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THE VIOLENCE WITHIN AND WITHOUT: IMAGINATION AND REALITY IN THE NOVEL

Rice University

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THE VIOLENCE WITHIN AND WITHOUT: IMAGINATION AND REALITY IN THE NOVEL

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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ABSTRACT

The Violence Within and Without: Imagination and Reality in the Novel

Jill (Thad) Jenkins Logan

In response to the paradox implicit in the phrase "realistic fiction," critics have frequently posited that an oppositional structure is an identifying characteristic of the genre. My approach, developed in two theoretical chapters, assumes that the mind/world relationship is fundamental to human experience and to the novel, and that the best way to describe the dialectics of the genre is in terms of a conflict between imagination and reality. I define "imagination" as the structuring power of the mind, and cite studies in psychology, literary and linguistic theory, aesthetics, and philosophy that demonstrate how essential the activity of organization is to our apprehension of the world. Following Wallace Stevens, I define "reality" as an external pressure that constitutes a resistance to this basic activity of organization. A constant interplay of imagination and reality operates in perception and cognition, just as organic life is characterized by a constant interchange between the internal structures of an organism and its environment. There are two modes of imaginative response to the pressure of reality: transformation and adaptation. The conscious mind structures phenomenal experience, and hence "transforms"
it: it is a characteristic of the human nervous system to establish simple patterns of organization, which are adjusted and elaborated in a process of adaptation. We can define "romance" as the impulse to generate form, and "realism" as the impulse to adjust or "correct" formal structures; these definitions make it possible to describe the novel as characterized by a tension between romance and realism, or in E. H. Gombrich's terminology, between "making" and "matching." The advantage of such a description is its ability to recognize the fictionality of all human systems, including the literary text, while acknowledging that there is a mimetic element that is essential to the genre. If we posit imagination and reality as the terms of a dialectic that informs the genre, it is possible to discuss characters, authors, and readers as engaged in this dialectic, and to trace the tension between romance and realism in each sphere of activity.

In two chapters of practical criticism, I analyze Middlemarch and Our Mutual Friend with regard to the imagination/reality conflict as it applies to the authors, characters, and readers of these texts. I demonstrate that there is a close correlation between those imaginative activities of the characters that we perceive as affirmed by the text, the strategies of interpretation and expression that have generated the text, and the imaginative activity we perform as readers. In a brief conclusion, I suggest how the theory and methodology I have developed can be applied to a wide variety of texts.
For my teachers, Robert Pierce and Robert Wilson, with gratitude to my husband, my father, and my friends.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter I. Imagination and Reality</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II. Novelists, Characters, and Readers</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III. Middlemarch: An Ideally Illuminated Space</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV. Our Mutual Friend: The Human Form</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V. Conclusion</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Imagination and Reality

Every act of human consciousness is an encounter between the mind and the world: this is what "consciousness" means. The question is, as Humpty Dumpty puts it, "which is to be master." Does the world exist independently of human perception and cognition, and determine our response, or do we construct our worlds by communal or individual acts of mind? I believe this question is at the heart of the novel as a genre, and believe moreover that the answer the novel persistently gives us is "both." It is precisely in its presentation of the mind/world relationship as a perpetual dialectic that, as Ortega y Gasset has suggested, each novel recapitulates Don Quixote. What I mean to do, in proposing a theory of the novel, is to suggest that a tension between "imagination" and "reality" engages not only characters in novels but also novelists and readers.

The terms "imagination" and "reality," which will be central to my argument, are taken from Wallace Stevens' The Necessary Angel. I have chosen them in preference to Lionel Trilling's "appearance and reality" for two reasons. Trilling, like most critics, conceives of the novel as grounded in a binary opposition of some kind; this is a significant fact, but the difficulty in positing "appearance" and "reality" as central terms of the opposition is that "appearance," as
Heidegger points out, cannot be simply opposed to "reality" because it is always a version of reality. We can no longer, in good faith, posit the existence of a pure reality against which appearance can be juxtaposed: indeed, it is just this reality which novels investigate and open to question. Moreover, the term appearance implies the activity of an apprehending mind, and it is this activity on which I mean particularly to focus. If, for "appearance" we substitute Stevens' term "imagination," the way becomes clear to explore the activities of the mind as it encounters "reality." Since authors and readers, as well as characters, are clearly involved in imaginative activity, a theory of the novel based on a dialectic of imagination and reality can do justice to the text as rhetorical artifact and experienced event. In fact, such a theory makes it possible to consider the activity of authors, characters, and readers in similar terms, and to draw important correlations between these centers of consciousness.

In the following pages, then, I mean to develop a theory of the novel in terms of a conflict or opposition between imagination and reality. My argument will be based on an exploration of this dialectic as it operates in all human experience; in Chapter II, I will focus specifically on novelists, characters, and readers. After establishing my approach to the novel as a genre, I will proceed, in Chapters
III and IV to analyze two nineteenth-century novels, *Middlemarch* and *Our Mutual Friend*, in the light of this theory, and I will conclude with a brief summary of the relevance of my approach to a wide variety of novels. The issues which I will address are, for the most part, familiar ones, and I want to begin by examining—and perhaps to some extent re-defining—the traditional terminology which critics have used in attempting to describe the genre.

We know that in studying the novel we cannot seem to do without two terms—"romance" and "realism." We know, too, that we cannot discuss the novel for long without running into the idea of mimesis. Yet contemporary philosophy has taught us that we cannot use the term "reality" with any confidence in its referent: indeed, as Robert Langbaum suggests in *The Poetry of Experience*, no one since the Enlightenment has been able to assume the existence of a stable, autonomous, absolute truth on which we can all agree.¹ An uncertainty about what is "really real" confuses the whole issue of mimesis, since (in connection with the novel) the term implies a relationship between the text and real life, and we are no longer sure (if anyone was ever quite sure) what that is. As if this were not confusion enough, several centuries of aesthetic theory have made us acutely
aware that the representation of anything in art (much less a representation of life) is a very problematic issue in itself. The variety of meanings attached to the term "realism" is a reflection of this aesthetic and ontological complexity. The term "romance" is rapidly becoming as loaded with meaning as its twin: we can mean any number of things by it, and both words have lost some usefulness in becoming so rich. Yet we need them in order to understand the novel, and in the course of this chapter I mean to propose stipulative definitions that will make these terms better tools of analysis.

As I see it, any theory of the novel must come to grips with the relationship between fiction and life. Novelists have always been interested in this relationship, and have always tended to claim some sort of "truth" for their work though they have usually been aware of the complexity of the relation between truth and fiction. I think we can solve some of the problems associated with mimesis by postulating that novels are mimetic of our experience of life and considering what the fundamental elements of that experience are. Coleridge believed them to be the existence of the self and the existence of "things without us," and my own sense of the novel is based on this formulation. The relationship between mind and nature is central to the poetry of the Romantics, and I want to argue that the novel can be seen as another version of the Romantic exploration of this relation-
ship: in the novel, the interest in mind extends to include ordinary (as opposed to "poetic") consciousness; the concept of nature comes to include the urban, social environment. I believe that a theory of the novel must be grounded in this issue, and that we need to redefine romance and realism in terms of the mind's encounter with the world.

In *Partial Magic*, Robert Alter has stated that "the over-riding subject of the novel in all its forms would seem to be the disparity between the structures of the imagination and things as they are." Alter's statement suggests that what is distinctive about the novel is its presentation of the mind/world relationship not as a harmonious marriage but as a divorce—or at least a separation. Wallace Stevens, in *The Necessary Angel*, has discussed poetry in terms of an interdependence of "imagination" and "reality" and I propose to make use of Stevens terms to elucidate the dialectic which I believe informs the genre. Stevens conceives of reality as "whatever the imagination works with that is not itself;" reality is "a pressure from without" that exerts a "violence" against us. This seems to me a particularly useful definition since it allows us to avoid a tangle of ontological problems by conceiving of reality simply as that which is external to the imagining mind. I want to suggest, then, that a conflict, or tension, or opposition between imagination and reality is the distinguishing feature of the
novel as a genre.

Several contemporary thinkers, most notably perhaps, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, have taught us to recognize that the notions held by a social community are not natural but conventional, and subject to change. The novel outlives "realism" insofar as the term implies a certain set of assumptions about the nature of reality, about "things as they are." What it does not outlive, and remain a novel, is a pattern of opposition or contrariety. Ferdinand de Saussure's classic statement about language—"il n'y a que des différences, sans termes positifs"—can be loosely applied to the novel. There is no positive factor the presence of which identifies a text as member of the genre; the identifying feature is a certain disparity, a disparity which produces the Quixotic tension that so many critics have believed to be a radical of the genre. Characteristically, the novel insists on the existence and power of both imagination and reality. Stevens tells us that "we live in the mind" and I think the novel as a genre affirms this statement while simultaneously affirming that we live in the world.

Whether we discuss the novel as a rhetorical act, a "world" in itself populated by fictional characters, or an experienced event, the genre is characterized by an interaction of the mind and some external reality. Whether we focus, in other words, on the author (and/or the narrator),
the characters, or the reader, we can observe an interplay of "imagination" and "reality" that is the distinguishing feature of the genre. Since such an interplay is fundamental to our experience of life, it constitutes the basis of the novel's mimetic power. My thesis, then, commits me to demonstrating first of all that a dynamic relationship between the mind and the world is basic to human experience, and secondly that this relationship is a structural principle of the novel. For the remainder of this chapter, I want to focus on the mind/world relationship with reference to certain observations and hypotheses from several fields of study; in doing so, I mean to ground my own statements on a solid theoretical base, and make the foundations of my approach clear before proceeding, in Chapter II, to a discussion of novelists, characters, and readers, and in the next chapters to an analysis of specific texts. It will be necessary for me to begin with a fairly detailed look at theories of perception and cognition, in order to develop a terminology which will allow us to consider romance and realism as aspects of the encounter between imagination and reality.

The dynamic conflict between the mind and the world begins at a purely biological level. All living beings exist in an environment: organisms are alive precisely insofar as they are not merely located in an environment but are
responsive to that environment in a particular way. The responses we identify as life involve a composition of some part of the environment according to the structural principles of the organism, in the processes of respiration or photosynthesis: Jean Piaget contends that "an organism only reacts to a milieu by assimilating it, in the widest sense of the word," and defines assimilation as "the functional aspect of structure formation." The fact of life, then, implies that it is impossible for any life form to encounter an environment that is unmediated by structures related to the life-form itself. We are "always already" beyond any simple contact with the world as it is in itself. Nonetheless, the survival of an organism depends on the establishment of an appropriate relationship with its environment. Adaptation, or what Piaget calls "accomodation" is thus a second essential principle of life.

The fundamental biological facts of assimilation and adaptation can be seen to form a pattern which operates at all levels of human experience. In Psychology and Epistemology, Piaget discusses these twin principles as the basis of cognition.

A certain equilibrium between assimilation of objects to the subject's activity and the accommodation of this activity to objects thus forms the point of departure for all knowledge and is presented at the very outset in the form of a complex relation between the subject and objects which simultaneously excludes any purely empirical
or purely aprioristic interpretation of the cognitive mechanism.\textsuperscript{10}

Piaget's reference to the complexity of the subject/object relationship is obviously important to my thesis and will be discussed further in some detail. In the next few pages, I want to focus on the concept of "structure formation" as it applies to human consciousness, to the life of the mind.

It is the act of organizing, of giving form, that characterizes all activities of consciousness. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "the same creative capacity which is at work in imagination and ideation is present, in germ, in the first human perception."\textsuperscript{11} That the mind is formative at all levels of its operation is, of course, a familiar concept in post-Kantian philosophy; it was also, as M. H. Abrams has so thoroughly outlined in The Mirror and the Lamp, a key concept in Romantic aesthetic theory. Coleridge's "synthetic and magical power," the imagination, is essentially, I would argue, a generic term for the structuring power of the mind as it operates in perception, cognition, and aesthetic experience. Throughout these chapters, I will use the term "imagination" with this definition in mind, and my sense of the contrast or conflict between imagination and reality will be closely related to the question of form.

Contemporary psychology has largely verified the Romantic
poets' conviction that the mind is not merely a passive recipient of sense impressions. Although some of its theories (such as the principle of psychophysical isomorphism) have been discounted, the Gestalt school has made significant contributions to the psychology of perception in its insistence that perception is an activity, and moreover an activity that must be studied in terms of formal relationships rather than discrete units. Gestalt theorists, then, do not subscribe to a Berkeleyan view of perception as a simple additive process by which isolate sensations are combined: fundamental to their approach is the proposition that the organism always responds to patterns of stimuli; a percept is itself an organization of data that preserves, by way of neurological dynamics, formal relationships among the stimuli. According to Wolfgang Köhler, "sensory organization constitutes a characteristic achievement of the nervous system."12

The organization of sensory data into what Köhler calls "functional wholes" seems to follow the law of Prägnanz: the nervous system exhibits a tendency to "prefer" simple, regular forms. This has interesting implications for aesthetic theory, as does the fact that meaning tends to accru to these "functional wholes": again according to Köhler, "meaning follows the lines drawn by natural organization; it usually enters into segregated entities."13
It is important to remember that the forms under considera-
tion are not necessarily visual shapes; indeed, Köhler him-
self stresses that "the concept 'Gestalt' may be applied far
beyond the limits of sensory experience."\textsuperscript{14} If we follow
this lead and extend the notion of a gestalt to include
cognitive systems of order and relationship, there is ample
evidence that the principle of organization into functional
wholes plays an important part in our apprehension of the
world.

In this context, twentieth-century studies in the
apprehension of language and literature provide a useful
model for the mind's encounter with the world. Structural
linguistics has, of course, proceeded from the axiom that
the sentence (and, ultimately, the system of language) must
be the focus of the linguist's attention, because the re-
lational structure in which a word participates is the locus
of meaning. Benveniste, for instance, defines the meaning of
a word as "the sum of its possible relations with other words":
meaning is based on "the capacity of a linguistic unit to
integrate a higher-level unit."\textsuperscript{15} In literature, according
to Tzvetan Todorov, "sentences are integrated into units of
larger dimension which in turn are integrated into the work
as a whole."\textsuperscript{16} It is the reader who organizes these units
into patterns that generate meaning. In my next chapter, I
will discuss the activity of the reader at some length; the
point here is that acts of interpretation, like acts of perception, consist in organization. "To interpret something," as Jonathan Culler tells us, "is to bring it within the modes of order that culture makes available."\textsuperscript{17}

Whether or not all possible modes of order are culturally determined, the link between interpretation and form is a crucial one. E. H. Gombrich, whose study of perception in \textit{Art and Illusion} has been extremely important to my thinking, notes that "there is only a difference of degree between ordinary perception . . . and interpretation." Gombrich stresses that when we are aware of our own activity of organizing data into functional wholes we say we "interpret"—"where we are not we say we see."\textsuperscript{18} Key to his theories is the conviction that John Ruskin's idea of the "innocent eye" is nonsense: to see is to sort, model, and organize. The structuring power of the mind is always at work in our apprehension of the world, and it is literally impossible for any conscious organism to encounter unmediated reality.

Whether in response to a literary text or the world of experience, we always, as Stanley Fish has argued, interpret, always bring phenomenal experience into forms of order as a means of making sense of it. Acts of interpretation may be more or less public, and more or less consciously recognized as interpretations by the individual or community. The ways of making meaning that Fish calls "interpretive
strategies" can generate critical readings of literary texts, world-views, or programs of action. For Kenneth Burke (who seems to have provided Fish with the notion of "strategies") the choice of a mode of action is inherent in a perspective. Burke's pragmatic bent leads him to focus, in The Philosophy of Literary Form, on the active role of the mind in the context of expression rather than interpretation. His statement that "stylization is inevitable" is, however, another version of the principle of "assimilation" that I have been attempting to elucidate here.

Naive theories of realism have tended to ignore the formative activity of the mind and the inevitability of stylization. George J. Becker, in his introduction to Documents of Modern Literary Realism, summarizes what I think is an over-simplification of the relation between truth and fiction: Becker argues that the realists want to "let the facts speak for themselves... once the facts presented are attached to some pre-existent body of doctrine or belief they cease to speak for themselves and speak only as directed." But facts have no voice of their own, and always appear to us already informed by our particular interpretive strategies. A good response to the argument Becker proposes comes from C. S. Lewis, who in the epilogue to his study of Medieval and Renaissance cosmology points out that no world-model can ever be quite simply "true."
Nature gives most of her evidence in answer to the questions we ask her. Here, as in the law courts, the character of the evidence depends on the shape of the examination ... In relation to the total truth in the witness' mind, the structure of the examination is like a stencil. It determines how much of the total truth will appear and what pattern it will suggest.21

Lewis is suggesting here that facts always speak as directed; it is an illusion to suppose that they can do otherwise. We can go further than Lewis and observe that the fact, like the isolate sensory stimulus or the phoneme, has meaning only insofar as it is integrated into a functional whole. Our histories depend, of course, on such organizations of facts and the principles that we use to establish order.22

What all this suggests, then, is the now-familiar idea that all human systems are, in a sense, fictional.

Since it is what I have called the imagination which generates structures and patterns of organization, which is responsible for constructing the "functional wholes" which make sense of experience, it is the imagination which "creates" the worlds in which we live. This is the point William Blake tried persistently to make at a time when an increasingly dualistic, mechanistic notion of mind and world had begun to dominate Western culture. Owen Barfield, a modern critic whose views are close to Blake's, has argued that "the world of things is a habit of mind."23 Insofar as our perception and our language are modes of imaginative organization which
effect our apprehension of the world, we are all artists ceaselessly engaged in representing reality to ourselves. It is a corollary of this proposition that our individual apprehensions of reality—or, as Burke would say, our sizing up and naming of situations—can be only a version of truth. Similarly, our language and our arts can never simply present reality but always, to some extent, must construct and create it.

In making the point that all verbal communication involves a choice among possible styles, Burke anticipated what has become a truism in contemporary critical thought. From New Critics to post-Structuralists, there is widespread agreement that, as Todorov says, "no narrative is natural: a choice and a construction will always preside over its appearance."24 The artist's work is thus another version of the power to form that characterizes life and consciousness. It would seem, then, that René Wellek comes to an irrefutable conclusion in arguing that "the theory of realism is ultimately bad aesthetics, because all art is 'making' and is... a world in itself of illusion and symbolic forms."25 Nevertheless, the existence of what many people have felt compelled to call realistic fiction should alert us to the fact that Wellek's formulation does not tell the whole story. Bad aesthetics or not, realism exists in perceived distinction to other modes of fiction. John Romano, in *Dickens and Reality*, 
argues convincingly that the novel continually resists the limitations of form, the distance from reality that all formal structures inevitably entail. What Romano's thesis implies is that novels characteristically acknowledge a "pressure from without," a pressure exerted by reality against all our forms, fictions, and strategies.

A number of critics make reference to the fact that reality is what seems to resist our imaginations. Martin Price speaks of the "stubbornness of the actual," Kenneth Burke of "the opponent who cannot be refuted, the nature of brute reality itself." C. S. Lewis, meditating on his wife's death, deplores "the fatal obedience of the image," and longs for "the rough, sharp, cleansing tang of otherness." "All reality," he declares, "is iconoclastic." Eric Auerbach, distinguishing legend from history, notes that legend is "too smooth": it fails to give a sense of the friction and resistance of real life."26 A corollary of Coleridge's proposition about the fundamentals of human experience would appear to be that "things without us" do not readily conform to our images, our desires, our expectations, our ideas. What novels do is engage us in an experience of this tension between the mind and the world.

The need for adaptation is a primary fact of biology, as I have pointed out, and an acknowledgement of this principle is basic to what we call "realistic" fiction. The
metaphysics of the novel insist that there is a world existing independently of consciousness: our structures and our strategies always exist in some sort of relationship to what they are structurings of and strategies for. While (beyond the purely physical level) it may be difficult if not impossible to determine which "readings" or interpretations of reality are most adequate—since, short of revelation, we have nothing to compare them to in order to test their validity—it is clear that some kind of adequate or appropriate relationship to the external world is a necessary condition of survival and sanity. The novel is grounded in a sense that there is something out there, with which we are inextricably involved, whether we will or no, and with which we must come to terms. We live not only in the mind, but also in the world.

Just as the relationship that obtains between any organism and its environment is a dynamic one, consisting in a complex set of inter-relations, so the encounter of mind and world seems to be characterized by a perpetual interchange. New developments in perceptual psychology suggest that Köhler's functional wholes need to be considered not as static entities, but as aspects of a process. As Piaget points out, the concept of transformation is essential in any study of structure: what Piaget calls the "transformational aspect of perception" involves an interchange between the subject
and the world that can be described as "anticipation and correction."27 This model, elaborated by cybernetics and information theory, is based on the notion of the feedback loop. A dolphin's use of a sonar-like mechanism to orient itself in space provides a simple illustration of the process: similarly, patterns of sensory organization may be considered as perceptual "hypotheses" about phenomena, which may be confirmed or refuted by "feedback" from the external world.28

In his most recent work, The Sense of Order, Gombrich suggests that "the organism must probe the environment and, as it were, plot the message it receives against an elementary expectation of regularity." This expectation of regularity is based on the law of Pragnanz: "our nervous system exhibits an observable bias for simple configurations, straight lines, circles, and other simple orders, and we will tend to see such regularities rather than random shapes."29 The minimal modes of order constructed by our nervous systems, then, form the basis of our perception of the world; these schemata are modified and elaborated as information from the external world is received and processed.

In his earlier Art and Illusion, Gombrich traces the development of representational art as a process that involves a modification or "correction" of schemata in response to what he calls the impulse to "match" the phenomenal world. He postulates that all artists work with certain culturally
determined visual stereotypes; at certain periods in history (notably classical antiquity and the Renaissance) there is a sustained effort on the part of generations of artists to adapt and modify these stereotypes so as to render the visual image increasingly life-like. To the Middle Ages, for example, "the schema is the image; to the postmedieval artist, it is the starting point for corrections, adjustments, adaptations, the means to probe reality and to wrestle with the particular." Gombrich sees all representational art as generated by a two-fold process of "making and matching." Basic schematic structures (which are the foundation of art as well as perception) are "corrected" as those structures are tested against "reality." If, as I have suggested, the formulation of schemata is in fact the characteristic activity of consciousness at all levels of its operation, then the principle of the adapted stereotype can provide a useful model for a relationship between imagination and reality. The primary and essential activity of consciousness is imaginative structuring; a secondary process involves the modification of structures in response to the pressure of reality.

I suggest that with this model in mind, the terms "romance" and "realism" can be re-defined in such a way as to help clarify the novel's relation to life and the literary tradition. Following George Levine, whose article
"Realism Re-considered" has been important to my thinking. I propose to consider romance as corresponding to the primary imaginative activity of "making," and realism as corresponding to the secondary activity of "matching." From this perspective, both are activities of the imagination, of consciousness, and neither gives us access to reality: thus we can discuss realism as a certain impulse, and a certain technique, without becoming entangled in ontological arguments. This formulation will also allow us to account for the fact that romance is associated with a specific literary genre and with a certain mode of thought and behavior. The essential impulse here is toward the transformation of experience, based on the mind's inherent propensity to create patterns, to order and organize, to generate structures and to impose those structures on the world. The realistic impulse, on the other hand, is grounded in our fundamental need to adapt our structures in order to deal with external reality. Just as a dynamic interplay of "assimilation and accommodation" characterizes the response of organisms to the world, so I would argue an interplay of romance and realism is characteristic of all the imaginative activity associated with the novel.

In the genre of romance, as Northrop Frye has shown us, we can observe formulaic narrative patterns that constitute "the structural core of all fiction." In The Secular Scripture, Frye makes the interesting point that "left to
itself" (that is, "meeting no resistance from reality")
"what the imagination produces is the rigidly conventional."32
Here it seems to me is the literary version of the law of
Pragnanz insofar as it accounts for what Gombrich has termed
"the natural pull toward the minimum stereotype."33 Both
Frye and Harry Levin discuss the novel as a displacement or
correction of the formulaic structures of romance. According
to Levin, "romance works with a definite repertory of symbols
and conventions;"34 realistic fiction exposes the inadequacy
of such conventions by testing them against ordinary human
experience. Historically, then, the novel and the romance
exhibit an evolutionary relation between making and matching:
romance is the genre of the stereotype, the novel of the
stereotype adapted in response to reality.

For all its usefulness, however, such an evolutionary
model needs to be amended. Levin's criticism is based on a
perjorative view of romance that implicitly denies the
importance of the imagination in life and in art: myth,
fairy tale, and romance are not, as he suggests, merely an
equivalent of wish-fulfillment fantasies; they are products
of the constructive power of the mind which generates all
forms, including language. Levin notes at one point that
"the mind falls naturally into Quixotic habits, idealizes and
embellishes, creates false perspectives and geometrical mis-
conceptions."35 I think he is describing with a fair degree
of accuracy what I called the romantic mode of consciousness here: what I want to stress is that such Quixotic habits are the foundation of art and consciousness, and that what Blake calls the "imaginative eye" is more important in and for the novel than Levin allows.

What is really at issue here is a philosophical disagreement about the mind/world relationship. In defending the romantic tendency to generate forms, patterns, structures, and to interpret experience in terms of those forms, I am arguing against an essentially Bergsonian conception of the mind and the world that I believe underlies Levin's theories and those of Frank Kermode. For both, all literary form is a violation of the truth of experience: the formal properties of art are always a kind of lie, just as for Bergson, all forms of knowledge distance and separate us from life. In Dickens and Reality, John Romano has similarly argued that "the world as any of us know it is a world reduced and simplified and violated by the forms of knowing." While it should by now be clear that I agree with this position up to a point, I want to insist that the mind also plays a more positive role in the drama of apprehension.

