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Scenes of Reading in Dickens's Writings

Caroline Ann Goodsell

Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

English

School of English

University of Kent

December 2018

Word Count: 98972

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my family and my supervisors, Professor Catherine Waters and Dr Sarah Wood, for their support and encouragement throughout this project.

Abstract

This project brings together two key elements of Dickens's life and works: performance and affect. Dickens felt emotion in the performances he gave and enabled his audiences to feel in response to these. When composing his writings and when performing them as Reader, Dickens sympathised with his characters by feeling their emotion as his own and by imagining himself to be them. Sympathy not only enabled Dickens to immerse himself in the consciousness of a character but to explore his own consciousness, as he does when assuming the voice of Richard Wardour in *The Frozen Deep*. By thinking Wardour's thoughts and feeling his emotions, Dickens realises that he is suffering as intensely as is Wardour. For Dickens, assumption – 'being someone, in voice etc. not at all like [himself]' (*Letters* 6: 257) – is a liberating and enlightening experience of self-discovery which Dickens's readers also have when they sympathise with the characters of his fiction.

As I discuss, characters who represent readers in Dickens's writings also become aware of their previously unknown thoughts and feelings when they sympathise with a 'character' from the 'narrative' they 'read' or with a representative narrator. I argue that the 'reader's' moment of enlightenment occurs in the quiet and unobtrusive presence of a 'narrator' who enables his 'reader' to sympathise with him through sensory response to his non-verbal communication of emotion. The auditors of Dickens's Readings also sympathise with him when Dickens communicates his feelings non-verbally to them through his use of gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. Moreover, his performance of assumption as Reader demonstrates how the unobtrusiveness of the actual narrator is required for his reader to sympathise with

the character assumed. When Dickens assumes his characters, he seemingly transforms himself into them and apparently disappears as Reader on stage, which enables his auditors to immerse themselves in the consciousness of the characters that they believe are there instead.

Dickens's readers also respond to the illusion created by the performance of the actual narrator by hearing the voices of the characters he assumes and with whom they sympathise. However, Dickens's readers remain aware of the imaginary physical presence of the narrator who is creating an effect, just as Dickens's auditors never entirely lose consciousness of Dickens as Reader on stage. Indeed, Dickens ensures that his auditors focus on his physical presence as Reader and that they admire his 'flamboyant display of histrionic power' (Andrews 207), while the typically Dickensian narrator – whom Garis defines as a 'theatrical artist' (Garis 191) – 'wants his presence to be felt [as he] overtly and audibly performs before us some brilliant routines and contrivances in order to command attention and applause' (191). As Anny Sadrin notes, Dickens wanted his readers to imagine the narrator as a 'visible and tangible' physical presence (181) and, as I show in my discussion of the narrator's performance, he can often be imagined to be physically present when he narrates as animatedly as Dickens does as Reader. I propose that, while Dickens's auditors, readers and 'readers' feel emotion intensely through sympathising with Dickens and their unobtrusive narrators (both actual and representative) when they communicate their emotion non-verbally to their audiences, they also feel strongly in response to verbal expression of feeling by Dickens and his narrators while in their virtual or actual physical presence. Essentially, Dickens enables his audiences to read the scenes of his writings as he read the scenes of his life: through sensory and emotional response and sympathy.

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Introductory Chapter

My project focusses on how Dickens's experience of assumption provides a model for understanding the experience of reading: by sympathising with a fictitious character, Dickens, like his readers, is not only able to immerse himself in the imaginary world of the character but to realise his own feelings. Moreover, by creating the illusion for his auditors of his 'disappearance' through 'being someone,¹ in voice etc. not at all like [himself]' (*Letters* 6: 257), Dickens models how the narrator creates the same effect for the reader as he assumes the voices of his characters by not only speaking as though he is them but by thinking their thoughts and feeling their emotions as though they are his own. It is when the narrator appears to 'disappear' through the act of assumption that the reader, by becoming less aware of the narrator's presence, is able to immerse herself in the voice (or consciousness) of a character and so, like Dickens and the narrator, to imagine that she is 'someone [...] not at all like [herself]'. The narrator's performance of the act of assumption therefore facilitates the self-discovery of the reader – his unobtrusive voice allowing her to hear her own through hearing that of the character. As I also discuss, the narrator's unobtrusiveness – even when not achieved through the act of

¹ Dickens describes his enjoyment of assumption in a letter to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, written on 5 January 1851. He writes, 'Assumption has charms for me – I hardly know for how many wild reasons – so delightful, that I feel a loss of O I can't say what exquisite foolery, when I lose a chance of being someone, in voice etc. not at all like myself'.

assumption – enables the reader to immerse herself in *his* voice as well and, in so doing, to feel intensely emotions that are unfamiliar to her. However, while I argue mainly that it is when the narrator’s presence is felt as unobtrusive that the reader feels her own emotions through feeling those of the other, I also discuss how a narrator who can be imagined as a vocal, physical presence directs the reader to respond with feeling to what he describes.

Dickens’s self-discovery occurs when he confirms how he feels through feeling the emotions of Richard Wardour, the character he plays in *The Frozen Deep*. As Jean Ferguson Carr notes, ‘[Dickens’s] vague sense of “something wrong” in his way of life is given a compelling solidity and form in Wardour’s suffering’ (36) as Dickens expresses *his* anguish – caused, no doubt, by the frustration and dissatisfaction he feels in his marriage to Catherine – through performing Wardour’s. Dickens’s ‘agitated relief in projecting and symbolising an emotion not unlike his own’ (Johnson 904) suggests a cathartic release of emotion through his performance which is confirmed by his accounts of the physical exertion he has used in expressing both his and Wardour’s emotions. In letters addressed to Mrs Brown and to Mrs Watson respectively, Dickens recounts how – in separate performances of the play – he has been ‘tearing [himself] to pieces’ (*Letters* 8: 421)² and ‘rending the very heart out of [his] body by doing that Richard Wardour part’ (*Letters* 8: 488). What is suggestive about Dickens’s performance as resembling the experience of reading, is that it shows how self-discovery occurs as a result of ‘the complete

² Dickens wrote this letter to Mrs Brown on 28 August 1857 after a performance of the play in Manchester, the proceeds from which were donated to the family of the late Douglas Jerrold.

absorption of the self in *another*' (Andrews 115 my italics)³ - the act of assumption, like that of sympathy, enabling both actor and reader to believe that 'someone else's emotion [has become their own]' (Gallagher 169).⁴

It is not only through acting but through writing that Dickens highlights the importance of assumption and sympathy in the reader's experience of reading his fiction. Describing how her father acted the part of each character as he wrote, Mamie Dickens observes how 'he [threw] himself completely into the character that he was creating' to the extent that 'he [...] not only lost sight of his surroundings, but had actually become in action, as in imagination, the creature of his pen' (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 121-2). He assumed the thoughts and emotions of the characters of his narratives as intensely as when immersing himself in those of Richard Wardour, as Forster notes in how Dickens 'entered into [their] mental phases and processes' (*Life* 2: 116-7), 'laughed and wept with them' (*Life* 2: 194) and was 'as much elated by their fun as cast down by their grief' (*Life* 2: 194). Dickens certainly held strongly the view that a writer should describe his characters as though he knows their minds, as his complaint about one writer who does not attests: 'It seemed to me as if it were written by somebody who lived next door to the

³ In his discussion of how Charles Mathews's monopolylogue was 'a prototype for [Dickens's] public readings' (259), Andrews describes how their use of assumption was 'an act of the sympathetic imagination' (259) and refers to how 'Byron praised Mathews as one who was gifted with the rare talent of intuitively identifying himself with the minds of others' (259).

⁴ Catherine Gallagher discusses sympathy in *Nobody's Story. The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820*.

people, rather than inside of them' (*Letters* 6: 452-3), he writes to Forster during the summer of 1851.⁵ According to one anonymous critic of the *Illustrated London News*, Dickens also wanted his readers to sympathise with his characters as he had in the act of composition and when in their imaginary presence,⁶ by 'put[ting] [themselves] in the place of imaginary persons [and by] laugh[ing] [and] sorrow[ing] with them, as he was wont to do' (*The Critical Heritage* 515). If Dickens himself does not state explicitly that he wanted his readers to discover the emotions that they were capable of feeling through feeling those of his characters (as *he* does when playing Wardour), then both his contemporaries and modern critics note that this was both his intention and the effect of his writings. Richard Lettis argues that Dickens believed that 'all writing should address the heart, should attract it, move it, teach it something about itself' (Lettis 241), a view also held by Susan Horton who defines Dickens's realism as 'a kind of emotional realism: a fidelity to our own notion of what it feels like to be a conscious human being' (Horton 98). In his biography of Dickens, Forster refers to the French writer, Henri Taine's, claim that not only were Dickens's readers' emotions evoked by his descriptions, as 'they find themselves trembling with emotion, their eyes filled with tears, their cheeks [...] broad with laughter' (265) but by 'the discovery they have thus made that they too can suffer, love, and feel [which makes] their very existence [seem] doubled to them' (265). It is the realisation that they can feel what Dickens's characters feel that is arguably the

⁵ While the letter refers predominantly to Dickens's responses to *The Scarlet Letter*, Dickens is here, according to the editor, referring to a 'clever story of another popular writer' (453).

⁶ Forster notes how Dickens always had 'his creatures by his side [as] living, speaking companions' (*Life* 2: 194).

most powerful effect of Dickens's writings and which accords with a similar claim made by Richard Lettis that Dickens was 'not so much interested in improving the manners or even the morals of his readers as he was in heightening their capacity to feel human emotion' (139). Lettis's argument is substantiated by the writer John Cordy Jeaffreson who observes that Dickens's 'purpose in whatever book, chapter, or scene he writes, is to call certain passions of our mind especially into action, and to effect this he brings into the foreground, and makes use of all those facts of life, the description of which will tend to arouse the required emotions' (*The Critical Heritage* 378). Dickens encouraged both his auditors and his readers to feel emotion, as his request to those attending a Reading in Bristol – in which he invites them to feel free 'to give vent to any feeling of emotion' (Fielding 246) during his performance – and his letter to Thomas Mitton about Mitton's reaction to reading *A Christmas Carol* prove: 'I am extremely glad you *feel* the Carol' (*Letters* 3: 605-606).⁷ Both Mitton's and – in response to another public reading – Robert Lytton's emotional responses to Dickens's works offer sufficient evidence that Dickens

⁷ Dickens addresses his auditors on 19 January 1858 before a Reading for the *Athenaeum* in Bristol and his speech is reported by a local reporter of the *Bristol Mirror* and *General Advertiser*. In order to be consistent with Malcolm Andrews's capitalisation of 'Reading' and 'Reader' in *Performing Selves*, which, as he explains, is 'to distinguish the public recitation from the private act of 'reading'' (*Performing Selves* ix), I have also done this.

achieved his aim: Lytton writes to Dickens about how ‘the multitudinous creations of [his] surpassing genius stimulated every emotion’ (*Letters* 11: 353-4).⁸

The gratitude Dickens expresses to Mitton for ‘feel[ing] the Carol’ (*Letters* 3: 605-6) offers proof of how Dickens wanted his readers to experience the same emotional response as he had felt when writing it, the extremity of which he describes in a letter to Cornelius Felton: ‘Charles Dickens wept, and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself in the most extraordinary manner, in the composition’ (*Letters* 4: 2). It is a wish he states more explicitly in a letter to William Bradbury after finishing *The Haunted Man*: ‘I finished last night, having been crying my eyes out over it – not painfully but pleasantly as I hope the readers will – these last three days’ (*Letters* 5: 451) and in another to the Honourable Robert Lytton – this time in reference to the auditors of his public readings – in which he notes how, with each performance, he ‘come[s] with a feeling of perfect freshness to that little red table, and laugh[s] and cr[ies] with [his] hearers, as if [he] had never stood there before’ (*Letters* 11: 353). Dickens’s wish to share with his readers and auditors his emotional responses to his writings reflects his need – which he repeatedly refers to in his letters, prefaces and in the preliminary addresses of his speeches and public readings – to establish a relationship with them which he describes as one of ‘personal friendship’ (Fielding 264).⁹ It is, as Susan Ferguson

⁸ Robert Lytton writes to Dickens after the Reading of *David Copperfield* in St. James’s Hall on Monday 8 April. See the footnote to Dickens’s letter to Lytton on 17 April 1867.

⁹ Dickens makes this comment during the first session of his Readings – which were undertaken for profit – on 29 April 1858. In a letter addressed to John Forster on 30

notes of how Dickens ‘presented himself as an intimate with [the] audiences [of his public readings]’ (Ferguson 345) and as ‘a fellow reader’ (345), ‘that most democratic of relationships – the friend’ (345). Dickens especially wanted to be *intimate* friends with his audiences – Malcolm Andrews notes that ‘Dickens [...] worked hard to develop the close, personal relationship’ (112) with them and that he was ‘a man famished for intimacy’ (69) – and this wish is reflected in the way in which he sought to communicate his emotions to both his readers and auditors.

When, in his preface to volume one of *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, Dickens declares that ‘to *commune* with you, in any form, is to me a labour of love’ (*Dickens at Work* 88-89 my italics), he indicates his need to have ‘an intimate (especially mental or spiritual exchange [*OED*])’ with them, a rapport which allows them to feel his emotions as their own by not imagining the physical presence of Dickens as they would if he were to communicate them verbally.¹⁰ Through communing with his

March 1858, Dickens tries to persuade him of the worthiness of his public readings which he has undertaken as a result of ‘that peculiar relation [personally affectionate and like no other man’s] which subsists between me and the public’ (*Letters* 8: 539). Moreover, in his preface to *David Copperfield* (October 1850), Dickens shows respect for ‘the reader whom [he] love[s]’ when he says that he is ‘in danger of wearying [her] with personal confidences and private emotions’ (45).

¹⁰ The *OED*’s definitions of the verb ‘to commune’ are: ‘Confer, consult, converse, (*with* a person, of, (*upon* a matter). Have an intimate (esp. mental or spiritual) exchange or discussion (*with* a friend, one’s heart, etc., *together*); feel in close touch *with* (nature etc.). Confer about, discuss, debate.’ The *OED* defines ‘rapport’ as: ‘Relationship, connection; communication. Now usu., harmonious accord, understanding and empathy; a relationship characterised by these. A posited state of

readers, Dickens encourages them to sympathise with him because, by not emphasising his bodily presence through verbal communication of his feelings, he allows them (as Gallagher explains) to imagine that they are ‘immediately appropriable sentiments, free sentiments belonging to nobody and therefore identifiable with [themselves]’ (171). Dickens’s intimacy with his readers is seen in how he allows his feelings to be felt by them so that they are able to imagine themselves to be him. It is the same kind of intimacy which Dickens also established with the auditors of his public readings, as one New York reviewer observed: “‘he put[s] himself en rapport with his hearers and becom[es] one of them’” (Andrews 121).

Dickens’s wish to commune with his readers and for them to sympathise with him is represented clearly within his novels in the relationships between characters. In the chapters that follow, I analyse the way in which, as representative unobtrusive narrators, Agnes, Little Dorrit and Jasper enable their respective ‘readers’, David, Clennam and Rosa, to sympathise with them by conveying their emotion through sound rather than by expressing it verbally. It is through a sensory reading that each ‘reader’ is able to assume the emotions of their ‘narrators’ and, in so doing, to discover how they feel. While Taine claims that this was the experience of Dickens’s actual readers, it is difficult to identify the techniques used by Dickens to create the effect of a narrator who appears to convey his emotions non-verbally to

deep, spiritual, emotional or mental connection between people, esp. one in which one person may mesmerise another; a feeling of sympathy and cooperation between therapist and patient, or tester and subject.’

the reader.¹¹ However, I suggest that, as with the representative readers in the fiction, the actual reader is able to imagine herself to be en rapport with the narrator when he does not state explicitly his emotions but instead allows them to be inferred by the reader who is then able to explore her own consciousness through immersing herself in his. For example, through his selection of specific details in his description of a location, the narrator suggests his feelings about them while allowing the reader to realise her own without, as Angus Easson argues, ‘the agitation of response to a mediating observer’s emotions’ (19). In his discussion of some aspects of the narratorial style of “A Visit to Newgate”, Easson focusses specifically here on how the narrator’s unobtrusiveness enables the reader to visualise a scene without being distracted by his voice: ‘Dickens,’ he says, ‘recognised the effectiveness of a quiet power in accurate delineation [whereby the] very quietness of tone makes a point, since the mind’s eye can rest on such scenes . . .’ (Easson 19).

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens does sometimes create the effect of a narrator whose unobtrusiveness allows the reader to imagine vividly the scene described. The narrator’s plain account of the actions and movements of Fagin, Sikes and Oliver as they walk through the streets of London or its surrounding countryside invites the reader to move virtually along with them and to ‘see’ the specific details of the location through which they pass. The significance of movement to our becoming

¹¹ While not referring specifically to non-verbal communication, Andrews writes of how, as a serial writer, Dickens ‘aspires to an intimacy between writer and reader [where] the stress on the immediacy of the transmission of feelings, unrefined, spontaneous, and in the reciprocation of those feelings anticipates the special dynamic of the Readings’ (18).

immersed in a dramatically presented scene where, as Percy Lubbock explains, ‘the motion of life is before us [and] the recording, registering mind of the author is eliminated’ (Lubbock 111), is referred to by Dickens in a letter to Mrs Brookfield in which he advises her that, if she were to ‘[tell] that affecting incident in a letter to a friend’ she would need to ‘describe how [she] went through the life and stir of the streets and roads, to the sick-room’ (*Letters* 11: 160).¹² Dickens’s interest in describing the movement of characters accords with his belief that the writer should create the illusion that scenic action is happening independently of narratorial mediation, as he states in letters to prospective writers. In the same letter to Mrs Brookfield, Dickens advises her that he does not ‘want [her], in a novel, to present [herself] to tell such things, but [that he wants] the things to be there’ (*Letters* 11: 160-161). The key to immersing oneself in the ‘autonomous action’ of the scene, as Lilian Furst explains in her discussion of realism in fiction, is the unobtrusiveness of the narrator, the ‘impersonal, disembodied and imperceptible voice’¹³ (Furst 57), and it is this which, in his letter to Charles Collins, Dickens cites as essential to *his* visualisation of a narrative scene. Referring to Collins’s work, Dickens writes:

¹² Dickens also observes, in a letter written to W. C. Macready on 3 August 1857, that a collection of pictures he had seen in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition wanted ‘more amusement, more particularly [...] something in motion, though it were only a twisting fountain’ (*Letters* 8: 399).

¹³ The ‘autonomous action’ noted by Furst is likely to be what Lubbock means when he refers to how, in a dramatically presented scene, ‘the motion of life is before [the reader]’ (Lubbock 111) which is confirmed by Lubbock’s additional claim that ‘the author places [the reader] [...] in front of the visible and audible facts of the case, and leaves it to these to tell the story. It is a scene treated dramatically’ (71).

It is greatly too much in the manner of the stories about the time of the Essayists; it does not hang well together; it is not easy; and there is too much of the narrator in it – the narrator not being an actor. The result is, that I can not see the people, or the place, or believe in the fiction. (*Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* 312)

Dickens's insistence that he wants to visualise the 'people' and 'place' that Collins describes in his narrative is no doubt due to his own ability to imagine vividly the characters and scenes that he includes in his. The power of his imagination is noted by Dickens himself in a letter to Forster in which he describes how the image of Doctor Marigold's daughter, Sophie, from *Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions*, 'Suddenly [came] flashing up in the most cheerful manner, and he had only to look on and leisurely describe it' (*Letters* 11: 105). His son, Henry Fielding Dickens, also records a similar remark which his father made to him: "If you want your public to believe in what you do [he said] you must believe in it yourself. So much is this the case with me that when I am describing a scene I can as distinctly see the people I am describing as I can see you now" ("The Social Influence of Dickens" 63). George Henry Lewes observes that Dickens was a 'seer of visions' whose 'vividness of imagination approach[ed] so closely to hallucination [that] when he imagined a street, a house, a room, a figure, he saw it not in the vague schematic way of ordinary imagination, but in the sharp definition of actual perception, all the salient details obtruding themselves on his attention' (Lewes 144-5). Lewes concludes that Dickens's ability to '[see what he describes] thus vividly, made us also see it' (145), a claim supported by Dickens's intention in writing *The Pickwick Papers* – as recorded in his preface to the original edition of 1837 – that his 'object

in this work, was to place before the reader a constant succession of characters and incidents; to paint them in as vivid colours as he could command; and to render them, at the same time, life-like and amusing' (*The Pickwick Papers* 41). Dickens's belief that his readers should become immersed in a narrative scene mostly through visualising characters as they move through various locations is achieved, according to one obituarist of the *Saturday Review*, who writes that Dickens 'had the power of making the reader feel thoroughly at home in an imaginary world, and of being and living and moving in it naturally' (*The Critical Heritage* 502).

Although in my introductory paragraph I claim that the narrator's apparent 'disappearance' through the act of assumption allows the reader to immerse herself fully in the voice of a character, in general the reader of Dickens's narratives is rarely able to *completely* lose consciousness of the narrator's voice. In fact, in any narrative it is inevitable that we will always 'hear' the voice of the narrator who, as Percy Lubbock explains, as 'the storyteller as opposed to the dramatist [...] must give the very words that were spoken by his characters, the dialogue, but of course must interpose on his own account to let us know how the people appeared, and where they were, and what they were doing' (Lubbock 111). The narrator's voice in Dickens's writings is 'heard' by the reader as 'loud' (Sadrin 181), according to Anny Sadrin, a 'loudness' which, as Garis explains, is 'virtually a physical, even an acoustic phenomenon' (Garis 14). It is this almost real experience of his voice which makes his presence very strongly felt by the reader as 'assertive' (Andrews 22) and 'orchestrating' (25), a voice which, as Sadrin notes, 'draws attention to itself' (181) even when, according to Garis, a 'more self-effacing method' (99) is required. Garis claims that, as a 'theatrical artist' (191), the narrator 'wants his presence to be felt [as he] overtly and audibly performs before us some brilliant routines and

contrivances in order to command attention and applause' (191): he wants to be congratulated for his performance of narration which includes his use of language and rhetorical techniques – the 'verbal devices' (24) which, Garis says, 'dazzle us' and ensure our 'continual awareness of the artificer responsible, a self-exhibiting master of language' (24). The narrator's use of 'verbal artifice [...] forces itself into [the reader's] consciousness' (7-8), dominating it and so inhibiting her full imaginative immersion in the scene described. Referring specifically to the opening passage of *Little Dorrit*, Garis concludes that, although the reader *is* able to 'become aware of the objects [the narrator's use of] language is embodying' (7-8) and of the 'feelings it is evoking' (7-8), he is also made to feel the 'presence of the artificer' (7-8) who describes the scene. The reader's full immersion in the self-developing, continuous and integrated illusion'¹⁴ of narrative and the 'self-effacement of the artist' (53) required for this are, Garis argues, as 'elements of serious dramatic art [...] at variance with [...] theatrical art' (53) which focusses 'our attention [on] the artist himself, on the stage of his own theatre, performing his brilliant routines' (54).

Another element of 'dramatic art', Garis claims, is the 'disembodied, mostly intelligent search for the centre of human beings' (53) which I interpret as the reader's search for what exists within her own consciousness – a discovery which

¹⁴ Garis shares the same view of dramatic art as Lubbock, Furst and Dickens all of whom, as I have noted, cite as an essential requirement the narrator's quiet unobtrusiveness. The 'self-developing, continuous and integrated illusion' (53) can be interpreted as Furst's 'autonomous action' (57), Lubbock's 'motion of life' (111) and Dickens's belief that the writer should create the illusion that the 'things [are] there' (161).

occurs through her immersion in the consciousness of a character but which, as Garis argues, is not what we expect to experience in 'the Dickens theatre' (169). It is in this theatre that the narrator's presence as a performer commands our attention as he recounts a character's thoughts and feelings as much as when he describes a scene and, with reference to the narrator's account of Clennam's response to London after returning from a period of time abroad,¹⁵Garis notes the narrator's performance throughout which is evident in his use of 'irony [as well as in] the general theatrical nature of the passage as a whole [and] the sense that a certain kind of writing is being accomplished [which, he concludes] does, of course, keep us from any really inward view of Clennam' (167-168). Again, as Garis argues is a defining characteristic of the Dickensian narrator, his self-conscious performance draws attention to his voice which is 'heard' throughout this passage, but it is equally the case that his presence as a performer is felt in his attempt to conceal his voice through adopting the voices of the characters he is describing. Through the use of free indirect discourse, the narrator's voice is clearly perceptible in reporting what was spoken or thought by the character whose voice is also 'heard' in what is, in fact, 'more than a mere indirect rendering of [his] original speech' (Leech and Short 325). Moreover, in his attempts to assume the voices of his characters, his presence as a performer who is creating the illusion that he '[has] gone, having transformed himself into a different identity' (Andrews 115) is clearly evident to the reader who

¹⁵ Garis refers to the extract from Book One, Chapter Two of *Little Dorrit* which begins, 'Mr Arthur Clennam sat in the window of the coffee-house on Ludgate Hill, counting one of the neighbouring bells, making sentences and burdens of songs out of it in spite of himself, and wandering how many sick people it might be the death of in the course of the year' (44).

accepts this performance of assumption as yet another example of his ‘theatrical routines’ (Garis 99). So when, in *Little Dorrit*, the narrator assumes the voice of Clennam we hear the voice of the performer as well, proving Wayne Booth’s conclusion correct that while ‘the author (or, in this case, the narrator) can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear’ (Booth 20).

The narrator’s act of assumption ensures that the reader remains aware of his presence while also experiencing the effect of his performance which is to hear the voice of the character through temporarily losing consciousness of the narrator’s voice. The reader’s responsiveness to both the performer and his act of assumption is represented by Dickens’s auditors’ responses to *his* acting of Wardour in *The Frozen Deep*, as Jean Ferguson Carr explains, and to his assuming the parts of his characters in his public readings, as one of his auditors, Charles Kent, observes. Dickens’s aim, as an actor, to create the effect that he ‘is’ Wardour is partly achieved because his auditors believe in this ‘illusion of theatre’ (*Dramatic Dickens* 39), but also partly discounted by their never forgetting Dickens’s presence on stage as he assumes this role. They see Dickens through ‘this disguised and assumed role’ (39) because his ‘personality overwhelm[s] the sketchy character of Wardour’ (39) – just as the narrator draws attention to *his* own voice through his exuberant performance of assumption. While in his account of one of Dickens’s Readings Kent notes the effectiveness of Dickens’s performance in that he appears to ‘disappear’ on stage through assuming the voices of his characters, his detailed account of Dickens’s

physical appearance and facial gestures, as Susan Ferguson remarks,¹⁶ confirms his constant awareness of Dickens's role as Reader:

Attending his Readings, character after character appeared before us, living and breathing in the flesh, as we looked and listened. It mattered nothing, just simply nothing, that the great author was there all the while before his audience in his own identity. His evening costume was a matter of no consideration – the flower in his button-hole, the paper-knife in his hand, the book before him, that earnest, animated, mobile delighted face, that we all knew by heart through his ubiquitous photograph – all were equally of no account whatever [...]. Watching him, hearkening to him, while he stood there unmistakably before his audience, on the raised platform, in the glare of the gas-burners shining down upon him from behind the pendant screen immediately above his head, his individuality, so to express it, altogether disappeared, and we saw before us instead, just as the case might happen to be, Mr Pickwick, or Mrs Gamp, or Dr. Marigold, or little Paul Dombey, or Mr Squeers, or SamWeller or Mr Peggotty, or some other of those immortal personages. (Ferguson 735)¹⁷

¹⁶ With reference to this extract from Charles Kent's *Charles Dickens as a Reader*, Ferguson claims that it 'would be unquestionably naïve to take at face value Kent's description of Dickens's presence as "of no account whatever", given that Kent, in the act of disregarding its importance, carefully details the physical presence of the author down to "the flower in his button hole"' (Ferguson 736).

¹⁷ Kent's observation of how Dickens's performance enables his auditors to visualise vividly the characters he assumes is similar to John Greenleaf Whittier's response to seeing Dickens read: 'But his reading is wonderful, far beyond my expectations. Those marvellous characters of his come forth, one by one, real personages, as if their original creator had breathed new life into them' (*Interviews and Recollection 2*: 300). Philip Collins also notes the Duke of Argyll's observation that Dickens 'had the faculty [...] "which many great actors have had, of somehow

In noting how Dickens ‘[stands] there unmistakably before his audience’ (735) as he seemingly transforms himself into the characters of his narratives who are imagined as vividly as Dickens is seen on stage, Kent acknowledges not only Dickens’s skills as a performer who, through assumption, appears to ‘altogether [disappear]’ (735) but how this apparent ‘disappearance’ depends upon his being physically present before them. Without him, his characters would not appear ‘living and breathing in the flesh’ (735) before his auditors, just as they would not be imagined by his readers without their being conscious of the presence of the narrator who, through his performance of narration, presents them to his readers.

Dickens’s obvious physical presence on stage represents not only how the narrator is inevitably required to tell his story but also foregrounds what he does in his role as storyteller: he can create the illusion of his disappearance but equally – as Garis argues – he commands the attention of his ‘auditors’ as he performs the act of narration. While Dickens’s main priority as public reader was to efface or to ‘suppress [himself] as much as possible’ in order to make ‘the characters [of his narratives] stand out prominently and separately’ (*Letters* 12: 72)¹⁸ – an effect which, as Kent observes, he achieved – he also wanted to be highly visible as both author and Reader of his works. Writing to Mr and Mrs J. F. Fields, Dickens describes how his new stage is designed to focus his auditors’ attention on him as he reads:

getting rid of their own physical identity, and appearing with a wholly different face and a wholly different voice” (“Dickens’s Public Readings” 194-195).

¹⁸ The letter to J. R. Osgood was written on 11 March 1868.

I have changed my stage. Besides that back-screen that you know so well, there are two large screens of the same color set off, one on either side, like the “wings” at a theatre. And besides those again, we have a quantity of curtains of the same colour, with which to close in any width of room from wall to wall. Consequently the figure is now completely isolated, and the slightest action becomes much more important. (*Letters* 12: 247)

The enclosed space in which Dickens stands enables his auditors to focus exclusively on him in his role as Reader and on the techniques – such as the actions noted by Dickens – used as part of his performance. As Susan Ferguson explains, it was because ‘Dickens’s performances were not simply of his characters, but of himself or, more accurately, of his public persona as the author of the novels from which the characters came [...] that he decided to use an extremely simple style of staging without costumes and with few props’ (731). Dickens’s ‘*uncostumed* body’ (my italics), illuminated by gas lighting, ensured that it was Dickens as Reader (and not as one of his characters) who remained ‘the centre of visual attention’ (731), while his props – ‘a small reading desk, a book, and, on at least some occasions, a glass and a pitcher of water, his handkerchief and gloves, and a paper knife’ (731-2) – further emphasised this role.

Dickens’s intention to focus the attention of his auditors on his authorial body clearly works, as Kent’s noting of his ‘mobile delighted face’, his ‘evening costume’ and the ‘flower in his button hole’ (735) proves – observations which reveal how highly aware he is of Dickens’s presence on stage ‘as the great author’ (735) who, as oral storyteller, is telling his own stories. It is a role described by Robert Tracy as one which Dickens fulfilled with pleasure in his Readings as they ‘satisfied for him a

deep need to be directly confronted by his audience, [...] to see their laughter and their tears, to bask in their admiration, and, most important of all, to be sustained by an audience' (Tracy 45).¹⁹ It is through sharing his auditors' emotional responses to his Readings that he confirms that he is in their presence as a live performer of his works. Dickens delights in their expression of feeling which he finds infectious – he confides to Forster that 'they made me laugh so, that sometimes I could not compose my face to go on' (Forster 221) – and in their mutual experience of his performance, as Reader, which he considers a collaborative one. Dickens notes how, as participatory auditors, they support him in his role as Reader – he describes in a letter to Georgina Hogarth how they 'do everything but embrace me, and take as much pains with the Readings as I do' (*Letters* 12: 251) – on what, on another occasion, he suggests is the shared journey of his public readings throughout which

¹⁹ While not referring specifically to his public readings, Sir Arthur Helps recalls how Dickens 'had a power of narration which was beyond anything even which his books show forth. How he would narrate to you, sitting on a gate or on a fallen tree, some rustic story of the people he had known in his neighbourhood! It was the very perfection of narrative' (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 236-40). Showing the same awareness as Kent of Dickens's bodily presence as Reader, Helps also notes how 'he had most expressive hands – not beautiful, according to the ordinary notions of beauty, but nervous and powerful hands. He did not indulge in gesticulation, but the slight movements of these expressive hands helped wonderfully in giving additional force and meaning to what he said, as all those who have been present at his readings will testify. Indeed, when he read, or when he spoke, the whole man read, or spoke' (*The Critical Heritage* 532).

he offers to ‘accompany’ them (Fielding 166).²⁰ Dickens enjoys interacting with his auditors, as does the narrator of *A Christmas Carol*, whose emphatic manner of addressing the reader – his *imaginary* auditors – proves. Moreover, as Dickens draws attention to his physical presence on stage as he performs his Readings, so too does this narrator by referring to his body while there are occasions where the narrator’s enthusiastic storytelling invites us to imagine his use of gestures and actions. He, too, plays the part of oral storyteller, a role which is not only suited to the genre of *A Christmas Carol*, the short story,²¹ but is one which, according to Ivan Kreilkamp, Dickens wanted his readers to imagine him playing as they read his

²⁰ In his prefatory address to the auditors of his Reading of *A Christmas Carol* in Birmingham on 30 December 1853, Dickens announces his intention to ‘accompany [them himself] through one of [his] little Christmas books’ (Fielding 166). Referring to Dickens’s preliminary address to his auditors in which he invites them to ‘give vent to any feeling of emotion’ (Fielding 246), Ferguson also comments on how Dickens relied upon his auditors’ imaginative and emotional responses to his Readings in order to ‘make the performance work’ (743). She concludes that ‘Dickens refers to the evening’s performance as one in which he “conducts” but the listeners must, by their own act of will, “accompany” him. Rather than presenting the works as his, then, authoritatively claiming them and explaining them, Dickens in every respect emphasises that the readings, like private scenes of novel reading, are collaborative acts in which writer and reader rely on one another’ (743).

²¹ Deborah Thomas notes, in *Dickens and the Short Story*, that ‘the only recurring feature in Dickens’s thinking about the form of the short story [...] appears to be the concept of oral narration. For Dickens, a story is fundamentally a story told by someone’ (4).

writings. Referring to how Dickens ‘more forthrightly than any other Victorian writer, structured his career around a literalised metaphor of the author as storyteller’ (90) and how, during the 1830s and 1840s, ‘he used public speaking as a means by which to infuse his written work with the authority of voice and dramatic performance’ (90), Kreilkamp concludes that ‘While we of course must read his work in the absence of his own physical and vocal presence, during his own lifetime Dickens insisted that to read him properly required seeing and hearing him as well’ (90). As oral storyteller, Dickens is therefore bringing alive on stage the persona he has created and that is especially apparent in *A Christmas Carol* – a text which, as Andrews claims, ‘was, from the start, written to be read aloud’ (81).²²

While she does not refer specifically to the narrator as an oral storyteller, Anny Sadrin claims that Dickens wanted him to be imagined as a ‘visible and tangible’ (Sadrin 181), physical presence who is ‘everywhere recognisable as the unique performer of the Dickens texts’ (181) and this wish is clearly embodied in Dickens’s presence on stage as Reader – the ‘unique performer’ of *his* fiction. By emphasising his physical presence, Dickens foregrounds the significant part played by the narrator – whose physical presence can be imagined vividly – in enabling the reader to

²² Dickens is also responding to the Victorian tradition of reading aloud which, as Andrews explains, would have been the initial experience of his ‘vast readership who first heard rather than read those stories as they unfolded month by month’ (24). More specifically, Dickens is manifesting by his public readings the ‘addiction [which he] and other nineteenth-century novelists [had] to declamatory reading of selections from their novels’, which, as Walter Ong concludes, ‘reveals the lingering feeling for the old oral narrator’s world’ (*Orality and Literacy* 149).

immerse herself virtually in a scene and to feel emotion in response to what she sees. The power wielded by the performer in directing his auditors to become immersed virtually in the narrative scene is clearly demonstrated by Dickens's act of inviting members of his audience on stage after one of his Readings, as he describes in the same letter – as cited above – to Mr and Mrs J. T. Fields:

Directly I had done, the screen, being whisked off by my people, there was disclosed one of the prettiest banquets you can imagine; and when all the people came up, and the gay dresses of the ladies were lighted by those wonderful lights of mine, the scene was exquisitely pretty; the hall being newly decorated, and very elegantly, and the whole looking like a bed of flowers and diamonds. (*Letters* 12: 247)²³

Dickens's stage-management of a scene constituted by his auditors is evident in how *his* 'people' '[whisk] off' 'the screen' – behind which is the set of the banquet – and by how 'the gay dresses of the ladies [are] lighted by those wonderful lights of [*his*]' (my italics). Dickens's physical presence as performer is constantly felt by his auditors, not only in how he asserts his presence by directing them but in how they enter the stage where, throughout his Readings, he has been standing before them. By admiring the outcome of his efforts in directing his auditors in the 'exquisitely pretty' scene, Dickens foregrounds his role as performer in facilitating their complete immersion – as participants within its action – in the scene on stage. In so doing, Dickens highlights his two key intentions as public reader: that his auditors should focus their attention on his performance of narration and that they should imagine vividly the narrative scenes that he describes. As Andrews notes, Dickens's energies

²³ See details in footnote 36.

were expended in his Readings ‘not just in the flamboyant display of histrionic power, but in the concentration of conjuring, detail by detail, that dense, palpable, imaginary world’ (Andrews 207).²⁴

As I show in my discussion of “A Visit to Newgate” and *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens’s readers are also able to immerse themselves in the virtual world of a narrative scene while fully conscious of the imaginary physical presence of the performer who describes it. These narrators direct their readers to feel in much the same way as Dickens does on stage as Reader, when he invites his auditors to ‘give vent to any feeling of emotion’ (Fielding 246) and when he prompts their emotional responses by feeling his in his laughter and tears, as he describes in his letter to Lytton. By expressing his emotions and by communicating verbally with his auditors, Dickens draws attention to his physical presence as he performs his act of narration which does not inhibit his auditors from feeling emotion. Instead, Dickens’s auditors feel emotion as much as his actual and representative readers who, through being in sympathy with their narrators, feel the emotion that is transmitted non-verbally as their own because it is not obviously identifiable with a narrator whose bodily presence is emphasised as he expresses verbally the emotion that he is

²⁴ By focussing his auditors’ attention on his role as Reader, Dickens is following the guidelines for public reading as set out by a writer in *The Nation*, who states that “‘The true theory of the performance is not that it is acting in which the actor, as much as possible, forgets himself into the very likeness of what he personates, but is rather that a gentleman dramatically tells a story among friends, indicating rather than perfectly assuming the characters of the personages brought before us”’ (Andrews 197).

feeling. While, in non-verbal communication, Dickens may convey his emotion through the use of his body – for example, through his use of eye contact,²⁵ - it is because this emotion has not been expressed by his body in words which would further foreground the feeling as belonging to him that, as Gallagher argues happens in sympathy, his auditors are able to appropriate it as their own because it appears to ‘belong to nobody’ (Gallagher 171). So despite Dickens’s preference for the unobtrusive narrator who – as he explains in his letter to Charles Collins (as quoted above) – is required for the reader to imagine the scene described and, as I argue, to sympathise with characters, there is evidence in his writings that the narrator – whose physical presence can be imagined – also enables the reader to feel emotion and to immerse herself in a virtual world.

²⁵ Mary Boyle observed of Dickens during his Readings that ‘his wonderful eyes seemed to have the power of meeting those of every separate individual in the audience’ (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 84-85), while T. C. De Leon also remarked – with reference to Dickens’s Readings in America – that there was “‘a subtle essence of sympathy that [could] only be felt, not described’” between Dickens and his auditors (Andrews 250-251). Others who knew or who had met Dickens noted his ability to sympathise with them, including his son, Henry Fielding Dickens, who said that ‘the greatest source of his power was his intense human sympathy’ (“The Social Influence of Dickens” 62) while Mary Frances Morgan commented that ‘the thing which struck me first, and which has always remained my strongest impression about him, was his power of putting himself in complete sympathy with other people; and I believe that to be the key-note of his genius’ (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 168).

I focus especially in this project on how the unobtrusive narrator's ability to enable the reader to hear her own voice – to discover the emotions and thoughts that she is capable of experiencing – is clearly modelled by Dickens's 'readers' who show how this occurs either through being in sympathy with a 'character' from the 'narrative' (and while in the presence of the unobtrusive 'narrator') or with the 'narrator' himself. It is through responding with her senses to the voice of the 'narrator' or to the music he plays that the 'reader' is able to sympathise with him according to Gallagher's definition as 'the process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own' (169). As Gallagher argues, the reader is able to appropriate 'sentiments' when they are not identified as 'belonging to somebody else' (171 *my italics*), and each 'reader' is able to feel as her own the emotions of her 'narrator' because they are conveyed to her in a way that does not draw attention to his physical presence as would occur if he were to communicate them through verbal interaction. The use of her senses plays a significant part in enabling the 'reader' to hear her own voice by reading people and the world in which she finds herself, as I discuss especially in my chapters on *A Christmas Carol* and *David Copperfield*.

My discussion of the significance of the use of the senses in feeling emotion is relevant to Dickens's own experience of reading his world. Dickens's strong, sensory responses to his environment evoked intensely felt emotion, as is described in the autobiographical fragment and cited in Chapter Three. While Dickens's 'readers' also feel strongly by sensing their real or imaginary worlds, so do they by sympathising through sensory response to their 'narrators'' non-verbal communication of emotion which demonstrates the intimacy that Dickens sought with his readers and auditors through sympathy. By sensing the feelings of her 'narrator', the 'reader' is brought closer to him as she feels physically his feelings

which she then feels as her own. For my analysis of the sensory in sympathy and, in general, in feeling emotion, I draw on some of the arguments proposed by Teresa Brennan in *The Transmission of Affect*. Brennan describes ‘discernment’ – a way of ‘reading the world, the other and texts through feeling rather than the mind’ (Mason 8) which ‘begins with considered sensing (by smell, or listening, as well as observation) – the process of feeling that also operates, or seems to operate, as the gateway to emotional response’ (Brennan 94).²⁶ Reading through feeling and sensory response has a ‘liberat[ing] effect’ (95) on the reader, enabling her to realise that she is not ‘self-contained in terms of the affects [or feelings she] experiences’ (95) but subject to the influence of the feelings of others (95). Brennan refers to the ‘transmission of affect [whereby] the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another’ (3-4): a ‘social’ experience ‘in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person but also come from without [...] and via an interaction with other people and with an environment’ (3-4). While these ‘transmitted affects’ are ‘social in origin’, they are also ‘biological and physical in effect’ (3-4) – the reader feels with her body the affects of others: she senses them.

Although Brennan does not refer explicitly to sympathy, the transmission of affect bears some significance to my discussion of how ‘readers’ sympathise with ‘narrators’ by sensing their emotion which they convey non-verbally through music or the sound of their voices. Moreover, Brennan’s definition of ‘finer feeling’ as ‘an opening through which one feels the other’s pain or joy as one’s own’ (123) is very

²⁶ Mason discusses Brennan’s theories about feeling in her essay, “Feeling Dickensian Feeling”.

similar to Gallagher's definition of sympathy as 'the process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own' (Gallagher 169), while the relevance of sensory response to sympathy is implied in how 'finer feeling' involves 'being open to the other through the deployment of sensation, meaning feeling' (Brennan 123). The view held by Brennan and Gallagher that, in 'finer feeling' and sympathy respectively, one feels the emotion of the other as one's own, is also reflected in the thinking of philosophers of preceding centuries. Brennan cites the claim made by Michel de Montaigne in his sixteenth century essay, "On Friendship", that "'True friends feel each other's feelings'" (Brennan 123), while Gallagher refers to David Hume's discussion of sympathy in *A Treatise of Human Nature. 1730-40*.²⁷ Before I refer to Gallagher's comments on Hume, I shall quote the following extract from the *Treatise*, in which Hume defines sympathy, and which is taken from an article by Rachel Ablow entitled, "Victorian Feeling and the Victorian Novel":

'Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathise with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements appear at first in *our* mind as mere ideas, and are conceiv'd to belong to another person, as we conceive any other matter of fact. 'Tis also evident, that the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images we form of them. (qtd. in Ablow 290)

Hume argues that when we sympathise with the other, we initially have an understanding of their emotions as 'ideas' which then are felt by us as feelings: the 'passions' which the other also feels.

²⁷ See page 180 of *Essais I*.

There is a transferral of ownership from one to the other so that, as Ablow concludes, we ‘pass from recognising another’s feelings as belonging to them to experiencing them as our own’ (Ablow 298) and Ablow questions how this is possible. Gallagher’s reflections on sympathy in *Nobody’s Story* provide a response to this question. She reasons that ‘If we grant that Humean sympathy works by appropriating emotions, by transforming them from the emotions of another (mere ideas) to our emotions, (lively sentiments), we can see how property (or, more precisely, its lack) serves as the invisible link between sympathy and fiction’ (Gallagher 171). Gallagher identifies a ‘barrier’ to our ability to sympathise with the other in ‘the body of the other person’ which, although ‘supposedly allow[ing] sympathetic identification’ by ‘communicat[ing]’ emotion, ‘also marks out the sentiments as belonging to somebody else and hence as being simply objective facts’ (171). In order to sympathise with the other, ‘Our conception of the sentiments as appropriate to *that* rather than *this* body must be overcome in the process of sympathy’ (171): by dispens[ing] with [...] the proprietary barrier of the other’s body’ and by ‘representing feelings that belong to no other body’ (171), fiction ‘gives us the illusion of immediately appropriable sentiments, free sentiments belonging to nobody and therefore identifiable with ourselves’ (171).

Gallagher’s argument that the reader sympathises with a fictitious character because his feelings do not belong to a real person, is relevant to my discussion of how the ‘reader’ appropriates as her own the feelings of the ‘narrator’ which, through being communicated non-verbally, do not emphasise his physical presence and so are not obviously identifiable as his. In his essay, “Phenomenology of Reading”, Georges Poulet also describes how the feelings represented within the narrative he reads are readily accessible to him because they do not belong to a

specific person. Poulet is aware of a ‘consciousness’ that, while ‘no different from the one [he] automatically assume[s] in every human being [he] encounter[s]’ (Poulet 54), belongs to the narrative rather than to a living body. Like the disembodied ‘free sentiments’ found in fiction (Gallagher 171), the feelings of this consciousness are available to be appropriated, or ‘assum[ed]’ (Poulet 54), by him. While Poulet does not refer to sympathising with the consciousness, the way in which it ‘welcomes’ him and ‘lets [him] look deep inside itself, and even allows [him], with unheard-of licence, to think what it thinks and feel what it feels’ (Poulet 54) suggests that it invites him to: according to Gallagher’s definition of sympathy, Poulet is able to imagine that ‘someone else’s emotion [has become his] own’ (Gallagher 169). I therefore refer to Poulet’s essay because the ideas he raises in relation to his experience of reading are relevant to my discussion of sympathy: that by immersing herself completely – through sensory response to non-verbal communication of emotion – in the consciousness of the ‘narrator’, the ‘reader’ is able to explore her own. As Poulet states, when he ‘assum[es]’ the ‘feeling proposed to [him]’ (57), ‘mental objects’ (57) (presumably his thoughts and emotions) ‘rise up from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition’ (57).

Dickens’s ‘readers’ feel emotion not only through sensory response and sympathy, but in response to the performance given by their ‘narrators’. My argument that the actual narrator of Dickens’s writings enables the reader to feel strongly is supported by Sally Ledger in her article, ““Don’t be so melodramatic!” Dickens and the affective mode”. Ledger concludes that ‘Dickens’s affective mode is [...] highly theatrical and performative’ (Ledger 2) and, while she does not refer specifically to the performance of the narrator, she cites Daniel Maclise’s account of Dickens’s

Reading of *The Chimes* to a small audience²⁸ and the scene depicting ‘the death of Jo the crossing sweeper’ (8) in *Bleak House* to substantiate her argument that it is the performativity of Dickens’s Readings and writings – as seen in his performance of the former and in his presentation or ‘meticulous staging of Jo’s death [in which is evident Dickens’s] persistent coupling of melodrama with satire’ (8) – that evokes an emotional response. As I have shown in my references to various reports of how Dickens’s auditors and readers expressed their emotional responses to the writings that were written and performed by him, Ledger’s citation of how Dickens’s auditors reacted to *this* reading by vacillating between “shrieks of laughter” and “floods of tears” (1) proves the effectiveness of his skills as a performer in affecting their feelings, while Lord Jeffrey’s letter to Dickens²⁹ in which, as Ledger notes, he expresses in ‘effusive terms’ (1) how he “cried and sobbed over [the most recent instalment of *Dombey and Son* to the extent that he] felt [his] heart purified by those tears” (1) confirms not only Ledger’s own conclusion that Dickens, as a writer (and especially of melodrama), was ‘aspiring to [...] a realism of affect, rather than to a representational realism’ (12)³⁰ but the views held by most of his reading and

²⁸ Ledger’s reference for Maclise’s report is K. J. Fielding’s “Two Sketches by Maclise”, *Dickens Studies Annual* 2 (1966) (13). Ledger notes also in her references that the reading of *The Chimes* took place at 58 Lincoln’s Inn Fields on 3 December 1844.

²⁹ Ledger’s reference for Lord Jeffrey’s letter to Dickens is Paul Schlicke’s *Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens* (187).

³⁰ Ledger continues: “[Dickens] is not asking his readers to “believe in” his account of either child’s death [Ledger also refers to the death of Tiny Tim] at the level of incident, but he is asking them to respond to – and to “believe in” – the emotional

listening audiences that Dickens was successful in enabling them to respond with feeling to his works.

When Dickens assumes the voice of Wardour, he demonstrates how it is through a performance that the reader sympathises with a fictitious character, as Rosa Bud also models when she sympathises with the character from her song. Moreover, through his act of assumption, Dickens foregrounds how it is by responding to the performance of the narrator that the reader is able to sympathise with a character from the narrative: when Dickens assumes the voice of – or sympathises with – Wardour and so apparently disappears (as Dickens) on stage, his auditors are also able to sympathise with the character he portrays, as, to some extent, are Dickens's readers when his narrator appears to disappear as he assumes the voices of his characters. As Andrews discusses, Dickens also reveals in his public readings his ability to assume the voices of the characters from his writings and refers to eyewitness accounts which, like the one cited earlier by Kent, record how Dickens seemingly disappears as he transforms himself into, amongst other characters, Mr Justice Stareleigh, as R. L. Lehmann records:

The face and figure that I knew, that I had seen on the stage a moment before seemed to vanish as if by magic, and there appeared instead a fat, pompous, puffy little man, with a plump imbecile face, from which every vestige of good temper and cheerfulness – everything, in fact, except an expression of self-sufficient stupidity – had been removed . . . (Andrews 195)³¹

affects of both scenes and, thereafter, to act upon the injustices meted out to the Cratchits and the Jo's of mid-nineteenth-century Britain' (12).

³¹ Andrews cites other records of Dickens's ability to efface himself through the act of assumption: "Each character that is introduced is as completely assumed and

Dickens's skill at creating the illusion that he has 'vanish[ed] as if by magic' (195) and to have then 'appear[ed] [...] [as] a fat, pompous, pousy little man' (195) is what distinguishes assumption from mimicry and impersonation, as Andrews explains:

Mimicry is the imitation of external traits; impersonation is the fuller entry into the character of someone else; assumption suggests the complete absorption of the self into another. At the mimicry end of the gamut, the performer remains the principal presence, ostentatiously drawing attention to his powers of imitation. At the assumption end the performer has gone, having transformed himself into a different identity. (115-116)

The self-effacement required for this transformation involves 'the complete absorption of the self into another' (115-116) whereby, through thinking the thoughts and feeling the emotions of the character he assumes, he feels as though he *is* him, as Dickens remarks of his experience of assuming the character of Wardour.³² Andrews describes how Dickens's 'full sustained entry into character – and the vanishing of [his role as] narrator [was] a tour de force' (193-194) and attributes this 'passion for sinking himself into his characterisations' (116) to his admiration of Charles Mathews's skills of assumption as exhibited in his

individualised by Mr. Dickens as though he were personating it in costume on the stage," reported an Edinburgh reviewer; and an American observer remarked, "Scrooge was himself, and not Scrooge filtered through Dickens" (Andrews 202-203).

³² See footnote 1 for this reference.

monopolylogues.³³ ‘What drew the young Dickens to attend so many of Mathews’s shows,’ explains Andrews, ‘was the extraordinary technique of impersonation, Mathews’s capacity to almost efface himself in the act of embodying one of his characters [. . .]. The commitment to full impersonation and the consequent disappearance of the soloist narrator into his characters were testified to again and again by those who saw Mathews in action’ (114-115). While Andrews does not use the term ‘assumption’, he suggests by ‘Mathews’s capacity to almost efface himself in the act of *embodying* one of his characters’ and his ‘commitment to *full* impersonation’ (114-115 my italics), ‘the *fuller* entry into the character of someone else’ and the ‘*complete absorption* of the self into another’ (115-116 my italics) of his definition of assumption which, for Dickens and Mathews, was ‘an act of the sympathetic imagination’ (Andrews 259).³⁴

As already noted, Dickens wanted his readers to sympathise with his characters as much as he did, and this is the intended effect of Dickens’s act of assumption in his Readings as Andrews implies when he states that Dickens ‘brings his characters to

³³ Andrews explains how the monopolylogue was the second part of Mathews’s ‘At Home’ solo performances, a ‘one-man farce, with Mathews playing each of the half-dozen or so characters. The staging for the musical recitation consisted usually of a drawing-room set, with a centre stage table, covered to the floor with green baize, a piano, and a large screen, behind which the performer would make his rapid costume changes. Mathews would initially appear in formal evening wear’ (112). The *OED* defines the monopolylogue as ‘an entertainment in which a single performer sustains many characters’.

³⁴ See footnote 4.

life, and draws his listeners into his imaginary worlds' (177) – the 'world' including the minds of these characters. As I have also noted, Dickens wanted his readers to immerse themselves in *his* mind – to sympathise with or to commune with him – and through the performance of his public readings, Dickens clearly demonstrates this wish to be in sympathy with his auditors as well. Andrews describes how this effect is achieved through the special qualities that Dickens exhibits as Reader, as well as through the specific techniques he employs. While reviewers sometimes find it difficult to define these qualities, referring to “the magic of his eloquence” (49) and to his “magic power” (250), it is clear from their comments that Dickens was highly effective in, as J. T. Fields observes, drawing his auditors “to that great sympathetic nature as if they longed in some peculiar way to give him their confidence” (73). The reviewer of the *Leeds Mercury* remarks on how, as a result of his Readings, Dickens has “created” with his readers “fresh bonds of sympathy which will prove as lasting as this existence” (49), while the reviewer of *The Times* makes a similar reference to the “bonds of sympathy” (250) that Dickens establishes with his auditors through his extraordinary powers as Reader. Andrews also cites Lady Westmoreland’s response to a ‘London Reading of “Little Dombey” early in 1862’ (168) which, although making no specific reference to sympathy, attributes his ability to ‘mov[e] masses of people of all ages, and of all kinds alternately to tears and laughter, to a degree [that she has] never [seen] equalled’ (168-169) to something other than his acting skills, as “His action is not graceful, his voice is not musical, and rather hoarse” (168-169). Despite Lady Westmoreland’s views, however, Andrews provides evidence of how the skills developed by Dickens to encourage his auditors to be in sympathy with him clearly produced the desired effect which is especially apparent in the way in which he

communicated non-verbally with them. Andrews records one reviewer's views – as recorded in the *New York Times* – of Dickens's 'first Reading of "A Christmas Carol" in New York' (120-121) which refers to how Dickens's "face relaxes into a smile, never marked enough to interfere in the least with the impersonation, but indicating and establishing a strong and hearty sympathy with his audience"(120-121). Like the 'narrators' who communicate their emotions to their 'readers' through the sound of their voices or through the music they play, Dickens conveys his to his auditors through his smile, enabling them to feel his feelings without expressing them verbally. There is, according to another review from the *New York Times*, no doubt that Dickens succeeded in communicating forcefully his emotion to them, as when "Every eye was bent on the reader's expressive face [. . .] the contagion of his mood seemed to pass directly to every individual in the room like a subtle magnetic influence" (252).³⁵ The powerful effect of his use of eye contact is

³⁵ *New York Times*, 11 December 1867. Andrews refers to the writer T. C. De Leon's use of the word "magnetic" in his review of one of Dickens's Readings to argue that De Leon's use of 'the technical terminology of mesmerism' (251) suggests the possibility that Dickens may have been adapting his proven mesmeric powers to the Reading performances in order to generate "sympathy" (252). Like the reviews quoted above, De Leon's account of Dickens's performance as Reader focusses on the extraordinary power Dickens possessed that, as 'something that went beyond technique' (251), enabled Dickens to be in sympathy with his auditors. Andrews cites the following extract from De Leon's review:

also observed by the playwright Herman Merivale, who notes how, during one of the Readings, Dickens's "eye [. . .] went straight for [his]" in response to Merivale's breaking "into a peal of laughter" at Dickens's performance as a "choleric old gentleman" and that, having found a "sympathetic eye" in his audience, Dickens then "read at [him], if ever a man did" (214-215). Andrews also notes how Dickens established a rapport with his auditors through 'his tone as narrator' – which a reviewer of the *Hartford Daily Courant* describes as one of "confidential explanation to the audience" – and by his use of 'body language' – the "gestures, attitudes, significant nods and glances" referred to by the same reviewer (211) – as well as through the design of his 'platform set [which] while not a drawing room, was composed of domestic furnishings – the elegant little desk, the carpeting, the matching fabric backdrop' (119) and was designed to establish the intimacy with his auditors which was also created by its 'forward positioning' which brought Dickens 'closer to his audience' (140).³⁶

There is something indescribable; a subtle essence of sympathy that can only be felt, not described, that puts him *en rapport* with the most antagonistic spirits and makes them his, while the spell is upon them. (Andrews 251)

³⁶ Andrews describes how Dickens most probably modelled the design of his set on Mathews's drawing room set which was designed to create the informal atmosphere required to support his intention to establish a rapport with his auditors which, according to the reviewer whose account Andrews cites, Mathews succeeded in doing:

It is true the room in which he received his company was very theatrical in *form*, - otherwise it was substantially the public drawing-room of the most

Andrews's study of the way in which Dickens sympathises with his auditors and with the characters he assumes is relevant to my discussion of how the reader experiences the unobtrusive voice in Dickens's writings. As I have noted already, readers sympathise with their narrators when emotion is conveyed subtly through non-verbal communication – as is shown clearly in my discussion of how representative readers sense the feelings of their 'narrators' – while Dickens's apparent disappearance on stage through assuming the voices of his characters is an illusion similar to that created by David whose voice can sometimes be imagined by the reader to be that of the character he sympathises with intensely: the younger David of his narrative. However, as I have also discussed in relation to Charles Kent's response to Dickens's Readings, Dickens (like his narrator) only *apparently* disappears as his physical presence as performer remains an undisputed fact. Andrews discusses how Dickens stages his Readings so that his auditors focus their attention on his bodily presence as Dickens, the Reader and author of the characters he brings to life before them. He refers especially to how Dickens's new desk makes 'so much more of him visible' so that he can 'project himself physically with arm gestures and body movement' (135), to the back-screen which 'throw[s] the figure of the Reader into higher relief' (138) and to the 'overhead gaslights' used at 'an 1855 Reading in Sheffield's Mechanics' Institute' which, as the *Sheffield Times* reports on 29 December 1855, 'ensured that "a powerful light was concentrated on the reader's face, and his features were distinctly seen all over the room"' (Andrews 144). In drawing attention to his role as public reader, Dickens is following the rules for

entertaining gentleman of his age; and had it not been for the spikes in front of the orchestra, the pit must have shaken hands with Charles Mathews Esq. before it wished him good-night. (Andrews 119-120)

public reading – which Andrews cites in his book³⁷ - whereby ‘The public Reader has a responsibility to exercise control, both in terms of not indulging in exaggerated mimicry and in never “forgetting” himself in projecting the story’ (77-78) which, he concludes, is ‘the essential role of the controlling narrator, whose authoritative, orchestrating presence must be evident throughout the recitation and should never be subsumed into one of the characters’ (77-78). The public reader is meant to be focussed on by his auditors if he is to sustain his relationship with them as narrator of his narrative and the ‘disappearance of the narrator into his characters [by which Andrews suggests assumption] destabilises that contractual relationship’ (197). As I show in my discussion of the narrator’s performance as oral storyteller in *A Christmas Carol* – a role very like that of public reader – the attention of *his* ‘auditors’ is commanded throughout as, like Dickens on stage as Reader, he performs his act of narration and, at times, attempts to disappear through assuming the voices of his characters. It is this type of narrator – one whose physical presence (especially in his role as oral storyteller) can be imagined vividly as he performs his act of narration – which Andrews identifies as one of the features of Dickens’s writings also foregrounded in his Readings. Andrews notes how the narrator’s ‘orchestrating presence’ and ‘boisterous narrative voice’ (25) serve to ‘reinforce the intimate personal bond’ (25) with his readers which Dickens later develops with his auditors through – as Andrews concludes in his later chapter – his ‘reputation as well as his personality on the platform [both of which help] to shape that bond’ (73). Although Andrews does not refer explicitly to sympathy in these extracts, the intimate bond that Dickens develops with his audiences is like the ‘sympathetic kinship between author and reader’ (250) which, Andrews explains, had been

³⁷ See footnote 43 for the full reference.

established with his readers throughout his career as a writer of ‘fiction and journalism’ (250) and which was experienced by his auditors as the “‘magic power’” referred to in *The Times*³⁸ and which Andrews interprets as ‘charismatic presence’ (251). The sympathetic bond between Dickens and his audiences is perhaps what is also meant by Andrews when he refers to the ‘chemistry of the relationship established between performer and audience’ (208) as an essential requirement for the auditor to believe in ‘the imaginary world conjured up on the platform’ (208). It is Dickens’s auditor’s ability to imagine the scene described by Dickens as he reads his writings on stage and his reader’s as she reads them privately that, argues Andrews, provides further proof that the ‘Readings [provided] continuity rather than innovation in Dickens’s career’ (29), as he confirms when he refers to one reviewer’s response to the Readings:

‘His power of reproducing a scene and bringing to the very eyes of his audience its exact features and the relative bearings of its composing parts has never been equalled’. The effect noticed by this reviewer could equally well apply to Dickens’s writings. The density and intensity of physical and social detailing in the novels perform just this task of engulfing the reader in the imaginary world of the novel. (207)

Andrews gives further evidence of the continuity between Dickens’s writings and Readings when he describes how what is imagined by the reader of his fiction becomes a reality for the auditor of his public readings: the virtual voice and presence experienced as ‘vocal resonance’ (30) by his reader become the actual vocal and physical presence of Dickens on stage as public reader (30), while the

³⁸ See footnote 56 for details.

