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The Rhetoric of Pity, Sentiment, Fact, and Debt

Teubler, Lisa-Marie

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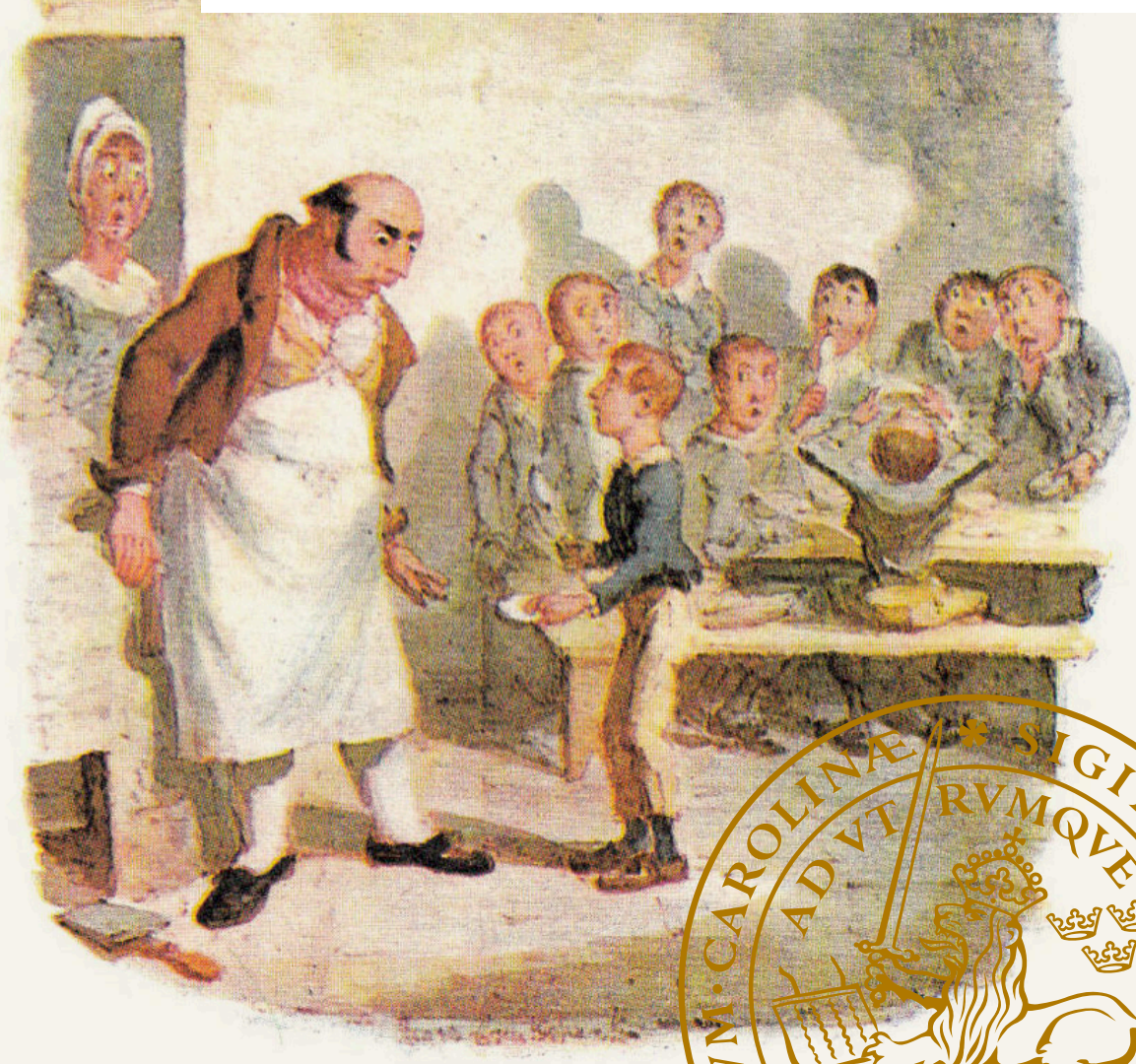
LISA-MARIE TEUBLER
CENTRE FOR LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE | LUND UNIVERSITY



This study presents a re-reading of some of Charles Dickens's most famous works and contends that they are filled with scenes of persuasion—moments of heightened rhetoric. It traces the idea of a *vir bonus*: a voice that speaks from the perspective of truth and love based in spontaneous feeling. Presenting this ideal of a successful and ethical rhetorician within the narratives, the analyses also offer ways of reading Dickens's novels as scenes of persuasion in themselves and thus shed light on a successful decoder of the rhetoric: an ethical reader. The vision that emerges from these novels is that a fulfilled human life is possible if community, imagination, feeling, and kindness are valued above everything. In spite of their political and cultural actuality, the brilliance of these narratives lies in the detail, in Dickens's divine comedy, and in his moving scenes of persuasion.

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Charles Dickens's novels are filled with scenes of persuasion—moments of heightened rhetoric. Through these scenes, the novels present a moral rhetoric and a person that uses this rhetoric toward ethical ends: a *vir bonus*. In particular, my study has focused on two separate but related levels of persuasion; the first remains within the narrative and the second takes into account the level between the text and its readers. The analysis of *A Christmas Carol* contends that readers witness the persuasion of Scrooge, a miser who learns to accept the *kairos* of Christmastime to become a kind, charitable man. *Oliver Tiwst*, this study argues, represents a rhetoric of pity through which both those who are pitied and those who provide the pity can be saved. This chapter shows that appeals to *pathos* are particularly effective in this context. The analysis of *Hard Times* has found that pity and benevolence no longer function as straightforward solutions to the problems that the novel stages. Instead, it paints a grim picture of what happens when the fundamental *logos* of a society is misguided and when the most powerful rhetoricians are not ethical. Finally, the analysis of *Little Dorrit* continues to discuss the issue of dangerous rhetoricians and highlights in particular the concept of *ethos* as a valuable way of understanding self-fashioning and fraud. In addition, the analysis of this novel discusses the concepts of debt and credit and their importance to communities.

Charles Dickens, *Vir Bonus,* Persuasion, Rhetoric, Debt, Pity, Sentiment, Fact

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MADE IN SWEDEN

To my parents, who have always lavished me with unconditional love.

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Abbreviations

Carol – A Christmas Carol

CDC – Charles Dickens in Context

DJO – Dickens Journals Online

KJV – King James Version of The Bible

Letters – The Letters of Charles Dickens, The Pilgrim Edition

OC – The Oxford Companion to Charles Dickens

OH – The Oxford Handbook of Charles Dickens

Speeches – The Speeches of Charles Dickens

A Note on Editions

This study applies the MLA reference system, and the primary texts are sourced, where applicable, to book and chapter to facilitate finding the relevant sections in various editions. All spelling and punctuation have been retained exactly as in the respective editions. Unfortunately, no textually reliable and complete edition of Dickens's works exists, and the most textually authoritative, the Clarendon Dickens, is both incomplete and usually only found in major research libraries. Therefore, I refer to the following editions because they are both textually reliable and widely available:

For *A Christmas Carol*, I use the most recent Oxford World's Classics Edition (2008), edited by Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, who writes in "Note on the Text" that he based this edition on the 1868 Charles Dickens Edition because it "represents his [Dickens's] final published intentions" (xxx). In the same note, Douglas-Fairhurst explains that he has not updated the standard nineteenth-century forms of spelling and punctuation but has "silently corrected" some printer's errors (xxx).

For *Oliver Twist*, I use the most recent Penguin Classics Edition (2003), edited by Philip Horne, who writes in "A Note on the Text" that his is the first edition to use the "original periodical version of *Oliver Twist, or, The Parish Boy's Progress*," which ran from February 1837 to April 1839 in *Bentley's Miscellany* (l). The wide availability of legitimate editions of *Oliver Twist* complicates the process of choosing an edition. On 9 November 1838, Bentley also published the text in three-volume form; thus, the final nine chapters were available to the public before the serialized form. Horne's edition contains the three-volume novel chapters and separations but denotes serialization breaks with an asterisk to facilitate an understanding of how the Victorian reading public would have experienced the text. Horne presents several arguments for using the 1838 version rather than the often-reproduced 1846 version, which is also the copy-text of the Clarendon edition. The most relevant argument to my study is that the serialized version of the text is the one that is closest to the original reading experience. Horne presents the serialized version of the novel with "a minimum of alteration or emendation" (lii). Importantly, he has also adopted the Penguin Classics house style, which means using "single quotation marks", "spaced n-dashes", and titles without full stops (lii).

For *Hard Times*, I use the Fourth Norton Critical Edition (2017), edited by Fred Kaplan. Much of the material that Dickens produced in the process of writing the novel influences a modern reader's understanding of the manuscript. There are number plans, memoranda, the original manuscript in its entirety, corrected proofs, the text as published in *Household Words* (1854), the first book edition (1854), the Library Edition (1858), the Cheap Edition (1860), the People's Edition (1865), and the Charles Dickens Edition (1867-68). Kaplan notes that "The original manuscript and even the corrected proofs appear to treat the novel as still, as it were, in the

workshop and thus could not be considered as providing a suitable copy-text" (253). Instead, a significant amount of meticulous work by the editors has gone into providing a text based on the 1854 edition that takes into consideration all other known material. Kaplan's version is the fourth edition, but only minor alterations have been made. He explains that "the division into three books, although conceived while Dickens was working on the early section … and also the chapter titles were first introduced in the one-volume edition of 1854" (239); consequently, they would not have been part of the serialized edition that the first readers encountered. In addition, a few minor emendations were made to any areas that could be deemed "an obvious mistake" (254), and each of these is commented on in the accompanying textual notes to the Fourth Norton Critical Edition.

For *Little Dorrit*, I use the most recent Penguin Classics Edition (2003), edited by Stephen Wall and Helen Small. This edition's copy-text of the novel is that of the first edition, published in one volume on 30 May 1857, which was one day before the final installment of the serialized novel. There are three subsequent editions from 1859, 1861, and 1868. In the introduction to the Clarendon Edition (1979), Harvey Peter Sucksmith comments in detail on the emendations made to the text and explains that all were made with the purpose of keeping the text as close as possible to the original author's intention (xli). Wall and Small comment that their edition has retained the spelling of the first edition although, as readers will note, it can seem "contradictory" (xxxiii). The original form of the first edition has been mostly retained with a few minor emendations where spelling or hyphenation were inconsistent and also to suit the Penguin house style: "single quotation marks are used rather than double, and the point has been removed after personal titles such as 'Mr', 'Mrs', and 'Dr'" (xxxiii). In addition, asterisks signal serialization breaks in the current version to help understand how the original readers would have experienced the text. Despite the inconsistent spelling and punctuation in *Little Dorrit*, I nevertheless follow Wall and Small's edition in my reproduction of the primary material.

Whenever I quote from Dickens's personal correspondence, I refer to the authoritative twelve-volume Pilgrim Edition of his letters: *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1–12. A reference is presented in line with MLA guidelines to the page number and the volume in which the letter can be found. For the readers' convenience, the works cited list contains the full reference to all sources. When referring to the narrator, I use the male personal pronoun, 'he', as the narrator often takes on a position presented as close to the author.

Introduction

‘Please, sir, I want some more.’

(*Oliver Twist* 15; bk. 1, ch. 2)

Oliver asking for more is one of the best-known moments of Charles Dickens’s oeuvre. This scene of persuasion serves as a good example for the analysis of this study. Urged on by the other boys, the hungry Oliver appeals to a workhouse overseer for more food. Within the narrative, he fails miserably because not only does he not receive any extra food, but he is also punished severely for requesting it. However, while Oliver is unsuccessful in achieving his end within the narrative, the scene is successful on another level of persuasion—that between text and reader—as it serves to establish goodwill and sympathy for Oliver as a character. It can even be argued that the scene is successful because Oliver is not.

It is my contention that Charles Dickens’s novels are filled with scenes of persuasion—moments of heightened rhetoric. As an author, Dickens was supremely aware of the rhetorical nature of his texts and the importance of finding the right means of connecting to his audience. In a letter from 17 July 1855, he gives advice to a writer by the name of Emily Jolly, suggesting that the ending of one of her stories is “unnecessarily painful” and reminding her, “you write to be read, of course” (*Letters 7*: 676–677).[1] Dickens’s connection to his audience is further underlined by his late career reworking of his novels into public reading scripts.[2] The novels analyzed in this study all evidence this interest in not only connecting with the readers but also appealing to them. I will analyze the novels’ complex use of rhetoric to offer new ways of understanding popular scenes in Dickens’s fiction. The moral outlook of these scenes is full of contradiction, paradox, and irony as well as a deep belief in the goodness of most, but not all, of humankind.

Magnus Ullén suggests that we can approach literary works as literary situations, which is a development of the concept of the rhetorical situation and takes into

1 James R. Kincaid makes a similar observation in *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter*, where he suggests that Dickens’s close connection to his audience is a sign of his rhetorical awareness and concern (pp. 18–19).

2 See, for example, Malcolm Andrews’s *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves: Dickens and the Public Readings*, in particular pp. 80–81.

account the sender, text, receiver, and context.[3] While this study's focus remains mainly on the text, Ullén's approach allows for a broader understanding of the interdependence of literature and its contexts. With regard to the context component, certain themes are particularly important to Dickens's rhetorical imagination. For example, charity, philanthropy, and kindness fulfill important functions in the scenes of persuasion both as themes and as means of persuasion. They exemplify as well as partake in explorations of ways to relieve the social evils of the time.[4] Relying on these concepts, a moral rhetoric emerges which creates and legitimizes a powerful and morally virtuous subject—what in Classical Rhetoric is termed a *vir bonus*.[5] In a variety of ways that will be subject to my analysis, the scenes of persuasion also recommend such a virtuous role to the readers.

Dickens's rhetoric is primarily emotional, which has elicited both praise and criticism. The wide range of responses to the texts is noteworthy; thinkers with highly diverse perspectives have claimed his works as representative of their ideologies. George Orwell commented, "The Marxist claims him as 'almost' a Marxist, the Catholic claims him as 'almost' a Catholic, and both claim him as a champion of the proletariat (or 'the poor,' as Chesterton would have put it)" (48). In contrast, "sentimental" and "moral" have often been the words of choice to criticize Dickens's oeuvre. For example, Orwell quotes Nadezhda Krupskaya, who "in her little book on Lenin, relates that towards the end of his life Lenin went to see a dramatized version of The Cricket on the Hearth, and found Dickens's 'middle-class sentimentality' so intolerable that he walked out in the middle of a scene" (48). However, the appeals to sentiment that the works frequently make are part of the complex rhetoric that this study outlines, and I argue that they are more effective as well as more complex than such criticism initially suggests. Indeed, on one occasion, Dickens advises John Overs, a writer and carpenter, that "you cannot interest your readers in a character unless you have first made them hate or like him" (*Letters 2*: 53). Thus, he explains the rhetorical importance of engaging the readers and making them feel for the characters.

In *The Warden*, Anthony Trollope parodies Dickens in the character of "Mr Popular Sentiment," a name that has since been used by those who wish to present him in an unflattering light. However, in Trollope's parody, Mr Popular Sentiment

[3] See, for example, Magnus Ullén's "The Problem of Modernity: Hawthorne Criticism, Faith, and the Literary Situation." *Orbis Litterarum*, vol. 72, no. 4, 2017, pp. 265–293.

[4] See, for example, Boyd Hilton's *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People: England 1783–1846*, p. 341 in particular.

[5] The term *vir bonus* was first used by Cato the Elder in a letter to his son, Marcus (ca. 160 B.C.). It has since been used by many classical thinkers and rhetorical scholars, among them Cicero and Quintilian. It is also closely related to Aristotelian rhetoric through the terms *pistis* and *fronesis*, which both refer to the relationship a speaker establishes with their audience and the trust they aim to create. For further reading see, for example, Michael Winterbottom's "Quintilian and the *Vir Bonus*" and Alex Brinton's "Quintilian, Plato, and the *Vir Bonus*."

is not a man who can simply be discarded as ridiculous, as his sentimental approach is highly successful: "Mr Sentiment is certainly a very powerful man, and perhaps not the less so that his good people are so very good; his hard rich people so very hard; and the genuinely honest so very honest" (147). Dickens's popularity, which also includes financial success, seems to be a crucial driving force behind the critique. Bethan Carney notes this when she suggests that there may be an ulterior motive in the heightened critique of the sentimental mode, as it coincided with the moment in which novels became accessible to a wider audience ("Inroduction: 'Mr Popular Sentiment': Dickens and Feeling"). Thus, the initial criticism of the sentimentality of Dickens's novels may be understood more as an elitist and conservative concern about his texts' influence on their audience rather than as a critique of the mode per se.

According to Trollope, Dickens's sentimental approach is a vital aspect of his melodramatic mode. While the term 'melodrama' has been subject to sustained critical attention in recent years and may be said to have been rehabilitated, Carney claims that "sentimentality" has not yet come to be treated with the same critical interest (2). Q.D. Leavis's early criticism of Dickens's sentimental mode may be the harshest, as it entirely reduces him to this mode and blames him for all the overly emotional popular fiction that followed. For example, in 1932, Leavis wrote:

> Dickens stands primarily for a set of crude emotional exercises. He discovered, for instance, the formula 'laughter and tears' that has been the foundation of practically every popular success ever since (Hollywood's as well as the bestseller's). Far from requiring an intellectual stimulus, these are the tears that rise in the heart and gather to the eyes involuntarily or even in spite of the reader, though an alert critical mind may cut them off at the source in a revulsion to disgust. (156)

Although Leavis changed her mind significantly throughout her career and presents Dickens's works in a very different light in *Dickens the Novelist*,[6] she was not alone in her initial dislike of Dickens's sentimentalism. Inadvertent or not, Oscar Wilde's famous comment on what is possibly the most sentimental moment in Dickens's works—that "one must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing" (qtd. in Wyndham 119)—is a profound comment on the closeness of seemingly opposing emotions. Appealing to these emotions, Dickens's works were extremely successful and highly seductive to a wide audience. The rhetoric of the novels is often deeply sentimental, creating ethical positions for readers and characters alike.

Several critics have previously discussed Dickens's rhetoric and thus function as the main interlocutors of my study. Sally Ledger and John M.L. Drew situate their readings of Dickens's works historically. However, while Ledger discusses

[6] Co-authored with her husband, F.R. Leavis, and published in 1979.

Dickens's popular radicalism in *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, Drew traces both the development of Dickens's political views and his mode of expression in *Dickens the Journalist*. Drew focuses on Dickens's journalism specifically, but other scholars have focused on these aspects with specific reference to Dickens's fictional work. Harvey Peter Sucksmith's *The Narrative Art of Charles Dickens*, Sheila M. Foor's *Dickens' Rhetoric*, and Daniel Tyler's edited volume *Dickens's Style* are relevant interlocutors, but they do not take into account the rhetorical situation that constitutes the reading experience of the novel given that they mainly focus on style. While some of these studies understand rhetoric only as the use of eloquence or style toward an end, this study proposes viewing rhetoric in a broader light—as a dialectical exchange between reader, text, author, and context.

To my knowledge, only one study approaches Dickens's texts with a similar understanding of rhetoric: James R. Kincaid's *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter*. Kincaid discusses laughter as a rhetorical means to an end which is applied both within the narrative of Dickens's novels and between the text and the reader. My study contends that Dickens's works are not only filled with a rhetoric of laughter but also with a rhetoric of pity, of sentiment, of fact, and of debt. These other currents of rhetoric work in a manner similar to Kincaid's understanding of laughter as a means of engaging readers while, at the same time, guiding them toward a specific reading. However, throughout the process of analyzing the novels, it became clear to me that Dickens's novels are never quite as didactic and straightforward as they first appear. For example, Kincaid's reading of laughter as a means of setting traps to expose the readers' callousness in *Oliver Twist* is undermined by the range of narrative voices and distances that Kincaid acknowledges but does not quite consider in full (60).

Building on some of the work of these scholars, this study analyzes scenes of persuasion on two separate yet related levels: The first level pertains to scenes within the narratives and the second level focuses on scenes between the texts and their audiences. Both levels are concerned with the means of persuasion that emerge as effective. These specific means comprise the right time to make an argument, *kairos*; how persuasion works through moving audiences emotionally, *pathos*; how words and reasoning can mislead, *logos*; and how characters establish their trustworthiness, *ethos*. Both the first and the second level of persuasion show concern about dangerous rhetoricians who abuse language and the audience to move them toward their own selfish ends. However, they also share ideas about what it means to be a *vir bonus*—a good person who speaks well. The rhetoric that is presented as morally admirable will be called 'ethical' throughout this study. I chose this term because it incorporates both the idea of honorable morals within a given context as well as the positive effect that using this rhetoric has on the *ethos* of the speaker.

Chapter 1 gives an account of the context of Dickens's rhetoric and discusses ways to approach it. It also presents an overview of his own education in rhetoric,

or rather the lack thereof, and of other experiences which may have inspired him, such as his parliamentary reporting and journalism. This chapter also introduces the aforementioned main interlocutors in more detail and presents other relevant approaches and criticism, such as those by John Bowen, Sally Ledger, Matthew Bevis, and others who have worked with related aspects of Dickens's work.

Chapter 2 presents an analysis of *A Christmas Carol* as an extended scene of persuasion, with the reformation of Scrooge from grumpy miser to benevolent capitalist as its goal. Analyzing the *Carol* as one long scene of persuasion made up of many smaller ones, the chapter argues that memory, pity, and the fear of mortality serve as means of persuasion in the reformation of Scrooge. The *Carol* stages its argument through presenting the ghost of Marley, who serves as a negative example of what will happen to Scrooge if he fails to understand, as Marley also failed to understand, that "mankind was his business" (23). Through the staging of opposites and the appearance of three further ghosts, who present Scrooge with the scenes of Christmas past, present, and future, Scrooge learns to pity first himself and then others. Finally, his encounter with his own un-mourned grave persuades Scrooge to change his ways. This chapter suggests that it is important to find the right moment, *kairos*, for any given act of persuasion. Christmas, as a typically charitable time of the year, is the most suited to it. However, the story itself has taken on a life of its own and now shapes that *kairos* on the second level of persuasion, as much as it appeals to it on the first level.

Chapter 3 presents an analysis of *Oliver Twist*, and focuses specifically on the sentimental mode and appeals to *pathos*. The chapter analyzes Oliver's use of rhetoric in scenes of persuasion and notes that he often uses non-verbal means of communication, such as tears and fainting. These have the effect of eliciting sympathy from other characters' as well as from the readers. The chapter concludes that pity is vital to the narrative and to Oliver's congenial ending. Pity is also the redeeming quality of Nancy, although it cannot save her as it does Oliver. Finally, the chapter discusses the narrator's use of irony in some detail and suggests that it is one of his most effective rhetorical devices. Irony is a vital ingredient in many of Dickens's texts and works simultaneously as a means of distancing readers from the narrative and as a means of making them complicit in it.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of *Hard Times*, a text that differs from the earlier texts in that it does not pursue a clear line of argument and persuasion. Instead, the novel explores the detrimental effects that a dogmatic belief in the philosophy of fact, and by extension any dogmatic beliefs, can have on the imagination. The novel also explores what happens when opportunistic individuals take advantage of the kindness of others. The focus of this chapter is on *logos* and the dire effects of disregarding fundamental human needs. In addition, it exposes effective rhetoricians who are eloquent but not worthy and suggests that imagination, and possibly sentiment, may counter the brute forces of factory life.

Chapter 5 analyses the scenes of persuasion in *Little Dorrit* and further develops the idea of effective but not virtuous rhetoricians, with a focus on *ethos*. This analysis examines how credit and debt are used as both social and financial concepts that interact in complex schemes. *Ethos*, which is related to trustworthiness, is also an important concept in credit and debt relations, and it is often synonymous with creditworthiness. However, in the novel, the structures of financial credit and debt are most often detrimental, as the goal seems to be to return to an ideal of domestic interaction that is based entirely on social forms of credit and debt. The chapter identifies Amy Dorrit as a personification of unconditional love and kindness for her family and a female character who effortlessly transcends the boundaries between home and market. Finally, the analysis introduces a few subplots that raise questions about various forms of charity and their implications for power and hierarchy. Like *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit* is an exploration of circumstances and beliefs rather than a proposal of solutions.

This study contends that in all four works, appeals to the readers' emotions—*pathos*—are the most successful; appeals to the use of language and logic—*logos*—fail or mislead if they are taken out of context; and finally, appeals to credibility and creditworthiness—*ethos*—are often dangerous and instable. My study thus traces the idea of a *vir bonus* who emerges through the texts as a voice that speaks from the perspective of truth and love based in spontaneous feeling—a character with no ulterior motives. While my analyses trace the ideal of a successful and ethical rhetorician within the narratives, they also offer ways of reading Dickens's novels as scenes of persuasion in themselves and thus shed light on a successful decoder of the rhetoric: an ethical reader.

Chapter 1: Charles Dickens's Rhetoric in Context

'Rhetoric' is a term without a straightforward definition, as it has been used to designate many different things in many different contexts since initial interest in the concept. Building on an inclusive understanding of rhetoric as incorporating context, text, sender, and receiver, this chapter begins by presenting the historical situation in which Dickens wrote. It then moves on to explore certain aspects of his biography that may have influenced his work, for example, how his readers engaged with his rhetoric and how various scholars have attempted rhetorical analyses of the novels, often by focusing on one specific aspect of the literary situation. Thereafter, the chapter synthesizes the various approaches to formulate a working definition of rhetoric for the analysis chapters that follow.

Establishing moral worth through acts of pity and kindness is a vital component of the rhetoric of Charles Dickens's novels, and these concepts underscore the emerging idea of a *vir bonus*—a good person who speaks well. Moreover, concepts relating to human kindness, such as sympathy, philanthropy, and charity, play important roles in the imagination of social improvement in the novels. In *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain*, Thomas Dixon presents the development of the term 'altruism'—which he uses as an umbrella term for the aforementioned concepts—and describes our modern understanding of Victorians as either selfless and communal or selfish and individualistic. Tracing scientific as well as social developments, Dixon notes that the term 'altruism' was first used around 1852 (1). With this new term, Victorians could now describe morally worthy endeavors in ways other than solely seeing them as part of religious obligation: "The invention of 'altruism' was one sign that this superiority of the believer over the unbeliever in the sphere of morals could no longer be taken for granted" (95). Being altruistic was thus a strong marker of moral worth in society and an alternative category to Christian charity. While Dixon studies late Victorian texts specifically, I argue that, although Dickens's works were published somewhat earlier, they participate in the same exploration of moral positions. These positions stand in relation to, but also detached from, the Christian tradition through their use of and engagement with rhetoric.

In *Dickens, Money, and Society*, Grahame Smith discusses the duality of Dickens's oeuvre, "his mixture of didacticism and poetry" (7), as he notes the

educational tone of some works. James R. Kincaid's study of the rhetoric of laughter stresses this didactic element in its discussion of this type of rhetoric as an education in how to read the narratives. However, the main strength of Dickens's rhetoric is its simultaneous complexity and clarity—it is never simply didactic nor simply imaginative; instead, it often uses one to achieve the other. In both his fictional and his non-fictional works, Dickens shows a fascination with as well as a wariness of rhetorical persuasion. This paradox of persuading while warning against persuasion underlies the narratives that this study investigates and is discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Dickens and the Victorians: Historical Context

A number of drastic economic and legislative changes marked the historical period during which Dickens was active.[7] In the 1830s, an awareness and discussion of some of the issues that concerned the inhabitants of the larger cities in particular increased in the public sphere (573).[8] Changed living conditions and working conditions also required a different way of dealing with those who could not support themselves, resulting in an overhaul of the earlier Poor Laws and finally culminated in the passing of the New Poor Laws.[9] The resulting changes, with the workhouse system in particular, are addressed in Oliver Twist and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Catherine Gallagher presents the Condition of England Debate as a major force and a discourse in itself that influenced a multitude of disciplines as well as authors (xi). Focusing specifically on the way in which certain authors such as Benjamin Disraeli, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens wrote "industrial novels" and thereby addressed one specific force of change, Gallagher investigates how novels responded to the changing material conditions that affected them and "led novelists to examine the assumptions of their literary form" (xi). She suggests that there was not one clear class-interest driving this debate but rather a mingling of a variety of voices from different spectrums on the social scale.[10] However, in the general discourse, one class was certainly understood as plagued by sickness, starvation, and other threats and thus viewed as dangerous to the status quo—paupers, "a mad, bad, and dangerous people, an

7 For a detailed discussion of the historical events of the time, see Boyd Hilton's *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783–1846*, in particular Chapter 9.

8 While the social reform and social problem novel became common genres, thinkers and politicians also engaged with questions of social reform. Friedrich Engels, for example, first published *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in German in 1845.

9 Though the New Poor Laws passed easily, they were not universally well received (Hilton 595).

10 For a full discussion on the influence of the industrialization on the novels see Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: 1832–1867*.

infectious disease threatening to destroy civilization" (Hilton 581). Dickens's narratives were some of the first to represent characters of that class with moral inner lives that could evoke sympathy.

Two of the most important concerns in an analysis of Dickens's rhetoric and its connection to altruism are the contesting assumptions during Dickens's lifetime about how to best relieve the suffering of the poor. The New Poor Law and the workhouse system assumed, firstly, that a workhouse should be as unpleasant as possible to deter the poor from ever wanting to enter it, and secondly, that if the poor would be given any more than what they absolutely need, they would become idle and reproduce to an unviable extent.[11] However, paternalism and individual acts of charity are not solely important to the recipients. In the older paternalistic system, propounded by Thomas Chalmers for example, charity was a religious obligation of the rich: it created a "desirable 'gift relationship' between giver and receiver" and made it possible through individual contacts to determine whether the poor were deserving or not (Hilton 341). These changing conceptions of how to best take care of those in need underlie the complex rhetorical exploration of moral worth of both giver and receiver in Dickens's works of fiction, and they change significantly throughout.

In *The Age of Improvement*, Asa Briggs discusses the importance of the work of Samuel Smiles, whose influential text *Self Help* was published in 1859. He states that "for Smiles and most of those of his contemporaries who thought like him the wisest way of tackling social evils was to combine the minimum of state interference with the maximum of voluntary cooperation" (382). It seems that this perspective of helping oneself was common not just among the middle class. Jonathan Rose suggests that the idea of self-help was "more than a crude success ethic" (68) and emphasizes that the working classes had their own mutual improvement societies that used theaters as collaborative places of education (80). However, despite the often-progressive spirit and belief in self-help, some thought that poverty was to some extent caused by individual shortcomings:

> Room was left for individual mobility—it was considered a virtue in a way which would have seemed impertinent in a village society—but not everyone could move. There still had to be poor, but it was increasingly easy to say that they were poor not because God chose them to be so, but because they lacked the requisite gifts of character and perseverance. It was still possible to feel well disposed towards them and to offer them charity in hard times, but it was easy, too, to say that they were best left to look after their own future and to go on to dismiss charity as an obsolete and sentimental indulgence. (Briggs 55)

[11] See for example Hilton, p 592. Hilton also discusses the fear of overpopulation that had been sparked by food shortages and infectious disease earlier in the century (see Chapter 5, specifically 349).

Briggs accentuates the complexity of simultaneous beliefs in self-help and philanthropy. Some individuals are able to help themselves and succeed, while others inherently lack this ability and are thus in need of philanthropy. Importantly, the notion that these individuals are unable to help themselves is often interpreted as proof that they hold their lowly positions because of individual shortcomings. According to Briggs, Dickens "looked to the power of benevolence (or the Christian spirit) to draw the different sectors of society together" (257). Although Briggs's assessment is valuable, I argue that Dickens's understanding of benevolence goes much further and becomes rather complicated and unclear in his later novels.[12]

Norris Pope's Dickens and Charity presents some of the different contentions about charity and benevolence at the time of Dickens's writing and situates Dickens within these different ideas. While Dickens was critical of many of the evangelicals' contentions, "evangelical morality affected all segments of English society" at the time (Pope 1). Many of them believed, "social inequality must be accepted as God's will," and that this in turn was a "blessing" because it "acted as an important stimulant to the exercise of virtue" (6–7). The poor, in short, served an important function in legitimating good individuals within Christian doctrine. Dickens, although not an evangelical himself, was influenced by an evangelical moral outlook and believed that "religion was a matter of individual conscience" rather than dependent on ceremonious celebrations of it (248). While he criticized certain aspects of "evangelical philanthropy, he believed no less firmly than evangelicals did that charity and benevolence were essential and highly appropriate products of Christian faith" (248). However, attitudes toward the poor and how to best handle inequalities changed substantially throughout Dickens's productive time, which becomes apparent when studying his rhetoric with regard to questions of benevolence and worthiness, both on behalf of the giver and on behalf of the receiver.[13]

Appealing to Readers: Dickens and Sentiment

Any analysis of the literary situation requires some understanding of the audience, which is an aspect of writing that Dickens was well aware of. The historical context that influenced both Dickens and his readers has already been presented in some detail, but how did readers engage with Dickens's texts? How did he try to connect

[12] Several studies can be recommended for further reading on this subject. Sarah Flew argues in "Unveiling the Anonymous Philanthropist: Charity in the Nineteenth Century" that philanthropy was at times motivated by intrinsic reasons. Moreover, Norris Pope's *Dickens and Charity* is an in-depth study of Charles Dickens's personal involvement with charitable activity and his personal interpretation of the concept. Finally, Robert Bremner's *Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History* provides a useful overview of some of the most influential conceptions of benevolence through history.

[13] For some introductory information see Norris Pope's contribution "charity and Dickens" in *OC*, pp. 84–88.

with them? Analyses of Dickens's works often note the variety of audiences that were drawn to them. In *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Rose introduces some contemporary readers of Dickens's novels. Arguing that he was one of the most widely read authors among the working class, Rose suggests many of these readers adopted aspects of Dickens's rhetoric. George Acorn, a reader who Rose presents in more detail, organized his entire memoir around his reading of *David Copperfield* (111–112). Although some of the working-class readers criticized the representation of their class and found it to be overly romantic, "as a general rule … Dickens's universe was solid enough and familiar enough to provide a common frame of reality for all social classes" (114).

Rose claims that utilizing Dickens's works as means of persuasion was not just common among the general population. Indeed, agitators in the labor movement were "particularly fond of quoting Oliver Twist on the subject of asking for more" (50). In particular, *Oliver Twist* received positive reviews from rather mixed audiences. While this may seem surprising today, Rose suggests that reading a variety of perspectives into the texts was quite common at the time: "Even literature that appeared to be safely conservative was potentially explosive in the minds of readers" (39). This reflects how literature played an important role in Victorian society: as a means of identification, as a means of education, and as a means of getting to know spheres of life that may otherwise have remained hidden to some.

One of the most common reasons for reading, both then and now, is simply the wish to be entertained, and meeting this expectation may be a necessary means to an end for a professional author. Kincaid notes, "Certainly Dickens did think of his novels, at least partially, as periodic communications with his affectionate readers" (18). He was an author who needed his literary works to sell, as his income was required to feed a quickly growing family, and there are several anecdotes—particularly concerning the low sales of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and the following decision to produce a Christmas book (*A Christmas Carol*)—that highlight this very tangible purpose.[14] In *Karl Marx and World Literature*, S.S. Prawer notes that Marx found it problematic that too many writers have "to write to live, instead of living to write" (55). Nonetheless, Marx thought of Dickens as an outstanding author, and this may well be because Dickens had found a mode to move his audiences through appeals to their emotions and affective scenes of persuasion, aspects Marx explores in his own writing (Prawer 401).

As mentioned, Dickens's works are often associated with a sentimental mode.[15] Historically, Carolyn Burdett points out, the mode has been associated closely with

[14] See, for example, Michael Slater's *Charles Dickens*.

[15] For an in-depth discussion of Sentiment in Victorian fiction in general and Dickens's work in particular, see for example the *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol 16, No 2., August 2011 (in particular Burdett, White, and Tilley). Further works of importance are, among others, the original essay "Sentiment" by James Fitzjames Stephens, published in *Cornhill Magazine*, Fred

the Victorians as modernists strove to dismantle it ("Introduction" 187). However, some Victorians attacked Dickens's sentimentalism quite fervently; for example, James Fitzjames Stephens wrote an eviscerating article entitled "Sentimentalism" in *Cornhill Magazine* in which he attacked the mode and some of his contemporaries' indulgence in it, suggesting that sentiment is good but "sentimentality" can become an "immoderate indulgence" if it is "an act of self-indulgence, done for the sake of the pleasure of the emotion itself" (*Cornhill Magazine,* vol. 10, 1864: 70). Afraid of a possible overindulgence in this mode, Stephen advocated "control, order and restraint" (Tilley 261). Burdett claims that the critique of the mode was quite similar in the mid-nineteenth century and the late-nineteenth century, but Bethan Carney points out that the critique of Dickens's sentimental mode coincided with concern about the characters that it represented. Both Burdett and Carney highlight that the perceived problems with the sentimental mode are often framed in connection with the fear of an "upturned hierarchy" (Burdett "Introduction" 189). According to Carney, some of Dickens's early critics felt it was necessary to discredit sentiment because they perceived his narratives as radical and therefore dangerous (1). However, Carney does not describe sentiment but rather its rhetorical effectiveness as the problem. She suggests that "it was Dickens's populism coupled with his popularity that caused his sentiment to be viewed as problematic" (2). The initial critique of it is thus an interesting starting point for an analysis of the sentimental mode as a means of persuasion in Dickens's works.

While Carney situates the reading of Dickens's sentimental rhetoric historically and seeks the causes of it, Emma Mason focuses on the effect that the sentimental mode has on readers and the ends toward which a writer like Dickens might use it to teach ethical codes:

> Dickens is intent on reminding us of such codes as well as being concerned to teach us ways of reading them: he encourages us as readers to interpret the world through its emotional content, training us to do so by providing readers with literary scenes fuelled by sentimental feeling. (1)

In Mason's reading, the novel becomes a didactic tool, fulfilling Adorno's wishes for the reader to become "emotionally committed" and thereby less likely to be seduced into a "neutrality from which (political) extremes, like capitalism or fascism, might emerge" (4). Thus, feeling with a text and sympathizing with the characters are seen as ways of avoiding a merely factual, logical, approach to experience—a line of analysis that will become important in my discussion of *Hard Times*. Mason's reading may hint at one of the aspects that allows readers to

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Kaplan *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*, Audrey Jaffe *Scenes of Sympathy*, and Michael Bell *Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling.*

continue enjoying Dickens's works even today. The texts continue to move readers toward a variety of ends by evoking certain emotions and by guiding them toward ethical codes embedded in the narratives.

Like Mason, the discussion of Kaplan's *Sacred Tears* presented by Burdett touches on the effect that sentimental literature has on readers. The Victorians inherited the idea that there is a connection between sentiment and moral value from David Hume and Adam Smith, a tradition "which leads to the Victorian hero of good and moral heart" (Burdett "Introduction" 189). Kaplan points specifically to Dickens's "conviction that novels are vehicles, among other things, for teaching virtue, and that the moral sentiments are the source of virtuous actions, pervades his fiction" (39–40).[16] Michael Bell argues similarly that Dickens believed society can be positively influenced through "emotional education of individuals" (127). In addition, Kaplan seeks to bring together moral feeling and moral action in the concept of benevolence and suggests that Dickens's representation of the "Benevolent man" is a representation of such an idealized giver (55). However, Burdett suggests that criticism has since moved beyond this straightforward understanding of an inherited concept and notes that there is greater complexity to the discussion of sentiment in Victorian fiction.

For instance, although useful, feeling can also become excessive and self-indulgent—two qualities that might not have been valued by Victorians. According to Kaplan, Carlyle was worried about this: "Sincerity, the ultimate virtue that precedes all others, is, for Carlyle, the enemy of sentimentality" (138). Dickens, I suggest, is concerned with questions of sincerity as well, but he seems to see spontaneous feeling as closest to sincerity rather than as a distortion of it. Consequently, there is a constant tension between the means and the ends of the sentimental mode. All these tensions are negotiated and, at times, explicitly reflected on in the rhetoric of Dickens's novels. Michael Bell suggests that Dickens's works engage with the sentimental mode and establish a dialectic between true and false feeling (118 and 127). This study contends that these tensions and reflections are particularly pronounced in the scenes of persuasion. Dickens's sentimental mode was common and welcome in the first half of the nineteenth century, but tastes changed and so did his later novels, most likely as a reaction to those changes. While there are clear sentimental tropes in the early novels, their use is more subdued and nuanced in later works. However, what remains is the close connection between morals, truth, and feeling that the sentimental mode establishes and that Dickens investigates in his writings.[17]

One especially relevant aspect of the sentimental mode discussed by scholars such as Tilley is its close connection to sight and morals. In her article, "The

[16] Compare Adam Smith *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

[17] See Paul Schlicke's "sentiment" in *OC*, pp. 523–525. For further reading, see "Emotions" in *OH*, edited by Juliet John, pp. 580–597.

Sentimental Touch: *Dickens's Old Curiosity Shop* and the Feeling Reader," Tilley presents material from her research on the reaction of blind children at the Perkins Institution in Boston when presented with Braille versions of Dickens's texts. Although Dickens had visited the institution in 1842, he declined to visit again on his second trip to America in 1867, claiming the threat of the extreme amounts of correspondence that would likely follow as reason. Nevertheless, he gifted 250 copies of *The Old Curiosity Shop* to the students (227–228). The purpose of giving Dickens's works in Braille to the blind pupils is outlined in several documents. Tilley suggests,

> sentimental fiction was expected to exert a moralizing influence over pupils, underlining suppositions about the pedagogic function of sentimental literature in the period as well as the more implicit assumption that visual impairment was accompanied by emotional (and by extension moral) deficiencies. (226)

Sentiment, sight, and morals are here all closely connected, and the exploration of these connections in implicit and explicit ways is vital to Dickens's rhetoric. In particular, the importance of observing scenes of suffering that can evoke sympathy cannot be overstated in the analyses of scenes of persuasion. Meanwhile, the blind students themselves take on the role of pitiful, sentimental subjects in the representation by their educators at the Perkins Institute (226). In one telling anecdote that Tilley recounts, a teacher from a different city asks to receive one of Dickens's donated books and formulates her demand by making appeals to *pathos* (235). It is as if the appeal has come full circle: the books present a sentimental rhetoric, the people who read them are sentimental subjects, and the educators use their students as sentimental means of persuasion used to elicit sympathy and charitable actions.

In her article, "'Don't be so melodramatic!' Dickens and the affective mode," Sally Ledger discusses the melodramatic mode and raises many important points in relation to Dickens's sentimental rhetoric. Her description of the affective mode specifically and her understanding of Dickens's purpose in using this mode are useful starting points for my study:

> On the one hand, the emotional affects of his writings were designed to promote individual charity as well as to plead on behalf of systemic social change; on the other hand, his exploitation of the melodramatic mode played to the widest popular audience so as to maximize the commercial success of his writing projects, in the process making him a very rich man. (3)

According to Ledger, Dickens's novels are full of melodramatic tableaux, particularly visual moments (often accompanied by an illustration) when the narrative freezes and exposes a scene filled with emotional cues. However, Dickens's works cannot be narrowed down to these didactic moments; rather,

Ledger suggests that the scenes are often accompanied by a somewhat Brechtian 'alienation effect' (7). This "grammar of affect" that contrasts pathos-heavy scenes with directly following scenes of joy increases the effect of both and adds to the complexity of the works. Although Ledger notes a difference between these effects, appeals to *pathos* are appeals to the readers' feelings, so producing a happy feeling can be just as affective an appeal as producing a sad one. *Pathos* as a rhetorical concept is thus somewhat different to *pathos* in the way that Ledger uses it in the article.

In *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, Ledger suggests that melodrama and satire are two common modes of Dickens's popular radicalism, describing melodrama as "the restoration of moral order" and suggesting that the congenial endings in the novels serve this purpose (103). She is particularly interested in how Dickens was able to relate to his audience and claims that he was also able to "transcend the boundaries between high and low culture" (3) by establishing a sense of "us" between the works and their readers (4). Formulating arguments about the exact effect of Dickens's works is difficult as this would require a study of the Victorian readership that, today, can only be based on second-hand accounts; however, it is certainly useful to keep this perspective in mind when analyzing the rhetoric of the novels. Nevertheless, according to Ledger, Dickens's demand of his readers to sympathize with the poor is what constitutes his radicalism (179).

In *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction*, Audrey Jaffe investigates the Victorian understanding of sympathy specifically and argues "that sympathy in Victorian fiction is inseparable from issues of visuality and representation because it is inextricable from the middle-class subject's status as spectator and from the social figures to whose visible presence the Victorian middle classes felt it necessary to formulate a response" (8). This making visible of an object of sympathy is also central to Adam Smith's understanding of the concept in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, where he suggests that "by changing places in fancy with the sufferer … we come either to conceive or to be affected by what he feels" (10). According to Jaffe, Smith thus understands "sympathy not as a direct response to a sufferer but rather as a response to a sufferer's representation in a spectator's mind" (*Scenes of Sympathy* 4). This definition of sympathy makes literary texts an important source of images upon which a reader can project their sympathy; however, Jaffe claims that there is "a difference between the pleasurable sympathetic feelings fiction invites and the potential threat of an encounter with an actual person" (7). Dickens's novels which I study here, I want to suggest, investigate the possibilities and the consequences of evoking sympathy and the importance of sympathetic engagement both to individual identities and to communities. While Jaffe argues, "The figures Victorian society defines as objects of sympathy were, of course, its outcasts; situated outside respectable identity," Dickens's novels suggest that everyone profits from giving and receiving sympathy.

The seeming tension between popular and radical in Dickens's oeuvre also interests other scholars who see clues about his political ideals in these concepts. In her article "Dickensian Intemperance: Charity and Reform," Amanda Claybaugh discusses Sketches by Boz and introduces a distinction between charity and reform (46). According to Claybaugh, the distinction is two-fold: firstly, reform is far away, while charity is near at hand; secondly, charity is direct and concrete, while reform is indirect and often initiated through speeches and other modes of persuasion (47). While Dickens openly criticizes reform, he often acts like a reformer himself (48). In *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit*, John Bowen seeks to break with the supposed binary between radical and reactionary, and suggests that Dickens "can be both familiar and strange at the same time, and often in the same words" (2).[18] Analyzing Dickens's rhetoric provides valuable insights into how the texts grapple with these pressing matters. Although Claybaugh does not draw this conclusion, her article points to the already mentioned paradox of Dickens's rhetoric. The rhetoric in the novel foregrounds altruism and sympathy as direct means of improving society and warns against rhetorically conscious modes of persuasion, but the manner in which this solution is presented is highly rhetorical. The novels are thus simultaneously rhetorical means of persuasion and warnings against rhetorical persuasion.

Dickens and Rhetoric

Studying the rhetoric in Dickens's works raises an obvious question: How much formal training in the art of rhetoric did he have? Dickens's formal education was sketchy, to say the least. One of his most avid critics, James Fitzjames Stephen, formulates what is not necessarily meant as a compliment when he makes a comparison between William Cobbett and Dickens. Stephen claims that both wrote in a similar manner and were not taught according to the Classical model, adding that "the object of the narrative of [Dickens] is to paint a picture which will catch the eye of the most ignorant and least attentive observer" ("Mr. Dickens" 475). Between the ages of five and ten, he attended a dame school, "a deficient private establishment with an unqualified woman at its head" (Litvack 214).[19] Toward the end of the time spent in Chatham, Dickens briefly attended Reverend William Giles' school where he received a more solid education. In *Authors in Context: Charles Dickens*, Andrew Sanders suggests that Dickens quite enjoyed his first formal education at William Giles' establishment.[20]

[18] For a complete re-reading of Dickens's early works see John Bowen's *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit*.

[19] See also Michael Allen's *Charles Dickens' Childhood*, pp. 54–55.

