CHARLES DICKENS AND THE BILDUNGSROMAN

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Dickens's modes of unification and characterization, and his thematic preoccupations, in David Copperfield and Great Expectations are best understood when these two novels are considered as manifestations of the bildungsroman genre in England. The narrative structure, the kind of protagonist and the thematic concerns are all related to the central study of a young man's development from childhood to early adulthood.

Chapter One argues that Oliver Twist, despite its superficial resemblances to David Copperfield and Great Expectations, is not a bilgungsroman because its chronological scope is too limited and the hero's moral or psychological development is not the novel's central interest. Chapter Two argues that David Copperfield is Dickens's first, and purest, representative of the genre, displaying all the major characteristics outlined in my Introduction. Great Expectations, too, can be considered as a bildungsroman, but Dickens's narrative technique and concept of development have grown more complex, and he goes beyond the previous limits of the genre.

A sequential study of the novels shows Dickens's progress as a thinker, and as a technical novelist, from the relative simplicity of Oliver Twist to the great complexity of Great Expectations.

ABSTRAIT

David Copperfield et Great Expectations, ayant contribué à l'évolution du genre 'bildungsroman' en Angleterre, démontrent une structure et une méthode de caractérisation particulières et lient des thèmes divers pour soutenir leur étude principale du développement d'un jeune homme depuis son enfance.

Le premier chapitre propose que le roman intitulé Oliver Twist, bien qu'il ressemble à David Copperfield et à Great Expectations, ne doit pas être considéré comme étant un bildungsroman car il se limite à l'enfance du héros; aussi bien, son développement psychologique et moral ne forme pas l'intérêt principal de l'oeuvre. Le deuxième chapitre présente l'idée que David Copperfield fût le tout premier bildungsroman que Dickens ait écrit et qu'il en est le plus pur. Le troisième chapitre recherche les traits du genre bildunsroman dans Great Expectations tout en avouant que Dickens, avec une vision plus complèxe du développement et une technique romancière plus ambitieuse, dépasse ici les limites ordinaires du genre.

Lorsqu'on lit ces romans consécutivement, on peut voir l'acheminement de Dickens comme penseur et romancier où il surpasse la simplicité relative de Oliver Twist pour la plus grande complexité de Great Expectations.

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INTRODUCTION

The bildungsroman traces the development of a sensitive, introspective young hero as he passes through various significant experiences to reach a desirable degree of self-awareness.[1] The novel's focus on the hero's development dictates, to a large extent, the chronological scope and the thematic concerns of the work. The hero's life is recorded from his early years to young manhood. The record can begin when he is a few years old (Great Expectations) or even before his birth (David Copperfield). He lives his early years, generally, in a provincial setting, surrounded by people whose insensitivity to his personal qualities, to his dreams and ambitions, alienates him socially. His young manhood generally sees him liberated from the earlier social restraints; he moves from a provincial to a metropolitan environment and finds kindred spirits who foster his moral, intellectual and emotional growth. His alienation, or enforced solitude, during much of his earlier life, is conducive to that introspection which is a necessary quality of the bildungsroman hero. The hero comes to reflect on his own situation in the world, and on his own character. Without such reflection, his "apprenticeship to life"[2] would be impossible.

It is the concern with the hero's development, with his apprenticeship to life, that gives the bildungsroman its focus.

> The bildungsroman in its pure form has been defined as the 'novel of all-round development or self culture,' with 'a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the hero to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experiences.'[3]

Many young heroes lack this interest in their own being and moral progress. In novels like Tom Jones the central interest is not the hero's development itself, but rather the maze of situations in which he involves himself and from which he is frequently obliged to extricate himself by using his wits if he is not saved by a lucky accident.[4] The concern is with his amorous and financial career, and in Tom Jones's case, his true identity, which amounts to no more than knowing who his parents were. Heroes like Tom Jones lack the quality of refined introspection and, therefore, cannot be considered as bildungsroman heroes.

