

**ILLNESS AS METAPHOR: COMPARING THE TRANSATLANTIC
REPRESENTATIONS OF NEUROLOGICAL DEVIANCE IN THE WORKS
OF CHARLES DICKENS AND HERMAN MELVILLE**

by

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ABSTRACT

Charles Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty* (1841) and Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853) are two stories featuring titular protagonists whose neurological conditions mark them as different from the rest of society. The eponymous protagonist in *Barnaby* suffers from "idiocy," now formally termed intellectual disability disorder, whereas the eponymous protagonist in "Bartleby" displays traits of autism, a condition characterized by an impairment in language and communicability. Although Dickens and Melville both present characters who are neurologically deviant, the purpose of doing so is diametrically different in each work. Through *Barnaby*, Dickens expresses a need for paternalistic reform on both a state and communal level to assist the mentally ill, as well as the rest of society's most vulnerable groups. *Barnaby* is not an unambiguous censure of British society, however; in the story, Dickens suggests a need for the existing British practice of moral management, which was a technique of non-restraint originally used in state asylums to treat the mentally ill. Melville, on the other hand, uses "Bartleby" to criticize the American medical system's tendency to institutionalize members of society who are considered to be "deviant". In the case of "Bartleby", this deviance is communicated through autism, which manifests itself into seemingly unusual patterns of work and correspondence that confuse the story's narrator, a lawyer. As such, "Bartleby" and *Barnaby* represent ideologically opposing perspectives of medicine and its potential to heal society's outcasts. Whereas Dickens expresses interest in assisting individuals deemed to be non-normative, Melville portrays normativity itself as mercurial and conditional rather than an innate human disposition.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of Eighty, initially published in serial installments in 1841, tells the story of an eponymous protagonist with intellectual developmental disorder (IDD) (regarded in the novel as well as in the Victorian sphere as “idiocy”) who is thrust into the center of The Gordon Riots, a series of violent protests in the 1780’s in which English Protestants expressed their displeasure with legislation intended to support Catholics. Although not as famous as Dickens’ other works, *Barnaby* provides extraordinary detail into the trials and tribulations of commoners during the Victorian era, and is based on real historical conflicts. More importantly, the novel evinces Dickens’ sophisticated understanding of contemporary Victorian notions of the mind. According to Children’s Neuropsychological Services, IDD is a “neurodevelopment disorder characterized by deficits in general intellectual functioning such as reasoning, planning, judgement, abstract thinking, academic learning and experiential learning.” These deficiencies certainly apply to Barnaby, whose idiocy makes him a target for exploitation by protestors. Indeed, as a vulnerable “idiot,” Barnaby is ill-treated by the power-hungry leaders of The Gordon Riots, including Lord George Gordon and his secretary Gashford, which causes him to join the riots and eventually be thrown into jail. In this way, Dickens uses the “idiot” character of Barnaby as an emblem of all of society’s most vulnerable groups

(including the poor) in order to prove the need for stronger paternal guidance, from both a community and a state level.

“Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street”, also published in multiple installments in 1852, is a story that details the relationship between a lawyer and his scrivener, the eponymous Bartleby. Unlike *Barnaby*, “Bartleby” takes place in industrial New York, as suggested by its name. Similar to *Barnaby*, “Bartleby” was not an immediate commercial success upon release, although it is now regarded as one of the most significant works in Melville’s canon (Machor 87). The story is written from the perspective of the lawyer, who explains the history of his relationship with his employed scrivener, from his initial days as an employee to his ultimate demise in a Manhattan prison. Throughout the story, the lawyer’s descriptions of Bartleby demonstrate classical traits associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), also known as autism. Although autism was not formally recognized and diagnosed until several decades after the publication of “Bartleby”, Melville demonstrates a prophetic, physician-like perceptiveness of the illness and uses it as a symbol of the dismantling of the American medical status quo.

My interest in this project arose from the fact that both stories were published in the middle of the 19th century, and both feature protagonists who are ascribed neurological conditions by their respective authors. To make matters more interesting, one story is written from an English perspective, while the other is written from an American perspective. The combination of these factors inspired me to research Dickens’ and Melville’s attitudes toward prevailing psychiatric notions of their time,

and to gauge how these attitudes translate to the literary representations of their fictional protagonists.

In this thesis, I will use two different approaches to answer the aforementioned inquiries. For Dickens, in addition to analyzing *Barnaby*, I will parse through his numerous journal entries and essays that are relevant to mental illness and the brain as a whole. This is possible because Dickens, as an editor and writer for two separate serialized publications, has a rich source of essays from which it is possible to deduce his thoughts on Victorian ideas of the mind, particularly as it pertains to his preferred methods of treating mentally ill individuals such as Barnaby. For Melville, on the other hand, I will rely almost exclusively on the text provided in “Bartleby”, as Melville does not have an extensive collection of essays in which he overtly discusses his views of American psychiatry. Although several literary analyses of “Bartleby” implicate aspects of Melville’s personal life (such as his own economic struggles) as potential explanations for elements of the plot, I will not conduct a similar analysis. Even though there is sure to be some correlation between Melville’s own life and the plot of “Bartleby”, such biographical allegorizing would, as Kingsley Widmer writes, treat the story as “conspiratorial camouflage for self-pity.” Nonetheless, both approaches to analyzing *Barnaby* and “Bartleby” will elucidate Dickens’ and Melville’s respective perceptions of bureaucracy, institutionalization, and psychiatry in general. After using these approaches, I will argue that whereas Dickens supports bureaucratic efforts such as institutionalization and medicalization to aid the mentally ill, Melville conveys the shortcomings of contemporary medicine. In Melville’s mind,

medicine fails to see that deviant behavior is often not the result of a neurological condition, but rather a natural byproduct of repressive, isolating social circumstances.

Prior to proceeding to further analyses of these two works, it is important to emphasize that, in spite of their demonstrated interest in mental illness and neurological deviance, Dickens and Melville were not scientific soothsayers. It would be disingenuous to suggest that Melville had a sophisticated understanding of autism (it was not diagnosed, after all, until nearly a century after “Bartleby”), or that Dickens had a sophisticated understanding of the neural underpinnings of intellectual development disorder. Nonetheless, analyzing the representation of these conditions in the authors’ two works will reveal how people in the past perceived disability. When describing Victorian literature, for instance, Talia Schaffer writes that it is a “rich place to see how Victorians were thinking about social change, how they depicted changing care relations, how they justified care, how care turned disastrous, and how care saved people.” This analysis can be broadly generalized to any domain, including American literature, as well. Consider how Carol Colatrella describes Melville’s literature: “The rhetoric employed by the writer links literature to particular discourses that are reconsidered and judged in the experience of reading. Since Melville’s texts are generally regarded as subversively containing or concealing implicit criticism of his culture, they can be examined as examples of texts that must be deciphered to teach readers about culture.” As a whole, both Dickens and Melville use literature to bespeak elements of their unique cultural experiences. Through their words, they reveal prevalent regional perceptions of the brain, disability, as well as the role of

institutions in helping deviants. Ultimately, I will prove that Dickens and Melville use neurological deviance in their stories as channels to convey contrasting views of medicalization and its impact on the mentally ill.

Chapter 2

BARNABY AND DICKENS IN RELATION TO VICTORIAN PSYCHIATRY

In order to study the representation of IDD, or “idiocy”, in *Barnaby Rudge*, some scholars advocate for uncovering elements of Dickens’ personal life. Carolyn Dever, for instance, suggests analyzing Dickens’ works through a psychoanalytic lens, which emphasizes elements of his personal life experiences to explain the significance of the various characters and themes in his writing. According to her, psychoanalysis provides “considerable explanatory power for the analysis of Dickens’ fiction” (Dever 216). Although there is value to this approach of criticism, it overlooks the important role that Victorian context played in Dickens’ writing. In this section, I will use Victorian society’s overarching perception of idiocy as the basis for understanding Dickens’ representation of the novel’s protagonist. Indeed, as opposed to focusing on aspects of Dickens’ personal life, I will examine Dickens’ expressed views on the brain and disability in his various published writings, as Barnaby’s characterization is predicated on Dickens’ active involvement in the mainstream psychological discourse of the mid-19th century. As such, a thorough understanding of how the mentally ill were recognized, diagnosed and ultimately treated will provide context for the representation of Barnaby.

The works published in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, two periodicals that Dickens edited and oversaw in the 1850s and 1860s (several years after the initial publication of *Barnaby* in 1841), provide proof of Dickens’ enduring interest in contemporary psychological debate. In this section, I will elaborate on these

works as a means of unpacking Dickens' views on the mentally ill and the best ways to treat mental illness on a systematic level. Such essays include those published by Dickens himself - such as "A Curious Dance Round a Christmas Tree" (1852), which was co-written with W.H. Wills - as well as works published by other writers, including Henry Morley's "The Cure of Sick Minds" (1859) and Andrew Halliday's "Happy Idiots" (1864). Dickens assumed great editorial responsibility for the works published in these periodicals. In fact, his involvement was such that he once demanded a contributor entirely rework the basis of his essay on dreams, stating, "I have read something on the subject, and have long observed it with the greatest attention and interest" (*The Oxford Handbook of Charles Dickens* 395). Furthermore, articles published in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* often contained citations or references to notable writers on the mind, such as John Abercrombie, Alexander Bain, and Thomas Reid, once again demonstrating Dickens' awareness of prevailing psychological dialogue.

