

Face Value in *A Tale of Two Cities*

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This essay ponders how proper names and faces interact to construct social identities in *A Tale of Two Cities*. The novel treats a mass loss of identity before, during, and after the French Revolution of 1789, with social identities rupturing and realigning along family, class, gender, generational, and national lines. It expresses such ruptures and realignments largely through proper names and faces: proper names pronounced, renounced, denounced, hidden, discovered, recorded, altered, and blotted out; faces presented, represented, (mis)recognised, recorded, altered, masked, frozen, distorted, changed, and severed from bodies.

At the beginning of *A Tale*, Doctor Manette's lost social identity is expressed chiefly in terms of a detached proper name and an illegible, unrecognisable face. He is identified by a process akin to picture identification, in which a represented face is matched to an embodied face in order to establish a proper name and social identity. Mr Lorry travels to Paris 'to identify him if I can.' Following 18 years in the Bastille, Manette 'has been found under another name; his own, long forgotten or long concealed' (I iv 28). He identifies himself geographically and institutionally as 'One Hundred and Five, North Tower' (I vi, 44), his cell in the Bastille. In taking on the name of his location, his loss of social identity extends to a subjective inability to delineate himself from his surroundings. His loss of nominal identity is manifested in 'the scared blank wonder of his face', through which 'No human intelligence could have read the mysteries of his mind' (I vi 51). The blank face of his subjectively lost identity renders him socially unrecognisable. It is only when a glimmer of memory strikes Manette that Lorry recognises him: 'At first I thought it quite hopeless, but I have unquestionably seen, for a single moment, the face that I once knew so well' (I vi 45-6). Only when Lorry recognises the face does he make a positive identification, matching Manette's embodied face to its representation in his memory. The re-called name, and by extension the recalled social life, here depend on the recalled face.

Lorry's process of personal identification is a prototype of picture identification. As we will see in more detail below, in increasingly populous areas, in times of immense social mobility, personal acquaintance and personal memory

became insufficient to establish social identity. Thus, pictorial and ekphrastic images came to serve as cultural and bureaucratic collective ‘memories’.

The essay belongs to a larger study investigating how British prose fiction informs and is informed by the rise of picture identification from the late eighteenth century.² Picture-IDs aim to establish unique social identities, as passport historian Martin Lloyd avers: ‘The passport must be unique, signifying a unique individual [and]...the examiner...must...determine if the passport is uniquely identical with the individual.’⁴ Dominant theories of identity in the humanities today, however, deny the possibility of the unique, unambiguous identity that picture-IDs aim to establish. Developed largely to combat claims that identity is objective, fixed, essentialist, and natural and to oppose uses of such claims to construct and defend social hierarchies and uneven distributions of political power and economic resources, these theories view individualist notions of identity as patriarchal, capitalist, bourgeois, and right wing. They have, therefore, sought to dismiss and dismantle the representational capacities of proper names and physiognomical faces. Individualism, proper nouns, and faces have given way to Foucauldian preoccupations with societies, common noun categorisations, and bodies.⁵ Jacques Derrida and others have deconstructed

² While picture-IDs can contain other written information besides names and other biometric indices besides faces, these are variable and secondary. Only proper names and faces are universal and primary. Recent political discussions of identity cards in England maintain that, while fingerprint and iris recognition technologies are more accurate than even digital facial recognition technologies, not everyone has fingerprints or irises: only the face is universal. Houses of Commons Home Affairs Committee, *Identity Cards: Fourth Report of Session 2003-4*, vol. 1 (London Stationery Office, 30 July 2004), p. 45.

⁴ Martin Lloyd, *The Passport: The History of Man’s most Travelled Document* (Stroud, Glos.: Sutton Publishing, 2003), p. 130.

⁵ See, for example, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1965) and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

proper nouns to improper and common nouns.⁶ As proper nouns have collapsed into common and improper nouns, so, too, faces have been severed from discursive, psychoanalytic, and performative bodies alike.⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have abstracted individuating, physiognomical faces into machines of ‘faciality’;⁸ psychoanalysts have wiped them into blank sites of projection.⁹ In consequence, studies within the humanities generated by these theories are preoccupied with bodies rather than faces, with common rather than proper nouns, with identity at the level of class, gender, sexuality, race, and nationality rather than with individual identity. By contrast, in picture identification, the face is to the body as the proper noun is to the common noun: it denotes a particular, as opposed to generic, identity.¹⁰

Attention to the proper nouns and faces of picture identification, however, need not mark a return to the concepts of identity against which recent and current theories militate. Picture identification by no means purports to identify essentially, absolutely, finally, positively, or objectively. Agencies producing and using picture-IDs readily acknowledge that they are social constructions that can be forged, falsified, and fabricated.¹¹ That picture-IDs must be updated and renewed, together with the ongoing addition of biometric indicators and technologies, attests to institutional and cultural awareness that identities are changing and elusive. Neither

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) and Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood, John P. Leavey, Jr., and Ian McLeod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁷ Judith Butler’s work on performative bodies is the best-known. See her *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988), p. 187, p. 194, and *passim*.