Suzanne Howe, in her study of the bildungsroman in England, decides to exclude Charles Dickens from her survey; she claims that the course of David's and Pip's development more closely resembles that of Tom Jones than it does that of the archetype hero of the bildungsroman Wilhelm Meister.[5]

> David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Pendennis - to name only a few examples- have been omitted. They are autobiographical and they deal, it is true, with young men who learn from experience and who grow up in the course of the story, but more by accident than design. David, Pip and Arthur Pendennis are, like Tom Jones, sadder and wiser young men in the last chapter than in the first, but their essential nature has not been modified. They have not developed through any inner realization of their own powers and the resolve to make their experience function. They have stumbled good-naturedly over their obstacles, righted themselves, and determined not to make that particular mistake again, but they are not imaginative enough or reflective enough to see the wider implications of what has happened to them.[6]

My disagreement with Howe is not on the matter of definition, since the quotation above has a clear concept of what the bildungsroman is, but rather on interpretation. Having worked out a most helpful theory of the bildungsroman, based on textual studies and a historical awareness of the genre's evolution, Howe then seems to misread certain novels which, in my opinion, deserve to be included in her survey of the genre. The principal concern of my thesis is to show that David Copperfield and Great Expectations are indeed bildungsromans. By examining the nature of the hero and the course of his development, I shall argue that David Copperfield and Great Expectations belong to this distinctive genre.

> The line at which the direct effect of Wilhelm Meister ceases, and independent English variations on the theme begins, is blurred and uncertain. Two languages and literary traditions, and two cultures during a complicated period of their history, have helped to make it so.[7]

This statement indicates that it is futile to evaluate the English bildungsroman insofar as it matches the German archetype, Wilhelm Meister. Goethe's novel provides a general theme to serve as the framework for the bildungsroman, that of the maturing hero extending his consciousness until a satisfactory point of development has been reached. Carlyle pointed out this central aspect of the work to the earliest English readers in the preface to the first edition of his translation Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels: Translated from the German of Goethe, (1824).[8]

> The development of man in all his endowments and faculties, gradually proceeding from the first rude exhibitions of puppets and mountebanks, through the perfection of poetic and dramatic art, up to the unfolding of the principle of religion, and the greatest of all arts, the art of life.[9]

At that point, as Wilhelm Meister indicates, the novel can legitimately conclude, since the hero is about to enter a new

phase. This new phase is adult life, the prelude or apprenticeship to which has just been described. Wilhelm Meister provides no more than the general framework that subsequent writers in the genre would use; the hero's social class, his amiability, his moral standards and intellectual qualities are largely a matter for each individual novelist to determine.[10]

Howe points out that the modification of the genre in England has complex cultural causes, among them the distinctive features of English and German romanticism. The realistic English settings of some eighteenth-century English fiction also contributed to the modification of the genre. Howe notes of Wilhelm Meister that "the characters that move through this story are to a great extent abstractions."[11] They represent ideas, or attitudes to life, and the novel is to a great extent a novel of ideas, sometimes laboriously explicated.[12] Carlyle, in his Preface, made similar observations:

> The characters are samples to judge of, rather than persons to love or hate. The everlasting disquisitions about plays and players, and politeness and activity, and art and nature, will weary many a mind that knows not and heeds not whether they are true or false.[13]

If the English bildungsroman had been content to remain a novel of ideas, then the differences between the English and German works would undoubtedly be less marked. One could at

least compare them on a level of abstraction without the intrusion of differentiating realistic detail. As they stand, however, the English bildungsromans rely greatly on particularizing detail. Defoe and Fielding had established a precedent of vivid and familiar settings: country inns, London drawing rooms, prisons and streets. They also include a gallery of satiric English rascal types, which Dickens would later accentuate in his creation of a grotesque population for his own novels. The autobiographical relationship between author and hero was another important modifying factor that enhanced the realistically English quality of the works. The autobiographical interest varies, of course, from one novel to the next, and while it is not a prerequisite feature of the genre it is a recurrent one. Dickens's experiences in the blacking warehouse find their way into David Copperfield: "I really think I have done it ingeniously," he told Foster, "and with a very complicated interweaving of truth and fiction."[14] The characters who surround the hero can also be drawn from the author's personal observations. Micawber has been identified with Dickens's own improvident father. The person on whom Miss Mowcher, the dwarf, was partly modelled recognized herself in Dickens's characterization.[15] Much of the material of the English bildungsroman, then, is not derived from its German ancestor. It expresses the author's own immediate knowledge of himself and of life, using the convenient

thematic framework which Wilhelm Meister provides and the realistic precedents of such English novelists as Defoe and Fielding to give expression to personal observation.

