Recountings: On Dickens's Financial Memory

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"The great house is, therefore, a huge circulating library."
Charles Dickens on the Bank of England (1850)

"Without memory, there is no debt."
Margaret Atwood,* Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth *(2008)

In a 2006 *TLS* review article on the architectural history of the Bank of England, Gillian Darley thus describes the vast expansion of the Bank's operations in the early-nineteenth century: "By 1815, more than a thousand were working on the Bank site, a factory floor in which time-keeping, discipline and mechanization ordered what may have been the largest white-collar work force in the world" (13). This consummate display of order, precision, and systemization contributed to the Bank's increasing figuration as an imposing symbol of the nation and authority—an edifice responsible for the good governance of, as Darley says, with the language of exemplarity that so frequently accompanies its description, "the *largest* white-collar work force *in the world*." The Bank, and the larger system it inhabited, was evidently an increasing force to be reckoned with.

In recent years, a growing body of critical work has carried out a good deal of this reckoning process, encouraging us to consider the degree to

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which the institutionalization of the banking system informed the cultural experience—and cultural production—of nineteenth-century Britain.[1] Such thinking of course extends well beyond the bounds of both that period and those of academic enquiry. I point, for instance, to a recent marketing campaign by ING DIRECT, which compels us to think in similar terms about the bank's construction in our own age. In ING's 2012 "Old Ways" television commercial, a central feature of its new "Forward Banking" campaign, the viewer enters a looming, grey cavernous space, a bank, which is emptied of employees and customers and, it seems, of its cultural significance as well.[2] In this fascinating piece of revisionism, the bank's conventional iconography—the deposit slip; the pen with the chain attached; the limited banking hours, marked on an archaic sign; the water cooler, stale coffee, and free donuts; the velvet ropes; and, above all, the banker's green lamp—are, literally, obliterated, exploding one by one before our eyes. Endless reams of paper reminiscent of Dickens's Circumlocution Office rain down across this financial sepulchre and are replaced, as we move to the next shot and the comfortable, easy-chair bank of today, by the relaxed coffee-sipping individual, happily reviewing his financials on his smooth functioning iPad at his local "ING DIRECT Café."

In rendering such images and objects of the banking realm so viscerally obsolescent, ING taps into a critical aspect of shared cultural memory: this commercial urgently reminds us of the degree to which banking, as a physical experience, had once been bound up with individual and daily life, and perhaps, more importantly, it reminds us of just how much of it we have forgotten. And as if the bank's connection to our collective memory were not plain enough from the images on screen, the nostalgic tones of Edith Piaff are called in to overstate the case: "It's all paid for, wiped out, and forgotten," she sings in her mournfully defiant "Je Ne Regrette Rien."

What ING is doing here is attempting to revise, but not altogether alter, our conception of banking as intensely personal, tactile, and experiential. Such a construction of the bank can likewise be found, I would contend, in nineteenth-century British culture. Throughout the century, the period's fiction charts an increasing—if tentative—acceptance of the bank's role as

1 See for instance Patrick Brantlinger (1996), Catherine Gallagher, Mary Poovey, Gail Turley Houston, and Gordon Bigelow. On the Bank of England in this period in particular, see Alec Cairncross, David Kynaston, and Richard Roberts. Poovey (2003) offers a useful overview of the development of the financial *system* in the nineteenth century.

2 Available on line www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8K3MsuGpnY. 1 October 2012.

both a financial *and* interpersonal mediator, one often responsible for the authentication of individual identity and a guarantor of social legitimacy. In George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1874), for example, the narrator identifies the relocation of saved money from the "Old stocking" at home to "the savings-bank" in town as one of a range of changes coming to "Old provincial society" (88). In this new context, "Municipal town and parish" were increasingly marked by "fresh threads of connexion" and possessed of a "new consciousness of interdependence" (88). In a rather more extreme yet no less culturally resonant example of the kind of "interdependence" made possible by the banking system, Stevenson's Dr Jekyll, we might recall, opens a bank account in the name of "Hyde" in order to consolidate a separate public identity for his second self. Earlier, Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857), a novel preoccupied with financial and moral accounting, offers a more muted example of the mediatory function of the bank, as Mrs General confidently tells Mr Dorrit that, instead of directly compensating her for her position in the family, he may simply "pay [her] credit at [her] bankers" (437).

