applicable, and Mrs. Hobson Newcome is presented as the most conspicuous example of its correctness. The sermonizing discourse of the novel thus attempts to prevent the too ready identification of the moral with the social type - 'Mrs. Hobson Newcome is vain and proud <u>because</u> she is the wife of a City merchant' - by insisting that she is typical of the way of all the world. It is a sort of negative extension of sympathy, in which the reader is asked to recognize that we are all the same as one another, and perhaps as bad. This recognition, moreover, in no way challenges the social hierarchy which founds the confident description of Mrs. Hobson Newcome as 'vulgar', and which is indeed the presupposition of the worldly-wise tone of the narrative voice itself.

The play of meanings between the various elements of the novel - narrative, characterization, commentary - is a highly complex one.

However, one must be careful not to separate too simply these categories, for the 'sermonizing' commentary itself is highly dependent upon narrative.[23] As we have seen, the typicality of the characterizations is ambiguous, now lending itself to the socially typical, now to the morally and hence eternally typical. The implications of the latter attitude are made explicit in passages of authorial commentary that occur at frequent intervals throughout the novel, notably if problematically in the overture, and again in chapter five, volume one, when the reader is asked not to be too hard on the Colonel's brothers for first neglecting and then recognizing Clive according to the state of the Colonel's fortunes. The example of Joseph and his brothers is quoted to show both the commonness and antiquity of such attitudes:

> How naturally Joseph's brothers made salaams to him, and admired him, and did him honour, when they found the poor outcast a prime minister, and worth ever so much money! Surely human nature is not much altered since the days of those primeval Jews (I, 5, 65).

The founding authority for the typicality of the characterizations, then, would appear to be the founding narrative of Christian society. Updating the Biblical vocabulary in a rather vulgar way, however, suggests that the reference ought not to be taken too seriously - to write of Joseph and his brothers as though they too were characters in The Newcomes is either sacrilegious, or amounts to a little trap for the reader, forcing him to discriminate between the different authorities enjoyed by the two texts. Either way the eternalizing comment becomes suspect. In this universally corrosive atmosphere, the very authority of narrative itself is thrown into doubt.

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23. A point made in passing by Tillotson in Thackeray the Novelist: 'Having seen how universal in the narrative of Thackeray is his philosophy, we can see, too, how universal in the passages of philosophy is narrative. Inside the passages of philosophy we are still seeing actions as well as receiving thoughts. Even when they are homilies, they resemble the homilies that are packed with story' (p. 97). Tillotson, intent on defending the novel on Jamesian grounds by supplying it with a spurious unity, claims that this demonstrates the 'naturalness' of the relationship between homily and story; this relationship, however, is far from 'natural' if only because there is a need to demonstrate one.

III

It is no secret that Thackeray is a very allusive writer. His novels - and The Newcomes is no exception - abound with references both to 'life' and to 'letters'. This allusiveness presupposes a high degree of formal self-consciousness, for constantly to challenge comparison with other writing is clearly to make an assertion about the kind of writing that your own novel is; and perhaps more importantly, it is to draw attention to the fact that it is writing.

We have seen, however, that allusions to other narratives, and other characters, is also a way of establishing (and often simultaneously undermining) the authority of the narratives and characters of the text. Though ultimately the two are not separable, this kind of allusion is clearly to 'life' rather than to other writing - the point of their union being indeed the Biblical narrative itself. Equally important are the references to other fictions.[24]

Hogarth's Industry and Idleness is not the only one of his works to be alluded to; his Marriage a la Mode appears yet more frequently in the novel, especially with reference to Barnes' marriage to Lady Clara Pulleyn.[25] While these allusions assert a similarity between the narratives alluded to and the narrative of the novel, the frequent

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24. In one of the best - and few - modern criticisms of the novel, 'The Pygmalion Motif in The Newcomes', Nineteenth Century Fiction, (1974-1975), 22-39, R.D. McMaster has argued that each character in the novel constructs an imaginary fictional world which is at odds with reality, and that these imaginary constructions are often couched in allusions to other fictions, subverted by the movement of the novel. But while McMaster sees this in an exclusively moral and psychological context, I see it in a formal context as well, so that the allusions to other fictions actually foreground the fictionality of this text as well, profoundly affecting its own status.

25. Burne-Jones first insisted upon the importance of this reference for the novel, in his 'Essay on The Newcomes', Oxford and Cambridge Magazine (Jan. 1856). Reprinted in The Critical Heritage, pp. 252-259.

references to 'Romance' claim the novel is actually different from that mode of writing. The Newcomes, in fact, constantly skirts Romance, at once denying it and feeling obliged to affirm it.