⁹ See, for example, H. G. Wallbott’s discussion of Lev Kuleshov’s 1919 experiments with facial expression in film montage. ‘Influences of facial expression and context information on emotion attributions’, *British Journal of Social Psychology* 27 (1988): 357-69.

¹⁰ This concept persists today in the widespread consensus that blurring the face alone in film or video obscures social identity.

¹¹ See, for example, the House of Commons report cited in note 1.

does the general public naively or devoutly declare faith in the veracity of picture identification, as popular jokes clustering around the clause, ‘If you actually look like your passport photo’, attest.¹² Picture-IDs further acknowledge the fragmented nature of social identity. They seek to establish unique, unambiguous identity through pieces and fragments: through represented symbols and images interacting with presented body parts and performed signatures. These have no centre, no transcendental signified, but refer only to each other. The modest aims and claims of picture-IDs, then, consist of matching and mapping pieces and patches to establish social identity temporarily for specific purposes, such as financial transactions, travel, and access to privileges, activities, memberships, and spaces. Picture-IDs are never once and for all. They are constantly remade, re-inscribed with new elements, and must be continually re-presented.

Neither need a study of picture identification mandate a return to a definition of individual identity in the terms of bourgeois individualism. Proper names and faces not only individuate, they also attach family, regional, religious, and national names and facial resemblances to related others. The proper names and faces of picture identification, then, are not simply reactionary entities requiring suppression, denial, dismissal, or dilution to common nouns and bodies. Rather, they warrant serious investigation.

Contemporary academic rejections of individual identity do not lie at a great distance from the attitudes and actions of French revolutionaries. Revolutionaries worked not only to overturn hierarchical common noun class categorisations and to redistribute economic resources to bodies. They also strove to destroy privileged, individuated identities represented by named faces, that is, by pairings of upper-class proper names and faces on coins, paper money, portraits, busts, and other sculptures. Not only did revolutionaries criminalise common nouns describing the French ruling classes, like ‘aristocrat’ and ‘émigré’, rendering them synonymous with criminal categories like ‘traitor’ and ‘thief’, they also blotted out aristocratic proper names. As

¹² These include: ‘you aren’t well enough to travel’; ‘it’s time to take a holiday’; ‘it’s time to go home’; and, ‘there’s something seriously wrong with you’.

the guillotine severed individuating faces from generic bodies, decapitated heads joined blotted-out names to eradicate privileged, individuated social identities.¹³

Concomitantly, new laws extended individuating intersemiotic identities to the masses in the ekphrastic facial descriptions required in French passports from 1791. On June 5, 1791, the French foreign minister, Montmorin, issued this passport:

By the Authority of the King

To all officers, civil and military charged with overseeing and maintaining public order in the different departments of the Kingdom and to all others similarly responsible, greeting. We order and direct that you allow to pass freely the Baroness de Korff, going to Frankfurt with two children, a maid and a personal valet and three servants without giving her or allowing her to be given any obstruction. The present passport is valid for one month only.

Issued ‘By the Authority of the King’, this passport allowed King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette to escape from Paris disguised as the valet and maid indicated therein. They were nearly out of France when Louis leaned out of the coach window and was recognised by a retired soldier named Deurne, who sounded the alarm. Deurne had never seen the king, but identified him by the resemblance of his face to its depiction on the promissory notes of the period.¹⁴ Deurne, then, made a picture identification of the monarch, matching an embodied face to a represented face, and attached those matched faces to a proper name.

Up to this point, as historian John Torpey points out, ‘descriptions of a person’s social standing—residence, occupation, family status, and so on—were generally regarded as adequate indicators of a person’s identity for purposes of internal passport controls in France.’ But when Montmorin defended his oversight on the grounds that, ‘with the large number of passports [he] signs, it is impossible for him to verify whether the name of the persons who request them is true or false’, the

¹³ As with all revolutions, such pairings were re-inscribed to establish new hierarchies. See, for example, Sylvia Musto, ‘Portraiture, Revolutionary Identity and Subjugation: Anne-Louis Girodet’s Citizen Belley’, *Canadian Art Review* 20.1/2 (1993): 60-71.

¹⁴ Lloyd, *The Passport*, pp. 61-65.

failure of such information to establish social identity became manifest.¹⁵ The incident further highlighted the failure of common noun categorisations, like ‘valet’ and ‘maid’, to establish specific social identity and, concomitantly, the ability of common nouns to disguise individual social identities.