‘latent companionship [Dickens] had sensed with his readers’ is ‘supplanted by isolated moments of actual companionship, or of encounters as near to companionship as was consistent with being in the same room as Charles Dickens’ (69). It is the relationship not only of companionship and friendship that transfers from the writings to the Readings – Andrews states that ‘The special friendship between readers and writer was already established: the Readings would simply improve it’ (177)³⁹ – but of intimacy as well: ‘The Readings took him one step closer to a personal intimacy with those who had come to know and to depend on him for over twenty years’ (9), he concludes.

While Andrews discusses how the characteristic features of Dickens’s writings are evident in his performance of the Readings, I focus on how Dickens’s skills as a performer and public reader are both modelled by characters within the narrative action and revealed in the performance of the narrator. As I have noted already, the main ways in which Dickens’s performance relates to the narrator’s are seen in how the act of assumption – in creating the illusion of his disappearance – encourages the auditor to sympathise with the character Dickens assumes and in how Dickens’s sympathy with his auditors is represented within the narrative action by ‘narrators’ who sympathise with their ‘readers’. Essentially, it is Dickens’s auditors’ awareness of his role as performer on stage that bears the most significance for my discussion of the performance of the narrator in general and, more specifically, for how the reader never loses awareness of the narrator as a performer even when – through the act of assumption – he attempts to efface himself, as I explore especially in my

³⁹ Andrews also states that ‘The tone of friendly, informal confidentiality carries through from the writings to the Readings’ (213).

chapter on *Little Dorrit*. In describing the Dickensian narrator as ‘instinct with histrionic self-awareness, now spinning the conversational web to trap the reader’s relaxed confidence, now partly entering character by sidling into free indirect discourse, now subsumed wholly in character’ (123), Andrews not only confirms Garis’s view of the versatility of the narrator as a performer of ‘his brilliant routines’ (28) but also provides the stimulus for my exploration of how the narrator’s portrayal of the voices of characters is often evident in free indirect discourse. It is Garis’s views on how, in drawing attention to his role as performer, the narrator inhibits the reader from becoming fully immersed in a narrative scene or in the consciousness of a character that informs much of my discussion of the performance of the narrator throughout this project. However, while I support this argument, I also suggest – as I have mentioned already in relation to the narrator of “A Visit to Newgate” and the actual and representative narrators of *A Christmas Carol* – that the reader is able to imagine the scene *and* the narrator who describes it. Indeed, as I have noted above (with reference to his analysis of the description of Marseilles in the opening scenes of *Little Dorrit*), Garis also argues this point, concluding that ‘there are two “presences”, two illusions being created in this description: the illusion of Marseilles [...] and also the illusion of “seeing” the skills of the describer itself, almost palpably present to us as he goes about his professional work of evoking the illusion of Marseilles’ (9). In describing the narrator as ‘palpably present’, Garis implies that he can be imagined as a tangible presence, ‘present before us’ (9) as a ‘performer, as a maker and doer’ (9): a narrator who is actively creating the scene. As I argue in my discussion of the narrator of *A Christmas Carol*, the reader is able to imagine his physical presence as he performs his act of narration and especially in how he can be imagined to be acting the actions he describes and in how he refers to his mobility.

Garis's argument that the performance of the narrator commands the attention of the reader instead of allowing her to immerse herself entirely in the consciousness of a character (for example, Clennam's) is also substantiated by my claim that the narrator's act of assumption is more notable as a feature of his performance than it is as a means to enable the reader to experience the thoughts and emotions of the character he assumes, although, to some extent, she is able to do this as well. However, while Garis also argues, with specific reference to the presentation of Clennam's emotions in *Little Dorrit* and Bella Wilfer's in *Our Mutual Friend*, that 'again and again Dickens seems simply unable to keep himself from working up lurid theatrical routines out of material which would seem to call for a more self-effacing method' (99), he also proposes that 'now and then one becomes engaged with Clennam's inner life in *Little Dorrit*, and one always senses that Dickens has registered in this characterisation his deepest and most personal moral questioning' (187). As I show in my discussion of the representative readers, Scrooge, David, Clennam and Rosa, their inner lives are conveyed vividly through either sympathising with their 'narrators' or with a 'character' from the 'narrative' they 'read'.

Garis identifies the two types of narrator that I discuss as both actually and representatively present in his writings and which, according to Andrews's and Ferguson's accounts, are modelled by Dickens in the performance of his public readings: the narrator who attempts to disappear through assuming the voices of his characters and the one who draws attention to his role as performer. Ferguson focusses especially on how Dickens's public readings provide a representation of the experience of reading his fiction where, as public reader, Dickens models not only the two types of narrator encountered by the private reader but also the acts of

private reading and of narrating. As ‘monopolylogues’, Ferguson describes how Dickens’s Readings foreground the way in which the self-effacement of the narrator enables the reader – or, in Dickens’s case, his auditors – to experience ‘a scene of reading that emphasis[es] dialogue and characters [...] and particularly the different voices of the characters [rather than] the controlling authority of the narration’ (735). However, as Andrews also argues in his discussion of how the rules for public reading and Dickens’s staging of them ensure that the focus of attention is on his role as Reader, Ferguson confirms that, no matter how much Dickens wanted to present a dramatic scene by acting the parts of his characters, ‘the readings were not plays and the part Dickens played was not only that of actor. He also played the reader in what was effectively staged as a scene of reading’ (733). As Reader, Dickens not only draws attention to his role as performer but to the act of narration itself and this is achieved partly by his use of the paper-knife, a prop that is significant not only in how it emphasises his role as *public* reader (Ferguson 731-732), as I noted earlier, but in how it serves to identify him with the *private* reader ‘encountering the book for the first time and actively cutting open the pages of the text’ (736). Dickens’s identification with the reader is also seen in how he ‘present[s] himself as an intimate with his audiences, taking that most democratic of relationships – the friend – as his ideal and dramatizing himself before his readers as a fellow reader’ (Ferguson 745). Ferguson further suggests that the intimacy or ‘bond with the audience as one among a fellowship of readers’ (730) occurs as a result of his ‘perform[ing] a scene in which the characters [take] central stage’ (730) so that Dickens and his auditors are able to share ‘a mutual affection for [them]’ (730). The modelling of reading, narrating, the narrator who draws attention to his role as performer and the one who attempts to efface himself are also evident within the narrative action of Dickens’s novels and

stories where, as ‘readers’, Scrooge, David, Clennam, Rosa and Jasper each encounter ‘narrators’ who contribute to their experience of ‘reading’ and, in particular, enable them to feel emotion in response to what they ‘read’. I suggest that the First and Second Spirits, Dora, Steerforth and Jasper represent the narrator whose physical presence can be imagined by the reader as he directs her to feel, while the Last Spirit, Agnes, Little Dorrit and also Jasper model the narrator whose unobtrusiveness allows her to discover the emotions that she is capable of feeling through sympathising with either a character from the narrative or with him. The reader’s self-discovery occurs through sympathy as is also foregrounded by Dickens when, through enabling his auditors to sympathise with him and with the characters he assumes, he allows them to realise their own feelings and when, through his assumption of Wardour in *The Frozen Deep*, he realises *his* own.

It is through modelling how the reader discovers the emotion that she is capable of feeling that Dickens – as public reader and as actor – and the characters of his fiction emphasise its significance as an experience of reading, as I show with reference to Scrooge, David, Clennam and Rosa. Characters also model how self-discovery occurs through immersing oneself in a scene, as is demonstrated in *Oliver Twist* when Sikes throws himself into the activity of extinguishing the fire (403-404) and in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* when Jasper views the landscape of Cloisterham from the top of its cathedral (107). Jasper realises his thoughts about murder while in the presence of Durdles who I suggest represents the narrator whose unobtrusiveness allows the reader to hear her own voice through immersing herself in a scene, as the Last Spirit also enables Scrooge to do. Durdles and the Last Spirit represent the narrator who not only allows the reader to discover her thoughts and emotions in this way but who enables her to imagine a virtual world which, as

Dickens expresses in his letter to Charles Collins, is what Dickens himself wanted to experience as a private reader and which, as his obituarist records, he achieved for *his* readers.⁴⁰ In my first chapter, Scenes of Reading in “A Visit to Newgate”, I discuss how the narrator of “A Visit to Newgate” enables the reader to imagine herself to be within a place as he describes his movements around it, proving how this is achieved by a narrator who, in so doing, encourages the reader to visualise his physical presence. In Chapter Two, *A Christmas Carol*, I show how Scrooge’s experience of reading is clearly enacted within the narrative action as he encounters the Spirits, his ‘narrators’, all of whom contribute to his self-discovery through guiding him to immerse himself with his senses and emotions in the scenes of his life. Scrooge’s realisation of the emotions that he is capable of feeling comes through sympathising with his former selves and this is illustrated clearly in how he relives the joy he felt on the occasion of Mr Fezziwig’s ball (*A Christmas Carol* 64). In addition, I discuss how the narrator draws attention to his performance of narration through his use of ‘verbal devices’ (Garis 24) and by encouraging his readers to imagine him as an oral storyteller whose physical presence and proximity to them is felt as he tells his story. By suggesting that his physical presence can be imagined as he directs his readers to respond with their senses and feelings to the significant features of his narrative, I reinforce my argument that the Spirits, as representative narrators, guide their ‘reader’, Scrooge, in a similar way. In the following chapter, *David Copperfield*, I show how David finds his voice as a reader by sympathising with his unobtrusive ‘narrator’, Agnes, and, in general, through his sensory and emotional responses to the world. In contrast with Agnes, I suggest that Dora

⁴⁰ See footnote 21 for the reference for Dickens’s letter to Charles Collins and footnote 23 for the reference for the obituarist.

inhibits him from discovering what he is capable of feeling by her dazzling and charming physical presence which, like that of the typical Dickensian narrator Garis describes, both attracts and distracts him. In Chapter Four, *Little Dorrit*, I discuss how the narrator's performance of the act of assumption (which the reader experiences as free indirect thought) only partly enables the reader to immerse herself in the consciousness of Clennam because the reader remains aware of the narrator as a performer. However, I argue that if the intended outcome of the act of assumption for the narrator – to seem to disappear – is not achieved, then that for the 'reader', Clennam, is as he realises the emotion that he has the potential to feel (his love for Little Dorrit) by sympathising with her: as with the actor's experience of assumption, the reader's experience of sympathy is self-discovery. Chapter Five, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, focusses on how, as 'readers', Rosa and Jasper search for and eventually find their own voices when they immerse themselves in an imaginary world: Rosa, in that of the character from the song she sings and Jasper, in his vision of Cloisterham. I discuss the role of performance in Rosa's self-discovery as she sympathises with the character from the song she sings and with Jasper, her unobtrusive 'narrator', in whose piano accompaniment she hears the emotion that she can feel as her own. However, I suggest that while Jasper may seek to discover his feelings through his musical performances, they do not enable him to do so through sympathising – his chanting, for example, is for him an inward-looking and solitary act. As with my chapters on *A Christmas Carol* and *David Copperfield*, I show how characters model not only the unobtrusive narrator who enables the reader to realise her own emotions – as Jasper and Durdles do – but also the narrator who draws attention to his role as performer and who directs the reader to feel emotion in response to the salient features of his narrative, as I suggest Jasper does.

I have chosen a selection of his writings each of which I focus on in chapters arranged in the order in which each text was published and which range from those written at the beginning of Dickens's career as a writer – “A Visit to Newgate” from *Sketches by Boz* (1836) in Chapter One – to his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* which was published after his death in 1870, which I discuss in Chapter Five. The texts chosen are relevant to the focus of my thesis which is how the reader's realisation of her feelings occurs through sympathising with the narrator or with a character and how this is achieved as a result of the narrator's unobtrusiveness, as well as how the narrator whose physical presence can be imagined directs the reader to respond with feeling to what is described. My choice of “A Visit to Newgate” from *Sketches by Boz* is to show how the narrator's physical presence is foregrounded in Boz – the observer and reporter of the scenes he has viewed – and which the reader is able to imagine as she immerses herself virtually and emotionally in these scenes. As a novel based partly on Dickens's experience as a child learning to read the world around him, *David Copperfield* is relevant to the theme which I pursue throughout this project which is that the reader undergoes a form of self-discovery through reading with her senses and emotions. *Little Dorrit* provides many examples of free indirect and direct discourse which I use for my discussion of the narrator's various performances of the voices of his characters, while the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* illustrates how the narrator who draws attention to his performance of narration also directs his readers to respond with their emotions to the significant features of his narrative. My choice of *A Christmas Carol* is also relevant to the comparisons I make between Dickens's writings and his public readings, not only in how the narrator is portrayed, as Dickens is as Reader, as an oral storyteller, but also in how the unobtrusive narrator enables the reader to

immerse herself in a scene – which is modelled by the Last Spirit in whose presence Scrooge immerses himself in the scene of his death – relates to Dickens’s adaptation of the story for his Readings in which, as Ferguson explains, he wanted ‘the characters rather than the author [to take] centre stage’ (737). Ferguson describes how ‘the prompt copy Dickens used through most of his reading career for *A Christmas Carol* shows that the narrator’s part, though not entirely eliminated, was extensively cut down and depersonalised for the readings’ (737). The fact that *A Christmas Carol* was, as Ferguson states, ‘one of his most frequently performed and popular readings’ (736) and that Dickens viewed the Christmas story that he had written as ‘a most prodigious success – the greatest, I think, I have ever achieved’ (Dexter 557) also supports my choice of this text for my project. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is of special interest as Dickens’s last and incomplete novel which, as Sylvere Monod complains, has invited literary critics to ‘[possess] themselves of the mystery and work on it in a spirit and in a way which, for many years, [has] obscured the great value of the book [...] [and which is] devoted to the mystery of Edwin Drood, not to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Monod 6-7).⁴¹ While bearing in mind that, before, since and at the time of Monod’s writing these comments in the late 1960s, Dickens scholars *have* focussed their attention on the text itself rather than conjecturing on its possible ending, I use Monod’s objection to their supposition as one of the reasons why I examine closely the details of the text. Indeed, my discussion of every text involves a close analysis of Dickens’s use of language and its effects and so, in this respect, I contribute to the redirection of attention to Dickens’s style as an area of research which, according to Daniel Tyler in his

⁴¹ The original source is “The Unfinished Fugue, Or *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*”, in *Dickens the Novelist* (488-502).

introduction to a recent selection of essays on this topic, *Dickens's Style*, has, in general, been 'frequently disregarded or undervalued' (Tyler 1).

Through the focus of my project, however, I contribute to the literary criticism on performance and affect in Dickens's writings and, to some extent, to that on 'his extensive theatrical experience and abilities' (Ferguson 730) and his capacity to feel and to express strong emotion. With reference to the public readings, Collins describes Dickens as 'a performer [who] was very talented, maybe a genius' ("Dickens's Public Readings" 193) while J. B. Van Amerongen concludes that '[Dickens's] whole persona and character bespoke the actor' (Van Amerongen 50). Dickens was also aware of his ability as an actor which – in a letter of application to audition to become an actor at Covent Garden, to which he refers in a letter to Forster – he attributes to 'a strong perception of character and oddity, and a natural power of producing in [his] own person what he observed in others' (*Letters* 4: 244-245).⁴² Dickens's self-awareness extends to his knowledge of his feelings – an awareness which, as I argue throughout this study, his characters also acquire as 'readers' – which he expresses emphatically in letters to friends. Writing to Forster from America on 28 January 1842, Dickens describes the 'intense anxiety and suspense' with which he and Catherine have been awaiting news from both Forster

⁴² In his letter to Forster, Dickens describes how he was unable to attend the audition arranged by Bartley, 'the stage manager at Covent Garden', because 'when the day came' he 'was laid up' 'with a terrible bad cold and an inflammation of the face' (244-245) and so narrowly missed the opportunity to pursue a career as an actor. The exact date of the letter is uncertain but it was probably written on 30-31 December 1844 and 1 January 1845.

and his family (*Letters* 3: 95-96), while in a letter written on 22 February 1855 to Maria Beadnell (now Winter) in which he agrees to meet with her again, Dickens shows his understanding of the nature of the love he once felt for her when he describes ‘The simple truth and energy which [...] would have overcome everything’ (*Letters* 7: 543-545). Despite his attributing ‘a habit of suppression which now belongs to [him] [...] which makes [him] chary of shewing [his] affections’ to Maria’s rejection of his ‘entire devotion to [her]’ which ‘made so deep an impression on [him]’ (*Letters* 7: 543-545), the openness with which he recounts how he felt suggests otherwise. In fact, in writing and in person, Dickens communicated directly to his family and friends what he felt strongly, as this extract from his letter to his youngest son, Edward (Plorn) – who was about to emigrate to Australia – proves: ‘I need not tell you that I love you dearly, and am very, very sorry in my heart to part with you’ (*Letters* 12: 187-188) and which disproves the claim made by Dickens in the letter to Maria that he is cautious about ‘shewing [his] affections, even to [his] children, except when they are very young’ (*Letters* 7: 543-545).⁴³ The intensity of the emotion felt at the actual moment of parting from Plorn is described by Dickens in a letter to another correspondent, from which this extract – cited by Mamie Dickens in her memoirs – is taken: “‘It was a hard parting at the last. He seemed to become once more my youngest and favourite little child as the day drew near, and I did not think that I could have been so shaken’” (*My Father as I Recall Him* 13) and

⁴³ Mamie Dickens describes her father’s ‘tender and affectionate nature’ shown in ‘his care of and for us as wee children’ (*My Father as I Recall Him* 12) and how ‘kind, considerate and patient he always was [so that they] were never afraid to go to him in any trouble, and never had a snub from him or a cross word under any circumstance’ (13-14).

by Henry Fielding Dickens who witnessed the occasion: “My father openly gave way to his intense grief quite regardless of his surroundings, and I do not think I had ever fully realised till then the depth of his affection towards his children” (qtd. in “Joyful Convulsions” 9).⁴⁴ The severity of his grief at the death of his sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, is also recorded by Mamie who notes how ‘The shock of [Mary’s] sudden death so affected and prostrated him that the publication of “Pickwick” was interrupted for two months’ (*My Father as I Recall Him* 21-22) as well as by Forster who describes Dickens’s ‘grief and suffering [as] intense’ (Forster 66-67) and refers to when, on a visit to see Dickens following her death, ‘[Dickens’s] heart opened itself to [his]’ (66-67) as he confided effusively in the man he trusted. That Dickens was, undoubtedly, a man of feeling is evidenced in these accounts and, I believe, symbolised by the ‘large tear’ which Mamie and those present as he died saw ‘[roll] down his face’ when ‘his spirit left [them]’ (*My Father as I Recall Him* 123-124). The tear, the ‘shudder’ that ‘pass[ed] over [him]’ and the ‘deep sigh’ that he ‘heaved’ (123) were visible and audible expressions of emotion to be sensed by his auditors who, like the ‘readers’ within his fiction, were able to sympathise with him. On the brink of death as throughout his life, Dickens’s role remained the same: that of a performer – a writer, an actor and a public reader – who, through feeling, encouraged his audiences to feel – a part that is forever played by his narrators.

⁴⁴ The original source is *Memories of My Father*, by Henry Fielding Dickens.

Sanders also refers to his later memoirs, *The Recollections of Sir Henry Fielding Dickens* in which he confirms Dickens’s claim that he tended to suppress his feelings as he was ‘afraid of “letting himself go”’ (“Joyful Convulsions” 9).

Chapter One

Scenes of Reading in “A Visit to Newgate”

In the opening passages of “A Visit to Newgate”, the narrator explains that his purpose in describing the interior of Newgate prison lies ‘in the hope founded more upon the nature of the subject, than on any presumptuous confidence in our own descriptive powers – that this paper may not be found wholly devoid of interest’ (*Sketches by Boz* 235). He wants to provide the reader with an accurate account of the living conditions and state of mind of its inmates so that she, unlike those who regularly pass the prison, may not remain unaware of ‘the condition of the unhappy beings immersed in its dismal cells’ (234). As Philip Collins argues in *Dickens and Crime*, Dickens ‘had very decided opinions on most issues to do with crime – opinions based on the information he had gathered through observation, reading and discussion with officials from the prisons and police’ (*Dickens and Crime* 12) and due to the influences of the many ‘social and political upheavals’ of the time which, as Dennis Walder states in his introduction to *Sketches by Boz*, ‘profoundly affected’ Dickens’s ‘thinking’ (*Sketches by Boz* XV). Dickens’s ‘lifetime coincided with the greatest period of legal and penal reform in our history [...] [when] almost every aspect of the social treatment of crime had been overhauled: the criminal law and its administration in the courts, the police system, the prisons and other forms of detention, and the scope and operation of capital and other such physical punishments’ (*Dickens and Crime* 3). Dickens formed his own opinions on issues relating to crime and punishment on which he wrote ‘many articles’ (*Dickens and Crime* 11-12), including one entitled “Capital Punishment” for the newspaper he

edited, the *Daily News*. As Collins observes, Dickens's views on capital punishment changed as he grew older: as a younger man, in the 1840s, Dickens 'had advocated the abolition of capital punishment [whereas] by 1859, he was threatening to hang any Home Secretary who stepped in between one particular 'black scoundrel and the gallows' (*Dickens and Crime* 16-17). At various stages of his life, Dickens 'witnessed several executions, though he was not (as some recent commentators have averred) a morbid devotee of these ceremonies; he abhorred them' (*Dickens and Crime* 13) and this presumably was how he felt when, in 1835, he wrote "A Visit to Newgate" for the 'reformist-radical' newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle* (*Sketches by Boz* XV).

For the *Morning Chronicle*, Dickens also wrote an article called "Crime and Education" in which he claimed to 'know the prisons of London well', and to have 'visited the largest of them more times than [he] could count' (*Dickens and Crime* 28-29). Indeed, Dickens's visits to prisons were numerous and widespread: in 1840, 'he made a circuit of all the London prisons, and in later years he visited many more in Britain, Europe and America' (*Dickens and Crime* 13). Collins records how 'often, too, when on holiday or on Reading tours, he inspected the local prisons not only in England, but in Scotland, France, Switzerland, Italy, and in America during his second visit in 1867-1868' (*Dickens and Crime* 28-29). Dickens's keen interest in prisons was seen in the friendship he established with 'several important Prison Governors' (*Dickens and Crime* 13) and in the articles he wrote about those which he had visited 'for charitable activities he had undertaken' (*Dickens and Crime* 28-29). One of the most influential of Dickens's writings on this topic was 'a celebrated account' of the Penitentiary, 'the world-famous prison at Philadelphia' (*Dickens and Crime* 28-29) which he wrote in *American Notes* on returning home from his visit in

1842. Collins describes how this article was ‘bitterly disputed, at the time, and half a century later after its publication its facts and arguments were again challenged in a pamphlet issued by the Household Association (a forerunner of the Howard League for Penal Reform) and written by its Secretary, William Tallack. Penal progress, as Tallack and his Association viewed it, was lamentably slow, one of the hindrances being ‘the still lingering influence, upon the popular mind, of the fictitious description of the Philadelphian system of prison separation, written more than fifty years ago by Charles Dickens’ (*Dickens and Crime* 13). However, regardless of its adverse effect on the progress of penal reform, this article was praised in 1843 by a reviewer for the *Edinburgh Review* who claimed that it ‘is really of great value. Prisons and madhouses have always had strong attractions for him; he went out [to America] with the advantage of a very extensive acquaintance with establishments of this kind in England [...] Mr Dickens’s observations [on American prisons] will be read with great interest [...] [and we] highly esteem his opinion on such a matter’ (*Dickens and Crime* 13). According to this reviewer, Dickens was a well informed and respected authority on prisons based on the evidence he had acquired during his visits and his knowledge was increased and his views developed in response to the literature he read. Collins notes how Dickens ‘read fairly widely, if indiscriminately, on the social topics that engaged his interest’ while ‘many pamphlets about Newgate [were in his library at Gad’s Hill]’ (*Dickens and Crime* 29). Dickens was also greatly influenced by ‘two of his favourite authors, Sydney Smith and Carlyle, [whose] striking pronouncements on penology [...] chimed with his own views at several points’ and by ‘the eighteenth-century masters [who] had often included prison-schemes in their stories, with comments which doubtless helped to form his opinions on these matters’ (*Dickens and Crime* 29-30).

As Collins argues, Dickens underwent a ‘fairly marked change of opinion’ on penal reform (*Dickens and Crime* 16-17), just as he did with regards to capital punishment. ‘In the 1840s, Dickens’s opinions on prison discipline had been, on the whole, enlightened; by the ‘50s and ‘60s he was running level with, or even behind, public opinion, let alone progressive opinion, in this field’ (*Dickens and Crime* 16-19). In keeping with the ‘common tendency of mankind’, Dickens became ‘more conservative and reactionary in middle and later life’ (*Dickens and Crime* 22) but what, suggests Collins, contradicts the often popular perception of Dickens as one who was ‘increasingly clear-sighted in his opposition to the structure and ideology of his society’ (*Dickens and Crime* 22), was his ‘capitulation to the retrograde popular, and official, ideas on prison-discipline’ (*Dickens and Crime* 22). In “A Visit to Newgate”, Dickens does not make explicit to the reader his views on prison reform: there is, as Collins asserts, an ‘absence of a penological point of view’ (*Dickens and Crime* 33), and, unlike the ‘professional insight’ shown in the Prison Inspectors Report for 1835-1836, Dickens ‘has no formed opinions by which to judge, command or criticise’ (*Dickens and Crime* 33). ‘The more confident Dickens of a year or so later would certainly have expressed’, as the Report does, ‘a moral revulsion at the prison’s laxity, inefficiency and corruption’ (*Dickens and Crime* 36) and, as Duane Devries records, ‘a footnote that Dickens inserted in the essay in the 1837-1839 edition of the *Sketches* indicates his somewhat later intense interest in prison reform’ (Devries 116): “The regulations of the prison relative to the confinement of prisoners during the day, their sleeping at night, their taking their meals, and other matters of gaol economy have all been altered – greatly for the better – since this sketch was written three years ago” (Devries 116). It is possible, suggests Devries, that the ‘intense interest’ in prison reform which is evident in this

footnote also had ‘some bearing on his underlying intentions in 1835’ (Devries 116) when Dickens wrote the original sketch. That Dickens refrained from openly stating his opinions may have been due not only to his inexperience as a writer but to his lack of specific knowledge at this time. Collins explains that, ‘As a young journalist making his first visit to a prison, and being taken on a two hours’ conducted tour, he naturally failed to see any of the features which excited the wrath of the Prison Inspectors: he was doubtless steered clear, for instance, of the frequent scenes of intoxication which occurred because beer was so freely admitted into the prison’ (*Dickens and Crime* 36). Dickens must, however, have been aware of Newgate’s reputation for being ‘in 1835, and for long after, [...] one of the worst prisons in England’ (*Dickens and Crime* 31-32) where ‘half the crimes committed in and around London [...] were planned in the prison itself’ (*Dickens and Crime* 31-32). Since childhood, he had been fascinated by Newgate prison which, as Michael Slater states, continued to ‘[haunt] his imagination’ (*Charles Dickens* 56) throughout his life: in “Where We Stopped Growing”, an article written much later in his career, Dickens’s narrator records that ‘We have never outgrown the rugged walls of Newgate, or any other prison on the outside. All within, is the same blank of remorse and misery’ (*Dickens’s Journalism* 112). Devries concludes that, while there is ‘very little’ ‘plea for prison reform’ (Devries 114) in “A Visit to Newgate”, Dickens has a ‘general moral purpose’ (Devries 116) in writing this sketch and cites the narrator’s description of the extreme poverty of the girl visiting her mother in jail as an example (Devries 116). Therefore, in accordance with one of the purposes of the sketch as a genre – which is to instruct – and with the widely perceived purpose of Dickens’s writings as a moral one, Dickens does provide the reader with moral instruction in this sketch, as was recognised by one reviewer of the *Morning*

Chronicle, George Hogarth. As Walter Dexter records in his article, “The Reception of Dickens’s First Book”, Hogarth writes: “It [“A Visit to Newgate”] contains a minute, and we believe, a very accurate description of this dismal abode, and of its guilty and miserable inmates. It is written throughout in a tone of high moral feeling, and with great eloquence, and must leave a deep and lasting impression on the mind of every reader” (Dexter 44).⁴⁵

To educate his readers morally was not, however, Dickens’s main objective in writing “A Visit to Newgate”. ‘As it had been in previous sketches, Dickens’s purpose was to ‘amuse’ (Devries 113), argues Devries, and, as ‘a literary form, a sub-genre of the essay, the sketch in the 1830s [primarily] sought to [do this]’ (Grillo 56). Grillo notes the predominantly comic nature of the sketch as a genre which intends to amuse its readers, just as Dickens claims to have been amused after his visit to Newgate. In his letter to Catherine Hogarth, Dickens refers to the ‘rather amusing’ ‘anecdotes’ he wishes to tell her and states that he was ‘intensely interested in everything [he] saw’ (*Letters* 1: 88). It is this “‘interest’ that the prison had for Dickens [...] that, in turn, he hoped his subject would have for his readers’ (Devries 114), claims Devries, and ‘interest’ is the word which most aptly corresponds with

⁴⁵ In his article, “The Narrator of *Sketches by Boz*”, Julian Breslow notes that in *Sketches* ‘the narrator often writes to entertain as well as to instruct’ (136), while Virgil Grillo records in *Charles Dickens’s Sketches by Boz: End in the Beginning* that ‘The reviews [of *Sketches*] were confident that Boz would provide “instruction” to all his readers’ (116). An anonymous obituarist, writing for the *Daily News* on 10 June 1870, states that in ‘all [Dickens’s] works there is a high moral aim, and we may surely add, a high moral teaching’ (*The Critical Heritage* 510).

one of the definitions of the verb ‘to amuse’: ‘to engage the attention of’ (*OED*) which is what Dickens aims to do not only in “A Visit to Newgate” but in all of his sketches.⁴⁶ As Collins argues, Dickens’s interest in Newgate lay in its literary potential (*Dickens and Crime* 40) as a subject which, as a journalist and sketch-writer, Dickens knew would captivate his readers – especially as he planned to describe prisoners who were condemned to death. ‘As newspaper men have always known, a good murder is worth a dozen thefts or swindles any day’ (*Dickens and Crime* 39-40) and Dickens was highly conscious of this fact when he wrote to his editor, John Macrone, explaining why he chose not to write about the House of Correction after finishing his sketch on Newgate: ‘You cannot throw the interest over a year’s imprisonment, however severe, that you can cast around the punishment of death. The Tread-Mill will not take the hold on men’s feelings that the gallows does’ (*Letters* 1: 103).⁴⁷

Dickens visited Newgate ‘as an author collecting material for what he intended to be a serious literary effort [...] [and] Dickens meant his essay to be the high point of *Sketches by Boz*’ (Devries 114). Dickens was very aware of the effect that his

⁴⁶ The definition of the verb ‘to interest’ (‘to arouse the curiosity or concern of’ [*OED*]) is similar to this definition of the verb ‘to amuse’ (‘to engage the attention of’). The *OED* provides these additional definitions of the verb ‘to amuse’: ‘Divert from seriousness, give pleasure to, with something trifling, ludicrous, or entertaining; make laugh or smile.’

⁴⁷ In another letter to John Macrone, written on 27 October 1835, Dickens reveals his awareness of Newgate as an interesting subject: ‘I have long projected sketching its Interior, and I think it would tell extremely well’ (*Letters* 1: 83).

literary techniques would have on his readers – especially on their feelings – as he discusses in the same letter to Macrone in response to Macrone’s enquiry about Dickens’s ‘omission of some of the description of the prison kitchen, evidently concerning the appalling sanitary conditions there’ (Devries 114): ‘Again, about the kitchen. I know no place in which I could introduce the fact without weakening my subsequent description, and I left it out lest scrupulous ninnies who do not see these things as you or I do, should think there was something disgusting in the idea, and repulsive’ (*Letters* 1: 103). The ‘conscious effort’ made by Dickens ‘to produce a work of definite literary merit’ (Devries 113) clearly produced the desired result as his ‘literary advisors were particularly enthusiastic’ (Devries 112) about this sketch. In the same article for the *Morning Chronicle*, Hogarth praises “A Visit to Newgate” as ‘the most remarkable and striking of the author’s productions’ which he claims is ‘evidently the work of a person of extraordinary intellectual gifts’ (Dexter 43-44). Hogarth focusses on ‘the concluding picture of a condemned criminal passing his last night on earth in his solitary cell [which] is drawn with terrible power’ (43-44) and notes how this scene is ‘even more pathetic and impressive’ for being ‘eloquent[ly] and simp[ly]’ described (43-44).

Hogarth comments on the pathos in Dickens’s prose, recognising Dickens’s skill as a writer in evoking pity and sadness for the condemned prisoner. He responds to Dickens’s skills as a ‘literary craftsman’ (Devries 115) and not to the ‘indignation of the reformer’ (115) and, in so doing, foregrounds Dickens’s main purpose in writing “A Visit to Newgate” which, as Devries argues, is to be ‘descriptive and impressionistic, not didactic’ (Devries 114). In seeking to affect his readers, Dickens is not aiming to incite them to take action in order to effect change in society (as is his intention in writing *A Christmas Carol*) by, for example, improving the

conditions of Newgate's prisoners, but to raise their awareness of these conditions and of the experience of feeling emotion. In particular, he wants to share with his readers his own experience of Newgate – to report 'what we did see, and what we thought' (*Sketches by Boz* 235) – and, essentially, what he *felt* about what he saw. As Angus Easson states, 'Boz goes to prison to experience what Newgate is; and gives us that experience and others like it' (Easson 17), and he does this in his role as a 'journalist sketch artist' who, like Washington Irving who 'first formulated' the literary sketch, is 'a mere observer who is generous enough to share his observations' (Byerly 354). As I discuss in this chapter, it is the performance given by his narrator in "A Visit to Newgate" that enables the reader to sympathise with the prisoners just as Dickens wanted his readers to sympathise – as he had done – with the characters in all of his writings. I explore the techniques used by the narrator as part of his performance in order to make the reader feel, focussing especially on the key role he plays in modelling sympathy and emotional response in order to guide the reader to read by feeling. Throughout the sketch, the narrator enables the reader to imagine his physical presence as a performer and this physical presence is felt at all times as he guides her virtually around Newgate, directing her attention to salient details that should elicit feeling. What I therefore show in this chapter is that the narrator whose physical presence can be imagined vividly enables (as I also suggest that the unobtrusive narrator does) the reader to immerse herself imaginatively and emotionally in a narrative scene. Through his virtual guided tour of Newgate, the narrator demonstrates to the reader how immersion in a narrative scene can occur by imagining that one is moving within it – an effect that Dickens aims to create in many of his writings, as I shall discuss. It is, however, Dickens's predominant wish that his readers should immerse themselves in a narrative scene by feeling emotion

that the narrator strongly emphasises when he expresses emotion in response to what he and the reader now witness together. Like Dickens, it is by feeling that he encourages the reader to feel and in the performance given by this narrator is exemplified the many ways in which Dickens's narrators enable their readers to feel.

As part of his performance, the narrator uses emotive language in order to express his feelings about what he saw on his first visit to Newgate and to persuade the reader to feel these as well, in response to what he now describes. In his account of the yard where female visitors are kept, the narrator conveys how he was moved with compassion for the visitor whose extreme poverty is clearly evident:

In one corner of this singular-looking den was a yellow, haggard, decrepit old woman, in a tattered gown that had once been black, and the remains of an old straw bonnet, with faded ribbon of the same hue, in earnest conversation with a young girl – a prisoner of course – of about two-and-twenty. It is impossible to imagine a more poverty-stricken object, or a creature so borne down in soul and body, by excess of misery and destitution [...]. The old woman was talking in that low, stifled tone of voice which tells so forcibly of mental anguish; and every now and then burst into an irrepressible, sharp, abrupt cry of grief, the most distressing sound that human ears can hear. (*Sketches by Boz* 237)

The narrator focusses the reader's attention on the details of the visitor's appearance and actions which indicate the physical and mental distress caused predominantly by the effects of poverty. The old woman wears ragged and worn clothing which has lost its colour. She shows signs of ill health as well as old age. The narrator's compassion for her is seen not only in his use of emotive diction such as 'anguish' and 'sharp' – which describes the intensity of her suffering – and 'irrepressible' and 'abrupt' – which suggests how suddenly and unrestrainedly she expresses her grief –

but in his ability to sense her feelings through interpreting the expression of anguish in her voice which is, as he concludes superlatively, ‘the most distressing sound that human ears can hear’ (237). The narrator sympathises through sensory response to non-verbal communication of emotion as is shown also in his reading of the facial expression of the daughter and visitor of the ‘squalid-looking woman’ prisoner whose ‘pinched-up half-starved features twisted into an expression of careful cunning’ and whose ‘sullen smile [which] came over the girl’s face for an instant’ he interprets as her pleasure ‘not so much at the probability of her mother’s liberation, as at the chance of her ‘getting off’ in spite of her prosecutors’ (238). He sees ‘very little anxiety or mental suffering depicted in the countenance of any of the men’ who have ‘been sentenced to death’ (244) while ‘there [is] nothing peculiar either in [the] appearance or demeanour’ of the women prisoners in ‘the spacious, bare, whitewashed apartment’ (239-240). The ‘appearance’ and ‘demeanour’ of the prisoners reveal to the narrator their feelings of mainly apathy, dejection and resignation. Some of the women prisoners ‘[gaze] at the visitors with listless curiosity’ while others ‘[retire] behind their companions to the very end of the room, as if desirous to avoid even the casual observation of the strangers’ (239-240). The narrator’s observation of the women’s wish to avoid being seen by the visiting party is as perceptive as is his deduction that the man condemned to death whose ‘face was purposely averted towards the window [...] had *assumed* an air of courageous indifference’ (245 my italics): the narrator has noted that the indifference displayed by *this* prisoner is what he is pretending to feel.

The strength of the narrator’s emotions is expressed in the rhetorical techniques used as part of his performance. In his statement, ‘It is impossible to imagine a more poverty-stricken object, or a creature so borne down in soul and body, by excess of

misery and destitution', the narrator conveys the intensity of his feelings through his use of hyperbole ('It is impossible') and emotive diction, all of which convey the indignation and sorrow felt about the visitor's extreme poverty. In his description of the visiting daughter of the 'squalid-looking woman' (238), the narrator further communicates his emotion through his use of listing and repetition:

The girl belonged to a class – unhappily but too extensive – the very existence of which should make men's hearts bleed. Barely past her childhood, it required but a glance to discover that she was one of those children born and bred in poverty and vice, who have never known what childhood is; who have never been taught to love and court a parent's smile, or to dread a parent's frown. The thousand nameless endearments of childhood, its gaiety and its innocence, are alike unknown to them. They have entered at once upon the stern realities and miseries of life, and to their better nature it is almost hopeless to appeal in aftertimes, by any of the references which will awaken, if it be only for a moment, some good feeling in ordinary bosoms, however corrupt they may have become. Talk to *them* of parental solicitude, the happy days of childhood, and the merry games of infancy! Tell them of hunger and the streets, beggary and stripes, the gin-shop, the station-house, and the pawnbrokers, and they will understand you. (238)

The narrator emphasises how passionately he disapproves of the girl's poverty and parental neglect by repeating the phrase 'who have never known' and by contrasting in lists the features of an upbringing of 'parental solicitude, the happy days of childhood and the merry games of infancy' with those that typify what she and children of her social background experience daily: 'hunger and the streets, beggary and stripes, the gin-shop, the station-house, and the pawnbrokers.' The sadness and sympathy he feels for her are evident in the opening sentence in which he states explicitly his views and conveys implicitly how he feels by suggesting emotively how we 'should' respond with our emotions. His use of the word 'should' is as

directive as it is persuasive – the auxiliary verb ‘shall’ can be used in the sense that someone ‘Must [do something] according to a command or instruction’ as well as ‘ought to as the right or suitable thing’ (*OED*) – and there are many instances in this sketch where the narrator both directs and persuades the reader to feel and to sympathise.

For example, in his description of the prison chapel, the narrator clearly persuades the reader to respond emotionally to the ‘condemned pew’ when he declares that ‘there is one subject, too, which rivets the attention and fascinates the gaze, and from which we may turn disgusted and horror-stricken in vain, for the recollection of it will haunt us, waking and sleeping, for months afterwards’ (242). Having related how the condemned prisoners, ‘in sight of all their fellow-prisoners, from many of whom they may have been separated but a week before’ are now ‘singled out for death’ and made to participate in ‘their own burial service’ (242), the narrator then instructs the reader to feel the feelings of the condemned prisoner:

Imagine what have been the feelings of the men whom that fearful pew has enclosed, and of whom, between the gallows and the knife, no mortal remnant may now remain; think of the hopeless clinging to life to the last, and the wild despair, far exceeding in anguish the felon’s death itself by which they have heard the certainty of their speedy transmission to another world, with all their crimes upon their heads, rung into their ears by the officiating clergyman! (242-243)

The narrator directs the reader to sympathise, while the emotive phrases ‘hopeless clinging to life to the last’ and ‘wild despair, far exceeding in anguish’ actually enable the reader to carry out the instructions in the imperative verbs: to sympathise as intensely as the narrator does with the prisoner whose feelings he recounts. The

sympathy the narrator has for him as, in his cell, he awaits his death by hanging is as evident as is his wish for the reader to sympathise too:

Conceive the situation of a man, spending his last night on earth in this cell. Buoyed up with some vague and undefined hope of reprieve, he knew not why – indulging in some wild and visionary idea of escaping, he knew not how – hour after hour of the three preceding days allowed him for preparation, has fled with a speed which no man living would deem possible, for none but this dying man can know. He had wearied his friends with entreaties, exhausted the attendants with importunities, neglected in his feverish restlessness the timely warnings of his spiritual consoler; and now that the illusion is at last dispelled, now that eternity is before him and guilt behind, now that his fears of death amount almost to madness, and an overwhelming sense of his helpless, hopeless state rushes upon him, he is lost and stupefied, and has neither thoughts to turn to, nor power to call upon the Almighty Being, from whom alone he can seek mercy and forgiveness, and before whom his repentance can alone avail. (246)

Again, the narrator directs the reader to imagine what it is like to be the prisoner as he anticipates his impending fate and enables her to do so by employing rhetorical techniques such as listing and repetition of phrases in order to persuade her. The narrator's knowledge and understanding of the prisoner's wish to escape from his punishment are shown in his description of how he is 'buoyed up with some vague and undefined hope of reprieve', 'indulging in some wild and visionary idea of escaping' and oblivious to the passage of time. His sympathy becomes even more apparent in his portrayal of how the prisoner feels as the time of his death approaches when, with no spiritual guidance to support him, 'his fears of death amount almost to madness, [...] an overwhelming sense of his helpless, hopeless state rushes upon him [and] he is lost and stupefied.' The use of the present tense in this final section contributes to the effect that the narrator is feeling what the prisoner

is feeling at the time of the event described and so also enables the reader to sympathise with the prisoner as intensely as the narrator does.

Throughout his description of the prisoner's last hours alive, the narrator's voice and virtual physical presence as a performer can be imagined as he shows a willingness to sympathise with him – a desire which amounts to his voicing his thoughts as is evident in his use of free indirect thought:

Hours have glided by, and still he sits upon the same stone bench with folded arms, heedless alike of the fast decreasing time before him, and the urgent entreaties of the good man at his side. The feeble light is wasting gradually, and the deathlike stillness of the street without, broken only by the rumbling of some passing vehicle which echoes mournfully through the empty yards, warns him that the night is waning fast away. The deep bell of St Paul's strikes – one! He heard it; it has roused him. Seven hours left! He paces the narrow limits of his cell with rapid strides, cold drops of terror starting on his forehead, and every muscle of his frame quivering with agony. Seven hours! He suffers himself to be led to his seat, mechanically takes the bible which is placed in his hand, and tries to read and listen. No: his thoughts will wander. The book is torn and soiled by use – how like the book he read his lessons in at school just forty years ago! He has never bestowed a thought upon it since he left it as a child: and yet the place, the time, the room – nay, the very boys he played with, crowd as vividly before him as if they were scenes of yesterday; and some forgotten phrase, some childish word of kindness, rings in his ears like the echo of one uttered but a minute since. The deep voice of the clergyman recalls him to himself. He is reading from the sacred book its solemn promises of pardon for repentance, and its awful denunciation of obdurate men. He falls upon his knees and clasps his hands to pray. Hush! what sound was that? He starts upon his feet. It cannot be two yet. Hark! Two quarters have struck; - the third – the fourth. It is! Six hours left. Tell him not of repentance. Six hours' repentance for eight times six years of guilt and sin! He buries his face in his hands, and throws himself on the bench! (246-7)

The narrator's performance is especially evident here as he immerses himself in the consciousness of the prisoner by describing his sensory and emotional responses to

his surroundings and the thoughts and memories which these evoke. The narrator's use of pathetic fallacy in describing the 'deathlike stillness of the street without' and how 'some passing vehicle [...] echoes mournfully through the empty yards warn[ing] him that the night is waning fast away' (247) shows how the way in which the prisoner interprets what he hears reflects his preoccupation with his imminent execution. The sounds outside the prison remind him of how quickly time is passing and, as the narrator conveys dramatically through his use of brief exclamatory sentences, he is alert to the warning chimes of the bell of St Paul's Cathedral. The way in which these sentences swiftly succeed each other reflects the speed with which each thought travels through his mind and the terror and tension he feels as this happens. The prisoner's actions and physical appearance bespeak his fear and the accumulation of clauses in their description creates an atmosphere of suspense. The dramatic effect created by the narrator's use of these techniques draws attention to his role as a performer whose physical presence and voice can be imagined vividly as he narrates animatedly – one can almost visualise him performing the prisoner's action of walking about his cell. Like Dickens as author and as actor, the narrator sympathises with the character he describes through giving a performance and this is demonstrated in his impersonation of the voice of the prisoner through the use of free indirect thought: 'The book is torn and soiled by use – how like the book he read his lessons in at school just forty years ago!' and 'Hush! what sound was that?' (247).⁴⁸

Just as Dickens demonstrates by assuming the voice of Wardour in *The Frozen Deep* how the reader sympathises with a fictitious character, so the narrator models by

⁴⁸ See page 37 of my introductory chapter for the reference to Andrews's explanation of what distinguishes impersonation from assumption.

impersonation how he wants the reader to immerse herself in the mind of the condemned prisoner. Through showing how he sympathises by feeling strongly the emotions not only of the condemned prisoner but of all of his fellow inmates, the narrator foregrounds the significance of affect in reading “A Visit to Newgate”. The narrator invites the reader to immerse herself in scenes of feeling – those of the suffering of the prisoners and their visitors – and in so doing he contrasts their passionate emotion with the lack of feeling expressed or felt by others. The young female prisoner is ‘perfectly unmoved’ by her mother’s anguish and, ‘hardened beyond all hope of redemption, [she] listen[s] doggedly to her mother’s entreaties [...] [taking] no more apparent interest in the conversation than the most unconcerned spectators’ who share her indifference to this ‘display of feelings’ with which they are ‘too familiar [...] to excite even a passing thought.’ Unlike the narrator who feels strongly in response to all he sees and hears, these onlookers are ‘no more concerned by what [is] passing before their eyes, and within their hearing, than if they were blind and deaf’ (237-8). What the narrator feels most passionately about the visiting daughter and those of ‘her class’, is how she has never been ‘taught to love and court a parent’s smile, or to dread a parent’s frown’ (238): to read the emotions of others.

By describing how he moved through Newgate prison and his emotional responses to what he saw, the narrator foregrounds two of the experiences which Dickens wanted his readers to have when reading his writings: to imagine themselves to be moving within a narrative scene and to feel emotion.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ See introductory chapter for my discussion of Dickens’s view that readers should feel emotion when reading his writings and how he considered the description of

Leaving the chapel, descending to the passage so frequently alluded to, and crossing the yard before noticed as being allotted to prisoners of a more respectable description than the generality of men confined there, the visitor arrives at a thick iron gate of great size and strength. Having been admitted through it by a turnkey on duty, he turns sharp round to the left, and pauses before another gate; and having passed this last barrier, he stands in the most terrible part of this gloomy building – the condemned ward. (243)

The narrator's use of the present participle of verbs which describe movement (for example, 'descending') enables the reader to imagine that she is carrying out the actions described and so moving through Newgate prison as she reads. The directions given to the reader about how to navigate her way virtually around the prison provide proof that the narrator has actually been there which further encourages her to believe that she is moving (as the narrator has done) within the scene described. The concrete details alluded to by the narrator (such as 'the thick, iron gate') are evidence of the actual existence of the prison and it is this knowledge

movement as a significant feature of writing. Other writers on Dickens also note how he created the effect of movement in his writings: an obituarist writing in July 1870 records how 'he delights to put his persons in active motion' (*The Critical Heritage* 526) while Percy Fitzgerald concludes that Dickens's vitality is reflected in his writings and especially in his description of 'that actual living movement in the form of walking, riding, travelling by coach or other vehicle, railway excursion, ascent of mountains abroad, travelling over the Continent in diligences or carriages. Everyone familiar with his writings will recognise how he delighted in this motion . . .' (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 229-30).

which helps the reader to visualise what the narrator has seen. Indeed, the narrator is keen to record accurately and in detail everything he saw on his visit as is shown in the following extract in which the narrator describes the route from the lodge to other areas of the prison:

From this lodge, a heavy oaken gate, bound with iron, studded with nails of the same material, and guarded by another turnkey, opens on a few steps, if we remember right, which terminate in a narrow and dismal stone passage, running parallel with the Old Bailey, and leading to the different yards, through a number of tortuous and intricate windings, guarded in their turn by huge gates and gratings. (236)

What is apparent in each extract is that, again, the narrator conveys what he feels about what he encountered: the ‘stone passage’ is ‘dismal’ (236) while his use of emotive language and the superlative when describing ‘the condemned ward’ as ‘the most terrible part of this gloomy building’ (243) are intended to evoke in the reader the fear which he felt at the time of his visit. Significantly, the narrator guides the reader to the condemned cell where another ‘reader’ models the outcome of feeling strongly through immersion in a narrative scene: the realisation of who he is. When the condemned prisoner falls asleep and dreams of ‘walking with his wife in a pleasant field, with the bright blue sky above them, and a fresh and boundless prospect on every side’, he imagines himself to be in a place where he is free from ‘the stone walls of Newgate’ and from his identity as one who has maltreated her. He basks in her love as ‘she [...] lean[s] upon his arm, and look[s] up into his face with tenderness and affection’ and, in so doing, experiences again what it is like to

be a caring, loving husband while also feeling a strong sense of relief as he ‘fall[s] on his knees before her and fervently beseech[es] her pardon for all the unkindness and cruelty that wasted her form and broke her heart!’ (247-8). This is a dream wish-fulfilment in which the prisoner runs away from his present existence as a criminal in an attempt to lead a more fulfilling life. He dreams of ‘flying from the scene of his imprisonment like the wind’ – his swift movement affording him a sense of freedom that is also felt as he enters the wide open spaces of ‘the open fields’ and the ‘broad wide country’ (247-8). He is exhilarated by the prospect of being liberated from his former transgressions and of transforming himself into the man he once was. However, although his dreams provide the opportunity of escape from his identity as a criminal, they also confirm that he is one as the pronouncement at the scene of his trial that he is ““Guilty”” shows (247-8). Here the prisoner’s tension and fear are reflected in the sense of breathlessness created by the use of parataxis through which are recorded his fragmentary observations of his surroundings. Further confirmation of his identity occurs when he awakes ‘cold and wretched’ to the realisation that ‘Every object in that narrow cell is too frightfully real to admit of doubt or mistake. He is the condemned felon again, guilty and despairing; and in two hours more he is a corpse’ (248).

The condemned prisoner’s experience of immersing himself in the scenes of his dreams is similar to that of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* as he is guided by his ‘narrators’ – the Spirits – into those of his past, present and future.

Chapter Two

A Christmas Carol

When Scrooge immerses himself in these ‘narrative’ scenes, he realises *his* identity as a miser whose life of self-interest will lead to a death mourned by nobody. His terror at seeing what he assumes – and what is later confirmed – to be his concealed corpse, motivates him, on waking from his dream, to transform into the gentleman whose benevolent acts are seen in the final stave. As ‘narrators’ who represent the various narrative styles found in Dickens’s writings, the Spirits contribute to Scrooge’s transformation as ‘reader’ by directing him to note the details of the scene which convey its moral and social message, by encouraging him to feel emotion through responding with his senses to what he encounters and by sympathising with his other selves. They guide Scrooge’s reading just as the actual narrator guides ours, prompting us to feel and somehow to change as we read *A Christmas Carol*.

That Dickens’s readers *did* feel strong emotion and, through feeling, were motivated to change as a result of reading the *Carol*, is evidenced in Dickens’s letters and in contemporary reviews of this story. Dickens expresses his gratitude to Thomas Mitton for ‘feel[ing] the *Carol*’ and to Charles Mackay for his ‘pleasure in the *Carol*, so earnestly and spontaneously expressed [which gave him] real gratification of heart’ while ‘the beautiful manner [...] in which [Laman Blanchard]

notic[es] [the] *Carol* fill[s] [his] heart to the brim.’⁵⁰ If Dickens wanted to effect a change in his readers it was by encouraging them to sympathise with the poor and to take action to alleviate their suffering. His anger in response to the appalling working conditions of women and children and the inadequate education provided by the Ragged Schools led to a deeply felt sympathy for them and a determination to ‘make some strikingly powerful plea for the poor’ (Slater 101), the ‘sledge hammer’ blow that, as Dickens states in a letter to Dr Southwood Smith, will ‘come down with twenty thousand times the force’ of his original idea of writing a pamphlet (*Letters* 3: 461).⁵¹ As Michael Slater explains in his essay, “Dickens’s Tract for the Times”, it was most probably Dickens’s reaction to reading ‘the Second Report (Trades and Manufactures) of the Children’s Employment Commission, sent to him

⁵⁰ Letters to Mitton, Mackay and Blanchard are cited in *Letters* 3: 605-6, 609-10 and 215-6 respectively.

⁵¹ In *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Percy Fitzgerald describes how ‘Boz had indeed a heart that bled for the sorrows of the poor and the suffering’ (1: 294-295), while an anonymous writer for *Fraser’s Magazine* (July 1870) writes that Dickens ‘had a deep pity, a deep sympathy [...] for the poor, and especially the hard working poor’ (*The Critical Heritage* 528). Perhaps most significantly, considering my discussion of sympathy and assumption, G. K. Chesterton concludes that ‘Dickens had sympathy with the poor in the Greek and literal sense; he suffered with them mentally; for the things that irritated them were the things that irritated him. He did not pity the people, or even champion the people, or merely love the people; in this matter he was the people’ (Chesterton 133).

by one of the Commissioners, his friend Dr Southwood Smith,' that made him think of writing the *Carol* (Dickens 1970 100-101).⁵² Slater describes the report as:

a horrifying document disclosing that parish orphans or the children of poor families were regularly sent out to work at the age of seven years and sometimes as early as three or four; that such wages as they earned invariably went entirely to their parents if they had any; and that their 'apprenticeships' (if any) gave them no real skill and were 'often passed under circumstances of great hardship and ill-usage'. In some industries children often worked fifteen, sixteen, or eighteen hours a day 'without any intermission' in places 'very defective in drainage, ventilation and the due regulation of temperature'. They had not 'good and sufficient food, nor warm or decent clothing. When under the absolute control of adult workmen, they were 'almost always roughly, very often harshly, and sometimes cruelly used'. In such leisure time as they had they were allowed to run completely wild; attempts to educate them were either non-existent or grossly incompetent; and brutalised as they were by such a way of life, their moral condition was appalling. (Slater 100-101)

Dickens's indignation was caused not only by his reading of this report but by seeing for himself what Richard Kelly describes as 'the brutal working conditions that devastated the bodies and souls of small children [in] the tin and copper mines' (Kelly 15-16) in Cornwall and about which Dickens writes to the editor of the

⁵² In *The Life and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge*, Paul Davis also notes that 'Dickens dated the *Carol* from his address to the Manchester Athenaeum on 7 October 1843. He was struck by the goodwill in the faces of the working people in his audience and stirred to write a Christmas story addressed to a similarly broad national audience' (Davis 5).