When Dickens first started writing in the 1830s and 1840s, theories of mind that supported its immateriality were prevalent in Victorian discourse. Such theories argued that the mind was distinct from the body, implying that the physical sciences could not be used to understand the mind's mechanism of action. Dickens owned two books by Abercrombie, a physician who believed the mind could not be studied using the same means used to study the rest of the body. As Abercrombie wrote: "[T]he mind can be compared to nothing in nature; it has been endowed by its Creator with a power of perceiving external things; but the manner in which it does so is entirely

beyond our comprehension. All attempts, therefore, to explain or illustrate its operations by a reference to anything else, can be considered vain and futile.”

Although this view of the mind, known as “soul-based,” was eventually replaced by physicalist models during the latter stages of Dickens’ career, Dickens’ insistence on the immateriality of the mind in his writing stayed relatively consistent.

Dickens’ belief in the immateriality of the mind formed the basis of his view that the mind could be rehabilitated through proper treatment. Because Dickens regarded the mind as an entity that was distinct from the physical body, he viewed mental disabilities as manifestations of physical, bodily disorders as opposed to disorders of the ethereal mind. The *Household Words* article “The Cure of Sick Minds,” for instance, describes mental illness as “the perverted action of the mind caused by a defect in its instrument [i.e., the body]” (Morley 417). The essay also states that “there is often better mental food in a beefsteak than in a book” (Morley 417), suggesting the mind’s health is a direct consequence of overall bodily health. Furthermore, Dickens’ belief in the mind’s immateriality paved the way for his view that all humans possess certain innate faculties that, through proper treatment, could be captured and resurfaced. Dickens’ characterizations of Barnaby are evidence of his belief in these innate faculties. Consider the following description of Barnaby’s jolly nature: “It is something to know that Heaven has left the capacity of gladness in such a creature’s breast; it is something to be assured that, however lightly men may crush that faculty in their fellows, the Great Creator of mankind imparts it even to his despised and slighted work” (Dickens 201). Dickens’ allusion to divinity indicates a

willingness to ascribe the mind to powers that are beyond the understanding of traditional means of inquiry, such as the physical sciences. Similarly, when describing a blind patient named Laura Bridgman in a Massachusetts asylum, Dickens describes the woman as having possessed an “immortal soul” as well as an “immortal spirit which had been implanted within her [which] could not die, nor be maimed nor mutilated.” In other words, Dickens’ belief in the immateriality of the mind led him to suggest that even the most mentally impaired individuals possessed certain inalienable facilities which could be resuscitated through the correct form of treatment.

To understand Dickens’ preferred method of treating mentally ill individuals such as Barnaby, it is first important to define and situate Barnaby’s exact condition (“idiocy”) in the context of contemporary Victorian psychiatry. During the first half of Dickens’ career, many of the standard views about the mentally ill were based on the writings of physician John Haslam, who described mental “insanity” as a composite of three different mental states: idiocy, lunacy and unsoundness of mind (Haslam 9). These three types of insanity were given legal significance under the generic term “non compos mentis” in the landmark Lunatics Act of 1845, which would dictate mental health legislation in England and Wales for several decades (Takabayashi). According to Haslam, the feature that distinguished idiocy from other types of insanity was its status as a permanent infirmity. Unlike lunacy (which Haslam defined as an intermittent condition that affected otherwise sound individuals) and an unsound mind (which he defined as a person of a weak disposition), idiocy was viewed as an incurable, lifelong condition (Haslam 10).

Barnaby's idiocy, by virtue of its permanency, is intended to be synonymous with innocence. He is helpless and therefore requires proper guidance from both his local community as well as the state in order to be protected from the evil forces around him. Dickens uses his titular protagonist's intellectual impairment, then, as a vehicle to expose pervasive corruption and the exploitation of society's most vulnerable groups. As Valerie Pedlar writes: "In choosing a species of madman as the eponymous protagonist...Dickens gives importance to that element of society which demands wise guidance if it's not to be corrupted by those self-seekers against whose wily machinations naivety is no protection" (Pedlar 43). Furthermore, the novel can be viewed as a treatise on the consequences of not properly treating and caring for a Victorian "idiot" who is otherwise unable to fend for himself. This is a testament to Dickens' advocacy for a form of treatment formally known as "moral management," which aimed to help the mentally afflicted regain control of their innate faculties through principles of non-restraint. An understanding of the history of moral management will better contextualize Dickens' portrayal of Barnaby, as well as the general Victorian understanding of mental illness

Moral management, which is characterized by a lack of physical restraint and a respect for the dignity and individuality of individuals with mental ailments, owes its roots to two men: a French physician named Philippe Pinel, and a Quaker humanitarian named William Tuke. A doctor, Pinel was opposed to the type of inhumane, brutal treatment afforded to patients in asylums such as the Bicêtre (which housed Parisian men deemed to be insane) and the Salpêtrière (which housed Parisian

women deemed to be insane). His resistance to these methods of cruelty inspired him to devise a course of treatment predicated on compassion and restoration. Pinel was eventually appointed by the French government to lead the Bicêtre, which had previously been characterized by misery, suffering and lifelessness. Consider Albert Deutsch's description of the Bicêtre upon Pinel's arrival:

The asylum looked like a circle of the Inferno when Pinel entered upon his duties. The lunatics lay all about, raving, riveted with chains and irons. They were regarded as desperate, dangerous animals on a lower plane than criminals, for the latter were not stripped of all their human attributes as the insane were supposed to be... Their cries of anger, agony and frustration induced by intolerable confinement, mingled with the endless clanging of chains and the crack of keepers' whips. (Deutsch 90)

Following the success of his efforts in Bicêtre, Pinel summarized his findings and conclusions in his eminent book *Traité médico-philoso-phique sur l'aliénation mentale* (1801), which greatly influenced France, Germany, Great Britain, and America.



This painting by Tony Robert-Fleury demonstrates Pinel unfettering female patients at the Salpêtrière. Some women can be seen expressing gratitude to Pinel for freeing them, while others remain chained to the walls awaiting his help.

The same year (1792) that Pinel introduced his reforms at Bicêtre, a group of Quakers in York, England initiated a similar altruistic paradigm for the mentally ill. The leader of this group was William Tuke, a tradesman who yearned for an institution that could provide refuge to fellow Quakers suffering from mental debilities. This establishment, which opened in 1796 and was appropriately named “The Retreat,” intended to cultivate a familial atmosphere through an “emphasis on employment and exercise as conducive to mental health” and “the treatment of patients as guests rather than as inmates” (Deutsch 93-94).

Neither Pinel nor Tuke initially knew of each other’s humanitarian efforts geared toward helping the mentally ill, yet both the Bicêtre and the Retreat at York greatly influenced the organization and guiding principles of mental hospitals around the world. Deutsch writes that Pinel’s influence was greatly concentrated in Europe due to the “wide circulation of his classic work,” whereas Tuke’s influence could most tangibly be felt in America. Since this section focuses on the Victorian view of mental disability, I will concentrate on how Pinel’s work eventually influenced Dickens, before returning to talk about the influence of English asylums on those in America (and on Melville) in subsequent sections.

A combination of factors led to Pinel and Tuke’s principles of moral management ultimately influencing English physician John Conolly, who systematically elucidated the technique of non-restraint to the point where it piqued the interest of Dickens. Firstly, the work done by Pinel and Tuke laid the foundation for the removal of chains and fetters in the late eighteenth century. Likewise, a British

parliamentary investigation in 1815 evinced the particularly cruel and inhumane conditions inside many asylums, which “had the effect of arousing public sentiment against coercive methods, and led progressive leaders to seek ways and means of bringing restraints down to a minimum” (Deutsch 214). Finally, the tragic death of a patient strapped in bed in a strait-jacket during the night in Lincoln Asylum, England, led to an overhaul in the practices of the asylum, such that the asylum's supervisors (Dr. Charlesworth and Mr. Gardiner Hill) abolished the practice of mechanical restraints altogether. These techniques of non-restraint were of great interest to Dickens, who believed that mental impairments were byproducts of physical, bodily impairments.

Conolly studied the non-restraint methods implemented by his predecessors and expounded on these principles in a formal way as a medical superintendent of the Middlesex Asylum in Hanwell, England. Similar to those of his influences, Conolly’s model of moral management was characterized by a few guiding tenets: patients should not be physically restrained, they should be treated as individuals, and they should engage with each other in productive and meaningful ways via employment. And like Pinel, Conolly eventually summarized his thoughts regarding moral treatment in his landmark book, *The Treatment of the Insane Without Mechanical Restraints* (1856). It is through this book that Dickens was introduced to Conolly’s work and the overarching concept of moral management for the treatment of the mentally debilitated.