In England, political philosophers increasingly despaired of the ability of proper names to represent persons. In 1830, Jeremy Bentham recommended that each person be legally required to have a unique name. Realising the impossibility of enforcing such a system, he subsequently suggested tattooing names on bodies.¹⁶ In 1843, John Stuart Mill worried extensively in his *System of Logic* about the semantic emptiness of proper names.¹⁷

In France, following the King’s near escape, a law was hastily passed requiring passports to contain physical descriptions—descriptions that were primarily facial. This is an example from the period:

...aged forty eight years—height four feet eleven inches—brown hair and eyebrows—brown eyes—nose like a duck—large mouth—wide chin—round forehead—round face with a small spot on the right cheek and going a bit grey...¹⁸

In a similar vein, Madame Defarge in *A Tale* keeps a knitted register, ‘That she may be able to recognise the faces and know the persons’, ‘that she may identify them’ (III, 3, 276, 277). Her knitted description of double agent John Barsad follows the pattern of French passports—strikingly so:

...age, about forty years; height, about five feet nine; black hair; complexion dark; generally, rather handsome visage; eyes dark, face thin, long, and

¹⁵ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 17-32.

¹⁶ Jeremy Bentham, ‘Principles of Penal Law’ (1830), *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1843), vol. 1: p. 557. I am indebted to Jane Caplan for this reference (see note 36).

¹⁷ John Stuart Mill, ‘Of Names and Propositions’, *A system of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, 2 vols., 10th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1879) I.

¹⁸ Lloyd, *The Passport*, p. 66.

sallow; nose aquiline, but not straight, having a peculiar inclination towards the left cheek... (II, xvi,187)

As Madame completes the description, she pronounces: 'It is a portrait!' (II xvi, 184). Ekphrastic descriptions were the poor man's portrait, the everyman's portrait. They had been instituted in France during the 1760s to keep track of vagrants who lacked the customary verbal identifiers of residence and occupation and were not readily recognised by locals.¹⁹

But the French Revolution and Reign of Terror is only one social context for *A Tale*. Practices of mass social identification, both institutional and social, increasingly paired proper names and faces. By the time *A Tale* was published in 1859, photography was becoming the portraiture of the masses. Although photographs were used only intermittently in passports from 1854,²⁰ the *carte de visite* was widely displacing the purely verbal calling card. Documents based on the *carte de visite* were used for employee identification, as passes to events, and other social and cultural purposes from the 1850s.

A Tale goes beyond social practices of picture-identification, however, to characterise class groups and class conflict through proper names and faces. Aristocrats are reduced to their titles in the expression, 'Monseigneur as a class', and in the title (redoubled to shore up the lesser status of) 'Monsieur the Marquis', who dances failed attendance on Monseigneur (II, xxiii 236; p. 286). Stripping aristocrats of Christian and family names strips them of the markers of kinship and distils them to an identity of sheer entitlement.

Aristocratic faces join aristocratic names in decamping from expressing religious and socio-biological bonds. The stone face of the Marquis emblematises both religious and humanist evisceration: body without soul and hardened heart.²² The depiction of his face as a mask further represents him as constructed, artificial, unnatural. Monsieur the Marquis's sole point of passion lies in maintaining the

¹⁹ I am indebted to Colin Jones for this information.

²⁰ Passport photographs were not used consistently until World War I and, even then, were accompanied by ekphrastic descriptions.

²² Victorian literary conventions drew on Johann Kaspar Lavater's popular revival of classical physiognomy in the 1770s, which held that both soul and heart manifested in the face..

entitled prerogatives of the family name (pp. 145-47). It is less the family nature of this name than its entitlement that he seeks to protect, evinced by his willingness to sacrifice the sole heir, his nephew, Charles Darnay to it. Together, impersonal title and stone mask create a picture-ID of a class morally, emotionally, and physically impervious to others and to its own social danger and impending extinction.

While male aristocrats distil to their titles, male revolutionaries truncate to a shared Christian name, Jacques.²³ Christian names serve a double function: they make one a member of the Christian church and distinguish members of the same family from one another. They thus forge bonds beyond the family and create divisions within the family. The newly adopted revolutionary Christian name revokes the baptismal name, marking a rejection of membership in a religion advocating submission to divinely ordained class hierarchies. The shared Christian name refuses distinctions in the new class family, fusing identities more tightly even than the bonds of the twinned Evrémonde fraternity. The shared name makes the many one and the plural 'People' singular: 'The Republic goes before all. The People *is* supreme' (III, vii, 303. emphasis added). The many must become one in order to overthrow the one 'Monseigneur as a class'. Only numbers, physical descriptions, and professions differentiate one Jacques from another. Numbers in place of names indicate a loss of subjective, individual identity here and in Manette's 'One Hundred and Five, North Tower'. However, in the case of the Jacques, they also represent a new order, a new history, a new sequence of swelling numbers pressing horizontally against fixed hierarchies from below: 'Work, Jacques One, Jacques Two, Jacques One Thousand, Jacques Two Thousand, Jacques Five-and-Twenty Thousand; in the name of all the Angels or the Devils—which you prefer—work!' (II, xxi. 224).

In contrast to the impassive stone face of the Marquis, the faces of the revolutionaries are depicted as excessively passionate, as 'faces...more horrible and cruel than the visages of the wildest savages in their most barbarous disguise' (III, ii, 272). Intriguingly, both Marquis and mob faces are represented as masks, suggesting that both extreme impassivity and impassionedness are social constructions, contrasting an essentially 'human', 'real', 'authentic', normative, middle-class, middle-ground psyche.