On one level there is a simply parodic relationship; the thirteenth chapter of volume two, for example, begins with an outright parody of a 'contemporary writer of Romance', who invariably began his 'tales of Chivalry' with a description of two horsemen. This of course only repeats Thackeray's earlier parody of G.P.R. James in 'Barbazure', one of the Novels by Eminent Hands which he contributed to Punch;[26] it is little more than a stylistic flourish, though it is a style which draws attention to its own scriptiveness. A more significant instance occurs at the beginning of the preceding chapter, when Ethel's undignified position, as in company with Lady Kew she is hunting down Lord Farintosh, is described:

> To break her heart in silence for Tomkins, who is in love with another; to suffer no end of poverty, starvation, capture by ruffians, ill-treatment by a bullying husband, loss of beauty by the small-pox, death even at the end of the volume; all these mishaps a young heroine may endure (and has endured in romances over and over again), without losing the least dignity, or suffering any diminution of the sentimental reader's esteem. But a girl of great beauty, high temper, and strong natural intellect, who submits to be dragged hither and thither in an old grandmother's leash, and in pursuit of a husband who will run away from the couple, such a person, I say, is in a very awkward position as a heroine; and I declare if I had another ready to my hand (and unless there were extenuating circumstances), Ethel should be deposed at this very sentence (II, 7, 91).

The passage continues with a defence of Ethel; so many worship the idols of wealth and station that it is Vanity Fair which ought to be condemned, for leading young women to bow down at that altar. Here, then, a parody of romance is accompanied by an assertion of its moral strength, a

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26. 'Barbazure, by G.P.R. Jeames Esq. Etc.' in Novels by Eminent Hands, Contributions to Punch, 2 vols., I, 52-65.

combination tellingly described by Saintsbury as 'that Heinesque combination of romance with satire of romance, in which Thackeray is Heine's only rival'.[27] A lot is at stake, however, in playing off 'reality' against 'romance' - no less than the very status of the novel itself, which attempts to assert the ultimate triumph of romance while recognizing this as wish fulfilment, a sort of connivance between the writer of romance and the 'sentimental reader'. The satire of romance in this passage (in which the 'loss of beauty by the small-pox' is probably an allusion to Esther in Bleak House), seizes on the reader's identification with the heroine, and the conventional and repetitive gratification which this affords; but romance is also the yardstick by which Ethel's conduct is to be measured. In this light the novel appears ambivalent, for what such passages expose is both the insufficiency of worldliness and the wish-fulfilling nature of romance.

Perhaps this amounts to little more than a reformulation of the traditional view of Thackeray as a 'sentimental cynic'; but what this view lacks, above all, is any sense of the formal implications of the simultaneous assertion of romance with satire of it. The Newcomes is formally affected in two main ways; first in the organization of its narratives, with their disruptions of normal expectations; and secondly, in the foregrounding of the fictionality of the novel, above all in its famous final passage.

I have earlier suggested that no narrative enjoys any formal priority in the novel; but as it nears its conclusion, most of the text's thematic problems - the marriage market, the blindness of parental affection, the opposition between worldliness and sentiment - do get condensed around the narrative of Clive, Ethel and Rosey. Clearly

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27. Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 20.

enough, if Clive and Ethel could be brought together, then an (imaginary) resolution of these thematic problems would be effected, and there do seem to be preparations for this at one or two places in the text prior to its very end. For example, Ethel's renunciation of worldliness and the Marquis of Farintosh, which would clear the way for her marriage with Clive, precedes the announcement of the latter's marriage to Rosey; so that the announcement of the marriage, occurring quite unexpectedly in the course of a visit by Ethel to Sarah Mason (II, 23, 306), comes as a great coup de roman. It is as though the narrative is developing normally, and moving towards a normal fulfilment, but that it has got out of kilter. Subsequently, when it becomes increasingly apparent that the death of Rosey is the only way that Clive and Ethel can be brought together, the enormity is exposed of the demands made by romance upon reality. On one occasion, for example, Ethel visits Clive and his family, and she forms a little tableau with the Colonel, Clive and his child; Rosey looks on:

> Rosey's eyes were not good to look at, as she stared at the group with a ghastly smile. Mrs. Mackenzie surveyed the scene in haughty state, from behind the sofa cushions. She tried to take one of Rosey's lean, hot hands. The poor child tore it away, leaving her ring behind her; lifted her hands to her face: and cried - cried as if her little heart would break. Ah me! what a story was there; what an outburst of pent-up feeling! What a passion of pain! (II, 41, 483-484).