Indeed, in both his fiction and non-fiction alike, Charles Dickens proves especially attentive to the bank's increasing role in shaping individual lives.[3] His work readily invites the extension of our thinking about the cultural, financial, and symbolic significance of the bank in the Victorian period. For, as Dickens observes above, the bank—there the Bank of England—is not merely a monument to mammon but to culture, nation, and information. And, it seems highly appropriate that in the year following the bicentennial of Dickens's birth, as well as an age of financial crisis and social uprising, we once again turn to Dickens's own monument of history and historicizing, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), in order to consider the process by which banking came to assume a central position in the functioning of the economy as well as the lives of the citizenry. As we shall see, in its portrayal of Tellson's Bank and its chief representative, Jarvis Lorry, *A Tale* is suggestive of the ways in which the bank's institutionalization—as part of a healthy, vigorous economy—was envisioned as a corrective to a history of financial and political turbulence.[4] It documents

3 Timothy Alborn and others have identified the banker's intermediary position at the intersection of the financial and the domestic realms taking particular hold in the 1850s. See also Kirsten Guest.

4 The connection between economic instability and revolution is well documented. Patrick Brantlinger, for instance, notes that "both the American and French revolutions, like the later Russian one, could not have succeeded except on the highly volatile fiscal basis of paper money and huge public debts.... [In contrast] British sterling seemed like the incarnation of sanity and sobriety" (*Fictions* 140).

the banking system's often troubling connection to "the strong arm of the law" historically but also charts its growing emergence as an information exchange seen as instrumental to the preservation of social order.

Like Dickens's earlier historical novel *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *A Tale of Two Cities* links the recollection of cataclysmic political and social upheaval to the lasting effects of a long-elided traumatic personal history. It memorializes not only general riot but also the enduring consequences of violent, individual death. In the exposure of Dr Manette's memoir, which recounts the gruesome fate of Madame Defarge's sister, the narrative suggests that the horror of the past will ultimately insist on its acknowledgement. To suggest that *A Tale* centres on a history of violation is of course hardly a novel claim; the same could indeed be said of much of Dickens's fiction. Yet my emphasis in this essay on the significance of the banker's role in the novel's confrontation with history represents largely uncharted territory. While often aptly identified as a typical "representative of the emergent bourgeoisie" and "the soul of commercial honour" (Brantlinger *Fictions* 160), Jarvis Lorry plays a far more complex role in the text's examination of the construction of individual and cultural memory. Critical to *A Tale*'s confrontation with traumatic recollection—both personal and national—is the bank's creation, suppression, and narration of that history.[5] In his containment of secrets, of family and of state, the figure of the banker offers an important counterbalance to the obsessive expressiveness embodied by figures such as Madame Defarge and thus to the violent consequences of the novel's traumatic reverberations. Ever true to his name,[6] Lorry moves fluidly between two nations, often preserving those secrets that will enable his profitable resurrection of both Manette and Darnay. Ultimately, even more so than the good doctor, the banker offers the most potent source of "universal medicine" for a family and a social body deeply wounded by the transgressions of the past.

Perhaps aptly so, for Dickens's novels are, generally speaking, histories of bad financial transactions. Debt, above all, is what they compulsively memorialize, even as their characters strive, often relentlessly, toward the

5 The focus on the concealment and exposure of history here registers what Poovey identifies as the "dynamic" central both to Victorian finance and Victorian fiction: "the constitutive relationship between disclosure and secrecy" ("Writing" 19).

6 The *OED* defines "lorry" as a "long flat wagon" or a "large motor vehicle for carrying goods." In the context of mining, it also refers to "a running bridge over a pit." Here we can see the metaphorical implications of Lorry serving as a bridge across the Channel, keeping everyone from going over the brink, as it were.

mental oblivion of the past. Andrew Smith's contention in his discussion of *A Christmas Carol* that "consciousness can never free itself from the dictates of the economy" (52) is exemplified by *A Tale of Two Cities*. Indeed, in the face of revolutionary tumult the bank in *A Tale of Two Cities* is charged not only with the control and circulation of information but also with the governance of memory and consciousness. And it is precisely here, in this intersection of the financial and the psychological, that we may have the most to glean from a focus on the representation of the monetary realm in nineteenth-century literature. For this imbrication of money and memory is hardly confined to Dickens but is one that informs a range of literary texts throughout the century. Tennyson's *Maud* (1855), Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* (1886) are just a few examples of works that link vexed financial relations to the representation of individual memory and, often, its fracture.