²³ The Jacquerie was a synonym for peasant uprisings in France, stemming from the 1358 peasants' revolt. Peasant revolutionaries received the generic name 'Jacques Bonhomme'.

Yet the class lines are not so clearly drawn: they are disrupted by gender lines. The novel's two main female characters, Lucie Manette-Darnay-Evrémonde and Madame Defarge, stand paradoxically ruptured from the males of their common noun class designations and aligned with their enemies in name and face. Like the Jacques, Lucie of the many family names is known chiefly by her forename. Like the Jacques, she has generated a second Lucie, a namesake undifferentiated from her except by chronological sequence. Like the Jacques, Lucie has an immensely emotive face: 'a forehead with a singular capacity (remembering how young and smooth it was), of lifting and knitting itself into an expression that was not quite one of perplexity, or wonder, or alarm, or merely of a bright fixed attention, though it included all the four expressions' (I iv., 23). Revolutionary faces too are described as 'knitted': 'foreheads knitted into the likeness of the gallows-rope they mused about enduring, or inflicting' (I v 33).

In a similar vein, Madame Defarge is nominally and facially differentiated from male revolutionaries and aligned with her arch-enemy, the Marquis. She is never Madame Jacques, nor do we know her Christian name until she is called to witness in a court of law near the end of the novel. The frequent truncation of her name to 'Madame' aligns her with the titular Marquis and Monseigneur. Her 'steady face' (I v 35) stands in marked contrast to the savage faces of other revolutionaries and closer to the Marquis's stone face.

But these nominal pieces and facial images are simply a backdrop for the novel's central concern with the social identities of its middle-class or would-be middle-class males. While re-calling Manette by his proper name recalls him to life, health, friends, and family as well, throughout the novel there is a sense that 'it is better not to name' (III, xi, 349-50). . In a political context where hierarchical patriarchy is being leveled by horizontal fraternity, the paternal name is fraught with danger. Naming too often takes the condemnatory and lethal form of denunciation, as indicated in the word play, 'he is denounced—and gravely' (III, vii, 303). For Charles Darnay, the reattachment of a detached name threatens annihilation of life, health, association, and identity. Darnay is just one step ahead of the Revolution, on a downwardly mobile quest to dissociate himself from his aristocratic French patriarchal heritage. He has renounced his father's name, Evrémonde, and substituted an anglicised version of his mother's name, D'Aulnais. He has refused his title of 'Marquis', placed his wealth in the service of the French lower classes, and gone to

work among the English middle classes (p. 185). Darnay has thus already done to his own name and inheritance what the Revolution is doing to those of his peers: ‘the nobility were trooping from France by every highway and byway, and their property was in course of confiscation and destruction, and their very names were blotting out’ (II, xxiv, 251). But Darnay finds that, in spite of his own nominal blottings and private family revolution, his family name is impossible to cast off and live. His ‘detested family name had long been anathematised by Saint Antoine, and was wrought into the fatal register’, ‘registered, as doomed to destruction...the château and all the race...Extermination’ (III, x, 344; II, xv, 178-9). The family name is relentlessly reattached, then attached to a capital sentence (p. 437).

The old family name joins new condemnatory common nouns. ‘Aristocrat’ has become synonymous with ‘criminal’ and ‘emigrant’ with ‘traitor’ (III, I, 256-8). In the barrage of old names and new nouns, Darnay experiences a loss of subjective identity: ‘I am lost here. All here is so unprecedented, so changed, so sudden and unfair, that I am absolutely lost’ (III i 262). The subjective, individuating ‘I’ is lost through re-association with the family name and redefinitions of common noun classifications. On trial for guilt by association with the family name and criminalised common nouns, not English pseudonyms, individual innocence, morality, motivation, or action are of any avail. Darnay can only attempt interpretive escapes:

Was he not an emigrant then? What did he call himself?

Not an emigrant, he hoped, within the sense and spirit of the law. (III vi 293)

But these too are insufficient to save him. At his first French trial, he only manages to throw off guilt by nominal association through affiliation with another family name: that of Manette, into whose family he has married. Subsequently, however, the lethal patriarchal name proves more powerful than the salutary effects of Manette’s. Manette and his daughter, far from saving Charles by their name, are sucked into the guilt by association of the Evrémonde family name and its capital sentence.

The family name condemns people through guilt by association. So too does the family face. Dickens’s fascination with family resemblance has been widely discussed. In *A Tale*, Lucie uncannily resembles both father (‘The resemblance between him and Lucie was very strong at such times’ [II, vi, 104]), and mother (‘It is the same. How can it be!’—[I, vi, 47]). Her daughter resembles her facially and nominally. Jerry Cruncher’s son shares his name and is described as his father’s

‘express image’ (II, I, 57). The Evrémonde twins are all but identical (pp. 397-98). Darnay must resemble twin father and uncle, for Manette regards him with ‘an intent look, deepening into a frown of dislike and distrust, not even unmixed with fear’ before he learns Darnay’s family name (II, iv 85).