So far, I have spoken almost exclusively of the thematic features of the bildungsroman, its hero, its settings, its chronological limits and preoccupation with an idea of life. I shall show in the chapters on David Copperfield and Great Expectations how these two novels exhibit the recurring features I have mentioned. There are also formal features, however, which link Dickens's two novels to the bildungsroman genre, and these must also be considered in more detail in the following chapters. Suffice it to say here that the structure of the novel depends upon, or supports, the basic study of the protagonist's development. The focus on the hero imposes a certain unity in each novel in that it synthesizes a number of diverse episodes and characters by showing how they either foster or hinder the hero's growth. One can scarcely think of any character in any bildungsroman who remains neutral in this respect. Yet, despite this unity, each novel has difficulty in coming to a well-rounded conclusion, given the fairly strict chronological focus of the genre. The reader is left to speculate about the remainder of the hero's life, and the inclusion of an epilogue, or of a last chapter which performs the functions of an epilogue, does not solve the problem

of completeness integrally. To a certain degree, the end of the novel satisfies the reader's expectations in that the end of a phase is definitely reached, but the phase is always perceived as part of life's continuum. In Dickens's case, the first person perspective further complicates the structural difficulties. The reader is constantly aware that a certain amount of formative time elapsed between the end of the recorded events and the moment when the narrator begins to record retrospectively, during which time both objectivity and a probing interest in the self were developed. I shall consider how Dickens attempted to solve this problem of completeness in David Copperfield and Great Expectations. In the first he writes two concluding chapters functioning as an epilogue, and in the second he tries two versions of the last chapter neither of which is entirely satisfactory.

The bildungsroman genre, then, has certain thematic and structural features which, in my opinion, both David Copperfield and Great Expectations incorporate. If it is asked why Oliver Twist cannot be considered to be a bildungsroman, the answer clarifies what the bildungsroman is. Oliver Twist, to a certain extent, anticipates the two later novels in that it has a child hero who suffers early rejection, who moves to London and, in the end, establishes his identity.[16] The novel does not follow him to young manhood. It concludes when he is still

a child. Oliver does not develop morally, since he is always good, tender-hearted, honest and pure; in the den of iniquity he can feel only repulsion for those who exploit and pity for those, like Nancy, who suffer. The question of his identity, in the end, is treated rather like that of Tom Jones. The fact that he comes to know himself does not have any far-reaching psychological connotations; it serves essentially to establish him socially. In terms, therefore, of chronological scope and the moral and psychological complexity which provides a basis for the study of development, Oliver Twist falls short of David Copperfield and Great Expectations.

I shall interpret David Copperfield and Great Expectations in the light of the concept of the bildungsroman which this introduction has advanced. One major reason for applying the conventions of the bildungsroman to these two novels is that such an exercise allows one to see more clearly one of the lines of Dickens's development from David Copperfield to Great Expectations. This means that the greater complexity of Great Expectations might be better understood if one perceives a more ambitious use of the conventions than Dickens had seen fit to employ in David Copperfield. In the later novel, there is a more morally complex hero following a more difficult course of development; there is a more ambitious narrative structure supporting more complex thematic concerns. The differences between the two novels, however, are more of degree than of kind.

The 'kind,' despite modifications, is recognisably the bildungsroman. Having advanced a concept of the genre and suggested why Dickens might usefully be considered as contributing to the bildungsroman tradition, it is now appropriate to interpret the individual works in the light of the foregoing concepts.

NOTES

[1] Generally, the bildungsroman heroes are Romantic or post-Romantic because "to the authors of the Bildungsroman, as to Wordsworth, the child was an entity in himself. . . . Not until the psychology of the child was taken seriously as an appropriate literary concern was the writing of the English bildungsroman a possible enterprise." (Jerome Hamilton Buckley, Seasons of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding, Harvard University Press, 1974). Buckley includes such heroes as Julien Sorel (Le Rouge et Le Noir), Jude (Jude The Obscure), Philip Carey (Of Human Bondage), Paul Morel (Sons and Lovers), as well as David in David Copperfield and Pip in Great Expectations. All these novels contain many of the themes and characteristics outlined in this introduction.

[2] The term bildungsroman should be distinguished from entwicklungsroman where the concept of the hero's growth is ill-defined, merely acknowledging that the hero does grow; and from the term Erziehumgsroman where the hero follows a programmed course of study in order to develop.

