CARRY ON DICKENS!
DICKENS IN THE 1980s: PETER ACKROYD
GRAHAM SWIFT, SALMAN RUSHDIE

Kenneth R. Ireland

According to Harold Bloom, Milton is central to any theory and history of poetic influence in English. For the novel today, that role of strong precursor might be assumed by Joyce or Dickens. With the latter, a critical and popular appeal is already secure by 1970, his centenary year. Shaw ranked him with Shakespeare and himself, and F. R. Leavis was to re-evaluate the 'Shakespeare of the novel.' The critical watershed of studies by Edmund Wilson, George Orwell and Humphrey House in the 1940s inspired a range of commentaries, biographies and annotated editions, while film versions, public readings and stage musicals joined radio and television adaptations of Dickens's novels. Centenary tributes acknowledged that his influence was now a 'necessary ingredient in our civilized life,' and that by presenting man in society rather than debating abstractions, his example served to 'discourage our novelists from going the way of all French.'

If Angus Wilson, a biographer-critic of Dickens, shows in his novels of the 1950s and 1960s, by range of social types and speech-styles, by detail and irony, the influence of the 'Great Inimitable,' Frederick Busch's *The Mutual Friend* (1978) blends biography and fiction in a composite view of Dickens's last years. A landmark of stage adaptation such as the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Nicholas Nickleby*, supplements films of the 1980s which explore 'Dickensian' features in different ways. His reception by academic critics, as proto-Marxist or

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1 F. R. and Q. D. Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1979), xi.
4 See Neil Sinyard, "Dickensian Visions in Modern British Film," *The Dickensian* 418 (Summer 1989), 108-17.
bourgeois reactionary, susceptible to Lacanian or Deconstructionist readings, completes a broad appeal. The questioning of ‘classic realism’ as a dominant, moreover, has led to exploration of his use of romance conventions, while analysis has been enriched by applying the insights of Foucault, Bakhtin, Shklovsky and Greimas. Such varied approaches reinforce the point, that Dickens’s novels are ‘not just inert texts with fixed meanings, but imaginative structures open all the time to new readings, new uses.’¹ Some of those ‘new uses’ may be seen in novels of the 1980s by Peter Ackroyd, Graham Swift, and Salman Rushdie.

In each instance, the precise relationship between Dickens and later texts needs elucidation, and reference will be made to terminology developed in Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsestes*, a magisterial work on practices of derivation. The notion of palimpsest itself alludes to the superimposition of one text upon another, which it does not entirely cover up, but leaves transparent.² Between texts belonging to such ‘second-degree’ literature, various overt or covert relationships may be posited. Genette analyses five types of transtextual relations, according to a roughly increasing order of abstraction and implicitness. Beginning with intertextuality, which includes citation, plagiarism and allusion, he moves to the paratext and metatextuality, concluding with hypertextuality and architextuality. It is with the fourth type, however, that he is principally concerned, that of hypertextuality: every relation uniting one text B, the hypertext, with an anterior text A, the hypotext, on to which it is grafted, not like a commentary, but rather by a process of transformation or imitation. Six subtypes, amply illustrated by Genette, are then proposed: parody, travesty, satiric imitation (‘charge’), pastiche, transposition, and serious imitation (‘forgerie’). The bulk of Genette’s study has to do with transposition or serious transformation, since for him it represents the most important of all hypertextual practices, it is often on a large scale and may involve complex blends of sub-categories. He goes on to make an inventory of the main procedures, according to the varying degrees of formal and thematic transformation of the hypotexts. It is to the subtype of hypertextual trans-

position that we chiefly resort in tracing Dickensian echoes in recent British novelists.

Peter Ackroyd (b. 1949), a Londoner by birth and residence, a graduate of Cambridge, is equally familiar as literary editor and reviewer, film and television critic.1 The publication of his biography of Dickens will not have surprised readers of *The Great Fire of London*, since the entire action of that first novel revolves around Dickens’s *Little Dorrit*. In a preface, Ackroyd summarizes the first part of *LD*, and then suggests that ‘certain [of those] events have certain consequences,’2 which *GFL* embodies. The result, however, is sharply disproportionate, 1:5, to the scale of *LD* itself, so that emulation by quantity must be ruled out. To examine if and how nineteenth-century values might be reinstated today, Ackroyd adopts as central theme the making of a film about *LD*. Such interartistic embedding marks all his works: an invented diary in his Wilde novel, architecture in *Hawksmoor*, painting and poetry in *Chatterton*, archaeology in *First Light*.