In a context of picture identification, the shared family face functions as corroborating evidence for the family name and reinforces guilt by nominal association. Conjoined in the ‘fatal register’ of Madame Defarge, family face and name forge a lethal form of picture identification (p. 411). Since the family resemblance that proves salutary in other Dickens novels proves fatal in *A Tale*.

Therefore, the novel investigates how far other kinds of shared faces can rescue from guilt by association. Lucie’s knitted forehead wars with Madame’s knitted register and the knitted faces of revolutionary revenge to vindicate Charles Evrémonde, called Darnay. At Darnay’s English trial for treason, Lucie’s emotive face imparts middle-class sympathy to a mostly lower-class, unsympathetic crowd: ‘Her forehead had been strikingly expressive of an engrossing terror and compassion’; ‘This had been so very noticeable, so very powerfully and naturally shown, that starers who had no pity for him were touched by her’ (II, ii, 67). They are more than touched by her; they adopt her facial expression:

Any strongly marked expression of face on the part of a chief actor in a scene of great interest to whom many eyes are directed, will be unconsciously imitated by the spectators. [Lucie’s] forehead was painfully anxious and intent...Among the lookers-on there was the same expression in all quarters of the court; insomuch, that a great majority of the foreheads there, might have been mirrors reflecting the witness. (II, iii, 75)

The facial mirroring here forges resemblances and connections other than those made by familial or class bonds. It even bonds together opposed categories, like French and English, and higher and lower classes.

But bonds forged by affective facial resemblances are subject to rapid, bipolar fluctuations in the novel. At Darnay’s first trial in France, spectators shift rapidly from one facially evinced emotion to its opposite: ‘So capriciously were the people moved, that tears immediately rolled down several ferocious countenances which had been glaring at the prisoner a moment before, as if with impatience to pluck him out into the streets and kill him’ (III, vi, 294). Elsewhere,

The mad joy over the prisoners who were saved, had astounded [Manette] scarcely less than the mad ferocity against those who were cut to pieces... With an inconsistency as monstrous as anything in this awful nightmare, they had helped the healer...then caught up their weapons and plunged anew into a butchery so dreadful, that the Doctor had covered his eyes with his hands...[.] (III, iv 281)

The sympathetic urge to ameliorate suffering here alternates with a violent urge to inflict suffering. One leads to, feeds on, and requires the other.

Even Lucie's sympathy is predicated on enmity. The shared face of sympathy proves not only ineffectual to save Darnay, but also itself culpable and subject to punishment. When Darnay is sentenced to death, Madame Defarge imagines Lucie 'in a state of mind to impeach the *justice* of the Republic. She will be full of *sympathy* with its *enemies*' (III, xiv, 375 emphases added). Sympathy is not only the enemy of violence, but also of justice. Lucie's middle-class sympathy is the enemy of social justice because it asks the lower classes to yield their claims for social equality and legal recourse and to let wrongs committed against them by ruling-class males pass unpunished, unaccounted for, unrecompensed.

Furthermore, middle-class female sympathy is violent in being self-sacrificing. Lucie's face works to school the lower classes in sacrificing their interests to ruling-class male interests. To sympathise with Lucie is to join her in self-abandonment to the interests of middle-class men. If middle-class female sympathy does not prove fatal in being a crime against the French Republic, then it works its own suicidal course. Carton's identification with Lucie's sympathy leads to his own self-abandoning suicide, although I shall qualify and complicate this reading below.

It is not simply its redoubled internal and external destruction that thwarts the ability of the shared emotive face to save. More resolute and fixed than any face-borne emotion is the steady face of Madame, presiding over condemnatory picture identification: her knitted register of faces and names set against Lucie's knitted face. Defarge remarks: 'it is very strange—now, at least, is it not very strange...that, after all our *sympathy* for Monsieur her father and herself, her husband's name should be proscribed under your hand at this moment' (II, xvi, 192-3, emphasis added). Like the picture-IDs of Madame's register, revolutionary faces are symbolic faces: 'upon them, and upon the grown faces, and ploughed into every furrow of age and coming up afresh, was the sign, Hunger' (I, v, 32). Symbolic power proves stronger than

affective power in the novel because the revolutionaries add to symbolic faces rhetoric, logic, and law: arguments of cause and effect, hypotheses supported by evidence, rhetorical parallelism and legal balance sheets that demand an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, innocent lives for innocent lives, a family for a family, a class for a class. These mirrorings prove far more compelling, powerful, and durable than fluctuating affective facial mirrorings. In their lethal operations, they fix faces forever (p. 154).

If the shared family face and the symbolic face condemn, and if the shared affective face fails to save and even destroys people, another kind of shared face vindicates and saves them. While Lucie's facially expressed sympathy *motivates* Carton to die for Darnay, it does not *empower* him to save Darnay. At both Darnay's English trial and in France, Carton saves Darnay by the shared face of physiognomical resemblance: 'they were sufficiently like each other to surprise, not only the witness, but everybody present, when they were thus brought into comparison' (II, iii, 77). Physiognomical resemblance to Carton twice saves Darnay from execution: once in England and once in France. In the first instance it does so by confusing their identities; in the second by an act of reciprocal identity theft.