Forms of knowing may indeed "violate" the known; for Martin Heidegger, such violence is the defining characteristic of human being. "The violence of poetic speech, of thinking projection, of building configuration," is the
specifically human act by which we "wrest being from concealment into the manifest." "To be a man means to take gathering upon oneself." Through human language, "things first come into being and are"; through the work of art, "everything else that appears . . . is first confirmed and made accessible." Forms of knowing create the known world, and therefore cannot be simply juxtaposed to it. While he does not deny that a kind of distance (or gap, or rupture) is simultaneously and inherently a concomitant of human being, Heidegger persistently rejects every simple dualism, including the outright opposition between imagination and reality implicit in Romano's approach to the novel.

Although Heidegger evidently did not agree, Ernest Cassirer is said to have felt that "there was no essential difference between their positions;" for my purposes, Cassirer provides a more accessible statement about the mind/world relation which retains those aspects of Heidegger's thought that are important in this context. Throughout The Philosophy of Symbolic Form, Cassirer evinces the more positive attitude toward form that seems to me so important as a complement to Romano's position. A basic tenent of the work is the idea that "every authentic function of the human spirit embodies an original, formative power." Cassirer maintains that the formative activity of consciousness is the means by which both the subjective and the objective
come into existence. Like Heidegger, Cassirer suggests that man "possesses his self only when instead of remaining within the . . . flow of events, he divides the stream and gives form to it." 40 Similarly, "the object . . . is no fixed form that imprints itself on consciousness but is the product of a formative operation. . . . effected by consciousness." 41 What I mean to suggest, with reference to the work of these philosophers, that a dualistic view of the mind and the world is untenable: we need instead to conceive of this relationship as a perpetual interchange in which the imagination and reality are always engaged.

Yet I have spoken earlier of the "divorce" between the mind and the world as an essential condition of the novel, and it is important to recognize that the interchange I have described above need not be as friendly as Cassirer's language suggests; in this sense Heidegger's notion of "violence" is often particularly appropriate to the encounter of mind and world as presented in the novel. One image that I have found particularly useful in conceiving this encounter is that of smashing against a wall: another is Stevens' vision of the imagination as "a violence from within that protects us from a violence without." A sense of tension between the mind and the world is, as I have argued, characteristic of the novel, and it is a tension that derives from the most basic facts of our existence; neither the
forms of life and consciousness, nor "reality" exist independently of each other—nevertheless, there is a world external to our individual being which presents itself as distinct from our consciousness, with which we must somehow come to terms.

Although the exigencies of philosophical discourse are beyond my means, I believe that in order to adequately discuss this state of affairs—and to make sense of the novel as a genre—we need to develop a two-fold sense of the imagination. On the one hand, it is the only means of accession to reality at our disposal: without acts of perceptual and cognitive organization we could not exist for ourselves, nor apprehend the world. On the other hand, our structures and strategies are never simply "true," but are always a species of fiction, and thus they are always susceptible to being contrasted with "reality." The double quality of the imagination and the forms that it brings into being is very like the curious double-ness that Heidegger discovers in appearance.

Because being, physis, consists in appearing, in an offering of appearance and views, it stands essentially and hence necessarily and permanently in the possibility of an appearance which precisely covers over and conceals what the essent in truth, i.e. in unconcealment, is.42

Appearance, then, both conceals and reveals, and only conceals insofar as it does reveal. Similarly, I would argue, the formative power of the mind is both the origin of meaning
and the source of fictions, illusions, and lies.

In a complex argument that need not be reproduced here, Cassirer suggests that meaning is a function of closure. Heidegger expresses a similar principle in stating that "limit and end are that wherewith the essent begins to be." Barthes offers another version of this idea in S/Z: "the very existence of difference generates life and meaning." Culler, in Structuralist Poetics, bases his disagreement with post-structuralists on the ground that "something can have meaning only if there are other meanings it cannot have," and quotes Foucault's statement to the effect that rules governing the production of meaning are simultaneously "principles of constraint." It is this inescapable relationship of meaning and limitation that ultimately makes the formative power of the mind both a source of truth and a source of lies, an avenue of freedom and an instrument of repression, an access to being and to non-being: Los and Urizen.

With particular reference to its predilection for form, Roger Bacon spoke of the mind as a kind of criminal. But if the imagination is, in one sense, the villain of the piece, it must also be seen as heroic. This is why characters like Quixote, Lord Jim, and Emma Bovary are such potent imaginary beings. The romantic tendency to interpret experience in terms of aesthetic form, to transform experience imaginatively,
is a version of that constructive energy which not only generates art but is a foundation for our experience of the world. At the same time, as I have been at pains to establish, the romantic impulse is linked to the stereotype and the convention. These characters are excellent examples of the romantic tendency toward an imposition of fixed patterns upon experience that leads to an unbalanced (and potentially suicidal) relationship between the self and the world. What they lack is an ability to be flexible enough in their schematic formulation to adequately accommodate experience—that is to say, they are not "realistic."

This latter point sounds so obvious that it might seem that I have gone to some trouble only to re-state a commonplace. Yet the definitions of romance and realism I have established here can provide the basis for a comprehensive discussion of novelists, characters in novels, and readers of novels. Moreover, when the terms are defined in relation to fundamental activities of consciousness as it encounters the world, then the statement that the novel as a genre is characterized by a combination of romance and realism becomes newly meaningful. To say that such a combination—or, as I should say, a dialectic—is the structural principle of the genre explains the characteristic "Quixotic" tension, which is based on the paradoxical truth that we live in the mind and in the world. Finally, by considering romance and realism
in the novel as aspects of the dynamic interplay between imagination and reality which characterizes our experience of life, it is possible to account for the mimetic element which we all feel to be a distinguishing feature of the genre while acknowledging the fictionality of all human forms, including, of course, the novel itself.
II. Novelists, Characters, and Readers

To my mind, the best practical criticism of individual texts can move freely between discussing the characters and their world, elucidating the experience of the reader, and considering the text as a rhetorical artifact. Since the reader, the novelist, and (ostensibly) the characters are all centers of consciousness, it is possible to view them all as engaged in a conflict between imagination and reality that I have posited as fundamental to the genre. What I propose to do in this chapter, then, is to substantiate my assertions about the novel by looking more specifically at the activity of novelists, characters, and readers. In doing so I will also be establishing a methodology for the analysis of texts. My argument will focus first on the author, then on the characters, and finally on the reader: this does not mean that I consider these to be discrete categories, since they obviously are not, but it has seemed best to proceed in this way so as to demonstrate clearly that some version of the interplay between romance and realism is operating in all three spheres.

One of the advantages of my approach is that it allows us to discuss the author without speculating about intentions: I think we can identify, instead, a characteristic activity that novelists seem to be engaged in. Novelists themselves,
however, can enlighten us about what they believe they are
doing, and such statements on their part should be considered
in constructing a theory of the novel. This is not to
suggest that the relationship between author and text is
necessarily a privileged one, but I do mean to affirm that
an analysis of the text as a rhetorical structure is important.
Moreover, texts are imaginative artifacts, and an examination
of the dynamics of their construction is directly relevant
to my argument. It is, then, my intent to apply Fish's
"magic question" here, and ask "what does a novelist do?"

The most obvious answer is that he or she manipulates
a symbol system, and in the use of language (a function the
novelist shares, of course, with all who speak or write)
exhibits both romantic and realistic modes of activity:
language-use involves us all in the experience of constructing
formulations and simultaneously adjusting those formulations
(according to rules of grammar and syntax) to cope with
particular speech situations. Todorov has noted that there
are two aspects of any utterance: "action, on the part of
the speaker" and "the evocation of a certain reality." He
goes on to stress that "this reality has, in the case of
literature, no other existence than that conferred by the
utterance itself."1 Although novelists establish an illusion
of actuality, they do not work with facts but only with
language: the reality evoked by the linguistic act of a
novelist is always a construct of the imagination. Part of what this means is that what we call the "world" of any novel is an imagined world, its reality an illusion generated by the novelist's own strategies of expression and interpretation.

In "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy,'" Mark Shorer notes "the inevitability of individual imaginative habit, the impressive fact that every mind selects its creative gamut from the whole range of possible language, and in thus selecting determines its character and the character of its creations." Virginia Woolf's England is not quite the England of H. G. Wells: the reality with which characters in Bleak House have to contend is not precisely the reality that resists Faulkner's protagonists in As I Lay Dying. In analyzing a given novel, it is important to determine what the features of reality in that novel are, to chart the imagined world. I think the best way to do so is to look closely at what seems to work in a given text to retard, resist, and constrain the imaginative lives of the characters. By considering what works against the imagination in a given text we can not only come to understand something of what a certain novelistic "world" is like, but can begin to describe the conflict between mind and world that informs a particular text.

Since the qualities and dimensions of a fictional world
are determined by the "constructive eye" of an artist, that world is an imagined world, a product of the romantic imagination. We can agree, then, with William Gass in saying that what a novelist does is to "make" worlds. But I want to argue that Gass is wrong to state that such making is "the only business of the novelist."\(^3\) What is distinctive about the activity of the novelist, on the contrary, is a commitment to matching the world evoked by his discourse and generated by his vision with a public world. The feedback loop is essential to the dynamics of the novel, and for the novelist feedback comes from the human community. He or she is working in the realistic mode, then, in attempting to match the forms of his or her imagination to life as experienced in our common world; we credit a piece of fiction with "realism" insofar as its imaginary world corresponds to our sense of how things are in the "real" world.\(^4\)

Since, as I have previously argued, such conceptions are themselves a species of fiction, the "matching" I am discussing here involves the relative correspondence of world models, and we can avoid having to consider realism in terms of ultimate truths about what is or is not "really" real. Realism as a literary effect depends on a consensus of opinion between the novelist and the reading community about the nature of reality. Given the fact that world-views vary from one social group to another, one historical period to
another and from one individual to another, we are often in the position of learning to accept a novelist's imagined world. This is the case, I think, when we confront new texts that require us to deploy unfamiliar strategies of naturalization, and it is also the case when we read older texts that present unfamiliar social worlds; in reading the latter, we frequently need to go outside the novel itself for instruction about contemporary historical conditions in order to perceive the text as realistic. What matters is not that the text merely confirm our prejudices but that we can come to share—at least provisionally—in the novelist's imagined world as though it were our own.

Such sharing is possible, in part, because of the novelist's commitment to be responsible to the world of public experience. What he or she undertakes to order imaginatively and present to our perception is life as experienced by some kind of historical community. In his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, for example, Hawthorne argues that the romancer claims "a certain latitude" to which the novelist does not feel himself entitled, since the novel aims at a fidelity to "the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." Similarly, Henry James asserts that romance deals with experience liberated, so to speak, experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we so wish to put the matter,
drag upon it, and operating in a medium which
relieves it... of the inconvenience of a related,
a measurable state, a state subject to all our
vulgar communities.6

Joseph Conrad, discussing his own work, speaks of his
"romantic feeling of reality" as a faculty which can be a
blessing to the artist provided it is "disciplined by a
sense of personal responsibility and a recognition of the
hard facts of existence shared by the rest of mankind."7
In response to his critics, Alain Robbe-Grillet insists that
the "new novel" far from being an arcane exercise open only
to specialists, is "interested only in man and in his
situation in the world," and argues that "what is at issue
here is an experience of life."8

I would suggest, then, that when an artist liberates
him or herself from "our vulgar communities" he or she is no
longer working in the genre of the novel. If new genres are
developing in response to changing historical conditions,
that is all to the good, but if the word novel is to mean
anything there must be some things it does not mean. The
novel, I repeat, is characterized by a certain discipline
of the artist's imagination in response to the awareness of
what Robert Alter has called "some commonly perceived human
reality."9 In the next section of this chapter, I will focus
more specifically on how novels recognize "the hard facts of
existence": for the moment, I want to continue my considera-
tion of how an interplay of romance and realism characterizes
the activity of the novelist.

If we see, in a commitment to "matching" the imagined world and the world of ordinary human experience, a version of what I have called the realistic impulse, we can identify the novelist's construction of plots as a version of romanticism. The pattern of plot is always, in a sense, artificial, and some such artifice is inherent in all novels—if not all possible narrative. 10 Cervantes establishes a model for the novelist as self-conscious artificer, and I think we can see a similar recognition of this role on the part of novelists from Sterne to Thackery to Joyce: many post-modern narratives (as, for example, the work of John Barth and Donald Barthelme) are based on an awareness of the artificiality of the conventional plot. Yet however suspicious of the forms of story they may become, novelists are, I believe, essentially storytellers, and as such they exercise the romantic power of making.

If the story, as E. M. Forster suggests, is "the lowest and simplest of all literary organisms," 11 it is also a product of that capacity for form that Köhler terms "the characteristic achievement of the nervous system." Storytelling is an ancient activity of the human community, bearing witness to our need to represent experience of ourselves in order to make sense of it. Moreover, the formulaic patterns of myth, romance, and fairy-tale would seem to correspond
in important ways to psychic life, as suggested by the work of Freud, Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Bruno Bettelheim. Story, I would suggest, has always the potential capacity to function as an imaginative ordering of human life. In the genre of the novel, that potential is fulfilled in a particular way: here, what is given (in Susanne Langer's phrase) "symbolic form" is the life of individuals as members of historical social communities.\textsuperscript{12}

Both Ian Watt and David Goldknopf discuss the development of the genre in terms of a discovery that "the lived-in world is worthy of imaginative involvement."\textsuperscript{13} In the novel, the storyteller's imagination is not left to itself, but engages itself with the experience of men and women in this world: the feat of the successful novelist is to impose a pattern on the events of ordinary life without falsifying our sense of what that life is like. In the process, formal patterns of narrative are variously adjusted and modified; this, as I have argued, the novel is the genre of the adapted stereotype. Because the romancer feels less commitment to adapt formal structures in this way, the proliferation of "un-corrected" schemata is characteristic of that genre; it tends toward a multiplication of formulaic patterns and (as Frye has observed) toward the rigidly conventional. Henry James (among others) has pointed out that the novel is subject to a proliferation not of pattern but of detail--
hence the loose, baggy monster, which is a counterpart of the roman de longue haleine. Such monsters are not solely a product of the nineteenth century; they are the logical extreme of a realistic tendency: if narrative schemata are refined out of existence we are left with an assemblage of data that cannot signify, just as without perceptual organization there would only be a "buzzing confusion."

When "ordinary" life is made into story it ceases to be quite ordinary. If, as Levin contends, novels deflate the patterns of myth and romance by bringing them into contact with life-as-experienced, they also invest the latter with aesthetic form and thus alter our perception of it. As well as showing us the discrepancy between narrative form and experience, novels characteristically reveal the weight and mystery of ordinary life, life in the common world. Thus, I would argue that what might be called re-mythification is not a recessive element in or a recent addition to the novel (as Levin and Maurice Shroder, respectively, have suggested)\(^{14}\) but inheres in the genre from its inception. Successful novelists, then, have in some measure accomplished what "romantic" characters attempt: a transformation of "reality" through the power of the imagination.

I have argued that the resistance of "things without us" is a distinguishing feature of human experience; novels create
the illusion that such resistance functions within the world of the text. What characters in the novel do--characters as distinct as Roquetin and Clarissa, is encounter a world: as in our own experience, this encounter is marked by a conflict of imagination and reality. Consciousness organizes, imposes structures, and deploys strategies; it is met by a resistance that reality exerts against all modes of order, all pattern and form. Insofar as they are represented as centers of consciousness operating in an environment, characters function as analogues of ourselves: this, of course, is true of all characters in all forms of fiction; what is distinctive about characters in the novel is the particular kind of world they inhabit and their relationship to that world.

In the genre of romance, the environment in which characters operate is less resistant to mind and metamorphosis than our own: the physical and social worlds permit of more extensive kinds of transformation than we can ordinarily accomplish. Hence the prevalence in this genre of magic, which is based on the ability to manipulate this more fluid environment. Heros of romance do, sometimes, fail--as Lancelot fails in the Quest of the Holy Grail; such failure is, however, grounded in some moral flaw on the part of the hero, rather than in the resistance offered by what Burke calls "the unanswerable opponent--the nature of brute reality
itself." Romance is a genre of human potency: bravery, courtesy, and fidelity can and do overcome all opposition, to transform the world. Hence the consolation Bruno Bettelheim believes fairy tales offer to children is "the message... that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious."16 The image of the triumphant hero whose foot is on the dragon is an image of the relationship between mind and world in romance; it is also an image that can figure the ascendancy of form.17

In the genre of the novel we do not see this kind of simple victory. The world a novel presents to us is much more difficult to master, and can never be mastered with conclusive finality, by the storyteller or by the characters. And it is precisely in this recognition of the world's recalcitrance that the novelist displays solidarity with "the rest of mankind," and participates in "our vulgar communities." Insofar as it resists every kind of imaginative transformation, then, the world of the novel is like our own. Moreover, as I have suggested, the imagined world of any novel represents the resistance of reality in particular ways, and the precise nature of this resistance will bear, as a general rule, a close relation to the resistance of reality as it is experienced by members of a certain social community at a certain moment in history. In other
words, "the hard facts of existence" are variously conceived in different novels. Since, up to the present time, novels have been produced in a bourgeois, capitalist society (or in reaction against such a society) money and property are standard features of what is presented as reality. But twentieth-century novels are, for example, more likely than those of the nineteenth to take a dim view of human effort in the face of what is widely viewed as the reality of universal chaos. A fully developed correlation between a particular novel and conditions of life in a specific time and place is, of course, a topic that would require substantial research; I mean only to stress that such a correlation exists, and is important to the genre. (This is not to suggest that the individual experience of a novelist should not be taken into account, but I would again insist that, in this genre, an artist's private vision of reality must be at least open to confirmation by a community.) However reality may be presented, the crucial point here is that it functions as a resistance to the characters in the novel, as an externality with which they must somehow come to terms, but cannot fully master.

There are two modes of a character's ostensible response to the world: an effort to understand or interpret that world, and an effort to act in it. Alan Friedman who in The Turn of the Novel also focuses on "the dynamic confronta-
tion of two pressures, self and world," makes this point in referring to "insight and deeds" as the "onrushing double response" of the self to the world. Friedman speaks at length of "the perceiving self's attempts to grasp--to come to grips with, in perception and action, the assaults and offers of the surrounding world."\(^{18}\) I would suggest that perception and action are (as Burke constantly stresses) closely related, and moreover, that they are two kinds of imaginative response precisely insofar as they involve a transformation of the environment, an ordering or structuring of the world. In the case of narrative, the distinction between mental acts and physical action is flattened, since every kind of activity is purely linguistic. Thus it is an axiom of my theory that the model of romance and realism developed in the preceding chapter can be applied to the totality of a character's response to the world.

The function of the schematizing power of the mind in both interpretation and action can be illustrated by a brief look at the two modes of activity in *Absalom, Absalom*!. Thomas Sutpen's efforts to establish--almost in the classic sense--a house, constitute a sustained attempt to realize in the physical world, the public world, the structures of his imagination. "you see," he tells Quentin's grandfather, "I had a design in my mind."\(^{19}\) Such a design, then, can be considered a schema out of which arise Sutpen's actions in
the world, a schema which Sutpen attempts to impose on the world through his action. Other characters are primarily involved in interpretation: they deploy various strategies and create various fictions in an effort to understand their world and its inhabitants. In doing so they are engaged in an effort to bring information into intelligible, meaningful "modes of order." Shreve, at one point, imagines Charles Bon

leaning there in that solitude between panting smoke and engines and almost touching the answer aware of the jigsaw puzzle picture integers of it waiting, almost lurking, just beyond his reach, inextricable, jumbled, and unrecognizable yet on the point of falling into pattern which would reveal to him at once, like a flash of light, the meaning of his whole life. . . 20

This seems to me an apt description of much interpretive activity in the novel. We can see, particularly in the dialogue of Quentin and Shreve, the interplay of romance and realism that seems to me so important. They do progressively modify their interpretations in an attempt to arrive at a more adequate (a more mimetic) reconstruction of the past, yet as Faulkner explicitly notes, much of what they do is create a story of their own.

In Absalom as in all novels, neither world-transforming action nor clear and comprehensive vision are easily realized. Georg Lukacs' theory of the novel stresses the difficulty—or impossibility—for our modern consciousness, at least, of attaining an adequate understanding. As Paul de Man inter-
interprets Lukacs in *Blindness and Insight*, the mind's inherent need for "totality" is thwarted by the fact of alienation: "any attempt at a total understanding of our being will stand in contrast to actual experience, which is bound to remain fragmentary, particular, and unfulfilled." Whereas "totality strives for a continuity that can be compared with the unity of an organic entity. . . . the estranged reality intrudes upon this continuity and disrupts it."21 Harold Toliver, in *Animate Illusions*, similarly stresses the resistance of the world to consciousness, although he focuses primarily on action rather than interpretation. "Characters work against resistance and intrusions. . . . that upset their chosen courses." In the novel, "protagonists are characteristically exposed to what appear to them to be interventions and unexpected antagonisms, following an irregular rhythm."22 Or as Judith Sutpen puts it:

You get born and you try this and you don't know why only you keep on trying it and you are born at the same time with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying and they don't know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug. . . .

In my view, some version of this attempt to weave one's pattern into the rug constitutes the essential activity of characters in the novel.
What we can observe in the plot of the novel is, similarly, some version of a conflict between this imaginative activity and what functions in the text as reality. At the risk of over-schematizing what is actually a complex and subtle issue, I would suggest that we need to consider romantic and realistic impulses on the part of the characters in terms of both action and interpretation, since the latter constitute two modes of the mind's encounter with the world. Thus we could construct a four-term model in order to analyze the response of characters to reality. In the context of interpretation, then, we may see a character adjust and revise his or her conceptions and attitudes based on experience in the world—as, for example, do Elizabeth Bennet, Steven Daedalus (in Portrait of the Artist) and Marlowe in Heart of Darkness. (Such a movement toward an altered interpretive strategy is characteristic of Bildüngsroman.) The corresponding adjustment in the field of action appears as a move to adapt one's behavior (again, in response to experience) in order to function more effectively in the world: Tom Jones, Pip, and Strether are obvious examples here. The romantic interpretive mode—which we can see in Jim, Emma Bovary, Jason Compson, and Mr. Micawber—consists in a commitment to maintain one's own sense of oneself and of the world in the teeth of evidence and experience. The characteristic romantic action is an attempt to alter one's
environment, to change the world. Little Dorrit, Sutpen, and Pamela are all engaged in this kind of activity. While the distinction I amek here between action and interpretation is to some extent an artificial one, I think we can observe that in some novels (as, for instance, Mrs. Dalloway) the overall focus tends to fall on interpretation, while others (like Vanity Fair) emphasize various attempts at the actualization of strategies and fictions in the social world.

As the examples I have chosen will perhaps make clear, neither realism nor romance is necessarily a privileged response; adaptation may be a betrayal of people or ideals, for example, and the refusal or inability to correct schematic interpretations and modes of action can appear to be "heroic," silly, or evil. Moreover, there are varying degrees of possible success or failure in both the effort to adapt to the world and the effort to transform the world. So far as the latter is concerned, novels do explore our freedoms as well as our limitations: insofar as the world of a given novel is relatively susceptible to imaginative transformation, we tend to call a novel comic; worlds conceived as highly resistant to transformation usually generate novels that we perceive as tragic. What I want to stress is that the formulation I have proposed is actually a very flexible one and can be applied in a variety of ways, to match the varieties of the novel.
It is, as I have argued, a basic illusion of the novel that characters encounter a "real" world, a world which like our own is irreducibly itself, and resists our strategies of action and interpretation. But the text is an imaginative artifact, and thus its world is articulated for us, its reality made accessible to us. In the context of a given novel, we can determine with a fair degree of accuracy what is real; we can juxtapose imaginative acts of the characters to this reality and thus evaluate the adequacy of a response in a way it is never quite possible to do outside of art. Thus, for example, we know that Jason Compson's reading of Caddy and Miss Quentin ("once a bitch, always a bitch") is simply wrong; we can tell that David Copperfield should not marry Dora Spenlow; we can perceive that Emma Woodhouse has a more accurate understanding of herself at the end of the novel than at the beginning. When characters deviate from reality, we perform the acts of correction that they do not; we perceive the gap between imagination and reality as irony, and we function as realists in the dialectic of realism and romance.

It may be objected that some novels call into question the very possibility of adequate interpretation or action. But I would insist that all novels are (of necessity) informed by a particular strategy on the part of the artist; no such strategy can be simply neutral, but must always constitute
a certain vision of the way things are. Here, we have not only to do with what a novelist presents as reality but also with his or her view of the mind and its operations. It is this comprehensive and informing vision--implicit in every line of the text--that functions as revealed truth in the novel, a truth against which we can always test the accuracy or adequacy of a character's imaginative acts.

As Burke has shown us, any perspective contains a moral dimension; the novelist's strategies of interpretation and expression establish certain values that we can use as criteria to evaluate the characters' perceptions and actions. Thus a character may, for example, adapt successfully to existing social conditions (Podsnap is a good example here) while violating the implicit or explicit moral laws established by the text; on the other hand, a character may (like Dilsey) utterly fail to attain a realistic conception of the world but nevertheless be affirmed in his or her vision of things. It is important to observe here that a novelist may not like the way things are, and that the truth he or she discovers to us may be one we find horrible; in such cases, the effort at "making" worlds becomes particularly significant. The question of valid and invalid strategies of perception and action is a complex one; nonetheless, a very useful question to ask about any novel is what strategies seem to be affirmed by the text, whether because they constitute the most ade-
quate response to reality, or because they are congruent with what the text establishes as goodness. To answer this question is to approach what we perceive as the meaning of a text.