The very title of *GFL* likely derives from that mistress of the esoteric non-sequitur, Mr F’s Aunt, in *LD* I, 13. If she is too inimitable to have a modern counterpart, other figures echo Dickens’s world: the red-haired tramps near the site of the Marshalsea Prison, the old woman with a life’s possessions in her prams, the dwarf Little Arthur who resembles not Arthur Clennam, but Little Dorrit’s bald and one-eyed friend, Maggy. At the end, grinning and dancing over the prison ruins, ‘like a stage demon’ (168), Little Arthur recalls the grotesque Daniel Quilp from *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Ackroyd’s Sir Frederick Lustlambert, director of the Film Finance Board, to whom the film-producer Spenser Spender applies for funds, wears various metaphorical hats, and is akin to Lord Lancaster Stiltstalking of the Circumlocution Office. Dickens’s irrepressible Flora Casby finds an academic successor:

‘The gown...began talking—so quickly that Spenser could hardly understand him. “Goodness how extraordinary I was examining the text could you pass me a little more bread please how kind only the other

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day but it seems to me that the verbal associations without wishing to sound too pretentious are locked in as it were to a mode of discourse which do please correct me if you disagree I was reading an essay of Derrida's do you know his work yesterday at least I think it was yesterday—'' (90-1).

Typically Dickensian too, are defamiliarization and reductions of human to object; here, High Table rituals viewed by an outsider: 'Some foreign words were muttered and Spenser sat between two black gowns. The gowns began eating their food with considerable ferocity, kept their eyes upon their plates, and made no effort to speak to him' (90). Elsewhere, recalling Twemlow's reification in Our Mutual Friend as an 'innocent piece of dinner-furniture,' Ackroyd satirizes the hollowness of society by substituting a collective thing for individual identities: 'The table was by now talking about its previous night...made no reaction to these events...smiled indulgently...drank its relatively inexpensive champagne' (66).

Such cameos stand in for the many scenes of high society in LD. Even the French ballad linked with the criminal Rigaud, is truncated in GFL to 'Who passes by this road so late? / Always gay!' The refrain, in a scene where Rowan Phillips, a Canadian lecturer at Cambridge, meets Tim Coleman, boyfriend of the Audrey Skelton who believes she is Little Dorrit, is wittily appropriate, since 'gay', in its modern connotation, defines Rowan. Other intertextual citations, abridged or modified, draw on the encounter between a young prostitute, Maggy and Little Dorrit, and on the prison scene between Dorrit and his daughter. Both scenes are filmed by Spenser and both have consequences, as if to underline the problematic nature of adaptation. After the first, an incensed Audrey slaps the leading actress, and after the second, an arc-light shatters, sealing the fate of the film. Audrey becomes increasingly paranoid as she re-enacts her idol's speech and behaviour. At the riverside film set, she fires the warehouse, and Spenser perishes in the blaze. His wife Laetitia, who tries to kill herself, falls prey, like Audrey, to the human diminution common in LD. Being called 'Lettuce' or Letty, 'confirmed her status merely as an object...perhaps she did resemble an abbreviation or a vegetable' (45), while Spenser's failure to treat her as an adult, leads to her adopting the 'little girl' manner of the child they never had. When she walks out on him, he
realizes he has merely, in a film-like way, considered 'the surface of her life' (93); reduced to a helpless infant, he can only look at himself in the mirror, and repeat over and over the name of Little Dorrit.

For other characters, LD has different implications. The polytechnic lecturer, Job Penstone, whose name recalls the teacher Bradley Headstone in OMF, finds paradox in making a film, an expression of Western capitalism, based on a subversive text, anti-capitalist, anti-industrial, anti-authoritarian. Social conditions have changed little in over a century, with deprivation and class struggle still rife. Power is merely exercised more discreetly: "They don't imprison Little Dorrit for debt; they force her into petty crime and then institutionalise her in a borstal" (81). When students question Dickens's anti-feminist stance, Penstone declares that his women are always pathetic, or pseudo-masculine. Such critiques far surpass the producer's ideas for the film, even if Spenser's stress on the melodramatic foreshadows the final catastrophe. As scriptwriter, Rowan confesses his failure to capture the spirit of Dickens, who is 'not our contemporary, and it may have been a mistake to make him sound like one... We don't live in the same world. We don't even live in the same city...’" (158-9). Spenser looks across the river at the tower-blocks and office complexes, then at his film set, for whose hollowness he feels sudden contempt: his 'original vision had turned into papier-mâché' (159). At that moment, when the project seems more and more like an expensive mistake, Audrey turns the papier-mâché into ashes.