Examining the essays in *All the Year Round* that pertain to psychiatry, Richard Currie writes that Dickens supported asylums for the mentally afflicted, so long as they followed Conolly's model of moral management (18). Indeed, several works published in Dickens' periodicals portray the application of Conolly's principles. The *Household Words* essay "A Curious Dance Round a Christmas Tree" and the *All the Year Round* essay "Happy Idiots," for instance, describe instances in which patients in asylums participate in festive celebrations, which is in accordance with Conolly's emphasis on interpersonal engagement. Likewise, both "Happy Idiots" and the *All the Year Round* essay "Without a Name" (1851) describe visits to asylums in England that follow the principles of moral management. "Without a Name" is written from the perspective of a woman who describes her experiences as an inmate at the Bethlehem Royal Hospital for lunatics. Upon entering the asylum, the writer anticipates cruel and torturous conditions characteristics of traditional insane asylums, yet she quickly discovers a sense of harmony and community inside the asylum. She is greeted by "the song of birds", and she claims to have "found refuge within its walls." Consider her description of the hospitality in the asylum:

Everything was done to amuse and interest me. I was sent, under the charge of an attendant, to numerous places of amusement. I was encouraged to employ myself, and books were lent to me by the head physician...I entered the hospital without tears, but I left it sorrowfully, knowing that in the wide world there were none who would treat me with so much consideration, none who

would so tend and console me, should it please God again to afflict me, as the kind friends who reside within the dear walls of Bethlehem. ("Without a Name" 291)

Similar to "Without a Name", "Happy Idiots" is written by a journalist who details his experiences in Earlswood asylum, which was supposedly so grand as to be compared "in architectural magnificence with the mansions of the rich and great" (Halliday 565). Amazed by the hospitality, lushness and scale of the asylum, the journalist writes that "it would almost seem...for the advantage of physical comfort, it is better to be mad than sane, better to be an idiot than to have the full use of one's faculties" (Halliday 565). Furthermore, he writes that "the majority of [the patients] exhibited an activity of body and a cheerfulness of expression which I had never before witnessed in persons so manifestly deficient in mental power" (Halliday 564).



This colored engraving by John Maurer of The Hospital of Bethlehem depicts the lavish greenery in front of the institution, and it also demonstrates the hospital's royal architecture. Patients who are shown in the foreground can be seen frolicking and enjoying their time.

Although Dickens' interest in moral management is evident in the aforementioned works which were published several years after *Barnaby*, it is also evident much earlier in Dickens' accounts of American asylums in 1842 (which appeared in *American Notes* less than a year after the publication of *Barnaby*). In his travels to America, Dickens expresses satisfaction with the way patients were treated in the Perkins Institute and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind. In one journal entry, Dickens writes of how "the children were at their daily tasks in different rooms," which agrees with Conolly's notion that patients should be given responsibilities that give them a sense of purpose. In the same way, Dickens applauds these institutions for how they treat patients as individuals rather than a homogenous clump of inmates, writing that the absence of uniforms "presents each child to the visit or in his or her own proper character, with its individuality impaired." The end result is "cheerfulness, industry, and good order discernible in every other part of the building" (*American Notes* 22).

In the context of *Barnaby*, Dickens does not ever explicitly mention non-restraint or systematic, humane methods of treating mentally ill characters such as Barnaby. Instead, the tenets of moral management are disseminated in a metaphorical sense through the concept of paternalism - which Patrick McDonagh describes as a "parent-child relationship between the classes" (McDonagh 182) - as several characters in *Barnaby* require stronger social and familial paternalism to protect themselves from greedy opportunists. In the next section, I will argue that Dickens' use of paternalism represents an effort to bring awareness to larger societal changes

that must take place to properly treat the mentally ill. Such initiatives include an increase in state assistance to asylums housing the poor (social paternalism), as well as an emphasis on proper communities of care to treat the disabled (familial paternalism). In this way, Dickens' version of moral management in *Barnaby* accounts for a community-oriented model of care, while also foreshadowing the same frustrations with the British government that Dickens expounds upon in *American Notes*, released a year after the publication of *Barnaby*. In the end, Barnaby's intellectual impairment provides Dickens a platform through which he can convey the need for reform on both an individual and state level for society's most susceptible groups.

Chapter 3

IDIOCY AS A METAPHOR FOR CLASS EXPLOITATION

As alluded to in the previous section, Dickens was a proponent of the principles of moral management made famous by Conolly, which had slowly but surely permeated Europe during the 19th century thanks to his own work and that of predecessors such as Pinel and Tuke. Specifically, Dickens believed that patients in asylums could undergo a reversal in their deranged state - or, at the very least, be able to function more normally in society - through treatment that was predicated on non-restraint and individuality. In this section, I will argue that Dickens applies the tenets of moral management to *Barnaby*, as well, although in a much more symbolic sense than is the case in many of the essays published in *All the Year Round*. In the context of *Barnaby*, Dickens implies that strong paternal guidance that is founded on compassion and empathy can guide Barnaby back to “normalcy,” which ultimately resembles the methods of moral management. These paternal figures include the literal paternal figure of Barnaby’s father, the symbolic paternal entity of the state government (which exerts power over the working class), as well as Barnaby’s local community. Barnaby’s idiocy, then, symbolizes the importance of providing proper guidance to the proletariat, whose vulnerability makes them susceptible to the influence of corrupt ruling powers.

Although Victorian notions of the mind are undeniably primitive in comparison to modern understandings, Barnaby’s mental illness is in fact nuanced and intentionally curated to accentuate the need for stronger paternalism in Victorian

society. IDD, the now-formally recognized acronym used to describe idiocy, is recognized as a lifelong disorder that is treated via long-term “management and rehabilitation programs...aimed at helping children with the disorder acquire skills so they can live health, happy, relatively independent lives” (“Intellectual Development Disorder”). Similarly, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, parents of children with IDD can treat their children by taking them to developmental pediatricians and by contacting local intervention agencies (“Facts About Intellectual Disability”). In accordance with these contemporary means of treating individuals with IDD, Dickens believed that “idiots” such as Barnaby could be treated for their condition, although it would require much greater effort from both the community and state level than would be necessary to treat individuals suffering from other types of mental illness.

Dickens distinguished idiocy from insanity and other types of “insanity,” which meant he acknowledged idiocy’s status as a permanent infirmity. This did not stop him from believing in the potential for treatment, however. Note how in the *Household Words* essay “Idiots,” Dickens expresses optimism for the treatment and rehabilitation of those considered to be “idiots”:

Until within a few years, it was generally assumed...that because an idiot was, either wholly or in part, deficient in certain senses and instincts...nothing could be done for him, and he must always remain an object of pitiable isolation. But a closer study of the subject has now demonstrated that the

cultivation of such senses and instincts as the idiot is seen to possess, will, besides frequently developing others that are latent within him but obscured, so brighten those glimmering lights, as immensely to improve his condition...Consequently there is no greater justification for abandoning him, in his degree, than for abandoning any human creature. ("Idiots" 176)

Clearly, Dickens sympathizes with those suffering from idiocy and believes that proper treatment may bring to life some of their dormant natural faculties. Likewise, his stance on treating idiocy is grounded in an evolving understanding of idiocy that no longer viewed it as an unfixable ailment. In accordance with Haslam's delineation of idiocy and insanity, Dickens writes that "in the Insane certain faculties which once existed have become obliterated or impaired," whereas "in Idiots, they either never existed or exist imperfectly" ("Idiots" 176). This distinction is significant. In the context of idiots like Barnaby, then, one can conclude that although temporary, stopgap methods of treatment (such as those that rely on mechanical force) may be sufficient to reverse the course of illness for an "insane" individual, idiocy is a longer-lasting ailment whose treatment requires a strong sense of paternal guidance from both the state and the community level. Dickens believed that such proper, systematic treatment of those suffering from idiocy (i.e., his literary version of moral management) could cultivate and invigorate their innately present "glimmering lights."

When considering Dickens' belief in treatment for "idiots", it makes sense why Dickens does not portray Barnaby as an individual lacking vitality and life altogether (as specified in the prior section, Dickens writes glowingly of Barnaby's faculty for joy). Instead, Dickens depicts Barnaby - and the "idiot" in general - as a disadvantaged individual who simply needs empathy and support from their immediate environment to enliven their latent senses. This need for support is heavily implied in the novel's first lengthy description of Barnaby:

His hair, of which he had a great profusion, was red, and hanging in disorder about his face and shoulders, gave to his restless looks an expression quite unearthly—enhanced by the paleness of his complexion, and the glassy lustre of his large protruding eyes. Startling as his aspect was, the features were good, and there was something even plaintive in his wan and haggard aspect. But, the absence of the soul is far more terrible in a living man than in a dead one; and in this unfortunate being its noblest powers were wanting. (*Barnaby Rudge* 35)

Although it appears as though Dickens suggests Barnaby lacks a soul (which would contradict his insistence on the existence of a soul in all beings, irrespective of mental condition), it is important to note that Dickens includes hints of life in Barnaby, writing of his good features and of "something even plaintive in his wan and haggard aspect." Moreover, Dickens writes later in the novel that to Barnaby, "the world...was full of happiness; in every tree, and plant, and flower, in every bird, and beast, and tiny

insect whom a breath of summer wind plaid low upon the ground, he had delight” (*Barnaby Rudge* 388). This suggests that although the “noblest powers” seem to be lacking in Barnaby, this is due to external circumstances rather than any fault of Barnaby’s own. Barnaby does not lack a soul - Dickens makes sure to emphasize this point by making mention of his faculty for happiness. It is there, yet it lies dormant because the conditions surrounding Barnaby are not conducive to its realization. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that such circumstances include poverty, fatherlessness and abandonment - all of which are beyond Barnaby’s control, and all of which demonstrate a need for stronger community guidance to support him.

