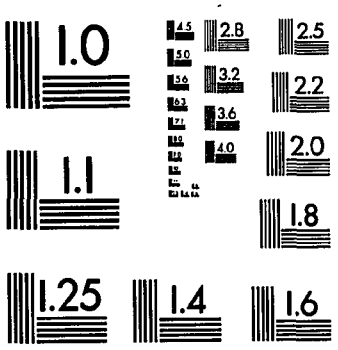

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DICKENS AND THE TRADITION OF COMEDY: A STUDY OF "PICKWICK PAPERS" AND "OUR MUTUAL FRIEND"

City University of New York PH.D. 1985

DICKENS AND THE TRADITION OF COMEDY: A Study of Pickwick Papers and Our Mutual Friend

by

TOBY ANNE BIRD

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

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Abstract

DICKENS AND THE TRADITION OF COMEDY:
A STUDY OF PICKWICK PAPERS AND OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

by

Toby Anne Bird

Adviser: Professor Irving Howe

This study of Dickens and the tradition of comedy focusses on how Dickens uses comic techniques derived from the stage in his first novel, Pickwick Papers, and then in his last complete novel, Our Mutual Friend. In many ways these two novels represent opposite poles in Dickens' work. Pickwick is for the most part a comic picaresque novel in the eighteenth-century mode made up of many loosely connected episodes. Our Mutual Friend, on the other hand, is a much more realistic novel, with many comic moments and with a number of subplots all interconnected. In Pickwick Dickens draws on the traditional elements of comedy - the disguise, the pairing of trickster and gull, and the pairing of master and servant in order to dramatize the age-old comic preoccupation of "innocence buffeted by experience." In Our Mutual Friend, however, Dickens invests these comic techniques with symbolic resonance meant to suggest that deceit has corrupted all levels

of society.

Part of Dickens' method is to exploit in both novels the two common and closely related meanings of the word "farce." One is "A threatrical composition in which broad improbabilities of plot and characterization are used for humorous effect." The other meaning is "Something ludicrous; an empty show, mockery." The first definition most accurately describes the theatrical world of Pickwick with its artifice, including broad improbabilities of plot. The second describes the "real" world of Our Mutual Friend. We are horrified by the empty show - the mockery that masquerades as humanity. Both novels exploit the double meaning of the word "farce," but the tone of each novel dictates the emphasis. Dickens uses the techniques of dramatic comedy in Pickwick to celebrate the cleverness of deceit. In Our Mutual Friend, however, he used the same techniques both to expose and to condemn deceit on all levels of society. The backdrop of nineteenth-century London causes us to see deceit in an entirely different light. For this reason Our Mutual Friend, a mixture of both artifice and realism, has a moral weight one cannot claim for Pickwick.

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I would also like to thank Professor Irving Howe for his attentive reading of drafts of this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

This study of Dickens and the tradition of comedy will focus on how Dickens uses comic techniques derived from the stage in his first novel, Pickwick Papers, and then in his last complete novel, Our Mutual Friend. There have been several studies that have attempted to analyze Dickens' debt to the theater. For the most part, however, these studies explore the influence of melodrama and tragedy or seek to trace plots and characters to specific sources. But there are inherent dangers in trying to trace influence. Louis Cazamian, in his study of English humor, points to the problem when he cites the similarity between Don Quixote on the one hand, and Sir Roger de Coverly, Parson Adams, Uncle Toby, the vicar of Wakefield, and Mr. Pickwick, on the other. He says that although "the influence of Don Quixote would appear to be central in the development of modern English humor . . . it is not so much a matter of influence as of parallelism, affinity, and likeness."[1]

Margaret Ganz recognizes the problem when, in talking about Pickwick Papers, she notes that it " . . . is relatively so late a manifestation of the picaresque and addresses itself to a theme so centrally and persistently consecrated by art - the plight of deluded innocence

buffeted by experience - that certain questions of originality become irrelevant."[2] But critics have attempted to deal with the issue of specific influence anyway. William Palmer in "Dickens and the Eighteenth Century" cites the influence of Sterne, Fielding, and Goldsmith. He sees close parallels between Pickwick and Uncle Toby, especially in the similar involvement of Pickwick and Mrs. Bardell and Uncle Toby and the widow Wardman. He also points to the similarity between the scene in Joseph Andrews where Parson Adams mistakenly gets into bed with Fanny and the scene in Pickwick Papers where Pickwick mistakenly ends up in the room of the woman in the yellow curl papers. And he notes that the reformed Jingle in the Fleet is reminiscent of the reformed Jenkinson in jail in The Vicar of Wakefield.[3]

Although Earle Davis acknowledges that "the main influence upon Dickens' plot arrangement was the stage,"[4] he feels that Dickens owes a great debt to both Smollett and Fielding:

> Smollett leaned toward the extreme of drawing parts of the body or dress which he heightened beyond reality, but generally his descriptions center on picturesque detail, making the striking at the expense of the ordinary and the natural. . . . Farcical action was also the basic comic technique of both Smollett and Fielding. The effect of farce often derives from placing a character in some situation which is distasteful to him. The narrative method of a book like Smollett's Peregrine Pickle is to provide one good embarrassing situation or amusing predicament for each chapter. . . . Dickens naturally followed this scheme in Pickwick, for he too needed one good laughable incident or embarrassing situation for each installment. . . . He used many suggestions for these

> farcical incidents, reaching into his reading and his experience for inspiration, but it is amazing how many of these incidents resemble a situation first developed in Smollett or Fielding.[5]

This excerpt, however, instead of clarifying Dickens' indebtedness, serves to further confuse the whole question of influence. In using the word "farce" to describe the technique of Smollett and Fielding, Davis brings us back to drama and ultimately raises questions about the comic novel and its relationship to comic drama. This is not to deny that Dickens learned from Smollett and Fielding. However, what he learned from them was how to adapt to the novel techniques he already knew from his familiarity with drama.[6] For Smollett, Fielding and Dickens all used the techniques and forms common to stage comedy.[7] In fact in discussing Fielding, Churchill makes the point that his novels were influenced by his own experience in the theater, "so that we have a link, if a very slight one, to connect the novels of Fielding with the course of English stage comedy, from his own plays back (via Congreve, Wycherly, Dryden and Massinger) to those of Ben Jonson."[8]

In his full length study of Dickens' narrative art, Harvey Sucksmith cites the need for just such a study of Dickens' use of these techniques developed in dramatic literature:

> The influence of drama on the structure of Dickens's novels has not, I think, been sufficiently recognized or properly evaluated. R.C. Churchill for example. restricts the influence of the drama on Dickens's comedy to a matter of dialogue, dismissing the topic of structure with the usual critical cliches, vague

> references to "improbabilities" and "coincidences of the plot." . . . The influence of the drama on Dickens's narrative art should be considered against the background of his growing conscious preoccupation with structure and form.[9]

The Aims of the Dissertation

The argument of this dissertation is that although Dickens uses the same comic devices adapted from comic drama to construct both Pickwick Papers and Our Mutual Friend, he uses the same techniques with different effect in each novel because he is working toward different ends. In Pickwick Dickens draws on the traditional elements of comedy - the disguise, the pairing of the trickster and the gull, and the pairing of master and slave, for example, in order to dramatize the age-old comic preoccupation of "innocence buffeted by experience." Also in Pickwick Dickens' characters, the traditional comic "types," seem small and flat against the backdrop of the English countryside which is dotted with rolling hills and field, country roads, horses, carriages, farms, houses, and inns. In Our Mutual Friend, on the other hand, Dickens invests these comic techniques with symbolic resonance meant to suggest that deceit has corrupted all levels of society. To this end the relationship between character and setting is quite different. The expansive landscape is gone. Instead, there is the density of London with its famous wasteland-like backdrop of the dust

heaps, and the characters, instead of appearing small and flat, loom large and real against this backdrop and seem to grow out of it and to be tied to it. The intricate web of subplots contributes to a sense of claustrophobia where, for example, the traditional comic tricksters and gulls have become both literally and metaphorically the hunters and the hunted, and chapters have titles like "Tracking the Bird of Prey," "The Bird of Prey Brought Down," "Setting Traps," and "What was Caught in the Traps That Were Set."

Part of Dickens' method is to exploit in both novels the two common and closely related meanings of the word "farce." One is "A theatrical composition in which broad improbabilities of plot and characterization are used for humorous effect." The other meaning is "Something ludicrous; an empty show, mockery." The first definition most accurately describes the theatrical world of Pickwick with its artifice, including broad improbabilities of plot. The second describes the "real" world of Our Mutual Friend. We are horrified by the empty show - the mockery that masquerades as humanity. Both novels exploit the double meaning of the word "farce," but the tone of each novel dictates the emphasis.

In many ways Pickwick Papers and Our Mutual Friend represent opposite poles in Dickens' work. Pickwick is for the most part a comic picaresque novel in the eighteenth-century mode made up of many loosely

connected episodes. Our Mutual Friend, on the other hand, is a much more realistic novel, with many comic characters and comic moments and with a number of subplots all interconnected. Whereas the plot of Pickwick is more or less linear with broad strokes of comedy and farce typical of the early English dramatic comedies such as Gammer Gurton's Needle and Ralph Roister Doister, the plot of Our Mutual Friend is an intricate web of carefully woven strands like plots in the comedies of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Moliere. Although there is much more exuberant fun in Pickwick than in Our Mutual Friend, I agree with James Kincaid who, in talking about both early and late novels, says that "the notion that the humour is somehow detached from major concerns or that it functions mainly as a holiday or relief . . . seems[s] . . . demonstrably false."[10]

Comedy and the Novel

Critics as far back as Aristotle have attempted to explain comedy: how it works, what it does, what it is. Many literary critics maintain that, in general, comedy demands artifice.[11] In Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy, Thomas McFarland explains this relationship:

> Comedy . . . not only accepts artificiality, but revels in it. . . . Disguise . . . almost never succeeds in our daily experience. . . . But comedy not only constantly employs disguise, it frolics in its permutations. . . . Comedy tends to deal in typical

> rather than in individual characterizations. The uniqueness of the individual ego has no value in comedy. . . . So it goes in a comic plot, complication following complication, in symmetrical pairings, partings, and repetitions, as though some minuet-like dance were being performed. The men and women separate, come together, inter-mingle, come close, move apart, go around again.[12]

Alan Thompson states that "comic idealization involves simplification, distortion, exaggeration, such as we see in caricature. It is not realism in any ordinary sense of the term."[13]

The relationship between comedy and realism becomes especially problematic, however, when we add to the demands and conventions of comedy, the expectations we as readers bring to the novel form. According to Ian Watt, in his seminal work The Rise of The Novel, the novel's strength lies in its capacity for realism:

> The novelist's primary task is to convey the impression of fidelity to human experience, attention to any pre-established formal conventions can only endanger his success. What is often felt as the formlessness of the novel, as compared, say, with tragedy or the ode, probably follows from this: the poverty of the novel's formal conventions would seem to be the price it must pay for its realism. But the absence of convention in the novel is important compared to its rejection of traditional plots.[14]

Obviously, none of Watt's pronouncements about the novel takes into consideration the special nature of the comic novel which relies heavily on the conventions of comedy, including that of traditional plot and characterization. For example, Kincaid calls Martin Chuzzlewit a nineteenth-century version of The Alchemist[15] and Davis compares Miss Havisham to Volpone.[16] Furthermore, it is

interesting to note that Watt's negative comments about Fielding reveal the techniques that Fielding, Smollett and Dickens used to create comic characters:

> His comic approach . . . denies him a convincing and continuous access to the inner life of his characters, so that whenever he has to exhibit their emotional life, he can only do it externally by making them have exaggerated physical reactions. The fact that Fielding's characters do not have a convincing inner life means that their possibilities of psychological development are very limited.[17]

Watt has here unwittingly delineated the comic technique that Barbara Hardy has called "imposed external action." In her discussion of Dickens' use of the stage convention of the "sudden conversion," she comments that "it is as if he were committed to the imposed external action of some eighteenth-century novels, like those of Fielding or Smollett, which he had read and admired."[18] And George Ford supports this contention:

> Novelists such as Austen and James, who have successfully used dramatic plot, have demonstrated that the scope of the novel form offers special resources for the exploration of motives of action so that character development seems probable. Dickens dismissed these special resources with the word "dissective." He preferred to rely not on the resources of fictional drama . . . In practice, this meant not merely a reduction of authorial comment and dissection, but a reliance upon stage motivation.[19]

Dickens As Dramatist

There is no question that the novel is the most realistic of genres with respect to its attention to the details of locale and daily life. But E.M. Forster makes

the important point that in the novel the author attains only an illusion of reality:

> A character in a book is real . . . when the novelist knows everything about it. He may not choose to tell us all he knows - many of the facts, even of the kind we call obvious, may be hidden. But he will give us the feeling that though the character has not been explained, it is explicable, and we get from this a reality of a kind we can never get in daily life.
>
> For human intercourse, as soon as we look at it for its own sake and not as a social adjunct, is seen to be haunted by a spectre. We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly.[20]

That we "cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way[, that] . . . we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to . . . " is the subject of Dickens' novels. He dramatized over and over again that "perfect knowledge is an illusion." He incorporated into his novels the technique used by the dramatist because he saw that a dramatist creates a different kind of verisimilitude, one that perhaps, in some ways, is more true to our everyday experience of the world than is the illusion of reality found in a novel. In our everyday experience we don't know what people are thinking. On stage, as in life, characters meet each other, talk, act, react. We in the audience do not know what they are thinking unless the dramatist has them deliver soliloquies or tell someone else what they are thinking. We do not usually know much about their backgrounds except as we glean information from what unfolds before us. We can

only see what they look like, watch what they do and hear what they say. Based on what we see and hear, the externals, we try to understand the inner being - to make sense of what they say and do, and we use this evidence to predict what will happen.

Because Dickens' vision was essentially consonant with that of the dramatist, and because he saw that these techniques accurately mirror the realities of everyday experience, he uses the techniques of the dramatist and in his novels he shows very little of what characters are thinking. Dickens relies on the externals of appearance, dialogue, and movement to create his characters in the same way that the dramatist does. For example, in both Pickwick and Our Mutual Friend he creates many characters easily identifiable by specific physical characteristics (Joe the fat boy's fatness, Jenny Wren's bad back and queer legs), or by dress (Winkle's sportsman's coat, Sloppy's buttons), or by habitual gesture (Peter Magnus' "bird-like habit of giving his head a jerk every time he said any thing"[p. 304][21]), Twemlow's putting his hand to his forehead), or by speech (Jingle's staccato rhythm, Riderhood's tag "'I am a man as gets my living, as seeks to get my living by the sweat of my brow'"[p. 173][22]). But, whereas the shorthand is used to characterize and for comic effect in Pickwick, in Our Mutual Friend the short hand serves to deepen our perception of both the character and that character's situation at one and the same time.

In order to dramatize personality and plot through conversation, Dickens uses dialogue for both structural and thematic ends, and creates pairs of characters in both novels. The ongoing relationship of the characters within each pair, as well as the personality of each of the characters is revealed through their conversations, as well as through their interactions. Because the picaresque form limits the range of ongoing relationships, the only important pair of characters in Pickwick is that of Pickwick and Sam Weller. Although many characters reappear, there are really no other pairs as such whose conversations help to reveal character except perhaps Sam and his father. However, there are many such pairs in Our Mutual Friend, because the plot is in some sense circular and the characters are interconnected. Each pairing is significant in its own right and the many pairings also indicate that on one level the novel is specifically about how people relate to each other and how relationships evolve. So we have the following major pairs whose conversations are important structurally and thematically: Eugene and Mortimer, Jenny and Lizzie, Bella and Mr. Wilfer, Bella and Harmon, Jenny and Riah, Sophronia and Alfred Lammle, Wegg and Boffin.

This dissertation will demonstrate that the difference in the novels then, lies not in technique. The difference is in the context Dickens creates for his characters and dramatic situations. The characters in Pickwick play

their silly games against the neutral backdrop of the eighteenth-century English countryside. Except for Pickwick and Sam Weller, the rest of the characters are no more than caricatures - the familiar types of farce comedy - and the plot is heavy with the artifice of coincidence and disguise. But the backdrop Dickens creates in Our Mutual Friend is no longer the neutral countryside; it is, instead, the hostile city, and the games people play are no longer silly, but are played in deadly earnest set into motion by an author bent on exposing his characters for the cheats they are. Furthermore, not all of the characters are drawn as caricatures, and the adults no longer act like children on a playful romp. It is significant, in fact, that the children, like Jenny and Sloppy, are forced to act like adults.

Michael Goldman in a study entitled The Actor's Freedom: Toward A Theory of Drama, notes that all great comedy talks "about the deeper meaning of what it is playing with . . . the problems of finding and maintaining identity, of establishing the self in the real world."[23] And as Sucksmith asserts, Dickens successfully manipulated techniques of stage comedy to dramatize that "society consisted of a tissue of unreal attitudes and relationships founded on deceit."[24] The chapters of my dissertation will proceed from an examination of character and plot to a closer look at the "tissue of unreal attitudes and relationships founded on deceit" and will

demonstrate that Dickens used the techniques of dramatic comedy in Pickwick to celebrate the cleverness of deceit. In Our Mutual Friend, however, he used the same techniques both to expose and to condemn deceit on all levels of society. The backdrop of nineteenth-century London causes us to see deceit in an entirely different light. For this reason Our Mutual Friend, a mixture of both artifice and realism, has a moral weight one cannot claim for Pickwick.

Notes

[1] Louis Cazamian, The Development of English Humor (Durham, N.C.:Duke University Press, 1952), pp.148-9.

[2] Margaret Ganz, "Pickwick Papers and the Refashioning of Reality," Dickens Studies Annual 4(1975) 37-8.

[3] William J. Palmer, "Dickens and the Eighteenth Century," Dickens Studies Annual 6(1977) 23-6.

[4] Earle Davis, The Flint and the Flame: The Artistry of Charles Dickens (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), p. 54.

[5] Davis, pp. 18-22.

[6] My intention is not to minimize the influence of Smollett and Fielding on Dickens. He was most likely also influenced by their use of distinctly eighteenth-century realistic English background and "props" such as stage coaches and inns, and by their use of typically common English "characters."

[7] Northrop Frye's essay "Dickens and the Comedy of Humours," in his The Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 218-240, deals with Dickens' use of comic technique in some depth, but because of its essay length it serves as only a good introduction to the subject. Frye's feeling is that the "comedy of humours" Dickens uses, which we most readily identify with Ben Jonson, reaches back to the classical tradition through Plautus to Greek New Comedy. Most critics place Jonson and Shakespeare (who critics say writes out of the medieval English tradition) in different categories of comedy. At first glance this seems logical. Looking at their work in entirety, they each create a distinct and different impression. However, I would argue that all comedies have much in common, specifically in their use of comic technique. In many ways Dickens seems as much akin to Shakespeare as he does to Jonson. Though we would also say that the works of Austen and Dickens are different, as examples of comedies, they also have much in common.

[8] R.C. Churchill, "Dickens, Drama and Tradition," Scrutiny 10(1942), p. 364.

[9] Harvey Sucksmith, The Narrative Art of Charles Dickens (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 225-6.

[10] James Kincaid, Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter (Oxford Univ. Press, 1971),p.4-5.

[11] Of course this is a relative statement. As Joyce Carol Oates comments in the Book Review section of The New York Times, September 9, 1979, p. 14, "Art implies artifice."

[12] Thomas McFarland, Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 4-10.

[13] Alan Reynolds Thompson, The Anatomy of Drama (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), p. 219.

[14] Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 13-14.

[15] Kincaid, p.132.

[16] Davis, p. 257.

[17] Watt, p. 274.

[18] Barbara Hardy, "The Change of Heart in Dickens's Novels," Victorian Studies 5(1961-2), 57.

[19] George Ford, Dickens and His Readers: Aspects of Novel Criticism Since 1836 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 4.

[20] E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Arnold, 1927), p. 63.

[21] This page reference and all future references to pages in Pickwick Papers are from the reprint edition published by A.L. Burt Company, Publishers, n.d.

[22] This page reference and all future references to pages in Our Mutual Friend are from the reprint edition published by Signet, New American Library, 1964.

[23] Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 309.

[24] Michael Goldman, The Actor's Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama (New York: Viking, 1975), p. 128.

Dramatis Personae

Things are seldom what they seem,
Skim milk masquerades as cream.
W.S. Gilbert - HMS Pinafore

It is a commonplace in life and has become a convention in art that we infer station, disposition, and character, and can predict behavior from observations of physical characteristics, gesture, dress and other possessions. In both Pickwick Papers and Our Mutual Friend, Dickens creates characters as would a dramatist, by concentrating on external features. Dickens "builds" his characters in this way by exploiting his readers' trained readiness to rely on the external details he uses to create his characters. By sketching in these details, his characters and their surroundings burst into life full-grown and we follow them with our eyes much as if they were on stage. But the kinds of characters he creates whether basically realistic or grotesque and the contexts in which he places them control both our perception and reactions to them.

Realistic Characters

Dickens used visual detail in several ways, depending upon the effect he was after. When Dickens

gives us very few physical details about his characters, they seem more or less realistic, and consequently, more "novel-like" because we fill the gaps by imagining realistic detail. For example, we are given very few descriptive details about Pickwick and Sam Weller. All we learn is that Pickwick is bald, wears spectacles, tights and gaiters. When we meet Sam Weller we are told nothing at all about his physical characteristics. We are merely told what he is wearing. The only possible clues to his personality are that "A bright red handkerchief was wound in a very loose and unstudied style round his neck, and an old white hat was carelessly thrown on one side of his head."(123) Although Pickwick gets himself into situations that are grotesque in their absurdity, the fact that Pickwick and Sam are not described in grotesque terms allows us to see them as individuals and to get close to them, for grotesquerie almost always has a distancing effect.

Because Dickens creates many realistic characters in Our Mutual Friend, there are many about whom we have only a slight physical sense, but despite this slightness, Dickens gets across what he wants us to know, for the descriptions carry symbolic weight. For example, he provides few details about the appearance of his two main couples, but to indicate their essential goodness, he uses the literary convention of giving them pleasing

exteriors. So we are told about Harmon that he is a "dark gentleman. Thirty at the utmost. An expressive, one might say handsome, face."(55) Bella has "an exceedingly pretty figure and face."(51) We learn from Abbey Potterson that Lizzie Hexam is "good-looking,"(86) and though early scenes that involve Eugene don't describe his physical appearance at all, late in the novel, when he meets Lizzie where she has been hiding, he is described as having a "handsome face."(760) Dickens uses this literary shorthand to give us a sense of other realistic characters in Our Mutual Friend as well. For example, Rogue Riderhood is brought to visual life by our knowledge of what a bargeman might wear and by his "squinting leer"(18) which is enough of a clue to reveal the inner man.

Grotesques

In many cases Dickens exaggerates a physical characteristic that makes its owner into a grotesque. And although a Dickens character whose appearance is described in great detail is invariably a grotesque, Dickens is frequently creating grotesque characters, so minor, that they make an appearance in one scene taking up the space of one sentence, and are never seen or heard from again. For example, in Pickwick, on the way to

Manor Farm, the Pickwickians stop at a farm to try to get rid of their overly rambunctious horse. The farmer's wife is described as "a tall bony woman - straight all the way down - in a coarse blue pelisse, with the waist an inch or two below her arm-pits."(66) Here is an example of beautiful economy. The physical description is at one and the same time characterization. Similarly, in Our Mutual Friend Georgiana Podsnap is made to dance with a partner her mother has produced who is described as

> an ambling stranger, with one eye screwed up into extinction and the other framed and glazed, who, having looked down out of that organ, as if he descried Miss Podsnap at the bottom of some perpendicular shaft, brought her to the surface and ambled off with her.(164)

But, this sentence, unlike the one sentence description quoted above from Pickwick, serves not only to describe and characterize a very minor character. It also serves as Dickens' commentary, his moral indictment, of the event at which this character appears. We get a picture of a grotesque-looking individual who is about to dance with Georgiana Podsnap who has already been described as a grotesque. Dickens concentrates the grotesqueness in the young man's vision which is literally and, by implication, metaphorically distorted. We already know that the announced reason for the party is to celebrate Georgiana's eighteenth birthday, but we also know that it is really being thrown by her parents as a way of

cancelling their social debts. So what we have are a number of linked distortions - the people are grotesque, and the event itself is on the order of grotesque. The moral indictment is in the implicit contrast to what would be normal and natural - an eighteenth birthday party thrown by parents out of love for their child with guests invited who are genuine friends and well-wishers.

Dickens manipulates us into laughing at these grotesques even though it is all pretty horrifying partly because we don't identify or care very much about them and partly because we delight in the artistry of the creator. But Dickens does not necessarily create grotesques just for laughter's sake. Two grotesque children, one from each novel, make for an interesting contrast. In Pickwick, Joe the fat boy is a comic grotesque. When we meet Joe, he is described to us as "a fat and red-faced boy."(51) No description is provided of any other of his physical characteristics or his dress. Everything we are told about him contributes to our sense of his fatness. Dickens tells us he waddles, and when it is time to eat, "the leaden eyes, which twinkled behind his mountainous cheeks, leered horribly upon the food."(54) Thus introduced to us (and the Pickwickians), he is fixed in our minds and we greet him like a familiar friend when the Pickwickians make subsequent trips to Dingley Dell. His behavior is

entirely predictable and therefore delightful. He knows no bounds. As Wardle says, "he's a natural curiosity."(57)

Jenny Wren in Our Mutual Friend is also a grotesque child described in terms of her physical characteristics. But it is likely that in comparing her with the fat boy Joe, Dickens would have characterized her as an unnatural curiosity. When we meet her for the first time we see her as Charley Hexam and Bradley Headstone do. They have come looking for Lizzy Hexam. "A parlour door within a small entry stood open and disclosed a child - a dwarf - a girl - a something."(251) She tells them she can't get up because

> "my back's bad and my legs are queer." . . . The queer litle figure and the queer but not ugly little face, with its bright grey eyes, were so sharp that the sharpness of the manner seemed unavoidable. As if, being turned out of the mould it must be sharp.(251)

Charley and Bradley "looked at the little creature with a wonder that did not diminish"(252) and as they make conversation, we and they find out about Jenny's profession as a doll's dressmaker.

> The person of the house gave a weird little laugh . . . and gave them another look . . . She had an elfin chin that was capable of great expression, and whenever she gave this look, she hitched this chin up - as if her eyes and her chin worked together on the same wires.(252)

This is quite different from the descriptions we get of that grotesque child, the fat boy Joe, and the difference

is in the context in which we find the two characters. We know nothing about Joe except that he is Mr. Wardle's servant and that he is grotesquely fat because he likes to eat. From the little we can tell, he is well treated and is allowed to indulge himself. After all, he belongs to the idyllic world of Dingley Dell.

Jenny, on the other hand, can hardly indulge herself in anything except her sharpness. She is a grotesque through no fault of her own. Dickens has made her a grotesque with a bad back and queer legs to dramatize that she has been crippled by a hostile society that forces twelve-year-olds to work or starve. She is an unnatural curiosity, from a psychological point of view as well, because she is a child forced too early into the role of adult, bitter at other children who have tortured her because of her bad back and queer legs, and bitter at her father who is a burden instead of a support. Her entire situation, in fact, as a member of the neglected poor of London, is grotesque. We can laugh at the grotesqueness of the fat boy Joe, but the grotesqueness of Jenny Wren is no laughing matter.