[20] See also Michael Allen's *Charles Dickens' Childhood*, pp. 64–66.

Reverend Giles is apparently also the origin of Dickens's nickname "the inimitable," which Giles had imprinted for Dickens on a snuffbox after his success with *The Pickwick Papers* (Sanders 3). However, Dickens's time at Rev. Giles's establishment lasted only about a year, after which the family moved to London (Litvack 214). In 1824, his education was broken off altogether when he was sent to work at a blacking factory to support the family (Slater 20).[21] The degradation that he felt was something for which he apparently never forgave his parents, and it finds its way into many of his texts, most obviously *David Copperfield*. After his time at the blacking factory, Dickens began to study at Wellington House Academy, which was, apparently wholly undeservedly, known as a very good school in London (Slater 25). According to Slater, the only effect that this time might have had on Dickens as a writer is that it provided him "with some good copy for future use" (26).[22]

Dickens's formal education taught him little about rhetoric, but his lifelong interest in the theater, for example, would influence his understanding of both performance and rhetoric.[23] Dickens discusses the important connection that he sees between theater and life in his essay, "The Pantomime of Life," published in *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1837. In this essay, he contends, "A pantomime is to us, a mirror of life" (291) and suggests, according to Schlicke, that "all men and women are actors in a great pantomime" ("theatre and theatricality" 574). Noting the importance of theater to Dickens's understanding of life, Schlicke also comments on its importance to Dickens's understanding of the theatrical as a means of persuasion:

> Dickens believed that love of the theatre was an innate human characteristic, and for this reason he was confident that theatrical art had potency as a great educative force. By appealing directly to people, he felt, it could stimulate imagination as no other means, however pleasingly instructive could do. (574)

[21] For more information on this period in Dickens's life see John Bowen's "The Life of Charles Dickens I: before Ellen Ternan" in *Charles Dickens in Context*, Michael Slater's biography *Charles Dickens*, Michael Allen's *Charles Dickens's Childhood* (in particular p. 80), and Michael Allen's "New Light on Dickens and the Blacking Factory."

[22] For example, Dickens published the article "Our School" in *Household Words* (11 Oct. 1851) with his experience of Wellington House Academy in mind. In addition, his heavy-handed schoolmaster, William Jones, serves as an inspiration for Mr Creakle in *David Copperfield* (Slater 25).

[23] Robert Garis analyzes the theatricality of Dickens's novels in *The Dickens Theatre*. More recent and introductory work to support Dickens's lifelong interest in the theatre can be found, for example, in John Glavin's "Dickens and the Theater" (*OH* 666–681), Marty Gould's "The theatre" (*CDC* 125–132), and Juliet John's "Melodrama" (*CDC* 133–139). Lastly, Edwin M. Eigner provides an in-depth discussion of some of Dickens's particularly theatrical characters in *The Dickens Pantomime*.

In "The Amusement of the People," Dickens writes, "It is probable that nothing will ever root out from among the common people an innate love they have for dramatic entertainment in some form or other" (13; p. 1 in *DJO*). Already Aristotle had a clear sense of the ways in which theater could move an audience and the ends toward which this strength could be used. Dickens seems to share this belief, and it has clearly affected the rhetoric of his novels.

His professional experience would also certainly have had an impact on Dickens's knowledge of and use of rhetorical strategies. In 1827, he left Wellington House Academy and worked as a clerk in a law firm and later another (Slater 27–30). However, eventually, he felt that legal work was not for him, so he moved into journalism instead. He had taught himself shorthand, a skill which led to his promotion to the position of legal reporter in Doctor's Commons when he was seventeen (Slater 31–32). His ability to closely observe and report, and his quickness in doing so led him to take over the parliamentary reporting for the Morning Chronicle when he was twenty-two. Whenever he was not working in parliament, he would travel to cover political campaigns. It is safe to assume that the rhetorical strategies used in parliamentary speeches as well as in the political campaigns did not go unnoticed by an avid observer such as Dickens. Matthew Bevis, for example, suggests in *The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce*, "Dickens's early years as a parliamentary reporter involved prolonged exposure to the voices of those who were educated in the same tradition [i.e. they were classically trained]" (27). Bowen also comments on this vital influence on Dickens's style in "The life of Dickens I: before Ellen Ternan": "Shorthand parliamentary reporting gave him an ear acutely trained to individual speech patterns and a lifelong distaste for Parliament and all its ways" (5). Thus, Dickens had ample opportunity to learn practical rhetorical skills in the law courts and in Parliament.

Dickens's interest in the theater is one piece of evidence of his awareness and importance of the audiences of rhetorical situations. Further evidence for this interest can be substantiated through his journalism and his public readings.[24] In *Dickens and His Performing Selves*, Malcolm Andrews writes about Dickens's engagement with his public and describes the process of establishing a sort of conversation with his readers. With installments and the gossip-like nature of some of his narratives, his "readers became used to this quasi-epistolary relationship with their novelist, though it was essentially a one-way correspondence" (69). Dickens cared for this relationship and knew it was important to his success. He established it through his novels, his prefaces, his journalism and, most thoroughly so, through his public readings:

[24] For a detailed discussion of the term "rhetorical situation" see the original article "The Rhetorical Situation" by Lloyd Bitzer, and Richard E. Vatz's engagement with the concept in "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." For its useful application to fictional contexts, see Magnus Ullén's invention of the "literary situation."

> This wish to convert his readership into companionship, or perhaps one might say to realize in a series of live encounters the always latent companionship he had sensed with his readers, by exchanging the 'letter' for the 'personal interview', was one of the main motives behind the Readings enterprise. (Andrews 69)

In addition, Dickens was quite aware of the ways in which texts needed to be shaped in order to be performed, and he rewrote and reworked his novels extensively into reading scripts before presenting those to an audience (80–81). Thus, plenty of evidence suggests that Dickens was acutely aware of his audience and had specific ideas of how to best move them, even though he was not formally trained in rhetoric.

Another hint at Dickens's interest in persuasion is the content of his library, as Harvey Peter Sucksmith suggests in *The Narrative Art of Charles Dickens*. Dickens owned Edward Mangin's *Essays on the Sources of the Pleasures Received from Literary Compositions* (1809), which focuses mainly on the use of effects in literary texts. Sucksmith suggests that Dickens was concerned with "emotive effects" (26), an assumption that the close reading of his novels supports: "By the best effect, Dickens would almost certainly have understood one which included the most *powerful* emotive reaction in the reader that could be successfully produced under the circumstances" (27; original emphasis). As Mangin's essay includes a rather elitist view of art and those able to appreciate it, it is questionable whether Dickens would have agreed with many of its suggestions. However, the understanding of literature's ability to move people and the means of doing so which the essay explores certainly overlap with Dickens's fictional works, and thus it is possible to assume that reading it inspired Dickens's writing to some degree.[25]

In *The Rhetoric of Laughter*, James R. Kincaid also comments on Dickens's rhetorical awareness: "Certainly Dickens did think of his novels, at least partially, as periodic communications with his affectionate readers; he wrote with the reader very much in mind; and he was very much concerned with that reader's feelings" (18). Arguing in line with the other scholars quoted earlier, John Drew states in *Dickens the Journalist* that "Dickens's direct knowledge of the writings on rhetoric of Aristotle, Cicero or Quintilian was, it may safely be said, negligible" (160). However, although he never had a classical education, "he had ample opportunity to study the fruits of one during his five years as a reporter of parliamentary speeches, and to compare its spoken and written results with other styles of oratory" (160).

Drew's study takes a different path than the others and sheds light on the reverse relationship, that is, on ways in which Dickens's journalism may have been influenced by what he learned about eloquence and rhetoric. His keen sense of observation and talent in describing what he saw is one of the main foundations of

[25] Particularly relevant chapters in the essay are the following: "On Pity," "On Melancholy," and "On the Tender Affections."

his literary success, and it seems to have been an important aspect of his journalist career as well. Drew quotes Dickens's description of Brougham as one of the best speakers he had ever seen:

> [The young Brougham] was by far the greatest speaker he had ever heard. Nobody rivalled him in sarcasm, in invective, in spirit-stirring eloquence. He was the man, too, he said, who of all others seemed, when he was speaking, to see the longest way before him. (13)

Dickens's oeuvre spanned a large variety of genres and, consequently, rhetorical purposes. His addresses to a wide audience and his representations of a wide range of characters, in turn, has shaped his authorial voice and persona.

Describing Dickens's journalistic style more closely, Drew comments, "in terms of an appeal to tradition, the texture [of Dickens's journalistic rhetoric] is thus neither strictly neoclassical nor Romantic, neither intellectual nor seeking to ground viewpoint in an essentialist aesthetic of feeling" (163). When describing Dickens's journalism, Drew captures an important element of his rhetoric: the works are explorations of the ways in which rhetoric works. Another interesting study in this context, and one with a particular focus on Dickens's parliamentary reporting, is Nikki Hessel's *Literary Authors, Parliamentary Reporters: Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Dickens*, in which Hessel, like others, suggests that Dickens's fictional work was profoundly influenced by his parliamentary reporting. She suggests that Dickens's familiarity with the standards of reporting, with audiences, and with expectations of editors meant that he knew well "when to conform and when to innovate" (14).

Finally, Matthew Bevis studies "the ways in which [Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, and Joyce] and their publics conceived the relations between political speech and literary endeavour" (3). Bevis situates his explorations historically and claims that during the periods in which the aforementioned authors wrote, there were many discussions "about whether the rhetorical impulse of oratory to move listeners to action should be combined with or kept at a remove from the aesthetic impulse of literature" (3).[26] There was thus an ongoing debate at the time about whether or not literary works should or could be kept separate from acts of persuasion commonly associated with political oratory. According to Bevis, literary works in the nineteenth century were considered modes of rhetorical persuasion (15), and they participated in the discussions about art and politics and the possibility of keeping them apart (3). Dickens and other authors "were aware that a disinterested independence might shade into an irresponsible indifference" (5), a struggle that is certainly visible and often caricatured in Dickens's novels. In line with this, Bevis

[26] See also S.S. Prawer's discussion of Karl Marx's faith in the rhetorical power of fictional works, which Prawer presents in detail in *Karl Marx and World Literature*.

explores how writers dealt with the, at times, conflicting tendencies between the aesthetic and the political impulse and how style could become an expression of political sympathies (5).

In discussing the nineteenth-century concern with "the vexed, intimate relations between oratory and literature" (21), Bevis comes to the conclusion that literary persuasion incorporates one of Aristotle's central ideals of classical rhetoric—the ability "to argue persuasively on either side of a question…in order that it may not escape our notice what the real state of the case is and that we ourselves may be able to refute if another person uses speech unjustly" (*On Rhetoric* 34; bk. 1, ch. 1, 12). Accordingly, Dickens's novels take part in the exploration of a moral rhetoric, a form of expression that entertains responsibly.

Rhetoric in Dickens's Fiction

This chapter has presented some critical positions regarding Dickens's rhetoric in general and his journalism in particular, but nothing has been said yet about the specific rhetoric of Dickens's fictional works. In examining Dickens's rhetoric, Sucksmith takes into account author, text, context, and audience. He defines "the rhetoric of fiction as *the technical means whereby, through structure, effects are created and vision focused*" (7; original emphasis) and argues that Dickens's main goal was always to produce the greatest effect on his readers. Naturally, there have always also been critical readers of his fiction who did not enjoy his way of narrating. For example, in his review of *A Tale of Two Cities* in *The Saturday Review* (17 Dec. 1859), Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, an avid critic of Dickens and a distinguished lawyer, puts Dickens's literary qualities under intense scrutiny: "No portion of his popularity is due to intellectual excellence…The two main sources of his popularity are his power of working upon the feelings by the coarsest stimulants, and his power of setting common occurrences in a grotesque and unexpected light" (742). Stephen criticized Dickens harshly on many occasions and often, as mentioned, with a specific focus on the sentimental aspect of his works. According to his brother, Stephen considered *Robinson Crusoe* "the ideal novel," as it matched what he thought a novel should be: "a serious attempt by a grave observer to draw a faithful portrait of the actual facts of life" (Leslie Stephen qtd. in Collins 344).[27] Sucksmith, who contends that the priority given to intellectual engagement over emotional response is neither logical nor effective, severely criticizes the strict difference between intellectual and emotional responses that Stephen propounds. He argues that Dickens, the man and author, was rather wary of rhetorical strategies of persuasion and claims that "in seeking to illustrate the danger of rhetoric, Dickens

[27] For further reading on James Fitzjames Stephen's criticism of Dickens's works, see Philip Collins, *The Critical Heritage: Charles Dickens*, pp. 344–349; 366–374; and 408–412.

has failed to indicate its power" (6). The novels certainly show a wariness of rhetoric and a suspicion of its many misuses; however, they are also profoundly involved in rhetorical persuasion and as such acutely aware of the power of rhetoric.

The tension that underlies Dickens's oeuvre can also be noted in the language of the texts, as Sheila M. Foor points out in *Dickens' Rhetoric*. While this title suggests that she focuses on a similar area as this study, the actual focus of her work remains solely on the textual component of the rhetorical situation as she claims that it is Dickens's skillful use of words made him famous (1). Her explorations of details such as letters, ink, paper, and individual words are interesting in their own right; however, one of Foor's minor claims is most relevant to my study of Dickens's rhetoric. She speaks of Dickens's "ironic caution that fewer words are better," the irony of which becomes painfully obvious to a reader aiming to hold up the 860 pages of Little Dorrit. Foor claims that Dickens highlights the problem of words "through the theme of language use and abuse" and thereby "solidifies his vision of the goodness of common people" (139). A mistrust of language and words and a mistrust of calculated, eloquent conversation emerge as the most important finding in Foor's study, and these are important observations for my close analysis of Dickens's works in the following chapters.

Daniel Tyler's edited volume on *Dickens's Style* focuses only partially on the style of the novels. "Style" is broadly defined in this collection of articles, and some of the chapters may be best described as dealing with rhetoric in general. Tyler states in the introduction that little has been written on Dickens's style and that critics often make a too clear distinction between his style and his ideology. He argues that this approach is counterproductive: "When critics have attended to Dickens's style, the tendency has been to read it as being at odds with the essential meaning of his work" (7). Tyler continues this thought and comments that Dickens's style "is thought to betray the contradictions or tensions in his ideology, which he is able to resist more deliberatively in other aspects of his writing, such as plotting and characterisation, which are seen to be less instinctive" (7). According to Tyler, the connection between Dickens's style and his ideological pursuits is less at odds, and he aims to redefine style to incorporate rhetorical purpose. Thus, in a way, style would be a manifestation of that which Dickens's novels seem to represent as most truthful—a spontaneous expression of feeling and thought.

It is further noteworthy that the ideal rhetoric that emerges from the novels is unmediated and uncalculated. According to Tyler, "Dickens's style frequently, typically, cooperates with his intentions" (11). While Tyler's focus rests mainly on style, he quotes Arthur Quiller-Couch, who claims, "the merit of Dickens's writing is ethical, rather than stylistic. … He argues that Dickens's supreme achievement is his spirit of charity" (13). However, this study shows that these two positions are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, I argue that it is through his very rhetoric that Dickens presents the ethics of an altruistic Christmas spirit—but for all the year 'round.

Finally, James R. Kincaid's *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* is the most relevant study in connection to my own as I share its definition of rhetoric and engage with it in a similar manner. Kincaid's idea that the laughter inspired in the readers and produced by the characters works as a means of persuasion anticipates my understanding of kindness, fancy, and credit and debt as means of persuasion in the novels. Moreover, understanding laughter as a means of identification allows Kincaid to see it as a strategy of rhetorical persuasion much like those I describe in the rhetoric on the second level of persuasion. Kincaid's perspective takes into account the complex relationship between texts and their readers as he states that our response to certain aspects of the text with laughter conditions our overall understanding of and engagement with the novel. His purpose is "to examine the part laughter plays in our response to both early and late novels" (1), and he investigates "how our laughter is used … to cement our involvement in the novel's themes and concerns" (1). Kincaid argues convincingly that laughter functions as a means of identification and thereby as a positioning of the readers, who either distance themselves from certain characters or identify with them and events in the plot, depending on how the text conditions their laughter.

Moreover, Kincaid suggests there is a clear continuity in Dickens's use of rhetorical devices and the tools that support the plot in his novels. Evaluations of Dickens's work have often described the early novels as funnier and somewhat less artistically complex, while the later ones have been described as darker and more sophisticated. Kincaid does not agree with this assessment: "I think we have made an over-facile and generally false distinction between the dark and the funny Dickens, and between the early and the late novels" (4). Bowen shares this perception and makes a case for the seriousness and artistic complexity of Dickens's early novels in *Other Dickens: Pickwick to Chuzzlewit*. However subtly done, Kincaid admits that there is a certain progression in the development of Dickens's use of laughter as a rhetorical device: "Generally speaking, as Dickens progressed he used humour for perhaps more serious purposes, attacking and persuading the reader more and more subtly" (4). I argue that this statement applies to the use of other means of persuasion as well and to the less optimistic and more pragmatic rhetoric in the later novels that I analyze.

What is Rhetoric? A Working Definition

The aforementioned critics who have written on Dickens's rhetoric, style, or eloquence all define these terms differently. To Sucksmith, rhetoric is closely connected to an intention of the author, while to Foor it is what others would describe as style. Tyler's work on style includes several articles that define style as others would define rhetoric. The definition of rhetoric on which this thesis relies derives from a variety of scholars and works, but it is best described as a situation in which an author, a text, and a receiver communicate in a context. George Leith and Dick Myerson propose a rather useful definition as they distance their own study of rhetoric from two somewhat outdated approaches: the Enlightenment project of uncovering truth and the still somewhat common notion that rhetoric is a "special and slightly underhand use (or abuse) of language" (xiv). Similar to my own approach, they see the study of rhetoric as a holistic undertaking, one that does not merely focus on the use of language:

> *All* utterances can be seen at one level as attempts to persuade; but the precise mechanism by which someone is persuaded to part with their money in exchange for a commodity, or to adopt a particular course of action (as in the public sphere of politics) cannot be discovered by concentrating solely on language. (xiv; original emphasis)

Their approach thus anticipates the holistic nature of my approach in studying all aspects of the rhetorical situation: speaker, audience, text, and context. Leith and Myerson suggest that "Classical Rhetoric frequently turns to literature for an understanding comparable to, and richer than, its own" (83).[28] This study turns to Dickens for an understanding of a wholesome moral rhetoric that he envisioned as a means of solving some of the pressing issues of his time.

Based on classical rhetorical theory, I focus specifically on the rhetorical appeals of *kairos*, *pathos*, *logos*, and *ethos*. Aristotle claimed that these exist in all rhetoric, and I maintain that by studying all four, a reader of Dickens's works can begin to understand his particular mode of persuasion. *Kairos* refers to the pertinent moment of making an argument, or more specifically, the best time, place, and setting of an argument. It assumes that the same argument may succeed in one setting while it would fail in another. In rhetorical theory, this term refers to the context which surrounds the other three elements. *Pathos* refers to the emotions. That is, appeals to *pathos* refer to the sensibilities of the audience. To make an effective appeal to *pathos*, authors must know what moves their audience and then formulate their argument accordingly. In rhetorical theory, this term refers to the audience. *Logos* has been defined in many ways throughout the centuries of its existence. While it

[28] Leith and Myerson use a capital R when spelling Rhetoric to denote their own definition of the term and to set it off from the multitude of other definitions that exist in criticism.

originally referred to the words of the message specifically, it has come to be used as a term for reason or logic. Both definitions are productive, and they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In rhetorical theory, this term refers to the text. Finally, *ethos* refers to the trustworthiness of the speaker of an argument. Originally, this term incorporated the various aspects that may define the character of a speaker. An appeal to *ethos* would thus strive to present the narrator as unbiased and the source of an act of persuasion as credible. In rhetorical theory, this term refers to the author or speaker.

The first analysis that I present is that of *A Christmas Carol*, which is taken out of chronological order to serve as a test case of the application of the different rhetorical appeals in action. The *Carol* can be read as one complex scene of persuasion in which all parts of the text cooperate to make Scrooge a "better man" and to teach the readers what exactly "being a good man" entails. This short story offers some keys that can help unlock the complex moral rhetoric of the texts that follow.

Chapter 2: *A Christmas Carol* or Scrooge Persuaded

Critical readers of *A Christmas Carol* tend to agree that it has a definitive rhetorical purpose, namely, that while the text shows the persuasion of Scrooge, it also attempts to persuade its readers. At the same time, critical readers disagree about what exactly the rhetorical purpose is. Is it religious or secular? Is it radical or reactionary? Tony Williams comments on rituals as traditions and argues, "In *A Christmas Carol* Dickens, economically and skillfully, managed to use the human yearning, indeed the human need, for tradition, community, and celebration, as a means of challenging and indicting contemporary attitudes in his overwhelming call for change" (63). While the text clearly appeals to shared essential human needs and investigates their significance, the "overwhelming call for change" that Williams points out is difficult to substantiate.

Ruth Glancy argues that the five Christmas books that Dickens produced "hold a contradictory position" among his works (191). While the content of these books is often less complex than that of the novels in terms of plot and development, they played a vital role in shaping Dickens's oeuvre and what it came to be known for. Discussing Dickens's professionalism, John Bowen states, "As with serial publication, these writings had a distinctive and new publication rhythm, allied to the calendar" ("Dickens as Professional Author" 51). Selling the text as a Christmas book suggests that the content of the text in itself advertises the very thing that Dickens hoped readers would do with the book: buy it and gift it. Thus, the *Carol* participates in the capitalist endeavor that it simultaneously condemns.

I argue that the text establishes a rhetorical moral framework that refers back to social codes perceived as more stable in the quest to counter the imminent changes of industrialism and early capitalism, while, at the same time, seeing the potential for prosperity and improvement in the developments. Heather Anne Tilley argues similarly: "Dickens's skill lay in making recourse to the literary and philosophic vain of the eighteenth-century sentimental mode, which allowed readers a nostalgic response to changing social conditions" (19). Thus, the *Carol's* great rhetorical success lies in appealing to fundamental human needs and presenting Scrooge and readers alike with what it means to be a *vir bonus*.

Dickens declared the Christian origins of his stories in an 1861 letter to the Reverend David Macrae, in which he also introduces an idea of his "good people":

> With a deep sense of my great responsibility always upon me when I exercise my art, one of my most constant and most earnest endeavours has been to exhibit in all my good people some faint reflections of the teachings of our great Master, and unostentatiously to lead the reader up to those teachings as the great source of all moral goodness. (*Letters 9*: 556)

In my analysis, the term that Dickens uses here, "unostentatiously," is important in understanding his rhetoric; ostentatious rhetoricians do not fare well in the novels. Regarding the Christian perspective, it is important to consider that Dickens refers to it in a letter to a clergyman; hence, this could be seen as a case of Dickens knowing his audience.[29] However, Dennis Walder argues in *Dickens and Religion* that even "if Dickens is not primarily a religious novelist, he none the less evidently expresses religious beliefs in what he writes" (171). While Dickens clearly declared the Christian origin of the Carol in this letter, some contemporary readers, such as John Ruskin, did not appreciate what they thought of as its secularity (Glancy 198).[30] Dickens's works are often positioned at a strange intersection between the religious and the secular.[31] The book titles in *Hard Times*, "Sowing," "Reaping," and "Garnering," for example, include biblical references, and my discussion of *Little Dorrit* focuses on the concept of debt, which is also central in the Christian doctrine.[32] Meanwhile, many sections of Dickens's works are far removed from such a specific moral framework and appear to explore how moral worthiness can be formed and sustained outside of religious obligation.[33]

Many scholars have discussed the *Carol* with varying starting points. The secular aspects that scholars note are often particularly concerned with the developing capitalist system. In this context, Lee Erickson suggests that we should understand "the psychology of Scrooge and also the physical form of *A Christmas Carol* … as aesthetic responses to the depressed English economy of 1843 that seek to fulfill in themselves both the author's and the audience's wishes for a more prosperous future" (51). Jen Cadwallader argues similarly when she claims, "Scrooge's

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[29] For a thorough discussion of Religion in Dickens's life and works see Dennis Walder's *Dickens and Religion*, which takes a non-partisan entry point into discussing Dickens's religious affiliations and the allusions to religion in his novels.

[30] See also Ruskin, John. *The Works of John Ruskin*, in particular p. 7.

[31] Some modern critics who discuss this are Robert Douglas Fairhurst in his introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of *A Christmas Carol* (viii) and Sally Ledger in *Dickens and the Popular Radical* Imagination (123).

[32] See Peter Selby's *Grace and Mortgage* for an in-depth discussion of the significance of credit and debt in Christianity, past and present.

[33] Further suggestions for readings of criticism on the Carol can be found in Ruth Glancy's *Dickens's Christmas Books, Christmas Stories, and Other Short Fiction: An Annotated Bibliography*, New York and London: Garland, 1985 as well as in her addition to this article which focuses specifically on newer criticism between 1985 and 2006, published in *Dickens Studies Annual*.

conception of time as only a monetary unit underscores the limitations of the capitalist lens through which he views the world—a mental state that Dickens concerns himself with in much of his fiction" (60). Rediscovering his senses and ability to relate to the world in terms other than monetary are central to the *Carol's* scenes of persuasion. For example, Audrey Jaffe suggests that Scrooge needs to be socialized into "commodity culture" from which he has been absent through his lack of "human fellowship" ("Spectacular Sympathy" 261). In *Scenes of Sympathy*, Jaffe observes that sympathy is closely connected to identity and community. Scrooge's lack of sympathy signifies a distance to "cultural value" and thus an alienation from community (12), an issue that is also of great importance in the analysis of Mr Dorrit's struggle with being on the receiving end of sympathy in *Little Dorrit*. This chapter seeks to answer the question of how exactly Scrooge's process of re-socialization proceeds.

Elodie Russelot defines the main purpose of the *Carol* somewhat differently when she states, "Dickens targets what he deems one of the main causes of social inequality: the well-to-do's refusal to help" (64). Williams's reading of the story is similar to that of Russelot, as he also claims that the text has a clear purpose: "Thus the *Carol* is a text written in response to specific social concerns—ignorance and want—that outraged the writer, who believed they needed to be exposed to general awareness" (63). Ignorance and want are condemned in particular, through the representation of them in two destitute children by those names, who are hidden under the coat of the Ghost of Christmas Present. However, it is noteworthy that want is addressed from a capitalist perspective. Andrew Smith comments on this:

> Discussion of poverty is clearly marginalised because the emphasis is on how Scrooge needs to effect a compassionate change by becoming a better capitalist, as it is only through putting his money into circulation that, paradoxically, the inequalities generated by capitalism are alleviated. (38)

Jaffe's analysis of the story focuses on the effect and means of the transformation that the *Carol* promotes, and Glancy comments that the strength of Jaffe's reading is that it takes "into account the importance of the imagination in Dickens's Christmas writings, both as an antidote to Utilitarian thinking and as a source of sympathy" (199). This imagination will also become important in *Hard Times*, which attacks Utilitarian thinking and suggests that imagination can counterbalance these forces.

The *Carol* is an exemplary work of persuasion on several levels. It stages the persuasion of the greedy capitalist Scrooge into one of the 'good people' that Dickens invokes in his letter to Macrae—a *vir bonus*—by presenting him with memories, moving him to pity, and confronting him with mortality.[34] While the

[34] The full letter can be found in *Letters 9*, p. 556.

Carol allows for a variety of interpretations regarding its overall purpose, my study focuses specifically on the means of persuasion that are used both on the first and on the second level to convince Scrooge and the readership to become such 'good people'.[35] The first level of persuasion remains within the narrative and presents the persuasion of Scrooge; the second level of persuasion plays out between the text and the readers and uses the persuasion of Scrooge as a rhetorical tool in the persuasion of the reader. Within these scenes, rhetorical appeals to *kairos*, *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* play important roles. The *Carol* thus exemplifies many of the discussions that are central to the following chapters as it begins to establish a moral rhetoric that continues to develop throughout Dickens's oeuvre. This moral rhetoric incorporates, among other aspects, the appeals to sentiment that are central to the rhetorical persuasion in *Oliver Twist*; the philosophy of fact that is a central theme in *Hard Times*; the obsession with money and issues of credit and debt that pervade the scenes of persuasion in *Little Dorrit*; and the representation of the worth of characters according to certain moral guidelines that either grant or deny them congenial endings is what all these narratives have in common.

On the first level, the persuasion begins with the scene in which Scrooge sees Marley's face in the knocker on his door. This prepares him for the actual process of persuasion by breaking down his way of making sense of the world. On the second level, the persuasion begins with Dickens's prefaces both to the Christmas Books in general and to the *Carol* specifically. In the former, Dickens declares his purpose: "My chief purpose was, in a whimsical kind of masque which the good humour of the season justified, to awaken some loving forebearing thoughts, never out of season in a Christian land" (Preface to *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books*). This preface makes an appeal to *kairos*—the pertinent time for making an argument, but it does so by explicitly declaring itself light-hearted entertainment. The preface as such does thus not prepare readers for the persuasive nature of the novel but rather clouds this angle, which is not the case in many of the other novels' prefaces, in which a clear purpose is often declared.

The preface also implies that reflection can lead to betterment and a return to goodness. In the preface to the *Carol*, Dickens states, "I endeavoured in this Ghostly little book to raise the Ghost of an Idea which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me" (Preface to *A Christmas Carol*). Readers see Dickens's struggle with the possibilities of rhetoric: he is both wary of it and extremely good at it, and so the story seizes its readers and moves them in a bodily manner rather than presenting a number of reasons for why

[35] One recent reading of the *Carol's* rhetorical purpose is Paul K. Saint-Amour's in his article "'Christmas Yet To Come': Hospitality, Futurity, the *Carol*, and 'The Dead'," where he claims, "The *Carol* stages the ruination of Scrooge's plans by ethical appeals that come to him from elsewhere; it also attempts, in the course of this staging, to ruin the plans of its readers" (101). Such a clear purpose of both Scrooge and the readers does not strike me in reading the text, but the ethical appeals that Saint-Amour notes are plentiful.

they should adopt a certain standpoint. Readers will be haunted by an "idea"—the spirit of Christmastime. As I begin to present the specific rhetorical appeals in connection to the narrative, it is important to note that they serve as starting points for ways of focusing the analysis and will in no way remain rigid or separate. Inherent in the nature of literary persuasion is the overlap of appeals, and inherent in the nature of Dickens's fiction is the impossibility of categorizing it.

Kairos

Kairos refers to the appeal to the pertinent moment for making an argument and to the right measure. Among Aristotle's appeals, *kairos* was classified as an inartistic appeal, as the orator does not form it through an inventive (artistic) process. In "Kairos *in Aristotle's* Rhetoric," James L. Kinneavy and Catherine R. Eskin explain, "although the term does not appear in Aristotle's definitions of rhetoric, the concept of a specific act in a concrete case does" (434). In the most common reference works for rhetorical terms, the definition of *kairos* typically begins from a "rhetor-oriented" perspective.[36] That is, the definitions see *kairos* as a way of shaping the argument. The two main definitions of the term are the "right moment" and the "right measure" of a given persuasive act in the specific rhetorical situation. When speakers make an appeal to *kairos*, they imply that they are speaking or writing at the right time and place for a successful persuasion. As this study focuses on the textual aspect, the literary situation, the place of the persuasion is predefined. On the first level, there may be several different places and times, as the setting can change, but on the second level, the place is firmly rooted within the novel or story that the readers hold in their hands. However, the situation in which readers encounter the text may differ significantly and can have a strong influence on the persuasion. *Kairos* refers to the 'context' component of the literary situation, and in the *Carol*, Christmas is a vital aspect of this context.

For many readers, the Christmas books and the Christmas spirit that they present have become synonymous with Christmas itself. According to Williams, "from 1843 onwards Dickens's Christmas books and stories became a powerfully significant part of his output and established a special relationship with his readership which he was keen to foster and develop" (62). Indeed, some "looked upon Dickens as the spirit of Christmas incarnate: as being, in a word, Father Christmas himself" (62). George Orwell also notes that "the thought of Christmas almost automatically raises the thought of Charles Dickens" (*Tribune*, Dec. 24,

[36] For a detailed definition of the term see, for example, Gert Ueding *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik,* pp. 836–844; Bruce Herzberg and Patricia Bizzell *The Rhetorical Tradition*, pp. 24, 81, 85; Richard A. Lanham *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, p. 94; or Thomas Sloane *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, pp. 413–417. Sources were chosen by consulting Anders Sigrell's article, "Retoriska uppslagsverk och lexica."

1943). T.A. Jackson argues somewhat differently that the relevance of Christmas to Dickens's oeuvre is overstated and sees proof for this claim in the fact that Dickens did not produce more Christmas books than any other author did at the time (171). In addition, although they are sold at Christmas, most of his works were not actually set during Christmastime (the *Carol* being the notable exception here) (172).[37] While there may be few direct settings of Christmastime in the texts, I argue in line with Chesterton that the Christmas spirit promoted by the *Carol* is central to Dickens's rhetorical imagination. In this narrative, it has become synonymous with the virtuous behavior of the good people in his novels.

In the *Carol*, both the first and the second level of persuasion make appeals to *kairos*, in particular, to the *kairos* of Christmastime. Those who try to persuade Scrooge in various scenes do so by appealing to this *kairos*, but they fail because he does not subscribe to that particular spirit. His nephew, Fred, fails when he tries to convince Scrooge to come for a visit, and his employee, Bob Cratchit, has to beg for a day off. Scrooge does not see the point of the sentimentalities of Christmastime and complains about the loss of profit that these entail. On the second level of persuasion, this story makes a point about sentimentalism by suggesting that Scrooge is not sentimental enough. He needs to learn to feel before he can appropriately react to the appeals to *kairos* that Fred and Bob Cratchit are making.

One example that both illustrates Scrooge's philosophy and exemplifies a failed attempt at appealing to *kairos* is the scene in which two men come to the counting house to ask for a charitable gift from Scrooge. The men appeal to *kairos* by stating that at Christmastime, it is customary to make a charitable donation:

> 'At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,' said the gentleman, taking up a pen, 'it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.' (13; stave 1)

Scrooge's reply highlights both his belief that the system will take care of it and his disregard for the premise of Christmastime as an especially charitable time of the year:

> 'Are there no prisons?' asked Scrooge.
> 'Plenty of prisons,' said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.
> 'And the Union workhouses?' demanded Scrooge. 'Are they still in operation?'
> 'They are. Still,' returned the gentleman, 'I wish I could say they were not.'
> 'The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?' said Scrooge.
> 'Both very busy, sir.'

[37] Paul K. Saint-Amour also claims, "the expectant temporality of Christmas remains central to these stories' critical energies" (94).

> ‘Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,’ said Scrooge. ‘I’m very glad to hear it.’ (13–14; stave 1)

Mutual intelligibility must precede persuasion, and these two men are practically unable to comprehend Scrooge’s words because they are so different from what the text suggests is an acceptable reaction to their request for charity. Asking for a charitable donation at Christmas, the narrative suggests, is almost like asking a rhetorical question—the yes is implied. However, Scrooge is insistent:

> ‘I wish to be left alone,’ said Scrooge. ‘Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.’
>
> ‘Many can’t go there; and many would rather die.’
> ‘If they would rather die,’ said Scrooge, ‘they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don’t know that.’
> ‘But you might know it,’ observed the gentleman.
> ‘It’s not my business,’ Scrooge returned. ‘It’s enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people’s. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!’ (13–14; stave 1)

In this scene, Scrooge does not respond to the same means of persuasion as the usual audience of these two men. Their obvious confusion at his reaction further highlights the strangeness of Scrooge’s attitude in the context of the narrative’s moral imagination. As strange as Scrooge’s reply seems, his mention of the “surplus population” (14; stave 1) hints at Thomas Malthus, who argues in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* that it “is the constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it” (14; bk. 1, ch. 1). Malthus, whose theories would have been well known to Dickens’s contemporaries, feared that a population left unchecked would reproduce to an unsustainable extent, thus threatening its very own existence.

This narrative section also invokes another thinker of the time, Thomas Carlyle, and his sarcastic question in *Chartism*, “Are there not treadmills, gibbets; even hospitals, poor-rates, New-Poor Laws?” (50; ch. 6), which Scrooge echoes. Scrooge relies on the state and makes it clear that these issues are none of his business, quite literally: “I don’t know that … It’s not my business” (14; stave 1). Alluding to Malthus’s theories and Carlyle’s criticism is a particularly interesting move in terms of the scene’s overall rhetorical approach, particularly considering the second level of persuasion, because it is a way of engaging readers in a critique of Malthusian theories. Having Scrooge refer to them, while at the same time suggesting that he would willingly let the poor die, invites distinctively negative connotations to the reading of Malthus’s idea at the same time as it discredits Scrooge’s trustworthiness within the narrative. Dickens seems to address the inhumanity of Victorian prisons

and workhouses here and continues to do so in his later works, most notably through the workhouses in *Oliver Twist*, Gradgrindism in *Hard Times*, and the debtor's prison in *Little Dorrit*.

On the second level of persuasion, the narrator also appeals to an already culturally established idea of what kindness and Christmastime mean to an ideal reader while the narrative continues to build this *kairos*. For example, the narrator appeals to *kairos* to highlight Scrooge's inhumanity. He comments that Scrooge's cold character does not heat up even at Christmas: "He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas" (10; stave 1). Here, the narrator strengthens the description of Scrooge's character as cold and unfeeling—stressing Scrooge's lack of a morally sound *ethos*. At the same time, he shapes a clear position for the readers to identify with. In *Other Dickens*, Bowen discusses the involvement of the readers in the narrative process:

> And as the ghost of Marley does not come alone, or simply to question Scrooge, but obliges him to witness the poverty and exploitation of the working people and the abject poor who surround him and who suffer by his deeds, so all Dickens's fiction bears with it ethical demands upon its readers. (6)

The *Carol* calls upon Scrooge to become a better man at Christmastime, and in the process, suggests that readers should honor this time as well.

Time is a significant concept in the *Carol*. The narrative of Scrooge's persuasion begins with the words of a fairytale: "Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house" (10; stave 1). Cadwallader suggests that this sentence mixes "three notions of time: the timelessness of the fairy tale, the time-out-of-time of Christmas, and the more or less specific historical moment evoked by the reference to the counting house" (68). Combining these three times, Cadwallader claims, is a way of learning a "timeless moral" through "the recognition of the significance of Christmas time" and understanding that it is applicable not only to that particular moment in time but also to all the following Christmastimes to come (68). Time, however, is also disrupted in the narrative, which complicates a linear reading of the plot and thereby also the seemingly straightforward establishment of an overall moral framework.

The second level of persuasion presupposes that the readers are willing to accept the premises of Christmastime that are presented. They are invited to share the perspective of the narrator who renders Scrooge's behavior and reasoning faulty and thereby invites the readers to distance themselves from these in order to step into a virtuous role instead. Jaffe argues that the seasonal return of the *Carol* mirrors the function of the text:

> If vision's ability to evoke presence serves as a primary way of naturalizing ideological effects in the *Carol*, the story's annual return may be said to perform the

> same function by making specific feelings and activities, including reading or viewing the story itself, seasonal imperatives ("Spectacular Sympathy" 262).

Jaffe's argument touches on both levels of rhetorical persuasion that I analyze in this study. Within the narrative, Jaffe analyzes the function of vision, which I connect closely to appeals to *pathos*, as one way of narrative seduction rather than persuasion because it naturalizes rather than makes obvious. On the second level, this effect is mirrored through the repetitive reading of the text. An action repeated over time can serve to naturalize it, and this has happened in the case of the *Carol*.[38]

Ethos

Appeals to *ethos* are appeals to the trustworthiness of the speaker.[39] Sloane, Jasinski, and Ueding all trace the relevance of the historical context to the formation of *ethos*, noting that an effective modern *ethos* can differ significantly from that of an effective Victorian one. Sloane suggests that "perhaps the most significant Victorian contribution to modern selfhood is the increased emphasis upon private family life" (271). Jasinski discusses three specific ways in classical rhetoric in which a speaker can prove themselves worthy: *phronesis*, meaning good sense; *arete*, meaning virtue; and *eunoia*, meaning goodwill (229). However, how exactly these are given meaning depends on the dominant *logos* of the time. What we consider virtuous behavior today, for example, may differ from what a Victorian would have considered virtuous.

Aristotle discusses an important second definition of the word—*ethos* as custom or habit: "moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (*ethos*), and has indeed derived its name, with a slight variation of form, from that word" (*Nichomachean Ethics*; bk. II). This second definition refers to the culture or community of the first definition. Thus, the trustworthiness of the speaker is defined in a context of judgments that are culturally, politically, and legislatively determined. A speaker is not only defined by their specific behavior or act of persuasion in a given situation but also by their virtue as expressed through their customs and habits over time. This importance of judging a character's virtue based on more than simply their words is highlighted in Dickens's narratives, where dangerous rhetoricians are often those who speak well and persuasively but do not act in line with the façade of virtue that they build in their speech.

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[38] Compare Robert Douglas Fairhurst's "Introduction" in *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008, pp. vii–xxix.

[39] See also Gerd Ueding, "Ethos" in *Rhetorisches Wörterbuch*, p. 1518. For more detailed definitions of the term and a description of its definitions through time, see also: James Jasinski *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*, pp. 229–234; Thomas Sloane *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, pp. 263–277; and Gert Ueding *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, pp. 1516–1543.

In my analysis, "speaker" can refer either to the characters that speak within the diegesis or to the narrator that addresses the readers or narrates the story. The narrator in the *Carol* plays with the presentation of his *ethos*. In the beginning of the narrative, he establishes a conversational tone: "Scrooge knew [Marley] was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? They were partners for I don't know how many years" (9; stave 1). Rather than impressing the readers with facts such as the exact number of years that they have known each other, he simply establishes that it was a long time while also suggesting intimate knowledge of their relationship. This conversational tone of the narrative shapes the *ethos* of the narrator, as it suggests that readers can feel comfortable around his narrative and trust him as they would a friend. At the same time, his voice is highly performative and witty as he invites readers into the narrative. This confident quality of voice underlines his skillful rhetoric, and of that, Dickens's narratives tend to be suspicious. Consequently, the tension between skilled rhetoricians and moral amiability lies at the heart of this study's focus. Only a person who both means well and speaks well can truly qualify as a *vir bonus*.

The formation of Scrooge's *ethos* is one of the most important aspects of the scene of persuasion that spans the entire story. It begins with a troubled *ethos* because Scrooge's name and identity mean nothing to him; indeed, he has a very utilitarian attitude to names: "The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him" (9; stave 1). Cadwallader observes, "Scrooge's identity is lost in his preoccupying interest in his business—its name takes precedence over his" (68). On the second level of persuasion, the function of Scrooge's characterization as cold and uncaring serves to support the ethos of the text. That is, the moral of the text is strengthened through the presentation of Scrooge's lack of a positive *ethos*. Readers learn to be apprehensive of his views from the beginning of the story through the framing of his trustworthiness, but throughout the text, his *ethos* becomes more complex as readers learn that he used to be a different person before he became obsessed with profit.

The main plot of the *Carol* shows Scrooge's development into a better person, and, on the second level of persuasion, the narrative makes the position of what this good person should be like clearer by introducing virtuous characters to contrast with the actions and speeches of those who are not. In the case of Scrooge, his unworthiness at the beginning of the narrative is established through contrast with a variety of characters, above all, his nephew Fred. The fact that Fred is related to Scrooge intensifies the effect as it highlights that there is nothing in the 'nature' of Scrooge that is unkind, that is, that unkindness is not hereditary—an idea that is also important in *Oliver Twist*. Through the visions of the Ghost of Christmas Past, we learn that he was once different. Through memory, pity, and mortality experienced

through the senses during the journeys with the ghosts, Scrooge learns to be a good person once more.[40]

Fred also serves to establish an ideal understanding of Christmastime. His positive spirits are unaltered even as he encounters Scrooge's negativity:

> 'There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say,' returned the nephew. 'Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!' (12; stave 1, original emphasis)

Fred's speech marks his understanding of Christmas as a time for community, charity, and kindness, but it also marks Fred as an eloquent rhetorician. Bob Cratchit "involuntarily applauded" (12), and Scrooge comments mockingly "You're quite a powerful speaker, sir … I wonder you don't go into Parliament" (12). This very eloquent speech by the nephew is thus directly counter-balanced by Scrooge's mocking comments, which both offer relief from the intensely sentimental tone and draw attention to the rhetoric of the speech itself. Scrooge remains unaffected, as he refuses to let himself be moved, but Cratchit is moved and, consequently, represents the ideal audience for such a speech.

Not only Scrooge and Fred are contrasted in this scene, but also Scrooge and Cratchit as the audience of the speech. In unison with Bob Cratchit, Fred offers an example of the *vir bonus* that Scrooge is meant to become at the end of his persuasion. This particular section offers another criticism on the second level of persuasion voiced through Scrooge, namely, that of the eloquent but unvirtuous speaker, which Scrooge describes fit for Parliament (12). This criticism also finds expression in a character such as James Harthouse in *Hard Times*. The general wariness of such eloquence that Scrooge experiences is also expressed in many of Dickens's other works. Here, it may be considered a moment where Scrooge should be agreed with on the second level of persuasion.

Fezziwig, the benevolent businessman for whom Scrooge used to work, serves as a further contrast. The description of Fezziwig is brief but could not be more

[40] I want to thank Professor John Bowen for pointing out the importance of memory in the *Carol*. Bowen elaborates on memory and other important aspects in his article, "Charles Dickens and the Gothic." *The Cambridge History of the Gothic Volume II: The Nineteenth Century, 1800–1900*, edited by Angela Wright and Dale Townshend, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming

different from that of Scrooge pre-persuasion. With the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge watches Fezziwig prepare for the Christmas celebrations:

> Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence, and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice… (34; stave 2)

The description of Fezziwig is bodily and sensory. His "comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice" (34) very nearly materializes from the page as the narrative seems barely able to contain his good spirits. His joviality has a profound effect on those working for him: "There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on" (35; stave). Scrooge's fear of a loss of productivity caused by a day off is negated by this representation of Fezziwig. Looking upon the scene reminds Scrooge of what he once was, and Jaffe argues that Scrooge learns his lessons so quickly because "what is represented as learning in fact demonstrates that in his heart he knows them already" (259). Although the distortion of time in the story makes it unclear how long it takes for Scrooge to learn this, what is clear is that he is rediscovering something rather than encountering it for the first time. Through the visual encounter with the scene and an identification with his younger self, Scrooge learns to feel compassion with his older self: memory and pity are starting to work on his mind.

Jaffe argues that there is a close connection between identification and compassion ("Spectacular Sympathy" 259). In her analysis, these are two forms of sympathy, and a return to sympathy is the ultimate goal of the narrative. Wendy Parkins analyzes the use of emotional appeals somewhat differently than Jaffe, focusing solely on the second level of persuasion when she states that, in his early works, "Dickens foregrounded emotions like pity or compassion to foster a greater awareness of the suffering of others and thus disrupt the reader's self-absorption and provoke an ameliorative response" (470). While Jaffe sees compassion and self-recognition as two aspects of sympathy, Parkins suggests that one can be used to cure an extreme form of the other. The *Carol* seems to work with a definition that corresponds more clearly to Jaffe's, as Scrooge does not fully change his ways until he begins to feel pity for himself. Like Jaffe, Heather Anne Tilley argues, "a large amount of narrative energy is expended in illustrating the point that individuals must be able to look at themselves, before they can see others" (5). However, it is noteworthy that the process of Scrooge's persuasion happens through his encounter with a variety of images, many of which inspire pity for himself, but these are interspersed with images that inspire pity for others as well. The balance between

these two forms of involvement seems to facilitate the persuasion of Scrooge. The good person within the *Carol's* narrative is self-aware but not self-absorbed.[41]

Self-recognition is a vital aspect in the formation of trustworthiness. In the beginning of the *Carol*, Scrooge is described as completely alienated from his environment:

> External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often 'came down' handsomely, and Scrooge never did. (10; stave 1)

This description of Scrooge works to undermine his credibility by describing him as pathologically unfeeling. He does not have common reactions to stimuli of the senses. The effect is particularly strong because of the appeals to *logos* that the narrator makes within the comment: by personifying the weather, Scrooge's lack of reaction to heat and cold, for example, seems eerily unnatural. The weather is involved in "entreaty" and has "intent" and "purpose" (10), but it does not succeed in persuading Scrooge.