The Consequences of Failed Paternalism

Dickens uses Barnaby’s vulnerability as a result of his idiocy to suggest a need for intervention. In the context of *Barnaby*, this intervention manifests itself in the form of paternalism, on both a state and communal level. As mentioned in the previous section, McDonagh defines paternalism as a concept that “posits a parent-child relationship between the classes, reiterating an ostensibly organic familial structure” (182). As an “idiot,” Barnaby lacks the wherewithal to make the correct decisions by himself, needing proper guidance at all times if he is to not be exploited. As McDonagh writes: “Barnaby himself is an obvious subject for paternal guidance - one who cannot choose for himself because he simply does not have the capacity. Presented thus as the eternal child, Barnaby becomes the perfect symbol of a people in need of good government...He is the helpless poor driven to desperation, the ignorant man exploited” (191). In the novel, the personal conflicts afflicting each of the

characters are metaphorically intertwined with the overarching political conflicts afflicting Victorian society. Specifically, the burdens beset on each of the sons in the story - from Edward Chester to Joe Willet to Barnaby to Hugh (who is the bastard child of John Chester) - are all consequences of improper or failed fatherhood. As a result of these failed attempts at masculine paternalism, the children in these scenarios become involved in conflict, thereby serving as reminders of the ramifications of those who do not receive proper guidance from paternal authorities. Consider John Chester, for example, who is a conniving, corrupt political figure. After he refuses to allow his son Edward to marry Emma Haredale, Edward leaves his father to go to the West Indies. Likewise, after John Chester abandons his gypsy mistress, she gives birth to Hugh and ends up dying during Hugh's childhood. Similarly, Joe Willet leaves to fight in the American Revolution (which is itself an anti-paternalistic political act) after suffering years of abuse and torment from his father, John Willet. In this way, the failure of masculine paternalism in the novel becomes synonymous with Barnaby's idiocy, as both engender lonely, misguided individuals in need of greater parental guidance. In Dickens's view, these vulnerable characters all lack the proper form of masculine moral management, or fatherhood that is rooted in compassion and empathy.

The failure of masculine paternalism also manifests itself in the case of Simon Tappertit, the apprentice of Varden, who plays the role of a paternal mentor to Simon in much the same way as a father. Simon harbors resentment toward Varden, as Simon feels he is too intelligent and sophisticated to be working for a man like Varden. He

also loves Varden's daughter, Dolly, who does not love him back. Although Varden does not outwardly disrespect Simon, it is clear that Simon is an afterthought in Varden's mind compared to Dolly and his wife, Mrs. Varden. Due to the lack of power and guidance he experiences while working in Varden's workshop, Sim leads his own underground organization (the Brotherhood of United Bull-dogs), where he is referred to by other apprentices as "captain." His position of authority and leadership at the Brotherhood provides him the sense of paternal authority that he lacks in his life. Here, Tappertit organizes regular meetings with other apprentices in which they designate future punishment for all of the masters who do not treat their apprentices properly. Moreover, it is no coincidence that Dickens pits Simon, Dennis, Hugh, and Barnaby (the characters in the novel who are most abandoned by Victorian society) together as leaders of a division of the mob whose responsibility is to "go by London Bridge, and through the main streets, in order that their numbers, and their serious intentions might be the better known and appreciated by the citizens" (*Barnaby Rudge* 404). These characters are united in their feeling that their paternal supervisors (whether it is Varden, John Chester, Rudge, or the state government as a whole) treat them as afterthoughts.

Improved masculine paternalism is not the only intervention that Dickens suggests in the novel, however. Dickens also implicates state paternalism, or guidance from the British government, to help the mentally ill and the socioeconomically disadvantaged. When exploring state paternalism, it is important to view it in the context of working class movements of the time - namely, Chartism, which was a

proletariat Victorian movement that aimed to protect workers from abusive and exploitative authorities. Indeed, Dickens uses paternalistic reforms to treat the mentally ill as symbolic analogues of proper Chartist reforms intended to benefit all of society's most at-risk groups. Just as Chartist reforms intended to protect the British everyman by enabling them to vote and hold political power, for instance, Dickens suggests reforms in *Barnaby* that are intended to return leverage to vulnerable members of the population such as Barnaby, Sim, and Hugh (whose tribulations will be detailed in the following several paragraphs). To be clear, the events of *Barnaby* take place nearly six decades prior to the Chartist movement (which took place during the 1830s and 1840s), so it would be inaccurate to suggest that Chartism influenced The Gordon Riots. With that being said, *Barnaby* was published during the height of the Chartist movement in 1841, and it is clear that the contemporary Chartist movement's emphasis on protecting the vulnerable from political rulers influenced Dickens' portrayal of London's most helpless inhabitants in *Barnaby*. As such, even though the novel does not acknowledge specific Chartist positions such as voting rights, it echoes the Chartist theme of empowering those who deserve more guidance.

Chartism is also relevant to *Barnaby* and paternalism as a whole because the surface-level religious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in the novel are in fact byproducts of social class conflicts. In this way, Dickens uses the religiously-motivated anti-Catholic riots as the underpinning of a larger, more existential disconnect between paternalistic figures (fathers as well as the state government) and groups in society that need guidance (children as well as the working class). This is

apparent in the fact that many of those fighting on behalf of Lord George Gordon have no particularly strong religious affiliations. Instead, these characters fight because the mob represents a form of community and organized paternalist authority that they have lacked their entire lives. Take Dennis, the hangman, and Hugh, the ostler at the Maypole Inn, who both request Gashford to join the movement despite having no history of participation in religious activities. Although religion is implicated in their willingness to fight, it is merely a conduit to convey their dissatisfaction with the ignorance of the paternal figure of the state government. Consider this exchange between Dennis, Hugh, and Gashford:

‘No Popery, brother!’ cried the hangman.

‘No Property, brother!’ responded Hugh.

‘Popery, Popery.’ said the secretary with his usual mildness.

‘It’s all the same!’ cried Dennis. ‘It’s all right. Down with him, Muster Gashford. Down with everybody, down with everything! Hurrah for the Protestant religion!’ (*Barnaby Rudge* 316)

In this conversation, “popery”, a derogatory term used to refer to Catholics, transforms into “no property”, which is an inherently Chartist position that refers to property disputes between the social classes. When Gashford reminds Hugh that Gordon’s movement is merely for “Popery”, Dennis states “it’s all the same.” Not only does this reply suggest that Hugh and Dennis are not truly fighting for a religious cause, but it also communicates that The Gordon Riots were likely fueled by socioeconomic

displeasure (resulting from a sense of dissatisfaction with the paternalist government) as much as religious discontent.

Dickens' frustrations with the British state's inadequate paternalism are also evident in his discontent with the British manner of institutionalization. This displeasure is especially evident in *American Notes*, in which Dickens criticizes poorly-run British asylums by stating that they offer "very little shelter or relief beyond that which is to be found in the workhouse and the jail...[they are] looked upon by the poor rather as a stern master, quick to correct and punish, than a kind protector, merciful and vigilant in their hour of need." This comment by Dickens is particularly relevant to *Barnaby* since the novel is an embodiment of his dissatisfaction with a British state that fails to properly guide its most vulnerable citizens, from mentally disabled individuals like Barnaby to socioeconomically abandoned individuals like Hugh and Dennis. Consider the following scene, for instance, in which Mary Rudge interacts with a gentleman on the street who symbolizes the ignorant British state:

'An idiot, eh?' said the gentleman looking at Barnaby as he spoke. 'And how long hast been an idiot?'...

'From his birth,' said the widow.

'I don't believe it,' cried the gentleman, 'not a bit of it. It's an excuse not to work. There's nothing like flogging to cure that disorder. I'd make a difference in him in ten minutes, I'll be bound.'

‘Heaven has made none in more than twice ten years, sir,’ said the widow mildly.

‘Then why don’t you shut him up? We pay enough for country institutions, damn ‘em. But thou’d rather drag him about to excuse charity - of course. Ay, I know thee.’ (*Barnaby Rudge* 389-390)

There is the implication that Barnaby’s “idiocy” is fake and merely used to warrant sympathy and money from strangers. This is a similar retort used by ignorant people in positions of power who describe vagrants who beg for money. It is no coincidence that Barnaby happens to be both - poor *and* mentally disabled - since Dickens groups together the mentally ill with the socioeconomically disadvantaged as members of society’s most vulnerable population.

Community Models of Care

In *Barnaby*, Dickens calls for reform from fathers and the state in order to tend to the needs of society’s most vulnerable groups. In addition, he also suggests the need for improved communal paternalism to take care of individuals like Barnaby. To study communal paternalism, it is important to first understand the presence of care communities in Victorian fiction in general. Talia Schaffer writes that Victorian society in the middle of the 19th century transitioned from a community-based model of care to one that emphasized medicalization and institutionalization. She writes that many works of Victorian fiction of this era contain “care communities” (Schaffer 61), which she defines as groups consisting of “people forming ad-hoc, flexible, small

groups of caregivers, usually composed of voluntary connections and including perhaps three to ten people” (Schaffer 61). Schaffer evokes Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* as an example of a story that emphasizes the importance of these care communities. Schaffer writes that the novel’s protagonist (Scrooge) learns to forsake his proclivity for isolation and selfishness in favor of “a well-regulated community in which each individual tries to secure the pleasure and well-being of others, and to recast an economic organization as a social collective...” (Schaffer 80). In this sense, Barnaby, too, exemplifies the restorative potential for a care community. Unlike stories that demonstrate the salutary effects of a care community, however, *Barnaby* reveals the deleterious consequences of its absence. Until he is recruited by Gordon, Barnaby lives an unenviable life that is characterized by solitude, wilderness, and deviance, all of which is accentuated by the fact that he is the direct descendant of an escaped murderer. Varden and Mary Rudge clearly have Barnaby’s best interests at heart, but these two characters are not enough to comprise the sort of cohort of several people that Schaffer mentions. This results in other characters exploiting Barnaby’s loneliness for their own profit. As Elizabeth Wells writes: “...the characters who see Barnaby’s gifts as something to magnify are not interested in his well-being” (370). Arguably the most prominent exploiters in the novel are Lord George Gordon and his secretary, Gashford, who lead the anti-Catholic riots. When Mary and Barnaby are sitting on a bridge, devoid of money or shelter, she asks Gashford (who happens to be sitting nearby) about the source of commotion on the streets. Surprised by her ignorance, Gashford informs Mary about the plans for a petition against Catholics, and

eventually inquires about the availability of Barnaby to participate. When Mary implores Gordon and Gashford to not involve Barnaby in the assemblage because “he is not in his right senses,” Gashford and Gordon gaslight her by claiming she is morally corrupt for suggesting her son has an intellectual disability:

'It is a bad sign of the wickedness of these times,' said Lord George, evading her touch, and colouring deeply, 'that those who cling to the truth and support the right cause, are set down as mad. Have you the heart to say this of your own son, unnatural mother!'