Disguise

Disguise, a stock comic device, is a part of both novels, but in Our Mutual Friend the device becomes

transformed from the literal to the figurative. The notion that "clothes make the man" is a component of both novels and is treated comically in Pickwick when Dickens has Sam Weller comment on the clothing Pickwick has provided for him for his new job:

> Mr. Weller was furnished with a grey coat with the "P.C." button, a black hat with a cockade to it, a pink striped waistcoat, light breeches and gaiters, and a variety of other necessaries, too numerous to recapitulate.
>
> "Well," said that suddenly-transformed individual, . . . "I wonder vether I'm meant to be a footman, or a groom, or a gamekeeper, or a seedsman. I looks like a compo of every one on 'em."(161)

Problems arise, however. People arrive at the wrong conclusions if they rely on appearance because, for any number of reasons, many people are actors, costumed to play roles they have assigned themselves or society has assigned them. For example, disguise is used in a conventionally theatrical way early in Pickwick when Tupman "borrows" Winkle's coat with the Pickwick Club button, while Winkle is asleep, for Jingle to wear to the Rochester Charity Ball. Jingle's wearing Winkle's coat creates classic comic confusion reminiscent of centuries of stage farce. Jingle insults an army officer who, the next morning, comes looking for the gentleman who "wears a bright blue dress coat, with a gilt button with P.C. on it"(24) and Winkle is summoned. Dr. Slammer wants a written apology.

> If the principal tower of Rochester Castle had suddenly walked from its foundation, and stationed itself opposite the coffee-room window, Mr. Winkle's surprise would have been as nothing, compared with the profound astonishment with which he had heard this address. His first impression was, that his coat had been stolen.(25-6)

But his coat is in his closet, though it does show signs of having been worn. He considers the evidence, what he sees and what he has heard, and draws the following conclusion:

> "It must be so," said Winkle, letting the coat fall from his hands. "I took too much wine after dinner and have a very vague recollection of walking about the streets, and smoking a cigar afterwards. The fact is, I was very drunk; - I must have changed my coat - gone somewhere - and insulted somebody - I have no doubt of it; and this message is the terrible consequences."(26)

This scene is reminiscent of comic confusion in earlier theatrical comedies involving doubles - in such plays as Plautus' Amphitryon and Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors and Twelfth Night.

Deliberate disguise involving stealing someone else's coat in order to deceive is also a plot device in Our Mutual Friend, but here the results are far from comic. John Harmon, returning to England, is drugged and robbed by a sailor who changes into Harmon's clothes intending to impersonate Harmon. Harmon sobers up only to find that the sailor has been killed and his body identified by fellow shipmates as Harmon's. Harmon does a double-take as did Winkle, for he is in the very strange situation of having been declared dead. He

decides to remain "dead" since the conditions of his father's will do not please him, and, deciding on another disguise, first goes by the name of Julius Hanford, then becomes secretary to the Boffins and woos and wins Bella Wilfer under the alias John Rokesmith. At one point, however, in trying to decide whether to shed his disguise or not, he reveals his ruminations in something like a dramatic monologue. It is as if he is on stage by himself, thiking out loud. He has found that the Boffins deserve their good fortune, but that Bella does not love him:

> When he saw them and knew them and . . . could find no flaw in them, he asked himself, "And shall I come to life to dispossess such people as these?" He had heard from Bella's own lips . . . that the marriage would have been on her part mercenary. He had since tried her, in his own unknown person and supposed station, and she not only rejected his advance but resented them. Was it for him to have the shame of buying her, or the meanness of punishing her? Yet by coming to life and accepting the condition of the inheritance, he must do the former; and by coming to life and rejecting it, he must do the latter.(421-2)

It should be noted that a man's wooing and winning a woman while using a false identity is a favorite device in stage comedy, as,for example, in Jonson's Bartholomew Fair, and Sheridan's The Rivals. But here in Our Mutual Friend, Dickens uses Harmon's disguise as a realistic plot device in order to dramatize Harmon's dilemma. He must disguise his identity in order not to hurt those he loves. This hinges on the inheritance which for Harmon at this point is a curse rather than a blessing. Harmon,

trapped by conditions beyond his control, only achieves his ends and assumes his true identity through the mechanism of Boffin, who pretends to be a miser in order to test Bella. Harmon can only reveal his true identity when he is absolutely sure that his wife will stand by him even if he were a pauper. Boffin's "disguise" as a miser is the opposite of Harmon's in that it is truly theatrical in its dependence on the artifice of stage comedy. Unfortunately, this is inconsistent with the realistic side of Boffin's characterization that we see in his conversations with the Lammles, for example, and Dickens never reconciles the realistic Boffin with the buffoon. This is a weakness in the subplot, as acknowledged by many of the critics.

But, to be deceptive, people don't have to both deliberately assume a disguise and masquerade under a different name or personality. Pickwick's three travelling companions are examples of people whose everyday clothes are meant to deceive in that each is dressed in an outfit meant to project a false image, but an image each believes in. When we meet them, they are sitting with Pickwick:

> On his right hand sat Mr. Tracy Tupman; . . . Time and feeding had expanded that once romantic form; the black silk waistcoat had become more and more developed; inch by inch had the gold watch-chain beneath it disappeared from within the range of Tupman's vision; and gradually had the capacious chin encroached upon the borders of the white cravat, but the soul of Tupman had known no change - admiration

> of the fair sex was still its ruling passion. On the left of his great leader sat the poetic Snodgrass, and near him again the sporting Winkle, the former poetically enveloped in a mysterious blue cloak with a canine-skin collar, and the latter communicating additional luster to a new green shooting coat, plain neckerchief, and closely-fitting drabs.(3-4)

Tupman may dress the part of the lover, but he is so unsuccessful a lover that Rachel Wardle is stolen away from him with his unwitting help; Snodgrass' blue cloak may help him look the part of he poet, but he writes wretched poetry; and Winkle's new green shooting jacket does not fool anyone into thinking that Winkle is a true sportsman. He is a coward and is incompetant at every sport he tries - horseback riding, rook-shooting, and ice skating.

In Our Mutual Friend, Bradley Headstone has outfitted himself for a part he wants to play - that of schoolmaster. If Tupman's "ruling passion" is "admiration of the fair sex," Snodgrass' "poetry," and Winkle's "sport," then Bradley's is "respectability:"

> Bradley Headstone, in his decent black coat and waistcoat, and decent white shirt, and decent formal black tie, and decent pantaloons of pepper and salt, with his decent silver watch in his pocket and its decent hair-guard round his neck, looked a thoroughly decent young man of six-and-twenty.(246)

The Pickwickians are sublimely oblivious to the fraud involved in outfitting themselves as they have. The only times they confront their deceptions are in the farcical scenes when theirreal personalities are exposed. Bradley, on the other hand, in Dickens' complex,

psychological rendering, always seems to be painfully aware of himself as a fraud:

> He was never seen in any other dress, and yet there was a certain stiffness in his manner of wearing this, as if there were a want of adaptation between him and it, recalling some mechanics in their holiday clothes. He had acquired mechanically a great store of teacher's knowledge. . . . From his early childhood up, his mind had been a place of mechanical stowage. . . . There was a kind of settled trouble in the face. It was the face belonging to a naturally slow or inattentive intellect that had toiled hard to get what it had won and that had to hold it now that it was gotten. He always seemed to be uneasy lest anything should be missing from his metal warehouse, and taking stock to assure himself.(246)

We never learn why the Pickwickians are the frauds they are. Given the farcical nature of Pickwick, it hardly matters. They are stereotypical characters found in farce comedy, but they ring true in that they are like many people who conceal their real selves and are eventually found out. But we do learn some facts about Bradley's background that give his appearance and demeanor a complexity and a psychological reality that have great impact:

> . . . [T]here was enough of what was animal, and of what was fiery (though smouldering), still visible in him to suggest that if young Bradley Headstone, when a pauper lad, had chanced to be told off for the sea, he would not have been the last man in a ship's crew. Regarding that origin of his, he was proud, moody, and sullen, desiring it to be forgotten. And few people knew of it.(246)

Ultimately, this points to the issue of class - an important theme in Our Mutual Friend, but one that has little significance in Pickwick. The Pickwickians seem

to be men of independent means off on a jaunt through England. Bradley is struggling up the social ladder, after having pulled himself up by his bootstraps. On the one hand, Bradley has struggled to attain the rank of schoolmaster, and earned the right to wear the appropriate costume; on the other hand, in the scenes with Eugene Wrayburn, we can see how from a different perspective he seems condemned through an accident of birth to be limited to the role of schoolmaster. Bradley is painfully aware that the role in life cut out for Eugene is a much more "respectable" one, and that Eugene did not have to struggle to attain it. That Eugene is also in his own way trapped by circumstances beyond his control is something Bradley doesn't see.

Finally, we see Bradley no longer conscious of feeling like a fraud, and this, ironically, is when he is at his most fraudulent. He becomes Riderhood's double, having deliberately copied his dress in order to murder Eugene. "And whereas, in his own schoolmaster clothes, he usually looked as if they were the clothes of some other man, he now looked, in the clothes of some other man, or men, as if they were his own."(693) The implications here point to Bradley's distressing alienation from his true self which cause him to feel that he is an imposter, an overreacher, not an uncommon reaction of someone who has moved up several notches on

the social ladder. As he plots Eugene's murder, the tension builds:

> Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks, encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal. Under his daily restraint, it was his compensation, not his trouble to give a glance towards his state at night and to the freedom of its being indulged.(601)

Having reached this schizophrenic state, there is no turning back for Bradley Headstone.

As in the case of Bradley Headstone, Dickens frequently dramatizes how people hide behind their chosen outfits, and that the wearing of a costume or uniform, whether it is tied to an occupation or social class often is used as a subtle or sometimes not so subtle means of claiming and asserting influence and power over others.

Probably the most wonderful extended comment on the power of a uniform to impress is the episode in Pickwick in which work uniforms are the star attraction - the footman's "swarry." This scene parodies the world of their masters', a world where hierarchies of social class exist, where distinctions of rank are emphasized, and where members of a class are aware of who is above and who below them. Through dress and possessions, the footmen, belonging to the servant class, have developed a mock-hierarchy within their class. Sam has been invited by Mr. John Smauker, always designated as "a powder-headed footman in gorgeous livery"(507) who

imitates his master's pretensions to grandeur and good taste. He produces a "small snuff-box with a fox's head on top of it,"(508) then discusses the art of taking snuff with Sam and gives him his recommendations. On the way to the "swarry," Mr. Smauker warns Sam, "'You'll see some very handsome uniforms, Mr. Weller . . . and perhaps you'll find some of the gentlemen rather high at first, you know, but they'll come around.'"(529) When they arrive at the greengrocer's shop "the full splendour of the scene burst upon Mr Weller's view."(529) Sam is treated to a show in technicolor. He sees "a stoutish gentleman in a bright crimson coat with long tail, vividly red breeches, and a cocked hat"(530) and one gentleman "in a yellow waistcoat, with a coach trimming border,"(530) who was talking to a "neighbor in green-foil small."(530) Soon arrive "a gentleman in orange-coloured plush"(531) and "another selection in purple cloth with a great extent of stocking."(531) During the meal Sam carries on a conversation with a footman dressed in a "light-blue suit, and leader buttons"(532) about the possibilities for wooing women connected with the families for whom they work, and in a moment of cameraderie, the gentleman in blue comments: "'. . . [W]e know, Mr. Weller - we, who are men of the world - that a good uniform must work its way with the women, sooner or later.'"(534)

Also, in Pickwick, Dickens portrays comically this desire to project an image in his creation of Bob Sawyer, whom we first meet as a medical student, and later as surgeon, a part for which he costumes himself accordingly. Winkle, coming upon his new shop quite by accident, doesn't even recognize him. Sawyer is in the little parlor in the back of the shop drinking with his friend Bob Allen, when he realizes a customer is at the counter. ". . . [A] studious-looking young gentleman in green spectacles, with a very large book in his hand, glided quietly into the shop, and stepping behind the counter, requested to know the visitor's pleasure."(541) As soon as he recognizes Winkle, however, he breaks into laughter and asks Winkle, "'What, don't you know me?'"(542) When Winkle replies that he doesn't, Sawyer responds with glee, "and pulling off his green spectacles, grinned the identical grin of Robert Sawyer, Esquire, formerly of Guy's Hospital."(542) Later he explains to Winkle how he ended up in this particular shop. After he passed his exams, he "put on a black suit of clothes and a pair of spectacles, and came here, to look as solemn as I could."(543) To dress for the part is almost to gain it.

The characterization of the rising young businessman in both novels parallels that of Bob Sawyer and Bradley Headstone except that the rising young businessman is higher in social rank, and partly for that reason is

portrayed with more anger and less sympathy by Dickens. High social rank means more power and implies a corollary - the potential abuse of that power. In Pickwick rising young businessmen play a very small part in the novel. The only ones we meet are Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, and his friend and business associate, Frank Simmery, Esquire, both of the Stock Exchange. This is what we are told about Flasher's situation when Pell and the Wellers come to do business with him:

> The office of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, of the Stock Exchange, was in a first floor up a court behind the Bank of England; the house of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire was at Brixton, Surrey; the horse and stanhope of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire were at an adjacent livery stable; the groom of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, was on his way to the West End to deliver some game; the clerk of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, had gone to his dinner; and so Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, himself, cried, "Come in. . . ."(792)

And this is what Flasher and Simmery look like: "Both gentlemen had very small boots and very big rings, and very little watches and very large guard chains, and symmetrical inexpressibles and scented pocket handkerchiefs."(793) Each also had a "gold pencil-case."(793)

In Our Mutual Friend this business "type" decked out as an important person has multiplied, and there are many characters of Flasher's ilk, all of them more unsavory than Flasher because they play larger parts and are more integral to the novel. Alfred Lammle is a prime example. When we first meet him sitting around the Podsnap's

dining table he is described as having "too much nose on his face, too much ginger on his waistcoat, too much sparkle in his studs, his eyes, his buttons, his talk, and his teeth."(25) When we are at his home, we get a glimpse of his surroundings and friends and see that, as in the case of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, there is a direct connection between the appearance of the surroundings and its inhabitants.

> . . . [T]here was a certain handsome room with a billiard table in it . . . which might have been Mr. Lammle's office, or library, but was called by neither name, but simply Mr. Lammle's room, so it would have been hard . . . to determine whether its frequenters were men of pleasure or men of business. Between the room and the men there were strong points of general resemblance. Both were too gaudy, too slangy, too odorous of cigars, and too much given to horse-flesh, the latter characteristic being exemplified in the room by its decorations and in the men by their conversation. High-stepping horses seemed necessary to all of Mr. Lammle's friends . . . [A] few of them (these, mostly asthmatic and thick-lipped) . . . were for ever demonstrating to the rest, with gold pencil-cases which they could hardly hold because of the big rings on their fingers, how money was to be made.(293-4)

The one "friend" of Lammle's we get to know is the devious Fascination Fledgeby who, we are told, is "sensible of the value of appearances as an investment, and liked to dress well."(304)

Two other primary examples of those in Our Mutual Friend who are "sensible of the value of appearances as an investment" are Veneering and Podsnap, whom Dickens describes mostly by detailing their possessions. Without them they are nothing. Their possessions don't so much

reflect who they are; in effect, they are their possessions. Dickens lavishes a great amount of detail on both Veneering and Podsnap. The essence of Veneering is his "newness." After describing all his new possessions, Dickens says, "all things were in a state of high varnish and polish. And what was observable in the furniture, was observable in the Veneerings - the surface smelt a little too much of the workshop and was a trifle sticky."(20) The essence of Podsnap is best described by Dickens as "podsnappery,"(152) an arrogant self-righteousness. After giving us examples of this by citing the kind of art, music, and literature a disciple of Podsnappery would prefer, Dickens contrasts him with Veneering by saying that their establishments had nothing in common.

> Hideous solidity was the characteristic of the Podsnap plate. Everything was made to look as heavy as it could and to take up as much room as possible. Everything said boastfully, "Here you have as much of me in my ugliness as if I were only lead; but I am so many ounces of precious metal worth so much an ounce - wouldn't you like to melt me down"?(154)

This is different from the parading and preening of the footmen in Pickwick who seem like so many birds showing off to each other. Veneering and Podsnap are not taking part in a silly charade; they are deadly serious. Their possessions signify their status in a world where status signifies and, consequently, confers real power.

But disguise extends beyond hiding behind clothes

and other possessions. In both novels Dickens has characters alter the very features they were born with for the purposes of deception. This often gives them a grotesque appearance, which dramatizes that such contrivances are distortions of the natural state. For example in Pickwick Dickens creates Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, a literary and historical descendant of the eighteenth-century fop, who is introduced to Pickwick in Bath. First Dickens describes his costume, but ends up with an ironic comment about his teeth:

> The friend was a charming young man of not much more than fifty, dressed in a very bright blue coat with resplendent buttons, black trousers, and the thinnest possible pair of highly-polished boots. A gold eye-glass was suspended from his neck by a short broad black ribbon; a gold snuff-box was lightly clasped in his left hand, gold rings innumberable glittered on his fingers, and a large diamond pin set in gold glistened in his shirt frill. He had a gold watch, and a gold curb chain with large gold seals; and he carried a pliant ebony cane with a heavy gold top. His linen was of the very whitest, finest, and stiffest; his snuff was princes' mixture; his scent bouquet du roi. His features were contracted into a perpetual smile; and his teeth were in such perfect order that it was difficult at a small distance to tell the real ones from the false.(504-5)

In Our Mutual Friend Dickens makes extensive reference to cosmetic changes as an element of disguise and deceit, and in doing so, suggests that disguise does not have to be quite as theatrical as the example above derived from stage comedy. Disguising natural features through cosmetic changes are all around us, part of the texture of our everyday lives. In describing Mrs. Lammle

at the Veneering's dining table, he states that she has a "complexion that lights up well when powdered - as it is . . . "(25) Dickens pokes fun at Twemlow, even though he is one of the most sympathetic characters in the novel because he really looks grotesque when Veneering visits unannounced to ask Twemlow to work for his election to Parliament.

> There he finds Twemlow in his lodgings, fresh from the hands of a secret artist who has been doing something to his hair with yolks of eggs. The process requiring that Twemlow shall, for two hours after the application, allow his hair to stick upright and dry gradually, he is in an appropriate state for the receipt of startling intelligence, looking equally like the Monumement on Fish Street Hill and King Priam on a certain incendiary occasion not wholly unknown as a neat point from the classics.(277)

But the epitome of falseness is Lady Tippins, one of the characters Dickens dislikes the most. As Veneering and Podsnap are equated with their furniture, so Lady Tippins is equated with her cosmetic facade. She is the essence of falseness. When we first meet her at the Veneering's dining table, she is described as having "an immense obtuse drab oblong face, like a face in a tablespoon, and a dyed Long Walk up the top of her head, as a convenient public approach to the bunch of false hair behind."(25) On the morning of the wedding of the Lammles, we get a more full description of her in all her grotesqueness:

> . . . [T]hat horrible old Lady Tippins . . . begins to be dyed and varnished for the interesting

> occasion. . . . Whereabout in the bonnet and drapery announced by her name, any fragment of the real woman may be concealed, is perhaps known to her maid; but you could easily buy all you see of her in Bond Street: or you might scalp her, and peel her, and yet not penetrate to the genuine article. She has a large gold eye-glass, has Lady Tippins, to survey the proceedings with. If she had one in each eye, it might keep that other drooping lid up and look more uniform. But perennial youth is in her artificial flowers, and her list of lovers is full.(141)

And a year later, on the morning of the anniversary celebration of the Lammle's marriage, Dickens comments about Lady Tippins that "as to her face and neck this adorable divinity is, as it were, a diurnal species of lobster - throwing off a shell every forenoon and needing to keep in a retired spot until a new crust hardens."(452-3)

Finally, it might be useful to culminate the discussion of the significance of the externals of dress and appearance by examining one scene from each novel in which Dickens focuses on the complicated issue of appearance and dress and their role as costume and disguise. In Pickwick the episode is a scene typical to farce comedy in its tone and development. The Pickwickians have been invited to Mrs. Leo Hunter's "fancy dress dejeune," and they must choose costumes. Mr. Leo Hunter advises Pickwick on choosing a costume:

> "Dear me," said Mr. Pickwick, glancing at his own figure - "I can't possibly" -
> "Can't Sir; can't!" exclaimed Mr. Leo Hunter. . . . Consider, Sir, how many appropriate characters are open for your selection. Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, Pythagoras - all founders of clubs."

> "I know that," said Mr. Pickwick, "but as I cannot put myself in competition with those great men, I cannot presume to wear their dresses."
>
> The grave man considered deeply, for a few seconds, and then said,
>
> "On reflection, Sir, I don't know whether it would not afford Mrs. Leo Hunter greater pleasure if her guests saw a gentleman of your celebrity in his own costume, rather than in an assumed one."(201)

So Mr. Leo Hunter decides he can make an exception. But Pickwick's costume isn't the only problem. Mrs. Pott wants to go as Apollo, "'Only Pott objects to the tunic,'"(201) Winkle tells Pickwick. The implication is that her wearing a plain ordinary tunic would reflect poorly on her position.

> "He's right. He is quite right," said Mr. Pickwick emphatically.
>
> "Yes; - so, she's going to wear a white satin gown with gold spangles."
>
> "They'll hardly know what she's meant for; will they?" inquired Mr. Snodgrass.
>
> "Of course they will," replied Mr. Winkle indignantly. They'll see her lyre, won't they?"
>
> "True; I forgot that," said Mr. Snodgrass.(201-2)

But there are more costume troubles brewing. Tupman tells Pickwick that he is going to go disguised as a bandit.

> "You don't mean to say," said Mr. Pickwick, gazing with solemn sternness at his friend, " . . . that it is your intention to put yourself into a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail?"
>
> "Such is my intention, Sir," replied Mr. Tupman warmly. "And why not, Sir?"
>
> "Because Sir," said Mr. Pickwick, considerably excited - "Because you are too old, Sir."
>
> "Too old!" exclaimed Mr. Tupman.
>
> "And if further ground of objection be wanting," continued Mr. Pickwick, "you are too fat, Sir."
>
> "Sir," said Mr. Tupman, his face suffused with crimson glow, "This is an insult."
>
> "Sir," replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone, "It

> is not half the insult to you, that your appearance in my presence in a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail, would be to me."(202)

Pickwick relents, however, and he leaves for Mrs. Leo Hunter's with his three costumed friends. But Dickens adds a particularly amusing note when Pickwick approaches the "fancy dress dejeune" where the populace has lined up to watch the guests arrive, and the boys in the street applaud Pickwick "as loudly as anybody, probably under the impression that his tights and gaiters were some remnants of the dark ages."(205)

Dickens adds a final twist to this episode when he has Jingle appear as an honored guest at the "fancy dress dejeune." His costume is the uniform of a naval officer and he is introduced by Mrs. Hunter as Mr. Charles Fitz-Marshall. Mrs. Hunter confides to Pickwick that he is a man of fortune. At this point both we, the readers, and the Pickwickians know that Jingle is an imposter and is using the costume as a genuine disguise in order to deceive Mrs. Hunter and her monied friends. We watched him use Winkle's coat for the same purposes at the Rochester charity ball, and we watched while he deceptively courted Rachel Wardle for her money. When Jingle spies the Pickwickians he makes a hasty exit.

What we have here are people making mistakes when they try to distinguish truth from falsehood through the use of dress as evidence. A group of people put on

costumes for the fun of it, but their identities underneath the costumes are obvious. They are each playing at being someone else. Pickwick feels he can't presume to impersonate someone else, so he goes as himself, but is mistaken as being in costume anyway. Jingle the supreme actor, uses his costume not as part of a frolic but in earnest, as a disguise so that he can be someone he is not, in order to deceive. Part of the comedy stems from the irony that he has come to a costume ball wearing a costume, and that his host, Mrs. Hunter, who is also one of his intended victims, does not realize he is in costume. This confusion of identity is a common device in farce meant to raise the question, "Who are we?" and demonstrates, as Sucksmith asserts that "as early as Pickwick, Dickens was aware of the ironic discrepancy between the mask and the face."[1]

In Our Mutual Friend the scene in which Riderhood is brought back to life from nearly drowning deals with many of these same issues but here the symbolic resonance undercuts any inclination we might have to laugh at Riderhood and his predictable behavior once he revives. Here we have a strangely moving birth. We watch as a person is born into conscious life. In a sense the scene telescopes Riderhood's life so that we can witness his passage from innocence into experience. We watch him gradually assume the expression, attitude and costume we

recognize as as Riderhood's. As Riderhood gains consciousness, his soul becomes buried under the successive layers with which society has identified, labelled, and in some sense, trapped him. In this Rousseau-like vision of mankind, he is burdened with a costume and attitude that has disguised the soul he, like all of us, was born with. There is jubilation when he begins to revive:

> See! A token of life! An indubitable token of life! The spark may smoulder and go out, or it may glow and expand, but see! The four rough fellows seeing, shed tears. Neither Riderhood in this world, nor Riderhood in the other, could draw tears from them, but a striving human soul between the two can do it easily.(492)

Riderhood's daughter, Pleasant, is deluded into thinking things will be different when he resumes consciousness, but she is mistaken.

> The short-lived delusion begins to fade. The low, bad, unimpressible face is coming up from the depths . . . to the surface again. As he grows warm, the doctor and the four men cool. As his lineaments soften with life, their faces and their hearts harden to him.(494)

The bedside watchers "wait for him to become conscious that they will be glad to get rid of him."(495) The doctor asks him how he feels: "He replied gruffly, 'Nothing to boast on.' Having, in fact, returned to life in an uncommonly sulky state."(496) Piece by piece he replaces his costume:

> Mr. Riderhood next demands his shirt, and draws it on over his head . . .
> . . .

> He then buttons his linen very moodily, . . . He then doggedly demands his other garments and slowly gets them on, with an appearance of great malevolence . . . . . .
> "Where's my fur cap?" he ask in a surly voice, when he has shuffled his clothes on.(496)

Putting Riderhood, one of the more despicable characters in the novel, through this experience of nearly drowning allows Dickens to deal with some of the complexities inherent in the concept of identity. The ambiguities of identity are implicit in the use of the plot device of the disguise in traditional farce comedy. But here in Our Mutual Friend Dickens has taken the notion of disguise to its logical conclusion and instead of using it strictly as a theatrical plot device, has shown how society contributes toward moulding each one of us into a being that can be seen as a distortion of some true inner self, and is, therefore, in a sense, a disguise. Dickens has, in this way, managed to elicit from us some sympathy for Riderhood as a fellow human being, a character whose behavior toward everyone around him - especially his daughter - elicits in all other instances no sympathy at all.

[1] Harvey Sucksmith, The Narrative Art of Charles Dickens (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 257.