Morning Chronicle on 25 July 1842.⁵³ As his letter to Angela Burdett Coutts reveals, Dickens also visited the Ragged School of Field Lane, an ‘awful sight’ where ‘school is held in three most wretched rooms on the first floor of a rotten house’ with pupils who are ‘shocking’ in their ‘dire neglect of soul and body’ and difficult to teach because they ‘know nothing of affection, care, love, or kindness of any sort’ (*Letters* 3: 562-3). Dickens’s reaction to feeling strong emotion was to take action to help them by writing letters to those who could raise awareness of their situation (and perhaps the funds to support them) and *A Christmas Carol* which, as he states in his preface to the Cheap Edition of 1852, he hoped would inspire in his readers ‘some loving and forbearing thoughts, never out of season in a Christian land’ (*A Christmas Carol* 265). According to an anonymous reviewer writing in the *Athenaeum* in December 1843, Dickens succeeded in doing this by making the reader ‘laugh and cry [and to] open his hands, and open his heart to charity’ (Kelly 223), while Thackeray notes how ‘Many men were known to sit down after perusing it, and write off letters to their friends, not about business, but out of their fullness of heart, and to wish old acquaintances a happy Christmas’ (*The Critical Heritage* 147-8).⁵⁴ Like Scrooge, readers were motivated to change by reflecting on their former

⁵³ In his letter, Dickens challenges those politicians who choose to believe that ‘there are no grievances, no discomforts, no miseries whatever, in the mines [and who consider] it an interference with the rights of labour to exclude women from the mines – women who work by the side of naked men – (daughters often do this beside their own fathers) – and harnessed to carts in a most revolting and disgusting fashion, by iron chains’ (*Letters* 3: 282).

⁵⁴ Dickens’s own acts of charity for the poor are noted by Fitzgerald who describes Dickens as ‘a conspicuous philanthropist [who] devoted a large portion of his talents

behaviour towards others, including one *auditor* of Dickens's public reading of the *Carol* in America, as Gladys Storey recounts:

Among the multitude that surged out of the building came a Mr and Mrs Fairbanks (the former was head of a large scale factory), who had journeyed from Johnsbury, Vermont, for the occasion. Returning to their apartments in Boston, Mrs Fairbanks observed that her husband was particularly silent and absorbed in thought, while his face bore an expression of unusual seriousness. She ventured some remark, which he did not appear to notice. Later, as he continued to gaze into the fire, she inquired the cause of his reverie, to which he replied: "I feel that after listening to Mr Dickens's reading of *A Christmas Carol* to-night I should break the custom we have hitherto observed of opening the works on Christmas Day". Upon the morrow they were closed. The following year a further custom was established, when not only were the works closed on Christmas Day, but each and every factory-hand received the gift of a turkey. (Storey 120)

Mr Fairbanks was no doubt inspired to think about his treatment of his employees by the feelings he felt during Dickens's Reading – one which, like many others of the *Carol* and of his other writings, often made his auditors express their emotions openly: Dickens writes of how, during his reading of the *Carol* in Boston, "One poor girl in mourning burst into a passion of grief about Tiny Tim, and was taken out" (Fitzsimons 131).⁵⁵ It is Dickens's *performance* as Reader which makes his

and his time [...] to the amelioration of [society]'s conditions, to the reform of abuses, and [...] to the relieving of the *poor*, and promoting a thing that was nearest to his heart. He did not merely write powerfully on these matters, but he gave his time and labour cheerfully, and did a vast deal' (204-5).

⁵⁵ Many accounts by Dickens and by those who attended his Readings of the *Carol* note his auditors' expression of emotion. Cuthbert Bede describes how, during his

auditors feel, just as it is the narrator's and the Spirits' which enable the reader of *A Christmas Carol* and Scrooge (its representative reader) respectively to respond with their emotions to the narrative scenes that are presented to them.

In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which the performances given by the actual narrator and the Spirits, as representative narrators, enable the reader and Scrooge, as representative reader, to feel emotion and to sympathise through sensory response to what they read. In my discussion of the performances given by the narrator and the First and Second Spirits, I explore the argument, addressed throughout this project, that the narrator who draws attention to his imaginary physical presence plays a significant part in directing the reader to feel emotion. While I focus predominantly on how the physically 'present' narrator and the First and Second Spirits evoke in the reader and in Scrooge emotional and sensory responses, I also discuss the equally important role played by the unobtrusive narrator, as represented by the Last Spirit (and sometimes the First Spirit), in allowing Scrooge to hear his own voice: to rediscover the emotion that he is capable of feeling and the moral values that he has always known. In response to the various types of performance given by the Spirits, Scrooge feels emotion very strongly and so what I focus on in this chapter is the argument proposed by Sally Ledger that 'Dickens's affective mode is [...] highly theatrical and performative' (Ledger 2). By discussing the importance of sensory

Reading in Wolverhampton in 1858, one auditor's 'irrepressible shout of laughter [at] Scrooge's clerk occupying a dismal little cell – "a sort of tank" – [...] helped to unfreeze [the audience whose] tears and plaudits greeted [Dickens] for the rest of the evening' (Bede 208). Bede refers also to Dickens's delight at 'that appreciative laugh' and how Dickens 'instinctively blessed the person for his applause' (208).

response to Scrooge's ability to feel emotion and to sympathise, I explore Teresa Brennan's theory that '[emotional] discernment begins with considered sensing [...] – the process of feeling that operates, or seems to operate, as the gateway to emotional response' (Brennan 94) and her definition of 'finer feeling' which, as I note in the introductory chapter, is very like Gallagher's view of sympathy: 'finer feeling' involves being 'open to the other through the deployment of sensation, meaning feeling' (Brennan 123). As I also note in my introductory chapter, my discussion of the ways in which the Spirits contribute to Scrooge's experience of reading develops Emma Mason's argument that the outcome of their 'teaching Scrooge how to respond to the world through his senses' (12-13) is his 'renewed emotional connection with the community' (Mason 15): the acts of kindness which prove Scrooge's transformation into a man who feels for others.⁵⁶ As I demonstrate in this chapter, it is through sympathising with the main 'character' of the 'narrative' he reads (himself), that Scrooge experiences a moment of insight as 'reader' while in the presence of his unobtrusive 'narrator': the Last Spirit. However, as I also prove by showing how Scrooge sympathises with his former self while with the First Spirit, the physically 'present' 'narrator' does not distract him from immersing himself emotionally and by virtual movement in each 'narrative' scene. Throughout this chapter I focus on physical presence as a significant aspect of the performances given by the narrator, the First and Second Spirits and Dickens as Reader, while also drawing further comparisons between them which include the ways in which each draws attention to his performance of narration and his adoption of the role of oral

⁵⁶ See introductory chapter for my references to the articles written by Ledger and Mason, to Brennan's discussion of affect in *The Transmission of Affect* and to Gallagher's definition of sympathy.

storyteller. The performance of the oral storyteller forms one of the points of comparison that I make between Dickens's Reading of *A Christmas Carol* and his narrator's performance in the original text and which relates to my discussion of the claim made by Malcolm Andrews that Dickens foregrounded in his Reading text the extracts of *A Christmas Carol* in which the dramatic presence of the narrator is emphasised. The comparisons that I draw between the performances given by the narrator and the First and Second Spirits are relevant to the analogy between Scrooge's experience of reading his 'narrative' scenes and the actual reader's experience of reading *A Christmas Carol*, as Dickens scholars have noted.⁵⁷ A common feature of these performances is that it is through feeling and expressing emotion that each narrator encourages his audience to feel and it is this factor that I focus on – initially, in the extraordinarily exuberant performance of the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* and then mainly in the performances of the Spirits. As a preliminary to my discussion of how the First Spirit reawakens Scrooge's senses and raises his awareness of feeling emotion by leading him to scenes that evoke sensory and emotional responses, I explore the ways in which Marley's Ghost raises Scrooge's awareness of sensory and emotional responses in reading.

The narrator demonstrates throughout his performance that, like Dickens his creator, he is capable of feeling strongly and that he wants his reader to feel as intensely as he does about what he relates. He is especially keen to express his anger about the suffering of the poor which he does through his use of the rhetorical techniques with which he also persuades her to share this emotion, as is seen in the

⁵⁷ See footnote 96 for further information.

description of the two impoverished children who emerge ‘from the foldings of [the Second Spirit’s] robe’ (92) in Stave Three:

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked; and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread. (92)

Through his use of antithesis, the narrator emphasises the extremity of their suffering by contrasting how they should look with their ill and prematurely aged appearance. By personifying age and by showing the effects which it has on them, the narrator highlights their vulnerability in being subjected to powerful forces over which they have no control: they do not choose to be ‘pinched’, ‘twisted’ and ‘pulled [...] into shreds’ by ‘a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age’ any more than they want to be possessed by ‘lurk[ing]’ ‘devils’ who ‘[glare] out menacing[ly]’ from within them. The narrator enforces his point about their poverty by listing emotive words which define its distinguishing features: ‘Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling [and] wolfish’ are adjectives that indicate that their skin is discoloured through poor health, that they are thin and rapacious as a result of being insufficiently fed and sullen because uncared for. The narrator suggests by his use of the adjective ‘wolfish’ that they have been dehumanised by their suffering, a point which he enforces in his concluding statement in which he uses hyperbole to persuade the reader to feel the strength of his indignation: ‘No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity,

in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.’ His repetition of ‘no’ and his listing of three consecutive phrases are as emphatic as the phrases in which he lists three words, as is evident in his description of one of the least salubrious areas of London where ‘Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery’ (98). By preceding most of the words within each list with ‘and’ or ‘with’, the narrator focusses the reader’s attention on each emotive word with which he persuades her to feel his disgust through appealing predominantly to her sense of smell.⁵⁸

The narrator shares not only his anger with the reader but also his joy as he celebrates that which his characters feel, again using exclamatory sentences in order to express his deeply felt emotion, as when he describes ‘The joy, and gratitude and ecstasy!’ and ‘The shouts of wonder and delight with which the development of every package was received!’ (68) by the children of Belle as they unwrap the presents that their father has bought them for Christmas. Although it is clear that the feelings he describes are the children’s (as later he refers to ‘the children and *their* emotions’ [68 my italics]), by using the definite article ‘the’ instead of the possessive pronoun ‘their’, the narrator focusses the reader’s attention on the emotions themselves as those which he delights in and wishes to be admired. As the voice of Dickens, the narrator wants to make the reader aware of the importance of happiness

⁵⁸ The narrator’s anger is also expressed in his ironic use of the adjective ‘worthy’ with which he describes one of the ‘over-full city churchyards’ (*A Christmas Carol* 280) to which the Last Spirit guides Scrooge in Stave Four.

(especially at Christmas time) and does this by pointing out to her expressions of joy.⁵⁹ When Scrooge's nephew laughs about Scrooge, he 'hold[s] his sides, roll[s] his head, and twist[s] his face into the most extravagant contortions [making his wife laugh] as heartily as he' (87). Scrooge's laugh of relief, on discovering that the scenes in which he has been immersed are those of his dreams and not of reality, is described by the narrator as 'a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh' (112), while by repeating the word 'chuckle' when describing the happiness which Scrooge feels when he pays for the turkey and 'recompens[es] the boy' who has bought it, the narrator foregrounds this utterance of mirth. The narrator further emphasises the benefits of laughter when, with reference to how Scrooge's nephew's wife laughs when he does, he states authoritatively that 'there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour' (86-87). It is through his use of declarative statements like this one that the narrator also makes explicit to the reader the moral message of his narrative as well as focussing her attention on significant

⁵⁹ Dickens's enjoyment of Christmas is well noted. Mamie Dickens records how her father 'loved Christmas for its deep significance as well as for its joys' (*My Father as I Recall Him* 31-32), while Percy Fitzgerald describes how the 'Affection, good-humour [and] domestic enjoyments [which] were next [Dickens's] heart [at Christmas time]' are also 'displayed' in his writings, so 'Thus the happy jovialities of the 'Christmas Carol' were quite real' (Fitzgerald 215). Charles Mackay, reviewing *A Christmas Carol* for the *Morning Chronicle* on December 19 1843, states that 'It is impossible to read this little volume [...] without perceiving that its composition was prompted by a spirit of wide and wholesome philanthropy [...] – a spirit that knows where happiness can exist, and ought to exist, and will not be happy itself till it has done something towards promoting its growth here' (Kelly 221).

details. With reference to the Cratchit family's Christmas celebrations, the narrator concludes that they 'were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time' (84) because of the love they feel for each other rather than for material wealth, while he explains that 'The misery [of the phantoms shown to Scrooge at the end of Stave One] is that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever' (52). The narrator directs the reader to note 'The strangest thing about [the First Spirit which] was that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light' (55) before informing her that 'its strangest quality [was that it] fluctuated in its distinctness' (55).

In every aspect of his performance, the narrator is directing the reader in her reading, persuading her to feel by feeling his emotion while making her aware of the importance of feeling as well as of the moral message and significant details of the narrative. By directing the reader, he draws attention to himself and to his skills as a narrator, just as Dickens invites his auditors to focus their attention on his physical presence on stage and on the performance he gives as Reader. Like the narrator, Dickens encourages his auditors to feel, not only explicitly by giving them permission beforehand to 'give vent to any feeling of emotion' (Fielding 246) during the Reading, but by showing *his* feelings – perhaps, as the narrator's seem to be, genuinely felt – but which are expressed as part of his performance. Citing a reviewer's comments from the *Belfast News-Letter* about one of Dickens's Readings, that 'in voice, gesture and facial expression – "he always suggests the idea that [his expression of feeling] is the insensible result of genuine emotions, and not a trick to counterfeit these emotions"', Andrews concludes that, while 'he did very often surprise himself emotionally during the Readings, [...] the apparently effortless freshness of response to the text on his part was also a technical accomplishment'

(Andrews 217).⁶⁰ Andrews also notes the other features of Dickens's performance that focus his auditors' attention on Dickens as Reader which, in addition to the design of the set which I refer to in my introductory chapter, include his use of voice and gestures.⁶¹ He refers to a Dublin reviewer's account of how, in Dickens's reading of the "level" portions of the narrative [...] where the interest might be expected to flag, he keeps attention alive by the admirable distinctiveness of his tones, by the judicious pauses – the measured flow and variety of his vocal modulations" (Andrews 184). Andrews describes how Dickens became 'a master of the dramatic pause, and [how] he could vary the pace to an astonishing degree' and refers to how 'one listener described the "furious speed" with which he read, in the 'Carol', the flight of the spirit of Christmas over the rooftops: "he never drew breath"' (Andrews 185).⁶² Dickens's 'highly expressive and mobile face, the eyes

⁶⁰ Andrews provides further evidence that Dickens *did* respond emotionally to what he was reading when he refers to one of the explanations given by Philip Collins for the 'relative unpopularity' of Dickens's Reading of 'Little Dombey' as being that Dolby [had] 'remarked that Dickens found [it] painful to read' (249). Mamie Dickens notes how, during his rehearsals of 'his readings from "Dombey", the death of "Little Paul" caused him such real anguish, the reading being so difficult to him, that he told [them] that he could only master his intense emotion by keeping the picture of Plorn, well, strong and hearty, steadily before his eyes' (*My Father as I Recall Him* 13-14).

⁶¹ See pages 42-43 of the introductory chapter for Andrews's comments and pages 18, 19, 25 and 48 for Ferguson's.

⁶² With reference to how Dickens 'never permitted voice, look, gesture, to pass the limits of discretion,' Kent records how, although 'his tones [...] were often subdued

and mouth particularly, was attested to by many,' notes Andrews, but refers especially to the use of his hands, "the slight[est] movement [of which – as Sir Arthur Helps observes -] helped wonderfully in giving additional force and meaning to what he said'" (Andrews 187). Andrews records how, when 'describing the Fezziwig Ball, [Dickens's] hands performed on the desk top, with the fingers dancing as though they were the legs of the party folk' (Andrews 93), an action which, like his 'mashing of the potatoes, the sweetening of the applesauce, and the dusting of the plates' in his narration of the Cratchits' Christmas dinner, 'he put his whole self into [...] as if he were there and taking part' (Trautmann 465).

As one who narrates as animatedly as Dickens does on stage as Reader, the narrator can be imagined to be using actions and gestures which, along with many of the features of his performance, invite the reader to visualise his physical presence. For example, in his description of how Scrooge and Dick Wilkins closed the shutters of the warehouse in preparation for the Fezziwig Ball, his counting in numbers not only punctuates the sentence which conveys the speed with which their actions were carried out, but also enables the reader to imagine *him* to be counting as he mimics these actions:

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters – one, two, three – had 'em up in their places – four, five, six – barred 'em and pinned 'em – seven, eight, nine – and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses. (62)

almost to a whisper, every syllable, nevertheless, [was] so distinctly articulated as to be audible in the remotest part of a vast hall like that in Piccadilly' (Kent 28-29).

By repeating the word ‘Nobody’ when recounting how Scrooge searched for a stranger in his chambers, the narrator again can be pictured to be performing Scrooge’s actions: ‘Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; [. . .] nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall’ (43). One can also imagine the narrator carrying out the action of ‘seiz[ing] the ruler’ in order to frighten away the carol singer who sings through the keyhole of the door to Scrooge’s counting-house with the same ‘energy’ as Scrooge does (40) and, perhaps, in a similar way to how Dickens used the paper-knife ‘in the early years of the Readings, as part of [his] repertoire of gestures’ (Andrews 136).⁶³ When Dickens seizes the paper-knife, he is physically present before his auditors as an oral storyteller which is how the narrator wants his readers to imagine him and as Dickens always considered the narrator of a short story to be. In *Dickens and the Short Story*, Deborah Thomas claims that ‘the only recurring feature in Dickens’s thinking about the form of the short story [...] appears to be the concept of oral narration [and that for him] a story is fundamentally a story told by someone [...] told directly by a storyteller or placed within a framework which suggests the idea of oral narration’ (Thomas 4). With reference to Michael Slater’s discussion of the “special intimacy of tone” of the Christmas Books which ‘with respect to “A Christmas Carol” is “that of a jolly, kind-hearted bachelor uncle seated across the hearth from his hearers on some festive domestic occasion”’ (38), Thomas concludes that ‘the sense of oral narration [is] re-creat[ed] [in the *Carol* by the]

⁶³ Andrews also notes how, in his early Readings of *A Christmas Carol* ‘when [Dickens] came to Fezziwig’s dance and described how the dancer “appeared to wink with his legs”, he gave an expressive look and a wave of the paperknife’ (Andrews 137).

obvious presence of the storyteller' (38) while later in his public readings, Dickens makes 'this sense of fireside narration even more explicit [when] he urg[es] his audience on one such occasion that "nothing would be more in accordance with his wishes than that they should all, for the next two hours, make themselves as much as possible like a group of friends, listening to a tale told by a winter fire"' (38).⁶⁴ As Andrews discusses, Dickens creates this sense of intimacy with his auditors not only through the 'domestic furnishings' (Andrews 119) and 'forward positioning' (140) of 'its platform set' (119) but by 'his tone as narrator' which, as a reviewer of *The Hartford Daily Courant* describes, is one of "'confidential explanation to the audience'" and his use of 'body language': "'gestures, attitudes, significant nods and glances'" (211). When the narrator describes how near to Scrooge the First Spirit is when he 'draw[s] aside the curtains of [Scrooge's] bed' as being 'as close to it as I am now to you and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow' (54), he encourages intimacy with his readers by inviting them to imagine how physically close he is to them. The narrator sustains this close relationship with his readers by the way in which he directly addresses and confides in them, as is evident when he describes Scrooge's thoughts and feelings as he awaits the arrival of the Second Spirit: 'Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much' (71). The colloquial expression used throughout his narrative and which is seen here in the phrase, 'I don't mind calling on you to believe', further enforces this tone of intimacy as the narrator addresses the reader as though speaking to a friend. He is

⁶⁴ Slater's comments about tone are made in his article, "The Christmas Books" (20), while Dickens's address to his auditors is recorded in *Speeches* (Fielding 246).

keen to establish a bond with her which he does when he compares how Scrooge ‘began to think’ before the arrival of the Second Spirit in Stave Three with how ‘you or I would have thought at first’ (72).

The narrator’s frequent use of colloquial expression and the way in which he addresses the reader – often through digressions – enables her to imagine him as an oral storyteller who is physically present before his auditors as he reads. He can be imagined to be in the act of narrating when, having digressed in order to emphasise the fact that Marley is dead, he resumes the subject of his narrative: ‘The mention of Marley’s funeral brings me back to the point I started from’ (33). The narrator draws attention to his role as storyteller, not only through the use of phrases that are characteristic of storytelling, such as ‘Once upon a time’ (35) and the discourse marker ‘now’ with which he directs the reader to the next point of his narrative, but by the declarative statements with which he asserts his authority as one who has information to impart.⁶⁵ At the beginning of his story, he announces emphatically that ‘There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate’ (33) and so instructs the reader to understand and appreciate his story. The narrator’s use of the imperative in this example and when he challenges the reader to tell him if she knows ‘a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge’s nephew [then she should] introduce him to [him]’ (86), invites the reader to imagine that he is interacting with her as he also does when he asks, rhetorically, ‘Scrooge knew he was dead? Of

⁶⁵ Harry Stone notes how ‘The story proper of *A Christmas Carol* begins with the traditional “Once upon a time”’ (Stone 121).

course he did. How could it be otherwise?’ (33).⁶⁶ The enthusiasm with which he performs his narrative enables the reader to imagine his physical presence as a narrator who, as I have noted already, carries out the actions he describes and, as he suggests when he refers to how close he is to the reader, moves as he narrates. The energy felt within the narrative reflects that with which Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. Paul Davis records how ‘Dickens’s sister-in-law [...] had never seen him more excited by a project [and that] he worked with such fervour [that he had] completed the manuscript by the end of November, and on 19 December *A Christmas Carol* [...] was on the stands’ (Davis 7).⁶⁷ *Dickens’s* energy – ‘the aura of energy that played about him’ (Andrews 238), ‘his amazing energy, at times demoniacal in its fierceness’ (Storey 91) – is seen in the performances of the narrator and of the Reader of the *Carol*, as Andrews argues when he states that ‘the *Carol’s* powerful but elusive energy’ (235-6) derives from ‘that extraordinary and sustained near-delirious state of mind’ (205-206) in which he wrote it, some of which ‘returned

⁶⁶ With reference to the authenticity of ‘the speaking voice’ which, ‘by its living presence [is] a guarantee of sincerity and natural truth,’ Robert Tracy asserts that ‘the art of the gifted story-teller [is seen in how he] speaks in the presence of an audience, open to the audience’s reactions, improvising the tale sustained by the audience’s interest and response’ (“Reading Dickens’s Writing” 37-38).

⁶⁷ Michael Slater also notes the intensity with which Dickens wrote this story: ‘The *Carol* was written at white heat in such “odd moments of leisure” as Dickens could snatch from his work on the eleventh monthly instalment of *Chuzzlewit*’ (*A Christmas Carol* xviii) while Richard Kelly also acknowledges how quickly he completed it: ‘Words flew from his pen, and before the end of November he had finished the manuscript’ (Kelly 16).

to energise the Reading [the effect of which] could be intoxicating on the listeners' (235-6) which is proven in Dickens's letter to Wills after his Reading in Darlington in which he declares: 'The town was drunk with the *Carol* far into the night' (235-6).

It is inevitable that readers of *A Christmas Carol* will be as exhilarated by the narrator's performance as was J. Hillis Miller who remarks on the 'inordinate linguistic exuberance' and 'extraordinary stylistic verve' of this narrative (Miller 193) where 'a single adjective, example or epithet will never do' (193) as in his description of Scrooge as "'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner!'" (193). The narrator's listing of words conveys his enthusiasm about what he describes which is shown in his account of the various foods surrounding the Second Spirit when Scrooge first meets him:

Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. (72)

What Richard Kelly refers to as the 'narrative joy' in the 'outpouring of exclamation and hyperbole in [the] passages describing Scrooge' (Kelly 23) can be applied to this extract where the narrator revels in the abundance of food as he lists each item, his enjoyment shown also in his choice of adjectives which appeal to the reader's senses through visual and tactile imagery: 'red-hot', 'cherry-cheeked', 'juicy', 'luscious' and 'seething' (72). The narrator's enthusiasm is evident also in his repetition of the phrase 'In came' and the word 'some' as he indicates how many people enter the

warehouse for the Fezziwig Ball and the manner in which they do this: ‘In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke [...]. In they all came [...] some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and anyhow’ (62). The narrator’s repetition of the conjunction ‘and’ when he lists the food eaten between each dance also conveys his enthusiasm: ‘There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer’ (63). The narrator (or officially Dickens) clearly enjoys using a variety of techniques as part of his performance which include his use of metaphorical language, alliteration and onomatopoeia. As Miller notes, ‘personification of inanimate objects [...] is so important a feature of Dickens’s style in all his work’ (195) and is used with magnificent effect in *A Christmas Carol*. The narrator suggests to the reader that on seeing the ‘dingy cloud’ of fog that ‘obscur[es] everything’ outside Scrooge’s counting-house on Christmas Eve, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale’ (35). The ‘ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions’ in the fruiterers’ shop are personified as ‘Spanish Friars’ (75), while the ‘lowering pile of building’ which houses Scrooge’s chambers is so awkwardly positioned ‘that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten the way out again’ (41). The effect of personification in these examples is to stimulate the reader’s imagination, enabling her to realise the ‘fatness’ of the onions by imagining corpulent Spanish friars (75) and to picture the fanciful scenario of a house playing hide-and-seek. As Garis notes, ‘The first impression, and a continuing one, in Dickens’s prose is of a voice

manipulating language with pleasure and pride in its own skill' (Garis 16-17) and this is apparent throughout the story as he 'dazzle[s] us with verbal devices' (24), using simile and alliteration in describing Scrooge as 'secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster' (34). In his introduction to Scrooge's character, the narrator also shows how well he (or Dickens) uses extended metaphor to describe Scrooge's unsociability and lack of feeling for others: 'A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas' (34). The narrator further emphasises his skill with language by his use of hyperbole (just one of many examples in the *Carol* where, as Miller confirms, 'hyperbolic superabundance is [its] distinctive feature' [196]): 'External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, nor wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty' (34). Perhaps the most obvious example of the narrator's enjoyment of his performance is seen in his description in Stave Five of the sounds made by the church bells as they ring on Christmas Day where he so much delights in his use of onomatopoeia that he repeats the words in reverse order: 'Clash, clang, hammer, ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding, hammer, clang, clash' (112).

The narrator is performing with his voice, making it 'heard' as loudly as Garis claims is typical of the Dickensian narrator so that 'his insistent voice all but totally fills our consciousness' (14-15) even when we are supposed to lose awareness of it as when, through the use of free indirect discourse, he impersonates the voices of those guessing what Scrooge's nephew is thinking in the 'game called Yes and No' (90):

The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. (90-91)

As is characteristic of free indirect discourse, the narrator's voice is 'heard' in the words with which he introduces what was said by those playing the game and in his reporting, through the use of the third person and past tense, their speech. Again, we feel the narrator's enthusiasm in his repetition of the conjunction 'and' with which he also conveys the excitement of the participants as, from Scrooge's nephew's responses to their questions, they gradually deduce (or, more specifically, the 'plump sister' does) that he is thinking of Scrooge. As a performer, the narrator also adopts the voice of an orator who, through the use of rhetorical techniques, expresses his anger about the suffering of the poor (as I have illustrated above) or that of a lawyer presenting evidence in court:

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact that Scrooge had seen it night and morning during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the City of London, even including – which is a bold word – the corporation, aldermen, and livery. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven-years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any immediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face. (41-42)

In 'Now, it is a fact,' 'It is also a fact' and 'Let it also be borne in mind' (41-42), the narrator uses the phraseology of a lawyer who is arguing his case and who then, in his concluding statement which he begins with the phrase, 'And then let any man explain to me', challenges his auditors to explain how the unimaginative Scrooge who is familiar with the immutable door knocker should see in it Marley's face. The narrator is here, as he is throughout the narrative, 'call[ing] attention to himself' (Parker 207) and to his 'brilliant routines' (Garis 28) as a 'theatrical [...] artist' (Garis 28) who is, as Andrews states, 'instinct with histrionic self-awareness' (Andrews 123).⁶⁸ Garis argues that we are 'continual[ly] [aware]' of the 'artificer [...]' as a self-exhibiting master of language' (24) and that 'we never lose sight of him for a moment' (Garis 38-39) while Andrews refers specifically to the narrator of the *Carol* as 'an intrusive presence' (Andrews 81) – one which Dickens ensured was felt by his auditors when, in his Reading of the *Carol*, he foregrounded those passages where the 'narrator is especially self-assertive' in order to 'intensif[y] the dramatic presence and personality of the first-person narrator' (85). Andrews argues that Dickens's decision to focus on these passages where the narrator is 'performing like one of the story's characters' (85) was in keeping with his wish to 'increase the dramatic element' (84) of the narrative which he achieved by 'pruning [the text in order to emphasise] the speaking characters at the expense of narration and description' (84). As an animated Reader, Dickens performs as though he is a character but the 'dramatic element' is seen also in his assumption of Scrooge where he seemingly transforms himself into this character, as Andrews records of Dickens's Reading of the *Carol* in New York on Saturday 7 December 1867:

⁶⁸ Parker's comments refer specifically to the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* while Garis and Andrews refer to Dickens's narrator in general.

He suddenly becomes Scrooge, and it's as if he, Dickens, has disappeared. What we see is Scrooge, and what we hear is Scrooge: the old features, the pointed nose, the shrewd grating voice. (Andrews 7)

When Dickens assumes the voice of Scrooge, *his* voice becomes subsumed in Scrooge's as Dickens appears to disappear on stage, and yet his auditors still see and hear *him* as Reader of these passages as they do of those where he is more 'self-assertive' (Andrews 85). As auditors of the Readings of his other works, Kent and Lehmann never completely lose consciousness of Dickens's physical presence as performer even though they note how distinctly they visualise his characters on stage: Kent states that 'the great author was there all the while before in his own identity' (Kent 31-32) while Lehmann refers to 'the face and figure that [he] knew [and] that [he] had seen on the stage a moment before' (Andrews 195).⁶⁹ While Kent and Lehmann become momentarily unaware of Dickens, Kate Field's account of his portrayal of Micawber from *David Copperfield* reveals how she is always conscious of 'the character and the man *impersonating* that character' (Andrews 196-7 my italics) – 'impersonating' very aptly describing Dickens's 'fuller entry into the character of someone else' (Andrews 115) where his presence as impersonator predominates.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See pages 17, 18 and 37 of my introductory chapter for my references to Kent's and Leymann's accounts respectively.

⁷⁰ See page 37 of my introductory chapter for Andrews's definition of mimicry, impersonation and assumption.

Dickens could no more be Micawber without that cough than Micawber could have ever been at all without Dickens [...]. None but a great man misunderstood ever had such a propensity to choke. And when Mr Micawber *does* cough, the two lapels of hair brushed above Dickens's ears, appear to be drawn by capillary attraction towards the sentiments spoken, and, waxing rampart, nod approvingly, as if to say, 'Just so'. (Field 27)

Field proves how closely she focusses on Dickens in performance when she notes 'the two lapels of hair brushed above Dickens's ears' and the 'cough' which Dickens adopts for the Reading only.⁷¹ In noting each feature, Field responds to Dickens's physical presence as Reader just as the reader or imaginary auditor of *A Christmas Carol* is encouraged by the narrator to imagine his physical presence as oral storyteller. However, while she is aware of Dickens as performer, she is also responsive to the intended effect of his performance which is to seemingly disappear on stage through assumption. Whereas the cough identifies Dickens as a performer who is adopting a technique in order to portray a character, the way in which the 'lapels of hair', as Dickens's, 'appear to be drawn by capillary attraction towards the sentiments spoken [or expressed by the cough]' (Andrews 196-7) shows how fully (and bodily) he immerses himself in and sympathises with the character he is playing. Field sees in this detail assumption taking place as she does more generally throughout his performance as 'the impersonator and impersonated' – Dickens and Micawber – appear to fuse into one person on stage: as Andrews states, 'It was as if

⁷¹ As Field states, "'Neither cough nor lapel are to be found in the text'" (Andrews 196) to which Andrews adds, 'Micawber's obtrusive cough was indeed a new feature of the character whom all knew so well' (196).

Dickens were voluntarily possessed by the characters. Where did Dickens's being end and Micawber's begin in this symbiosis?' (196).

In noting how, during his performance on stage, Dickens draws attention to himself as well as appearing to disappear through assumption, Field, Kent and Lehmann respond to the effects produced by Dickens that are also created in his writings. As I have shown, the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* commands the reader's attention through the animated performance with which he encourages the reader to imagine his physical presence as oral storyteller. Like Dickens, the narrator's presence as performer is evident as he impersonates or tries to assume the voice of one of his characters and in his role as storyteller where he requires the full attention of his readers or 'auditors'.⁷² As I have discussed, Dickens communicates powerfully with his auditors when he does so non-verbally, using gestures, facial expression and tone of voice to convey the emotion which either he, as Reader, or as the character he assumes, feels. This type of performance is unobtrusive through being non-verbal: Dickens communicates through the use of his body just as the Last Spirit does with his 'reader', Scrooge, through his silent, physical presence. The outcome for Dickens's auditors, as it is for Scrooge, is to feel emotion intensely as he is also directed to do by the First and Second Spirits whose fascinating physical appearance and whose verbal interaction with Scrooge represent the way in which the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* invites the reader to imagine him as an oral storyteller interacting with his auditors. All three Spirits guide Scrooge's reading of

⁷² See page 197 of *Performing Selves*, also cited in my introductory chapter, for Andrews's reference to an extract from *The Nation* in which the writer provides the guidelines for public readings.

the narrative scenes of his past, present and future and what is clear from his encounter beforehand with Marley's Ghost is that he is already a competent reader.

When Scrooge sees 'in the knocker without its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face' (41-42), he not only shows that he has a vivid imagination but the potential to sympathise because he sees the image of someone else – someone whose feelings he could feel as though they are his own. Through focalisation, the narrator describes how Scrooge observes closely, reflects upon and interprets his vision of Marley's face:

It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air; and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be, in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression. (42)⁷³

Moreover, Scrooge's 'startled' reaction to what he sees which makes his 'blood [...] conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy' (42) proves how he is capable of feeling emotion physically. He responds with his senses to Marley's Ghost, '[seeing] it standing before him', '[feeling] the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and [marking] the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head' (44) while '[its] voice disturb[s] the very marrow in his bones' (45).

⁷³ Scrooge's interpretation of what he 'reads' bears some relevance to Mary Pratt's view that the ultimate purpose of the storyteller is for his auditor to have not only "an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs he is representing [...] [but] an interpretation of the problematic event" (qtd. in Schiefelbein 57).

Scrooge's responses to Marley's Ghost reveal his abilities as a reader as well as his limitations: Scrooge may use his senses but he '[fights] against [them]' as well, remaining 'incredulous' about the apparition of his former business partner (44). While Scrooge feels emotion strongly and physically, especially in response to the voice of Marley's Ghost and to the sounds that he makes – when it 'rais[es] a frightful cry, and [shakes] its chain [Scrooge] [holds] on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon' (47) – he also attempts to suppress his feelings as on the occasion where, having been challenged by the Ghost about why "'he doubt[s] [his] senses'" (45), Scrooge makes a joke in order to '[keep] down his terror' (45).⁷⁴ Scrooge may have the ability to sympathise which is seen in how he visualises someone other than himself and in his sensory and emotional responses to sound and voice, but he has yet to fulfil his potential. Scrooge's inability to feel the 'infernal atmosphere' enveloping Marley's Ghost and which manifests itself in the agitation of 'its hair, and skirts, and tassels [as though] by the hot vapour from an oven' (46-47) shows that he has yet to immerse himself fully in the world of someone else: for him, the 'infernal atmosphere' is an impenetrable barrier.

Marley's Ghost raises Scrooge's awareness of the importance of sensory and emotional responses in reading while also pointing out to him the moral message of his life which it directs Scrooge to relate to. It makes clear to Scrooge that its purpose is to warn him of the consequences of pursuing a life of self-interest so that he can 'escape [Marley's Ghost's] fate' (49-50) of interminable remorse in afterlife.

⁷⁴ In her essay "Feeling Dickensian Feeling", Mason notes that 'Unable to "feel", Scrooge is brutally woken into feeling by the Ghost's shaking of his chains' (Mason 47).

In declaring its sorrow, Marley's Ghost encourages Scrooge to sympathise with it but while Scrooge does respond emotionally to what it says, Scrooge's fear is caused by his witnessing the expression of intensely felt emotion and by his realisation that he might, in the future, suffer in the same way:

“Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faltered [sic] Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water of the comprehensive ocean of my business!”

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

“At this time of the rolling year,” the spectre said, “I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode? Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me!*”

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly. (49)

Scrooge's faltering voice reveals his fear at recognising that, like Marley's Ghost, he has missed the opportunity to help others, especially the poor. When he 'quake[s] exceedingly', he experiences *his* own feelings and not those of remorse as would occur if Scrooge were to sympathise with Marley's Ghost in the way in which Gallagher defines as the 'process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own' (Gallagher 169). Having raised Scrooge's awareness of some of the significant

factors involved in reading, Marley's Ghost then guides him to a scene in which other spirits are suffering its fate of eternal remorse. It is a scene which it 'beckon[s] Scrooge to approach', clearly intending him to read what is shown although not by immersing himself in it: 'Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer' (52): to immerse oneself in this scene would be tantamount to experiencing the suffering which it wants Scrooge to avoid. By 'listening for a moment [before] join[ing] in the mournful dirge [and] floating out upon the bleak, dark night' (52), Marley's Ghost proves that its ability to immerse itself in this scene is due to its feeling the emotions of its fellow sufferers whose 'incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret, wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory' (52) are very like the anguished utterances that it has already made. It sympathises by hearing the emotions which it feels expressed in the sounds of voices; it 'join[s] in the mournful dirge' because it feels, for the same reasons as the spirits, the pain of despair. While Scrooge hears and fears the sounds of suffering, he cannot sympathise as Marley's Ghost does because he has not shared their experience. His inability to sympathise is shown in how he remains a spectator of the scene, 'look[ing] out' on to it from the vantage point of the window and using his senses of vision and hearing to read the scene outside (52). Scrooge senses in this scene what he has just sensed in the narrative told by Marley's Ghost whose restlessness and despair are felt also by 'phantoms, wandering hither and thither [...] and moaning as they [go]' (52) – their chains symbolising the constraint felt after death due to a life devoted to work and self-gain: 'one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle [...] crie[s] piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door step' (52) – this phantom, like Marley's Ghost, is forever and frustratingly unable to help others. The deduction made by the

narrator is also made by Scrooge who perceives accurately the meaning and moral message of this narrative scene: ‘The misery of them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever’ (52).

Marley’s Ghost hears its voice in this narrative scene as Scrooge will hear his in the scenes of his past, present and future when he feels emotion that will transform him into a sympathetic man. Each scene will be presented by a spirit who will guide his reading, enabling him to sympathise with his other selves through sensory response. The First Spirit makes a dramatic entrance into Scrooge’s chamber at the appointed time of one o’clock in the morning, with ‘light flash[ing] up in the room upon the instant’ (54) as it draws aside the ‘curtains of his bed’ (54). Scrooge comes ‘face to face with the unearthly visitor’ (54) whose strange appearance attracts his attention just as the reader is drawn to the narrator’s performance in *A Christmas Carol*. The Spirit is fascinating for its contradictions: it looks ‘like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man’; ‘its hair [...] [is] white as if with age; and yet the face [has] not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom [is] on the skin’ while it ‘[holds] a branch of fresh green holly in its hand [yet has] its dress trimmed with summer flowers’ (54-55). What especially captures Scrooge’s attention is the ‘bright, clear jet of light’ that ‘[springs] from the crown of its head’ making visible to him each distinguishing feature of its body – and its ‘[fluctuating] [...] distinctness,’ appearing as ‘now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body’ (54-55). The Spirit wants its body to be seen by Scrooge – in its entirety, illuminated by light – and indistinctly and fleetingly as one part comes into view before transforming itself into another. Scrooge responds to the Spirit – as the reader does to the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* and as Dickens’s auditors react to him as Reader – by being

constantly aware of its physical presence even when it tries to disappear. The Spirit may fade partially out of sight but it reappears as ‘distinct and clear as ever’ (55) and, in so doing, makes plain to Scrooge that it will be forever present to him as one who will – as is symbolised by the light emanating from its head and ‘lustrous belt’ (55) – enlighten him.

The First Spirit is physically present to Scrooge as it helps him to feel again. From the moment when he ‘[finds] himself face to face with the unearthly visitor’ (54) as it ‘draw[s] aside [...] the curtains of his bed’ (54), Scrooge feels its closeness to him as it guides his reading of the scenes of his past. Scrooge has the Spirit at his side, indicating to him the significant features of each scene and monitoring his responses to them, and is only sometimes momentarily unaware of it in his absorption in the scenes he views – such as the Fezziwig Ball towards the end of which he ‘[becomes] conscious that [the Spirit is] looking full upon him’ (64) and after which he ‘and the Ghost again [stand] side by side in the open air’ (65). The Spirit makes Scrooge even more aware of its physical presence when, before their journey begins, it ‘clasp[s] him gently by the arm’ (56) and leads him into ‘an open country road’ (56) – the first scene of his past. ‘Its gentle touch, though [...] light and instantaneous’ (57) has a powerful effect on Scrooge, ‘[appearing long afterwards] still present to [his] sense of feeling’ (57) and stimulates other sensory responses: Scrooge becomes ‘conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long long forgotten’ (57). The Spirit reawakens Scrooge’s senses and raises his awareness of feeling emotion just as, immediately before this episode, it offers him emotional support by placing its hand on his heart (57), promising Scrooge that its touch will uphold him more than the robe to which it clings. Here, the significance of the

Spirit's words, "Bear but a touch of my hand *there* [...] and you shall be upheld in more than this!" (57) is seen in their relevance to the narrator of *A Christmas Carol*: the Spirit's physical contact with Scrooge relates to the narrator's wish to be visualised as being physically present to his imaginary auditors, while its verbal communication with Scrooge is shown in how the narrator invites his 'auditors' to imagine him as an oral storyteller who is *telling* them his story. When the narrator confides in the reader that, on first meeting the Spirit, Scrooge is 'as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow' (54), he reinforces this comparison between them: both remain close to their readers as they guide them to read by feeling.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The analogy between Scrooge's experience of viewing the scenes of his life and the reader's response to the narrative scenes described by the narrator has been discussed by various literary critics. In his article, "Dickens Time and Again", Robert Patten notes that 'our senses respond to his voice as Scrooge does to the Ghosts, and we respond to the story he tells as Scrooge does to the times which the Ghosts present' (Patten 170). In *The Sense of an Audience. Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot at Mid-Century*, Janice Carlisle argues that 'The narrator is to the reader what the Spirits are to Scrooge. [...] Like the presences in Scrooge's bedchamber, the voice of the story attends the reader "in the spirit". The tie between character and reader springs, therefore, from their similar relation to a narrating presence'. She concludes that 'The process which the miser undergoes, therefore, can be a process which reading his story will invite the reader to experience. [...] Scrooge acquires a new power of vision, one which the reader is asked to adopt' (Carlisle 46).

The Spirit leads Scrooge to scenes which evoke in him strong emotional responses. As they move along the country road and encounter the 'jocund travellers' recognised by Scrooge from his youth, Scrooge feels the joy which they feel at Christmas time and which they express 'to each other, until the broad fields [are] so full of merry music, that the crisp air [laughs] to hear it' (57). Scrooge is 'rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them' (57) and 'filled with gladness' to hear them (57): his senses stimulated, he feels emotion. Scrooge feels emotion physically: his 'cold eye glisten[s]' and 'his heart leap[s] up' as the boys go past him just as, on first finding himself in this scene, his "'lip [...] trembl[es]'" and there is something (no doubt a tear) [...] upon [his] cheek'" as the Spirit points out to him and which, 'with an unusual catching in his voice' (57), he attempts to deny. Prompted by the Spirit's statement, "'The school is not quite deserted [...] A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still'" (57), Scrooge sobs at the memory of his loneliness as a school boy left alone at school during the holiday. The Spirit takes him to 'the melancholy room' (58) where, as 'a lonely boy', he is 'reading near a feeble fire' and weeps 'to see his poor forgotten self' (58). The sounds of the house – the 'echo', the 'squeak and scuffle from the mice', the 'drip from the half-thawed water-spout', 'the sigh [of a] despondent poplar' and the 'clicking in the fire' – all '[fall] upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence, and [give] a freer passage to his tears' (58), revealing again – as he does in his response to Marley's Ghost – his sensitivity to sound which makes him feel and express emotion. Having aroused Scrooge's senses by its touch, the Spirit leads Scrooge into a scene in which he immerses himself with his senses and emotions – 'considered sensing', as Brennan states, being 'the process of feeling that [...] operates [...] as the gateway to emotional response' (Brennan 94). As the narrator directs the reader to a specific feature of the scene that will evoke in

her an emotional response, so the Spirit ‘[touches Scrooge] on the arm, and point[s] to his younger self, intent upon his reading’ (58). Scrooge ‘exclaims in ecstasy’ (58) when he sees again the characters that, as a young boy, he imagines when reading ‘Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves’ from *The Arabian Nights*: Ali Baba appears first, ‘Suddenly [...] in foreign garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: [standing] outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, [and] leading an ass laden with wood by the bridle’ (58).⁷⁶ As his ‘heightened and excited face’ (59) reveals, Scrooge is exhilarated by what he sees and feels emotion so intensely that, in a ‘most extraordinary voice’ (59), he partly laughs and cries. It is unusual, says the narrator, for Scrooge to express emotion in such an unrestrained manner just as it is for him to change suddenly from feeling joy when he exclaims “‘Halloa! Hoop! Halloo!’” to feeling sorrow when he cries ‘in pity for his former self’ (59). This scene is one which foregrounds Scrooge as reader: his former self is absorbed in the imaginary world of his book while, as ‘reader’, Scrooge immerses himself imaginatively and emotionally in this entire ‘narrative’ scene.⁷⁷ The Spirit notices the effect which feeling emotion has on his ‘reader’, Scrooge: as Dickens intended for the readers of the *Carol*, Scrooge begins to think of doing good for others:

⁷⁶ As Slater explains in his notes to the text, as a child Dickens was an avid reader of *The Arabian Nights* while throughout his life he ‘retained a great love of these stories and his writings contain numerous allusions to them’ (*A Christmas Carol* 269).

⁷⁷ In *A Sense of an Audience*, Carlisle argues that Dickens’s portrayal of ‘Scrooge’s younger self as a reader’ emphasises the comparison between Scrooge and the reader of *A Christmas Carol* which is made by various literary critics.

“What is the matter?” asked the Spirit.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge. “Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that’s all.”

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, “Let us see another Christmas!” (59)

The thought of giving money to the carol singer comes from the ‘pity [he feels] for his former self’ (59): Scrooge is sympathising with himself in the sense of feeling ‘tenderness and concern aroused by the suffering and misfortune of another’ (*OED*) as opposed to experiencing ‘someone else’s emotion [as] our own’ (Gallagher 169). Other than by feeling again the joy he felt as a boy when reading *The Arabian Nights*, Scrooge’s emotional immersion in the entire scene is limited to how he feels about the boy’s suffering: he feels sorrow *for* the lonely boy rather than his loneliness. In his response to the Fezziwig Ball, however, there is more evidence to indicate that Scrooge is sympathising with his former self in the way in which Gallagher describes. While Scrooge immerses himself in this scene with the same enthusiasm as when he imagines the characters from *The Arabian Nights* – ‘His heart and soul [are] in the scene and with his former self [as he] corroborat[es], rememb[ers] and enjoy[s] everything’ (64) – his undergoing the ‘strangest agitation’ (64) indicates that this scene is having a more profound effect on him than the previous one. Scrooge’s mind is unsettled by what he has seen in a similar way to how Poulet’s is when, by assuming ‘any feeling proposed to [him]’ within the narrative he reads, ‘mental objects rise up from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition’ (Poulet 57): when Poulet sympathises by feeling the feeling as his own (Gallagher

169), he realises the thoughts and emotions that have lain deep within his mind.

Scrooge's response to the Spirit's expressing what are presumably Scrooge's current views about the Fezziwig Ball proves that he has sympathised with the 'character' from the 'narrative' he 'reads', because he assumes the voice of his former self:

“A small matter,” said the Ghost, “to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.”

“Small!” echoed Scrooge.

[...]

“Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?”

“It isn't that,” said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. “It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”
(64)

By feeling again the pleasure he felt at the Fezziwig Ball, Scrooge states what he has always known but which has, like Poulet's 'mental objects', remained submerged in his consciousness: that making people happy through acts of benevolence is worth more than giving them money. Scrooge has read the moral message and, as with his response to the previous scene, thinks of the kind deeds that he might have done for his clerk:

“What is the matter?” asked the Ghost.

“Nothing particular,” said Scrooge.

“Something, I think?” the Ghost insisted.

“No,” said Scrooge, “No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That’s all.” (64)

The authority asserted by the Spirit over Scrooge through insisting on a response from him is also exercised by the actual narrator over the reader when he instructs her to accept the fact that ‘Marley was dead’ which ‘must be distinctly understood or nothing wonderful can come of the story [he] is going to relate’ (33). The declarative statement used here confirms his authority as storyteller imparting information to his reader and is used to the same effect by the Spirit when introducing the next scene: ““They have no consciousness of us”” (57), he explains with reference to the ‘jocund travellers’ (57). Both the narrator and the Spirit want their readers to understand their narratives and the Spirit observes Scrooge closely to check whether he has registered the moral message of each scene: the Spirit’s asking Scrooge ““What is the matter?”” followed by ““Something, I think?”” (64) prompts Scrooge to prove that he has. The narrator and the Spirit direct their readers to note the significant details of the scene and, like the narrator, the Spirit makes explicit its moral message: for example, after the scene where Scrooge’s sister, Fanny, comes to take him away from the school forever, the Spirit’s statement that ““she had a large heart!”” (61) makes clear to Scrooge the importance of feeling for others. Like the narrator, the Spirit also focusses the reader’s attention on expressions of emotion, illuminating with its light and making sparkle the tears in the eyes of Scrooge’s fiancée as she speaks to him of her sadness about his obsession with money (65). As the Spirit intends for its ‘reader’ (and as the narrator intends for his), Scrooge expresses *his* emotions in response to this scene which are felt intensely:

“Spirit!” said Scrooge, “show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?”

“One shadow more!” exclaimed the Ghost.

“No more!” cried Scrooge. “No more. I don’t wish to see it. Show me no more!”

But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next. (65-66)

Scrooge cannot bear to feel feelings which he finds intolerably distressing but this is exactly what the Spirit wants for him and, by asserting its authority with physical force, makes him see his former fiancée celebrating Christmas with her family. Scrooge reacts to this scene of domestic happiness by feeling a strong sense of regret at not having married and become a father which he expresses in tears that dim his sight and break his voice (68). He cannot “bear it” and instructs the Spirit to “remove [him] from this place” (68) but the Spirit’s authority remains indomitable, manifesting itself in the form of the light which, at all times, emanates from it and which, in this instance, ‘burn[s] high and bright’ (70). Try as he might, Scrooge cannot extinguish the light which ‘stream[s] from under [the cap] in an unbroken flood upon the ground’ (70), symbolising the powerful influence that it has had in enlightening Scrooge. In the presence of the Spirit, Scrooge has, through feeling, realised what he has always known and felt – an insight that is symbolised by ‘the light upon [the Spirit’s] head [which] burn[s] very clear’ (64) when Scrooge sympathises with his former self at the Fezziwig Ball. By its light, the Spirit communicates subtly how Scrooge is learning from the scenes it presents to him and while there is no evidence to suggest that Scrooge is receptive to the meaning of this

form of non-verbal communication (Scrooge only ‘dimly connect[s] it with [the Spirit’s] influence over him’ [70]), he is responsive to the other ways in which the Spirit communicates with him without speaking. When the Spirit ‘touch[es] him on the arm, and points to his younger self, intent upon his reading’ (58), Scrooge looks at the characters from *The Arabian Nights*, and when it ‘sign[s] to him to listen to the two apprentices’ (64), he obeys. Unlike when it ‘clasp[s] him gently by the arm’ (56) and then touches Scrooge’s heart (56), the Spirit does not combine its actions with words and so is not, in this instance, completely representative of the narrator who, like the narrator of *A Christmas Carol*, can be imagined to be physically present as an oral storyteller communicating verbally with his auditors. Instead, its tacit communication with Scrooge represents the way in which the narrator conveys quietly his feelings about what he describes by allowing them to be inferred from the details he selects and focusses on rather than by stating them explicitly. While the Spirit does not communicate its emotion to Scrooge, it does establish with him the rapport that is required for this transferral of emotion from narrator to reader to take place which Dickens’s auditors experience when he communicates his emotions to them through his eyes, smile and tone of voice and when other ‘readers’ – for example, David Copperfield and Rosa Bud – sympathise with their ‘narrators’ who convey their feelings through the qualities of their voice or through the music they play. The Spirit’s rapport with Scrooge is seen in how it reads Scrooge’s thoughts and feelings as when, having informed him that it is there for the sake of Scrooge’s “welfare”, the Spirit perceives that he objects to this proposal and so offers an alternative: “Your reclamation, then” (56), while, following the scene of the Fezziwig Ball, the Spirit sees that he is troubled which Scrooge confirms by admitting regretfully that he “should like to be able to say a word or two to [his]

clerk just now! That's all'" (64). The Spirit uses its sense of sight when reading Scrooge, just as Scrooge uses his when, before the door opens to reveal his sister, Fanny, arriving to take Scrooge home from school, he looks at the Spirit as though seeking a reaction from it and in order to convey his feelings of sadness by 'a mournful shaking of his head' (59) in anticipation of another scene where he is alone. The rapport established between them occurs through sensory response to each other but not by *sympathising* with each other through sensory response, so when Scrooge first hears the 'soft and gentle' and 'singularly low' (55) voice of the Spirit, he may, as David does when he responds to Agnes's voice, sense its qualities, but there is no 'thrill' (unlike in *David Copperfield* where it expresses Agnes's earnestness) to 'touch a chord within' him (*David Copperfield* 374). However, the Spirit's 'gentle touch' (57), while not expressing its emotion, does enable Scrooge to remember the thoughts and feelings that he once had as other 'readers' recall theirs when they hear the sound of their 'narrators'' feelings: the 'chord' touched within David by the 'thrill' in Agnes's voice signifies the moment when David's consciousness is stirred and, as Poulet experiences, 'mental objects rise up from [its depths] into the light of recognition' (Poulet 57).

Through its silent communication with Scrooge, the Spirit represents the way in which the unobtrusive narrator allows the reader to hear her own voice when she immerses herself in a narrative scene, as Scrooge does when he sympathises with his former self at the Fezziwig Ball. The Spirit quietly and unobtrusively stands beside Scrooge who is so absorbed in his reading that he momentarily forgets that his 'narrator' is there until he becomes 'conscious that it [is] looking full upon him' (64). Like the narrative voice sometimes found in Dickens's writings, the Spirit presents Scrooge with scenes for him to read with minimal narratorial intrusion: the Spirit

refrains from voicing its views about what is shown and allows Scrooge to feel his own feelings. By asking Scrooge whether he remembers the way, the Spirit permits him to explore the scene and to feel emotion in response to what he senses while it remains a discreet presence at his side, offering only one brief explanatory statement as guidance: ““These are the shadows of the things that have been. [...] They have no consciousness of us””(57). The Spirit provides its ‘reader’ with factual information intended to focus his attention on the details of the ‘narrative’ scene rather than on the Spirit’s performance as ‘narrator’ as would occur if it were to express strongly felt emotion. The Spirit may speak dispassionately about the subject matter of each scene but the succinctness with which it describes the significant feature to be noted and its use of emotive language have the immediate effect of making Scrooge feel and express emotion:

“The school is not quite deserted,” said the Ghost. “A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed. (57)

The Spirit’s words prepare Scrooge to read the next scene by focussing on the image of himself as ‘a lonely boy [...] reading near a feeble fire’ (58) to which he responds with the same strength of feeling as before: ‘Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be’ (58). The Spirit’s unobtrusiveness is what distinguishes its ‘narratorial’ style – or the way in which it guides Scrooge to read the scenes it presents to him – from that of the Second Spirit who asserts its physical presence with vigour and who expresses its emotion with passion.

The sheer size of the Second Spirit ensures that Scrooge will notice it when, on entering the room, he beholds ‘a jolly Giant’ sitting ‘in easy state upon [a] couch [...] glorious to see’ (72). The Spirit’s clothes emphasise its huge stature: the ‘ample folds’ of the ‘deep green robe’ (74) indicate the capaciousness of the garment and of the ‘breast’ which is visible beneath it. The costume itself attracts attention to the Spirit: a ‘simple deep green robe, or mantle’ (74), it is as striking in its single colour as is the First Spirit’s ‘tunic of the purest white’ (55) each of which is complemented by a contrasting material: a border of ‘white fur’ (74) for the robe and ‘summer flowers’ for the tunic. In the same way as the First Spirit illuminates itself with its ‘jet of light’ (55), the Second Spirit ensures that Scrooge observes every detail of its physical appearance with the aid of the ‘glowing torch’ (72) which also sheds light on its surroundings and on Scrooge. Light shines on articles of their clothing so that the ‘lustrous belt’ (55) of the First Spirit and the ‘shining icicles’ (74) which intertwine the ‘holly wreath’ (74) worn by the Second, attract Scrooge’s attention to the items themselves and to their wearers. However, whereas the First Spirit silently presents itself to Scrooge as the ‘curtains of his bed [are] drawn aside’ (54), the Second Spirit commands him to “‘Look upon [it]!’” (74), more forcefully making its physical presence known to Scrooge as it does throughout their journey into the scenes of Christmas Present. Scrooge sees how active the Spirit is within the scene, restoring ‘good humour’ to the angry ‘dinner-carriers who [have] jostled each other’ by shedding ‘a few drops of water on them’ from its torch (77) and making the ‘lamp-lighter [...] laugh out loudly’ (85) by its ‘outpouring’ of ‘harmless mirth’ (84). While the Spirit remains invisible to the revellers and lamp-lighter, each feels the effect of its powerful presence as it stands or passes close to them, its benevolence affecting all whom it approaches, as is also seen when the Spirit [stands] beside sick

beds, and they [are] cheerful; on foreign lands, and they are close at home; by struggling men, and they [are] patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it [is] rich' (91). The Spirit exults in being able to contribute to the joy felt by those celebrating Christmas by being physically present within the scene, 'bar[ing] its breadth of breast, open[ing] its capacious palm, and float[ing] on, outpouring, with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach!' (84) – a Spirit who, like the narrator of *A Christmas Carol*, wants its reader to notice it and what it can do. That Scrooge is aware of his 'narrator's' skills is evident in how he wonders at how the Spirit is able to 'accommodate [itself] to any place with ease [...] [standing] beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature, as it is possible [it] could have done in any lofty hall' (78) – a 'power' which, as the narrator suggests, the Spirit may have felt 'pleasure [...] in showing off' (98).

Scrooge depends upon the Spirit's being physically present in order to immerse himself in each scene: as he does when with the First Spirit, Scrooge holds onto the Spirit's robe for support as it leads him into places where people are celebrating Christmas, moving swiftly with him over sea and land (85) and travelling far and wide (91). The Spirit is, as the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* can be imagined to be, a mobile physical presence within the 'narrative' scene which stays as close to Scrooge as the First Spirit does and as the narrator claims he is to the reader (54). While each Spirit moves with Scrooge, the Second Spirit's more dynamic and adventurous journeys reflect the energy with which the narrator can be imagined to be relating events such as the Fezziwig Ball – an energy which is seen also in the Spirit's active role in affecting those of *his* 'narrative'. As I have discussed, the narrator is a lively and gregarious storyteller who invites his readers to imagine him to be telling his tale, emphasising his physical presence by his verbal interaction with

them as 'auditors'. By communicating verbally with Scrooge, the Second Spirit illustrates clearly how the narrator asserts its physical presence and invites intimacy with his 'auditors'. The Spirit welcomes Scrooge with words, inviting him to "Come in! and know [it] better . . .!" (72) and unreservedly offers information about itself: "I am the Ghost of Christmas Present" (74) it says, before instructing Scrooge to look at it and to react to what he sees: "You have never seen the like of me before!" (74) it exclaims, to which Scrooge replies, "Never" (74). The Spirit is keen to converse with Scrooge, encouraging him to speak by asking him questions which, in turn, prompt Scrooge to ask his own:

"Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?" pursued the Phantom.

"I don't think I have," said Scrooge. I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?"