Scrooge does not mind the freezing cold as he has no interest in bodily comfort or flavorful food. He is dressed in a non-aesthetic manner and is bothered by the smells and sounds of Christmas that are generally considered beautiful and comforting. Scrooge's return to sentiment—to caring about himself and others—is one of the central ways in which he is changed. Although Jaffe does not refer to this as the second level of persuasion, she makes an important point about the readers' learning process in this context: "Reading, for the spectator of *A Christmas Carol*'s scenes, is staged as the recovery of knowledge the reader once possessed" (259). As the preface to the book suggests, readers are to be haunted by an idea raised by the story, much like Scrooge is haunted by the pictures of his past that remind him of his own vulnerability and his earlier happiness.

When Marley's ghost appears, it takes some time before Scrooge is convinced that he is actually there because he does not trust his senses:

> 'You don't believe in me,' observed the Ghost.
> 'I don't,' said Scrooge. …
> 'Why do you doubt your senses?'

[41] According to the *OED*, 'self-aware' as a term is first mentioned in 1913. However, 'self-absorbed' seems to have already been commonly used in the nineteenth century, with a first mention of it in 1823.

> ‘Because,’ said Scrooge, ‘a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!’ (21; stave 1)

This scene exemplifies how Scrooge’s development into a feeling and compassionate human being goes through the senses to a significant degree. Scrooge’s response builds distance as it jokingly searches for other explanations for the vision he is experiencing. He believes that perhaps a digestive issue may have affected his senses and reasons the vision of the Ghost away. Cadwallader comments that when Scrooge sees Marley’s face in the knocker, “It is the beginning of his entering into two-way relations with the world around him” (69). He is forced to make sense of the Ghost and cannot do so by remaining within his usual frame of reference. The intelligibility of this situation can only come about when he enters into a relation with his senses and that which surrounds him. The moment at which Scrooge’s way of making sense is challenged by the appearance of a ghost is also the moment at which his persuasion begins: “To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, would be untrue” (17; stave 1). Scrooge is only interested in facts, and so he also only believes things that he can see: “Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now” (19; stave 1). In a skillful play on words, the narrator highlights Marley’s lack of compassion that Scrooge never bothered much about until he is now in a very visual manner presented with Marley’s literal lack of bowels.

Senses play an important role in Scrooge’s reformation. Jaffe formulates an argument specifically concerned with the visual. Referring to Sergei Eisenstein’s discussion of the connection between cinema and literature, Jaffe argues that there is a “persistent ‘regime of perception’ in Western culture—one in which appeals to the eye play a significant role in the production and circulation of ideology” (“Spectacular Sympathy” 254). The *Carol*, in many ways, can be considered proto-cinematic, as it shows both Scrooge and the readers scenes and cuts that form a whole, thus lending itself well to such an analysis. Arguing that the *Carol* is one of Dickens’s most visual works (254), Jaffe suggests that “as a model of socialization through spectatorship, the narrative posits the visual as a means toward recapturing one’s lost or alienated self—and becoming one’s best self” (255). However, it does not merely challenge the visual sense, as I show in the section on *pathos*.

Logos

Logos is the most difficult to define of all the rhetorical appeals as it has been used in a variety of ways.[42] Jasinski writes that in Neo-Aristotelian scholarship of the twentieth century, *logos* is defined "as a mode of proof [like *ethos* and *pathos*]," and specifically "as rational **argument** or appeals based on reason as opposed to appeals to the emotions or to the character of the speaker or writer" (350; original emphasis). However, this definition is not the only definition that existed in ancient Greek. Instead, *logos* was also used as a means of describing anything that may have to do with language and linguistic ways of shaping a message (Jasinski 350–351). While the ancient Greeks thought of *logos* as a great democratic tool, some also saw its possible risks (351). Jasinski comments that the "corruption of *logos*—its degeneration from the ideal of logical calculation into an ability to manipulate and deceive" continues to cause anxiety in rhetorical theory (351), and I argue that a similar anxiety can be traced in Dickens's works. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues, "law has compulsory force because it is a *logos* emanating from some prudence and intelligence" (qtd. in Aygün 185). One definition of *logos* thus relates to generally agreed upon rules from which laws and other rules in society are derived. Ömer Aygün argues in *The Middle Included: Logos in Aristotle* that "Not being confined to firsthand experience, logos is capable of defining … a level of generality and universality irreducible to any tactical cooperation" (185). As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, *Hard Times* presents the detrimental state that society finds itself in when the *logos* that defines its rules and ethics is misguided or enforced by an unethical group or individual. In short, it presents a society in which the *logos* itself is not compatible with human experience.

Another definition of *logos* relates to the Christian doctrine and was used to mean Jesus and Word in "three passages of the Johannine writings of the New Testament" (*OED* "logos"). This definition does not drive my rhetorical analysis but can be interesting to keep in mind for the specific historical context in which Dickens wrote. In his letter to Reverend Macrea, Dickens specifically mentions the Bible in relation to the Christmas books: "In every one of those books there is an express text preached on, and the text is always taken from the lips of Christ" (*Letters 9*: 577). The Christian word upon which many of the moral assumptions of the Carol are built can thus also be seen as one aspect of its *logos*.

The narrator of the *Carol* seems at times hyper-aware of his language use and is highly self-conscious of its figurative nature. For example, he questions the use of an idiomatic expression, while immediately pointing out somewhat flippantly that if we begin to question these things, the whole country will end up in disarray:

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[42] For more detailed definitions of the term and a description of its definitions through time, see also: James Jasinski *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*, pp. 350–351; Thomas Sloane *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, pp. 456–468; and Gert Ueding *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, pp. 624–653.

> Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.
>
> Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. (9; stave 1)

The narrator works toward reinvigorating a cliché in this excerpt and thereby exposes a possible danger connected to *logos*: the naturalization of concepts. Questioning an idiomatic expression this early on in the narrative has a double effect. Firstly, it draws specific attention to the fictionality of the work. Secondly, it emphasizes that that which seems real at any given time may not actually be. For example, the narrative begins with the strange inversion that "Marley was dead" but immediately adds "to begin with" (9; stave 1), which hints that later on, he no longer will be. Death, which might be considered the ultimate truth, the most definite fact, is reversed in this story; and if something as true as death can be undone, surely, everything else can be as well.

Some of the most important moments in Scrooge's persuasion happen through appeals to *logos*. These scenes are like small moments of sudden clarity in which Scrooge slowly learns to realize the faults of his earlier ways. In most of these scenes, the ghosts repeat a statement that Scrooge has made earlier or recall a situation that he has experienced in the narrative's setting up of the persuasion and then displace it, thereby exposing the lack of compassion in his earlier words and actions. Rather than simply lecturing on right or wrong, these scenes are heightened moments of persuasion, as they make Scrooge himself react to his earlier self and thereby realize his own faulty reasoning. They persuade "unostentatiously," to use Dickens's own word here (*Letters 9*: 556). Cadwallader observes that "each scene Scrooge visits with his spirit guides helps him empathize with others" (71). These moments disintegrate Scrooge's reasoning by displacing his words and actions and thereby rendering them unkind and strange with regard to general human interaction.

The first of these didactic moments, though not one that quotes Scrooge's words back at him, takes place when Scrooge sees himself as a boy and begins to feel compassion for his younger self. In this scene, he remembers the boy who came to his home to sing a Christmas carol the night before the Ghost came to meet him and wishes that he had not sent the boy away: "I should like to have given him something: that's all" (32; stave 2). The Ghost does not react to this but "smiled thoughtfully" (32). Rather than using words to tell Scrooge how to be, the Ghost encourages Scrooge to draw his own conclusions. This mode of persuasion is seductive rather than instructive as it does not clearly state a premise and does not clearly frame the persuasive act; instead, it helps Scrooge to remember his childhood

and to draw a lesson from this healthily framed nostalgia.[43] The same happens on the second level of persuasion, where the readers begin to draw their own conclusions and learn from the narrative without being explicitly told to do so.

The second didactic moment is the scene in which Scrooge sees the festivities at Fezziwigs's Christmas party. All the employees, including Scrooge's younger self, are happily enjoying the food, drink, and dancing, and the Ghost comments by recalling Scrooge's earlier words:

> 'A small matter,' said the Ghost, 'to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.' 'Small!' echoed Scrooge.
>
> The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,
>
> 'Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise? (36–37; stave 2)

Scrooge, who earlier in the narrative was reluctant even to allow his Clerk a day off, now defends the opposing view:

> 'It isn't that,' said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. 'It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.' (37; stave 2)

Scrooge, "speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self" argues as he would have when he was younger. Glimpses of his potential for kindness are already noticeable in this early scene. This second revelation is completed by Scrooge, who then thinks about his clerk to whom he "should like to be able to say a word or two … just now" (37). When Scrooge sees this Christmas in the past, he acts completely out of character: "During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation" (36; stave 2). Scrooge is led away from his calculations and is moved to his senses by this experience, which is not negotiated by the calculating mind but rather felt in the body. This is precisely why it works. Logical approaches hardly ever seem to work out in Dickens's oeuvre. Those who are most concerned with words and logic (*logos*) are also most calculating, and 'calculatedness' is a quality of the villains in Dickens's texts. The *Carol's*

[43] Douglas Fairhurst suggests that the *Carol* today functions "as a reminder of the simple pleasures" and "an annual invitation to the pleasures of nostalgia" (viii).

persuasion, both on the first and the second level, is explicitly in favor of appeals to *pathos* and questions appeals to *logos* if they are too far removed from a felt reality. *Logos* in the Christian sense of the word and in its connection to Jesus is also brought into an interesting tension, as the narrative seems to suggest that words alone are not enough.

The third didactic moment takes place when Scrooge accompanies the Ghost of Christmas Present to see the Cratchits' Christmas celebration. He sees Tiny Tim and asks if he will live. Rather than answering yes or no, the Ghost describes an image: "I see a vacant seat … in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die" (52; stave 3). This visual description is completed by yet another scene in which the Ghost uses Scrooge's words to further his persuasion: "What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population" (52). The narrator comments on this particular bit: "Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief" (52). Referencing these Malthusian sentiments builds a sharp contrast to the *pathos* that this scene presents and discredits these theories on the second level of persuasion in the same way that the Ghost's repetition of them does for Scrooge on the first level.

The fourth time that Scrooge's reasoning becomes unraveled through inversion happens when the Ghost of Christmas Present reveals Ignorance and Want, which he presents as the children of mankind. Scrooge shows concern for them and pities them—he is by then at a later stage of his persuasion and capable of compassion: "Have they no refuge or resource?' cried Scrooge" (63; stave 3). The Ghost uses Scrooge's own words once more to convince him: "'Are there no prisons?' said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. 'Are there no workhouses?'" (63). By using these inverted appeals to *logos*, the ghosts expose Scrooge's earlier logic as flawed and steer him toward the realization that his materialistic logic is missing a vital element: humanity. Brandon Chitwood argues that Ignorance and Want, "Unlike Dickens's gallery of poor orphans … are figures of horror, not pathos" (680), so that "their rhetorical function is less logical than visceral" (680). In other words, their persuasive effect is felt and thus appeals to *pathos* rather than to *logos*.

Dickens's texts are full of tension, and one of these concerns the use of language and the potential of words. The third Spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, does not speak, which further complicates the relationship the narrative seems to have with its means of existence—language. What the Ghost shows Scrooge are shadows of what will be if things proceed as they currently do; however, these events are not yet manifested in words and thus still alterable (e.g. 63; stave 3). The narrative ends on this note: "Scrooge was better than his word" (83; stave 5). Words matter, but actions matter more. Saying "Merry Christmas" is an important marker of goodness in the novel, but it needs to be proceeded by the adequate expressions of goodness through action such as charity and kindness. There is then a sense in

this story, much as the ancient Greeks described it, that language is both powerful and deceiving.

Scrooge's reasoning and actual words are used against him not only by the ghosts but also by the narrator. For example, the narrator comments on the scene in which Scrooge sees his childhood friends riding by on ponies. The comment inverts Scrooge's earlier claim that there was no profit to be made from the Christmas spirit and that it was thus a mere waste of time and money:

> Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him? (30)

In spite of his questioning mind, Scrooge feels the pleasure of the scene's happy memories all through his body. Here, the rhetorical questions asked by the narrator present a free indirect discourse of Scrooge's inner monologue. The section draws the readers' attention to it as it bursts with rhetorical devices such as metonymy and repetition. It suggests that, although the pleasure experienced in the scene is not quantifiable, it is a fundamental human need.

Pathos

Pathos is the fourth, and final, rhetorical appeal, and as mentioned, it is vital to the rhetoric of the *Carol*. When rhetoricians make appeals to *pathos*, they appeal to the feelings of the audience that they hope to persuade.[44] The definition of this appeal is somewhat less complex than that of *logos*, for example, but the value that is placed on it, particularly in Aristotle's rhetoric, is less clear (Jasinski 421). According to Aristotle, "The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain; such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries" (*"Art" of Rhetoric*; bk. II, 1). Appealing to *pathos* is then an effective means of moving an audience. Jasinski notes that Aristotle is at times ambiguous about this particular appeal, as he describes it both as an important mode of proof and as a way of clouding the judgment of an audience (421–422).

The definition of *pathos* today is also greatly influenced by the views of George Campbell, an eighteenth-century scholar. He believed that there are "two rather different dimensions of a human—the emotional versus the rational" (Jasinski 423).

[44] For detailed definitions of the term and a description of its definitions through time, see also: James Jasinski *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*, pp. 421–429; Thomas Sloane *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, pp. 554–568; and Gert Ueding *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, pp. 689–717.

Aristotle, on the contrary, does not see these two reactions to an appeal as separate from each other but rather as connected and influenced by one another (424). In the *Carol*, there does seem to be some understanding of a difference between reason and feeling, as Scrooge suffers from an apparent one-sidedness of the former and is severely lacking the latter. However, there is no clearly drawn line between the two; rather, the narrative seems to be grappling with the relationship of reason and feeling throughout, and does not come to a conclusion. What may be most important in almost all definitions of the term is that, of the three artistic appeals (*logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*), "it is the latter that impels an audience to act" (Sloane 555). What, then, are the appeals to *pathos* that are made in the *Carol*?

The most straightforward appeals that are made both on the first and on the second level of persuasion are those that relate to the audience's feelings. The suffering of the poor, the small amount of food that is to feed the many Cratchits, the intense images of the starved and suffering children, Ignorance and Want, under the coat of the Ghost of Christmas present—all of these images appeal to *pathos*. An ideal reader, that is, one who is already in touch with their feelings, will react with pity and sympathy to these scenes and ideally be moved to charitable action. Scrooge, however, is not moved by any of this as he has detached himself from his feelings, similar to Mrs. Gradgrind in *Hard Times*. Detachment from one's true emotional experience is also what happens with Mr Dorrit in *Little Dorrit* after he has come back into money. He places manners above anything else and thereby detaches himself entirely from social credit, to his own detriment, as my later analysis will show. Scrooge must learn how to feel before he can become a *vir bonus*.

Sensory experience as one sort of appeal to *pathos* is a central means of persuading the audience in the *Carol*, but it may be difficult to imagine how a text can produce sensory experience. In rhetorical theory, visual effects are an important means of persuasion as they are seen to engage the emotions. In the *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, Thomas Sloane explains, "images are particularly effective in arousing emotions, whether those images are visual and direct as sensations, or cognitive and indirect as memory or imagination, and part of a rhetor's task is to associate the subject with such images" (555). By calling on his memory and presenting him with images of his past, present, and future, the ghosts appeal to Scrooge's feelings to move him to action.

Some of the most-effective scenes in the *Carol* are replete with imagery relating to the senses, and these scenes tend to be those that lead to observable change in Scrooge's worldview. While the entire *Carol* is brimming with visual descriptions, that of Tiny Tim's empty chair and the abandoned crutch is one of the strongest: "I see a vacant seat … in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die" (52; stave 3). Rather than merely stating that the child will die, the description of the future image that the Ghost sees with his inner eye is much more effective. In "The Use of Pathos in Charity Letters: Some Notes toward a Theory and Analysis,"

Marshall Myers suggests that "our understanding of pathetic appeals begins with the ancient Greeks, particularly Aristotle, whose painstaking analysis of various emotions, including pity, strongly hinted at the need for an image upon which to project an emotion" (5). Aristotle specifically discusses the importance of pity and terror as means of leading audiences of tragedies to catharsis (e.g. *Poetics* 73–75). In *"Art" of Rhetoric*, he defines who feels the emotion and with whom:

> Let pity then be a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it; an evil which one might expect to come upon himself or one of his friends, and when it seems near. For it is evident that one who is likely to feel pity must be such as to think that he, or one of his friends, is liable to suffer some evil, and such an evil as has been stated in the definition, or one similar, or nearly similar. (225; bk. II, 8)

Dickens provides these sights of evil in characters for whom both Scrooge and the readers can feel pity. In particular, children and women are presented as vulnerable and defenseless and call forth compassion. Aristotle suggests that a person (a man in his work) is more likely to feel the emotion of pity if they have "parents, children, or wives, for these are part of them and likely to suffer the evils of which we have spoken" (225). In the persuasion of Scrooge, the memory of his younger self moves him to action: first to pity himself, and later, to pity others.

The persuasion of Scrooge works to a great extent by drawing on the visual, as the ghosts show Scrooge his past, his present, and his future framed in scenes. Myers claims that the more vivid the image, the more likely it is to move someone to an appropriate action (8). However, the narrative engages more than solely the visual sense. Auditory, olfactory, and gustatory senses are also often appealed to in the text—auditory, in the scene in which the bells ring (47; stave 3); olfactory, in the scene in which the Ghost of Christmas Present appears in Scrooge's room surrounded by much food and "seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam" (43; stave 3); and gustatory, when the Ghost of Christmas Present "sprinkles" a "flavour" from his torch that transforms the meals of all, but especially the poor, as they need it most at Christmastime (48; stave 3).

To become a *vir bonus*, Scrooge must learn to feel, see, hear, smell, and taste and to posit his self within the world of the senses. For example, when Marley's ghost asks Scrooge to step closer to the window that he is about to disappear through, he appeals to his sense of hearing. As Scrooge approaches, Marley's ghost raises a hand to stop him, and he does:

> Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night. (25–26; stave 1)

Another scene in which sensory experiences play an important role is that of the Cratchits' on Christmas that the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge. The scene is filled with smells, sounds, and sights. Tiny Tim's "active little crutch" can be heard in the house, the saucepan in which Mrs. Cratchit is cooking the gravy is "hissing hot" (50; stave 3), and when the Christmas pudding is taken out of the copper, an abundance of comforting Christmas smells fill the house (51; stave 3). On the first level of persuasion, the narrator confirms the experience by pointing out that "Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last" (54; stave 3). In another scene, the wife of Scrooge's nephew plays a simple piece of music on her harp that reminds him of the past once more:

> When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindness of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley. (58; stave 3)

In addition, the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge a number of scenes with people celebrating Christmas in their own ways in a variety of places that are far from comfortable. The miners, the guards at the lighthouse, and the sailors that the Ghost of Christmas Present shows him all enjoy moments of quiet happiness at Christmas even though they are poor and far away from their families.

Finally, Scrooge's experience with the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come is narrated somewhat differently, as the responsibility for linguistic expression is placed on Scrooge: "He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved" (63; stave 4). The Ghost does not speak, and its eyes are not visible though Scrooge suspects that they are under the hood. Here, Scrooge has to rely entirely on the sensual encounters that he makes himself, and he is forced to actively make sense of them through narrating his experience himself. The idea of seeing and being seen is stressed:

> It thrilled [Scrooge] with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black. (64; stave 4)

It is as though this final Ghost comes as the executor of Scrooge's destiny, presenting what the future holds if he does not manage to convert. The absence of language emphasizes sensual experience further but also puts greater responsibility on Scrooge as an interpreting subject. He is not lectured into becoming a better

person but rather must convert on his own. The silent presence of the Ghost that accompanies Scrooge helps him form, or rather restore, his moral conscience.[45]

On the second level of persuasion, that between the text and the audience, the narrator also engages the visual senses of the readers while remaining emphatically oral in his narration. When the Ghost of Christmas Past comes to Scrooge's bedroom, the narrator makes the scene visual for the readers by providing a detailed description:

> The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow. (28; stave 2)

"I tell you" interrupts the narration of the scene, as it emphasizes the role of the narrator in visualizing the scene. Readers are invited to share the image that he presents in an almost poetic manner. This can be understood as a way of making an appeal to *pathos* on the second level of persuasion, and it is a highly effective narrative technique that draws readers into the story. The narrator himself is suddenly in a similar position as the spirits, and he is standing at our elbow. The second level of persuasion thus becomes a sort of meta-narrative that mirrors the same means of persuasion that the first level applies.

One of the main impulses that motivates givers in the text is the representation of their own fragility and suffering. T.A. Jackson comments on what might prompt employers to become benevolent and suggests, "the whole parable seem [sic] to hint that only a thorough shaming, reinforced by the fear of terrors to come, could induce them to behave with decency" (176). Jackson's reading is interesting in the context of Aristotle's thoughts about inducing pity and fear, but I suggest that the narrative works somewhat more subtly. Jaffe's definition of identification and compassion as two parts of sympathy becomes important in this context once more (470). Learning to have compassion for himself helps Scrooge find a way back into a different kind of selfhood. However, it is not due to a fear of the terrors to come per se but rather a fear of the lack of his own significance that eventually moves Scrooge to action: memory, pity, and mortality are the three main driving forces behind the change.

The Ghost of Christmas Past reminds Scrooge both of why he is as cold as he is and of how others feel without human interaction and care: "'The school is not quite deserted,' said the Ghost. 'A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still'" (31; stave 2). The appeal to *pathos* that the narration of this scene makes both highlights the sentiment that Scrooge needs to regain and the sympathy that he begins to feel by being reminded of his own vulnerability:

[45] In a proto-Freudian reading, the ghosts may function as Scrooge's super-ego.

> They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be. (31; stave 2)

This "poor forgotten self" that Scrooge sees in a memory is doubly forgotten: by his contemporaries in the scene and by his future self. This realization and reminder moves him to pity and is an important step in the persuasion as it also opens him up to the possibility of feeling pity for others.

Sentimental rhetoric, such as that in the preceding passage, is closely associated with the use of *pathos* and has been discussed for as long as Dickens's works have existed. As mentioned earlier, his contemporary and hostile critic, James Fitzjames Stephen, engaged with the question of using feelings to move readers.[46] Parkins discusses Stephen's "Sentimentalism" in a similar manner as the passage quoted from Tilly above:

> As Stephen saw it, the problem with novel's appeals to 'feelings for their own sake' was that, at the same time, the contemporary novel also sought to articulate 'propositions'—distinct political or social views—and such propositions could not be kept separate from the excessive feelings that overflowed promiscuously into areas that should be dealt with rationally and logically. (Parkins 469)

Stephen does not criticize descriptions of feelings per se, which he describes as a fundamental human need that moves us to action, but rather writers who dwell on the emotions for specific purposes: "Every expression which is put in either because [the writer] enjoys the interest of dwelling upon the matter, or in order to heighten the emotion of himself or his reader, is justly chargeable with being sentimental" (Stephen 72). He makes an exception when commenting on the use of "tender feeling" (73) in literary works because, he claims, eliciting these feelings and thereby giving pleasure is one of the main purposes of fiction (72–72). As Parkins suggests, Stephen's critique of sentiment is concerned with its rhetorical purposes. He sees the use of sentiment as unproblematic until it is used to convince an audience of something specific. When that is the case, "a sentimental book is like a cooked account. Its object generally is to make things pleasant, and, as such, it shows that the person who states it, is either weak, ignorant, or fraudulent" (75). In making these polemical claims, Stephen inadvertently highlights the great potential of affective appeals to move readers. He does not criticize Dickens's means so much as he criticizes the ends; thus, he shares an interest in similar questions as Dickens himself, such as, what makes a good rhetorician?

[46] Additional readings into Fitzjames Stephen's criticism of Charles Dickens's work can be found in *The Critical Heritage: Charles Dickens*, edited by Philip Collins.

The Narrator and Common Themes

When considering the delicate balance between the potential and the danger of rhetoric, the role of the narrator deserves close attention. In all of the following analyses, but particularly in *Oliver Twist*, the rhetoric of the narrator has a significant impact on the analysis of the second level of persuasion as he mediates this level. On the first two pages of the *Carol*, the narrator frames it as a ghost story; this voice of the narrator appears again in the final paragraph and thereby provides a frame to the core narrative. As mentioned, it begins with the words "Once upon a time" (10; stave 1) as if it were the beginning of a fairytale. From this point onward, the narrative "I" steps into the background to be replaced by an omniscient narrative voice.

Analyzing the narrator's use of rhetoric works neatly as a way of seeing all four rhetorical appeals in action. Beginning with *kairos*, the narrative of the *Carol* teaches the readers about Christmastime as the pertinent time for giving. The narrator's concluding request that readers "keep Christmas well," as Scrooge has learned to do (83; stave 5), highlights this as one of the main ends of the persuasion. Moreover, the narrative voice that frames the fairytale-like scene of Scrooge's persuasion presents a certain meta-awareness of the project of persuasion that it engages in.

In terms of *logos*, the narrator points to the figurative arbitrariness of language by contemplating the expression "dead as a doornail" (9; stave 1), while he also increases his *ethos* by making the persuasion and use of language visible in this way. It is as if he declares his mission and thereby makes himself a more trustworthy orator. However, by doing so, he also proves to be a highly skillful one, which is more cause for concern than for trust in Dickens's narratives. Finally, the narrator makes frequent appeals to *pathos* by framing the narrative in visual scenes and guiding the readers toward feeling with the Cratchits, Fred, and eventually Scrooge. The reader is thus left with the task of evaluating whether this rhetorician is both good and rhetorically skillful, in short, whether he is a *vir bonus* or not.

In addition to the appeals to *kairos*, *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, the *Carol* introduces several aspects that are central to the imagination of Dickens's oeuvre: sentimental rhetoric and the theme of fact and fancy. The narratives of Dickens establish the discrepancies between these two and the issues that arise when fancy is neglected and fact is foregrounded. Scrooge's inability to relate to the world around him is described in connection with a lack of imagination, and that, in turn, seems to have been caused by his inability to remember his past—a loss of his childhood innocence and happiness:

> Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London, even including—which is a bold word—the corporation, aldermen, and livery. (16; stave 1)

Most interesting about this initial scene is that the possibility of Scrooge's persuasion is established, as his mode of reasoning (similar to the philosophy of fact in *Hard Times*) is challenged for the first time. This is the moment Scrooge sees Marley's face in the knocker. Scrooge needs to change his way of making sense; he has to suspend his common judgment and accept the supernatural in order to be persuaded.

When the Ghost of Christmas Past arrives, Scrooge still reasons as he normally would: "'Why, it isn't possible,' said Scrooge, 'that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!'" (27, stave 2). The presence of the ghosts and the disruptions of time as he knows it make it difficult for Scrooge to make sense of the situation. In addition, Scrooge is still very much concerned with his limitations as a human being. For example, when the Ghost wants to leave through the window, Scrooge points out that he is "a mortal … and liable to fall" (29; stave 2). But the Ghost takes Scrooge with him, and there is literally no turning back. Physical limitations have been rendered inconsequential, and the door to Scrooge's persuasion has been opened.

The most thorough disruption of Scrooge's reasoning is posed by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come and affects the reading of the ending of the *Carol*. The misery that Scrooge must observe for a short time is similar to the misery that Marley observes for eternity, as he is unable to do good in death but forced to look upon the suffering of others. Saint-Amour comments,

> The massive and conspicuous foreclosures of Dickens's tale generate an equally massive sense of relief, of ethical potential, and of elevated responsibility when those foreclosures are revealed to have been *only* representations—that is, when the future is reopened with Scrooge's realizing 'the Time before him was his own, to make amends in.' (100; original emphasis)

The loss of time, the uncertainty of the future, and the fear of what might come are thus the greatest forces that move Scrooge, and being given time to make amends becomes the greatest gift Scrooge receives.[47]

Another theme to which I return in later analyses is that of legacy, the lack thereof, and the possibility of achieving a congenial ending. In the *Carol*, Scrooge is never explicitly unsuccessful with his rhetoric, but readers learn that if he does not repent, he will be un-mourned and even mocked in death. Meanwhile, readers learn that kindness leads to rewards and can prevent a tragic death. During his travel with the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, Scrooge sees the scenes of his un-mourned death. A character comments on his impending funeral: "It's likely to be a very cheap funeral … for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it" (65;

[47] See also John Bowen's "Charles Dickens and the Gothic".

stave 4). Parkins reconsiders Dickens's sentimental death scenes in a way that is also applicable to Scrooge's death, as she quotes from Judith Butler's work, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Parkins claims that the central question that Butler raises in this work is "What counts as a livable life and a grievable death?" (qtd. in Parkins 477), and the answer to this question is important for understanding the "foundation of any society because it provides a powerful indication of 'Who counts as human, whose lives count as lives'" (477). While Parkins connects this evaluation in Dickens's works to the death of children in particular, it pertains to Scrooge as well. He is not fully convinced he should change his ways until confronted with his own mortality and un-mourned grave.

Cadwallader addresses the economic calculations involved in Scrooge's death, which serve to show him his own lack of worth. Having gone through his possessions at the house, a woman impounds Scrooge's bed curtains and states, "He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead!" (69; stave 4). The pawn shop only pays a tiny sum for all of Scrooge's earthly belongings. Cadwallader comments, "Scrooge, measuring everything in monetary terms, is given a glimpse of what his life ends up being worth in these same terms" (73). Indeed, after Scrooge's death, the narrator comments, "The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure" (72; stave 4). Scrooge has not interacted with the outside world other than in terms of economic calculations; therefore, his death is treated in the same way.

Moreover, the memory of the Cratchits' deceased son, Tiny Tim, stands in direct opposition to Scrooge's death and serves to highlight the lack of mourning. Mr. Cratchit is overcome by grief for his son: "He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were" (73; stave 4). This spontaneous, and thus suggestively authentic, emotional outburst of grief stands in contrast to the forced speaking-well-of-the-dead that the Cratchits try to perform when toasting Scrooge. The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come and Scrooge overhear Bob Cratchit, who speaks to Mrs. Cratchit about Tim and his grave: "I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often" (73; stave 4). In another scene, which is in direct contrast to this scene, Scrooge sees his own grave: "Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE" (75; stave 4, original emphasis).[48] He will not be remembered, and his grave will not be taken care of. The direct comparison to Tiny Tim's well-tended grave and thoroughly mourned death is the final nail in the coffin of Scrooge's persuasion.

[48] The name 'Ebenezer' is a biblical reference to 1 Sam. vii. 12, where it describes a memorial stone erected by Samuel. Its literal translation is "stone of help" and it signifies the meaning "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (*OED*).

The persuasion of Scrooge is complete when he begs the Spirit of Christmas Yet To Come to let him erase the writing on his tombstone and to make amends.[49] He vows to accept the premises of Christmastime and to honor its spirit all the year round:

> I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone! (77; stave 4).

The story's ending proves the success of Scrooge's persuasion, as he now puts his education in pity and kindness into action. Scrooge has finally succeeded in becoming a *vir bonus* and thereby averted his own unhappy ending as well as Tiny Tim's death. By the use of appeals to his senses, particularly memory, pity, and mortality, Scrooge has learned to be compassionate, both with himself and with others, and in the process, he has found his "self" again. In short, Scrooge has accepted the *kairos* of Christmastime.

The narrator comments one last time on the importance of the visual in the narrative as he invokes the reactions of possible critics of Scrooge's conversion:

> Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be *blind* anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. (83; stave 5, my emphasis)

Ignorance of the suffering around us is one of the ills of the world that the *Carol* seeks to rectify. On the second level of persuasion, the readers have learned what Christmastime is supposed to entail and how they themselves can be cured from their ignorance through helping those in need. Inviting a third level of persuasion into the analysis, the *Carol*, although not initially a financial success, had the very real effect of shaping and sustaining Dickens's fame. The end of the persuasion of the story thus works on three levels of persuasion toward a path back to jolly prosperity but warns against forgetting those in need along the way—the Cratchits, it suggests, you will always have at your elbow.[50]

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[49] In "Dickens by the clock," Matthew Bevis argues that it is possible to read Scrooge as someone who was "always this man," the one after the persuasion, and that "he just tried for a while to evade the difficulties and uncertainties which came with being him" (51). Scrooge's redemption would thus not really be a redemption but rather a realization that his new selfish, money-centered ways are not sustainable in the long run.

[50] Compare Matthew 26:11: "For ye have the poor always with you."

Chapter 3: *Oliver Twist* or the Rhetoric of Pity

> It appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really do exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives; to shew them as they really are, for ever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they may; it appeared to me that to do this, would be to attempt a something which was greatly needed and which would be a service to society. (Preface to 1841 Edition of *Oliver Twist*)

In the Preface to the 1841 edition of *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens addresses the criticism that the novel glamorizes crime and suggests a close connection between reality and fiction. In this direct address to his readers, he encourages them to engage with social issues through reading literature. His statements highlight the social responsibility that Dickens understood novel writers and rhetoricians to have and introduces to the readers their own responsibility as socially engaged members of the public. John Bowen claims in *Other Dickens* that Dickens stages a "constant distrust of philosophical reasoning's complicity with social and familial exploitation" (83), and it seems that the narrated histories of characters in his books are ways of countering this complicity. Wendy Parkins argues that a face-to-face encounter with the 'Other' is presented in much of Dickens's writing and that texts such as the *Carol* and *Oliver Twist* "foregrounded emotions like pity or compassion to foster greater awareness of the suffering of others and thus disrupt the reader's self-absorption and provoke an ameliorative response" (470). The effect that Dickens's writing had on his readers remains outside the scope of my discussion; however, how the text attempts to engage its readers is a central aspect. *Oliver Twist* exemplifies the appeals to kindness that are essential to Dickens's rhetoric. Appeals to *pathos* are common both on the first and second level of persuasion, as the text moves from specific to general and seeks to engage its audience emotionally as a way of inviting compassion.[51]

[51] In *Dickens's Villains*, Juliet John analyzes the macabre and theatrical aspects of Dickens's fiction as two intertwined aspects and seeks "the rationale for Dickens's 'ostension' in his populism and his belief that 'dramatic' forms of entertainment best serve the purposes of cultural inclusivity" (3). Popular culture mattered immensely to Dickens, and the use of melodramatic forms as well

Dickens was heavily involved in questions concerning the society in which he lived, and he maintained an intense public presence throughout his career, seeking ways to engage with some of the pressing issues of the time. His journalism and work as an editor contributed to the formation of his *ethos* and thus influenced the impression that a reader had of his novels and their purposes. Between 1837 and 1839, Dickens had not yet finished *The Pickwick Papers* when he started to write *Oliver Twist*; and before he finished that work, he already started to publish *Nicholas Nickleby.* These are just the major novels that overlapped, but Dickens was also writing extensive amounts of journalism, mainly in the form of reviews and other reports at the time.[52] The publication of these other texts produced a framework that encouraged readers to see more in the novels than mere entertainment.[53] Paul Schlicke attests to the positive reception of *Oliver Twist* upon its first publication and suggests, "The novel was read as much as a social document as a work of art" ("*Oliver Twist*" 441). Various groups ranging from Tories to members of the working class lauded the text for its critique of the New Poor Law.[54] Nonetheless, the publication provoked criticism from some readers who found the representation of criminals in such detail ethically inappropriate: "Thackeray attacked Dickens for romanticizing crime" (Schlicke 441). Dickens addresses these criticisms in the prefaces, thereby framing the later publications and readings of the text.

The Prefaces: Meta-Scenes of Persuasion

As the prefaces are important framing devices for the novel's overall persuasion, this chapter considers them a part of the rhetorical context. Kathleen Tillotson, who edited the 1846 edition of *Oliver Twist* for the Oxford World's Classics series, comments in her short article, "The Preface to *Oliver Twist* and the Newgate Novel Controversy," on the special role of the 1841 preface compared with the other prefaces, which were all written retrospectively once the serialization was completed: "With *Oliver Twist*, however, what the Preface does is impose retrospectively a coherence of intentions of the novel which … were not so clear-

as sentiment were some ways in which he sought to produce inclusive texts. See also Fred Kaplan *Sacred Tears*.

[52] See *Dickens' Journalism: Volume II, The Amusements of the People and Other Papers: Reports, Essays and Reviews, 1834–51*, edited by Michael Slater.

[53] For details on this see *Dickens' Journalism: Sketches by Boz and Other Early Papers 1833–39*, edited by Michael Slater.

[54] Schlicke comments that Dickens "had reported the parliamentary debates concerning the New POOR LAW of 1834, which aroused widespread protest during the harsh winter of 1836–37" ("*Oliver Twist*" 440; original emphasis). These protests are mirrored in the irony and criticism presented in *Oliver Twist*. For more on the reception of the novel, see the same source (especially p. 441).

cut at its outset" (449). Some critics mentioned the novel in connection to the Newgate novels published at the time.[55] William Makepeace Thackeray, for example, openly criticized Dickens for his depictions of the criminals: "'The pathos of the workhouse scenes in *Oliver Twist*… is genuine and pure,' Thackeray declares, 'but, in the name of common-sense, let us not expend our sympathies on cut-throats, and other such prodigies of evil'" (qtd. in Tillotson, "The Preface to Oliver Twist and the Newgate Novel Controversy": 447). Although Dickens tried to create a distance between his works and the Newgate novels, *Barnaby Rudge*, which includes a scene of rioters at Newgate prison, and his preface to *Oliver Twist* served to strengthen this connection.[56]

In *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, Sally Ledger states that Thackeray's criticism was somewhat misguided in suggesting that "*Oliver Twist* was responsible for the public's enthusiasm for crime and criminals in the literary field" (66). Ledger comments further that the interest in such fictions had long been established, and thus, Dickens merely served a genre that was already popular at the time (66). Critique of Dickens's radicalism often focused on criticizing the sentimental mode of representation as a means of humanizing those who were typically seen as unworthy of such a privilege. Fear of his sentimental mode of persuasion thus also seems to recognize the Victorians' understanding of the effectiveness of appeals to *pathos*.

Dickens's words in the preface become part of the scene of persuasion between the text and the reader, as the preface is a frame that shapes the way in which readers experience the novel. In his renowned work, *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*, Gérard Genette describes any text that surrounds the actual text as vital to the rhetorical reading situation.[57] Aiming to answer what exactly it is that a preface does, he suggests that the two main actions "are *to get the book read* and *to get the book read properly*" (197; original emphasis). However, this only applies to the first preface because later readings will likely already have been influenced by other paratexts (197–198). As Dickens's works were serialized, no prefaces were ever written as an overall introduction. It simply would not have been possible to write one, as Dickens himself would not have known where the text was headed

[55] In the 1830s, several novels were published "that dealt with criminals' lives," and these were referred to as Newgate novels (Robert L. Patten "Newgate novels" in *The Oxford Companion to Charles* Dickens, pp. 405–406). Dickens was repeatedly associated with this group of novel writers although he tried to disassociate himself actively from it, the writings of which were by some, such as Thackeray, considered to have a "radicalish tendency" (Patten 405). Dickens's 1841 preface addresses these concerns specifically. For more information on the Newgate novel see, for example, Keith Hollingsworth *The Newgate Novel, 1830–1847: Bulwer, Ainsworth, Dickens, and Thackeray*; and Philip Collins *Dickens and Crime*, especially pp. 27–51.

[56] See, for example, Chapter 56 (pp. 445–452).

[57] For a close analysis of the rhetorical purposes of paratexts see Genette's *Paratexts*, specifically Chapter 8 (pp. 161–163; 178–194; 194–195), Chapter 9, and Chapter 10.

when he first set out to write it. However, he added many prefaces at various stages of the publications and often wrote new ones for later editions. Prefaces, according to Genette, have the distinct purpose of "hanging onto [the reader] with a typically rhetorical apparatus of persuasion" (198). Dickens often addresses questions of context as he makes rhetorical appeals to the audience.

In "The Author's Preface to the Third Edition (1841)," Dickens responds to one specific reader, Thackeray, with a good dose of irony: "It is, it seems, a very coarse and shocking circumstance, that some of the characters in these pages are chosen from the most criminal and degraded of London's population" (456; Penguin Classics Edition). Rebutting this statement, Dickens suggests that it is very much possible to draw good out of evil: "I confess I have yet to learn that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil" (456). The preface thus presents what the purpose of the novel as a scene of persuasion is in the author's mind and thereby declares a very specific way of decoding it. As noted above, however, the prefaces were added later and should thus be understood as a reshaping of the readers' views in light of the criticism received rather than as an initial statement of intent.

In a rhetorical analysis, it is useful to ask how the preface addresses its readers. Genette mentions the "Choice of public" as one of the core questions that should be asked of a preface: "Guiding the reader also, and first of all, means situating him, and thus determining who he is" (212). As "The Author's Preface to the Third Edition (1841)" is formulated to meet some of the criticism that had been made against the novel, it should reach critics and convince them that their criticism is misguided. However, the frequent use of irony and general tone of the argument make such a successful persuasion rather unlikely. In combination with the biting mockery of those who criticize the novel, it is questionable whether Dickens would have been effective in persuading his critics to change their minds. It seems more likely that they would have been insulted, so it is likely that the preface was meant to strengthen the bands of the readers that already agreed with Dickens.

Specifically, he mocks some readers' inability to look at the lower classes: "It is wonderful how Virtue turns from dirty stockings; and how Vice, married to ribbons and a little gay attire, changes her name, as wedded ladies do, and becomes Romance" (458). Dickens suggests that when readers encounter immoral behavior from the upper classes in texts, they are amused; but looking at the rougher issues of crime and poverty of the lower classes disgusts them. He is utterly unforgiving of this and states clearly that he is not willing to make any concessions to such "delicate" readers:

> I have no faith in the delicacy which cannot bear to look upon them. I have no desire to make proselytes among such people. I have no respect for their opinion, good or bad; do not covet their approval; and do not write for their amusement. (459)

Instead of engaging with these readers and trying to convince them, he declares them unworthy of his attention. This creates a strong rhetorical effect as it simply excludes them from the narrative that follows. In a reverse move, it also functions as a means of persuasion because it plays on a reader's desire to be part of the conversation. The passage defines an ideal reader as one who is willing to look upon the vilest evil to draw good from it. Dennis Walder claims that Dickens was "less interested in problems of doctrine and theology than in touching the religious consciousness of a vast reading public" (4), so "the fundamental aim of *Oliver Twist* … is to move us, as Mr Pickwick was moved in the Fleet, into sympathy and charity for the poor" (42).[58] This aim is manifested both in the means and in the ends of the novel's scenes of persuasion, as my analysis will show.

One example of Dickens's engagement with social issues and a demonstration of his skillful rhetoric is his second preface, that to the "Cheap Edition" (1850) (*Oliver Twist* 461; Appendix B, Penguin Classics Edition).[59] In this preface, he engages directly with one of the issues that he was most concerned with at the time: sanitary reform. Speaking about "Jacob's Island," which he presented in *Oliver Twist* and used as an example of the abysmal housing and hygiene of the poor, Dickens argues, "I was well convinced then, as I am now, that nothing effectual can be done for the elevation of the poor in England, until their dwelling-places are made decent and wholesome" (461). Making this the main topic of his preface, Dickens presents an eviscerating attack of Sir Peter Laurie, who he ironically calls "a gentleman of infallible authority, of great innate modesty, and of a most sweet humanity" (462). Laurie had questioned the need for sanitary reform mainly by pointing out that Jacob's Island was fictitious. Dickens comments sarcastically on having read the proceedings of that very meeting in Marylebone and inverts Laurie's claim with an ironic statement:

> When I came to read this, I was so much struck by the honesty, by the truth, and by the wisdom of this logic … that I resolved to record the fact here, as a certain means of making it known to, and causing it to be reverenced by, many thousands of people. (463)

Dickens then proceeds to apply the logic of Laurie in a rhetorically skillful maneuver, similar to that used by the ghosts in the *Carol*:

[58] For a full discussion of religion as an influence on Dickens's life and works, see Dennis Walder's *Dickens and Religion*.

[59] Dickens re-writes his preface entirely for this edition and responds to comments from Sir Peter Laurie, Lord Mayor at the time (*Oliver Twist* 461–464; Appendix B, Penguin Classics Edition).

> Reflecting upon this logic, and its universal application; remembering that when FIELDING described Newgate, the prison immediately ceased to exist; that when SMOLLETT took Roderick Random to Bath, that city instantly sank into the earth; that when SCOTT exercised his genius on Whitefriars, it incontinently glided into the Thames; that an ancient place called Windsor was entirely destroyed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth by two Merry Wives of that town, acting under the direction of a person of the name of SHAKESPEARE; and that MR POPE, after having at a great expense completed his grotto at Twickenham, incautiously reduced it to ashes by writing a poem upon it;--I say, when I came to consider these things, I was inclined to make this preface the vehicle of my humble tribute of admiration to SIR PETER LAURIE. But, I am restrained by a very painful consideration—by no less a consideration than the impossibility of his existence. For SIR PETER LAURIE having been himself described in a book …, it is but too clear that there CAN be no such man! (463; original emphasis)

Dickens declares his purpose: to mock Sir Peter Laurie in front of a large audience; he proceeds to do so by use of Laurie's own logical errors; and, finally, he removes Laurie from existence altogether, again, by applying the latter's own reasoning. Similar to Scrooge's in the scenes in which the ghosts quote his words back at him, Laurie's *ethos* is attacked, and his earlier words are rendered ridiculous.

Narratorial Commentary and The Narrator's *Ethos*

While the preface frames the narrative, the beginning of the novel sets the scene of the story and of the narration. In "Dickens by the clock," Matthew Bevis presents a reading of the opening sentence of *Oliver Twist* as both "ineffective" as well as "coercive" in relation to time (56). Bevis suggests, "What is of consequence is both confirmed and belied by temporal sequence, because the meaning of any single moment—in sentences as in life—is in part created by what we bring to it and what we expect or want from it" (57). The relevance of the reader and of interpretation continues as the scene lays out the way in which the reader might approach the text, and does so, appropriately for this particular novel, with much irony. Oliver's struggle of coming into the world, symbolic of his many struggles to follow, is described as follows: "Now, if during this brief period [immediately after his birth] Oliver had been surrounded by careful grandmothers, anxious aunts, experienced nurses, and doctors of profound wisdom, he would most inevitably and indubitably have been killed in no time" (4; bk. 1, ch. 1). In *Other Dickens*, John Bowen comments that it is not clear whether this is a simple case of dark irony or a more complex invitation to the readers to evaluate their own comforts as well as their position with regard to Oliver (83). In my analysis, it can be both.