Tricksters and Gulls

> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less."
>
> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty "which is to be master - that's all."
>
> Lewis Carroll
> Through The Looking Glass

The trickster gulling his victim is a classic plot device often found in broad farce, reaching back to Aristophanes and repeatedly used in Renaissance and Restoration theater as well. Dickens uses this comic formula of the trickster setting up his victim as the central plot device in both novels. In Pickwick we laugh because the victims deserve their fate and we know they won't suffer any lasting harm. In Our Mutual Friend, however, frequently, instead of laughing, we often gasp with horror, for victims of tricksters rarely deserve their fate and they suffer a great deal.

Jingle is the incarnation of the classic trickster found in stage comedy, and much of the plot of Pickwick is the stringing together of incidents in which Jingle gulls an unsuspecting party. We don't realize his true nature in his earliest scenes of the novel (we too are gulled), but as we watch him operate, the evidence mounts. Part of the interest and amusement is in our

realizing Jingle's true nature before the Pickwickians do, though they have the same evidence we do. They are so ridiculously innocent and ignorant of the ways of the world, that they invite the treatment they receive from him, starting with his "borrowing" of Winkle's coat. Jingle's deception of Rachel Wardle is far grander than is his deception in the episode of the "borrowed plumage," and involves a lot of staging. A supreme actor, Jingle writes a very clever script in order to set up the "evidence" in such a way that everyone draws the conclusions he wants them to draw. We don't know exactly how Jingle is going to manipulate all the principals until he's done it and we can't believe he is going to pull it off, but pull it off he does, partly because he is lucky. While walking in the garden at Manor Farm, he overhears the clandestine courting of Rachel Wardle and Mr. Tupman. When he gets Rachel Wardle alone, he goes into his act:

> That insinuating gentleman sighed deeply, fixed his eyes on the spinster aunt's face for a couple of minutes, started melodramatically, and suddenly withdrew them.
>
> "You seem unhappy, Mr. Jingle," said the lady . . . "May I show my gratitude . . . by inquiring into the cause, with a view, if possible, to its removal?"
>
> "Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Jingle, with another start - "removal! remove my unhappiness, and your love bestowed upon a man who is insensible to the blessing - who even now contemplates a design upon the affections of the niece of the creatue who - but no; he is my friend; I will not expose his vices. Miss Wardle - farewell!" . . . Mr. Jingle applied to his eyes the remnant of a handkerchief . . . and turned toward the door.

> "Stay, Mr. Jingle!" said the spinster aunt emphatically. "You have made an allusion to Mr. Tupman - explain it.
> "Never!" exclaimed Jingle, with a professional (i.e. theatrical) air. "Never!" and by way of showing that he had no desire to be questioned further, he drew a chair close to that of the spinster aunt and sat down.
> "Mr. Jingle," said the aunt, "I entreat - I implore you, if there is any dreadful mystery connected with Mr. Tupman, reveal it."
> "Can I?" said Mr. Jingle, fixing his eyes on the aunt's face - "Can I see - lovely creature - sacrificed at the shrine - heartless avarice!" He appeared to be struggling with various conflicting emotions for a few seconds, and then said in a low deep voice - "Tupman only wants your money."
> "Wretch!" exclaimed the spinster, with energetic indignation. (Mr. Jingle's doubts were resolved. She had money.)(108-9)

Rachel is appalled at the thought that Tupman might actually be in love with her niece, Emily, and says that she can't and won't believe it. Jingle's response is, "'Watch 'em.'"(109) We, of course, know that Jingle is deceiving her, but wonder how he is going to accomplish this. The "evidence" materializes the next day at dinner which convinces Rachel Wardle that Tupman doesn't love her and that Jingle does. The narrator then has us overhear a conversation between Jingle and Tupman which explains how Jingle constructed the "evidence." We find out that not only is he a supreme actor, Jingle's a clever director as well. Tupman starts with a question:

> "How did I do it?" he inquired.
> "Splendid - capital - couldn't act better myself - you must repeat the part to-morrow - every evening, till further notice."
> "Does - Rachel still wish it?" "Of course - she don't like it - but must be done - avert suspicion . . . only few days more - when old folks

blinded - crown your happiness."(111)

When Jingle asks him if he has a message for Rachel, the "unsuspicious Mr. Tupman"(111) tells Jingle to tell her "'. . . how hard I find it to dissemble - . . . and how ardently I long for the time when I may call her mine, and all dissimulation may be unnecessary.'"(111) The irony in this conversation - Tupman's talking to Jingle, of all people, about the difficulties of dissembling, enriches the already comic situation. Gulls are often especially comic because they are so unsuspecting that they often help their deceivers along. Tupman, for example, has already seen how Jingle acted at the charity ball, in Winkle's "borrowed plumage," but Jingle is so clever that he wins Tupman over in spite of earlier suspicions. The conversation quoted above concludes as follows:

> "Oh my friend!" said poor Mr. Tupman, . . . "receive my warmest thanks for your disinterested kindness; and forgive me if I have ever, even in thought, done you the injustice of supposing that you could stand in my way. My dear friend can I ever repay you?"
>
> "Don't talk of it," replied Mr. Jingle. He stopped short, as if suddenly recollecting something, and said - "By-the-by, you can't spare ten pounds, can you? . . ."(111)

And Tupman, fool that he is, "lends" him the money. The situation here is reminiscent of scenes involving other clever tricksters - the scene in Volpone where Volpone tricks Corvino into handing over his wife, and the scenes in The Country Wife where Horner tricks many men into

handing over their wives.

Rachel is "saved" from the rascal Jingle just in time, but the foiling of that scheme does not mean the end of the seemingly irrepressible Jingle, because he pops up in several more episodes with his sidekick Job. In the farcical episode at the girls' boarding school as well as in the later ones where Jingle masquerades as Colonel Fitz-William in his appearance at Mrs. Hunter's "fancy dress dejeune," and in his attempt in the same disguise to win the hand of Nupkins' daughter, we cheer Jingle on because of his cleverness and because his victims are such ripe targets; they are vain, naive, and/or greedy.

But Pickwick and Sam eventually do get a small measure of satisfaction in their pursuit of Jingle and Job in the exposure scene at the home of Nupkins. And this end[1] is typically farcical. Sam and Nupkins' servants wait for Trotter in the kitchen. When he appears at the door Weller and Nupkins' servants rough him up downstairs and then at the signal of a bell

> . . . Sam seized one arm and Mr. Muzzle the other; and one pulling before, and the other pushing behind, they conveyed him up stairs, and into the parlour.
>
> It was an impressive tableau. Alfred Jingle, Esquire, alias Captain Fitz-Marshall, was standing near the door with his hat in his hand, and a smile on his face wholly unmoved by his very unpleasant situation. Confrontingz him, stood Mr. Pickwick, who had evidently been inculcating some high moral lesson, for his left hand was beneath his coat tail, and his right extended in air, as was his wont when delivering himself of an impressive address. At a

> little distance stood Mr. Tupman with indignant countenance carefully held back by his two younger friends; and at the further end of the room were Mr. Nupkins, Mrs. Nupkins, and Miss Nupkins, gloomily grand,and savagely vexed.(360)

The rest of the scene is a delicate balance between punishment of Job and Jingle and frustration on the part of everyone else. Jingle remains irrepressible and Job impudent. And although they are in a sense classic overreachers who fail in their ultimate quest, they impress us because they are shrewd observers of human nature. When Nupkins asks the rhetorical question "'What prevents me . . . from detaining these men as rogues and imposters?'"(360) Jingle's answer is on the mark: "'Pride, old fellow, pride, . . . Wouldn't do - no go - caught a captain, eh? - ha! public - not for worlds - look stupid - very!'"(360)

Pickwick then launches into a pompous, angry speech about how they deserve more punishment than they will get because he is willing to settle for exposing them for the imposters they are. Job Trotter goads him on and Jingle has the final word:

> "Ha! ha!" said Jingle, "good fellow Pickwick - fine heart - stout old boy - but must NOT be passionate - bad thing, very - bye, bye - see you again some day - keep up your spirits - now Job - trot."
>
> With these words, Mr. Jingle stuck on his hat in his old fashion, and strode out of the room. Job Trotter paused, looked round, smiled, and then with a bow of mock solemnity to Mr. Pickwick, and a wink to Mr. Weller, the audacious slyness of which, baffles all description, followed the footsteps of his hopeful master.(361)

The advantage seems to be on their side again but even though Pickwick had forbade Sam's request to "'polish that ere Job off, in the front garden . . . .'"(361) he has given no such prohibition to Muzzle who " . . . concealing himself behind the street door, and rushing violently out, . . . contrived with great dexterity to overturn both Mr. Jingle and his attendant, down the flight of steps, into the American aloe tubs that stood beneath."(362) This is a fitting end that rights the balance, again. They get the drubbing they deserve, but it is as if they are not much more than impudent children who have been spanked.

But all is not just fun and games in Pickwick. Even in this first novel Dickens introduces characters and situations whose types will later appear in Our Mutual Friend. The deputy shepherd Reverend Stiggins is a hypocrite who preaches sobriety and reverence, but is really only interested in his own comfort. A trickster-preacher in the mold of Jonson's Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, he has his own ingenious schemes for keeping comfortable which center on finding gullible people like Mrs. Weller to invite him into their homes. When Sam goes to his father's for a visit, there is Stiggins sitting by the fire drinking hot pineapple rum and water, engaged in conversation with Mrs. Weller, " . . . and the topics principally descanted on, were the

virtues of the shepherd, the unworthiness of his flock, and the high crimes and misdemeanours of everybody beside . . ."(378-9)

Dickens makes it clear that this shepherd and deputy shepherd are not atypical. He has Tony Weller indict their "type," these itinerant preachers with dubious credentials:

> "The worst o' these here shepherds is, my boy, that they regularly turns the heads of all the young ladies, about here. Lord bless their little hearts, they thinks it's all right, and don't know no better; but they're the wictims of gammon, Samivel, the wictims o' gammon."(377)

But Stiggins gets his comeuppance also, and the scene in which it takes place is a wonderful blend of farce and realism. Tony Weller and his friends having made sure Stiggins shows up drunk at the monthly meeting of the United Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Association, they then sit in the audience and watch him get himself in trouble. When Stiggins knocks down a revered member, chaos breaks loose. Stiggins received his physical punishment at the hands of Tony Weller who "attacked the Reverend Mr. Stiggins with manual dexterity. . . . [A]nd without further invitation he gave the Reverend Mr. Stiggins a preliminary tap on the head, and began dancing round him in a buoyant and cork like manner . . ."(471-2) But unlike the farcical end of Jingle, before Stiggins gets a real drubbing, Sam pulls his father away and the Reverend Mr. Stiggins is removed

to "strong lodgings for the night."(472)

Our Mutual Friend is also a novel full of tricksters and gulls. Some are closely related to the types associated with the artifice of stage comedy, but many have been transformed into characters with realistic occupations and settings and go about gulling their vulnerable and unsuspecting victims in true nineteenth-century fashion. Silas Wegg is the closest parallel to Jingle in that he also is both a grotesque and a trickster. Cetainly he inhabits a strand in the novel that is the closest to farce comedy. Both men are one dimensional schemers full of jaunty self-confidence and boundless energy. But whereas Jingle's escapades are randomly strung together as part of a picaresque novel, Wegg's moves are not on a vertical plane, but rather, accumulate and spiral downward, and each incident added to the ones that precede it, combine to reveal a treacherous greedy man, hungry for power. For Wegg is anything but an impudent, misbehaving child, and Dickens continually reminds us of how despicable he is. On his first visit to Boffin's Bower, Dickens ediorializes as follows:

> His wooden conceit and craft kept exact pace with the delighted expectation of his victim. The visions rising before his mercenary mind, of the many ways in which this connextion was to be turned to account, never obscured the foremost idea natural to a dull over-reaching man that he must not make himself too cheap.(76)

In order to wrest Boffin's fortune from him, Wegg enlists the aid of Venus who he declares is a friend and partner, and they plot Boffin's downfall. There is a strong farcical element in much of this, for example in the scene where Wegg and Venus creep discreetly behind Boffin as he digs in his mounds. They then have to turn and run so as not to be caught spying:

> . . . Mr. Wegg's descent was not accomplished without some personal inconvenience, for his self-willed leg sticking into the ashes about half-way down, and time pressing, Mr. Venus took the liberty of hauling him from his tether by the collar: which occasioned him to make the rest of the journey on his back, with his head enveloped in the skirts of his coat, and his wooden leg coming last, like a drag.(540-1)

In another scene in this subplot Dickens uses another stock device of classic farce. Venus, deciding to come clean, confesses to Boffin when suddenly Wegg is heard at the door. Venus quickly finds a place to secrete Boffin. It is all exceedingly visual:

> "Get behind the young alligator in the corner, Mr. Boffin . . . Draw your legs in, Mr. Boffin, at present I see a pair of shoes at the end of his tail. Get your head well behind the smile, Mr. Boffin, and you'll lie comfortable there; you'll find plenty of room behind his smile. He's a little dusty but he's very like you in tone. Are you right, Sir?"(637)

We in the audience along with Boffin listen as Wegg continues his plotting, led on by Venus' leading questions. First Venus asks if there is anything new and Wegg responds that there is.

> ". . . That foxy old grasper and gripper -"
> "Mr. Boffin?" inquired Venus, with a glance towards the alligator's yard or two of smile.

> "Mister be blowed!" cried Wegg, yielding to his honest indignation. "Boffin. Dusty Boffin. That foxy old grunter and grinder, sir, turns into the yard this morning, to meddle with our property, a menial tool of his own, a young man by the name of Sloppy. . . . Give him an inch and he'll take an ell. Let him alone this time, and what'll he do with our property next? . . . I must be overbearing with Boffin, or I shall fly into several pieces. I can't contain myself when I look at him. Every time I see him putting his hand in his pocket, I see him putting it into my pocket. Every time I hear him jingling his money, I hear him taking liberties with my money. . . . I consider his planting one of his menial tools in the yard an act of sneaking and sniffing. And his nose shall be put to the grindstone for it. . . . I'll put him in harness, and I'll bear him up tight, and I'll break him and drive him. The harder the old Dust is driven, sir, the higher he'll pay. And I mean to be paid high, Mr. Venus, I promise you."(638-9)

This device in which a person whose motives are suspect unwittingly reveals himself in the presence of his intended victim is a staple of stage comedy. Variations can be found, for example, in Jonson's The Alchemist where the tricksters assume their victim doesn't understand English and discuss their schemes right in front of him, and in Sheridan's School for Scandal where the profligate nephew does not recognize his uncle and incriminates himself. (This technique is so successful, it has become an overworked formula in American TV situation comedies.)

Dickens here as well as elsewhere is in fact a master trickster himself in that he accomplishes two sets of contradictory goals. One the one hand he creates a trickster like Wegg and an accomplice like Venus who are

one-dimensional and so fantastic in their grotesquerie that we would be inclined to call them "stagey." But at the same time he also manages to make their motives and actions real, and persuades us of this by editorializing and generalizing. For example, many chapters earlier, in summing up the developing relationship between Wegg and Boffin, Dickens comments:

> The man of low cunning had, of course, acquired a mastery over the man of high simplicity. The mean man had, of course, got the better of the generous man. How long such conquests last is another matter; that they are achieved is everyday experience, not even to be flourished away by Podsnappery itself.(213)

The repitition of "of course" here points to a rather oppressive melancholy that pervades the novel even at its lighter moments. And this points to another set of contradictory goals. Dickens manages to pull us toward laughter and horror at the same time. Although Dickens secretes Boffin away as a farcical plot device, the comedy is subdued. After Wegg leaves, Boffin comes out of his hiding place not with the vigor of a Sam Weller eager to even the score, but "with an expression of countenance so very downcast that it not only appeared as if the alligator had the whole of the joke to himself, but further as if it had been conceived and executed at Mr. Boffin's expense."(641)

The tension between laughter and horror is particularly evident in Wegg's exposure scene. It is a

complicated scene. He's been exposed long ago to all around him as the greedy power-hungry figure that he is. It is now everyone else's turn to remove their "disguises" to reveal their true selves to him - Boffin, Rokesmith, Venus, and Sloppy. In many ways this is similar to Jingle's and Job's exposure scene. The punishers, here primarily Boffin and Rokesmith, are like Pickwick and Nupkins, content merely to banish him. They are even willing to give him money so he won't be penniless. But their motives in getting rid of him are purely benevolent, unlike Nupkins who wanted to spare himself and his family embarrassment.

Yet the balance here is entirely different because there is nothing about Wegg's character that can redeem him in our eyes. He is more audacious than are Jingle and Job who, like incorrigible children, stick out their tongues and thumb their noses at their punishers. But Wegg's audacity is partly due to the fact that he is so slow-witted, so convinced of his own invincibility, and so bent on his own mission that in the presence of all, he continues to press his claims. When Venus tells him that he has deserted him, Wegg isn't fazed in the least.

> "You are a fool," said Wegg, with a snap of his fingers, "and I'd have got rid of you before now . . . . You may go and welcome. . . . You leave the more for me. Because, you know," said Wegg, dividing his next observation between Mr. Boffin and Mr. Harmon, "I am worth my price, and I mean to have it. . . . I am here to be bought off, and I have named my figure. Now, buy me, or leave me."

> "I'll leave you, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, laughing . . .
>
> "Bof-fin!" replied Wegg, turning upon him with a severe air. "I understand your new-born boldness. . . . Knowing that you've nothing at stake you can afford to come the independent game. Why you're just so much smeary glass to see through, you know! But Mr. Harmon is in another sitiwation. What Mr. Harmon risks is quite another pair of shoes. . . . I drop you, Bof-fin, as beneath my notice. . . . (859)

But Wegg soon finds out that the will he's found is invalid. Boffin offers to set him up in another stall, and asks how much it will cost.

> "Mr. Boffin, returned Wegg, in avaricious humiliation: "when I first had the honour of making your acquaintance, I had got together a collection of ballads which was, I may say, above price."
>
> "Then they can't be paid for," said John Harmon, "and you had better not try, my dear sir."
>
> "Pardon me, Mr. Boffin" resumed Wegg, with a malignant glance in the last speaker's direction. ". . . I had a very choice collection of ballads, and there was a new stock of gingerbread in the tin box. I say no more, but would rather leave it to you."
>
> "But it's difficult to name what's right, because you really have turned out such a very bad fellow. So artful and so ungrateful you have been, Wegg, for when did I ever injure you?"
>
> "There was also," Mr. Wegg went on, in a meditative manner, "a errand connexion in which I was much respected. But I would not wish to be deemed covetous, and I would rather leave it to you, Mr. Boffin."(863)

Wegg goes on, adding the furniture that made up his stall, the patronage lost, and then despairs that he doesn't know how to put a price on " . . . how far the tone of my mind may have been lowered by unwholesome reading on the subject of misers . . ."(683) When Boffin offers him a couple of pounds, Wegg in his greediness holds out for more by responding, "'In justice to myself, I couldn't

take it, sir.'"(863) That, however, is his undoing. Here Dickens has fashioned a typically farcical ending similar to that experienced by Jingle and Job. He too ends up physically removed from the premises:

> . . . John Harmon lifted his finger, and Sloppy . . . backed to Wegg's back, stooped, grasped his coat-collar behind with both hands, and deftly swung him up like the sack of flour or coals before mentioned. . . . Sloppy lightly trotted out with him and trotted down the staircase, Mr. Venus attending to open the street door. Mr. Sloppy's instructions had been to deposit his burden in the road; but a scavenger's cart happening to stand unattended at the corner . . . Mr. S. found it impossible to resist the temptation of shooting Mr. Silas Wegg into the cart's contents. A somewhat difficult feat, achieved with great dexterity and with a prodigious splash. (863-4)

When Jingle and Job land in the American aloe tubs we are amused and admit that it really is what they deserve, even if we have divided loyalties. For different reasons we are drawn to both sides. But in the case of Wegg, we are, of course, pleased that he has been tossed into the scavenger's cart. This ending allows Dickens, his benevolent characters, and his audience to indulge in the emotional satisfaction to be had from a relatively harmless but well deserved act of revenge, since the implication is that a scavenger's cart is where the likes of Wegg really belong.

Fascination Fledgeby is another deceiver in Our Mutual Friend but even more dangerous than Wegg because he has more power. Dickens wants us to judge him harshly as well:

> He was the meanest cur existing, with a single pair of legs. And instinct (a word we all clearly understand) going largely on four legs, and reason always on two, meanness on four legs never attains the perfection of meanness on two.(300)

And although there is an element of staginess in his habit of being "prone to self-examination in the articles of whisker and mustache,"(294) Dickens supplies us with some family history (revealing an unhappy childhood) which he certainly doesn't do for Jingle. This in some way explains, but does not apologize for, Fledgeby's personality and preoccupation.

Fledgeby is hateful because his main thrill is sustaining an elaborate fiction whereby he maintains he is merely an acquaintance of Riah who he gives out is the moneylender. Like Jingle, he gets a great deal of pleasure out of gulling the world, but unlike Jingle, he gets particular pleasure in being destructive: ". . . [E]very bargain, by representing somebody's ruin or somebody's loss, acquired a peculiar charm for him."(304) He enjoys keeping secret the way he makes his money and when Lammle questions him and he objects, he does so with "an internal chuckle."(302) And in trying to gain the upper hand in his dealings with Lammle, Fledgeby has "the meanest of twinkles in the meanest of eyes."(303) But he enjoys himself the most when he has Riah act a part in a little drama to convince others that Riah is the principal. He gets a special pleasure when he and Riah put on this charade for

Lammle. Fledgeby first goes into his act for Lammle's benefit when he turns to Riah and asks him if he can make terms on behalf of a friend:

> "I am but the representative of another, sir," returned the Jew . . . . "I do as I am bidden by my principal. . . .
> "Ha, ha!" laughed Fledgeby. "Lammle?"
> "Ha, ha!" laughed Lammle. "Yes. Of course. We know."
> "Devlish good, ain't it, Lammle?" said Fledgeby, unspeakably amused by his hidden joke.
> "Always the same . . . " said Lammle. "Mr. -"
> "Riah, Pubsey and Co., Saint Mary Axe," Fledgeby put in, as he wiped away the tears that trickled from his eyes, so rare was his enjoyment of his secret joke. . . . "He is only the representative of another! . . . Does as he is told by his principal! Not his capital that's invested in the business. Oh, that's good. Ha, ha ha." Mr. Lammle joined in the laugh and looked knowing; and the more he did both, the more exquisite the secret joke became for Mr. Fledgeby.(471)

A few pages later when Lammle informs him that their plans to marry him off to Georgiana are dashed and Fledgeby sees the prospects of her fortune out of his reach, he gives Lammle advice:

> " . . . [W]hatever you do, Lammle, don't - don't -, I beg of you - ever fall into the hands of Pubsey and Co. . . . [F]or they are grinders, regular flayers and grinders, my dear Lammle," repeated Fledgeby with a peculiar relish, "and they'll skin you by the inch from the nape of your neck to the sole of your foot, and grind every inch of your skin to tooth-powder."(473)

Very much like a stage villain, Fledgeby delivers a dramatic monologue after Lammle leaves, explaining his motives to the audience for wanting revenge on Lammle:

> "You have a pair of whiskers, Lammle, which I never liked," murmured Fledgeby, "and which money can't produce; you are boastful of your manners and

> your conversation; you wanted to pull my nose, and you have let me in for a failure; and your wife says I am the cause of it. I'll bowl you down, I will, though I have no whiskers," here he rubbed the places where they were due, "and no manners, and no conversation!"(474-5)

And Dickens ends the chapter with another dramatic monologue by Fledgeby after he sends Riah off to buy up the outstanding debts he had marked:

> ". . . [L]ook out, fellow Christians, particularly you that lodge in Queer Street! I have got the run of Queer Street now, and you shall see some games there. To work a lot of power over you and you not know it, knowing as you think yourselves, would be almost worth laying out money upon. But when it comes to squeezing a profit out of you into the bargain, it's something like!"(479)

When Mrs. Lammle puts on her own act and asks "'dearest Mr. Fledgeby'"(619) to intervene on their behalf with Riah he says he will, but instead, he runs to Riah and is both "blithe and merry."(620)

> There was quite a fresh trill in his voice . . . "Halloa!" said Fledgeby, falling back, with a wink. "You mean mischief, Jerusalem!"
>
> The old man raised his eyes inquiringly.
>
> . . . "Oh you sinner! Oh, you dodger! What! You're going to act upon that bill of sale at Lammle's are you? Nothing will turn you, won't it? You won't be put off for another single minute, won't you?"(620-1)

The Lammles deserve what they get and are fitting opponents in a struggle with Fledgeby, but Fledgeby's playing with the innocent Twemlow is really despicable. Dickens alludes to a rationale: they are both related to Lord Snigsworth and Twemlow has profited from the connection whereas Fledgeby has not; but this in no way

can justify Fledgeby's treatment of Twemlow. Twemlow is paying off a debt incurred on behalf of a friend and Fledgeby insists on "interceding" on his behalf. Riah takes his cues and states that the bill must be paid in full immediately. When Twemlow leaves "in the lowest spirits,"(631) Fascination exults in his triumph:

> Fascination Fledgeby was in such a merry vein when the counting-house was cleared of him that he had nothing for it but to go to the window, and lean his arms on the frame of the blind, and have his silent laugh out, with his back to his subordinate. . . . [H]e turned round again with a composed countenance . . . but, his merry vein coming on again, he was obliged to turn round to the window once more and lean his arms on the blind.(631)

Although there is a decided staginess in Fledgeby's characterization, Dickens does not want us to dismiss him as a singular human aberration, so he remarks at one point parenthetically that when Fledgeby was running through the streets of London, the London fog had "closed about him and shut him up in its sooty embrace. If it had never let him out any more, the world would have had no irreparable loss, but could have easily replaced him from its stock on hand."(479)

But even while placing Fledgeby in the real world by making him just one of many genuinely evil people waiting to pounce on any and all likely victims, Dickens still manages to execute an utterly fantastic farcical end for him which is consistent with his one-dimensional characterization. Fledgeby first gets a realistic

punishment in the form of a beating administered by Lammle which we are not witness to. But when Jenny walks in, he is "in his shirt, a pair of Turkish trousers, and a Turkish cap, rolling over and over on his own carpet and sputtering wonderfully."(788) At his request Jenny cuts away his shirt to expose the welts on his back. He then asks her if vinegar and brown paper seem like the right application. "'Yes,' said Miss Jenny, with a silent chuckle."(792) She then adds pepper to the plasters before she applies them. "The last thing Miss Jenny saw, as she looked back before closing the room-door was Mr. Fledgeby in the act of plunging and gambolling all over his bed, like a porpoise or dolphin in its native element."(792) We, along with Jenny, take great satisfaction in his physical discomfort. Just as it is fitting that Sloppy administer the final indignity to Wegg, so it is fitting that Jenny administer this punishment, for she is truly a wronged innocent. And certainly the nature of the prank is more in line with her character than it is with the character of either Riah or Twemlow.