'I am astonished at you!' said Gashford, with a kind of meek severity. 'This is a very sad picture of female depravity...'

‘With regard to this young man, my Lord, [Gashford] added... ‘He is as sensible and self-possessed as any one I ever saw.’ (*Barnaby Rudge* 400)

Clearly, Gashford and Gordon are only interested in Barnaby because of his potential as a supporter for their cause. In the same way, they realize that they hold leverage over the widow because she does not exactly have a place of shelter where she can take her son and escape from the assemblage. She is forced to bend to their will due to her lack of power. Eventually, she is “thrown to the ground”, while Barnaby is “whirled away into the heart of a dense mass of men”, at which point she no longer sees him (*Barnaby Rudge* 403).



Dickens commissioned the following illustration by Hablot Browne, which depicts Lord George Gordon and Gashford attempting to convince Barnaby and his mother that Barnaby is a good candidate to fight for the Protestant cause in The Gordon Riots. Barnaby's posture and gaze suggest an impressionable disposition as he listens to Gordon and Gashford, who both appear devious and cunning. Mary Rudge observes the situation haplessly.

Willet, Barnaby's employer at the Maypole, also takes advantage of Barnaby - specifically, the fact that Barnaby can withstand darkness and harsh conditions, which would both be considered unethical for a "normal" employee to endure. Since Barnaby lacks a tight-knit group of individuals who would protest unethical demands on his behalf, Willet is able to treat Barnaby poorly without consequence. When John Chester requests Willet for a messenger that will be able to deliver a note to a specified location "without loss of time" (*Barnaby Rudge* 236), Willet immediately thinks of Barnaby because of his ability to endure any type of condition with speed and efficiency. Consider Willet's descriptions of Barnaby:

"Why the truth is...that the person who'd go quickest is a sort of natural, as one may say, sir; and though quick of foot...Sometimes he walks, and sometimes he runs. He's known along the road by everybody, and sometimes comes here in a cart or chaise, and sometimes riding double. He comes and goes, through wind, rain, snow, and hail, and on the darkest nights. Nothing hurts *him*." (*Barnaby Rudge* 236-237)

By describing Barnaby as though he were a savage beast, Willet justifies his ignorant attitude toward Barnaby's mental condition and also exemplifies the broader attitude toward marginalized people in a society that lacks proper paternal authority. Looking for an external source of paternal guidance, Barnaby joins the mob, which represents the first time in his life in which he interacts with a large cohort of people who care about his health and whereabouts.

Dickens once again accentuates Barnaby's happy-go-lucky personality in scenes of the protests: "Forgetful of all other things in the ecstasy of the moment, his face flushed and his eyes sparkling with felight, heedless of the weight of the great banner he carried...on he went, proud, happy, elated past all telling - the only lighthearted, undesigning creature, in the whole assembly" (*Barnaby Rudge* 405). As Barnaby participates in the assembly, he expresses pure bliss at his participation in a community-oriented event. He even shows empathy toward his mother, who he assumes will be proud of him for waving a flag and leading a rally of people: "'She would be proud indeed to see me now, eh Hugh?'" said Barnaby. 'Wouldn't it make her glad to see me at the head of this large show? She'd cry with joy, I know she would. Where *can* she be? She never sees me at my beset, and what do I care to be gay and fine if *she's* not by?'" (*Barnaby Rudge* 405). This touching dialogue is one of the only times in the novel in which Barnaby acknowledges his intellectual disability and the effect that it has on other people. Now part of a cohort of people who he believes support him, Barnaby experiences a sense of contentment and competence. He does not know, unfortunately, that the rest of the mob is participating in the assembly for the same reason as him - to work together and experience a semblance of the organized paternalism that they have lacked their entire lives.

Over all, Dickens uses Barnaby as a channel to elicit sympathy for Victorian society's most defenseless groups, from impressionable children to impoverished workers. After all, although Barnaby certainly represents the mentally debilitated population, he is an emblem of *all* oppressed, marginalized groups in society, as his

exploitability makes him a target for exploitation by corrupt leaders (in this case, Lord George Gordon and Gashford). As Katherine Tillotson writes in the introduction to the Oxford edition of *Barnaby Rudge*: “Barnaby must finally be accepted less as a study of individual character than as an expression of the Dickensian compassion for the helpless and exploited” (qtd. in McDonagh 174). This is precisely why Barnaby works side-by-side with impoverished rioters during The Gordon Riots. By situating Barnaby alongside the blue-collar rioters, Dickens illustrates how a lack of proper paternal guidance can cause society’s most vulnerable groups to become violent and form cliques in hopes of finding other, more dangerous forms of guidance. As McDonagh writes, Dickens believed the working classes could not “be fully self-governing; like Barnaby, they would always require a strong and benevolent paternalist authority to guide and rule them” (189).

Chapter 4

USING BARTLEBY TO RECONSIDER DEVIANCE

“Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street” (1853) is a short story that details the interactions between a lawyer and his scrivener, Bartleby, who happens to possess features associated with autism. Although autism was not formally diagnosed until several decades after “Bartleby”, examining its depiction in the story can provide insight into the 19th century American perception of the condition. Initially, Bartleby dutifully performs work for the lawyer, but he eventually discontinues working altogether and refuses to move from the lawyer’s office, which ultimately results in his imprisonment and death. In this section, I will analyze the overarching symbolic value of ascribing traits of autism to literary characters, with a focus on autism’s utility in relation to its primary characteristics: impairment in communication, impairment in sociability, and insistence on repeated behaviors. By giving Bartleby a mental illness, Melville creates a character who does not conform to societal expectations of a Wall Street employee. This frustrates the lawyer, who in turn represents the 19th century American medical system, which advocates for medicalization and institutionalization of societal “deviants” in lieu of treatments to fix their situations. In the end, Melville presciently applies the concept of labeling theory, a sociological concept developed several decades after the publication of “Bartleby”, to demonstrate that Bartleby’s reclusive, introverted behavior should be considered normal as opposed to “deviant”, given his circumstances.

Autism as a Literary Symbol

For centuries, authors have used illness as conduits to express personal views. In her book “Illness as a Metaphor”, Susan Sontag delves into the historical representations of tuberculosis and cancer, concluding that both diseases are typically portrayed in terms of internal psychological states. According to her, this elicits an artificial association between the conditions and morality itself, ultimately resulting in shame and a sense of wrongdoing for those who suffer from the conditions. Other scholars have linked the representation of illness with larger societal themes. Marie Lee, for instance, writes that autism in particular is often used as a “metaphor for the stress of life under late-stage capitalism”, claiming that the disorder is depicted as a deterrent to the “conventional American family.” She provides two examples of such novels, stating that the autistic characters in these novels are captured and represented as “tabula rasa on which a writer can inscribe and project almost anything” (Lee). In this respect, autism holds a special appeal because, as Polly Morris writes, it remains largely misunderstood. According to her, the difficulties that autistic people endure “remain tantalizingly unexplained in an era when medical advances have demystified so many other ailments” (Morris). Clearly, the enigmatic nature of autism has inspired countless authors to use the disorder in their novels as vehicles to convey various themes about society.

Historically, stories that feature autistic characters share certain commonalities. Gordon Bates writes that all novels featuring autistic characters present the following symptoms: impairment of language, impairment of socializing, and preference for routine. These characteristics align closely with the Diagnosis and Statistical Manual

of Mental Disorders' characterization of autism as a disorder that is marked by "persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts", as well as "restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities." In "Bartleby ", Melville perceptively illustrates all the aforementioned symptoms, as the scrivener uses few words, does not socialize, and repeats the same behavior on a daily basis. Consider the lawyer's following observation of Bartleby, for example: "I observed that he never went to dinner; indeed that he never went anywhere. As yet I had never of my personal knowledge known him to be outside of my office. He was a perpetual sentry in the office" (Melville 36). Similarly, the lawyer later describes that he "noticed that Bartleby did nothing but stand at his window in his dead-wall revery" (Melville 66). In these scenes, it is evident that not only does Bartleby keep to himself (which is an indication of an impairment in communicability and sociability), but he also stays in the office every day and refuses to leave its premises, almost as though he were a statue.