These ongoing literary transactions are collectively suggestive of ways in which economic criticism may offer a means of expanding our understanding of conceptions of memory and history during a period when—as we know from the work of scholars such as Nicholas Dames, Jill L. Matus, Sally Shuttleworth, and Jenny Bourne Taylor, to name but a few—questions about the mind, consciousness, and memory were at the forefront of both the cultural imagination and scientific exploration. In his efforts to control the unwanted intrusion of memory, Lorry serves a critical source of historical mediation. Yet as such, the banker's own actions prove deeply governed by a contradictory pull of recollection and forgetting.[7] Identifying a "double economics—of forgetting and anamnesis" in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers,* Julian Wolfreys claims that Dickens's fiction confronts the way in which "History, the past … are no longer available to us in any unmediated form" (48). *A Tale's* preoccupation with this very tension indicates the extent of Dickens's self-conscious engagement with the challenges of the genre he inhabits. Indeed, in this regard, the bank, that great "circulating library" in Dickens's view, shows a figural connection to the Victorian novel itself, particularly in its incarnation in autobiographical and historical fiction. Through their employment of retrospection, such

7 Although a range of work on the construction of history has since been carried out (De Groot, Jones, Maxwell, Wolfreys), Hayden White's views on the "meditative function" of historical narrative yet remain relevant in this regard: "As a symbolic structure, the historical narrative does not *reproduce* the events it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about the events and charges our thought about the event with different emotional valences" (402).

narratives produce an apparently coherent, linear history. Yet the production of this history is of course one necessarily based on selective memory, on the act of forgetting. As Nicholas Dames observes in his treatise on memory, amnesia, and Victorian fiction, "the machinery of Victorian fiction operates to slowly and gradually erase the field of data, fact, and circumstance with which it starts, and to replace that field with a diluted, stable, and carefully-selected set of details" (18). Both his efforts to control the unwanted intrusion of the past and his rather disingenuous insistence that he is but a detached "speaking machine" (25), a *teller,* if you will, from *Tell*son's ultimately mark out Lorry's "business" as remarkably similar to that of the historical novelist.[8]

"Keeping the Register"[9]

In the connections that *A Tale* draws between personal and national trauma, the novel revisits many of the concerns, as I noted above, of Dickens's earlier work of historical fiction, *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). In both texts, histories of paternal violence and abandonment enclosed within the heart of the narrative continue to wound the generations that follow.[10] The narrative exchange of Hugh for Barnaby at the conclusion of *Rudge* constitutes a similar structural parallel; in *A Tale,* another abject figure, here Sydney Carton, faces execution in the place of another. And, as in *Rudge,* the ruling class and their bedfellows, the institutions of state, are shown to have bred violence into the bones of the marginalized.

Yet the varying treatment of cultural and political authority in the two works registers a shifting emphasis in Dickens's consideration of the state's financial and legislative mechanisms. *Barnaby Rudge* clearly implicates the financial and legal establishment of the late-eighteenth century in the extensive social disruption caused by the Gordon Riots, an event Linda Colley readily identifies as "the largest, deadliest, and most protracted

8 The *OED*'s definition of "teller" identifies the term as a historical convergence point for both the financial and narrative realms. The definition of "teller" as "one who relates, makes known or announces" dates back to the fourteenth century; 1480 is noted as the first instance of the use of the word in the sense of "an officer in a bank who receives or pays money over the counter."

9 *A Tale*, 179.

10 Dickens's chief rioter of *Barnaby Rudge,* the illegitimate Hugh, is less a hero than he is symbolic of a kind of cultural disfigurement; so too is the more sympathetic but intellectually blighted Barnaby. For a more extensive discussion of history, memory, and concealed traumatic violence in *Barnaby Rudge,* see Sara Malton, 19–31. Patrick Brantlinger (2001) also takes up the question of Dickens and history and *Barnaby Rudge.*

urban riots in British history" (332).[11] Led by Lord George Gordon and the Protestant Association, the Riots ostensibly erupted as an act of protest against the Catholic Relief Acts. More than simply an expression of anti-papal sentiment, however, the rioters' excessive violence, Dickens's novel suggests, is symptomatic of a state already plagued by a general disregard for human life. At the centre of the "happy social system" stands Dennis the Hangman, "the functionary of law" and distributor of that "universal Medicine applicable to men" (615)—execution. Although he himself becomes "chief among the insurgents" (614), Dennis remains confident in his impunity, knowing just "how high he stood, in his official capacity, in the favour of the Crown, and both Houses of Parliament, the Mint, the Bank of England, and the Judges of the land" (615). During this period the Bank, like the financial system generally, was seen to require Dennis's brand of protection from a host of threats to its interests, chief among them crimes against property. The resulting proliferation of property legislation in turn produced a sharp increase in imprisonment and executions for such crimes.[12] In his discussion of the destruction of Newgate and the liberation of its prisoners during the Gordon Riots, Peter Linebaugh observes that of the individuals for whom trial records are available, "the overwhelming majority were imprisoned for crimes against property.... As an economic class, they were the have-nots" (336). So Dickens's rendering of the rioters concurs: "this vast throng, [was] sprinkled doubtless here and there with honest zealots, but composed for the most part of the very scum and refuse of London, whose growth was fostered by bad criminal laws, bad prison regulations, and the worst conceivable police" (407).