A more pathetic gull than the innocent Twemlow is the absolutely naive Georgiana Podsnap, a victim of the realistic tricksters Alfred and Sophronia Lammle. The Lammles married each other for money which it turns out neither has. It is while honeymooning on the Isle of

Wight that they come to find out the truth and make their pact. Dickens sums the situation up poetically: "A gull comes sweeping by their heads and flouts them. . . . A taunting roar comes from the sea, and the far-out rollers mount upon one another, to look at the entrapped imposters and to join in impish and exultant gambols."(147) Lammle sums it up practically: "' . . . [W]e have both been deceiving, and we have both been deceived. We have both been biting, and we have both been bitten. . . . I wonder how I can have been such a fool as to take you to so great an extent upon trust.'"(149) He then proposes that they keep the fact to themselves. "'We have pretended well enough to one another. Can't we, united, pretend to the world? Agreed. . . . [A]nd we owe all other people the grudge of wishing them to be taken in, as we ourselves have been taken in. Agreed?'"(150)

The Lammles must manipulate their victims by making their victims do and say what they want them to. But whereas it is great fun, a real game, for Jingle to do so, for the Lammles it is serious business and they have hard work of it. Dickens creates a brilliant scene where he shows us that in order to bring Sophronia and Fledgeby, the two "lovers," together to consummate the "deal" with Fledgeby, the Lammles have to prompt Georgiana and Fledgeby into playing parts for which both

are ill-suited. Georgiana and Fledgeby become puppets, and we watch as the Lammles pull their strings and do the talking for them. This starts at dinner and continues at the opera. Mr. and Mrs. Lammle sit at either end in the box, Mrs. Lammle next to Georgiana, and Mr. Lammle next to Fledgeby.

> Mrs. Lammle made leading remarks to Fledgeby, only requiring monosyllabic replies. Mr. Lammle did the like with Georgiana. At times Mrs. Lammle would lean forward to address Mr. Lammle to this purpose.
>
> "Alfred, my dear, Mr. Fledgeby very justly says, apropos of the last scene, that true constancy would not require any such stimulant as the stage deems necessary." To which Mr. Lammle would reply, "Ay, Sophronia, my, love, but as Georgiana has observed to me, the lady had no sufficient reason to know the state of the gentleman's affection." To which Mrs. Lammle would rejoin. "Very true, Alfred; but Mr. Fledgeby points out," this. To which Alfred would demur: "Undoubtedly, Sophronia, but Georgiana accurately remarks," that. Through this device the two young people conversed at great length and committed themselves to a variety of delicate sentiments without having once opened their lips, save to say yes or no, and even that not to one another.(299)

Visually this is outrageously funny with the Lammles acting as ventriloquists and Fledgeby and Georgiana playing the part of uncomfortable and anxious dummies.

The Lammles go home exhausted, and when Mr. Lammle checks in on Fledgeby the next morning he finds him in ill-humor as well. He may not be much of a lover, but he is a match for Lammle and resents Lammle's question about what he thinks of Georgiana. He tells Lammle that he was "'well aware'"(303) that he didn't play his part well.

" . . . But don't you on that account come talking to

> me as if I was your doll and puppet, because I am not. . . . If you'll go on managing capitally, I'll go on doing my part. Only don't crow. . . . Or. . . take it in your head that people are your puppets because they don't come out to advantage at the particular moments when you do . . ."(303-4)

The scene in which the Lammles try to gull Boffin in a last desperate attempt to avoid bankruptcy, brings Sophronia Lammle together for the final time with the foolish gull, the "poor silly"(709) Georgiana Podsnap, who bursts into the room in tears. Here is the perfect "entrance;" Dickens gives her center stage, she plays her part, and makes a hasty exit. She opens with:

> "Oh, my dear Sophronia" . . . , wringing her hands as she ran up to embrace her, "to think that you and Alfred should be ruined! Oh, my poor dear Sophronia, to think that you should have had a sale at your house after all your kindness to me! Oh, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, pray forgive me for this intrusion, but you don't know how fond I was of Sophronia when Pa wouldn't let me go there any more, or what I have felt for Sophronia since I heard from Ma of her having been brought low in the world. You don't, you can't, you never can think how I have lain awake at night and cried for my good Sophronia, my first and only friend!"(709)

Regarding her own small fortune, she wants to "'make some of it over somehow to Sophronia and Alfred, by signing something somewhere that'll prevail on somebody to advance them something.'"(711) This move is reminscent of Tupman, the gull, helping along Jingle, in his scheme to fleece him, but Tupman is a grown man whose naivete is outrageous, so we don't feel sorry for him. And since Jingle is not really evil, the scene in which he gulls Tupman is very funny. Georgiana, however, is a child who

has been overprotected by her parents which makes her vulnerable and causes her too readily to trust the unscrupulous Lammles.

While Georgiana being gulled by the Lammles is a classic device from stage comedy, it is interesting to note that there is no grand exposure scene here. Boffin, a benevolent elderly gentleman, in some ways similar to Pickwick, spares Georgiana the trauma of learning about the Lammles' real motives. Georgiana has hardly been there a moment when she hurries to leave. Her exit is as dramatic as her entrance.

> ". . . Oh, my gracious, I must tear myself away, or Pa and Ma will both find out. Dear, dear Sophronia, good, good-bye.! . . . Good-bye, dear Mr. Lammle - I mean Alfred. You won't think after to-day that I have deserted you and Sophronia because you have been brought low in the world, will you? Oh me! Oh me! I have been crying my eyes out of my head, and Ma will be sure to ask me what's the matter. Oh, take me down, somebody, please, please, please!"(711)

The Lammles leave Boffin knowing that he is aware of their schemes. They are in some sense tricksters reminiscent of stage villains, especially Alfred Lammle, in his all-encompassing evil nature, but Dickens allows us to conceive of them realistically by giving few physical characteristics and their money troubles make them seem like authentic creatures of nineteenth-century Victorian society. Their "end" is equally authentic. When their financial ruin is made known to members of society, their "kick downstairs" is to be ostracized and

to have to leave in disgrace for a life in exile on the continent.

Dickens certainly doesn't limit trickery to such grandly theatrical characters and subplots. His point is that we all are at some level tricksters out to deceive others by the way we act. We become players in dramas for which we have written the script in order to impersonate characters we would like to be or would like others to think we are. Often, in so doing we direct a cast of characters so that they play out their parts, sometimes without their even realizing that they are being manipulated.

All the points made so far about tricksters and gulls come together brilliantly in the trial scene in Pickwick and in the parts of Our Mutual Friend having to do with Society. At the trial of Bardell vs. Pickwick rhetoric and acting become part of institutionalized deception. Here we have a number of tricksters and gulls. Although the scene is realistic in that Dickens reproduces in an exceedingly visual way an actual courtroom and the proceedings of an actual trial, he uses here the same technique he does in creating his grotesques - that of exaggeration. Here both language and action are exaggerated, creating satire which is a sublime blend of both kinds of farce: on the one hand the scene has broad improbabilities of plot and

characterization for humorous effect, and on the other, it shows justice and truth for what it often is in a court of law - a mockery.

The premise in any court case is that it is possible to arrive at the truth by examining the evidence. But Dickens dramatizes the reality: that the courtroom is a stage for live drama; that the actors-tricksters are the plaintiff, the defendant, their lawyers, the witnessess, the judge, and other court personnel. The audience-gulls for whom this show is put on is the jury whose members must draw conclusions based on evidence presented in order to arrive at the truth. We are well aware, as we watch this parody of a court scene, that how a case is presented - or staged - matters far more than innocence, guilt, truth, or justice. Here, as in many of the other examples of trickery, money is a primary force. Performances are staged by agents of the law entrusted with the pursuit of justice and truth, but hired to win cases for clients. How well they do on one case will determine whether they will be hired to try other cases. So self-interest becomes a motive and justice irrelevant. What Dickens shows us is that a trial becomes an acting (i.e. deceiving) contest and that the best tricksters win.

Mrs. Bardell, the complainant, does a wonderful job of acting. She has the backup of a top notch supporting

cast and she has had quite professional directors. Mr. Pickwick had been looking elsewhere

> . . . when a slight sensation was perceptible in the body of the court; and immediately afterwards Mrs. Bardell, supported by Mrs. Cluppins, was led in . . . in a drooping state . . . An extra sized umbrella was then handed in by Mr. Dodson, and a pair of pattens by Mr. Fogg, each of whom had prepared a most sympathising and melancholy face for the occasion. Mrs. Sanders then appeared, leading in Master Bardell. At sight of her child, Mrs. Bardell started; suddenly recollecting herself, she kissed him in a frantic manner; and then relapsing into a state of hysterical imbecility, the good lady requested to be informed where she was. In reply to this, Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders turned their heads away and wept, while Messrs. Dodson and Fogg entreated the plaintiff to compose herself. Serjeant Buzfuz rubbed his eyes very hard with a large white handkerchief, and gave an appealing look towards the jury, while the Judge was visibly affected, and several of the beholders tried to cough down their emotions.
>
> "Very good notion that, indeed," whispered Perker to Mr. Pickwick. "Capital fellows those Dodson and Fogg; excellent ideas of effect, my dear Sir, excellent." As Perker spoke, Mrs. Bardell began to recover . . . while Mrs. Cluppins, after a careful survey of Master Bardell's buttons and . . . button-holes . . ., placed him on the floor of the court in front of his mother, - a commanding position in which he could not fail to awaken the full commiseration and sympathy of both Judge and jury.(476-7)

Serjeant Buzfuz, the barrister hired to argue Mrs. Bardell's case in court, is also a supreme actor. His rhetoric, his tone, and his coordinated movements are as carefully calculated as is the case he presents. He ends his introduction to the court by stating that he is of "positive certainty that the cause of truth and justice, or, in other words the cause of his much-injured and most oppressed client, must prevail with the high-minded and

intelligent dozen of men whom he now saw in that box before him."(478) The narrator then explains that "Counsel always begin this way, because it puts the jury on the very best terms with themselves, and makes them think what sharp fellows they must be. A visible effect was produced immediately."(478)

Serjeant Buzfuz then launches into his version of the "facts and circumstances"(479) of the case, starting with a sentimentalized version of the life and death of Mr. Bardell who he portrays as having been a dedicated civil servant. "At this pathetic description of the decease of Mr. Bardell, who had been knocked on the head with a quart-pot in a public-house cellar, the learned serjeant's voice faltered . . ."(479) Buzfuz's description of Pickwick's renting a room in Mrs. Bardell's home is distorted for effect as well:

> The serpent was on the watch, the train was laid, the mine was preparing the sapper and the miner was at work. Before the bill had been in the parlour-window three days - three days - gentlemen - a being, erect upon two legs, and bearing all the outward semblance of a man, and not of a monster, knocked at the door . . . enquired within; he took the lodgings; and on the very next day he entered into possession of them. This man was Pickwick - Pickwick, the defendant."
>
> Serjeant Buzfuz, who had proceeded with such volubility that his face was perfectly crimson, here paused for breath.(480)

He goes on and on, laying out his case and detailing to the jury how he is going to prove it. He tells them about witnesses and then moves on to a discussion of evidence, two letters he has in his possession that

Pickwick wrote to Mrs. Bardell that he says "'speak volumes indeed.'"(483) He then goes into a ludicrous and hilarious "interpretation" of these letters and ends his address to the jury by stating that they must find in favor of his client. "'And for those damages she now appeals to an enlightened, a high-minded, a right-feeling, a conscientious, a dispassionate, a sympathising, a contemplative jury of her civilized countrymen.'"(484)

Of course Pickwick's case is really damaged when the Pickwickians are each called as witnesses, and Winkle, who is called first, does the most damage. Dickens starts by saying that Skimpin, Buzfuz's assistant, "was of course anxious to confuse a witness who was notoriously predisposed in favour of the other side, as much as he could."(486) When Skimpin asks him his name, he "inclined his head on one side to listen with great sharpness to the answer, and glanced at the jury meanwhile, as if to imply that he rather expected Mr. Winkle's natural taste for perjury would induce him to give some name which did not belong to him."(486) Skimpin typically poses a question "with a firm and steady frown"(487) and smiles "suspiciously to the jury."(487) All this has the effect of reducing Winkle "to the requisite ebb of nervous perplexity."(488)

When Winkle is turned over to be questioned by the

defense, he answers the first question so eagerly that he "ought to have got him out of the box with all possible dispatch. Lawyers hold that there are two kinds of particularly bad witnesses: a reluctant witness, and a too-willing witness; it was Mr. Winkle's fate to figure in both characters."(489) Winkle talks too much and unwittingly implicates Pickwick in unforseen ways. Tupman and Snodgrass don't do much better. By the time Sam is called to the witness box it's too late. The jury then retires to deliberate. This farce of a trial is over when the jury takes fifteen minutes to find Pickwick guilty.

In Our Mutual Friend, Dickens uses the social gatherings of the members of Society as an opportunity to reveal that the members of Society are actors in a farce called "Friendship." The only sympathetic gull seems to be Twemlow. He remains in a constant state of befuddlement because he can't quite figure out the rules by which the members of Society play their games - he doesn't know how to act a part.

We are first introduced to Society in Chapter Two, at the home of the Veneerings where the narrator notes that "at the table of the Veneerings . . . no man troubles himself much about the Veneerings themselves, and . . . any one who has anything to tell generally tells it to anybody else in preference."(28) The only

reason Twemlow is even invited to Veneering's dinners is that he is a second cousin to Lord Snigsworth, and for that same reason he is "in requisition"(21) elsewhere.

Several weeks before the Lammles' wedding, Mrs. Veneering invites "her dearest Mr. T",(137) to the Veneerings "to make a fourth at dinner with dear Mr. Podsnap, for the discussion of an interesting family topic . . ."(137) When Twemlow arrives, he is thanked as an "old, old friend,"(137) and reintroduced to their "dear friend Podsnap."(137) Twemlow observes that Podsnap had made himself at home at the Veneerings and is standing with his back to the fire, Podsnap having appeared to convince himself "that he has been intimate in the house many, many years."(138) The Veneerings announce to the two of them, "their family friends,"(138) that Sophronia and Alfred are going to be married. Twemlow remarks to himself "('Oh! . . . then there are only two of us, and he's the other')"(138), until he hears that Lady Tippins was invited but couldn't come, whereupon Twemlow adds her in as number three, and then hears that Lightwood couldn't come, (number four), and neither could Boots and Brewer: "('Then' thinks Twemlow, with his eyes shut, 'there are si-' But here collapses and does not completely recover until dinner is over. . . .)"(138) He then finds out that he is being asked to give away the bride, someone he barely knows.

At the wedding party at the home of the Veneerings, Twemlow is still trying to sort all the relationships out. He thinks maybe Mr. and Mrs. Lammle are in fact Veneering's oldest friends, but Veneering does not confirm this for him:

> He has mentioned to Twemlow how he regards Sophronia Akershem . . . in the light of a sister, and Alfred Lammle . . . in the light of a brother. Twemlow has asked him whether he went to school as a junior with Alfred? He has answered, "Not exactly." Whether Sophronia was adopted by his mother? He has answered, "Not precisely so." Twemlow's hand has gone to his forehead with a lost air.(137)

The affair has the overtones of a business deal, is a mockery of the ideal, and a farce of a celebration.

The Podsnap's party in honor of Georgiana's eighteenth birthday is another farce that masquerades as a get-together of good friends. When the Podsnaps discuss the possibility of a party for the occasion, Mrs. Podsnap says that "'it will enable us to clear off all those people who are due.'"(153) And so they go ahead and

> requested the honour of the company of seventeen friends of their souls at dinner; and . . . they substituted other friends of their souls for such of the seventeen original friends of their souls as deeply regretted that a prior engagement prevented their having the honour of dining with Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap . . ."(154-5)

To which Mrs. Podsnap responded: "'Asked, at any rate, and got rid of;' and . . . they successfully disposed of a good many friends of their souls in this way, and felt their consciences much enlightened."(155) At the party, Veneering is called upon to tell the story of the Harmon

murder which he is more than happy to do as he had "prospered exceedingly"(157) in previously recounting the story and

> . . . had turned the social distinction it conferred upon him to the account of making several dozen bran-new bosom-friends. . . . So, addressing himself to the most desirable, he plunged into the case and emerged from it twenty minutes afterwards with a Bank Director in his arms. In the mean time, Mrs. Veneering had dived into the same waters for a wealthy Ship-Broker and had brought him up, safe and sound, by the hair.(158)

This hypocrisy is also graphically demonstrated when Veneering is arranging his election to Parliament. Though unopposed, he seeks the support of his friends. Twemlow is initially flattered when Veneering comes calling. But this elation doesn't last long when he finds out that Veneering is really after his relative Snigworth's endorsement. Twemlow tells Veneering that he "'must beg'"(277) to be excused from contacting Lord Snigworth on Veneering's behalf, and Veneering responds with, "'Bless you, bless you!' . . . horribly disappointed, but grasping him by both hands again in a particularly fervent manner."(277)

Mrs. Veneering, meanwhile, visits Lady Tippins who agrees to work on Veneering's behalf by visiting her friends whom she regales with the following speech:

> "What do you suppose me to be? You'll never guess. I'm pretending to be an electioneering agent. And for what place of all places? Pocket-Breaches. And why? Because the dearest friend I have in the world has bought it. And who is the dearest friend I have in the world? A man of the name of Veneering. Not

> omitting his wife, who is the other dearest friend I have in the world; and I positively declare I forgot their baby, who is the other. And we are carrying on this little farce to keep up appearances, and isn't it refreshing! Then, my precious child, the fun of it is that nobody knows who these Veneerings are, and that they know nobody, and that they have a house out of the 'The Tales of the Genii,' and give dinners out of the 'Arabian Nights.' Curious to see 'em, my dear? Say you'll know 'em. Come and dine with 'em. . . . Do come and dine with my Veneerings, my own Veneerings, my exclusive property, the dearest friends I have in the world! . . ."(281)

When the Lammles have a breakfast to celebrate their first anniversary and invite all their "friends," Mrs. Lammle herself in her private conversation with the surprised Twemlow admits that "the celebration of to-day is a mockery . . . "(463) But the guests all eat and drink, not caring about the fraudulent nature of the celebration and listen to Veneering and Lammle both deliver toasts full of empty talk. Veneering, of course, refers to the Lammles as "being the dearest and oldest friends he has in the world,"(489) but then goes on to say that the audience itself is made up of "many, who are all the oldest and dearest friends he has in the world . . . "(459) Dickens ends his speech by parodying it in order to emphasize its utter nonsense:

> . . . [H]e is here to submit to you that the time has arrived when, with our hearts in our glasses, with tears in our eyes, with blessings on our lips, and in a general way with a profusion of gammon and spinach in our emotional larders, we should one and all drink to our dear friends the Lammles, wishing them many many years as happy as the last, and many many friends as congenially united as themselves.(460)

Although we are perhaps amused by the unintended irony in

Veneering's last phrases, Lammle's toast is in some ways more interesting because we know Lammle is aware of the irony behind his speech:

> He will never forget that at Veneering's he first saw Sophronia. Sophronia will never forget that at Veneering's she first saw him. They spoke of it soon after they were married and agreed that they would never forget it. In fact, to Veneering they owe their union. They hope to show their sense of this some day ("No, no," from Veneering) - oh, yes, yes, and let him rely upon it, they will if they can!(460)

His wife who "has sat quite still with her eyes cast down upon the table-cloth"(461) is the only person in the room aware that he means the opposite of what the rest of his audience thinks he means.

The Lammles' eventual financial disgrace reveals, just in case we have not been convinced, the true nature of their "friends." Immediately Veneering "begins to find out that the Lammles are the only people ever entered in his soul's register who are not the oldest and dearest friends he has in the world,"(677) and decides to throw a dinner party to discuss their fate. This is also an excuse to invite all his new "friends." The narrator tells us that the Veneerings seem to have made a career out of throwing dinner parties and accumulating new friends, but "still, as at first, howsoever the dining circle widens, it is to be observed that all the diners are consistent in appearing to go to the Veneerings, not to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Veneering (which would seem to

be the last thing in their minds), but to dine with one another."(687) And like Mrs. Wilfer who is happy that her daughter is wealthy because it elevates Mrs. Wilfer's status, Veneering's new friends "like astronomical distances, are only to be spoken of in the largest figures."(685)

In the last chapter of the novel, called "The Voice of Society," at issue is the meaning of the words "lady" and "gentleman." Lady Tippins brings up the question by asking Mortimer to tell her about Eugene and Lizzie's wedding and makes disparaging remarks about Lizzie's background. Mortimer defends their marriage, and Lady Tippins asks everyone else in turn for their opinion. It is only Twemlow other than Mortimer who comes to Lizzie's defense and calls her a lady. He clarifies his stand by defining his terms:

> "I say . . . if such feelings on the part of this gentleman induced this gentleman to marry this lady, I think he is the greater gentleman for the action, and makes her the greater lady. I beg to say that when I use the word "gentleman," I use it in the sense in which the degree may be attained by any man. The feelings of a gentleman I hold sacred, and I confess I am not comfortable when they are made the subject of sport or general discussion."(894)

Many chapters earlier, Mrs. Lammle had declared Twemlow to have "'the soul of a gentleman.'"(461) To Lady Tippins the terms "lady" and "gentleman" are just labels that denote caste and privilege.

In Pickwick those in the trial scene who are not

punished for their wilfull miscarriage of justice (Dodson and Fogg and Buzfuz) play minor roles and are soon forgotten. Because of the episodic nature of the novel, we really don't expect to see them again. They are tricksters who have taken center stage, played their parts with gusto and they then recede into the background. Although they are of the real world of the law, their manipulation of judge and jury reminds us of Jingle's manipulation of Rachel Wardle and Mr. Tupman. They seem to be clever tricksters and we are inclined to give them credit for their cleverness. And we know that the victim - Pickwick - will not long be the worse for the experience. In fact, as a lesson in how the real world operates, he actually may profit from the experience. The only really sour note is the victimizing of Mrs. Bardell by her own lawyers and Pickwick eventually comes to her rescue.

This glimpse into the world of the powerful who take advantage of those who are not, is magnified to such an extent in Our Mutual Friend that it becomes the core of the novel. Here we see that the power mongers take advantage of their peers as well as those not in positions of power. The Voices of Society, frequently meet in each other's lavishly appointed homes, but care not a whit for each other. They are tricksters seeking out gulls for "friends" because they only care about what

"friendship" can earn them in so many pounds sterling. It is not exaggerating to label Veneering, Podsnap, Tippins, the Lammles as evil people who have reached their respected positions in society because of wealth, supposed wealth, or the right connections. We are left at the end of Our Mutual Friend with Lady Tippins and Podsnap still presiding - Twemlow and Mortimer Lightwood still in attendance. This novel does not mete out punishments and rewards according to the formulae of comedy. The powerful members of Society are not punished. They, who never doubt their authenticity, and who never realize or a moment that they are a mockery when measured against Twemlow's definition, are "real" tricksters who live beyond the confines of the novel. The reality is that this body called Society, by and large, remains unpunished because poetic justice is not meted out; they are not playing the parts of tricksters in a theatrical farce where the righteous are rewarded with happy marriages and the evil punished by a push downstairs. They live on in the real world unpunished, gulling the rest of the world from their positions of power, an accurate reflection of the way things are, a farcical conception of society and humanity itself.

[1]Although Jingle and Job reappear in the Fleet as reformed swindlers, their dramatic end is, for all intents and purposes, in this scene.

SEPARATE WORLDS

Letter sent to Harold Pinter:
Dear Sir:
I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your play The Birthday Party. These are the points which I do not understand:
1. Who are the two men? 2. Where did Stanley come from? 3. Were they all supposed to be normal? You appreciate that without the answers to my questions I cannot fully understand your play.

Pinter's reply:
Dear Madam,
I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your letter. These are the points which I do not understand: 1. Who are you? 2. Where do you come from? 3. Are you supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to your questions I cannot fully understand your letter.

As we have seen, Dickens uses the classic comic device of the disguise and the conventionally comic pairing of the trickster and the gull to create the worlds of both Pickwick and Our Mutual Friend. But he also builds his plot around the confusion and misunderstandings that evolve amongst characters because in our attempts to know our world, we each bring our own perspectives to bear on how we look at the world, perspectives that have been created because of specific circumstances such as gender, geography, politics, religion, occupation, or social class. In Pickwick this often creates misunderstandings with comic results, but

in Our Mutual Friend the lack of communication becomes a severe limitation and an indictment of a society whose members' perspectives are often governed by self-interest.

Gender

One inevitable circumstance that separates us from totally understanding each other is the matter of gender. The responses attributed to gender-related behavior in Pickwick are those associated with the stereotypes common to comedy, and Dickens exploits the comic potential of the scenes. For example, women are often repelled by men's ways, but understand one another, because they all are members of a woman's world. This implies a kind of unwritten language inpenetrable to members of the opposite sex.

When the Pickwickians visit Manor Farm in Dingley Dell, one day the men go off to a cricket match. The women sit home and wait for them to return:

> Eleven - twelve - one o'clock had struck, and the gentlemen had not arrived. Consternation sat on every face. Could they have been waylaid and robbed? Should they send men and lanterns in every direction by which they could be supposed likely to have travelled home? or should they ---- Hark! there they were. What could have made them so late? . . . They rushed in to the kitchen whither the truants had repaired, and at once obtained rather more than a glimmering of the real state of the case.(102)

The men are dead drunk. After many noisy protestations, the men, who have had a wonderful time,

are helped upstairs to bed. The women then comment to each other in typical fashion: "'What a shocking scene!' said the spinster aunt. 'Disgusting!' ejaculated both the young ladies."(104)

Also in Pickwick, Dickens exploits for its comic effect the cliche about a woman hiding her age. When Rachel and Jingle are discovered in their room at the inn, Jingle, in trying to bluff his way out of the situation, says that she doesn't have to go home with her brother because she's over twenty-one. At hearing Wardle respond "contemptuously,"(132) that she is "'More than one and forty!"(132) in true stereotypical fashion the spinster aunt "uttered a loud shriek, and became senseless."(132) The "kindhearted"(132) landlady turns to Mr. Wardle and cries:

> "Ugh, you brute! . . . Poor dear." And with sundry ejaculations, of "Come now, there's a dear - drink a little of this - it will do you good - don't give way so - there's a love," &c. &c. the landlady, assisted by a chambermaid, proceeded to vinegar the forehead, beat the hands, titillate the nose, and unlace the stays of the spinster aunt, and to administer such other restoratives as are usually applied by compassionate females to ladies who are endeavoring to ferment themselves into hysterics."(132)

In Our Mutual Friend Dickens also dramatizes that men and women are "different." Mrs. Lammle is an example of a woman in a serious plot strand of the novel who reasons in ways that men can never understand. Dickens attributes to her the ability to draw conclusions that

Twemlow and Mr. Lammle do not draw even though they have the same information. She has that illusive quality commonly called "woman's intuition." In a discussion with Twemlow she tells him that he should not be deceived: his debt "'. . . has fallen into Mr. Fledgeby's hands. Mr. Riah is his mask.'"(682) Twemlow reacts with surprise:

> "Impossible!" cried Twemlow, standing aghast. "How do you know it.?"
> "I scarcely know how I know it. The whole train of circumstances seemed to take fire at once and show it to me."
> "Oh! Then you have no proof."
> "It is very strange," says Mrs. Lammle coldly and boldly and with some disdain, "how like men are to one another in some things, though their characters are as different as can be! No two men can have less affinity between them, one would say, than Mr. Twemlow and my husband. Yet my husband replies to me 'You have no proof,' and Mr. Twemlow replies to me with the very same words!"
> "But why, madam?" Twemlow ventures gently to argue.
> "Consider why the very same words? Because they state the fact. Because you HAVE no proof."
> "Men are very wise in their way," quoth Mrs. Lammle, . . ."but they have wisdom to learn. My husband, who is not . . . inexperienced, sees this plain thing no more than Mr. Twemlow does - because there is no proof. Yet I believe five women out of six, in my place, would see it as clearly as I do."(683)

Here the scene is not a comic interlude, although we may be amused at Mrs. Lammle's exasperation and Twemlow's persistent naivete. Mrs. Lammle, although aligning herself with womenkind through her mentioning as support for her opinion that five out of six women would see the situation as she does, is, in fact, alone. She is not

the stereotype of the hysterical, emotional woman we find in Pickwick who bands together with other women for support against men whom they don't understand and who don't understand them. Mrs. Lammle, a realistic character, must fight for her own survival. Here we see that she is not even able to communicate with Twemlow, the one person who might be sympathetic to her plight.