In "Bartleby", Melville associates the classical characteristics of autism with a lack of sociability, which makes sense considering autism is marked by a deficiency in language and communication. "Bartleby", then, can be seen as Melville's take on the root cause of autism - whereas some individuals in the 19th century blamed "a weak family and vice committed by ancestors" for mental illness (Floyd), Melville attributes autism to the isolating, oppressive societal structures of industrialized New York. In this way, he does not view Bartleby's autism as "abnormal" - rather, Melville presents Bartleby's behavior as a natural consequence of his surroundings.

Labeling Theory and the Disability Critique View

In order to understand Melville's attempts to put Bartleby's "deviant", or "abnormal", behavior into context, it is necessary to understand labeling theory. Labeling theory, first prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, posits that deviance is a property of societal and cultural norms as opposed to inherent laws of human nature. The theory is especially implicated in the identification of neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism. Critics of the labeling theory view mental illness as a "disorder", or "an abnormal condition that has a definite etiology and is treatable in a medical mode" (Weinstein 72). These critics believe in the value of mental hospitals such as asylums as a method of treating the mentally ill. In contrast, advocates of the labeling theory believe that "mental illness is a label attached to those who engage in certain types of deviant activities", and that the characteristics of the mentally ill are "violations of social norms...rather than the result of some personal predisposition or specific psychopathology" (Weinstein 72).

Labeling theory also has strong connections to the disability critique view, a newer perspective on mental illness which states that "disability is the result of social power relations, not of inherent properties; it is a political rather than a physical concern" (Pinchevski 32). Currently, there is a dichotomous debate between two sides: the medicalization and pathologization of abnormal behavior (such as Bartleby's), and the attempt to normalize seemingly aberrant behavior (the disability critique view). As such, the disability critique intends to shift the perception of mental illness away from the sphere of medicine into that of sociology. As Garland Thomson writes, Bartleby

can be viewed as a disabled character “whose bodily appearance or function will not conform to cultural expectations and standards”, demonstrating yet another example of society’s tendency to shift from “benevolence to pathology as a dominant cultural response to the unfit” (qtd. in Pinchevski 33).

In “Bartleby”, Melville indicates that he is a proponent of the disability critique view, as he suggests that Bartleby’s behavior (which adheres to classical descriptions of autism) is a property of his social circumstances rather than an innately freakish disorder. To demonstrate, Melville suggests that the prison-like environment of Wall Street - which includes the lawyer’s office and, more specifically, Bartleby’s own space of work - induces the traits of abnormality that people typically associate with autism. In other words, Bartleby’s autistic behavior mirrors his environment. In accordance with his quiet, apathetic environment, he too is uncommunicative and unsociable. And just like the large folding screen that separates his desk from the rest of the office, he too is emotionally separated from the rest of society. Furthermore, consider how the lawyer describes his working chambers: “The view might have been considered rather tame than otherwise, deficient in what landscape painters call ‘life’” (Melville 5). Although autism was not formally diagnosed until decades after the publication of “Bartleby”, Melville demonstrates an intricate understanding of the impact of the environment on the characteristic behaviors associated with the disorder. Indeed, recent studies have implicated air pollution (which is one of the many facets of the industrial New York sphere) as an early-life risk factor for the development of autism. According to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences,

“children of mothers living near a freeway, and traffic-related pollution, during the third trimester of pregnancy were twice as likely to develop ASD.” Similarly, studies have shown that immune dysfunction, one of the primary causes of autism, is a direct result of environmental factors such as “artificial indoor lighting... insufficient exercise, chronic psychological stress, and vitamin D deficiency” (“Autism”).

Of course, it would be disingenuous to suggest that Melville had a systematic, scientific approach to his portrayal of Bartleby. It goes without saying that he did not have access to the sort of in-depth analysis of autism that is currently available in the scientific literature. With that being said, it is no coincidence that Melville implicates certain elements of advanced industrial society - most notably those that pertain to a confined, sedentary lifestyle - to the isolated, lonesome traits (which, in turn, are markers of autism) that are characteristic of Bartleby. Clearly, Melville knew that Bartleby’s work environment is not conducive to sociability or a sense of communality. As a result, he presciently associates these cloistered working conditions with Bartleby’s autistic behavior, suggesting that behaviors associated with autism can be induced by an environment as enclosing as Bartleby’s. As described by an article in the New York Journal of Medicine: “Certainly [“Bartleby”] urges the importance of searching beyond surface symptoms to the subtle ways in which patients are connected to larger problems of society such as alienation and poverty.”

In spite of his enigmatic nature, Bartleby does hint at the reason for his “deviant” behavior throughout various moments in the story. At one point, Bartleby decides that he will do no more writing. When the lawyer asks for an explanation,

Bartleby indifferently replies, “Do you not see the reason for yourself” (Melville 55). Although the reason is not explicitly stated, one can assume Bartleby is referring to his poor working conditions. Immediately afterwards, it occurs to the lawyer that Bartleby has suffered partial visual blindness as a result of “copying by his dim window for the first weeks of his stay with me...” (Melville 55). Since the lawyer associates Bartleby’s dim window with his impaired vision, it is also reasonable to associate Bartleby’s working conditions with his autistic behavior. Furthermore, when the lawyer later proposes a clerkship in a dry-goods store as an employment opportunity to Bartleby, Bartleby replies that such a job would entail “too much confinement” (Melville 81). This is another direct indication by Bartleby that he does indeed care about (and is therefore affected by) his work environment, despite his reticent demeanor. Barnaby even refuses food from the grub-man at the Tombs toward the end of the story, claiming, “I am unused to dinners” (Melville 90). All of these quotes indicate that Bartleby is unaccustomed to salutary social events, as his life is dominated by isolation and a lack of human interaction. It does not help that the nature of a scrivener’s job is itself repetitive and cumbersome, as the lawyer describes Bartleby’s job as “a very dull, wearisome, and lethargic affair” that some might consider “intolerable” (Melville 21). Over all, it is evident that Bartleby does not work in an environment that is conducive to sociability or communicability, and the consequences of such isolation are manifest in both his demeanor and his autistic characteristics.

American Disciplinary Reforms and Parallels to Moral Management

As discussed above, Bartleby's environment shapes his behavior, and can even be considered a primary contributor to his traits of autism. The lawyer's failure to make this association defines the story's central enigma, while also explaining why he is a symbol of the ignorant 19th century American medical system. Prior to analyzing how the lawyer upholds virtues of the American medical system, though, it is important to understand how American society at large at the time perceived the mentally ill. The 19th century American medical system attempted to reform societal deviants such as the mentally ill through the process of institutionalization. The mentally ill were often sent to prisons or state-supported mental asylums, and American social reformers such as Dorothea Dix initiated forms of treatment that were founded on humanity and compassion, much like English moral management (Floyd). As discussed in previous sections, moral management was founded on the principles of non-restraint, and was characterized by a few guiding tenets: patients should not be physically restrained, they should be treated as individuals, and they should engage with each other in productive and meaningful ways via employment. Coincidentally, these precepts bear a striking resemblance to those which underlie the 19th century American disciplinary system, which intended on reforming deviants. Consider the following description of this American system:

Rehabilitation was meant to be effected by separating the prisoner from other deviants and placing him, or less frequently her, in a solitary

environment...Reading and work were encouraged in both systems...By means of silent and reflective reading, constructive work, and controlled interaction with carefully selected visitors...the prisoner would develop discipline that would habituate him or her to life in society. Reformers explained this rehabilitation as a way to bring the individual into a harmonious relation with others. (Colatrella 14)

Several features of this description, from the emphasis on intercommunication to constructive work, read like the principles of Conolly's technique of non-restraint. The commonalities between English and American institutions is no surprise, as English institutions influenced American social reformers. According to Colatrella, the development of the penitentiary in eighteenth century England "encouraged a view of the individual as a subject ripe for moral improvement" (14). In other words, both the British and the Americans perceived inmates as flawed deviants in need of formal methods of restoration. As a result, nineteenth-century American "reformers attempted to rehabilitate transgressive individuals by subjecting them to schedules and environments organized to instill discipline" (Colatrella 14).



This engraving by H.B. Hall depicts The New York State Lunatic Asylum, which was New York's first state-run institution for the mentally ill. Note the spaciousness of the grounds as well as the lush vegetation surrounding the building, both of which draw parallels to the illustration of the Bethlehem Royal Hospital shown earlier. The New York Asylum also adopted methods of moral treatment. Clearly, English mental institutions inspired the organization of their American counterparts, both in terms of architecture as well as guiding tenets.

Several high-profile American writers, including Melville, criticized this view of disciplinary reform. As Colatrella writes, works by Melville often “resist conventions of the sentimental novel that described in positive terms how obedience could lead to social acceptance.” Colatrella implicates both Dickens and Melville as writers whose fictional characters possess eccentricities that “mark them as unfit to participate in a disciplinary society.” The difference between *Barnaby* and *Bartleby*, then, is that in the former, Dickens shows the need to “repair” the titular protagonist, thereby sharing a similar attitude to that of American social reformers. In “Bartleby”, however, Melville shows that it is society (not Bartleby himself) that needs to be repaired. This is because Dickens acknowledged idiocy as a neurological aberrancy, whereas Melville suggested traits of autism - specifically, its communicative and social impairments - should be expected in a pitiless industrial society. Consider how Colatrella describes the distinction between the works of Dickens and those of American writers such as Melville: “Dickens could simultaneously act as a critic of an establishment and as the most lionized and institutionalized writer of his society, but, for American writers, excessive criticism of authority was ironically the most American position they could take, the always idiosyncratic choice, and the most threatening toward the Republic” (Colatrella 11). Dickens criticizes the state government for improper paternal guidance, which causes society’s most vulnerable groups (including the mentally ill) to rebel and riot against the state. Yet he maintains his support for state-run British asylums, suggesting that the mentally ill should be sent to asylums that adhere to the principles of moral management. As such, Dickens

was an indirect proponent of the same American disciplinary system that Melville criticizes in “Bartleby”.