The rhetoric in this section both sets out a critical reading perspective and presents the voice of the narrator, which remains bitingly ironic throughout the entire novel. Immediately following this moment, readers witness the first attempt of persuasion

in the novel. The old pauper woman who helps with the birth tries to convince Oliver's mother to stay alive as she describes her own role as a mother to the doctor who is delivering the baby:

> 'Lor bless her dear heart, when she has lived as long as I have, sir, and had thirteen children of her own, and all on 'em dead except two, and them in the wurkus with me, she'll know better than to take on in that way, bless her dear heart! Think what it is to be a mother, there's a young lamb, do'. (4; bk. 1, ch. 1)

The prospect of eleven dead children and a life of extreme poverty is clearly not an incentive that could convince Oliver's mother to hang on to her life. She dies, and Oliver becomes an orphan. On the first level, this is a failed attempt at persuasion, though, of course, also a moment of wit on the part of the narrator. On the second level of persuasion, this scene is successful in setting out the general tone and the general sympathies of readers. Clearly, this narrator does not think that the circumstances in the workhouse are anything worth experiencing, and he begins to elicit pity for the destinies of those who have to live inside it. Dickens taps into criticism of the New Poor Law here and elsewhere, which was seen as an "assault on the working-class family … perceived by its critics to create a large number of effectively parentless children" (Ledger 86). Orphans are one of the main groups of characters that feature in Dickens's novels, and the detrimental effect of the workhouse on families is also particularly visible in *Little Dorrit*, which I discuss in Chapter 5. In *A Christmas Carol*, readers see a working-class family that is intact, and Ledger notes that it becomes like a "refuge from the chill air of the world of political economy" (101).

The narrator's voice is vital in shaping scenes of persuasion both on the first and on the second level. At times, he shows great self-awareness of his use of rhetorical means of persuasion. For example, the narrator self-consciously borrows melodramatic elements with a possible effect of greater cultural inclusion. Schlicke comments, "in language, characterization, and action *Oliver Twist* is by far the most melodramatic of Dickens's novels" ("*Oliver Twist*" 440). In "Melodrama," Juliet John seeks to define the intention and effect of this use of melodrama: "Dickens sees popular drama as enabling cultural inclusion, and melodrama in particular as offering a common language through which all strata of society can communicate" (133). An awareness of this rhetorical use of melodrama is highlighted in the opening of Chapter 17, in which the narrator comments on it specifically by appealing to the readers and declaring that they can trust him in the narrative process. Explaining the purpose and reality of sudden changes between scenes, the narrator states that it is his "sole desire to proceed straight through this history with all convenient despatch, carrying my reader along with me if I can" (135). This formal resemblance to life and its many small scenes and changes are, according to John, what makes it possible for all readers alike to enjoy the narrative.

Declaring a similarity between the melodramatic form and reality, the narrator states, "The transitions in real life from well-spread boards to death-beds, and from mourning weeds to holiday garments, are not a whit less startling, only there we are busy actors instead of passive lookers-on, which makes a vast difference" (135; bk. 1, ch. 17). Engaging with the difference between reality and fiction, as Dickens does in the prefaces, the narrator suggests to the readers that even if the narrative transitions should seem somewhat too abrupt to be believable, so too are those of real life. The difference, he suggests, lies in how we experience them. In real life, we are so busy with our experiences that we are not startled, while the literary situation allows us to pause and reflect, which increases the experience of the strangeness.

The section continues by diverting further into a discussion of authorship and the connection between author and readers: "I merely make this [introduction to the chapter] in order to set myself quite right with the reader, between whom and the historian it is essentially necessary that perfect faith should be kept, and a good understanding preserved" (135; bk. 1, ch. 17). The trust between reader and narrator is presented as crucial to a successful narration. Of the utmost importance here is the consideration of *ethos* that is also crucial to successful rhetoricians on the first level, within the narrative. Successful rhetoricians in Dickens's novels must use ethical means of persuasion toward ethical ends, but in the case of the narrator, wit and playfulness are also important. He is meant to entertain his audience, after all.

While the narrator as the mediator plays a crucial role in framing the scenes of persuasion on the first level, he is even more central to the second level—that between text and reader. In specific moments of commentary, he engages directly with the readers of the text. Sara Håkansson argues that George Eliot used the technique of narratorial commentary "to shape her reader's responses to the text" (9). Håkansson's study "aims to show that narratorial commentary serves to shape the reader's response in specific ways, which by implication suggests that narratorial commentary, in effect, compels readers to construct meaning in accordance with a particular set of structures devised by the text" (39). Dickens's narrators also frequently comment on narrative events and suggest interpretations to readers, so a close investigation of their persuasive potential helps to understand their effect on the second level of persuasion.

One of the main tasks of the narrator in *Oliver Twist* can be defined in his own terms as presenting the "history" of Oliver Twist; indeed, he identifies himself as Oliver's "biographer" (46; bk. 1, ch. 6). He declares himself as the authoritative voice of this history and thereby asks the readers to trust his narration. He guides the reading of the diegesis through commenting on it directly and on the characters who figure in it. For example, in book the second, chapter the fifth, he remarks that, just before Mr Bumble (who has just asked Mrs Corney to become his partner in life and in running the workhouse) leaves, he likes to spend a few minutes "merely pausing … in the male paupers' ward to abuse them a little, with the view of

satisfying himself that he could fill the office of workhouse-master with needful acerbity" (220). This narrative description is both specific, as it characterizes Mr Bumble, and general, as it suggests that to be a workhouse master one needs to be able to abuse the paupers.

As in any scene of persuasion, the readers have to judge the narrator's representations based on his trustworthiness in *Oliver Twist*. This is difficult at times because the narrator's irony can be so intense that it begins to threaten his *ethos*; irony and its threat to the narrator's *ethos* will be discussed later in this chapter. In a clearly declared rhetorical appeal, the narrator shapes his position in the text and increases his *ethos* by showing his virtue and goodwill through appeals to *pathos*. One of these *pathos*-laden scenes is that in which Rose Maylie is sick, and it is unclear whether she will survive. The narrator exclaims:

> The suspense, the fearful, acute suspense, of standing idly by while the life of one we dearly love is trembling in the balance—the racking thoughts that crowd upon the mind, and make the heart beat violently, and the breath come thick, by the force of the images they conjure up before it—the desperate anxiety *to be doing something* to relieve the pain, or lessen the danger which we have no power to alleviate; and the sinking of soul and spirit which the sad remembrance of our helplessness produces,—what tortures can equal these, and what reflections or efforts can, in the full tide and fever of the time, allay them! (270; bk. 2, ch. 10, original emphasis)

The careful, suspenseful, description of the person who is looking at a life "trembling in the balance" draws readers into a shared experience, a relatable one, which is what makes this moment so persuasive. Appealing to the senses, the narrator brings before the eye the scene itself: "the racking thoughts that crowd upon the mind" cannot be stopped as they overcome those hoping to see their loved one recover; "the heart beat[ing] violently" is another uncontrollable physical reaction; and the invoking of "the images" that crowd upon the mind of those waiting to see if the person will make it (270). All of these expressions of feeling finally culminate in the only thing that could alleviate them: action to alleviate the suffering. That, however, is not within the power of the person watching another's life "trembling in the balance." Schlicke comments that Dickens's "portrait of Rose Maylie owes something to [his] memory of Mary Hogarth" ("*Oliver Twist*" 439). Mary Hogarth, Dickens's sister-in-law, died suddenly on 7 May 1837, and Catherine subsequently miscarried (437). It is thus likely that the intense description of Rose Maylie's life hanging in the balance was influenced by Dickens's recent experience of this death.

Having established such a common ground, the narrator seizes the pertinent moment—*kairos*—to make a call for action:

> We need be careful how we deal with those about us, for every death carries with it to some small circle of survivors thoughts of so much omitted, and so little done; of so many things forgotten, and so many more which might have been repaired, that

> such recollections are among the bitterest we can have. There is no remorse so deep as that which is unavailing; if we would be spared its tortures let us remember this in time. (272; bk. 2, ch. 11)

Commenting in such a manner without providing some context may seem like an attempt at moralizing that may not have the intended effect on the readers, but the narrator now includes an addressee by using the pronoun "we." It is as if he gives readers a way out of the misery they have just experienced, while at the same time, calling them to responsibility, just as Scrooge is called to responsibility in the *Carol*.

The narrator moves between specific scenes and narrative sections to make more general claims. Suggesting that he is Oliver's biographer, for example, he explicitly holds the function of recounting the boy's life in as truthful a manner as possible. This individualizing of the narrative is countered by the story's title, which is individual (*Oliver Twist*) but also typical (*The Parish Boy's Progress*). Bowen asks, "What is at stake in that title? A choice to begin with, of name and identity—Oliver Twist or the Parish Boy, individual or type?" (*Other Dickens* 95). The narrator grapples with this question as he moves between Oliver's tale as both a representation of a specific boy's suffering and salvation and an entire group's suffering, which may not find salvation. This moving in and out of individual and typical becomes a means of persuasion in itself as it allows readers to feel with a specific example and asks them then to apply the conclusions to a general cause. Walder suggests that, as a means of avoiding being drawn into the sensationalism of the ongoing debates, Dickens's "art is an art of implication, not explication" (47). While this may be true on the level of an overall social critique of the system of poor relief, it is not true when it comes to the representations of individual suffering and crime that are extremely explicit in this novel.

The ongoing self-conscious reflection of the narrator regarding his role in the narrative makes the rhetorical moves and scenes of persuasion on the second level quite noticeable. However, there are shifts in the voice between this narratorial commentary and the general narration. An example of such a shift that also incorporates a move from specific to general can be seen in the following scene:

> Oliver had long since grown stout and healthy; but health or sickness made no difference in his warm feelings to those about him, (though they do in the feelings of a great many people,) and he was still the same gentle, attached, affectionate creature, that he had been when pain and suffering had wasted his strength, and he was dependent for every slight attention and comfort on those who tended him. (265; bk. 2, ch. 10)

The narration of Oliver and his feelings toward those who cared for him is interrupted by a general comment, in parentheses, on how people in general tend to act. These shifts also give nuance to the content of the narrative moments: At times, the overall narrative seems to be free of judgments, although of course it is not,

while the commentary clearly has a subjective tone and often a declared purpose. Common to both of these narrative distances is that appeals to *pathos* are foregrounded as effective means of persuasion.

Effective and Ineffective Means of Persuasion

Having presented the narrator's role, this section turns to the analysis of scenes of persuasion between characters and the means that are effective within them. While Oliver is absent for much of the novel, readers follow Oliver's path to a congenial ending throughout the main plot. Edwin Eigner comments on the1841 preface, in which Dickens declares the moral purpose of the novel: "Simplification to achieve moral clarity, and an inherent tendency toward abstraction, are defining characteristics of [melodramatic] art. Thus Oliver is described by Dickens as 'the Principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last' (1841 Preface)" ("melodrama in Dickens's writing" 381). How is this "Principle of Good" represented in the scenes of persuasion? Several scenes in *Oliver Twist* address these questions. Specific means of persuasion emerge as ethical, while others are disqualified through being presented either as ineffective or as immoral. There are characters whose rhetoric seems to be effective yet immoral, for example, Fagin; but the overall narrative eventually punishes him for his immorality and thereby renders the rhetoric ineffective on the second level of persuasion. The theme of giving and receiving plays an important role in defining moral and immoral actions, as a closer look at the characters in scenes of persuasion shows.

Although the novel never informs the readers where Oliver may have learned to behave ethically and to act in the manner most likely to be rhetorically successful, scenes of persuasion show he is aware of this behavior from an early age. For example, when he is supposed to leave the care of Mrs Mann, who has raised him in the branch workhouse with the frequent use of violence, he "was about to say that he would go along with anybody with great readiness" (8; bk. 1, ch. 2). However, he knows that this sentiment is not what is expected of him: "young as he was … he had sense enough to make a feint of feeling great regret at going away" (8). Rather than using words as means of persuasion in this precarious situation, Oliver begins to cry, and "it was not a very difficult matter for the boy to call tears into his eyes" (8).

The narrator comments on his naturalness and truthfulness in producing these: "Hunger and recent ill-usage are great assistants if you want to cry; and Oliver cried very naturally indeed" (11; bk. 1, ch. 2).[60] While on the first level of persuasion,

[60] Compare Adam Smith *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the main argument of which suggests that morality is built into us as and that emotional reactions to certain situations thus come naturally to us.

Oliver can produce these tears to show his appreciation, the narrator's comment adds a second layer that makes it clear to the readers that Oliver is able to produce tears because he has been ill used. The appeal to *pathos* that is made via the tears has thus two different effects but is successful in its own way on both levels. The text implies that Oliver simply knows how to act in this moment, and the fact that he does so for good reason and not as a calculated way of achieving an end renders his use of tears morally acceptable.[61] Thomas Dixon claims, "Victorians were able to distinguish what they thought of as hollow and ideologically unsound sentimentalism, associated with a discredited revolutionary sensibility, from true pathos, arising from piety and social conscience" (*Weeping Britannia* 157). Dixon argues that Dickens's use of *pathos* asks for "true human sympathy" rather than "false sentimentality" (168), and Oliver's tears do just that—they ask readers to reflect and engage rather than merely express sentiment for sentiment's sake.[62]

While moving an audience in classical Greek tragedy was expected to be accomplished through a combination of terror and pity, Dixon argues that the combination that inspired tears in Victorian audiences was grief and hope (*Weeping Britannia* 158). The understanding that something can still be done to prevent an evil is then central to the sentimental vision. Scenes in *Oliver Twist* distinctly suggest that some of the suffering that is witnessed can still be alleviated; consequently, the works inspire action. Tears are both moving and cathartic, and highly effective as a means of persuasion. On several occasions, Oliver must appear before people specifically to convince them of something. The first of these encounters happens on the day he arrives at the workhouse. Mr Bumble informs him that "it [is] a board night" and that "the board had said he was to appear in front of it forthwith" (11; bk. 1, ch. 2).

The board is comprised of "eight or ten fat gentlemen" who sit around a large table (11) and subject Oliver to a series of questions. However, Oliver finds it difficult to understand what they are speaking about; for example, he does not understand what it means to be an "orphan." When he inquires after the meaning, one of the gentlemen calls him a fool (12; bk. 1, ch. 2). This scene becomes persuasive not only through the dialogue but also because the narrator highlights Oliver's desperation and fear: "poor Oliver" is "weeping bitterly" and stammering (12), while the gentlemen of the board speak "in a very decided tone," "in a gruff voice," and are "surly" (12–13; bk. 1, ch. 2). On the second level of persuasion, however, the power structure is inverted, as the probing and unkind questioning of Oliver disqualifies the gentlemen of the board in the readers' eyes. The narrator

[61] For an enlightening discussion of sentiment in all of its different forms and interpretations see Thomas Dixon *Weeping Britannia*, 2015, in particular pp. 1–11 and pp. 153–168.

[62] For further reading on Victorian sentimentality see Fred Kaplan *Sacred Tears*. For a specific focus on Dickens, see Chapter 2, pp. 39–70.

invites readers to pity Oliver and to be critical of the members of the board who refuse to speak to him in a way that he can understand.

Oliver's tears are effective both on the first and on the second level of persuasion, but a few other means of persuasion also characterize his rhetoric. Words in the novel seem to incriminate, and Oliver successfully avoids them by resorting to gestures such as crying and fainting. In addition, Oliver does not always understand words. Michal Peled Ginsburg suggests that Oliver's lack of understanding of such things as "board" and "orphan" is "not realistically but rhetorically motivated" (226). Ginsburg argues, "Oliver does not have to acquire virtue, he just has to be strong enough to resist having his virtue corrupted" (226). Although he fights at times and even runs away, he somehow manages to stay uncorrupted. However, the novel does not provide reasons for this—it simply is so—which makes it seem a natural part of Oliver's being.

Another aspect that supports this reading is Oliver's inability to hide what he feels: "The simple fact was, that Oliver, instead of possessing too little feeling, possessed rather too much" (31; bk. 1, ch. 4). Karin Lesnik-Oberstein argues that impetuosity, which might be expressed through spontaneous emotional reactions such as fainting or crying, "is the attempt to minimize suspicion of the intent, 'feigning' or lying associated with verbal language" (93). It might be debated whether Oliver's instances of speechlessness can be understood as passive because on many occasions he speaks and convinces through non-verbal cues. However, Oliver's inability to decode the messages presented by the board in combination with his inability to express himself through language make him both pitiful and non-threatening.

During Oliver's second appearance in front of a board—the magistrate's this time—he is meant to persuade the magistrate to let him be apprenticed to the chimney sweeper, Mr Gamfield. Being apprenticed to a chimney sweeper is a very dangerous thing, especially for a child, and this particular one, who is described as laboring "under the slight imputation of having bruised three or four boys to death, already," would clearly not make a kind master (21; bk. 1, ch. 3). On the way to the magistrate who must approve the apprenticeship, Mr. Bumble instructs Oliver very carefully, "all he would have to do, would be to look very happy, and say, when the gentleman asked him if he wanted to be apprenticed, that he should like it very much indeed" (23; bk. 1, ch. 3). However, once in front of the magistrate, Oliver is unable to hide his fear: "Oliver fell on his knees, and, clasping his hands together, prayed that they would order him back to the dark room,—that they would starve him—beat him—kill him if they pleased—rather than send him away, with that dreadful man" (25; bk. 1, ch. 3). In this scene, he is saved by pity—accidental pity because the magistrate only happened to look at Oliver's face and notice his panic when he could not find the inkstand on his desk—but pity nonetheless (25). Not being able to hide his feelings, Oliver has made an accidental appeal to *pathos* that the magistrate responds to when making his decision.

In this scene, Oliver cries because the man approached him with a friendly tone: "'My boy!' said the old gentleman, leaning over the desk. Oliver started at the sound. He might be excused for doing so; for the words were kindly said, and strange sounds frighten one" (25). In discussing the reason for tears, Dixon recounts Darwin, who "rightly noted that tears could not be neatly associated with any single mental state" (*Weeping Britannia* 7). Here, Oliver's tears are tears of relief, tears of joy even, and they incorporate hope and a means of alleviating his suffering—kindness. The ironic tone of the scene complicates its rhetoric and counterbalances the *pathos*. Rather than saying 'you must pity this boy,' the irony distances the readers from what is happening and allows them to develop a feeling of sympathy on their own accord rather than being told to do so. However, the use of irony also clearly suggests where the reader's sympathy should be placed.

In *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony*, D. J. Enright pertinently defines irony as "*alluring*: a way of making statements, not unlike that of poetry, which through the unexpectedness and the avoidance of head-on assertion [has] a stronger chance of discomposing, if not winning over, the person addressed" (1; original emphasis). Enright notes a rhetorical strength in using irony, and the narrative of *Oliver Twist* seems to play with this strength of irony. The narrator uses it to draw readers in on the second level of persuasion but then overuses it to such an extreme extent that, rather than being seduced by it, the reader is in danger of being overwhelmed by it.

Irony is an extremely important stylistic device in the rhetoric of Dickens's works, and it comes most effectively into play on the second level of persuasion, that between the narrator and reader. Although I discuss this in more detail in the section that addresses the second level of persuasion, I would like to point to the effect that it has in this context. Dick Leith and George Meyerson highlight the connection between intention, irony, and expectations and argue that "an important aspect of irony is the realization that the intentions of a speaker are always open to interpretation" (76). Using irony in the representation of a scene complicates the reading of it and may draw attention to the means of the persuasion. The speaker needs and wants the readers to notice this; thus, the use of irony can encourage a more reflective reading of the scene and may slow down the process of drawing conclusions because there are no straightforward ones on offer. The intensity of the narrator's irony can also result in readers feeling that they cannot trust his judgments and guidance, and it thus becomes a distancing device in a different manner.

Oliver is not the only character who at times has trouble finding words, but he is the only one whose presentation as such increases his perceived virtuousness. Nancy is another example of a character who resorts to other means of persuasion than language, and some of these means are similar to those of Oliver: a fainting spell or tears. When Fagin wants to punish Oliver upon retrieving him from Mr Brownlow, Nancy interferes. She becomes violent:

> ‘I won’t stand by and see it done, Fagin,’ cried the girl. ‘You’ve got the boy, and what more would you have? Let him be—let him be, or I shall put that mark on some of you, that will bring me to the gallows before my time!’ (131; bk. 1, ch. 16)

Finally, she faints. In the criminal circles of Fagin and Sikes, the use of language and means of persuasion are often rough. Most persuasion involves some form of threat or blackmail. Indeed, most of the time, Fagin and Sikes are giving orders rather than attempting to persuade. As Nancy is well versed in the rhetoric of this group, she realizes that pleading and begging—appeals to *pathos*—will not work; consequently, she uses a threat herself.

The narrator comments on this scene: “There is something about a roused woman: especially if she add to all her other strong passions, the fierce impulses of recklessness and despair: which few men like to provoke” (131; bk. 1, ch. 16). Nancy is both the melodramatic stereotype of the “tart with a heart” and something much stranger. Bowen notes,

> in the preface to *Oliver Twist* … Nancy is identified with truth itself: true to Oliver and her love for Sikes, a contradictory and impossible love, but nevertheless ‘TRUE’, and part of her wider truth, which is not scientific, but literary, paradoxical, and contradictory. (*Other Dickens* 98–99)

Nancy’s actions are motivated by her pity for Oliver. She also cares for Sikes, but the pity she feels for him is much stranger. Why and how Nancy cares for Sikes, who is both physically and verbally brutal, is one of the challenges to the imagination of the text’s readers and may be one of the aspects that Dickens addresses in the 1841 preface: “It is useless to discuss whether the conduct and character of the girl seems natural or unnatural, probable or improbable, right or wrong. IT IS TRUE” (460; Penguin Classics Edition, original emphasis). Nancy is adaptable and can alter her rhetoric according to the situation. She can be both kind to Oliver and cunning when her circumstances in life demand it.[63] One way of acting, however, comes more natural to Nancy—that of kindness and compassion—a quality for which neither Fagin nor Sikes have an aptitude.

A character who does not act based on kindness is Mr Giles—a servant in the house that Oliver is forced to break into by Fagin and Sikes. He wants to shoot Oliver because he feels it is his duty to protect his mistress and the property:

> Mr Giles held on fast by the tinker’s arm, (to prevent his running away, as he pleasantly said), and gave the word of command to open the door. Brittles obeyed, and the group peeping timorously over each other’s shoulder, beheld no more

[63] See Juliet John “Melodrama” in *CDC*, pp. 133–139, and Paul Schlicke “*Oliver Twist*” in *OC*, p. 440

> formidable object than poor little Oliver Twist, speechless and exhausted, who raised his heavy eyes, and mutely solicited their compassion. (231; bk. 2, ch. 6)

Oliver, who is once again "speechless," makes an appeal to *pathos* by raising his eyes and "mutely" begging for "compassion," but Mr Giles does not respond to these cues. He feels that he should be congratulated for shooting the burglar. Dragging the injured Oliver inside, Mr Giles exclaims, "'Here he is!' bawled Giles, calling in a great state of excitement up the staircase; 'here's one of the thieves, ma'am! Here's a thief, miss—wounded, miss! I shot him, miss, and Brittles held the light'" (233; bk. 2, ch. 6). Giles's exclamation concludes in a moment of bathos that is bound to produce a chuckle from the reader, but the narrative quickly moves back into its sentimental mode. Looking for appreciation and reward from his mistress, Giles proudly presents his catch, but Rose Maylie, even before she has seen Oliver, shows her ethical qualities in her ability to decode the scene of persuasion in the manner in which the narrator suggests it should be decoded. This is a scene of being persuaded rather than a scene of persuasion, but it works by using the same rhetorical means. Giles's main goal is to please his employer, and the scene clearly suggests that he has his priorities wrong. Similar to the Chief Butler in *Little Dorrit*, Giles remains unmoved by *pathos*.

Rose, on the other hand, is presented as naturally good, intelligent, and cheerful in a spontaneously charitable way:

> The very intelligence that shone in her deep blue eye and was stamped upon her noble head, seemed scarcely of her age or of the world, and yet the changing expression of sweetness and good humour, the thousand lights that played about the face and left no shadow there; above all the smile—the cheerful happy smile—were entwined with the best sympathies and affections of our nature. (235; bk. 2, ch. 7)

The description of Rose combines her physical features with a definition of "sympathies and affections" (235; bk. 2, ch. 7). Her feelings and compassion are linked to her intelligence, which seems an emotional intelligence that lets her respond instinctively to a situation such as that of her first encounter with Oliver. She is one of three benefactors who save Oliver from his misery (the others being Mrs Maylie and Mr Brownlow). Walder suggests that spontaneous pity and compassion such as Rose's for Oliver connote the natural goodness of a character: "Dickens wishes to avoid the premeditativeness of doing good as a duty, as well as any hint of excess—or even merely open-piety, preferring a modest, self-effacing, yet direct goodness which emerges as the natural expression of the personality" (45).

Rose suspends her judgment of the burglar and assumes innocence even before she sees him. Later, Rose establishes her grounds for her sympathy further: she can relate to his situation, as she herself was an orphan when her aunt took her in. Of course, it should not be forgotten that both Rose and Mr Brownlow recognize some family resemblance in Oliver, and although this is subconscious, it may nevertheless

play an important role. Rose pleads with Mr Giles to treat Oliver kindly, highlighting that he may have ended up in this kind of life through no particular fault of his own. These scenes are effective on both the first and the second level of persuasion:

> 'But even if he has been wicked,' pursued Rose, 'think how young he is; think that he may never have known a mother's love, or even the comfort of a home, and that ill-usage and blows, or the want of bread, may have driven him to herd with men who have forced him to guilt. Aunt, dear aunt, for mercy's sake think of this before you let them drag this sick child to prison, which in any case must be the grave of all his chances of amendment. Oh! as you love me, and know that I have never felt the want of parents in your goodness and affection, but that I might have done so, and might have been equally helpless and unprotected with this poor child, have pity upon him before it is too late.' (239; bk. 2, ch. 7)

Rose makes appeals to *pathos* by addressing the sentiments of the doctor and her aunt, who may be ready to judge Oliver based on the company he recently kept. She mentions his age and innocence, his possible lack of domestic love and security, and the likely injuries that he had to endure in terms of physical punishments and lack of food. This scene can be seen as one of those in which Dickens lays on the *pathos* a bit too thickly, but it is exemplary of his unique mode of combining intense grief with a spark of hope.[64] Rather than merely wallowing in the sentiment, Rose has a solution: she appeals to her aunt and the doctor to give Oliver a second chance to redeem himself, highlighting that his behavior cannot be seen as entirely his fault.

Kindness also plays a crucial role when Oliver first meets Mr Brownlow, the man whose pocket the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates had picked which is the crime for which Oliver is caught in their stead. The narrative description of the hunt for Oliver is an interesting piece of rhetoric, fueled by irony and social critique:

> There is a passion for *hunting something* deeply implanted in the human breast. One wretched, breathless child, panting with exhaustion, terror in his looks, agony in his eye, large drops of perspiration streaming down his face, strains every nerve to make head upon his pursuers; and as they follow on his track, and gain upon him every instant, they hail his decreasing strength with still louder shouts, and whoop and scream with joy 'Stop thief!'—Ay, stop him for God's sake, were it only in mercy! (77; bk. 1, ch. 10, original emphasis)

The narrative commentary describes the scene as if it were a hunt, with Oliver's pursuers appearing unable to distinguish between a boy and an animal. Here, the pursuers are merely hunting "*something*," not someone (77; original emphasis), and the child is described in the most pathetic terms as "wretched," "breathless," "panting with exhaustion," and with "terror" and "agony" in his expressions (77;

[64] Compare Dixon *Weeping Britannia*, p. 158.

bk. 1, ch. 10). The descriptions are general; we are not just watching Oliver, but a general occurrence.

The narrative then shifts from the general to the specific as it returns to the description of the chase of Oliver: "Stopped at last. A clever blow that. He's down upon the pavement, and the crowd eagerly gather round him" (77). While the others in the crowd push to get a glimpse and are eager to present their judgment, Mr Brownlow is "dragged and pushed into the circle" (77), which is an initial sign of his resistance to participate in this process of condemning Oliver. A second is his reply to the question, "Is this the boy, sir?" (77), to which Mr Brownlow responds, "I am afraid it is" (78; bk. 1, ch. 10). While the crowd are happy to have caught the thief, Mr Brownlow's acute sense of compassion for the child prevents him from rejoicing.

This discrepancy between someone willing to convict and Mr Brownlow, who is willing to extend compassion, continues when Oliver is presented to Mr Fang, the magistrate who is only concerned with confirming his preformed judgments and not interested in using his position to seek the truth of what actually happened. This is also a scene of rhetorical and persuasive ineptness both on the part of Oliver and Mr Brownlow, who is incapable of making his points in front of Mr Fang and incapable of preventing him from twisting his words (81–83; bk. 1, ch. 11). However, he speaks "*like* a gentleman, and consequently in strong contrast to Mr Fang" (81; bk. 1, ch. 11, original emphasis). Again, Oliver is unable to speak, even when he is asked a simple question such as, "What's your name, you hardened scoundrel?" (83; bk. 1, ch. 11). He "tried to reply, but his tongue failed him," as it does quite a few times in the text. It is as if he cannot engage with untruthful rhetoric, so being addressed in this thoroughly false manner prevents him from being able to respond to the question, an answer that would rhetorically be a way of agreeing that he is, indeed, a "hardened scoundrel". In addition, he is "deadly pale" (83), and so the arresting officer begins to answer the questions for him.

When the inquiry turns to his parents, Oliver can no longer cope: "At this point of the inquiry, Oliver raised his head, and, looking round with imploring eyes, murmured a feeble prayer for a draught of water" (83). Neither Mr Fang nor the officer realize Oliver's obvious distress. On the second level of persuasion, this renders him even more pitiful, and it has a similar effect on the first level of persuasion as it induces Mr Brownlow and the bookstall keeper to come to Oliver's defense. Finally, Mr Brownlow takes pity on Oliver, who has fainted. He carries the boy, who is still senseless after being abandoned in the courtyard by those in charge of him, back to his home.

In a later scene, readers learn that Oliver is not the first charity case that Mr Brownlow has taken on and that he was disappointed by the earlier one. Mr. Brownlow begs Oliver not to disappoint him as he has been disappointed before: "I have been deceived before, in the objects whom I have endeavoured to benefit; but I feel strongly disposed to trust you, nevertheless, and more strongly interested in

your behalf than I can well account for, even to myself" (108; bk. 1, ch. 14). Again, family resemblance matters here as Mr Brownlow subconsciously recognizes Oliver's mother in him. This description seems to expose a common attitude toward charity at the time—one that the narrator mocks in a lengthy narratorial commentary that establishes the importance of compassion and pity. As it is such a significant passage, I will quote it in full. The previous chapter ended with Mr Brownlow and Mr Grimwig sitting by the table until late at night waiting for Oliver to return from an errand. However, Oliver has been kidnapped by Nancy and is taken back to Fagin's crew:

> If it did not come strictly within the scope and bearing of my long-considered intentions and plans regarding this prose epic (for such I mean it to be,) to leave the two old gentlemen sitting with the watch between them long after it grew too dark to see it, and both doubting Oliver's return, the one in triumph, and the other in sorrow, I might take occasion to entertain the reader with many wise reflections on the obvious impolicy of ever attempting to do good to our fellow-creatures where there is no hope of earthly reward; or rather on the strict policy of betraying some slight degree of charity or sympathy in one particularly unpromising case, and then abandoning such weaknesses for ever. I am aware that, in advising even this slight dereliction from the paths of prudence and worldliness, I lay myself open to the censure of many excellent and respectable persons, who have long walked therein; but I venture to contend, nevertheless, that the advantages of the proceeding are manifold and lasting. As thus: if the object selected should happen most unexpectedly to turn out well, and to thrive and amend upon the assistance you have afforded him, he will, in pure gratitude and fulness of heart, laud your goodness to the skies; your character will be thus established, and you will pass through the world as a most estimable person, who does a vast deal of good in secret, not one-twentieth part of which will ever see the light. If, on the contrary, his bad character become notorious, and his profligacy a by-word, you place yourself in excellent position of having attempted to bestow relief most disinterestedly; of having become misanthropical in consequence of the treachery of its object; and of having made a rash and solemn vow, (which no one regrets more than yourself,) never to help or relieve any man, woman, or child again, lest you should be similarly deceived. I know a great number of persons in both situations at this moment, and I can safely assert that they are the most generally respected and esteemed of any in the whole circle of my acquaintance.
>
> But, as Mr Brownlow was not one of these; as he obstinately persevered in doing good for its own sake, and the gratification of the heart it yielded him; as no failure dispirited him, and no ingratitude in individual cases tempted him to wreak his vengeance on the whole human race, … . (115–116; bk. 1, ch. 15)

In this long ironic commentary working on the second level of persuasion, the narrator makes a modest proposal not unlike that of Jonathan Swift from a century

earlier.[65] He sets it out by offering "reflections on the obvious impolicy of ever attempting to do good to our fellow-creatures where there is no hope of earthly reward" (115), a statement which, if turned around, suggests that no such reward should be expected, not because it is unlikely but because it should be inconsequential. He then goes on to make two suggestions for how to render oneself "respected" and "esteemed" (116). The narrator proposes two options: pick one subject and bestow some charity upon it. If it works, the givers will be lauded for life, as most people will assume they are doing a lot of good quietly; if it does not work, they will never have to do anything again because they will have this case to serve as a negative example. Through these ironic inversions, the narrator finally contrasts Mr Brownlow's kind of charity to the earlier proposed one, again using irony. He "obstinately" continues to do good although, as he tells Oliver, he has been disappointed before (116), and so the narrator provides an instruction manual for how to be a charitable person by asking readers to decode the irony. This long section of narratorial commentary was included in *Bentley's Miscellany* but not in later editions. In a future study, it would be most interesting to compare the different versions and see how the rhetorical appeals have been modified for different audiences and different editions.

Mr Brownlow's attitude to charity is likely his most admirable character trait, but there are a few other means of persuasion that work on the second level to render him a *vir bonus*. Tears, for example, are also used as important means of appealing to *pathos* in the description of Mr Brownlow. Upon seeing Oliver propped up in bed and attempting to raise himself when "his benefactor" enters the room, Mr Brownlow tears up: "Mr. Brownlow's heart being large enough for any six ordinary gentleman of humane disposition, forced a supply of tears into his eyes by some hydraulic process which we are not sufficiently philosophical to be in a condition to explain" (92; bk. 1, ch. 12). This strange description by the narrator works in a similar way as the other ironic descriptions and specifically invokes a critique of Bentham's ideas of individuals as "machines" (Hilton 313). James E. Crimmins notes in "Bentham and utilitarianism" that William Hazlitt had presented Bentham "as a venerable anchorite in the quiet of his cell reducing law to a system and the mind of man to a machine, divorced from the life of spirit, imagination, passion, and sentiments of love" (49). Bentham's ideas are further ridiculed by Mr Brownlow's unfaltering kindness, which readers learn has already been tested once, which he nevertheless persistently pursues with no apparent gain for himself. For Bentham, "all motives, including the most extensive benevolence, are rooted in self-interest" (Crimmins 40).[66] Consequently, the description of Mr Brownlow's benevolence challenges this belief.

[65] See Jonathan Swift "A Modest Proposal" from 1729.

[66] See also John Stuart Mill's essay "Bentham" in *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, particularly pp. 69–70.

Mr Brownlow is described in mechanical terms here, as forcing up tears, which implies a distinct calculatedness, when what readers are supposed to understand is that they come most naturally to him. By invoking Bentham, while at the same time inverting meaning through irony, the narrator offers a critique of these theories in a playful and witty attempt to ward off too sentimental a rendering of Mr Brownlow as the perfect example of a charitable man. The narrator's invoking of a community through the "we" invites readers to join him in the position of one that is not too intellectualized to need to be able to explain everything. Mr Brownlow is in touch with his feelings and unfailingly compassionate, and the narrator invites readers to hail this quality.

In direct opposition to kind characters such as Mr Brownlow and Rose Maylie stand all the characters who work within the workhouse and poor relief system: Mr Bumble, Mrs Mann, Mrs Corney, and the 'philosophers' on the various boards before which Oliver has to appear. Bowen discusses this distrust of philosophers: "The novel itself contains a clear polemical edge turned against 'philosophers,' among whom Dickens includes Benthamite utilitarians, but which also cuts wider" (*Other Dickens* 83). Philosophers and, even worse, practical philosophers—the "fat" and idle men who sit on the various boards that Oliver and the readers encounter—make decisions that affect lives of the poor and downtrodden by relying on their theories rather than by empathizing with the needs of the poor. As mentioned above, the narrator often returns to criticizing the so-called philosophers:

> I wish some well-fed philosopher, whose meat and drink turn to gall within him, whose blood is ice, whose heart is iron, could have seen Oliver Twist clutching at the dainty viands that the dog had neglected, and witnessed the horrible avidity with which he tore the bits asunder with all the ferocity of famine:— there is only one thing I should like better; and that would be to see him making the same sort of meal himself, with the same relish. (33; bk. 1, ch. 4)

The main point that the narrator raises here is connected to a sense that these "philosophers" lack the ability to pity. Although most of the narration and the witty criticism in particular presented in the text is voiced with a great deal of irony, this section drops that rhetorical function and becomes extremely harsh. The anger the narrator expresses grows out of a pity for Oliver and extends to wishes for revenge, but it also suggests that the board are only able to make their decisions because they have not themselves experienced such hunger. Lacking the ability to perceive oneself as potentially threatened is extremely problematic and seems to make it more difficult for characters to relate.

Irony as Means of Persuasion and Threat to It

Irony is a prevalent form of expression throughout the entire narrative and deserves closer attention. At times, the use of irony can be particularly extensive, for example, in the representations of issues with poor relief resulting from the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which Dickens criticized sharply.[67] The first chapter of the novel in particular, which contains much narratorial commentary, can be understood as an attack on the model of human nature subscribed to by Jeremy Bentham and Thomas Malthus. Indeed, Ruth Richardson claims,

> For many people it is almost impossible to think of the workhouse regime without thinking also of Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist*, and it is probably true to say that modern-day conceptions of the workhouse as an institution have been fundamentally influenced by the novel. (13).

Richardson speaks with much uncertainty here, but the wide range of adaptations of *Oliver Twist* and the fact that even in its original form it is the best known of Dickens's novels substantiates that the representations of the workhouse system in it would have been well known.[68] What effect might the use of irony have in this particular work and in these particular scenes of persuasion?

The narrative voice is deeply ironic throughout the entire novel, at times, to the point where the narrator's rhetoric is so far beyond hope that it becomes questionable whether a reader can truly trust it. The *ethos* of the narrator is under threat. In the description of Oliver's birth and his mother's death, for example, the narrative voice sets out the tone for what is to follow:

> The hungry and destitute situation of the infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse authorities to the parish authorities. The parish authorities inquired with dignity of the workhouse authorities, whether there was no female then domiciled in 'the house' who was in a situation to impart to Oliver Twist the consolation and nourishment of which he stood in need. The workhouse authorities replied with humility that there was not. Upon this, the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be 'farmed,' or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food, or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female who received the culprits at and for the consideration of sevenpence-halfpenny per small head per week. (6; bk. 1, ch. 2)

[67] For a recent discussion of the historical and biographical context of Dickens and workhouses, see Ruth Richardson *Dickens and the Workhouse: Oliver Twist and the London Poor.*

[68] Schlicke adds that the thematic focus on "the power of clothing to characterize a person suggests the influence of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1836)" ("*Oliver Twist*" 440).

In a mock-bureaucratic voice, the narrator describes the strictly regulated order in which the various institutions communicate about the death of a mother and her now orphaned son. The stark contrast between descriptive terms such as "dignity," "humility," "magnanimously," "humanely" and what is actually happening, namely, that Oliver is going to be sent off to be "farmed" in a branch-workhouse, creates an almost comical dissonance in the narrative. There is no sign of emotional reaction to the tragedy that has taken place, and no compassion either. Rather, every institution tries to pawn Oliver off onto the next one. Irony is also deeply ingrained in the suggestion that the orphans in these branch-workhouses are "offenders against the poor-laws" (6). Newly born, the narrator shows how they are already treated as criminals, which does not bode well for their futures.

To understand exactly how irony functions as a rhetorical device within a scene of persuasion, it is crucial to understand what irony is. In *Rhetorical Style*, Jeanne Fahnestock describes the "*primary effect*" of irony, which signals to readers that what is said is the opposite of what is meant, and the "*secondary effect*" of irony, which pertains to "supporting the rhetor's argument and/or enhancing the rapport between rhetor and audience" (111; original emphasis). While the difference between rhetorical style and literary style is significant and manifests itself in different audiences and different expectations, they share a common purpose—to communicate something in a particular way. Consequently, the means of persuasion in these rhetorical situations can be similar. Most importantly, the primary effect of irony can only function if both the speaker and reader understand the statement as ironic. The narrator's message in *Oliver Twist* thus presupposes that his audience understands the social and political context in which the statement is situated and is able to recognize the stylistic features of irony as a means of decoding the meaning. Thomas Sloane defines irony's general characteristic as making "something understood by expressing its opposite" and points to three different levels of irony: "individual figures of speech," "particular ways of interpreting life," and "existence in its entirety" (404).

Sloane also claims that irony is "intellectually demanding" and requires a "dialogical relation" (404) as readers must enter into a relationship with the narrator to make sense of the meaning. Irony can only become irony if a statement is understood as such and not taken literally. As such, it is an interesting means of persuasion because it highlights the role of the receiver as much as that of the sender of the message. Fahnestock argues similarly that by encouraging a closer analysis of the message, irony "supposes and therefore at the same time constructs agreement over what is the case" (115). Readers might stop at the strangeness of a statement or the inverted expectations and thereby feel its effect even more, but in order for this process to work, they need to enter into a relation with the text and actively engage with its meaning. In describing Mr Bumble's changed dress after no longer being a Beadle, the narrator's irony intensifies the ridicule of Mr Bumble and beadles overall:

> There are some promotions in life which, independent of the more substantial rewards they offer, acquire peculiar value and dignity from the coats and waistcoats connected with them. A field-marshal has his uniform, a bishop his silk apron, a counsellor his silk gown, a beadle his cocked hat. Strip the bishop of his apron, or the beadle of his cocked hat and gold lace, what are they? Men, — mere men. Dignity, and even holiness too, sometimes, are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine. (295; bk. 2, ch. 14)

Irony works on several levels in this statement. The generality of the comment mocks those who do not live up to the uniform they carry and even suggests that the character traits typically associated with certain professions are not actually present. Moreover, the statement and the specific emphasis through repetition on "Men, — mere men" (295) mocks those who wear the uniforms and believe themselves to be of greater importance because of it. In addition, the narrator mocks both Mr Bumble, who certainly falls into both the above categories, and the readers, who may themselves fall into those categories. Finally, the use of irony makes this section comical and witty as well as satirical, which couches the delivery of a biting statement in witticism.

The second effect of irony that Fahnestock discusses relates to the content of the message that is presented: in exposing that which seems true, "the ironic statement highlights an incompatibility, an unacceptable contradiction between two views or accounts" (115). It adds an element of ridicule, "and ridicule, as Aristotle, repeating Gorgias, describes it, deflates the seriousness, pomposity, or power of an opponent" (116). This effect is especially relevant in the context of the narrator's irony in *Oliver Twist*, as he presents strong criticism of the workhouse and prison system. Using irony in this way and making his readers laugh at what they may have thought to be normal must have the distinct effect of deflating the rigidity and seriousness of what could seem most evidently true. Moreover, how the irony of the comments is shaped suggests to the readers where best to place their sympathies, but this position is then ironized; therefore, readers must side with the narrator or find themselves laughed at.

One case of this particular irony is the iconic scene in which Oliver is punished in the workhouse for having asked for more food. He is locked up for a long time, but the narrator soothes readers who might have thought this an outrage and states, "Let it not be supposed by the enemies of 'the system,' that, during the period of his solitary incarceration, Oliver was denied the benefit of exercise, the pleasure of society, or the advantages of religious consolation" (18; bk. 1, ch. 3). Following this passage, the narrator describes in detail how Oliver, "for exercise," was made to pump water in the freezing cold while being beaten up by Mr. Bumble; how, "for society," he was presented to all the other boys in the big hall as an example for bad conduct; and finally, "for religious consolation," he was made sit in solitude and listen in on the sound of prayers in a neighboring room (18). The narrator presents all these events as if they had grown out of the great charitable attitude of the board

of the workhouse, but it is quite clear that none of this is positive for Oliver. Irony thus plays a significant role in the rhetoric of *Oliver Twist* in particular with regard to the second level of persuasion: it shapes a community of readers (both including and excluding through the ability to understand the 'true' message); it functions as a distancing device to the stinging social critique that the novel presents at times; and it mocks those who are unable to see it for what it is.

Another ironic description that creates ridicule is the voicing of the board of the workhouse, the task of which is to ensure that everything runs smoothly. The high rate of children dying in the workhouses and the abysmal circumstances of their living conditions are criticized as the narrator suggests that the beadles' and the board's frequent checks to ensure that the inhabitants of the workhouses are not mistreated should prevent such a horror. The narrator describes the board's manner of checking on their protégées, invoking religious terminology by calling these excursions "pilgrimages":

> Besides, the board made periodical pilgrimages to the farm [where the children are raised until they are old enough to move to the workhouse], and always sent the beadle the day before, to say they were coming. The children were neat and clean to behold, when *they* went; and what more would the people have? (7; bk. 1, ch. 2, original emphasis)

This ironic voicing of the board serves as an attack on the system that runs these "farms". The reader may be thought to be incorporated in "the people" and is thus indirectly called to action to do the opposite of what the passage says: to want more for these children.

The fourth and final effect of irony that Fahnestock presents in connection to persuasion pertains to the relationship between speaker and reader: "Because irony requires a certain collusion between rhetor and at least one audience member, it can create social cohesion between the speaker/writer and the audience or, in cases of multiple addressees, a segment of the audience" (116). Irony may thus be a means of establishing a sense of community, a goal that is also central to the first level of persuasion, and highlights the potential that texts such as Dickens's have in creating shared beliefs among readers. When a narrator succeeds in creating a common ground, and a group of readers are willing to listen to and share these views and ideals, the literary work has the potential to be highly persuasive.

In addition, the narrator makes a mockery of the relativity of standpoints, particularly when concerning right and wrong. Mocking the philosophers, who, in *Oliver Twist*, are likely to be the philosophic radicals who created the New Poor Law, the narrator suggests that there is a clear 'right' to be uncovered in the text—that some things are simply right or wrong:

> Thus, to do a great right, you may do a little wrong, and you may take any means which the end to be attained will justify; the amount of the right or the amount of the

> wrong, or indeed the distinction between the two, being left entirely to the philosopher concerned: to be settled and determined by his clear, comprehensive, and impartial view of his own particular case. (95; bk. 1, ch. 13)

This bit of narratorial commentary attacks self-serving calculative approaches to decisions. The beginning of the passage recognizes that there are decisions that need to be made one way or another and that right and wrong need to be weighed against each other. The trouble is that the ultimate "distinction" between right and wrong is left "to the philosopher," and this is where the evaluation becomes self-serving. Creating a contradiction, the narrator suggests an "impartial view" but of the philosopher's "own particular case" (95). General and particular are staged against each other and find their culmination in a specific decision based on an individual view which does, however, seem to have an effect on the general. This discussion highlights one of the main contrasts with which the narrator works, that between 'the system' and those who work within it as opposed to the people who live within it and are governed by it. The tone is notably bureaucratic, clear, and compelling as the narrator seems to imitate the voice of those he is attacking.

In the representation of the workhouse board, Dickens presents a harsh criticism of these philosophers. He mocks the "sage, deep, philosophical men" (13; bk. 1, ch. 2) on the board by exposing their lack of sympathy with those for whom they are supposed to care. Moreover, through irony, the narrator presents their inability or unwillingness to grasp the actual situation: "when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once, what ordinary folks would never have discovered,— the poor liked it!" (13). The narrative commentary, in free indirect discourse once again, goes on to expose common beliefs among them: "It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes,— a tavern where there was nothing to pay,— a brick and mortar elysium where it was all play and no work" (13). These ironic lines suggest that the board and society generally assume a lack of gratitude on the part of the paupers, a lack that would disqualify them from any further compassion or relief. However, the reversal that is provoked by the narrator's irony suggests that these board members are beyond facts because, like Mr Fang, they have already decided on their version of the truth.