This kind of shared face saves by being a physiognomical resemblance that is not the result of a family relationship. . In being physiognomical, it manifests none of the instabilities of affective facial mirroring. In being unconnected to family relationships, it brings with it none of the guilt of family, class, or national association, for Carton and Darnay hail from different families, classes, and nations. It further counters nineteenth-century faith that physiognomy expresses moral character, for the men manifest markedly divergent moralities. The shared face, appearing outside the family, refuses to corroborate the guilt attached to the family name. More significantly, the unrelated shared physiognomical face subverts faith in picture identification to establish unique, unambiguous social identity, for the shared face attaches itself to two different names. It thus unravels eyewitness identifications in the English court and unpicks the stitches of Madame's knitted identifications in France.

No one to my knowledge has observed that their shared face rescues not only Darnay but also Carton from legal, moral, female, and lower-class condemnation, allowing the French aristocrat to escape public guilt by family, class, and national association and the dissolute English middle-class professional to emerge cleansed of

his private moral guilt as an international, intergenerational hero.²⁴ The process by which Carton emerges innocent of his personal, moral, romantic, and professional guilt and Darnay innocent of his family, gender, national, and class guilt depends on a mutual identity theft. Double identities rejected as duplicitous and criminal elsewhere in Dickens's fiction here effect a miraculous exculpation of both individual guilt and guilt by association.

Moreover, the process operates under the rhetorical figure of simile rather than those of metaphor or metonymy, tropes which are more commonly invoked in humanities theory and criticism. Simile maintains difference and co-existence against metaphoric merger and metonymic displacement. Where metaphoric condensation would fuse the sins and crimes of the two men, and where metonymic displacement would require one man to be held accountable for them all, simile allows each man to exchange his guilt for the other man's innocence and his innocence for the other man's guilt, and both to emerge scot free.

Let us contextualise these procedures and consider them more closely. Both rhetorical and theoretical studies tend to overlook and denigrate simile in favor of metaphor. Critical discussions of metaphor and metonymy greatly outnumber discussions of simile.²⁵ Moreover, many of the articles that discuss simile and metaphor together argue for simile's inferiority to metaphor. In studies of literary composition and of identity, metaphor is seen as more daring than simile because it claims identity, while simile, with its 'like' and 'as' conjunctions, claims only similarity. Christian Metz's claim that metaphor is 'more striking than its rival [simile]' in that it 'actively supplant[s]...one word by another', a procedure that 'was only potential in simile', is typical, as is John M. Kennedy's article, 'What Makes a Metaphor Stronger than a Simile?'²⁷

²⁴ This essay discusses guilt, sins, and crimes as they are constructed in the novel and levies no independent moral judgment on these issues.

²⁵ As of this writing,²⁵ the *MLA Bibliography* turns up 9097 hits in a keyword search for metaphor and only 421 for simile. The number drops to 355 when one searches for simile apart from metaphor and to 333 when articles in a journal entitled *Simile* not addressing simile are omitted. This yields a ratio of greater than 27 to 1.

²⁷ Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton

Neither is simile granted the tremendous semiotic, psychoanalytic, cognitive, and cultural theorising power accorded metaphor and metonymy. Roman Jakobson's association of metaphor with paradigmatic signification, lyrical poetry, Romanticism, and Freudian dream symbols, and metonymy with syntagmatic signification, epic poetry, realistic novels, and Freudian dream projections inspired many to carry these figures from classical rhetoric and literary studies into theories of mind, language, history, and culture.²⁸ Jacques Lacan's argument that the unconscious is structured like a language, for example, is rooted in psychoanalytic appropriations of metaphor and metonymy.²⁹ Other theories of mind in philosophy and cognitive linguistics also accord metaphor and metonymy a prime place.³⁰ One scholar even suggests that metonymy is the symbolism of the soul.³¹ Semiotic theorists similarly maintain that metonymy and metaphor go beyond ornamentation to epitomise signification, cognitive, and interpretive processes.³² Hayden White makes metaphor and metonymy central operations of historical discourse.³³ Cultural scholars accord theorising power to metaphor and metonymy.³⁴ While some theorists, like Paul de

(Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982), p. 176. John M. Kennedy, 'What Makes a Metaphor Stronger than a Simile?' *Metaphor and Symbol* 14.1 (1999): pp. 63-69.

²⁸ Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966-81).

²⁹ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock P, 1977).

³⁰ Verena Haser, *Metaphor, Metonymy, and Experientialist Philosophy: Challenging Cognitive Semantics* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005); Antonio Barcelona, ed., *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000).

³¹ Susan Nalbantian, *The Symbol of the Soul from Holderlin to Yeats: A Study in Metonymy* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

³² Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979).

³³ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973).

³⁴ Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

Man and Hayden White, pursue the heuristic uses of a range of rhetorical figures, simile is never among them.