At the close of LD, both the physical collapse of Mrs Clennam’s house and Amy's burning of the suppressed codicil, purge evil and promise hope. At the close of GFL, Audrey’s arson encompasses not only the film set but the entire neighbourhood, razing offices and homes alike. For the prison, the outcome is less ambivalent. While the Marshalsea site, central to LD, is close to where Tim lives with Audrey or meets Rowan, and the venue for Little Arthur’s murder of a young girl, the use of the prison metaphor, as in Dickens, is widespread. Trapped between Rowan and Audrey, Tim feels like 'a prisoner' (110), Rowan ‘a budgerigar whose cage has been invaded’ (127), while academic Cambridge resembles ‘a large open-air prison’ (130), and nocturnal London ‘a cloth placed over the cage of a bird’ (73). In the actual prison where Spenser films, he is struck by the air of hopelessness, oppressiveness and waste. By the time of the arc-light accident,
the structure has become quasi-allegorical: `rust and general fatigue permeated the old building' (150). When Little Arthur blows up the prison generator, the whole power system fails and the prisoners are set free. This final chapter completes the circle from the first chapter, when the dwarf learns of the closure of his amusement arcade, so that an outcast ultimately takes revenge upon an uncaring society, by forcing open one of its most repressive institutions.

If the first four chapters of GFL, each introducing a new set of characters, model themselves on the polyphonic opening chapters of OMF, or on the crosscutting of film, the procedure only underlines the relative spareness of Ackroyd's `pars pro toto' approach, as well as the difficulty of realizing Dickensian plenitude on a small scale. Devotees of metafiction may, however, view GFL as a scenario for private expansion, having already encountered self-conscious critiques of the model within the text. In Ackroyd's opening summary of LD Book One, the reader notes the factual 'error' suggesting that Clennam, rather than Pancks, discovers the Dorrits' fortune. To the inscription found at the Marshalsea site today, Ackroyd has added a further sentence in his novel, a blurring of fact and fiction characteristic of metafiction. In Ackroyd's terms, GFL presents itself as an updated sequel to the first half of LD; in Genette's terms, this constitutes a diegetic transposition, a shift in the spatio-temporal universe of the narrative from one era or social milieu to another. Heterodiegetic, in that the framework of action and the identity of characters alter, such a transposition 'proximises,' brings closer and actualises Dickens's hypotext for a new public. In terms of 'transvalorisation,' another aspect of transposition, applying greater or lesser value to features of a work, Ackroyd's hypertext must ultimately devalue LD: Audrey cannot compete with Amy, nor Tim with Arthur Clennam, while in the absence of parental figures such as Mr Dorrit and Mrs Clennam, the focus must shift elsewhere. By making Spenser's film of LD the thematic hub of GFL, Ackroyd approaches Genette's category of 'supplement,' transposition disguised as continuation. When, moreover, Audrey strikes the film-actress playing Little Dorrit, the status of events becomes 'metaleptic,' as 'real' and 'fictive' worlds blur.

With Graham Swift (b. 1949), a Dickensian hypotext for his Waterland (1983) is less obvious. Like Ackroyd, born and living in London,
also a graduate of Cambridge, Swift's activity spans the decade. His attraction to Dickens may be gauged from a Ph.D. thesis begun at York, on 'Dickens and the City,' but more especially from evidence in his fiction. The early settings show an ability to evoke local atmosphere, that of London suburbs, parks and commons; a firm control of detail, from sunlight on a cigar and orange mud on stockings, to the varied inventory of a shop, as well as sharply individualized characters, from hypochondriac and clockmaker to a mute father, reflect a common debt. \textit{WL}, however, unlike \textit{GFL}, proposes no specific hypotext, but the second of the novel's two epigraphs, which quotes the opening section of \textit{Great Expectations} ('Ours was the marsh country . . .'), hints at possible sources. Swift's procedure corresponds quite closely to Genette's category of diegetic transposition, which proximises, brings closer in time, geography, or society, a hypotext for a new readership. Reincarnations of Robinson Crusoe, Electra and Werther, are less relevant here than is the case of Alain Robbe-Grillet's novel \textit{Les Gammes}. This, like \textit{WL}, bears a paratextual epigraph (from Sophocles), whereupon dispersed hints and partial, selective use of \textit{Oedipus Rex} throughout give clues to its hypotext.