The Rhetoric of Thieves

Besides the board, there are three other characters who complicate the rhetoric of pity: Fagin, Sikes, and Nancy.[69] All three of them die eventually: Fagin is hanged, Sikes accidentally hangs himself, and Nancy is killed by Sikes. The presentation of these characters throughout the novel works toward these particular endings so that

[69] For a discussion of Dickens's representations of criminals with special reference to the melodramatic mode, see Juliet John *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture.*

none seem wholly unjust or avoidable. John suggests, "In Dickens's novels, [villains] are frequently the site of tensions and paradoxes which surround the attempt dramatically to marginalize the psyche underpinning Dickens's populist, anti-intellectual project" (11). While Dickens's project was certainly populist, it is too reductive to call it anti-intellectual. The novels exist between the tensions of these approaches, and this is what makes them particularly thought-provoking.

Some means of persuasion are common to the rhetoric of all three characters, while other features distinguish them clearly and set out Nancy in particular as a somewhat immoral character. The common features seem grounded in a shared purpose of the rhetoric: complicity. It is of the utmost importance for Fagin and his group to make new accomplices complicit so as to be able to blackmail them. For example, when Sikes tries to pick a fight and turns on Fagin, saying contemptuously, "You'll never have the laugh at me, though, unless it's behind a nightcap. I've got the upper hand over you, Fagin; and, d—me, I'll keep it. There. If I go, you go; so take care of me" (118; bk. 1, ch. 15). Fagin also concedes to this purpose when he comments on the need for Oliver to participate in a criminal act:

> [H]e *must* be in the same boat with us; never mind how he came there, it's quite enough for my power over him that he was in a robbery, that's all I want. Now how much better this is, than being obliged to put the poor leetle boy out of the way, which would be dangerous,— and we should lose by it, besides. (160; bk. 1, ch. 19, original emphasis).

If Oliver participated in a robbery, as all the other boys of Fagin's gang have done in one way or another, then Fagin would be able to blackmail and silence him. Moreover, Fagin uses Oliver in this way to do a favor for his associate Monks, who wants Oliver to incriminate himself. The final section of this passage, in which Fagin calculates his losses, reminds readers of Scrooge's misguided priorities before his conversion, but it is also a reference to the common stereotype at the time of "the greedy Jew" that the narrator refers to in shaping Fagin's *ethos*.

Fagin has willfully corrupted many young boys and girls into working for him and thus seems to deserve the punishment that he finally suffers; however, it is never quite clear what exact crime Fagin is executed for. On the second level of persuasion, Fagin may seem dangerous because he is rhetorically skillful and does not use his skill toward ethical ends. Fagin knows his audience well and is an accomplished rhetorician not because he is particularly eloquent, but because he is able to choose the right approach to persuasion in the right situation. When Fagin meets Noah Claypole, he uses a very different kind of persuasion than he did with Oliver. Noah has already incriminated himself, or at least Charlotte has, so Fagin can use blackmail and threats to convince him. The narrator describes Fagin's attempt at persuading Noah as follows:

> To strengthen an impression so desirable and useful, he followed up the blow [on the table] by acquainting him in some detail with the magnitude and extent of his operations; blending truth and fiction together as best served his purpose, and bringing both to bear with so much art that Mr Bolter's [Noah Claypole's alias] respect visibly increased, and became tempered, at the same time, with a degree of wholesome fear, which it was highly desirable to awaken. (350; bk. 3, ch. 6)

Voiced through the narrator, Fagin's implied purpose is to instill fear in Noah. Noah's "respect" for Fagin increases, but what appears to be respect is actually fear. Fagin's most common rhetorical means of persuasion are thus fear, blackmail, and complicity. Complicity is an interesting concept as it is one aspect of community, which is so important in Dickens's rhetoric. These two concepts play a particularly important role in *Little Dorrit*, where I discuss community as a vital human need built on forms of social debt and credit.

As Fagin is rhetorically skillful, he is presented as a great threat. In addition, he lacks what the narrator obviously deems a normal sense of sympathy. However, in his descriptions of Fagin and his gang, the narrator lacks the ability to feel with another himself. Sitting in The Three Cripples, he is confronted with a host of the poor and downtrodden:

> Cunning, ferocity, and drunkenness in all its stages were there in their strongest aspects; and women — some with the last lingering tinge of their early freshness almost fading as you looked, and others with every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out, and presenting but one loathsome blank of profligacy and crime; some mere girls, others but young women, and none past the prime of life, — formed the darkest and saddest portion of this dreary picture. (207; bk. 2, ch. 4)

Confronted by this destitute group of people, Fagin is "troubled by no emotions" (207). His purpose is always clearly defined as gain and avoiding the gallows, so there is no space for such an uneconomical emotion as pity. Fagin's representation by the narrator is troublesome at times. The narrator leaves little room for Fagin's inner life and does not grant him the same kindness that he does the other characters, even those who commit crimes.

Expressing gratitude for received kindness is a requirement for a good moral character, as Oliver shows, for example, when he tries to stand up as Mr Brownlow enters the room after he has taken him home to care for him (92; bk. 1, ch. 12). However, Fagin inverts the logic of charity and gratitude and misuses the appeals to *pathos* in his cunning pursuit of criminal ends. He appeals to the very same means of persuasion that are staged in the scene in which Fagin's gang kidnaps Oliver. Fagin is 'appalled,' and the narrator comments that Fagin is "reading Oliver a long lecture on the crying sin of ingratitude" (144; bk. 1, ch. 18):

> Mr. Fagin laid great stress on the fact of his having taken Oliver in and cherished him, when without his timely aid he might have perished with hunger; and related the

> dismal and affecting history of a young lad whom in his philanthropy he had succoured under parallel circumstances, but who, proving unworthy of his confidence, and evincing a desire to communicate with the police, had unfortunately come to be hung at the Old Bailey one morning. (144)

Here, the narrator does not let Fagin speak directly but rather renders his voice in a register that does not seem appropriate either for the character or for the content. His description is, once again, highly ironic and serves to contrast verbosity with brutality, thereby making Fagin's speech seem even more false. What Fagin really delivers here is a threat to Oliver, but the rendering of it by the narrator creates a distance, which removes agency from Fagin in a seeming suggestion that his actual speech is simply too much to expose the readers to.

Sikes's rhetoric is somewhat different from that of Fagin. He does not veil his threats and does not play rhetorical games; rather, he is harsh and brutal both in language and action. The narrator comments on one of Sikes's demands to Fagin: "Give it here, you avaricious old skeleton" ironically a "gentle remonstrance" (129; bk. 1, ch. 16). Even when he speaks to his dog, Sikes is aggressive and brutal, as the narrator suggests: "The dog no doubt heard, because Mr Sikes spoke in the very harshest key of a very harsh voice" (117; bk. 1, ch. 15). Although the dog has a similar temper as Sikes (117) is not necessarily worthy of readers' pity, Sikes's immediate threat to the dog's life strengthens the representation of Sikes's brutal character. His lack of compassion is further presented in the description of him when Nancy declares her love: "I wouldn't hurry by, if it was you that was coming out to be hung the next time eight o'clock struck, Bill. I'd walk round and round the place till I dropped, if the snow was on the ground, and I hadn't a shawl to cover me" (125; bk. 1, ch. 16). Sikes answer "And what good would that do?" is used by the narrator to characterize him as "unsentimental" (125), although after Nancy's death he is haunted by her image and begins to feel all manner of things.

As discussed earlier, sentimentality is vital to the moral inner world of characters and the novels themselves. Being detached from feeling and unable to be moved by appeals to *pathos* is highly problematic within the novel's rhetorical imagination, and this may be Sikes's biggest crime. Nancy begs him for forgiveness and asks him to "stop before you spill my blood. I have been true to you; upon my guilty soul I have" (396; bk. 3, ch. 10), but Sikes kills her anyway. Although Sikes is most brutal and has no inclination toward compassion or kindness, he is severely troubled after killing Nancy and haunted by "some fearful thing" (402; bk. 3, ch. 10), thereby revealing that even this brute of a man has a conscience.

Although she uses the rhetoric of the thieves on many occasions, Nancy does not embody it. She does what she needs to do to survive, but is moved to pity for Oliver and tries to act in his best interest as much as she can—eventually giving her own life to save him. One scene is indicative of Nancy's struggle with her life and the tasks that she must perform for Sikes and Fagin. When she is supposed to bring

Oliver to Sikes, and the boy begins to ask questions, she is not able to lie to him altogether:

> 'Yes; I have come from Bill,' replied the girl. 'You are to go with me.'
> 'What for?' said Oliver recoiling.
> 'What for!' echoed the girl, raising her eyes, and averting them again the moment they encountered the boy's face. 'Oh! for no harm.'
> 'I don't believe it,' said Oliver, who had watched her closely.
> 'Have it your own way,' rejoined the girl, affecting to laugh. 'For no good, then.'
>
> Oliver could see that he had some power over the girl's better feelings, and for an instant thought of appealing to her compassion for his helpless state. (165–166; bk. 1, ch. 20)

Nancy, as opposed to Fagin and Sikes, has those better feelings and an inclination to compassion. As mentioned earlier, she is a stereotype of "the tart with a heart" common in melodrama, but she is also more than that because of her insistence on caring for and loving Sikes. The brutality and conniving that is common to the thieves' rhetoric is something that Nancy has to put on. It is not her natural state of being, as the narrative suggests whenever she has trouble maintaining the act.

Nancy shows gratitude and kindness by helping to solve the mystery of Oliver's and Rose's origins without expecting compensation for it: "I have not done this for money. Let me have that to think of" (389; bk. 3, ch. 8). As Nancy refuses Rose's charity, her actions to save Oliver are selfless and only motivated by compassion:

> Whether it is God's wrath for the wrong I have done, I do not know; but I am drawn back to him through every suffering and ill usage, and should be, I believe, if I knew that I was to die by his hand at last (337; bk. 3, ch. 3).

Suggesting that she may kill herself, the narrative seems to offer her a way out of the ultimate sin that committing suicide would imply by placing the responsibility for her death on Sikes. There is no hope for Nancy in life, but there may be after death.

Oliver Twist presents pity and compassion as the most successful means and the most appropriate end to scenes of persuasion. Rhetoricians on the first level of persuasion show their moral worth by being able to sympathize with deserving characters and by acting kindly toward them. In particular, Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies are examples of such characters. For those who are unable to bestow charity on others because they lack the funds or the experience, there is still the option of proving themselves morally admirable (and thus being successful within the established moral framework) by being grateful for acts of compassion. Oliver is a prime example of one of these characters. He acts in a way that prompts sympathy in the kind people that he encounters and thanks them with gratitude. Inarticulateness and spontaneity, in particular, and an avoidance of calculated

rhetoric are further means of presenting characters as worthy. For example, Oliver resists the advances of Fagin and his group by failing to participate in rhetorical situations that might incriminate him; he cries, faints, or naively misunderstands.

The second level of persuasion, between text and reader, takes into account the narrator and the narratorial commentary. Presenting a narrative voice that omnisciently guides the reading of the text and a narrative voice that comments and interjects, this level highlights both appeals to *pathos* and appeals to *ethos*. Rhetorical success on this level can be defined as eliciting the readers' sympathy for the characters within the novel. Readers will have learned about the horrific workhouse system as well as about the pitiable orphan Oliver and the group of pitiable orphans that he represents. Ideally, they will be willing to bestow their sympathy on these characters and thereby render themselves morally worthy, as Mr Brownlow and Rose Maylie have done.

Chapter 4: *Hard Times* or the Charity of No Foregone Conclusions

Although Catherine Gallagher is too harsh in describing Hard Times as a work of "melancholic aimlessness" that shows "almost a complete lack of narrative hope" (*The Body Economic* 70), her argument that the novel fails to reconcile the dilemma it poses between individual happiness and the success of corporate enterprise is convincing (69). In the preface to the Fourth Norton Critical Edition, Kaplan asserts, "the Dickens of *Hard Times* was not the optimistic cheerleader of Christmas benevolence in which the Scrooges of the world were made to see the error of their ways and exemplify in their personal redemption the potential redemption of society as a whole" (vii). While *Hard Times* presents a less optimistic outlook on the state of society as a whole, I argue, with the Gradgrind plot in particular, the novel suggests that a general aptitude for kindness can be a means of alleviating some of the social inequalities that have been the result of the rapid developments of early capitalist society. However, the novel complicates benevolence, which John Bowen notes "never fails in early Dickens" (*Other Dickens* 21), because the central act of charity—that which has salvaged the plots of so many of the earlier novels—is the direct cause of the novel's main tragedy: Stephen Blackpool's death.

My analysis of *Oliver Twist* shows that evoking pity and compassion through appeals to *pathos* is a successful means of persuasion both within the narrative and between the narrative and its readers. *Hard Times* also uses pity as a crucial element to the plot and the path to a congenial ending; however, the novel is much more sceptical of the ability of all the characters to participate in this rhetoric. Rather than promoting benevolence as a means of alleviating certain inequalities, the novel formulates a warning against another kind of reasoning—a total reliance on fact, which favors intellectual calculations over heartfelt sentiment.

Hard Times engages with *logos* as a theme and shows the detrimental consequences of a society that is built on a *logos* that does not take fundamental human needs into consideration. In "Novels of the 1850s: *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*," Hilary Schor suggests that it was not only the focus of Dickens's works that changed but also Dickens's imagination, and as a consequence, his ways of appealing to the readers: "the effort at encompassing a broader social sphere led to a change in the forms of realism – to systems of reference that rely less on reported fact than on metaphor; ideas of character that

break with models of a solid and impermeable individualism" (65). In "Dickens as Professional Author," John Bowen traces this development thematically and comments that Dickens "worked hard to preserve his artistic freedom and to defend, as he did in *Hard Times* and elsewhere, the 'bohemian' world against the censure of Gradgrinds and Bounderbys" (54). Although the novel does not offer any means to alleviate the suffering of the workers, it seems to suggest that fancy, a form of playful imagination, can be a means of countering fact and is a vital ingredient for a fulfilled human life.

Before this chapter turns to a closer analysis of the rhetoric of *Hard Times*, it briefly examines the novel's historical context. In the full title, *Hard Times: For These Times*, Dickens claims a historical specificity. In *The Victorian Social-problem Novel*, Josephine M. Guy notes that this particular work "self-consciously addressed itself to a contemporary economic and political state of affairs" (5). While this highlights the topicality of the issues to Dickens's contemporaries, the main concerns of the novel appeal to general human needs that seem equally relevant to readers today. In *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, Sally Ledger suggests, "*Hard Times* is arguably the Dickens novel most firmly rooted in contemporary 1850s Britain" (209). For Schor, the novel is not only situated in a clear historical context but also "asks most clearly to be read not as a mere fictional world but as a commentary on a contemporary crisis" (67). In light of these analyses, what were the specific historic circumstances of the novel's production? What exactly is this crisis? And what would have shaped Dickens's and a contemporary reader's frame of reference?

Dickens visited Preston in 1854 to conduct research for the novel, and Nicholas Coles suggests that "what Dickens saw when he visited Preston in February 1854 provided the foundation for his presentation of the union in *Hard Times*" (162). However, Dickens claimed in a letter to Forster that he did not find much inspiration in Preston. In the letter dated 29 January 1854, Dickens writes, "I am afraid I shall not be able to get much here" (*Letters 7*: 260).[70] Indeed, when *The Illustrated London News* implied that "his story 'originated' in the industrial troubles in Preston" (Schlicke, "*Hard Times*" 266), Dickens refuted this suggestion with great vigor. In a letter dated 11 March 1854 to Peter Cunningham, the likely source of the statement in the *Illustrated London News*, he explains why:

> I don't know where you may have found your information, but I can assure you that it is altogether wrong. The title was many weeks old, and chapters of the story were written, before I went to Preston or thought about the present Strike. The mischief of such a statement is twofold. First, it encourages the public to believe in the impossibility that books are produced in that very sudden and Cavalier manner …; and Secondly in this instance it has this pernicious bearing: It localizes … a story

[70] Paul Schlicke also makes a note of the origin of the story in "*Hard Times*," *OC*, p. 266.

> which has a direct purpose in reference to the working people all over England, and it will cause, as I know by former experience, characters to be fitted on to individuals whom I never saw or heard of in my life. (*Letters 7*: 290–291)

Dickens is clear about the purpose of this letter and his point. Typical and individual representations seem to have already been on Dickens's mind when writing *Oliver Twist.* While he removed "Mudfog" from the later drafts of *Oliver Twist*, he nevertheless chose to keep Coketown as a specific place in *Hard Times*. It seems the point he was trying to make concerns all the working people in England, not just those in the specific town of Preston.

Dickens's engagement with the pressing matters of this time is further manifested in his journalism of 1854. Although he made it clear that his visit to Preston did not influence his writing of *Hard Times*, he does address the Preston strikes of 1853/54 in his article "On Strike."[71] On his way to Preston, Dickens describes meeting a fellow traveller, Mr. Snapper, who is quite desperate to place Dickens's opinion on the strikes, which the author aims to avoid.[72] He comments: "Mr. Snapper's rising opinion of me fell again, and he gave me to understand that a man *must* either be a friend to the Masters or a friend to the Hands" (319; original emphasis).[73] Dogmatic beliefs like those of Mr. Snapper's that judge life by pre-established concepts are one of the main causes of struggle in the novel.[74]

This concern is enacted particularly on the second level, as Schlicke suggests, "Because [Dickens] is concerned with the underlying attitudes which cause industrial strife, it is appropriate that the book includes a schoolroom where children are being indoctrinated" ("*Hard Times*" 268). From a rhetorical perspective, "On Strike" sets out the thesis that *Hard Times* continues to work with:

> I believe [says Dickens] that into the relations between employers and employed, as into all the relations of this life, there must enter something of feeling and sentiment; something of mutual explanation, forbearance, and consideration; something which is not to be found in Mr. McCulloch's dictionary, and is not exactly stateable in figures; otherwise those relations are wrong and rotten at the core and will never bear sound fruit. (319)

[71] For further reading, see K.J. Fielding "The Battle for Preston."

[72] Many studies address the significance of character names in Dickens's works. Stephen B. Dobranski's recent article "Names in Dickens: The Trouble with Dombey" is one example in point and offers a wide variety of secondary sources for those interested in reading more about this.

[73] In *Hard Times*. Fourth Norton Critical Edition, 2017, pp. 318–330.

[74] In her article "The Literary Imagination in Public Life," Martha Nussbaum points out a similar issue with rigidity expressed in *Hard Times*. When norms are understood as unchanging, trouble seems to be inevitable.

Thus, Dickens proposes "something" that will help soften the fronts and make peace among the various parties: "feeling and sentiment," in particular, a shared feeling that will lead to understanding. Hilton outlines the five giants—the vices and issues perceived as most pertinent at the time: want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness (573). Sentiment and feeling are crucial to counter at least some of these, and calculations and reasoning cannot counter them as they omit the human element. Coles comments that "On Strike" is typical for the magazine *Household Words* in which it was published, as it highlights "the dimension of 'humanheartedness,' as Kathleen Tillotson called it, in the relationship between classes" (167–168). However, Coles continues to explain that, in *Hard Times*, "Dickens … refuses any appeal to this central tenet of bourgeois hope and indeed structures class relations in the novel so as to make it inapplicable as a solution" (168). The one act of direct monetary benevolence presented in the novel, given by Louisa Gradgrind to Stephen Blackpool, indirectly leads to the death of the receiver. Thus, it seems *Hard Times* struggles with charity where earlier texts do not. Guy suggests that "'money' and its power to corrupt" are the main issues in the novel (130); for example, Louisa's charitable gift of money is problematic whereas Sissy's kindness is not.

Although Dickens seemed concerned about the effects of too much work and having little spare time to enjoy the pleasures of life, "On Strike" also attests to Dickens's faith in the capitalist system, or at least his understanding of some of its main premises, such as the relation between capitalist and worker, as unavoidable. He is convinced of the theory of supply and demand and worried about the threat of unemployment if demand disappears: "It is a melancholy thing that it should not occur to the Committee to consider what would become of themselves, their friends, and fellow operatives, if those calicoes, silks, and satins, were *not* work in very large quantities" (323; original emphasis). However, as Dickens says, he "shall not enter into that question" (323). In *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Hard Times*, Paul Edward Gray refers to Dickens's "ultimate faith in the economic system" and claims that it inspired Dickens to abandon his original idea of taking a break from novel writing. Instead, he began to write *Hard Times* to boost the sales of *Household Words*, which was struggling at the time (3). This claim to Dickens's faith in the economic system becomes relevant when one tries to understand the contradictory stances that *Hard Times* takes at times.

In her article, "The Literary Imagination in Public Life," Martha Nussbaum investigates the connection between the concept of 'fancy', as mentioned earlier, and the concept of 'altruism' (897), both of which are central concepts in the novel. Nussbaum suggests that their connection lies in the novel's rhetorical structure and function and that the act of reading a novel can be seen as an act of benevolence because it presupposes a willingness to suspend judgment and extend sympathy, even to those characters with whom readers might not be inclined to sympathize in real life: "there is, as the novel says, a charity in this willingness to go beyond the evidence. And this charity is a preparation for greater charities in life" (897). The

very concept of writing a novel and reading it indulges the readers' fancy, which Mr. Gradgrind would not consider a valuable use of time.[75]

Why then do I suggest that analyzing the rhetoric of this novel can be particularly fruitful? Rhetorical strategies live on, and the continuous relevance of the novel may lie with the continuous relevance of the rhetorical strategies that the novel both uses and exposes. Paul Edward Gray comments, "Dickens's narrative strategy in this novel evidently stimulates a reader's personal opinions and convictions in a manner that is worthy of some investigation" (9). He agrees with Nussbaum, who sees a strong connection between reading literature and being an active member of society, which is what a rhetorician in the classical sense would have been expected to be. Guy criticizes David Lodge's reading of *Hard Times*, and in the process, makes a crucial statement about the understanding of successful rhetoric. She argues that in many earlier readings, particularly Lodge's, "it is ideology which is silently providing the criteria for judgement about rhetoric" (23). This way of making sense of narratives is condemned within the novel, which suggests that it is crucial to establish an understanding of rhetoric as more than the mere pursuit of a clearly defined end.

Gray argues that fiction has the specific ability to bring about change in the readers' understanding by engaging them in the "experience of holding, simultaneously, conflicting views" (10). This may be precisely what Nussbaum means when she speaks of the charitable act of reading and of suspending judgments. *Hard Times* does not present any conclusions but rather asks readers to engage their senses in encountering the text. According to Nussbaum, novels teach sympathy: "For we are invited to concern ourselves with the fates of others like ourselves, attaching ourselves to them both by sympathetic friendship and by empathetic identification" (894). Indeed, my discussion of *A Christmas Carol* and *Oliver Twist* shows how appeals to the senses are effective means of persuasion. From that starting point, *Hard Times* lends itself to an investigation of why this may be the case.

The rhetorical process of reading *Hard Times* is thus two-fold: firstly, we observe the failure of Gradgrindism, which is both a danger to the happiness of the people of Coketown and easily misused toward untruthful ends. Simultaneously, the rhetoric of the novel instructs the readers to engage sympathetically with certain characters. It suggests that, when both the speaker and the purpose are ethical, using rhetorical means of persuasion is morally acceptable and thereby furthers the *vir bonus* motif. The double notion of means of persuasion as both effective and dangerous is also mirrored in the double notion of capitalism that Dickens explores,

[75] For an enlightening but less literature-specific discussion of how *Hard Times* is comparable to modern economic study, see Greenfield and Nilsson "Gradgrind's Education: Using Dickens and Aristotle to Understand (And Replace?) The Business Judgment Rule."

which is both an inhumane system of exploitation that needs to be resisted and a system that can be exploited for positive change.

Staging the Problem

To make these abstract connections clearer, I present an analysis of the rhetoric of *Hard Times*, in particular, the scene of persuasion that the novel constitutes when taken as a whole. *Hard Times* is one of Dickens's most polemical and politically engaged works. The main concern in this chapter is faith in Gradgrindism—the "philosophy of fact"—in which fact connotes truth and thereby becomes the ground upon which all decisions are based. More specifically, the novel attacks the *logos* that underlies the concept of Gradgrindism. This chapter notes that how a fact is presented or used has a major bearing on the way in which it is understood; thus, the philosophy becomes more like a rhetoric—instead of facts being used as an impartial means of making decisions, they are tailored to suit the rhetorician's needs. The novel encourages readers to embrace fancy and to offer the charity of no foregone conclusions both on the first and on the second level of persuasion.

The opening scene stages one of the main themes of the text—Thomas Gradgrind's philosophy of fact: "Now, what I want is, Facts" (7; bk. 1, ch. 1). The scene is set in a schoolroom where the teacher, Mr. M'Choakumchild, explains the school's philosophy to his students. The readers learn about the philosophy at the same time as the children: "You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them" (7). The brief state of uncolored representation of this theory through direct speech changes immediately in the second paragraph, in which the narrator describes the setting of the scene. The repetition of a number of words paints a picture of a "plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom," and the adjective "square" is repeated five times in one paragraph (7). Through these rhetorical devices, the narrator begins to actively form the representation of the teaching philosophy and to condition the way in which readers think of it.

Language is particularly significant throughout the first chapter, which invokes military images: "Indeed, as [the teacher] eagerly sparkled at [the students] from the cellarage before mentioned, he seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge" (8; bk. 1, ch. 2). Gallagher, who deems Hard Times "not a very entertaining book" (*The Body Economic* 77), suggests that the content of the novel is also visible in its form as it "relentlessly belabors its effortless prose and its unhappy … allegories" (*The Body Economic* 63). It is true, the language of *Hard* Times is very clear, but whether or not this signals a more extensive "belaboring" is questionable. Indeed, during a speech at a banquet held on 6 January 1853,

Dickens said that the "true man" should "deliver himself plainly of what is in him" (*Speeches* 158). In *Hard Times*, he seems to have taken his own advice.[76]

To address Gallagher's other point of criticism, the picture the novel paints is certainly less cheerful than Dickens's earlier novels and the prose reflects this. The use of impersonal representations continues as the narrator makes use of industrial similes: "So, Mr. M'Choakumchild began in his best manner. He and some one hundred and forty other schoolmasters, had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs" (12; bk. 1, ch. 2). Human aspects of life are mechanical, while objects are personified, for example, the smoke in Coketown: "A blur of soot and smoke, now confusedly tending this way, now that way, now aspiring to the vault of Heaven, now murkily creeping along the earth, as the wind rose and fell" (92; bk. 2, ch. 1). Here, the narrative suggests that things are strangely upside down in the town. In this case, this inversion of imagery highlights a perversion that the novel presents as inherent to the philosophy of fact.

Religious references are frequent in *Hard Times*. For example, the haze over Coketown spreads like a biblical plague: "So there it was, in the haze yonder; and it increased and multiplied" (92). This description of Coketown seems to imply that the haze was sent from God to punish its inhabitants.[77] In addition, in all editions since the first single volume version, the novel is split into three books, and the books' titles reference religious imagery: The first book is entitled "Sowing," the second book is entitled "Reaping," and the third book is entitled "Garnering." These headings invoke Galatians 6.7: "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Moreover, several of the chapter titles carry symbolic value and warrant a discussion in terms of the framing effect and rhetorical function that they hold in the novel.[78] Chapter one, for example, is called "The one thing needful," a reference to Luke 10:42; and chapter two is called "Murdering the Innocents," a reference to King Herod in Matthew 2.16–18. Framing the chapter with such a title provides a harsh moralistic backdrop to its description of the Gradgrind philosophy and Gradgrind himself as it suggests that all the negative effects of Gradgrindism are a form of punishment from above. The lack of consideration of higher concerns haunts the characters who subscribed to Gradgrindism in its entirety because, in the end, they will have nothing to say for themselves during their hour of final judgment.

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[76] Helen Small notes this as well in "Dispensing with style"; see p. 260.

[77] Compare Genesis 9.1.

[78] See also Gérard Genette's *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation* for a discussion of the framing function of chapter titles (ch. 11, "Intertitles," particularly pp. 298–309). It must be remembered though that the serialized form of *Hard Times* would have been presented to readers in different sections, so the chapter titles are first available to readers of the 1854 one-volume Edition (Kaplan "Note on the Text," *Hard Times*, Fourth Norton Critical Edition, 2017, p. 239).

As the repetition of adjectives such as "square" and mechanical terms such as "a galvanising apparatus" continues to be used in connection with Gradgrind and his philosophy, the novel delves into a complex commentary of the system in which this philosophy is at work (8; bk. 1, ch. 2). It connects, possibly indirectly, the rhetoric of utilitarianism to the imagery of industrialism. The novel depicts a society that is trained to function without addressing its humanity, and readers learn that this can only lead to trouble. Moreover, the biblical references invoke a Christian moral framework, which is further supported by presenting altruism and kindness as means of redemption. However, these means of alleviation are not as effective as they have been in the earlier novels, so the earlier texts' ideal of jolly charity begins to disintegrate in this novel.

The Rhetoric of Fact

The philosophy of fact favors apparently objective facts over emotional engagement. According to this doctrine, everything is measurable and facts are understood as truths. However, what the novel exposes gradually is that facts only become meaningful through the context of the rhetorical situation in which they are presented. Consequently, facts carry different meanings depending on the sender, the context, and the receiver of the conversation in which they are presented. The novel offers a plurality of truths and thus exposes the claim to ultimate truth presented in the philosophy of fact, or Gradgrindism, as false and misleading.

The failure of the philosophy of fact that becomes obvious when it is put into practice is staged through the representation of characters or groups of characters. As simple as it seems at first and as logical as it claims to be in staging the truth in Gradgrind's universe, the philosophy fails consistently when it is tested by a character whose human needs and values are still intact, Sissy Jupe. Sissy is the main antithesis to Gradgrind's philosophy in her kind and caring attitude and her inability to understand and live by the stern rule of fact. When Sissy is asked to state the occupation of her father, she says, "He belongs to the horse-riding" (9; bk. 1, ch. 2). Gradgrind does not consider this an acceptable occupation and begins to break down the father's actual tasks to devise a better term for it:

> 'We don't want to know anything about that, here. You mustn't tell us about that, here. Your father breaks horses, don't he?'
> 'If you please, sir, when they can get any to break, they do break horses in the ring, sir.'
> 'You mustn't tell us about the ring, here. Very well, then. Describe your father as a horsebreaker. He doctors sick horses, I dare say?'
> 'Oh yes, sir.'
> 'Very well, then. He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier and horsebreaker….' (9)

This scene, like many others in the novel, shows how facts only gain meaning through context. Gradgrind characterizes and organizes meaning into neat concepts. However, his calculations are absurdly rife with inaccurate speculation. The novel shows that the decisions made in the process of expressing oneself are rhetorical, and any rhetorical process, whether conscious or unconscious, is by nature connected to a process of choice.

In "Family and Society in *Hard Times*," Catherine Gallagher argues that Sissy cannot make sense of these calculations because of her literal-mindedness: "Sissy is too mired in literal particulars to be able to transform the events of life into generalisations" (191). Indeed, Gallagher goes so far as to claim that all the critics who see Sissy as a representative of the circus, and thus symbolic of the concept of fancy, are wrong (190). As the solution to the novel's troubles, Sissy breaks the metaphor of fancy because "Even though we are told on the last page that Sissy provides the workers with 'imaginative graces and delights' (p. 226), nothing we know of her makes this a credible claim" (192). Gallagher's claims, however, are not based on textual evidence but rather the lack thereof. It is true that we know very little of Sissy. There are only brief passages, such as the one that Gallagher quotes herself, which suggest that Sissy is deeply involved in imaginative processes; however, there is also nothing to suggest that she is not. Alex Wolloch argues in *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, "Things are continually presented as half-visible in Dickens's novels, but what underlies this half-visibility is the transformation of incompletely *seeing* into eccentric or obscure *sights*" (150; original emphasis). Sissy is arguably one of those half-visible characters, working her ways in the background. However, this does not mean she is underdeveloped but rather is used as an opportunity for salvation for those who change their ways in the novel. The greatest proof of her supreme imagination is her ability to believe that beyond Louisa's exterior of facts, there is a feeling human being and not mere emptiness.

Like *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times* presents a tension between abstraction and specificity. In "The Structure of Anxiety in Political Economy and *Hard Times*," Mary Poovey notes that the criticism of political economy in *Hard Times* highlights how a "nineteenth-century political economist…had no way to theorize the relationship between abstractions constructed on this 'large scale' and individual instances" (159). In its historical context, John Stuart Mill's essay "Bentham" contains a passage which describes this specific issue:

> It is a sound maxim, and one which all close thinkers have felt, but which no one before Bentham ever so consistently applied, that error lurks in generalities: that the human mind is not capable of embracing a complex whole, until it has surveyed and catalogued the parts of which that whole is made up; that abstractions are not realities *per se*, but an abridged mode of expressing facts, and that the only practical mode of dealing with them is to trace them back to the facts (whether of experience or of consciousness) of which they are the expression. (49–50)

Sissy is the antitype of these philosophers. Gallagher is right to point out that Sissy is drawn to literal interpretations (191), but this does not mean a breaking down of fancy in the conceptual framework of the novel. Instead, Sissy is the ideal decoder of facts; she is able to see through the rhetorical ways in which the proclaimed philosophers use these toward their various ends while ignoring the human experience that gives the facts meaning. Her character highlights the failure of the philosophy of fact in noting its performativity and reminds characters and readers through her actions and misunderstandings that there is a greater truth working in the background to which all must answer eventually.

One core element of being human, the novel suggests, is something that children are taught in infancy through being encouraged to engage with stories, fictional works, and other "fancies," in short, everything that Gradgrind considers a waste of time:[79]

> When she was half a dozen years younger, Louisa had been overheard to begin a conversation with her brother one day, by saying 'Tom, I wonder'—upon which Mr. Gradgrind, who was the person overhearing, stepped forth into the light, and said, 'Louisa, never wonder!' (45; bk. 1, ch. 8)

The narrator comments on this scene to show how this is a vital part of the Gradgrind philosophy: "Herein lay the spring of the mechanical art and mystery of educating the reason without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections" (45). The novel, of course, suggests that readers are supposed to do the exact opposite—they are to cultivate their sentiments and affections through, for example, reading novels such as this one. Learning to wonder and to engage with alternative scenarios are vital skills for an ethical and functioning human being in *Hard Times*, and they are foundational to a functioning community, as readers can see when observing Sleary's circus troupe.

The act of 'wondering' defines the difference between the destinies of the people of Coketown. Invoking the sort of stories that Gradgrind tells, the narrator comments, "the good grown-up baby invariably got to the Savings-bank, and the bad grown-up baby invariably got transported" (46; bk. 1, ch. 8). The narrator claims that one of the main differences between these two kinds of children lies in their choice of reading material. In a description of the way in which the inhabitants use the Coketown library, the narrator registers Gradgrind's worry and wonder at how,

[79] According to the *OED*, the word 'infancy' has an etymological root in which it means "speechlessness," "unwillingness to speak," or "silence." It might be possible to draw a connection between the moral goodness of the child, childhood innocence, and a resistance to manipulation through rhetoric. Once a child learns how to use language, it also has the potential to use it manipulatively. Compare Oliver's speechlessness, for example.

> They sometimes, after fifteen hours' work, sat down to read mere fables about men and women, more or less like themselves, and about children, more or less like their own. They took De Foe to their bosoms, instead of Euclid, and seemed to be on the whole more comforted by Goldsmith than by Cocker. (46)

Reading for the purpose of being entertained, sharing stories for the purpose of feeling as if one belongs to a community, and experiencing the lives of characters similar to oneself are not concepts that make sense to Gradgrind. The gain that reading one of these books provides is difficult to calculate because it is emotional, close to "their bosoms" and "comforting," and not a calculable accumulation of knowledge. Gallagher further points out that "Dickens wished to prove that the labor of amusers (like himself) is a positive contribution to, rather than a drain on, the wealth of England" (*The Body Economic* 78).

While Sissy is a positive example of someone who resists facts, there is also the example of Thomas Gradgrind junior, who has grown up under the philosophy of fact but is still able to appeal to his sister's emotions (*pathos*) in an effort to manipulate her. His literary mind finds expression in a variety of ways; one of them is his enjoyment of alliteration when he is frustrated:

> 'No, Loo; I wouln't hurt *you*. I made an exception of you at first. I don't know what this—jolly old—Jaundiced Jail,' Tom had paused to find a sufficiently complimentary and expressive name for the parental roof, and seemed to relieve his mind for a moment by the strong alliteration of this one, 'would be without you.' (47; bk. 1, ch. 8, original emphasis)

The character of Tom suggests that an education in the philosophy of fact breeds egotistical individuals, but he is particularly dangerous because he is able to appeal to *pathos* to achieve what he wants. Coles argues that "as the theory of self-interest logically requires, he is unable to imagine the feelings of other people and treats Louisa, and indeed everyone else in his life, as an instrument for his own purposes" (153). In light of a rhetorical analysis, Coles's comment seems only partially plausible. Tom has enough imaginative capability to be able to creatively invent a rhetorical approach that will convince his sister. His understanding of the facts of the world incorporates a close understanding of his sister and makes it possible for him to manipulate her.

It is also possible to read the difference between Tom and his sister as gender specific. Louisa and her mother both struggle with the philosophy of fact more intensely than the male characters seem to. Within the narrative, Tom acts entirely according to his own needs and whims. Not considering the fact that Louisa is disgusted by Bounderby, Tom pushes her to marry him because he thinks it will be good for him personally. Using emotional blackmail and speaking entirely from his perspective, Tom speaks about the arrangement:

> ‘You are very fond of me, an’t you, Loo?’
> ‘Indeed I am, Tom, though you do let such long intervals go by without coming to see me.’
>
> ‘Well, sister of mine, … when you say that, you are near my thoughts. We might be so much oftener together—mightn’t we? Always together, almost—mightn’t we? It would do me a great deal of good if you were to make up your mind to I know what, Loo. It would be a splendid thing for me. It would be uncommonly jolly!’ (80; bk. 1, ch. 14)

Not caring at all that it would not be “a splendid thing” for Louisa, Tom uses her emotional attachment to him to achieve his material goals. When Tom leaves with his “departing steps [that] retreated quickly, as glad to get away from Stone Lodge,” Louisa still stands in the door “looking steadfastly” toward the “fires of Coketown” (80). This serenity and willingness to sacrifice her own happiness for the sake of her brother contrasts with his ingratitude and renders her morally admirable. Her *ethos* is strengthened, while his is weakened.

In a deeply ironic section, in which the narrator builds emphasis through repetition, he suggests that Tom’s ingratitude and lack of care for anyone but himself are the effects of his upbringing:

> It was very remarkable that a young gentleman who had been brought up under one continuous system of unnatural restraint, should be a hypocrite; but it was certainly the case with Tom. It was very strange that a young gentleman who had never been left to his own guidance for five consecutive minutes, should be incapable at last of governing himself; but so it was with Tom. It was altogether unaccountable that a young gentleman whose imagination had been strangled in his cradle, should be still inconvenienced by its ghost in the form of grovelling sensualities; but such a monster, beyond all doubt, was Tom. (109; bk. 2, ch. 3)

Through ironic inversions, the narrator suggests that hypocrisy is precisely what an education in the philosophy of fact leads to because Tom does still feel. However, without the lessons in sympathy that can be learned through fancy, he is never taught to care for anyone but himself and only uses his abilities toward his own selfish ends. He has learned the philosophy of fact, but he uses it as a rhetoric, which means that far from being a *vir bonus*, he is in fact merely a hypocrite. Martha Nussbaum addresses the novel’s way of exposing the philosophy of fact as an inherent failure of political economy and suggests that “the ‘facts’ of political economy are actually reductive and incomplete perceptions, and its ‘reason’ is a dogmatic operation of intellect that looks, frequently, both incomplete and unreliable” (888). While the philosophy of fact presents itself as truthful and the only fair way of making judgments, *Hard Times* explores the various ways in which this doctrine fails with feeling individuals.

When output and gain are measured entirely in terms of monetary and material gain, other stakeholders suffer (the environment, the workers, et cetera). This may also be why the charitable gift of money passing from Louisa to Blackpool leads to his tragedy, while Sissy's acts of kindness throughout the novel save both herself and members of the Gradgrind family. Bitzer and Sissy are the main personifications of the results of a successful education in the rhetoric of facts versus a failed one, and it may be significant that it worked on the male character, Bitzer, but failed on the female character, Sissy. In *Hard Times*, women are seen as closer to their emotions than men and at times incapable of controlling them. They are also seen as incapable of adopting the philosophy of fact without it becoming detrimental to their health and happiness (e.g. Mrs. Gradgrind). Incidentally, Sissy's visibility but noticeable lack of long verbal exchanges in the text rendered through direct speech fulfills another Victorian stereotype. Boyd Hilton notes, "the conventional view of feminine submission needs to be qualified. Women may have been inaudible but they were encouraged to be visible, almost as though their presence lent a benediction" (364). Sissy's presence in the background, it is hinted, saves both Louisa and Mr. Gradgrind; thus, her presence coupled with choice words of kindness are the "benediction" that she offers to the other characters.

The Failure of the Philosophy of Fact

In presenting Bitzer and Sissy as opposites, the text links two themes to these characters: fact and fancy. While Sissy and her upbringing in the circus represent fancy, Bitzer is an example of an individual successfully educated in the philosophy of fact:

> He had grown into an extremely clear-headed, cautious, prudent young man, who was safe to rise in the world. His mind was so exactly regulated that he had no affections or passions. … Having satisfied himself, on his father's death, that his mother had a right of settlement in Coketown, this excellent young economist had asserted that right for her with such a steadfast adherence to the principle of the case, that she had been shut up in the workhouse ever since. It must be admitted that he allowed her half a pound of tea a year, which was weak in him: first, because all gifts have an inevitable tendency to pauperise the recipient, and secondly, because his only reasonable transaction in that commodity would have been to buy it for as little as he could possibly give, and sell it for as much as he could possibly get; it having been clearly ascertained by philosophers that in this is comprised the whole duty of man—not a part of man's duty, but the whole. (96; bk. 2, ch. 1)

The narrator renders the descriptions with a good dose of irony, signaling to readers that they are to read what is stated and to decode it to mean the opposite. However, the first sentence offers another layer of this irony. On the first level of persuasion, this is not an ironic statement but rather a statement of fact, but on the second level

of persuasion, readers may detect an ironic comment in the last part of the sentence: the narrator refers to social climbing by suggesting that Bitzer was "safe to rise in the world" (96), but what exactly does this mean? This claim is not supported anywhere in the text and neither is the suggestion that a lack of affection and passion is a prerequisite for success. Readers seem invited to conclude that someone with no affection for even their own mother is not a worthy social climber. Consequently, the suggestion that "an extremely clear-headed, cautious, prudent young man" is "safe to rise in the world" is put into question (96).

The implicit critique in this paragraph is aimed at the Utilitarian doctrine, which becomes clear in the description of Bitzer's mother in the workhouse, but Dickens's attack on this doctrine has been criticized as rather crude.[80] In this section, there is no sign of such crudeness. Instead, it is both subtle and comical in its presentation of Bitzer as a negative example of someone educated in Gradgrindism. The ideal rhetoric that my earlier chapters have outlined underscores the critique of the cold and unemotional calculation of happiness, which Dickens saw in the utilitarian doctrine. Making an important connection between a good economist and a lack of a charitable or altruistic disposition, the narrator first describes Bitzer's coldness in dealing with his mother and then calls him an "excellent young economist" (96; bk. 2, ch. 1). Greenfield and Nilsson argue along the same lines when they claim that "unlike Stephen Blackpool and the Good Samaritan, then, Bitzer is the paradigmatic 'good economist'" (805). However, the section not only presents an individual gone wrong but also excels at inverting the principles of political economy by showing the moral ineptness of characters that live according to them.

Sissy, in contrast, is presented as an example of the positive development of a child into an adult when the philosophy of fact fails to take a hold on them. When learning about national prosperity, Sissy is unable to understand the numbers and concepts without relating them to the people they affect. She shows great insight here, while the numbers do not:

> 'National Prosperity. And he said, Now, this schoolroom is a Nation. And in this nation, there are fifty millions of money. Isn't this a prosperous nation? Girl number twenty, isn't this a prosperous nation, and a'n't you in a thriving state?'
>
> 'What did you say?' asked Louisa.
>
> 'Miss Louisa, I said I didn't know. I thought I couldn't know whether it was a prosperous nation or not, and whether I was in a thriving state or not, unless I knew who had got the money, and whether any of it was mine. But that had nothing to do with it. It was not in the figures at all,' said Sissy, wiping her eyes. (51–52; bk. 1, ch. 9)

[80] See for example Catherine Gallagher *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel*, in particular pp. 62–85.

This brief exchange between Louisa and Sissy highlights the very questions that the novel poses: can the greatest good for a society be calculated by referring to facts and numbers alone, or is there something more that needs to be taken into consideration? While the novel does not come to any definite conclusions on this point, it suggests that context matters. On the first level of persuasion, the philosophy of fact fails repeatedly to take into consideration human needs: those who are affected by it suffer or use it toward their own immoral ends. On the second level of persuasion, readers learn a valuable lesson about rhetorical contexts as they are taught to question the validity and usefulness of facts by putting them into context with those that they affect. Sissy highlights the lack of moral meaning produced by the facts when these are not related to the effect that they will have on those affected by them.

Hard Times aligns a resistance to the philosophy of fact with a natural aptitude for kindness and, like *A Christmas Carol* and *Oliver Twist*, it suggests that pity both for others and for oneself can save those who are misled. Sissy embodies kindness and humility as she humbles herself entirely to Louisa: "Whatever you want most, if I could be that. At all events, I would like to try to be as near it as I can. And however far off that may be, I will never tire of trying. Will you let me?" (180; bk. 3, ch. 1). When Louisa finally breaks out of the philosophy of fact, she does so by asking Sissy to pity her:

> Louisa raised the hand that it might clasp her neck, and join its fellow there. She fell upon her knees, and clinging to this stroller's child looked up at her almost with veneration. 'Forgive me, pity me, help me! Have compassion on my great need, and let me lay this head of mine upon a loving heart!' 'O lay it here!' cried Sissy. 'Lay it here, my dear.' (181; bk. 3, ch. 1)

Louisa needs to be forgiven for her misguided ways of making sense of the world and can only leave the world of fact by making an emotional connection with Sissy through pity. The novel can be seen as an education in these sentiments, and Nussbaum's suggestion that the process of reading a novel requires a reader to engage in sympathy only highlights this argument further. In this context, it is also noteworthy that this scene makes use of rather melodramatic imagery. On the second level of persuasion, the novel practices what the rhetoric of the novels I analyze in this study preaches: it makes appeals to *pathos*. Louisa clasps her neck, falls to her knees, and clings to Sissy. All these visual descriptions help readers to form an image or even a tableaux of the scene in which Louisa begs Sissy for her compassion. It appeals to the readers' sentiments in asking them to step into Sissy's position and pity Louisa. The visual appeals that Sissy makes to characters on the first level simply by her presence are thus also intensified on the second through a visual description such as this one.