Just as Dickens believed that moral management could rid the mentally ill of their disease and accordingly enliven their latent faculties, the American medical system was organized on the premise that “with the right combination of habit and encouragement, anyone could be redeemed from evil instincts or corruption” (Colatrella 9). In “Bartleby”, Melville uses the principle of labeling theory to prove that this view of the mentally ill as deviants in need of help “served as support for a repressive, authoritarian system to control individual impulses perceived as deviant” (Colatrella 16). Unlike Dickens, who believed in the potential for institutionalization to bring society’s outcasts back to normative behavior, Melville uses “Bartleby” as a means of questioning the very definition of normative behavior itself, urging readers to consider how deviance is the result of tradition and establishment rather than nature.

In the next section, I will argue that Melville uses the lawyer as an emblem of the medical community in order to criticize its flaws - specifically, its tendency to label nonconformists as deviants without considering the true reason for their seemingly unusual behavior.

Chapter 5

AUTISM AS A CRITIQUE OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Although it may be tempting to view “Bartleby” primarily as an attack on capitalism (the full title of the work implicates Wall Street, after all), a deeper analysis of the story reveals that it is a pointed critique of the American medical system, as opposed to a simple critique of Wall Street capitalism. In this section, I will argue that Melville uses Wall Street and New York City in general as platforms to chastise the American desire to “reform” people who do not adhere to artificially contrived disciplinary standards. Specifically, Melville expresses dissatisfaction with society’s tendency to institutionalize individuals like Bartleby without considering the root cause of their supposedly “aberrant” behavior. Indeed, the lawyer regards Bartleby as a deviant for his seemingly abnormal behavior, but Melville suggests that such behavior was arguably in line with what one would expect from an employee working in similar conditions. As such, when considering Melville’s criticism of institutionalization (i.e., the eagerness to indiscriminately place those suffering from mental illness in penitentiaries or mental hospitals), it is no surprise that in “Bartleby”, the lawyer interrogates Bartleby and details his behavior in the same way as a physician performing a detailed clinical case report. The lawyer has been previously described as a “practical optimist, the blandly benevolent rationalist, as a representative liberal American” who “provides an image of a decent, well-meaning, prudent, rationalizing enforcer of established values” (Widmer 449). In this section, I will argue that these “established values” include those of the American medical

system. In this way, Melville uses the lawyer as a representative of the medical field in order to ultimately criticize its shortcomings when dealing with so-called “deviants.”

A medical case report, also known as a case history, is a “detailed description of a clinical encounter with a patient” (Trottier), and it is often written for the purpose of summarizing unique cases that may prove to be beneficial for other physicians and clinicians. Such reports have been an integral aspect of medicine since its very inception, as they make information about patients with rare and interesting conditions publicly accessible. Keeping this information in mind, the lawyer’s lengthy, interrogative descriptions of Barnaby certainly read like case histories. Consider this example, in which the lawyer describes Bartleby’s mysterious behavior:

I remembered that he never spoke but to answer; that though at intervals he had considerable time to himself, yet I had never seen him reading - no, not even a newspaper; that for long periods he would stand looking out, at his pale window...I was quite sure he never visited any refectory or eating house... that he never went any where in particular that I could learn; never went out for a walk...he had declined telling who he was, or whence he came, or whether he had any relatives in the world; that though so thin and pale, he never complained of ill health. (Melville 46)

In this excerpt, the lawyer thoroughly describes Bartleby’s behavior from the perspective of a keen observer who is perceptive of both Bartleby’s physical health (the lawyer mentions Bartleby’s slim, pallid frame, for instance) as well as his day-to-

day activities. In many ways, this description reads much like a psychiatric case report. Furthermore, Bartleby's described behavior matches the classical characteristics of autism, as defined by the DSM-5: the lawyer writes that Bartleby constantly looks out his window (indicative of a preference for routine, repeated behaviors), does not regularly interact with others (indicative of an impairment in sociability), and does not communicate to others about his whereabouts or his background story (indicative of an impairment in language). Aligning the lawyer's descriptions with those commonly made by physicians makes the lawyer an unofficial symbol of the 19th century American medical system. His failure to properly "treat" Bartleby (i.e., change his behavior), then, represents how the American disciplinary and medical systems were woefully underprepared to confront individuals as complex as Bartleby, whose behavior is the byproduct of social circumstances more so than any internal infirmity.



d'après Sir Luke Fildes, R. A. - Joseph Tomanek

Weyhe, Philadelphia

THE DOCTOR

The Doctor (1891) by Luke Fildes demonstrates a Victorian physician overlooking a sick child, whose parents are grieving in the periphery. The iconic painting has been used to implicate the qualities of an attentive, caring physician. Although the painting is originally English, it was eventually re-purposed and reproduced in America. Furthermore, the painting's depiction of a doctor as an honest, upright individual helped to contribute to the elevated status of physicians and the medical system in American society.

Another instance of the lawyer performing a case history-like analysis of Bartleby occurs when he has an internal monologue on the best way to remove Bartleby from his office. As he states: “Finally, I resolved upon this; - I would put certain calm questions to him the next morning, touching his history...” (Melville 48). Despite these efforts to understand Bartleby’s past, however, Bartleby reveals nothing, and the lawyer’s sympathy for Bartleby is gradually replaced by agitation. The lawyer cannot comprehend why Bartleby is defying his commands, as the former genuinely believes he is providing Bartleby everything that he could possibly need. In the following scene, the lawyer tries to extract information from Bartleby’s past, yet Bartleby refuses to provide any information:

‘Will you tell me, Bartleby, where you were born?’

‘I would prefer not to.’

‘Will you tell me any thing about yourself?’

‘I would prefer not to.’

‘But what reasonable objection can you have to speak to me? I feel friendly towards you...’

It was rather weak in me I confess, but his manner on this occasion nettled me.

Not only did there seem to lurk in it a certain calm disdain, but his perverseness seemed ungrateful, considering the undeniable good usage and indulgence he had received from me. (Melville 51)

Similar to a physician who prescribes medication to fix a patient's illness, the lawyer believes that the money he gives Bartleby as an employee should make him grateful. As stated earlier, though, Bartleby's "unusual" behavior is not the result of a simple treatable ailment (and is also not something that will go away with money), but is rather the result of the isolation and lifelessness that surrounds him. As suggested earlier, Bartleby's autistic behavior mirrors his environment – his lack of gregariousness and openness mirror his quiet, lifeless work environment. Yet the lawyer - just like a 19th century American physician - attempts to reduce Bartleby's behavior to a mere bodily ailment, even stating at one point that Bartleby is experiencing "misery" as a result of a "sad and silly brain" (Melville 44) as well as an "innate and incurable disorder" (Melville 48). Like Dickens did for Barnaby, the lawyer implicates neurological deviance as an explanation for Bartleby's seemingly aberrant behavior. The lawyer fails to see, however, that it is not Bartleby's abnormal brain that is to blame for his behavior; instead, the lawyer's repressive, indifferent work environment has caused Bartleby to act the way that he does. In this way, Melville proves that the lawyer, despite his earnest efforts, is simply incapable of relating to Bartleby and identifying the root cause of his problems, just as the 19th century American medical and reform sphere was incapable of truly understanding societal deviants.

Like the medical system, the lawyer implicates morality in his efforts to fix Bartleby. This is exemplified in a scene in which he claims to have sympathy for Bartleby's unusual behavior, yet this sympathy is predicated on his perception of

Bartleby as an exploitable commodity. Note how the lawyer describes his temper in relation to Bartleby's inconsistent work ethic: "If the individual so resisted [completing work] because of a not inhumane temper, and the resisting one perfectly harmless in his passivity; then, in the better moods of the former, he will endeavor charitably to construe to his imagination what proves impossible to be solved by his judgment" (Melville 31). Here, the lawyer implies that he only endeavors charitably toward Bartleby when the former is in a good mood, which means the lawyer's sympathy is both conditional and insincere. This quote also evinces the real reason the lawyer attempts to resolve Bartleby's "problem": the lawyer simply wants to make himself feel morally righteous, without any genuine concern for the reason behind Bartleby's behavior. When expressing his supposed compassion for Bartleby, the lawyer states that Bartleby "is useful to me...to befriend Bartleby; to humor him in his strange willfulness, will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually prove a sweet morsel for my conscience" (Melville 32). Just as the American disciplinary system believed in the potential to morally reform the mentally ill, the lawyer believes his righteousness can contribute to a reform in Bartleby's behavior.