\textit{WL} might seem outwardly un-Dickensian. Tom Crick, a London history-teacher, is driven by the religious obsessions of his wife Mary and a challenge from one of his pupils, into using lessons to tell his own history. This idiosyncratic approach, combined with the scandal of Mrs Crick's theft of a baby and subsequent committal, forces him to retire. In her teens, his wife-to-be, pregnant by Tom, underwent a crude abortion, an event condemning her to a childless marriage. At the same time, her sexual initiation of Tom's mentally retarded brother, results in Dick's fatal attack on a local boy, Freddie Parr, responsible, he believes, for her pregnancy. The double blow to Dick, of learning the truth about Mary's pregnancy and about his own origins (conceived by his mother and her father), leads him to dive into the river and vanish. Predating these events, is a century and a half of prosperity, even as a family curse brings on dramatic floods, mass intoxication and arson. Intent on proving that history is no mere fairy-tale, Tom Crick's self-conscious address to his pupils, and foregrounded deployment of rhe-

torical devices, serve to emphasize the status of W_L as metafiction, as fiction of ‘process,’ and to focus on the activity of storytelling itself.

Such an outline distorts the novel’s a-chronological and fragmentary ordering. The narrative—Now of Greenwich 1980 alternates with earlier crises centring around 1943, the year of Mary’s abortion, Parr’s death and Dick’s disappearance. Both initial and final chapters are set then, in a powerfully evoked Fenland, atmospheric framework for the whole novel. Birthplace and childhood home of the narrator, its role becomes as significant in W_L as the Thames marshland of Kent in Great Expectations. Pip’s encounter with Magwitch in that bleak setting, leads to fortune and inward change, involving a recognition of the geographical and human ties of childhood. Tom Crick’s aim, in his ‘double narrative’ of past and present, is to point out how the former determined the latter, so that his own sequential arrangement of material enables him to dramatize significant events. The motif of the body in the river (W_L, ch. 1), however, more closely resembles the opening of OMF, where Gaffer Hexam trawls another victim from the Thames, than the start of GE. In each instance, an initial enigma governs the action, and Dick’s fate, typically, is only resolved in the final chapter. Motivating this suspense, is Tom Crick’s desire to retain the interest both of readers and teenaged frame-audience. That audience is metropolitan, and if Tom moves narratorially between London-present and Fenland-past, the oscillation echoes Pip’s own between city and marshland. While Tom’s retrospective fixes upon his own teens, however, Pip’s begins when he is seven, underscoring Dickens’s mastery of the innocent child’s view.

Both W_L and GE employ first-person narrators, a mode used extensively in Swift’s fiction; both Tom and Pip remain childless at the end, as if to express scepticism about expectations, as well as to emphasize the conditioning power of the past. If Dickens, in his ‘Bildungsroman,’ reveals Pip’s gradual shifts towards acknowledging errors and omissions, Swift sets Tom in a more directly pedagogical role. Comparisons with Gradgrind in Hard Times, or Headstone in OMF are to Crick’s advantage, since he avoids the dry factuality of the one and the mechanicality of the other. W_L also includes a type of ‘sentimental education,’ an ironic ‘Bildung,’ in Mary’s instruction of Dick. Such misapplied education, whereby he treats as serious what she intends as play, results in Parr’s death and Dick’s exit. Tom’s address to his pu-
pils, now at the age he was in 1943, conveys personal responsibility for past events. In *GE*, the revelation that Pip’s secret benefactor and Estella’s father are one and the same convict, deflates their overbearing attitudes and self-deceptions.

Other motifs and relationships echo those in *GE*. Escapes by water (Abel Magwitch and Dick Crick); personal assaults (Orlick on Mrs Joe, Dick on Parr, Thomas Atkinson on his wife) feature in each, but the effects are more fatal or longer-lasting in *WL*. Between Tom and his moronic brother, a relationship of awkward tolerance; between Pip and his brother-in-law, Joe Gargery, though both he and Dick are illiterate, the difference is less radical, Joe’s simplicity exuding a warmth which allows reconciliation. Monomania, in a religious form, drives Mary Crick to kidnap a baby, in an emotional form it festers in Miss Havisham. If the latter aborts feeling in a figurative way, using Estella to exact revenge on mankind, her counterpart in *WL* is Martha Clay, who carries out literal abortion. Both she and Miss Havisham are presented as witches, the latter as an inversion of the fairy godmother, at the same time as Pip sees himself as ‘the young knight of romance’ preparing to marry his ‘princess’ Estella. It is the escaped convict who, as his name indicates, is the true, unlikely agent of change. Much of *WL* engages a similar fairytale mode. Tom’s father’s courtship of his mother resembles a ‘story-book romance,’ and Tom himself returns from war, ‘in the guise of the returning Prince ready to pluck aside briars and cobwebs and kiss his Princess out of whatever trance has possessed her for the last three years.’ The formulaic ‘once upon a time’ is frequent, as a device to dissolve painful memories and create ironic distance, as well as to blur boundaries, since the settings of all good fairy-tales must be ‘both palpable and unreal’ (6).