"More than eighteen hundred," said the Ghost. (74)

The Spirit responds quickly to Scrooge's question, imparting information as it also does in order to raise its 'reader's' awareness of the moral and social message of the 'narrative' scene: the suffering and neediness of the poor. Having seen the Spirit sprinkle incense on the poor revellers' dinners, Scrooge questions it:

"Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

“To any kindly given. To a poor one most.”

“Why to a poor one most?” asked Scrooge.

“Because it needs it most.” (77)

In answering his question, the Spirit is teaching Scrooge as it does when addressing him with the strength of feeling also felt and expressed by the narrator. The narrator’s vehement description of Ignorance and Want is complemented by the Spirit’s fervent warning to Scrooge to ““Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!” cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. “Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And bide the end!”” (94). The Spirit speaks as persuasively as the narrator, also using rhetorical techniques such as emotive language, declarative statements, exclamatory sentences and the imperative in order to enforce its point that Scrooge (and his fellow citizens) have a responsibility for the welfare of children who are uneducated, starving and extremely poor. Like the narrator, the Spirit wants its ‘reader’ to feel emotion as strongly as it does about the suffering of the poor – feeling which is expressed here and on revealing the foot or, as Scrooge perceives it, ““claw”” which ““protru[des] from [its] skirts””: ““It might be a claw for the flesh there is upon it,” was the Spirit’s sorrowful reply’ (92). Scrooge’s question, ““Have they no refuge or resource?”” (94) proves that, having been ‘appalled’ (92) by what he has witnessed and moved by the Spirit’s words, he is now thinking of helping those less fortunate than himself – thinking that leads to further reflection on his former values when the Spirit ‘turn[s] on him for the last time with his own words’: ““Are there no prisons?” [...] Are there no workhouses?”” (94).

The Spirit's expression of emotion has the intended effect of evoking an emotional response in Scrooge as well as drawing attention to the physical presence of a feeling and animated being which is how we are also able to imagine the narrator when 'listening' to his passionately felt addresses. By 'stretching out its hand towards the city' (94) in order to indicate those politicians who have been delaying reforming legislation for the education of the poor, the Spirit expresses its anger with a gesture similar to those that the reader imagines the narrator to use and which Dickens adopts when physically present before his auditors as Reader. The passion felt by the Spirit when challenging politicians to 'deny' the truth about the outcome of 'Doom' (94) which awaits the impoverished (94) is also evident in the Spirit's response to Scrooge's question about whether Tiny Tim will live:

"Man," said the Ghost, "if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!"
(82)

Again, the Spirit's use of the imperative, emotive language, rhetorical questions and exclamatory sentences convey its strength of feeling, the force of which is felt by Scrooge who 'bend[s] before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling, cast[s] his eyes upon the ground' (82), showing the physical signs of fear and remorse revealed also when Scrooge '[hangs] his head [when] hear[ing] his own words [about the poor dying and "decreas[ing] the surplus population"] quoted by the Spirit [and is] overcome with penitence and grief' (82). The Spirit is performing with words as it is

with actions and it is to each of these performances that Scrooge responds as ‘reader’. When the Spirit brings ‘from the foldings of its robe [...] two children [who are] wretched, abject, frightful, hideous and miserable’ (92), Scrooge sees the tangible evidence of the Spirit’s and narrator’s moral message about the pitiful neglect of children who are poor – a sight so shocking that it renders him speechless. The narrator’s statement that the Cratchits were happy because of their love for one another rather than for material wealth is enforced by the Spirit when it makes them ‘[look] happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit’s torch’ (84). The Spirit complements with actions the words that it and the narrator have spoken, enabling Scrooge to see as well as hear the point they make: to sense the meaning of the scene. That Scrooge has learnt to identify the moral message from what he senses and to feel emotion as a result is clear from how, as the family fade from sight, he focusses his attention ‘especially on Tiny Tim, until the last’ (84) – the child who has prompted Scrooge to feel sympathy for the afflicted.⁷⁸

The Spirit’s physical presence plays a significant role in Scrooge’s education as ‘reader’: without its being there, Scrooge would not see scenes of those celebrating Christmas as he could be, just as the narrator’s virtual physical presence is essential for our imagining the narrative scene. Scrooge is shown families gathering and preparing for Christmas in homes with ‘roaring fires’, ‘hot plates baking through and through before the fire’ and ‘deep red curtains, ready to be drawn, to shut out cold

⁷⁸ In her introduction to *The Christmas Stories*, Ruth Glancy notes that ‘Readers of the Christmas Stories will find Scrooge recast in many forms when isolation, regret and a crippling sense of loss are turned into a greater capacity for compassion, often through the example of a child’ (Glancy xxii-xxiii).

and darkness' (84). These families are, like the Cratchits, happy in each other's company and as jovial as 'the people who [are] shovelling away on the housetops [...] full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball – better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest – laughing heartily if it [goes] right, and not less heartily if it [goes] wrong' (75). Those shovelling snow are as good-humoured as the Christmas shoppers who are 'all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they [tumble] up against each other at the door, clashing their wicker baskets wildly, and [leave] their purchases upon the counter, and [come] running back to fetch them, and [commit] hundreds of the like mistakes in the best humour possible' (76). Scrooge sees people, in many different locations, celebrating Christmas: miners '[join] in the chorus' of 'the old man[']s' 'Christmas song' (85), the men in the lighthouse '[wish] each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog' (86) while 'every man on board [the ship] [...] ha[s] a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year' (86). Everyone is in festive mood and Scrooge is reminded of how his reluctance to enjoy Christmas contrasts with his own family's joviality. Showing tolerance of Scrooge's ill-tempered rejection of the offer to join his family for Christmas dinner, Scrooge's nephew speaks forgivingly of his uncle's faults and expresses his determination to invite him every year nonetheless:

"I was going to say," said Scrooge's nephew, "that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure that he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him." (88)

This statement not only foregrounds Scrooge's nephew's generosity towards his uncle, but also provides a clear view for Scrooge to reflect upon of how pitiful his chosen lifestyle is: introspection and solitude contrast unfavourably with joyful conviviality. Proof that Scrooge has learned from these words is seen in his reaction to the music that follows: 'a simple little air', 'played well upon the harp' (89) by Scrooge's niece, makes Scrooge remember everything shown to him by the First Spirit and to think that 'if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindnesses of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley' (89): Scrooge realises that welcoming and performing acts of kindness would have brought him more happiness than leading a life devoted to work. Moreover, his nephew's claim that in "taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us [...] he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm" (88) is proven to be true because Scrooge enjoys participating imaginatively in the games played by his family, including that of 'How, When and Where' in which he becomes 'so engrossed [that] wholly forgetting in the interest he [has] in what [is] going on, that his voice [makes] no sound in their ears, he sometimes [comes] out with his guess quite loud, and very often [guesses] quite right, too' (90). By its physical activity within each scene, the Spirit shows Scrooge how to act benevolently towards those less fortunate than himself at Christmas time, providing an example for him to follow of the 'active sympathy' which Dickens believed in and of the 'feelings and sympathies [...] evoked by the annual holiday' which, as George Stott states, Dickens wanted his readers to adopt as 'the ruling principles of life'.⁷⁹ 'The sight of [the] poor revellers [...] interest[s] the

⁷⁹ In a letter addressed to Miss Emmely Gotschalk on 1st February 1850, Dickens advises her that 'In every human existence, however quiet or monotonous, there is

Spirit' (77) – as it should Scrooge – and the Spirit helps them by 'sprink[ling] incense on their dinners from [its] torch' (77). The Spirit brings peace to the dinner-carriers who have exchanged 'angry words' by 'shed[ding] a few drops of water on them from [this torch]' (77) and is generous in giving the joy that it feels to those it encounters (84) and in providing hope for the suffering (91). Dickens's message about the Christmas spirit is revealed also in the Spirit's physical appearance where geniality, openness and joy are seen in 'its capacious breast [which is] bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice', its 'dark brown curls [which are] long and free: free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheerful voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air' (74), while the Spirit's wish to be at peace with people is evident in its 'antique scabbard [which has] no sword [...] in it, and [where] the ancient sheath [is] eaten up with rust' (74).

Encouraged by having 'learnt a lesson' from the First Spirit 'which is working now' (74), Scrooge is keen to learn from the Second, instructing it when they first meet that "'if [it has] ought to teach [him to] let [him] profit by it'" (74) which, as his

range enough for active sympathy and cheerful usefulness' and instructs her to 'Come out into the world about [her], be it either wide or limited. Sympathise, not in thought only, but in action, with all about [her]' (*Letters* 6: 25). In "Charles Dickens", *Contemporary Review*, dated January 1869, George Stott writes of Dickens's message about Christmas that 'Mr Dickens sets himself to preach; the feelings and sympathies supposed to be evoked by the annual holiday are to be the ruling principles of life, the model keeper of Christmas, our guide and example. Joviality and high living; benevolence, good humour, and good fellowship – sic itur ad astra' (*The Critical Heritage* 500).

responses to what he is shown reveal, he does. By the time Scrooge encounters the Last Spirit, he recognises the mistakes that he has made in life and has, as Audrey Jaffe states, ‘become an accomplished reader [who] knows he should seek some meaning, as well as his own image, in these scenes, and [...] does so with confidence’ (“Spectacular Sympathy” 260). Scrooge also by now recognises the Spirit as one who will guide him to read the scenes it presents to him and expresses his willingness to be led by one whose “purpose is to do [him] good” (96). Scrooge directs the Spirit to “Lead on” (96), following its direction to note the significant aspects of each scene and referring to the Spirit for an explanation of what he sees: for example, the relevance to Scrooge of the ‘little knot of business men’ (97) who are discussing disinterestedly the death of a colleague (96-97). The Spirit communicates clearly and silently with Scrooge using its ‘outstretched hand’ (95) and, in particular, its finger to point to the pertinent place which Scrooge focusses on as closely as he tracks the movement of the finger when ‘he read[s] upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE’ (108) and understands completely when the ‘finger point[s] from the grave to him, and back again’ (108) that this is his grave. Scrooge is receptive to the Spirit’s non-verbal communication with him through which it conveys its strength of purpose – in response to which Scrooge feels emotion strongly – and feeling. He reads in the ‘steady hand’ (102) and ‘unmoved finger’ (103) which point unrelentingly to the head of the concealed corpse, the Spirit’s determination that he should remove the cover and discover whose it is: “I understand you [...] and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power,” Scrooge remonstrates (103). The Spirit’s usually steadfast hand, used functionally in directing Scrooge, becomes one which expresses emotion in response to that felt by Scrooge, ‘appear[ing] to shake’ (108)

after Scrooge desperately tries to convince the Spirit that he ““will not be the man [he] must have been but for this intercourse”” (108). As the ‘*kind hand [which] tremble[s]*’ (110 my italics) reveals, the Spirit sympathises with Scrooge, feeling the fear felt by him on realising that the covered corpse is his as well as Scrooge’s desperate hope that he ““may change these shadows [it has] shown [him], by an altered life!”” (110). The Spirit sympathises with Scrooge by sensing the emotion seen in Scrooge’s trembling body (108), reading his non-verbal expression of feeling in addition to his words and while Scrooge does not sympathise with the Spirit by feeling its feelings, his reading of the Spirit’s non-verbal communication with him indicates their rapport. Scrooge understands what the Spirit is communicating to him through the use of its body: that the apparent ‘[inclination of] its head’ (95), which Scrooge senses is happening beneath its garment, is a nod of assent to his question about whether its purpose is to show him scenes of the future and ‘dread[s] that he [sees] new meaning in its solemn shape’ when it ‘point[s] down to’ one of the graves (108).

Like the First Spirit, the Last Spirit’s silent and non-verbal communication with Scrooge represents the way in which the unobtrusive narrator quietly conveys his feelings to the reader by allowing them to be inferred from the details on which he focusses the reader’s attention. The rapport established between the Last Spirit and Scrooge also occurs through sensory response and not, in general, through sympathy: as ‘narrator’, the Last Spirit does not communicate its emotion to Scrooge (his ‘reader’) non-verbally, as Dickens conveys his to the auditors of his Readings through his body and facial gestures and as other ‘narrators’ convey theirs through voice or music. It is, however, the Spirit’s silence and concealment – with the exception of its hand the Spirit is hidden from view – which make it most like the

unobtrusive narrator. The Spirit is ‘shrouded in a deep black garment, which conceal[s] its head, its face, its form and [leaves] nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand [without which] it would [be] difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it [is] surrounded’ (95). It blends into its surroundings, effacing itself as does the unobtrusive narrator when he describes a narrative scene and in contrast with the First and Second Spirits (especially the Second) each of which draws attention to its physical presence within the scene, emitting light rather than the ‘gloom and mystery’ scattered by the Last Spirit ‘in the very air through which [it] move[s]’ (95). When Scrooge and the Spirit ‘scarcely [seem] to enter the city; for the city rather seem[s] to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act’ (96), the Spirit illustrates the ease with which the unobtrusive narrator enables the reader to immerse herself imaginatively in a narrative scene. The Spirit’s quietness allows Scrooge to feel emotion and to use and explore his mind without, as Easson describes, ‘the agitation of response to a mediating observer’s emotions’ (Easson 19): the Last Spirit, like the unobtrusive narrator – and, as I have noted, sometimes the First Spirit – does not express its feelings about what it describes. While Scrooge feels emotion strongly in response to the scenes shown to him by the First and Second Spirits, those presented to him by the Last Spirit elicit especially intense and unpleasant feelings. Scrooge feels ‘horror’, ‘detestation’ and ‘disgust’ (102) when he sees and hears the ‘charwoman’, ‘laundress’ and ‘undertaker’s man’ (99) discussing disdainfully the deceased man whose possessions they have pillaged to be pawned. He ‘shudder[s] from head to foot’ (102), physically shaken by the realisation that “‘The case of this unhappy man might be [his own as his] life tends that way, now’” (102) and ‘recoil[s] in terror’ on seeing the corpse (102). Scrooge is ‘quite agonised’ (103) by the disrespect and

indifference shown towards the deceased and begs the Spirit to find someone ““who feels emotion caused by this man’s death”” (103) but, to his dismay, ‘The only emotion that the Ghost [can] show him [...] [is] one of pleasure’ (104): Caroline and her husband have lost their ‘merciless [...] creditor’ (104). Scrooge thinks while in the silent presence of the Spirit: as it stands ‘quiet and dark’ (98) beside him, he sets out to uncover the meaning of the scenes in which city workers discuss their deceased colleague. Now accustomed to interpreting the scenes presented to him, Scrooge begins to ‘consider’ the significance of the conversations that he has heard, ‘feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose’ (97) and ‘latent moral for his own improvement [...] and resolv[ing] to treasure up every word he hear[s], and everything he [sees]; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it appear[s]’ (98). While Scrooge searches for his presence in these scenes, he fails to read the relevance of his absence which he attributes to how he ‘had been revolving in his mind a change of life’ (98) rather than to his death. It is only when he hears the charwoman refer to the miserly and solitary life led by the man who had nobody to ““look after him when he was struck with Death”” (100) and then justify her taking of his bed-curtains, blankets and shirt with the conclusion that ““He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead!”” (102) that Scrooge begins to see himself in the scene.

Scrooge is now aware of the relevance of the events of the ‘narrative’ scene to his own life and becomes increasingly fearful of the discovery that he is the dead man. In the ensuing scene, Scrooge finds himself ‘almost touch[ing]’ the bed where the corpse lies ‘beneath a ragged sheet’ which is ‘so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge’s part would have disclosed the face’ (102) but which, while he ‘[thinks] of it, [feels] how easy it

would be to do, and [longs] to do it [...] [has] no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side' (102). Scrooge is frozen with fear and the terror he feels on entering and throughout the scene has not abated by the time he is ready to leave, as his plea to the Spirit proves: "'Spirit!' he said, 'this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!'" (103). The room is a "'fearful place'" because of what it suggests rather than reveals: while it is not, at this stage, confirmed whose body lies beneath the sheet, details such as the 'bare, uncurtained bed' and 'ragged sheet' (102) confirm the charwoman's account of how she took the bed-curtains and blanket belonging to the miser as its body lay 'plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept [and] uncared for' (102). Scrooge's interpretation of these visual clues leaves him in no doubt of the fact that this is the corpse of the "'wicked old screw'" (100) referred to by the charwoman which, as he has already acknowledged, might very well be his. The 'secret impulse' (102) which compels Scrooge to '[glance] round' what is, presumably, a bedchamber, 'anxious to know what kind of room it [is]' (102) is in response to his growing suspicion that this is the scene of his death. Scrooge is, however, frustrated in his attempt to confirm this: the room is 'very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy' (102), while he lacks the 'power to withdraw the veil' (102) in order to see the face. Through his sense of sight, Scrooge only partially reads the scene which, while it stimulates his thoughts, imagination and emotions – Scrooge '[*thinks*] of [uncovering the face], [*feels*] how easy it would be to do, and [*longs*] to do it' (102 my italics) – remains a mystery to him. The dusky room is as mysterious as the body of the Spirit which, concealed beneath the 'deep black garment' (95), is visible only by its shape and movements and which, like the body which lies beneath the sheet, frightens Scrooge. Scrooge is afraid of the unknown, of what he cannot see beneath the

surface, of the truth which awaits discovery: the scene is set to be read just as Scrooge's mind is waiting to be heard and the Spirit plays a pivotal part in both experiences of reading. Working closely with the features of the scene – just as the unobtrusive narrator merges almost imperceptibly with his narrative scene – the Spirit again directs Scrooge to what is significant for him to note as 'reader'. The Spirit takes Scrooge directly to the focal point of the scene – an action which is complemented by 'a pale light [which], rising in the outer air, [falls] straight upon the bed' (102). Just as the 'dumb' body 'announce[s] itself in awful language' (102), so the Spirit's 'steady hand' (102) and 'unmoved finger' (103) communicate clearly and forcibly to Scrooge its instruction to reveal the face of the corpse. As one silent voice, the body and the Spirit present Scrooge with a mysterious and evocative image which enables Scrooge to hear *his* own voice – the thoughts that have been unheard by him for some time:

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand WAS open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, Strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal! (102-3)

Scrooge knows that the man who has been respected in life for his generosity, sympathy and kindness towards others – essentially, he who was a man of feeling with a 'pulse' and a 'warm' and 'tender' heart to prove it – will be immortalised for

these deeds.⁸⁰ He understands the rewards for acts of kindness as well as the consequences of a life devoted to self-interest, as his subsequent thoughts reveal:

He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly.

He lay, in the dark, empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What *they* wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think. (103)

The outcome for the miser is abandonment in death: a body to be eaten by a cat and rats rather than a human being to be mourned and remembered for his kindness.

This dimly lit image, surrounded by darkness and mystery, provides Scrooge with the most illuminating reading experience when he rediscovers the moral values that he has always known and which contrast significantly with his present way of living. Hearing his voice is a moment of intense insight for Scrooge when the meaning of his life becomes apparent in what he now senses strongly is the room where *his* body lies. At this point, Scrooge identifies with, and, in a sense, sympathises with the body as he imagines himself to be uncared for in death. It is a 'moment of recognition' or 'anagnorisis' for Scrooge as 'reader' when 'ignorance gives way to knowledge' or, more specifically in Scrooge's case, 'mental objects [thoughts that

⁸⁰ 'Pulse' is used here to suggest that the man is feeling emotion. One of the definitions of 'pulse' is 'a throb or thrill of life, emotion, etc.' (*OED*).

are familiar to yet temporarily forgotten by him] rise up from the depths of consciousness' (Poulet 57) as Scrooge sees the result of a life led like his.⁸¹

As David Parker concludes, 'anagnorisis [...] is provoked by the contrast the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come displays to him: on the one hand the deathbed of Tiny Tim and the green burial plot, both sanctified by love; on the other the lonely deathbed and neglected grave that await Scrooge himself' (Parker 205). Scrooge is shown a death mourned by a family united in grief for their child whom they promise to remember with love and also respect for his exemplary qualities: "I know [says Bob to his children] that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was [...] we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it" to which his children respond unanimously, "No, never, father!" (107). Unlike those who show indifference to Scrooge's death and speak disparagingly of him, the Cratchits mourn the loss of their "little, little child" (103), their sorrow – expressed openly by Bob who '[breaks] down all at once' (106) when describing his visit to his son's grave – mixed with hope and joy in knowing that he will be immortalised in their hearts. In contrast with Tiny Tim's well-tended grave, Scrooge's deserted one shocks him into an awareness that he will be as forgotten in death as he was isolated in life and it is this knowledge that propels him into the benevolent acts of the final stave. Scrooge's suffering is extreme as the Spirit

⁸¹ *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines anagnorisis as 'a term used by Aristotle in *Poetics* to describe the moment of recognition (of truth) when ignorance gives way to knowledge. According to Aristotle, the ideal moment of anagnorisis coincides with peripeteia, or reversal of fortune' (Cuddon 38).

persistently confirms his death when Scrooge desperately beseeches it to state otherwise and promises that, having learnt the moral lesson of each scene, he 'will honour Christmas in [his] heart, and try to keep it all the year' (110). The distress felt in this final scene of his dreams is evident as he awakes, 'sobbing violently, [...] his face wet with tears' (111) and repeating his promise – now with the relief and gratitude he feels at having the opportunity to 'make amends' (111) – to embrace the Christmas spirit at all times. Buoyed by a newfound sense of optimism and this time overwhelmed by extremely strong feelings of happiness, Scrooge prepares to practise the lessons that he has been taught. As with his responses to the scenes of his dreams, Scrooge feels emotion physically: 'he [is] so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice [...] scarcely answer[s] to his call' (111); when he sends the turkey to the Cratchits 'the hand in which he [writes] the address [is] not a steady one' (113) while the 'chuckle[s] with which he [pays] for the Turkey and [...] the cab' (113) which will transport it to them as well as that 'with which he [recompenses] the boy, [are] only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he [sits] down breathless in his chair again, and chuckl[es] till he crie[s]' (113). Scrooge is 'splitting with a laugh' (113) when deciding to send the turkey to Bob Cratchit, feeling the physical effects of laughter as does his nephew when, 'laugh[ing] [...] heartily' about Scrooge's dismissal of Christmas as 'humbug', he 'hold[s] his sides, roll[s] his head, and twist[s] his face into the most extravagant contortions' (87) while during the 'Game called Yes and No' (90) he is 'so inexpressibly tickled, that he [is] obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp' (91). When Scrooge's nephew 'revel[s] in another laugh [...] it [is] impossible to keep the infection off; though the plump sister [tries] to do it with aromatic vinegar [and] his example is unanimously followed' (88) not only by those present within the scene

but, as Scrooge's laughter shows, by its 'reader'. Scrooge sees in his nephew's good-humoured tolerance of him the positive effect that laughter has in helping him and his family to accept his uncle's "ill whims" (87) as those which cause Scrooge to suffer but which should not cause them offence. They laugh about Scrooge in the same 'good-natured' way as does Scrooge's nephew, 'not much caring what they [laugh] at, so that they [laugh] at any rate' (88) and Scrooge's nephew 'encourag[es] them in their merriment' (89) as part of their joyous celebrations at Christmas time. Scrooge's nephew brings happiness to himself and to others through his acts of benevolence as Bob Cratchit confirms when he describes how, despite being relatively unacquainted with him, Scrooge's nephew had stopped him in the street to ask the cause of his distress, expressed his sorrow for the death of Tiny Tim and offered to help him. What Bob finds "quite delightful" (106) about Scrooge's nephew is not what "he might be able to do for [them], so much as [...] his kind way," (106), his sympathetic manner which, as Bob concludes, made it seem "as if he had known [their] Tiny Tim, and felt with [them]" (106).

Scrooge's nephew sympathises with Bob Cratchit in the way in which Gallagher defines as 'the process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own' (Gallagher 169) – he feels the sorrow felt by Bob as though he is him which is how, as G. K. Chesterton notes, Dickens sympathised with the poor: he did not pity [...] or [...] merely love the people; he was the people' (Chesterton 133). While Scrooge may not sympathise with the poor to the same extent as Dickens does, his shocked reaction to Ignorance and Want shows that he is capable of pitying them – of feeling 'concern aroused by the suffering or misfortune of another' (*OED*). The intense emotion he feels on realising their extreme deprivation and the mistake he has made in denying it, motivates him to help those who are suffering, including Bob Cratchit

whose needs he has so far neglected. With the ‘active sympathy’⁸² recommended by Dickens and demonstrated by the Second Spirit and Scrooge’s nephew, Scrooge sets about rectifying his wrongs through benevolent acts that will benefit Bob Cratchit materially and emotionally. Paying for and sending the poulterer’s largest “prize Turkey” (112) to Bob Cratchit’s address in Camden Town, for the ‘cab’ which takes it there and ‘recompens[ing] the boy’ who bought it (113) are acts which are executed with enthusiasm by Scrooge who also delights in informing him that he will “raise [his] salary, and endeavour to assist [his] struggling family” (116). What makes these acts of benevolence is the ‘charitable feeling’ (*OED*)⁸³ and, indeed, the *feeling* with which they are carried out. Scrooge is overcome with joy which, as I have noted, is felt physically by him: at the thought of sending the turkey to Bob Cratchit he ‘split[s] with a laugh’, ‘the hand with which he [writes] the address [is] not a steady one’ and he ‘[sits] down breathless in his chair’ (113) after chuckling about his good deeds. Scrooge is, as he promises the boy, “in earnest” (113) – he genuinely means what he says – and it is this earnestness which ‘[cannot] be mistaken’ when he wishes Bob Cratchit “A merrier Christmas [...] than [he has] given [him], for many a year!” (116). Scrooge feels again the Christmas spirit and makes others feel it too, inviting Bob to “discuss [his] affairs [that] very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop” (116) and welcoming him into his home. Scrooge wants to be with people and values highly their reciprocation of his sociability: greeting people in the streets on Christmas Day, ‘Scrooge regard[s]

⁸² See footnote 28 for further details.

⁸³ The full definition of benevolence is ‘the disposition to do good; kindness, generosity, charitable feeling (towards humankind at large). An act of kindness; a gift of money, a charitable contribution’ (*OED*).

everyone with a delighted smile [and] look[s] so irresistibly pleasant [...] that three or four good-humoured fellows [say], “Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!” (114) (Scrooge later describes their words as ‘the blithest’ of ‘sounds’ [114]), while he appreciates more than the offer of thanks for his charitable donation, the ‘portly gentleman’s’ (114) sincere promise that he will visit him: “I thank you fifty times. Bless you!”, Scrooge replies (114). He is keen to converse with people, initiating conversation with the boy in the street and remarking to himself that “It’s a pleasure to talk to him” (112-113), while he offers a polite salutation to the portly gentleman: “My dear sir [...] How do you do?” (114). Scrooge seeks physical contact with others, ‘taking the old gentleman by both his hands’ (114) as he later ‘pat[s] children on the head’ in the streets (115), communicating non-verbally messages of goodwill and feelings of happiness, just as the Second Spirit ‘outpour[s], with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach’ (84). Indeed, in many respects, Scrooge reveals what he has learnt from the Second Spirit whose willingness to interact with Scrooge is emulated by him in his encounters with those he meets in the streets on Christmas Day where, with the geniality and openness of the Second Spirit, he gives generously to others the joy that he feels. The Second Spirit’s wish to be at peace with everyone, symbolised by its empty scabbard, is also seen in how Scrooge asks the portly gentleman to pardon him for Scrooge’s rejection of his request for a donation to charity, and in how he makes amends with Bob Cratchit by helping his family and with Scrooge’s nephew by accepting his invitation to Christmas dinner. In each instance, Scrooge shows humility in changing his behaviour towards others and courage in admitting to the portly gentleman that the name, “Mr Scrooge”, “may not be pleasant to [him]” (114). Following the example of his nephew, Scrooge follows the rule of kindness

despite the difficulties this might, or does, entail: Scrooge feels a ‘pang across his heart [at the thought of] how this old gentleman [will] look upon him when they [meet]’ (114), just as his nephew – by being only slightly acquainted with Bob Cratchit – risks having his offer to help him rejected while his yearly invitation *is* dismissed by Scrooge. Scrooge understands the importance of kindness, recognising and praising the portly gentleman’s kind deeds (114), and feeling the happiness that he previously contemplated feeling as a result of his own.⁸⁴ Nothing can dampen Scrooge’s spirit as he re-enters the world as a man who has transformed into – or reclaimed his identity as – one who lives and feels for others and whose optimism is reflected in how he senses his surroundings: the ‘churches [ring] out the lustiest peals he [has] ever heard’ (112), there is ‘no fog, no mist [...] [but instead] Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air [and] merry bells’ (112).

As a result of the intense feelings evoked by the scenes of his dreams, Scrooge does exactly what Dickens wanted the readers of *A Christmas Carol* to do: he takes action to alleviate the suffering of the poor. As Dickens also wanted for his readers, Scrooge immerses himself in each ‘narrative’ scene by sympathising with its ‘characters’ – in Scrooge’s case, the main one – and so hears his own voice as he re-discovers the thoughts and emotions that have, for so long, been buried in his mind and heart. Also guided by various types of ‘narrative’ voice, David, like Scrooge, hears *his* own voice as he reads and writes the scenes of his life.

⁸⁴ See my earlier discussion of how Scrooge’s niece’s music makes him think of how ‘he might have cultivated the kindnesses of life for his own happiness’ (89).

Chapter Three

David Copperfield

As an unobtrusive ‘narrator’, Agnes Wickfield plays a central role in David’s development as ‘reader’: her quiet influence enables him to realise how he really thinks and feels. While Agnes leads David to self-discovery, in many respects Dora Spenlow misguides him, drawing his attention to her alluring physical appearance and manner, just as the typical Dickensian narrator – whom she represents – compels his reader to imagine his physical presence and to focus on his narrative style. The Dickensian narrator varies his performance as Dora demonstrates when, before dying, she tells David factually and unemotionally that they would always be unsuited as husband and wife and so speaks with the voice of the unobtrusive narrator when she expresses David’s innermost thoughts and feelings about their marriage. As I discuss in this chapter, it is the performance of unobtrusiveness that has a profound effect on David as ‘reader’ which is shown in David’s response to Agnes’s non-verbal communication of her emotion to him, especially when she does so through the sound of her voice. When David senses her emotion he sympathises with her by feeling her emotion as his own and, in so doing, discovers what lies deep within his own consciousness.

In this chapter, I therefore continue my discussion of the significance of sensory response in enabling the ‘reader’ to feel emotion and refer again to Teresa Brennan’s theory that ‘[emotional] discernment begins with considered sensing (by smell, or listening, as well as observation) – the process of feeling that also operates, or seems to operate, as the gateway to emotional response’ (Brennan 94). Moreover,

Brennan's argument that the 'transmission of affect' occurs when 'the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another' (Brennan 3-4) is relevant to how Agnes enables David to sympathise with her by conveying her emotion to him non-verbally. David's immersion in Agnes's feelings through sympathy bears some resemblance to Poulet's experience of reading – to which I also refer in this chapter – where 'any feeling proposed to [him] is immediately assumed by [him]' (57) so that he shares a 'common consciousness' (59) with 'the conscious subject ensconced at the heart of the work' (59), just as David, as 'reader', shares his with his 'narrator', Agnes. The idea of sharing the emotion of the other relates to Gallagher's view of sympathy as 'the process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own' (Gallagher 169) and whereas, in the last chapter, I discuss how Scrooge sympathises in this way with his former self – the 'character' of the 'narrative' he 'reads' – in this chapter I focus on David's sympathy with his unobtrusive 'narrator'. The outcome of sympathy for Scrooge, as for David, is an illuminating moment of self-discovery when, as Poulet describes of his own experience of reading, feelings that are known to him but that have been buried within 'the depths of his consciousness' (Poulet 57) rise 'into the light of recognition' (Poulet 57): in David's case, his doubts about Steerforth's integrity are confirmed by the sound of Agnes's voice. In my discussion of the intimacy that David establishes with Agnes through sympathy, I acknowledge that which Dickens sought with his readers through communing with them and with the auditors of his public readings through the design of his set and through non-verbal communication.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ See introductory chapter for further discussion of how Dickens sought to develop

In my discussion of Dora's performance, I show how the Dickensian narrator whom she represents directs the reader to feel emotion but does not allow her to fully sympathise with him because she is distracted by his strong vocal and physical presence through which he expresses his emotion. I argue that, unlike the disembodied emotion conveyed through the sound of Agnes's voice, the emotion communicated verbally by Dora serves to remind David of Dora's bodily presence, as does his sensory reading of her body through which he feels her love for him. Emotion does not exist independently of her body as it does of Agnes's in the peculiar qualities of her voice and so David cannot sympathise with her according to Gallagher's definition of sympathy, although he feels intensely in response to the emotion Dora expresses. I focus on how David's inability to sympathise with Dora is because of the obstacles that arise in his communication with her which are mainly due to his misreading of her mind and character, the intimidating way in which he imparts information to her and Dora's misunderstanding of David's use of metaphorical language. While the performances given by Dora and Agnes differ, they have the same profound effect on David, proving that all performances given by Dickens's narrators evoke strong emotional responses in their readers. I therefore continue to explore in this chapter the claim made by Sally Ledger that 'Dickens's affective mode is [...] highly theatrical and performative' (Ledger 2). Throughout this chapter, I discuss how David feels emotion through a sensory reading of his world and begin by focussing on the early stages of David's development as a reader while drawing comparisons with Dickens's experience as a child reading his world, as recorded in his autobiographical fragment.

a close bond with his audiences.

In writing *David Copperfield*, Dickens was given the opportunity to express his feelings about his life through David, the hero with whom, as Forster notes, he is closely identified (*The Life of Charles Dickens* 1: 7). Forster refers specifically to how Dickens projected his childhood experience of working at Warren's Blacking warehouse – as described in the autobiographical fragment – into David's miserable time at Murdstone and Grinby. As Forster states, this period in Dickens's life was one which was so traumatic for him that 'he never could lose the remembrance while he remembered anything, and the recollection of which, at intervals, haunted him and made him miserable, even to that hour' (*Life* 1: 19). He found it difficult to talk about, and rarely did, although Forster claims that, 'very shortly' after 'unintentionally touch[ing] [this] painful place in his memory' (19), Dickens then divulged 'in all their detail the incidents that had been so painful to him' (19) and which he also recorded in writing. The 'fragment of the autobiography of Dickens' (20), quoted by Forster in *The Life of Charles Dickens*, was originally intended as 'the first portion of what he had designed to write' of 'his own life' (20) but which he had 'abandoned' in favour of *David Copperfield* – a 'fancy' which had '[begun] to take shape in his mind' (20). Forster describes how Dickens's 'warehouse experiences fell then so aptly into the subject he had chosen, that he could not resist the temptation of immediately using them [which he did by] embody[ing] [them] in the substance of the eleventh and earlier chapters of his novel' (20). In Chapter Eleven, David describes this period of neglect in his life in almost the exact words as those used by Dickens in his autobiographical fragment. David is 'surpris[ed] [that] he [could] have been so easily thrown away at such an age' (*David Copperfield* 164) while it "'is wonderful to [Dickens] how [he] could have been so easily cast away'" (21), "'[descending] into [a] poor little drudge'" (21) just as David becomes the

‘little labouring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby’ (165). David’s voice is Dickens’s as he tries to ‘express the secret agony of [his] soul as [he] sunk into [the] companionship [of his fellow workers] [...] and felt [his] hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in [his] bosom’ (166). Like Dickens, David has a ‘deep remembrance of the sense [...] of being utterly without hope [...]; of the shame [he] felt in his position [and] of the misery it was to [his] young heart to believe that day by day what [he] had learned, and thought and delighted in, and raised [his] fancy and [his] emulation up by, would pass away from [him], little by little, never to be brought back any more’ (166). David and Dickens are regretful that there was – as David says of *his* neglected state – ‘no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no assistance, no support, of any kind, from any one’ (*Copperfield* 170) while they ‘considered quite hopeless’ the prospect of being ‘rescu[ed] from this kind of existence’ (*Copperfield* 173), resigning themselves instead to being ‘miserably unhappy’ (*Copperfield* 173). As David cannot be, Dickens is bitter with his parents for “‘accept[ing] very willingly” (21) the offer for him to work at the blacking warehouse and “‘never can forget, that” while “‘[his] father said [he] should go back no more, and should go to school”’, his “‘mother was warm for [his] being sent back” (32).⁸⁶

Contrary to his claim that he “‘[does] not write resentfully or angrily” (32) about what he perceived to be his parents’ neglect of him, Dickens’s indignation and bitterness are clearly evident in how he enforces this point with repetition, hyperbole and emotive language – rhetorical techniques by which he conveys the strength of

⁸⁶ The autobiographical fragment is cited in *The Life of Charles Dickens* 1: 20-33 of the A. J. Hoppe´ edition from which I quote in this chapter.

feeling felt throughout the fragment. “I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget” (37), Dickens declares emphatically, the brief, consecutive phrases in which the key words “never” and “forget” are repeated, make it plain how deeply embedded in his consciousness is this memory. The repeated word “No”, preceding each word relating to the moral guidance wanting in his life, and the listing of each of these, convey forcefully Dickens’s anger at the complete lack of provision for his welfare: “No advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no support, from anyone that I can call to mind” (24). One senses Dickens’s suffering as he *describes* his suffering, his use of emotive language proving how he pities his own plight: he refers to “the *scantiness* of [his] resources”, the “difficulties of [his] life [...] [and how he has] lounged about the streets, *insufficiently* and *unsatisfactorily* fed” (25 *my italics*). “How much [Dickens] suffered is [...] utterly beyond [his] power to tell” (25): its intensity silences him and he undoubtedly does not exaggerate when he states hyperbolically that “No man’s imagination can overstep the reality” of his “secret” and “exquisit[e]” suffering (25). Dickens felt and expressed passionately his emotions as a child reading the ‘narrative’ scenes of his world: “I felt keenly [...] the being so cut off from my parents,” declares Dickens (26), describing how he “remonstrated with [his] father on this head, so pathetically and with so many tears, that his kind nature gave way” (26). Dickens’s “tears ran down [his] face” (31) when watching his sister Fanny receive one of the prizes awarded to pupils at the Royal Academy of Music and “could not bear to think of [himself] [as] beyond the reach of all such emulation and success” (31). He “felt as though [his] heart were rent” (31), as though he were feeling the physical effects of emotion, while many years later, as an adult, he *did* feel “a shock [go] through [his] blood” if he read the words “MOOR-

EEFFOC” (coffee-room spelt backwards) as he “often used to do [...] in a dismal reverie” (25) during his breaks while working at Warren’s Blacking warehouse.

In his autobiographical fragment, Dickens reveals how he was “a child of singular abilities: quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally” (21) – an intelligent reader whose sensitivity is seen in his sensory and emotional responses to the world and in his powers of observation.⁸⁷ Dickens describes what he saw and heard as a child working at Warren’s Blacking warehouse: “the wainscotted rooms and its rotten floors and staircase, and the old grey rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up visibly before [him], as if [he] were there again” (21). It is, no doubt, because he observed so closely and sensed so strongly his surroundings that he recollects them in such vivid detail when writing about them and on every occasion where, on approaching “Robert Warren’s” in the Strand, he “cross[es] over to the opposite side of the way, to avoid a certain smell of the cement they put upon the blacking-corks” which reminds him not only of the place but of “what [he] was once”: the lonely and unhappy child (33). Dickens describes how his “early interest in observing people” (30) is “illustrat[ed]” by the “circumstance” of his father’s organising a petition for his fellow prisoners of the Marshalsea to sign, an event which Dickens was keen to attend:

⁸⁷ In the *Life*, Forster states that he has a ‘picture of [Dickens at school in Chatham] as a sensitive, thoughtful, feeble-bodied little boy, with an amount of experience as well as fancy unusual in such a child, and with a dangerous kind of wandering intelligence that a teacher might turn to good or evil, happiness or misery, as he directed it’ (*Life* 1: 9-10).

When I went to the Marshalsea at night, I was always delighted to hear from my mother what she knew about the histories of the different debtors in the prison; and when I heard of this approaching ceremony, I was so anxious to see them all come in, one after another (though I knew the greater part of them already, to speak to, and they me), that I got leave on purpose, and established myself in a corner, near the petition. (30)

He notes each person's distinguishing characteristics: "their different peculiarities of dress, of face, of gait, of manner, [are] written indelibly upon [his] memory" (31), stimulating his thoughts and imagination so that, as a budding author, he "[makes] out [his] own little character and story for every man who [puts] his name to the sheet of paper" (31).⁸⁸ Dickens also notices his father's pleasure and pride when hearing the words that he has written read aloud with so much enthusiasm by Captain Porter: he listens "with a little of an author's vanity, and contemplating (not severely) the spikes on the opposite wall" (31). Dickens understands how his father is feeling by watching him attentively, just as David reads perceptively the thoughts and emotions of the people he encounters.

As David states at the beginning of Chapter Two:

⁸⁸ In *Charles Dickens. His Tragedy and Triumph*, Edgar Johnson states that 'Dickens saw the brilliant individual quality of each person and experience in its comic or pathetic or dramatic essence, and in so doing he surprisingly realised Walter Pater's aspiration toward "a life of constant and eager observation"' (Johnson 1127).

I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy. In fact, I think that most grown men who are remarkable in this respect, may with greater propriety be said not to have lost the faculty than to have acquired it; the rather, as I generally observe such men to retain a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased, which are also an inheritance they have preserved from their childhood. (24-25)⁸⁹

David concludes that he ‘was a child of close observation’ (25) which is proven in his description of the people and places he saw as a child making sense of the world around him. From an early age, David notices detail: ‘propp[ing] his eyelids open with [his] two forefingers’, he ‘look[s] perseveringly at [Peggotty] as she [sits] at work; at the little bit of wax-candle she [keeps] for her thread – how old it look[s], being so wrinkled in all directions! – at the little house with a thatched roof, where the yard-measure live[s]; at her work-box with a sliding lid, with a view of Saint Paul’s Cathedral (with a pink dome) painted on the top; at the brass thimble on her finger’ (28-29). Like Dickens, David interprets imaginatively what he sees:

⁸⁹ While not referring explicitly to his powers of observation, Mary Boyle describes Dickens’s child-like interest in ‘setting up’ the chalet given to him by the French actor, Charles Fechter: ‘In the setting up of the said Chalet, after the manner of a child’s architectural toy, Charles had found the greatest amusement, for he was indeed one of those who find “A child’s keen delight in little things,” and the hanging of his pictures, the arranging his furniture, the annexation of a tiny conservatory, and the construction of an underground tunnel, which connected the area round the house with a small plantation of lofty cedars, under the shade of which he had erected his *chalet*, were all sources to him of intense interest’ (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 86).

Peggotty's 'cheeks and arms [are] so hard and red that [he] wonder[s] the birds [don't] peck her in preference to apples' (24); her 'forefinger [is] roughened by needlework, like a pocket nutmeg-grater' (24) while 'the ground-work' of 'a red velvet footstool' 'appear[s] to [him] to be one and the same thing' as 'Peggotty's complexion' (29). On his journey on horseback to Lowestoft, David cannot resist 'turning [his] head sometimes, and looking up in [the] face [of Mr Murdstone]' (34) whose features he examines thoroughly: 'His hair and whiskers [are] blacker and thicker, looked at so near, than even [he] ha[s] given them credit for being. A squareness about the lower part of his face, and the dotted indication of the strong black beard he shave[s] close every day, remind[s] [him] of the wax-work that ha[s] travelled into [the] neighbourhood some half-a-year before' (34). Again, David's imagination is stimulated by what he sees, as it is when, on noting Mr Murdstone's 'shallow black eye [...] which, when it is abstracted, seems from some peculiarity of light to be disfigured [...] by a cast' (34), David 'wond[ers] what he [is] thinking about so closely' (34). David shows an interest in Mr Murdstone's state of mind which he reads with remarkable understanding as is seen on the occasion where, having been reprimanded by Betsey Trotwood for his previous maltreatment of David and Clara, David notices that, although he smiles at Betsey before leaving, he does so with 'heavily contracted' eyebrows and a pallid complexion which suggest the anger that he is really feeling. His reading of Mr Murdstone is one which reaches beyond what is immediately obvious as an observer: David is not fooled by the apparent affection he shows Clara – his '[drawing] her to him, his whisper[ing] in her ear, and kissing her' – but knows instead 'that he could mould her pliant nature into any form he chose' (56).

David knows instinctively what Mr Murdstone is capable of thinking and he retains this ability to read intuitively as an adult.⁹⁰ Much later in the novel, while there is nothing to suggest in Ham's expression that he is angry with Steerforth for eloping with Emily, David has the sudden realisation that Ham has the incentive to kill him:

I happened to glance at Ham, then looking out to sea upon the distant light, and a frightful thought came into my mind – not that his face was angry, for it was not; I recall nothing but an expression of stern determination in it – that if ever he encountered Steerforth, he would kill him. (462)

Ham is comparatively inarticulate, but his thoughts are accurately detected by David no matter how subtly they are revealed to him: 'I thought I had read in his face that he would like to speak to me alone' (742), says David and he is proven to be correct

⁹⁰ Dickens also had this ability, as Forster records in his biography: 'It seems almost too much to assert of a child, say at nine or ten years old, that his observation of everything was so close and good, or that he had as much intuitive understanding of the character and weaknesses of the grown-up people around him, as when the same keen and wonderful faculty had made him famous among men' (*Life* 1:12). Eliza Lynn Linton also records Dickens's powers of observation: 'How bright he was! How keen and observant! His eyes seemed to penetrate through yours into your very brain, and he was one of the men to whom, had I been given that way, I could not have dared to tell a lie. He would have seen the truth written in plain characters behind the eyes, and traced in the lines about the mouth' (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 214).

when Ham confides in David his unwavering love for Emily.⁹¹ David's intuitive reading of Ham indicates a deep understanding of the thoughts and feelings which he unknowingly has and it is through understanding that David sympathises with him – not only by knowing how he feels – but by feeling the effect of these emotions just as he does when witnessing Ham's intense suffering at first learning of Emily's flight: David is 'paralysed by the sight of such grief' (458). As a child, David sympathises with his mother by understanding what she is really feeling: 'nobody knows better than [David does] that she likes to look so well, and is proud of being so pretty' (28) when, after 'dancing in the parlor', she 'wind[s] her bright curls round her fingers, and strait[ens] her waist' (28). David perceives her pleasure at hearing the compliments made about her by Mr Murdstone's acquaintances at Lowestoft repeated by him, despite her dismissal of these 'impudent fellows who [talk] nonsense' (36). David senses her feelings about him when, having been reprimanded sternly by Mr Murdstone, he thinks that his 'mother [is] sorry to see [him] standing in the room so scared and strange, and that, presently, when he [steals] to a chair, she follow[s] [him] with her eyes more sorrowfully still – missing, perhaps, some freedom in [his] childish tread' (58). David sees her sympathising with him by feeling sadness in response to his suffering which is what *he* does when,

⁹¹ J.T. Fields perhaps refers to Dickens's intuition when he states: 'There are no living eyes like them, swift and kind, possessing none of the bliss of ignorance, but the different bliss of one who sees what the Lord has done and what, or something of what, he intends' (*Interviews and Recollections 2*: 318). In *Dickens and Mesmerism*, Kaplan also notes that Dickens had 'a strongly developed sense of prescience, a predilection for premonition that bordered on a commitment to clairvoyance, if only as a metaphor for the powers of the mind' (Kaplan 160).

feeling ‘so sorry for [his] mother’s distress’ (62) following her pathetic attempt to make amends with Mr and Miss Murdstone, he ‘[can] hardly find the door, through the tears that [stand] in [his] eyes’ (62). David is here feeling more than sorry for her distress – he is actually feeling her emotion as though it is his own: as David’s tears show, he is crying *with* her, sympathising in the sense that Gallagher defines.

David reads with his senses his mother’s emotions, seeing her ‘stop her ears’ (68) and hearing her cry when she is unable to prevent her husband from beating him. He is quick to see people’s feelings: the ‘steady but [...] kindling eye’ (476) with which Mr Peggotty looks at Mrs Steerforth as he speaks of her son’s misconduct and the ‘angry flush [which] overspread[s] her face’ as she listens to him are all sharply observed by David. Mr Murdstone’s fleeting expression of remorse when – on meeting Peggotty and David while arranging his marriage licence – Peggotty implies that he “‘worrised and frightened [Clara] to an early grave!’” (483), is caught immediately by David’s eye, as are the ‘traces of deeper emotion’ in Mrs Steerforth’s ‘pale’ face which David sees ‘directly’ as a sign ‘that she knows from [Steerforth] what he has done’ (473). David hears in the ‘touch of softness in her voice’ (474) that she is affected by the ‘rugged eloquence’ with which Mr Peggotty speaks of his love for Emily and earnestly beseeches her to persuade Steerforth to marry Emily and save her from disgrace. He detects emotion in her voice as he does in the ‘dismal sounds’ of Mr Mell’s flute-playing (87) and in Rosa Dartle’s performance of an Irish song (442).

Mr Mell expresses in his ‘doleful performance’ (92) the sorrow that he feels which makes David feel the same feeling: he ‘think[s] of all his sorrows until [he] [can] hardly keep [his] tears back’ (87) and then ‘listen[s] through it to what used to be at home, and to the blowing of the wind on Yarmouth flats’ – sounds of happier

times which contrast with how ‘sad and solitary’ (92) he feels now.⁹² By feeling the unhappiness also felt by Mr Mell, David sympathises with him in the way in which Gallagher describes as ‘the process by which someone else’s emotion becomes our own’ (Gallagher 169) which occurs when David hears in the ‘dismal sounds’ the emotion which is identifiable as that felt by Mr Mell but which can also be appropriated by David. As Gallagher argues, ‘Our conception of the sentiments as appropriate to *that* rather than to *this* body must be overcome in the process of sympathy’ (Gallagher 171) and while Mr Mell’s body produces these sounds when he plays the flute, the sounds themselves – and the emotion which they convey – exist independently of his body and so can therefore be immediately appropriated by David as ‘free sentiments belonging to nobody and therefore identifiable with [himself]’ (171). There is further evidence that Mr Mell’s consciousness has become immersed in David’s when David imagines that he is hearing the flute ‘sound mournfully in [his] ears’ (112) during his storytelling session with Steerforth and when he ‘fanc[ies] it playing so sorrowfully somewhere’ (112) as he goes to bed. In hearing the voice of their sorrow, David hears that of his conscience: he feels ‘quite wretched’ (112) because he knows that he is partly responsible for Steerforth’s unkindness towards Mr Mell and for how unfairly he was dismissed from his post.⁹³

⁹² Robert Bledsoe notes that ‘Dickens’s writing often suggests that, as the 20th century composer Paul Hindermith maintained, music evokes not feelings but “memories of feelings” (*A Composer’s World*, 1952), and indeed in Dickens’s novels musical reactions are often closely tied to dreams and memories’ (qtd. in *The Oxford Reader’s Companion to Dickens* 396).

⁹³ In her article, “How Musical was Charles Dickens?”, Lillian Ruff refers to ‘when Dickens was a day-boy at the ‘Classical and Commercial Academy’, he had an

Sensing emotion in music makes David realise *his* own thoughts and feelings about Mr Mell – those that lie deep within his mind and which are unaffected by the views of others, especially those of Steerforth.

Albeit fleetingly, David hears his own voice as he also does when listening to Rosa Dartle's song:

I don't know what it was, in her touch or voice, that made that song the most unearthly I have ever heard in my life, or can imagine. There was something fearful in the reality of it. It was as if it had never been written, or set to music, but sprung out of the passion within her; which found imperfect utterance in the low sounds of her voice, and crouched again when all was still. I was dumb when she leaned beside the harp again, playing it but not sounding it, with her right hand. (442)

David is afraid of the strangeness of the song and of the intensity of the passion that it embodies – an emotion which, while clearly Rosa's as it comes from 'within her', might also be felt as his own. While Rosa expresses *her* own emotion with her voice, David hears it in the '*low sounds* of her voice' (my italics), sound which – as 'the sensation produced in the ear or other organ of hearing by the vibration of the surrounding air or other medium' (*OED*) – exists independently of her voice and body which enables David to appropriate as his own the passion these sounds convey. The autonomy of the song and its passion is seen also in how it seems to resist verbal and musical expression and can only be heard '*imperfect[ly]* in the *low* sounds of her

English teacher who 'was a constant flute player,' and the sound, which always saddened him, left an indelible memory. When flute-playing is described, it is evident that he is harking back to this earlier experience' (Ruff 41).

voice’: like a wild animal that ‘[springs]’ out of its resting place to which it then returns and ‘[crouches]’, the song has a life of its own and, like sound, it moves away from ownership (my italics).⁹⁴ Its ‘fearful reality’ – mysterious and unfamiliar to David – stuns him into a silent sympathy with Rosa whose passion he recognises as his own: he is struck ‘dumb when she lean[s] beside the harp [...] playing it, but not sounding it, with her right hand.’

David is sensitive to the feelings of others – he “‘has a heart to feel for the distresses of his fellow creatures when they are behind a cloud”” (185) remarks Mr Micawber – and it is perhaps because of this quality that he is aware of it in others.⁹⁵ He is grateful to Emily for the compassion she shows when she hears of ‘the loss [that he has] sustained’ and notes how ‘the tears [stand] in her eyes’ as she ‘look[s] at [him] so kindly across the table’ (152). David values (more highly than grammatical accuracy) the physical evidence of the emotion expressed by Peggotty when writing her letter to him: ‘the blots [are] more expressive to [him] than the best composition; for they [show] [him] that Peggotty ha[s] been crying all over the paper’ (257). He appreciates their expression of feeling and disapproves of Miss Murdstone’s unemotional reaction to his mother’s death: ‘She was particularly proud of her turn for business; and she showed it now in reducing everything to pen and ink, and being moved by nothing’ (140). David notices the ease with which Mr Dick

⁹⁴ In *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word*, Walter Ong describes the ‘movement of sound [and how] all sound, and especially oral utterance, which comes from inside living organisms, is “dynamic”’ (Ong 132).

⁹⁵ Forster describes Dickens’s ‘ardent sympathy with the creatures of the fancy which always made so absolutely real to him their sufferings or sorrows’ (*Life* 2: 90).

sympathises with those who are suffering and how he instinctively seeks them out as he does Mr Micawber before he tells David about his misfortunes: ‘He was by nature so exceedingly compassionate of anyone who seemed to be ill at ease, and was so quick to find any such person out, that he shook hands with Mr Micawber, at least half-a-dozen times in five minutes’ (714).⁹⁶ One of the many qualities that David admires in Mr Peggotty is his steadfast sympathy for Mrs Gummidge whenever she feels the loss of her husband: ‘When she had gone, Mr Peggotty, who had not exhibited a trace of any feeling but the profoundest sympathy, looked round upon us and nodding his head with a lively expression of that sentiment still animating his face, said in a whisper: “She’s been thinking of the old ‘un!”’ (52). The sympathy is genuinely and deeply felt, illuminating his face as does the ‘joyful love and pride’ with which he talks about Emily and her accomplishments (115) which is also visible in how his ‘honest eyes fire up, and sparkle, as if their depths [are] stirred by something bright’ (115).⁹⁷ The emotion expressed by Mr Peggotty emanates from

⁹⁶ As J. T. Fields observes, Dickens was also quick to help those in need, including a blind man: ‘Dickens, a long distance away from him, with that tender, sensitive, and penetrating vision, ever on the alert for suffering in any form, had rushed at once to the rescue, comprehending at a glance the situation of the sightless man. To help him to his feet and aid him homeward in the most natural and simple way afforded Dickens a pleasure as only the benevolent by intuition can understand’ (*Interviews and Recollections 2*: 316).

⁹⁷ Dickens’s admiration of how, in her performance in *The Frozen Deep*, an actress expresses emotion that she really feels, is expressed in his letter to Miss Burdett Coutts on 5 September 1857: ‘I never saw anything like the distress and agitation of her face – a very good little pale face, with large black eyes; it had a natural emotion

within which is where his determination to rescue Emily is also firmly ‘anchor[ed] [...] in the purest depths of his fine nature’ (719). David respects Mr Peggotty for his dedication in searching for Emily throughout which his ‘patience never tire[s]’ (719) and he remains, as ever, a man of ‘sturdy action’ (719) who leaves nothing to chance.⁹⁸ Mr Peggotty openly reveals his feelings to his auditors as does Dr Strong when speaking about his marriage, declaring afterwards: “‘I have shown you my heart. I am sure you will respect it’” (625) which David does, noting the ‘simple honesty’ with which he ‘put[s] his handkerchief to his eyes’ (623) – instead of affecting to disguise how he feels – and the ‘perfect simplicity of his manner’ (625) evident throughout his speech which brings tears to *David’s* eyes.⁹⁹ Again, David

in it [...] which was quite a study of expression. [...] I told her on the last night that I was sure she had one of the most genuine and feeling hearts in the world; and I don’t think I ever saw anything so prettily simple and unaffected’ (*Letters* 8: 432-3).

⁹⁸ Mr Peggotty’s qualities are shared by Dickens: as Forster states, ‘This was the quickness, keenness, and practical power, the eager, restless, energetic outlook on each several feature, that seemed to tell so little of a student or writer of books, and so much of a man of action and business in the world. Light and motion flashed from every part of it. [...] “What a face is his to meet in a drawing-room!” wrote Leigh Hunt to me, the morning after I made them known to each other. “It has the life and soul in it of fifty human beings.” In such sayings are expressed not alone the restless and resistless vivacity and force of which I have spoken, but that also which lay beneath them of steadiness and hard endurance’ (*Life* 1: 65-66).

⁹⁹ This account of Dr Strong’s character bears some resemblance to Henry Fielding Dickens’s observations about his father: ‘He was as simple and natural in his speech

sees how sincerely Dr Strong feels what he says, his hand ‘tremb[ling], like his subdued voice, in its earnestness’ (624) and, as with Mr Peggotty, the worthy qualities which are so deeply ingrained in his character, rise from within to without: ‘His homely figure [seems] to be lightened up by his fidelity and generosity. Every word he utter[s] [has] a force that no other grace could have imparted to it’ (625). David thinks highly of ‘the impressive and affecting dignity’ (624) with which he speaks about his wife and the ‘almost reverential manner in which he put[s] away from him the lightest doubt of her integrity’ (624). He is as honourable as Mr Peggotty and, as David observes, Traddles who, while at Salem House, ‘[holds] it as a solemn duty in the boys to stand by one another’ (102) and ‘who suffer[s] for this on several occasions [including the one where] Steerforth laugh[s] in church, and the Beadle, [thinking that] it [is] Traddles, [takes] him out: [Traddles] never [says] who [is] the real offender, though he smart[s] for it next day’ (102). David admires how each man puts others before himself with the selflessness seen also in Mrs Gummidge who, after Emily’s elopement, tirelessly helps Mr Peggotty and his family:

What a change in Mrs Gummidge in a little time! She was another woman. She was so devoted, she had such a quick perception of what it would be well to say, and what it would be well to leave unsaid, she was so forgetful of herself, and so regardful of the sorrow about her, that I held her in a sort of veneration. (465)

as he was in his manner, which was always quiet, refined, and entirely free from ostentation’ (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 160).

David cannot ‘meditate enough upon the lesson that [he] read[s] in Mrs Gummidge, and the new experience she unfold[s] to [him]’ (465): as ‘reader’, he is aware of the moral message conveyed by her transformation from a miserable, self-pitying, old woman to one who feels for others. David learns from Mrs Gummidge as he does from Mr Peggotty, Dr Strong and Traddles whose qualities he reflects upon and feels emotion about, just as Dickens wanted his readers to respond to the fall of Emily and Martha, as he states in a letter to W.W. F. De Cerjat on 29 December 1849: ‘I have been turning it over in my mind for some time, and hope, in the history of Little Emily (who *must* fall – there is no hope for her) to put it before the thoughts of people, in a new and pathetic way, and perhaps do some good’ (*Letters* 5: 682).¹⁰⁰

David is a perceptive reader of people: he not only understands their feelings and thoughts but also their character. He sees in Clara submissiveness when, after her argument with Peggotty about Mr Murdstone, she defers to Peggotty ‘very much’ (33) and to the will of Mr and Miss Murdstone when they are testing David (65), while in Mr Murdstone’s treatment of his wife, his domineering nature is evident to David from the outset when he instructs her to ‘controul [herself]’ (54) when greeting David on his return home (54). David reads beyond Betsey Trotwood’s

¹⁰⁰ Dickens is writing in response to De Cerjat’s suggestions about the portrayal of Emily and Martha. On 25 April 1849, he writes to Dudley Costello of the more serious purpose of *David Copperfield*: ‘we can be cheerful and merry I hope, notwithstanding, and with a little more purpose in us’ (*Letters* 5: 527). In *The Reader in the Dickens World*, Susan Horton notes that Dickens’s readers ‘expected not only to be pleased and entertained, but were sure they ought to find some moral or lesson in his books as well’ (Horton 5).