Geography

Just as Dickens singles out gender as a characteristic that prevents us from wholly understanding each other, he also realizes the role geography plays in determining a specific and often unique point of view. In Pickwick, again, the scenes are comic and they all revolve around the difference between living in the country and living in the city. Here Dickens reverses the common comic convention of having a country bumpkin visit the city. The Pickwickians, who are city slickers, are thrust into the ways and customs of country living. They don't know how to negotiate their way in the world of the country, and they don't understand a lot of what they see and hear.

In Dingley Dell, they are ushered into the world of the country gentleman, represented by Mr. Wardle. Here the customs of country living and the language associated with different customs and procedures are baffling to the

uninitiated, but the scenes are in the nature of traditional farce and therefore are genuinely comic. For example, when it is discovered that Jingle has run off with Rachel Wardle, Mr. Wardle runs after them and Pickwick accompanies him.

> Mr. Pickwick's temporary excitement began to sober down a little, as he reflected upon the inconvenience and dangers of the expedition in which he had so thoughtlessly embarked. He was roused by a loud shouting of the post-boy on the leader.
> "Yo-yo-yo-yo-yoe," went the first boy.
> "Yo-yo-yo-yoe!" went the second.
> "Yo-yo-yo-yoe!" chimed in old Wardle himself, most lustily, with his head and half his body out of the coach window.
> "Yo-yo-yo-yoe!" shouted Mr. Pickwick, taking up the burden of the cry, though he had not the slightest notion of its meaning or object. And amidst the yo-yoing of the whole four, the chaise stopped.
> "What's the matter?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.
> "There's a gate here," replied Mr. Wardle . . .(116)

While in the country, Mr. Wardle introduces the Pickwickians to the country sports of rook-shooting and cricket. The first time they go rook-shooting Mr. Wardle's intimacy with the procedures and rituals of the sport are contrasted with Pickwick's ignorance. Pickwick notices two "ragged"(86) boys climbing up two trees and asks why they have done that.

> He was rather alarmed; for he was not quite certain but that the distress of the agricultural interest . . . might have compelled little boys, attached to the soil, to earn a precarious and hazardous subsistence by making marks of themselves for inexperienced sportsmen.
> "Only to start the game." replied Mr. Wardle, laughing.
> "To what?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

> "Why, in plain English to frighten the rooks."
> "Oh! Is that all?"(86)

Another time when they go rook-shooting, it is Winkle who shows his ignorance:

> The dogs suddenly came to a dead stop . . .
> "What's the matter with the dogs' legs?" whispered Mr. Winkle. "How queer they're standing."
> "Hush, can't you?" replied Wardle, softly. "Don't you see, they're making a point?"
> "Making a point!" said Mr. Winkle, staring about him, as if he expected to discover some particular beauty in the landscape, which the sagacious animals were calling special attention to. "Making a point!
> "What are they pointed at?"
> "Keep your eyes open," said Wardle . . .
> There was a sharp whirring noise, that made Mr. Winkle start back as if he had been shot himself. Bang, bang, went a couple of guns; . . .
> "Where are they?" said Mr. Winkle, in a state of the highest excitement, turning round and round in all directions. "Where are they? Tell me when to fire. Where are they - where are they?"
> "Where are they!" said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which the dogs had deposited at his feet.
> "Where are they! why, here they are."(253-7)

If Dickens portrays the customs and procedures associated with bird-hunting as being strange to the uninitiated, he portrays the customs and procedures associated with "the art and mystery of the noble game"(95) of cricket as being utterly incomprehensible and downright absurd. First of all, are their costumes of "straw hats, flannel jackets, and white trowsers, - a costume in which they looked very much like amateur stone-masons . . . "(91) They see a "very stout gentleman, whose body and legs looked like half a gigantic roll of flannel, elevated on a couple of inflated pillow-cases,"(91) and another "who strongly

resembled the other half of the roll of flannel aforesaid."(91)

> Several players were stationed, to "look out" in different parts of the field, and each fixed himself into the proper attitude by placing one hand on each knee, and stopping very much as it he were "making a back" for some beginner at leap-frog. . . .(92-4)

In Our Mutual Friend the place where people live can create a problem in understanding, but this is no longer dramatized through playful clashes between city and country folk. Here Dickens both literally and figuratively covers more territory as he focusses on the more serious problem of the barrier in communication between the residents of one nation and those of any other.

At the party for Georgiana's eighteenth birthday, Dickens reveals through an absurd conversation that even when we try, we are limited in our ability to communicate with "foreigners" and, therefore, to know them and their world. The Frenchman whom Podsnap had invited is struggling along in English, occasionally throwing a French word into the conversation with Podsnap when suddenly another guest interrupts:

> A youngish sallowish gentleman in spectacles, with a lumpy forehead, . . . here caused a profound sensation by saying, in a raised voice, "ESKER," and then stopping dead.
> "Mais oui," said the foreign gentleman, turning towards him. "Est-ce que? Qui donc?" But the gentleman with the lumpy forehead having for the time delivered himself of all that he found behind his lumps, spake for the time no more.(156)

Podsnap considers this merely an inconvenient interruption and resumes his conversation, but a few minutes later the man interrupts again, and unwilling to give up, "again madly said, 'ESKER' and again spake no more."(156) Dickens gives this guest a suggestively grotesque appearance and then uses the adverb "madly" to describe his attempt to communicate in order to project onto him the attitude of the others in the room who are staring at him. To them he appears to have uttered one word of gibberish. He obviously can't speak French, nor can anyone else in the room. But he is a man struggling to communicate in the foreigner's native tongue. His entire effort is spent on one anglicized pronunciation of one French word. Rendered this way, the scene highlights by caricature the gap between people from countries with different languages. It is during the frantic chase after Jingle that Pickwick hears the gibberish "yo-yo-yo-" and wants to know what it means. To Podsnap, however, the gibberish of "esker" is beneath inquiry. He feels he does not need to understand. And his attitude takes on additional ominous significance because he speaks as if for all of England.

Politics and Religion

In Pickwick a number of comic scenes take place in Eatanswill. Dickens uses Eatanswill and its important

resident Pott as a means to satirize those whose politics govern their point of view. But what goes on in the fictitious town of Eatanswill is for the most part either innocent fun or downright silliness. Everyone belongs either to the Buff or the Blue party, and everything is "made a party question."(162)

> If the Buffs proposed to new skylight the market-place, the Blues got up public meetings, and denounced the proceedings; if the Blues proposed the erection of an additional pump in the High Street, the Buffs rose as one man and stood aghast at the enormity. There were blue shops and Buff shops, Blue inns and Buff inns; - there was a Blue aisle and a Buff aisle, in the very church itself.(162)

Defending those who are Blue, and attacking those who are Buff become Pott's sole preoccupation. Shortly after Pickwick introduces him to Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen, he remarks that he hopes they are both "'imbued . . . with blue principles.'"(773)

> "Why I don't exactly know about that," replied Bob Sawyer, "I am-"
> "Not buff, Mr. Pickwick," interrupted Pott, drawing back his chair, "your friend is not buff, Sir?"
> "No, no," rejoined Bob, "I'm a kind of plaid at present; a compound of all sort of colours."(773)

Pott then declares that he is sure he could convince the "waverer" in the rightness of his "blue" cause. This is laughable because of its silliness. Bob Sawyer is a jokester and Pott a fool.

In Our Mutual Friend Dickens develops a number of scenes and characters in order to dramatize how religion preoccupies some people and colors their point of view

the way politics does Pott. But if in the political satire of Pickwick he reveals that political prejudice is ridiculous, in Our Mutual Friend he reveals that religious prejudice is dangerous and ugly. Dickens illustrates this through the relationships a number of characters have with Fledgeby's employee, Riah, and with the people in the Jewish community where Lizzie is in hiding. Those Christian characters who see the Jewish characters according to the prevailing stereotype of the Jew will never really know them as individuals. This is even true of "good Christians" like Eugene who, even though he has a lot of reforming to do, has basically a good heart. He reveals his prejudice when he playfully and disrespectfully calls Riah Mr. Aaron and, in trying to encourage Riah to leave Lizzie in his care says, "'If Mr. Aaron . . . will be good enough to relinquish his charge to me, he will be quite free for any engagement he may have at the synagogue. . . .'"(450)

Another "good Christian," Reverend Milvey's wife, does not at all mean to be disrespectful, but she is ruled by her convictions that Christians should not mix with Jews. Lizzie explains to the Milveys how the people with whom she lives helped her take care of the final arrangements for the burial of Betty Higden.

> "Surely not the Jew who received us?" said Mrs. Milvey.
> ("My dear," observed her husband, in parenthesis, "Why not?")

> "The gentleman certainly is a Jew" said Lizzie, "and the lady, his wife, is a Jewess, and I was first brought to their notice by a Jew. But I think there cannot be kinder people in the world."
> "But suppose they try to convert you!" suggested Mrs. Milvey, bristling in her good little way, as a clergyman's wife.
> . . .
> Lizzie shook her head, still smiling. "They have never asked me what my religion is. . . . They never talk of theirs to us, and they never talk of ours to us. . . . They never asked me what religion that poor thing had followed."(571)

Still unconvinced, Mrs. Milvey later talks to the village children in order to investigate "whether they were in danger of becoming children of Israel."(571)

When Riah breaks off his association with Fledgeby, thereby freeing himself from the duplicity with which he was involved, he explains his situation to Jenny Wren. Dickens' own didactic motives are unfortunately somewhat transparent here as they are in the speech just quoted of Lizzie's, but Riah's speech is interesting nonetheless:

> " . . . I reflected that . . . I was doing dishonour to my ancient faith and race. I reflected . . . for the first time, that in bending my neck to the yoke I was willing to wear, I bent the unwilling necks of the whole Jewish people. For it is not, in Christian countries, with Jews as with other peoples. Men say, 'This is a bad Greek, but there are good Greeks. This is a bad Turk, but there are good Turks.' Not so with Jews. Men find the bad among us easily enough - among what peoples are the bad not easily found? - but they take the worst of us as samples of the best; they take the lowest of us as presentations of the highest; and they say, 'All Jews are alike.' If, doing what I was content to do here, . . . I had been a Christian, I could have done it, compromising no one but my individual self. But doing it as a Jew, I could not choose but compromise the Jews of all conditions and all countries."(794-5)

He thinks back to the time when Jenny witnessed Fledgeby and Riah deceive Twemlow into thinking that it was Riah who was pressing for payment of Twemlow's debt:

> " . . . I always saw that the poor gentleman believed the story readily, because I was one of the Jews - that you believed the story readily, my child, because I was one of the Jews - that the story itself first came into the invention of the originator thereof, because I was one of the Jews."(794)

Pott's political prejudices in Pickwick are comic partly because there are no real victims; religious prejudice in Our Mutual Friend is not comic because it is portrayed realistically and Dickens has created both sympathetic perpetrators and real victims. In these scenes in which Dickens dramatizes prejudice against the Jews, he shows us how pervasive the prejudice is by showing us four levels of prejudice. Fledgeby is one extreme. In the next grouping are basically good-hearted if self-serving characters like Eugene and Mrs. Milvey who utter prejudicial remarks. But through Riah's speech we learn of more insidious forms of prejudice that comprise a third level of prejudice. Through the internalized belief in the stereotype of the Jew, even innocents like Twemlow and Jenny Wren believed the story about Riah, however inconsistent with his personality it seemed. Finally, through Riah, Dickens dilineates a fourth level when he indicts all of Christendom. Riah says that "they take the worst of us as samples of the best" and then they say "All Jews are alike." Here in Our Mutual

Friend Dickens points his finger with shame at those who operate from a limited point of view and condemn an entire people. This is far more serious criticism than meted out to Pott with his knee-jerk reaction against anyone who doesn't show allegiance to his fictitious Blue party.

Occupation

In both novels occupation is significant in determining point of view. In Pickwick Dickens has many amusing examples of how occupation colors point of view and can create barriers to communication. When Pickwick, Wardle, and Perker are searching for Jingle and Rachel Wardle, they ask Sam Weller, the boots at the local inn, to tell them who is presently staying at the inn. His singular perspective is initially confusing to them:

> ". . . There's a vooden leg in number six, there's a pair of Hessians in thirteen, there's two pair of halves in the commercial, there's these here painted tops in the snuggery inside the bar, and five more tops in the coffee-room."
> "Nothing more?" said the little man.
> "Stop a bit," replied Sam, . . . "Yes; there's a pair of Vellingtons a good deal vorn, and a pair of lady's shoes, in number five."
> "What sort of shoes?" hastily inquired Wardle, who, together with Mr. Pickwick, had been lost in bewilderment at the singular catalogue of visitors.
> "Country make," replied Sam.
> . . .
> "It is them," explained Wardle. . . .
> "Hush!" said Sam. "The Vellingtons has gone to Doctors' Commons."(130)

Similarly, Sam's father, Tony Weller, draws images

from his world as a coachman in describing in a letter to Sam, the fatal progress of his late wife's illness. It reads in part:

> " . . . . [H]er veels wos immedetly greased and everythink done to set her a goin as could be inwented your farther had hopes as she vould have vorked round as usual but just as she wos a turnen the corner my boy she took the wrong road and vent down hill vith a welocity you never see not vithstandin that the drag was put on strictly by the medikel man it wornt of no use at all for she paid the last pike at twenty minutes afore six o'clock yesterday evenin havin done the journey wery much under the reglar time vich praps was partly owen to her havin taken in wery little luggage."(744)

After reading it, Sam says, "'Wot a incomprehensible letter, . . . who's to know wot it means . . .'"(744)

There are over forty occupations either mentioned or brought to life in Pickwick representing every economic class. Dickens, having grown up poor in mid-nineteenth-century industrial England, was well aware that everyone had to be productive in order to survive, and he saw that in a fight for survival, occupations often became preoccupations. His description of the people who live on Lant Street where Bob Sawyer lives (and where Dickens had lived for a time), gives an indication of how Dickens realized that occupation, especially from the point of view of the poor is synonomous with a way of life and becomes identity:

> In this happy retreat are colonised a few clear-starchers, a sprinkling of journeymen bookbinders, one or two prison agents for the Insolvent Court, several small housekeepers who are employed in the Docks, a handful of mantua-makers,

> and a seasoning of jobbing tailors. The majority of the inhabitants either direct their energies to the letting of furnished apartments, or devote themselves to the healthful and invigorating pursuit of mangling. The chief features in the still life of the street, are green shutters, lodging-bills, brass door-plates, and bell-handles; the principal specimens of animated nature, the pot-boy, the muffin youth, and the baked-potato man. The population is migratory, usually disappearing on the verge of quarter-day, and generally by night.(441-2)

Dickens is not going in for any heavy-handed sociological statement here about the effect of industrialization on the people or the rise of the middle class. After all, this novel is "set" in the eighteenth century, and is predominantly comic in tone. But it is written with a nineteenth-century consciousness for a nineteenth-century audience, and there are suggestions, throughout the novel, which Dickens explores with more seriousness and in more depth in Our Mutual Friend, that a person's identity and point of view, like the comic examples above of Sam and Tony Weller, is inextricably tied up with his or her job, like it or not. Our Mutual Friend is likewise filled with occupations representing all scales of society and, in fact, has characters like Boots and Brewer whose names represent their functions in society. In Our Mutual Friend Dickens gives us a description of a street that is an interesting contrast to Lant Street. Bella is on her way to visit her father:

> The City looked unpromising enough, as Bella made her way along its gritty streets. Most of its money-mills were slackening sail, or had left off grinding for the day. The master-millers had already

> departed, and the journey-men were departing. There was a jaded aspect on the business lanes and courts, and the very pavements had a weary appearance, confused by the tread of a million feet. There must be hours of night to temper down the day's distraction of so feverish a place. As yet, the worry of the newly stopped whirling and grinding on the part of the money-mills seemed to linger in the air, and the quiet was more like the prostration of a spent giant than the repose of one who was renewing his strength.(661)

The difference in language alone in the descriptions of the two streets is of interest. The poor of Lant Street scurry about directing their "energies" toward making a living and, although Dickens may in fact be implying that it is too bad that that is how they have to expend all their energy, in the contrasting passage in Our Mutual Friend there is no energy at all. Here we have Dickens' view of nineteenth-century industrialized England. In the City, big-time entrepreneurs employ salaried workers. The energy is sapped from the workers in order to energize the machines which "had left off grinding for the day." There is a surreal, nightmarish quality in the description that likens the late afternoon "quiet" to "a spent giant." The workers are by implication dwarf-like, their function reduced to serving the giant. The language here sets the tone: the street is "feverish," "weary," and "jaded," and "worry" still hangs in the air after the workers have gone home.

In fact, in Our Mutual Friend, it is the weary and jaded Eugene Wrayburn (jaded because he hates his

profession in the law) who makes a direct comment to the effect that occupation colors point of view. Eugene has commented to his law partner, Mortimer Lightwood, that someone has been loitering outside their building and Mortimer jumps to the erroneous conclusion that it concerns legal action regarding Eugene's debts. Eugene responds: "'Observe the legal mind! . . . Observe the dyer's hand, assimilating itself to what it works in.'"(597)

In keeping with this general tone, no portrait of a worker's point of view in Our Mutual Friend has the exhuberance or seems to have been created for the sheer fun of it as it seems they have in Pickwick. In Pickwick Dickens portrays workers as still having the innocence and independence that he associates with pre-industrialized England. But in Our Mutual Friend workers have become slaves in the world of work and consequently work is often seen as a crushing burden. For example, Sloppy, a flat character conceived in comic terms, is defined and defines himself by his mangling, much the way Tony Weller does by his occupation as coachman. But we know that Sloppy was an unwanted baby, rescued and raised by the poor Betty Higden. Sloppy appreciates her generosity and is devoted to her. He realizes that the job of mangling is important to them and by extension his doing it makes him important - it

justifies his existence in that home. When Sloppy comes to the Boffin home to report that little Johnny is ill, he talks about how, because Betty Higden had to nurse Johnny, the mangling was left to Sloppy, and he "beamed and blushed as he said it, quite enraptured with the rememberance of having been serviceable."(62) Following is a passage amazingly similar to Tony Weller's description of his ailing wife:

> "Last night," said Sloppy, "when I was a'turning at the wheel pretty late, the mangle seemed to go like Our Johnny's breathing. It begun beautiful, then as it went out it shook a little an got unsteady, then as it took the turn to come home it had a rattle-like and lumbered a bit, then it come smooth, and so it went on till I scarce know'd which was mangle and which was Our Johnny. Nor Our Johnny, he scarce know'd either, for sometimes when the mangle lumbers he says, 'Me choking, Granny!' and Mrs. Higden holds him up in her lap and says to me, 'Bide a bit, Sloppy,' and we all stops together. And when Our Johnny gets his breathing again, I turns again, and we all goes on together."(362)

Tony Weller's novel use of the metaphor of the coachride to describe his wife's death is both touching and amusing despite its being about death. Mrs. Weller has been nothing more than a stereotypical comic caricature, a step-mother Sam seems to care little about, and we feel momentarily sorry for Tony Weller, but know that he will bounce back. Sloppy's use of the metaphor is touching but no longer amusing. He is a vulnerable child talking about the imminent death of an infant, the grandchild of Betty Higden, the most sentimentally conceived character in the novel. And the implication is, also, that perhaps

he might not have died if the poor, represented by Betty Higden, had access to more information and better medical care.

After Reverend Milvey conducts the funeral for Betty Higden, Sloppy says to him: "'I've took it in my wretched head that I might have some times turned a little harder for her, and it cuts me deep to think so now.'"(569) To comfort him, Reverend Milvey speaks to him using the idiom he knows Sloppy will understand, and explains "' . . . how the best of us were more or less remiss in our turnings at our respective mangles - some of us very much so - and how we were all a halting, feeble, and inconstant crew.'"(569) Unlike Tony Weller's metaphor of the coach ride, here the metaphor of the mangling is extended beyond Sloppy's use of it. As unique as the mangling image is, Dickens has Reverend Milvey use it for two really different reasons. First of all, it is a way for Reverend Milvey to talk to Sloppy in the idiom that he will understand and will comfort him. But Reverend Milvey also appropriates it and generalizes it, which gives the metaphor religious significance that represents a truth probably close to Dickens own and which invests the metaphor with meaning for a larger audience (we the readers, for example). This dramatizes the poetic quality inherent in unique visions or perspectives.

If ever there was a character with a poetic vision,

it's Jenny Wren who confounds people all the time when she talks about her work, partly because she is consumed by her work. She discusses the dolls she is making clothes for as if they were alive. In a way this is fitting. She is, after all, a child and, were she free to play with dolls, it would be appropriate for her to talk about them as if they were real people. The irony is, of course, that she has no time to play with dolls, but must support herself and her drunken father by making doll's clothes for the dolls of the idle rich. What also is disconcerting is that she talks as if she works for the dolls, not their owners. The first time Bradley Headtone and Charley Hexam meet her, they are struck by her singular point of view. After Bradley finds out what she does for a living, he asks her if it's a good business.

> "No. Poorly paid. And I'm often so pressed for time! I had a doll married, last week, and was obliged to work all night. . . . They looked at the little creature with a wonder that did not diminish, and the schoolmaster said, "I am sorry your fine ladies are so inconsiderate."
>
> "It's the way with them," said the person of the house, . . . "And they take no care of their clothes, and they never keep to the same fashions a month. I work for a doll with three daughters. Bless you, she's enough to ruin her husband!
>
> . . .
>
> "Are you always as busy as you are now?"
>
> "Busier. I'm slack just now. I finished a large mourning order the day before yesterday. Doll I work for lost a canary-bird."(252-3)

But not only does Jenny Wren act as if her dolls are alive, she also sees real people as dolls. This unique

way of looking is a key to her resourcefulness, but is really due to necessity. If she didn't constantly view the world through the eyes of a dolls' dressmaker she would starve. As she and Riah walk through the streets they pass a shop with her dolls in the window. She stops to proudly point them out and he compliments her on their beauty. She tells him that the hardest part is "'the trying-on by the great ladies . . . '"(482) He doesn't understand.

> "Look here. There's a Drawing Room, or a grand day in the Park, or a Show, or a Fete, or what you like. . . . I squeeze among the crowd . . . When I see a great lady very suitable for my business, I say, 'You'll do, my dear!' and I take particular notice of her, and run home and cut her out and baste her. Then another day, I come scudding back again to try on, and then I take particular notice of her again. . . . All the time I am only saying to myself, 'I must hollow out a bit here; I must slope away there;' and I am making a perfect slave of her, with making her try on my doll's dress. Evening parties are severer work for me, because there's only a doorway for a full view, and what with hobbling among the wheels of the carriages and the legs of the horses, I fully expect to be run over some night. However, there I have 'em, and catch a glimpse of my little physiognomy poked out from behind a policeman's cape in the rain, I dare say they think I am wondering and admiring with all my eyes and heart, but they little think they're only working for dolls! There was Lady Belinda Whitrose. I made her do double duty in one night. I said when she came out of the carriage, 'You'll do, my dear!' and I ran straight home and cut her out and basted her. Back I came again and waited behind the men that called the carriages. Very bad night, too. At last 'Lady Belinda Whitrose's carriage! Lady Belinda Whitrose coming down!" And I made her try on - oh! and take pains about it, too - before she got seated. That's Lady Belinda hanging up by the waist, much too near the gas-light for a wax one, with her toes turned in."(482-3)

She is a brilliant creation - grotesque, both comic and tragic at once. We laugh at her ingenuity, admire her for her creativity, and are pained because of her poverty.

In both novels Dickens also spends a great deal of time dramatizing the points of view of characters at the other end of the spectrum: those who because of their occupations are in positions of power. In Pickwick the "establishment" is seen mostly in terms of those associated with the law. And it is here that Dickens, in exploiting the use of professional jargon, shows how the private language of a profession creates a barrier to understanding, sometimes intentionally, between those in the profession and those who must do business with those in the law. For example, early in the novel, Perker tries to exert the power of his profession by talking to Pickwick in legalese because Pickwick has interfered: "'Mr. Pickwick, my dear Sir, excuse me - I shall be happy to receive any private suggestions of yours as amicus curiae, but you must see the impropriety of your interfering with my conduct in this case, with such an ad capandum argument.'"(129) At the end of the novel, Tony Weller and Sam do business with Pell whom Tony asks to Probate his late wife's will:

> ". . . Wot we rek-vire, Sir, is a probe o' this here."

> "Probate, my dear Sir, probate," said Pell.
> "Vell, Sir," replied Mr. Weller sharply, "probe and probe it, is wery much the same; if you don't understand wot I mean, Sir, I dessay I can find them as does."
> "No offence I hope, Mr. Weller," said Pell, meekly.
> "You are the executor I see," he added, casting his eyes over the paper.
> "I am, Sir," replied Mr. Weller.
> "These other gentlemen, I presume, are legatees, are they, enquired Pell with a congratulatory smile.
> "Sammy is a leg-at-ease," replied Mr. Weller; . . .(789)

The law is an example of a profession that not only has created its own private language, it has created a private world with its own rules and regulations, hierarchies, rituals, and even dress. This insulates those within the law and helps them to wield power they haven't earned.

This world has its own reality and internal logic from the point of view of those within it, but can seem incomprehensible and absurd to those outside. Before Pickwick can be remanded to the Fleet, a writ of habeas corpus must be obtained for which he, Perker, and Sam go to Serjeant's Inn. First Dickens gives us a general view of what takes place in this world, and the specific singleminded function of each individual as Pickwick, who is an outsider sees it. Dickens then dramatizes and orchestrates the scene:

> . . . Leaning against the wall, close beside the seat Mr. Pickwick had taken, was an office lad of fourteen with a tenor voice, and near him a common-law clerk with a bass one. A clerk hurried in with a bundle of papers, and stared about him. "Sniggle and Blink," cried the tenor.