Thus, Tom, as storyteller, introduces the Fens, where the key personal events occur. So uneventful, by contrast, are the three decades of married life in London, that he can dismiss them in a single sentence (107), an ellipsis which recalls the studied vagueness of Pip’s professional activity in London. The Crick home, a lock-keeper’s cottage on a tributary of the Ouse, is transformed in young Tom’s imagination into a ‘fairy-tale place.’ A superstitious father does things in a ‘magical
and occult ' (1) way, an inventive mother tells stories to ' outwit reality ' (15), in a flat monotonous landscape, whose ghosts and legends, visionaries and fanatics make it into ' a miraculous land . . . an expectant stage on which magical things could happen ' (101). If Swift's depiction of the cottage and its surrounding Fens owes much to Dickens's evocation of Joe Gargery's forge and hinterland of marsh, a broader concept might be introduced. Referring to his childhood favourite, Charles Kingsley's Hereward the Wake, Tom recalls his mental escape into misty Fenland settings, where ' history merges into fiction, fact gets blurred with fable ' (180). The description comes close to the practice of ' magic realism,' often characterized by its elimination of the 'difference between fact and fiction,' its tendency to recount fantastic occurrences as though they were commonplace, to present familiar things in unusual ways. Dickens's own practice of 'romantic realism' offers striking prefigurations; his call for 'fanciful treatment' in 'frightfully literal and catalogue-like' times, his intention to show 'Romance . . . in all familiar things,' and his concept of 'fantastic fidelity' as a way to relate fiction to real life, all indicate his affinity with and relevance to the issues of today.

Swift makes amends for the relative scarcity in Ackroyd of such stylistic features of Dickens as enumeration, rhetorical questions and repetition, since the school framework makes them natural to the discourse. Many paratextual chapter-titles in WL, as if to reinforce their oral and pedagogical status, begin with 'About . . .' thematic similarities and contrasts are emphasized by a whimsical pairing of titles in consecutive chapters (27-8, 47-8), highly reminiscent of LD (I, 16-17; II, 5-6, 30-4). Swift's novel-title, initially applied to the unvarying nature of Tom's marriage to Mary (102), ultimately carries the sort of metaphorical charge exerted by the river and dust-heaps in OM, the pervasive London fog and the melancholy Lincolnshire rain in Bleak House. Swift's title thus brings two adjacent, opposing realms together, so in-

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3 Donald Fanger, Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1967), 72.
6 Forster, II, 278.
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indicating a necessary conjunction and interplay: past and present, history and story, fluid and fixed, the interconnected and amphibious character of experience. Dickens’s account of GE as a ‘grotesque tragi-comic conception,’ seems pertinent in describing two ‘Dickensian’ moments from \( WL \). Firstly, the humorous effects of the potent Coronation Ale:

‘Sky-rocks and Roman candles intended for a dazzling evening display were let off in broad daylight and along alarming trajectories. A horrific incidence of shipwreck and drowning almost occurred when the “St Guthlac,” whose steersman had quaffed his bottle, as had a good many of his passengers, took a zig-zagging career across the river, pennants aflutter and steam-horn braying, and was almost run down by the “Fen Queen,” under a similar state of captnacy’ (149).

Secondly, the intensely poignant consequences of unwanted pregnancy, alleviated only by the final word-play:

‘So I carried the pail across the mist-wrapped, dew-soaked meadows. Larks were trilling somewhere above the mist, but I was stumbling through a mist of tears. I climbed the river wall, descended to the water’s edge. I turned my head away. But then I looked. I howled. A farewell glance. A red spittle, floating, frothing, slowly sinking. Borne on the slow Ouse currents. Borne downstream. Borne all the way (but for the Ouse eels ... ) to the Wash. Where it all comes out’ (274).