Sissy's kindness and resistance to the philosophy of fact are represented through her ability to decode Louisa's need and her correct response to it as well as her

ability to understand empty rhetoric and expose dangerous rhetoricians. She cannot be tricked by Harthouse, and he is unable to make sense of this new rhetorical situation in which someone calls out his manner of stating "facts". He tries to counter Sissy's demand for him to leave Coketown:

> 'But do you know,' he asked, quite at a loss, 'the extent of what you ask? You probably are not aware that I am here on a public kind of business, preposterous enough in itself, but which I have gone in for, and sworn by, and am supposed to be devoted to in quite a desperate manner? You probably are not aware of that, but I assure you it's the fact.' (187; bk. 3, ch. 2)

Harthouse, clearly not desperately devoted to his task and much more desperately devoted to corrupting Louisa, makes a crucial point here. He is supposed to fulfill this duty, but circumstances have allowed him to do other things. Harthouse makes a factual statement; however, "It had no effect on Sissy, fact or no fact" (187). In her inability to see the facts, she sees beyond them. The novel suggests that the 'intention' or purpose hidden behind the representation of 'facts' is much more important in decoding a 'true' meaning. This is a particularly interesting scene when analyzed as a scene of persuasion. For the first time, it seems, Harthouse encounters a character who is not blinded by his nonchalance. He is usually able to twist facts in his favor, thereby justifying immoral actions. However, when Sissy questions his actions directly, he is unable to maneuver his way out of the situation: "Only a poor girl—only a stroller—only James Harthouse made nothing of—only James Harthouse a Great Pyramid of failure" (188; bk. 3, ch. 2). In the rhetorical context, Sissy becomes the opposing argument which makes the emptiness of Harthouse's rhetoric apparent.

As mentioned earlier, Bitzer and Sissy represent two distinct groups. Sleary and the Circus troupe are Sissy's "family" and represent the philosophy of fancy. Sleary comments, "They [people] can't be alwayth a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth a working, they an't made for it" (232; bk. 3, ch. 8). Entertainment connects to the idea of fancy, which the novel presents as a basic human need. Mr. Childers, another member of the circus troupe, inverts Bounderby's logic of value and time:

> 'You see, my friend,' Mr. Bounderby put in, 'we are the kind of people who know the value of time, and you are the kind of people who don't know the value of time'
>
> 'I have not,' retorted Mr. Childers, after surveying him from head to foot, 'the honor of knowing *you*;—but if you mean that you can make more money of your time than I can of mine, I should judge from your appearance, that you are about right.' (30; bk. 1, ch. 6, original emphasis)

Like Sleary, Childers belongs to a group of people who calculate and define wealth differently than Bounderby. For Bounderby, time spent effectively is time spent in

the most profitable manner. In contrast, Childers believes that time spent effectively is time spent in the most enjoyable manner. A further note on calculation is voiced through Sleary, who philosophizes about Sissy's belief that her father will return:

> It theemth to prethent two thingth to a perthon … one, that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelf-intereth after all, but thomething very different; t'other, that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, whith thomehow or another ith at leatht ath hard to give a name to, ath the wayth of the dogth ith! (231; bk. 3, ch. 8)

Evading truths and facts wherever possible, Sleary comments that "Calculating or not calculating," "thomehow or another," this love cannot be defined in clear factual terms because it goes beyond those. The representation of Sleary and the circus troupe can be interpreted as very romantic. However, their love, which goes beyond "Thelf-intereth" may also stem from their need for community as a means of survival. Their altruism and kindness toward one another would then be just as much self-interest as the harsh calculations of Bounderby, although the troupe remains much more virtuous in comparison on the second level. The troupe cooperates for communal survival, while Bounderby's self-interest is entirely for the purpose of individual gain. In the representation of this group in *Hard Times*, they represent a greater moral goodness than those who have the financial means to be generous. Their natural aptitude for kindness goes beyond personal gain, for example, when they take care of Sissy after her father disappears. Consequently, the novel sustains an idea of the virtuous poor and the selfish capitalist. Community is once again an important counterweight to the increased selfishness of the pursuit of wealth highlighted in the novels that this study discusses.

Martha Nussbaum suggests that "the moral antitype of Gradgrind's school is Sleary's circus, whose capacity to please is closely linked to its moral superiority" (894). The clearest opposition between the circus troupe's kindness and the resistance to or lack of such kindness in Bounderby is shown in the scene in which Sissy must be told that her father has run away. The tightrope lady comforts her:

> Then came Sissy Jupe, running into the room as she had run out of it. And when she saw them all assembled, and saw their looks, and saw no father there, she broke into a most deplorable cry, and took refuge on the bosom of the most accomplished tight-rope lady (herself in the family way), who knelt down on the floor to nurse her, and to weep over her. (35; bk. 1, ch. 6)

The fellow circus woman does not hesitate to bring herself down to Sissy's level, quite literally, in order to comfort her. The sentimental moment of putting her to her chest, which is what Sissy does for Louisa later on, is heightened by the fact that the tightrope lady is pregnant. The visual setup of this image of pity is similar to the scene in which Sissy pities Louisa and forms another appeal to *pathos* on the second

level of persuasion. Again, the ability to pity is an important marker of moral worth. Bounderby's behavior is the glaring opposite, as he becomes impatient with so much sentimentality:

> Now, good people all … this is a wanton waste of time. Let the girl understand the fact. Let her take it from me, if you like, who have been run away from, myself. Here, what's your name! Your father has absconded—deserted you—and you mustn't expect to see him again as long as you live. (36; bk. 1, ch. 6)

Bounderby is unmoved by the sentiment in this scene, and his appeal to facts also fails because he follows it with an untruth: he has *not* "been run away from" (36). His rhetoric fails both because it pretends to appeal to reason and thus fails to recognize sentiment as a fundamental human need and because it presents a lie. The narratorial commentary immediately after projects an ironic tone as it highlights Bounderby's failed appeal to the circus troupe on the first level:

> They cared so little for plain Fact, these people, and were in that advanced state of degeneracy on the subject, that instead of being impressed by the speaker's strong common sense, they took it in extraordinary dudgeon. The men muttered, 'Shame!' and the women, 'Brute!' (36)

On the second level, the narratorial commentary serves to further direct the readers' sympathies toward the circus troupe and away from Bounderby.

Harthouse, Mr. and Mrs. Gradgrind, as well as Bounderby and his housekeeper, Mrs. Sparsit, compose the group that stands opposed to the circus folk. However, only Mr. and Mrs. Gradgrind truly follow the philosophy of fact, although Mrs. Gradgrind seems so burdened by it that it eventually kills her. Mr. Gradgrind is a true believer; he thinks that this philosophy teaches his students and children to become the best possible functioning human beings. In suggesting that Sissy can stay with him and continue her education if she cuts all ties to the circus, he reasons, "The only observation I will make to you, Jupe, in the way of influencing your decision, is, that it is highly desirable to have a sound practical education" (37; bk. 1, ch. 6). He truly believes that he is preparing the children for the best possible life within the world that he envisions, but Bounderby and Mrs. Sparsit seem to use the premises of the doctrine to their own advantage while constantly flouting its maxims.

Mrs. Gradgrind, although a minor character, receives one of the most interesting character descriptions in the novel. The moments in which she appears are replete with imagery and irony; her physical weakness is worsened by facts that seem constantly to encroach on her. Initially, the narrator describes her as the perfect wife for Mr. Gradgrind, who chose her for two reasons:

> Firstly, she was most satisfactory as a question of figures, and, secondly, she had 'no nonsense' about her. By nonsense he meant fancy; and truly it is probable she was as free from any alloy of that nature, as any human being not arrived at the perfection of an absolute idiot, ever was. (20; bk. 1, ch. 4)

She constantly overuses *pathos* and is, in general, a pitiful individual reminiscent of Mrs. Gummidge in *David Copperfield*, though much less vocal. The narrator describes Mrs. Gradgrind as,

> a little, thin, white, pink-eyed bundle of shawls, of surpassing feebleness, mental and bodily; who was always taking physic without any effect, and who, whenever she showed a symptom of coming to life, was invariably stunned by some weighty piece of fact tumbling on her. (18; bk. 1, ch. 4)

As brilliantly comical as the narrator renders the Mrs. Gradgrind scene, her situation is rather tragic. She does not do well under Gradgrindism, as this passage clearly shows; yet, according to the facts, she is ideally suited for it. Her sickly condition leaves her feeble, but what she seems to want is life rather than facts.

When Mrs. Gradgrind is on her deathbed, Louisa visits her. The narrator describes Mrs. Gradgrind at this point as "nearer to Truth than she ever had been" (160; bk. 2, ch. 9). Her responses to Louisa's enquiries into her state of being are a moment of supreme wit and simultaneously supreme tragedy: "'Are you in pain, dear mother?'…'I think there's a pain somewhere in the room,' said Mrs. Gradgrind, 'but I couldn't positively say that I have got it'." (160) Mrs. Gradgrind is indoctrinated into a world of fact and materiality so far removed from any ability to feel or relate that she is not even able to locate her own pain as within her. This scene may be the strongest critique of the philosophy of fact as it highlights the alienation of oneself inherent in Gradgrindism—an alienation that is similar to that from which Scrooge must recover. A complete reliance on facts that removes any connection to the individual as such produces individuals that cannot make sense of their own existence. Consequently, moments where a greater bodily force takes over, such as the moment of death, cannot be understood within the framework of Gradgrindism. It is also possible to see this moment as a religious moment. In Christian doctrine, impending death would be the time to prepare to meet one's maker and receive a final judgment—a "truth" that would render all "facts" inconsequential.

The limitations of the philosophy of fact are further highlighted when Louisa speaks to her father about her future and the possibility of marrying Bounderby. She asks him whether he thinks that she loves Bounderby (82; bk. 1, ch. 15). Gradgrind, at first utterly perplexed by the question, eventually finds a way to turn it into a theoretical discussion rather than an emotional one:

> The reply depends so materially, Louisa, on the sense in which we use the expression [love]. Now, Mr. Bounderby does not do you the injustice, and does not do himself the injustice, of pretending to anything fanciful, fantastic, or (I am using synonymous terms) sentimental. (82)

Gradgrind links sentimentalism to fancy and other forms of imagination to describe emotional means of experiencing and engaging with the world. He then presents a number of facts to Louisa and eventually convinces her that marrying Bounderby is the right course of action:

> I would advise you (since you ask me) to consider this question, as you have been accustomed to consider every other question, simply as one of tangible Fact. The ignorant and the giddy may embarrass such subjects with irrelevant fancies, and other absurdities that have no existence, properly viewed—really no existence—but it is no compliment to you to say, that you know better. (83; bk. 1, ch. 15)

Facts, however, are not useful when making such a decision, which becomes particularly apparent when Louisa breaks down in front of her father after she has been married for a while. Although Gradgrind is successful in making Louisa marry Bounderby, this arrangement works only for a short time and never for Louisa. The plot of the novel suggests that material success may offer safety and status but does not lead to happiness and can thus not sustain a human being. Instead, it nearly tempts Louisa into being unfaithful with Mr. Harthouse, which would have been her downfall.

The narrator comments that Gradgrind is unable to cross "the artificial barriers he had for many years been erecting between himself and all those subtle essences of humanity which will elude the utmost cunning of algebra until the last trumpet ever to be sounded shall blow even algebra to wreck" (84; bk. 1, ch. 15). In yet another religious reference, the narrator suggests that facts will not stand up to the final judgment.[81] According to Revelation, the sound of seven trumpets will announce the end of the mortal world and the beginning of the Kingdom of God. The last three trumpets are called the 'trumpets of woe,' and they are explicitly warned against in this section of the Bible:

> And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! (Revelation 8:13)

Invoking the last of the seven trumpets in this novel thus suggests that all of the earthly facts will become obsolete and irrelevant once the kingdom of God commences. In addition, the word "artificial" that the narrator uses to describe

[81] Compare Revelation 8: 13.

Gradgrind's reasoning also threatens one of the established concepts of moral worth in Dickens's rhetoric: naturalness and spontaneity.

Gradgrind has built such sturdy barriers with his ideals that he does not have the ability to notice Louisa's feelings, and he does not even understand Louisa's figurative speech when she makes what is really a comment about herself by referring to Coketown: "There seems to be nothing there, but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, Fire bursts out, father!" (84; bk. 1, ch. 15). This is a clear image of her body, which is brimful of sensations ready to burst out at any time, but her father, having shut down any inclination to fancy in himself, is unable to understand this: "I do not see the application of the remark" (84). The narrator comments: "To do him justice he did not, at all" (84). Louisa's need for love and romance is manifested in her figurative use of language and represented in her general kindness toward Rachel and Blackpool later on. While Gradgrind believes that she marries Bounderby because it is the most sensible thing to do, she only does so out of care for her brother. Her selfless act renders her unhappy and finally leads to her breakdown and inability to continue the relationship. This detrimental aspect of kindness suggests that the gratitude of the receiver of the kindness is as important as the kindness itself. As with a successful act of rhetoric in which speaker, listener, and context must align, the interactions between the giver, the receiver, and the context of a charitable act must also align for it to be successful.

The scene in which Louisa is finally no longer able to hide her emotions behind the façade of facts begins by describing Gradgrind at work: "He sat writing in the room with the deadly-statistical clock, proving something no doubt—probably, in the main, that the Good Samaritan was a Bad Economist" (173; bk. 2, ch. 12).[82] Using a biblical reference once again, one that is also referred to in *Oliver Twist*, the narrator ironically highlights the theoretical undertaking of Gradgrind and couples it with the image of a "deadly-statistical clock" (173). The suggestion of blasphemy swings along with this message, which implies that Gradgrind considers his calculations truer than the Bible, the Word of God. His appeals to *logos*, it seems, are completely misguided and quite factually built on the wrong gospel. There is a strong claim in this section, and it continues throughout the novel, that Gradgrind's philosophy cannot begin to understand the complexities of life. In this same scene, Louisa finally breaks down and accuses her father of making her miserable:

> 'How could you give me life, and take from me all the inappreciable things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart? What have you done, O father, what have you done, with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here!' (173)

[82] Compare Luke 10.29–37.

Louisa's exclamation and use of rhetorical questions borders on the sentimental, even the melodramatic, that Dickens uses in many of his other works, and it is Louisa's strongest appeal to *pathos* both on the first and the second level of persuasion. It suggests that the purpose of life needs to be more than productivity. It also invokes Christianity by referring to the graces of the soul and by exclaiming "O father." Indeed, where does faith fit into the doctrine of Gradgrindism? Although the novel does not quite go as far as to call it un-Christian, the ironic comment on the Good Samaritan and Louisa's claim that there is no space for the soul in this doctrine suggest that, perhaps, there is no space for God in it either.

Pity and kindness once again save and can help to redeem characters who have acted wrongly, both for Louisa who asks for it and for her father who is finally able to give it to her and thereby finds his way back into the moral realm. "All that I know is, your philosophy and your teaching will not save me," Louisa says, "Now, father, you have brought me to this. Save me by some other means!"(176; bk. 2, ch. 12). The narrator comments, "he laid her down there, and saw the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying, an insensible heap, at his feet" (176). Being asked for pity in such a direct manner by his own daughter, Gradgrind must search for a way to deal with the situation that is not based on fact. Louisa's appeals to *pathos* finally begins to dismantle Gradgrind's beliefs.

Assuring Louisa that he has acted all her life in what he thought was her best interest, he now states that he feels unable to help her out of the situation into which his original advice has gotten her: "[I]f I see reason to mistrust myself for the past, Louisa, I should also mistrust myself for the present and future" (178; bk. 3, ch. 1). He finally concedes to the novel's argument that is made on the second level of persuasion all throughout:

> Some persons hold … that there is a wisdom of the Head, and that there is a wisdom of the Heart. I have not supposed so; but, as I have said, I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the Head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient; how can I venture this morning to say it is! (179; bk. 3, ch. 1).

Gradgrind suspects that his ability to see this now has come about through a gradual change, through "mere love and gratitude" so that "what the Head had left undone and could not do, the Heart may have been doing silently" (179). Neither the narrator nor Gradgrind comment on what exactly caused this change of perspective, but the description of Sissy as a silent character moving through the house which follows immediately after suggests that her presence has subtly changed Gradgrind in a similar manner as it has changed Louisa (179).

There is a distinct echo here of the silence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, who is also the final means of convincing Scrooge to convert by presenting him with what will happen if he does not. The sentiment of pity, possibly caused by the fear of one's personal ruin, is a redeeming factor that can re-humanize those who have

been misled by the philosophy of fact. The novel thus suggests that the ability to feel, both for oneself and for another, are vital aspects of humanity. Gradgrind can redeem himself as a good human being after all because his intentions were good. He did honestly think that this system would be good for his children and the children at his school, unlike Bounderby who uses the doctrine for his own personal gain.

Mr. Bounderby: The Master of the Rhetoric of Fact

Mr. Bounderby embodies the rhetoric of fact because he tailors facts to build his *ethos* and his material success. Ironically, Bounderby claims to be entirely authentic and frequently points out that he will not bow down to any possible rules of conduct because he considers those to be 'false'. Bounderby is an unwelcome climber in society and proud of it: "Whoever expects refinement in *me* will be disappointed. I hadn't a refined bringing up" (21; bk. 1, ch. 4, original emphasis). His mannerisms show clearly that he has no intention of fitting in with polite society:

> So, Mr. Bounderby threw on his hat—he always threw it on, as expressing a man who had been far too busily employed in making himself, to acquire any fashion of wearing his hat—and with his hands in his pockets, sauntered out into the hall. 'I never wear gloves,' it was his custom to say. 'I didn't climb up the ladder in *them*. Shouldn't be so high up, if I had.' (22; bk. 1, ch. 4, original emphasis)

His resistance to polite conventions is a comment on the uselessness of such rhetorical ornaments, but it can also be understood as a comment on class as Bounderby connects his claims to authenticity closely to his humble upbringing:

> How I fought through it, *I* don't know … . I was determined, I suppose. I have been a determined character in later life, and I suppose I was then. Here I am, Mrs. Gradgrind, anyhow, and nobody to thank for my being here but myself. (18; bk. 1, ch. 4, original emphasis)

Bounderby represents 'new money' and the *ethos* of the self-made man, the latter of which is a fiction, of course, because when his mother arrives in Coketown, she exposes his narrative of himself as a self-made man as a lie. In an interesting inversion, Bounderby excels at fancy, of course, as he has dreamed up an entirely new life for himself. However, this is not the imagination of a *vir bonus* because he uses it to fashion a deceitful rhetoric.

Bounderby's ostentatious proclamations of his *ethos* as a self-made man may be what truly disqualify him from a congenial ending. Early in the novel, the narrator already names Bounderby the "Bully of humility" (18), and he returns to this name throughout (e.g. 39; bk. 1, ch. 7 and 209; bk. 3, ch. 5):

> He was a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare and a metallic laugh. A man made out of a coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him. A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open and lift his eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start. A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility. (17–18; bk. 1, ch. 4)

The continuous repetition of "A man" in this passage draws attention to the matter of gender. Bounderby's obnoxiousness is particularly male somehow, and his lack of sentiment goes hand in hand with this description. In *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, Ledger notes that, in the characterization of Bounderby, "Dickens's visceral response to the sufferings and injustices of the poor led him to continue to embrace the melodramatic mode and its character types" (212). The description of his "metallic laugh," the "coarse material" he is made from, and his "brassy speaking-trumpet" all serve to sustain the description of him as someone cold and mechanical. In addition, Bounderby frequently speaks of himself in the third person (e.g. 19; bk. 1, ch. 4). His very appearance is described as boastful: being bald, "One might have fancied he had talked it [his hair] off; and that what was left, all standing up in disorder, was in that condition from being constantly blown about by his windy boastfulness" (18; bk. 1, ch. 4). The narrator's ironic and mocking descriptions of Bounderby invite readers to chuckle at this character, to laugh at his ostentatiousness, and to feel a sense of Schadenfreude when his airs are finally exposed. Rather than straightforwardly telling readers to be wary of Bounderby, the shared laughter at him has the distinct effect of rendering him ridiculous.[83]

Bounderby's claim to be speaking truths at all times is problematic in several ways, including in his capacity as master of a factory. Speaking to Harthouse, Bounderby makes statements about the work in the mills:

> Now, you have heard a lot of talk about the work in our mills, no doubt? You have? Very good. I'll state the fact of it to you. It's the pleasantest work there is, and it's the lightest work there is, and it's the best paid work there is. More than that, we couldn't improve the mills themselves, unless we laid down Turkey carpets on the floors. Which we're not a-going to do. (104; bk. 2, ch. 2)

These are misrepresentations, but Bounderby presents them as alternative facts. Assuming that Harthouse has heard talk about the kind of work and situation that the hands experience, Bounderby disputes these accounts of the situation by

[83] For a discussion of laughter as a means of persuasion, see James R. Kincaid *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughte*r, although Kincaid does not discuss laughter in relation to Bounderby.

presenting his own, which further highlights that an analysis of the motivations of any speaker is crucial for determining whether or not an account is trustworthy. If a powerful man like Bounderby presents his account of the factories, it diminishes the claims of those who are less powerful. On the second level of persuasion, Bounderby is ridiculed by the narrator and thereby rendered untrustworthy. However, on the first level of persuasion, his opinions and accounts are representative, and Harthouse as an aspiring parliamentary politician from the upper class relies on these accounts rather than on those from the hands themselves. The narrative also warns against characters who simply become too powerful or too effective to have their morals questioned and foreshadows Mr Merdle in *Little Dorrit*. Bounderby's rhetoric is commanding, anti-factual, and arrogant, and yet his rhetoric is successful until the very end simply because he leaves no room to be questioned.

A moment of different rhetorical strengths and opportunities between the classes is described in the first encounter between Bounderby and Stephen Blackpool, a hand in Bounderby's factory. Blackpool comes to see Bounderby to ask him if it is possible to divorce his alcoholic wife: "'Now, a' God's name,' said Stephen Blackpool, 'show me the law to help me!'" (65; bk. 1, ch. 11). After first making some general statements about morals and virtues, Bounderby finally admits that there is such a law, but that it "costs a mint of money" (65). The law, though technically made for everybody, only benefits some. That is, the law distinguishes between rich and poor in its factual effectiveness (65–66; bk. 1, ch. 11). In addition, Bounderby shows how there are different moral attachments to such a request as Blackpool's, depending on who makes it. When Blackpool has to flee town, Bounderby rephrases and re-presents the way in which the first encounter of him and Blackpool took place: "What warning did I give that fellow, the first time he set foot in the house, when the express object of his visit was to know how he could knock Religion over, and floor the Established Church?" (149; bk. 2, ch. 8). This was certainly not what Blackpool wanted to do, but rephrasing it changes the *ethos* of Blackpool, that is, if Bounderby were a trustworthy commentator. On the first level of persuasion, this is effective rhetoric. Bounderby is more powerful than Blackpool and ultimately has the ability to destroy his life, which he does by firing him. However, on the second level of persuasion, the narrative directs the sympathies differently. Blackpool seems helpless and pitiable, and Bounderby seems like a hypocrite unworthy of the readers' sympathy.

Stephen Blackpool: The Height of Sentimentalism?

Stephen Blackpool is a rather sentimental representation of a working-class individual. In "On Strike," Dickens comments on "the working class" with great admiration:

> Their astonishing fortitude and perseverance; their high sense of honor among themselves; the extent to which they are impressed with the responsibility that is upon them of setting a careful example, and keeping their order out of any harm and loss of reputation; the noble readiness in them to help one another, of which most medical practitioners and working clergymen can give so many affecting examples; could scarcely ever be plainer to an ordinary observer of human nature than in this cockpit. (327–328)

In this interesting bit of rhetoric, Dickens uses virtues typically associated with the aristocracy, or seen by the aristocracy as part of their *ethos*, to describe the poor. Dickens often criticizes the aristocracy, and this inversion seems to suggest that the poor are the truly virtuous. Blackpool is one of these virtuous individuals: naturally kind, humble, and unwilling to support aggression against the masters. The representation of the Cratchits in *A Christmas Carol* and the Plornishes, and even Little Dorrit in the novel named after her, all serve to strengthen this representation of the virtuous poor further. Blackpool's catch-phrase, "Tis a muddle" (e.g. 58; bk. 1, ch. 10), sums up the problem that *Hard Times* stages. The text has no solution for the muddle, but Blackpool clearly points out that he believes it to be the masters' responsibility to find one.

Blackpool is the main victim of the novel. He suffers first at the hands of his alcoholic wife, although the main issue in relation to her seems to be that her existence prevents Blackpool from marrying Rachael.[84] He then suffers because he steps up and speaks out against Slackbridge, who tries to convince the workers to fight against their masters. Blackpool also suffers at the hands of Bounderby, who fires him for speaking out about the unbearable situation of the workers. Moreover, he is framed for robbing a bank, which was actually done by Tom Gradgrind. Finally, he dies when he is trying to rush back to town to clear his name and falls into a mineshaft along the way. The misfortunes that befall Blackpool are so extreme and so intensely melodramatic that that they are almost diminished by their excess. An overuse of *pathos* can lead to a negative reaction by an audience; it can have the opposite effect on some readers because it is less believable, less relatable, and too ostentatious. Whether or not Blackpool's narrative is rhetorically successful will, as in any rhetorical situation, depend to a large extent on the willingness of readers to extend their sympathies and their level of appreciation for sentimental narratives.

[84] Although Blackpool's wife is very different from Dora in *David Copperfield* and from Catherine Dickens, first wives tend to be a bit of a hassle in Dickens's oeuvre. This is, of course, a particularly relevant issue in light of the recent discovery of Dickens's own attempts to move his wife out of the way to be with someone else. Although this did not happen until 1858, a full four years after the publication of *Hard Times*, Dickens seems to explore this theme not only in *Hard* Times but also in *David Copperfield* (where Dora, somewhat conveniently for David, dies young). For a full account on the recent discovery of Dickens's own troubles with his wife, see John Bowen's "Unmutual Friend" in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 February 2019.

When he counters Slackbridge on the stage, many members of the audience pity him for his pathetic appearance: "They looked at Stephen's worn face, rendered more pathetic by the homely emotions it evinced; and, in the kindness of their nature, they were more sorry than indignant" (116; bk. 2, ch. 4). Nevertheless, Blackpool fails at persuading the audience of his peers and is then shunned by them for the rest of the novel. He is no more successful with his speech to Bounderby, who wants to know what "you people, in a general way, complain of" (122; bk. 2, ch. 5). Stephen explains:

> Sir, I were never good at showin o't, though I ha had'n my share in feeling o't. 'Deed we are in a muddle, sir. Look round town—so rich as 'tis—and see the numbers o' people as has been broughten into bein heer, fur to weave, an to card, an to piece out a livin', aw the same one way, somehows, twixt their cradles and their graves. Look how we live, an wheer we live, an in what numbers, an by what chances, and wi' what sameness; and look how the mills is awlus a goin, and how they never works us no nigher to ony dis'ant object—ceptin awlus, Death. Look how you considers of us, an writes of us, an talks of us, and goes up wi' yor deputations to Secretaries o' State 'bout us, and how yo are awlus right, and how we are awlus wrong, and never had'n no reason in us sin ever we were born. Look how this ha growen an growen, sir, bigger an bigger, broader an broader, harder an harder, fro year to year, fro generation unto generation. Who can look on't, sir, and fairly tell a man 'tis not a muddle? (122)

Although rendered in an accent, this speech is very eloquent. Blackpool's language use is figurative and contrastive: he gives examples, speaks about life's journey from the cradle to the grave, and offers deep insights into the fundamental human needs that the workers of Coketown are denied. His speech is filled with repetition, parallel form, and imagery all leading up to the rhetorical question at the end. He also highlights the point already made that those who hold the power, politicians, get their truths from the masters and not from the hands. Bounderby gets to tell the stories of the hands, and as seen earlier, he does not do so in a truthful manner. Having listened to this speech, Bounderby does not comment on the statements in detail but seems to accept them as fact when he asks for a solution. Blackpool's polemical claim that the masters are always right and the workers always wrong would have been understood as pure fact by Bounderby and Blackpool's appeals to *pathos* have no chance with someone as unsentimental as him—Blackpool's rhetoric fails again. For Bounderby, unmoved by Blackpool's appeals, the solution to the problem is much easier: remove Blackpool.

While the narrator actively works to frame Slackbridge's speech negatively, he does not do so with Blackpool's, and instead, allows the scene to develop uninterrupted. This direct opposition of two speeches with the same intended effect yet made in very different ways and proposing very different means of achieving the goal highlights that rhetoric matters. Blackpool's sincerity increases his *ethos*, and his lack of aggression suggests to readers that he is the one who should be

listened to and not Slackbridge. He makes an impassioned speech claiming that the workers need hopes and dreams, that they need to love and like, and that they need "memories and inclinations" because without these, the 'muddle' will be too much to handle (124; bk. 2, ch. 5). Blackpool makes a claim against the philosophy of fact by stating that the 'muddle' will not be resolved until the workers are no longer regulated like machines (124). Because of this speech, he is fired and has to leave Coketown as it will not be possible for him to find work there any longer after having spoken his mind so clearly.

His altruistic streak helps Blackpool to not feel completely demoralized by the situation as he reasons with himself that his leaving town will be better for Rachael:

> Herein, too, the sense of even thinking unselfishly aided him. Before he had so much as closed Mr. Bounderby's door, he had reflected that at least his being obliged to go away was good for her, as it would save her from the change of being brought into question for not withdrawing from him. (126; bk. 2, ch. 6)

Rachael is Blackpool's means of survival: "As the shining stars were to the heavy candle in the window, so was Rachael, in the rugged fancy of this man, to the common experiences of his life" (77; bk. 1, ch. 13). In this analogy, Rachel is something outside of the common world that gives his life more than common experience. The narrative suggests that love and hope, as expressed through his "rugged fancy," are necessary for a man like Stephen Blackpool to continue living.

Blackpool's immediate consideration of Rachel highlights his moral worth, as does his ability to resist anger and aggression. His speeches are pleading, but in contrast to Slackbridge and some other protestors, he never expresses any violent sentiments:

> I ha' fell into th' pit, my dear, as have cost wi'in the knowledge o' old folk now livin, hundreds and hundreds o' men's lives—fathers, sons, brothers, dear to thousands an thousands, an keepin 'em fro' want and hunger. I ha' fell into a pit that ha' been wi' th' Fire-damp crueller than battle. I ha' read on't in that public petition, as onny one may read, fro' the men that works in pits, in which they ha' pray'n an pray'n the lawmakers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em, but to spare 'em for th' wives and children that they loves as well as gentlefolk loves theirs. When it were in work, it killed wi'out need; when'tis let alone, it kills wi'out need. See how we die an no need, one way an another—in a muddle—every day! (216; bk. 3, ch. 6)

Blackpool's appeal in this final speech is to *pathos* and to the shared human needs that all men have but that are denied to the workers. In the introduction to the 2003 Penguin edition of the novel, Kate Flint claims that Stephen is "another highly sanitized, unthreatening member of the masses ... especially worthy of our interest through not being made a representative of the workers but through being ostracised by them" (xxiv–xxv). It is difficult to see how Blackpool can be both an "unthreatening" member of the masses and simultaneously ostracised by them for

threatening their cause, but Flint has a point in suggesting that it is this particular tension between group and individual identity that is of relevance in the novel. In the older Penguin edition, David Craig describes Blackpool as "the outstanding weakness of the novel ... the mixture of sentimentality and melodrama ... This part of the novel is thus peculiarly shaky" (28–29). Truly, this part of the plot seems weaker and less pronounced, less scathing than the criticism presented through Gradgrindism, for example. However, Craig's assessment and Schor's claim that Blackpool "offers as political analysis only the tag-phrase ''tis a muddle'" (68) are much too reductive and do not take into account the harsh criticism of the way in which factory owners and politicians alike make sense of the workers' situation, the way in which they do not treat them as human beings, and the way in which they willingly risk the lives of their employees.

Blackpool's rhetoric contains a strange tension. The speeches seem to be those of an educated man but "classed" down by a heavy accent. It is difficult to imagine the ideal audience for them. How would a middle-class audience build pity with a man who is claiming that most factory owners are willing murderers? On the other hand, the working-class readers may not side with him either for his earlier attack on Slackbridge's speech. The narrator comments on the manner in which Blackpool delivers this speech: "He faintly said it, without any anger against anyone. Merely as the truth" (216). Again, a character who is close to death speaks the "truth" and thus invokes a higher judgment in the narrative—one that cannot be calculated. On the second level of persuasion, this "truth" has a distinct purpose: it appeals to the readers, suggesting that this is the truth on which decisions should be based. The narratorial commentary at the end of this scene praises Blackpool's selfless behavior: "It was soon a funeral procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his Redeemer's rest" (217; bk. 3, ch. 6). The strong sentimental tone of this final narratorial comment renders the scene an appeal to *pathos*. Whether or not it is successful is left to each individual reader to decide.

Pity, Kindness, and Sentiment: Individualism or Altruism?

The novel presents pity and kindness as fundamental human virtues, and these virtues work to establish characters as ethical.[85] Louisa, brought up as a student of the philosophy of fact, shows through her kindness for Sissy and later Blackpool that she is not a dogmatic follower of this doctrine. When Sissy comes to Bounderby's house, she accidentally forgets to curtsy to Mrs. Sparsit, for which Bounderby scolds her in his bombastic manner. A scene ensues in which Sissy bears

[85] In "Theme, Form, and the Naming of Names in *Hard Times*," Philip V. Allingham suggests that the key to decoding much of the moral and themes of the novel lies in analyzing the origin and meaning of the characters' names.

some resemblance to the young Oliver Twist, who also constantly finds himself in overwhelming situations to which he responds emotionally: "Sissy, who all this time had been faintly excusing herself with tears in her eyes, was now waved over by the master of the house to Mr. Gradgrind" (44; bk. 1, ch. 7). When Sissy obviously begins to feel the sorrow of losing her father again, Louisa pities her: "It was only now, when her sorrow broke out, that Louisa looked at her" (44). Moreover, whenever Sissy asks Gradgrind whether he has received a letter from her father, Louisa feels for her:

> Louisa would suspend the occupation of the moment, whatever it was, and look for the reply as earnestly as Sissy did. And when Mr. Gradgrind regularly answered, 'No, Jupe, nothing of the sort,' the trembling of Sissy's lip would be repeated in Louisa's face, and her eyes would follow Sissy with compassion to the door. (55; bk. 1, ch. 9)

Sissy's emotional reaction has an effect on Louisa, who thereby shows that she is not a mere product of the philosophy of fact. She can be moved by appeals to *pathos* although she is unlikely to use them herself at this point. This scene thus has the double-effect of rendering Sissy worthy of pity and of showing that Louisa is capable of providing it.

Louisa also shows her natural kindness and instinct to pity another person when Blackpool turns to look at her for help after Bounderby fires him (124; bk. 2, ch. 5). Although she cannot or does not dare to respond in front of Bounderby, she later goes to Blackpool's home to offer him money. He does not want to accept it at first:

> Louisa looked, in part incredulous, in part frightened, in part overcome with quick sympathy, when this man of so much self-command, who had been plain and steady through the late interview, lost his composure in a moment, and now stood with his hand before his face. (130; bk. 2, ch. 6)

Blackpool renders himself a worthy receiver by humbling himself even more than he usually does and declaring that it will now be his life's task to pay Louisa back and that it will be an honor for him to do so (130). In this scene, Louisa is the ideal selfless giver and Blackpool the ideal humbled receiver.

Gallagher notes another implication that is also relevant in the rhetorical context of evoking sympathy: Stephen and Louisa are in similar situations, as both are trapped in relationships that make them miserable. Gallagher comments that "when Stephen and Louisa meet, they feel an immediate sympathy for one another" ("Family and Society in *Hard Times*" 177). It is likely that they do so because they can relate to the other's misery. Problematically, and as mentioned earlier, Louisa's gift to Blackpool is later discovered on him, and he is accused of having taken it in a bank robbery. Monetary gifts are often problematic in Dickens's fiction, which promotes rhetorical or emotional gifts of kindness over monetary gifts that could alleviate a specific economic shortfall.

Often in Dickens's works, women are moral examples apt to acts of kindness. In "On Strike," Dickens describes the working women of Preston as charitable and compassionate: "the greater part of the unmarried girls stopped here, to change, each sixpence, and subscribe her weekly penny in aid of the people on strike who had families" (329). In *Hard Times*, however, this picture is somewhat complicated. Rachael, who loves Blackpool, nevertheless cares devotedly for his alcoholic wife whenever she turns up. Stephen describes her as a virtuous woman: "Let me see thee setten by the bed. Let me see thee, a' so good, and so forgiving" (73; bk. 1, ch. 13). Rachael is immediately sceptical of Louisa's act of charity and does not want to get involved in this transaction. She later raises questions about the purpose of it:

> 'I am very, very sorry,' said Louisa. 'O young lady, young lady,' returned Rachael, 'I hope you may be, but I don't know! I can't say what you may ha' done! The like of you don't know us, don't care for us, don't belong to us. I am not sure why you may ha' come that night. I can't tell but what you may ha' come wi' some aim of your own, not mindin to what trouble you brought such a poor lad. I said then, Bless you for coming; and I said it of my heart, you seemed to take so pitifully to him; but I don't know now, I don't know!' (199; bk. 3, ch. 4)

This passage engages with the questions of whether charity and pity are useful and whether altruism can ever be unselfish and effective when it happens between different classes. Rachel also suggests that Louisa may only have acted in this way to relieve her own conscience without thinking about the consequences it would have for Blackpool, that her act of charity was rhetorical rather than truly kind. Finally, the passage is an example of a similar treatment that Blackpool has suffered and that Rachel is trying to resist: judging Louisa as one of the community of which she is a part. The readers know that Tom has been instrumental in framing Blackpool, so there is a sense of guilt by association that may rest on Louisa as well.

Mrs. Sparsit's pity is quite ostentatiously a rhetorical device to achieve certain ends. She uses it as a means of gaining power and reinforcing hierarchies. The narrator describes her particular kind of pity for Bounderby: "He had been married now, a year; and Mrs. Sparsit had never released him from her determined pity a moment" (93; bk. 2, ch. 1). Moreover, "Mrs. Sparsit's greatest point, first and last, was her determination to pity Mr. Bounderby" (151; bk. 2, ch. 8). Her pity is determined, which suggests that it is actively forced by her and underscores that the receiver may not actually want or need it. Presenting herself as a kind of Angel in the House, taking care of Bounderby and showing the new Mrs. Bounderby (formerly Louisa Gradgrind) how her husband should be taken care of, she constantly implies that Bounderby is to be pitied (153; bk. 2, ch. 8).[86] Here, pity is

[86] Referencing, of course, Coventry Patmore's poem of 1854. For a critical discussion of the concept, see Elizabeth Langland *Nobody's Angels: Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian England*.

much more important to the one offering it than the one receiving it. Pity ensures status and power in this particular scene, and this allows for a very interesting reading of it in the novel—one that is a development from the melodramatic and sentimental forms of pity exhibited in *Oliver Twist* and *A Christmas Carol*. In Dickens's earlier narratives, rhetorical success through the rhetoric of kindness is often related to class; mobility of status is connected with nobility of character. In *Hard Times*, those who are virtuous are not necessarily rhetorically successful. Dickens thus begins to see challenges with the earlier ideals of kindness and benevolence and explores them in the novel.

On the second level of persuasion, the narrator signals this to readers. He comments ironically on Mrs. Sparsit's altruism: "It soon appeared that if Mrs. Sparsit had a failing in her association with that domestic establishment, it was that she was so excessively regardless of herself and regardful of others, as to be a nuisance" (151; bk. 2, ch. 8). Mrs. Sparsit inverts everything that is generally considered good. What might appear to be a virtue in another person is often a nuisance or vice in her:

> She was likewise deeply apologetic for wanting the salt; and, feeling amiably bound to bear out Mr. Bounderby to the fullest extent in the testimony he had borne to her nerves, occasionally sat back in her chair and silently wept; at which periods a tear of large dimensions, like a crystal earring, might be observed (or rather, must be, for it insisted on public notice) sliding down her Roman nose. (151)

In this extremely funny description of Mrs. Sparsit's characteristics, readers learn about her ostentatious demand for pity even though there is no reason for it. Her crocodile tears require "public notice," and she apologizes for all the wrong reasons. Her character highlights the danger of rhetoric when it is used intentionally and manipulatively. She uses pity and humility as means to an end and thereby makes a mockery of those who really are worthy of pity and charity. While it works on the first level of persuasion, on the second level, it highlights the importance that, in a sustainable society, a successful rhetor is also a *vir bonus*.

Another means of persuasion that appears virtuous and truthful in Oliver Twist and is corrupted by Mrs. Sparsit is the use of tears to achieve one's goal or to inspire pity in others. In *Oliver Twist,* tears are frequently represented as means of eliciting pity, but Mrs. Sparsit's tears, as opposed to those of Oliver, are not authentic: "'Sir,' whispered Mrs. Sparsit, 'my nerves are at present too much shaken, and my health is at present too much impaired, in your service, to admit of my doing more than taking refuge in tears'" (190; bk. 3, ch. 3). Although the novel calls for sensual experience to counter the doctrine of fact, Mrs. Sparsit's sentiment is fake and thus complicates the understanding of it as virtuous. This raises the question of performance in relation to rhetoric and underlines the importance of the *vir bonus* motif. Rhetorical means of persuasion are dangerous and misleading if they are not used by a morally admirable individual toward ethical ends. In this way, the novel

can again be seen as a development of themes that I have discussed in the earlier works. It plays with aspects that are elsewhere taken seriously, for example, with Mr. Bounderby's childhood suffering and Mrs. Sparsit's pity and tears.

Unvirtuous Rhetoricians

While characters such as Mrs. Sparsit and Bounderby use a variety of means to achieve their dishonest personal goals, they are not the most dangerous rhetoricians of the novel, mainly because they are not very good at making people believe them (although Bounderby does so for a while). Harthouse and Slackbridge, the union leader, however, are truly dangerous rhetoricians, each of them for very different reasons. Harthouse, the bored young gentleman from London, is reminiscent of a similar character in *David Copperfield*, James Steerforth. Steerforth's main goal is also to entertain himself in any way possible, and both lack the moral scruples that might prevent them from putting their superior rhetorical skills to use toward immoral ends. Slackbridge, on the other hand, is a union leader and a populist who tries to convince the workers to unite against the masters; he also turns them against Blackpool. The novel resists conclusions about class connections when it comes to rhetoric and morality. Instead, it suggests that both of these men are blinded by self-interest. Coles's claims that "what is wrong with the union from the point of view of *Hard Times* is not that it stirs up bitterness between those who ought to be in harmony, but rather that it crushes the life of the individual" (168). The lack of humanity and individualism that such a grouping presupposes is a major concern of the novel, but it seems also concerned with an angry mob that may rise up and threaten the status quo. In this respect, *Hard Times* goes against its otherwise strong subversive potential.

Through all these representations, the novel suggests that there is a dangerous kind of rhetoric, which can blind its audience much as appearances can. Both Tom and Louisa are mesmerized by Harthouse and unable to judge his character; they can only judge facts and his appearance suggests that he is a gentleman. As Harthouse is a skillful rhetorician, he knows his audience and what they want to hear as well as what interests them most. For example, when he speaks to Louisa and tries to catch her attention, he purposefully mentions her brother Tom because he knows how much she cares for him. Importantly, Harthouse makes no claim to being a good man: "I seem to be protesting that I am sort of a good fellow, when, upon my honour, I have not the least intention to make any protestation to that effect, and openly announce that I am nothing of the sort" (141; bk. 2, ch. 7). He has no need to make any claims to trustworthiness because his station and his wealth allow him to be whatever he wants to be. This exposes another inequality, one from which Bounderby profits as well: those who have power can make their own rules.

Meanwhile, those who are without means must rely on their labor to get on in the world; their *ethos* is not a given and, instead, must be worked for constantly.

Harthouse makes a number of grand claims: "The only difference between us and the professors of virtue or benevolence, or philanthropy—never mind the name—is, that we know it is all meaningless, and say so; while they know it equally and will never say so" (135; bk. 2, ch. 7). The narrator immediately comments in a way that makes Harthouse's exclamation questionable on the second level of persuasion:

> Why should she be shocked or warned by this reiteration? It was not so unlike her father's principles, and her early training, that it need startle her. Where was the great difference between the two schools, when each chained her down to material realities, and inspired her with no faith in anything else? What was there in her soul for James Harthouse to destroy, which Thomas Gradgrind had nurtured there in its state of innocence! (135)

However, Louisa is not surprised by Harthouse's claims about the meaninglessness of virtue because they stem from a similar doctrine as her father's. They are based on calculations rather than on emotions and thus lack the same central elements as Gradgrindism. Faith and inspiration, the passage suggests, make the difference. Interestingly, Harthouse seems to plot intrigue mainly because he is bored and because he can, which may imply that his actions are the consequences of his whims rather than the consequences of calculation. The rules that are declared under the doctrine of Gradgrindism do not apply to characters such as Harthouse or Bounderby. Instead, both use them as means to an end.

Slackbridge, though mostly ridiculed in the narrative, is nevertheless presented as a dangerous rhetorician. The narratorial commentary assumes delusions of grandeur on his part and names his ideas in the context of religious reference "the Gospel according to Slackbridge" (198; bk. 3, ch. 4). In his rhetoric, he creates a sense of an 'us' and a 'we': "the slaves of an iron-handed and grinding despotism," "friends," "fellow-sufferers," "fellow-workmen," and "fellow-men" (113; bk. 2, ch. 4). The narratorial commentary and omniscient narration in the first chapter in which Slackbridge appears invoke negative connotations as the narrator describes the "densely crowded and suffocatingly close Hall" where Slackbridge gives his speech to the workers (113). However, the narrator does not call it a speech; instead, he describes it as "froth and fume" similar to that coming out of the factories in Coketown. The visual description of the speaker's gestures is likewise eerie:

> He had declaimed himself into a violent heat, and was as hoarse as he was hot. By dint of roaring at the top of his voice under a flaring gaslight, clenching his fists, knitting his brows, setting his teeth, and pounding with his arms, he had taken so much out of himself by this time, that he was brought to a stop and called for a glass of water. (113)

The focus of the description lies on the delivery (*actio*) rather than the meaning (*inventio*) of the speech, which has the distinct effect of distancing readers from the speaker's message. The narrator makes it clear that the person delivering this speech, although physically in an elevated position and powerful because he has an audience to influence, is in fact morally much less virtuous:

> Judging him by Nature's evidence, he was above the mass in very little but the stage on which he stood. In many great respects, he was essentially below them. He was not so honest, he was not so manly, he was not so good-humoured; he substituted cunning for their simplicity, and passion for their safe solid sense. An ill-made high-shouldered man, with lowering brows, and his features crushed into an habitually sour expression, he contrasted most unfavourably, even in his mongrel dress, with the great body of his hearers in their plain working clothes. (113)

Slackbridge is presented as an agitator, a rather crude caricature of a union leader, and someone who only pretends to want the best for the hands. On the first level of persuasion, he is a successful rhetorician at least with some of the hands; but on the second level of persuasion, the narrator's description of him as "cunning," "not so manly," and "not so good-humoured" attacks his *ethos* and thus suggests to readers that they should be sceptical of his rhetoric. This is a moment in the novel where different currents seem to collide. There is nothing in Slackbridge's speech that should render him particularly dangerous, and yet the narrator takes great care to present him as a dangerous rhetorician. It is clear that the novel aims to present unionism and leaders like Slackbridge as troublesome, but readers here have to take the narrator's word for it as there is no other evidence.

While presenting the scene as dangerous and suggesting that emotions are running high, the narrator does not seem to want to paint a picture of the workers as being wrong either. However, he also does not quite grant their voices credibility:

> That every man felt his condition to be, somehow or other, worse than it might be; that every man considered it incumbent on him to join the rest, towards the making of it better; that every man felt his only hope to be in his allying himself to the comrades by whom he was surrounded; and that in this belief, right or wrong (unhappily wrong then), the whole of the crowd were gravely, deeply, faithfully in earnest; must have been as plain to anyone who chose to see what was there, as the bare beams of the roof, and the whitened brick walls. (114; bk. 2, ch. 4)

In this comment on the scene, the narrator uses highly figurative language to come to terms with what he describes. The responsibility of noticing is placed on the reader, as it was "plain to anyone who *chose* to see" (114; my emphasis). The scene highlights the justness of the cause while simultaneously suggesting that the wrong means are used to pursue it. The narrator represents Slackbridge in a clearly negative manner but also calls out the ignorance of those who are able to make a difference, suggesting that things may get violent if left unchanged.