Primarily comprised of the under classes, the rioters take retributive aim at bastions of legislative and financial power, such as Newgate Prison, the home of Chief Justice Lord Mansfield, the Mint, and the Bank of England. The attack on the Bank of England can especially be seen as an act of revenge against the inequities fostered by an expanding capitalism dependent upon legislation that perpetuates social inequities. In *Bloody Romanticism,* Ian Haywood identifies, quite rightly, the destruction of Newgate *and* the assault on the Bank of England as twinned acts of "decoronation" (185), which together lent the riots their especially harrowing aspect, their "insurrectionary and apocalyptic character" (185). According

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11 In a similar vein, Caroline Houlihan Flynn describes the Riots as "arguably the most traumatizing event that Londoners had experienced since the Great Fire of 1666" (459).

12 See Frank Whitson Fetter, V. A. C. Gatrell, Douglas Hay, Randall McGowen, and Sara Malton.

to Daniel Abramson, rather than a "spontaneous anomaly" (84), as many have often claimed, the attack on the Bank, which "climaxed the riots," was a carefully orchestrated effort, one driven in large part "by popular notions of the Bank as a secretive, conspiratorial organization, secluded behind its high screen walls" (84). Abramson makes a convincing argument for the way in which the assault on the Bank formed a critical part of what was envisioned as a "revolutionary coup" (84). Given its supposed possession of "popish money" (84), the Bank was in the minds of many associated with France: "By the ideological logic of the Gordon Riots the Bank of England and its architecture represented a modern, foreign, and elitist presence in the traditional body of the traditional City of London. To the disenfranchised, the Bank of England's buildings would have appeared self-enclosed, hegemonic, secretive, and cosmopolitan" (85). The targeting of the Bank of England thus constitutes an act of revenge against secrecy and the control of history by the elite. And for Dickens, the desecration of eminent public institutions during the riots not only marks out the disintegration of the social fabric but also threatens disastrous financial consequences: if such attacks were successful, the narrator speculates, "there must ensue a national bankruptcy and general ruin" (*Rudge* 557).

While *Rudge* implicates the financial and legislative establishment in the riots' origins and their fallout, in *A Tale of Two Cities,* English institutions such as Tellson's Bank represent a source of order and security in a world of ubiquitous threat, financial and otherwise, a world where, as we are warned in the opening pages "anybody on the road might be a robber or in league with robbers" (9). In such a climate of pervasive insecurity, we are to be thankful, it seems, that the banker holds the keys to the repository of secrets of both individual and state. The ultimate liberation of Darnay, aided and abetted by the English banker, signals that a new order of civility is soon taking shape, a world apart from France and its primitive revolutionary chaos. But that new order depends upon the elimination of the old—and memory, it seems, whether in the figure of Madame Defarge or Sydney "Memory" Carton, must be sacrificed in its service. While hardly on par with Dennis, Jarvis Lorry is, interestingly, at once both an instrument of resurrection *and* an executioner. At the novel's conclusion, when Carton exchanges his life for Darnay's, Lorry, taking his instructions from Sydney Carton, is the deliverer who facilitates the transaction. When the coach traveling from Paris is detained and searched we are told that "It is Jarvis Lorry who has replied to all the … questions. It is Jarvis Lorry who has alighted and stands with his hand on the coach door, replying to a group of officials" (370). This moment is just one in a series the novel

when, as Carton told Lorry earlier, "it will all depend on [him], and it could depend on no better man" (357).

There are no doubt historical reasons for the shifts in Dickens's thinking about financial institutions and individual liberty. Although set in the revolutionary era,[13] the novel's characterization of the banker responds in part to the rise of the banking profession in the mid-nineteenth century. The emergence of specialized periodicals such as *The Economist* (in 1843) and *The Banker's Magazine* (in 1844) further reinforced the centrality of banking's position within the social fabric, while instructive pieces such as James William Gilbart's "Ten Minutes of Advice about Keeping a Banker" (1839) sought to educate the public about the fundamentals of personal banking and to emphasize the establishment of a banking identity as both a social and financial imperative. As well, as Patrick Brantlinger observes, a series of bank reform acts throughout the earlier part of the nineteenth century (1826, 1833, 1844) led to the "growing security of the Bank of England [which, in turn,] helped create a new sense of economic stability" (*Fictions* 139–40) in the years that followed. As Brantlinger explains, and Dickens's own observations reveal, Dickens "ultimately exonerates or misrecognizes the public institutions charged with the production and regulation of money—above all, the Bank of England—as virtuously constructive" (Brantlinger *Fictions* 157). In *A Tale,* the bank in question is of course not the Bank of England, yet Tellson's and its representative proves a worthy guardian of "national security" all the same.