The third novelist is Salman Rushdie, internationally the best-known. Born in 1947 of an anglophile Moslem family in Bombay, educated at Rugby and Cambridge, he settled in London after 1968, working in theatre and advertising, then as critic and writer. Moslem reaction to The Satanic Verses, culminating in Ayatollah Khomeini’s death-edict in February 1989, has meant that, ever since, Rushdie has been in hiding, despite his apparent conversion to Islam in 1990. If the furore has confirmed the extra-literary influence of imaginative fiction, it has detracted from other aspects of \( SV \), now largely overshadowed by religious and political debate. In print and interviews, Rushdie has cited

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a range of cultural and literary inspiration on his work, from Lawrence Sterne to García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Günter Grass. The contribution of Dickens, however, has been largely reserved for *SV*.

A free fall from a blown-up jumbo jet by Gibreel Farishta, a Bombay film star, and Saladin Chamcha, a TV character actor, preludes events taking place mainly in England, but with interpolated visions and stories in the Middle East and India. By syntactic junction of their identities as ‘Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha,’ each condemned to an ‘endless but also ending angelicdevilish fall,’ early clues are given about their separate but intertwined fates. During the novel, Gibreel, famed for his screen portrayal of gods, loses his religious faith, while Chamcha undergoes a secular split between East and West. Ironically, once on British soil, it is the anglophile Chamcha who is arrested as an illegal immigrant, his protests sabotaged by the sudden growth of horns and cloven hoofs. His transformation is counterpointed by a halo around Gibreel’s head. Both incidents occur at the cottage of 88-year old Rosa Diamond, whose tales of the Latin-American pampas hypnotise Gibreel, but whose outward actions echo those of David Copperfield’s great-aunt Betsey Trotwood, waging her continual war on donkeys:

‘Usually she was implacable in defence of her beloved fragment of the coast, and when summer weekenders strayed above the high tide line she descended upon them . . . —This is my garden, do you see.—And if they grew brazen,—getoutofitsillyoldmoo, itsthesoddingbeach, she would return home to bring out a long green garden hose and turn it remorselessly upon their tartan blankets and plastic cricket-bats and bottles of sun-tan lotion, she would smash their children’s sandcastles and soak their liver-sausage sandwiches, smiling sweetly all the while: You won’t mind if I just water my lawn? . . . ’ (134)

To invoke *David Copperfield*, is to recall its autobiographical character, and to suggest that *SV* is the most personal of Rushdie’s novels. The scene in which Chamcha, unassisted, must learn how to tackle his breakfast kipper at school, the choice of the Richardsonian ‘Pamela Love-lace’ as the name of Chamcha’s English wife, when Rushdie’s own first

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wife had been 'Clarissa,' and the moving account of the death of Chamcha's father, all bear an autobiographical stamp. Elsewhere in SV, Dickensian reification serves satiric ends: at a Detention Centre, a goatish Chamcha meets other immigrants, including a man-tiger, a woman-buffalo, Nigerian businessmen with tails, Senegalese transit passengers turned into snakes, all metamorphosed by official descriptions. Other figures recall Dickensian caricatures. Thus, the nervousness of Pamela's lover is projected into name, physical appearance and mannerisms; Jamshed Joshi has become 'Jumpy,' his 'wire coat-hanger shoulders' and high, over-excited giggle go with his thinning hair, 'ruffled so often by his frenzied hands that it no longer took the slightest notice of brushes or combs, but stuck out every which way and gave its owner the perpetual air of having just woken up, late, and in a hurry' (172).

Here, following Dickens, a part escapes overall control and gains independence, at the same time as it typifies the whole. Similarly, a stutter becomes a speech 'tic,' to identify the film-producer S. S. Sisodia, a name already richly repetitive. In London's East End, the impact of physical and mental surroundings has taken its toll on the immigrant community. Eccentrics of a Dickensian kind have become so by reason of treatment received, and humour mingles with pathos. An elderly Sikh, once a J. P., 'shocked by a racial attack into complete silence ... now ... pronounced no sentences' (283), judicial or grammatical. An accountant is obsessed by the need, 'to rearrange his sitting-room furniture for half an hour each evening, placing chairs in rows interrupted by an aisle and pretending to be the conductor of a single-decker bus on its way to Bangladesh' (283).