Ignorance is one of the two main vices that are attacked in *A Christmas Carol*, and they continue to play an important role even in this narrative. However, ignorance seems to be an issue not only on the part of those who could help the workers but also on the part of the workers themselves. Blindly following someone like Slackbridge simply because he is a convincing rhetorician who offers what seem to be quick solutions and targets at which to direct one's anger and frustration is another form of ignorance and may be what the narrator refers to with "(unhappily wrong then)" (114). Community, which is typically a positive thing in the novels that I study, can also be dangerous when it leads to the formation of groups that may become radical. The persuasion on both the first and the second level appeals to the emotions: Slackbridge's speech does this, and the narrator's description of it does so too, which means that the narrator himself uses rhetorical tactics to achieve his goals even though these are the very means of persuasion he seems to warn against through the representation of Slackbridge.

Narratorial Commentary or Persuading the Readers

As the earlier parts of this chapter have already shown, the narrator has an important function in guiding the readers' sympathy. As in the novels I have already discussed, the narrator in *Hard Times* actively participates in shaping the narrative world. There are also moments, as Nussbaum suggests, in which readers are paralleled to characters and thereby suggestively aligned with the characters in the novel: "As Mr. Gradgrind wonders about 'this unaccountable fact,' [the fact being that people enjoyed reading novels after their long workdays] the reader of course notices that it is her own preferences and current activity that are being described" (891). Audience participation is an important rhetorical and literary tool that Dickens uses in the process of the novel's overall persuasion as well as in other endeavors throughout his career.

The preference for fancy over fact, which is one of the main themes of the novel, is visible in the narrator's use of literary and fictional allusions. At the very beginning of the novel, when readers are still learning about the philosophy of fact, the narrator comments on the schoolmaster's behavior by making an intertextual reference to Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves:

> He went to work in this preparatory lesson, not unlike Morgiana in the Forty Thieves: looking into all the vessels ranged before him, one after another, to see what they contained. Say, good M'Choakumchild. When from thy boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by and by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within—or sometimes only maim him and distort him! (13; bk. 2, ch. 2)

Using a genre of 'fancy' to make his point, the narrator acknowledges that he expects his readers to appreciate such a reference to the imaginative process and that they are thus different from the students, and in particular, from the students' teachers that the readers encounter in the novel. Moreover, the language used in the narrator's voicing of an address to M'Choakumchild is evocative of that used in some of the translations of the Bible. Finally, the mention of Morgiana may be a form of foreshadowing, as she has many characteristics that are similar to Sissy. Morgiana is a young, lower-class female heroine, and although much less pronounced, so is Sissy. She provides the pity and care for the characters who need it most and is the nearly invisible influence that, for example, moves Mr. Gradgrind to his eventual reformation.

While not the main focus of my discussion, religion is an important theme in the novel. In one commentary, the narrator discusses the religious denomination of the people of Coketown, stating that workers can choose among eighteen different denominations in the town but simply show no interest in going to church. The narrator mocks the opinions of the various societies and churches on this matter, stating that "a native organisation in Coketown itself" repeatedly asked for "acts of parliament that should make these people religious by force" (24; bk. 1, ch. 5). This line of thought continues as the narrator, with an ironic tone, presents the various amoral habits of the workers, who somehow cannot be convinced to go to church, "*would* get drunk" (25; bk. 1, ch. 5, original emphasis), take opium, and get sent to jail. All of this, the narrator explains, is stated in tables and figures and presented as fact. The narrator then turns to Gradgrind and Bounderby, who walk through Coketown:

> Then, came Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, the two gentlemen at this present moment walking through Coketown, and both eminently practical, who could, on occasion, furnish more tabular statements derived from their own personal experience, and illustrated by cases they had known and seen, from which it clearly appeared—in short it was the only clear thing in the case—that these same people were a bad lot altogether, gentlemen; that do what you would for them they were never thankful for it, gentlemen; that they were restless, gentlemen; that they never knew what they wanted; that they lived upon the best, and bought fresh butter, and insisted on Mocha coffee, and rejected all but prime parts of meat, and yet were eternally dissatisfied and unmanageable. (25)

In this section, the narratorial commentary shifts from general commentary to a free indirect discourse that voices Gradgrind's doctrine and directly addresses a group of "gentlemen". Dickens already used a similar description of a group of gentlemen in *Oliver Twist*. Here, Gradgrind's and Bounderby's views are presented; however, the tone of the narrator is clearly ironic, which suggests that he sees beyond the anecdotal evidence used to suggest that more workers are addicted and in jail than gentlemen. As readers have seen in the situation of Blackpool's wish for a divorce,

the *logos* that underlies the laws does not take into account men and women without means. Readers have thus been made aware that there is a fundamental difference in how the law is used on the different classes, which likely contributes to the difference in the prison population as well.

The narrator shapes the moral of the story. When Stephen and Rachael say goodbye, he adds movingly,

> It was but a hurried parting in the common street, yet it was a sacred remembrance to these two common people. Utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared creeds, the poor you will have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you! (133; bk. 2, ch. 6)

The reference to Matthew 26:11, "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" acts as a reminder of the duty that those who are better off have toward the poor, but it is not a financial duty. Rather, it is the duty of giving them time and space to be human and to cultivate their graces, fancies, and affections. The utilitarian doctrine and the New Poor Law that are mainly designed to stop the poor from having too much comfort and enjoyment for fear that they may reproduce are inverted here by suggesting that romance is the only thing that keeps the poor from revolting. This is a useful passage to conclude the analysis of *Hard Times* because it illustrates one of the possible alleviations to the current situation that the narrator stages: granting the poor enjoyment, sustaining their hopes, and respecting their humanity. If nothing changes, he warns, "Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you!" (133). The final appeal of the text is thus another appeal to the emotions of the readers: instilling pity but also fear.

All main characters appear in the final scene as the narrator shows the readers how they have fared in life. The ending of the novel implies a specific moral: Sissy, the one person who resisted the philosophy of fact and instead lived in line with her natural kindness and pity is the only character who seems fully content. She is also the only character who is able to see through the deceitful rhetoric of Harthouse in the telling scene discussed earlier. This moral on the first level of persuasion is coupled with a direct address to the readers and thus an appeal on the second level:

> Dear reader! It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be! We shall sit with lighter bosoms on the hearth, to see the ashes of our fires turn gray and cold. (236; bk. 3, ch. 9).

Reminiscent of Mrs. Gradgrind's death scene and the "Truth" (160; bk. 2, ch. 9) that the narrator claims she is then closer to than ever before, this last phase of narrative suggests to the readers that they should remember in light of their own mortality what will count when their "fires turn gray and cold" (236; bk. 3, ch. 9). In the paragraph leading up to this imploration, the narrator describes how well Sissy fares in life, how she tries "hard to know her humbler creatures," how she beautifies "their lives of machinery and reality," and how she does all of this "as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or pledge, or covenant, or fancy dress, or fancy fair; but simply as a duty to be done" (236). She does not subscribe to any doctrine but follows some higher sense of duty. The narrator presents her's as the ideal position from which to act and speak: Sissy is a *vir bonus*.

Readers are likewise reminded of their task to take what they have learned from the novel and apply it to their actual lives. Nussbaum comments:

> Addressing the reader as a friend and fellow agent, though in a different sphere of life, the authorial voice turns this reader's sympathetic wonder at the fates of the characters back on him or herself, reminding her that she too is on the way to death, that she too has but this one chance to see in the fire the shapes of fancy, and the prospects these suggest for the improvement of human life. (907)

Rhetorical success on the narrative level is only achieved by Sissy, but rhetorical success on the second level of persuasion depends entirely on the answer to the question that the narrator also poses to Louisa: "did Louisa see these things of herself?" (236; bk. 3, ch. 9). Do the readers see these things for themselves? While, for Louisa, "These things were to be" (236), for the reader, that question will have to be answered over and over again. *Hard Times* thus evades an ending for both Louisa and the readers; it calls them into responsibility and offers no foregone conclusions.

Chapter 5: *Litte Dorrit* or the Importance of Debt

This chapter analyzes the rhetoric of credit and debt in *Little Dorrit*, serialized between 1855 and 1857, and seeks to uncover some of the inherent constructions of their financial and social forms. More specifically, the chapter investigates how credit and debt work in scenes of persuasion both on the first level, within the narrative, and on the second level, between text and readers. On the whole, the novel presents a paternalistic system that includes financial speculations and questionable acts of charity. Financial debt and credit are often associated with the paternalistic structures in the plot and need to be counterbalanced by the female characters' potential for and facilitation of social credit and debt, which are often expressions of sympathy and vital instruments in sustaining community.

Several critics have pointed to credit and debt relations in literature as interesting aspects of study. In *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740–1914*, Margot C. Finn discusses mainly financial credit from a historical perspective. However, she suggests that there is another facet to this sort of credit, in particular, in consideration of character, as her title suggests. While for Finn, social and financial forms are embedded, I propose that *Little Dorrit* explores an important distinction between the two. Finn argues that credit dealings fulfill an important task "in the creation and maintenance of social distinctions and economic disparaties" (9). However, while "oratory authors" like Samuel Smiles would see personal credit as directly influenced by moral behavior and economic success, the texts that Finn analyzes often represent characters who are successful "in sustaining their credit relations despite their economic deficiencies and moral failings" (321). Finn's analysis begins to outline a potential danger of the concept of credit and creditworthiness, a danger which, I argue, is enacted and explored in the scenes of persuasion in *Little Dorrit*. I argue that the novel exposes the concepts of credit and debt as deeply paradoxical, both on the first and on the second level of persuasion. In addition, the text connects these themes with the rhetorical concept of *ethos* and explores how both financial and social debt are used in scenes of persuasion. In the narrative world, credit does not always signify moral worth and debt not always a lack thereof. Indeed, a rigid interpretation of debt as inherently bad and blind faith in the seemingly most creditworthy characters cause the main tragedies of the novel.

One aspect that has divided critical opinion is the political nature of the novel. Paul Schlicke describes the text as Dickens's "most politically outspoken novel, and also the most overtly symbolic in structure" ("*Little Dorrit*" 342). In contrast, Francesca Orestano suggests, "In *Little Dorrit* rather than bold statement we find negotiation, and balance in quiet despair" (251). The rhetoric of the novel is arguably where these two views merge, as the scenes of persuasion have less overt morals than those in earlier texts but still construct an overall critical view of both individual and institutional shortcomings. Schlicke suggests that Dickens's "letters at the time indicate despair of the country's political process" ("*Little Dorrit*" 345). On 30 September 1855, for example, Dickens wrote to John Forster,

> I really am serious in thinking … that representative government is become altogether a failure with us, that the English gentilities and subserviences render the people unfit for it, and that the whole thing has broken down since that great seventeenth-century time, and has no hope in it. (*Letters 7*: 713)

However, Dickens's frustration was not only with the political system, but also with the general state of society.[87]

His frustration about the incompetence or unwillingness of institutions to help those whom they are supposed to be serving finds expression in the novel. Dickens wrote again to Forster on 29/30 March 1856: "Society, The Circumlocution Office, and Mr. Gowan, are of course three parts of one idea and design. Mr. Merdle's complaint, which you find in the end to be fraud and forgery, came into my mind as the last drop in the silver cream-jug on Hampstead-heath." (*Letters 8*: 79).[88] *Little Dorrit* presents a system that is dangerously out of touch with the experiences of the citizens, a theme which Dickens had already explored in *Hard Times*. Schlicke describes the novel's claustrophobic vision:

> As the book proceeds, examples of imprisonment—physical and psychological, institutional and individual, political, administrative, and economic—proliferate, establishing Dickens's vision of society at large as a kind of prison which entraps everyone save those (principally the story's heroine) who can find spiritual freedom through the power of love. ("*Little Dorrit*" 346)

[87] Further engagement with these themes can be found in Dickens's journalism of the time. In particular, the *Household Words* articles "A Poor Man's Tale of a Patent" (Oct. 1850), "Red Tape" (Feb 1851), "Prince Bull. A Fairy Tale" (Feb. 1855), and "Nobody, Somebody, and Everybody" (Aug. 1856) are relevant in this context. They can all be found at *DJO*.

[88] John Sadleir was an Irish MP, a financier and swindler, Junior Lord of the Treasury 1853, who committed suicide on Hampstead Heath. The cream jug mentioned in the passage was found by Sadleir's body (*Letters, Vol 8*, edited by Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Angus Easson, Footnote 3 and 4, p. 79).

Closely coupled with the theme of imprisonment that dominates *Little Dorrit* is the Victorian world of finance. In discussing Dickens's understanding of this world, Francis O'Gorman suggests that"he used capitalist systems effectively: investment, sound banking, profitable trading practices" (276). However, Dickens was also concerned with the individual's responsibility in the system and with "the moral standards of those *within* existing organisations" (276; original emphasis). These worries find expression in the novel's engagement with various forms of public and private debt and credit.

In *States, Debt, and Power: 'Saints' and 'Sinners' in European History and Integration*, Kenneth Dyson historicizes the moral judgments inherent when discussing credit and debt and the separation into "good" and "bad" debt that these imply. In particular, he stresses the "ultimately subjective basis of the knowledge that frames the way in which creditor-debtor relations are represented and debated" (65). While the timeline of his discussion can be inconsistent, Dyson shows that credit and debt have fascinated thinkers since Aristotle. He also claims, "The world of credit and debt is properly a realm of narrative reasoning" (66). Credit and debt relations play an important role in the rhetoric of *Little Dorrit*, where their fictional nature is made explicit. They structure the main plot and inform the moral judgments in the world of the characters, and by extension, the world of the readers.

The novel presents both resistance and submission to advancing economic forces and an increasing lack of clarity in defining self and other. It does so by establishing two different kinds of credit and debt, which are closely intertwined in the narrative: one that is based on the exchange of money and commodities (financial) and one that is based on social interactions and non-monetary gifts such as kindness (social). While financial debt is often detrimental to a character, the novel suggests that social debt is an important aspect of a functioning society. Reliable and humanely managed lines of credit are, of course, important for social mobility, but there is a notable lack of these in the novel. Social credit and debt, on the other hand, are unavoidable and actually desirable in a community because they are the basis of human relationships and sources of ethical behavior.

Peter Selby discusses the relevance of the concept of debt in relation to Christian doctrine in *Grace and Mortgage: The Language of Faith and the Debt of the World*. He claims that "debt brings about a power relationship and creates a 'bond' … that is often unequal and constraining" (3). Arguing that the modern understanding of Christ is deeply influenced by our understanding of the relationships between credit and debt, Selby asks a question that seems also deeply to concern Dickens in this novel: "Is a human life conceivable that is not in some sense constituted by such debts that are beyond repayment?" (146). *Little Dorrit* struggles with concepts of benevolence and charity. However, it also struggles with characters who live

completely independent of any indebtedness, be it to God, to others, or to themselves.[89]

In "Novels of the 1850s: *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*," Hilary Schor claims, "Neither unions nor charity; neither parliamentary machinations nor reformist politics; none of these external forms of political transformation works, or is even seriously considered in these novels" (75). Though it is unclear how charity constitutes a tool for political transformation, Dickens is certainly less convinced of its positive effects in the later novels than he is in *A Christmas Carol* or *Oliver Twist*. Paul A. Jarvie suggests in *Ready to Trample on All Human Law: Financial Capitalism in the Fiction of Charles Dickens* that "old-fashioned individual goodness … is simply insufficient to deal with the world of financial capitalism as *Little Dorrit* presents it" (111). The main rhetorical aim of the novel seems to be to warn against conceptions of *ethos* as based on financial credit and bad debt and to promote the pre-capitalist ideas of social credit and debt incurred through gift giving, as discussed by anthropologists such as Marcel Mauss.[90] Finn highlights the relevance of Mauss's theory of gift giving to the formation of communities and the upholding of social hierarchies: "In Mauss's *Gift*, credit constitutes the lifeblood of human relations, helping both to forge viable social groups and to distribute power within them" (7). In a manner of speaking, credit relations are thus essential to communities, and *Little Dorrit* explores both the positive and the detrimental consequences of this.

In many ways, the representations of rhetorical success and failure are much more subtle in this novel than they are in some of the earlier novels, and congenial endings for the characters are fewer and less pronounced. While some of the earlier works allow minor characters to interrupt the plot and lighten the mood, *Little Dorrit* offers fewer moments of comic relief. The change in style and tone of Dickens's narratives that I already noted in my discussion of *Hard Times* continues, but the mechanisms and tools that Dickens has introduced in his earlier novels to help the readers decode worthy and unworthy rhetoricians and causes remain unchanged. This novel is less explicit in teaching its readers how to decode the narrative but trusts that these readers are familiar with the codes that the earlier novels have established. The analytical focus of this chapter lies on uncovering the overarching framework that renders certain rhetorical means ethical and others not—the means of persuasion that render an individual a *vir bonus*. These rhetorically established hierarchies share a common theme—debt and credit. The various ways in which characters fashion their *ethos* are presented as deeply influenced by forms of credit and debt.[91]

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[89] In *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter*, James R. Kincaid argues that Little Dorrit is "rooted … deeply in Christian pessimism" (193).

[90] For more, see Marcel Mauss's *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*.

[91] Stephen Greenblatt coins the term 'self-fashioning' in his 1980 study, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, in which he discusses "the role of human autonomy in

Creditworthiness, *Ethos*, and Accountability

Accountability is an important aspect in the discussion of debt and credit because it is linked to credibility and *ethos*. As defined earlier, *ethos* is the position of credibility from which persons (or characters) present their arguments. In "The Rhetoric of Credit, the Rhetoric of Debt: Economic Arguments in Early America and Beyond," William Rodney Herring discusses the importance of the person in a credit and debt interaction: "credit depends upon credibility or, to put it more plainly, … credit has everything to do with ethos" (67). *Ethos* can thus be understood as a person's creditworthiness. That is, in a rhetorical situation, the receiver of the argument becomes the investor who has to decide whether or not the speaker or sender of the argument is trustworthy and whether or not they should extend the credit of listening to them, of believing them, and of feeling for them. In a credit economy, it is the credibility of individuals, their *ethos*, which is their most important commodity and a vital ingredient to their rhetorical success. Herring argues,

> If one can describe a person as creditworthy or, to frame this in broader terms, trustworthy, then one can feel confident about the kinds of actions he or she will perform. And confidence in the future behavior of debtors is essential to the efficient operation of a credit economy. (67)

Ethos, however, can also be fashioned deceptively. When it is used as a means of achieving rhetorical ends, it becomes problematic both for the community whose internal credit and debt relations are threatened as a result and for the character, as *Little Dorrit* suggests.

Before turning to a closer analysis of private debt and credit and the *ethos* of individual characters, I want to highlight the connection that the novel makes between private and public accountability. Lionel Trilling comments on the general "powers of particularization" that are presented alongside the "powers of generalization and abstraction" (245). The issue of understanding complex contexts through abstraction has already been addressed in the chapter on *Hard Times*, particularly in the character of Sissy Jupe, but it continues to influence the imagination of Dickens even in this work. Poovey argues that "the abstractions with which nineteenth-century social scientists represented their analytic objects foreclosed the possibility that skeptics could know the actual particulars that political economists claimed to analyze except through the representations that took their place" (156). This criticism, so clearly represented through Sissy's inability to make sense of the representations without putting them into a context of felt

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the construction of identity" (256). It is my contention that the term is also useful when describing the means by which characters actively shape their *ethos* on the first level of persuasion.

experience, becomes even more extreme in *Little Dorrit*, where everything related to government, law, and financial structures is obscured to the point of unintelligibility. That, in turn, makes it easier for Mr Merdle, and the Barnacles and Stiltstalkings to profit from the system.

Little Dorrit investigates the theme of general and specific as it moves in and out of staging issues as matters of individual fault and systematic failure. Patrick Brantlinger argues that Dickens's criticism steers clear of the Bank of England (159): "Dickens tends to portray the destruction wrought by money in terms of its private effects, whereas he ultimately exonerates or misrecognizes the public institutions charged with the production and regulation of money … as virtuously constructive" (157). Brantlinger's claim holds in so far as *Little Dorrit* does focus on the private rather than the public effects of the destructive force of money. However, the Circumlocution Office exposes an inherent lack of accountability in the governing system: "Whatever was required to be done, the Circumlocution Office was beforehand with all the public departments in the art of perceiving—HOW NOT TO DO IT" (*Little Dorrit* 119; bk. 1, ch. 10, original emphasis). In addition, the novel presents an inherent question of value that is construed through descriptions of financial and social debt and credit relations. Paul A. Jarvie suggests, "it is quite impossible to determine true 'worth,' since exchange-value is an artificial construction, a societal judgement call, whereas use-value is real" (90). Worth and value have become fictions, and the true value or worth of a thing, such as that of a relationship or a situation, has become obscured.

Mr Merdle

The Merdle plot stresses the dangers of speculative schemes and, although construed primarily as the personal failure of the character Merdle, it is clear that his crimes are representative of a greater epidemic and that society's inability to uncover his schemes is almost as problematic as the crime itself.[92] Jarvie claims that Merdle is "an absolute nullity of a character who serves only as an enabler and a figure for a whole society's generalized capitalistic greed" (81). However, Mr Merdle is more than a mere figure. His quiet and yet extremely calculated approach to convincing Mr Dorrit to invest with him, for example, presents him as a character who shifts between invisibility and cunning. In "Spectacle and Speculation: the Victorian Economy of Vision in *Little Dorrit*," Ronald R. Thomas notes, "Merdle is both fact and symbol in the text" (41). He represents not only the personal failure and crime of a banker but also "the entire phenomenon of centralised and mystified control of global markets by financial speculation" (41).

[92] In addition, Guy notes that individualism and interventionism are not mutually exclusive for Victorians, who often sought solutions to systematic issues through individual change (see, for example, p. 44).

At first sight, Mr Merdle has the strongest *ethos* of all the characters in the novel, but on the second level of persuasion, readers are told that he is not a confident man: he is in awe of his butler and hides behind his wife. Mr Merdle's *ethos* also begins to fail on the first level of persuasion, as the 'facts' on which he has built his name become exposed as fictions, similar to Mr Bounderby's in *Hard Times*. Before the exposure of Mr Merdle's fiction, the narrator describes his status in the following manner:

> Mr Merdle came home, from his daily occupation of causing the British name to be more and more respected in all parts of the civilised globe, capable of the appreciation of world-wide commercial enterprise and gigantic combinations of skill and capital. For, though nobody knew with the least precision what Mr Merdle's business was, except that it was to coin money, these were the terms in which everybody defined it on all ceremonious occasions, and which it was the last new polite reading of the parable of the camel and the needle's eye to accept without enquiry. (416–417; bk. 1, ch. 33)

Mr Merdle's status is that of a businessman; however, there is a lack of clarity about the origin of his wealth, so he is removed from anything tangible. Dennis Walder discusses the status of Mr Merdle's convictions in an attempt to determine his conscience and status in the novel:

> There is no sign that Merdle has any personal religion, much less that he shares Mrs Clennam's particular brand of hypocrisy, although it is perhaps significant that he also 'imprisons' himself in guilt by that tell-tale handcuffing gesture Dickens gives him. (185)

This gesture and Mr Merdle's eventual suicide suggest that he does have a conscience, so paradoxically, by extinguishing his *ethos* on the first level, his *ethos* on the second level may slightly improve.

Mr Merdle's *ethos* differs from the strategically self-fashioned *ethos* of Blandois that I discuss later.[93] In short, it is unclear how far Mr Merdle actively fashions his role and how far society simply ascribes it to him, although he does use the situation to his best advantage and he does make active choices to keep his surface polished by marrying someone like Mrs Merdle. His intention in marrying Mrs Merdle is clear. He states what role he wishes his wife to play in society: "Mrs Merdle … You supply manner, and I supply money" (419; bk. 1, ch. 33). He married her because her exterior was a perfect match:

> This great and fortunate man had provided that extensive bosom, which required so much room to be unfeeling enough in, with a nest of crimson and gold some fifteen

[93] Please note that I refer to this particular character as Blandois in this study. In the novel he has three different names, so some scholars may also refer to him as Rigaud or Lagnier.

> years before. It was not a bosom to repose upon, but it was a capital bosom to hang jewels upon. (265; bk. 1, ch. 21)

The paradox that the narrator uses in describing her is typical of his mocking tone throughout the novel. Her appearance is all surface, on which Merdle can display his riches. On the whole, the character of Merdle exposes the fickleness of the exterior when trying to determine a character's true *ethos*. Society is blinded by these symbols of status and does not look beyond them, thereby facilitating Mr Merdle's fraudulent schemes.

There is an artificiality to the beauty of Mrs Merdle, for example, that seems to go hand-in-hand with her lack of moral qualities:

> The lady was not young and fresh from the hand of Nature, but was young and fresh from the hand of her maid. She had large unfeeling handsome eyes, and dark unfeeling handsome hair, and a broad unfeeling handsome bosom, and was made the most of in every particular. (257; bk. 1, ch. 20)

Appearances are important means of judging a character's *ethos*, but they can also be misleading, and this, as the novel suggests, can have detrimental consequences. Moreover, the narrator frequently repeats the word "unfeeling" in his description of Mrs Merdle, which makes a significant connection to sentiments and the role they play in determining moral worthiness. By engaging with irony and paradox as modes of representation, the novel asks, 'What happens when rhetoric is used deceptively or is decoded incorrectly?' and 'What happens when that which seems true is not?'

O'Gorman sees in Mr Merdle a "disconcerting ironisation of Dickens himself, a man making profit through the circulation of stories, claims, and fictions" (278). The connection he draws between the author and characters who invent fictions for themselves to make some kind of profit from them is very fitting and can certainly be seen as a caricature of Dickens's himself. However, Mr Merdle is not a good example of this ironic twist because there is no evidence of him actively circulating "stories, claims, and fictions" (278). Rather, it is society that does this for him. Mr Merdle functions as a warning to the readers of the novel against keeping false gods, a warning similar to that which Scrooge receives from the girl that he loved in his youth.[94] The narrator comments with an ironic tone on Mr Merdle's value for Society and his interest in it:

> He was the most disinterested of men. – did everything for Society, and got as little for himself, out of all his gain and care, as a man might. That is to say, it may be supposed that he got all he wanted, otherwise with unlimited wealth he would have

[94] Compare *A Christmas Carol*, pp. 37–38, where Scrooge's former girlfriend breaks up with him because he values money more than her.

> got it. But his desire was to the utmost to satisfy Society (whatever that was). (266; bk. 1, ch. 21)

Mr Merdle's fraud is foreshadowed in this chapter, but Society is unable to perceive it as the complaint, the "shadow" of which "was faint enough as he moved about among the throng, receiving homage" (272; bk. 1, ch. 21). His character highlights the potential of fraudulent individuals and the inability of society to question what lies behind shimmering appearances. In "Recognition or Reification?: Capitalist Crisis and Subjectivity in *Little Dorrit*," Ben Parker claims, "The financial crash in the novel is not shown as systemic to the market, but as a freak 'criminal' glitch therein" (135). The Merdle plot is the representation of an individual crime and a society that has lost the ability to judge fact from fiction. As such, it is not a critique of the entire system, but an exploration of the ways in which criminal individuals can use it to their advantage.

In "Mr Merdle's Complaint," no one but the Merdles are mentioned by name. All other characters are addressed by their profession, which, on the one hand, produces a de-individualizing effect, yet, on the other hand, makes the criticism more general and less personal. Given that "Bar," "Treasury," "Bishop," and "Physician" (264–265; bk. 1, ch. 21) are all unfeeling and calculating, none of them are able to see through Mr Merdle's façade behind which the truth of his failed business ventures and fraud loom in the form of a "complaint". Dickens presents abstractions here which he quite fervently criticized as a means of making sense of the complexities of human nature through the character of Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times*. It seems that those who can only make sense of the world in abstractions and generalizations and lack the ability to feel are also worse at judging a good rhetorician from a dangerous one. The rhetorical move of using abstractions mirrors the criticism made of these characters:

> The bosom, moving in Society with the jewels displayed upon it, attracted general admiration. Society approving, Mr Merdle was satisfied. He was the most disinterested of men, - did everything for Society, and got as little for himself, out of all his gain and care, as a man might. (265–266; bk. 1, ch. 21)

This description relies heavily on irony. Society chooses to put Mr Merdle on a pedestal aspiring to impress him to share in some part of his grandeur. His status is another marvel of circumlocution in the novel. He presents himself as particularly wealthy and grand, society invests in him because of this misguiding *ethos*; and then his *ethos* as a wealthy businessman is strengthened further because society helps to fashion it.

On the second level of persuasion, the Merdle plot may be read as a warning against increasingly uncertain schemes of speculation, credit, and financial gain. Humphry House claims in *The Dickens World*, "Speculation … is a form of suicide rather than a way of getting on in the world" (59). The Merdle plot draws a grim

picture of speculation, blind faith in appearances, and elaborate fictions built on little substance:

> All people knew (or thought they knew) that he had made himself immensely rich; and, for that reason alone, prostrated themselves before him, more degradedly and less excusably than the darkest savage creeps out of his hole in the ground to propitiate, in some log or reptile, the Deity of his benighted soul. (581; bk. 2, ch. 12)

Mr Merdle's *ethos* is created to suggest creditworthiness. Other characters want to invest in his brand, to buy themselves a piece of his greatness, and Mr Merdle knows how to use this when selling his business ventures to potential investors. *Ethos* based on supposed wealth, the novel suggests, is a dangerous construct because the presentation of it obscures accountability. Indeed, a significant number of financially successful or seemingly successful characters in Dickens's novel later turn out to be frauds. A large amount of wealth, especially if acquired suddenly, is often not sustainable, which leaves the Meagles to serve as the sole example of a sustainable financial situation.

Although Mr Merdle is presented as very quiet and there is little evidence of his actively deceiving anyone, the scene in which he convinces Mr Dorrit to invest with him shows that he is rhetorically skillful and knows his audience well. When Mr Dorrit has come into money and Fanny has accepted Edmund, Mr Merdle invites Mr Dorrit to dine with him and during the meal begins to persuade him to invest in his ventures. Mr Merdle tries to convince Mr Dorrit by making it sound as though it would be a big favor part to allow such a thing: "You know we may almost say we are related, sir … and therefore, you may consider me at your service" (644; bk. 2, ch. 16). This rhetorical move is highly effective because it plays on Mr Dorrit's need to feel like a part of society. Mr Merdle continues to make the deal, appealing to Mr Dorrit: "It would not … be at the present moment easy for what I may call a mere outsider to come into any of the good things—of course I speak of my own good things—" (644). Receiving a favor from someone in Mr Merdle's position on the grounds that they will soon be family can be compared to a social contract, one in which Mr Dorrit is indebted to Mr Merdle in a way that gives him status and legitimacy as one of the investors.

After Mr Merdle's death, his schemes are finally exposed. The whispers about the nature of "his complaint" become louder until,

> [e]very partaker at his magnificent feasts would be seen to have been a sharer in the plunder of innumerable homes; every servile worshipper of riches who had helped to set him on his pedestal, would have done better to worship the Devil point-blank" (742; bk. 2, ch. 25).

In other words, his *ethos* as a trust-worthy and credit-worthy businessman collapses, and all his investors who thought of themselves as wealthy in both social and

monetary terms are instantly turned into paupers and frauds themselves. Much like in *Hard Times*, facts are sometimes only fictions, and the novel shows that decoding these is a complex rhetorical process. O'Gorman argues, "Financial fraud and writing fiction are implicitly, suggestively, entwined for Dickens, as for others" (278). Credit, although not discussed by O'Gorman, takes on another interesting role in this narrative exploration of fraud because it is also, as mentioned, inherently fictional. Moreover, O'Gorman suggests that the "financial fraudster has a habit of words" (278). While this is very much the case with Mr Bounderby in *Hard Times*, it is not so with Mr Merdle. He is often very quiet and lets his wife take the reins. The innocence that a lack of words and an inability to express oneself connoted in *Oliver Twist* is thus challenged in this character, who seems overwhelmed by his own schemes rather than innocent. The narrator comments on Mr Merdle's tendency to keep quiet: "The master-mind of the age, true to its characteristic of being at all times a mind that had as little as possible to say for itself and great difficulty in saying it, became mute again" (731; book 2, ch. 24). The term "mute" suggests an involuntary element to this silence, an actual inability to express himself, which suggests passivity on Mr Merdle's part. On the second level of persuasion, this renders him somewhat pitiable, which complicates, as shown above, a straightforward reading of him as an inherently depraved criminal.

Mr Dorrit

As seen in the description of Mr Merdle, *ethos* formation is central to the novel, and Mr Dorrit is another character whose role in these processes needs to be investigated more carefully. Mr Dorrit continuously works on establishing and exhibiting his credit as he fashions fictions and shapes situations in the way that, he thinks, will seem most creditable to his desired place in society. In the character of Mr Dorrit, the novel also presents private forms of debt and credit, such as charity, pity, and kindness, as important sources of community, while public forms of debt and credit are obscured through institutions like the Circumlocution Office.

Mr Dorrit's *ethos* takes on two distinct but closely related forms in the two books: "Poverty" and "Riches". In "Poverty," he presents himself as the Father of the Marshalsea and aims to keep up the fiction of himself as the patriarch of the debtor's prison, a position that grants him seniority and implies that the other prisoners should seek out his patronage. The narrator describes Mr Dorrit's growing pride at being in the Marshalsea:

> A disposition began to be perceived in him, to exaggerate the number of years he had been there [in the Marshalsea]; it was generally understood that you must deduct a few from his account; he was vain, the fleeting generations of debtors said. (81; bk. 1, ch. 6)

Being imprisoned in a debtor's prison means that one quite literally no longer has any credit. An economic value is non-existent, as one is no longer able to act as an agent in the market.[95] However, Mr Dorrit aims to change this perception by insisting that his visitors adhere to rules of conduct that resemble those outside of the prison walls: "He received them [the visitors] in his poor room (he disliked an introduction in the mere yard, as informal—a thing that might happen to anybody), with a kind of bowed-down beneficence" (81). Performing the role of the patriarch of an institution of monetary debt thus ironically increases Mr Dorrit's social credit, at least on the first level of persuasion. On the second level, this self-fashioning on part of Mr Dorrit is presented at times mockingly and at times pitifully so that he is unlikely to succeed in convincing readers.

In Mr Dorrit's manner of interpreting rhetorical situations, he often inverts the meaning of credit and debt. For example, the narrator says, "It became a not unusual circumstance for letters to be put under his door at night, enclosing half-a-crown, two half-crowns, now and then at long intervals even half-a-sovereign, for the Father of the Marshalsea" (81). However, instead of accepting these as acts of charity, which they are meant to be, Mr Dorrit receives them as tokens of appreciation and respect, thereby inverting the hierarchical and rhetorical structure associated with charity: "He received the gifts as tributes, from admirers, to a public character" (81; bk. 1, ch. 6). On the first level of persuasion, Mr Dorrit claims the assertive definition of this act and thereby defines his identity in a way that suits his own idea of what his *ethos* should be. On the second level of persuasion, Mr Dorrit's act serves to characterize him as someone who may not be a criminal like Blandois or Mr Merdle, but who nevertheless equally inverts the logic of rhetorical situations to suit his own purpose. This also underscores a similarity between the rhetorical situation and the situation of gift giving, both of which are determined by the interplay of sender, text/act, receiver, and context.

Mr Dorrit's "genteel fiction" (89; bk. 1, ch. 7) is built on a number of instable variables, all of which threaten to crumble at various points in time. For example, when Mr Plornish (a Plasterer) gives Mr Dorrit "a little pile of halfpence" (82; bk. 1, ch. 6), Mr Dorrit acts outraged and insulted. This is 'too low' a person and 'too small' a gift for him to accept. The image that he has created of himself would be threatened by accepting it. However, after first seeming extremely insulted, he inverts the rhetorical structure of the charitable move by presenting his acceptance of the gift as the actual moment of charity: "Give me the money again … and I'll keep it, and never spend it" (82; bk. 1, ch. 6). He thus presents his acceptance of the

[95] The fact that Dickens repeatedly presents these individuals in what may be called mainstream Victorian fiction is noteworthy. By doing so, he restores economic value even to the fictions of these characters. Many thanks to Dr. James Williams for noting this when commenting on an earlier draft of this study.

money as an act of kindness and makes this the central purpose of the exchange, removing the threat of falling from his self-fashioned throne in the Marshalsea.

On the second level of persuasion, Mr Dorrit's *ethos* is a very different matter as the narrator is not always willing to accept Mr Dorrit's self-fashioning without a critical remark. For example, he comments on the development of the status and rank of the Father of the Marshalsea with a good dose of irony:

> In course of time, and in the very self-same course of time, the Father of the Marshalsea gradually developed a new flower of character. The more Fatherly he grew as to the Marshalsea, and the more dependant he became on the contributions of his changing family, the greater stand he made by his forlorn gentility. With the same hand that had pocketed a collegian's half-crown half an hour ago, he would wipe away the tears that streamed over his cheeks if any reference were made to his daughters' earning their bread. So, over and above her other daily cares, the Child of the Marshalsea had always upon her, the care of preserving the genteel fiction that they were all idle beggars together. (88–89; bk. 1, ch. 7)

This passage illustrates a complex interaction of debt and credit, of social value and economic value, and of public and private narratives. While Mr Dorrit presents himself as the socially creditable patriarch of the Marshalsea, he is, in fact, dependent on the tokens of appreciation that he receives from his community to sustain himself economically. Likewise, his daughters pretend that they are not working in order to sustain their own social credit as well as their father's although they have to work to ensure the financial credit of the family. The narrator presents Mr Dorrit's hubris and lack of consideration for Amy through invoking the paradoxical nature of his credit interactions.

Helping readers to understand Mr Dorrit's *ethos* on the second level of persuasion, the narrator presents his pompous behavior inside the Marshalsea:

> The brothers William and Frederick Dorrit, walking up and down the College-yard – of course on the aristocratic or Pump side, for the Father made it a point of his state to be chary of going among his children on the Poor side, except on Sunday mornings, Christmas Days, and other occasions of ceremony, in the observance whereof he was very punctual, and at which times he laid his hand upon the heads of their infants, and blessed those young Insolvents with a benignity that was highly edifying – the brothers, walking up and down the College-yard together, were a memorable sight. Frederick the free, was so humbled, bowed, withered, and faded; William the bond, was so courtly, condescending, and benevolently conscious of a position; that in this regard only, if in no other, the brothers were a spectacle to wonder at. (238; bk. 1, ch. 14)

Here, the Marshalsea serves as a microcosm of the outside world, and Mr Dorrit has ensured his position on top of the social hierarchy within it. In a way, the Marshalsea is like a stage on which the ideas that govern the outside world are performed, albeit

on a much smaller scale. Similar to Mr Casby on the outside of the prison walls, Mr Dorrit is the patriarch of the Marshalsea and collects money from his subjects who are fortunate enough to enjoy his patronage. Much like on the outside of the prison walls, benign patriarchs and capitalists grant their subjects help when they are in need and perform charitible acts on specific days of the year. The novel ridicules this structure and seems to question it explicitly by paralleling Mr Dorrit's patriarchy with that of Mr Casby. Both do not actually help their 'subjects' but rather use them as means of establishing their own superiority. Christmas Day, as mentioned in the previous passage, has already been discussed in terms of its pertinence (*kairos*) for charity in the analysis of *A Christmas Carol*. The novel stages this system of giving in the miniature world of the Marshalsea and begins to question its actual value and positive effects.

The performance of kindness and charity as means of establishing one's identity and *ethos* are also presented through Mr Dorrit's treatment of his brother, Frederick. The narration suggests that Mr Dorrit's worry about his brother is insincere and that it merely serves a rhetorical purpose. While still in the Marshalsea, he speaks to the turnkey as Frederick leaves one day and asks him to,

> [b]e so kind as to keep the door open a moment, Chivery, that I may see him go along the passage and down the steps. Take care, Frederick! (He is very infirm). Mind the steps! (He is so very absent). Be careful how you cross, Frederick. (I really don't like the notion of his going wandering at large, he is so extremely liable to be run over.). (242; bk. 1, ch. 19).

The excessiveness of Mr Dorrit's care for his brother does not seem to be warranted. Consequently, it appears to be carefully staged to serve his *ethos* building rather than to serve Fredrick. In this context, Mr Dorrit's charity for his brother is similar to that of Mrs. Sparsit's for Bounderby in *Hard Times*. The original purpose of charity and giving is removed as it becomes a mere tool for establishing power over another person and a means of establishing one's superior status.

Social credit and debt as well as financial credit and debt share similar characteristics. While within one specific financial interaction, credit represents the positive aspect of the interaction and debt the negative aspect, social credit and debt can also be positive for both a character and the community. Community is thus built on a very different understanding of the value of credit and debt than that which the financial market accepts. In her article, "Communities Built from Ruins: Social Economics in Victorian Novels of Bankruptcy," Leeann Hunter discusses bankruptcy "as a driving metaphor of the Victorian age" (138). Financial ruin, Hunter suggests, does not only have an economic effect, but also "damages [the] personal credit in the community" (138). This, however, is only true to a certain extent. Young upper-class gentlemen like Henry Gowan, for example, who cannot control their impulsive spending, do not have to keep it in check, as there always seem to be solutions for them that do not involve the workhouse. In addition, the

financial ruin that brought Mr Dorrit to the Marshalsea became coupled with a social gain that he developed throughout his stay there. Cutting ties with this form of social debt when he regains his financial credit proves to be detrimental for Mr Dorrit. In the second book of *Little Dorrit*, "Riches," Mr Dorrit's wealth has been re-established. However, although he regains social power and status, by giving up the need for community support, he also loses his self and his purpose in life, which eventually leads to his second ruin and finally his death. Before he leaves the Marshalsea, he declares,

> Everybody … shall be remembered. I will not go away from here in anybody's debt. All the people who have been – ha – well behaved towards myself and my family, shall be rewarded. Chivery shall be rewarded. Young John shall be rewarded. I particularly wish, and intend, to act munificently, Mr Clennam. (441; bk. 1, ch. 35)

Ironically, regaining his financial credit causes him to lose his social credit.

Once Mr Dorrit is rich, he tries to hide his past, particularly his long stay in the debtor's prison. In an effort to do so, he repeatedly tries to confirm his new status as a gentleman through declarations of it (not unlike Blandois). However, these constant declarations have the opposite effect as they draw attention to his status and thereby make it seem less natural than that of 'true' gentlemen such as Mr Meagles or even Henry Gowan. Indeed, he attacks anyone who seems to see through his genteel fiction. When he eats with Mr Merdle, the Chief Butler makes him particularly uneasy:

> That stupendous character looked at him, in the course of his official looking at the dinners, in a manner that Mr Dorrit considered questionable. He looked at him, as he passed through the hall and up the staircase, going to dinner, with a glazed fixedness that Mr Dorrit did not like."(646; bk. 2, ch. 16)

Mr Dorrit's propensity to give way to fancy is dangerous in this scenario as it develops into a form of paranoia in which he feels certain that the Chief Butler is out to get him: "It misgave him that the Chief Butler must have known a Collegian, and must have seen him in the College – perhaps had been presented to him" (646; bk. 2, ch. 16). The narration of Mr Dorrit's fear in free indirect discourse allows readers a perspective on his wandering mind and his need for sound reassurance. However, the Chief Butler seems to be particularly aware of the variety of genteel fictions around him because of his unique position as a servant who is privy to society's darkest secrets. Being part of society, and at the same time firmly separate from it, the Chief Butler can observe the fictions from the inside as well as from the outside of this community.

Although Mr Dorrit's fear of the Chief Butler seems exaggerated, in the scene following Mr Merdle's suicide, the Chief Butler proves to be a well-informed and a pragmatic sort of person. The Physician speaks to him to inform him of the death:

> ‘Mr Merdle is dead.’
> I should wish,’ said the Chief Butler, ‘to give a month’s notice.’
> ‘Mr Merdle has destroyed himself.’
> ‘Sir,’ said the Chief Butler, ‘that is very unpleasant to the feelings in one of my position, as calculated to awaken prejudice; and I should wish to leave immediate.’
> ‘If you are not shocked, are you not surprised, man?’ demanded the Physician, warmly.
>
> The Chief Butler, erect and calm, replied in these memorable words. ‘Sir, Mr Merdle never was a gentleman, and no ungentlemanly act on Mr Merdle’s part would surprise me.’ (740; bk. 2, ch. 15)

Challenging Mr Merdle’s use of the code of the gentleman, the Chief Butler shows in this exchange that he has been aware of the truth of Mr Merdle’s character all along. He himself has assimilated to the code of the gentleman, passing, as it were, as someone who holds the social credit of one without having the financial credit to sustain the status. Moreover, he is acutely aware of the importance of the portrayed role of the gentleman and of the threat that the nature of Mr Merdle’s plot will pose to his own status. His employability, which is his source of survival, is tied to Mr Merdle, and the circumstances of the latter’s death could negatively affect the Butler’s *ethos*. The character of the Chief Butler also mirrors some of the representations that readers have encountered in the earlier texts. He is not sentimental and reacts in a calculating manner to Mr Merdle’s death rather than with emotion. Like Bitzer in *Hard Times* or Scrooge before his persuasion (though differently than Bitzer), the Chief Butler makes sense of this situation entirely based on calculations and reason.

The instability of Mr Dorrit’s fiction and his fear of being found out find expression in several other scenes. When the Dorrit family arrives in Martigny, Mr Dorrit attacks the Innkeeper who has given his room to Mrs Merdle and is now offering him an ‘inferior’ room. Mr Dorrit sees this as a personal affront:

> ‘Is it possible, sir,’ said Mr Dorrit, reddening excessively, ‘that you have – ha – had the audacity to place one of my rooms at the disposition of any other person?’
>
> Thousands of pardons! It was the host’s profound misfortune to have been overcome by that too genteel lady. He besought Monseigneur not to enrage himself. He threw himself on Monseigneur for clemency. If Monseigneur would have the distinguished goodness to occupy the other salon especially reserved for him, for but five minutes, all would go well.
>
> ‘No, sir,’ said Mr Dorrit. ‘I will not occupy any salon. I will leave your house without eating or drinking, or setting foot in it. How do you dare to act like this? Who am I that you – ha – separate me from other gentlemen?’ (483; bk. 2, ch. 3)

In this passage, the narrative shifts in and out of direct speech as it presents Mr Dorrit's feeling of neglect and proper treatment upon his arrival. Mr Dorrit's worry anxiety that his earlier ruin could be uncovered occupies his mind constantly and leads to his perceiving anything that does not go exactly as he thinks it should as an immediate threat to his *ethos*. He reacts with outrage in an attempt to preserve it but disqualifies himself and his character through these reactions for a high society where emotional outbursts are not considered proper. His behavior suggests a general lack of humility and grace, but it also suggests that the nature of *ethos* formation is particularly difficult as it depends to a large extent on the way in which others perceive a character. Moreover, this is another instance of irony in the narrative: Mr Dorrit's desperation to preserve his creditworthiness is the very thing that undermines it.