At this point it may become more clear why I have chosen to lay such stress on the imagination in developing a theory of the genre. Since, in my view, the author, characters, and reader are all engaged in varieties of imaginative activity, my thesis provides a logical and consistent way of moving between the referential and rhetorical aspects of the text. It is possible, for example, to correlate the imaginative activity of the characters with that of the novelist (Quentin and Shreve, for instance, are doing much the same thing as William Faulkner): often, we can see that the acts of imagination affirmed by the text are very similar to those that have generated the text. Moreover, the kinds of imaginative activity presented by the characters can also be considered in relation to the reader's experience: again, the strategies affirmed by the text are often those which we are asked to deploy in reading.

The parallel between reader and character is an obvious one; we encounter the text as characters (ostensibly) encounter a world. Just as characters attempt, in a variety of ways, to make sense of their world, so as readers we are committed to interpretation in order to render the text
intelligible. Reading itself is an imaginative activity, and the principles of romance and realism can be seen to operate in the reader's experience. In *The Implied Reader*, Wolfgang Iser focuses on reading as an activity that depends on an interplay of anticipation and correction; to study precisely how this interplay works is the province of linguistics and information theory, but it is important to note that reading, like perception itself, involves an organization of data: this organization is a dynamic process that includes both the formation of schemata and the correction or emendation or amplification of those schemata as the reader moves through the text.²⁵

We never read without expectations and projections. According to Iser (who makes extended reference to Husserl) the act of reading is "a kaleidoscope of perspectives, pre-intentions, and recollections."²⁶ Like Todorov, Iser sees the interpretation of a text as a combinative process through which we establish patterns and thus "form the 'gestalt' of a literary text."²⁷ Jonathan Culler similarly compares the act of interpretation to gestaltist theories of the "functional whole."²⁸ In order to make meaning we put things together. Thus the reader, like the artist, is always a sort of romantic, insofar as he or she applies in a special way the constructive power of the mind and engages in the formative act that is what I have meant by imagination.
Yet we must, in some way, "adapt" our imaginative activity in response to the text if we are to experience it at all. The fact that we produce meaning through a process of patterning does not obviate the fact that texts exist, and that they exert a certain "pressure" against us as we read. Critics have expressed the interplay between reader and text in a variety of ways: Georges Poulet, for example, argues that a reader "places his consciousness at its disposal" and Wayne Booth speaks of "subordinating the mind and heart to the book."29 C. S. Lewis, in An Experiment in Criticism, puts it this way:

The parts of the poema are things we ourselves do; we entertain various imaginations, imagined feelings, and thoughts in an order, and at a tempo, prescribed by the poet... This is less like looking at a vase than like 'doing exercises' under an expert's direction, or taking part in a choric dance.30

Lewis finds the source of literary pleasure in this "successful obedience to what seems worth obeying and is not quite easily obeyed;" Wallace Stevens has made a similar point in writing "the poem must resist the intelligence/almost successfully." Any text involves the reader in an encounter with a resistant externality: to read is not only to combine and structure, but also to adapt and correct our patternings in response to the temporal unfolding of the text. Thus reading has a "realistic" as well as a "romantic" aspect.

Just as the individual consciousness never encounters
an environment un-modified or unmediated by imagination, so
no reader can encounter the "real" text, the text as ab-
olutely other, absolutely "itself." In reading, as in
perception, there is no innocent eye. While some readings
may seem to us more realistic than others, any reading can
only be partially true. We make meanings from a text by
imposing order and form upon it, yet the ways we choose to
make sense (the kinds of gestalts we create) will always be
conditioned by our culture, our particular literary compe-
tence, and our individual experience: as Harold Bloom has
pointed out, every reading is a mis-reading.\textsuperscript{31} We cannot
include in any interpretation every semantic possibility
offered by the text; our patterns and configurations will
of necessity exclude some semantic elements. The forms
that we create in the activity of reading are, then, a species
of illusion; they are opposed or resisted by the plurality
of the text, which (like reality) perpetually eludes the
limitations of form.\textsuperscript{32}

In the preceeding pages I have tried to show how a
version of the conflict between imagination and reality
operates in all reading; it remains to be seen how this
conflict can be more specifically related to the reading of
a novel. The question of how the novel as a genre offers
a reader what Toliver calls "the pleasure of resisted
patterns of understanding"\textsuperscript{33} is not a simple one, and I
cannot pretend to offer a complete answer here. It does seem, however, that novels resist one familiar strategy of interpretation that epic and romance, on the other hand, seem to invite—that is, the allegorical transformation. It is here, perhaps, that we can provisionally locate the way a conflict of imagination and reality in the reading process applies to the novel as a genre.

To read a text as an allegory is to perform an extended act of metaphorical substitution. That epic and romance invite this kind of reading is obvious enough; witness the fate of the Aeneid in the hands of patristic exegetes, or British romance in the hands of Spenser. Metaphor is based on a perception of similarity; a perceived likeness forms the basis for the metaphorical substitution. Allegory involves the reader in making a series of such substitutions, a process governed by making reference to some system of order external to the text. An allegorical reading results (theoretically) in a thoroughgoing organization of the parts of a text into a coherent whole: details are variously combined and subordinated so as to create a pattern consistent with the "metatext." Novels, I submit, characteristically put up a resistance to this kind of pattern formation, and, more generally, to the kind of metamorphosis that derives from substitution.

My argument here is not so much that novels are generated
by Jakobson's metonymic principle (although I would not dispute this insight) as that realistic fiction is grounded in the perception of difference, of dis-similarity, in the negation of resemblance that has been called irony. As a genre, the novel claims to present the unique, the particular, the discrete--hence, in part, its claim to truth. In the words of George Eliot, novels are concerned with life "here--now--in England." My point is that novels insist on the quidditas of things, the fact that things are thus and not otherwise, themselves and not something else, as they are, not as we would have them be. Such an insistence seems to me to stand in clear opposition to the romantic tendency to see one thing in terms of another (to see a barber's basin, for example, as Mambrino's helmet), to transform one's experience into something else. Thus Flaubert insists that Emma Bovary is Emma Bovary, while her imagination rushes toward a conflation of her identity with the heroines of sentimental literature. I believe that a great and abiding characteristic of the novel is a resistance to the kind of metamorphosis Emma performs. It is important to stress, however, that I am not returning to Levin's notion of de-mythification but speaking of a resistance that texts we call novels offer to certain interpretive strategies.

This resistance is closely related to the importance of detail in the novel. A number of critics have discussed
detail, almost always with the sense that it is a concomitant of realism. Wellek and Warren, for example, claim that mimetic detail is "the chief stylistic trait" of realistic fiction.  

Ian Watt speaks of the rise of the novel as analogous to the rejection of universals and the emphasis on particulars which characterizes philosophic realism.  

Structuralist critics have also focused on detail in their investigation of vraisemblance: the unnecessary detail announces itself as a reference to a world precisely because it seems to serve no function in the narrative. Martin Price, in "The Irrelevant Detail and the Emergence of Form," constructs an argument which at several points accords substantially with my own. Price notes "our tendency to create patterns, to relate elements, to simplify, to classify," and argues that "the realistic novel always quarrels" with the schema, the archetype, the generalized form, "breaking their limits by extension and insisting on the stubbornness of the actual."  

I would suggest, as an emendation of Price's argument, that irrelevant detail in fiction serves precisely the function of halting our innate proclivity toward the formation of simple patterns. A multiplicity of detail makes it more difficult for us to organize the text schematically; we are compelled to expand and elaborate our interpretive schemata, and thereby to "correct" them, in order to make sense out of the data offered us by the text.
This movement away from the formulaic is, as Gombrich can show us, a movement towards the mimetic. A simple visual formula which, for example, serves the Medieval artist to represent Jerusalem, Rome, and Damascus becomes particularized by the modification and amplification of the schema in such a way that it no longer represents the generalized concept "city" but refers specifically to a unique place. In the novel, characters, events, and environments are presented in such a way that we cannot easily read them as generalized, conventional, or symbolic—as anything other than themselves. When characters read themselves in such ways we sense that they are involved in an unjustified or unrealistic mode of interpretation. We cannot, for example, quite read Tom Jones as a version of everyman's spiritual pilgrimage, nor can we identify Lena Grove as a figure of myth without being aware of a certain discrepancy between the formal pattern and the concrete realization. Lena is Lena, not an archetype. Yet the fact that we are tempted to perform such acts of metaphoric translation is important: it is precisely in the tension between discrete particularity and the possibilities of meaning that are generated by imaginative patterning that we can locate the life of the novel. The abundance of detail that is characteristic of the genre resists the impulse toward form that I have called romance. But I must constantly stress that in reading, as
in perception and cognition, this romantic faculty is indispensable; we cannot render a text, or our lives, intelligible without an act of organization, without imposing order and form. Thus, in a special way, the text of a novel is an area of interplay between form and that which is resistant to form—or, in my terminology, between imagination and reality.

The particular conflict between imagination and reality that I have taken to be an identifying feature of the genre also operates in another way. We do not take the text to be reality, of course, although some aspects of it may function analogously: the text is, obviously, an imaginative artifact. Similarly, as Gombrich notes in *Art and Illusion*, except in the rare case of *trompe l'œil* there is never any question of a painting being anything but a painting, a visual image composed of pigment and canvas. What representative art does, according to Gombrich, is to "suggest a reading in terms of reality," to enable us to see "reality in terms of an image and an image in terms of reality."³⁷ Novels encourage us to see the world in terms of the text and the text in terms of the world. We are encouraged, in a variety of ways, to juxtapose the text to what we know of human experience, to what we know of life as it is lived in this world. The novel, then, is an imaginative structure which tests itself (or is tested by the reader) against the world. Our sense of fictional truth is a function of this
juxtaposition.

It might seem, at this point, as though I have returned the long way round to a simple mimetic theory of the novel. My sense of the genre differs from such a theory primarily in that it does not presume the existence of a stable, autonomous reality that might be imitated. As we read a novel, we come to participate in a certain reading of the world; we become involved in the experience of applying certain interpretive strategies to the world. Thus what is effected in the reader--at least, what the novel is capable of effecting--is a re-making of our world-view. Even in the case of very bad novels, as, for example, *The Other Side of Midnight*, we cannot help but participate in the informing interpretive strategy as long as we read, and thus we have the experience of perceiving the world in the lurid and sensational light of Sidney Sheldon's imagination. Novels, as Conrad realized, "make us see," make us see our common world and our individual lives in a certain light that we may or may not choose to accept as the light of truth. We know now that all vision is a species of creation; if this knowledge has made it impossible for us to conceive of the novel as fiction which simply tells the truth, we can still be grateful for these imagined worlds through which we can recover and discover our own.

In the following chapters I want to analyze two texts
with an eye to the interplay between imagination and reality as I have defined those terms. If reality is to be considered both as that which resists our imagination and, more specifically, as the environment in which conscious beings function, then such an analysis must take into account both the distinctive features of the environment in a given novel and the ways in which this imagined reality impinges on the characters. I will, that is, be asking what sort of world a novel presents, what it is which the mind encounters, at what points the characters meet a resistant externality. As well as charting reality in a given novel, I will attempt to delineate the novel's "mental landscape," looking closely at what seem to be important acts of the imagination and/or investigating certain modes of imaginative activity that seem to be especially prevalent or especially significant. Finally, I mean to identify the particular nature of the conflict between imagination and reality that informs a given text, and to relate this to the construction of the text and the experience of the reader.

I have chosen to discuss two nineteenth-century novels, Middlemarch and Our Mutual Friend. The disadvantage of such a choice is that it might suggest my theory is not applicable to novels of other periods. I have tried to show, by the examples I have used at various points, and in my concluding chapter, that this is not the case, and that the principles
I have elucidated here provide a genuine description of the genre. My decision to look closely at these novels is based on my own interest in the nineteenth century, and on the fact that they provide a good opportunity to show how my theory works. *Middlemarch*, for example, offers a very clear-cut view of the "schema and correction" model (the process by which imaginative formulations are adjusted in response to reality) in the lives of the characters, and an interesting variation on this process as it applies to the reader. *Our Mutual Friend*, on the other hand, manifests in a particularly clear way the novelist's modification of conventional narrative schemata, yet allows me to make it clear that "imagination" in the lives of the characters need not be considered merely as a linear pattern of "making and matching." I mean to show, in the following chapters, that the theory I have developed here is adequately general but not simplistic or reductive: taken together, these two novels will permit a more concrete elucidation of the theory and a demonstration of its flexibility. Obviously, I think that the novels themselves can be illuminated in the process. I want to begin with *Middlemarch*, since on the whole it represents a clearer statement of the basic theme of my argument.
III. *Middlemarch*: An Ideally Illuminated Space

My theory of the novel commits me to an elucidation of the dialectic between imagination and reality as it operates for the novelist, the characters "in" the novel, and the reader. Moreover, it is a corollary of my thesis that the critic can discover (or establish) significant correlations between these spheres of imaginative activity. In the following pages, then, I will focus on Eliot's own commitment to "matching" the forms of the imagination to experienced life, on the struggles of her characters to realize their "romantic" impulses, and on the reader's experience as she encounters this long and complex narrative. Following Kenneth Burke's lead, I propose to consider the short Prelude as a "representative anecdote," a kind of metaphor in which the central issues of the text as a whole are infolded. Thus my discussion of *Middlemarch* will begin with a close reading of its first pages.

Jonathan Culler points out in *Structuralist Poetics* that the first sentence of a novel is a very curious thing in that we are asked to "do something with it."¹ The opening of this novel seems to me especially curious in that it assumes we have already done something: "dwell, at least briefly, on the life of Saint Theresa. . . smiled with some gentleness at the thought of the little girl walking forth one morning to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors."² Now I am quite certain that I, for
one, never gave a moment's thought to the life of Saint Theresa before reading *Middlemarch*. This omission may of course be explained by assuming that it results from the cultural differences between me and George Eliot, but the sentence itself resists this explanation. It begins, "Who that cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of time, has not dwelt... on the life of Saint Theresa."

If, then, I cared to know the history of man I would have given her some thought; I must conclude that I am not one who desires such knowledge, not, at least, the sort of knowledge implied by the scientific language of the second clause. The opening sentence of *Middlemarch* suggests a gap between my own consciousness and that of the narrator, a gap that consists in the narrator's possession of a vision of human history that is at once more rigorous, more generous, and more comprehensive than my own. For readers who have dwelt on the life of St. Theresa, the opening sentence begins a shared awareness with the narrator that is to be a significant feature of the reading experience. The important point here is that the narrator establishes himself as one who apprehends the world in a certain way, and offers us the opportunity to participate in this vision.3

The particular event in human history which the Prelude brings to our attention involves a certain conflict:
Theresa and her brother set out from Avila "with human hearts already beating to a national idea" only to be intercepted by "uncles" who "turned them back from their great resolve" (p.3). The conflict between the children and their uncles presents us with the radical structure of the novel's plot, and suggests a way to interpret the events of the plot. Not only Dorothea and Lydgate, but also Casaubon, Bulstrode, Farebrother, and many others are thwarted by domestic reality. The story of Theresa is, I contend, open to interpretation as a fable in the manner of William Blake: the children are figures of the human imagination, while the uncles are, as Eliot explicitly tells us, an avatar of that reality which resists, retards, and constrains our imaginative life. The Prelude implies that *Middlemarch*, like all novels, will tell a story of the conflict between imagination and reality. The little tale of Theresa and her brother also establishes the particular quality of this conflict: it is "domestic" reality which is at issue here. The banalities of ordinary experience, so nicely figured by "uncles" are juxtaposed to a childish idealism which sets out to transform the world.

As we move into the second paragraph of the Prelude, we find a further juxtaposition, closely related to the first; the narrator begins by presenting a conflict between children and uncles, then goes on to contrast the life of Saint Theresa with life "here--now--in England" (Dorothea,
p. 22). Theresa eventually did manage to effect a transformation of the world in the "reform of a religious order" (p. 3), but she lived, we are reminded, three hundred years ago. The second paragraph, then, juxtaposes legendary heroism to life in contemporary society, and suggests that the latter (acting just like an uncle) renders the former impossible, particularly for women. The final sentence of the Prelude, leading directly into a description of Dorothea Brooke, suggests that the text we are about to read will chronicle not a long-recognizable deed but the "blundering life" of a "foundress of nothing" (pp. 3,4).

Such a chronicle is implicitly contrasted, in the Prelude, with three other genres: epic, romance, and tragedy. These genres are mentioned in such a way as to draw our attention to the relationship between life and art: Theresa's nature, for example, is said to have "demanded an epic life: what were many volumed romances of chivalry . . . to her?"(p. 3). Here Eliot correlates the actions and events of a human life and literary genres; she also evinces a characteristically modern sense that epic action is no longer possible. A seminal idea communicated by the Prelude is that we are the artists of our lives, striving to achieve shape, order, and coherence in a world which resists our attempts to realize form; our imagination encounters a domestic reality characterized by "meanness of opportunity. . . dim lights and tangled circumstance" (p. 3).
The Prelude strongly suggests that in the modern world, the attempt "to shape one's thought and deed in noble agreement" (p. 3) can meet with only limited success. For the individual self, then, the larger social world operates as an uncle to inhibit the actuation of our grand designs and the achievement of our goals.

Much has been made of Eliot's determinism, and it is certainly made explicit in the Finale: "There is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it" (p. 612). The pressure of reality is very much in evidence in all Eliot's novels, yet there is in her work (and, as I have argued, in all novels) a counterforce, a counter-movement. There is "a violence from within," the imagination, "that presses back against the pressure of reality." If Middlemarch shows us that what we are is largely determined by an external reality, it also discovers to us that our own apprehension of this reality plays a vital part in our lives, and that our actions are a part of the complex sequence of interrelations that constitute the world. As a number of critics have pointed out, Eliot's deterministic bent does not preclude a belief in human freedom, nor does her fundamentally positivist philosophical orientation preclude an intense sensitivity to the subjective truths of experience. The self's response to the surrounding world and its limitations is essential to Eliot's presentation of the conflict between
imagination and reality in *Middlemarch*.

As I suggested in Chapter Two, we can consider interpretation and action as two related modes of that response. One of the most important features of Eliot's treatment of the relationship between the self and the world is her profound conviction that adequate perception is the foundation of adequate action. That is, the kind of active response to the world that she identifies as morally sound must be grounded in an accurate perception of truth. For Eliot, there seem to be two possible avenues to such perception: a sincere commitment to what she felt were the "inner" truths of Christian orthodoxy, or on the other hand, a rigorous application of the mind to empirical truths. As guides to interpretation, both are able to provide a corrective to the illusion, that, for Eliot, stands in the way of an appropriate response to reality: the illusion of the self as the center of the world.

*Middlemarch* is a text so thoroughly concerned with the questions of interpretation that at least one critic conceives of "a landscape of opinion" as the matrix of the action. Eliot repeatedly stresses that our desires, experience, and expectations determine, to a great extent, what we see: the world is open to a wide variety of "readings." "Probabilities are as various as the faces to be seen at will in fretwork; every form is there, from Jupiter to Judy, if only you look at it with creative
creative inclination" (p. 224). The text provides us with a multiplicity of examples. Although Celia perceives Casaubon as revoltingly ugly, for Dorothea--who interpreted him "as she interpreted the works of Providence" (p. 55)--he is "one of the most distinguished looking men I ever saw" (15). As Will Ladislaw was "ready to turn everything that befell him into the collisions of a passionate drama," (p. 587) so Rosamond, unhappy with her husband, "constructs a little romance" involving Will, (p. 552) whom she assumes "would have preferred her if the preference had not been hopeless" (p. 551). Fred Vincy, expecting a comfortable inheritance, is described as "keeping up a joyous imaginative activity which fashions events according to desire," (p. 172) while for Casaubon, Will's relationship to Dorothea brings "his power of suspicious construction into exasperated activity. To all the facts he knew he added imaginary facts. . . " (p. 307) thus fashioning events according to his bitterness and fear. Dorothea has "an equal quickness to imagine more than the fact," (p. 149) and it is her "usual tendency to over-estimate the good in others" (p. 585).

The application of the imagination to facts, the construction of form out of a particular interpretive strategy, is not necessarily an evil. Positivist philosophy itself does not claim that we can ever avoid the mediating presence of consciousness in our attempts to know the world: the formative power of the mind is a fact that
must be considered in an empirical methodology.\textsuperscript{5} That we discover relations among things according to our "creative inclination" is, in \textit{Middlemarch}, simply a psychic truth. Both Dorothea and Rosamond are, in different ways, "ready to construct their own lives," (p. 399) and both--like Eliot herself--are engaged in the imaginative transformation of experience. "The imagination," as Stevens tells us, is "the power of the mind over the possibilities of things; but if this constitutes a certain single characteristic, it is the source not of a certain single value but of as many values as reside in the possibilities of things."\textsuperscript{6}

For Eliot, moral and aesthetic value lies in how we choose to see, how we choose to exercise the creative inclination of our minds.

To say that the imaginative transformation of experience is not, in itself, either pernicious or virtuous is not to impute to Eliot a moral or aesthetic relativism. Not all methods of interpretation are equally valid; some perceptions, some imaginative models of the world, are simply false. Rosamond's assumption that every man she meets is, or soon will be, in love with her is flatly contradicted by what functions as objective fact in the novel. \textit{Middlemarch} does not suggest that reality is non-existent or unknowable: Eliot adheres to what C. S. Lewis has called "the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really
false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kinds of things we are."  Many interpretations are possible, but there is some range of objective meaning which does exist, and to which interpretation can be more or less correlative, adequate, responsible. We are asked, therefore, in reading Middlemarch not only to observe different acts of perception and interpretation, but also to evaluate acts of the imagination, to evaluate varying modes of consciousness. In every case, the criterion for determining the adequacy of an interpretive act is based on a juxtaposition of the formulations of the mind to reality.

There is ample evidence that Eliot as an artist felt compelled to correlate her own powers of invention and construction to "domestic reality." In the often-cited seventeenth chapter of Adam Bede, she rejects the temptation to "refashion life and character entirely after my own liking." As it is much harder to draw "a real, unexaggerated lion" than a giffith, so "it is a very hard thing to tell the exact truth," but only in making such an effort can the artist avoid a reprehensible irresponsibility. In "The Natural History of German Life," Eliot states unequivocally that in novels the unreality of representations of life is "a grave evil." Her review of John Ruskin's Modern Painters makes it clear how important Eliot believed the process I have called "matching" to be. She first defines realism as "the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained
by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality." She goes on to make the somewhat surprising statement that "a thorough acceptance of this doctrine would remould our life."\(^{10}\)

"Realism" for Eliot, then, consists of a recognition of reality and a willing submission of the imagination to things as they are; it is not merely an aesthetic credo but the heart of morality. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to fully delineate Eliot's own vision of reality, we can postulate with some assurance that she subscribed to the positivist conception of reality as a complex but comprehensible system that includes natural and social phenomena, governed by observable laws of cause and effect. The moral value of an adequate perception of reality lies in the fact that it leads to a recognition of the self as a part of this system, along with all other human selves: the human world is a system of inter-locking subjects, each of which has a "center of self" (see p. 157) equivalent to our own. Hence, in theory at least, a fully realistic vision can remould our lives by divesting us of egocentric strategies of interpretation and egotistic action, and can help us to develop a "liberal imagination" that takes into account the distortions of our own perspective and the fact that there are other "readings" of the world than our own. Although
"we are all born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves," (p. 156) we can learn to develop a more adequate relationship to the world. Hence, in spite of the suffering that they entail, the various crises that force us to adapt and adjust to reality constitute the means by which we can achieve a moral maturity.

The possibility of growth through suffering is essential to Eliot's art and her conception of life. Such growth is not, of course, automatic; it depends on a certain willingness to accept reality, to open oneself to the world as it is. Moreover, this kind of acceptance will not necessarily make us happy, so long as we define happiness as personal gratification; what it can do is prevent our lives from being destructive to others, and for some of us this will be the best achievement we can hope for. Like Matthew Arnold, Eliot saw resignation and acceptance as great contemporary virtues. On the whole, her view of the relationship between the self and the world is somber, but not despairing: we can never escape the limiting pressures of reality, but if we can learn to recognize and accept those limits, our lives can be purposeful and we can make contributions to the "good of the world."

*Middlemarch* is a sustained and extremely thorough analysis of the conflict between imagination and reality, of "the contrast between the outward and the inward"11
that characterizes human experience. The plot, as I have suggested, is an elaboration of the paradigm established in the prelude: the encounter between strategies of interpretation and action and an external reality (often in the form of other people) which resists or contradicts imaginative structures. *Middlemarch* is an extremely coherent text in the sense that we can observe this fundamental pattern of disparity between fictions and facts throughout the novel, in the smallest moments as well as the large movements of the plot. As an example of the former, we learn that one Mrs. Dollop has construed that Lydgate "meant to let the people die in the hospital, if not to poison them," (p. 323) on the basis of his desire to perform an autopsy on Mrs. Goby. Her particular fiction never undergoes the test of juxtaposition to reality—except, of course, in the mind of the reader—and thus she is at liberty to persist in her interpretation. The protagonists of the novel, on the other hand, are those characters whose imaginative formulations we see tested by events in time, whom we see in the process of confronting the pressures of reality as they struggle to order their public lives in accordance with their inner visions. Barbara Smalley, in her study of Eliot and Flaubert,\(^\text{12}\) has very thoroughly elucidated this process with reference to all the main characters; since it would be tedious and superfluous for me to repeat her meticulous analysis, I will limit my own discussion of the characters
to a brief look at the figures who appear in the Prelude as St. Theresa and her brother, in the body of the novel as Dorothea and Lydgate.