Even so, this is not to suggest that by the time we reach *A Tale* the taint of blood has been thoroughly cleansed from the banker's hands. Early on in the novel, Dickens reminds his readers of the bank's longstanding sanguinary tendencies:

> Indeed, at that time [1780], putting to Death was a recipe much in vogue with all trades and professions, and not least of all with Tellson's. Death is Nature's remedy for all things, and why not Legislation's? Accordingly, the forger was put to Death; the utterer of a bad note was put to Death; the unlawful opener of a letter was put to Death; the purloiner of forty shillings and sixpence was put to Death; … Thus Tellson's, in its day,

13 As Sally Ledger observes, *A Tale* "has a continuous timescale, constantly reflecting on its year of publication whilst narrativizing the historical past" (79). Ledger, like many, argues that the 1850s were from Dickens's perspective hardly the moment of relative equipoise that has often been claimed; his historical novels were "very much a reflection on the volatility of contemporary British culture" (77). See also Malton 47–51.

> like greater places of business, its contemporaries, had taken so many lives, that, if the heads laid low before it had been ranged on Temple Bar instead of being privately disposed of, they would probably have excluded what little light the ground floor had, in a rather significant manner. (56–57)

Thus, the *ancien régime* is hardly the only institution with a bloody past. The bank may represent a potential source of social mollification, but it too must come to terms with its own history, which reveals its embroilment with an inequitable legal system and its resulting responsibility for so many deaths.

Assigning a fatherly face to an otherwise faceless institution, the portrayal of Lorry seems to offer the requisite tale of redemption—of not merely Darnay but of the banker himself. Lorry's activities signal a culture in transition from the "gallows, pillory, whipping post, and branding iron" (85) to more productive forms of social order. For despite the dark, murky character of Tellson's, a place where "the oldest of men carried on the business gravely" (57), the narrative emphasizes Lorry's regenerative effects. Lorry's effective governance of the family—a microcosm, of course, of the nation state—testifies to both his professional acumen and moral turpitude. He perpetually intervenes in family affairs and becomes a kind of paternal substitute, or "capitalist-surrogate" (Alborn 203), functioning where Manette frequently is unable to do so. As a figure of familial control and order, he asks following Darnay's initial trial in London, "do you not think I may speak for us all?" (85). The bank has long served as an adoptive parent for Lucie, and so it is Lorry whom Stryver aptly first consults about his potential marital prospects with her. Eminently reserved and respectable, Lorry sharply contrasts with those corrupt financial figures appearing elsewhere in Dickens, such as Merdle, the reprobate financier of notably foreign origin in *Little Dorrit* (1857). He likewise represents a welcome improvement over the banker Josiah Bounderby, that repellent "self-made man" of Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) .

Lorry's tidy, businesslike accounts also offer a poignant counter to Madame Defarge's vengeful knitting, which contains her fatal "register" (179). Her moralistic accounting records not merely disinterested public facts but individualized personal histories—it manifests what Jason B. Jones aptly terms her "murderous memory" (45). Tellson's, by contrast, offers a model for the rational control of information as a means of preventing panic. Here we learn of its expanding social function in the summer of 1792:

> Tellson's was at that time, as to French intelligence, a kind of High Exchange; and this was so well known to the public, and the inquiries made there were in consequence so numerous, that Tellson's sometimes wrote the latest news out in a line or so and posted it in the Bank windows, for all who ran through Temple Bar to read.... The penitential den once set apart for interviews with the House, was now the news-Exchange. (244)

This London bank stands above all as the "great gathering-place" (244), the social centre. It produces not merely credit records or financial statements, but *narrative* accounts as it becomes the source of stories from abroad. It also authenticates identity: "every new comer from France reported himself and his tidings at Tellson's, almost as a matter of course" (244). Formerly a place of judgment and punishment with troubling connections to the law—a "penitential den"—the bank, now a literal *window* into the conflict abroad, looks outward to participate in the broader world beyond its sequestered interiors. The novel thus dramatizes, although often ambivalently, the bank's central position within the culture and its role in the careful production of a particular version of its society's history.