Metaphoric merger and metonymic displacement are certainly in evidence in *A Tale*, but they tend to govern the identification of women and the lower classes. If Lucie Manette epitomises metaphoric identification, Madame Defarge pursues a metonymic identity. Lucie's 'magic secret' lies in her ability to merge identities: in 'being everything to all of us, as if there were only one of us' (II xxi, 221). But Lucie loses her own identity in the identities of others, a loss of individualism that middle-class male heroes ultimately eschew, in spite of temporary and projective mergers through Lucie. Madame, by contrast, is preoccupied with metonymic identification, that is to say, identity by association. She associates names with names and names with faces to forge identities and sentences in her knitted register. The attributes and actions of the Marquis St Evrémonde stand, synecdochally, for his entire family and class, so that his whole family and entire class must be punished for them. More than this, Madame pursues a revolutionary identity of displacement.

The novel, however, rejects both metaphoric merger and metonymic association for its middle-class and would-be middle-class males. Jane Caplan reminds us that 'The term *identity*... incorporates the tension between "identity" as *self-same*, in an individualising, subjective sense, and "identity" as *sameness with another*, in a classifying, objective sense'.³⁶ Simile, a figure of sameness that didactically retains differentiation, maintains individuation for middle-class men against metonymic displacement by, or metaphoric merger with, associated others and eschewed common noun categorisations, such as 'wastrel', 'drunkard', 'émigré', 'traitor', 'prisoner'—even 'citizen'. It further navigates the competing claims of family, class, gender, sexual, racial, national, age, and other group affiliations on higher-class males in the formation of their social identities by giving priority to bonds with other higher-class men.

³⁶ Jane Caplan, "'This or That Particular Person": Protocols of Identification in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, eds. Jane Caplan and John Torpey (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), p. 51, original emphasis. Caplan cites and builds on arguments by Beatrice Fraenkel, *La signature: genèse d'un signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 197.

The 'like' simile governs the identities of socially dominant males in the novel. Darnay, an aristocrat, resembles Manette, a middle-class male, in his efforts to live as a middle-class male in England: '*Like you*, a voluntary exile from France; *like you*, driven from it by its distractions, oppressions, and miseries; *like you*, striving to live away from it by my own exertions, and trusting in a happier future' (II, x139).

Lorry's circumnavigations around middle-class male identity are also expressed through simile. Breaking the news to Lucie that her father is alive, he unfolds his identity through simile:

Like Monsieur Manette, your father, the gentleman was of Beauvais. *Like* Monsieur Manette, your father, the gentleman was of repute in Paris....His affairs, *like* the affairs of many other French gentlemen and French families, were entirely in Tellson's hands. (I iv 25 emphases added)

When Lucie seeks to substitute identity for simile, ('But this *is* my father's story'[I iv 25, original emphasis]), Lorry maintains the differentiations of simile: 'this *is* the story of your regretted father. Now comes the *difference*' (I iv 26, emphasis added). Simile here is not simply an indirect approach to a shocking revelation. It defines Manette chiefly through similar males from whom he is subsequently individuated and differentiated. Later, when Manette suffers a relapse of identity loss, Lorry restores his missing pieces of memory through similaic identification.

Simile extends from rhetoric to visual representations. The faces of Carton and Darnay are like each other rather than identical: even the seamstress at the end of the novel can see the seams that the conjunctions of simile resolutely maintain. Their similar faces forge confused rather than metaphorically fused or metonymically associated identities. Facial simile maintains a double identity that allows Carton and Darnay to be confused and distinguished as it serves their interests.

In Victorian prose fiction and theatrical melodrama, double identity is invariably adopted to commit crimes with impunity. Barsad-Pross and English Cly-French Cly take on double identities to commit fraud, perjury, theft, espionage, and treason with impunity. Double agent John Barsad is ultimately discovered and condemned because he has only one face for two names. By contrast, those double agents of each other, Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay, possess two names and two faces that allow them to dissociate identities as well as to exchange them.

Nevertheless, in the double agency of double agent John Barsad-Solomon Pross, *A Tale* finds its template for exonerating Darnay from his guilt by association

and Carton from his personal guilt. Solomon Pross can plead innocent of the crimes committed by John Barsad, just as John Barsad can plead innocent of the crimes committed by Solomon Pross. In the same way, Darnay is acquitted at his English trial, not because he is proven innocent, but because his identity is perceived to be interchangeable with Carton's. Legal punishment depends on the unambiguous, unique, positive identification of a criminal. Since neither man can be positively identified uniquely and unambiguously by attaching one face to one name, no man can be identified as having committed the crimes. The charges therefore go unanswered. No guilty parties remain. No one is punished.