As these characters move through their lives (as we move through the novel) they encounter various "retarding frictions" as they attempt to "shape their thought and deed in noble agreement." Both are turned back from their "great resolves" by domestic reality, that is, by their home lives, their marriages, and by the social world of Middlemarch in which they must live from day to day. By my definition, Dorothea and Lydgate begin as "romantics," who mean to be and to do great things, to create lives which, like works of art, will be informed by the shaping vision of the imagination and will transform the world. What we can see in their stories is a process of "schema and correction" as they respond to the exigencies of life, and adapt to the pressures of reality, the system of inter-relationship of which they are, willingly or not, a part.

We are given, in Chapter 15, a detailed explication of Lydgate's plan for his life, much of which is phrased, significantly, in the future conditional: "... he would settle in some provincial town as a general practitioner ... He would be a good Middlemarch doctor and by that very means keep himself in the track of far reaching investigation ... He intended to begin in his own case some particular reforms ... He was ... to live among people who could
hold no rivalry with that pursuit of a great idea which was to be a twin object with the assiduous practice of his profession" (pp. 108, 109, 110). Lydgate at first believes that he will not consider marriage until he has made significant progress toward his goals, "until he had trodden out a good clear path for himself away from the broad road which was quite ready made" (p. 70). He has not, however, reckoned on encountering Rosamond Vincy. Soon, his initial plan is modified to include a wife. "His notion of remaining much longer a bachelor had been a mistake: marriage would not be an obstruction but a furtherance" (p. 258).

One hundred and eighty-eight pages of text lie between the last two passages I quoted. For the reader, who has journeyed to Rome with the newlywed Casaubons in the course of those pages, and become better acquainted with Rosamond, there is every reason to fear that this marriage may prove a very mixed blessing indeed. We have, furthermore, seen Lydgate once before make a serious mistake about a woman with whom he was infatuated. He enters his marriage with a certain set of expectations, a schema: a wife is to provide her husband with uncritical support and recreation. Rosamond, he anticipates, will "venerate" his work and never interfere with it, "keep order in the home" yet be ready to "transform life into romance at any moment" (p. 258). He imagines he has found a wife "instructed to the true womanly
limit and not a hair's breadth beyond," and therefore "docile" and ready to obey him. Rosamond, in fact, seems to fit beautifully into the life he plans to create. The story of their married life is largely a story of how his interpretation of Rosamond, his anticipation of their relationship, is modified by domestic reality. While we can easily judge Lydgate's notions of what women are and what marriage is to be grossly inaccurate, the process of his education in these matters seems especially brutal; it seems so, in part, because each blow that falls on Lydgate is anticipated by the reader, and we wince for him, in part because the correction of his inadequate schema involves the destruction of his attempt to "shape his thought and deed in noble agreement."

While Rosamond is not to blame for every difficulty Lydgate encounters, she increasingly is revealed to us—and to her husband—as a being hostile to his plans who resists him at every turn, a psychically independent being who approaches the world with her own fictions, her own interpretive strategies, her own will to shape her life. Unfortunately for Lydgate, Rosamond's plan for her life involves money and social position; Rosamond, too, is one of those "ardent souls ready to construct their own lives... apt to commit themselves to the fulfillment of their own visions" (p. 399), and her highest vision is "that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do
with vulgar people" (p. 123). For Rosamond, "the piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth." Before the two have even met, he has been incorporated into her "social romance": "Ever since that important new arrival in Middlemarch she had woven a little future" (pp. 87-88). Lydgate's "looks and words meant more to her than other men's because she cared more for them", and she has interpreted these looks and words "as the opening incidents of a preconceived romance--incidents which gather value from the foreseen development and climax" (pp. 123-124). Rosamond's imagined future does, of course, come to pass, but she writes the text of her life at the expense of her husband's.

What marriage means for Lydgate is a violent collision with domestic reality, an education in "the subservience of conduct to the gaining of small sums" (p. 133); marriage it turns out, is rather more expensive than Lydgate had anticipated. It is the need for money--along with the "hampering threadlike pressure of small social conditions," which gradually lures Lydgate into the fatal entangling alliance with Bulstrode. In the wake of the Raffles incident, Rosamond's keen sense of social disgrace and her fervent desire to leave Middlemarch effectively prevent Lydgate (whose will she has finally mastered) from acquiescing in Dorothea's plan that he continue his work at the Fever Hospital. He must now, he says in their interview at Lowick, "do as other men do, and think what will please the world
and bring in money" (p. 563). Thus he has "corrected" his original model for his life in response to domestic reality.

So much has been written about the heroine of *Middlemarch* that it seems almost redundant to discuss Dorothea at all. Critical argument often revolves around the extent to which Eliot was in control of the character, aware of her Quixotic short-sightedness. To this particular argument I have little to add, and intend only to trace the pattern of schema and correction ostensibly enacted by this Theresa "foundress of nothing." Interestingly enough, we see Dorothea in the opening chapters literally poring over schemata in the form of blueprints. These plans for new cottages are the focus, and the symbol, of Dorothea's efforts to "construct her own life." She seeks in them the architecture of a life which might be "greatly effective." "Her mind... yearned after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there" (p. 6).

Faced with the comfortable worldliness of those around her, Dorothea finds it extremely difficult to sustain any lofty conception of the world or of her place in it. The cherished plans are, for Celia, merely "notions," Dorothea's "favorite fad" (p. 27). Her uncle remarks to his dinner guest that "young ladies are too flighty" to handle his paperwork (p. 14)—an excellent example of an "uncorrected" schema; Mr. Brooke has somewhere acquired this notion and
has no intention of altering it on the basis of his intimate contact with two real young ladies, neither of whom is remotely flighty. In the same conversation, Brooke benignly trounces Dorothea's attempt to discuss agriculture with Sir James on the grounds that "young ladies don't understand political economy." Dorothea has heard this before: "that never-explained science. . . was thrust as an extinguisher over all her lights." Sir James, for his part, expecting to marry Dorothea eventually, "had no idea that he should ever like to put down the predominance of this handsome girl, in whose cleverness he delighted." He cheerfully agrees to work with her on the plans for the cottages, in precisely the same manner as he presents her with a lap dog. He maintains the good-humored belief that "a man's mind—what there is of it—has always the advantage of being masculine. . . even his ignorance is of a sounder quality" (pp. 12-16). Given such an environment, it is no wonder that Dorothea is enchanted by the first man she meets who seems to take her seriously.

It is a commonplace of *Middlemarch* criticism that both Dorothea and Casaubon approach their marriage with expectations that are shattered by the reality of wedlock. Dorothea believed that it was from this man she should learn "how it was possible to lead a grand life here—now—in England" (p. 21). She also looked (not unnaturally) for "understanding, sympathy, and guidance" (p. 24). Casaubon,
who seems at once brutally selfish and infinitely pitiable, thinks he has at last found "an ardent self-sacrificing affection," "a blessing in every way suited to his peculiar wants" (p. 37). He has indeed found the former in Dorothea; he is, however, unable to accept her offered love, in part because he will not modify his peculiar wants in response to the realities of his situation, in part because he simply cannot perceive her for what she is.

To his suspicious interpretation, Dorothea's silence. . . was a suppressed rebellion; a remark from her which he had not in any way anticipated was an assertion of conscious superiority; her gentle answers had an irritating cautiousness in them; and when she acquiesced it was with a self-approved act of forebearance. (p. 307)

Casaubon is not mistaken in perceiving that he is no longer the object of his wife's uncritical adulation; their journey to Rome, friendship with Will, and above all a closer acquaintance with the author of the Key of All Mythologies, have indeed modified the "original romance" she had made for herself. (The phrase, characteristically, is Will Ladislaw's; see p. 155.) The crucial difference, however, between Dorothea and Casaubon's idea of Dorothea lies in her response to the intrusion of reality upon her fictions.

Dorothea "adjusts herself to the clearest perception" of the facts about her husband without becoming the silently castigating wife he imagines her to be. "When she looked steadily at her husband's failure, still more at his possible consciousness of failure, she seemed to be looking along
the one track where duty became tenderness" (p. 267). The growing realization that it is he who is responsible for her miserable life at Lowick, that he is a suspicious, cold, and bitter man, culminates in a "meditative struggle" in the course of which Dorothea transforms her pain and anger into a "resolved submission." Faced with the collapse of her imaginative structures, a crisis in which "some women begin to hate," (pp. 312-313) Dorothea's consciousness nonetheless reaches "toward the fullest truth, the least partial good" (p. 151). What we see here is her ability to "correct" a schematic perception without losing the integrity of her overall vision.

To the reader, Casaubon's sudden demise seems a somewhat contrived but thoroughly fortuitous event; that Dorothea does not perceive her husband's death as a welcome release is a measure of her goodness. As Celia puts it, "... that he has been taken away, that is a mercy, and you ought to be grateful" (p. 360). Dorothea is not grateful, but learning of Casaubon's unwarranted jealousy and spitefulness does free her from feeling any obligation to continue his work. She determines to lead a solitary life devoted to others. "I shall never marry again," she tells Celia. "I have delightful plans. I should like to take a great deal of land, and make a little colony, where everyone should work, and all the work should be done well" (p. 401). Yet she has too little money for a "great scheme" and no clear way
to put her small fortune to good use. As a wealthy widow, Dorothea is confronted with the same difficulties that the world has always presented to her: "What could she do, what ought she to do" (p. 20). Eventually, of course, she revises her plan of philanthropic celibacy, marries Will, and finds "a life of beneficent activity" in supporting his career.

Eliot seems almost to have anticipated the response of critics to Dorothea's story in her comments about later-born Theresas:

Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse. (p. 3)

Such has indeed been Dorothea's fate at the hands of a critic like F. R. Leavis; interestingly enough, Eliot as a novelist has similarly been judged extravagant in her idealization of Dorothea, while even so sympathetic a reader as W. J. Harvey deplores her lapse in handling the relationship with Will. Yet the problem of Will's characterization so frequently brought forward in critical discussions actually works to obscure some important issues. To conclude that he is not "a subtle and deeply felt creation" (although that conclusion is probably true enough) is to express a discontent with Dorothea's choice not unrelated to that of Sir James Chettam. What critics seldom point out is that Will is beautiful, with a sensual vitality noticeably lacking in Dorothea's former husband. I think that some critics,
like Chettam, resist the notion that Eliot's heroine might have wanted erotic happiness, though as Gordon Haight has pointed out in his biography, Eliot herself had a strongly sensual nature.\textsuperscript{16} I do not, however, mean to imply that our response to the conclusion of Dorothea's life is invalid; of course it seems to us, as to "many who knew her," "a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another" (p. 611). Surely that is part of the point. Critical distaste for Dorothea's second marriage is too rarely accompanied by a sense that there is such a thing as social injustice, and that Dorothea has been victimized by a sexist society, as Eliot made quite explicit in the Finale of the first edition. Surely, too, Smalley is correct in noting that what seems anticlimactic in Dorothea's story is precisely Eliot's heroine "making her terms with the sort of reality Eliot conceives of."\textsuperscript{17} Middlemarch is not a text in which marriages are made in heaven: of course we would like to see Dorothea paired with Lydgate; she must make the best of it with Will Ladislaw, as we must adapt our own expectations about happy endings.

In the stories of Lydgate and Dorothea we see the playing-out of Eliot's sense of tragedy as "the terrible difficulty" of the "adjustment of our individual needs to the dire necessities of our lot."\textsuperscript{18} Both characters do make such adjustments: Lydgate remains a doctor, although he must
abandon the research he loved; Dorothea does find a life of personal sacrifice and altruism, though the scope of her endeavor is not grand. Despite the fact that Lydgate became "what is called a successful man," we can certainly recognize that his story is a sadder one than Dorothea's, more nearly a tragedy in Eliot's sense. This is, to some extent, a result of the fact that Rosamond, unlike Casaubon, does not do her spouse the favor of dying. Still, Eliot stresses that Dorothea's consciousness habitually reaches toward "the least partial good" and that this makes an important difference to her subjective experience of life. But Eliot offers us no assurance that personal happiness is a reward for "correcting" our romantic visions; Lydgate, too, has made an inward motion of adjustment: he "accepted his narrowed lot with sad resignation. He had chosen this fragile creature, and taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying that burthen pitifully" (p. 586). The mistake of marrying Rosamond is simply irrevocable: our actions have consequences in the world, and make us, as Eliot points out, what we are. (That Lydgate might have avoided his mistake is a possibility I will discuss in a moment.) Rosamond herself, although she undergoes a crisis of awareness in her relation to Will and Dorothea, never really loses her tendency to deal with reality by ignoring its existence; she deals death to her husband in the process, but her "patience" with him is
rewarded at last, and she has, on the whole, managed to actuate her fictions (her "social romance") in the public world more successfully than either Lydgate or Dorothea. It is in the mind of the reader, educated by the experience of Middlemarch, that she is a failure, and a horror.

For the remainder of this chapter I want to concentrate on the reader's experience, and will attempt to demonstrate how Eliot's text engages us in strategies of interpretation that can make possible an adequate relationship to reality. The first point to be made is that in reading the novel we perceive the town of Middlemarch as a system, almost a system in Piaget's sense of the work, characterized by wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation. The processes of transformation and self-regulation are, in a sense, the perceptible plot of the novel. We see Middlemarch "transform" itself insofar as its inhabitants go about their work, marry, shift allegiances, bear children, and die, according to certain natural laws and social conventions. New inhabitants are assimilated, while some depart, but the town retains its coherent structure. Piaget's "self-regulation" refers to the rhythm of schema and correction I have discussed in terms of individual lives; with reference to the system of Middlemarch, this rhythm can be perceived as the process by which such aberrant citizens as Dorothea and Lydgate are variously chastened by "feedback" from the
human community. "In Middlemarch, sane people did what their neighbors did" (p. 17). While this process is as likely to make martyrs as to reform eccentrics or to punish criminals, it obviously works to preserve the integrity of the system. It is this integrity, this "wholeness" that seems to me the most significant feature of our experience of Middlemarch and of Eliot's conception of reality.

As we read, the solidarity of mankind becomes not so much an ideal as an imaginative truth: each life, for good or ill, is linked to all others. Eliot's use of entrelacement, interweaving the stories of many characters, gives us the opportunity to observe "the stealthy convergence of human lots," (p. 70) and makes perceptible to us how "numerous strands of experience lying side by side" (p. 429) constitute a coherent whole. "Things hang together," as Caleb Garth observes (p. 297). Wholeness may be felt as a curse, as it is for Lydgate, hampered by the "small thread-like pressure" of reality; it may be, as for Dorothea, a difficult but joyous blessing: however we or the characters may respond, wholeness is a reality in Middlemarch, in the world according to Eliot. From this vision of reality come the astonishingly varied and pervasive number of textual references to threads, webs, and nets, as Mark Shorer has observed.

The wholeness of Middlemarch, in our reading experience,
comes to figure (or be equivalent to) the wholeness of the world at large. We do not really encounter any other environment in the novel; except for two flashbacks (filling us in on the past lives of Lydgate and Bulstrode) we leave the town only once, with the Casaubons. This gap in the circle only makes it more perceptibly a circle; we return to Middlemarch more conscious of its small, self-contained systematic nature. Moreover, the Rome we visit is "the spiritual center and interpreter of the world" (p. 143). The city is one which, as Will Ladislaw puts it, "saves you from seeing the world's ages as a set of box-like partitions without vital connection. . ." For Will, Rome has provided a "sense of history as a whole" (p. 157).

Dorothea's distress in seeing Rome results from her inability to perceive anything but a "stupendous fragmentariness" (p. 143); she has not the psychic apparatus (she lacks the appropriate schemata) to process the vast influx of new information, to render it intelligible. This cognitive crisis is, of course, closely related to her discovery that Casaubon is rather different than she had imagined, that "the way in which the years to come might be filled with joyful devotedness was not so clear to her as it had been" (p. 151). The interlude in Rome, then, discovers to us and to Dorothea a wider, more complex reality, but this is nonetheless a systematic reality which can be comprehended by the human mind.
While we may question the depth of Will Ladislaw's comprehensive vision, there is no doubt that the narrator has "a knowledge that breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions that unite all contrasts" (p. 143). Eliot's narrator "sees life steadily and sees it whole," has unlimited access to the minds of the characters and can "sing of what is past, or passing, or to come." The narrator, though sympathetic, stands at a distance from the system that is Middlemarch and watches it like a scientist: he presents us with a comprehensive vision of the human world in microcosm, reveals to us, in small, "the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of time." The lucidity of the narrative voice in this novel assures us that meaning is ultimately accessible to the mind. Eliot's handling of character, for example--particularly her use of entrelacement--implies that human identity is not really an unfathomable mystery: characters can so fruitfully be compared and contrasted precisely because they share a common (and comprehensible) humanity; personality and interpersonal relationships can be explained and understood by the analytic mind, since logical laws do pertain to the psychic world. It is, then, possible to see the whole human system at once: the narrator possesses, and can share with us, an adequate vision of reality.

It is crucially important to recognize that such a
vision is not a given in ordinary human experience: it is an achievement, laboriously won through the exercise of the consciousness in a particular way. In her description of Lydgate's research, Eliot has given us an outline of the kind of imaginative activity that has generated the text of Middlemarch and that can make possible an accurate comprehension of the world. I want to quote most of this passage, despite its length, in order to show how the salient features of Lydgate's activity are related to the construction of the novel and the reading experience. In Book one, Chapter sixteen, Lydgate has spent an evening at the Vincy's:

He went home and read far into the smallest hour, bringing a much more testing vision of details and relations into this pathological study than he had ever thought it necessary to apply to the complexities of love and marriage... fever had obscure conditions, and gave him that delightful labor of the imagination which is not mere arbitrariness, but the exercise of disciplined power--combining and constructing with the clearest eye for probabilities and the fullest obedience to knowledge; and then, in yet more energetic alliance with impartial Nature, standing aloof to invent tests by which to try its own work... Many men have been praised as vividly imaginative on the strength of their profuseness in indifferent drawing or cheap narration... but these kinds of inspiration Lydgate regarded as rather vulgar and vinous compared with the imagination that reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens, but tracked in that outer darkness through long pathways of necessary sequence by the inward light which is the last refinement of Energy, capable of bathing even the ethereal atoms in its ideally illuminated space... He was enamored of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation; he wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes which prepare human misery
and joy. . . that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth of happy or unhappy consciousness. (p. 122)

In the next pages, I want to focus on the following four points in this passage that seem to me especially significant: the "testing vision of details and relations"; the tracking of "subtle actions. . . through long pathways of necessary sequence"; the action of "combining and constructing with the clearest eye for probabilities and the fullest obedience to knowledge"; and the "arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation." Taken together, these points comprise a description of the realistic strategy which for Eliot is the foundation of aesthetics and morality. It is this "delightful labor of the imagination" in which the narrator and the reader of *Middlemarch* are engaged.

In his review of the novel, Henry James called it a "treasure house of detail." For Eliot, attention to detail is a mark of that fidelity to the truths of nature without which art is suspect. In her essay on Young, for example, she objects to the poet because "he habitually treats of abstractions, and not of concrete objects or specific emotions," while she praises Dutch painting for its carefully detailed rendering of common subjects. She is explicitly committed to a representation of experience as it unfolds in a particular time and place, for
a particular individual. In reference to Romola she writes that "it is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself." In her depiction of the character itself, Eliot the novelist illustrates her narrator's observation that

particular faults... have distinguishable physiognomies.... Our vanities differ as our noses do: all conceit is not the same conceit, but varies in correspondence with the minutiae of mental make in which one of us differs from another. (p. 111)

The mental tendency to ignore detail and particularity, "to fly up too quickly to generalizations," is indicted by Francis Bacon as one of the fundamental crimes of the mind. For Eliot, it is as pernicious in the moral sphere as it is reprehensible in the aesthetic; a vision that does not include the details of ordinary life causes grief as surely as it produces unsound novels. Rosamond discovers herself unhappily married because

the Lydgate with whom she had been in love had been a group of airy conditions for her, most of which had disappeared, while their place had been taken by everyday details which must be lived slowly from hour to hour, not floated through with a rapid selection of favorable aspects. (p. 484)

Farebrother, who arranges his collection of insects "in fine gradation, with names subscribed in exquisite writing" (p. 129) is clearly one of the moral centers of the novel. In his "exhaustive study of the entymology of the district"
we can see an analogue of Eliot's work; in his meticulous methods of classification, we can see a version of the author's commitment to organize the manifold of experience so as to render it comprehensible while doing justice to its infinite complexity.

The tracking of "subtle actions... through long pathways of necessary sequence" is closely related to an unswerving attention to detail. It is also akin to the Christian virtue of prudence, which a modern apologist has defined as "taking the trouble to think out what you are doing and what is likely to come of it." One obvious example of a character's failure to do this can be seen in Bulstrode's behavior during the last illness of Raffles: he never quite acknowledges to himself that his part in the events leading to Raffles' death is tantamount to murder, nor does he consider the possibility that this episode might come to public knowledge and therefore bring about the ruin he seeks to avoid. Another example of failure to perceive "necessary sequence" is Rosamond's illogical assumption that Will Ladislaw's return to Middlemarch (Chapter 77) is associated with her own long-desired departure: "she felt assured that the coming would be a potent cause of the going, without at all seeing how." The narrator goes on to elaborate the point:

This way of establishing sequences is too common to be fairly regarded as a peculiar
folly in Rosamond. And it is precisely this sort of sequence which causes the greatest shock when it is sundered: for to see how an effect may be produced is often to see possible missings and checks; but to see nothing except the desirable cause, and close upon it the desirable effect, rids us of doubt and makes our minds strongly intuitive (p. 564).

The narrative structure of Middlemarch works to discourage this sort of "intuition" in favor of a clear-sighted perception of how the laws of cause and effect operate in a human life. Eliot writes of the novel, "my design is to show the gradual action of ordinary causes." Her painstaking analysis of events and individuals, so often and justly praised, is precisely an operation of that imagination which "reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens." The impression of enormous compassion which we receive from Eliot's narrator is due, largely, to this power of analysis. Reading the novel, we do not see "the rigid outline with which facts present themselves to onlookers" without a balancing vision of how "the fact was broken into little sequences, each justified as it came by reasonings which seemed to prove it righteous." (p. 452)

In his excellent chapter on Middlemarch in Laughter and Despair, U. C. Knoepflmacher points out that Eliot's novel "asks us to assemble each and every strand of which it is composed." While the protagonists appear to move forward in time along a linear path, "the reader is constantly compelled to join their stories through analogy and differ-
entiation."\textsuperscript{26} The intricate interlacings of the novel's plot, then, involve us in a particularly elaborate application of the organizing capacity that underlies all interpretation: we "combine and construct" in order to comprehend the total pattern of Middlemarch. It is, of course, this constructive power of the mind that I have meant by the term imagination. Eliot, in her description of an imagination which is "capable of bathing even the ethereal atoms in its ideally illuminated space," lays especial emphasis on the importance of relating the constructions and combinations of the mind to reality: it is the testing of the imaginative constructions against objective truth, with "the clearest eye for probabilities and the fullest obedience to knowledge," that distinguishes Lydgate's mental activity from Casaubon's. The necessity of exposing one's combinations and constructions to the pressures of reality, of "correcting to more and more exactness of relation" explains why Casaubon's effort after a systematic vision fails. His theory

was not likely to bruise itself unawares against discoveries: it floated among flexible conjectures. . . it was a method of interpretation which was not tested by the necessity of forming anything which had sharper collisions than an elaborate notion of Gog and Magog; it was as free from interruption as a plan for threading the stars together. (p. 351)

Similarly, Rosamond's life is characterized by the fact that she declines to acknowledge the existence of any
external reality against which her own interpretations and designs might need to be tested: she was, for example, "little used to imagining other people's states of mind except as a material cut into shape by her own wishes," (p. 569) and is always, by her own standard, "a perfect lady." The moral implications of an imagination which does not on any level engage in the task of "correcting" its inventions should be clear: "What she liked to do was to her the right thing" (p. 427).

Early in this chapter I quoted from Adam Bede Eliot's assertion "The pen is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffith." A similar statement appears in the passage on imagination to which I have referred at length:

Many men have been praised as vividly imaginative on the strength of their profuseness in indifferent drawing or cheap narration:--reports of very poor talk going on in distant orbs... or exaggerations... that seem to reflect life in a diseased dream.

Eliot goes on to contrast this (ostensibly the contrast is made in Lydgate's mind) with "that arduous invention that is the very eye of research, provisionally framing and correcting its object to more and more exactness of relation."

The kind of fiction Eliot believes in, because it is to her a fiction that is morally sound, is "realistic" insofar as it submits to the test of juxtaposition with life as it is ordinarily experienced by ordinary men and women. She distrusts works of art which, like Rosamond's statements,
are "elegant accomplishments" not intended to give any "direct clue to fact" (p. 198). The artistic imagination must be responsible to what we know of reality, must not be "mere arbitrariness . . . but the exercise of disciplined power . . . with the clearest eye for probabilities and the fullest obedience to knowledge."