I say ambivalently, for, while the bearer of "news," of public information, the bank simultaneously engages in the repression of history; its activities mirror the tension between resuscitation and burial, revival and death that pervades the text.[14] In contrast to "disorganised" (244) France, the fiscal and political health of "Business-like Old England" depends in large part on the judicious treatment of information about the past. A willingness to look askance from history and maintain its secrets, "safe, and strong, and sound" (*A Tale* 17), seems likewise necessary for the effective functioning of the dominant narrative of "business-like England," for the health of the nation state as well as its individual citizenry. With reference to Dickens's early fiction, David Trotter observes that "the threat to economy appears as fever and riot" (92); Tellson's bank is in this schema diametrically opposed to riot—it is an archive of both money and information and characterized by businesslike detachment rather than fervour and emotion. Striving to counter, in the words of John Plotz, "rude public revelations of what ought to have been hidden" (40), the knowledge that the bank circulates apparently takes the form of pure fact—news—rather than rumour of the kind found brewing in the Defarge wine shop.[15]

14 Albert Hutter also addresses the novel's interest in "distinter[ring] the historical moment and mak[ing] it come alive" ("The Novelist" 25).

15 Bjorn Tysdahl observes the structural and symbolic parallels between Tellson's bank and the Defarge wine shop.

Yet this *apparent* neutrality is in many respects but a convenient illusion. It notably enables Tellson's to grant "great liberality to old [French] customers who had fallen from their high estate. Again, those nobles who had seen the coming storm in time, and anticipating plunder or confiscation, had made provident remittances to Tellson's, were always to be heard of there by their needy brethren" (244). Chief among them was Monseigneur, who made Tellson's his "head-quarters" (244). And it is no little irony that while at Tellson's "news-Exchange," Lorry holds in his hand the very letter that attests to Darnay's identity as an Evrémonde. Yet he does not nor indeed will not look deeper to see the truth it holds. The bank's memory is often highly selective; it can ensure the erasure of individual history even as it promises to protect identity. This participation in the preservation of illusion has its most emphatic manifestation at the novel's conclusion, where, as I have mentioned, Lorry assumes the power of naming as he confirms the identity of each of the passengers—Lucie, Mannette, and, most importantly, "Carton" (now Evrémonde)—in the coach headed for England.

Like the bank itself, Lorry is of course hardly disinterested, especially when it comes to family affairs; his, and Tellson's, tendency toward suppression forms a characteristic component of English identity. A self-proclaimed business "machine" (25), Lorry's claims to objectivity prove rather flimsy, given that, in his line of work, "secrecy and misinformation were sometimes considered more valuable than accuracy" (Poovey, Introduction 25). For Dickens the value of this secrecy inheres not only in its direct economic consequences but also in its broader implications for public security and order. A kind of wilful amnesia, the concealment of history can be, as it proves in Darnay's case, life-saving. The final exchange of bodies at the novel's conclusion inscribes Carton, however falsely, with the Evremonde history. Through Carton's death the line is finally forgotten, "exterminated" from history.

"Filling up Blank Forms"[16]

In *Barnaby Rudge*, Barnaby's "darkened intellect," his lack of coherent memory, leads to his participation in the riots, oblivious as he is of their political significance. Rather like Dr Mannette, Barnaby is merely an unconscious instrument of destruction. By contrast, those who relentlessly remember—the illegitimate Hugh or Madame Defarge—are the revolution's incendiaries.

16 *A Tale,* 27.

To avoid such catastrophic outcomes, memory, the novel suggests, must be more productively governed, and Lorry, the man of finance, proves just the man for the job. Shared concerns in recent work on Dickens's fiction by Jill L. Matus and John Bowen offer some explanation as to why this might be so. Their discussions of trauma in Dickens's fiction reveals a provocative conceptual overlap between the banker's professional activities, as enumerator, and, as his broader cultural function, as guardian of narratives about the past. In her study of shock, consciousness, and Victorian fiction, Matus suggests that "Dickens is particularly interested in the aftermath of crime and the way the mind, riven by guilt, dissociates itself from responsibility" (120). Concerned with the way "Victorian fiction shapes an incipient discourse of trauma" (191), Matus suggests that an "ethos of culpability" (191) rendered Victorian considerations of the effects of shock on memory and consciousness "less concerned with *victimhood* than they are with *accountability*" (187). Taking the matter of "accounts" rather more literally, John Bowen observes that *A Tale of Two Cities* centres on the tension between "counting and uncountability" (105); yet in doing so he shares with Matus an interest in the way that Dickens's works attempt to come to grips with the mind's response to the traumatic event. As Bowen points out, "on a psychic level, counting is often the sign of, and counterforce to, unbearable or traumatic affect.… It is a way of calming the madness, of seeking to contain, know, or control the unknown, frightening, or mysterious" (121). As an especially poignant illustration, he refers to the longstanding practice of enumerating the dead or wounded during times of war. We ourselves need only look back five years, to Gradgrind in *Hard Times* (1854), to see that, for Dickens, how one counts is in index to one's character: bent on precise definition and control, Gradgrind is, above all, "a man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over" (6). Far more "creative" in his accounting, Lorry possesses the imaginative capacity necessary for literal and figurative *authorship*, responsible as he is for deaths, burials, marriages, disinterments, and so on. The degree of control assigned to Lorry suggests that the entire narrative is an attempt to "calm the madness," to come to terms with a traumatic history that, on some level, cannot finally be contained or accounted for. Perhaps, as the final stages of the novel suggest, it can merely be outrun.