Whether detailing Chamcha's room, the Englishness of Pamela's voice or the Indianness of a drought, Rushdie, like Dickens, revels in enumeration. In the dream-vision of the market at Jahilia, the device is allied to rhetorical repetition; in the account of London tower-blocks, it gains force from the juxtaposition of literal and figurative: 'fast-food packets, rolling cans, shattered job prospects, abandoned hopes, lost illusions, expended angers, accumulated bitterness, vomited fear, and a rusting bath' (461), a sequence recalling the conversion of feelings into food in *Midnight's Children*. Gibreel's recipe for the English is a metamorphosis of London into a tropical city, and the benefits are listed with wit and fantasy (354-5). One of the transformations, depicting the nightly meltdown at the Club Hot Wax of a model of Mrs Thatcher, is
too personal-specific in its satire to be Dickensian. Another strongly recalls a scene from OMF, when the face and hair of Bradley Headstone, trapped by Rogue Riderhood, degenerate overnight. With Rushdie, the phenomenon is leavened with humour, as Pamela discovers that her hair has gone snow-white overnight, so that she has to shave her head and wear a burgundy turban. When Jumpy ascribes her transformation to the reappearance of Chamcha, she 'pointed dramatically towards the open sitting-room door. "In that case," she triumphed, "why did it also happen to the dog?"' (281).

In his 'magic realism,' Rushdie not only blends factual with fictional (Rajiv Gandhi visits Gibreel in hospital, Khomeini is exiled in London), but his fantasy is also more radical than Ackroyd or Swift. He conjures up, for instance, visions of dead climbers, and the epic 'haj' of Ayesha, the ethereal butterfly-girl. For one of his most crucial chapters, however, Gibreel's and Chamcha's reunion after almost 300 pages, Rushdie resorts to Dickens. Since the couple was separated at the cottage of the Dickensian Rosa Diamond, he frames, in a sense, the central books of SV. The venue is Shepperton studios, where a party takes place in a huge re-creation of Dickensian London, since a film is being made of a hit musical based on OMF. At two removes from its hypotext, what Genette terms an intermodal transposition is ironically devalorised by its truncated but snappy title of Friend!, or The Chums, 'as it was known in the business' (421). Business is the word, since Rushdie lends the musical's creator the name of Jeremy Bentham, the utilitarian philosopher whom Dickens parodies in Hard Times as Gradgrind. Here, in SV, the choice of OMF is apt in several ways. The notion of the 'Doppelgänger' in OMF, runs from the title and modulates through the pairing and duplicity of figures, duplicated motifs, including John Harmon's aliases, to the phenomenon of an external double. Headstone's very name and superficial decency foreshadow an alliance with his evil double, Rogue Riderhood, whom he can vanquish only at the cost of his own life. Dickens dramatizes the inextricable linkage of the best and worst within individuals and society. Rushdie's thesis of the necessary interpenetration of opposites patently echoes Dickens's novel.

In satiric imitation (Genette's 'charge,' his third category of hypertextuality) of scenes at the Veneerings and Podsnaps (OMF, ch. 2 & 11), replete with breathless present-tense verbs, exclamation marks and
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dashes, Rushdie evokes on the film set the fashionable surface of another society. Cinema has contracted London in space and time, so that the parvenu Veneerings are now 'shockingly' adjacent to the patronising Podsnaps in Portman Square, and the ash-heaps of Boffin's Bower loom over the West End. Amidst 'real' guests, hired extras and film leads, Chamcha sights Gibreel on the 'London Bridge Which Is Of Stone,' but is pushed back by a musical chorus into a Curiosity Shop. There, he is entertained with a parody of Podsnapping, condensed and versified from Dickens's prose hypertext:

"Ours is a Copious Language,
A Language Trying to Strangers;
Ours is the Favoured Nation,
Blest, and Safe from Dangers" (423)

The singer's chauvinism, however, is distinctly downmarket. Exposing her shapely right breast, she offers Chamcha a map of London drawn upon it in red magic-marker, with the river all in blue. At this critical juncture, a self-conscious narrator intervenes to warn the reader of the approaching 'tragedy,' or at least its echo as 'burlesque for our degraded, imitative times,' since Chamcha is no Iago and Gibreel no Othello. The intertextual allusion serves to contrast Chamcha as a solitary, abandoned figure, with the admired, celebrated Gibreel, who expresses the 'scorn of an inverted Podnap, for whom all things English are worthy of derision instead of praise' (425-6).