Mr Dorrit's lack of humility and inability to deal with his past other than by repressing it is also evident in the scene in which John Chivery comes to visit him and brings him gifts, which Mr Dorrit perceives as charity and thus a threat to his new position. This scene clearly shows the change in Mr Dorrit's behavior after coming into money and his panic at attempting to preserve the fiction of himself as never having been an inmate in the Marshalsea. It also shows that rhetorical situations are largely dependent on context. This situation has happened many times before, but while to John it is a sign of respect, to Mr Dorrit, it is now an insult. Mr Dorrit physically attacks his visitor: "'Now, sir,' said Mr Dorrit, turning round upon him and seizing him by the collar when they were safely alone. 'What do you mean by this?'" (659–660; bk. 2, ch. 18). He perceives the visit as an insult (660), but John does not understand the reaction. When Mr Dorrit was still an inmate in the Marshalsea, John would bring him cigars, and they would be gratefully received as tokens of appreciation. However, now Mr Dorrit refuses John's kindness because it carries the old connotations and would thus return Mr Dorrit to the lower hierarchical position that he seeks to escape: "Damn your bundle [of cigars], sir! … I – hum – don't smoke.' 'I humbly beg your pardon, sir. You used to'" (660; bk. 2, ch. 18).

John Chivery reacts emotionally to being humiliated and 'put in his place' in this manner and states, "I never thought of lessening the distance betwixt us, I am sure. I know it's a liberty, sir, but I never thought you'd taken it ill. Upon my word and honor, sir … in my poor way, I am too proud to have come, I assure you, if I had thought so" (660). John is truthful to his character, and thus this scene both highlights John's kindness as well as Mr Dorrit's lack thereof because of his primary fixation on his status. In addition, this scene renders Mr Dorrit an unworthy receiver of kindness, which is also very problematic in the moral framework of the narratives analysed in this study. Seeing John's emotional reaction finally elicits some sympathy in Mr Dorrit (660), and he makes an effort to change the situation. Just like in the Marshalsea, he reverses the situation of power and claims to accept the gift for John's sake.

Renouncing social bonds means renouncing his former kind of social capital, and Mr Dorrit renounces both by refusing to allow any connections to his past self. He presents John with a cheque and gives away the cigars to the carriage driver later on. Speaking about *Little Dorrit* and *The Mill on the Floss*, Hunter claims, "The state of being in ruin, and therefore in debt to other individuals, is identified in these novels as a state of redemption and possible reform" (142). By denying this social debt to characters such as Chivery and also later on his daughter, Mr Dorrit enters into a sort of social and emotional ruin from which he cannot recover. Eventually, the facts of his former life take over his fictions as he is no longer able to keep up his rhetorical self-fashioning. Memory, much as in *A Christmas Carol*, is an important motif in this context. Orestano notes, "Memory—involuntary memory—is what determines the final public undoing of William Dorrit, who, during an elegant banquet in Rome, starts speaking about his former prison" (256). Mr Dorrit, unlike Scrooge, refuses to be humbled by his past and refuses to accept it as lessons for his present and future until it eventually destroys him.

Decoding Creditworthiness

Little Dorrit plays with different interpretations, both in determining *ethos* and in evaluating good and bad credit and debt. The rhetorical aspect highlights the importance of understanding the audience. In Dickens's article "A Walk in a Workhouse," for example, the narrator comments on a religious service given at the workhouse: "The service was decorously performed, though the sermon might have been much better adapted to the comprehension and to the circumstances of the hearers" (204). Different audiences require different means of persuasion.

The relevance of different audiences and thus different approaches to decoding the novel's meaning can be exemplified by taking a closer look at Blandois's fiction of being a gentleman. The narrative stages opposites to make a point much like in the other texts that I have discussed. Blandois's actions are similar to those of some of the gentlemen in the novel: his manners, his appearance, and even his criminal inclinations. The narrator comments: "He had a certain air of being a handsome man – which he was not; and a certain air of being a well-bred man – which he was not. It was mere swagger and challenge; but in this particular, as in many others, blustering assertion goes for proof, half over the world" (25; bk. 1, ch. 1). Paradoxically, Blandois's mimicry, appearance, and manners, which are so carefully crafted to portray the image of a gentleman, betray him as not actually being one. His appearance and manners may resemble one, but on the first level, he is too ostentatious about the status; and, on the second level, readers are told almost immediately that the manners are merely means to an end. Consequently, the reading of Blandois suggests that appearances and the *ethos* connected with these require careful decoding to ensure that they are built on sincerity. On the whole, the

novel seems sceptical of the moral qualities of gentlemen, but it does present a few good men, such as Arthur Clennam, possibly Mr Pancks, and also, to some extent, Mr Meagles, although in a less straightforward manner, as my discussion of the Tattycoram plot will show. Good men as opposed to the failing gentlemen in this novel fill their roles with good intentions and kindness (783–784; bk. 2, ch. 28), and those seem to be qualities that must be meant rather than merely performed.

Blandois has his own perception of society and how it should treat him. Under his pseudonym, Lagnier, he travels in France and Switzerland and meets Cavalletto to whom he then speaks about this: "I am a man … whom society has deeply wronged since you last saw me. You know that I am sensitive and brave, and that it is in my character to govern. How has society respected those qualities in me?" (147; bk. 1, ch. 11). This description of himself suggests that he may have the exact qualities expected in a gentleman, but somehow society still does not consider him one. This scene works persuasively in two directions. On the first level of persuasion, it suggests that Blandois is a self-fashioner, whose *ethos* is misleading and thus a threat within the framework of ethical rhetoric. On the second level of persuasion, his representation of what a gentleman should be invites readers to evaluate other gentlemen in the novel by these guidelines, and here readers may notice that many of them fall short.

Finn comments on gentility, the concept to which Blandois is committed: "ascriptions of gentility are, notoriously, unreliable indices of social status and economic worth" (182). A direct connection to rhetorical self-fashioning and a character's *ethos* can be derived from Finn's statement. Blandois suggests that he does everything that gentlemen do, and thereby ridicules the status of the gentleman: "I sell anything that commands a price. How do your lawyers live, your politicians, your intriguers, your men of the Exchange? How do you live? How do you come here? Have you sold no friend?" (783; bk. 2, ch. 28). The representation of Blandois suggests that *ethos* relies on more than surface and declarations. Actions, such as killing his wife and blackmailing, speak louder than his declaration of being a gentlemen. Although Blandois's and Mr Dorrit's failures of claiming that status are caused by very different actions, they both expose the impossibility of attaining the status through mere proclamation of it. Whether it is a recommendable to be a gentleman within the framework of the novel seems questionable; instead, the text presents the *vir bonus* as an alternative status that is worth attaining and that is achieved not through wealth or society's approval but through the willingness to extend social credit in the form of kindness.

Mr Casby's *ethos* is also rhetorically significant. He presents himself as a benign patriarch, but his charitable endeavors are merely a fiction of goodness and not an actual case of kindness. In one of the few truly comical scenes of the novel, Mr Pancks opposes the Patriarch, Mr Casby, and finally refuses to work for him any longer. Mr Casby states, "You are made for nothing else, Mr Pancks. You are made to do your duty, but you don't do your duty. You are paid to squeeze, and you must

squeeze to pay" (831; bk. 2, ch. 32). When Mr Pancks refuses to continue to collect rent from those who have the least, he exposes Mr Casby's entire pretence of benevolence:

> 'What do you pretend to be, … What's your moral game? What do you go in for? Benevolence, an't it? YOU benevolent!' … 'I have discharged myself from your service … that I may tell you what you are. You're one of a lot of impostors that are the worst lot of all the lots to be met with. Speaking as a sufferer by both, I don't know that I wouldn't as soon have the Merdle lot as your lot. You're a driver in disguise, a screwer by deputy, a wringer, and squeezer, and shaver by substitute. You're a philanthropic sneak. You're a shabby deceiver!' (833; bk. 2, ch. 32, original emphasis)

In order to speak his mind freely, Pancks jeopardizes his job and thus his own financial credit. The symbolic cutting of Casby's "sacred locks" is Pancks's final act to remove the Patriarch's power—an act of utter humiliation in front of the inhabitants at Bleeding Heart Yard (836; bk. 2, ch. 32). Pancks's critique is a symbolic comic castration of a system and of an individual of significant socio-economic, paternal power. Although merely a subplot, this critique is further supported by the novel's decentralization of paternal power, which finds its climax in the kind, maternal instincts of Amy Dorrit, who holds all narrative threads together.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Credit and Debt

As previously mentioned, my analysis defines two separate yet related concepts of debt: financial debt and social debt. Many scholars of economy have argued that debt and credit are necessary aspects of a functioning economy. Kenneth Dyson describes Keynesian macroeconomics and discusses the 'paradox of thrift': "thrift may be individually desirable but, if adopted by everyone, will bring the economy to ruin" (79). Following this argument, if all characters were to act like Amy Dorrit, it would lead to economic crisis on a greater scale. Dyson comments that "[d]ebt was the price paid for the joys of being part of a hedonistic consumer culture" (78). The novel, as such, does not oppose the financial system and is firmly a part of it as a commodity in the market. However, the expectations concerning debt and credit are different for the various characters. In Henry Gowan's case, his mother, and later his father-in-law, Mr Meagles, pay for his extravagances. The consequences of financial debt are thus quite different for Edward Dorrit than they are for Henry Gowan.

Little Dorrit presents the self-fashioning of *ethos* to achieve a certain end or to be part of a specific social group as problematic. However, it also presents the very real effects of belonging to one group or another, and thereby, in a manner of speaking, the reasons for why characters may be trying to fashion a specific *ethos*.

Accountability and punishment for financial debt, for example, are not created equal for all classes of society. The rich or those who are well connected can often find ways to avoid the punishment or to make it less uncomfortable. For example, when Arthur Clennam gets into debt as an investor in one of Mr Merdle's fraudulent schemes, Mr Rugg, who is Pancks's landlord and familiar with cases of debt, states that Mr Clennam should not be in the Marshalsea but rather within the King's Bench, where he could live outside the prison walls:

> 'Another word of reason, sir!' cried Mr Rugg. 'Now, this *is* reason. The other may be taste; but this is reason. If you should be taken on the little one, sir, you would go to the Marshalsea. Now, you know what the Marshalsea is. Very close. Excessively confined. Whereas the King's Bench—'Mr Rugg waved his right hand freely, as expressing abundance of space. (750; bk. 2, ch. 26, original emphasis)

Mr Rugg analyzes this decision and tries to appeal to his reason, suggesting that Mr Clennam should not be affected by anything else. While Arthur just wants to "get it over with" and is willing to "take [his] chance" (750), Mr Rugg reminds him of the importance of keeping up appearances. He comments on Clennam's "taste" for staying in the Marshalsea rather than moving to the King's Bench:

> 'Well, sir, well! But is it good taste, is it good taste? That's the question.' Mr Rugg was so soothingly persuasive as to be quite pathetic. 'I was almost going to say, is it good feeling? This is an extensive affair of yours; and your remaining here where a man can come for a pound or two, is remarked upon, as not in keeping. It is *not* in keeping. I can't tell you, sir, in how many quarters I hear it mentioned.' (773; bk. 2, ch. 28, original emphasis)

Arthur is not interested in an *ethos* that is merely a case of a polished surface; instead, he has a deeply self-sacrificing ideal of what his *ethos* requires, which is the very thing that makes it stronger on the second level of persuasion. His goodness and lack of fault in his financial ruin ensure that he remains virtuous no matter the company he keeps. Indeed, he wants to pay his dues: "I must take the consequences of what I have done" (749; bk. 2, ch. 26). Arthur's unwillingness to use the system in his favor and to place himself first at the expense of others means that he has to move to the debtor's prison. While his financial credit is destroyed, his social credit (his *ethos* as perceived by the readers of the novel) has increased. In addition, his reversal of fortunes is also the beginning of his modestly congenial ending with Little Dorrit, and thus, the acceptance of this punishment is rewarded in a way.

The congenial ending that Amy and Arthur share reflects the novel's questioning of the importance of financial credit and debt and highlights the social debt incurred through love and kindness as central to fulfilling relationships. In the final speech of the novel which Amy addresses to Arthur, she tells him that she is not rich and that love should be the only riches that matter:

> 'Never to part, my dearest Arthur; never any more until the last! I never was rich before, I never was proud before, I never was happy before. I am rich in being taken by you, I am proud in having been resigned by you, I am happy in being with you in this prison, as I should be happy in coming back to it with you, if it should be the will of GOD, and comforting and serving you with all my love and truth. I am yours anywhere, everywhere! I love you dearly! I would rather pass my life here with you, and go out daily, working for our bread, than I would have the greatest fortune that ever was told, and be the greatest lady that ever was honored. O, if poor papa may only know how blest at last my heart is, in this room where he suffered for so many years.' (850; bk. 2, ch. 34, original emphasis)

Amy and Arthur find happiness in poverty and in owing nothing to anyone except to one another for their mutual kindness and charity given at different stages of the novel. Selby suggests that in Christianity, the only gift that should matter should be the "*true* gift" (154; original emphasis)—"grace not mortgage" (154). In accepting their financial ruin, they highlight their emotional success and their piety—their detachment from the material aspects of the present world.

The connection that Selby makes to truth is particularly relevant not only to this narrative but also to my reading of *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*. In the previously quoted passage, Amy offers all her "love and truth" to Arthur, but what is this truth? Is it the same "truth" as Nancy's truth that Dickens invokes in his 1841 preface? Dickens writes about Nancy: "It is useful to discuss whether the conduct and character of the girl seems natural or unnatural, probable or improbable, right or wrong. IT IS TRUE" (460; Penguin Classics Edition, original emphasis). In *Hard Times*, Mrs. Gradgrind is "nearer to Truth than she ever had been" (160; bk. 2, ch. 9) when she is very ill and close to death. The capitalization of Truth in this description suggests a connection to God, a truth that she will meet after her death. Taken together, and placed within the framework of the rhetorical analysis that I conduct in this study, it seems that there is an underlying current that Dickens explores—a connection between representation, love, truth, and Christianity. His works propound a truth that lies beyond calculation, and this seems to also be the truth from which a *vir bonus* must speak—a requirement that is particularly manifested in the quest for naturalness, uncalculatedness, spontaneity, and goodness.

Social debt can be a positive concept and is a substantial part of a functioning community, but the novel suggests that repentance and restitution for one's sins are also important.[96] The emotional kind of debt and the need or ability to repay it is addressed when Arthur first comes to see his mother upon his return. Later, he discovers that Mrs Clennam is not actually his mother but that his father had an

[96] In "Dickens and Religion: *Little Dorrit*," Dennis Walder explores the way in which *Little Dorrit* navigates Old and New Testament narratives. Walder's text also investigates Dickens's own involvement with these questions and with a search for spirituality that is different from those in the earlier novels. See pp. 170–194 in particular.

affair before he married, and Arthur is the illegitimate child of that affair. While Arthur is not aware of what Mrs Clennam understands as her sacrifice in raising him as her own, he assumes that the debt she wants to be repaid is financial; therefore, he renounces any connection to his family's business and thereby feels that he has freed himself from indebtedness (61; bk. 1, ch. 5).

Moreover, he gives an impassioned speech in which he details another aspect of his repayment by declaring to Mrs Clennam (and to the readers) that, throughout his life, he has submitted himself and his will to the wishes of his parents: "I cannot say that I have been able to conform myself, in heart and spirit, to your rules; I cannot say that I believe my forty years have been profitable or pleasant to myself or any one; but I have habitually submitted, and I only ask you to remember it" (61). His brief speech is followed by a long section of narratorial commentary which addresses the early religious connection between guilt and debt:

> Woe to the suppliant, if such a one there were or ever had been, who had any concession to look for in the inexorable face at the cabinet. Woe to the defaulter whose appeal lay to the tribunal where those severe eyes presided. Great need had the rigid woman of her mystical religion, veiled in gloom and darkness, with lightnings of cursing, vengeance, and destruction, flashing through the sable clouds. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, was a prayer too poor in spirit for her. Smite thou my debtors, Lord, wither them, crush them; do Thou as I would do, and Thou shalt have my worship: this was the impious tower of stone she built up to scale Heaven. (61)

The quoting of passages from the Lord's Prayer here suggests that everyone is a sinner and should thus forgive other sinners. Walder claims that the main theme of *Little Dorrit* lies with "the contrasting views of Mrs Clennam's imprisoning Old Testament ethos and Little Dorrit's liberating New Testament spirit" (171). He notes, however, that the true contrast is between false views of the Old Testament and true views of the New Testament (188). Little Dorrit offers forgiveness wherever she goes (e.g. bk. 2, ch. 31), and Mrs Clennam wants revenge. The novel seems to suggest that repentance, restitution, and acceptance of one's own guilt are the only ways out of the kind of debt that is caused by guilt. Forgiveness is thus represented as a vital aspect of social debt and credit, and a lack thereof is as detrimental as a lack of social debt, which eventually kills Mr Dorrit.

However, Dickens is not always pro forgiveness and anti revenge, as Walder notes: "Dickens reveals in pursuing Rigaud a sympathy for that Old Testament ethic of revenge he otherwise rejects" (171). As noted in my introduction to this study, there is a clear sense that some characters are simply incapable of achieving the *vir bonus* position or too far gone to ever return to it. Blandois, a truly melodramatic character in *Little Dorrit*, embodies "pure evil," Sally Ledger notes (230). Juliet John suggests further in *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* that "Rigaud dramatizes the consequences of a constant externalization of

passion" (113). He seems to be at the other extreme from Scrooge before his persuasion and from Gradgrind at the height of his belief in the philosophy of fact—constantly in pursuit of fulfilling his immediate desires.

Tattycoram has similar issues with her passions, but she is not so violent and dangerous and also not so inherently evil as Blandois. Tattycoram can be tamed, but Blandois cannot. His death, however, does not restore the moral order of the novel as it should within the typical framework of a melodrama. Ledger claims in this context that *Little Dorrit* struggles with "the evil that Dickens saw all around him in the middle of the 1850s" and that "The fear that corruption is not always visible and readily dealt with is everywhere present" (230). Little Dorrit presents such a multitude of plots and morals that it is difficult to see a single coherent argument develop throughout. However, Schor suggests it is noteworthy that "by the book's end it seems easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to get any rich people into the book's happy ending" (70). Not only financial debt but also financial credit seems to exert a disruptive and detrimental force: in Arthur Clennam's case because it goes hand in hand with an indebtedness to Mrs Clennam, in Mr Dorrit's case because it makes him disavow all sentimental connections, and in Mr Merdle's case because it is built on fraud.

Tattycoram and Miss Wade

The minor plots and minor characters tend to be particularly interesting in Dickens's novels. Alex Wolloch analyzes their importance in *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, and although he does not comment on Miss Wade specifically, his arguments are relevant to this analysis. For example, he argues, "In all of Dickens's novels, minor characters persistently wrest attention away from any privileged, central figure—but they never *succeed* in destroying the asymmetric structure that condemns them to minorness" (143; original emphasis). The character of Miss Wade takes a critical position in context of this argument, as the following analysis suggests. Ledger notes an anti-paternalism in *Bleak House* (*Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* 207), and I argue that Little Dorrit explores the problems and difficulties of paternal structures in relation to the financial market and forms of charity, for example, in the subplot of the Meagles, Tattycoram, and Miss Wade. Whenever Tattycoram rebels against the social debt that the Meagles' act of charity places her under, the Meagles and the narrative struggle with her behavior. In the framework of charity, she is indebted to them; however, she refuses to or is incapable of acting in the manner that Mr Meagles would consider appropriate.

This plot presents a fascinating departure from Dickens's jovial charity and his benevolent givers into a psychological exploration of what it is like to receive charity and become indebted as a consequence. Tattycoram reacts to the

indebtedness with which she seems unable to deal by losing her ability to speak diplomatically: "Go away from me, go away from me! When my temper comes upon me, I am mad. I know I might keep it off if I only tried hard enough, and sometimes I do try hard enough, and at other times I don't and won't" (42; bk. 1, ch. 3). On these occasions, Mr Meagles usually asks her to count to twenty-five to calm down. The tone of the outburst changes mid-way as she begins to feel guilty for not repaying her debt to the Meagles:

> What have I said! I knew, when I said it, it was all lies. They think I am being taken care of somewhere, and have all I want. They are nothing but good to me. I love them dearly; no people could ever be kinder to a thankless creature than they always are to me." (42–43; bk. 1, ch. 3).

Torn between, on the one hand, refusing to submit and, on the other hand, being grateful for the charity she has received, Tattycoram presents a deeply troubled rhetoric—a split *ethos*. She knows how she should act, what her correct identity would be, but she is unable to fully act in the expected way. Like Blandois, she is full of passion, although her passion is not of the criminal kind.

In her struggle with the Meagles's charity, Tattycoram reveals the hierarchical nature of the charitable act to which she is struggling to submit. Speaking to Arthur, Mr Meagles recounts Tattycoram's accusations just before she left: "who were we that we should have a right to name her like a dog or cat? … She would take no more benefits from us; she would fling us her name back again, and she would go" (343; bk. 1, ch. 27). Mr Meagles recounts her outburst: "What did we think she, Tattycoram, might have been if she had been caressed and cared for in her childhood, like her young mistress? As good as her? Ah! Perhaps fifty times as good" (343). The representation of Tattycoram highlights important questions of nature and nurture as well as of charity and the resulting indebtedness. Mr Meagles does not understand "the passionate sense that sometimes comes upon the poor girl, of being at a disadvantage" (347). The narrative leaves the readers to judge for themselves whether or not Tattycoram has a point in making these accusations and whether or not she is worthy of the reader's compassion and sympathy.

However, much of Tattycoram's thoughts and questions are presented through Mr Meagles' voice, which seems to underscore Tattycoram's wish to break out of these structures. The Meagles bestow their charity on her, but she does not repay them in the expected manner and thereby puts her social creditworthiness into question. Moreover, her *ethos* as perceived both by characters in the novel and by readers is challenged by many aspects: her eroticism, her relationship to Miss Wade, her temper, and her illegitimacy to name a few. Yet, she fulfills an important rhetorical function on the second level of persuasion by challenging the readers' common perception of charity that Dickens himself had helped to establish through his earlier works.

After Tattycoram has run away to Miss Wade, Arthur and Mr Meagles call on her to ask her to return. A scene ensues in which Miss Wade delivers a biting speech filled with irony:

> 'See here', she said, in the same level way as before. 'Here is your patron, your master. He is willing to take you back, my dear, if you are sensible of the favor and choose to go. You can be, again, a foil to his pretty daughter, a slave to her pleasant wilfulness, and a toy in the house showing the goodness of the family. You can have your droll name again, playfully pointing you out and setting you apart, as it is right that you should be pointed out and set apart. (Your birth, you know; you must not forget your birth.) You can again be shown to this gentleman's daughter, Harriet, and kept before her, as a living reminder of her own superiority and her gracious condescension. You can recover all these advantages, and many more of the same kind which I dare say start up in your memory while I speak, and which you lose in taking refuge with me – you can recover them all, by telling these gentlemen how humbled and penitent you are, and by going back with them to be forgiven. What do you say, Harriet? Will you go?' (348; bk. 1, ch. 27)

In this strong scene, Miss Wade uses some of the same means of persuasion that the narrator uses within the novel—opposites, irony, and appeals to creditworthiness. She suggests that Tattycoram is a mere ornament to adorn Pet, a way of showing "the goodness of the family" (348). Miss Wade presents the Meagles's charity as entirely self-serving and aims to influence Tattycoram's decision. Her speech also suggests that charity has an inherently indebting structure. What is given and cannot be returned leads to indebtedness, if not economically then socially, to those who give it. This indebtedness does not necessarily have to play a negative role in the novel because social debt is vital in sustaining communities, but it seems clear that it feels uncomfortable to Tattycoram.

To understand the full persuasive potential of Miss Wade's speech, it is important to analyze her *ethos*, which is threatened by several factors. Firstly, it is difficult to determine her status, which is generally an important *ethos* marker, because she is illegitimate (566; bk. 2, ch. 9). As her origins are uncertain, her nature cannot be clearly defined. Another aspect that threatens Miss Wade's *ethos* is that she makes a deal with the criminal, Blandois, and is seen speaking to him. Her sympathy for Tattycoram is based on shared pain: "She has no name, I have no name. Her wrong is my wrong." (351; bk. 1, ch. 27), but her care for Tattycoram is exposed as self-serving because it aids her own purpose of revenge and may also be due to sexual attraction. When Tattycoram renounces the Meagles, at first, Miss Wade sees it as a triumph: "And there was a visible triumph in her face when she turned it to dismiss the visitors" (351). Later on, in her letter to Arthur that I discuss in detail in the next section, Miss Wade recounts her first encounter with Tattycoram and her wish to save her:

> In that company I found a girl, in various circumstances of whose position there was a singular likeness to my own, and in whose character I was interested and pleased to see much of the rising against swollen patronage and selfishness, calling themselves kindness, protection, benevolence, and other fine names, which I have described as inherent in my nature. (702; book 2, ch. 21)

Miss Wade ascribes ideological statements to Tattycoram, but they are only voiced by her. It is unclear whether Tattycoram shares these views or is simply an impressionable girl.

Miss Wade is a strange character in the narrative who is both to be believed and to be doubted. On the first level of persuasion, characters keep their distance to her in a seeming inability to handle her. She defies the common roles prepared for a woman and thereby fashions an *ethos* that other characters find difficult to judge. On the second level of persuasion, judging Miss Wade is not that simple either. The narrator does not give much guidance, here, and instead lets her speak for herself, whether this is to her advantage or not is for the reader to decide.

The narrative suggests that Miss Wade acts with the same motives as those she criticizes, which undermines the strength of her claims. According to Tattycoram, Miss Wade is actually similar to the Meagles because she also expects to be repaid for the kindness of taking in Tattycoram. That is, she also sees Tattycoram as indebted to her and expects her to repay that kindness by being submissive: "You are as bad as they were, every bit. But I will not be quite tamed and made submissive. I will say again that I went to look at the house [the Meagles' house], because I had often thought that I should like to see it once more" (692; bk. 2, ch. 20). Eventually, in the denouement of this specific plot of the novel, Tattycoram begs to be taken back in by the Meagles, which she is, and so this disruptive narrative finds a close. Miss Wade's words, however, may linger in the readers' minds.[97]

Miss Wade's character is also worth analyzing in more detail because she seemed to have been a character that fascinated Dickens. He dedicates an entire chapter to her story, "The History of a Self Tormentor" (Book the Second "Riches", chapter XXI). In a letter to John Forster of 9 Feb 1857, he describes the pains that he went through in writing "The History of a Self-Tormentor" and asks Forster for his thoughts on the presentation of it. He takes the idea of making it into a separate chapter from Fielding and Smollet and states, "it is sometimes really impossible to present, in a full book, the idea it contains … without supposing the reader to be possessed of almost as much romantic allowance as would put him on a level with the writer" (*Letters 8*: 279–280). Dickens, it seems, wanted to make Miss Wade more central to the novel: "In Miss Wade I had an idea, which I thought a new one,

[97] Although he does not discuss Miss Wade in particular, Alex Woloch's *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* presents an enlightening reading of minor characters in Dickens's novels.

of making the introduced story so fit in surroundings impossible of separation from the main story, as to make the blood of the book circulate through both" (*Letters 8*: 279–280). Forster, however, was apparently not impressed by this idea or the execution of it, so Dickens concedes: "I can only suppose, from what you say, that I have not exactly succeeded in this" (*Letters 8*: 279–280). Although Dickens eventually listened to Forster, "The History of a Self Tormentor" is one of the most interesting chapters of the entire novel not only in terms of female agency, but also in light of my discussion of debt and credit.

The chapter is written in form of a first-person narrative: a letter that Miss Wade writes to Arthur Clennam. Until this point, her story has been presented through the eyes of male characters or the narrator. She presents an antithesis to many of the main narrative currents as she lives on her own, is outspoken, and illegitimate; consequently, she is a threat to established society and an outcast in many ways. The narrative in this chapter invites readers to understand Miss Wade and is thus a step in the direction of eliciting sympathy for her. In another way, it may also be too strange to move the readers' emotions, especially because there will be little common ground between such a character and a typical reader, which makes evoking pity more difficult. In addition, the title of the chapter is worth noting. She may be understood as a deeply troubled woman who has suffered a lot of unkindness in her life simply through no fault of her own.

Another way of reading Miss Wade is to see her as a paranoid individual. She is unable to fathom that a kind deed can ever be done without an ulterior motive and convinces Tattycoram that she is just being used, all while using the girl herself. Miss Wade's story proposes a very different understanding of kindness and charity, one that is directly opposed to the understanding of these concepts as the way to solve social inequalities in Dickens's earlier novels. Dickens apparently wanted her to play an important role in the text, which says something about the importance of making these points. At the same time, he adhered to Forster's suggestions and kept her own narrative confined to the one chapter. In this edition of the novel, Miss Wade disrupts the concept of charity and questions its motifs; meanwhile, she does not have a strong *ethos*, so her disruptiveness is likely not rhetorically successful.

Amy Dorrit: The Martyr of the Marshalsea

In direct contrast to the representation of Miss Wade's mistrust of charity and kindness stands the representation of Amy—the eternally selfless giver. The two characters have a number of similarities: They had a difficult start in life and are in a solitary position with the need to support themselves. The description of Amy is somewhat paradoxical because she is described as both a child and a mother. Her role of taking care of her father is more like that of a parent, and she also takes care of Maggy, a girl who became ill in childhood and thus stopped developing. Maggy's

name for Amy is "Little Mother," which describes their relationship perfectly. This double role of child and mother builds Amy's *ethos*. Little Dorrit is often presented as innocent and even compared to a child, both by the narrator and other characters. Arthur Clennam, for example, has to resist the urge to say "my poor child" to her (111; bk. 1, ch. 9), and the narrator comments that she "seemed the least, the quietest, and weakest of heaven's creatures" (111). Representations such as these serve to characterize her as innocent and childlike, which means that both on the first and on the second level of persuasion she is characterized as innocent.

One aspect that aids the representation of Amy's innocence is her inability to understand when she is being used, in particular, by her own family, although it is not entirely clear in the narrative whether she really is unaware—knowing anything for sure is a difficult matter in the novel. However, an awareness that one is taken advantage of implies that one cares for oneself to a certain degree. Amy is entirely selfless. Her father is one of the characters who takes advantage of her, but she does not acknowledge this and rather chooses to let him do so, in fact, she encourages it. The narrator comments on this: "If ever pride were innocent, it was innocent in Little Dorrit when she grew boastful of her father" (112; bk. 1, ch. 9). She has invented her own truth about him:

> It is often said that his manners are a true gentleman's, and quite a study. I see none like them in that place, but he is admitted to be superior to all the rest. This is quite as much why they make him presents, as because they know him to be needy. He is not to be blamed for being in need, poor love. Who could be in prison a quarter of a century, and be prosperous! (112)

In the final sentence of this passage, Amy questions the cause and effect of the debtor's prison, highlighting at once her innocence and the paradox of her father's prison sentence, which makes it impossible for him to earn money while expecting him to pay back his debts. The narrator comments: "What affection in her words, what compassion in her repressed tears, what a great soul of fidelity in her, how true the light that shed false brightness round him!" (112). Walder argues,

> Dickens wishes to avoid the premeditativeness of doing good as a duty, as well as any hint of excess—or even merely open—piety, preferring a modest, self-effacing, yet direct goodness which emerges as the natural expression of the personality. (45)

Amy Dorrit is such a character, and her kindness thus serves as the ideal version of it in contrast to those that the Meagels, Miss Wades, and Mr Casby stand for. The narrative's judgments of these acts are not binary. Amy's kindness has detrimental effects on her, and other characters may fare quite well with their rather insincere forms of charity.

In "Domesticity," Catherine Waters argues, "Dickens's investment in the values of hearth and home reflects the central emotional importance of the family in

Victorian middle-class culture" (350). She addresses Ruskin's idea of the home as a "refuge" (351), which he presents in Sesame and Lilies: Lecture II "Of Queens' Gardens": "This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division" (68). Waters compares Ruskin's ideal of a woman to that presented in the "Angel in the House." According to Waters, "Ruskin's idealisation of the home makes clear the values of privacy, womanly self-sacrifice and manly protection which are held to distinguish and shield it from the public realm of capitalist competition, struggle and self-interest" (352). However, in *Little Dorrit*, Amy passes between the worlds of the private home and the realities of the public market. To sustain her family, she has to act in both and proves quite capable of doing so. In this context, Hunter claims,

> Care in the Victorian novels does not assume the form of a pure sentiment to balance the severity of the marketplace, but rather adopts economic forms, such as debt fulfillment or forgiveness, to reflect the demands of an industrial culture in which the family is an economic unit. (149)

Amy balances the aspects of home and work by displaying an impeccable *ethos* of kindness and virtue, but one that is not self-fashioned but rather comes naturally to her.

The only member of the family who appreciates Amy is her uncle, Frederick Dorrit, but even he relies on her caring qualities, "instinctively taking Amy's arm as the one to be relied on" (255; bk. 1, ch. 20). In a scene in which Fanny attacks Amy for fear she may ruin the family credit, Frederick, who is usually weak and meek, has finally had enough:

> To the winds with the family credit! … Brother, I protest against pride. I protest against ingratitude. I protest against any one of us here who have known what we have known, and have seen what we have seen, setting up any pretension that puts Amy at a moment's disadvantage, or to the cost of a moment's pain. We may know that it's a base pretension by its having that effect. It ought to bring a judgement on us. Brother, I protest against it, in the sight of God! (509; bk. 2, ch. 5)

In this strongly worded passage, Frederick Dorrit often repeats the phrase, "I protest," and direct addresses of his "Brother," thereby making the important point that the entire family is indebted to Amy. All members of the Dorrit family are metaphorically living on Amy's kindness, and because they neither repay their debts nor acknowledge them, the narrative's structure renders them morally bankrupt.

The novel presents owing and repaying as closely connected to the idea of pride, and pride matters to almost all characters in the novel. In a way, pride is each character's understanding of their creditworthiness, sometimes socially and sometimes economically based, and their own self-fashioned *ethos*. However, the constituents of this pride or the parameters on which it is built differ from character

to character. For Amy, it is important that Arthur does not offer her father charity because financial indebtedness seems to render a later social engagement on even terms impossible. This refusal of Amy to accept charity is one of the most interesting aspects of the novel as it breaks with a paternalistic society's ideal of promoting alleviation through charitable schemes that produce indebtedness as well as with the stereotype of the less powerful woman. Amy refuses to put herself into this position. Arthur offers her friendship instead, and this is the kind of debt and credit with which Amy feels comfortable:

> She was so tremulous and agitated, and he was so moved by compassion for her, and by deep interest in her story as it dawned upon him, that he could scarcely tear himself away. But the stoppage of the bell, and the quiet in the prison, were warning to depart; and with a few hurried words of kindness he left her gliding back to her father. (101; bk. 1, ch. 8)

His words of kindness are his gift in this situation. Until later in the novel, she has no way of repaying him, but he eventually needs her kindness, and they are again on equal terms.

> He would have spoken; but she put up her trembling hand again, and he stopped.
>
> I have no use for money, I have no wish for it. It would be of no value at all to me, but for your sake. I could not be rich, and you here. I must always be much worse than poor, with you distressed. Will you let me lend you all I have? Will you let me give it to you? Will you let me show you that I have never forgotten, that I never can forget, your protection of me when this was my home? Dear Mr Clennam, make me of all the world the happiest, by saying Yes! Make me as happy as I can be in leaving you here, by saying nothing to-night, and letting me go away with the hope that you will think of it kindly; and that for my sake – not for yours, for mine, for nobody's but mine! – you will give me the greatest joy I can experience on earth, the joy of knowing that I have been serviceable to you, and that I have paid some little of the great debt of my affection and gratitude. (792; bk. 2, ch. 29)

This passage raises several central themes to the novel and to my discussion. Firstly, it shows the connection to the frequently repeated "DNF" (Do Not Forget) of the watch that Arthur brings home as a request from his dying father who wished to send a message to his mother in this way.[98] Secondly, it highlights the importance of credit and debt, here in the form of charity, in the construction of the overall power structures of the novel. Thirdly, it inverts the usual structure of charity. Amy

[98] Matthew Bevis notes in "Dickens by the clock" that timepieces in Dickens's works "increasingly come to speak to and from a moment that won't seem to stop" (68). They become repetitions that "to some extent allegorise the journeyings of [Dickens's] style by refusing to give up on what has gone before" (68).

asks Arthur to accept the charity not because it will help him but because it will help her.

Amy's letters to Arthur Clennam, written while her family is rich, are important to consider because they express her "self" and her discomfort with wealth, as she longs for the days when she could help her father. Her identity and self-defined *ethos* are based on her actions of kindness and on her pity for her father, so she continues to pity him although there seemingly is no more need for it. Describing these feelings in her letter, Amy writes:

> I often feel that old sad pity for – I need not write the word – for him. Changed as he is, and inexpressibly blest and thankful as I always am to know it, the old sorrowful feelings of compassion comes upon me sometimes with such strength, that I want to put my arms round his neck, tell him how I love him, and cry a little on his breast. I should be glad after that, and proud and happy. But I know that I must not do this; that he would not like it, that Fanny would be angry, that Mrs General would be amazed; and so I quiet myself. Yet in doing so, I struggle with the feeling that I have come to be at a distance from him; and that even in the midst of all the servants and attendants, he is deserted, and in want of me. (494; bk. 2, ch. 4)

In the family's new state of being there is no space for sentiment and pity; manners and surface have replaced the deeper human connections that Amy thrived on. The novel, of course, shows that Mr Dorrit still needs these sentimental connections as well and that his resistance to them is eventually detrimental. This scene also suggests that pity does not only serve the person who receives it. Amy's pity and kindness may not have been selfless after all because the role that she has always assumed for the sake of her family has become her identity. It has been her task in life to take care of others, but once the family regains their wealth, she can no longer do so without threatening the status of the family. They forget about their social indebtedness to Amy and in the process leave her without a vocation and without an identity.

At the end of the letter, she asks Arthur to continue to pity her and to continue to see her as his "poor child" (495; bk. 2, ch. 4). The purpose of this letter is to convince him to see the power positions between them as unchanged. Thereby, Amy highlights the interconnection between pity, love, friendship, and power. In her second letter, Amy is even more specific: "So dearly do I love the scene of my poverty and your kindness" (580; bk. 2, ch. 11). Finally, she declares her love to Arthur and also highlights her return to poverty as the moment when they can finally be together: "I have nothing in the world. I am as poor as when I lived here" (849; bk. 2, ch. 34). Sellby notes that love and social debt are fundamental to Christian ethics, and Arthur's and Amy's scene of final realization is built on similar grounds (154). In Romans 13:8, Paul says "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." Now that both characters are poor

again, they can enter into a relationship in which they are both entirely dependent on one another and yet entirely free.

Little Dorrit lends itself to the exploration of the effects of financial credit and debt as well as the social credit and debt involved in rhetoric and community building. Although there are some exceptions such as the financial debt which Pancks's takes on in order to find out about the Dorrit's wealth and Tattycoram's problematic social debt to the Meagles, social debt on the whole is presented as positive and financial credit on the whole is presented as problematic. On the first level of persuasion, characters struggle with the financial credit system, which seems to allow for characters such as Mr Merdle to defraud and use it to his own advantage. Moreover, characters who have trouble decoding *ethos* that is based on a fraudulent creditworthiness suffer in the novel as do those who aim to fashion this fraudulent *ethos*. Mr Merdle commits suicide and members of Society who had trusted him are ruined. Finally, Mr Dorrit is so concerned with his rhetorical self-fashioning as a creditworthy member of society that he fails to notice that he loses all of his creditworthiness because of his very attempts to sustain it.

In the plot of Arthur Clennam and Amy Dorrit, modesty, kindness, loyalty, and love are presented as achievable qualities to counterbalance the incalculability of speculative schemes. Social debt and credit are important factors in the building of communities, while public debt and credit are obscured, unspeakable as Parker has argued (131). The main catastrophe of the novel, Mr Merdle's fraud, is not presented as an inherent fault of the economic system but rather as an individual crime. Like Mr Bounderby, Mr Merdle uses the failing institutions and society's difficulty in determining worthy rhetoricians to his advantage. On the second level of persuasion, readers are reminded of the importance of the morals of a character, especially one who is rhetorically successful (with or without words). However, in *Little Dorrit*, it is no longer so simple to determine what exactly constitutes a *vir bonus* as benevolence is not a straightforward rhetorical means of becoming one anymore.

Conclusion or Why James Fitzjames Stephen Was Wrong

> Fifty years hence, most of his wit will be harder to understand than the allusions in the Dunciad; and our grand-children will wonder what their ancestors could have meant by putting Mr. Dickens at the head of the novelists of his day. (James Fitzjames Stephen in "Mr. Dickens," 8 May 1858, *Saturday Review*: 475)

As I conclude my study on Dickens's rhetoric nearly two centuries after these words were written, I must point out the obvious: James Fitzjames Stephen was wrong. However, I mention once again the man who was one of Charles Dickens's most fervent critics, because in his review, "Mr. Dickens," Stephen discusses similar issues to those addressed in this study. Although he does not describe it in these exact words, Stephen's main concern is that Dickens is a dangerous rhetorician: Someone who is very effective and popular, but not a good man—not a *vir bonus*. Stephen presents Dickens as an entertainer, and a successful one at that, but he does not take him seriously as a social critic. Instead, he suggests that the "union of banter and sentiment" (475) presented in Dickens's novels may be dangerous if repeated over a sustained period of time—simply because continuous repetition will wear down any audience's reasoning mind. Moreover, Stephen sees Dickens as a poor observer of moral potential, one who "can only conceive of virtues and vices in their very simplest forms" (475). Finally, he suggests that Dickens's mind is "for the most part of the feminine gender" (475), and he does not mean this as a compliment. Most fascinating about Stephen's criticism is that it touches on similar points to those that Dickens himself seems to investigate in the novels I have considered here. Both Stephen and Dickens worry about rhetoricians who are effective but not ethical, but the way in which they define this ethical rhetoric seems diametrically opposed.

Dickens's novels present a supremely successful sentimental rhetoric that warns against the lack of sentiment rather than against too much of it. This rhetoric actively aims to reach all members of society (except the aristocracy perhaps, which may be the real cause of Stephen's criticism); it warns against abstractions wherever it can, and it highlights a shared humanity as the ultimate goal; finally, it is a rhetoric that often counters harsh patriarchal structures with a female character who speaks from a position of kindness and transcends boundaries of both class and gender. As the

potential solutions to many of the social issues of the time, Dickens seems to value the very approaches that Stephen finds problematic.

For more than two centuries, Charles Dickens's novels have engaged a varied audience and have stimulated political, legislative, and cultural debate. His unique use of and play with rhetoric is one of the driving forces behind these various forms of engagement with the novels. Though both Victorian readers like Stephen and modern scholars have fervently criticized the sentimental mode of the texts, that mode has been very effective at drawing its readers into the narrative worlds by engaging their emotions. This kind of emotional involvement plays an important role in the novels themselves, which address the issue of ethical means and ends of persuasion. The early novels establish a rhetoric of virtue by presenting specific appeals as more effective and more moral than others. In the process, these texts establish a clear idea of a *vir bonus*. However, the complex rhetoric of pity, charity, and kindness that the early novels present as a solution to the social inequalities of the time is viewed with increasing scepticism in the later works, which are less concerned with the specific details of the rhetoric of virtue. Instead, these novels explore the detrimental effects of dangerous rhetoricians and the importance of learning to recognize these.

A *vir bonus* must mean well and speak well, and his or her rhetoric is often characterized by spontaneity, naturalness, kindness, and feeling. All of the works analysed in this study call for a shared humanity, both of the characters and of the readers, and they appeal to that humanity through scenes of persuasion. The most common appeal that the novels make is to the readers' feelings, to *pathos*, as characters and readers alike are encouraged to sympathize with the less fortunate and to trust their feelings when making ethical judgments. These appeals go hand in hand with a general wariness of language. While the novels themselves are works of persuasion on the second level, they explicitly (and paradoxically) warn against any sort of premeditated attempt at persuasion on the first level.

In *A Christmas Carol*, the miser Scrooge learns to once again be a good man through encounters with four ghosts, who use memory, pity, and the fear of mortality to appeal to his senses. As Scrooge learns to allow feeling to influence his reasoning, he becomes a better man who then shares his wealth through acts of charity and benevolence. Appeals to *kairos* play a particularly important role in this text, which presents Christmas as the pertinent time for this sort of persuasion. In addition, the annual return of the narrative to the homes of its many readers serves to strengthen the *kairos* of Christmastime on the second level of persuasion and reminds readers annually to be kind and charitable to all their "fellow-passengers to the grave" (*Carol* 12; stave 1).

In *Oliver Twist*, much of the dramatic tension derives from the way in which Oliver resists the attempts of Fagin and his gang to corrupt him into a life of crime. As with the *Carol*, appeals to *pathos* are also particularly important in this novel, which is supremely sentimental and presents a complex melodramatic approach to

persuading characters and readers alike. Oliver is incorruptible, and this quality seems coupled with his inability to speak anything but the truth. His use of words often fails, and instead, his appeals are made through tears and fainting. While Oliver's rhetoric is noteworthy, the novel's particular strength lies in its sentimental representation of characters such as Nancy, whose 'truth' asked the Victorian readers to extend their sympathies further than they might normally have done.

In *Hard Times*, there is a particular focus on the philosophy of fact, which causes the suffering of so many characters. The abstractions and terms, the *logos*, under which this doctrine operates are shown to be insufficient for the characters to grasp what makes a human life worth living. This novel is less concerned with appeals to *logos* and more with investigating what happens when the *logos* that determines how life is lived in a society is fundamentally misconceived. The structures of benevolence that formerly alleviated suffering are questioned in the narrative, which stages Louisa's monetary gift to Blackpool as the cause of his tragedy, and which presents characters such as Mrs. Sparsit, who make a mockery out of the concept of pity and kindness. Salvation can be achieved for certain characters by appealing to the barely visible goodness of Sissy Jupe.

The final novel discussed in this study, *Little Dorrit*, explores the complex interactions of financial and social debt and credit and their equal potential to build or destroy communities. The novel focuses specifically on appeals to *ethos* and the way in which self-fashioning often becomes detrimental to individuals and communities, particularly when carried out for the wrong reasons. Mr Dorrit's attempts to preserve his financial credit and status become so central to his self-fashioning that he actively cuts many social and communal ties, which has detrimental consequences for him. Society's misreading and misrepresentation of Mr Merdle's *ethos* leads to the ruin of entire communities when his fraud is finally exposed. The novel thus presents the dangerous consequences of misreading or misjudging the *ethos* of others.

While this study has focused on two levels of persuasion explicitly—that between the characters within the narrative and that between the text and its readers—there is another level of persuasion that would make for a fruitful field of study: that between Dickens's *ethos* and his oeuvre, a mutually-constitutive relationship. Leith and Myerson contend that "an effective storyteller … wields a kind of power that has often been seen as subversive" (7). Dickens's *ethos* as an author influences the perception of his works, and his works, in turn, influence the perception of his *ethos*. Thus, Dickens both established a moral rhetoric, a position for a good person speaking well, and actively tried to appear like a *vir bonus* himself.

It is astonishing how many of Dickens's worries about dangerous rhetoricians and alternative facts are still relevant today. Indeed, some of the characters in the novels seem as though they are caricatures of some of the world's current politicians. In engaging with the structures of ethics, virtue, and rhetoric, Dickens seems to have grasped what lies at the very core of human interactions. He called

for sympathy and emotional engagement, for a sentimental but critical investigation of both the *logos* and the *ethos* of those who have the power to speak and, more importantly, to be heard. However, in spite of their political and cultural actuality, the strength of Dickens's works does not lie with suggesting solutions to social inequalities—they are works of literary fiction. Although meant as a criticism, Stephen rightly commented that when reading Dickens, "You understand what he means on the first reading far better than on any other" (475). Dickens's genius does not lie in the novels' broad strokes, which are often somewhat conventional. Rather, his genius lies in the detail, in his divine comedy, and in his moving scenes of persuasion. Nearly two centuries later, every new reading of Dickens's novels challenges the many readings that have gone before—he gets better every time.

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