Simile effects this mutual vindication. After their resemblance has astonished everyone at Darnay's English trial, the two men are represented as 'so like each other in feature, so unlike each other in manner—standing side by side, both reflected in the glass above them' (II iii 81). The men stand hinged by similitic conjunctions of rhetoric and mirror: 'side by side', 'like' and 'unlike', the mirror, a visual echo of the verbal rhetoric, yielding an intersemiotic identification. Like similes, mirror images resist identity and one-way displacements, for mirror reflections are never exact resemblances because they reverse left and right fields. Added to this scopic mirroring, Dickens had devised a nominal left-and-right-field, verbal-mirrored reversal when he initially named his characters Charles Darnay and Dick Carton.

The reversal of left and right fields extends to the novel's core concerns with the guilt and innocence of these men. The description of their reflection in the criminalising glass that has reflected so many guilty parties before them and in which Darnay was earlier ashamed to see himself reflected is followed swiftly by the verdict, 'ACQUITTED' (II iii 82, original emphasis). This moment epitomises the larger game of mirrors in which guilt and innocence are reversed until only exculpation is possible. Carton is innocent of the nominal and affiliative charges of *émigré*, aristocrat, and Evrémonde, under which he dies; Darnay is guilty of them. As Carton dies at the guillotine to save Darnay from his guilt by association, Darnay lies in a carriage under the influence of drugs and Carton's name, falsely accused of the manly incapacity and intoxication that are Carton's characteristic sins. As each is falsely accused of, and subjected to recriminations for, the other's sins, culpability and accountability vanish: crimes and punishments are divided up so that neither is punished for his own. Both are refigured as falsely accused innocents, as scapegoats for the other's sins. The scapegoat, Mark M. Hennelly tells us, is 'a double and a

double, an ambiguous mixture of sameness and difference as it represents *both sin and salvation*.³⁷ *A Tale of Two Cities*, like the mirror in the English court, redoubles Hennelly's 'a double *and* a double' when each man serves as scapegoat for the other. Neither is an innocent atoning for a guilty other: rather, each is guilty of his own sins, but eludes his own guilt by taking on and passing as innocent of the other's sins.

Such are the mirrored operations of simile, the mutual exchanges of justice and injustice, guilt and innocence, that each figures as both an unjustly punished innocent and a guilty party that goes unjustly unpunished. Where metonymic displacement would require one to be punished in place of the other and metaphoric merger would result in the unjust punishment, or the unjust exculpation, of both, simile succeeds in saving by a double reflection, a double resemblance, a double exchange. The illusion of simile is that each sin has been accounted for, that atonement and expiation have occurred, but it's all been done with mirrors. Similaic identity theft changes personal vice into public virtue and public vice into personal virtue, just as Barsad's betrayal of England figured as patriotism in France, and his betrayal of France figured as heroism in England.

Carton's final prophetic vision extends the mutual identity theft to posterity, creating a joint paternity for future generations expressed intersemiotically in a rhetoric of faces and names. Carton envisions a future in which Lucie holds 'a child upon her bosom, who bears my *name*' (p. 465, emphasis added). In this scenario, 'Sydney' at last lies on Lucie's bosom and receives her body and love through a nominal and facial interpenetration with Darnay that forges a joint paternity for the boy. If little Sydney Darnay resembles his father, as he must in a Dickens tale, then he will also resemble Carton. Named Sydney rather than Charles, his name and face will create a picture-ID that evokes Carton as much as, if not more than, it does Darnay. And if, like Dickens's own sons named after other men, Carton's surname serves as middle name, young Sydney Carton Darnay subsequently solidifies the joint paternity when he names his own son after himself, not his father. Once the name passes from son to grandson, it becomes a patriarchal name.

Carton's own sullied name is sanitised by his namesake, who inherits the moral character and professional industriousness of his biological father:

³⁷ Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., "'Like or No Like': Figuring the Scapegoat in *A Tale of Two Cities*", *Dickens Studies Annual* 30 (2001): p. 220, original emphasis.

I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine. I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see the blots I threw upon it, faded away. I see him, foremost of just judges and honoured men... (III xv 390)

Sydney Carton, debauched wastrel, can never rise from advocate to judge, but his namesake can and, in his vision (which the narrator assures us is prophetic), does. The men who stood charged as traitors, exploiters, plunderers, rapists, murderers, drunks, failures, and wastrels incapable of reform or rescue now co-create judges who determine the guilt and innocence of others. The novel avers in the face of all this that ‘the Creator never reverses his transformations’ (III xv 385). Any reversals of mirrored simile would require each man to carry and account for his own guilt. Carton’s death, then, is not only for Darnay, but also for himself. Darnay’s life, then, is not only for himself, but also for Carton.

In the final analysis, the similaic mode of intersemiotic identification, far from establishing unique, unambiguous identities to protect society from crimes and acts of terror, ushers in a perpetual identity theft that allows the individual sins and class crimes of ruling males not only to pass unaccounted for, but also to figure as innocence and heroism. It further establishes an inheritance of patriarchal legal power that passes from criminals to judges. At the guillotine, Carton prophesies: ‘I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself, and wearing out’ (III xv 389). No man makes expiation for his evil; evil makes expiation for itself. In this context, Carton’s final words, ‘It is a far, far better thing I do, than I have ever done’, evoke a definitive shudder.