The financial realm in *A Tale* is perpetually bound up with life, death, and its remembrance. From the outset, the bank is shown to have a particular hold on the mind, having invaded, for instance, every aspect of Lorry's consciousness. Deep in reverie while riding in the coach to Dover, he dreams that he is in the bank, which was possessed of "strong-rooms

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underground … with such of their valuable stores and secrets as were known to the passenger" (17). In his dream, the omniscient Lorry "went in among them with the great keys and the feebly-burning candle and found them safe, and strong, and sound, and still, just as he had last seen them" (17). It is worth noting here that the image of the archive or "store" had by this period become, as Matus points out, a common metaphor for memory: "The 'normal state' of memory [in this context] is a happy relationship of storage and retrieval, an archive under good management" (90). Like an archivist, Lorry exercises discrete control over the historical information to which he has access and carefully determines that which he will leave "submerged" (15) and that which will he will see "recalled to life" (17). This control sharply contrasts with those traumatized individuals such as Manette or Madame Defarge, whom memory all but possesses, threatening, by repeated "intrusions" to overtake their entire consciousness.

In certain respects, Lorry's connection to the resuscitation and circulation of history places him in a position that appears troublingly similar to that of Madame Defarge. Yet the manner in which each confronts the trauma of history varies remarkably. Her fixation on the rape and death of her sister, what Bowen rightly designates as "the founding trauma of the book" (122), proves the source of the destruction that follows. She is driven by an annihilative impulse, one embodied by her compulsive knitting; both are ceaseless, offering no reprieve. Such repetitive actions, Bowen suggests, offer a compulsive response to insistent trauma (121), not unlike Manette's shoemaking. In the view of Madame Defarge and the revolutionaries, there exists traumatic violence that is beyond redemption, a debt that cannot be repaid. Unable to be brought to any just account, its perpetrators can only be wiped out, eliminated entirely. A course of "extermination" (*A Tale* 353) constitutes the only adequate means of restitution.

Importantly, their divergent responses to matters of the past—Lorry's controlled and judicious, Madame Defarge's compulsive and vicious—mark out a tension that characterizes the treatment of memory and consciousness in much of Dickens's fiction. Rosemarie Bodenheimer's eloquent discussion of the way that memory informs Dickens's life and works is especially useful here. Bodenheimer identifies a "complex fracture between Dickens's valorized ideas of memory and the unwilled, negatively inflected recollections" (57) that pervade his novels. Counteracting the "resentful remembering" that possesses Madame Defarge, Lorry stands as a figure of "strategic forgetting" (Bodenheimer 57), a counter to trauma and its hysterical recollection. Always "discreet" (*A Tale* 148), Lorry conceals Manette's relapse upon Lucie's marriage to Darnay, and it is Lorry himself

who destroys Manette's shoemaking tools and bench in order to obliterate the memories that have possessed the doctor once more.[17] Taking his final instructions from Sydney Carton toward the novel's close, the acquiescent Lorry asks few questions about the vague, secret "arrangements" (358) that will take the family from France following the final exchange of Carton for Darnay—an exchange of bodies instead of bank notes.