This is the Rosey whom the 'sentimental reader' has so comfortably been wishing dead; her appearance here suggests that there is something in reality permanently intractable to romance. This powerful image is comparable, in its complexity of meaning, to Malvolio's exclusion from Illyria.

It is, moreover, precisely the resolution of this narrative line - the marriage of Clive and Ethel - which the extraordinary ending of the novel throws into doubt. Juliet McMaster is exactly right when she

writes that 'in his "happy ending" Thackeray is exposing rather than capitulating to the kind of sentimentality by which readers like to delude themselves that everything comes out right in the end'.[28] Yet more even than this is exposed in the 'happy ending', for it is the whole Fable which is there shown to be full of imaginary rewards and gratifications:

> And the poet of Fable-land rewards and punishes absolutely. He splendidly deals out bags of sovereigns, which won't buy anything; belabours wicked backs with awful blows, which do not hurt; endows heroines with preternatural beauty, and creates heroes, who, if ugly sometimes, yet possess a thousand good qualities, and usually end by being immensely rich; makes the hero and heroine happy at last, and happy ever after. Ah, happy, harmless, Fable-land, where these things are! (II, 42, 506).

The whole ending of the novel thus ultimately exposes and precludes the imaginary gratifications of romance, and with them the ideological comfort derived from the supposition that such gratifications are possible in the real world. Moreover, the 'poet of Fable-land' enjoys here nothing less than divine powers; the analogy is comparable to that occasionally if problematically made between the novel and the founding narrative of the 'human story'. In Little Dorrit also, we saw, divinity and the narrator were categorically similar; in The Newcomes, scepticism about Fable extends to include a much more fundamental scepticism.

The formal complexity and sophistication of the novel, then, has profound implications for its interpellant ideological power. It is not that ideology as such is subverted in the novel; but that its authority is. This can perhaps be seen most clearly in the absence of an authoritative narrative voice; indeed the multiplicity and complexity of narrative voices in the novel make reading it an

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28. Thackeray : The Major Novels, p. 172.

experience of astonishing and rapid shifts in perspective. The first eight chapters of the novel reveal the following - an implied author for the overture, who might be Pendennis but whose authority is unquestioned; Pendennis himself for the Cave of Harmony scene; another implied author for the history of the Thomas Newcomes, father and son, but one whose authority is doubtful, in view of the parodied formality of the opening of chapter two;[29] the five authors of the letters in chapter three, each of varying authority; Pendennis again for chapters four and five, though his authority is stronger in the passages of authorial commentary; a Mr. Giles, who is introduced as a relation of the Hobson Newcomes, solely to give an account of their menage and the banking-house; Pendennis for chapters six and seven; Clive's 'candid prattle' in chapter seven, which is as much a narrative device as a revelation of character; while in chapter eight, the party given by Mrs. Hobson Newcome, the status of the gathering is witheringly established by Barnes Newcome, who debunks Charles Honeyman as 'humbug' - who himself is the medium by which the various 'notabilities' at the party are described and exposed. The authority of these various narrative voices varies widely, of course, and in some cases the point is more to get them to reveal themselves than to propel the narrative; but the rapid changes in perspective on the actions and characters of the novel make the process of reading much more active than where there is a single narrative voice of undoubted authority. None of the

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29. Because he did not indicate sufficiently clearly that the authority of this narrative voice was not total, Thackeray got into serious difficulties in America, where exception was taken to the phrase 'when Mr. Washington was heading the American rebels with a courage, it must be confessed, worthy of a better cause' (I, 2, 16). As he was at pains to point out in his letter of self-defence in The Times, 23 November, 1853, 'The satire, if satire there be, applies to us at home, who called Washington "Mr. Washington"; as we called Frederick the Great "the Protestant Hero", or Napoleon "the Corsican Tyrant" or "General Bonaparte".' Thackeray admits in the letter that 'irony is dangerous'. LPP, III, 321.

narrative voices in the novel, especially not that of the authorial commentary, carries such authority; for as we have seen, it is just in these sections that some of the most marked undercuttings of narrative certainties are effected.