In addition to not being able to identify the cause of Bartleby's behavior, the lawyer also vastly overestimates his own capabilities as a helpful boss. At one point, he thinks he has "masterfully" handled the situation with Bartleby, even though he has actually made no progress in changing Bartleby's behavior or even removing him from the office premises. As he states: "As I walked home in a pensive mood, my

vanity got the better of my pity. I could not but highly plume myself on my masterly management in getting rid of Bartleby...The more I thought over my procedure, the more I was charmed with it" (Melville 60). The lawyer's satisfaction with his own course of action (which ultimately fails anyway) is akin to how those in charge of the medical and disciplinary systems baselessly advocate for the process of institutionalizing patients with mental illness, even if this institutionalization leads to no tangible improvement in their health and behavior.

Melville indicates on several more occasions throughout the story that the lawyer is only feigning sympathy for Bartleby. As Bartleby's value as a commodity decreases, so does the lawyer's tolerance. Exasperated by Bartleby's refusal to work, the lawyer declares Bartleby's erratic behavior to be the product of an errant mind, which cannot be fixed. In reality, though, Bartleby's behavior is not unfixable - instead, the lawyer is simply too narrow-minded to realize the actual reason for Bartleby's behavior. Consider how the lawyer justifies his decision to no longer support Bartleby:

They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. And when it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor, common sense bids the soul rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and

incurable disorder. I might give him alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach. (Melville 47)

The lawyer views Bartleby's condition as an unfixable neurological condition, which makes sense because he represents the American medical community, which did not have the means to treat an individual as multifaceted as Bartleby, who does not conform to orthodox medical norms. Here, neurological deviance is used to validate an unwillingness to help, which is an interesting contrast to *Barnaby*, a novel in which deviance is used as a call for help. Moreover, the lawyer's belief that Bartleby's ailment is due to an unfixable defect in the soul greatly contrasts with Dickens' soul-based psychology, which was based on the premise that the mentally ill possessed intact, yet dormant, souls that could be repaired through proper treatment. Of course, Melville himself does not agree with the views of the lawyer, and merely uses him as a channel to convey the hypocrisy of the medical community as a whole. Evidently, the lawyer does not have a problem helping Bartleby when the latter can still contribute to his bottom line. Bartleby's autism is only a problem once Bartleby's value as a commodity starts to dissipate. When contrasting the lawyer's aforementioned description of Bartleby's "incurable" mind with an earlier description of Bartleby's assiduous nature, it becomes clear that the lawyer never cared about Bartleby to begin with. The lawyer has no problem with Bartleby's silence and incommunicability, for instance, when Bartleby is still working. As the lawyer describes: "His steadiness, his freedom from all dissipation, his incessant industry (except when he chose to throw

himself into a standing revery behind his screen), his great, stillness, his unalterableness of demeanor under all circumstances, made him a valuable acquisition. One prime thing was this,—he was always there;—first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night. ” Bartleby’s autism is initially an employable advantage for the lawyer, which is why he tolerates it. Once the autism manifests itself into a complete isolation from work activities, though, the lawyer wants Bartleby to leave.

Further examples of the lawyer’s selfishness can be seen in his treatment of two other employees in his office, Turk and Nippers, who have unusual work habits. Turk works efficiently in the morning and struggles to focus after twelve o’clock, whereas Nippers is the exact opposite. The lawyer does not pay too much attention to this peculiar behavior, since one employee is active while the other is not, which means he still ultimately benefits from their services. He writes, for instance, that Turk “was in many ways a most valuable person to me”, so “I was willing to overlook his eccentricities” (Melville 9). It is worth noting that the lawyer tolerates Turk’s “eccentricities” - or his “deviance” - since he benefits from Turk’s services. In fact, the lawyer even plans the schedules of Turk and Nippers such that he can attain maximum productivity from both, suggesting to Turk that “he need not come to my chambers after twelve...” (Melville 10). He even thinks that purchasing a coat for Turk will make him less grumpy. In contrast to the lawyer’s expectations, though, the coat does not bring Turk happiness. Instead, the coat “had a pernicious effect upon him” and “made him insolent” (Melville 15). If one considers the lawyer to be an

emblem of the medical community, this represents another example of a “treatment” gone wrong. Clearly, the lawyer’s methods of treatment for his employees, or his figurative patients, do not work.

When devising other methods of “treating” Bartleby (i.e., changing his behavior so as to make him complete his work), the lawyer expresses great frustration with Bartleby’s unwillingness to coherently communicate. As the lawyer writes: “Nothing so aggravates an earnest person as passive resistance” (Melville 31). This quote demonstrates exactly why autism functions so significantly in the plot: by virtue of its nature as a condition marked by a lack of communication, autism is associated with passive resistance. Active resistance can be silenced, but passive resistance cannot. Indeed, it would be easy to silence an individual that is already loud. Silencing an individual who protests quietly, though, requires much greater effort. If Bartleby were violent and outwardly stubborn about his working conditions, the lawyer would have had an excuse to dismiss him from the office. If he vandalized property in the lawyer’s office, for instance, the lawyer would have been justified in using police force to arrest Bartleby and thus remove him from the area. Instead, Bartleby never does anything so ostensibly wrong as to warrant immediate expulsion. He forces the lawyer to contemplate a reason to expel him. The lawyer technically retains the power to dismiss Bartleby throughout the course of the story, yet this power is only nominal, as all of his efforts to displace Bartleby fail. The more the lawyer fails to successfully dismiss Bartleby, the more the lawyer realizes that perhaps there is something wrong him as opposed to the scrivener:

You will not thrust him, the poor, pale, passive mortal,—you will not thrust such a helpless creature out of your door? you will not dishonor yourself by such cruelty? No, I will not, I cannot do that...Then something severe, something unusual must be done. What! surely you will not have him collared by a constable, and commit his innocent pallor to the common jail? And upon what ground could you procure such a thing to be done?—a vagrant, is he? What! he a vagrant, a wanderer, who refuses to budge? It is because he will not be a vagrant, then, that you seek to count him as a vagrant. That is too absurd.

(Melville 91)

The lawyer's aforementioned internal dialogue signifies a battle of his conscientiousness, and his inability to formulate a cohesive successful strategy to dismiss Bartleby represents his understanding that Bartleby may not be doing anything wrong, after all. Left without a solution, the lawyer eventually decides to move his own office, stating "since he will not quit me, I must quit him" (Melville 91).

Throughout the story, Melville presents the lawyer as a symbol of the American medical establishment. As such, his inability to identify the source of Bartleby's "deviant" behavior represents the primacy of 19th century medicine. In addition to not conforming to orthodox medical norms, Bartleby also disrupts the lawyer's way of life by refusing to serve as an economic commodity. Cleverly, Melville makes sure that Bartleby does not outwardly protest his repressive surroundings. Instead, Melville ascribes a condition marked by passivity to fight the

lawyer and the medical status quo that he represents. Bartleby's autism, then, functions to resist the lawyer's orthodox rules while helping Bartleby retain the power to do as he pleases.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Released within several years of each other during the middle of the 19th century, *Barnaby Rudge* and “Bartleby, the Scrivener” represent two fascinating perspectives on institutionalization, medicine, and the role of the bureaucratic status quo in aiding society’s most vulnerable groups. As writers from different parts of the world, Dickens and Melville produce works of fiction that speak to the contemporary issues afflicting their respective nations, while also managing to impart their own views of the mind and the role of medicine in aiding the mentally ill. Indeed, comparing *Barnaby* to “Bartleby” reveals how aspects of regional culture (whether it be English Chartism in the case of *Barnaby*, or Wall Street in the case of “Bartleby”) interact with each other to ultimately produce prevailing notions of neurological deviance. By reading these works, one is able to better understand how Victorians and industrial Americans perceived disability, especially in the context of the government’s role in treating it. Moreover, an examination of the works reveals how Dickens and Melville approached disability reform.

Although some argue that *Barnaby* is a call for reform to help society’s most vulnerable groups, the novel is in many ways a defense of existing salutary practices of helping the mentally ill. In the story, Dickens portrays institutionalization in a positive light, so long as it follows Conolly’s principles of moral therapy. Similarly, he calls for the perpetuation of communal support systems, in which entire groups of people tend to the needs of the vulnerable and impaired. “Bartleby”, on the other hand, is an unambiguous condemnation of industrialized America and its proclivity for attempting to reform individuals rather than reforming its own infrastructure.

Melville's work compels readers to question traditional definitions of disability, and what it truly means to be considered physically or intellectually impaired relative to the norm. He uses autism as a channel to communicate passive resistance against the American system of reform and medicine, presciently applying the principles of labeling theory to a character whose "deviance" is defined by his behavior relative to his surroundings as opposed to his own innate disposition. Dickens, on the other hand, views conformity and deviance as indicators of the need for stronger paternal guidance from both a communal and state governmental level.

To be sure, both *Bartleby* and *Barnaby* are portrayed as victims - one of an innate disorder, the other of a repressive, lonely society. The difference between the two characters, then, is in the authors' recommended course of treatment for them: Dickens believes in institutionalization and the implementation of moral management to aid the mentally ill, whereas Melville suggests the need for reform in the very makeup of society as opposed to medicalized techniques to assist society's "deviant" class. In this way, "*Bartleby*" and *Barnaby* represent two ideologically opposing portrayals of medicine and its capacity to heal. The antithetical positions adopted by both authors regarding medicalization represent a debate that is perhaps more relevant than ever in society, as election talk is continually dominated by arguments about the role of pharmaceuticals and the prison industrial complex. Although *Barnaby* and "*Bartleby*" are reputed for their intricate storylines and plot twists, analysis of the texts' representations of neurological deviance provides significant opportunity to understand 19th century attitudes toward the mentally ill and their role in society.

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