> "Porkin and Snob," growled the bass.
> "Stumpy and Deacon," said the new comer.
> Nobody answered; and the next man who came in, was hailed by the whole three, and he in his turn shouted for another firm, and then somebody else roared in a loud voice for another, and so forth.
> All this time, the man in the spectacles was hard at work swearing the clerks; the oath being invariably administered without any effort at punctuation; and usually in the following terms: -
> "Take the book in your right hand this in your name and handwriting you swear that the contents of this your affidavit are true so help you God a shilling you must get change I haven't go it."(579-80)

Viewing all this going on, Pickwick says to Sam, "'I suppose they are getting the habeas corpus ready.'" And Sam responds, "'Yes, . . . and I vish they'd bring out the have-his-carcase. It's wery unpleasant keepin' us vaitin' here. I'd ha' got half a dozen have-his-carcases ready, pack'd up and all, by this time.'"(580)

Although the instances where Sam shows his ignorance and naivete can be a source of amusement, as they are with the characters in Pickwick, they also point to the fact that a person without an education can be vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous lawyers. Like Tony and Sam Weller in Pickwick, both Boffin and Riderhood in Our Mutual Friend each on a separate visit to Mortimer Lightwood, get tripped up by language having to do with the law. When visiting Lightwood's office about conditions of the will, Boffin goes back over the events that preceded his inheritance.

> "Then you, and the gentleman in the uncomfortable neckcloth under the little archway in Saint Paul's Churchyard - "

> "Doctors' Commons," observed Lightwood.
> "I understood it was another name," said Mr. Boffin pausing, "But you know best. Then you and Doctor Scommons, you go to work, and you do the thing that's proper, and you and Doctor S. take steps for finding out the poor boy . . ."(112)

Weller's "have-his-carcase" for "habeas corpus" and Tony's "leg-at-ease" for "legatees" are similar in their mangling, but Sam Weller's mangling is probably deliberate and both examples are actually quite clever. Their garbling points to their lack of formal education but also points to the fact that they are perfectly able to get by without that education and to make clever fun of pompous jargon. We may laugh at Boffin's mangling, but we also realize that Boffin's lack of education could lead to serious consequences. We are apt to worry about him in a way we'd never worry about the Wellers. Mortimer Lightwood worries about him too, and his honesty and good advice keeps Boffin from offering a ridiculously large reward for the apprehension and conviction of the supposed murderer of John Harmon.

Riderhood can hardly be called naive, but he certainly is ignorant. When he goes to Mortimer to accuse Gaffer of murder, he wants "'to take a Alfred David'"(173) and again, although we may find this amusing, it reveals an ignorance that seems to effect Riderhood's personality. He is continually suspicious of others, perhaps because he feels at a

disadvantage as a result of his ignorance. Here again, a lack of education appears to be a real handicap.

In both novels Dickens not only dramatizes how occupations such as those associated with the law can create worlds unique unto themselves, he also dramatizes how in business a myopic point of view can encourage insensitivity. In Pickwick Dickens makes this point lightly in regard to medical students. When Pickwick attends Bob Sawyer's bachelor party on Lant Street, he meets many young men aspiring to the medical profession and gets to see the world from their point of view. Jack Hopkins explains why he has arrived late:

> "Rather good accident brought into the casualty ward."
> "What was that, sir?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.
> "Only a man fallen out of a four pair of stairs' window; - but it' a very fair case . . . indeed."
> "Do you mean that the patient is in a fair way to recover?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.
> "No," replied Hopkins, carelessly. "No, I should rather say he wouldn't. There must be a splendid operation though, to-morrow - magnificent sight if Slasher does it."(446-7)

In Our Mutual Friend Dickens treats this insensitivity, this alienation from feeling, in greater depth by demonstrating that many people succeed in their work by divorcing themselves from any feeling they might have for those in their employ or their charge. The inspector is an example similar

to the medical students in Pickwick in his devotion to his work as well as in his insensitivity to those in his charge, but the setting is so different that the playfulness and exhuberance is gone. Dickens' dramatization is quite cleverly done. The inspector does not react to dead bodies, accusations of murder and the like, but Dickens also more subtlely reveals the inspector's lack of feeling in making him oblivious to the background noise of a screaming prisoner. When Lightwood and Wrayburn come to call, they find the inspector "posting up his books in a whitewashed office, as studiously as if he were in a monastery on the top of a mountain and no howling fury of a drunken woman were banging herself against a cell door in the back-yard at his elbow."(39) He tells them he'll be with them in a minute, and finishes his work "(it might have been illuminating a missal, he was so calm), . . . showing not the slightest consciousness of the woman who was banging herself with increased violence and shrieking most terrifically for some other woman's liver."(462)

When, in the last chapter, Lady Tippins asks each person at the Veneering table whether or not Eugene should have married Lizzie, described by Lady Tippins as a "'female waterman,'"(891) she gets the following insensitive, strictly-business point of

view as reported by the narrator from a man identified only as "The Contractor who is Providence to five hundred thousand men:"(890)

> It appears to this potentate that what the man in question should have done would have been to buy the young woman a boat and a small annuity and set her up for herself. These things are a question of beef-steak and porter. You buy the young woman a boat. Very good. You buy her, at the same time, a small annuity. You speak of that annuity in pounds sterling, but it is in reality so many pounds of beef-steaks and so many pints of porter. On the one hand, the young woman has the boat. On the other hand, she consumes so many pounds of beef-steaks and so many pints of porter. Those beef-steaks and that porter are the fuel to that young woman's engine. She derives therefrom a certain amount of power to row the boat; that power will produce so much money; you add that to the small annuity; and thus you get at the young woman's income. That (it seems to the Contractor) is the way of looking at.(893)

People have been reduced to commodities. Lizzie, whom this contractor has never even met, is, in his scheme of the world, only worth what she can produce. The value of her existence can be reduced to the equation: input equals output. The exhuberance and positive energy in the market place that is apparent throughout Pickwick does not exist in Our Mutual Friend where the streets of the City are full of the "whirling" and the "grinding" of the "money-mills." Lizzie Hexam, whom Dickens draws as the ideal woman and perhaps the ideal human being is, in the eyes of the powerful, no more than an "engine" to be kept fueled in order that she be as productive as possible.

Social Class

The quotation above points to another factor which governs point of view. Dickens dramatizes that social class is an inevitable circumstance that creates confusion and separates people, and prevents them from understanding each other. In both novels Dickens makes many references to the whole issue of class, and often uses the classic comic twosome of the master-slave relationship updated to the employer-employee relationship or generalized to upperclass-lower class relationships (or non-relationships) as a means of dramatizing the different and often alienated and incompatible worlds of different economic groups. In Pickwick these examples are usually comic and satirical, treated in essentially benevolent terms. The idea of class is not yet threatening. We see an example of stratification according to economic class at the Rochester Charity Ball, as we stand with Jingle and Tupman in the corner of the ballroom and listen as Jingle comments to Tupman about the people who are there: "' . . . [Q]ueer place - Dock-yard people of upper rank don't know - Dock-yard people of lower rank - Dock-yard people of lower rank don't know

small gentry - small gentry don't know tradepeople - Commissioner don't know anybody.'"(20) A little further on the narrator fills us in on what is going on:

> While the aristocracy of the place - the Bulders, and Clubbers, and Snipes - were thus preserving their dignity at the upper end of the room, the other classes of society were imitating their example in other parts of it. The less aristocratic officers of the 97th devoted themselves to the families of the less important functionaries from the dock-yard. The solicitors' wives, and the wine merchant's wife, headed another grade, (the brewer's wife visited the Bulders;) and Mrs. Tomlinson, the post-office keeper, seemed by mutual consent to have been chosen the leader of the trade party.(21)

This social stratification is replicated with a vengeance in Bath, of course, where Cyrus Bantam, Esquire describes the ball nights to Pickwick:

> The ball-nights in Ba-ath are moments snatched from Paradise; rendered bewitching by music, beauty, elegance, fashion, etiquette, and - and - above all, by the absence of any tradespeople, who are quite inconsistent with Paradise, and who have an amalgamation of themselves at the Guildhall every fortnight . . . "(506)

This separation of the upper class from the middle class satirized in these scenes from Pickwick is incidental to the novel since class is not a primary focus of the novel. But the division and the problem it creates is at the core of Our Mutual Friend, and is in some way woven into all the various sub-plots of the novel. Furthermore, class colors point of view in really harmful ways. When Boffin

inherits the Harmon fortune, for example, Mrs. Boffin declares she now wants to go into Society. Boffin suggests that she visit her old neighbor friends, but she feels cut off from that world:

> "But it don't answer," said the cheerful Mrs. Boffin.
> "When we worked like the neighbours, we suited one another. Now we have left off, we have left off suiting one another."
> "What, do you think of beginning work again?" Mr. Boffin hinted. "Out of the question! We have come into a great fortune, and we must do what's right by our fortune; we must act up to it."(120)

The disparity in social class, the fact that Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn come from two different worlds, is the problem that complicates their relationship, and makes up the major workings of the plot. But here Dickens' method of treating their incompatability because of social class is more conventionally novelisitic. The characters and their dilemma are treated romantically and melodramatically. In a discussion about Eugene between Jenny and Lizzie, Jenny remarks that "'. . . he's a gentleman. Not of our sort, is he?'"(387) And in telling Bella about him, Lizzie calls him "'. . . a gentleman far above me and my way of life.'"(580) From all their points of view at the beginning, a union in marriage is an impossibility. When Eugene finds her in her hiding place, she begs him to leave her and stresses their differences.

When he tells her not to be distressed, she replies:

> "What can I be, when I know the distance and the difference between us? . . . You have not felt this as I feel it, being so different from me and beginning from a different point of view. . . . Think of me as belonging to another station and quite cut off from you in honour. . . . I am removed from you and your family by being a working girl. How true a gentleman to be as considerate of me as if I was removed by being a Queen!"(758-9)

Once the marriage does take place, Eugene asks Mortimer to point out to him if he ever sees him acting embarrassed because he married Lizzie. He starts by stating that maybe he and Lizzie will go to live in the colonies, but then states emphatically that he will not go. His blood is "wholesomely up" (887):

> " . . . Shall I turn coward to Lizzie and sneak away with her, as if I were ashamed of her! . . . I will fight it out to the last gasp, with her and for her, here in the open field. When I hide her, or strike for her, faint-heartedly, in a hole or a corner, do you . . . tell me what I shall most righteously deserve to be told: that she would have done well to have turned me over with her foot that night when I lay bleeding to death and to have spat in my dastard face."(889)

This speech emphasizes the courageous step Eugene takes in marrying Lizzie and calls attention to the obstacles to happiness that will confront them in their attempts to penetrate Society. For after all, it is Society that is the problem, most vocally represented by Cyrus Bantam Esquire's counterpart in Our Mutual Friend, Lady Tippins.

The separate worlds of the various classes each with its own perspective are often incompatible, and members of the upper class are often indifferent and even callous to those lower on the economic ladder because they have no understanding of their world (and often don't care to understand it). This is demonstrated in Pickwick in the scene at the Bardell - Pickwick trial when one of the common jurymen, a chemist, about to be sworn in, begs the court's pardon, and asks to be excused:

> "On what grounds, Sir?" said Mr. Justice Stareleigh.
> "I have no assistant, my Lord," said the chemist.
> "I can't help that, Sir," replied Mr. Justice Stareleigh.
> "You should hire one."
> "I can't afford it, my Lord," rejoined the chemist.
> "Then you ought to be able to afford it, Sir," said the Judge, reddening; . . .
> "I know I ought to do, if I got on as well as I deserved, but I don't, my Lord," answered the chemist.
> "Swear the gentleman," said the Judge, peremptorily.(474-6)

We might laugh at the judge's total inability to grasp the chemist's situation, but undercutting the humor is our knowledge that the judge, a person designated by society to mete out justice, commits an unjust act in refusing to excuse the chemist from jury duty. This is one of the few interchanges in Pickwick that looks forward to the scenes in Our Mutual Friend that depict the incredible isolation

and insulation of those who wield power. Justice Stareleigh certainly sounds like the forerunner of that Voice of Society Mr. Podsnap:

> Mr. Podsnap was well-to-do and stood very high in Mr. Podsnap's opinion. Beginning with a good inheritance, he had married a good inheritance, and had thriven exceedingly in the Marine Insurance way, and was quite satisfied. . . .
>
> Thus happily acquainted with his own merit and importance, Mr. Podsnap settled that whatever he put behind him be put out of existence. There was a dignified conclusiveness - not to add a grand convenience - in this way of getting of disagreeables, which had done much towards establishing Mr. Podsnap in his lofty place in Mr. Podsnap's satisfaction.
>
> "I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it!" Mr. Podsnap had even acquired a peculiar flourish of his right arm in often clearing the world of its most difficult problems, by sweeping them behind him (and consequently sheer away) with those words and a flushed face. For they affronted him.(151)

Mr. Podsnap's "world got up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past five, and dined at seven."(151) At his daughter's eighteenth birthday party the automaton who has been hired to entertain, "played a blossomless, tuneless 'set,' and sixteen disciples of Podsnappery went through the figures of: (1) getting up at eight and shaving close at a quarter-past; (2) breakfasting at nine; (3) going to the City at ten; (4) coming home at half-past five; (5) dining at seven, and the grand chain."(161)

But it is not only the rich and powerful who fail to understand the life of suffering and poverty.

The suffering of the poor is a foreign experience to all those who have not been touched by it, even those who are well-meaning like Pickwick. Pickwick is a gentleman of apparently independent means and his ignorance of a world in which people live differently is revealed any number of times. He and Sam have several conversations that highlight their different upbringings and explains their different outlooks. At one point Pickwick is enjoying the scenery and Sam mentions that what he's now doing "'Beats the chimbley pots . . . '"(214) He goes on to tell Pickwick that he "'. . . vas a carrier's boy at startin: then a vagginer's, then a helper, then a boots.'"(214) Sam then mentions that before he "'. . . took up with the vagginer. . . '"(215) he "'. . . had unfurnished lodgin's for a fortnight. . . '"(215) Pickwick doesn't understand what he means, so Sam explains:

> "Yes - the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. Fine sleeping-place - vithin ten minutes' walk of all the public offices - only if there is any objection to it, it is that the sitvation's rather too airy. I see some queer sights there. . . . Sights, Sir, . . . as 'ud penetrate your benevolent -heart, and come out on the other side. You don't see the reg-lar wagrants there; . . .it's generally the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves up in the dark corners o' them lonesome place - poor creeturs as an't up to the twopenny rope."(215)

Pickwick doesn't know what the "twopenny rope" is and Sam tells him that it ". . . is just a cheap lodgin' house, vere the beds is twopence a night. . . "(215) When

Pickwick asks him why they call a bed a rope, Sam responds, "'Bless your innocence, Sir, . . .'"(215) and then goes on to explain how the system works. We expect Pickwick to be ignorant. His naivete is one of the cornerstones upon which the comedy is built. And Sam has survived the "unfurnished lodgin's" and has left poverty far behind. He is not sarcastic when he says to Pickwick, "Bless your innocence" and we tend to agree with him.

In Our Mutual Friend Dickens also gives us examples of well-meaning people who are ignorant of what it is like to be poor. For example, when Betty Higden comes to the Boffins to tell them her plans for independence, she first talks to Rokesmith:

> "You have wonderful energy," returned Rokesmith. "You are as young as I am."
> Betty Higden gravely shook her head. "I am strong for my time of life, sir, but not young, thank the Lord!"
> "Are you thankful for not being young?"
> "Yes, sir. If I was young, it would all have to be gone through again and the end would be a weary way off, don't you see? . . ."(425)

Rokesmith isn't the comic Pickwick. That he should not understand what it is like to be poor is not funny and shows how difficult it can be for even well-meaning people to understand experiences foreign to them. And Betty Higden is not the survivor, Sam Weller. She does not triumph over her poverty; but rather is brought down by it. And as she roams the countryside and looks for a

place to sleep, she notices the houses and shops along her paths:

> Those gentlefolks and their children inside those fine houses, could they think, as they looked out at her, what it was to be really hungry, really cold? Did they feel any of the wonder about her that she felt about them? Bless the dear lauging children! If they could have seen sick Johnny in her arms, would they have cried for pity? If they could have seen dead Johnny on that little bed, would they have understood it? Bless the dear children for his sake, anyhow! So with the humbler houses in the little street, the inner firelight shining on the panes as the outer twilight darkened. When the families gathered indoors there for the night, it was only a foolish fancy to feel as if it were a little hard in them to close the shutter and blacken the flame.(558)

The reality that the upper class wants to have as little to do as possible with the lower classes and often do not hesitate to point out their superiority points to a deliberate distancing of the two worlds which is parodied in Pickwick at the "swarry" of the footmen. Their positions as footmen with elaborate and showy uniforms gives them rank amongst servants and they assert themselves in their world, putting as much distance as possible between themselves and those below them. When it is time to eat at the "swarry" in the little room behind the greengrocer's shop, the footmen give the greengrocer a hard time as he serves them dinner, calling him "'a wulgar beast,'" "'an inattentive reskel,'" "'a low thief,'" "'an unreclaimable blaygaird.'"(531-2)

> The poor greengrocer bowed very humbly while these little epithets were bestowed upon him, in the true spirit of the very smallest tyranny; and when every body had said something to show their superiority, Mr. Tuckle proceeded to carve the leg of mutton, and to help the company.(531-2)

The footmen are ordinarily not in positions of power, so the arrangement they have with the greengrocer gives them a chance to exercise some power, but it is essentially playacting. It's all a game.

The comic treatment of this theme of pointing out their superiority in Pickwick is trivial partly because it is parody of affectation more than anything else, but in Our Mutual Friend the early confrontation between Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone is full of real cruelty. Here Eugene gets great pleasure out of flaunting his superiority and belittling an obvious inferior. But because Eugene is so obviously superior in intelligence and in self-control as well as in social standing, Bradley is not fair game, and although we may laugh at Eugene's sarcastic remarks, we realize that his behavior is far from gentlemanly. Eugene is in a powerful superior position. Whereas Bradley has worked hard to get where he is, Eugene, by virtue of his birth, doesn't have to work at all. He is a member of society. His position in society and his willingness to live by many of its standards despite

Because Bradley and he are rivals for Lizzie's affection, Eugene does not hesitate to torment Bradley, partly by remaining cool, but mostly by making the class issue the focus of the discussion both directly and indirectly. He does this because he sees right away that this is Bradley's point of vulnerability. Lizzie does not like Bradley as a man, but Bradley is so self-conscious about his class origins, that it would be hard for him to believe Lizzie would not take his status into consideration as well.

Dickens builds up to this confrontation by sketching in an introductory scene. As Charley and Bradley leave Lizzie's the first time that Bradley meets her, they pass Eugene walking toward her house.

> They had nearly crossed the bridge when a gentleman came coolly sauntering towards them, with a cigar in his mouth, his coat thrown back, and his hands behind him. Something in the careless manner of this person, and in a certain lazily arrogant air with which he approached, holding possession of twice as much pavement as another would have claimed, instantly caught the boy's attention.(259)

Charley then explains to Bradley who it is that had passed, how he knows him, and why he resents him. A few minutes later at Lizzie's house, Eugene asks Lizzie who has been there with her brother. When she says, "'The

Schoolmaster,'" he responds: "'To be sure. Looked like it.'"(264)

The showdown takes place at Eugene and Mortimer's apartments when Charley and Bradley come to remonstrate for his having the nerve to pay for Lizzie's education. Up until this point Bradley and Eugene have not been formally introduced. Ostensibly Charley argues on behalf of his sister, but it is obvious to both Bradley and Eugene that the argument is really between the two of them. Throughout the conversation, Eugene more or less ignores Charley and in some cases, to be particularly perverse, addresses his remarks to Mortimer. Charley, in an animated tone, starts the conversation, but then Eugene turns to Mortimer and asks him who the other person is.

> "I am Charles Hexam's friend," said Bradley: "I am Charles Hexam's schoolmaster."
>
> "My good sir, you should teach your pupils better manners," returned Eugene.
>
> Composedly smoking, he leaned an elbow on the chimney-piece at the side of the fire and looked at the schoolmaster. It was a cruel look, in its cold disdain of him, as a creature of no worth. The schoolmaster looked at him, and that, too, was a cruel look, though of the different kind, that it had a raging jealousy and fiery wrath in it.
>
> . . .
>
> "In some high respects, Mr. Eugene Wrayburn," said Bradley answering him with pale and quivering lips, "the natural feelings of my pupils are stronger than my teaching."
>
> "In most respects, I dare say," replied Eugene, enjoying his cigar, "though whether high or low is of no importance. You have my name very correctly. Pray what is yours?"
>
> "It cannot concern you much to know, but -"

> "True," interposed Eugene, striking sharply and cutting him short at his mistake, "it does not concern me at all to know. I can say Schoolmaster, which is a most respectable title. You are right, Schoolmaster."
>
> It was not the dullest part of this goad in its galling of Bradley Headstone that he had made it himself in a moment of incautious anger.(322-3)

Charley then goes on to explain that they looked up Eugene's address, first went to his office, and then came to his apartments.

> "You have given yourself much trouble, Schoolmaster," observed Eugene blowing the feathery ash from his cigar. "I hope it may prove remunerative. . . ."
>
> "I don't know, Mr. Wrayburn," answered Bradley, with his passion rising, "why you address me -"
>
> "Don't you?" said Eugene. "Then I won't."
>
> He said it so tauntingly in his perfect placidity that the respectable right hand clutching the respectable hairguard of the respectable watch could have wound it round his throat and strangled him with it. Not another word did Eugene deem it worth while to utter, but stood leaning his head upon his hand, smoking and looking imperturbably at the chafing Bradley Headstone with his clutching right hand, until Bradley was well-nigh mad.(323-4)

Charley then makes a speech about Eugene's having no right to pay for Lizzie's education at which point Eugene, "removing his fast-waning cigar from his lips,"(325) suggests that Bradley take his pupil away, and Bradley asks Charley to wait for him downstairs.

> "You think me of no more value than the dirt under your feet, said Bradley to Eugene, . . .
>
> "I assure you, Schoolmaster," replied Eugene, "I don't think about you."
>
> "That's not true," returned the other; "you

know better."
"That's coarse," Eugene retorted; "but you don't know better."
"Mr. Wrayburn, at least I know very well that it would be idle to set myself against you in insolent words or overbearing manners. That lad who has just gone out could put you to shame in half a dozen branches of knowledge in half an hour, but you can throw him aside like an inferior. . . . But I am more than a lad . . . and I WILL be heard, sir."
"As a schoolmaster," said Eugene, "you are always being heard. That ought to content you."
. . .
"Mr. Wrayburn."
"Schoolmaster."
"Sir, my name is Bradley Headstone."
"As you justly said, my good sir, your name cannot concern me. . . ."(326)

When Bradley says that he too disapproves of Eugene's involvement with Charley Hexam's sister, Eugene replies:

"Are you her schoolmaster as well as her brother's? - Or perhaps you would like to be? . . . A natural ambition enough . . . Far be it from me to say otherwise. The sister . . . is so very different from all the associations to which she has been used, and from all the low and obscure people about her, that it is a very natural ambition."
"Do you throw my obscurity in my teeth, Mr. Wrayburn?"
"That can hardly be, for I know nothing concerning it, Schoolmaster, and seek to know nothing."
"You reproach me with my origin," said Bradley Headstone; "you cast insinuations at my bringing-up. But I tell you, sir, I have worked my way onward, out of both and in spite of both, and have a right to be considered a better man than you, with better reasons for being proud."
"How can I reproach you with what is not within my knowledge, or how I can cast stones that were never in my hand, is a problem for the ingenuity of a schoolmaster to prove," returned Eugene.(327-8)

Bradley tries several times to get his point across,

but Eugene deflects it with sarcasm. In his final remarks Bradley again refers to his status: "'I scorn your shifty evasions, and I scorn you, . . . In the meanness of your nature you revile me with the meanness of my birth. I hold you in contempt for it. . . . '"(328) Eugene realizes early on that Bradley is painfully insecure about his status and reveals this in the sarcastic and disingenuous remark he makes to Mortimer right after Bradley walks out the door: "'A curious monomaniac . . . The man seems to believe that everybody was acquainted with his mother!'"(329) This confrontation is neither comic nor satiric, although Eugene's sarcasm is amusing in its wit. Dickens has created realistic characters from whom we do not have much aesthetic distance. Dickens wants us to be engaged in the moral issues involved, not to be carried away in laughter.

Dickens makes some strategic decisions in working out the plot in Our Mutual Friend in order to further highlight and contrast the different worlds of the rich and poor and how alien they are to each other. Chapters Nineteen and Twenty are interesting in that they contrast Jenny's world of work with that of the Veneerings'. At the end of Chapter Nineteen, for example, called "Still Educational," we meet Jenny's drunken father who has

spent most of his money on drink, which means that Jenny has to work harder to support them. She is despairing and angry at him, and, treating him like a son and not a father, she sends him to bed without supper. The chapter ends with these words about Jenny:

> The person of the house was the person of a house full of sordid shames and cares, with an upper room in which that abased figure was infecting even innocent sleep with sensual brutality and degradation. The dolls' dressmaker had become a little quaint shrew; of the world, worldly; of the earth, earthy.
>
> Poor dolls' dressmaker! How often so dragged down by hands that should have raised her up; how often so misdirected when losing her way on the eternal road and asking guidance. Poor, poor, little dolls' dress-maker!(274)

The very next chapter is ironically called "A piece of Work," and in it Veneering goes about getting himself elected to Parliament - - a farce since he's bought himself the office. But what is emphasized here is that before he can accept the offer extended by "a legal gentleman"(275) representing Britannia, he and his wife "must work"(275) to make sure his friends rally around him. The entire chapter is about the feverish pitch of this "work." He rushes out in a hansom cab and is "driven furiously"(276) to Twemlow's who is unwilling to procure Lord Snigworth's endorsement but who then responds: "'One thing, however, I can do for you . . . and that is, work for you.'"(277) Podsnap thanks him profusely and blesses

him. Twemlow checks the time which is twenty to eleven, says he'll get to the club by ten minutes to twelve "'. . . and I'll never leave it all day.'"(277) His work consists of sitting at a desk by a large window "to be respectfully contemplated by Pall Mall,"(278) and writing letters. He also electioneers amongst members who only want to know if Veneering is a club member. "Towards six oclock of the afternoon, Twemlow begins to persuade himself that he is positively jaded with work . . . "(278) The insular world that Twemlow and fellow members of Society inhabit is best reflected in his opinion about Veneering's entering the House of Commons: "'I think,' rejoins Twemlow, feelingly, 'that it is the best club in London.'"(278)

From Twemlow's Veneering "dashes"(278) to see Podsnap who agrees to work for him, leaves Podsnap "at a hand-gallop"(280) and "descends upon"(280) Boots and Brewer while Mrs. Veneering goes to Lady Tippins who, like Twemlow, has not quite started the day. Lady Tippins, in fact, considers it "the middle of the night."(280)

> . . . Mrs. Veneering incoherently communicates how . . . that Veneering has said, "We must work;" how that she is here, as a wife and mother, to entreat Lady Tippins to work; how that the carriage is at Lady Tippins's disposal for purposes of work; how that she, proprietress of said bran-new elegant equipage, will return home on foot - on bleeding feet if need be - to work (not specifying how), until she drops by the side of baby's crib.