Since it would in principle be possible to construct a hierarchy of the authority enjoyed by these various narrative voices, with that of the implied author of the 'sermonizing' at the top - or not quite the top, since God is the ultimate omniscient narrator - it is clearly important that it should be in these very sections that the irony is at its slipperiest, the authority hardest to specify. The very fact of using Pendennis as the main narrator prevents too ready an ascription of authority to the sections of commentary[30] - his own weakness and uxoriousness making him unreliable as a narrator. If any novel can be described as decentred, it is The Newcomes; and if any novelist makes formal play with the absence of a unifying centre, it is Thackeray. The ultimate authority in The Newcomes is precisely the one that throws its own authority most into doubt.

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30. In a letter to Sally Baxter, 26 July 1853, Thackeray wrote of The Newcomes that 'I am not to be the author of it. Mr. Pendennis is to be the writer of his friend's memoirs and by the help of this little mask (wh I borrowed from Pisistrates Bulwer I suppose) I shall be able to talk more at ease than in my own person', LPP, III, 297-298. It seems astonishing that Thackeray should not have noticed that Lytton, who used the device of one character from The Caxtons appearing in, and as the author of, the subsequent My Novel, himself borrowed the idea from Sterne, whose Tristran Shandy is the immediate (and infinitely superior) model for The Caxtons. Indeed, formal self-consciousness, which appears to be Thackeray's biggest debt to the eighteenth-century novelists, is precisely the aspect of their work which merits no discussion at all in English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century (1853). The half-chapter devoted to Sterne, for example, concentrates on his mannered, self-regarding 'sentiment', and his licentiousness. If Thackeray's own criticism is marred by his inability to separate the author from the book, however, it is just this inability with regard to his own writing that forced him into the formal complexity that marks The Newcomes. Thus, in another letter, to Mrs. Elliott and Kate Perry, he write: 'Mr. Pendennis is the author of the book, and he has taken a great weight off my mind, for under that mask, and acting, as it were, I can afford to say and think many things that I couldn't venture on in my own person, now that it is a person, and I know the public are staring at it', LPP, IV, 436.

I have described ideology as constitutive of literature, so that what a literary text works on is not life but ideology. Clearly, different texts work on ideology in different ways. Little Dorrit, I have argued, attempts to establish its ideology in complex symbolic and hermeneutic codes; ultimately their inability to give any coherence to the multiplicity of ideological narratives intercalated in the text marks the fictionality of the text's coherence. The Newcomes, by contrast, works its narratives into a more consistent ideological discourse - and a more conservative one - but then proceeds to undermine their interpellant power by a persistent refusal to grant authority to any of the multiple narrative voices in the text. Dickens achieves his effects by working within the categories of bourgeois ideology, pursuing them almost to breaking point; Thackeray remains coolly outside those categories, with such a pervasive scepticism that the founding condition of ideology itself - narrative - seems occasionally thrown into doubt. It is uncertain which of the two novels is finally more subversive.

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Ideology and the Novel in the 1850s, by Simon Dentith

Abstract of thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D., 1980

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, the first four of which provide a descriptive account of a set of ideological narratives ('myths') particularly important in the 1850s:

(1) self-help, and the myth of the self-made man, as it is narrated in the non-fictional writings of Smiles, several 'success manuals', and in the novels of Dickens, Lytton, Trollope, D.M. Mulock, Lever and Geraldine Jewsbury.

(2) narratives of fraud, as they are found in the novels of Geraldine Jewsbury, Emma Robinson, Catherine Sinclair, Lytton, Trollope and Lever; in the writings of Carlyle, D. Morier Evans, Lalor, Smiles and J.S. Mill.

(3) charity, as it is narrated in the novel, the periodicals, and other writings, especially by Malthus and Spencer.

(4) pre-Darwinian ideas of race, especially as they are organized around the category of type.

In all four cases, I attempt to give an account of the social, economic and ideological forces which produced the various narrations of the underlying narrative. These myths attempt to supply the deficiencies of political economy as a morally interpellant ideology, but the relationships within this set of myths are contradictory, depending on different conceptions of worth, labour and gentility; nevertheless, they can and do co-exist in the same text.

In the fifth chapter, I give a critical account of literary-critical attempts to categorize the appearance of such material in the novel as conventional. I suggest that these myths provide part of the ideological matrix in which the novels of the 1850s are situated, and I argue that precisely because such myths depend upon narrative, the novel is a privileged arena for their elaboration and, perhaps, subversion. Finally, in the last two chapters I give extended analyses of Little Dorrit and The Newcomes, stressing the way that both texts avoid ideological foreclosure though using different means to do so.