Thus instrumental in both Darnay's liberation and Carton's execution, Lorry assumes the authority, however passively, to dole out the sentence of death. He contravenes the law's judgment at the climax of the novel, intervening in the operation of justice as he has frequently done throughout *A Tale.* Many of the revelations about the crimes of the past occur, as we know, within the bounds of the court.[18] The law is ostensibly charged with the production of a coherent narrative of prior events, but the trials become occasions for the miscarriage of justice; the repeated necessity of Lorry's intervention marks out their unreliability when it comes to the articulation of cultural memory (Manette's text—his memoir—offers the one counter to all of the confusing and confused oral testimony and unreliable witnesses). In this context, the banker, despite his age, represents critical, modern values of discretion, honour, and efficacy rather than those corrupt interests that the law has long been seen to serve. Its authority receding, the law thus proves merely trauma-inducing, revictimizing those who have suffered by forcing a confrontation with the original violation.[19] Lorry strives to counter this enforced re-enactment, often occluding the truth of the past, covering over old wounds as best he can. His final and most significant act of rewriting of the past occurs at the moment of his acceptance of Carton's final instructions; silent about the truth of his plans, which will, in effect, rewrite the legal and historical record, the barrister places it all in the hands of the capable banker who "will save them all" (357).

Lorry's public face of neutrality thus conceals his vested interests: his control of individual consciousness and of public, often legal, narrative.

17 See also Mark M. Hennelly Jr, whose argument offers a slightly different emphasis: "the physician also heals himself by unearthing the memory of his buried past and admitting that his presently ordered life is a shame and a sham" (230).

18 Examining the novel's portrayal of "arbitrary justice," Sally Ledger suggests that the novel's trial scenes illustrate Dickens's "mid-century reformist vision of the legal process" (79).

19 Writing of the relationship between Dickens's formulation of shock in his fiction and later conceptions of trauma, Matus reminds us that the "hallmark of trauma, Freud decided, was the inability to possess memory, make the event the subject of narrative" (88).

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His usurpation of the law's ability to produce a coherent history of events suggests that this banker is not merely a man who enumerates but one who names and thus narrativizes: if nothing else, he is an *author.* Often on "his way to dig some one out of the grave" (17), Lorry has the capacity to disinter history itself. His employment of a kind of selective memory, even though he holds all the "keys" to the debts of the past, as well as his often manipulative disclosure and employment of "facts," collectively resemble the activities of the author of historical fiction. He thus in this respect mirrors to a great degree an "amnesiac self," to draw again on Nicholas Dames's terms. In detailing Lorry's operations, Dickens seems to expose the very machinery of what Dames identifies as "nostalgic recollection," which, the latter suggests, "aims always at a winnowing of fact into a named, stable, and communal meeting" (207). Rather like an author of realism, Lorry is entirely manipulative with the facts yet thoroughly truthful, and we as readers are encouraged to admire him for his mediation skills. If we are to go forward, the novel suggests, we must necessarily blur the vision with which we look backward—even if, as the final escape from France suggests, we are, rather like Lot's wife, perpetually compelled to look back over our shoulder: "Look out, look out, and see if we are pursued!" (*A Tale* 372).

The bank's role in ensuring our secure delivery from the binds of history—and thus in healthy social regeneration—is confirmed by Lorry's final act of benevolence: upon his death, Lucie and Darnay inherit his estate. Thus, *A Tale*'s portrait of the banker can perhaps be seen as at once forward looking and yet constitute a kind of nostalgia for who or what the banker used to represent, before the advent of entirely faceless exchange and the transition, as Eliot would have it, from the domestic "stocking" to the public "savings-bank." For here the banker is yet also the *pater familias*. Financial relations do not so much erase identity but, rather, construct it out of personal, human interest. This new inheritance represents the potential riches of capitalism, free of the trappings of history and liberating Darnay from the bloody history of his origins, which had become, like the state in general, marked by extreme moral and financial decay, "a crumbling tower of waste, mismanagement, extortion, debt, mortgage, oppression, hunger, nakedness, and suffering" (130). Having abandoned his past, Darnay duly prepared for his inheritance by first adopting a middle work ethic of "perseverance and untiring industry" (135) as a teacher of French language and literature. This seems an apt transition for the heir to a man who can be seen in many ways to serve as not only as guardian of family and state but an author of the history of both. A figure of "mercantile nobility" (Hutter, "Nation and Generation" 453), Lorry is the ideal new

father for Darnay and Lucie: English, a bachelor without a past, "trusted, respected, and looked up to," "a man of business" all of his life (322).

In *A Tale* the bank and its honourable representative come to signify a force of liberation that can free individuals from the oppressive weight of their past. As a storehouse of history, financial and otherwise, the bank is increasingly constructed as a vital source of social organization and mollification. While the resulting order often comes at an extremely high price, not the least of which is, in the case of *A Tale,* the life of Sydney Carton, it seems that the bank can breed stability, perhaps if, like Jarvis Lorry, it is willing to acknowledge personal as well as public forms of value. In this context, the banker seems increasingly possessed of the ability to determine narratives of history, even to create new ones, to absolve old debts and bestow new riches. This is, we might say, a portrait of the artist if ever there were.

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