‘many eccentricities and odd humours’ (216) in order to understand that there is ‘something about [his] aunt [...] to be honoured and trusted in’ (216) – a realisation that comes from witnessing ‘the generosity of her championship of poor harmless Mr Dick’ (216). His response to Betsey Trotwood shows how he is developing as a ‘reader’ who is ‘[beginning] to know that there is *something* about [his] aunt’ (216 my italics) that he can depend upon and respect: he perceives that she has a certain quality but cannot identify what it is. As a child, David is unable to fully interpret what he senses and sufficiently analyse how he feels: his ‘uneasy jealousy’ of Mr Murdstone is due to ‘a child’s instinctive dislike, and a general idea that Peggotty and [he] could make much of [his] mother without any help [which] certainly [is] not *the* reason that [he] might have found if [he] had been older’ (33). As the older David concludes, he ‘could observe, in little pieces, as it were; but as to making a net of a number of these pieces, and catching anybody in it, that was, as yet, beyond [him]’ (33): ‘The child sees, hears, smells, touches (the nutmeg-grater forefinger of Peggotty), registers impressions very strongly, but cannot perceive connections or interpret events,’ as Andrews concludes in *Dickens and the Grown-up Child* (151). ‘Child-like, according to [his] theory’ (42), David reads the world in which he lives with the innocence, imagination and fresh vision of a child. He cannot understand why Mr Murdstone insists on keeping the geranium blossom plucked by his mother and is unable to see its sentimental value when he thinks that Mr Murdstone ‘must be quite a fool not to know that it would fall to pieces in a day or two’ (33). His naivety is seen also in how he does not suspect that Mr Murdstone’s acquaintances are referring to him as the one who is “‘sharp” (35) and not to “‘Brooks of Sheffield”” which he is ‘quite relieved’ about because ‘at first, [he] really [thinks] it [is] [him]’ (35). David reads his environment imaginatively: the ‘pulpit’ in his village church

becomes in his thoughts ‘a good place [...] to play in’ and pretend that it is a ‘castle’ ‘with another boy coming up the stairs to attack it, and having the velvet cushion with the tassels thrown down on his head’ (27-28). David’s imagination is stimulated by the boys’ names which are carved on ‘an old door in [his school’s] playground’ (90) which he cannot read ‘without enquiring in what tone and with what emphasis [each boy] would read, ‘Take care of him. He bites.’ (90): he conceives that ‘a certain J. Steerforth – who cut his name very deep and very often [...] would read it in a rather strong voice, and afterwards pull [David’s] hair’ (91). David senses Steerforth’s character by looking at his carving which is ‘very deep’ and frequently made, suggesting the assertiveness and self-confidence expressed in a ‘strong voice’. David creates a character by reading a name in a place while he also imagines characters from the stories he has read to be within a specific location:

Every barn in the neighbourhood, every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own, in my mind, connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them. I have seen Tom Pipes go climbing up the church-steeple; I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back, stopping to rest himself upon the wicket-gate; and I *know* that Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr Pickle, in the parlor of our little village alehouse. (66-67)

So vividly has he imagined his favourite characters that he even believes that he *is* them:

I have been Tom Jones (a child’s Tom Jones, a harmless creature) for a week together. I have sustained my own idea of Roderick Random for a month at a stretch, I verily believe. I had a greedy relish for a few volumes of Voyages and Travels [...] and for days and days I can remember to have gone about my region of our house, armed with the centre-piece out of an old set of

book-trees – the perfect realisation of Captain Somebody, of the Royal British Navy, in danger of being beset by savages, and resolved to sell his life at a great price. (66-67)

Assumption offers David a way of escaping from the ruthless tyranny of Mr and Miss Murdstone as it also provides Dickens with a release from the unhappy period of his childhood while, years later, his assuming the character of Wardour in *The Frozen Deep* enables him to release the anguish caused by his marriage to Catherine by expressing Wardour's.¹⁰¹ By imagining that he is 'someone, in voice etc. not at all like [himself]' (*Letters* 6: 257),¹⁰² Dickens is freed from himself and from unhappiness and this is also the experience of David when – having heard from Peggotty the details of how his mother died and that she is buried with her baby, and having chosen to remember her in happier times 'as the young mother of [his] earliest impressions' (144) – he then concludes that 'The mother who lay in the grave, was the mother of [his] infancy; the little creature in her arms, was [himself], as he had once been, hushed for ever on her bosom' (144). David assuages the pain of grief by re-asserting his identity as the son of the mother who loved him in life and who will love him forever in death. This image of mother and son is one which

¹⁰¹ See the opening pages (especially pages 6 and 7) of Chapter One of Forster's *Life*, for Dickens's very similar account of his experience of reading the books left to him by his father. See also the opening section of my introductory chapter for discussion of Dickens's playing the part of Wardour in *The Frozen Deep* and my references to Dickens's views of assumption.

¹⁰² See letter to Lytton, written on 5 January 1851, and cited on the first page of my introductory chapter.

he keeps in his heart and mind and reads in his surroundings as a source of comfort when he is feeling alone and unsure of his future, as when he looks out of his bedroom window after he is rescued from a state of neglect by his aunt, Betsey

Trotwood:

I remember how I still sat looking at the moonlight on the water, as if I could hope to read my fortune in it, as in a bright book; or to see my mother with her child, coming from Heaven, along that shining path, to look upon me as she looked when I last saw her sweet face. (209)

As a reader of life and of literature, David's imagination is active in interpreting what he observes closely: the people *and* the places that he encounters or imagines in his actual and fictional worlds. I have noted already – in relation to David's observation of Peggotty and Mr Murdstone – his attention to detail and this is also evident when he sees, for the first time, Mr Peggotty's 'perfect abode' (41). David is 'charmed with the romantic idea of living in [...] a real boat that [has] no doubt been upon the water hundreds of times, and which [has] never been intended to be lived in, on dry land' (41). The boat captures his imagination and he notes mentally and records in detail the various features of its interior:

It was beautifully clean inside, and as tidy as possible. There was a table, and a Dutch clock, and a chest of drawers, and on the chest of drawers there was a tea-tray with a painting on it of a lady with a parasol, taking a walk with a military-looking child who was trundling a hoop. The tray was kept from tumbling down, by a bible; and the tray, if it had tumbled down, would have smashed a quantity of cups and saucers and a teapot that were grouped around the book. On the walls there were some common coloured pictures, framed and glazed, of scripture subjects [while] over the little mantel-shelf, was a picture of the Sarah Jane lugger, built at Sunderland, with a little

wooden stern stuck on to it; a work of art, combining composition with carpentry, which I considered to be one of the most enviable possessions that the world could afford. There were some hooks in the beams of the ceiling, the use of which I did not divine then; and some lockers and boxes and conveniences of that sort, which served for seats and eked out the chairs. (41-42)

So keen are David's powers of observation that he sees everything 'in the first glance after [he] cross[es] the threshold' (42), interpreting the use of each object 'according to his theory' (42): with the fresh vision and curiosity of a child. As an imaginative reader, he appreciates the artistic and practical design of the picture of the Sarah Jane lugger and the ingenious way in which the boat has been transformed into a house: his bedroom is 'in the stern of the vessel; with a little window, where the rudder used to go through' (42) and includes a 'little looking-glass [...] framed with oyster-shells' and 'a nosegay of seaweed in a blue mug on the table' (42) – reminders of the seas on which it once sailed. David's ability to see all details in a glance and to recall them accurately is one which Dickens also possessed as those who knew him confirm. Sir Arthur Helps describes Dickens's 'powers of observation [as] almost unrivalled [as he could] see and observe nine facts for any two that [Helps] see[s] and observes' (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 232) while Mrs Watson records his 'marvellous quickness of vision, taking in everything at a parting glance. Thus, driving through a town with tall houses, he described, with all the details of a weird portrait, the appearance of an old woman looking out of a top-storey window. Though he had seen her but for a moment, the impression was complete and indelible. Nothing escaped him, and one understands the power of detail in his books' (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 82). As the older David observes, he is aware of *his* 'strong memory of [his] childhood' (25) as he is of his having been 'a

child of close observation' (25) and, like those men whom he admires for having retained from their childhood 'the faculty [of observation]' (25) along with 'a certain freshness, and gentleness, and capacity of being pleased' (25), David observes as attentively as an adult as he does as a child. When he enters Traddles's room in his house in London, he again sees as many of its features at first glance as when crossing the threshold of Mr Peggotty's home:

It was in the front of the house, and extremely neat, though sparsely furnished. It was his only room, I saw; for there was a sofa-bedstead in it, and his blacking-brushes and blacking were among his books – on the top shelf, behind a dictionary. His table was covered with papers, and he was hard at work in an old coat. I looked at nothing, that I know of, but I saw everything even to the prospect of a church upon his china inkstand, as I sat down – and this, too, was a faculty confirmed in me in the old Micawber times. Various ingenious arrangements he had made, for the disguise of his chest of drawers, and the accommodation of his boots, his shaving-glass, and so forth, particularly impressed themselves upon me, as evidences of the same Traddles who used to make models of elephants' dens in writing paper to put flies in; and to comfort himself, under ill usage, with the memorable works of art I have so often mentioned. (409-10)

As with his observation of the boat, David notes the details which reveal the room's other purpose: the 'sofa-bedstead' is clearly visible to him but he sees also what is hidden from view – the 'blacking-brushes and blacking [...] behind the dictionary' and 'the disguise of his chest of drawers' (410). David again sees everything immediately and this time without consciously focussing on anything – he 'look[s] at nothing, that [he] know[s] of, but [...] [sees] everything' (410) – revealing the peripheral vision which is similar to Dickens's ability to '[move] his eyes without moving his head,' as Marcus Stone recalls (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 183).

As Marcus Stone also observes of Dickens, he was ‘a man who lived a lot by his nose. He seemed to be always smelling things. When we walked down by the Thames he would sniff and sniff – “I love the smell of this,” he used to say’ (*Interviews and Recollections 2*: 194-5).¹⁰³ With *his* sense of smell, David makes sense of his environment, identifying the objects which might be in Peggotty’s store-room: ‘a smell of soap, pickles, pepper, candles and coffee,’ all of which he smells ‘at one whiff’ (25). David interprets smells according to what he perceives with his other senses: most notably those of sight and touch. The ‘strange unwholesome smell upon the [school-room at Salem House which is] like mildewed corduroys, sweet apples wanting air, and rotten books’ (89) reflects the ‘forlorn and desolate place’ that he sees with its ‘scraps of old copybooks and exercises [which] litter the floor’ (89), the ‘two miserable little white mice [which] are running up and down in a fusty castle made of pasteboard and wire’ and the ‘bird, in a cage, a very little bigger than himself’ (89): neglected and enclosed spaces associated with the odours he describes. David’s response to the ‘breathless smell of warm black crape’ with which ‘the three young women [are] at work [in] a little back-parlor behind [Mr Omer’s] shop’ relates to how he feels the ‘close and stifling’ atmosphere of this ‘little shop’ (136) on entering it: he senses heat. David reads these scenes purely with his senses, comprehending each through the powers of sight, touch and smell. As the older David records, as a child he ‘did not know what the smell was then, but [does] now’ (136): he could not fully interpret the significance of the ‘warm black crape’ but registered it as a sensory impression instead. It is these sensory

¹⁰³ In a letter to W.W. F. De Cerjat on 7 July 1858, Dickens also ‘certif[ies] that the offensive smells [of the Thames], even in that short whiff, have been of a most head-and-stomach distracting nature’ (*Letters 8*: 598).

impressions that eventually voice their meaning to David as he gradually realises what it is that he is sensing and, in particular, hearing. The ‘regular sound of hammering [that comes] from a workshop across a little yard outside the window’ (136) initially appeals only to his musical ear – he describes how it keeps ‘a kind of tune: Rat-tat-tat, Rat-tat-tat, Rat-tat-tat’ and is responsive to rhythm – but, as he continues to listen, it ‘[comes] into [his] mind what the noise [is], while it [is] going on’ (138): the sound of the making of his ‘dear, dear mother’s coffin’ (138).¹⁰⁴ David has no previous sensory experience of the construction of a coffin – he has ‘never heard one making [or] seen one that [he] know[s] of’ – and he is uncertain about ‘how [he knows]’ (138) what the sound is of, and yet by *hearing* this sound, David realises what he knows instinctively which is what Scrooge also experiences when, by looking upon the scene of his death, he hears his own voice: for each ‘reader’, sensory response leads to enlightenment.

For Scrooge, sensory response evokes in him emotions which contribute to his self-discovery as ‘reader’. Before he hears the voice of the thoughts that he has always had about the consequences of a life devoted to self-interest, Scrooge feels ‘horror’, ‘detestation’ and ‘disgust’ (*A Christmas Carol* 102) in response to the contemptuous comments made about the deceased, ‘shudde[rs]’ at the prospect that *he* is the dead man they discuss and ‘recoil[s] in terror’ when he sees the corpse (102). Scrooge feels these emotions intensely and often physically which is how David also feels his when reading the scenes of his life. Like Scrooge, David feels the physical effect of shock which is seen in his realisation – even before Ham

¹⁰⁴ David’s musical response to sound and voice is seen also in his description of Mrs Fibbitson’s ‘unmelodious laugh’ (87).

confirms it – that Steerforth has eloped with Emily: ‘I felt the shock again. I sank down in a chair, and tried to utter some reply; but my tongue was fettered, and my sight was weak’ (460) – David is rendered as speechless as he is motionless by the news: ‘I could not have moved if the house had been about to fall upon me’ (460). As a child returning to a home transformed by Mr Murdstone’s presence, David is again shocked into silence when, seeing Peggotty make ‘a most extraordinary festoon of herself’ when ‘getting out of the cart’ (53), he feels ‘too blank and strange to tell’ her (53). On this occasion, David feels fear intensely as he tries to understand the changes that have occurred since leaving Blunderstone: he is ‘quite frightened’ when, sensing Peggotty’s ‘agitation’, he asks her “‘What’s the matter?’” (53), while ‘his eyes [are] full and he [feels] as if [he is] going to tumble down’ (53) after he questions why his mother “‘hasn’t [...] come out to the gate’” (53) to greet him. These are physical responses to fear of the unknown, similar to those felt by Scrooge as he faces the uncertainty of whose corpse lies before him: David ‘trembl[es] and turn[s] white’ (54) at the news that he has “‘got a Pa’”, thinking of the reincarnation of his father before Peggotty informs him that he has “‘a new one’” (54). Like Scrooge, David feels the physical effect of a variety of emotions: he turns ‘burning hot’ and is ‘giddy with apprehension and dismay’ (176) at the prospect of there being no one to collect him from the booking-office to take him to Salem House, while the thought of ‘a man [who was in a debtor’s prison with Roderick Random] with nothing on him but an old rug’ (176) – whom David imagines might be imprisoned with Mr Micawber – brings tears of pity to David’s eyes, making ‘the turnkey [swim] before [his] dimmed eyes and beating heart’ (176).¹⁰⁵ At the ‘remembrance of [Peggotty and his mother]’, David’s tears ‘chok[e]’ him and he ‘[breaks] down’ as he

¹⁰⁵ This is another instance of where David relates his reading of literature to life.

defends Peggotty against Betsey Trotwood's disparaging comments about her and tries to express his love for one who loves him as dearly as she loved his mother (208). David cries tears of anguish which make it difficult for him to speak and cause him to '[lay] [his] face in [his] hands upon the table' (208) – a physical reaction to emotion that is felt as intensely as the 'objectless and unintelligible fear' which 'thrill[s] [his] whole frame' (796) as he listens to the tumultuous roar of the storm in which Ham and Steerforth die.¹⁰⁶ David fears the unknown outcome of the storm just as he fears the discovery of all of the changes that have taken place at Blunderstone Rookery: he fears what he does not know and – especially as a child – understand. The journey to his mother's funeral is, for David, a bafflingly alarming one while he is forced to witness the 'love-making and hilarity' (139) of Minnie and Joram in response to which – 'remembering how they [have] been employed' (139) in the arrangements of the funeral – he feels 'afraid of them [and] as if [he] [is] cast away among creatures with whom [he has] no community of nature' (139): as an inexperienced 'reader', David feels isolated in a scene that is new to him.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Referring to how David 'appropriately has traits typical of a man of sensibility – innocence, benevolence, tenderness,' Gwendolyn Needham argues that 'if tears be an index of sensibility, David supplies an overflow; they accompany almost every emotion – joy, grief, shame, rapture, indignation, pity – and serve to relieve and refresh, soothe and exalt' ("The Undisciplined Heart of David Copperfield" 85).

¹⁰⁷ While Minnie and Joram are attending the funeral in their official capacity, the inappropriateness of their conduct reflects how Dickens felt about attending funerals which he states in a letter to Mrs Henry Austin – written on 21 July 1868 – regarding

Arguably the most significant reading experience for David is when he becomes aware of how he really thinks and feels about Steerforth which occurs when Agnes informs him of her concerns about the influence that Steerforth has over him:

There was always something in her modest voice that seemed to touch a chord within me, answering to that sound alone. It was always earnest, but when it was very earnest, as it was now, there was a thrill in it that quite subdued me. I sat looking at her as she cast her eyes down on her work; I sat seeming still to listen to her; and Steerforth, in spite of all my attachment to him, darkened in that tone. (374)

David is affected by the ‘thrill’ of her voice by which she communicates her intensely felt conviction that Steerforth is an unworthy friend: her thought becomes his as his view of Steerforth ‘darken[s]’ in response to her ‘tone’. Indeed, within the depths of his consciousness, David already has this thought about Steerforth as his foreknowledge of what she means by “‘there is one thing that [she] should set [her] heart on very much’” (374) suggests not only that he knows that she will refer to the part played by Steerforth in David’s drunken visit to the theatre but that Steerforth *is* a bad influence over him. As when, by hearing in his memory the sorrowful sound of Mr Mell’s flute David realises how distressed he feels about Steerforth’s humiliation of Mr Mell, the sound of Agnes’s voice raises David’s awareness of how he does not entirely trust his friend. It is by hearing the sorrow felt by Mr Mell in the sound of his flute and the extreme earnestness expressed in the ‘thrill’ of Agnes’s voice that David sympathises with each according to Gallagher’s definition and, in

the death of her husband: ‘I have the greatest objection to attend a funeral in which my affections are not strongly or immediately concerned’ (*Letters* 12: 155).

so doing, hidden thoughts and feelings – Poulet’s ‘mental objects’ – rise into ‘the light of recognition’ (Poulet 57).¹⁰⁸ David responds to the ‘*something* in [Agnes’s] modest voice’ that always ‘touch[es] a chord within [him], answering to that sound alone’ which, while clearly belonging to *Agnes’s* voice, as sound it exists independently of her as well so that, like the ‘dismal sound’ of Mr Mell’s flute and the ‘low sounds’ of Rosa Dartle’s voice, Agnes’s feelings can be felt and ‘immediately appropriat[ed]’ by David as ‘free sentiments’ which ‘[belong] to nobody’ (Gallagher 171). Agnes communicates her emotion non-verbally and unobtrusively to David through the sound of her voice in a similar way to how Dickens sought to commune with his readers and auditors, establishing with them ‘an intimate (especially mental or spiritual exchange)’ of feeling.¹⁰⁹ As I discuss in my introductory chapter, this rapport or sympathy with his readers is felt in passages where the narrator does not state explicitly his feelings about what he describes but instead allows them to be inferred from the details he selects and focusses on. The narrator communicates subtly with the reader as Dickens does with the auditors of his public readings when he expresses his emotion through the tone of his voice and

¹⁰⁸ In “Phenomenology of Reading”, Poulet describes how, in assuming ‘any feeling proposed to’ him in the text that he reads, ‘*mental objects* rise up from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition’ (57 my italics): he realises the *thoughts and feelings* that he was unaware of having. See also pages 35-36 of the introductory chapter for my discussion of how Gallagher’s definition of sympathy relates to Poulet’s experience of reading.

¹⁰⁹ This is one of the definitions of ‘to commune’ as cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as well as to ‘confer, consult, converse (*with* a person, *of, (up)on* a matter)’ and to ‘feel in close touch *with* (nature etc.).’

through his use of facial expressions and bodily gestures. As an unobtrusive 'narrator', Agnes allows David to hear her feelings about Steerforth through the qualities of her voice instead of through verbal expression and what she does say about Steerforth is stated unemotionally as fact substantiated by evidence:

"I do not judge him from what I saw of you the other night," she quietly replied.

"From what, then?"

"From many things – trifles in themselves, but they do not seem to me to be so, when they are put together. I judge him, partly from your account of him, Trotwood, and your character, and the influence he has over you." (374)

She speaks calmly and confidently of her conviction that Steerforth is untrustworthy:

"I am certain that what I say is right. I am quite sure it is. I feel as if it were some one else speaking to you, and not I, when I caution you that you have made a dangerous friend" (375). Agnes feels detached from what she says and as though "some one else is speaking" to him: a voice which embodies the emotion that she feels intensely and that, as David confirms, is heard in its 'sound', 'thrill' and 'tone'.

Agnes's quiet communication of her feelings to David has a powerful effect on him as 'reader', enabling him to hear his own voice – by realising his thoughts and feelings about Steerforth – and then to visualise his friend: 'his image, though it was still fixed in [David's] heart, darkened' (375). As Angus Easson discusses in relation to some of the passages where the narrator describes the prisoners in "A Visit to Newgate", 'The very quietness of tone makes a point, since the mind's eye can rest on such scenes, without the agitation of response to a mediating observer's emotions' (Easson 19) just as Agnes's unobtrusiveness allows David's 'mind's eye'

to ‘rest on’ Steerforth. Indeed, there are many instances where, as an unobtrusive ‘narrator’, Agnes enables her ‘reader’ to imagine a narrative scene: an effect which – as is seen in his letters to Mrs Brookfield and Charles Collins – Dickens advised prospective writers to use.¹¹⁰ Like the earnestness with which she speaks about Steerforth, the ‘sweet forbearing kindness’ (574) – heard in her voice as she remonstrates jovially with David for frightening Dora (574) when attempting to raise her awareness of household duties – evokes in David’s imagination a scene in which Agnes is ‘admiringly and tenderly embracing Dora’ (574) – an act of kindness by which she ‘tacitly reprove[s] [him], by her considerate protection, for [his] hot haste in fluttering that little heart’ (575). Again, David responds to feeling in her voice by imagining a scene, just as he immerses himself in the memories which the ‘sorrowful, distant music’ of Agnes’s voice enables him to recall when, after his return to England from abroad, she speaks to him ‘tenderly of Dora’s grave’ (844). Agnes speaks to him gently and calmly, her voice ‘touch[ing] the chords of [his] memory so softly and harmoniously, that not one jar[s] within [him]’ (844): she skilfully awakens his feelings as he remembers the past.¹¹¹ The use of certain qualities of her voice in guiding David as ‘reader’ is as effective as the various other ways in which she communicates with him non-verbally. When, after expressing his remorse about Agnes witnessing his disgraceful behaviour at the theatre, she reassures him by

¹¹⁰ In each letter to these prospective writers, Dickens advises them that they should create in their works the illusion that scenic action is happening independently of narratorial mediation. See references to these letters on pages 11-12 of the introductory chapter.

¹¹¹ ‘Touched the chords of my memory’ is similar to the expression ‘to touch the right chord’, meaning ‘to appeal skilfully to emotion’ (*OED*).

putting ‘her hand upon [...] [his] arm for a moment’ (374), David feels in response to her touch ‘befriended and comforted’ (loved and cared for): emotions evoked by sensory stimulus, just as Scrooge – in response to the First Spirit’s ‘gentle touch’ – becomes ‘conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten!’ (*A Christmas Carol* 57).¹¹² On the occasion where, having asked her who she loves, David hears Agnes’s tears he also feels her distress (they ‘[smite] [him] to the heart’ [865]) – a sympathetic response which, like his reaction to the ‘thrill’ of her voice when she warns him about Steerforth, ‘awak[ens] something in [him]’ [865]), although this time with the positive outcome of ‘bringing promise to [his] heart’ – as does his remembrance of her ‘quietly sad smile’ (865) – of her love for him. ‘[Shaken] [...] more with hope than fear or sorrow’ (865), David is ready to put into action what he ‘[has] not dared to think of’ (865) – the thought rises ‘from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition’ (Poulet 57) and into realisation – as he prepares to propose to Agnes.

¹¹² Both Mamie and Henry Fielding Dickens remembered the touch of their father’s hand. Mamie recalls how ‘the touch of his hand – he had a most sympathetic touch – was almost too much sometimes, the help and hope in it making my heart full to overflowing’ (*My Father as I Recall Him* 17-18). Henry cannot forget Dickens’s response to hearing the news that Henry had been awarded a scholarship at Cambridge: ‘Turning towards me with tears in his eyes and giving me a warm grip of the hand, he said, “God bless you, my boy; God bless you!” That pressure of the hand I can feel now as distinctly as I felt it then, and it will remain as strong and real until the day of my death’ (*Memories of my Father* 19-20).

The way in which David sympathises with Agnes as he hears in her tears her love for him, is proof of their intimacy as ‘narrator’ and ‘reader’ each of whom communes with the other (as Dickens sought to do with his audiences) by reading and feeling each other’s emotions. For example, after Agnes’s discussion with David about how Uriah Heep is insidiously gaining power over Mr Wickfield, David reads in ‘the expression of her face’ – as she tends to her father – her ‘deep fondness for [him], and gratitude to him for all his love and care’ and when she ‘fervently appeal[s] to [David]’ to be ‘compassionate’ towards him, David feels ‘that nothing she could have said would have expressed more to [him], or moved [him] more’ (286). David’s closeness to Agnes is seen also in how he reads her thoughts by observation, noting that there ‘was more that she might have said; more that she knew, or that she suspected’ (376-7) about Uriah’s ascendancy over Mr Wickfield, and by understanding her motive in ‘withhold[ing] it from [him]’ as the need to protect her father. David’s understanding of the thoughts and emotions which Agnes silently conveys to him is proof of the rapport that exists between them and which is evident also in his knowledge of her character. When, in writing to Agnes about his forthcoming marriage to Dora, he implies rather than states explicitly Steerforth’s involvement in ‘Emily’s flight,’ he knows that she will quickly ‘divine the truth, and that she would never be the first to breathe his name’ (496). *Agnes’s* understanding of David’s character is shown when, following his drunken appearance at the theatre, she instructs him to leave, knowing that he will obey her if she tells him that she is “‘very earnest in it’” (371). On this occasion, Agnes states explicitly to David her knowledge of him after having read his ‘stupid intention’ of waiting in order to ‘hand her down-stairs’ which he must have ‘expressed [...] somehow’ (371) and silently. Agnes reads David by ‘look[ing] at [him] attentively for a little while, [...]

appear[ing] to understand' (371) not only his thought but that – as she later warns him – he is being influenced by a “dangerous friend” (375). Agnes reads David closely, perceiving quickly the thoughts that he communicates to her in his facial expression and in response to which she expresses her feelings, as on the occasion where she asks him whether he has noticed any change in her father:

I had observed it, and had often wondered whether she had too. I must have shown as much, now, in my face; for her eyes were in a moment cast down, and I saw tears in them. (285)

An unspoken thought elicits an unspoken feeling as David and Agnes commune with each other by reading each other.

The intimacy between them is seen not only in how David assumes Agnes's voice by thinking her thoughts and by feeling her emotions but in how he internalises her moral values which then determine the decisions that he makes and the actions that he takes. 'It [is] in no disposition for Uriah's company, but in remembrance of the entreaty Agnes [has] made to [him to tolerate Uriah], that [David] ask[s] him if he [will] come home to [his] rooms, and have some coffee' (384-5) after dining with Mr Waterbrook. On another occasion, David is relieved that Steerforth '[cannot] come to London just then [...] [and] suspect[s] the truth to be, that the influence of Agnes [is] upon [him], undisturbed by the sight of him; and that it [is] the more powerful with [him], because she [has] so large a share in [his] thoughts and interest' (393). Agnes's warning about Steerforth is deeply embedded in David's consciousness as a voice that cannot be silenced and which is heard again when, faced with the opportunity to confess to Steerforth that, 'even by a shapeless thought' he has

mistrusted him, *David* is silenced by his ‘reluctance [...] to betray the confidence of Agnes’ (443). David trusts Agnes as his conscience – a voice that is his, just as Agnes becomes his after he marries her: he describes how he ‘Clasp[s] in [his] embrace [...] the centre of [himself] [and] the circle of [his] life’ (869) – metaphors which suggest more than ownership but that, like his conscience, she is an essential part of him. In describing Agnes as his ‘soul’ (882) at the very end of the novel, David again emphasises how she is a vital element of his existence: ‘the principle of thought and action in a person’ and ‘the spiritual part of a human being considered in its moral aspect’ (*OED*) are definitions which befit the significant role played by Agnes in David’s life.¹¹³ As his moral guide, Agnes never leaves the ‘sanctuary of [his] thoughts’ (431) and he often feels her spiritual presence, as though she is a ‘removed being, like an Angel’ (384) or someone with whom ‘in the mystery to come [he] might yet love [...] with a love unknown on earth’ (849). After the death of Dora, she is like ‘a sacred presence in [his] lonely house’ (776) whose influence affects the thoughts and actions of everyone ‘in that time of sorrow’ (776) and he forever associates her with the ‘tranquil brightness’ of ‘a stained glass window’ (233) which he once saw in a church when a child. As the ‘tranquil brightness’ of the stained glass window suggests, Agnes is felt as a powerful yet gentle influence by David as she guides him to read his world: the ‘soft light of the colored window [...]

¹¹³ Some of the key definitions of ‘soul’ as cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: ‘The principle of thought and action in a person, regarded as an entity distinct from the body; a person’s spiritual as opp. to corporeal nature. Also (*rare*), an analogous principle in animals’ as well as ‘The spiritual part of a human being considered in its moral aspect or in relation to God and his precepts, *spec.* regarded as immortal and as being capable of redemption or damnation in a future state.’

falls on [him] when [he is] near her and on everything around' (241-2 my italics) while her 'heavenly light [enables him] to see all other objects' (882). Agnes's light silently enlightens David, symbolising clearly the effectiveness of her non-verbal communication with him as well as her 'noiseless presence' (520) of which he is almost always aware. Like the unobtrusive narrator whom Easson detects in "A Visit to Newgate", Agnes's quiet and usually unemotional voice not only allows David to find his buried thoughts and feelings but to express them openly. 'I only knew that I was fervently in earnest, when I felt the rest and peace of having Agnes near me' (574), says David, and this earnestness is seen when, having told Agnes this and, '[feeling] so deeply what [he] [says]', David is 'affected [...] so sincerely, that [his] voice fail[s]' (574) and he bursts into tears. Before he proposes to Agnes, David tries to 'lay [his] mind before her, truly, and entirely' (867) and to show her how he 'has come into a better knowledge of [himself] and of her' (867) which, as I have argued, has occurred through sympathising with her: by immersing himself in the consciousness of Agnes, David immerses himself in his own and so discovers 'the truth of [his] love for her' (867). Agnes has opened her consciousness to him, allowing him to look 'deep inside it' (Poulet 54) and, through sensory response, to 'think what it thinks and feel what it feels' (Poulet 54): to fully sympathise with Agnes to the extent that he feels as though he is her.¹¹⁴ David assumes Agnes: her

¹¹⁴ Poulet describes encountering a 'consciousness' when he reads which 'is open to [him], welcomes [him], lets [him] look deep inside itself, and even allows [him], with unheard-of-licence, to think what it thinks and feel what it feels' (54). As I note on page 15 of my introductory chapter, the reader's search for what exists within her own consciousness occurs through this immersion in the 'consciousness of another' (Poulet 54).

emotions, thoughts and moral values while, as his 'soul' (882), he feels within him her spiritual presence as an essential and animating element of his existence. Indeed, David feels entirely dependent on Agnes *for* his existence: 'the dear presence, without which [he would be] nothing, bears [him] company' (882) as he writes 'far into the night' (882) while, referring to her role in guiding him, David declares to her that "'What I am, you have made me, Agnes'" (848). Agnes has become a part of David, a fulfilling and liberating experience of assumption and of love which has, as Robert Heaman argues, enabled him to 'realise [his] full identity' as both reader and lover ("Love and Communication in *Little Dorrit*").¹¹⁵

Agnes's consciousness fuses with David's, making him strongly aware of their love for each other and especially of his love for Agnes, of which he has so far been aware as a 'distant thought' (823) or as the 'mysterious impression' (572) of having

¹¹⁵ David's assumption of Agnes relates to Dickens's wish for his readers to identify with his characters, as Richard Lettis states: 'Essential to Dickens's concept of fictional character was identification. A good character not only came alive; he became part of the reader' (228-229). When Dickens read a narrative by Lady De Lancey (the sister of his friend Basil Hall, who sent it to him) of her experiences with her husband at Waterloo, he wrote, "'I am husband and wife, dead man and living woman, Emma and General Dundas, doctor and bedstead – everything and everybody (but the Prussian officer – damn him) all in one'" (Lettis 228-229). In his article "Love and Communication in *Little Dorrit*", in which he discusses Clennam's love for Little Dorrit, Heaman concludes that 'By loving another you complete yourself, you realise your full identity' (Heaman 40), which I discuss in relation to Clennam's reading of *Little Dorrit* in the next chapter.

experienced before the conversation where Mr Micawber hints to him that Agnes would make a suitable wife (572). He realises that he now loves Agnes with the discipline which she has shown by being his ‘friend and sister’ (824) when she might have loved him romantically, and values the ‘sacrifice’ that she has made in listening to his ‘confidences’ (824) which have often been about Dora. Having learnt from Agnes the self-denial which he so admires in her (earlier he describes her ‘calm, good, self-denying influence’ [278]), David determines to ‘convert what might have been between [himself] and Agnes, into a means of making [him] more self-denying, more resolved, more conscious of [himself], and [his] defects and errors’ (825). Agnes has inspired him to understand himself and to conduct himself according to his true nature, as he does after she advises him to write “‘as plainly and openly as possible’” (575) to Dora’s aunts, informing them of his love for their niece: an act which reflects “‘the candour of [his] nature’” (575). After the death of Dora, David understands his love for Agnes – an emotion which, like the other feelings and thoughts which have risen ‘from the depths of [his] consciousness into the light of recognition’ (Poulet 57), he no longer attempts ‘to conceal from [himself]’ (824) but which, with a disciplined heart, he determines should remain ‘undisturbed’ in the form of their ‘long-subsisting’ fraternal love (824). David’s knowledge of himself and of his love for Agnes motivates him to act in response to this self-discovery: while Scrooge’s rediscovery of what he has always known about the importance of kindness towards others prompts him to express his love of humanity through benevolent acts, David tells Agnes that he loves her. In so doing, David exhibits the openness which Agnes advised him to have in communication with Dora’s aunts when he speaks of how his reliance on her as his “‘guide, and best support’” (867) “‘became a second nature, supplanting for the time the first and greater one of loving

[her] as [he does]” (867). Having been encouraged by Agnes to discover his true feelings, David now reveals these to Agnes who is prompted to declare that she has always loved him (868). What has been felt in secret sympathy is now heard in words which confirm the bond which they share as ‘narrator’ and ‘reader’, just as Dickens’s sympathetic union with his auditors becomes audible when they and Dickens laugh and cry together.¹¹⁶ It is a bond strengthened by the moral principles which Agnes has taught David, such as the selflessness seen in his declaration to her that she has “not taught [him] quite in vain. There is no alloy of self in what [he] feel[s] for [her]” (866) and in how his proposal has arisen from what he knows to be right, as Agnes advised him to act when writing to Dora’s aunts about his affection for their niece (575). David knows that marriage to Agnes would fulfil all that has been ‘wanting’ (703) in his life as she would be able to help him and ‘[share] the many thoughts in which [he has so far] had no partner’ (703) as, indeed, she has already done. David has expressed his gratitude to Agnes for being his guide, “solace and resource” (848) and promises that he will always “confide in [her] [...] whenever [he] fall[s] into trouble, or [...] in love” (285). David sees Agnes as ‘one of the elements of [his] natural home’ (496), essential to his happiness and to which his ‘heart turn[s] naturally’ (496) ‘in all emotions’ (496) and he almost always feels

¹¹⁶ See introductory chapter for my reference to Dickens’s letter to Lytton in which he describes how he ‘laugh[s] and cr[ies] with [his] hearers’ (*Letters* 11: 354). In *Performing Selves*, in which he refers to the *Syracuse Daily Standard*’s report of how “The author laughs with the hearer all the time” (Andrews 216), Andrews concludes that while ‘This degree of rapport struck some as endearing but perhaps a little unprofessional’ (216), it ‘is precisely at such moments [...] that he fulfils his dream of companionship and community of feeling with his listeners’ (216).

those which reflect the positive influence which she has on him, as is evident when, after discussing with Mr Spewlow the cancellation of his articles, he expresses his pleasure, joy, hope and relief in meeting her (515). Agnes fills his 'heart with good resolutions, strengthen[s] [his] weaknesses, by her example, so directed [...] that all the little good [he has] done, and all the harm [he has] forborne, [he] solemnly believe[s] [he] may refer to her' (525). David trusts in her belief that he will be strengthened by sorrow (822) which inspires him to try to overcome his despair at the loss of Dora, Steerforth and Ham (819). With Agnes's voice in his mind, David seeks out 'Nature [and] admit[s] to [his] breast the human interest [he has] lately shrunk from' (822), while applying himself to his writing as she has encouraged him to do (822-823). Fortified by feeling and by thought, David returns to England with the disciplined heart that is founded in self-discovery and which – as Gwendolyn Needham states – is rewarded with Agnes's 'life-long love' (Needham 106).

When David's heart is *undisciplined*, it is rewarded with Dora – a 'narrator' whose physical attractiveness captivates David in much the same way as the reader's attention is drawn to the typical Dickensian narrator. As I discuss in my introductory chapter as well as in my chapter on *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens's narrator can often be imagined as physically present as he performs his act of narration: a 'theatrical artist [who] wants his presence to be felt [as he] overtly and audibly performs before us some brilliant routines and contrivances in order to command attention and applause' (Garis 191) and whose use of 'verbal devices' 'dazzle us' (Garis 24), as Garis argues. Before he even meets her, David is prepared to adore what he senses of Dora: the sound of her name, as spoken by her father, he considers a "'beautiful name'" (396), while his visual appreciation of the features of her garden – the 'charming lawn', the 'clusters of trees' and 'perspective walks' (396) – prefigures

how he will focus on every detail of Dora's physical appearance. David becomes Dora's 'captive and [...] slave' (397) as soon as he *sees* her, admiring her 'form [and] face' (399) and – on greeting her later in the garden – her 'curls' and the 'straw hat and blue ribbons' (402) which rest upon them. The spectacle of Dora has such a strong impression on David that he remembers and reflects upon it later, recalling vividly in his imagination how she looked with her 'quantity of curls, and a little black dog being held up in two slender arms, against a bank of blossoms and bright leaves' (404). As Garis notes of the typical Dickensian narrator, the reader 'never lose[s] sight of him for a moment' (39), and David never loses sight of Dora, keeping her image in his mind as he thinks about or looks at her. Dora is a visual delight in which David immerses himself entirely: whether she is 'sitting on a garden seat under a lilac tree [...] among the butterflies, in a white chip bonnet and a dress of celestial blue' (487) or 'lay[ing] [...] flowers against her little dimpled chin' (488), David is absorbed to the point of distraction, 'los[ing] all presence of mind and power of language in a feeble ecstasy' (488). David is almost mesmerised by Dora when, again on the day of her birthday celebrations, he momentarily loses consciousness of his surroundings as he 'star[es], in a dream' at 'Dora blushing [and] look[ing] so lovely' so that he cannot 'tear [himself] away' from her until Mr Spenlow rouses him with his snoring (492). His absorption in Dora occurs mostly through *seeing* her but also by *listening* to her sing 'enchanted ballads [...] accompanying herself on a glorified instrument, resembling a guitar' (401) throughout which he becomes 'lost in blissful delirium' (401) – a state of mind which endures as she takes her leave of him, giving him her 'delicious hand' to feel (401). The touch of her hand complements David's sensory reading of her by confirming her physical presence – a presence which he feels even in her absence as

when, on her birthday, ‘the farewell touch of Dora’s hand [is] still light on [his]’ (492) as he rides home to London. Like the Dickensian narrator and Dickens as Reader who, in trying to efface themselves through assumption, only succeed in drawing their audiences’ attention to their imaginary or physical presence as performers, Dora ensures that her physical presence is felt by David at all times.

As a performer, Dora draws David’s attention towards her, enchanting him with her music and captivating him with Jip’s new tricks which usually involve his ‘standing on his hind legs’ (608). On first meeting Dora, David is attracted to her ‘graceful, variable, enchanting manner’ (399) and enthralled by her ‘most delightful little voice, [her] gayest little laugh [and her] pleasantest and most fascinating little ways’ (399) and these ‘ways’ continue to charm David throughout their courtship and marriage. David finds her ‘childish way [...] the most delicious way in the world to [him]’ (546) when he is trying to explain to her that he is now poor and declares that the ‘Judge of the Prerogative Court might have fallen in love with her, to see her fold her little hands and hold them up, begging and praying [him] not to be dreadful any more’ (548). David is here distracted by Dora’s performance – her manner and action – from having a serious conversation with her, and this is her intention whenever she objects to what David chooses to discuss: in this case, how they must prepare to lead a frugal life together. She ‘shak[es] her curls’ (546) at him, drawing his attention again to her attractive physical features in an attempt to stop him from saying that he is poor, using Jip as part of her performance by declaring that she’ll “‘make Jip bite [him] [...] if [he is] so ridiculous’” (547) as to continue to reinforce his point. When David *does* persist in persuading Dora that she must rise to the challenge of their newfound circumstances and that “‘perseverance and strength of character will enable [them] to bear much worse things’” (547), Dora’s

reaction is again to use Jip as a distraction by instructing David to kiss him ‘on the centre of his nose’ which he finds ‘impossible to resist’ doing, especially when she ‘put[s] her own bright, rosy little mouth into kissing form’ – a performance which ‘charm[s] [him] out of [his] graver character’ (547). David is seduced by her ‘pretty coaxing way’ of reprimanding him for “‘getting up at five o’clock’” in the morning, finding it ‘impossible to say to that sweet little surprised face [...], that we must work to live’ – a concept which Dora dismisses with the conclusion that they can live “‘Any how!’”, before giving David ‘such a triumphant little kiss, direct from her innocent heart, that [he] would hardly have put her out of conceit with her answer, for a fortune’ (550-1).

Dora’s kisses are felt by David as the reader often imagines that she is feeling the ‘tangible’, physical presence of the Dickensian narrator (Sadrin 181), which is especially the case in *A Christmas Carol* where the narrator claims to be ‘as close [to the reader as though he is] standing in the spirit at [her] elbow’ (*A Christmas Carol* 54). Dora stands close to David as she gives him ‘that precious little kiss’ before leaving the room after their conversation about Agnes’s influence over her, during which he has been feeling ‘the little soft hand travelling up the row of buttons on [his] coat, and [...] the clustering hair [...] against [his] breast’ (618). Dora’s touch invites David to indulge in a sensory reading of her throughout which he is completely absorbed in *Dora*: the physically attractive and present ‘narrator’. However, David’s sensory immersion in Dora is confined to her body while her mind remains a mystery to him and he can only wonder ‘what she [is] thinking about, as [he] glanc[es] in admiring silence’ at her hand, hair, ‘the lashes of her downcast eyes’ and her ‘idle fingers’ (618). In general, David cannot sympathise with Dora – as he can with Agnes – by sensing her thoughts and feelings and this is because he is

distracted not only by the features of her body but by the obstacles which arise through communicating verbally with her. When, having advised David that it is futile to attempt to make her wise, Dora then begins to suggest that “it would have been better to have [...]”, she does not finish what she has to say, and David’s prompting question, “Done what, my dear?” is met with Dora’s evasive reply of “Nothing!” (702). On this occasion, Dora is reluctant to express her thoughts and feelings to David, while he fails not only in encouraging her to do so but in understanding what they might be, as his attempt to complete her question proves: “Don’t I think it would have been better to have done nothing, than to have tried to form my little wife’s mind?” (702). David needs Dora to *say* what she means because he cannot read her mind, as Dora cannot his, as she tells David before confiding in him that she thinks she is unsuited to be his wife: “Because I don’t know what you will think, or what you may have thought sometimes. Perhaps you have often thought the same. Doady, dear, I am afraid I was too young” (772). David cannot always communicate clearly *his* meaning to Dora who interprets literally his use of metaphorical language which often frightens or confuses her and so he has to make his ‘meaning plainer’ (699) when suggesting to Dora that they are partly responsible for the poor service provided by their employees:

“The fact is, my dear,” I began, “there is contagion in us. We infect everyone about us.”

I might have gone on in this figurative manner, if Dora’s face had not admonished me that she was wondering with all her might whether I was going to propose any new kind of vaccination, or other medical remedy, for this unwholesome state of ours.

[...]

“I begin to be afraid that the fault is not entirely on one side, but that these people all turn out ill because we don’t turn out very well ourselves.” (699-700)

‘It damp[s] [his] new-born ardor, to find that ardor so difficult of communication to her’ (547), and yet what David does not realise is that his use of metaphorical language may rouse his enthusiasm but only serves to terrify Dora who ‘receiv[es] [the suggestion that, before they marry, she should learn more about housekeeping] with something that [is] half a sob and half a scream’ (548):

“It will be so useful to us afterwards,” I went on. [...] For our path in life, my Dora,” said I, warming with the subject, “is stony and rugged now, and it rests with us to smooth it. We must fight our way onward. We must be brave. There are obstacles to be met, and we must meet, and crush them!” (548)

As Julia Mills later advises David, ““mental suffering and trial [are] not appropriate to our Dora [who is] a thing of light, and airiness, and joy”” (549), and so it is unsurprising that Dora should object to the thought of being ““brave”” and ““fight[ing] [...] onward”” (548) in a battle for which – as she has already told David – she has no strength (547). Again, it is Dora’s literal interpretation of the metaphorical which fuels her fear: she is reassured by Miss Mills that her future husband is not a ‘labourer’ or ‘navigator’ (549) who wants to ‘smooth’ a real ‘stony and rugged’ ‘path’ (548).

Dora’s misunderstanding of David’s use of figurative language has the effect of distancing her from him and this is also the consequence of his use of rhetorical

expression, as is evident in the extract cited above. His repetition of the phrase ‘we must’ is a technique more suited to public speaking than to talking to one’s fiancée, and Dora no doubt feels like his auditor as she listens to an address which is intended to persuade her to take action. David’s later attempt to ‘form Dora’s mind’ (700) by imparting information to her in a formal and didactic manner is another example of where David’s communication with Dora serves to separate rather than to unite them, as David himself realises afterwards when he refers to the ‘shadow [that has come] between [them]’ (701). His motive is selfish: he wants to ‘[form] her mind to [his] entire satisfaction’ (704) so that he and Dora are suited in ‘mind and purpose’ (704) and, as he concedes afterwards, he seeks to ‘adapt Dora to [himself]’ (704). David is trying to change Dora in order to make her (in some ways) more like him – an endeavour which he finds as disconcerting as Dora does (700) and which he eventually realises is a pointless one: concluding that ‘perhaps Dora’s mind [is] already formed’, he resolves to ‘adapt [himself] to Dora’ (704) and is rewarded with happiness not least because ‘Dora’s life [becomes] all sunshine’ (704). By ‘persever[ing], even for months’ in trying to educate Dora so that there can be ‘a perfect sympathy between [them]’ (701), David reveals a limited understanding of sympathy which he believes can be achieved through sharing knowledge rather than feeling. In endeavouring to form Dora’s mind in spite of the obvious distress that this is causing her, David proves how unmindful he can be of her feelings. David can see when he ‘read[s] Shakespeare to her [that she is] fatigued [...] to the last degree,’ that she ‘start[s] from [the] little scraps of useful information, or sound opinion [that he] giv[es] her’ (701) and ‘that she always [has] an instinctive perception of what [he is] about, and [becomes] a prey to the keenest apprehensions’ (701) but persists ‘with determination’ nonetheless (701). Dora is as intimidated by

David's attempt to "make [her] wise" (702) as she was by his endeavour to encourage her to learn more about housekeeping (699), and David proves in each case how he either does not fully understand, or fails to take into consideration, her character. Ignoring the warning given by Miss Mills that Dora is not fit for "mental suffering and trial" (549) and Betsey Trotwood's advice that "Little Blossom is a very tender little Blossom, and the wind must be gentle with her" (644), David does everything to change her into someone whose mind and purpose are suited to his. As Dora tells David after he admits that he has been trying to make Dora wise by being wise himself, "It's not a bit of use. [...] You know what a little thing I am, and what I wanted you to call me from the first. If you can't do so, I am afraid you'll never like me" (702): David must accept Dora as his 'child-wife' – a role that she has assigned herself to play (651).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ The difficulty that David has in communicating with Dora, their inability to sympathise with each other and their unsuitability of mind and purpose reflect the frustration which Dickens felt in his marriage to Catherine and which he voices in letters to friends. Writing to Forster on 30 March 1858, Dickens states that he 'believ[es] [his] marriage has been for years and years as miserable a one as ever was made [and] that no two people were ever created, with such an impossibility of interest, sympathy, confidence, sentiment, tender union of any kind between them, as there is between [his] wife and [him]' (*Letters* 8: 539). In a letter to Angela Burdett Coutts, written on 9 May 1858, Dickens confides that Catherine 'is the only person [he has] ever known with whom [he] could not find some way to some kind of interest' (*Letters* 8: 560). Dickens's wish to be able to communicate with his wife reflects his equally strong need to communicate with his readers and to be

This is a role for which Dora has been formed by those who have treated her as a child and who have protected her from dangerous influences and which she now uses as a form of self-protection in her marriage to David. By his own admission, Mr Spewlow is an ‘indulgent father’ (561) who strives to “surround her with protections against, the consequences of, any foolish step in the way of marriage” (560) and who employs Miss Murdstone for this purpose as Dora’s “companion and protector” (397). David notices and objects to how Dora’s aunts regard her as ‘a pretty toy or plaything’ (610) – ‘the pleasure of Miss Lavinia’s life [being] to wait upon her, curl her hair, make ornaments for her, and treat her like a pet child’ (610). While Dora welcomes the maternal attention of her aunts, interpreting it as affection for which she is grateful – “I am sure they’re very kind to me [...] and I am very happy” (611), she remonstrates – her response to being protected is to rebel against those who are, in effect, controlling her: “So I told papa last night that I *must* come out” (402), declares Dora in defiance of Miss Murdstone’s instruction that she must wait until the “day [is] aired” (402) before venturing outside. As his ‘child-wife’, Dora tries to rebel against David’s attempts to control her – seen in how he instructs her to learn more about housekeeping and in how he tries to form her mind – by behaving as a child. When the ‘cookery-book [makes] [her] head ache, and the figures [of the accounts will not] add up’, Dora ‘rub[s] them out, and [draws] little understood by them, as Richard Lettis notes: ‘no author ever felt more powerfully the compulsion fully to communicate what he meant and favour[ed] being as clear as possible for his audience’ (Lettis 233-4). In his obituary tribute to Dickens, Sir Arthur Helps writes of how Dickens ‘had a horror of being misunderstood, and grudged no labour to be “understand[ed] of the people”’ (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 334).

nosegays, and likenesses of [David] and Jip, all over the tablets' (611) as a way of challenging David's authority as well as comforting herself in a situation which she finds stressful. Dora's childish rejection of responsibility is seen in her evasive answer to David's question about whether she would know how to buy "'a shoulder of mutton for dinner'" (611): "'Why, the butcher would know how to sell it, and what need *I* know?'" (612) while to his enquiry, 'with an eye to the cookery-book', whether she would know how to make 'a nice Irish stew', Dora replies that 'she would tell the servant to make it' (612). Through role play, Dora leads David into *her* world of marriage in which she is free to 'be' a child and where David has to respond accordingly by treating her as one. He has the cookery-book 'prettily bound [...] to make it look less dry and more inviting' and gives her 'a pretty little pencil case and box of leads, to practise housekeeping with' (611). In order to 'plea[se] [his] child-wife' (655), David willingly participates in Dora's world by pretending to need a new pen from the 'spare bundle of pens [which she holds] at her side' (655) when he is writing and to accept (again because it pleases Dora) that 'the principal use to which the cookery-book [is] devoted [is for] Jip to stand upon' while 'hold[ing] the pencil case in his mouth' (61). David's willingness to engage in role play is no doubt because he has already done so, when courting her, by playing the 'lackadaisical young spooney' (401) who 'dote[s] upon and worship[s] her' (401) as a being – 'a Fairy, a sylph' (397) – who belongs to an imaginary world of his creation. Being with Dora makes David feel as though he is in 'Fairyland' when they smell the geraniums in her garden (404) while when he '[takes] Dora's little hand and kiss[es] it' (490) at her birthday picnic, it seems to David as if they have gone 'straight up to seventh heaven' (490). David escapes into unworldly lands where he can be with Dora in a state of bliss, just as Dora retreats into her imaginary

world of marriage where she finds comfort in behaving and in being treated as a child. By being David's 'child-wife', Dora defends herself from criticism of what she perceives to be her deficiencies as his wife and, in so doing, directs him to play the role of a tolerant husband:

“I don't mean, you silly fellow, that you should use the name, instead of Dora. I only mean that you should think of me that way. When you are going to be angry with me, say to yourself, “it's only my child-wife!” When I am very disappointing, say, “I knew, a long time ago, that she would make but a child-wife!” When you miss what I should like to be, and I think can never be, say, “still my foolish child-wife loves me! For indeed I do.” (651)

In this role, David delights in Dora's happiness with her 'make-belief of housekeeping' (655) – even though she rarely manages to lock the doors with the keys she is given possession of – and together with Dora seeks refuge from reality in role-play and performance: ‘the guitar-case [...] and the songs about never leaving off dancing, Ta ra la! [ensure that they are] as happy as the week [is] long’ (612).

David is given a role to play by Dora which suits her role as 'child-wife' but which does not allow him to act according to “the candour [of his] nature” (575), as Agnes has always advised him to do. When he *is* frank with Dora by telling her what he really thinks and feels about matters – especially those relating to their need to work hard for a living – the consequences are disastrous for both of them, as on the occasion where, having spoken about overcoming the “obstacles” in their “path”, Dora is 'so frightened' that David fears he might have 'killed her' (548). In order to maintain a happy marriage, David has to humour Dora and avoid speaking to her about the 'many anxieties' he has so as not to upset or worry her: he 'keep[s]

[them] to [himself] [...] for his child-wife's sake' (653). By being unable to express openly to Dora his thoughts and emotions, David cannot *be* himself as he can when confiding in Agnes with whom, as I have noted, he also sympathises by thinking her thoughts and feeling her emotions. It is Agnes's quiet communication with David – when she speaks to him calmly and unemotionally or when she conveys her thoughts and feelings to him non-verbally – that allows him to sympathise with her and so discover those thoughts and feelings that lie deep within his own consciousness. Like the Dickensian narrator whose '[loud] [...] voice [...] all but totally fills our consciousness' (Garis 14-15), Dora's performance – her physical appearance and presence, actions and verbal interaction with David – completely imbues David's consciousness, distracting him from sympathising with Dora whose mind, like his, remains unexplored. While David is affected by Dora's emotion, its main effect is to draw his attention to Dora rather than to his innermost thoughts and feelings. Dora's 'artless pleading' of David to think of her as his 'child-wife' makes such a 'strong impression on [him]' that he can never forget it and, when writing, is able to 'invoke the innocent figure [...] to come out from the mists and shadows of the past, and turn its gentle head towards [him] once again' (651-2). Again, Dora's imaginary physical presence fills his mind as it does when, in conversation with Mr Spenlow about the discovery of David's love letter to her, he pictures 'the beautiful little treasure of [his] heart, sobbing and crying all night' and then 'piteously begg[ing] and pray[ing] [Miss Murdstone] to forgive her, [...] vainly offer[ing] her [...] kisses, work-boxes, and trinkets' (557) in order to appease her. Imagining Dora 'in such grievous distress' causes David to be 'in a tremulous state for a minute or so' (557) – physically moved by scenes of feeling. David feels Dora's love for him when he senses her body: 'the triumphant kiss' that she gives him comes 'direct from her

innocent heart' (550) – proof of the purity of her love for him which he also feels for her: referring to his wish to idolise Dora, the narrator reflects on the 'purity of heart' of his youthful adoration (401). Even as Dora lies dying, David '*see[s]* her love for [him], alive in all its strength' (772 my italics) as he '*hold[s]* her hand [...] [and] her heart in [his]'

 (772 my italics).

David's awareness of Dora's body as she expresses her emotion confirms that her feelings belong to *her* body and not his – a 'conception' which, as Gallagher argues, 'must be overcome in the process of sympathy' (Gallagher 171). As I have noted, David is able to sympathise with Agnes when she communicates her emotions and thoughts about Steerforth through the sound of her voice (as sound exists independently of her body), which enables David to 'immediately appropriate' the 'free sentiments' (Gallagher 171) conveyed in the '*something* in her voice' (374 my italics). The outcome of David's sympathy with Agnes is for him to realise the doubts that he also has about Steerforth, and while self-discovery does not occur through sympathising with Dora, it does when she speaks to him in the plain and unemotional style of Agnes. When Agnes speaks to David in this way, he is given the peace and quiet to feel emotion without being immersed in Agnes's feelings, just as the reader is when the narrator refrains from conveying his emotional response to what he describes. David is deeply affected by Dora's declaration of their unsuitability as husband and wife because, like Agnes, she voices his unacknowledged thoughts and feelings: those that now rise into 'the light of recognition' (Poulet 57). David has, for some time, been feeling dissatisfied in his marriage: 'the old unhappy feeling pervad[es] [his life]' (703) and there is a sense of 'something wanting' (703) – a 'void which somewhere seem[s] to be about [him]' (654) that he longs to be filled by a wife who can be – as Dora is not – his

‘counsellor [...] [with the] character and purpose to sustain [...] and improve [him] by’ (654). These thoughts and feelings come fleetingly into David’s consciousness ‘like a strain of sorrowful music faintly heard in the night’ (703) – ‘as undefined as ever’ (703) and yet forever present ‘in the innermost recesses of [his] mind’ (704). Also present in David’s mind are the words spoken by Mrs Strong which ‘constantly [recur] to [him]’ (704), confirming the doubts that he has about his and Dora’s suitability as husband and wife: “‘The first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart’” and “‘There can be no disparity in marriage, like unsuitability of mind and purpose’” (704). As his attempt to form her mind proves, David regrets that he and Dora do not share the same interests and knowledge and gradually realises that his ‘own heart was undisciplined when it first loved Dora; and that if it had been disciplined, it never could have felt, when [they] were married, what it had felt in its secret experience’ (704). David’s uncertainty about Dora is evident even before he marries her as his reaction to Aunt Betsey’s suggestion that Dora is “‘silly’” and “‘light-headed’” (509) proves: David ‘resent[s] the idea, [...] but [...] in a manner [is] struck by it, as a new one altogether’ (509) – he recognises the truth in what she says. Aunt Betsey’s words strike a chord with him because, like Agnes’s warning about Steerforth, they express what he already knows deep within his own consciousness, and David feels ‘a vague unhappy loss or want of something overshadow [him] like a cloud’ (510) when she hints that Dora lacks the earnestness which he needs in a wife. David knows that he and Dora are “‘young and inexperienced [and that they] say and think a good deal that is rather foolish’” (509) but denies Aunt Betsey’s suggestion that he “‘fanc[ies] [himself] in love’” (509) by declaring that they “‘love one another truly’” (509) and that he would probably “‘go out of [his] mind’” (509) if he thought that he or Dora “‘could ever love anybody else, or cease to love’” each

other (509). David's impassioned protestation of his love – like that given in response to Aunt Lavinia's claim that he “think[s] [he] like[s] [Dora] very much” (603) – offers proof of his youthful infatuation with Dora which Aunt Lavinia recognises as “the likings, or imaginary likings, of such very young people as [David] and [her] niece” (605). In contrast with how David enthuses about Dora, “Affection [according to Aunt Lavinia] mature affection, homage, devotion, does not easily express itself. Its voice is low. It is modest and retiring, it lies in ambush, waits and waits” (604) – just as Agnes is quiet and patient in her love for David. David's effusive expression of feeling is therefore a sign of his *immature* affection, while his need to support how he feels by referring to how “all [his] friends [know] how [he] love[s] her, and how earnest [his] love [has] made [him]” (604) perhaps shows that he feels he must convince not only Aunt Lavinia of the sincerity of his love for Dora, but himself. These lingering doubts may also lurk behind David's entreaty to Agnes ‘not to regard [his love for Dora] as a thoughtless passion which could ever yield to any other’ (496) that he makes in his letter to her about his engagement and in which he assures her of the ‘profundity’ of his love and his ‘belief that nothing like it had ever been known’ (496). So when, before she dies, Dora tells David that she was “too young”, not only “in years” but “in experience, and thoughts and everything” (772), that David is “very clever [and that she] never was” (773) and that “as years went on, [her] dear boy would have wearied of his child-wife [who] would have been less and less of a companion for him” (773), she voices what David has been faintly conscious of for some time. Hearing his own consciousness in the words spoken by Dora is highly emotive for David who is made to recognise what he truly thinks and feels about her. David regrets the dissatisfaction that he has felt in his marriage and it is for this reason as

well that he cries profusely at ““every word [which] seems a reproach”” (773).