> "My love," says Lady Tippins, "compose yourself; we'll bring him in." And Lady Tippins really does work, and work the Veneering horses too; for she clatters about town all day, calling upon everybody she knows, and showing her entertaining powers and green fan to immense advantage, by rattling on with My dear soul, what do you think? What do you suppose me to be? You'll never guess. I'm pretending to be an electioneering agent. . . ."(280-1)

All the workers gather at the Veneerings for dinner after their hard day's work and get drunk. They feel entitled because they have worked so hard.

> Mrs. Veneering faintly remarks, as dinner opens, that many such days would be too much for her.
>
> "Many such days would be too much for all of us," says Podsnap, "but we'll bring him in!"
>
> . . .
>
> Strictly speaking, it would be hard to show cause why they should not bring him in, Pocket-Breaches having closed its little bargain and there being no opposition. However, it is agreed that they must "work" to the last, and that if they did not work, something indefinite would happen. It is likewise agreed that they are all so exhausted with the work behind them, and need to be so fortified for the work before them as to require strengthening from Veneering's cellar. . . . "(282)

This is indeed an ironic contrast to Jenny's father who also gets drunk after a day's work. Many chapters later, we find that Jenny must pay for her father's funeral by engaging in genuinely hard work: "Many flaunting dolls had to be gaily dressed before the money was in the dress-maker's pocket to get mourning for Mr. Dolls."(800) The image of Jenny Wren, dolls' dressmaker, working feverishly outfitting dolls to be able to afford mourning

clothes for her dead father calls attention to the contrast between the frivolous world of the rich and the desparate world of the poor.

Finally, it is useful to look at he classic comic master-slave relationship updated to master-servant as a pairing between members of two different social classes. The comedy and the interest in these kinds of relationships often arise because of the tension between the two worlds of master and servant which results in a clash between the presumed and assumed subservience of the servant to the master, and the reality that the master is often at the mercy of the servant. This happens oftentimes because the servant is a "master" of the real world which frequently results in a comic inversion of what is "supposed to be," as in the many scenes between Sam and Pickwick. The innocent Pickwick gets himself into scrapes; the street-wise Sam does his best to rescue him.

However, in Our Mutual Friend the struggle between master and servant represents an instance of a genuine disarrangement in society that identifies it as a sick society. Again, Wegg, despite his theatricality, is the most obvious example of a servant whose motives are entirely suspect. And lest we assume that Wegg is unique, Dickens generalizes

about his "type." Boffin often drops in at night to have Wegg read to him.

> If Wegg had been worse paid for his office, or better qualified to discharge it, he would have considered these visits complimentary and agreeable; but, holding the position a handsomely remunerated humbug, he resented them. This was quite according to rule, for the incompetent servant by whomesoever employed is always against his employer. Even those born governors, noble and right honourable creatures, who have been the most imbecile in high places, have uniformly shown themselves the most opposed (sometimes in belying distrust, sometimes in vapid insolence) to their employer. What is in such wise true of the public master and servant the world over. (331)

As the ultimate example of a disarranged society, one in which social class is divisive, Dickens has created Lady Tippins when he describes her getting ready for the Lammle's wedding:

> Betimes next morning, that horrible old Lady Tippins (relict of the late Sir Thomas Tippins, knighted in mistake for somebody else by His Majesty King George the Third, who, while performing the ceremony, was graciously pleased to observe, "What, what, what? Who, who, who? Why, why, why?") begins to be dyed and varnished for the interesting occasion.(141)

The parenthetical anecdote recapitulates a scene that could have occurred in any number of theatrical farces, but attributing the fictional mistake to the actual King George the Third points to its absurdity. The fact that Lady Tippins' title is due to a quirk of fate suggests that the members of the monarchy are just as apt to be as incompetent as anyone else. In creating Lady Tippins and the rest of the members of

Society, Dickens dramatizes that the class system promotes a way of life that says nothing about an individual's worth, keeps people in their places, encourages divisiveness, lack of trust, and narrowness of trust. Lady Tippins, who is at the top of the social order, does not contribute to life in any meaningful way. Her whole existence is bent on validating her place in Society by being with the "right" people in the "right" places. How is anyone to know who Lady Tippins really is? What are we to deduce from seeing her or listening to her?

That Pickwick is a gentleman is important. That he is paired with Sam, a member of the working class, is equally important because Sam is his teacher and protector. In their romps around the country, part of the comic confusion stems from Pickwick's sheltered life. Because he has trouble seeing the world through the eyes of others, he cannot predict their behavior and adjust his own behavior accordingly. But little by little he becomes wiser, and learns from his experiences and others. When he does not learn, he is the butt of his own ignorance. In Our Mutual Friend, on the other hand, the so-called "gentlemen" - the Voices of Society - are more than happy with what divides them from their fellow men and are eager to put as much distance as

possible between them and the working class. And in contrast to Pickwick, these Voices of Society are not naive and do not become victims - they victimize others. The caste system here is perhaps the most pervasive factor that keeps people from communicating with each other and from understanding each other, more so than gender, geography, politics - the butt of so many jokes and so much comic confusion in Pickwick.

CIRCUMSTANCE AND EVIDENCE

> Puddin'head Wilson's Calendar: Even the clearest and most perfect circumstantial evidence is likely to be at fault, after all, and therefore ought to be received with great caution. Take the case of any pencil sharpened by any woman: if you have witnesses, you will find she did it with a knife; but if you take simply the aspect of the pencil, you will say she did it with her teeth.
>
> Mark Twain - Puddin'head Wilson

In both Pickwick and Our Mutual Friend another classic plot device Dickens exploits is one in which characters are deceived by a set of circumstances, what Pickwick in one instance calls "'a dreadful conjunction of appearances.'"(251) This can be the stuff of broad farce as it is in Pickwick, where it serves to advance and complicate the plot and demonstrates what perfect fools men can be. Usually, Dickens constructs the scene so that we, the readers, see the situation for what it is and we laugh as the characters draw the wrong conclusions and get themselves into trouble.

For example, when Pickwick is staying in The Great White Horse in Ipswich, he goes down the passages and stairways in his nightgown in order to retrieve his watch, only to get lost on the way back to his room and ends up in someone else's room. We suspect it, and Dickens builds up the suspense. Pickwick is sure he has

"found" his room because of the evidence: it looks just like the one he left. But a few minutes later, to Pickwick's horror, a woman enters. "'A strange man,' shreiked the lady,"(316) and Pickwick makes a very embarrassed and hasty exit. This "complication" furthers along the plot, for the next morning Pickwick finds out she's Peter Magnus' fiancee, Peter Magnus mistakes their relationship, the woman runs to the magistrate Nupkins to prevent violence between Pickwick and Magnus, all of which brings Jingle back into the plot because he has become involved with the Nupkins' family.

In Bath, Mr. Winkle gets himself and a fellow lodger, Mrs. Dowler, into trouble when he opens the front door in the middle of the night to let her in, and it slams closed behind him. Embarrassed, his dressing gown blowing in the wind, he rushes into Mrs. Dowler's sedan chair with the cry, "'Hide me - do something with me.'"(524) Mr. Dowler looks out of his bedroom window just in time to see Winkle jump into the sedan chair with his wife - "a dreadful conjunction of appearances." Dowler runs after Winkle who runs into his bedroom, "locked the door, piled a wash-hand-stand, chest of drawers and table against it, and packed up a few necessaries ready for flight with the first light of morning."(525) Dowler "avowed, through the key-hole, his stedfast determination of cutting Mr. Winkle's throat

next day . . ."(525) This episode is another example of typical farce and innocent fun and further serves to move the story to Bristol to where Winkle and Dowler have both independently run off, and reintroduces us to Bob Sawyer, now surgeon.

But the scene in the novel which is the most comic and, consequently, most famous example of such a misunderstanding is the episode upon which much of the plot in the novel hangs - the conversation between Pickwick and Mrs. Bardell which results in the trial for breach of promise and then Pickwick's imprisonment in the Fleet. We are not privy to what Pickwick is really talking about, although we do realize he is being misunderstood. Dickens very skillfully draws this conversation out for two pages starting when Pickwick asks Mrs. Bardell, "'Do you think it's a much greater expense to keep two people, than to keep one?'"(256) The astonished Pickwick discovers Mrs. Bardell is drawing the wrong conclusions when "she . . . flung her arms round Mr. Pickwick's neck, with a cataract of tears, and a chorus of sobs"(157) and faints in his arms just as the three Pickwickians and Mrs. Bardell's son walk in. After she revives and is led downstairs, we readers find out what Pickwick was really talking about. "'I cannot conceive what has been the matter with that woman. I had merely announced to her my intention of keeping a man

servant, when she fell into the extraordinary paroxysm in which you found her. Very extraordinary thing.'"(159)

In Our Mutual Friend Dickens relies on an apparently similar farcical device in an early scene in the novel where people innocently misinterpret evidence before them: the first Veneering dinner when we meet the members of Society. Here a truly amusing mix-up takes place which the narrator describes as "a fearful circumstance."(22) The Podsnaps are announced. Podsnap immediately heads for Twemlow, mistaking him for Veneering, and says, "'How do you do? So glad to know you. Charming house you have here. I hope we are not late. So glad of this opportunity, I am sure!'"(22-3) Before Twemlow can explain that he is not Veneering, Podsnap calls his wife over to introduce her. Before the Podsnaps realize their mistake, Mrs. Podsnap declares to Mrs. Veneering that ". . . the baby is already very like him, . . . " looking at Twemlow. Then Mr. Podsnap turns to Veneering who has just expressed his delights as seeing him and Podsnap says to Veneering: "'Thank you. I am ashamed to say that I cannot at this moment recall where we met, but I am so glad of this opportunity, I am sure.!'"(23) But all is sorted out "when the arrival of more guests unravels the mistake."(23) This is all too much for Twemlow who observes "that of the remaining seven guests four discreet characters enter with

wandering eyes and wholly decline to commit themselves as to which is Veneering until Veneering has them in his grasp . . ."(26) Obviously, instead of serving as a complication merely meant to advance the plot and to entertain at the same time, this scene serves to reveal the Veneerings as nobodies, as newcomers to Society. It also reveals that this gathering of supposed friends is not much more than a meeting of strangers. There is an element of satire in this case of mistaken identity which undermines any presumed respect we might have for these Voices of Society and there is none of the sublime silliness that we find in the instances of innocent mistakes detailed in Pickwick.

Many times we make the kind of mistakes not because of "a dreadful conjunction of appearances," but because of our own prediliction or obtuseness. We give raw data an interpretation we'd like it to have despite evidence, sometimes overwhelming evidence, that another interpretation is probably closer to the truth. We see what we want to see, which further impedes our understanding our world. Given the sunny, effervescent tone of Pickwick, the instances in Pickwick are ones in which the characters blithely interpret all data positively. The discrepancy between how we would interpret the data and how a character interprets the same data is what makes for the humor.

It's certainly true that Pickwick's innocent, naive, idealistic, and optimistic way of looking at the world around him colors his vision. While the Pickwickians are at Manor Farm, one morning Sam tells Pickwick that there are medical students downstairs. Given all the evidence to see them one way, Pickwick insists on seeing them another:

> "I am glad of it," said Mr. Pickwick, casting his nightcap energetically on the counterpane. "They are fine fellows; very fine fellows, with judgements matured by observation and reflection; and tastes refined by reading and study; I am glad of it."
> "They're smoking cigars by the kitchen fire," said Sam.
> "Ah!" observed Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his hands, "overflowing with kindly feelings and animal spirits. Just what I like to see!"
> "And one on 'em," said Sam . . . "one on 'em's got his legs on the table, and is a drinkin' brandy neat, vile tother one - him in the barnacles - has got a barrel o' oysters atween his knees, vich he's a openin' like steam, and as fast as he eats 'em, he takes a aim vith the shells at young dropsy, who's a settin' down fast asleep, in the chimbley corner."
> "Eccentricities of genius, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.(413-4)

In another comic moment in Pickwick we have Wardle, who is predisposed toward thinking well of Pickwick's friends, congratulate Tupman for being a good shot. But all Tupman has done is close his eyes and aim his gun toward the sky. When a partridge falls to the ground he assumes Wardle has bagged him.

> He was just on the point of congratulating Wardle on his invariable success, when that gentleman advanced towards him, and grasped him warmly by the hand.
> "Tupman," said the old gentleman, "you singled out that particular bird?"
> "No," said Mr. Tupman - "no."

> "You did," said Wardle. "I saw you do it - I observed you pick him out - noticed you, as you raised your piece to take aim; . . . the best shot in existence could not have done it more beautifully. You are an older hand at this, than I thought you, Tupman; - you have been out before."
>
> It was in vain for Mr. Tupman to protest, with a smile of self-denial, that he never had. The very smile was taken as evidence to the contrary; and from that time forth, his reputation was established.(259)

In this next wonderfully satiric excerpt from the ball scene in Bath we get a slightly different treatment of the innocent Pickwick. Here his reaction to the people he meets is more like Sam's in the episode involving the medical students. Here it is Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire, M.C. who sees what he wants to see and Pickwick who plays the "straight man." Mr. Dowler has just asked if "'anybody'" is here. Bantam responds:

> "Any body! The elite of Ba-ath. Mr. Pickwick, do you see the lady in the gauze turban?"
>
> "The fat old lady?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, innocently.
>
> "Hush, my dear Sir - nobody's fat or old in Ba-ath. That's the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph."
>
> "Is it indeed" said Mr. Pickwick.
>
> "No less a person, I assure you," said the Master of Ceremonies. "Hush. Draw a little nearer, Mr. Pickwick. You see the splendidly dressed young man coming this way."
>
> "The one with the long hair, and the particularly small forehead?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.
>
> "The same. The richest young man in Ba-ath at this moment. Young Lord Mutanhed."
>
> "You don't say so?" said Mr. Pickwick.
>
> "Yes. You'll hear his voice in a moment, Mr. Pickwick . . . The other gentleman with him, in the red under waistcoat and dark moustache, is the Honourable Mr. Crushton, his bosom friend. How do you do, my Lord?"
>
> "Veway hot, Bantam," said his Lordship.
>
> "It is very warm, my Lord," replied the M.C.
>
> "Confounded," assented the Honourable Mr.

> Crushton.
>
> "Have you seen his Lordship's mail cart, Bantam?" inquired the Honourable Mr. Crushton. . . .
>
> "Dear me, no," replied the M.C. "A mail cart! What an excellent idea. Re-markable!"
>
> "Gwacious Heavens!" said his Lordship, "I thought evewebody had seen the new mail cart; it's the neatest pwettiest, gwacefullest thing that ever wan upon wheels - painted wed, with a cweam piebald. . . . I dwove it over to Bwistol the other morning in a cwimson coat, with two servants widing a quarter of a mile behind; and cwucify me if the people didn't wush out of their cottages, and awest my pwogwess, to know if I wasn't the post. Glorwious, glorwious!"
>
> At this anecdote his Lordship laughed very heartily, as did the listeners, of course. Then drawing his arm through that of the obsequious Mr. Crushton, Lord Mutanhed walked away.
>
> "Delightful young man, his Lordship," said the Master of Ceremonies.
>
> "So I should think," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, drily.(511-2)

Here the discrepancy between Lord Mutanhed's title denoting nobility and his obvious lack of noble looks and behavior is the source of the humor. But although Dickens, through satire, reveals the idiocy of the "elite of Ba-ath," we can only laugh. They seem like remote, impotent, non-threatening stick figures. There is something childlike and innocent about all this optimism and good will, even in the praise showered on undeserving characters like the medical students and Lord Mutanhed.

In off-hand remarks and scenes in Our Mutual Friend in which Dickens uses this technique of setting up a discrepancy between the raw data and the interpretation of that data, Dickens dramatizes the dark side - that it can be self-serving as well as harmful to others to believe what you want to believe. Whereas in

Pickwick Dickens focusses on the "good" characters like Pickwick who believe "good" things about others, in Our Mutual Friend it is frequently the opposite. Surely Lady Tippins' "delusions" are both self-serving and egocentric, though perhaps harmless in her fantasy that Eugene and Mortimer are part of her stable of lovers. Mortimer humors her and calls her his "fair enslaver."(459) Lady Tippins "nods" to Eugene "as her dear Bear and playfully insinuates that she (a self-evident proposition) is Beauty and he the Beast."(459) In the last chapter when she sees Mortimer after his long absence she "all but screams at sight of her false swain. She summons the deserter to her with her fan . . ."(890) We no longer chuckle with amusement as we did at the misguided good-will of Pickwick, but react with displeasure at the perversity and narcissism of Lady Tippins who convinces herself of what she wants to believe because of her self-centeredness.

Lady Tippins' behavior is even more reprehensible in her attitude toward Lizzie. In asking Mortimer about Eugene and Lizzy's wedding, she starts by asking how he left "'the savages,'"(890) and when he professes not to understand, she calls him a "'Tormentor!'"(890) and asks specifically about the wedding. She persists in "seeing" her as the daughter of a waterside low-life. "'How was the bride dressed? In rowing costume? . . . I hope she

steered herself skiffed herself, paddled herself, larboarded and starboarded herself, or whatever the technical term may be, to the ceremony?'"(891) It certainly is possible to laugh here, but what we are laughing at is Lady Tippins' sharp tongue. We laugh at her audacity: we do not laugh in complicity.

Fascination Fledgeby, another character in Our Mutual Friend for whom Dickens has no sympathy, also believes what he wants to believe. It is convenient for him to believe that the Jew Riah is out to deceive him. If Pickwick in his innocence believe that all men are like him, then Fledgeby's attitude about whatever he thinks Riah is up to is similarly a classic case of projection. When Fledgeby arrives at his place of business on a holiday and finds the door locked, he immediately assumes Riah is playing "'nice games!'"(309) but Riah explains that there have been no customers. Fledgeby responds: "'Ah! Can't be buyer and seller too. That's what the Jews say, aint it? . . . Your people need speak the truth sometimes, for they lie enough . . .'"(310)

Fledgeby obviously thinks Riah has money stashed away that he had made when working for Fledgeby's dead father. Thinking so, justifies the poor wages he pays him and the poor treatment he metes out, and he asks Riah if he has hid his money in a roof garden Riah has built:

"'I should like to know what you really are worth,' returned Fledgeby, with whom his growing rich on that stipend and gratitude was a very convenient fiction."(312)

When Riah comes to go over the books at Fledgeby's home, Fledgeby lets him in, and then falls asleep. Riah, waiting for him to awake, dozes by the warmth of the fire. Fledgeby finally awakes.

> "Now, old 'un!" cried Fascination, in his light raillery, "what dodgery are you up to next, sitting there with your eyes shut? You ain't asleep. Catch a weasel at it, and catch a Jew!"
> "Truly, sir, I fear I nodded," said the old man.
> "Not you!" returned Fledgeby, with a cunning look. "A telling move with a good many, I dare day, but it won't put ME off my guard. Not a bad notion, though, if you want to look indifferent in driving a bargain. Oh, you are a dodger!"(468-9)

They then go over the books and count the cash and Fledgeby "rang every sovereign."(469)

> "I suppose," he said, taking one up to eye it closely, "you haven't been lightening any of these; but it's a trade of your people's, you know. YOU understand what sweating a pound means, don't you?"
> . . .
> "Do you not, sir - without intending it - . . . sometimes mingle the character I fairly earn in your employment with the character which it is your policy that I should bear?"
> "I don't find it worth my while to cut things so fine . . . " Fascination coolly answered.
> . . .
> "Not in generosity?"
> "Jews and generosity!" said Fledgeby. "That's a good connexion!. Bring out your vouchers and don't talk Jerusalem palaver."(469-70)

After Lammle has come and gone and Fledgeby has sent Riah on his way to buy up the queer bills, he remarks to Riah

that he is sure he will "'. . . go on squeezing those Christians like the Jew you are.'"(475) When he finds out that Riah has had a hand in Lizzie's going into hiding, he tries to find out where she is, but Riah says it is a "'sacred confidence.'"(476) "'Honour, too!' cried Fledgeby, with a mocking lip. Honour among Jews. Well.'"(476) It's hard to say that Fledgeby really believes all he says about Riah and the Jews, but he certainly wants to believe it.

In both novels Dickens also dramatizes that this predisposition to believe what we want to believe extends beyond our judgements about human nature and extends into science: social science, physical science, and natural science. These interpretations turn into pronouncements, then get passed on to others who regard them as fact, and become part of a "received" body of knowledge. In Pickwick the discrepancy between how characters interpret the data and how we as readers interpret it, again, makes for the humor. First of all, we must keep in mind the original premise of the plot of Pickwick which is laid out in the document in Chapter One. Pickwick has been congratulated by members of the Pickwick Society on his investigations into the world of natural science which resulted in the paper: "Speculations on the Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with Some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats."(1) So the members have given Pickwick approval to travel

extensively. They " . . . cannot but entertain a lively sense of the speculations of that learned man into a wider field . . . and consequently enlarging his sphere of observation to the advancement of knowledge, and the diffusion of learning."(2) What Dickens does throughout the travels of the Pickwickians, however, is to undermine the whole notion of scientific truth and in so doing to raise questions about "the advancement of knowledge and the diffusion of learning." It brings us back to the question, what can we ever really know? But in Pickwick we laugh when we realize how much we presume and how little we know; there are no life-threatening consequences to not knowing.

For example, in a particularly comic twist, Dickens invents an extreme case of believing what one wants to believe, by, not in this case, having Pickwick draw the wrong conclusions based on evidence provided, but by having him invent both evidence and conclusions! Pickwick has settled into lodgings in Bath:

> . . . Mr. Pickwick began to drink the waters with the utmost assiduity. Mr. Pickwick took them systematically. He drank a quarter of a pint before breakfast, and then walked up a hill; and another quarter of a pint after breakfast, and then walked down a hill; and after every fresh quarter of a pint, Mr. Pickwick declared, in the most solemn and emphatic terms, that he felt a great deal better, whereat his friends were very much delighted, though they had not been previously aware that there was anything the matter with him.(514)

Obviously Pickwick is not the only person in Bath who

believes in the powers of the mineral water. The narrator describes for us the pump-room and the patrons going about getting the water to drink, and comments that "it is a most edifying and satisfactory sight to behold the perserverance and gravity with which they swallow it."(514)

Probably one of the most famous scenes in the novel in which Pickwick's scientific endeavors are called into question is the one in which Pickwick "made that immortal discovery which has been the pride and boast of his friends, and the envy of every antiquarian in this or any other country."(141) He has found a stone with an inscription on it.

> Mr. Pickwick's eyes sparkled with delight, as he sat and gloated over the treasure he had discovered. He had attained one of the greatest objects of his ambition. . . . [H]e - he, the Chairman of the Pickwick Club - had discovered a strange and curious inscription of unquestionable antiquity, which had wholly escaped the observation of the many learned men who had preceded him. He could hardly trust the evidence of his senses.(142)

But he does trust the evidence of his senses and he presents his discovery at a meeting of the Pickwick Society. "Mr. Pickwick was elected an honorary member of seventeen native and foreign societies, for making the discovery; . . . none of the seventeen could make anything of it but . . . all agreed it was very extraordinary."(153) But Mr. Blotton of the Pickwick Society "presumed to state a view of the case, as

degrading as ridiculous."(153) He states that he had travelled to Cobham and questioned the man in front of whose cottage he'd found the stone who "presumed the stone to be ancient but solemnly denied the antiquity of the inscription - inasmuch as he represented it to have been rudely carved by himself in an idle mood . . ."(154) We might expect that Pickwick's contribution to scientific knowledge having been discredited, that is the end of this episode; but Dickens gives us an ending that is wonderfully absurd and the same time demonstrates that for a variety of reasons people believe what they want to believe.

> The Pickwick Club, as might have been expected from so enlightened an Institution, received this statement with the contempt it deserved, expelled the presumptuous and ill-conditioned Blotton from the society, and voted Mr. Pickwick a pair of gold spectacles, in token of their confidence and approbation; . . .
>
> Mr. Blotton was ejected but not conquered. He also wrote a pamphlet, addressed to the seventeen learned societies, containing a reptition of the statement he had already made, and rather more than half intimating his opinion that the seventen learned societies aforesaid were so many "humbugs." Hereupon the virtuous indignation of the seventeen learned societies being roused, several the native learned societies translated the pamphlets of the foreign societies into English, the foreign learned societies translated the pamphlets of the native learned societies into all sorts of languages: and thus commenced that celebrated scientific discussion so well known to all men, as the Pickwick controversy.(154)

This episode is so successful, that Dickens gives us a repeat performance later in the novel, only this time Pickwick doesn't write the scientific treatise; he's

merely the unwitting cause of it because he carries a lantern with him as he chaperones a clandestine night visit between Arabella and Winkle. Sam had warned him that the light would get them into trouble. A few houses away, "an elderly gentleman of scientific attainments"(567) looks out his window and sees a light mysteriously appear and vanish several times. He wonders what the light is.

> They were not meteors; they were too low. They were not glow-worms; they were too high. They were not will-o'-the wisps; they were not fire-flies; they were not fire-works. What could they be? Some extraordinary and wonderful phenomenon of nature, which no philosopher had ever seen before; something which it had been reserved for him alone to discover, and which he should immortalise his name by chronicling for the benefit of posterity. Full of this idea, the scientific gentleman seized his pen again, and committed to paper sundry notes of these unparalleled appearances, with the date, day, hour, minute, and precise second at which they were visible, all of which were to form the data of a voluminous treatise of great research and deep learning, which should astonish all the atmospherical wiseacres that ever drew breath in any part of the civilised world.(567-8)

When he calls his servant to him and asks him what he thinks it is, and his servant responds, "'I should say it was thieves, Sir,'"(568) the scientific gentleman dismisses him as a fool. He goes outside to investigate, and is about to encounter Pickwick, Winkle and Sam, at which point Sam aims a fist at his head and knocks the scientific gentleman out. But just as the inscribed stone's being discredited didn't damage Pickwick's theory and subsequent fame, this latest turn of events doesn't

damage the scientific gentleman's either. In fact he makes good use of the blow to his head in his treatise:

> . . . [H]e demonstrated in a masterly treatise that these wonderful lights were the effect of electricity, and clearly proved the same by detailing how a flash of fire danced before his eyes when he put his head out of the gate, and how he received a shock which stunned him for a full quarter of an hour afterwards, which demonstration delighted all the Scientific Associations beyond measure, and caused him to be considered a light of science ever afterwards.(569-70)

This is masterly fiction parading as fact.