In the preceding paragraphs, I have attempted to identify the qualities which characterize an imagination capable of attaining a comprehensive view of human history. It is important to notice that Lydgate is described as possessing such an imagination: his is a mind which, we may speculate, would be able to "demonstrate the more intimate relations of living structure, and help to define men's thoughts after the true order" (p. 110). What Lydgate does not do is to turn the searching light of the imagination onto his personal life. In this omission lie his "spots of commonness" and his failure. He does not "think it necessary" to apply a "testing vision . . . to the complexities of love and marriage," nor to questions of his domestic economy. "It never occurred to him that he should live in any other than what he would have called the ordinary way, with green glasses for hock and excellent waiting at table" (p. 255). The narrative style of Middlemarch, characterized in large part by "intrusion," commentary, and direct address, continually asks the reader to apply the disciplined
imagination to his or her "domestic" life, and thereby to avoid Lydgate's mistake.

It no longer seems necessary (thanks, in part, to W. J. Harvey) to defend Eliot's method of narration against a school of criticism which would see the use of authorial comment as constituting a "total lack of technique."²⁷ It is, furthermore, a travesty of the experience of reading the novel to regard the commentary as some superfluous didactic indulgence on Eliot's part, separable from the "real" text. As Stanley Fish suggests in "Affective Stylistics" (his appendix to Self-Consuming Artifacts) it is the experience of an utterance--all of it--that is its meaning. The narrator's ubiquitous use of the first person plural, his tendency to comment on the action, to extend the import of an incident or observation, mean something. Following Fish, I would suggest that what this narrative technique means is what it does, and what it does is compel us to make a crucial imaginative connection between this story and our own lives. Harvey makes much the same point when he argues that in reading Eliot's novels "we do not leave the 'real' world behind," but "keep both worlds and their interrelationship firmly in our minds," and Isobel Armstrong has similarly argued that Eliot's "sayings" or commentary draw us into the novel and build a bridge between the work of fiction and our own experience.²⁸ To perceive the narrator's comments as mere platitudes, then,
is to have failed to make the necessary imaginative connection. When the narrator says "we" (as in "we are all born in moral stupidity") he means precisely me, Thad Logan, and you, gentle reader, mon semblable, mon frere.

As we read this novel, we are—if we are receptive readers, made conscious of our own consciousness, of our own methods of interpreting the world. Consider the effect of the following comments.

[Mr. Brooke] had been inclined to think of himself as a general favorite (we are all apt to do so, when we think more of our own amiability than of what other people are likely to want of us). (p. 291)

[Fred's] father was using that unfair advantage possessed by us all when we are in a pathetic situation and see our own past as if it were simply part of the pathos. (p. 415)

Most of us are apt to settle within ourselves that the man who blocks our way is odious. (p. 345)

[Farebrother] had not escaped that low estimate of possibilities which we rather hastily arrive at as an inference from our own failure. (p. 139)

Expenditure—like ugliness and errors—becomes a totally new thing when we attach our own personality to it, and measure it by that wide difference which is manifest (in our sensations) between ourselves and others. (p. 429)

(I would venture to say that almost every reader of the novel comes across at least one such comment which instantly elicits a shock of recognition: I have no intention of giving an example drawn from experience.) What these comments do is to bring to our attention the way we habitually perceive things at certain moments, in certain
situations. The text is full of statements like this. Frequently, they are phrased without the form of direct address, as when the narrator states that "manners must be very marked indeed before they cease to be interpreted by preconceptions either confident or trustful" (p. 15). Often the comments seem more related to morality than to perception (although it should be clear by now that I think the two intimately related): "Mortals are easily tempted to pinch the life out of their neighbor's glory, and think that such killing is no murder" (p. 154). The cumulative effect of these moments in the text is to make us more conscious of how we perceive, interpret, and act. Eliot's narrative technique makes us aware of the traps the mind is liable to fall into, and asks us to perform evaluative analyses of our own mental processes, and thereby to bring our imaginations into "more and more exactness of relation" to reality. If we can do so, there is hope that we can avoid Dorothea's short-sightedness, and Lydgate's selective blindness.

The extensive authorial commentary functions to provide an instructive resistance to our imaginations; as I have argued, some such resistance to interpretation operates in all novels, as an analogue to the reality which resists the imaginative activity of characters: here, it seems to me that it is the persistent connections we are compelled to make between the text and our own experience that works to
inhibit our tendency to organize the text schematically. The narrator's comments continually disrupt the pattern of the narrative and make it more difficult for us to perceive the story as a closed and internally coherent formal structure. We discover that we are ourselves a part of the pattern, in much the same way that characters discover their own entanglement in a complex web of events and personalities, and our presence interrupts the narrative design. Whereas the protagonists must move outward, beyond themselves, in order to attain a realistic vision, the reader's journey is inward; in both cases, what is at issue is the relation of the self to an external system which includes and encompasses the self. For us, as for the characters, the relation between imagination and reality needs to be grounded in an awareness of our participation in a common humanity.

Early in this chapter I mentioned that such awareness can be arrived at not only by rigorous mental discipline but also by commitment to the Christian concept of charity. If Lydgate's research provides us with one model of the kind of imaginative activity affirmed by the text, Dorothea's visit to Rosamond (and, on a smaller scale, Harriet Bulstrode's magnificent little moment of imaginative solidarity with her husband) show us how the loving heart can also transcend that egotism which is the most common and most dangerous obstacle to an accurate vision of truth.
The text of *Middlemarch* enacts for us not only a rational and empirical mode of knowing, but also involves us in that perception of other selves as centers of consciousness like our own which is the source of beneficent human activity in Eliot's world. In reading *Middlemarch* we are given the opportunity to observe each character as such a center: hardly any character, however minor, is denied a moment of illumination in the compassionate wisdom of the narrative voice.\(^{29}\) There are, moreover, a great many protagonists in this novel, whose lives are not presented to us "in rigid outline" as "facts present themselves to observers," but rather "in little sequences," as they would be perceived by a subject. In this context, too, the narrator's "generalizations" are important in encouraging us to realize that we share the human failings of these characters, and cannot remain (like Lydgate) aloof and secure in our prejudices. The text engages us in an experience of empathetic knowledge, and an experience of "direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow men" without which, we are told, "there is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality." (p. 453).

In Dorothea's interview with Rosamond we can see "the saving influence of a noble nature, the divine efficacy of rescue that may lie in a self-subduing act of fellowship" (p. 588). It seems to me that the narrator, in uttering this text, then, performs for us the function of a "noble
nature" insofar as the text moves us toward--by provisionally engaging us in--a more valid imaginative response to the world. The importance of attaining such a response is made quite clear at the end of the novel, when we are told that "We insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorothea's." There is a similar implication of our responsibilities in an early chapter on Lydgate:

For the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them, there is always a good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little. Nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual change! In the beginning they inhaled it unknowingly: you and I may have sent some of our breath towards infecting them, when we uttered our conforming falsities or drew our silly conclusions. (p. 107)

We are involved in the stories of those around us: we are an active part of the environment for other minds, and we help to constitute reality for other imaginations. The effect of our being, for good or ill, will be "incalculably diffusive." For those of us born at this later stage in the history of man, a knowledge such as the narrator's can--in a reversal of the Prelude's formulation--perform the function of a coherent faith and social order. For Eliot it is within our power, through a compassionate exercise of the disciplined imagination, to play a part in "the growing good of the world," as she has done in composing Middlemarch.
IV. Our Mutual Friend: The Human Form

If, in reading Middlemarch, we can posit that the passage describing Lydgate's research outlines the strategy of interpretation affirmed by the text as a whole, we can see a similar crux, for Our Mutual Friend, in Mrs. Boffin's recognition of John Harmon. The manner and the substance of her discovery provide a paradigm for imaginative activity in the novel, and in the following pages, I will discuss the issue of recognition as it figures in the "lives" of the characters, the work of the novelist, and the experience of the reader. Dickens, like Eliot, is profoundly concerned with problems of knowing; both novelists exhibit a sense of epistemological crisis that is both an inheritance of Kantian philosophy and a response to the Victorian world. What I will be suggesting here is that Dickens affirms a different mode of knowledge than does Eliot; his novel implicitly and explicitly affirms a kind of imaginative activity which is manifested in Mrs. Boffin's epiphanic moment of recognition.

Near the end of Our Mutual Friend, the reader is surprised to discover that Mr. and Mrs. Boffin have for some time been aware of John Harmon's identity. While we have known that "Rokesmith" is in fact Harmon for some thirty chapters, and perhaps have guessed the truth much
earlier, it is not until the thirteenth chapter of Book
Four (part of the final serial issue) that Mrs. Boffin re-
veals to us and to Bella her own moment of discovery. Soon
after Harmon's long monologue in Book Two, wherein he
"officially" reveals himself, and decides to renounce his
identity, it seems that Mrs. Boffin has come at the truth.
Since this seems to me such an important moment, I will
quote Mrs. Boffin at some length as she recounts to Bella
the crucial scene of recognition.

My Noddy wanted a paper out of his Secretary's
room, and I says to Noddy, "I am going by the
door and I'll ask him for it." I tapped at
his door, and he didn't hear me. I looked in
and saw him a-sitting lonely by his fire,
brooding over it. He chanced to look up with
a pleased kind of smile in my company when
he saw me, and then in a single moment every
grain of the gunpowder that had been lying
sprinkled thick about him every since I first
set eyes upon him as a man at the Bower took
fire! Too many a time had I seen him sitting
lonely, when he was a poor child, to be pitied,
heart and hand! Too many a time had I seen him
in need of being brightened up with a comforting
word! Too many and many a time to be mistaken,
when that glimpse of him come at last! . . .
I just makes out to cry, "I know you now!
You're John!" and he catches me as I drops.

Enclosed as it is within another moment of revelation, this
scene, this instant of joyful recognition epitomized in
the words "I know you now," represents the most significant
kind of imaginative activity in Our Mutual Friend. Mrs.
Boffin's discovery consists in a sudden, spontaneous
perception of another human being, a perception grounded in
love, immediate, emotional, and intuitive. At once, in a
flash, a truth already known is newly revealed; the revelation centers in human identity, and moreover has the effect of restoring identity: it is because Mrs. Boffin knows him that Harmon can remain himself. Her act of recognition, then, gives us a clue to the "mental landscape" of this novel. The field of interpretation here is the human individual (more specifically, the human face) and the problem is identity; through an act of "sympathetic perception" a perception that comes not through logic but "directly from the heart," it is possible to recognize the truth of another's being and hence to generate a mutual friendship that offers hope in a world inimical to authentic life.

The problem of discovering and asserting individual identity in the metropolis constitutes a major thematic element in most of Dickens' novels. Edmund Wilson was perhaps the first critic to thoroughly elucidate how profoundly Dickens' experience as a child in the blacking factory influenced his vision of the self and the world, creating a deep sense of personal isolation, of the inner life as terribly threatened by an alien and hostile environment. Certainly Dickens felt, perhaps more intensely than any other nineteenth-century novelist, the power of industrial, urban society and the force exerted by that society against the individual's attempts to live creatively, against the freedom of the mind to act "under laws of its
own origination." In a brilliant study of "the trials of the imagination" in Dickens novels, Garret Stewart has demonstrated how thoroughly the questions of imagination and identity are linked; the great task of the imagination is to create and maintain "an inward space for personality," to rescue men and women from the "toxic indifference" of society, and make possible "a homing of the spirit."3 What is at stake for the characters in the novels, particularly those in Our Mutual Friend, is the survival of genuine personality in a world which multifariously resists such survival.

In the first chapters of the novel we are presented with a number of characters, all of whom appear to us in an environment or a situation in which they are somehow uncomfortable. This sense of a certain discomfort ranges from the mild but perceptible confusion of the Boffins in adjusting to their newly acquired fortune, to the utter distraction of "Julius Hanford." We first see Lizzie cringing in horror at her habitual work; Twemlow "steeped in confusion" at "the ever-swelling difficulty of his life" (pp. 48-49); Eugene "buried alive" at dinner, "trifling quite ferociously with his dessert knife" (pp. 53-57); Bella "impatient and petulant,"(p. 77) deploring the absurdity of her situation as Harmon's widow. These early glimpses of distress and discomfiture are like the first notes of a theme which will increase in subtlety and intensity as
the novel progresses. Characters find themselves adrift in a world they have not made, a world both unpredictable and (most often) painfully constricting. As he did in *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*, Dickens begins the novel with a scene which functions as a powerful symbol for such a spiritual condition: two figures floating on the river "between Southwark Bridge which is of iron, and London Bridge which is of stone, as an autumn evening was closing in"(p. 43).

In studying the imaginative life of the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* the pattern of schema and correction is less important than the attempt to establish adequate schemata, adequate modes of ordering: it is as though Dickens' characters tend to face the resistance of externality at a more primitive level than those of George Eliot. What we can trace here is a variety of efforts to articulate the self in the world, efforts which involve some kind of reconciliation with and orientation in the world through the discovery of authentic identity. Eugene Wrayburn is a good example of what I mean here. Although it is certainly true that he shifts from a simple to a more complex "reading" of Lizzie, Eugene is beset by the difficulty of forming structures of action and interpretation at all. As he puts it to Mortimer, "I don't design anything. I have no design whatever. I am incapable of designs." This incapacity is
bound up with the "riddle of his identity": in response to Mortimer's questions "What are you doing? Where are you going?" Eugene answers that he cannot say--"to enable me to do so, I must first have found out the troublesome conundrum. . . Here it is. Eugene Wrayburn" (pp. 348-349). Harmon is confronted with a similar conundrum of identity: he has seen himself dead, as it were, introduces himself to Boffin as "Nobody," and "buries" himself for want of the means to recover and re-assert his authentic self. Like Eugene, Harmon is struggling with the problem of being; for both, the issue of actuating the self in the world is linked to the problem of relating to a woman: in Harmon's case, to winning Bella's love for himself, in Eugene's, to coming to grips with his feeling for Lizzie.

These women are also engaged in a struggle to discover and defend their own being. Lizzie and Bella (as well as Jenny Wren) are deeply concerned with escape as a means of access to identity. As Stewart and others have shown, Jenny finds in art, wit, and visionary fantasy a refuge from the prison of her body and the moral wreckage of her home. Similarly, Lizzie escapes first into fire-gazing, later into education: her literal flight from the city is an explicitly moral escape, an actuation of her determination to hold herself apart from the degradation of the waterfront that she had "set her face against" (p. 589). For Bella, humiliated at having been willed away "like a dozen of
spoons," (p. 81) money seems to offer freedom and power; through the Boffins, she manages to escape from the narrow mean-ness of life at the Wilfer's. Like Betty Higden, Jenny, Bella, and Lizzie are all struggling tenaciously to maintain an idea of themselves, are all in flight from that which would reduce them to their circumstances.

Even the Boffins, whose good fortune sets them apart from the other characters, must confront the problem of their identity, of what they are doing and where they are going. The divided house of their early period vividly suggests an uncertainty about how to cope with their new situation. Mr. Boffin's consultation with Lightwood in Chapter 8 centers around the problem of managing the fortune. Boffin remarks, "I was a'most as well as I was. It's a great lot to take care of." When Lightwood suggests, however, that he might not take care of it, and that any number of people would be glad to relieve him of it, Boffin rejects the irresponsibility of this strategy (pp. 133-134). Significantly, it is Mrs. Boffin who (in the next chapter) sets the course for their future life. She declares that they must "act up to" the fortune, and what she means by this is important. Mrs. Boffin means to have "Society!"--her conception of acting up to the fortune also includes actively seeking to use the money for the benefit of others, specifically, to "do something for" Bella and to adopt an orphan (pp. 144-147). It is crucial
to note here that the Boffins need not have chosen to act
as benefactors: if, by the ninth chapter, they are identi-
"fied with "the Kings and Queens in the Fairy Tales," (p. 149)
a role which they will play throughout the novel, this is
an identity we have seen them choose for themselves.

Here, as in the recognition scene, it is Mrs. Boffin
who has discovered a solution to the conundrum of identity.
She has intuitively grasped the truth that identity is a
social function, a function of relationship: to be, we
must be someone to, and for, another. The isolate self
cannot establish an authentic personality—it is only
within a social context that individual existence can have
effective meaning. (Jenny might seem to constitute an
exception here, but Jenny has had her dolls, and her "bad
boy," and the bright children of her vision.) At this point
it becomes more clear how my notion of the imagination as
the structuring power of the mind dovetails with the question
of identity in Our Mutual Friend. Here, what is important
is the generation of social forms which make meaning possible
in individual lives: the Boffins, for example, set out to
create a community, and communities may well be considered
as another version of the "gestalt" or functional whole. I
am suggesting then, that in this novel mental activities of
organizing and ordering can best be seen in terms of relations-
ships, in the social structurings that are modes of human
order.
Such an approach to the imagination in Our Mutual Friend allows us to account for the enormous significance of friendship in this novel. Robert Morse has briefly noted the remarkable number of "pairs" here, and it is interesting to observe that the novel begins with two figures in a boat and ends with two figures shaking hands. There are, in fact, so many groups and pairs of friends that even to enumerate them would be tedious: we might think immediately of Mortimer and Eugene, Mrs. Lammle and Georgiana Podsnap, Jenny, Lizzie, and Riah, Charley Hexam and Bradley Headstone, Silas Wegg and Mr. Venus, and the Veneerings with their six-hundred-and fifty "oldest and dearest." The word and the concept "friend" appear with great frequency, often at moments of high emotional intensity, as when Harmon speaks of the Boffins as "the true friends of my lifetime," (p. 429) or when the terribly wounded Eugene evinces "an unspeakable yearning to have speech with his friend and make a communication to him" (p. 810). Although friendship can be corrupt (and I will speak in a moment of its perversions in Our Mutual Friend) at its best it constitutes a human order within which identity is generated.

In order to make my point here more clear, I will focus for a moment on a scene that takes place after Johnny's funeral. Bella has been asked by Harmon to approach Lizzie to make sure that adequate reparation has been made for Riderhood's false accusation. Early in the interview,
Lizzie asks, "Can you tell me who my unknown friend is?"—referring to the anonymous benefactor who was responsible for clearing Gaffer Hexam's name. The conversation rapidly moves to Bella's inquiry whether Lizzie has a friend "of her own age and sex," which is followed by Bella's expressed wish that she might be Lizzie's friend. In response to Bella's offered friendship, Lizzie shares with her the story of her present life, including the fact of her hopeless love for Eugene. Bella, deeply moved by the story, "sat enchained by the deep, unselfish passion of this girl or woman of her own age, courageously revealing itself in the confidence of her sympathetic perception of its truth."

Lizzie's self-revelation effects a recognition on Bella's part that she is "a nasty little thing... a shallow, cold, worldly, limited little brute." Yet Harmon has earlier asked Bella whether she really knows herself, and Lizzie counters Bella's self-deprecation, saying that she knows better. What Lizzie sees of Bella as she looks into the fire, is "a heart well worth winning and well won. A heart that, once won, goes through fire and water for the winner, and is never daunted." The women part with pledges of continued friendship, and Bella returns to John feeling "serious," "as if much had happened--to myself, you know" (pp. 587-593).

What has happened, I would argue, is an experience of mutuality through which Bella's true identity is affirmed.
Bella has moved to establish a relationship with Lizzie: Lizzie's ensuing revelation is a revelation not only of herself, but also of her new friend. For although Bella has "never experienced anything like" Lizzie's generous devotion to Eugene, she can perceive it sympathetically, and Lizzie has earlier pointed out that Bella could not be made to understand "if the understanding was not in your own breast already" (p. 591). The women have engaged in a mutual vision of the heart, a vision which is at once the source and the effect of their friendship. Lizzie, in a sense, confers identity on Bella here in her own act of sympathetic perception. Such an act—which is very like Mrs. Boffin's "naming" of John Harmon—is the essence of beneficent human relationship in this novel.5

Travesties, parodies, and perversions of friendship are similarly linked to questions of mutuality and identity. The horrible partnership of Headstone and Riderhood (which ends in a shared death) is begun in a recognition of shared hatred for Eugene. At their first meeting, Headstone correctly names Riderhood, who for his part clearly perceives the schoolmaster's distress and its cause. In his later disguising of himself as Riderhood, Headstone is not only using his "friend's" identity to divert suspicion for the attempted murder, but is also acting out his psychic coalescence with the criminal. The most striking moment of "identification" in their relationship comes, of course,
when Riderhood appears at the school: up to this point, he has known Headstone only as "t'otherest governor," but now he compels him to write his name on the blackboard, and elicits a reading of the name from the pupils, who innocently and obediently deliver their master up to his tormenter by revealing him as "Bradley Headstone!" (p. 865). Riderhood, of course, means to use his knowledge of the attack on Eugene to blackmail Headstone, thus turning the tables, since from the beginning of their acquaintance Headstone has viewed Riderhood as an "instrument" to be used. Here, in the objectifying of human personality for purposes of gain, is the essence of corrupt relationship. We see such corruption in Silas Wegg as he perverts Noddy Boffin's offered friendship, in Fascination Fledgeby's ugly game of exchanged identities with Riah, and in the Lammle's aptitude for "improving acquaintances."

The Lammle's provide a good example of the sort of mutuality that prevails in the Podsnap/Veneering circles. The mistake of identity on which their marriage is founded is foreshadowed in the second chapter, wherein Podsnap mistakes Twemlow for Veneering. What is happening here is a failure of adequate or correct naming, a failure that inheres in a social system that, as Hillis Miller has pointed out, has become "separated from authentic human value." The mirror imagery associated with this world (noted by Miller and John Romano) suggests that a principle
of conferred--or reflected--identity does hold good here; individuals are what they are by virtue of what others call them, by virtue of being known: hence the Veneerings desperate quest for friends to ratify their existence. Yet the mirror as a symbol also suggests the dis-embodied superficiality of such relationships, the fact that they are a matter of pure appearance: hence the weird unreality of the Veneering world, epitomized by Lady Tippins, who is also pure appearance, and the Buffer, Boots, Brewer trio, with their interchangeable identities. What happens to the Lammles--each of whom has accepted the reflection of the other in the Veneering mirrors--is a sudden discovery of the disparity between these reflections and truth. The community that has generated their social identities has shown itself incapable of providing access to authentic being.

Between what Northrop Frye has called "the social establishment and the criminal anti-establishment" in Our Mutual Friend are the characters who function as protagonists in the novel. Frye has aptly stressed the importance of New Comedy plot conventions in Dickens, and nowhere are these conventions more obvious than in the stories of Eugene and Lizzie, Bella and John Harmon. I want to discuss these stories as stories at some length later in the chapter, but for the moment I intend to focus on the difference between these couples and the Lammle's with respect to the
question of identity. What we can see operating in their relationships is the kind of shared affirmation of identity that seems to me characteristic of what Frye terms "the congenial society" as it is embodied in this novel. We can trace in their stories the mutual discovery and creation of newly viable modes of human order.

I have spoken earlier of how Bella is affected by Lizzie's confidence; Lizzie, however, is not the only one who refuses to validate Bella's vision of herself as mercenary. Although Harmon is at first almost defeated by his inability to reach her, once the Boffins are included in the secret of his identity and his love for her, their own strong belief in her goodness can begin to work its magic. Boffin tells John he would "lay his life... that she's the true golden gold at heart" (p. 843). It is their confidence in her, and their vision of what she is "at heart" that leads them to conceive of the plan to prove her. It is important to note that the proving of Bella is not an empty exercise but the means by which she discovers and actuates herself. Not only does she see and reject Boffin's pretended miserliness as a logical extension of her love for money, she also sees and accepts her love for John as a more profound truth about herself than the fictions she has perpetrated. Her departure from the Boffin house is both an authentic act of her own will and an act that has been brought about through Harmon's love for her. It is
almost as though he (with the support of his friends) has willed her into being, yet he has done so not by imposing an identity upon her but by trusting in the truths of her own deep self. His own "testing" of Bella, later in the novel, is based on giving her the opportunity to fully evince such trust in him, in spite of appearances.

Harmon's condition up to the middle of the novel illustrates the sort of spiritual vacuum that prevails in an absence of mutuality and recognition. He cannot be himself unless he is known, and he finds himself in a situation which makes self-revelation peculiarly difficult. In his long monologue in II, xiii he reveals himself to us, however, in a story that centers on the problem of his identity. He begins by reciting how it feels to be Nobody:

It is a sensation not experienced by many mortals... to be looking into a churchyard on a wild, windy night, and feel that I no more hold a place among the living than these dead do, and even to know that I lie buried somewhere else, as they lie buried here. Nothing uses me to it. A spirit that was once a man could hardly feel stranger or lonelier, going unrecognized among mankind, than I feel. (p. 422)

The scheme that began as an attempt to know without being known ("to see and form some judgment of my wife, before she could possibly know me for myself," p. 424) has, of course, led to the crime that robbed Harmon of his identity. George Radfoot's literal "theft" is accomplished through the use of drugs that plunge Harmon into a delirium of self-
estrangement.

I heard a noise of blows, and thought it was a wood cutter cutting down a tree. I could not have said that my name was John Harmon--I could not have thought it--but when I heard the blows I thought of the woodcutter and his axe, and had some dead idea that I was lying in a forest... But it was not I. There was no such thing as I, within my knowledge. (p. 426)

Significantly, he does not die only because he is able, at the last, to perform for himself the saving act of naming: "the consciousness came upon me, 'This is John Harmon drowning! John Harmon, struggle for your life. John Harmon, call on Heaven and save yourself!'" (p. 426). It is interesting to note that in this moment of great crisis, the self speaks to the self, as a friend.