Moreover, the way in which Dora states plainly and unemotionally the facts enables David to reflect on and to feel what she means without the distraction of responding to her emotions: ““He would have been more and more sensible of what was wanting in his home. She wouldn’t have improved. It is better as it is”” (773).

With these words, Dora concludes her education of David as ‘reader’ by not only confirming his existing thoughts about their marriage but by predicting his future unhappiness with a wife to whom he is unsuited. Having attracted his undisciplined heart, Dora then raises his awareness of the consequences of acting on its ‘mistaken impulse[s]’ (704), seen in how she resists his attempts to improve her by ‘form[ing] her mind’ (700). Her horrified responses act as challenging reading material for David who eventually realises that he has misread her and that he must, as Dora reminds him, accept her for who she is – ““a little thing”” and, ““what she wanted [him] to call [her] from the first”” (702): his ““child-wife”” (651). Her final words are delivered in a manner that is unusual to her and it is perhaps also for this reason that they have such a significant impact on David. Instead of giving the performance of the Dickensian narrator who, as Garis argues, ‘wants his presence to be felt [as he] overtly and audibly performs before us some brilliant routines’ (Garis 191), Dora now gives that of the unobtrusive narrator whose quietness – as Agnes more fully portrays – allows the reader to hear *her* own voice: to recognise her true thoughts and feelings. In giving this rare performance, Dora demonstrates the way in which the Dickensian narrator can vary the performance that *he* gives by changing unexpectedly into other voices while ensuring that his presence is felt at all times. As I show in my next chapter, the narrator of *Little Dorrit* is an especially versatile

performer whose attempts to assume the voices of the characters he describes prove that, like Dickens on stage as Reader, he can never entirely disappear.

Chapter 4

Little Dorrit

On stage as Reader, Dickens ensured that his auditors focussed their attention on him as the performer of his writings and on the performance he gave, which included the act of assumption whereby, as his auditors witnessed,¹¹⁸ he was very effective in creating the illusion of his disappearance as he seemingly became the characters of his creation, not only in appearance and speech, but in how he felt their feelings as though they were his own: sympathised according to Gallagher's definition.¹¹⁹ As Kate Field observed of Dickens's portrayal of Scrooge in his Reading of the *Carol*, 'Scrooge's horror at sight of the young girl once loved by him and put aside for gold, show[ed] that Dickens's power [was] not purely comic' (19): in assuming his characters, he was capable of 'intense sympathy' (Kent 13) which, according to Kent, was the key to his success as Reader.¹²⁰ The 'intense earnestness' (Kent 13) with which Dickens assumed his characters was witnessed also by those who saw his performances as an actor. In *Dickens and the Stage*, T. Edgar Pemberton records

¹¹⁸ See introductory chapter for references to eyewitnesses' accounts of Dickens's skill in assuming his characters.

¹¹⁹ As already noted, Gallagher defines sympathy as 'the process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own' (169).

¹²⁰ Field also records how passionately Dickens feels David's 'sorrow' when, 'as Copperfield, [he] exclaims, "Oh God forgive you, Steerforth, to touch that passive hand in love and friendship, never, never, more!"' which, she concludes, 'is a sigh from a heavy, heavy heart' (24).

Mrs Cowden Clarke's reaction to Dickens's "wonderful impersonation" in *The Lighthouse*, which focussed on how "his grandly intelligent eyes were made to assume a wandering look – a sad, scared lost gaze, as of one whose spirit was away from present objects, and wholly occupied with absent and long-past images" (Pemberton 138). In this role, Dickens assumed not only the emotions but the thoughts of the character, portraying a mind in action – reflecting and remembering – as vividly as he conveyed the 'inner conflicts' (Brannan 86) of Wardour in *The Frozen Deep*.¹²¹ It was the experience of 'being some one, in voice etc. [speech, thoughts and feelings] not at all like [himself]' (*Letters* 6: 257)¹²² that Dickens found so exhilarating about assumption, as it afforded him not only the opportunity to escape from the frustrations of his marriage, but to release his anguish through expressing Wardour's.¹²³ By feeling Wardour's feelings, Dickens was able to realise

¹²¹ See Robert Louis Brannan's introduction to *The Frozen Deep* in *Under the Management of Mr Charles Dickens. His Production of "The Frozen Deep"*.

¹²² In his letter to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton on 5 January 1851, Dickens writes, 'Assumption has charms for me – I hardly know for how many wild reasons – so delightful, that I feel a loss of O I can't say what exquisite foolery, when I lose a chance of being some one, in voice etc. not at all like myself' (*Letters* 6: 257).

¹²³ A review in *The Times* – as cited in Michael Slater's biography, *Charles Dickens* – attributes Dickens's attention to detail in assuming "the vindictive and (afterwards) penitent Richard Wardour" to his skills as a writer: "We feel that if Mr Dickens had had to describe in narrative form the situations of *The Frozen Deep*, instead of acting them, he would have covered whole pages in recording those manifestations of emotion, which, not having his pen in hand, he now makes by the minutest variations of voice and gesture" (Slater 418).

his own, just as the reader does when, through sympathising with a fictitious character, feelings that have for so long been suppressed, rise ‘from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition’ (Poulet 57).

Dickens wanted his readers to sympathise with his characters as fully as he did as author and Reader. Forster’s observation of how Dickens ‘entered into [their] mental phases and processes’ (*Life 2*: 116-7), ‘laughed and wept with them [and] was as much elated by their fun as cast down by their grief’ (*Life 2*: 194) again indicates how he sympathised according to Gallagher’s theory which is how, as an obituarist records, Dickens invited his readers to sympathise with the ‘imaginary persons’ of his narratives by ‘put[ting] [themselves] in [their] place [and by] laugh[ing] [and] sorrow[ing] with them’ (*The Critical Heritage* 515).¹²⁴ As Henri Taine claims, Dickens’s readers were not only deeply affected by the characters with whom he sympathised – ‘find[ing] themselves trembling with emotion, their eyes filled with tears, their cheeks [...] broad with laughter’ (Forster 265) – but by ‘the discovery they have thus made that they too can suffer, love and feel [which makes] their very existence [seem] doubled to them’ (265). The outcome of sympathy is self-discovery as Dickens’s readers realise the feelings that they are capable of feeling, which is what Dickens experiences through assumption and Clennam through ‘reading’ Little Dorrit.

¹²⁴ In *My Father as I Recall Him*, Mamie Dickens records Dickens’s reply to a letter from Mr John Tomlin about the death of Little Nell: “‘To think that I have awakened among the vast solitudes in which you dwell a fellow feeling and sympathy with the creatures of many thoughtful hours, is the source of the purest delight and pride to me’” (*My Father as I Recall Him* 53-54).

In this chapter, I explore the similarity between Dickens's experience of assumption when acting as Wardour in *The Frozen Deep* and Clennam's experience of 'reading' Little Dorrit by arguing that he sympathises with her as intensely as Dickens does with Wardour. I show how it is predominantly through a sensory reading of Little Dorrit as both a 'character' of the 'narrative' he 'reads' and as an unobtrusive 'narrator', that Clennam sympathises with her and, in so doing, realises that he loves her as a woman and not as a child. As with my discussion of Scrooge and David in Chapters Two and Three respectively, I explore the significance of the use of the senses in the 'reader's' emotional response to his world and so I again refer to the argument proposed by Teresa Brennan, in *The Transmission of Affect*, that '[emotional] discernment begins with considered sensing by smell, or listening, as well as observation – the process of feeling that also operates, or seems to operate, as the gateway to emotional response' (Brennan 94). Brennan refers also to 'finer feeling' which is felt by 'being open to the other through the deployment of sensation, meaning feeling' (Brennan 123) and which describes the way in which Clennam and Little Dorrit sympathise with each other through sensory response – a sympathy through which, as Brennan concludes, 'one feels the other's pain or joy as one's own' (Brennan 123). Brennan's theory of 'the transmission of affect' where 'the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another' (3-4) is again referred to in my analysis of how Little Dorrit, as unobtrusive 'narrator', communicates her emotion non-verbally to Clennam.¹²⁵ The way in which Little Dorrit enables Clennam to sympathise with her by feeling her emotions as his own recalls Catherine Gallagher's definition of

¹²⁵ See introductory chapter for further information about the relevance to my thesis of Teresa Brennan's book, *The Transmission of Affect*.

sympathy as ‘the process by which someone else’s emotion becomes our own’ (Gallagher 169) – a process where ‘sentiments’ are ‘free’ and ‘immediately appropriable’ (172) because they do not ‘[belong] to somebody else’ (171 my italics): Clennam feels the love which Little Dorrit communicates to him in the ‘tones of her voice’ (840) because they are disembodied. I therefore refer again to Gallagher’s views on sympathy and to Poulet’s experience of reading where he encounters a ‘consciousness that is open to [him and which] lets him look deep inside itself, and even allows [him], with unheard-of-licence, to think what it thinks and feel what it feels’ (Poulet 54), just as Clennam immerses himself in the consciousness of Little Dorrit when he sympathises with her. It is, however, Poulet’s exploration of his own consciousness through reading that is most relevant to Clennam’s self-discovery as ‘reader’: just as ‘mental objects’ (59) rise from ‘the depths of [Poulet’s] consciousness [...] into the light of recognition’ (Poulet 57), so Clennam realises the meaning of his love for Little Dorrit.¹²⁶

Self-discovery is what Dickens experiences through his performance of assumption in *The Frozen Deep*, but what he also achieves through sympathising with Wardour is the illusion that he has become him which, in turn, enables the reader to sympathise with this character too. In the first part of this chapter, I focus on how the narrator enables the reader to sympathise with Clennam when, through *his* performance of assumption (as seen in the use of free indirect thought), he shows how he sympathises with Clennam by attempting to voice Clennam’s thoughts as though they are his own. While I argue that the narrator sometimes very effectively

¹²⁶ See introductory chapter for my discussion of how Gallagher’s definition of sympathy relates to Poulet’s experience of reading.

creates the illusion of his disappearance, in general his presence as performer remains as apparent to the reader as Dickens's does to the auditors of his Readings when he assumes his characters. It is in response to the performance given by the narrator that the reader feels emotion and so again I acknowledge Sally Ledger's argument that 'Dickens's affective mode is [...] highly theatrical and performative' (Ledger 2). Through assumption, the narrator tries to conceal his voice but he also makes the reader feel by making his voice 'heard' loudly, and it is on the performances where he does this that I focus first. By discussing his use of satire and various rhetorical techniques, I show how the narrator who draws attention to his imaginary physical presence and skills as a performer enables the reader to feel very strongly – especially in response to his own intensely felt emotion. This chapter therefore also addresses my proposal that while it is the unobtrusive narrator who enables the reader to realise her thoughts and feelings through sympathising with a narrator or with a character, the narrator who can be imagined as a vocal, physical presence also has a significant part to play in directing the reader to feel.

As Dickens does as Reader, the narrator emphasises his role as an authoritative storyteller who is physically present – or, in the narrator's case, virtually so – before his imaginary auditors. I have noted already in my introductory chapter how Dickens designed the platform set of his Readings in order to foreground his bodily presence as Reader, making skilful use of props and lighting for this effect. Dickens's new reading table made 'so much more of him visible' (Andrews 135) to his auditors so that they could see his 'arm gestures and body movement' (135), while the 'overhead gaslights [...] ensured that a powerful light was concentrated on the reader's face, and [that] his features were distinctly seen all over the room' (144). In his letter to Mr and Mrs J. F. Fields, Dickens refers to how the new additions to

his set – the ‘two large screens [and] quantity of curtains [which are] of the same colour’ as the ‘back-screen’ (*Letters* 12: 24) serve to enclose and isolate his ‘figure’ for all to focus on.¹²⁷ As Susan Ferguson argues, Dickens chose to emphasise his role as Reader and ‘his public persona as the author of the novels from which his characters came’, through the use of ‘an extremely simple style of staging without costumes and with few props’ (Ferguson 731), and the props that he did use, such as the paper knife (731-2), reinforced this role.¹²⁸ The focus was on Dickens’s *authorial* body – the living version of the narrator of his novels or, in Frederick Trautmann’s words, ‘what had hitherto been represented by the printed page only’ (Trautmann 466) – a body which, “‘warmed by expression and clothed with the accessories of a direct personal communication” [...] conveyed what no typography ever could’ (466). As the reviewer of Dickens’s Philadelphia Readings concludes, “‘The fact that it is *Dickens* who reads, *his* eye through which sparkles the drollery, *his* voice through which trembles the pathos [...] is doubtless that which sets this apart from all other entertainments of the kind”’ (466).¹²⁹ As Andrews states in *Performing Selves*, the rules for public reading required that the Reader should be the focus of attention for his auditors as ‘the controlling narrator, whose authoritative, orchestrating presence must be evident throughout the recitation and should never be subsumed into one of the characters’ (Andrews 77-78) – although, as I have shown,

¹²⁷ See my citation from this letter in my introductory chapter.

¹²⁸ See my introductory chapter for further references to Ferguson’s essay, “Dickens’s Public Readings and the Victorian Author”.

¹²⁹ In his essay, “Philadelphia Bowled Clean Over: Public Readings by Charles Dickens”, Trautmann refers to an article from the *North American* published on January 24 1868.

Dickens managed to be physically present as Reader and seemingly disappear through assumption – and so the design of Dickens’s platform set was in keeping with these rules.¹³⁰

The narrator of *Little Dorrit* exercises *his* authority as one who is confident in his knowledge of his material, providing indisputable facts about his characters as is evident in this description of Rigaud who is imprisoned with John Baptist in Marseilles:

He had a certain air of being a handsome man – which he was not; and a certain air of being a well-bred man – which he was not. It was mere swagger and challenge; but in this particular, as in many others, blustering assertion goes for proof, half over the world. (25)

This is a declarative statement in which the narrator not only provides the reader with information but also asserts his view of Rigaud as one who relies on ‘blustering assertion’ in order to convince others of his worth – an opinion expressed with such strong conviction that the reader *has* to accept it. In asserting his view, the narrator asserts his presence as a storyteller who is emphatically telling his story and who, in so doing, can be imagined to be physically present to the reader: his imaginary auditors. Dickens’s wish for his readers to imagine the narrator – or, as Kreilkamp states, the ‘author’ – as a ‘storyteller’ who required them to ‘[see] and [hear] him’

¹³⁰ See introductory chapter for further reference to the rules for public reading – as cited in *Performing Selves* – and to the sources which provide evidence of how Dickens’s auditors’ awareness of his physical presence did not inhibit them from imagining the characters he assumed.

(Kreilkamp 90) as they read his writings, is fulfilled by the narrator's performance in *Little Dorrit*. While not so obviously cast as an oral storyteller, as is the narrator of *A Christmas Carol*, this narrator's use of discourse markers and digressions creates the effect of one who is speaking directly to a live audience.¹³¹ Discourse markers 'orient listeners' (Norrick 850 my italics), as Neal R. Norrick explains in his article, "Discourse markers in oral narrative", and, as is also seen in *A Christmas Carol*, the narrator's use of the discourse marker 'Now' serves not only to draw the reader's attention to an interesting part of the narrative but to the narrator who is *telling* them his tale:

Now, in the old days at home, certain audacious doubts respecting the last of the Patriarchs, which were afloat in the air, had, by some forgotten means, come in contact with Arthur's sensorium. (163)

One senses here a storyteller who is enthusiastically engaged in his narrative and who wants his 'auditors' to be so too, holding them in suspense as he introduces the idea that there are rumours abounding about Mr Casby. Imaginary auditors focus

¹³¹ As I note in my introductory chapter, the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* is so clearly portrayed as an oral storyteller that the story lent itself to adaptation for Dickens's public readings. As Andrews discusses in *Performing Selves*, the *Carol* 'was, from the start, written to be read aloud' (Andrews 81) while, in *Dickens and the Short Story*, Deborah Thomas concludes that 'the only recurring feature in Dickens's thinking about the form of the short story [...] appears to be the concept of oral narration. For Dickens, a story is fundamentally a story told by someone' (Thomas 4).

their attention on an imaginary oral storyteller and his act of narration which includes the use of digressions through which he chats to and confides in them, as the following extract shows:

But, forasmuch as all favourite legends must be associated with the affections, and as many more people fall in love than commit murder – which it may be hoped, however bad we are, will continue until the end of the world to be the dispensation under which we shall live – the Bleeding Heart, Bleeding Heart, bleeding away story carried the day by a great majority. (150)¹³²

The narrator's garrulity is apparent not only in how he digresses from his discussion of the derivation of the name 'Bleeding Heart Yard' with his generalised comments about legends, but in his aside to his 'auditors' – the parenthetical comment in which he further digresses in order to declare his hope that people will continue to fall in love. The reader is able to imagine the narrator as the 'garrulous entertaining confidant' Andrews describes as 'already established [as Dickens's] narrative persona' (Andrews 17) – a storyteller who enjoys narrating and who does so in the 'colloquial and casual tones appropriate to a raconteur working in oral tradition' (Reid 33), as is seen in his description of John Baptist after he has been knocked over by a Mail coach: 'A little, muscular, brown man, with black hair and white teeth. A lively face, apparently. Ear-rings in his ears' (178). The narrator's use of

¹³² The narrator is here referring to the legend of the 'young lady [who] used to be seen up at her window behind the bars, murmuring a love-lorn song, of which the burden was, 'Bleeding Heart, Bleeding Heart, bleeding away' (150) because she was forbidden from marrying the man she loved.

incomplete sentences is characteristic of speech, as is the word ‘apparently’ as it is used, in this instance, to contribute to the effect of informality.¹³³

Like Dickens on stage as Reader, the narrator focusses attention on his role as storyteller and his act of narration to which he makes frequent reference with comments such as, ‘This history must sometimes see with Little Dorrit’s eyes’ (181) – made before presenting Little Dorrit’s focalised responses to Clennam when she visits him in his chambers – which serve to remind the reader of the narrator who is narrating.¹³⁴ However, as Charles Kent declares, ‘Dickens’s Readings were more than simply Readings [...] [they were] highly elaborated histrionic performances’

¹³³ Andrews is referring to an obituary tribute in *The Illustrated London News* which describes the narrator of Dickens’s serialised fiction as “‘a kindly observant gossip, who was in the habit of watching the domestic life of the Nicklebys or the Chuzzlewits, and who would let us know from time to time how they were going on’” (Andrews 16). Andrews concludes that, in contrast with his early writings, ‘Dickens’s later novels could not be described as having quite this casual, gossipy effect on the reader’ (17). In his general discussion of the short story, Ian Reid is referring specifically to the ‘yarn’ and, while *Little Dorrit* is not a yarn, its narrator’s colloquial tone is, as I argue, characteristic of oral narration.

¹³⁴ In *The Language of Dickens*, G. L. Brook notes that ‘many readers’ find these allusions to the act of narration ‘unwelcome, regarding them as self-conscious interruptions of the illusion. The practice was more common in the Victorian novel than it is today, and the reader of Dickens has to be prepared to accept such remarks as “But bless your editorial heart, what a long chapter we have been betrayed into” (*PP*, ch. 28)’ (51).

(264) in which Dickens displayed his skills as a performer through assumption – as Kent and others have recorded – and by the way in which he created a sympathetic bond with his auditors through his non-verbal communication with them. Eyewitnesses noted Dickens’s “smile” which “indicated and establish[ed] a strong and hearty sympathy with his audience” (Andrews 121) as well as his use of eye contact: Herman Merivale remembers how Dickens’s “eye [...] went straight for [his]” in response to his breaking “into a peal of laughter” at Dickens’s performance as a “choleric old gentleman” and that, having found a “sympathetic eye” in his audience, Dickens then “read” ‘at [him]’, if ever a man did” (Andrews 214-5). As I also record in my introductory chapter, Andrews describes how Dickens established a rapport with his auditors through ‘his tone as narrator’ – which a reviewer of the *Hartford Daily Courant* describes as one of “confidential explanation to the audience” and by his use of ‘body language’ – the “gestures, attitudes, significant nods and glances” referred to by the same reviewer (Andrews 211).¹³⁵ The narrator of *Little Dorrit* is as enthusiastic as was Dickens to exhibit his ‘brilliant routines’ as an ‘artist’ who, as ‘the primary object of our attention [...] on the stage of his own theatre’ (Garis 53-4), is keen to ‘command [the] attention and applause’ of his reader (Garis 191). The techniques he employs are typical of the Dickensian narrator’s performance, most of which have been noted already in my preceding chapters. In addition to these, his use of epanaphora draws attention to the presence of the performer and the performance he gives, as is evident in his account of the interminable amount of jobs that Tip has tried and tired of:

¹³⁵ See introductory chapter for my references to eyewitness accounts of Dickens’s vivid portrayal of character by assumption and to the ways in which he developed a sympathetic bond with his auditors.

With intervals of Marshalsea lounging, and Mrs Bangham succession, his small second mother, aided by her trusty friend, got him into a warehouse, into a market garden, into the hop trade, into the law again, into an auctioneer's, into a brewery, into a stockbroker's, into the law again, into a coach office, into a wagon office, into the law again, into a general dealer's, into a distillery, into the law again, into a wool house, into a dry goods house, into the Billingsgate trade, into the foreign fruit trade, and into the docks.
(90-1)

Through epanaphora – ‘a series of parallel phrases each beginning with the same word or group of words’ (Brook 30) – the narrator’s voice is heard as he emphasises – by repeating the word ‘into’ before each list of occupations – how many Tip has attempted. One senses a weary tone of voice – indicative of the frustrations encountered by Little Dorrit in her persistent attempts to seek employment for her brother – in his enumeration of every job and in the refrain with which he punctuates each list of jobs: ‘into the law again’ (37) is a reminder of the profession which Tip returned to yet failed to persevere in. With reference to this extract, Brook argues that ‘The patience of Little Dorrit in finding jobs for her feckless brother Tip is emphasised in a single paragraph which could have been expanded to fill several chapters without any gain in effectiveness’ (Brook 37), and certainly enumeration works well here to convey the variety and quantity of jobs to which Tip could not – or did not – commit himself. The length of this sentence requires that the reader hold her breath as she reads which she is also able to imagine the narrator to be doing as he provides what seems to be an endless list, until the sentence concludes abruptly with reference to a workplace which contrasts hugely and humorously with the profession, referred to in the refrain, which Tip repeatedly returned to and retreated from: the law.

By replacing the last word used in the refrain with ‘docks’, the narrator emphasises the contrast between the well-respected profession of the law and the presumably manual labour undertaken by Tip in the docks. The narrator again uses contrast for effect when satirising Mr Casby whose serenity is often at variance with those who feel less composed, as on the occasion where, already feeling agitated, Pancks is accused by his proprietor of being too lenient with the tenants of Bleeding Heart Yard:

The Patriarchal state, always a state of calmness and composure, was so particularly serene that evening as to be provoking. Everybody else within the bills of mortality was hot; but, the Patriarch was perfectly cool. Everybody was thirsty, and the Patriarch was drinking. (830)

The narrator’s use of antithesis and hyperbole foregrounds the general sense of good fortune which Mr Casby conveys in contrast with the vast majority who are less fortunate: ‘everybody’ is ‘hot’ and ‘thirsty’ while ‘the Patriarch’ is ‘cool’ and ‘drinking’ (830). He gently satirises Mr Casby for perpetually adopting an air of composure which is an illusion created by him, as is his air of benevolence, as the narrator implies when Clennam is reunited with him and then with his daughter, Flora Casby:

There was the same smooth face and forehead, the same calm blue eye, the same placid air. The shining bald head, which looked so very large because it shone so much; and the long grey hair at its sides and back, like floss silk or spun glass, which looked so very benevolent because it was never cut. (160)

The narrator focusses on two of Mr Casby's physical features in order to raise the point of how fraudulent he is: his head looks larger than it is because it shines, while the length of his hair gives the impression of beneficence. Mr Casby's physical appearance deceives people into believing that he is someone he is not and it is only when Pancks confronts his proprietor in Bleeding Heart Yard that they are made to realise that, far from being kind-hearted, Mr Casby is a "shabby deceiver!" (833). When, having again knocked off Mr Casby's hat, Pancks then 'whip[s] out a pair of shears, swoop[s] upon the Patriarch behind, and snip[s] off short, the sacred locks that [flow] upon his shoulders' (836), the consequence is shocking to behold: 'a bare-polled, goggle-eyed, big-headed, lumbering personage stood staring at him, not in the least impressive, not in the least venerable, who seemed to have started out of the earth to ask what was become of Casby' (836). By losing his hair he loses his identity as the benevolent man he convinced himself and others that he was.

The narrator's tone is mildly satirical when he ridicules how Mr Casby's attempt to deceive people is shown in his appearance, and, with his usual facetiousness, makes his voice heard and his presence felt as one who can entertain the reader. He makes fun of Mr Casby's hair by comparing it with 'floss silk or spun glass' and, by his use of simile, displays his skills as a 'self-exhibiting master of language' (Garis 24). As a performer, the narrator wants the reader to applaud these skills and is self-conscious in his use of them, to the extent that he sometimes refers explicitly to the figure of speech that he is using. 'If so low a simile may be admitted', says the narrator, the 'immense dress' – worn by the countess whom Mr Merdle accompanies to dinner – 'went down the staircase like a richly brocaded Jack in the Green, and

nobody knew what sort of small person carried it' (268).¹³⁶ In asking to be excused for using this simile, the narrator not only draws attention to himself as its inventor but invites the reader to appreciate the effect produced by this figure of speech. By comparing the countess and her dress with a 'Jack in the Green', the narrator creates a comic contrast between two people of opposing social backgrounds attending very different occasions: an aristocrat at a dinner for 'Society' (268) and a chimney sweep participating in a May Day festivity. The narrator's satirical tone is 'heard' loudly when describing members of 'Society', as he does by encouraging the reader to visualise the incongruous scene of the countess 'enclosed in a wooden pyramidal framework covered with leaves.' As this simile shows, his satire is good-humoured and, in the words of William Forsyth, 'never ill-natured', revealing how he (or officially Dickens) 'delights in showing up a foible, whether of characters or manners' (*The Critical Heritage* 351) in those he observes, one of whom is Lord Lancaster Stiltstalking who, as a former employee of the British Embassy and Circumlocution Office, is also attending the dinner hosted by Mr Merdle.¹³⁷ The

¹³⁶ Garis describes the Dickensian narrator as 'the self-conscious virtuoso [whom] we never lose sight of [...] for a moment' (38-39).

¹³⁷ An obituarist, writing in the *Daily News* on 10 June 1870, noted his 'genial satire' (*The Critical Heritage* 504), while another, writing in *Fraser's Magazine* in July 1870, declares that '[n]either has any satirist ever laughed at mankind so entirely without bitterness or ill nature' (*The Critical Heritage* 528). James Fitzjames Stephen, however, held a different view of Dickens's satire. Writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in July 1857, he states that 'We wish he had dealt as fairly and kindly with the upper classes of society as he has with the lower; and that he had more liberally portrayed those manly, disinterested, and energetic qualities which

narrator again employs his powers as a performer, this time using reification in order to satirise Lord Stiltstalking whose dignified presence has an impressive, if not intimidating, effect on those who meet him. With reference to Lord Stiltstalking's former role as a British ambassador, the narrator describes how 'this noble Refrigerator had iced several European courts in his time, and had done it with such complete success that the very name of Englishman yet struck cold to the stomachs of foreigners who had the distinguished honor of remembering him, at a distance of a quarter of a century' (332). '[N]ow in retirement', he is 'so obliging as to shade the dinner' (332), 'cool[ing] the wines [and] chill[ing] the gravy' (333) in the process.¹³⁸ Again, the narrator's purpose in reifying Lord Stiltstalking is to amuse the reader who is able to imagine this gentleman as an object, 'a vessel filled with cold water', designed to refrigerate liquids just as he dampens the spirits of the guests.

Throughout his description of Mr Merdle's dinner party, the narrator 'satirises' Society's values which are based largely on having and displaying material wealth: 'Society had everything to look at, and everything to eat, and everything to drink' (268). Everything is provided for them, including the 'chief butler' who, while he

make up the character of an English gentleman. Acute observer that he is, it is to be regretted that he should have mistaken a Lord Decimus for the type of an English statesman, or Mr Tite Barnacle for a fair specimium of a public servant' (*The Critical Heritage* 368).

¹³⁸ In *The Language of Dickens*, G. L. Brook notes of this comparison of Lord Lancaster Stiltstalking with a refrigerator as one which 'Dickens uses elsewhere to describe the behaviour of the aristocracy: Sir Leicester Dedlock "moves among the company, a magnificent refrigerator"' (*BH*, ch. 9)' (Brook 33).

‘[does] nothing’ and ‘put[s] [Mr Merdle] out of countenance when [he] look[s] at him’ ‘look[s] on as few other men could have done’ (268), and so satisfies ‘Society’s’ needs. By adopting a satirical tone, the narrator is using his voice for effect – in this case to amuse the reader and raise her awareness of his point of view. The narrator’s voice is an instrument with which he performs in various ways – one of which is to imitate the voices of characters he describes, including those of Mr Plornish and Flora Finching. Through the use of free indirect speech, the narrator mimics the way in which each character speaks and, in so doing, ensures that his voice, as performer, is heard throughout. As Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short explain, free indirect speech ‘give[s] the flavour of the character’s words [while] also keep[ing] the narrator in an intervening position between character and reader’ (326-7) – one in which he can ‘[cast] an ironic light on what the character says’ (326-7) or just enjoy ‘drawing attention to his powers of imitation’ (Andrews 115-6).¹³⁹ In the following extract from Chapter Twelve which describes how, during his journey to the Marshalsea prison, Clennam ‘elicit[s] from his new friend a confused summary of the interior life of Bleeding Heart Yard’ (157), the narrator captures the voice of Plornish:

They was all hard up there, Mr Plornish said, uncommon hard up, to-be-sure. Well, he couldn’t say how it was; he didn’t know as anybody *could* say how it was; all he know’d was, that so it was. When a man felt, on his own back and in his own belly, that he was poor, that man (Mr Plornish gave it his decided belief) know’d well that poor he was somehow or another, and you couldn’t talk it out of him, no more than you could talk Beef into him. (157)

¹³⁹ I refer to the discussion of free indirect speech in Chapter Ten of *Style in Fiction*.

As is typical of free indirect speech, the narrator portrays the ‘linguistic characteristics [...] of the speaker’ (Brook 43), such as the way in which he concludes successive clauses with the phrase ‘it was’ in order to support his initial statement that ‘They was all hard up’ (157) in *Bleeding Heart Yard*. Grammatical inaccuracies are, as Brook confirms, often found in Dickens’s use of free indirect speech – ‘contrary to the usual practice, which is to put recorded speech into Standard English, even if the speaker would not habitually use Standard English’ (Brook 44) – and proves how enthusiastic the narrator is in providing an accurate imitation of speech.¹⁴⁰ With the skill of mimicry so often demonstrated by Dickens in life, the narrator mimics the idiosyncratic expressions with which Plornish attempts to enforce his argument and which feature parallelism for this effect: a man’s poverty was felt ‘on his own back and in his own belly’ while, once known to him, ‘you couldn’t talk it out of him, no more than you could talk Beef into him’ (157).¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Brook notes that ‘there are many examples in *Little Dorrit*’ of ‘substandard pronunciations and syntactic features’ and cites the example of when ‘the turnkey at the Marshalsea, when asked whether the wives of debtors were shocked by their experiences, “gave it as the result of his experience that some of ‘em was and some of ‘em wasn’t” (Bk 1, ch. 6)’ (Brook 44).

¹⁴¹ George Lear, who worked with Dickens as a fellow clerk at the solicitor’s firm, Ellis and Blackmore, writes of how ‘Dickens took great interest in [the old woman who used to sweep out the offices] and would mimic her manner of speech, her ways, her excuses, etc., to the very life. He would imitate, in a manner that I have never heard equalled, the low population of the streets of London in all their

The narrator's presence is felt not only as a performer who is imitating Plornish's speech but as a narrator who is reporting it – as is seen in the use of the past tense and third person pronoun – and whose authority as narrator allows him to comment on the character he describes which he does in parenthesis by emphasising the strength of Plornish's conviction about what he says.¹⁴² In the latter part of Plornish's speech about Bleeding Heart Yard, the narrator pauses in his mimicry of Plornish's speech in order to correct his misuse of a word – 'Mr Plornish said manufacturers, but appeared to mean malefactors' (158) – before resuming his presentation in free indirect speech of what the narrator considers to be Plornish's 'illogical opinion [which] was, that if you couldn't do nothing for him, you had better take nothing from him for doing of it; so far as he could make out, that was about what it come to' (158). The narrator is here commenting on how Plornish's speech indicates a lack of education: his malapropism reveals a limited range of vocabulary and his illogical views an inability to argue his point articulately. As the narrator states explicitly in his concluding comment, 'Thus, in a prolix, gently-

varieties, whether mere loafers or sellers of fruit, vegetables or anything else' (*Interviews and Recollections* 1: 11-12). *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines parallelism as 'phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other' (Cuddon 680).

¹⁴² Leech and Short note that free indirect speech 'usually occurs in the context of sentences of narrative report, and, given the preponderance of the third-person narrator telling his tale in the past tense, its characteristic features in the novel are almost always the presence of third-person pronouns and past tense, which correspond with the form of narrative report and indicate indirectness, along with a number of features both positive and negative indicating freeness' (325).

growling, foolish way, did Plornish turn the tangled skein of his estate about and about, like a blind man who was trying to find some beginning or end to it' (158). In portraying Plornish's 'prolix' account, the narrator proves not only that Plornish cannot express his views succinctly, but also that he has much to say about what he feels strongly: namely, how unfairly he considers the tenants to be treated. He speaks in a 'gently-growling' way, suggestive of the anger he feels which is clearly evident in his emphatic style of delivery: his repetition of the phrases 'hard up' and 'it was' enforces his point, while through the exclamatory sentence, 'Why, Lord, how hard it was upon a man!' and the rhetorical question, 'What was a man to do?' – found in another part of the speech – Plornish vents his emotion. While Plornish's verbosity indicates his wish to speak his mind, Flora Finching's volubility suggests the excitement and nervousness that compel her to speak and which, as is the case in the following extract, proves her eagerness to comply with Clennam's request that she employ Little Dorrit to sew for her. Flora greets Little Dorrit with an outpouring of words:

Flora was so sorry to have kept her waiting, and good gracious why did she sit out there in the cold when she had expected to find her by the fire reading the paper, and hadn't that heedless girl given her the message then, and had she really been in her bonnet all this time, and pray for goodness sake let Flora take it off. (300)

In this virtually unpunctuated sentence, the narrator imitates Flora's incessant speech and how she moves swiftly from one point to the next without pause, as the repetition of the conjunction 'and' reflects. Flora welcomes Little Dorrit with words which show her solicitude for her welfare and which essentially reveal her kindness

for others. By imitating Flora's speech, the narrator conveys not only her feelings but her character as one who, like Plornish, is prepared to help those in need.

The narrator ensures that *his* voice is heard when imitating the speech mannerisms of Plornish and Flora and that the reader is as amused by this performance as she is by his use of satire and metaphorical language.¹⁴³ With the same pride in his skills as a performer, Dickens demonstrated in his Readings his 'extraordinary powers of mimicry' (Van Amerongen 23-24) – those which were also intended to amuse his auditors. 'What he most wanted was the spontaneous appreciation evident in unchecked tears or laughter' (Andrews 71), and this he received from auditors who were responsive to the humour and pathos in his Readings. While, during his Reading of '*Dombey and Son* [the] tears in the eyes of almost everyone testified to his power over sober emotions' (Trautmann 465), 'Dickens was best at humor' (466), concludes Trautmann, which was clearly evident 'In all the humorous selections [in which] Dickens brought down his houses in laughter again and again' (465). As Trautmann records, 'Mrs Micawber of *David Copperfield* was a comical hit; John Browdie's Yorkshire dialect, in *Nicholas*

¹⁴³ In his letter to Forster on 7 April 1856, Dickens identifies 'some things in Flora in number seven that seem to [him] to be extraordinarily droll' and concludes that 'Nothing in Flora made [him] laugh so much as the confusion of ideas between gout flying upwards, and its soaring with Mr. F – to another sphere' (*Letters* 8: 82). As the editors of *Letters* 8 state, these references are made respectively to 'ch. 23 [which] begins with the visit of Flora and Mr. F's Aunt to Doyce and Clennam's factory [where] Flora is at her most flirtatious self with Clennam' (82) and to 'Flora's rambling recollections in chapter 24' (82).

Nickleby, convulsed the audience; and Mrs Raddle and the servant girl, of the *Pickwick Papers*, were represented with a felicity of expression – most notably, skilful climaxes and well-made points – that kept the assembly chuckling’ (465). To see his auditors laughing at his skills of mimicry was an extremely rewarding experience for Dickens who observed closely their reactions and who often laughed with them. In a letter written to Georgina Hogarth on 12 September 1858, Dickens records the reactions of a ‘remarkably good fellow of 30 or so’ to his imitation of Toots from *Dombey and Son*: he ‘found something so very ludicrous in Toots that he *could not* compose himself at all, but laughed until he sat wiping his eyes with his handkerchief. And whenever he felt Toots coming again, he began to laugh and wipe his eyes afresh; and when he came he gave a kind of cry, as if it were too much for him. It was uncommonly droll, and made me laugh heartily’ (*Letters* 8: 659). Dickens notes how this auditor is so overwhelmed by feeling that he cries tears of laughter – an emotional response as extreme as ‘the profoundest grief’ shown by ‘one gentleman’ who ‘really shook with emotion’ (659) during Dickens’s Reading of the death of Little Dombey. Dickens’s ability to affect his auditors was seen not only in his imitation of their ‘external traits’ (Andrews 115-116) such as gestures and speech mannerisms but in his ‘complete absorption of the self into [the character]’ (Andrews 115-116) he assumed by thinking his thoughts and feeling his emotions as though they were his own.¹⁴⁴ As I have noted, reviewers recorded how deeply

¹⁴⁴ Andrews distinguishes between mimicry, impersonation and assumption: ‘Mimicry is the imitation of external traits; impersonation is the fuller entry into the character of someone else; assumption suggests the complete absorption of the self into another’ (Andrews 115-116). See my introductory chapter for discussion of how Dickens emulated Charles Mathews’s skills of assumption.

Dickens felt the feelings of his characters – for example, Scrooge’s ‘horror’ at seeing his former fiancée with her family (Field 19) – and it was because of ‘the sincerity of Dickens in his impersonations’ (Kent 26) that ‘his thoughts and emotions were never mere make-believes, but always had their full and original significance’ (Kent 26): in other words, so strongly did he sympathise with his characters that it seemed as though he were them.¹⁴⁵ It is when he is ‘being’ someone ‘in voice etc. not at all like [himself]’ (*Letters* 6: 257), that he seemingly disappears on stage and the auditor is able to immerse herself in the voice (thoughts and feelings) of the character assumed without focussing on the performer’s ‘powers of imitation’ which the Reader ‘ostentatiously draw[s] attention to’ (Andrews 115-6) in mimicry. In assumption, ‘the performer has gone, having transformed himself into a different identity’ (Andrews 115-6),¹⁴⁶ and in *Little Dorrit*, the voice of the performer is heard as that of Clennam’s consciousness.

¹⁴⁵ As Paul Schlicke states, ‘The term which was used repeatedly to describe Dickens’s methods of presenting character during the readings was ‘impersonation’. As Charles Kent put it: “The different original characters introduced in his stories, when he read them, he did not simply describe, he impersonated; otherwise to put it, for whomsoever he spoke in character” [Kent 94-5]’ (*Dickens and Popular Entertainment* 238-9).

¹⁴⁶ The full reference from *Performing Selves* is a continuation of that cited in footnote 32 and states that ‘At the mimicry end of the gamut, the performer remains the principal presence, ostentatiously drawing attention to his powers of imitation. At the assumption end the performer has gone, having transformed himself into a different identity’ (115-6).

In all of the ways in which the narrator communicates the thoughts and feelings of Clennam, he demonstrates how fully engaged he is in what is, according to Kate Flint, ‘the most important centre of consciousness’ in *Little Dorrit*: the ‘subdued, detached, repressed persona of Clennam himself’ (*Dickens* 65). The forms of thought presentation are varied and range from those in which the narrator’s presence is felt strongly in reporting Clennam’s thoughts – as occurs in narrative report of a thought act and indirect thought – to those where the narrator seemingly disappears by voicing Clennam’s thoughts and feelings as though they are his own, which I suggest is evident in free indirect thought. Of course, it is inevitable that the reader will always be aware of the narrator who, as Percy Lubbock confirms, ‘must state, must tell, must narrate’ (Lubbock 63) and this necessary requirement is symbolised by Dickens’s physical presence on stage as Reader of which his auditors never completely lose consciousness, as Kent observes.¹⁴⁷ In fact, it is in keeping with the rules for public reading that the Reader should maintain his role as narrator – a “‘gentleman [who] dramatically tells a story among friends, indicating rather than perfectly assuming [his] characters’” (Andrews 197-198) as, indeed, Dickens achieved, as one reviewer recalls: “‘He does not, except on very rare occasions, act thoroughly out; he suggests, and suggests very forcibly, but he leaves it to his hearers and readers to supply what he does not himself feel it necessary to delineate’” (Collins 194).¹⁴⁸ However, as many of his auditors observed, Dickens *did* “‘act

¹⁴⁷ See introductory chapter in which I cite Kent’s account of Dickens’s Reading in which he comments on how, in spite of his full awareness of Dickens’s physical presence on stage, he is able to imagine Dickens to be the character he assumes.

¹⁴⁸ See introductory chapter for the full citation of these rules which are recorded in *The Nation* and quoted by Andrews in *Performing Selves*. The review of Dickens’s

thoroughly out” in his Readings by assuming the voices of his characters, as a reviewer from the *Edinburgh Courant* records: “[Dickens’s] peculiarities of voice and tricks of manner in a moment establish the identity of each new personage in the story [...] as though the individual had actually appeared and spoken in the flesh” (Collins 193-194), and as Kate Field confirms in her response to Dickens’s assumption of Scrooge: ‘Dickens *is* Scrooge most decidedly’ (Field 17 my italics). As is evident in reviews of Dickens’s Readings, his auditors immersed themselves in the illusion created through assumption while remaining aware of the performer producing this effect. For example, Lehmann refers to Dickens’s extraordinary ability to seemingly become Justice Stareleigh: “The face and figure that [he] knew, that [he] had seen on the stage a moment before *seemed* to vanish as if by magic, and there appeared instead a fat, pompous, pousy little man” (Andrews 195 my italics). It is this ability which I suggest that the reader is aware of when, through free indirect thought, the narrator’s voice fuses with that of Clennam.

It requires a very skilful performance by the narrator to create the illusion of his disappearance through assuming the voice of Clennam. As Wayne Booth states, while ‘the author [or the narrator] can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear’ (Booth 20) and, according to Leech and Short, this is especially the case in the ‘representation of the thoughts of characters [which] even in an extremely indirect form (like narrative report of thought acts) is ultimately an artifice’ (Leech and Short 337). They conclude that ‘We cannot see inside the minds of other people, but if the motivation for the actions and attitudes of characters is to

Reading is from the *Northern Whig* which Philip Collins quotes from in his article, “Dickens’s Public Readings”.

be made clear to the reader, the representation of their thoughts, like the use of soliloquy on stage, is a necessary licence' (337). In presenting the thoughts of Clennam, the narrator therefore displays his skill as an artificer and this is evident even, as Leech and Short suggest, in indirect forms such as narrative report of a thought act, where the narrator makes his presence felt in just describing this act as part of the narrative he relates. For example, in the following extract, in which the narrator describes how, on becoming a Marshalsea prisoner, Clennam reflects on the significant influence that Little Dorrit has had on him, he precedes his report of this thought act with a description of Clennam's action of 'dropp[ing] into a solitary arm-chair' (752) and, in so doing, places Clennam's act of thinking within the context of the narrative action:

Arthur Clennam dropped into a solitary arm-chair, itself as faded as any debtor in the jail, and yielded himself to his thoughts. In the unnatural peace of having gone through the dreaded arrest, and got there, the first change of feeling which the prison most commonly induced, and from which dangerous resting-place so many men had slipped down to the depths of degradation and disgrace, by so many ways, - he could think of some passages in his life, almost as if he were removed from them into another state of existence. Taking into account where he was, the interest that had first brought him there when he had been free to keep away, and the gentle presence that was equally inseparable from the walls and bars about him, and from the impalpable remembrances of his later life which no walls nor bars could imprison, it was not remarkable that everything his memory turned upon should bring him round again to Little Dorrit. Yet it was remarkable to him, not because of the fact itself; but because of the reminder it brought with it, how much the dear little creature had influenced his better resolutions. (752)

The significant point to draw from this extract is that it is entirely the narrator's voice which is heard in reporting Clennam's acts of reflecting and remembering and that Clennam's voice is not specifically represented as it would be if the actual thoughts were to be stated. The narrator makes his presence felt in role as narrator

throughout this extract as he reports Clennam's thought acts, asserting his authority by deducing that Clennam feels a sense of detachment when remembering 'some passages of his life' and that, given the circumstances surrounding his imprisonment, 'it [is] not unremarkable' that Little Dorrit should be the focal point of his memories. In describing and commenting on Clennam's acts of thinking, the narrator takes centre stage as a performer whose purpose is to portray the state of mind of his characters and he remains in this central role when identifying the thoughts themselves. For example, on the occasion where, having listened to Mrs Chivery's account of her son's love for Little Dorrit, Clennam then considers *his* own feelings for her, the narrator describes these and the thoughts he has as he continues his conversation with her:

He had come to attach to Little Dorrit an interest so peculiar – an interest that removed her from, while it grew out of, the common and coarse things surrounding her – that he found it disagreeable, almost painful, to suppose her in love with young Mr Chivery in the back yard, or any such person. On the other hand, he reasoned with himself that she was just as good and just as true, in love with him, as not in love with him; and that to make a kind of domesticated fairy of her, on the penalty of isolation at heart from the only people she knew, would be but a weakness of his own fancy, and not a kind one. Still, her youthful and ethereal appearance, her timid manner, the charm of her sensitive voice and eyes, the very many respects in which she had interested him out of her own individuality, and the strong difference between herself and those about her, were not in unison, and were determined not to be in unison, with this newly-presented idea. (277)

The narrator's presence is felt as he not only states explicitly how Clennam 'found it disappointing, disagreeable, almost painful, to suppose her in love with young Mr Chivery', but in how he records Clennam's thought process. The narrator describes how, having thought about his objections to young John Chivery's love for Little Dorrit, he then reasons that it would be unfair to her to view her as beyond the

reaches of the love of others, before he reverts to his original and strongly felt conviction that he cannot reconcile the idea of others loving one whose unusual qualities he finds so attractive. By describing what Leech and Short call the ‘content of what was thought’ (345), the narrator gives a more direct representation of Clennam’s voice than he does by just reporting his thought acts, while he attempts ‘to render the character’s immediate experience or consciousness of these thoughts’ (337) by tracing his thought process. However, the voice of the narrator in recording Clennam’s thoughts predominates, as is inevitable when, as Leech and Short state, ‘other people’s thoughts are not accessible to such direct perception’ (345). Even when Clennam’s thoughts are presented in direct thought, the narrator’s presence is felt in giving what is, in fact, another of his performances. As Leech and Short state, it is ‘because the direct perception of someone else’s thought is not possible that direct thought is perceived as more artificial than more indirect forms. When DT [direct thought] is used the writer is in effect saying, “This is what the character would have said if he had made his thoughts explicit”’ and it is ‘this explicitness which gives rise to the conscious qualities of DT’ (Leech and Short 345). The ‘conscious qualities’ of direct thought indicate the narrator’s presence as the performer who is voicing what cannot be expressed and so, as Leech and Short suggest, the narrator is speaking on behalf of the character despite his attempt to create the effect that we are hearing directly the character’s voice. In the following extract, in which Clennam reflects on how Little Dorrit has motivated him by her strength and determination, the narrator’s presence is felt as he reports Clennam’s thoughts as though they have been spoken by him:

None of us clearly know to whom or to what we are indebted in this wise, until some marked stop in the whirling wheel of life brings the right perception with it. It comes with sickness, it comes with sorrow, it comes with the loss of the dearly loved, it is one of the most frequent uses of adversity. It came to Clennam in his adversity, strongly and tenderly. "When I first gathered myself together," he thought, "and set something like purpose before my jaded eyes, whom had I before me, toiling on, for a good object's sake, without encouragement, without notice, against ignoble obstacles that would have turned an army of received heroes and heroines? One weak girl. When I tried to conquer my misplaced love, and to be generous to the man who was more fortunate than I, though he should never know it or repay me with a gracious word, in whom had I watched patience, self-denial, self-subdual, charitable construction, the noblest generosity of the affections? In the same poor girl!" [...] So always, as he sat alone in the faded chair, thinking. (752-3)

The use of the reporting clause 'he thought' makes plain to the reader that the narrator is presenting these thoughts as part of the narrative he relates and his presence as a narrator is seen in the opening sentence in which he declares how, in times of suffering, we can experience a moment of insight when we discover to whom we owe our gratitude, and in the concluding sentence in which he reminds the reader that he is describing Clennam's thought act. When the actual thoughts are expressed, the performer's voice is heard in giving a performance which – as Leech and Short state in their discussion of direct thought in general – 'is effectively a monologue, with the character "talking" to himself [and] the thoughts [which are spoken aloud] acquir[ing] the conscious quality' (342) indicative of the performer's artifice. The way in which Clennam asks himself questions to which he then supplies the answers, contributes to the effect created that he is talking to himself, or

‘speaking alone’, as occurs in a monologue.¹⁴⁹ So while in direct thought ‘authorial [or narratorial] intervention *appears* minimal’ (Leech and Short 342 my italics) and is most apparent in the reporting clause, it is actually omnipresent in the overall performance given by him.

Even in free indirect thought, where the narrator’s presence is meant to be felt as less obtrusive, his voice is heard in his performance of assumption in which he presents Clennam’s thoughts as though they are his own. As Leech and Short state, the narrator’s voice is heard in the ‘indirect features’ of free indirect thought which include the use of the past tense and the third-person pronoun (337-338) and which confirm that the narrator is reporting the thoughts of his character. However, the purpose of free indirect thought is to ‘apparently [give] us the “verbatim” thoughts of the characters with less and less intervention on his part’ (Leech and Short 337-338), and this illusion is created through the use of ‘direct features’ such as ‘the interrogative form and question mark’ as well as the ‘absence of a reporting clause’ (337-338). The combination of indirect and direct features in free indirect thought means that the reader hears the voice of the narrator *and* the character and so remains aware of the performer while responding to the effect of his performance. In the following extract which depicts Clennam thinking about Little Dorrit after their meeting on the Iron Bridge, the indirect and direct features of free indirect thought are apparent:

¹⁴⁹ *The Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* states that ‘the basic meaning’ of the monologue is that ‘a single person speak[s] alone – with or without an audience’ (Cuddon 553).

He felt that it was better to respect her entreaty, and did not move while her slight form went quickly away from him. When it had fluttered out of sight, he turned his face towards the water and stood thinking.

She would have been distressed at any time by this discovery of the letters; but so much so, and in that unrestrainable way?

No.

When she had seen her father begging with his threadbare disguise on, when she had entreated him not to give her father money, she had been distressed, but not like this. Something had made her keenly and additionally sensitive just now. Now, was there some one in the hopeless unattainable distance? Or had the suspicion been brought into his mind, by his own associations of the troubled river running beneath the bridge with the same river higher up?

He thought of his poor child, Little Dorrit, for a long time there; he thought of her, going home; he thought of her in the night; he thought of her when the day came round again. (281)

The narrator's presence in reporting Clennam's thoughts is evident in the opening and concluding statements, in which he describes Clennam's thought acts, and in the actual passage of free indirect thought. The use of the past tense in this passage corresponds with that used in the narrative report of Clennam's thought acts and so emphasises the narrator's role in reporting these and the thoughts themselves. The phrase which introduces Clennam's thoughts – 'and stood thinking' – further confirms that the voice heard in reporting this thought act will continue to be heard in recording the thoughts which follow: the *narrator* is reporting the thoughts of his character, as the use of the third-person proves. By stating Clennam's thoughts, the narrator does allow the reader to hear the voice of Clennam, while the absence of a reporting clause and the inclusion of questions contribute to the effect that we are 'apparently [...] directly inside the character's mind' (Leech and Short 345) – one

which is ‘active’ as each of the questions about the cause of Little Dorrit’s distress moves swiftly through his mind.¹⁵⁰

We are ‘*apparently* [...] directly inside the character’s mind’ (344 my italics) as a result of the performer’s skill in seemingly disappearing through assuming the voice of Clennam and yet we remain aware of the performer whose insistent presence as a reporter of Clennam’s thoughts is felt throughout. As I have noted, it is a necessary requirement that the narrator’s voice is heard, just as it is that Dickens’s auditors never completely lose consciousness of his presence on stage as Reader. However, as I have also suggested, when Dickens sympathises fully with the character he assumes so that, as Gallagher asserts, he feels as though ‘someone else’s emotion [has become his own]’ (169), he very effectively creates the illusion that he *is* that character. It is hard to distinguish between Dickens the Reader and the character assumed just as, in free indirect thought, it is ‘fairly common [to find that] it is impossible to tell by the use of formal linguistic criteria alone whether one is reading the thoughts of the character or the views of the narrator/author’ (Leech and Short 338). However, in the example of free indirect thought cited above, it *is* possible to tell the difference between the voice of the narrator and Clennam’s voice because we remain aware throughout of the presence of the narrator who is performing his act of assumption. Nevertheless, I suggest that there are occasions where the narrator appears to assume Clennam’s voice with little – if any – trace of the performer who is creating an effect and when, as a result, we hear a fusion of their voices. For

¹⁵⁰ Leech and Short state that ‘FIT is seen as a move to the right and hence away from the author’s most directly interpretive control and into the active mind of the character’ (Leech and Short 345).

example, when the narrator states his views in response to dialogue spoken by Little Dorrit, they can be interpreted as Clennam's thoughts because, by being expressed unobtrusively, the 'performer has gone [or almost], having transformed himself into a different identity' (Andrews 115-116). In the following extract, taken from the conversation on the Iron Bridge in which Little Dorrit thanks Clennam for the money he has given her father and asks him not to judge or misunderstand him, the narrator assumes the voice of Clennam:

"Not," she said, with a prouder air, as the misgiving evidently crept upon her that she might seem to be abandoning him, "Not that he has anything to be ashamed of for himself, or that I have anything to be ashamed of for him. He only requires to be understood. I only ask for him that his life should be fairly remembered. All that he said was quite true. It all happened just as he related it. He is very much respected. Everybody who comes in, is glad to know him. He is more courted than anyone else. He is far more thought of than the Marshal is."

If ever pride were innocent, it was innocent in Little Dorrit when she grew boastful of her father. (111-112)

In his statement about Little Dorrit's innocent pride, the narrator makes no reference to the fact that these are Clennam's thoughts and provides no indication that he is giving a performance of them (as is seen in all of the forms of thought presentation which I have referred to) but instead expresses what seems to be his reaction to her praise of her father. However, because the statement follows Little Dorrit's dialogue to which Clennam is listening attentively and, considering his intense interest in and close observation of her, the narrator's response to Little Dorrit can also be seen to be Clennam's. In allowing the reader to infer that these are Clennam's thoughts rather than drawing her attention to his presence in presenting them, the narrator

gives a very subtle performance in which his voice is heard as that of Clennam's consciousness: like Dickens as Reader, he assumes the character of his narrative. The narrator sympathises with Clennam according to Gallagher's definition of sympathy – which is 'the process by which someone else's emotion becomes our own' (Gallagher 169) – by thinking Clennam's thoughts as though they are his own and as though he is Clennam. The reader is then also able to sympathise with Clennam in the same way as the narrator does because his apparent disappearance through assumption enables her to imagine that she is hearing the voice of Clennam only: that she is actually rather than 'apparently' (as in free indirect thought) 'directly inside the character's mind' (Leech and Short 344). Moreover, by presenting Clennam's thoughts without making explicit that they are his, the narrator creates the effect that they are disembodied which enables the reader to more readily appropriate them as her own, as Gallagher argues occurs when the reader sympathises with a fictitious character. Gallagher proposes that our ability to sympathise with a person in real life is inhibited by our knowing that 'the sentiments [...] [belong] to somebody else' (172) and that 'our conception of the sentiments as appropriate to *that* rather than to *this* body [by which she means ours] must be overcome in the process of sympathy' (Gallagher 172). She suggests that 'this proprietary barrier of the other's body is what fiction freely dispenses with; by representing feelings that belong to no other body, fiction actually facilitates the process of sympathy [...] by giv[ing] us the illusion of immediately appropriable sentiments, free sentiments belonging to nobody and therefore identifiable with ourselves' (172). According to Gallagher's theory, the reader is able to sympathise with Clennam because he is a fictitious character whose sentiments are freely accessible to us to feel as though they are our own and so, by their unspecified

ownership within the narrative, they are even more freely available for the reader to appropriate. The narrator further enables the reader to sympathise with Clennam when, by presenting Clennam's thoughts as though he has not expressed them, he makes it possible for the reader to imagine that she is hearing the unspoken thoughts of a character – what Graham Greene defines as Dickens's 'secret prose [...] that sense of a mind speaking to itself with no one there to listen' (Greene 163).

Dickens's 'secret prose' is an unobtrusive performance by the narrator in which he presents the thoughts of a character as though they are unarticulated and not meant to be heard by anyone – a self-communing consciousness to which the reader attends by overhearing what is happening within it. I suggest that it is when we read an unobtrusive and impersonal statement of a character's thoughts (such as the one cited above) that the reader is able to freely immerse herself in a consciousness which is, as Poulet experiences in reading, 'open to [her and which] welcomes [her], lets [her] look deep inside itself, and even allows [her], with unheard-of-licence, to think what it thinks and feel what it feels' (Poulet 54). Essentially, she is able to explore a mind that could also be her own.