One more document in Pickwick makes claims to scientific veracity. This is the "Report of the Committee of the Brick Lane Branch of the United Grand Junction Ebenezer Temperance Society." Ostensibly, Dickens creates this scene where Tony and Sam Weller go to a meeting of the Temperance Society for reasons of plot; it is going to be fun to watch the drunken Stiggins disgraced. But Dickens also uses the opportunity to satirize a Temperance Society meeting and their findings. His parody of the report points up how, again, evidence and conclusions don't necessarily bear any relation to each other. People believe what they want to believe. The report, which is read aloud to those attending, contains a number of testaments to the benefits of abstinence, each one more ridiculous than the one before. The following excerpt is particularly amusing:

> "Betsy Martin, widow, one child, and one eye. Goes out charing and washing, by the day; never had more than one eye, but knows her mother drank bottled

> stout, and shouldn't wonder if that caused it (immense cheering). Thinks it not impossible that if she had always abstained from spirits, she might have had two eyes by this time (tremendous applause)."(468)

This technique of reasoning "backwards" and drawing conclusions that fit a theory that appeals to the theorizer regardless of how absurd, is practiced by the Wellers, too. For example, the following conversation takes place when Tony Weller is driving Sam and Pickwick through a poor neighborhood.

> "It's a wery remarkable circumstance, Sir," said Sam, "that poverty and oysters always seems to go together . . . [T]he poorer a place is, the greater call there seems to be for oysters. Look here, Sir; here's a oyster stall to every half-dozen houses - the street's lined vith 'em. Blessed if I don't think that ven a man's wery poor, he rushes out of his lodgings, and eats oysters in regular desparation."
>
> "To be sure he does," said Mr. Weller senior, "and it's just the same vith pickeled salmon!"(301)

A little while later during the same trip, Tony Weller turns to Mr. Pickwick and says:

> "Wery queer life is a pike keeper's Sir."
>
> . . .
>
> "The old 'un means a turnpike keeper, gen'lm'n," observed Mr. Weller, in explanation. . .
>
> "They're all on 'em, men as has met vith some disappointment in life," said Mr. Weller senior. . . . Consequence of vich, they retires from the world, and shuts themselves up in pikes; partly vith the view of being solitary, and partly to rewenge themselves on mankind, by takin' tolls."
>
> "Dear me," said Mr. Pickwick, "I never knew that before."
>
> "Fact, Sir," said Mr. Weller, "if they was gen'lm'n you'd call 'em misanthropes, but as it is they only takes to pike-keepin' (307-8)

So much for the imaginative reasoning behind the Wellers' sociological and psychological pronouncements written

down as facts in Pickwick's notebook.

Just as the Wellers make some rather dubious interpretations of evidence around them and "invent" strange theories, so does Podsnap of Our Mutual Friend. Podsnap is a type who is not condemned to a narrow point of view because of ignorance; rather he quite willfully adopts and promulgates his narrow point of view. Although his rampant chauvinism is comic in its absurdity, the effect of his premise that England is the only civilized country is to sabotage any communication between himself and anyone who isn't English. In describing his type, Dickens says:

> Mr. Podsnap's world was not a very large world, morally; no, nor even geographically: seeing that although his business was sustained upon commerce with other countries, he considered other countries, with that important reservation, a mistake and of their manners and customs would conclusively observe, "Not English!"(151)

At his daughter Georgiana's eighteenth birthday party "there was a foreign gentleman among them: whom Mr. Podsnap had invited after much debate with himself - believing the whole European continent to be in mortal alliance against the young person . . ."(155) He asks this foreigner how he likes London, and they engage in a conversation in which the foreigner tries very hard to follow Podsnap and answer the questions asked while Podsnap continually corrects his pronunciation of English words. Podsnap then goes on to expound on the British

Constitution: "'We Englishmen are Very Proud of our Consitution, Sir. It Was Bestowed Upon Us By Providence. No Other Country is so Favoured as This Country.'"(156) When the foreigner remarks that "'It was a little particular of Providence . . . for the frontier is not large,'"(157) Podsnap responds:

> "Undoubtedly, . . . But So it is. It was the Charter of the Land. This Island was Blest, Sir, to the Direct Exclusion of such Other Countries as - as there may happen to be. And if we were all Englishmen present, I would say . . . that there is in the Englishman a combination of qualities, a modesty, an independence, a responsibility a repose, combined with an absence of everything calculated to call a blush into the cheeks of a young person, which one would seek in vain among the Nations of the Earth."
>
> Having delivered this little summary, Mr. Podsnap's face flushed as he thought of the remote possibility of its being at all qualified by any prejudiced citizen of any other country; and with his favourite right-arm flourish, he put the rest of Europe and the whole of Asia, Africa, and America nowhere.(157)

And in the final chapter of the novel the narrator says that Podsnap, a Voice of Society, "always talks Britain, and talks as if he were a sort of private watchman employed, in the British interests . . . 'We know what Russia means, sir,' says Podsnap; 'we know what France wants; we see what America is up to; but we know what England is. That's enough for us.'"(890)

Instead of the Wellers' amusing theory about poverty and oysters merely being written down in Pickwick's notebook, the Voice of Society makes self-serving statements that poverty is decreed by Providence. This

absolves him and his kind from any responsibility for having had a hand in creating it, perpetuating it, and doing more to alleviate it. A guest at the birthday party has the nerve to bring up the fact that "some half-dozen people had lately died in the street, of starvation."(154) Podsnap answers that he doesn't believe it. When the guest replies that "'. . . we must take it as proved, because there were the inquests and the Registrar's returns,'"(164) Podsnap says that it was "'their own fault,'"(164) and retorts that "'. . . there is not . . . a country in the world, sir, where so noble a provision is made for the poor as in this country.'"(164) After much arguing back and forth, Podsnap stops the discussion:

> "I must decline to pursue this painful discussion. It is not pleasant to my feelings. It is repugnant to my feelings. I have said that I do not admit these things. I have also said that if they do occur (not that I admit it), the fault lies with the sufferers themselves. It is not for me" . . . to impugn the working of Providence. I know better than that, I trust, and I have mentioned what the intentions of Providence are. Besides," said Mr. Podsnap, . . . with a strong consciousness of personal affront, "the subject is a very disagreeable one. I will go so far as to say it is an odious one. It is not one to be introduced among our wives and young persons and I - "He finished with that flourish of his arm which added more expressively than any words, And I remove it from the face of the earth.(165-6)

But Podsnap is not the only villain in the piece when it comes to believing what one wants to believe about poverty. Dickens makes a didactic point in this

regard when he alludes to the "ladies in carriages"(557) who buy goods from Betty Higden as she roams the countryside. They liked her "bright eyes"(557) and "hopeful speech."(557) "In these and her clean dress originated a fable that she was well-to-do in the world: one might say, for her station, rich. As making a comfortable provision for its subject which costs nobody anything, this class of fable has long been popular."(557) This interpretation seems particularly perverse: the evidence supports the opposite conclusion.

The Wellers are one step away from being members of the impoverished class and they are in no position to act on their theories about poverty. Besides, their theories are disinterested - they are not meant to justify the Wellers' behavior. If anything, the Wellers have a measure of respect for the poor. Therefore, we feel free to laugh at their strange theories. The ladies in carriages, however, who patronize Betty Higden (both literally and figuratively), have invented the outlandish theory about her so as not to have to acknowledge poverty among those they know and like. Our impulse to laugh at their distortion is negated because we know Betty Higden and we realize the motive behind their having "invented" the theory in the first place. We understand the desparate circumstances she is in; we are seeing it from the victim's point of view which is not the case when the

Wellers expound their theories.

The Wellers are stereotypes of the poor but happy street-wise jokesters. They get by on their wits. If they invent a strange theory or two to help explain the world around them, we laugh in the same way that we laugh at Pickwick's theory about the stone's inscription or the scientific gentleman's about the lights he saw out of his window. But in Our Mutual Friend Dickens shows a kind of ignorance that is not funny. "Scientific" claims in Our Mutual Friend are superstitions that are believed by the uneducated and help perpetuate both their ignorance and their exploitation. Early in the novel the Inspector alludes to just such a one when he states that "'. . . there was not a word of truth in that superstition about bodies bleeding when touched by the hand of the right person; you never got a sign out of bodies.'"(42-3) And when Riderhood nearly drowns and all of the patrons of the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters stand by and watch the doctor work at bringing him back to life, Captain Joey, who is described as "a pupil of the much-respected old school,"(491) offers "scraps of the wisdom of the Captain's ancestors"(491) and "favours the doctor of the sagacious old-scholastic suggestion that the body should be hung up by the heels 'sim'lar . . .to mutton in a butcher's shop,' and should then, as a particularly choice maneouver for promoting easy respiration, be

rolled upon casks."(491) Much later, when Bradley sees Riderhood running across the rotting wood of the locks, he asks him if he isn't worried about falling in and drowning to which Riderhood responds that "'. . . it's well known to waterside characters like myself that him as has been brought out o' drowning can never be drowned.'"(699) Belief in that myth may actually be Riderhood's undoing. Seconds before he falls to his watery death in Bradley's grasp, Riderhood clings to this myth and reiterates, "'I can't be drowned.'"(876)

Riderhood is done in as much by his ignorance as his greed. Poverty has bred in him a feeling of inadequacy and a suspicion of his betters. It is almost as if the ignorant do not have the luxury to believe what they want to believe - they are too incapacitated by their ignorance to realize that supersition is not science. They are crippled by a dangerous naivete, not because they have led sheltered lives like the life of the gentleman Pickwick, but because they have been condemned by their station in life to be uneducated. When we see what ignorance breeds, and realize the potential consequences, we cannot laugh at its by-product. There is a big difference between the consequences that result from the misguided beliefs of the likes of Pickwick and the Wellers and those of Podsnap as well as nameless others in Our Mutual Friend. What is so damaging in Our

Mutual Friend is that mistaken beliefs, whether those willfully believed in by members of society or ignorantly believed in by members of the lower classes, all have serious repercussions, many of them involving life and death situations. Dickens has shown us the flip side of the coin in Our Mutual Friend. Whereas ignorance and misunderstanding is meant to generate laughter in Pickwick, ignorance and misunderstanding in the context of Our Mutual Friend is meant to generate enlightenment tinged with sorrow and regret.

CONCLUSION

Robert Bernard Martin notes that in comedy there is an "ironical tendency toward comic overstatement" and that "our recognition of the overstatement, by the deliberate falsity of the diction, establishes a world of artificiality, of comic safety." Furthermore, this comic safety predicts a "happy ending." He also remarks that the opening sentences of novels "surprisingly often set the tone of an entire book."[1] An examination of the opening sentences of Pickwick and Our Mutual Friend supports Martin's impression. These sentences set us up to believe that certain events will be plausible and that others will not. The opening sentence of Pickwick takes up the entire first paragraph and is full of comic overstatement:

> The first ray of light which illumines the gloom,and converts into a dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity, and nice discrimination, with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted.(1)

The first sentence of Our Mutual Friend also sets the tone:

> In these times of ours, though concerning the exact year there is no need to be precise, a boat of dirty and disreputable appearance, with two figures in it, floated on the Thames between Southwark

> Bridge, which is of iron, and London Bridge, which is of stone, as an autumn evening was closing in.(15)

Here a dark heaviness pervades. In contrast to "the first ray of light which illumines the gloom" in the first sentence of Pickwick, here we have "an autumn evening . . . closing in." Should we want to discount the first sentence of Chapter One of Our Mutual Friend as being the definitive opening sentence because it merely introduces one of the subplots, we can skip to the first sentence of Chapter Two which introduces the Voices of Society:

> Mr. and Mrs. Veneering were bran-new people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London. Everything about the Veneerings was spick-and-span new. All their furniture was new, all their friends were new, all their servants were new, their plate was new, their carriage was new, their harness was new, their horses were new, their pictures were new, they themselves were new, they were as newly married as was lawfully compatible with their having a bran-new baby, and if they had set up a great-grandfather, he would have come home in matting from the Pantechnicon, without a scratch upon him, French polished to the crown of his head.(20)

If we agree with R.B. Martin that "Comedy, tragedy, and satire . . . are not forms of literature or genres, but formulations of modes of thought, attitudes toward the world, ways of coming to terms with the meaning of its triumphs and vicissitudes,"[2] then we can see each of these three sentences as containing the potential for fulfilling each "attitude of the world" as projected by Dickens. It is obvious that the first sentence of Pickwick with its "comic overstatement" predicts comedy;

and that the first sentence of Chapter Two of Our Mutual Friend with its tone of sarcasm predicts satire. The first sentence of Chapter One of Our Mutual Friend introduces us not to tragedy in the classic dramatic sense, but to the tragic dimension that Dickens turns into romance and melodrama. But we are constantly aware of the potential for tragedy - the gloom that closes in on the novel as predicted by that first sentence.

What we all like to believe in, and what we expect from comedy ("comic safety" as Martin puts it) is a happy ending. The wishfullfilling celebratory end - a feast and/or marriage is one of the classic conventions of comedy, conventions that Dickens adheres to in both novels even though Our Mutual Friend is not by any means pure comedy. In fact, there are a number of weddings in each novel. In Pickwick the least significant marriage takes place halfway through the novel. But although the bride and groom are insignifiant characters, the chapter is not. It typifies the tone of the novel: it is full of laughter and good cheer. A combination of a celebration of Christmas and the marriage of Bella Wardle and her beau Trundle, the chapter is an opportunity to recreate for Dickens' audience the pleasures of Christmases past and the idyll of a country wedding. Dickens creates a sublime chapter stretching over twenty pages and three

days; the Pickwickians arrive in Dingley Dell on December 22nd, and spend the next three days celebrating. First comes the joy of the wedding and the accompanying festivities, and then comes Christmas eve, filled with fun and games: everyone kisses under the mistletoe, they play blind man's bluff, and snapdragon. After that "they sat down by the huge fire of blazing logs to a substantial supper, and a mighty bowl of wassail . . . in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look, and a jolly sound, that were perfectly irresistible."(400) They then sing Christmas songs and tell stories. Dickens creates this nostalgic scene with such loving care that we believe that it was so and are enveloped in the state of bliss created.

The novel ends with a wedding in the last chapter, but it is also the union of a relatively insignificant couple - Mr. Snodgrass and Emily Wardle. Her father starts out objecting because he had someone else in mind for her to marry, but when others intercede on her behalf, he relents. This wedding serves to bring all of the characters together in the final chapter and although the bride and groom are the guests of honor at the wedding breakfast at Pickwick's new house, it is Pickwick who takes center stage. It is as if we are there with the guests expressing our congratulations as well:

> Everything was so beautiful, so compact, so neat and in such exquisite taste, said everybody, that there

> really was no deciding what to admire most.
>
> And in the midst of all this, stood Mr. Pickwick, his countenance lighted up with smiles, which the heart of no man, woman, or child could resist: himself the happiest of the group, shaking hands over and over again with the same people . . . and inspiring everybody with his looks of gladness and delight.(814)

Aside from Sam's marrying Mary, which takes place after the novel is finished, one more marriage in Pickwick, the elopement of Arabella Allen and Mr. Winkle, is interesting because they marry against their families' wishes. But that doesn't last long because Pickwick reconciles their families with a minimum of problems. In the tradition of the instant conversion found in classic comedy, Winkle's father objects until he meets Arabella; then he shakes his son's hand, turns to his new daughter-in-law, and says, "'Kiss me, my love; you ARE a very charming daughter-in-law after all!'"(809) In Pickwick the weddings are truly happy endings. It is easy to suppose in the context of comedy that the couples are well matched, are truly in love, and will live happily ever after. We never give it another thought. The scenes serve the function of closure. The story has come to an end.

Dickens gives us three weddings in Our Mutual Friend and one other potential wedding, but none has the pure bliss associated with those in Pickwick. As in Pickwick, one wedding occurs way before the end of the novel. In Our Mutual Friend it is the wedding of

Sophronia Akershem and Alfred Lammle. The wedding itself and the party afterwards are a mockery of the ideal -the wedding at Manor Farm in Pickwick. This wedding is all empty show, with everyone playing a part, and going through the motions behind which there is no conviction, no real feeling. Sophronia starts by thanking Twemlow "'. . . for counterfeiting the late Horatio Akershem, Esquire . . .'"(140) Then the bridesmaids "come like adorable recruits enlisted by a sergeant not present; for, on arriving at the Veneering depot, they are in a barrack of strangers."(140) Mortimer is the reluctant best man.

The impression that this marriage is the consummation of a business deal and nothing more, and that those attending are interested in the "business" aspect of it, is alluded to a number of times. The bride's trustee is there and is

> an object of much interest. Veneering launching himself upon this trustee as his oldest friend (which makes seven, Twemlow thought) and confidentially retiring with him into the conservatory, it is understood that Veneering is his co-trustee and that they are arranging about the fortune. Buffers are even overheard to whisper Thirty Thousand Pou-nds! with a smack and a relish suggestive of the very finest oysters."(143)

Through all this "nobody seems to think much more of the Veneerings than if they were a tolerable landlord and landlady doing the thing in the way of business at so much a head."(143) It is a pretty depressing affair. Many of the guests, "pokey unknowns . . . even seem to

unite in some vague utterance of the sentiment that the landlord and landlady will make a pretty good profit out of this, and they almost carry themselves like customers."(144) Despite all this, "all the things indispensible to be said are said, and all the things indispensable to be done are done . . .(154) This is of course, essential to the charade. Soon enough we learn that the Lammles have married each other under false pretenses, and they certainly don't live happily ever after.

The wedding of Bella Wilfer to John Rokesmith, interestingly, is decreed before they've even met, by virtue of Old Man Harmon's will; but due to her excessive vanity and seeming greed, Harmon and Boffin test her and she marries Harmon disguised as Rokesmith, thinking he is a pauper. The wedding is for them an idyllic affair, but the only one accompanying them as far as she knows is her loving father. She does not dare inform her mother or her sister until after the fact, because she knows they would not approve, and she does not know that the Boffins are there, as they purposely secrete themselves, for it is not time yet for her to know that Rokesmith is really Harmon and that they approve of the wedding. The bride and bridegroom have a blissful wedding breakfast with Bella's father in Greenwich, but the absence of family and friends reminds us that, due to circumstances in the

hostile world beyond the breakfast table, they have not been able to have a "proper," traditional wedding and feast. Their marriage comes toward the end of the novel, but in and of itself it is not a happy ending and it does not signal closure. Bella still must be tested once they are married. She is happy in her doll's house, but only really passes the test her husband has set for her when she stands by him when he is arrested for a murder that he has not committed. Then, like Cinderella, she gets her reward - piles of money and all the creature comforts anyone could possibly imagine.

The wedding of Eugene Wrayburn and Lizzie Hexam also represents a beginning, rather than an end. Married at the close of the novel by Reverend Milvey as Eugene is recovering from Bradley Headstone's attempt on his life, they are surrounded by a few real friends - Mortimer, Jenny, and Bella, but because of the condition of the groom, instead of laughing with joy, they are moved to tears. And this is hardly a they-lived-happily-ever-after- wedding, even though Eugene does recover. Eugene knows the potential trouble in store for them and Mortimer mentions the coldness they will encounter from Lady Tippins. Like Winkle, Eugene also has married against his father's will, and like Winkle's father, Eugene's father is won over when he meets his daughter-in-law. We are not

witness to this conciliation; we only hear about it as Eugene repeats it to Mortimer. And it is a far cry from the honest, direct approval of Winkle, Sr. Here we hear the ironic tone Eugene uses in talking about his father and his father's obvious class-bound perspective. Eugene tells Mortimer that his father visited for two days and "'much objected to the accommodation of the hotel.'"(886) Eugene says that his father's "'equivalent to a melodramatic blessing'"(886) was to say that Lizzie ought to have her portrait painted. "'And he followed it up by rolling the claret (for which he called, and I paid) in his mouth, and saying, ''My son, why do you drink this trash?'' it was tantamount - in him - to a paternal benediction on our union, accompanied with a gush of tears.'"(886)

The last chapter of the novel can be seen as a parody of a wedding breakfast. The bride and groom are not in attendance, but they are the subject of the discussion; at least Lady Tippins tries to make them so. But Mortimer refuses to make their marriage a subject of sport. The only one who supports Lightwood is Twemlow who speaks up in defense of his principles, but is to no end. Twemlow is not likely to make a dent in the armor worn by the likes of Lady Tippins or Mr. Podsnap. We are certainly left to believe that Eugene and Lizzie will have a hard time making it in their world - that their

marriage is a happy ending for the two of them in the private ideal world, but their married life will be fraught with the problems of having to live in the real world.

The potential marriage is between Sloppy and Jenny Wren and it is a wonderful blend of the outlandish and the sentimental. They don't meet until the second to the last chapter when Sloppy comes to pick up a doll Jenny has been making for Bella Harmon's baby. This chapter is full of good will - reminiscent of the good will found in so many of the Pickwick chapters. They make small talk and size each other up, each in their open, child-like way. After all, both are children. He laughs with his mouth wide open and Jenny comments that he is "'like the giant . . . when he came home in the land of Beanstalk, and wanted Jack for supper.'"(883) He "in a burst of admiration"(883) comments on her beautiful hair. When he sees her crutch-stick she has to explain about her bad legs and back. She then demonstrates her disability by walking across the room after which he says, "'It seems to me you hardly want it at all.'"(884) She thanks him with a smile. When he offers to make her a new stick as well as "'nests and drawers'"(884) for her work and says he'd just as soon be paid with a song as he has heard that she sings beautifully, she responds that he is a "'very kind young man.'"(884) But her next comment, "'I

suppose He won't mind'"(884) causes Sloppy the most confusion as he doesn't know who "He" is and in asking for an explanation it takes a while for Jenny to get across that "He" is the person she intends to marry, but she hasn't met him yet. The scene ends with their both laughing: "This tickled Mr. Sloppy as an extraordinarily good joke, and he threw back his head and laughed with measureless enjoyment. At the sight of him laughing in that absurd way, the doll's dress-maker laughed very heartily indeed. So they both laughed, till they were tired."(885) Sloppy promises to come back soon.

Looking at the groups of weddings in both novels is instructive in terms of what they reveal about each novel. The unions in Pickwick are between insignificant characters - Bella Wardle and Trundle, Arabella and Winkle, and Emily Wardle and Snodgrass. All except Winkle and Snodgrass are merely stick figures and Winkle and Snodgrass are not much more. They are examples of Forster's flat characters drawn in the tradition of Ben Jonson's humours who act according to type in ways that make us laugh. Their marriages are not as important as are the wedding celebrations which become occasions for all the principles to get together to celebrate life and its blessings. And everyone lives happily ever after.

In Our Mutual Friend the characters who marry in the novel are no longer stick figures: Sophronia Akershem and

Alfred Lammle, Bella Wilfer and John Harmon, and Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn. All have first and last names that we remember well. Who can remember if Snodgrass and Winkle even have first names? And the three marriages are more important than the celebrations occasioned by the marriages. Dickens has altered the portrayal of the conventional marriage and celebration at the end of a comedy because he has not written a pure comedy and certainly these characters are not comic characters. Bella starts as a one dimensional comic character, but Dickens abandons that portrayal and attempts to round her out. Bella and John Harmon, and Lizzie and Eugene are romantic characters because they must valiantly confront a hostile world - a world that barely begins to exist within the confines of Pickwick. Here in Our Mutual Friend character looms at least as large as event. These individuals. however, instead of finally being in harmony with their surroundings, remain at odds with it. We know that for Bella and John Harmon and Lizzie and Eugene Wrayburn, their marriages are a refuge from a troubled, hostile world which lies right outside their doors. Whereas the celebration in Pickwick confirms the exhuberant spirit of the novel, the celebrations in Our Mutual Friend of the Harmon and Wrayburn marriages defy the dominant melancholy spirit in the novel. The Lammle's marriage, on the other hand, is an apt

reflection of the outside world. The celebration of their marriage defines that melancholy spirit. The potential marriage of Jenny and Sloppy is the closest to a Pickwickian event. But here too, even though both are flat comic characters drawn as grotesques, we know their backgrounds and the hardships they have endured, and know that, like the Harmons and the Wrayburns, their relationship is an oasis in a hostile world. So they, too, have a touch of the romantic.

In Our Mutual Friend society is a menacing farce. It needs to be restructured in order to accommodate the love between Eugene and Lizzie, Bella and Harmon. The conditions of society create the context for their stories; without the burdens of each of their histories there would have been no story. Like typical romantic heroes, they overcome the obstacles society puts in their way, but the obstacles are still in place to stand in the way of others.

By and large the characters and action in Pickwick are all on one level. Our Mutual Friend, however, is much more a mix of the realistic novel and the artificially comic. But because Dickens uses the dramatic technique of imposed external action to create both his realistic and his grotesque characters, it is only his grotesques who really come to life. Because we have no window into the inner lives of his characters,

and because his realistic characters have no illuminating idiosyncracies, his realistic "good" characters are largely lifeless.

The technique of "imposed external action" serves Dickens well as he creates the background of nineteenth-century London and peoples the stage with a full gamut of eccentric and obsessive characters who play out the major themes of the novel - themes common to comedy and satire through the ages. In both novels Dickens' moral fervor exposes hypocrisy, snobbery, social-climbing, self-righteousness, ignorance and greed, but, as detailed above, the complex world of nineteenth-century London is mirrored in Dickens' complex rendering of both character and plot in Our Mutual Friend.

Jenny Wren is an artist who understands her audience, just as Dickens understood his. After her father's funeral, she rushes home to cut out a clergyman's surplice from memory, but she intends to make the doll into one who performs weddings, not funerals.

> ". . . The public don't like to be made melancholy, I know very well. I am seldom called upon to put my young friends into mourning; not into real mourning, that is; Court mourning they are rather proud of. But a doll clergyman, my dear - glossy black curls and whiskers - uniting two of my young friends in matrimony," said Miss Jenny . . . "is quite another affair. If you don't see those three at the altar in Bond Street in a jiffy, my name's Jack Robinson."(803)

Like Dickens, she knew that her public, upon whom she was

dependent had a need to indulge in fantasy - to escape into a world of pure fun and laughter. Dickens knew that the sunny world of Pickwick was far more popular with his contemporaries than the gloom of Our Mutual Friend. But by the time he wrote Our Mutual Friend his vision had matured, and he used his technique to present to his contemporaries their world, doing it, as George Bernard Shaw put it in discussing his own comic technique, by coating the pill.

There is not the sense of closure and harmony in Our Mutual Friend that we find at the end of Pickwick where everyone is assumed to live happily ever after. The blend of realism and artifice works at cross purposes. Just as we have two beginnings - the realistic one of Lizzie and her father on the Thames and the satiric one introducing the Veneerings - so we have two endings. We have in the second to the last chapter the wonderful, emotionally satisfying fairytale meeting of Jenny and Sloppy. But in the last chapter we have a blend of the satire and realism in the last meeting of the Voices of Society where they condemn Eugene and Lizzie's marriage. The chapter ends with Mortimer and Twemlow shaking hands in a gesture of friendship and Mortimer goes off to the Temple "gaily,"(895) but in no way can that blot out the memory of the powerful Voices of Society and their condemnation.

The hostile world of Our Mutual Friend seems light years away from the sunny world of Pickwick, but in some ways they are of a piece. Each reveals the creative genius of a writer who used the technique of imposed external action derived from the tradition of the theater to dramatize his conviction that "all the world's a stage/ And all the men and women merely players."

[1] Robert Bernard Martin, "Notes Toward a Comic Fiction," in The Theory of the Novel: New Essays, ed. John Halperin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974, p.82.

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