On recovering, however, Harmon finds that "the whole country seemed determined to have me dead." Since he had felt "timid, divided in my mind, afraid of myself and everybody here" from the beginning of his voyage to England, (p. 423), he acquiesces in the judgment of others that he is dead; he becomes first Julius Hanford, later John Rokesmith, and when he has become convinced that no good can come of his re-asserting his identity, decides to bury John Harmon. I have spoken earlier of Mrs. Boffin's act of recognition, which works to restore the identity Harmon has all but lost. What Mrs. Boffin recognizes, however, is a lonely and unwanted child: it will take Bella's affirmation of his innate value to complete the recovery, and establish Harmon as a happy man. After the confrontation
between Rokesmith and Boffin (staged, of course, for her benefit) Bella angrily declares "He is worth a million of you. . . I would rather he thought well of me. . . though he swept the street for bread, than you did, though you splashed the mud upon him from the wheels of a chariot of pure gold" (p. 664). She speaks to Rokesmith of her rejection of his former suit, calling that rejection the act of "a shallow worldly girl. . . who was unable to rise to the worth of what you offered her" (p. 662). In the turning point of her own life, Bella chooses Rokesmith above a life of wealth with the Boffins. What is important for Harmon about Bella's choice is not that she therein proves herself, but that she establishes his worth by recognizing it, by loving precisely that unique and mysterious essence of personality that can say "I." The joy in his "Bella takes me!" (p. 671) is the joy of knowing one's self acknowledged and valued, and it is a joy that is only possible in relationship.

Eugene Wrayburn, unlike Harmon, has a devoted friend in Mortimer Lightwood; this relationship, however, cannot solve for Eugene the problem of his identity precisely because Mortimer is a kind of double, who has "founded himself" (p. 337) on Eugene, and thus can offer only a sort of mirror image. The important moment, for them both, comes when Mortimer asserts himself against Eugene in the matter of Lizzie Hexam; it is Mortimer who raises the
crucial question of what Eugene means to do about her, and it is Mortimer who recognizes (though dimly, at first) that this question has become central to Eugene's life. Lizzie herself offers what will be the saving vision of Wrayburn. Encouraged by Jenny to reveal "what you would think of him. . . if you were a lady," Lizzie finds in her fire a lady who says this of him:

She knows he has his failings, but she thinks they have grown up through being like one cast away, for want of something to trust in, and care for, and think well of. . . (pp. 403-405)

Lizzie's trust in him, her reliance on his "noble heart," (p. 761) begin to work to change Eugene as the little kitchen (installed to promote "the domestic virtues") cannot. After their interview at the Mill, Eugene wrestles with himself and his intentions: at first, he tries to fall back into his customary levity, but in the moment of doing so he feels the inadequacy of his accustomed persona to this situation, the "profligacy" of this tone in connection with Lizzie--he "asserted her against it," and goes on to assert the authenticity of his feeling for her. "I should like to see the fellow. . . who would undertake to tell me that this was not a real sentiment, won out of me by her beauty and her worth, in spite of myself" (p. 765). It is Lizzie who, after the accident, has implicit faith in Eugene's "purpose and energy," (p. 825) and who in being for him someone "to trust in, and care for, and think well of" rescues him from a life empty of meaning.
Lizzie is important to Eugene, however, not only because of her loving confidence in him, but because of what she is. Lizzie has a nearly mythic, erotic power rarely found in Dickens heroines. The manic energy of Bradley Headstone is like a reflex of the energy embodied in Lizzie. It is, of course, energy that Eugene lacks, and avoids; in his violent confrontation with Headstone we can see him nearly destroyed by the sudden intrusion into his life of a kind of emotional power that he has persistently denied in himself and ridiculed in others. Lizzie—who reads fire and masters the water—can mediate this power, as she can mediate the material world. Her literal rescue of Eugene from the river (made possible because she recognizes a face) is an emblem of emotional rescue; the "wonderful energy and address" she employs therein is a figure of the saving vitality she can set against the moribund sterility of Lady Tippins' Society.9

What Eugene can offer Lizzie is not a simple escape from lower-class life, but a validation of her own deep sense of herself as someone who does not belong in the world of Gaffer Hexam and Rogue Riderhood. From the first, he has noticed her, and she is later to speak of "the wonder and pleasure of being noticed by one so different from anyone who had ever spoken to me" (p. 763). Eugene has sensed in Lizzie a rare beauty, and he tells Mortimer at one point "There is no better girl in all this London than Lizzie
Hexam. . . No better among my people at home; no better among your people" (p. 347). In her interview with Bella, Lizzie shares what knowing and loving Eugene has meant to her: in response to Bella's suggestion that she would be better off if she could forget him, she objects that in doing so she would lose too much:

I should lose a kind of picture of him--or of what he might have been, if I had been a lady, and he had loved me--which is always with me, and which I somehow feel I could not do a mean or a wrong thing before. I should leave off prizing the remembrance that he has done me nothing but good since I have known him, and that he has made a change within me, like--like the change in the grain of these hands, which were coarse, and cracked, and hard, and brown, when I rowed on the river with Father, and are softened and made supple by this new work, as you see them now. (pp. 590-591)

Eugene, then, by recognizing Lizzie for what she is, has helped to effect in her the identity she prizes. When he can finally say, as she enters the sickroom with Mortimer, (Ch. 10) "he knows his wife," he accomplishes an imaginative victory for himself and for her.

In the double romantic plot, then, we can trace the formation of relationships which generate identity in mutual knowledge: this seems to me central to a study of how the imagination works in Our Mutual Friend. I want to look now at "reality" in the novel, that which intrudes upon and resists the formative power of the mind. It might seem, at first, that Frye is right to suggest that Dickens does not write novels, but fairy tales in the low
mimetic mode: the main characters do, after all, seem to manage the sort of successful transformation of the world that we associate with romance. A closer look, however, will reveal that the pressure of the common world characteristic of the novel is very much in evidence here. For the characters in the novel, this pressure or resistance seems to me to work in two ways, both of which are suggested in the opening paragraph, wherein Lizzie and her Father are described as floating on the river "between Southwark Bridge which is of iron and London Bridge which is of stone."

The most obvious factors of resistance to the formation of meaningful human structures in the novel are money and social rank; money stands in the way of John and Bella, rank in the way of Eugene and Lizzie. Hillis Miller's important observation that money is a human fiction is crucial to my argument here: both money and the established social order are actually forms of the imagination, products of the structuring power of the mind; they work, however, against the imagination here because they have become reified, fixed, and frozen. Money is the prime example of a "dead" form, a form that has become dissociated from its source in the human imagination, dissociated from feeling. Dickens, like Blake, was acutely aware of how tyrannical our systems can be when they are divorced from the individual imagination. Re-ified forms, like money and the social
structure, are forms that have enslaved their creators: they have become in-humane because they have lost contact with individual experience and are valued by a community more highly than individual experience. Such forms, like the Podsnap plate, take on a life of their own that is inimical to human life. The Bridges of iron and stone can be taken, then, to stand for the rigidity of conventional systems that constrict the authentic life of the imagination. When Charley Hexam accuses his sister of having "romantic" notions, he is positing these systems as the reality to which she should adapt.¹⁰

There is another aspect of reality in the novel, however, that is figured in the river itself, and perhaps in the stone of London Bridge. This is the world of pure matter, of materiality as it exists in itself, alien and usually hostile to humanity. If reified forms of consciousness are morally and spiritually deadly, the material world threatens physical death: four characters in this novel actually drown, and both Harmon and Eugene are nearly drowned. We might note, too, in this context, how inimical the physicality of the body can be in this novel. Jenny's deformity is an obvious example of what I mean here, but Johnny's illness and death, Mr. Dolls' alcoholism, and Eugene's mutilation are also relevant, and Headstone's brutal and uncontrollable sexuality is obviously a concomitant of physical being. The mounds of dust that loom on the
horizon of the novel (associated as they are with excrement) provide an image which powerfully conflates human physicality and the unformed materiality of the world.

What these two aspects of reality--pure matter and reified forms of consciousness--have in common is their resistance to the workings of the individual imagination. Together, they constitute a world which is alien to the human spirit, as Dickens conceives it. While a world without order is profoundly threatening, because it cannot be lived in, the structurings of Society are no less murderous in their own way. What is needed, then, is a human and humane ordering of the world. In this as in other novels, the idea of home seems to provide Dickens with a model for such order. It is interesting to note that his attitude toward home is diametrically opposed to that of George Eliot, for whom (at least in Middlemarch) domestic reality is hostile to imaginative life. I have explored at some length the establishment of community in Our Mutual Friend and its foundation in acts of knowing. I want now to consider in more detail how it is that acts of knowing in this novel can work against the perpetuation of dead form, toward forms that provide order in the world without doing violence to the individual and the truths of individual experience. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, it is perception grounded in feeling that makes all the difference.
One of the most interesting oppositional structures we can generate in response to this novel is the difference between, on the one hand, those characters who feel, who are capable of making an emotional response to the world, and on the other, those who (like Charley Hexam) do not feel or merely pretend to feel. In "good society," fictionalization of feeling is almost mandatory (note the effusive sentimentality of the Lammles and Lady Tippins) but genuine feeling is suspect. Early in the novel, for example, we see Mortimer and Eugene repress their sympathetic response to the story of The Man from Somewhere, because in the Veneering/Podsnap world, sensitivity is a "weakness."

Twemlow's moment of glory comes at the very end of the novel, when he asserts the validity of authentic feeling, in himself and in others. His response to the discussion of Eugene's marriage is "that this is a question of the feelings of a gentleman." He goes on to say:

The feelings of a gentleman I hold sacred, and I confess I am not comfortable when they are made the subject of sport or general discussion. (pp. 891-892)

When Podsnap "sneers" and asks whether Lord Snigsworth would agree, Twemlow's rejoinder is "I could not allow even him to dictate to me on a point of great delicacy, on which I feel very strongly" (p. 892). It is significant that the story ends on this note, for Dickens, like Keats, had an enormous confidence in "the holiness of the heart's affections," and in nearly all the novels it is through
such affections that humane order can be restored in the world.

Our Mutual Friend is a text that is replete with references to the heart. Twemlow is called at one point a "Knight of the Simple Heart" (p. 632); Bella, as I have noted, is "the true golden gold at heart," and Mr. Boffin himself has "the soundest of sound hearts" (p. 141); Lizzie is "amazingly strong at heart," (p. 770), Charley has a "hollow empty heart," (p. 780) Mr. Dolls is "enough to break his mother's heart," (p. 595) and lovesick Mr. Venus tells Wegg "it's the heart that lowers me" (p. 128). I have counted at least fifty such specific references; among them is the authorial comment (concerning Betty Higden) that "hearts may count in heaven as high as heads" (p. 276).

This idea is echoed in a later scene when, after the Lammles unsuccessful attempt to ingratiate themselves with the Boffins, Georgiana Podsnap appears with a distracted idea of helping her friend: Mrs. Lammle silently appeals to the Boffins, and "both understood her instantly, with a more delicate subtlety than much better educated people, whose perception came less directly from the heart, could have brought to bear on the issue" (p. 669).

There are a number of instances in this novel where truth is arrived at intuitively rather than by the exercise of analytic intelligence. Mrs. Lammle, for instance, knows that Fledgeby is Pubsey and Co., though she cannot prove
it. Bella similarly senses something wrong about Mrs. Lammle, hears "whispers against her in my heart" (p. 533). Betty Higden knows from seeing Mrs. Boffin's face that she is full of goodness. Jenny, through a "secret sympathy" can understand the word so important to Eugene (p. 809). Here, as for St. Augustine, truth is perceived through "the eye of the heart." George Henry Lewes observed in 1872 that "thought is strangely absent" from Dickens' work. . . "the logic of feeling seems the only logic he can manage." (Ford and Lane, p. 69) It is certainly true that the logic of feeling is more important in Our Mutual Friend than the careful rationality so dear to George Eliot. A rational approach to life is urged here by the thoroughly obnoxious Charley Hexam, while Mrs. Boffin, with her usual sagacity, observes that most matters "are matters of feeling" (p. 346). Robert Langbaum's notion of "the essential idea of romanticism," expressed in The Poetry of Experience, comes very close to providing a formulation of Dickens' approach to the question of knowledge: "the imaginative apprehension gained through immediate experience is primary and certain, whereas the analytic reflection that follows is secondary and problematical."\(^1\)

For two important reasons, the logic of feeling is more effective than any other kind of logic in accomplishing a humane ordering of the world. In the first place, it is anchored in individual experience, which for Dickens is
the locus of meaning. A perception "from the heart" involves
the whole being in an act of knowledge. I have previously
suggested a connection between Dickens and Blake, and Blake's
distinction between reason and imagination is important
here: reason is linked to abstraction and generalization,
but meaning inheres in particularity and in apprehended by
the imagination or poetic genius. Rational knowledge is
thus akin to reified and "dead" structures—like money and
the law. Blake, of course, has observed that law is
oppressive, and law in Dickens (here, the hated Poor Law) is
oppressive for precisely the reason Blake finds it so: it
cannot adequately take into account the unique particularity
of the individual. But perception from the heart originates
in individual experience, not in abstraction, and thus it
can apprehend the truth revealed in concrete particularity
and can divine the mysterious truths of personal identity.
Langbaum has stated that through "immediate experience of
the external world" the imagination can reveal a "living
organic reality":12 as I have suggested, the crucial acts
of the imagination in Our Mutual Friend center on human
beings, on other people, and reveal them for who they are.
What matters here is not sapience, not an idea of the
world, but connaissances, an interplay of knowing and being
known through which individuals can make for each other "a
homing of the spirit."

The social forms which are thus generated do not
constrict or blur individual identity but affirm and nourish it. To use Coleridge's terminology for a moment, they are organic forms that stand in opposition to the mechanistic forms of "respectable" Victorian society. What we see in the course of the novel is a creation of new "social gestalten" which is parallel to a creation of aesthetic forms newly relevant to human experience. Susanne Langer has discussed artistic form as "form expressive of human feeling," and this, I think, is what we can see established in the social sphere in Our Mutual Friend. In the place of a rigid, exclusive, cold community, an alternate community is established, generated by "sympathetic vision."

The community of mutual friendship has its seed in the Boffin's relationship, and grows to include Bella, John, Betty Higden, Sloppy, Lizzie, Eugene, Jenny, Riah, Pleasant Riderhood, and Mr. Venus—who, by the end of the novel is, like the others, "flush of friends."^13

Such a community offers freedom for the individual in that it establishes a space for what Mark Shorer has called "the exercise of individual imaginative habit."^14 I have mentioned earlier that we see characters struggling against being reduced to their circumstances, and in a sense this struggle is the essence of the conflict between imagination and reality in the novel. The question is whether external determinants of being and consciousness are to take precedence over the individual will in establishing identity.
A solution to the problem is offered by mutual conferral and affirmation of identity. Characters are not free here to articulate themselves just as they will—Jenny is lame, for example, and Riderhood does not make himself an honest man by asserting that he is one—but they can play an active role in the dynamic process by which identity is established in a social community. Dickens seems to be working here toward a reconciliation of two concepts of the self that appear throughout his work: on the one hand, he is enough of a marxist at heart to recognize that identity is grounded in the social world; on the other, he seems to feel, as Miller has argued, "that each man or woman has a fixed nature, a selfhood which may be obscured or distorted but never essentially altered." Here, he would appear to be suggesting that the essence of personality is only actuated through reciprocal relationship. In a community grounded in love, at any rate, external and internal determinants of identity need not be at war: within such a community it is possible to act out (as do the Boffins) the truths of the self in the social world.

Not all characters, however, can participate in this beneficent mutuality. Bradley Headstone, for example, is a sympathetic character, both in the sense that he is a man of deep feeling and in the sense that we can hardly help but care for him, yet he is excluded from the happy ending. Indeed, it might seem as though the fact of Bradley Headstone
subverts my argument about the power of feeling to work
good in the world, and I am not sure that the problems his
presence raises can be neatly or comfortably solved. Yet
I think that his significance lies precisely in the fact
that he cannot be accommodated or assimilated by the congenial
society; the power of his emotion, the force which drives
him in spite of his conscious intentions, is a reality which
simply exists, and Dickens' discovery of such an antithetical
reality within the self has important implications for the
novel as a genre. It suggests a mode of conflict between
imagination and reality which will be explored by
Dostoevsky and the moderns. Moreover, Headstone's story
has a special relevance when we remember Dickens' involve-
ment with Ellen Ternan; the heart, for all its capacity
to restore life, can involve us in relationships that will
not yield a saving mutuality, that will not generate a
home.

Headstone's story also alerts us to another important
point: acting out the deep truths of the self is not neces-
sarily a moral good. While Dickens values highly the right
to exercise "individual imaginative habit," the creative
activity of the mind must be willed to the service of a
community if it is not to be pernicious. Boffin creates a
golden world, for example, through an act of choice. It
is important for us, as well as for Bella, to see him play
the role of miser, because we can thereby recognize that
he might have been corrupt, that he might have chosen to be such a one, but did not. The fairy-tale magic in Our Mutual Friend is humanly made. While the fortune, it is true, is given, money only becomes an enabling instrument of the sympathetic imagination through a personal commitment to generate good in the world. Wegg, who might have been included in the community of friendship, chooses competition over mutuality—chooses to assert his identity at the expense of others and in doing so embodies the capitalist ethic. The alternative is presented in the Boffins, who cry for joy at John's return, though he comes to dispossess them.

In this novel, choosing oneself over others is a choice that subverts its own ends. When the will to exploit and dominate is pre-eminent, people begin the transition from spirit to matter that Dorothy Van Ghent has discussed. Both Wegg (whose wooden leg is significant here) and Riderhood come to conceive of themselves as things that can be bought and sold. Riderhood, for example, "means to be paid for the life as the steamer took," (p. 613) and Wegg insists "I am worth my price and I mean to have it" (p. 857). The more respectable capitalists that attend the Veneerings are similarly reduced to the quantifiable. The Contractor, the Chairman, and the "Father of the three hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds," "like astronomical distances, are only to be spoken of in the very largest figures" (p. 680).
Mr. Venus, on the other hand, staunchly declares "I have no price," (p. 642) and in doing so asserts his own humanity, and gains entrance to the paradisical community, where individuals are not measured, but loved and known.

It is of no small significance, in the context of these observations, that Dickens established a community with his readers unlike anything in the history of English literature. His popularity was, of course, enormous, and he seems to have been emotionally involved with his public to a remarkable degree. Kathleen Tillotson has shown us how serial publication tended to establish a close relationship between author and reader, and has noted that Dickens was avidly aware of "feedback" from his audience, and on more than one occasion modified his work in response to it. Tillotson goes on to say that "the sense of a sympathetic, applauding public seems to have been profoundly necessary to him."17 and George Santayana has also observed that "he needed to feel, in his writing, that he was carrying the sympathy of every man with him."18 Both George Gissing and Humphrey House have stressed Dickens "unity" with his readers in terms of moral attitudes and opinions:19 if he was a great reformer, and (by the end of his life, at least) a great critic of bourgeois society, he always possessed what Kenneth Burke sees as the most important attribute of the successful propagandist, the ability to convince others
that one's programs are in fact an embodiment of their own values. It seems to me, then, that just as his characters make sense of the world through emotional relationships, so Dickens himself depended on the love and admiration of his readers for his sense of himself and his place in the world. Edmund Wilson, defending the "exhibitionism" of Dickens public statement about his separation from Catherine, suggests that in his later years "the public... was probably closer than the wife by whom he had had ten children."^20 Wilson sees the near-pathological intensity of the public readings as the culmination of Dickens need to participate in an intimate relationship with an audience: in these readings, we can see Dickens acting out the persona which he and his admirers had created--that of the master storyteller.

Whereas George Eliot seems to stand beside her readers, sharing with them a look through the microscope of her style, a good model for Dickens' relationship with his readers is the more primitive image of a group of listeners gathered around a fire to hear a story, or perhaps the homely image of telling and hearing a bed-time story. Reading Eliot, we are asked to participate in a painstaking analysis; reading Dickens, we are asked to receive the revealed truth of the storyteller. Robert Morse has pointed out that "with the authority of a teller of folk-tales... Dickens simply assures his readers: This is what
happened."21 We know, for example, that Twemlow is an "innocent good gentleman" because Dickens tells us so, just as he tells us that Fascination Fledgeby was "the meanest cur on two legs." In an analysis of language in Martin Chuzzlewit, Steven Marcus speaks of "the presence of the novelist--of his disciplined, magisterial sensibility, acting as a kind of deity, freely creating and controlling the experience he imposes on his readers."22 All novelists, of course, create and control the experience they present to their readers, but not all assume, as Dickens does, the persona of "the Inimitable," the storyteller whose word is truth, whose language creates the world it describes.

We know, however, that he strongly objected to complaints that he was not a realistic writer. In the preface to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for instance, he defends himself against accusations of exaggeration, suggesting that it is the inadequate perception of others that makes his work seem exaggerated. Chesterton was probably right to say that Dickens' sensitivity to criticism led him astray insofar as he felt compelled to insist that his work was literally mimetic in every detail23--as we can see him do in the epilogue of *Our Mutual Friend* on the subject of wills. But it is important to stress that Dickens did feel the characteristic tension of the novelist between "making" and "matching." He wrote, for example, to Bulwer-Lytton about the constant "restraint" he exercised over his powers of
invention, and Foster recalls "his indifference to any praise of his performances on the merely literary side, compared with the higher recognition of them as bits of actual life."24 The two artisans of Our Mutual Friend, Jenny and Mr. Venus, are themselves involved with matching. Jenny bases her doll's dresses on the real ladies she catches sight of in the London streets, and emphasizes the trouble she takes to fit her designs to these models. Venus, in his articulation of forms, is bound by the laws of anatomy, and won't put Silas Wegg's limb even into a "miscellaneous," because it "don't match." I would argue that Dickens the storyteller is similarly committed to "matching" on a phenomenological level: in his work, as for Robbe-Grillet, what is at issue is experienced life.

The act of telling depends on a complimentary act of hearing or listening. Here again we can distinguish a mutuality which generates identity: Dickens can be a storyteller only so long as he is in touch with an audience who will affirm this role by assenting to it. What audiences do—or what all performers hope they will do—is pay attention. A good audience is one that will imaginatively participate in the spectacle presented to them, and this kind of participation can be viewed as parallel to the "sympathetic perception" that is affirmed as a valuable imaginative activity within Our Mutual Friend. It is interesting to note that the same factors which work against
attention and engagement on the part of an audience can be seen to operate in the text as counter-forces to the establishment of social community. Boredom, for example, a lack of interest and care, is figured by the assumed lassitude of Mortimer and Eugene; enslavement to a pre-conceived notion of what is, and hence what is presentable in art, is explicitly described in Podsnap; the utter refusal to participate in any act of community, the refusal to be a partner in an aesthetic experience, is wonderfully realized in Silas Wegg, whose way with texts is as brutal and as self-assertive as his ways with people. The relationship between storyteller and audience, then, is a mode of social relationship: whereas the reward of community for the characters in Our Mutual Friend is authentic identity, the reward offered by a narrative community is the pleasure of fictional knowledge.

Schopenhauer has suggested that all aesthetic pleasure is grounded in "delight in perceptive knowledge as such," and realistic fiction always plays to our pleasure in the knowledge of ourselves and our world. Now there are many varieties of knowledge, and as I have previously suggested, Dickens seems to value most highly that which is immediate, spontaneous, and emotional. The extraordinary vivacity of his prose, the shifting intensity of focus, the evanescent meaning revealed in details, are stylistic equivalents of that deep and sudden vision by which characters in Our
Mutual Friend come at the truth. The daemonic energy we feel in all his work, the imaginative power to re-vivify the world, are effected by such a vision. Whereas Eliot, by virtue of her own style and her own strategies, can offer her readers a clear and magnificently rational view of human experience, Dickens offers us another sort of knowledge altogether, a humane and lively knowledge grounded in the storyteller's unique voice and vision. An example of the difference between Dickens and Eliot can be seen in their respective handling of the multiple plot. In reading Eliot, we perform acts of cognitive organization through which the various strands of plot come together to form a coherent and logical whole; Dickens labyrinthine plots make sense as we untangle the complexities of human relationship and as we see the characters themselves work out their relationships to each other. In Eliot, to understand the pattern of the work as a whole is to understand the world; Dickens never offers us a sustained and coherent world-view but a momentary vision of human order in the world.

Despite the difference I have tried to suggest, knowledge in both Dickens and Eliot is presented as fundamentally good: in both Middlemarch and Our Mutual Friend, to know is a beneficent act, an act of the imagination that defends us against the violence of the world. But knowledge, as Romano insists, contains in itself the seed of corruption. It can become petrified, fixed, and thus (like Podsnap)
closed off from the truths of human experience. Knowledge, moreover, can be used as a tool of the tyrannical will, as Miller suggests it is used in Our Mutual Friend. To know can become a means of dominance and exploitation rather than a means to mutuality. It seems to me that the fantasy of invisibility—which, I believe, is closely linked to our pleasure in the novel as a genre—illustrates quite precisely this dual quality of knowledge. The desire to be invisible is, on the one hand, a desire to experience people and events as they are in themselves, un-altered by our presence, and hence it is a fantasy of transcendence, a version of the longing to escape our subjectivity. On the other hand, to be invisible would confer the ability to know without being known, and thus it constitutes a fantasy of mastery and power. What I mean to suggest here is simply that knowledge, like all forms of the imagination, can be at once liberating and oppressive.