In this quietly delivered statement, the narrator gives a very impressive performance of assumption where he enables the reader to imagine that she is hearing the voice of Clennam and to hear her own when, by sympathising with him – by thinking his thoughts and feeling his feelings – *hers* then 'rise up from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition' (Poulet 57). The narrator's quietness enables the reader to explore her own mind, 'the secrets of the vast profound' (Brannan 97-98) which – as Michael Slater concludes in response to this quotation from *The Frozen Deep* – '[exist] within every one of us' (Slater 417) and which

Dickens explored in his assumption of Wardour.¹⁵¹ As I discuss in my introductory chapter, Dickens's anguish was confirmed through feeling Wardour's and released through expressing this emotion in his performance. Through assumption, Dickens realised that he was suffering as intensely as was Wardour and it is this self-discovery which Clennam, as 'reader', also experiences when he sympathises with Little Dorrit as the 'character' of the 'narrative' he 'reads' and as the unobtrusive 'narrator' whose quiet communication with him raises his awareness that he loves her. As 'reader', Clennam immerses himself completely in the world of his 'character' by imagining what it is like to be her and by being strongly affected by what she says, does and feels. Clennam is absorbed in what he reads, just as one 'los[es] and forget[s] [oneself] in [one's] devotion to' whom one loves, as Little Dorrit advises her sister, Fanny (*Little Dorrit* 618). Little Dorrit suggests to Fanny that it is through immersing oneself in the life of the loved one and in the feeling of being in love that one changes, no longer entirely *being* oneself, but, as Robert Heaman concludes, 'complet[ing] [oneself]' and so 'realis[ing] [one's] full identity' (Heaman 39-40).¹⁵² The outcome of loving someone is self-discovery just as it is for

¹⁵¹ This reference is from the Prologue to *The Frozen Deep*, in which Dickens played Wardour and, as Robert Brannan states in *Under the Management of Mr Charles Dickens. His Production of The Frozen Deep*, focussed on portraying 'Wardour's inner conflicts' (Brannan 86).

¹⁵² In his essay, "Love and Communication in *Little Dorrit*", Robert Heaman concludes – in response to Little Dorrit's advice to her sister – that 'The ability to lose and forget yourself is central to Dickens's idea of the relationship between love and self-realisation. By loving another you complete yourself, you realise your full identity' (Heaman 39-40).

the reader as a result of sympathising with a character by feeling his emotion as her own and so, as Dickens experiences through assumption, imagining that she is ‘*being* someone in voice etc. not at all like [herself]’ (*Letters* 6: 257).¹⁵³

It is through reading *Little Dorrit* that Clennam eventually realises that he loves her as a woman and not as the child of the Marshalsea whom he has cared for and protected ever since he has known her. It is her child-like demeanour and physical appearance which capture his attention when he first observes her in his mother’s house: while he can see that she is a ‘woman, probably of not less than two and twenty’, she is ‘so little and light, so noiseless and shy, and appear[s] so conscious of being out of place among the three hard elders, that she [has] all the manner and much of the appearance of a subdued child’ (67-68). The contrast between Little Dorrit’s actual and apparent ages fascinates Clennam and his ‘original curiosity’ increases daily as he ‘resolve[s] to watch [her] and know more of her story’ (72): to immerse himself in her narrative. Clennam reads *Little Dorrit* as though she is a child, ‘thinking of her, if not speaking to her, as if she [is] [one]’ (110) when they walk towards the Iron Bridge while, ‘in his habit of considering her a child apart from the rest of the rough world’ (189), he feels a strong urge to protect her when following her and Maggy on their route home by ‘tak[ing] her up in his arms and carry[ing] her to her journey’s end’ (189). Clennam regards Little Dorrit ‘as the only person between union and himself there [are] ties of innocent reliance on one hand, and affectionate protection on the other’ (205) and he comes to the conclusion that he ‘regard[s] her [...] as his adopted daughter, his poor child of the Marshalsea hushed to rest’ (205). Clennam cannot perceive her love for him any more than he

¹⁵³ See footnote 5.

can recognise his romantic feelings for her. When he asks Little Dorrit why she has not visited him recently, he fails to read her discomposure – her ‘trembling little form and her downcast face, and the eyes that [droop] the moment they are raised to his’ (402) – as a sign of her love for him, although her distress evokes in him feelings of ‘concern’ and ‘tenderness’. Little Dorrit is quite open in showing her love for Clennam as when, having said that she knows that he will “‘not judge [her brother] hardly’”, she ‘rais[es] her eyes [...] [and] observe[s] his face more nearly than she [has] done yet, and [asks him whether he has been] “‘ill [...] tried [or] hurt’” (403). While Clennam is not unaffected by her concern for his welfare, as his uncertainty about how to reply reveals, he cannot interpret her solicitude as evidence of her love for him which, as the narrator implies, no other person feels as strongly as does Little Dorrit: ‘he never thought that she saw in him what no one else could see [and that] in the whole world there were no other eyes that looked upon him with the same light and strength as hers’ (403). When Clennam asks Little Dorrit why he is confiding in her about how he considers himself to be too old for marriage, he cannot recognise in her response the expression of her love for him and while he senses the physical signs of her feelings, he does not interpret their significance:

“Because you trust me, I hope. Because you know that nothing can touch you, without touching me; that nothing can make you happy or unhappy, but it must make me, who am so grateful to you, the same.”

He heard the thrill in her voice, he saw her earnest face, he saw her clear true eyes, he saw the quickened bosom that would have joyfully thrown itself before him to receive a mortal wound directed at his breast, with the dying cry, “I love him!” and the remotest suspicion of the truth never dawned upon his mind. No. He saw the devoted little creature with her worn shoes, in her common dress, in her jail-home; a slender child in body, a strong heroine in soul; and the light of her domestic story made all else dark to him. (404)

Little Dorrit's reply – in which she stresses how closely she sympathises with Clennam – is effectively a declaration of her love for him and yet Clennam can only read her as the Little Dorrit he knows: a character in a '*domestic*' rather than in a '*love*' story.¹⁵⁴ It is because Clennam sees her as a 'slender child' rather than as the woman who loves him that he unwittingly causes her distress by referring to his ineligibility for marriage: 'If he had known the sharpness of the pain he caused the patient heart, in speaking thus! [...] If he could have seen the dagger in his hand, and the cruel wounds it struck in the faithful bleeding breast of his Little Dorrit!' (404) exclaims the narrator.

Clennam always thinks of Little Dorrit as a child – 'his innocent friend, his delicate child, his dear Little Dorrit' (543) – and she dominates his thoughts most of the time, as is seen on the occasion where, following their meeting on the Iron Bridge, he is left thinking about 'his poor child [...] for a long time there' and continues to do so on his journey home, throughout the night and the following day (281). However, while Clennam thinks about the *child* he loves and cares for, her being the almost constant focus of his thoughts would suggest the love of a man for a *woman*. Indeed, while Clennam may not initially realise his romantic feelings for her, there is plentiful evidence of their existence. Clennam has such a 'deep interest in her story [...] that he [can] scarcely tear himself away' (101) from her when he

¹⁵⁴ In his article, "*Little Dorrit: The Readers Within The Text*", Robert Tracy argues that Clennam's 'starved imagination cannot conceive any imaginative projection of himself, nor recreate himself in narrative' (Tracy 130) and he has to be told by Young John Chivery 'that he is at the centre of Little Dorrit's story, that she loves him' (132).

visits her in the Marshalsea – so immersed is he in the woman he is attracted to. Moreover, he is affected by her feelings, ‘moved by compassion for her’ when she is so ‘tremulous and agitated’ (101) and respectful of the emotions with which she expresses her wish that, prior to visiting her, he “‘had not watched [her]’” and found out where she lived: ‘He understood the emotion [...] to arise in her father’s behalf; [...] and was silent’ (100). Clennam is sensitive to her feelings, noting her physical reactions to emotion: ‘She start[s], color[s] deeply, and turn[s] white’ (96) at the shock of seeing Clennam in the Marshalsea when she is attending her father and observes her ambivalent feelings towards him: ‘Her look at her father, half admiring him and proud of him, half-ashamed for him, all devoted and loving, went to his inmost heart’ (97). Clennam is *deeply* affected by her feelings, feeling them as though they are his own and so sympathising according to Gallagher’s definition, as is evident in his response to her passionate plea – made to him during their meeting on the Iron Bridge – that she should remain at home with her father: ‘The agonised way in which she poured this out as if it burst of itself from her suppressed heart, made it difficult for Clennam to keep the tears from his eyes as he saw and heard her’ (280-281).¹⁵⁵ Clennam sympathises with Little Dorrit in much the same way as she, who loves him, does with him – as she tells him, whatever affects or ‘touch[es]’ him, ‘touch[es]’ her (404) – and it is this sympathy, seen also in the way in which they communicate non-verbally with each other, which indicates the intimacy of lovers. Words are not necessary as they read each other’s thoughts and emotions in facial expression, tone of voice and bodily gestures. In the conversation where Little Dorrit tells Clennam that she pretends to her father that she is going to a party, she ‘rais[es] her eyes to [his] face, and read[s] its expression so plainly that she answer[s]

¹⁵⁵ See footnote 2 for Gallagher’s definition of sympathy.

it, [replying] “Oh no, certainly! I never was at a party in my life” (185). Clennam is equally as adept at reading her thoughts as is seen when, having told her of her father’s “wonderful fortune” (436), he supports her with his arm because she is so physically shaken by the news and ‘would have clasped the little figure closer, but he saw that the eyes appealed to him not to be moved’ (436). ‘Her eyes, and the tones of her voice, [...] [thank] him far better than she [thinks]’ (184) following her heartfelt thanks for Clennam’s assisting the release of Tip from jail, while, when Clennam declines her offer to share her fortune, ‘she [beseeches] him, more pathetically and earnestly, with her supplicatory hand, than she could have done in any words’ (793).

As the character he reads and as the woman he loves, Clennam immerses himself in her world, contemplating the life she has led having been ‘born and bred’ ‘among the [unsalubrious] scenes’ which contrast starkly with her ‘innocence’ and ‘childish aspect’ and through which he now accompanies her home following their first meeting on the Iron Bridge (114). On their journey *towards* the Iron Bridge, when he ‘[finds] himself thinking of her, if not speaking to her, as if she were a child’ (110), he wonders what she thinks of him and whether she considers him to be ‘as old in her eyes as she seem[s] young in his’ (110) – a clear sign that he would like to be accepted by her as her suitor. As one who unknowingly loves her as a woman and as a potential wife, he finds it ‘disappointing, disagreeable, almost painful, to suppose her in love with young Mr Chivery in the back yard, or any such person’ (277) and only knows the reason for this to be that she ‘interest[s] him out of her own individuality, and the strong difference between herself and those about her’ (277). Clennam ‘sadly and sorely miss[es] Little Dorrit’, as any lover would miss his loved one if she were to (as Little Dorrit does) travel abroad for an extended

period of time. Indeed, although he knows ‘what a large place in his life [is] left blank when her familiar little figure [goes] out of it’, Clennam is unprepared for *how* much he feels her absence and it is this absence which he feels even more strongly when he is first imprisoned in the Marshalsea. It is because he is given the room once inhabited by William Dorrit, that he feels her presence in her absence – the room evoking the ‘crowding associations with the one good and gentle creature who had sanctified it’ (751-752) – and in his desolation there feels so strongly ‘her absence in his altered fortunes’ that he ‘turn[s] against the wall to weep, sobbing out, as his heart reliev[es] itself, “O my Little Dorrit!”’ (751-752). If Clennam does not realise that he misses Little Dorrit because he loves her, he begins to reflect on how she has influenced him in a beneficial way. He cries because he is ‘so much in need of such a face of love and truth’ (752) while ‘everything his memory turn[s] upon [...] bring[s] him round again to Little Dorrit [...] [and to] how much the dear little creature ha[s] influenced his better resolutions’ (752). As the narrator states, ‘None of us clearly know to whom or to what we are indebted [...], until some marked stop in the whirling wheel of life brings the right perception with it’ (752) and this insight comes to Clennam in the ‘adversity’ (752) of imprisonment: in quietness and solitude, Clennam recognises how much Little Dorrit has inspired and motivated him by her example of patience, resilience and fortitude (752).

However, Clennam’s greatest insight is the realisation that he loves Little Dorrit and this self-discovery comes with the shocking news that she loves him. It is as though he has ‘been awakened from sleep, and stupefied by intelligence beyond his full comprehension’ (762) when Young John Chivery informs him of her love because he could never have imagined this to be the case. With this new knowledge in his mind, Clennam re-reads Little Dorrit by thinking again about her thoughts –

how she ‘might not have thought him old’ (763) as he originally thought that she did – and by hearing in the virtual voice of her letters as he re-reads them the ‘tones of tenderness’ (763) in which he now senses her love.¹⁵⁶ Clennam wakes up to the reality of her love and, in so doing, is able to read *his* own feelings, now recognising the signs of his love for Little Dorrit which have for so long been suppressed:

In the reluctance he had felt to believe that she loved any one; in his desire to set that question at rest; in a half-formed consciousness he had had, that there would be a kind of nobleness in his helping her love for any one; was there no suppressed something on his own side that he had hushed as it arose? Had he ever whispered to himself that he must not think of such a thing as her loving him, that he must not take advantage of her gratitude, that he must keep his experience in remembrance as a warning and reproof; that he must regard such youthful hopes as having passed away, as his friend’s dead daughter had passed away; that he must be steady in saying to himself that the time had gone by him, and he was too saddened and old?

He had kissed her when he raised her from the ground, on the day when she had been so consistently and expressively forgotten. Quite as he might have kissed her, if she had been conscious? No difference? (764)

He reflects on his actions towards her and whether they have concealed or revealed his love for her, questioning whether by persuading himself of his ‘nobleness [...] in his helping her love for any one’ (764) he was restraining his feelings for her and whether, by kissing her when she had fainted, he was expressing his love. As reader, Clennam experiences ‘the heightening of self-awareness which [Iser claims]

¹⁵⁶ In her letters from abroad, Little Dorrit reveals her love for Clennam by confiding in him, expressing her anxiety that he should not think of her as having changed in any way, and her wish that he should think of her. See pages 492-495 of *Little Dorrit* for her first letter and pages 575-581 for the second.

develops in the reading process' (Iser 157) when he realises that he has denied himself the opportunity to be in love, suppressing thoughts and feelings that, like Poulet's 'mental objects [now] rise up from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition' (Poulet 57). Clennam now recognises Little Dorrit as the 'centre of the interest of his life' (767) and is 'inspired' by her 'devotion' and 'inexhaustible wealth of goodness' to have 'an inward fortitude, that [rises] with his love' (791). Essentially, he realises 'how dearly he love[s] her' (791) which he tells her when he declines her request to share her fortune:

"If, in the by-gone days when this was your home and when this was your dress, I had understood myself (I speak only of myself) better and had read the secrets of my own breast more distinctly; if, through my reserve and self-mistrust, I had discerned a light that I see brightly now when it has passed far away, and my weak footsteps can never overtake it; if I had then known, and told you that I loved and honoured you, not as the poor child I used to call you, but as a woman whose true hand would raise me high above myself, and make me a far happier and better man; if I had so used the opportunity there is no recalling – as I wish I had, O I wish I had!" (793)

Clennam proves in this speech the self-discovery of a reader who now acknowledges that, by not reading his feelings, he has lacked self-knowledge and who, through lack of self-confidence, has been unable to '[discern] a light that [he] see[s] brightly now': Little Dorrit's love. Considering how Little Dorrit has always loved him and her ambivalent feelings towards his calling her his child, the most significant discovery for Clennam (and news for Little Dorrit) is that he loves and honours her as a *woman* 'whose true hand would raise [him] high above [himself]' (793). His newfound knowledge that he loves her as a woman and not as a child is reflected in how he reads her when she visits him in the Marshalsea following her return from abroad: he

notices that she ‘look[s] [...] more womanly’ than before, although remaining otherwise unchanged. Clennam’s understanding that they love each other enables him to more accurately read her emotions and to be even more strongly affected by them: ‘the same deep, timid earnestness that he ha[s] always seen in her, and never without emotion, he [sees] still’ but this time it has ‘a new meaning that [smites] him to the heart’ (791): it signifies clearly to Clennam that she loves him.

By sensing her love for him, Clennam sympathises with her by feeling her emotion in his heart where he now knows and feels his love for her. Clennam’s sensory reading of Little Dorrit not only raises his awareness of their love for each other but of his need for love, as is evident in his response to the ‘tones of [her] voice [as she] read[s] to him’ in the Marshalsea:

Yet Clennam, listening to the voice as it read to him, heard in it all that great Nature was doing, heard in it all the soothing songs she sings to man. At no Mother’s knee but her’s had he ever dwelt in his youth on hopeful promises, on playful fancies, on the harvests of tenderness and humility that lie hidden in the early-fostered seeds of the imagination; on the oaks of retreat from blighting winds, that have the germs of their strong roots in nursery acorns. But in the tones of the voice that read to him, there were memories of an old feeling of such things, and echoes of every merciful and loving whisper that had ever stolen to him in his life. (840)

Clennam immerses himself in the memories of feeling loved (as well as nurtured and protected) which the tones of her voice evoke and which he feels again as he listens, his heart and mind stirred into an awareness of an emotion that he wants to experience again. It is Little Dorrit who provides the love which he longs for in the ‘*tones*’ of her voice which, like the ‘thrill’ of Agnes’s, are disembodied and so

enable Clennam to feel as his the ‘immediately appropriable sentiments’ (Gallagher 171) conveyed in them. As he does when listening to the ‘tones of tenderness’ (763) of her letters, Clennam sympathises with Little Dorrit through sensory response to the expression of her love – ‘the process of reading’ which Brennan calls ‘discernment’ that ‘begins with considered sensing (by smell, or listening, as well as observation) [and which] operates, or seems to operate, as the gateway to emotional response’ (Brennan 94). Brennan describes also the ‘transmission of affect’ where ‘the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another’ (Brennan 3-4) and it is this transmission of feeling that is seen when Little Dorrit conveys her emotion through the tones of her voice and through other more indirect forms of communication. Before she enters Clennam’s room in the Marshalsea, Clennam feels her presence and her love in the ‘fragments of tunes and songs’ (788) which he thinks he hears as he sits, ‘Light of head with want of sleep and want of food’ by his window, and then again when ‘doz[ing] in exhaustion’ as well as ‘voices [that seem] to address him’ (788). Little Dorrit and her love are within Clennam’s consciousness, just as she is when he listens to the tone of her voice in which her love is subtly and instantaneously communicated to him without the distraction of verbal interaction. However, whereas Clennam really hears the tones of her voice as she reads to him, he imagines these tunes which are intermittently sensed by him, suggesting that, while he may feel intensely her love in the fragments he hears, he has yet to fully realise this love in an actual sensory reading of Little Dorrit. Like the reader’s thoughts and feelings that lie deep within her own consciousness waiting to ‘rise into the light of recognition’ (Poulet 57), the fragments of tunes have yet to be heard by Clennam as a complete and clear sign of Little Dorrit’s love.

‘One of the night-tunes [*is*] playing in the wind when the door of the room seem[s] to open to a light touch, and, after a moment’s pause, a quiet figure seem[s] to stand there, with a black mantle on it’ (789 my italics). Having felt her presence and love in the fragments of tunes which he imagined that he was hearing, Clennam is now *in* the presence of Little Dorrit, as his actual hearing of the night-tune indicates and through which Little Dorrit boldly affirms her love for him. However, as with his initial uncertainty about whether he was hearing the tunes, he is now unsure about whether he is really seeing Little Dorrit: the figure ‘seem[s] to draw the mantle off and drop it on the ground, and then seem[s] to be Little Dorrit in her old, worn dress’ (789). It is when fully awake that Clennam perceives that she is really physically present in the room as the woman who loves him which he is able to confirm by reading her with his senses. He *feels* Little Dorrit’s ‘hands [which she lays] on his breast to keep him in his chair’ (789) as a physical sign of how she cares for him, while ‘her tears [which drop] on him as the rain from Heaven [...] dropped upon the flowers’ (789) prove her sadness at his plight. Clennam senses her physical proximity to him when, kneeling ‘upon the floor at his feet [...] with her lips raised up to kiss him’ (789), she expresses her love and devotion. The Little Dorrit whom he feels and sees is a tangible manifestation of her love, as are the flowers which she sends him beforehand. As with his initial response to Little Dorrit, Clennam is uncertain about what he is sensing when, while dozing, ‘some abiding impression of a garden [steals] over him – a garden of flowers, with a damp warm wind gently stirring their scents’ (788-789) until he ‘*sees* a blooming nosegay: a wonderful handful of the choicest and most lovely flowers’ (788-789) – as ‘beautiful’ a ‘sight’ (789) as, no doubt, Little Dorrit is to him when she appears to him ‘in her old, worn dress’ (789). The flowers are as physically present for him to sense as is Little

Dorrit and he does so in order to alleviate his predominantly physical suffering, ‘inhal[ing] their fragrance’, ‘lift[ing] them to his hot head’ and ‘open[ing] his parched hands to them, as cold hands are opened to receive the cheering of a fire’ (789) in much the same way as he senses Little Dorrit while she attends to him. It is by sensing the flowers and Little Dorrit that Clennam becomes aware of how his suffering has affected him physically: his hand is ‘hot’ and he sees in Little Dorrit’s ‘loving, pitying, sorrowing, dear face, as in a mirror, how changed he [is]’ (789).

The emotions expressed in her face raise Clennam’s awareness not only of his suffering but of his physical existence as a man who is loved by her which is confirmed also by her touch. *Her* physical presence makes him aware of *his* and when she ‘call[s] him by his name’ (789), he is reminded of his identity as ‘Clennam’ – the man whom she recognises as her own. Clennam’s sensory response to Little Dorrit’s non-verbal and verbal communication of her love in this scene makes very clear to him their love for one another which he has only ever vaguely – if at all – realised. Through reading Little Dorrit, Clennam has become more self-aware, recognising that he is in love and that, as Dickens intended for his readers, he – like the character he sympathises with – can ‘suffer, love and feel’ (Forster 265).¹⁵⁷ Dickens was interested ‘in heightening [his readers’] capacity to feel human emotion’ (Lettis 139) and Clennam achieves this through his sensory reading of Little Dorrit which is how Dickens, as Emma Mason argues, ‘demand[ed]’ that his readers should read (Mason 6). Clennam sympathises with and is affected by Little Dorrit not only as the character he reads but as the unobtrusive narrator whom she represents by the

¹⁵⁷ In the second volume of *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Forster cites this reference from Henri Taine.

way in which she communicates her feelings non-verbally to him. As I have noted, in this respect Little Dorrit is very like Agnes in *David Copperfield* whose transmission of feeling through the sound of her voice enables David to realise his deeply felt doubts about Steerforth, just as Clennam is awakened to the reality of Little Dorrit's love which he senses. In general, it is Agnes's quietness and gentleness which enable David to hear his own voice – to realise how he really thinks and feels – in a similar way to how the unobtrusive narrator allows the reader to feel without the distraction of responding to the emotions which *he* expresses.¹⁵⁸ Having told Agnes that she provides him with the 'peace and happiness' and 'blessed sense of rest' that he needs, David '[breaks] into tears' so 'deeply' and 'sincerely' does he 'feel what [he] [says]' (574), and concludes that he 'only [knows] that [he is] fervently in earnest, when [he feels] the rest and peace of having Agnes near [him]' (*David Copperfield* 574). Agnes has enabled David to 'come into a better knowledge of [himself] and of her' (867) and to discover 'the truth of [his] love for her' (867) as he tries to tell her before proposing to her, and it is this self-knowledge which Clennam also acquires when, sitting in the quiet presence of Little Dorrit as she works beside him, he is 'inspired [...] with an inward fortitude that [rises] with his love' (*Little Dorrit* 791). By being near Little Dorrit, Clennam realises his potential and, just as he did when he felt her 'gentle presence' in her absence (752), considers, with gratitude, the salutary effect which she has on him: 'to

¹⁵⁸ See Chapter Three in which I discuss how Agnes's usually unemotional voice enables David to hear his in much the same way as the narrator's 'quietness of tone' in some passages of "A Visit to Newgate" allows the 'mind's eye to rest on [the] scenes [described], without the agitation of response to a mediating observer's emotions' (Easson 19).

be so consoled and comforted, and to believe that all the devotion of this great nature was turned to him in his adversity' (791). Just as David feels Agnes's influence as a powerful yet gentle one and is aware that there is 'goodness, peace, and truth, wherever [she] is' (242), so Clennam is conscious of Little Dorrit's 'quiet goodness' (291) and of her gentleness (791). Little Dorrit works 'noiselessly [...] to make his room as fresh and neat' (791) as possible in much the same way as Agnes arranges David's room in which he feels her 'noiseless presence' (*David Copperfield* 520) and knows that she has 'done all this, by its seeming to have quietly done itself' (520). Like Agnes, Little Dorrit prefers to work unobtrusively while keeping her thoughts and feelings to herself (309), although she is more self-effacing and shy than Agnes: 'To pass in and out of the prison unnoticed, and elsewhere to be overlooked and forgotten, were, for herself, her chief desires' (309).

The way in which Little Dorrit's quiet presence 'diffuse[s] itself through the else noisy prison' (791) represents how the unobtrusive narrator is heard as a quiet yet powerful voice in Dickens's writings in which is usually found, as Garis argues, a '[loud]' and 'insistent [one which] all but totally fills our consciousness' (Garis 14-15). The contrast between the vociferous and unobtrusive voices is seen in how, as a married couple and representation of the unobtrusive voice, Little Dorrit and Clennam go 'quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed and [pass] along [amidst] the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward and the vain [who make] their usual uproar' (859-860) – the crowds, like the 'noisy prison', representing the typical Dickensian narrator as defined by Garis. By their inseparability, they foreground the intimacy which is seen in the relationship between the unobtrusive narrator and the reader when they sympathise with each other through non-verbal communication and which Dickens sought to have with his

readers and auditors. As Dickens declares to his readers in his preface to *Master Humphrey's Clock*, 'to commune with you, in any form, is to me a labour of love' (*Dickens at Work* 88-89) and this wish to have 'an intimate (especially mental or spiritual exchange)' (*OED*)¹⁵⁹ with them is reflected in how, as a serial writer, Dickens 'aspires to an intimacy between writer and reader [where] the stress on the immediacy of the transmission of feelings, unrefined, spontaneous, and in the reciprocation of those feelings anticipates the special dynamic of the Readings' (Andrews 18). As Reader, Dickens clearly was in sympathy with his auditors, as reviewers record, noting especially how he communicated his feelings to them non-verbally. During his 'first Reading of 'A Christmas Carol' in New York' (Andrews 121), Dickens's "'face relaxes into a smile [...] indicating and establishing a strong and hearty sympathy with his audience'" (121), while a reviewer of another of his Readings remarks on how "'Every eye was bent on the reader's expressive face and the contagion of his mood seemed to pass directly to every individual in the room like a subtle magnetic influence. Mr Dickens appeared to feel the sympathy of his audience, and to be inspired by it'" (Andrews 252).¹⁶⁰ As I discuss in my

¹⁵⁹ One of the definitions of 'to commune' is to 'have an intimate (esp. mental or spiritual) exchange or discussion (with a friend, one's heart, etc., together)' (*OED*). As the obituarist I refer to at the beginning of this chapter also records, Dickens wanted his readers 'to sympathise with him [by] see[ing] what he was seeing', 'shar[ing] his present ideas and emotions [and by] put[ting] [themselves] in his place' (*The Critical Heritage* 515).

¹⁶⁰ See introductory chapter for further discussion of how Dickens sought to sympathise with his readers and my citations from Malcolm Andrews's *Performing*

introductory chapter, it is difficult to identify the techniques used by Dickens to create the effect of a narrator who appears to convey his emotions non-verbally to the reader, enabling her to feel them as her own, although I propose that the reader is able to sympathise with the narrator when he suggests, rather than states explicitly, his feelings.¹⁶¹ In the Readings, however, viewers could detect the ““bonds of sympathy”” (Andrews 250) which Dickens established with his auditors – a sympathy that was so strongly felt by both parties that it seemed as though he had “becom[e] one of them”, just as when, in assumption, he imagines that he is ‘being someone, in voice etc. not at all like [himself]’ (*Letters* 6: 257).¹⁶² What Dickens experiences with his auditors is the intimacy of sympathy where he feels the emotions of his auditors as his own (Gallagher 169) and, as in assumption, becomes completely absorbed in them (Andrews 115). Dickens is united in sympathy with the public whom he loves just as Clennam is with Little Dorrit, the woman he loves

Selves in which he provides evidence of how Dickens, as Reader, *did* sympathise with his auditors.

¹⁶¹ In my introductory chapter, I also note how ‘through his selection of specific details in his description of a location, the narrator suggests his feelings about them while allowing the reader to realise her own without, as Angus Easson argues, ‘the agitation of response to a mediating observer’s emotions’ (Easson 19).

¹⁶² Andrews records that ‘One of the first things noted by the New York reviewers was Dickens’s “putting himself en rapport with his hearers and becoming one of them – while occupying his own position as story-teller”’ (Andrews 121). As noted in my introductory chapter, Dickens writes about how much he enjoys assumption in his letter to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton on 5 January 1851 (*Letters* 6: 257).

as well as the ‘character’ and unobtrusive ‘narrator’ whom he ‘reads’.¹⁶³ It is by immersing himself – through sympathy and love – in Little Dorrit that Clennam discovers, as does Dickens when he assumes Wardour, ‘the secrets of the vast Profound’ (Brannan 97-98) that, as Slater states, ‘[exist] within every one of us’ (Slater 417).

¹⁶³ In his letter to Forster on 30 March 1858, Dickens refers to ‘that peculiar relation (personally affectionate and like no other man’s) which subsists between me and the public’ (*Letters* 8: 539). In his preface to *David Copperfield* (written in October 1850 and cited in the edition of the novel edited by Trevor Blount), Dickens declares that ‘I am in danger of wearying the reader whom I love with personal confidences, and private emotions’ (45).

Chapter Five

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

John Jasper foregrounds through his relationships with other characters the various ways in which the reader experiences the narrative voice in Dickens's writings: as a narrator whose physical presence can be imagined as he narrates and as a disembodied voice which is heard by the reader as a manifestation of what exists in her own consciousness: her thoughts and feelings. As Anny Sadrin explains, Dickens wanted his reader to imagine the narrator as a person, 'a character in his own right' (181) whose presence is sensed as 'visible and tangible' (181), and through his performance as a character within the narrative action, Jasper demonstrates the way in which the narrator draws attention to his imaginary physical presence as he performs his act of narration. However, as Dickens makes clear in his correspondence,¹⁶⁴ he also wanted his reader to imagine the narrator as a less obtrusive presence so that, by being less conscious of the dramatic presence of the narrator, the reader is not only able to visualise the scene for herself but to imagine that the narrative voice she is hearing is the voice of her own consciousness.

Dickens wanted to 'heighten [the reader's] capacity to feel human emotion' (Lettis 139) and especially those emotions of which she was unaware that she could feel.

As Richard Lettis also notes, 'For [Dickens] perhaps all writing, but most certainly fiction, should address the heart, should attract it, move it, teach it something about

¹⁶⁴ See Dickens's letter to Charles Collins on 19 November 1859, in which he advises Collins that in his story 'there is too much of the narrator [. . .]. The result is that I can not see the people or the place, or believe in the fiction' (*Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* 312).

itself' (241) and in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* it is predominantly through the music that he plays and sings – rather than through verbal communication which emphasises his dramatic presence – that Jasper enables Rosa Bud to discover the emotions that she did not know that she could feel. Jasper in this way therefore resembles the narrator who communicates unobtrusively with the reader (Rosa). At the same time, however, he also represents the *reader* with whom Durdles – as representative narrator – communicates. The self-effacement and uncertainty about his identity, which Durdles sometimes exhibits, characterise him as the narrator whose unobtrusiveness allows the reader to discover her thoughts and feelings as she reads. When Durdles guides Jasper around the cathedral at night, he effectively guides him around the confines of Jasper's consciousness.

In this chapter, I focus on Jasper as a 'narrator' and as a 'reader' and discuss how, in each role, Jasper demonstrates the relationship between performance and affect in Dickens's writings. As I have shown throughout this project, it is in response to the performances given by the narrator that the reader feels emotion and Jasper also represents the two types of narrator who, in different ways, affect the reader. I begin by discussing the ways in which, as a representative narrator whose physical presence can be imagined, Jasper directs his audiences to feel emotion in response to the salient details of the 'narrative' scene and especially to share the feelings which he has in response to these details. Jasper's activity within the 'narrative' scene and his self-consciousness as a performer emphasise his physical presence and it is on this aspect of his performance as 'narrator' that I focus first. I then discuss how, as an unobtrusive 'narrator', Jasper enables his 'reader', Rosa, to discover her deeply felt emotion by sympathising with him through sensory response to his non-verbal communication of emotion. I focus especially on the scenes where Rosa responds to

the passion which Jasper conveys to her in his music by feeling it as though it is her own and so I again refer to Gallagher's views on sympathy (Gallagher 169) as noted in the preceding chapters. Brennan's argument that one feels emotion through the use of one's senses (Brennan 94) is also relevant to my discussion of Rosa's intensely felt fear when she listens to Jasper's music, while her theory of 'the transmission of affect [whereby] the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another' (Brennan 3-4) is again referred to in my examination of how Jasper communicates his emotion non-verbally to Rosa. Rosa is able to sympathise with Jasper because the emotion that he communicates in the sound of his music is disembodied and so, like the 'free sentiments' (Gallagher 171) felt by the reader of fiction, can be appropriated by Rosa (Jasper's 'reader') as her own.

As well as Gallagher's views on sympathy, my discussion of the disembodied voice includes Maurice Blanchot's theory of the 'narrative voice' which he describes in his book, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*. As I discuss, Blanchot states that the 'narrative voice' is disembodied and unlocatable, as well as 'ghost-like' (141), which is how Rosa describes feeling Jasper's pervasive presence in her mind: he "haunts [her] thoughts, like a dreadful ghost" (53). Rosa feels Jasper's powerful presence as he voices her fears and it is the 'power of his [...] eyes [and] presence' (Kaplan 131) which, as Fred Kaplan argues, form a part of the 'armament of mesmeric weapons' (Kaplan 131) with which Jasper mesmerises Rosa. It is to Kaplan's discussion of the scene in Chapter Seven, where Jasper accompanies Rosa on the piano, that I refer when I argue that Rosa's response to Jasper as his mesmerist subject is the same as her response to him as his 'reader'. In addition to Kaplan, I refer to Arthur J. Cox's article, "Magnetic Sympathy and *The Mystery of*

Edwin Drood”, in which he explores the relevance of sympathy to mesmerism, in order to support my argument that Rosa sympathises with Jasper when he mesmerises her. While not referred to explicitly in this chapter, my discussion of sympathy and mesmerism is relevant to the strong sympathetic bond which Dickens established with the auditors of his Readings and which suggests, as Andrews claims, that he ‘may have been adapting his proven mesmeric powers to the Reading performances in order to generate “sympathy”’ (Andrews 252).¹⁶⁵

As Sally Ledger argues, ‘Dickens’s affective mode is [...] highly theatrical and performative’ (Ledger 2) and this is proven not only in Rosa’s emotional response to Jasper’s performance as ‘narrator’ but through her own musical performance as ‘reader’: when she sings the song in Chapter Seven she feels the sorrow of the character as her own. What Rosa demonstrates as ‘reader’ is the importance of sympathy in self-discovery, just as Dickens experiences when he assumes the character of Wardour in *The Frozen Deep*. In contrast with Rosa, Jasper’s search for what exists in the depths of his own consciousness does not occur through sympathising with a character in a song. As I explore in the final section of this chapter, Jasper’s musical performances as ‘reader’ encourage introspection rather than sympathy by his focussing solely on his own voice while chanting choir-music. I argue that, although Jasper does explore his own consciousness through performance, his lack of sympathy limits his self-discovery, while also discussing how, in other types of performance, Jasper tends to conceal his own feelings by expressing those of the parts he is playing – although sometimes he does convey

¹⁶⁵ See introductory chapter for further discussion of Dickens’s relationship with his auditors.

through performance how *he* feels as well. Finally, I conclude this chapter by focussing on the role played by Durdles, as unobtrusive ‘narrator’, in enabling Jasper to further examine his own consciousness by exploring the interior of Cloisterham Cathedral (which I suggest is a symbol of his consciousness) and by viewing the landscape of Cloisterham from the top of its Cathedral. I argue that, in guiding Jasper around Cloisterham Cathedral, Durdles has a vital function in Jasper’s self-discovery: as an unobtrusive presence, Durdles essentially enables Jasper to discover for himself what lies within his own mind. It is, however, when Durdles leads Jasper to the top of the Cathedral that he enables Jasper to ‘read’ in the scene of Cloisterham what he has so far been unable to find in his own consciousness. What I suggest is foregrounded here is the significance of virtual immersion in a narrative scene for the reader’s self-discovery: when Jasper immerses himself reflectively and imaginatively in the scene before him, he effectively immerses himself in his own mind.

It is Robert Garis who notes of Dickens’s writings that ‘the primary object of [the reader’s] attention is the artist himself, on the stage of his own theatre, performing his brilliant routines’ (54). The reader is encouraged to focus on the ‘artist’, or narrator, who is visualised by her as being physically present within a specific location as he performs the act of narration. The people of Cloisterham sense Jasper’s physical presence when they encounter him, just as the reader imagines the tangible presence of the narrator as she reads.¹⁶⁶ For example, in the scene in Chapter

¹⁶⁶ Garis describes how, in the opening passages of *Little Dorrit*, the narrator can be imagined as ‘almost palpably present to us as he goes about his professional work of evoking the illusion of Marseilles’ (Garis 9-10).

Nineteen where Jasper proclaims his love for Rosa, Rosa ‘feels’ not only his ‘intention’ to ‘[touch] her hand’ but his bodily presence from which she recoils by withdrawing her hand and by averting her gaze from ‘his eyes [which] are then fixed upon her’ (169). Like the typical Dickensian narrator whom Garis describes, Jasper ensures that his physical presence is felt within the narrative action by appearing suddenly within a scene, as occurs at the end of Chapter Fourteen where he disrupts the conversation of the group who have gathered to discuss the damage done to the cathedral by the storm:

This cluster is suddenly broken and put aside by the hands of Mr Jasper; all the gazing eyes are brought down to the earth by his loudly inquiring of Mr Crisparkle, at an open window: “Where is my nephew?” (131)

The group are made to notice Jasper by feeling him physically as they are ‘put aside by [his] hands’ (131) and by ‘looking’ not at the ‘tower’ but at the physical appearance of Jasper as he stands looking ‘white, half dressed, panting, and clinging to the rail before the Minor Canon’s house’ (131). His body is emphasised not only by his pallor and by his being partly clothed, but by his ‘panting’ and ‘clinging’ which draw attention to his body in action. Jasper here represents the narrator as a performer in both senses of the word: as one who is ‘carry[ing] out [an] action’ (*OED*) – what Garis describes as a ‘maker and doer’ (9) – and as one who is ‘represent[ing] a part in a play [. . .] on stage or to an audience’ (*OED*).¹⁶⁷ Jasper

¹⁶⁷ The *OED* gives the following definitions of ‘performer’: ‘A person who carries out or executes an undertaking, action, etc., esp. in a specified manner. A person

performs on stage to *his* audience – the group assembled outside the cathedral – as though he is acting in a melodrama. The way in which he appears unexpectedly besides the group is like the ‘violent’ ‘entrances and exits’ which, as Michael Booth describes, characterise melodrama, as are Jasper’s actions of ‘panting’ and ‘clinging’ which demonstrate the ‘strong emotion and intense physical activity’ (*English Melodrama* 195) of this genre of drama.

Jasper draws attention to his physical presence by his self-consciousness as a performer who, like the narrator whom Garis describes, is ‘self-consciously and deliberately and wilfully playing a certain role’ (64). In the scene where he declares his love for Rosa in the gardens of the Nuns’ House, Jasper’s reference to his actions suggests not only his awareness of their dramatic effect for the audience of schoolgirls whom he assumes to be looking out of the windows, but his wish for Rosa to focus on his body as he performs them. By reassuring Rosa that he “‘will not touch [her] again’” (170) and that he “‘will come no nearer to [her]’”, Jasper is inviting her to remember the sensation of his touch and to imagine, by his reference to his physical proximity, that he could do so again. He wants her to *feel* and to *see* him and directs her vision towards his choreographed position on stage as he ‘lean[s] idly against the pedestal’ (170).

Jasper represents, by his stage management of the scene in which he draws Rosa’s attention towards him, the way in which the physical presence of the narrator is felt by his activity within the scene he describes as *he* directs his reader’s attention towards its salient features. As I have shown in Chapter One, the narrator of “A

who performs a part in a play, a piece of music, etc., as a public exhibition of art or skill; a person who takes part in a public entertainment.’

Visit to Newgate” refers to his movements within the prison as he negotiates his way along corridors and through gates until he reaches the ‘narrow yard’ (227) where the women are imprisoned and directs the reader to notice the visible signs of one visitor’s old age and poverty and to interpret these selected details as evidence of the ‘poverty-stricken object’ (237) he then declares her to be. Although each has a different purpose in directing their audiences’ attention to the salient features of the scene, – the narrator’s is moral while Jasper’s is to deceive – the narrator wants his reader to share his emotional response to what he has seen, just as Jasper wants the group gathered to discuss the disappearance of Edwin Drood to share *his* view that Neville Landless has murdered him:

The bystanders looked at one another, and at Mr Crissparkle. To whom, Mr Jasper, who had been intently watching Neville, said: in a low distinct suspicious voice: “What are those stains upon his dress?”

All eyes were turned towards the blood upon his clothes.

“And here are the same stains upon this stick!” said Jasper, taking it from the hand of the man who held it. “I know the stick to be his, and he carried it last night. What does this mean?” (134-5)

Like the narrator of “A Visit to Newgate”, Jasper’s physical presence is felt within the scene as he indicates to the ‘bystanders’ what he interprets as the visible signs of Neville’s guilt. Jasper draws attention to himself by asking the question ““What are the stains upon his dress?”” in ‘a low distinct suspicious voice’ which suggests that he has a reason to suspect Neville and by his action of ‘taking [the stick] from the hand of the man who held it’ in order to enforce the point that ‘the stains upon [it]’ are evidence which could be used to incriminate Neville as Edwin’s murderer.

It is, however, on the visible signs themselves that Jasper wants the crowd to focus and he directs their vision towards these as ‘all eyes [are] turned towards the blood upon [Neville’s] clothes’. Like the narrator of “A Visit to Newgate”, Jasper selects specific details for his ‘readers’ to focus on and to interpret in the same way as he has.

As is noted by an obituarist writing for the *Illustrated London News* on 8 June 1870, Dickens ‘used to invite us to sympathise with him, to see what he was seeing, and to share his present ideas and emotions’ (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 515) and enables the reader to do so – as do the narrator of “A Visit to Newgate” and Jasper – by directing her to take note of salient details. Dickens had a moral purpose in educating his readers about those who were suffering in society, including ‘associates in crime [...] in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives’ which, as he explains in his introduction to the third edition of *Oliver Twist* (1841), ‘would be a service to society’ (457).¹⁶⁸ As an obituarist records in the *Daily News* on 10th June 1870, ‘In all his works there is a high moral aim, and we may surely add, a high moral teaching’ (*The Critical Heritage* 504) and so it is therefore fitting that the narrator should be – in the words of Susan Horton – ‘a kind of moral cheerleader’ who directs us to notice the ‘poor and abused’ (Horton 45). Dickens’s aim in raising his readers’ moral awareness was

¹⁶⁸ Writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in October 1838, Thomas Lister observes that ‘the tendency in [Dickens’s] writings is to make us practically benevolent – to excite our sympathy in behalf of the aggrieved and suffering in all classes; and especially in those who are most removed from observation. He especially directs our attention to the helpless victims of untoward circumstances’ (*The Critical Heritage* 73).

to make them feel by sympathising with him and with the characters he created and, in so doing, to discover more about the emotions that they are capable of feeling.

In order to enable the reader to discover more about her emotions, the reader has to imagine the narrator not as one who is physically present and active within the scene – as Jasper models in the extracts cited above – but as a voice perceived by the reader as that of her own consciousness. By not drawing attention to his physical presence as he performs the act of narration, the narrator’s voice becomes dissociated from him and instead becomes an impersonal presence of the type defined by Maurice Blanchot as the ‘narrative voice’. In contrast with the narrator whose presence is felt by the reader as ‘someone who is speaking in the background [and who is] prompting the characters or even the events with what they have to say’ (Blanchot 134), the ‘narrative voice’ ‘lets us feel that what is being told is not being told by anyone’ (140): there is no sense that the narrator is a person who is performing the act of narration. Although the ‘narrative voice’ *does* communicate with the reader, it does so by ‘speak[ing] at a distance [. . .] without mediation or community’ (142), subtly and unobtrusively and without emphasising the narrator’s act of communication with the reader. The ‘narrative voice’ ‘cannot be embodied’ (141) but is ‘spectral [and] ghost-like’ (141) as well as unlocatable, ‘hav[ing] no place in the work’ (141): the antithesis to the narrator Garis describes as one who is imagined as being physically present within a particular location. It is by being a disembodied and unlocatable presence that the ‘narrative voice’ can be appropriated by the reader as the voice of her own consciousness in much the same way as she sympathises with a fictitious character whose ‘feelings’, by ‘belong[ing] to no other body’ (Gallagher 171), (the body referred to suggests a real rather than a fictitious

character) can be felt by the reader as though they are her own.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, the way in which the ‘narrative voice’ communicates with the reader by ‘speak[ing] at a distance [...] without mediation or community’ (142) relates to Arthur Cox’s view of sympathy as an ‘understanding’ of each other’s thoughts and emotions without the ‘explicit communication’ (Cox 131) of these that would occur through verbal expression. Those who sympathise with each other have an ‘understanding’ (131) of each other’s thoughts and feelings, a rapport that enables them to ‘[convey]’ their ‘emotion’ to each other through a ‘heart-to-heart communion’ (132) and without the distraction of verbal interaction.

It is by listening to the music played and sung by Jasper that Rosa is able to sympathise with him: to experience his thoughts and emotions as though they are her own and, in so doing, to discover more about the emotions that she is capable of feeling. As Gallagher explains in reference to Hume’s discussion of sympathy, it is by knowing that the emotions of fictional characters ‘belong to no other body’ (171) that the reader is able to appropriate these as her own, as Rosa does when she hears emotion expressed in the music Jasper creates. Unlike the ‘vehemence’ (175) which, by being expressed verbally and through his ‘wicked and menacing’ (170) facial expression, reinforces the fact that the emotion he is feeling belongs to his own body,¹⁷⁰ the emotion heard in the music he performs in other scenes is only partly identifiable as his. While Rosa may – by being aware of his physical presence as he performs – interpret the emotion she hears expressed in the music as his, she more

¹⁶⁹ See introductory chapter for my discussion of Gallagher’s views on sympathy.

¹⁷⁰ The scene I refer to here is the one discussed earlier where Jasper declares his love to Rosa in the gardens of the Nuns’ House (Chapter Nineteen).

significantly appropriates it as her own. The dynamism of music, as sound,¹⁷¹ means that in moving away from the performer to the auditor it becomes disembodied and so allows the auditor to immerse herself in what she is able to perceive as her own emotion. Rosa's response to Jasper's music helps us to understand how the reader is able to interpret the voice she hears as she reads as the voice of her own consciousness. Jasper's music represents the unobtrusive way in which the narrator is able to convey his emotions to the reader by not drawing attention to his imaginary physical presence as he narrates. Like Blanchot's 'narrative voice' which, by being disembodied and mediated 'at a distance' (142), focusses the reader's attention on itself and on the emotion it conveys rather than on the narrator and his act of narration, Jasper's music enables Rosa to find within the music she hears the emotion which she can feel as her own. While Jasper, like the 'narrative voice' – which *does* communicate but 'at a distance' (142) – *is* conveying his own emotion to Rosa, the subtle way in which he does this through music makes it seem as though he is not. Instead, as Dickens communes with his reader, so Jasper communes with Rosa by conveying his emotion directly from his mind to hers without the distraction of verbal interaction.

In the scene in Chapter Three where, on returning from their walk in Cloisterham, Rosa Bud and Edwin Drood hear the sound of the organ and the choir as they approach the cathedral windows, Rosa's ability to sympathise with Jasper is

¹⁷¹ In *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong claims that 'all sound, and especially oral utterance, [. . .] is dynamic' (32).

contrasted with Edwin's tendency to empathise with him.¹⁷² Edwin's response to hearing the 'solemn swell' (23) is to think immediately of Jasper as the *person* who is feeling the emotion expressed within the music he plays and to remember the emotions which Jasper confided in him during their last conversation in the Gate House. The empathy he feels for Jasper as he reflects on how music – in being unlike the 'discordance' (23) of Jasper's state of mind then suggests a mind which feels a greater sense of harmony now – is shown by Edwin as he listens to Jasper's confidences about his dissatisfaction with his job as Lay Precentor of Cloisterham Cathedral. When, in Chapter Two, Edwin says that he has 'no doubt that that unhealthy state of mind which you have so powerfully described is attended with some real personal suffering, and is hard to bear' (11), he shows by how he has reflected on Jasper's emotions that he has identified with him as the *person* who is suffering. By being able to 'distinguish Jack's voice' (23) from the other voices in the choir, Edwin proves how practised he is in reading Jasper's thoughts and emotions, regardless of whether they are expressed in conversation or in music. What is most significant about Jasper's voice as he sings and as he speaks to Edwin,

¹⁷² The distinction I make between empathy and sympathy is that when one empathises with someone one is more aware of the person who is feeling the emotion with which one identifies. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines empathy as 'the power of mentally identifying with (and so comprehending) a person or object of communication.' Sympathy is 'the quality or state of being affected by the suffering or grief of another; the quality or state of being affected by a feeling similar or corresponding to that of another; the fact or capacity of sharing or being responsive to the feelings or condition of another or others; an instance of this' (*OED*).

is that Edwin is aware of Jasper's physical presence as performer and communicant respectively. By visualising and by remembering Jasper's physical presence as he listens to the music, Edwin represents the way in which a reader is able to imagine, as she reads, the narrator's physical presence as he performs the act of narration.

Edwin's awareness of Jasper's physical presence is a significant factor in determining his ability to empathise with him rather than to sympathise with him, as according to David Hume's theory, it is by knowing that 'sentiments' belong to 'the other's body' (Gallagher 171) that one is unable to sympathise. While Rosa, like Edwin, is aware of Jasper's physical presence as the performer of the music she is hearing, her identification of the emotions expressed in the music as those belonging to Jasper is implied rather than stated explicitly as it is in Edwin's thoughts and speech. The fact that Rosa wants to "get away" from the members of the choir, including Jasper, who will be "coming out directly" (23) as well as from the "resounding chord" (23) which she does not want to "listen to" (23), would suggest that she attributes the music and the emotion it conveys to the members of the choir and especially to Jasper. As one who creates or who contributes to the creation of the "resounding chord" (23), Jasper conveys directly – through the medium of music – his own emotion which she *senses* rather than *thinks* is his. This emotion evokes a feeling of fear in Rosa, presumably because she fears Jasper as the person she senses is feeling the emotion but, more significantly, because *she* feels the emotion which he feels and expresses in his music. It is by sensing rather than by knowing for certain that it belongs to Jasper that Rosa, by being less conscious of his physical presence, is therefore more able to appropriate his feelings as her own: to sympathise. As a non-verbal form of communication, music enables Jasper's presence to be felt within it rather than perceived in physical terms as would occur

through verbal interaction. It enables Rosa to ‘[understand] [. . .] without explicit communication’ (Cox 131) Jasper’s feelings which, as Cox describes, is ‘the defining characteristic of sympathy’ (131). By listening to the music which Jasper plays and sings, Rosa sympathises with him by engaging in the ‘heart-to-heart communion [which] consists largely of the conveyance of emotion and sensation’ (131).¹⁷³

By commenting on the “resounding chord” (23), Rosa proves not only her responsiveness as a musician to a specific feature of the music she hears, but her sensitivity as a ‘reader’ to a particular aspect of Jasper’s consciousness. Her exclamation, “Oh what a resounding chord!” (23) and her urge to “get away” (23) from it, suggest her fear of the emotion expressed in the chord which Jasper and

¹⁷³ In Part One of his article, “Magnetic Sympathy in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*”, Cox notes – with reference to Chauncey Hare Townshend’s *Facts in Mesmerism* – that, while sympathy is necessary for the mesmerist to mesmerise his patient, it does not involve the reciprocation of feeling between them. Cox cites Townshend’s argument that ‘although the magnetised person frequently experience[s] the sensations of the magnetiser’ (Cox 136), the mesmerist “does not also share the sleepwaker’s sensations [because] [t]he mesmeriser is not in mesmeric sleepwaking, [while] the patient is; and only he who is in the mesmeric state can appreciate the sensations in a mesmeric manner” [210]’ (Cox 136). In Part Two of this article, Cox states that ‘we must be especially alert to any mention of sympathy in connection with Jasper’ (210) as ‘the author is very explicit about the choir-master’s lack of connection with the rest of mankind’ (210) which confirms that Jasper would not be in sympathy with *his* mesmerist subject, Rosa.

Rosa, as performer and auditor respectively, feel. Rosa responds to the force of the chord – as ‘a group of notes sounded together’ (*OED*) – and to the energy of the emotion it conveys as it resounds powerfully in her mind as she listens to it.¹⁷⁴ However, while Rosa senses Jasper’s emotion in the “‘resounding chord’”, it is because she does not state explicitly that she does (unlike Edwin who relates the music directly to Jasper’s consciousness) that she is able to discover her own emotions by listening to it. By not knowingly associating the music with a specific voice or person, Rosa is free to immerse herself in the experience of feeling emotion as the reader feels the emotion conveyed by the impersonal and disembodied ‘narrative voice’. Rosa’s description of the chord as “‘resounding’” shows not only how she feels intensely the emotion it conveys as it echoes in her mind, but how in echoing in her mind it evokes other feelings. Her exclamation, “‘Oh, what a resounding chord!’” shows her fear of the unknown as she feels emotions with which she is unfamiliar but also a sense of wonder as she revels in this new experience.

It is, however, predominantly fear that Rosa experiences as she immerses herself in emotions which are new to her, as is shown clearly in the scene in Chapter Seven where Jasper accompanies her on the piano as she sings a song. What is most apparent in this scene – as well as in the one cited above – is that Jasper is prompting Rosa to discover emotions which she has never felt before by feeling *his* emotion which he conveys through the music he plays. By ‘hint[ing] the one note *as though it were a low whisper from himself*’ (51 my italics), Jasper not only makes Rosa

¹⁷⁴ The other definitions of ‘chord’ (in relation to music) as recorded by the *OED* are: ‘A concord; in *pl.*, the notes added to a bass to make up a chord. The string of a harp or other instrument.’

aware of the fact that he is communicating his emotion to her through the key-note, but causes her to ‘[break] into a burst of tears and [to] [shriek] out, with her hands over her eyes: “I can’t bear this! I am frightened! Take me away!”’ (51). Rosa fears Jasper’s passion for her which he expresses in the keynote – ‘a subtle violation of [her]’ which, according to Lawrence Frank, evokes an ‘outcry’ that only she, Helena and Jasper understand the cause of (Frank 175).¹⁷⁵ As her conversation with Helena held immediately after this scene shows, while Rosa lives in constant fear of Jasper whose presence she feels at all times as he “‘haunts [her] thoughts, like a dreadful ghost”’ (53) and as she hears him “‘in the sounds [of the music he plays] whispering that he pursues [her] as a lover”’ (53), she remains unaware of the exact nature of the danger he poses. Rosa may have sensed, or, as Helena says, “‘imagined”’ (53) that Jasper threatens her in some way but she has not reflected on, as Helena asks her, “‘*What* is threatened”’ (53 my italics). Rosa’s answer, “‘I don’t know. I have never even dared to think or wonder what it is”’ (53) proves that Rosa fears self-knowledge: in this case, the realisation that she, too, is capable of feeling passion.

While Helena prompts Rosa to *think* about the emotions that she is capable of feeling, Jasper encourages her to *feel* them. In contrast with Helena who, in speaking to Rosa represents the narrator whose physical presence is foregrounded as he performs the act of narration (Rosa further emphasises this by ‘clinging [to

¹⁷⁵ In her article, “Edwin Drood: A Bone Yard Awaiting Resurrection”, Marilyn Thomas argues that ‘Rosa’s fear of Jasper is largely of a sexual nature as well. Even though Rosa preserves her bodily integrity, she feels the diabolic power of Jasper’s glance, a glance that compromises her innocence by its penetrating potency’ (Thomas 15).

Helena] as her new resource' [53]), Jasper's quiet accompaniment and unobtrusive presence are representative of the narrator who allows the reader to hear her inner voice as she reads: to realise the thoughts and emotions that lie deep within her own consciousness. By carefully and '*softly hinting* the key-note from time to time' (48 my italics), Jasper not only suggests subtly to Rosa his passionate feelings but prompts her gently to realise her own. His unobtrusive accompaniment, which at times is even soundless when he 'play[s] the accompaniment without notes' (48), is designed to allow Rosa to hear both her *singing* and her *inner* voices. The quietness of his accompaniment is representative of the 'quietness of tone' (19) which Angus Easson notes as a distinctive feature of the narrator's description of the prison in "A Visit to Newgate" and which allows 'the mind's eye to rest on such scenes, without the agitation of response to a mediating observer's emotions' (19). While Rosa's awareness of Jasper's physical presence as he performs the accompaniment would suggest that she knows that he is mediating his own emotions, the almost imperceptible way in which he does this by 'playing [. . .] without notes' (48) and by 'hinting the key-note' (48) enables Rosa's mind's *ear* to hear the voice of her own consciousness.

Jasper is mesmerising Rosa, not only through the sound of the 'key-note' but through the 'power of his [. . .] eyes [and] presence' (Kaplan 131), conveying directly to her what exists within his own mind and so enabling her to discover what exists in her own. It is not only by communicating non-verbally with Rosa but by the act of mesmerism itself that Jasper represents the narrator whose unobtrusive presence enables the reader to hear the voice of her own consciousness. Fred Kaplan's claim that 'In mesmeric crisis [. . .] the mind may be put in touch with aspects of the mind that were otherwise hidden' (139) draws into comparison the

experience of the mesmerist's subject with that of the reader, which Poulet describes as 'a phenomenon by which mental objects rise up from the depths of consciousness into the light of recognition' (57). As the subject on whom he practises his mesmeric powers and as his 'reader', Rosa discovers the hidden aspects of her own consciousness when she feels the passion which Jasper also feels. This passion is conveyed to Rosa as he 'follow[s] her lips most attentively with his *eyes* as well as [his] *hands*' (48 my italics) each of which plays an important role – as part of his 'armament of mesmeric weapons' (Kaplan 131) – in mesmerising her. Rosa feels the powerful effect of his gaze as he watches her constantly and remarks to Helena afterwards that 'When [she] play[s], he never moves his eyes from [her] hands. When [she] sing[s], he never moves his eyes from [her] lips' (53). As Kaplan notes, 'in [Jasper's] mesmeric intensity of communication all the power of his body is focused in his eyes' (132) and this 'power' is communicated to Rosa through Jasper's 'eyes' which Rosa feels intensely even when, as she confides to Helena, she 'avoid[s] looking at them' (53).¹⁷⁶ Jasper forces Rosa to 'understand him without his saying a word' (53), making her feel the energy of his thoughts and emotions as he conveys them silently to her. As Rosa explains to Helena, Jasper 'obliges her to know' (53) what is happening in his mind, even when he is not communicating

¹⁷⁶ The way in which Jasper looks intently at Rosa is very like the way in which Dickens looked at those he spoke to, according to Eliza Linton. Remarking on his keen powers of observation, she notes that 'His eyes seemed to penetrate through yours into your very brain' (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 214). It is also interesting to note Dickens's energy, as Justin McCarthy describes: 'Dickens rather frightened me [...]. His manner was full of energy; there was something physically overpowering about it' (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 214).

directly with her, as when ‘he seems to wander away into a frightful sort of dream in which he threatens most’ (53).¹⁷⁷

Rosa hears within the fusion of her and Jasper’s voices the voice of her own consciousness as she is mesmerised by him and encouraged to read. Jasper’s hands play a significant role not only, as Kaplan has argued, in mesmerising Rosa (131),¹⁷⁸ but in enabling her to find within the music he plays and through his imaginary touch the emotions that she is capable of feeling. When Jasper touches the keys of the piano ‘carefully and softly hinting the key-note’ (151), Rosa hears the voice of Jasper, as he expresses his passion for her, fused with what she realises is her own voice as it sounds – for the first time in Rosa’s experience – the same emotion.