In a key passage, Chamcha and Gibreel now confront each other, in a scene which resumes the themes of guilt and evil from OMF: 'For are they not conjoined opposites, these two, each man the other's shadow?—One seeking to be transformed into the foreignness he admires, the other preferring, contemptuously, to transform' (426). Gibreel, in spite of new beginnings, has wished to remain 'continuous' with the past; Chamcha is a creature of 'selected discontinuities,' his revolt against history making him 'false' or 'evil,' by contrast with the 'good' or 'untranslated' Gibreel. Evil proves a natural and easy course, so that Chamcha is led to exploit the paranoid schizophrenia of 'his hated Other.' By the end of the scene, with confused and rapid movements over the counterfeit London and Southwark Bridges, as if imitating a speeded-up film, near-farce gives way to near-catastrophe. 'Gaffer Hexam' rows down the studio Thames with the senseless body
of Pamela’s lover, Jumpy Joshi, who has been mysteriously assaulted with an oar. As in GFL, ‘real’ and ‘fictive’ worlds blur in a ‘metatext’ procedure.

For Genette, the chief functions of hypertextuality are socio-cultural and aesthetic-creative, with the hypertext perceived as more powerful and flexible than the commentary-like metatext, and more autonomous and ambiguous than the intertext. The practice is related to ‘bricolage,’ making new out of old, and the virtue of such second-degree, ‘bookish’ literature lies in its ability to bring back earlier works into a new circuit of understanding.1 Despite his critical decline towards the end of the nineteenth century, Dickens’s popular reputation has never seemed threatened by Thackeray, Meredith, even George Eliot, so that, in a sense, he has been in less need of renewal than anyone, and his precursor role has seemed natural. The variety of his work, at various times, has drawn a variety of responses, and the 1980s have been no exception. Ackroyd’s response, in GFL, is a complete hypertext, an overt sequel to LD I, or rather an alternative modern version of II. Though devices of reification and defamiliarization, scenes of metaphorical and satirical potential appear, the shortness and stylistic flatness of GFL count against any rivalry with its hypertext, as thematically it explores resistances to and continuities of the LD world. As if conceding the primacy of style, Ackroyd’s later novels are all dominated by pastiche, and as if obeying Dickens’s call for ‘fanciful treatment,’ he blends fantasy with biography in his own Dickens, by allowing creator to meet his creations, or converse with Ackroyd’s: Wilde, T. S. Eliot, Chatterton.

Swift’s response, in WL, is a complete hypertext, but with a covert and oblique relationship to Dickens’s GE. Apart from its Dickensian handling of atmosphere, character and detail, WL reworks specific motifs (boyhood, past/present, enigma, escape, assault, monomania, fairytale) from GE. Even if changes in the framework of action and identity of actors make it a heterodiegetic transposition, the thematic centrality of an autobiographical ‘Bildung’ animates both novels. In stylistic terms, in choice of metaphorical title, in exploitation of magic realism, Swift marks his temperamental affinity with Dickens, while Genette, citing the ‘reading version’ of GE as an instance of authorial self-ex-

1 Genette, 447-53.
cision and quasi-transvocalisation, points out how the thoughts of the young hero have been scaled down in favour of the commentaries of the adult Pip. The parallels between this 'reading version' and the commentaries of the adult Tom in W L, are highly suggestive.

Rushdie's response, in S V, is a series of partial and fragmentary hypertexts, centring around a chapter which relates overtly to episodes in OMF. Elsewhere, a collection of eccentrics and caricatures, together with scenes of metamorphosis and a style of rhetorical enumeration reinforce links with Dickens. Both novelists incline to a literature of excess, as well as success, while S V, set largely in London, draws naturally upon the novelist of London 'par excellence.' In the key Shepperton chapter (VII, 2), OMF inspires themes of divided selves, guilt and evil, of the predatory and intolerant, superficial and unsympathetic forces in society. Rushdie's satiric imitation, however, is directed not towards ridicule of Dickens himself, but towards the persistence of attitudes and institutions he censured. In many ways, Rushdie's condensed but boisterous account is as important as the larger responses of Ackroyd and Swift. In his essay, "Outside the Whale" (1984), Rushdie argues against the quietism of Orwell's essay, "Inside the Whale" (1940). Rushdie contends that in a world without certainties or hiding places, we are all irradiated with history and politics. He calls for an authorial attitude of confrontation, of making 'as big a fuss, as noisy a complaint about the world as is humanly possible.' If Rushdie's stance is one which Dickens would certainly have endorsed, he would likely have been happy also to adopt, novelistically, Milton's precursor role. With a name which, moreover, in its colloquial usage, denotes 'devil' or 'deuce,' the linkage between Dickens and The Satanic Verses must be all but conclusive. Carry-on, indeed!

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1 Genette, 339n.