Since knowledge is an imaginative activity, a structuring of data (or, as I have argued, of people) into coherent and meaningful patterns, then the unknown can be taken as mode of "reality"—that which is outside of and resistant to the ordering accomplished by our minds. In discussing Middlemarch, I make the point that, for the reader, what functions as a resistance to the schematizing mind is the narrator's insistence that we look inward; the extensive authorial comment prevents us from closing off the story, will not
allow us to perceive it as a self-contained form distinct from our own experienced life. For the reader in Our Mutual Friend, it is an interplay of known and unknown that constitutes a dynamic conflict between imagination and reality. In a variety of ways, the text resists and disrupts easy, possessive knowledge, yet involves us in the processes of identification and recognition that are so important for the characters.

What I mean, in part, by an interplay of known and unknown in the reader's experience can be illustrated with reference to the first chapter. We are told that Gaffer Hexam is looking for something, and that Lizzie too watches the river intently: in her look there is a touch of "dread or horror," and we see her shrink from a stain in the boat "what bore some resemblance to the outline of a muffled human form" (p. 44). What Gaffer finds in the river is at first referred to as "it;" he and Riderhood share the euphemism "being in luck" to describe the successful completion of the search, and it is only in the course of their discussion on the ethics of robbery that we first read the word "corpse." The narrator never, in fact, uses the word, or even the personal pronoun, in reference to Gaffer's "luck," and the chapter ends with another oblique description:

What he had in tow lunged at him sometimes... and sometimes seemed to try to wrench itself away, though, for the most part it followed submissively. (p. 47)
While contemporary readers may have known sooner than we do what Gaffer was about, the fact remains that at some point in this chapter we identify his discovery, and we fill in the neuter pronoun with meaning, as Lizzie imaginatively (and with emotion) fills in the "outline" at the bottom of the boat. It is important to note that here again the object of attention is a human body, and the interplay of known and unknown centers on "the human form."

Throughout the novel there are similar moments of identification on the part of the reader. In chapter two we are given, by Mortimer, the "outline" of the Harmon story, and as we encounter the Boffins and Bella we recognize them as the characters to whom we were briefly introduced, and fill in the outline with increased awareness of the personalities involved in the tale of the Man from Somewhere. We guess, at some point, that Hanford and Rokesmith are really John Harmon (as Dickens emphatically insists he intended for us to do). We sense what Eugene's disappearance means, when he slips away from Mortimer after the discovery of Hexam's body, though we are not told explicitly until much later that he has gone to Lizzie. When Lizzie herself disappears, we recognize her—before she gives her name—as the "angel" who helps Betty Higden at the old woman's death. At about the same time, we identify Riderhood as the Deputy Lock who extorts Betty's last pennies, because we recognize his characteristic speech
patterns. We can identify Mrs. Lammle (before she tells Jenny her name) as the lady who waits downstairs while Mr. Fledgeby is engaged with "a gentleman," and we instantly recognize Headstone as the schoolmaster of reserved appearance who confronts Mr. Milvey at the station. Very often, moreover, Dickens favors an irony based on the reader's superior knowledge. Mrs. Wilfer is frequently made the butt of such comic irony, as she is when she declares "the craft, the secrecy, the dark deep underhanded plotting, written in Mrs. Boffin's countenance, makes me shudder" (p. 159). A similar, though darker, effect is achieved as we watch Silas Wegg work himself into a frenzy of righteous indignation over the fate of Aunt Jane and Uncle Parker, while we know perfectly well that these are pure creations of his imagination. The force of Dickens' serious irony--like that in Charley Hexam's tirade against Lizzie's selfishness--is also derived from our own recognition of the truth, our better knowledge of human beings in the novel.

Yet if we are inclined to feel secure in our superior knowledge, as Dickens certainly sets us up to do (note, for example, that the humor in Wegg's early reading lies in our own greater familiarity with his text) there are surprises in store for us here. We learn at several points that we do not, after all, know so much or so accurately as we thought. The most important such surprise is, of
course, the revelation that Boffin only pretended to be a miser. While we have savored the ironies of his condemnation of Rokesmith (knowing that the Secretary is himself the rightful possessor of the fortune) we have ourselves been wholly taken in by Dickens' manipulation of appearances. Obviously, we could not possibly guess the "truth" here since we are entirely dependent on the narrator to establish such truth, but the irritation we are likely to feel at Dickens for playing this kind of game with us is significant. We resent having been fooled. Like Wegg, we think we know a secret only to learn that our knowledge (like Wegg's document) is invalid. We are surprised not only at Boffin's masquerade, but also by the real secret of the Dutch Bottle; the triumph of mutuality here is even more complete than we had expected, since Harmon turns out not to be the rightful heir after all, but to owe everything to the Boffins. Other surprises and disruptions of our expectations are less easy to posit for every reader, but I might note that at my own first reading of the novel, I expected Wegg to be a loveable eccentric, thought Mrs. Boffin might well succumb to a nouveau-riche mentality of vanity and status-seeking, was surprised by Fledgeby's nastiness after seeing him (like Toots in *Dombey and Son*) undergo paroxysms of shyness around Georgiana Podsnap, and seriously expected Eugene to die. Certainly we are all taken aback by the discovery that the "goblin" who tormented Silas Wegg is
none other than Sloppy, and are tantalized by a possible romance between the orphan and Jenny--by the possibility that Sloppy is the unexpected embodiment of "him." Their future is not revealed, however, and their friendship remains in a state of potential, as does that of Twemlow and Lightwood at the very end. These nascent friendships are, in fact, a nice figure for the delicate balance of known and unknown that characterizes a reading of the novel.

I want to speak now at some length of what is perhaps the most important aspect of the "known" in the reader's experience of this text: the fairy-tale structure that underlies the plot, the romance conventions that are perhaps more clearly visible here than in any of the novels. Most critics have recognized the ubiquity of fairy tale motifs in Dickens' work; his use of such conventional plotting has come to be seen not as the lapse of an uneducated writer pandering to wish-fulfillment fantasies but as a valuable aspect of his unique vision. G. K. Chesterton, ahead of his time in this respect, saw that Dickens is in some sense a "mythographer," and a good deal of useful criticism has resulted from the modern interest in myth and fairy tale as dream-like expressions of psychic truth. Taking a somewhat different approach, William F. Axton has written a fascinating study of Dickens' "vision and style" as grounded in the popular Victorian theater, a theater in
which folklore and fairy tale held a pre-eminent place.\footnote{28} While these areas of exploration seem to me interesting and important, my own approach to fairy-tale in Dickens' work is suggested by a comment made by Martin Price:

> Popular literature is always close to the artifice of the formula. We look for the twice-told tale, or the tale told a hundred times, and we are ready to see it worked out anew, the old formula discernable beneath the ingenious variations, the pleasures of recognition as acute as those of discovery.\footnote{29}

In reading \textit{Our Mutual Friend} we find, like Mrs. Boffin, what we already knew newly revealed to us; here, the patterns of story are "worked out anew," the old forms of joy and hope re-discovered in the metropolis. The novel's first words--"In these times of ours"--both echo the traditional formula and stress its application to a historical reality.

The presence of conventional, fairy-tale elements in this novel seems to me too obvious to necessitate a lengthy exposition. Robert Morse has discussed this in some detail in his excellent article on \textit{Our Mutual Friend}, and to read Northrop Frye's study of "Dickens and the Comedy of Humors" is to perceive how intimately the central issues of identity, recognition, and revelation are linked to the archetypal patterns of romance. I want to focus only briefly, therefore, on the stories of the romantic leads in relation to what J. R. R. Tolkien has considered the mark of all true fairy tales, the "consolation of the
happy ending"—what he calls "Eucatastrophe." Since Tolkien's article "On Fairy Stories" is not as well-known as it deserves to be, I will quote from a paragraph in which this term is explained more fully.

... it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.

Tolkien goes on to quote, as an example of the "piercing glimpse of joy, and heart's desire" a moment near the end of "The Black Bull of Norroway":

Seven long years I served for thee,
The glassy hill I clamb for thee,
The bludy shirt I wrang for thee,
And wilt thou not waken and turn to me?

He awoke and turned to her. 30

The reconciliations of Bella and John, Eugene and Lizzie, partake of this quality of joy: they are accomplished, as I have suggested, through a mutual recognition that engenders a breaking away from the constricting forms of Victorian society, and the establishment of newly viable structures of love.

The eucatastrophe of Bella and John is foreshadowed by Mr. Boffin, when after the confrontation with Rokesmith he declares "it's all over my dear, and you're righted—and it's all right!" (p. 661). On a re-reading of the novel,
we can perceive the underlying meaning of Mr. Boffin's words and hear an echo of Lady Julian of Norwich's "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins and the wedding dinner at Greenwich are moments of festive joy, but the grand climax of this story comes, of course, just before the "revelation" chapter, when John takes Bella to the house prepared for her; like "the wishes in the fairy story, that were all fulfilled as soon as spoken,"

Bella's wishes for a nursery that is "a very rainbow of colors," a staircase adorned with flowers, an aviary, and an ivory case of jewels, (pp. 826-827) have come true. In describing this moment, Dickens uses language that moves us away from a materialistic delight in wealth toward a pastoral and organic vision of joy. In the aviary, for example, "a number of tropical birds, more gorgeous than the flowers, were flying about; and among those birds were gold and silver fishes, and mosses, and water-lilies, and a fountain, and all manner of wonders" (p. 838). It is, appropriately, Mrs. Boffin who delivers here the words of recognition that mark Bella's entrance into joy: "Welcome to your house and home, my deary!" (p. 839).

The eucatastrophic moment for Eugene and Lizzie is both quieter and, in a sense, deeper. The first part of it comes when Jenny "discovers a word." When his friend speaks the word, Eugene responds "Oh, God bless you Mortimer;" as
he leaves, Eugene tells him simply "I love you" and Jenny weeps in "the bower made by her bright hair" (pp. 811-812). Soon after, Lizzie enters the room, and Eugene can say that "he knows his wife." After the accomplishment of the marriage that Lizzie "would have given all the world to dare to hope for," Eugene asks her to undraw the curtains:

The sun was rising, and his first rays struck into the room as she came back and put her lips to his. "I bless the day!" said Eugene. "I bless the day!" said Lizzie. (p. 823)

In one important sense, which I will discuss in a moment, Lizzie and Eugene provide what Frye calls a "displacement" of the fairy tale pattern: they also, however, play out an older, mythic structure which operates, as myth is likely to do, at a level probably below the conscious awareness of Dickens and his readers. Lizzie, as I have already suggested, is linked to the elemental, natural world, and is invested with a peculiar erotic power. Her roles in the novel, moreover, tally closely with those of the Magna Mater, the "Triple Moon-Goddess" that Robert Graves describes as "the mother, the bride, and the layer-out."31 (We might remember here that she is a mother to Charley and attends Betty Higden's death.) It is interesting to note, too, that the moon is out on the night of Eugene's attack: "he found that the young moon was up". . . "the ripple under the moon broke unexpectedly now and then". . . "in an instant. . . the reflected night turned crooked, flames
shot jaggedly across the air, and the moon and stars came bursting from the sky"; Lizzie, hearing a noise of blows, follows a track of blood to where she sees "a bloody face turned up towards the moon, and drifting away" (pp. 766-768). Eugene--mutilated and thrown into a river--is linked here to Acteon, Orpheus, and ultimately to Osiris, particularly insofar as Lizzie's rescue corresponds to Isis' rescue and resurrection of the dismembered god. Eugene clearly experiences the cycle of death and rebirth that is characteristic of myth, and his final union with Lizzie has a parallel in the "theogamy or divine marriage" which Sir James Frazer posited as a basis for pagan rites of fertility. 32

In archaic myth, such a marriage restores and rejuvenates the earth, but here the wasteland of Victorian society is untouched by eucatastrophe in individual lives. As Edmund Wilson has pointed out, Lizzie and Eugene's marriage (though it unites the social polarities of high and low) "does not involve the whole structure of society... the successful middle-class remain unaffected by what has happened." 33 "In these time of ours," then, the patterns of myth and fairy tale cannot fully accommodate reality: what we see, in fact, in this novel is a juxtaposition of such patterns to the "realistic" world of the Podsnaps and Veneerings, the world of money and matter. In this sense, the structure of Our Mutual Friend is based on the discrepancy of realism and romance. Mr. and Mrs. Boffin do function, as I have
noted, as the King and Queen of fairy tale, but their powers in the world are limited, their kingdom is small, and it is Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap who have control of the social order.

Yet we need to observe here that even in the stories I have been discussing, which approximate closely to conventional narrative patterns, there is a certain difference or displacement (what Frye terms "the adjusting of formulaic structures to a roughly credible context"). I have stressed earlier that the Boffin's magic is humanly made, and Dickens reminds us of this fact when, in the course of the procession to the "nursery garnished as with rainbows," John tells Bella "we were hard put to get it done in so short a time" (p. 849). The note sounded here is subtle but important: the house has been made by human hands, working within ordinary human limitations. While I will not cite every kind of displacement that operates in the novel, it should at least be mentioned that the story of Eugene and Lizzie is itself juxtaposed to that of John and Bella: the former suggests that easy social mobility is an illusion, and that a great price is paid for happy endings in this world. Bella's choice of John over the Boffin's wealth, for example, turns out to win for her that wealth after all, since her husband is no "mendicant" but the prince in disguise. Lizzie, on the other hand, is not a princess; contrary to the conventions of romance, she is in truth as lowly in origin as she appears--no sudden
discovery will reveal her to be Eugene's social equal, and it will require (as Wilson points out) genuine courage on his part to marry her. Their reconciliation is accomplished only through suffering, and if Lizzie has, in the end, married the gentleman she adored, she has not done so without a nearly superhuman effort, nor has Eugene overcome the rigid forms of Victorian society without being broken. What I want to stress here is that if the "outlines" of fairy tale and romance are in some ways fulfilled in this novel, there is a counter-movement characteristic of the genre in which such outlines are "corrected" in response to the perceived realities of modern life.

Such displacements or corrections are one of the ways in which this text resists easy, possessive knowledge: the familiar patterns of narrative are not given quite unchanged to our perception. It is an axiom of my thesis that the amplification and emendation of schemata is basic to what we call realism; here, I would argue, it is also basic to the interplay of "known" and "unknown" that seems to me so important as a means of keeping the text alive for us. Just as money is a re-ified form of the imagination, so the old forms of story can become fixed and dead when they lose contact with immediate, emotional human experience. In this sense (as Romano has suggested) the story form can be viewed as parallel to all those formulations which restrict, constrain, and limit. While acts of telling and
hearing stories work to give human form to the world, story itself can become a specious coin, a mode of generalization and abstraction, and thus another aspect of that mechanism which works against the free life of the imagination. Thus, to stay "alive," the text must subvert its own articulation: too much of the already known, too much familiarity, is deadly. Victor Shklovsky has of course elucidated this general principle in "Art as Technique," and information theory has more recently given us the concept of "redundancy" to confirm Shklovsky's sense that we only pay attention to what is different from what we expected, that "as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic,"35 and hence increasingly schematized, increasingly divorced from immediate, concrete experience. I am suggesting, then, that an interplay of known and unknown in the text of *Our Mutual Friend* can be seen as a de-familiarization of conventional narrative patterns through a variety of techniques which disrupt these patterns and hence restore their potency.

One such technique is the displacement I have already discussed: another is the use of detail. In my introductory chapters, I have noted the importance of detail to the genre of the novel as a whole, and it is important to re-emphasize this point in discussing Dickens. (George Orwell, in a classic essay, has observed that "the outstanding, unmistakable mark of Dickens writing is the
unnecessary detail."\textsuperscript{36} Whereas in Middlemarch detail functions as a stylistic equivalent of minute analysis, and helps to engage the reader in such analysis, Dickens use of detail is closely linked to those sudden moments of intense vision that distinguish his interpretive strategy. The narrative consciousness seems to alight on a particular scene, object, or person, and focus there with a vivid attention that a number of critics (following G. H. Lewes) have described as "hallucinatory."\textsuperscript{37} Such attention can certainly be a way of "knowing," but it also constitutes a leap into the unexpected, into the concrete sensations of perception and the "exercise of individual imaginative habit" that tend to be lost in our habitual encounters with the common world. Hence, in part, the style can effect what Axton calls "the profound readjustment of his reader's perspective toward the familiar, commonplace world around them."\textsuperscript{38} If Dickens is a storyteller who relies heavily on primitive narrative structures, he is also a genius of the odd but exact detail which fills those "outlines" with immediacy: as Morse puts it, the legendary and archetypal figures that populate his fiction are "richly clothed in borrowed garments of actuality."\textsuperscript{39} Moreover, the sheer profligacy of detail (Orwell compared Dickens' imagination to a kind of weed) serves to blur those outlines, to render their perception more difficult, and hence to move us away from simple recognition of conventional formulae toward
a re-discovery of their power.

If the detail characteristic of Dickens' style is one means of effecting variations on the old forms of story, his equally characteristic humor is also linked to the disruption of pattern. Humor is conspicuously absent from the genre of romance, and I would argue that it is in fact inherently realistic insofar as it always involves a disruption of cognitive or perceptual schemata, or draws our attention to the artificiality of such schemata. While a survey of theories of comedy would be out of place here, we should note the stress that many such theories (notably that of Henri Bergson) place on incongruity, mechanism, and automatism. In "Dickens and the Comedy of Humors," Frye has shown the significance in Dickens' work of the "humorous" in a Jonsonian sense, the humor that arises from rigidity and obsession with ritual habit. Frye points out that we can recognize this kind of humor in the stock responses and behaviors of the characters (where it is often associated with the repetition of set phrases) and also in Dickens' sense of the absurdity of the conventions of Victorian society. An important part of his humor, then, involves making us aware of the foolishness of form. The parodic element of his style is similarly related to an apprehension of the absurdity of rhetorical forms: both Alice Meynell and, recently, Garret Stewart have discussed Dickens comic prose as a play on the wreckage of the "high style" of
Johnson and Gibbon, a rhetoric become corrupt because
divorced from authentic human experience.\textsuperscript{40} Dickens'
distinctive fondness for the grotesque is, I think, grounded
in the same sort of impatience with conventional forms.
Axton, who has made a lengthy study of Dickens' grotesquerie,
argues that "the grotesque aims to subvert the familiar
world. . . by means of sudden, surprising transformations
of its elements, so that the processes normally associated
with the working of everyday life are undone, or the con-
ventional relations between things are dislocated."\textsuperscript{41} To
show us, for example, the Podsnap spoons forcing their un-
wieldy way into the mouths of the dinner guests is to
reverse our ordinary experience of eating. (That it is also
a brilliant illustration of the Podsnaps' approach to human
relationship is a measure of Dickens' skill in manipulating
grotesquerie to serve the purposes of his narrative.) Ob-
viously, Dickens' humor is a subject beyond the scope of a
volume, much less a paragraph; I want only to suggest here
that Dickens' comic method is based on a subversion of
conventional forms of speech, action, and perception.

In the context of such subversion, the familiar
narrative formulae of myth, romance and fairy tale undergo
a certain modification that is illustrated rather well, I
think, by Dickens' description of Rumty Wilfer as "the
conventional cherub" (p. 76). Wilfer is a cherub in his
plump, childish attendance on Bella and later on the newly-
weds, yet his particular being alters our perception of the role he fulfills. The humor in such characterization lies in the implicit incongruity of the individual to the conventional role, and it is also in this incongruity, I would argue, that the convention itself is re-vivified. (This is a technique that James Joyce will use to great effect.) In the plot as a whole, we perceive the operation of the conventions of story while simultaneously perceiving the difference between this story and all others: we at once recognize the presence of convention and notice the disparity between these particular events and the familiar patterns of narrative. And it is because the old forms (like John Harmon) are recognized with some difficulty, because there is some resistance to such recognition, that they are not simply a redundant repetition of the already known but part of a dynamic combination of the familiar and the surprising that challenges our imagination.

Yet another kind of displacement or "correction" of conventional narrative patterns is figured by what happens to Mortimer Lightwood in the course of this novel. Mortimer begins by telling a story, a story which he thinks he knows, but he discovers that his apparent mastery of the form is an illusion. The tale of The Man from Somewhere turns out to be not the specious coin of dinner-party conversation, but a volatile pattern of events and personalities which will come to include his own life. At the end of Chapter
Two, as Romano has cogently observed, "reality" in the form of Charley Hexam unexpectedly intrudes on the closed social world of the Veneerings and opens the story, both in terms of setting in motion the plot of this novel and in the sense of precluding closure of the tale Mortimer has told. He and Eugene are drawn out into the night, to the river, and Lizzie, and the literal body of mystery. "How can we tell," Wilfer is later to ask Bella, "what coming people are aboard the ships that may be sailing to us now from the unknown seas!" (p. 737). Unlike Eugene, Mortimer does not disappear into the story, but returns to the Veneering table in the last chapter, and recounts the story of Eugene's marriage; yet his encounter with the unknown world has changed his attitude to the story he tells and his own relation to it. He no longer speaks as a detached observer, but as a profoundly engaged participant in the story. The story form is "opened," then, by becoming emotionally charged: for Mortimer, the known is literally disrupted by the unknown, the formal structure of story disturbed by his own inclusion in the pattern.

Mortimer can be seen as a figure of the reader precisely insofar as he moves from a detached, abstract knowledge of the patterns of story to an emotional, sympathetic perception of this particular story. We have similarly moved, in the course of the novel, to a point where we are actively engaged in the establishment of the conventional
happy ending. Most of those present at the dinner party are emphatically opposed to the notion that Eugene's story has ended at all happily: his marriage, to Lady Tippins, is "ridiculous," the rest of the committee view it as a particularly foolish sort of financial transaction, and all Podsnap has to say is "that it offends and disgusts me. . . . it makes me sick" (p. 889). We are the unseen guests (the unheard voices) who stand with Mortimer and Twemlow to affirm the marriage; in doing so we assert the happiness of the ending, and are actively involved in confirming the pattern of fairy tale. The fact that we can believe that such a marriage is "eucatastrophic," though it is condemned by the Voices of Society, implies that we have rejected the values of that society in favor of the values of the "congenial community"--which are summed up in Twemlow's appeal to feeling.

Dickens, then, has created in us an agreement about value that stands in contradiction to the structural principles of the urban, capitalist world. What we experience here, I think, is the sort of transvaluation often associated with the genre of pastoral, and it is interesting to observe that the withdrawal to a pastoral environment figures prominently in this novel. Lizzie finds at Plashwater Weir Mill the freedom to act in accordance with her sense of herself, as, more grimly, does Betty Higden. It is at the Mill that Bella's interview with Lizzie takes
place, and there by the "placid banks" of the river she begins to be reconciled to John, to converse with him (in her own words) "on equal terms" (p. 581). Eugene's accident and recovery, and his marriage are similarly set in the environs of the river, in the country. Garret Stewart has stressed that in Our Mutual Friend Dickens is newly sympathetic to the pastoral ideal, and cites the bar of the Fellowship-Porters, Riah's rooftop, and Jenny Wren's "rich shower of hair," as versions of a Keatsian "bower quiet" that can provide havens for the imagination in a hostile world.\(^{42}\) I would suggest that, for the reader, the text itself becomes a pastoral space for the re-valuation of metropolitan life, a fictional "bower" within which we can experience a recovery of genuine human value and from which we can return, "strengthened and enlightened, to active engagement in the imperfect world."\(^{43}\)

Our Mutual Friend is nonetheless, by my own definition, a novel and not a pastoral romance insofar as it contains within itself all that which (like "money, money, money") is subversive of pastoral and hostile to the individual imagination. It is the city, not the countryside, that is uppermost in our experience and that of the characters. If the text presents us--and I think it does--with fantasies of wish-fulfillment, it also presents the historical conditions of life which create a need for such fantasies and the powers which work in the common world to inhibit their
fulfillment. Even after we have assisted in generating a happy ending, the text continues (in Dickens' epilogue) and draws our attention to law and accident. In Dickens' attack on the Poor Law and brief description of the railway accident, I think we can perceive a final suggestion of the twin realities that work against the characters in the novel—abstract, de-personalized form and the dangerous physicality of ourselves and the world, both of which are modes of "external" (that is, unimaginative) determinants of being. Moreover, the very fact of accidence is wonderfully suggestive of the unexpected intrusions of the unknown on our human forms. Yet Dickens also refers, in the epilogue, to the text itself and the act of its creation: we are left, then, not only with a sense of the fragility of individual being, and life, and manuscripts, but also with an idea of fiction and the assurance that the text in hand has survived the violence of the world.

What fiction can offer—or what I think Dickens means his fiction to offer his readers—is, as I have noted earlier, a humane and lively knowledge of the world, a knowledge generated in the mutuality of author and reader, grounded in the storyteller's unique, sympathetic, imaginative vision. I will conclude this chapter by suggesting what such knowledge might make possible for us. Our affirmation of the happy ending seems to bear an interesting similarity to the mutual affirmation of identity so impo-
tant in the lives of the characters. We have seen in the course of the novel that the value of money is humanly conferred, and that it is possible to choose an alternative system of evaluation, based on "natural affection." We have seen how individual identity depends on recognition and verification in a social context. It would seem, then, that what we choose to value, and believe in, and recognize, is a crucial determinant of the worlds we make for ourselves and each other. We are told at one point that Boffin's chief literary difficulty is knowing what to believe, and in this little crisis of belief we can see a hint of that great crisis which increasingly preoccupied the minds of the Victorians. I think this text suggests that in deciding what (and whom) to believe, we can play an important role in determining what will be. If we can, then, at least for the duration of our engagement with the text, affirm the validity of fairy tale, then it might be possible to discover and create the old patterns of hope and joy in our own lives—to make fairy tales come true by believing in and "acting up to" them.