¹⁷⁷ In Part One of “Magnetic Sympathy in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*”, Cox states that one of the key features which distinguishes ‘the magnetic condition’ from the ‘sympathetic bond’ is the ‘intense if one-sided relationship’ between the mesmeriser and his subject whereby the ‘subject would obey any command of the magnetiser [...], sometimes responding even to unspoken instructions’ (Cox 136).

¹⁷⁸ Kaplan refers to Jasper’s ‘full armament of mesmeric weapons: the power of his music, eyes, hands, touch, voice, presence’ (131). Richard Lettis notes that ‘one of the words [Dickens] used to express his effort to awaken imagination was, appropriately enough for a writer who felt so close to his audience, “touch”’ and cites an extract from a letter written to Robert Lytton in which he describes one of his main motives for undertaking his public readings as “‘the hope that I could drop into some hearts, some new expression of the meaning of my books, that would *touch* them in a new way”’ (179 my italics). The letter was written on 17 April 1867 and is recorded in full in *Letters* 11: 353-354.

Rosa's fear of the passion which Jasper feels for her is evident when she feels as though by 'following her lips most attentively, with his eyes as well as hands' (51) he is touching her lips instead of the keys of the piano: "'it was *as if* he kissed me'" (53 *my italics*), she explains to Helena. Rosa feels "'terrified'" and "'ashamed'" (53) of the passion conveyed by Jasper as he observes closely her lips and, one can assume, of the discovery of her own potential to feel passion.

As the voice of her consciousness, Jasper embodies Rosa's innermost fears of which he raises her awareness by presenting them unobtrusively to her. It is through focussing Rosa's attention on his body that Jasper provides her with a dramatic presentation of her emotions where, in enacting the part of her fears, he enables her to 'watch the thought [or emotion] itself [...] without any other aid to understanding but such as its own manner of bearing may supply' (Lubbock 157). As the auditor of the dramatic enactment of her consciousness, Rosa is able to understand her feelings by sensing Jasper's physical presence without, as Percy Lubbock discusses, the obtrusion of narratorial mediation (143). The intensity with which she feels her emotions is reflected in how vividly she imagines Jasper's physical presence as the person who is "'whispering'" (53) to her, "'kiss[ing]'" (53) her or whom she fears will suddenly "'pass in through the wall when he is spoken of'" (53), while her virtual sensory response to the whisper and kiss enables her to perceive them as real rather than as imaginary and so to believe in the reality of the fears which they foreground. As Lubbock argues, in the dramatic presentation of consciousness 'the interior life [of the character] is given room to show itself, it appears, it acts' (143) – and Jasper acts before Rosa as the embodiment of her emotions, his tangible, physical presence drawing her attention to what he embodies – the *emotions* themselves – rather than to himself as would occur through the act of narration.

It is by acting as the voice of her consciousness that Jasper most clearly represents the narrator whose unobtrusiveness allows the reader to hear her own voice as she reads. Mediation of her emotions is rendered unnecessary as, through being a physical embodiment of them, he shows her how she feels. It is, however, not only by imagining his *physical* but his *intangible* presence that Rosa becomes more aware of her fears as she suggests occurs when ““he haunts [her] thoughts like a dreadful ghost”” (53). A ghost ‘manifests itself to the living visibly [and] audibly’ (*OED*) and so can be perceived as a physical presence – albeit a ‘shadowy nebulous’ one (*OED*) – as Rosa does when she imagines that he might appear unexpectedly in a room by ““pass[ing] in through the wall when he is spoken of”” (53). However, as the adjectives ‘shadowy’ and ‘nebulous’ suggest, a ghost can also manifest itself as a presence that is felt as indistinct and formless which is how Rosa feels *Jasper’s* presence as she fears that ““[haunt]”” (53) her consciousness.¹⁷⁹ Jasper pervades her consciousness as the emotions which she feels strongly and constantly and from which – as her admission to Helena that she ““feels that [she is] never safe from him”” (53) proves – she feels that she cannot escape. As the pervasive presence of her fears rather than as a specific embodiment of them, Jasper is like the ‘ghost-like’, disembodied and unlocatable ‘narrative voice’ which Blanchot describes (141).

¹⁷⁹ The *OED* defines ‘ghost’ as: ‘The soul or spirit as the source of life. The spiritual or immaterial part of a person, as distinct from the physical part; a person’s emotional, mental, and moral nature. An incorporeal being; a (good or evil) spirit. The soul of a dead person (later esp. of an ancestor), regarded as inhabiting the unseen world and freq. deified or revered. The soul of a dead person which manifests itself to the living visibly (as a shadowy nebulous image), audibly etc.; any apparition of a person or thing, a spectre.’

Moreover, Jasper's intangibility and omnipresence are felt by Rosa as Dickens also wanted the presence of the narrator of *Household Words* to be felt by his readers. Writing to John Forster on 7 October 1849, Dickens confides that he 'want[s] to propose a certain SHADOW, which may go into any place, by sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, candlelight, and be in all homes, and all nooks and corners, and be supposed to be cognisant of everything, and go everywhere, without the least difficulty [...] a kind of semi-omniscient, omnipresent, intangible creature' (*Letters 5: 622-623*). While the 'Shadow's' presence is intended to be felt everywhere, like Blanchot's 'narrative voice' and Jasper's imagined presence within Rosa's mind, its incorporality – Dickens describes it as an 'intangible creature' (622-623 my italics) and an 'odd, unsubstantial, whimsical new thing' (622-623 my italics) – does not enable the reader to imagine it as a person – a narrator – who is performing the act of narration within a specific place. Freed from the distraction of imagining the narrator's physical presence as he narrates, the reader is able to hear the voice of her own consciousness as she reads, as does Rosa when she feels Jasper's presence within her mind.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ It is worth noting that Dickens may have intended his readers to imagine the 'Shadow' as the tangible, physical presence that I have argued he is not. Malcolm Andrews's comparison of how the 'Shadow's' presence is felt 'at everybody's elbow' (28-29) with how the narrator of *A Christmas Carol* refers to his 'standing in the spirit at [his readers'] elbow[s]' (28-29) suggests this. My aim in comparing Jasper's presence within Rosa's mind with the intangibility and omnipresence of Dickens's 'Shadow' and Blanchot's 'narrative voice' has been to emphasise how Jasper represents the unobtrusive narrator. Dickens's use of the word 'Shadow'

When Rosa feels Jasper's presence inextricably embedded within her mind, she represents how, by hearing a fusion of her and the narrator's voices, the reader is able to detect the voice of her own consciousness as she reads. By hearing a fusion of these voices, the reader shows how she has sympathised with the narrator, feeling his emotions as though they are her own, and, in so doing, has discovered those which she is capable of feeling. It is through sympathising with the narrator and also with the characters within the narrative he relates, that the reader experiences what is arguably one of the most important outcomes of reading (especially as regards Dickens's intentions for *his* readers): virtual immersion in the imaginary world of the narrative.¹⁸¹ As I have shown, it is by sympathising with the narrator and with the characters within the narrative that the reader is able to immerse herself vicariously in their imaginary worlds by feeling as though she *is* them. When the reader imagines herself to be either the narrator or a character within his narrative, she experiences what is, according to the actor Simon Callow, 'the ideal state in which the actor should act' (258): to feel as though she is 'actually thinking [the] thoughts [of the character]' (258). Like the performance of reading, acting enables one to

which, as I noted earlier, is one of the definitions of a ghost – 'a shadowy nebulous image' (*OED*) – also reinforces the association of the narrator of *Household Words* with the 'ghost-like' 'narrative voice' and with how Rosa feels Jasper's presence as a "dreadful ghost" (53).

¹⁸¹ Dickens's wish to visualise the scene described in a work of fiction is recorded in his letter to Charles Collins, as noted in footnote 1. An obituarist also confirmed that Dickens enabled his readers 'to feel thoroughly at home in an imaginary world' (*The Critical Heritage* 549).

acquire greater self-knowledge by imagining oneself to be someone else.¹⁸² So when Rosa sings the ‘sorrowful strain of parting’ (51), she demonstrates how the actor’s experience of becoming more aware of the emotions that she is capable of feeling occurs – as it does for the reader – through sympathy. In acting the part of the character whose sorrow she expresses ‘in a very plaintive and tender voice’ (51), Rosa imagines that, through feeling the same emotion, she has become her. Rosa therefore shrieks in fear not only at the discovery that she can feel passion as strongly as Jasper feels but that, like the character whose part she is playing, she can feel deep sadness.

What distinguishes Rosa as an actor is that she makes no distinction between herself and the part she is playing as she sings with one voice, her ‘plaintive’ and ‘tender’ tone reflecting exactly the sorrow which both she and the character feel. In contrast with Rosa who, like the reader, hears her own voice as she immerses herself in that of the character, Jasper struggles to hear his own as he performs the parts of ‘Jasper’: the devoted uncle, the desperate lover, and Lay Precentor of Cloisterham Cathedral. Jasper is a self-conscious performer who is aware of the fact that he is performing several parts and therefore that the emotions he expresses in performance are felt by them and not by him. His preoccupation with himself as the performer of emotions and with the personae he is adopting – they are, in effect, different aspects of himself – means that he does not (as Rosa does as both actor and reader) realise his emotions through feeling those of the other. In the scene where he professes his love for Rosa, Jasper’s self-consciousness as a performer is seen in how he uses

¹⁸² Dickens writes of his enjoyment of assumption in a letter to Edward Bulwer Lytton on 5 January 1851 which I cite on the first page of my introductory chapter.

dramatic techniques to convey the emotions felt by the desperate lover.¹⁸³ What Booth describes as the ‘extreme emotionalism of melodrama’ (191) is evident in Jasper’s actions and facial expressions, his ‘convulsive hands’ (171) and ‘working features’ (171)¹⁸⁴ clearly revealing the agitation felt by the lover who seeks to persuade Rosa of his love. Jasper also reveals in his dialogue this ‘extreme emotionalism’ – or, more specifically, ‘a fierce extreme of admiration’ (171) – when he declares to Rosa that he will love her in spite of her ““hatred””, ““rage”” and ““scorn”” (171), his repetition of the phrase ““give me yourself”” (171) reinforcing the strength of what he professes to be his unconditional love. It is because Jasper is self-consciously using dramatic techniques in order to convey the emotion felt by the character he is playing that Rosa also focusses on these as part of his performance. The contrast between ‘the violence of his *look* and *delivery*’ (170 my italics) as he declares that he has always ““loved [her] madly”” (170) and the ‘composure of his assumed *attitude*’ (170 my italics) contributes significantly to her fear of his ‘hideous’ ‘words’ (170). Rosa responds as perceptively to his performance with words as she does to their meaning, recognising the falseness of his claim that by ““hid[ing] [his] secret loyalty”” (170) and by ““endur[ing] all in silence”” (170) he was patient and self-sacrificing during her engagement to Edwin, whilst also conceding that the way in which he delivers his words in his dialogue makes it seem as though he means what he says: ‘the words in which it is *told* are so true’ (170 my italics). By seeing through Jasper’s performance to what lies beneath it (his

¹⁸³ The scene referred to is described in Chapter 19 of the novel and is discussed on the first two pages of this chapter.

¹⁸⁴ Booth notes also that in melodrama ‘emotion had to be visible in the countenance’ (192) as it is in Jasper’s ‘working features’.

duplicity), Rosa draws attention to how Jasper's purpose as a performer differs from her own: whereas she discovers and expresses how she feels by immersing herself in the consciousness of the character she is playing, Jasper conceals how he feels by expressing the emotion felt by his *personae* but not by him.

As the term 'persona' suggests – it is defined as 'a character assumed by a performer' (*OED*) and, in its original sense, 'a mask [. . .] worn by actors' (Cuddon 701) – Jasper seeks to conceal himself from others and from himself by hiding behind the role he is adopting.¹⁸⁵ For example, in the scene where, having confided to Edwin that he is deeply discontented with his job as Lay Precentor (he complains of how "The cramped monotony of [his] existence grinds [him] away by the grain" [10]), Jasper then retreats into his adopted persona of devoted uncle in order to prevent himself from making further disclosures. He performs the part of an uncle whose 'strong interest in the youthful spirit that he loves so well' (12) is seen in the 'attitude' (12) which he sustains throughout his conversation with Edwin about Rosa. 'With an *expression* of musing benevolence on his face, [Jasper] attentively watch[es]

¹⁸⁵ The definition recorded in *The Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* is that it was 'originally a mask or false face of clay or bark worn by actors. From it derives the term *dramatis personae* and, later, the word *person*'. In *Acting as Reading*, David Cole also notes of the use of the term that 'Already in antiquity we find it being used in something like its later meanings of "character" or "role" (c.f. *dramatis personae*). But its root sense is "mask" – and especially an actor's stage mask' (237). The *OED*'s full definition of 'persona' is: 'A character assumed by an author, performer, etc., in his or her writing, work, etc. An aspect of the personality as displayed to others.'

every animated look and gesture attending the delivery of [Edwin's] words [. . .] remain[ing] in that *attitude* after they are spoken, as if in a kind of fascination attendant [on his interest in Edwin]' (12 my italics). As the nouns 'expression' and 'attitude' indicate, Jasper is using his face and body as part of his performance as the devoted uncle, while the phrase 'as if' reinforces the fact that he is creating the effect of someone who is fascinated by Edwin but who is not necessarily experiencing this emotion himself. Jasper is using not only his persona as devoted uncle with which to conceal his emotions but his performance in general. When Edwin remarks that his buying gloves for Rosa is "Rather poetical" (12), Jasper responds cryptically by quoting the lyrics of a song – "Nothing half so sweet in life" (12) – and in so doing avoids expressing what *he* feels. The vulnerability which he feels through having confided in Edwin causes him to freeze into a position where he is unable to move or speak and therefore to impart additional information about himself, to express his emotions or to respond to those felt and expressed by Edwin. As soon as Edwin says how honoured he feels by "hav[ing] something impressible within [him], which [. . .] deeply feels the disinterestedness of [Jasper's] painfully laying [his] inner self bare . . ." (11), Jasper acquires the 'steadiness of face and figure [which suggests that] his breathing seems to have stopped' (11). As a performer becomes motionless in order to create the effect that he has temporarily stopped living, so too does Jasper in order to seem not to be feeling or responding to emotion. It is through performance that Jasper dissociates himself from all allusions to his feelings. When, having listened to Edwin's observation that "[Jasper was] very much moved, and very unlike [his] usual self" (11) when he confided in Edwin, Jasper relinquishes his statuesque posture yet still dismisses what Edwin calls "the sentiment" (11) by

gesturing as though he is an actor: he ‘lifts his shoulders, laughs and waves his right arm’ (11).

While Jasper does seek to conceal his emotions by expressing those felt by his personae and by his use of various acting techniques, there are also occasions where he seemingly expresses his own feelings through performance. In the scene where Mr Grewgious informs Jasper that Rosa and Edwin are no longer engaged to be married, Mr Grewgious notes in Jasper’s facial expression and actions not only the visible signs of Jasper’s shock at this news but also the acting methods by which he conveys his reaction. His pallor – evident in his ‘staring white face’, ‘two quivering white lips’ (138) and in his being a ‘ghastly figure’ (138) – reveals clearly to Mr Grewgious Jasper’s distress. His anguish and despair are shown in his actions as he ‘lifts [his] outspread hands towards [his] head’ (138) and later ‘throw[s] back [his] head, clutch[es] [his] hair with [his] hands, and turns with a writhing action from [Mr Grewgious]’ (138). While Jasper’s actions show what he is feeling, they also indicate that he is performing with the ‘strong emotion and intense physical activity’ which, as Booth notes of the features of melodrama, ‘[mark] simple and complex actions alike’ (195). As acting techniques, these actions especially foreground the fact that Jasper is performing the part of himself and therefore cast some doubt over whose emotions we are witnessing: those of Jasper the *performer* or those of the ‘real’ Jasper. There is, however, no doubt that the changing colour of his complexion – the ‘staring white face’ (138) is later described as ‘lead-coloured’ (138) – is a visible sign of the emotion which *Jasper* is feeling when, by assuming the

voice of the character he is playing, he becomes himself.¹⁸⁶ As I noted earlier, a good actor immerses herself in the consciousness of her character so that she is able to feel her emotions and think her thoughts as though they are her own. To quote the colloquial expression, she ‘get[s] under [the] skin’ (*OED*) of the character she is playing and so, like Jasper, reveals through the appearance of her skin the emotions which both she and her character feel.¹⁸⁷ It is what Jasper’s body shows, rather than the actions that he performs with his body, that most clearly indicates the emotions that he is feeling as is also seen in the ‘dreadful starting drops or bubbles’ (138) (the beads of perspiration) which provide tangible evidence of Jasper’s anguish as he learns of Edwin’s and Rosa’s decision to live as “‘brother and sister [rather] than as husband and wife’” (138).

However, Jasper’s wish to conceal his emotions once they have been expressed is clearly symbolised by the image of the ‘starting drops’ (138) of perspiration which, as soon as they appear on the ‘surface’ (138) of his skin, look as though they are made of ‘steel’ (138). The comparison of the bodily evidence of Jasper’s fear with a non-human substance which cannot reveal emotion illustrates Jasper’s instinct to hide his feelings from others, one which is as strongly felt as is his need to express them. Moreover, when Mr Grewgious focusses on Jasper at the end of the scene as a ‘heap of torn and miry clothes upon the floor’ (138), he highlights the significant part performance has played throughout this and the preceding scene in which Jasper

¹⁸⁶ See the second page of my introductory chapter in which I discuss how Dickens’s assumption of Wardour’s feelings enabled him to understand his own.

¹⁸⁷ The *OED*’s definitions of this colloquial expression are: ‘to annoy or interest a person intensely’ and to ‘empathise with or understand a person.’

has sought his lost nephew, in concealing not only Jasper's emotions but his true identity. Jasper's clothes, which have become 'bedaubed with mud' (137) and 'torn to rags' (137) as he has toiled relentlessly to find Edwin, are worn as a costume for his role as devoted uncle – a part which he tries to sustain but which Mr Grewgious sees through to the 'real' Jasper: the one he suspects of being responsible for Edwin's disappearance and, presumably, his murder.¹⁸⁸ Mr Grewgious's close observation of Jasper as he monitors Jasper's physical responses to his news – he is described from the outset as 'looking fixedly at him sideways' (137) – indicates his suspicion of him while also enabling him to detect, as I have shown, how Jasper is really feeling. However, while Mr Grewgious does see Jasper's true emotions in the changing colour of his skin and in the drops of perspiration which appear on it, the closing image of the scene emphasises how Jasper's need to mask his feelings takes precedence over his wish to express them. Mr Grewgious sees no 'ghastly figure' (138) – the ashen and shocked Jasper whom he had previously seen 'rise, open-mouthed, from the easy chair' (138) – but instead sees '*nothing* but a heap of torn and miry clothes upon the floor' (138 *my italics*): he focusses solely on the costume

¹⁸⁸ Most scholars, as well as close members of Dickens's family, claim that Edwin was murdered by Jasper. His daughter, Kate Perugini, writes with reference to how Dickens confided his plans for the novel to both her brother, Charles, and Dickens's confidant, John Forster, that 'Having known both Mr Forster and my brother intimately, I cannot for a moment believe that either of them would speak or write that which he did not know to be strictly true; and it is on these grounds alone that I think I have a right to be heard when I insist upon the assertion that Edwin Drood was undoubtedly murdered by his uncle Jasper' (Perugini 3).

which, like the actions used as part of his performance, hides Jasper's real identity and emotions.

Jasper hides behind performance rather than using it as a means to discover his own voice. As these scenes illustrate, it is only on rare occasions – such as when his body shows his emotion – that Jasper is seen to be acting by feeling and expressing in one voice his thoughts and feelings. Jasper is inhibited as an actor because his attempt to find himself is through playing the part of Jasper rather than through imagining himself to be someone else and because he fears the self-discovery that immersion in the consciousness of the other would bring. Jasper's self-absorption is especially apparent in the scene where he rehearses choir-music for a performance that he will later give in Cloisterham Cathedral. The fact that he is performing his music alone and, 'with no light but that of the fire' (100), in relative darkness, enables him to focus on himself – without the distraction of having an audience or of seeing illuminated by bright light the details of his surroundings – as he attempts through 'chanting choir-music' (100) to hear the voice of his own consciousness. The *type* of music he is performing ('choir-music' [100]), the *way* in which he is performing (by 'chanting' [100]) and the amount of time he spends rehearsing ('two or three hours' [100]) all enable him to be inward-looking. Unlike the song which enables Rosa to discover her own voice as she feels and expresses the emotions felt by the character she is playing, the 'choir-music' (100) allows Jasper to focus on his own voice without the distraction of performing as another character. While Rosa hears her own thoughts and emotions expressed in the music she sings, Jasper attempts to find his own through the more introspective and private act of chanting –

a performance which, like the act of meditation with which it is associated, allows one to hear one's own inner voice.¹⁸⁹

The reason why I have emphasised how Jasper *attempts* to find his own voice through chanting and focussing entirely on himself is because I have so far argued that Rosa discovers her own through hearing her emotions expressed in the music she sings as she sympathises with the character she is playing. However, in addition to the darkness and the choir-music which enable Jasper to focus exclusively on his own voice, the meditative act of chanting allows him the opportunity to listen *intently* to it. If Jasper is chanting monotonously, then he is able to concentrate on the sound of the voice itself as he produces it without the distraction of having to modulate its tone as he would if he were to sing melodiously. The quietness of Jasper's 'low' voice means that, in needing to listen carefully in order to hear it, Jasper therefore focusses even more closely on the discovery of what lies within his own consciousness. There is evidence that he has found his own voice when, as a result of 'a grand composure of the spirits' (128), Jasper later sings in the cathedral in perfect time and with 'melodious power' (128). The fact that Jasper performs with what Mr Crisparkle calls "perfect self-command" (129) is because he now knows that what lies within the depths of his own consciousness is the will to murder

¹⁸⁹ One of the definitions of the verb 'to chant' is 'to talk or repeat monotonously' (*OED*) as sometimes occurs during meditation. The sustained period of time during which Jasper chants also reinforces the association with meditation. The *OED* also cites the following definitions of the verb 'to chant' as: to 'sing of, celebrate in song. Recite musically or rhythmically; intone; sing (to) a chant. Talk or repeat (a statement) monotonously.'

Edwin Drood.¹⁹⁰ Having established through chanting monotonously what he is capable of thinking, feeling and doing, Jasper now confirms this knowledge by hearing in the music he sings melodiously the voice of his own consciousness.

However, when rehearsing alone as well as when performing in public, Jasper also shows a reluctance to hear his own voice which is perhaps (as I suggested earlier) due to his fear of discovering what is in his mind. His quiet and monotonous chanting indicates his cautiousness about realising his thoughts and emotions as would occur through singing powerfully and harmoniously – a wariness which is also apparent in the ‘cracked monotonous mutter’ (73) he produces when singing in the choir in Chapter Nine. Again, his voice is ‘monotonous’ which suggests – along with the noun ‘mutter’ – that he is fearful of hearing his emotions expressed in music, as does its indistinctness and weakness: it is ‘cracked’, ‘feeble’ and ‘faintly heard’. I suggest that the way in which Jasper perceives hearing one’s own emotions and thoughts expressed strongly in music as endangering to one’s own consciousness is illustrated by the self-destruction of the ‘sea of music’ (73) and the survival of the

¹⁹⁰ I make this claim based on the evidence given by Dickens’s family as stated in footnote 27. Margaret Cardwell also notes in her introduction to *Edwin Drood* that ‘It is a noticeable feature of Jasper’s presentation that his beautiful singing voice is stressed in circumstances which invite the reader to view him in a discreditable light’ (xix). As Jasper sings ‘in beautiful voice’ (128) immediately before his nephew is reported as missing, this would suggest that Jasper has played some part in his disappearance and probable murder. John Beer also claims that ‘From an early stage, everything points to Jasper as the murderer. And the fact is that Dickens at every point signposts the fact for the reader with extraordinary clarity’ (Beer 713).

‘cracked monotonous mutter’. To begin with, the ‘cracked monotonous mutter’ struggles to be heard above the stronger voice of the choir (‘the sea of music’) as it overpowers Jasper’s weaker sound, ‘drown[ing] it in a sea of music’ (73). However, it is as the ‘sea of music’ voices very audibly its emotion as it soars around the cathedral ‘ris[ing] high and beating its life out, lash[ing] the roof, surg[ing] among the arches, and pierc[ing] the height of the great tower’ (73) that it destroys itself, leaving the almost defeated ‘mutter’ (Jasper) to emerge victorious as the ‘*living* [and mobile] waters’ (74 my italics) as opposed to the ‘dry and still’ sea (73). The voice of Jasper’s consciousness survives intact because it has not been heard distinctly whereas the ‘sea of music’ dies because it has, proving that self-discovery is potentially self-destructive.

Regardless of whether Jasper is cautious or fearful of self-discovery or whether he does or does not achieve this, there is no doubt that as a performer and as a representative reader he is in *search* of what exists within the confines of his own consciousness. His chanting especially demonstrates this search, as I have shown, while his adoption of various personae shows not only his need to conceal his identity from himself and from others but his attempt to find it through trying out different roles. Jasper’s composure when singing melodiously and the bodily signs of his emotions are instances of his having momentarily found his own voice but in general Jasper is restricted by a search that he undertakes alone and which focusses entirely on himself as performer and as the subject of his performance. Like Rosa – who finds her own voice by assuming that of the character she is playing and by hearing her own voice in Jasper’s – Jasper needs someone other than himself to help him find his own. It is Durdles who, by quietly showing Jasper around Cloisterham Cathedral – the symbol of Jasper’s consciousness – enables him to hear his own

voice as the unobtrusive narrator allows the reader to hear her own. Durdles represents the unobtrusive narrator by his self-effacement, seen literally in how the colour of his clothes blends into his surroundings – he is ‘chiefly of the gravestone, tomb, and monument way, and wholly of their colour from head to foot’ (28) – and in how he is reluctant to draw attention to his identity. When Durdles ‘speaks of himself in the third person [. . .] perhaps impartially adopting the Cloisterham nomenclature – in reference to a character of acknowledged distinction’ (29) – he effectively conceals his own identity by referring indirectly to himself as someone else. By being ‘a little misty as to his own identity when he narrates’ (23), Durdles shows the unself-consciousness of the narrator who effaces himself as he narrates as opposed to one who draws attention to his role as he performs self-consciously the act of narration. Even when the identity of being the target at which Deputy throws stones is conferred on him, Durdles evades recognition for his achievement – of which he is obviously proud – of having provided Deputy with not only a purpose in life but possibly an education: “‘I don’t know what you may precisely call it. It ain’t a sort of a – scheme of a – National Education? [. . .] then we won’t try to give it a name’” (23).

Durdles especially represents the way in which the voice of the unobtrusive narrator fuses with that of the reader so that she hears her own voice more audibly and, by immersing herself in the consciousness of the narrator, discovers what lies within her own. It is through immersion in the thoughts and emotions of the narrator that the reader is able to imagine that she is experiencing them as her own and that she is sharing with him, in the words of Poulet, a ‘common consciousness’ (59). When, in ascending the stairs to the ‘great Tower’ (105), Durdles and Jasper ‘turn to one another’ (106) in the darkness ‘as though their faces could *commune* together’

(106 my italics), they enact the rapport between the narrator and reader which the reader imagines to exist and that enables her to believe that the narrator's consciousness is her own. It is, however, through his knowledge of Cloisterham Cathedral that Durdles foregrounds the way in which the narrator and reader can be imagined to share one voice: as 'narrator', he has knowledge of Jasper's (his 'reader's') mind while Jasper (as 'reader') seeks to find this knowledge by immersing himself in that of Durdles (his 'narrator'). As 'reader', Jasper sees Cloisterham Cathedral and Durdles's knowledge of it as important for his search of what lies hidden within the depths of his own consciousness. Under the influence of opium, the 'Cathedral tower' (1) appears to Jasper as a recurring image which suggests – by its dominant presence within his consciousness – that it has some significance for him, while his urge to reach it as the place that is easily accessible to him (the cathedral door is 'open' [3]) for the exploration of his mind is evident when he actually enters Cloisterham Cathedral 'that same afternoon' (3). In viewing Cloisterham Cathedral as a 'never-changing place' (34), Jasper shows that he has limited knowledge of what he is capable of thinking and feeling unlike Durdles whose 'myster[ious] and interest[ing]' (34) 'connexion with' (34) it shows that he knows more than Jasper does of what lies deep within Jasper's consciousness. As a 'contractor for rough repairs' (28), Durdles has seen 'strange sights' (29) in the cathedral, he has (as Jasper remarks to him) "a remarkable accuracy [for] find[ing] out where people are buried" (34) there and is 'better acquainted than any living authority' (28) with the crypt. His superior knowledge of the crypt – which, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines, is a '*burial* [as well as] a secret *hiding* place' (my italics) – and of the places where bodies are buried within the cathedral signifies the specific information he has of what lies buried and hidden within Jasper's

mind.¹⁹¹ It is this information which Jasper seeks when he asks Durdles if ““there is anything new down in the crypt [or a] new discovery”” (34) that will contribute to his *self*-discovery.

Durdles may have extensive knowledge of what exists in Jasper’s consciousness but his function in showing him around the cathedral is not so much to impart his knowledge directly to Jasper as it is to allow him to discover it for himself. As Durdles guides Jasper to different areas of the cathedral he enacts the way in which the unobtrusive narrator enables the reader to hear within the fusion of her and the narrator’s voices what lies within her own consciousness. The way in which the narrator’s unobtrusiveness enables the reader to hear her own voice is demonstrated by Durdles’s minimal intervention in the process of Jasper’s self-discovery which is apparent as soon as they enter the crypt. While Durdles shows by his having the key to the crypt (they are described as entering ‘by a small door of which [he] has the key’ [105]) that he has control over Jasper’s search for what lies buried within his own consciousness, it is really Jasper who directs their exploration of it. The predominance of moonlight in the crypt symbolises the way in which Jasper conducts his search for the thoughts that he is unaware of having – a search which begins through chanting choir-music in his home and which is continued within the cathedral. As the ‘moon is about to rise’ (100) after Jasper finishes chanting, its appearance can be associated with Jasper’s search for what lies hidden within his own consciousness which he undertakes without anyone’s assistance. Therefore

¹⁹¹ The *OED* defines ‘crypt’ as: ‘A grotto, a cavern. An underground passage or tunnel. An underground chamber or vault; *spec* one under a church, and as a burial place.’

when Durdles's 'lantern is not wanted [as] the moonlight strikes in at the groined windows' (105) of the crypt, Jasper's search continues largely independently of Durdles's guidance. There is further evidence of Jasper's autonomous exploration of his own consciousness in how the moonlight illuminates the crypt by reflecting parts of its structure onto its interior – 'the broken frames [. . .] cast patterns on the ground' (105) while the 'heavy pillars which support the roof engender masses of black shade [between which] there are lanes of light' (105) – which represents the way in which, in effect, Jasper's mind lights itself.

The effectiveness of Jasper's independent search for what lies within his own mind is seen in the permanence and strength of the moonlight's illumination of the cathedral. The 'lanes of light' (105) – used initially by Durdles and Jasper to walk along in the crypt and then partly to light their way as they climb the 'very dark' (106) steps of the tower – remain when both return there for Durdles to stagger along and for Jasper to '[walk] among them, beating his hands and feet' (108). The brightness of the moonlight which shines on to Durdles and Jasper as they ascend the tower represents Jasper's strong ability to explore his own mind which is reinforced by how, again, part of the structure of his consciousness – 'the stained-glass window' (107) – reflects the light on to its interior or, more specifically, 'upon their faces' (107). One can also interpret the way in which the moonlight 'throw[s]' (107) the 'colors' (107) of the stained-glass on them as an indication of Jasper's power to immerse them instantaneously in a particular feature of his own consciousness. His dominant role in the exploration of his own mind contrasts with the unobtrusive part Durdles plays in guiding him – with the transient and weaker light of his lantern – around it. The 'speck' (107) of light emitted from Durdles's lantern illuminates faintly and fleetingly the 'dim angels' heads' (107) as they climb the steps of the

tower and contrasts with the more powerful and enduring ‘moonlit nave’ (107) as seen from the vantage point of the ‘low-arched galleries’ (107). By being less effective in lighting the cathedral than the radiating moonlight, the ‘speck’ of light illustrates the way in which Durdles – with little intervention on his part – allows Jasper to explore his own mind. The ultimate control Jasper has in this exploration is seen also in how the source for lighting the lantern – the ‘cold hard wall [from which Durdles] draw[s] a spark of that mysterious fire which lurks in everything’ (107) – is part of the structure of his consciousness which again proves how his consciousness is mainly self-illuminating.

While Durdles’s lantern is sourced by Jasper’s consciousness, the way in which he uses the ‘speck’ of light to navigate their way to the top of the tower illustrates how essential Durdles is in guiding Jasper to the thoughts that are unknown to him. He ‘wav[es] his lantern’ (107) in order to illuminate the ‘dim angels’ heads’ (107) and other structural features as they climb the ‘very dark’ (105) and ‘winding staircase [. . .] toilsomely, turning and turning and lowering their heads to avoid the stairs above, or the rough stone pivot around which they twist’ (107). Their increasingly obstacle-ridden ascent as they ‘turn into narrower and steeper staircases’ (107) shows how difficult it is for Jasper to access the thoughts that will have considerable significance for him as a ‘reader’, while the ‘strange places’ (107) and ‘cobwebs and [. . .] dust’ (107) symbolise how, in seeking them, he is entering unfamiliar and unexplored territory. It is only when they reach the tower’s summit and look out at the moonlit landscape of Cloisterham that Durdles’s lantern is no longer required (107) and *Durdles* is needed only as a reassuring presence as Jasper is left to read the scene before him. The appearance of moonlight here – as well as inside the cathedral – represents not only Jasper’s ability to explore his own

consciousness independently of Durdles but relates also to the knowledge that he has acquired through chanting choir-music before entering the cathedral. When he realises that he has the will to murder Edwin, the moon ‘ris[es]’ (100) as a sign of this newly found thought and continues to shine brightly into the crypt as his search advances. The predominance of moonlight in the crypt – as the first area of the cathedral they enter after Jasper’s initial exploration of his own mind – serves as a manifestation of his knowledge which Durdles scarcely needs to guide him to, as is proven by the ease with which he leads Jasper directly into the crypt and then puts aside his lantern (105). In the moonlit view of Cloisterham, Jasper sees represented by the ‘sanctuaries of the dead’ (107) the thought relating to his will to murder Edwin which is where to bury his body after he has killed him. This is a thought which preoccupies him as is seen in how he ‘contemplates the scene, and especially that stillest part of it which the Cathedral overshadows’ (the cathedral’s graveyard [107]) as the possible location for the burial and in his interest in the quick-lime which – prior to entering the cathedral – Durdles directs his attention to as a substance which is “‘quick enough to eat your bones’” (103) or those of Edwin’s body.¹⁹²

Jasper is presented by Durdles not only with a scene whose details relate to his preoccupying thought of murdering Edwin but which also invites a more insightful interpretation of it. In the river’s course from its apparent source of ‘the mist on the horizon’ (107) to its inevitable destination of the sea, Jasper is able to see symbolised

¹⁹² A. O. J. Cockshut notes that ‘the quick-lime and the hidden chamber in the cathedral provide an obvious clue about the disposal of the body’ (*Dickens and the Twentieth Century* 236).

his progression from being unsure of the outcome of murdering Edwin (one cannot see clearly through mist) to knowing for certain that, just as the river has a ‘restless knowledge of its approach’ (107) towards the destructive force of the sea, so he will (in some way) be destroyed by the act of murder. Indeed, in Chapter 14, the deleterious effect on his consciousness of his probable murder of Edwin is shown clearly in his shocked and dishevelled appearance – he is described as being ‘white, half dressed [and] panting’ (131) – as he demands to know the whereabouts of his nephew and is symbolised by the damage inflicted on the cathedral: the ‘hands of the Cathedral clock are torn off, [. . .] lead from the roof has been stripped away [. . .] and [. . .] some stones have been displaced upon the summit of the great tower’ (131). In symbolising the journey of life from birth to death, the river also enables Jasper to reflect on *something* other than himself so that – as the reader and actor discover what they are capable of thinking and feeling through imagining themselves to be (as Dickens says) ‘some *one* [. . .] not at all like [themselves]’ (256-257 my italics) – he is able to realise what lies within his own consciousness by immersing himself in a scene of life. The ‘mist on the horizon’ (107) represents how, at birth, we are ignorant of our destiny while the river’s ‘restless knowledge of its approach towards the sea’ (107) symbolises how, through living, we acquire the knowledge that we are all destined to die (in this case I interpret the sea as a symbol of death). It is not only the way in which Jasper reads the scene of Cloisterham as a scene of life but where he is when he reads it that allows him to realise that the key to self-discovery as a reader is to look beyond himself. Jasper is standing physically on top of the tower of Cloisterham Cathedral and symbolically outside of his own consciousness when – by immersing himself in the scene beneath him – he experiences what it is to be a true reader. The introspective acts of chanting choir-music and of exploring the interior

of the cathedral may have partly revealed to Jasper what lies within his own consciousness but the most significant discovery is made when Durdles leads him out of his mind.

Conclusion

Scenes of Reading in Dickens's Writings

When Jasper reads the scene of Cloisterham, he reads in it his destiny as a man who will, inevitably, die and as the murderer of Edwin Drood who will be destroyed by his crime. Jasper's course in life is as unchangeable as the river's route to the sea and it is this realisation that makes this an enlightening moment for him as 'reader'. As Kenneth Sroka argues, one of the experiences of reading for Dickens's characters is to 'see the constant truths of [their] past beyond the accidents of mutability' (Sroka 41): in Jasper's case, he reads the permanent facts of his past, present and future. Like Scrooge when, on reading the scene of the concealed corpse, he realises that he will be abandoned in death unless he changes into the kind man he used to be, Jasper experiences a 'moment of recognition' (Cuddon 38) or anagnorisis in the presence of an unobtrusive 'narrator' – Durdles – who, like the Last Spirit, allows his 'reader' to immerse himself in the 'narrative' scene.

In *Oliver Twist*, when Bill Sikes immerses himself in the 'narrative' scene of the fire, there is no unobtrusive 'narrator' to accompany him: instead, he is surrounded by the quiet presence of the countryside through which he has been travelling after murdering Nancy. As he 'plunge[s] further and further into the solitude and darkness of the road' (402) which leads him away from the scene of the crime, he '[feels] a dread and awe creeping upon him which [shakes] him to the core' (402): rather than escaping from his fears, he is confronted by them. The 'solitude and darkness' function as the unobtrusive narrator who enables the reader to hear her own voice: when Sikes imagines 'every object before him' as 'some fearful thing'

(402), he realises his deeply felt fears. ‘These fears [are, however,] nothing, compared to the sense that haunt[s] him of that morning’s ghastly figure following at his heels’ (402) whose ‘shadow’ he can ‘trace [...] in the gloom, supply the smallest item of the outline, and note how stiff and solemn it seem[s] to stalk along’ (402). As a manifestation of his overwhelming sense of guilt, the vision of Nancy’s corpse pervades his consciousness as a presence which he feels at all times. That he can discern in the darkness the details of its appearance is proof not only of how indelible is his memory of the corpse but of how intensely he feels the guilt which it represents. Sikes senses its presence everywhere, ‘hear[ing] its garments rustling in the leaves, and every breath of wind [which comes] laden with that last low cry’ (402) – its omnipresence proving how he cannot escape from ‘the dreadful consciousness of his crime’ (404).

The scene of the fire does, however, provide Sikes with the opportunity to ‘[fly] from memory and himself, [by] plung[ing] into the thickest of the throng’ (404) – seeking distraction in physical activity by assisting those who are attempting to extinguish the fire. It is the prospect of not only ‘personal danger’ (403) but of being with people and hearing *their* voices – instead of the voice of his own consciousness – which attracts Sikes to the scene and entices him to immerse himself in it. ‘Any sound of men [...] even though it convey[s] a real cause of alarm’ (403) is a welcome relief from solitude and motivates him to ‘[spring] to his feet [and rush] into the open air’ (403). As he views the fire from a distance, it is these human voices which excite him – ‘the shouts [which grow] louder as new voices [swell] the roar’, ‘the women and children [who shriek]’ and ‘men [who encourage] each other with noisy shouts and cheers’ (404) – and which inspire him to ‘[shout] too till he [is] hoarse’ (404) and so contribute to the ‘tremendous roar’ (404) of the scene. Sikes

immerses himself in a scene of sounds which he hopes will drown the voice of his own consciousness in which is embedded the knowledge of his crime and the fear and guilt which attend it. The sounds of the fire as it is being extinguished – the ‘crackling of flames’, the ‘clanking of the engine-pumps’ and the ‘hissing of the water’ (404) – as well as the frenetic activity in which he participates – Sikes is ‘working at the pumps’, ‘hurrying through the smoke and flame’ and ‘up and down ladders’ (404), – may give some respite from his troubled mind (he has no ‘thought till morning dawn[s] again’ [404]) but only temporarily: ‘this mad excitement over, there return[s] with tenfold force’ (404) the realisation that he is a murderer. As ‘reader’, Sikes experiences anagnorisis, a moment when he recognises that, like the condemned prisoner in “A Visit to Newgate”, he is a criminal who will be punished for his crime: an identity which, like the ‘constant [truth]’ of the murder he has committed, is ‘beyond the accidents of mutability’ (Sroka 41).

Sensory immersion in a ‘narrative’ scene enables Sikes to confirm his identity as a murderer, just as Scrooge knows – through his sensory reading of the scenes of his life – that he has become a miser. The ‘reader’s’ self-discovery is accompanied by deeply disturbing emotions which are often felt physically. Scrooge’s realisation that he could be the deceased miser (*A Christmas Carol* 102) makes him ‘[shudder] from head to foot’ (102), he ‘recoil[s] in terror’ (102) from the bed where the body lies and he is ‘quite agonised’ (103) when pleading with the Last Spirit to ““show”” him ““any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man’s death”” (103). Having seen the vision of Nancy’s corpse, Sikes feels ‘such terror as none but he can know, trembling in every limb, and the cold sweat starting from every pore’ (*Oliver Twist* 403), while, following his immersion in the scene of the fire, Sikes feels even more powerfully his fear which is evident in how he ‘look[s] suspiciously about him

[...] fear[ing] to be the subject of [the] talk [of] men [who are] conversing in groups' (404). Sikes's sensory reading of the fire increases his awareness of the murder which he has carried out – a fact that has already been felt forcibly by Sikes in his visualisation of the scene of the crime. The vision of the scene of the crime where Sikes killed Nancy appears to him suddenly and in vivid detail:

If he shut out the sight, there came the room with every well-known object – some, indeed, that he would have forgotten if he had gone over its contents from memory – each in its accustomed place. The body was in *its* place, and his eyes were as he saw them when he stole away. (403)

The clearness with which Sikes sees the objects of the room indicates that with which he understands that he is – and always will be – a man who has killed: an illumination which is similar to that experienced by Scrooge after he has viewed the covered corpse. The voice which Scrooge hears declare that he who 'WAS open, generous, and true' (102-3) in life will be immortalised for these deeds is the voice of Scrooge's consciousness expressing what he has always known and which he now recognises with startling clarity. Essentially, if he continues to lead the life of a miser he will be as 'unwatched, unwept [and] uncared for' (102) as 'the body of [the] man' (102) which he realises could be his own:

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly! (103)

Scrooge hears his own voice in the presence of the Last Spirit: an unobtrusive 'narrator' whose silence allows its 'reader' to think and feel without 'the agitation of

response to a mediating observer's emotions' (Easson 19).¹⁹³ Without speaking, the Spirit guides Scrooge to read the scene and complements what the scene reveals of itself: the 'dumb' body 'announce[s] itself in awful language' (102) just as the Spirit's 'steady hand' (102) and 'unmoved finger' (103) direct Scrooge to uncover the corpse. The Last Spirit is a necessary presence in Scrooge's experience of reading the scene, prompting him to explore its relevance to Scrooge's life and remaining quietly at his side as he reads. In contrast with Scrooge, Sikes reads his 'narrative' scene independently, guiding himself into the scene of the fire which will contribute significantly to his self-discovery: on hearing the sound of voices he 'rush[es] into the open air' (403) in order to watch the activity before 'plung[ing] into the thickest of the throng' (404). The 'narrative' scene has not been presented to Sikes – as it has to Scrooge – by an unobtrusive 'narrator' but instead he has found himself within the scene rather than – as Scrooge does with the scene of the corpse – viewing it as a spectator. Sikes proceeds 'doggedly' (402) along the road which leads into the countryside (his 'narrative' scene) in which he moves around freely: he attempts to run away from the 'phantom' which pursues him (402) and continues to evade its presence by '[leaning] his back against a bank' (402), '[throwing] himself upon the road' (402) and by 'rush[ing] into the field' (403) outside the shed. As Dickens wanted his readers to imagine themselves to be doing, Sikes is moving

¹⁹³ Easson refers specifically to the narrator of "A Visit to Newgate" whose unobtrusiveness enables the reader to feel emotion in response to what is described and to visualise the scene: 'Dickens recognised the effectiveness of a quiet power in accurate delineation [whereby the] very quietness of tone makes a point, since the mind's eye can rest on such scenes without the agitation of response to a mediating observer's emotions' (Easson 19).

within a ‘narrative’ scene: when Dickens advises Mrs Brookfield about her writings, he suggests that if she were ‘telling that affecting incident [from her novel] in a letter to a friend, [she would] describe how [she] went through the life and stir of the streets and roads, to the sick-room’ (*Letters* 6: 160) – movement which, as Percy Fitzgerald records, is frequently found in Dickens’s writings: ‘Everyone familiar with his writings will recognise how he delighted in this motion, [...] that actual living movement in the form of walking, riding [and] travelling over the Continent in diligences or carriages’ (*Interviews and Recollections* 2: 229-30).

Dickens strongly believed that the reader’s ability to imagine a narrative scene depended on the unobtrusive presence of the narrator. As he advises the writer, Charles Collins, about his latest work: ‘there is too much of the narrator in it – the narrator not being an actor [and] the result is, that I can not see the people, or the place, or believe in the fiction’ (*Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* 312). In the letter to Mrs Brookfield, as cited above, Dickens offers similar advice when he states: ‘I don’t want you, in a novel, to present *yourself* to tell such things, but I want the things to be there’ (*Letters* 6: 160) – he wants, according to Percy Lubbock’s definition of the ‘scene treated dramatically’ (Lubbock 71), ‘the motion of life [to be] before [the reader and] the recording, registering mind of the author [to be] eliminated’ (Lubbock 111). Sikes is certainly not made aware of a ‘narrator’ (even an unobtrusive ‘narrator’) who exists in bodily form – as Scrooge is conscious of the physical presence of the Last Spirit – but instead is immersed in a ‘narrative’ scene which allows him to read it alone. The solitude of the scene enables Sikes to realise how strongly he feels fear and to sense the embodiment of his guilt in the vision of Nancy’s corpse while he senses his surroundings. When Sikes ‘lean[s] his back against a bank, [he] [feels] that it [stands] above him, visibly out against the cold

night-sky' (402), and when he '[throws] himself [...] on his back upon the road' (402), the vision '[stands], silent, erect, and still – a living grave-stone, with its epitaph in blood' (402). Within the natural environment of this 'narrative' scene, Sikes senses his feelings: in the 'leaves' he 'hears' the vision's 'garments rustling' (402), while 'every breath of wind [comes] laden with [the] last low cry' (402) which Nancy gave before she died. It is as though Sikes's feelings form an integral part of the 'narrative' scene and are ready to be found and felt through sensory reading. Sikes finds his fear in the darkness which envelops him: as soon as he plunges into the 'darkness of the road', he feels the physical effects of 'dread and awe' (402) before seeing – faintly, at first, and then very distinctly – the vision of his guilt. He can just 'trace its shadow in the gloom' (402) and his sensing of this emotion culminates in his seeing 'those widely-staring eyes' which '[appear] in the midst of darkness' (403). It is as though the 'narrative' scene adopts the role of the unobtrusive 'narrator': its darkness and quietness enable Sikes to hear his own voice just as the Last Spirit – a 'silent shape' (*A Christmas Carol* 95) that is 'shrouded in a deep black garment' and 'surrounded' by 'darkness' (95) – allows Scrooge to hear his own voice when he reads the scene of the concealed corpse.

Sikes is reading a dramatically presented scene where 'the things [are] there' (*Letters* 6: 160) for him to discover and in which the narrator's presence – if not 'eliminated' (Lubbock 111) – is like the 'impersonal, disembodied [and] imperceptible voice' (Furst 57) which Furst argues is required in realism in fiction.¹⁹⁴ It is this unobtrusive voice that is sometimes found in *Oliver Twist* and

¹⁹⁴ Furst writes that 'How to seem absent though pervasive in the narrative is the realist's foremost challenge. While eighteenth-century narrators were a strong

which enables the actual reader to immerse herself imaginatively in a narrative scene. As a contemporary reviewer observes, the narrator of *Oliver Twist* does not ‘obtrude himself upon the reader’s attention’ (*The Critical Heritage* 42) and, arguably, this is unusual in Dickens’s second novel in which his narrator, ‘Boz’, draws attention to his role as storyteller.¹⁹⁵ For example, Boz concludes the second chapter in which Oliver asks for more gruel, by referring to the process of writing when he explains why he has not yet informed the reader of the consequences of Oliver’s actions.

As I propose to show in the sequel whether the white-waistcoated gentleman was right or not, I should perhaps mar the interest of this narrative, (supposing it to possess any at all,) if I ventured to hint just yet, whether the life of Oliver Twist will be a long or a short piece of biography. (17)

As Garis argues is typical of the Dickensian narrator in general, Boz ‘is self-consciously and deliberately and wilfully playing a certain role and asking us to become an equally self-conscious and deliberate audience for his performance’ (64): the reader of *Oliver Twist* is required to ‘listen’ to the storyteller. The narrator’s purpose in *Oliver Twist* is to entertain the reader with his story but what *Dickens* also wanted to achieve in writing this novel was to raise awareness of poverty and crime presence within their fictions, addressing readers on numerous occasions, the realist program of a true and faithful copy of reality demands an apparently autonomous action emanating from an impersonal, disembodied, imperceptible voice’ (57).

¹⁹⁵ In *Vanishing Points, Dickens, Narrative and the Subject of Omniscience*, Audrey Jaffe notes the progression in Dickens’s writings from ‘personified narration – Boz and Humphrey – toward the distant, invisible narrator of *Our Mutual Friend*’ (21).

in London by ‘showing it in its unattractive and repulsive truth’ (*Oliver Twist* 459). In his introduction to the third edition of *Oliver Twist* (1841), Dickens justifies his decision to ‘draw a knot of such associates in crime as really do exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives’ as an ‘attempt [to do] a something that was greatly needed, and which would be a service to society’ (457). Dickens’s purpose in ‘show[ing] [criminals] as they really are’ (457) and the actual living conditions of the poor – ‘the haunts of hunger and disease, the shabby rags that scarcely hold together’ (458) – is a moral (458) and edifying one intended to (as Thomas Lister concludes of Dickens’s writings) ‘make us practically benevolent – to excite our sympathy in behalf of the aggrieved and suffering in all classes; and especially in those who are most removed from observation’ (*The Critical Heritage* 73).

In the fictitious scenes of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens wants to convey what he has ‘often [seen] and read of, in actual life around [him]’ (*Oliver Twist* 460) so that his readers are able to imagine themselves within these scenes and experiencing what it must be like to be living the lives of Sikes, Fagin and Oliver. As Furst argues, in order to create the illusion of ‘a true and faithful copy of reality’ (Furst 57), an ‘impersonal, disembodied, imperceptible voice’ (57) is needed, and Dickens manages to create both effects in some of the scenes of this novel. For example, in his description of the room where a poor (and recently bereaved) family live, the narrator provides a factual and unemotional account of the key details of the scene which enables the reader to imagine it and to respond with her own emotions:

There was no fire in the room; but a man was crouching mechanically over the empty stove. An old woman, too, had drawn a low stool to the hearth, and was sitting beside him. There were some ragged children in another corner, and in a small recess opposite the door there lay upon the ground

something covered with an old blanket. Oliver shuddered as he cast his eyes towards the place, and crept involuntarily closer to his master; for, though it was covered up, the boy felt that it was a corpse. (41)

The reader is able to '[construct] [her] own vision' from 'the raw materials' (Horton 95-96): the features of the room selected by the narrator in order to enable the reader to imagine the scene in the same way as Oliver – who has just entered it with Mr Sowerberry – sees it.¹⁹⁶ The children are 'in another corner' and 'in a small recess opposite the door' lies 'upon the ground something covered with an old blanket' which Oliver senses is 'the corpse'. By focussing on details which indicate the family's deprivation – the absence of a fire in the room, the 'empty stove' and 'ragged children', – the narrator clearly conveys his moral message while allowing the reader to feel without the 'agitation of response to a mediating observer's emotions' (Easson 19). As Easson notes, with specific reference to the narrator of "A Visit to Newgate", 'Dickens recognised the effectiveness of a quiet power in accurate delineation [whereby the] very quietness of tone makes a point, since the mind's eye can rest on such scenes' (19), just as Oliver's eye rests on the room which he observes uninhibitedly. While the narrator refrains from expressing explicitly his emotions, they are implicit in the description of the room which he presents to the reader through Oliver's focalised responses. It is Oliver whom the reader imagines to be noting the details of the room and responding emotionally to

¹⁹⁶ Horton argues that 'the miscellaneous concrete detail' often found in Dickens's descriptions 'set[s] the reader down in the midst of a teeming world' for her to 'make sense of it for [herself]' and 'selects from those raw materials, that wealth of incident and detail, his own vision' (95-96).

them, just as the narrator intends the actual reader to do. Oliver feels fear physically when he ‘shudder[s] as he cast[s] his eyes towards the place [where the body lies], and cre[eps] involuntarily closer to his master’ (41).

Through focalisation, the narrator unobtrusively guides the reader’s responses to the scene in which she immerses herself virtually. As the obituarist notes, Dickens ‘had the power of making the reader feel thoroughly at home in an imaginary world, and of being and living and *moving* in it naturally’ (*The Critical Heritage* 502 my italics), and it is through describing the movements of characters as they walk through London or its environs, that the narrator enables the reader to imagine herself to be moving within the scene as well. In one of what Angus Wilson describes as ‘the great walking scenes’ (Wilson 84) of *Oliver Twist*, Fagin’s movements through the streets of London – after he has been told that the robbery at Chertsey has failed – are recounted:

The old man had gained the street corner before he began to recover the effect of Toby Cratchit’s intelligence. He had relaxed nothing of his unusual speed, but was still pressing onward in the same wild and disordered manner, when the sudden dashing past of a carriage, and a boisterous cry from the foot-passengers who saw his danger, drove him back upon the pavement. Looking hastily round, as if uncertain whither he had been hurrying, he paused for a few moments, and turned away in quite the opposite direction to that in which he had before proceeded. Avoiding as much as possible all the main streets, and skulking only through the by ways and alleys, he at length emerged on Snow Hill. Here he walked even faster than before; nor did he linger until he had again turned into a court, when, as if conscious that he was now in his proper element, he fell into his usual shuffling pace, and seemed to breathe more freely. (204)

Again, it is the narrator’s plain account of Fagin’s movements and of the places through which he travels which enables the reader to immerse herself imaginatively

in the scene described. The reader visualises Fagin walking through London: his 'unusual speed', as he 'press[es] onward in the same wild and disordered manner', revealing his fear of discovery which is seen also in how he 'look[s] hastily round' before 'turn[ing] away in quite an opposite direction', avoids being seen in 'all the main streets' by 'skulking only through the by ways and alleys' and, on arriving at 'Snow Hill' (a more open space), 'walk[s] even faster than before' (204). The reader 'moves' with Fagin and 'sees' what he sees: the 'street corner', the 'carriage', the 'pavement', the 'by ways and alleys' and the 'court'. The narrator describes the key features of the scene from which the reader is able to create an image in her mind of the entire location and the use of concrete nouns contributes to the illusion that this is a place that actually exists. Indeed, London *does* exist, and the narrator's (or Dickens's) use of real place names, such as 'Snow Hill', confirms this.¹⁹⁷ As Hillis Miller argues, 'Often the illusion that the text is a chronicle of real people and events, not a fictive concoction, is reinforced by the use of real place names' (*On Literature* 19) and so, in using them, the narrator creates the effect of the reality of Fagin's actions and so fulfils Dickens's ultimate aim of portraying the reality of the scenes of crime that he has witnessed.

¹⁹⁷ In his review, Richard Ford observes how Dickens 'sketches localities, particularly in London, with marvellous effect' (*The Critical Heritage* 82).

Dickens's ability to describe London in specific detail is due to his own knowledge of the city which also contributes to the effect of realism, as is seen in the following sentence which follows the extract cited above: 'Near to the spot on which Snow Hill and Holborn Hill meet, there opens, upon the right hand as you come out of the city, a narrow and dismal alley leading to Saffron Hill' (204).

As I have noted, Dickens has a moral purpose in raising his readers' awareness of scenes of crime and poverty, but what he also wanted to achieve – in not only *Oliver Twist* but in all of his writings – was to enable his readers to feel.¹⁹⁸ The reader is able to immerse herself in scenes of feeling by feeling the fear felt by Fagin, Oliver and Sikes and so experience 'a realism of affect' which, as Sally Ledger argues, Dickens 'aspir[es] to [...] rather than to a representational realism' (Ledger 12). With reference to the deaths of Jo in *Bleak House* and Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*, Ledger concludes that Dickens 'is not asking his readers to "believe in" his account of either child's death at the level of incident, but he is asking them to respond to – and to "believe in" – the emotional affects of both scenes and, thereafter, to act upon the injustices meted out to the Cratchits and Jo's of mid-nineteenth-century Britain' (12). It is by feeling emotion that Dickens's readers will be inspired to help the poor and suffering just as Scrooge is when, having immersed himself in the 'narrative' scenes of his life, he undertakes the benevolent acts related in the final stave. These 'narrative' scenes enable Scrooge to feel through sensory and emotional responses to something that exists separately to himself – the characters and events of the 'narrative' – just as Sikes feels when he senses his natural surroundings and the activity of the scene of the fire. Reading through feeling leads to self-discovery for each 'reader', as I have noted, but although both Scrooge and Sikes realise something significant about themselves when they immerse themselves in their 'narrative' scenes, it is Scrooge who is able to benefit from what he learns. While Sikes recognises that he will always know himself to be a murderer, Scrooge

¹⁹⁸ Richard Lettis argues that Dickens was 'not so much interested in improving the manners or even the morals of his readers as he was in heightening their capacity to feel human emotion' (Lettis 139).

can see the prospect of change by transforming himself into the kind man that he once was. It is through sympathising with his other selves that Scrooge rediscovers the joy felt by those who receive and give acts of kindness and is inspired, on waking from his dreams, to be benevolent towards others. As Dickens feels through assumption and by sympathising with the characters of his fiction as well as with the suffering of society, it is by imagining oneself to be someone else by feeling her feelings as one's own that is for Dickens – as it is for Scrooge and for all readers of literature and life – a deeply rewarding experience.

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