To some readers, now and in Dickens' own time, such "romantic notions" are simply not congruent with their apprehensions of the real world, and it is true that they imply great confidence in "the power of the mind over the possibilities of things." I should admit that the kind of affirmation I have discussed here, and elsewhere in the
chapter, was suggested to me by a rather foolish moment in J. M. Barrie's "Peter Pan." Tinkerbell, having drunk the poison prepared for Peter, is dying, and the audience is asked to save her life by asserting a belief in fairies through clapping their hands. Such foolishness, though, of one kind or another, is the only key to any house of fiction: the grimmest naturalism, like the wildest fairy tale, depends on at least a temporary willingness on our part to engage ourselves with and grant some sort of validity to the narrative. I would argue, too, (with Wallace Stevens) that such a willed and loving assent to the truths of the imagination is all that stands between us and the violence of the world. What is at stake for the children who clap for Tinkerbell is not the fairy's life, but their own.
Chapter V. Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to develop a theoretical approach to the novel as a genre and to demonstrate how that approach can be applied to the analysis of a given text. Obviously, Our Mutual Friend and Middlemarch do not constitute a representative sample of the set of all novels: they can, however, function as something like "representative anecdotes," in Kenneth Burke's phrase;¹ that is, I believe that my analysis of these two novels provides a paradigm in which the elements of a more extensive application of the theory are implicit. In the following pages I will suggest how the theory can be so extended, and how the methodology developed here can be useful in dealing with a wide variety of texts.

To begin with, Middlemarch and Our Mutual Friend can be considered as representative of different emphases within the genre on "making" and "matching": it has frequently been observed that some novels seem more "realistic" than others; I think this is a just observation, and that it can be explained with reference to the principles of romance and realism as I have here defined those terms. Eliot's novel, in a variety of ways, lays greater stress on the principle of adaptation, while in Dickens' work there is a stronger emphasis on the principle of transformation. It is relatively easy to construct a binary system in which
novelists can be compared and contrasted according to where the overall emphasis in their work tends to fall. Such juxtaposition seems to me especially useful in considering pairs of novelists from similar cultures and historical epochs. Thus if we set up a two-term model of romance and realism, we can consider Richardson as a romantic novelist and Defoe as a realistic novelist: this may seem obvious enough, but I want to pause to make it clear how I have arrived at this statement. Richardson's novels tend to focus on the mind and its operations, while Defoe's focus on the material world; we are more aware of the weight and detail of that world in *Moll Flanders* and *Robinson Crusoe* than we are in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, and Richardson's characters are able to effect more significant alterations in their environment. Similar pairs of novelists who give more emphasis to "making" and "matching" respectively are Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen, Dostoievsky and Tolstoy, Proust and Balzac, Fitzgerald and Hemingway, Sartre and Camus. Novels which are governed by the principle of "matching" tend to appear tough and hard-edged compared to the soft and fluid feeling of "romantic" novels: we feel more sharply, in reading, the pressure of reality. If we push such a distinction too far, however, it tends to collapse. Flaubert, for example, might be considered a more "realistic" novelist than Stendhal insofar as the scope of Madame Bovary's activity is so much more limited
than that of Julian Sorel, her effect on the world so small; yet Flaubert as an artist exhibits to an extraordinary degree the romantic faculty of construction and design in creating a literary artifact. The fact that a simple distinction between romantic and realistic novels *does* tend to break down easily is a reflection of the fact that a tension of making and matching is a structural principle of the genre.

There are, moreover, certain novelists—Cervantes, of course, and Joyce, and Conrad—whose work could not without distortion be described as either romantic or realistic: in their novels the distinctive tension is explicit and powerful. It is important to note, though, that I do not mean to say that these are the best novelists or the best kinds of novels: neither would I want to privilege either the more clearly romantic or realistic novel, although individuals may certainly prefer one kind over another. Indeed, one of the strengths of my approach is that it allows us to avoid privileging either romance or realism, imagination or reality: to do so leads to endless and ultimately pointless arguments along the lines of *The Great Tradition*.

As my reference to Richardson may have suggested, the development of the psychological novel is related to an emphasis on the imagination which is linked to the romantic mode; yet *Middlemarch* should alert us to the fact that we have to be careful about making this kind of generalization,
insofar as it is in certain ways a much more thorough
treatment of psychic life than *Our Mutual Friend*, while very
clearly a more realistic novel. In order to adequately
place the psychological novel in an overall frame of refer-
ence based on imagination and reality, we need to go back
to the distinction I made in Chapter Two between novels
that focus on interpretation and those that focus on action.
We can consider Henry James and Virginia Woolf as novelists
who are primarily interested in the mental activities of
perception and interpretation, and observe that Woolf is
also a more romantic novelist than James in that the world
she posits is more susceptible to imaginative transformation.
Similarly, novels like *Our Mutual Friend*, which focus on
public, social activity, can be either "romantic" or
"realistic" depending on whether the text as a whole seems
to affirm the possibility of transformation, as does Henry
Roth's *Call it Sleep*, or deny it, as does Dreiser's *An
American Tragedy*.

All this begins to sound, perhaps, a bit like Polonius'
attempt at generic classification, and I cannot emphasize too
strongly that the theory of imagination and reality is not
primarily designed to yield a taxonomic description. What
I want to develop is essentially a way of looking at novels,
not a way of categorizing them. Moreover, an application of
the theory *must* be grounded in a sensitivity to the individual
text if it is not to degenerate into a reductive and sim-
plistic formula. For this reason, in part, I have thought it best to limit my practical criticism to a thorough study of only two novels: if the theory is to work well, it is necessary to look carefully at the activity of authors, characters, and readers. Novels are characterized, as I have argued, by a certain tension, and any given novel will be informed by a dialectic, but it is crucially important to avoid an immediate identification of the terms of that dialectic with "imagination" and "reality." While *Middlemarch* does exhibit in an explicit way the opposition between the individual imagination and "domestic" reality, my analysis of *Our Mutual Friend* should show that not all novels are so easily described in these terms.

In the context of the novel, a conflict between the mind and the world is analogous to Noam Chomsky's notion of "deep structure" in syntax; when we consider the novel as a genre and when we study individual texts we need to pay attention to "surface structures" as well. Often, it is only by carefully and sensitively observing a given text that we can see how its particular system of oppositions is a transformation of the fundamental conflict between imagination and reality. The methodology I have proposed is based on identifying the tensions in a text in such a way that we can construct a coherent statement about its dynamics; that these tensions are transformations of a mind/world dichotomy is, of course, the heart of my thesis, but
this thesis should not be applied in such a way as to reduce the pluralities of meaning that novels offer us.

It is, nonetheless, possible to identify certain forms of conflict or opposition that seem to recur with some frequency in the genre. Courtship and marriage, for instance, as they figure in the novels of Austen, Thackery, Eliot, and Henry James are a fairly obvious mode of the imagination/reality dialectic. The prospective partner becomes what E. H. Gombrich calls a "screen," an empty or ill-defined area onto which a beholder can project an expected image; since marriage brings that sort of intimate acquaintance with another human being which renders it all but impossible for a spouse to function as such a screen, marriage is a "reality" which disrupts and deflates the imaginary forms created during a courtship. This particular opposition suggests the pattern of education (essentially, in my terms, a realistic pattern) that plays such an important role in many novels that some critics have defined the genre in terms of a movement from innocence to experience. But, I would argue, this formulation is a surface structure, and furthermore it does not account for the genre as a whole, since many novels do not trace a pattern of education in which we leave the protagonist sadder-but-wiser. Pamela is a good example here: she does not discover, in the course of her novel, that she was deluded about herself and the world, but manages to
impose her own fictions upon the world around her, and emerges from her trials as a lady; rather like Quixote, she has educated those around her.

Another important and very common structure is the opposition of the individual and society: this pattern is usually associated with the problem of a career or vocation, and we can perceive that it involves the struggle for self-actuation that I have discussed in Middlemarch and Our Mutual Friend. The pattern is of course rooted in Don Quixote, and has proved to be perenially interesting to the novelist, whether the issue is what I would call "vocation," as in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Sons and Lovers, and several of Graham Greene's novels, or whether it is a question of a "career" (with the consequent focus on status) as in much of Thackery's work. In the late nineteenth-century, Samuel Butler (in The Way of All Flesh) combines this pattern with a bourgeois/bohemian opposition, which was taken up by Somerset Maugham in The Razor's Edge, and later by novelists like Jack Kerouac. For the feminist novel, an opposition between the individual and society has been especially important: the attempt to articulate a life in the social world is most often viewed with a deep pessimism (Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook and Joan Didion's Play it as it Lays come to mind here), but Eudora Welty, for instance, tends to be more sanguine about the possibility that women can realize a productive life in
society.

A third recurrent oppositional motif is that of the city and the country: in this case, an individual novelist's approach in a given novel will determine which term is associated with imagination and which with reality. In the work of Lawrence, Emily Brontë, and Faulkner, for instance, the natural world functions as a "reality" closely linked to the physical body, the unconscious mind, and sexuality. In most of Conrad's work (particularly Nostromo), the natural world is contrasted to the humanly-made (that is, the imaginatively-made) civilized world, and the former is ominously alien and destructive. Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, on the other hand, stresses the beneficence of rural life and natural rhythms compared to the artificial systems of culture and convention embodied in the city. But it is also possible to conceive the city as representing reality in juxtaposition to life in the provinces: this is quite frequent in novels of education, from Evelina to Sister Carrie. Again, it is important to consider what is going on in a particular novel, and to look closely at the novel as a whole, before moving to identify the terms of its dialectic with imagination and reality.

There are any number of other generalizations we could make about versions of conflict in the novel: I have not, for instance, touched on the recurring opposition of upper and lower classes, or parents and children, or the various
incarnations of the Dr. Jekell and Mr. Hyde paradigm, in which the conflict is enacted within a divided self. I do not want to imply, however, that there are a certain limited number of categories which could be devised to describe the dynamics of the novel; historical conditions change, and novelists often establish variations on more common structures of opposition. Thomas Mann's juxtaposition of health and illness in *The Magic Mountain* is such a variation, and it is easy enough to see how it is linked to the condition of Europe in Mann's lifetime. As I suggested at the end of Chapter Two, Dickens' use of an interplay between the known and the unknown (which is similarly linked to problems of epistemology in Victorian England) is another such variation (though not absolutely original) which has been further explored by James and Faulkner, and is closely related to the development of the detective novel.

This latter point suggests another way to consider individual novels in the light of my thesis: in addition to locating a dialectic or pattern of contrariety, it is often very interesting to consider the field of interpretation in a given novel. Problems of interpretation and action may center, for example, around a particular person, like Kurz or Lord Jim, Daisy and Gatsby, or Mr. Darcy. The field of interpretation may be a specific place, such as Dublin, or Alexandria (in Lawrence Durrell's *Quartet*), India (and more specifically the Malabar Caves), or Paris. Sterne,
Proust, and Faulkner have used the past as a field of interpretation to great effect. When interpretation (and/or action) centers on a thing, like the Scarlet Letter or the Gould silver, the object is likely to take on a strong symbolic weight; it is much this sort of thing that happens to the whale in Moby Dick. This approach will be more useful in dealing with certain texts than with others: in Our Mutual Friend, there is a clearly defined emphasis on the "reading" of people, particularly faces, but in Middlemarch (as a whole), the field of interpretation is more diffuse and less easily characterized. Again, it is important to stress that I am not developing a taxonomy, but am suggesting a strategy that can be illuminating if applied with some discretion and tact.

As my treatment of Middlemarch and Our Mutual Friend should illustrate, my approach to a text involves looking for paradigmatic "moments"—scenes or situations in which the central issues of the text can be seen in clear relief, where we can locate the particular aspects of the interplay between imagination and reality that are especially important, and identify the strategies affirmed by the text. The location and elucidation of such paradigms is largely dependent on intuition and different readers could easily posit different paradigms, but as a general rule these "representative anecdotes" in the text are somehow spotlighted to draw our attention. A simple example is Pedro
Romero's bullfighting in *The Sun Also Rises*. In a highly stylized ritual—an imaginative form—the matador encounters the brute reality of death, and with courage and simple grace masters the chaotic and destructive energy of the bull. A full correlation of this paradigm to the text as a whole would require considerable discussion, but it should be obvious that the problem of controlling a chaotic energy (linked to war and sex) is important to Hemingway, and that his narrative technique is a linguistic version of the terse, "clean," stylized moves of the matador. Representative anecdotes are not always so vividly gestural: an important paradigm in *The Scarlet Letter*, for example, is the moonlit room (described in the Introduction), wherein the observer sees the objects and the common environment of ordinary life in an unfamiliar, magical light which (like the imagination) transforms reality. In suggesting that we focus on such moments in analyzing a text I am certainly not advancing an original argument; this is much the sort of thing that critics have always done: what my thesis can offer is a clear and logically consistent way of relating paradigmatic moments like these to the totality of the text, including the novelist's own strategies of interpretation and expression, and the experience of the reader.

I do not, then, see my own approach as radically different from traditional Anglo-American novel-theory: I believe that it incorporates elements of formal and affective
criticism in a useful way, and can deal quite adequately with the standard issues of traditional novel-criticism while acknowledging new developments in the field. A theory which focuses on acts of the imagination is, for example, especially well-suited to handle the classic issue of point of view. It is an axiom of my thesis (and, I believe, of Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction*) that we can always "characterize" the interpretive strategy of an omniscient narrator (as I have done in discussing *Middlemarch* and *Our Mutual Friend*); I-narrator novels present us with the need to formulate a dual description of such strategies (which may, of course, play against each other) as do novels which focus intensively on a single center of consciousness.

Novels with multiple narrative voices (like *The Sound and The Fury*) involve us in an exploration of a variety of perspectives and a variety of ways of making meaning. We may be asked to evaluate the relative adequacy of points of view, or we may be led to the discovery that no one perspective can be privileged over another. Since, as I have argued at some length, the consciousness of the character is an analogue of the consciousness of the reader, questions of narrative reliability are determined by our own willingness to accept and affirm the implicit parallel between ourselves and the character, to assent to his or her vision. Thus the process by which we credit a character with reliability in narration is closely linked to the larger question of truth
in fiction, which is similarly dependent on a sharing of awareness between reader and novelist.

It has become increasingly obvious that we cannot discuss point of view, or plot, or characterization, or setting, without taking into account the fact that language is the medium of all literary effects. Although my own criticism does not deal with language in any detail, the theoretical apparatus I have developed does, I believe, adequately acknowledge the importance of language. I want to suggest, very briefly, at least, how certain kinds of linguistic criticism could be related to my thesis and methodology. A stylistic analysis of vocabulary and syntax would, for instance, be extremely useful in characterizing the text's presentation of reality, as it would be in helping us to determine the narrator's characteristic "imaginative" strategies of organization. Similarly, an analysis of speech acts would be a valuable complement to studies of interpretation and action as modes of a character's response to the world. In discussing the resistance offered by the text to the reader's "romantic" imagination, I have focused on large-scale effects, but the work of Michel Riffaterre suggests that interruptions and resistances can be located and described at the linguistic level, and an analysis along these lines would provide a much more adequate account of the interplay of "imagination" and "reality" in the reading process.
Finally, I must confess myself insufficiently equipped as a critic to develop the "diachronic" aspect of my theory of the novel. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the realistic impulse which is essential to the genre implies a relationship between artist, audience, and history. In order to thoroughly develop a description of this relationship, I would need a fairly extensive knowledge of social and intellectual history, and some sort of coherent theory of historical change. In the absence of these, I will not venture to make hasty or superficial generalizations about the history of the novel or its future. Robert Alter, however, has made some interesting suggestions along these lines in his distinction between eighteenth and nineteenth century novels: out of need, the nineteenth century novelist becomes "Napoleonic," striving to imaginatively master the world, whereas the eighteenth century novelist could afford to be more casual--and hence more playful--about the fictionality of fiction. A novelist like Sterne could indulge in alienation effects more liberally because his audience was not depending on him to make sense out of the world, as the audience of the nineteenth century depended on its artists to do. Alter's formulation is provocative, and I will go on to indulge in a final bit of speculation about the artist and the audience in our own time.

There is a widespread current belief that the increasing fragmentation of society and culture has made it impossible
for any artist to offer more than a private and fragmentary vision, or to posit any system of values which could generate a communal agreement. I want to suggest that this is not quite true. At no time in history has the world of itself made any sense; human beings have always done so, by making myths, for example, or by imaginatively "penetrating" the phenomenal world to arrive at a perception of God's providence, or to discover the laws of nature. Meaning has never been a given in experience: it is made by acts of the mind and the will—it is our gift to experience, and to each other, and to the earth. It may be harder to make sense of the world now—though it seems to me difficult to be sure about this—but the power to do so is still ours, as it was in the beginning. What artists and audiences sometimes seem to have lost is a willingness to meet the challenge—to continue attempting the task of encountering the world imaginatively; although there is never any final success in this endeavor, it is the trying (as Heidegger has pointed out) that makes us human. And there is a pressing need: people do not like to live outside of communities of interpretation, and will generally take the best they can get in this way: such communities will always be re-generated, whether we like them or not. We can see this operating in the literary sphere in the enormous popular success of The Lord of the Rings: Tolkien discovered (to his own astonishment) that he had "made" a world which acquired to a remarkable degree
the quality of a shared and public world. What Tolkien's achievement suggests to me is the possibility and importance of a public art: while I am not arguing for a revival of the nineteenth century novel, I want to affirm the value of art that can--as the novel has done for many of us--make meaning from our common world.
Notes

Chapter I.


2 Raymond Williams, in Keywords (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), offers a thorough and concise survey of the important issues I have touched on here, in his entry for "realism," pp. 216-220.


4 Georg Lukac's theory of the novel is also grounded in the mind/world relationship, and Ian Watt in The Rise of the Novel (1957; London: Penguin, 1963) similarly discusses the development of the genre in these terms.


7 Notably Jose Ortega y Gasset. This tension has been explained in a variety of ways: as a tension between appearance and reality, innocence and experience, the individual and society, etc. In the Nature of Narrative, Scholes & Kellogg identify the novel as a genre with the synthesis of two antithetical types of narrative, the empirical and the fictional. In The Sense of An Ending (1966; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 151, Frank Kermode discusses the novel in terms of "the tension... between paradigmatic form and contingent reality." Kermode's
formulation is close to my own, but the point here is that critics' persistant tendency to see the novel in terms of some binary opposition suggests that such an opposition does indeed characterize the genre.


27. Structuralism, p. 11 and pp. 15-16.


30 *Art and Illusion*, p. 173.


32 *The Secular Scripture*, p. 36.

33 *Art and Illusion*, p. 144. That basic narrative structures exist and can be described is a fundamental principle in early structuralist studies of narrative; I am thinking in particular here of the seminal work of Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale*.


35 Levin, p. 52.

36 *Dickens and Reality*, p. 79.


38 I take this statement from David Krell's discussion of the "Davis disputation" in his introduction to Heidegger's *Basic Writings*, p. 26.


42 *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 104.

43 See *Language*, pp. 93-105.

44 *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 60.


46 *Structuralist Poetics*, pp. 251-252.
Chapter II. Notes

1. The Poetics of Prose, p. 26. In Feeling and Form (pp. 214 & 220) Susanne Langer makes a similar point: "the illusory events that she terms the basic abstraction of literature "have no core of actuality. . . . the stamp of language creates the fact." In The Language of Fiction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966) David Lodge also argues that "all poetic fictions exist only as certain words in a certain order," (p. 58).


4. In Keywords, for example, Williams makes the very important point that "most people hold that their own views of any matter are realistic" (p. 217).

5. Preface to The House of the Seven Gables (1851); rpt. in Miriam Allot, Novelists on the Novel, pp. 50-51.

6. Preface to The American (1877); rpt. in Allot, p. 56.

7. Preface to Within the Tides (1915); rpt. in Allot, p. 55.


10. In The Sense of an Ending (1966; New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967) Kermode has written brilliantly and at length on the artifice of fiction. He argues that Sartre, for example, literally cannot make a novel that does not belie his philosophical premises because "novels have beginnings, ends, and potentiality, even if the world does not," (p. 138).

11. Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1927); rpt. in Allot, p. 245.

12. In Feeling and Form, Langer develops a comprehensive theory of art based on this concept.


24. See "Semantic and Poetic Meaning" in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, pp. 138-167. Burke's position here (and my own) is similar to that of Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961),
particularly as stated in Ch. V, "Emotions, Beliefs, and the Reader's Objectivity."


26 Iser, p. 279.

27 Iser, pp. 283-284.


30 An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1961) pp. 133-134. In this thought-provoking little book, written near the end of his life, Lewis anticipates much of current "affective" theory, especially that of Stanley Fish.


32 In Iser's words, "the semantic possibilities of the text will always remain far richer than any configurative meaning formed while reading" (p. 285). He goes on to say "as the literary text involves the reader in the formation of illusion and the simultaneous formation of the means whereby illusion is punctured, reading reflects the process whereby we gain experience," (p. 290).

33 Animate Illusions, p. 229.


37 Art and Illusion, p. 345; p. 360.
Chapter III. Notes

1 Structuralist Poetics, pg. 264.


3 In referring to Eliot's narrator as a man, I am following the practice of Robert L. Patten, to whose teaching of Middlemarch in a graduate seminar at Rice University I am greatly indebted.


6 The Necessary Angel, pg. 136.


11 This phrase from The Mill on the Floss (III, v) is quoted by Paris (pg. 24) in a lengthy and important discussion of Eliot's sense of the disparity between objective and subjective truth.


13 See Smalley, pg. 155.


Smalley, pg. 155.


The Galaxy, XV (March, 1873), 424-428; rpt. in Nineteenth Century Fiction, VIII (December, 1953), 161-170. Cited by Haight in his Introduction to Middlemarch.


From the Novum Organum, I, xx; cited by Fish, pg. 84.


F. G. Steiner, in "A Preface to Middlemarch," Nineteenth Century Fiction, IX (1955), 262-279, comments on


Chapter IV. Notes


5 Stewart touches on this concept in his discussion of Jenny's discovery of the word: "here, 'wife' is a creative sign that defines one person in terms of another and brings about that true 'mutuality' which alone might redeem society," pg. 216.

6 J. Hillis Miller, Afterword, Our Mutual Friend (New York: New American Library, 1964); rpt. in The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ian Watt (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 125. Miller's more extensive discussion of Our Mutual Friend in Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958) has been important to my perception of the novel, and at many points our arguments are similar; my focus differs, I believe, in that I do not consider the novel to be so "dark" and in that I emphasize knowledge as an aspect of "intersubjectivity," especially with regard to the reader.


Lizzie's vitality is linked to her lower-class origins. For a discussion of "the problems of sex and class" in the novel, see Taylor Stoehr, Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 209-255. In "The Two Scrooges," Wilson has observed that the lower-class plays a new and important role in Our Mutual Friend, in part because "Dickens has come to despair utterly of the prospering middle-class," p. 63.


Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience, pg. 35.

Langbaum, pg. 24. In an interesting article on Great Expectations (in Price), George Pickerel suggests that Dickens is trying to "save" the "poetic view of experience," "the feeling that things somehow hang together and make sense, that we can somehow relate ourselves as a whole to the experience" which Pickerel feels is contrasted or opposed to an analytic approach to experience. Pp. 158-164.

Henry James, in his review of Our Mutual Friend (The Nation, 1866, 786-787; rpt. in The Dickens Critics) states that "a community of eccentrics is impossible" (pg. 51). But I am suggesting that this is precisely the community established here, and moreover that it is the only true community. When we are free, we are all "eccentrics."

Mark Shorer, "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy'," Critiques and Essays in Modern Fiction, pg. 98.


19. Gissing, in "Dickens' Satiric Portraiture" (Charles Dickens London, 1898; rpt. in *Ford and Lane*) argues that "he was one with his readers, and therein lay his strength for reform," p. 78. Humphry House makes a similar point in discussing Dickens as a reformer. "He shared a great deal of common experience with his public, so that it could gratefully and proudly say 'how true!'"; he so exploited his knowledge that the public recognized its master in knowing; but he also shared with it an attitude toward what they both knew, and caught exactly the tone which clarified and re-inforced the public's sense of right and wrong and flattered its moral feelings." *The Dickens World* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), pg. 41.

20. Wilson, pg. 58.

21. Robert Morse, "Our Mutual Friend," *Ford and Lane*, pg. 198. Frye, in "Dickens and the Comedy of Humors," has also observed that "we notice in Dickens how strong the impulse is to reject a logic inherent in the story in favor of impressing on the reader an impatient sense of absolutism: of saying, in short, la fatalite c'est moi," *Watt*, p. 49.


26 Chesterton, p. 83.


33 Wilson, pp. 65-66.

34 Frye, The Secular Scripture, p. 36.


36 George Orwell, "Charles Dickens," Inside the Whale (London, 1940), Parts v and vi; rpt. in Ford and Lane, p. 159.


38 Axton, pg. 153.

39 Morse, in Ford and Lane, p. 203.


41 Axton, p. 28.
42 Stewart, pp. 200-201


Chapter V. Notes


3 Partial Magic, Ch. IV, "The Self-Conscious Novel in Eclipse."
Bibliography