[3] Buckley, Seasons of Youth, p. 13.

[4] Cf. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975; paperback), 274 ff. "Tom Jones's character . . . exhibits some development, but it is of a very general kind." He then refers to Fielding's static view of human development.

[5] Suzanna, Howe, Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen: Apprenticeship to Life (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930).

[6] Howe, Kinsmen, p. 14. More recent studies of the bildungsroman echo Howe's opinions of Dickens; see Heather M. Ballon, "The Bildungsroman in Recent Canadian Fiction" (unpublished McGill M.A. Thesis, 1977): "Dickens is more a picaresque adventure than a bildungsroman because Pip is neither imaginative nor reflective enough to understand what is happening to him. . . ."

[7] Howe, Kinsmen, p. 7.

[8] London, Chapman and Hall, 1899; AMS edition (New York), 1969.

[9] Carlyle, Wilhelm Meister, pp. 6-7.

[10] Carlyle, for example, says of Wilheml: "The hero is a milksop, whom, with all his gifts, it takes an effort to avoid despising."

[11] Howe, Kinsmen, p. 50.

[12] see Howe, Kinsmen, p. 43: "Meister is something for those who want ideas in their novels. Sometimes these ideas are an organic part of the structure. . . ."

[13] Carlyle, Wilhelm Meister.

[14] Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph, 2 vols. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), 11, p. 667.

[15] Johnson, Dickens, p. 674.

[16] It anticipates them both in terms of its autobiographical preoccupations. Sherman Eoff, in "Oliver Twist and the Spanish Picaresque Novel" (Studies in Philogy 54 1957, 440-447) points out how independent Oliver Twist is of the Picaresque edition

and attributes its independence to Dickens's autobiographical interest, referring particularly to the blacking-warehouse period of Dickens's life. Ernest Boll, in "Charles Dickens in Oliver Twist" (Psychoanalytic Review, 27 [1940], 133-143) draws many parallels between facts in Dickens's life and the details of Oliver Twist.

CHAPTER I

Oliver Twist: Dickens's Preparation for the Bildungsroman Genre

Oliver Twist[1] is not a bildungsroman, but does display certain significant features which Dickens will develop more fully when writing his bildungsromans. Oliver Twist simply does not go far enough to be an apprenticeship novel. The novel traces the hero's progress from birth to early adolesence and then leaves him in the hands of kindly people who will look after him. Although his trials are severe, when he is forced to dwell among evil-doers, he does not cause the reader to fear for his moral safety; he does not commit a single act with which he can reproach himself; rather, he is the innocent victim of other people's sinfulness, and he is unassailably good. Finally, Oliver Twist cannot be considered a bildungsroman because Oliver does not learn enough about adult life by the end of the novel to enable him to assume the responsibilities of adulthood. Many of the events in the novel, based for example on Nancy's relationship with Sikes, on Nancy's conversations with Rose Maylie, on Mark's dealings with the Bumbles, are not part of Oliver's consciousness, but are presented by an omniscient third person narrator. In the third person bildungsroman, the distance between the viewpoint of the omniscient narrator and that of the young hero decreases as the hero grows

in consciousness; in Oliver Twist, however, the distance still remains remarkably great between the critical adult narrator's viewpoint and the young hero's, so that one cannot truly say there is a growth to an adult level of vision.

The end of the first chapter presents Oliver's situation quite clearly, in a way that will arouse the reader's interest in his material welfare: he is "a parish child -- the orphan of a workhouse -- the humble half-starved drudge -- to be cuffed and buffeted through the world -- despised by all, and pitied by none." (Ch. 1, p.3) Oliver begins on the very lowest scale in life; he is totally vulnerable and molded in the wholly insensitive hands of Mr. Bumble, Mrs. Mann, the workhouse Board, and whoever else chooses to become involved in his development. The second chapter deals in a sympathetic, though perfunctory, way with 'Oliver's Growth, Education and Board' until he is nine years old. The very perfunctory style of the chapter conveys the lack of interest bestowed on these most essential aspects of Oliver's growth. It is clear, indeed, that he has hardly grown; he is "a pale thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference"; his education has been totally neglected and his board has been frugal. (Ch. 2, p. 5) From the bureaucratic point of view, he lacks any personal identity. His name alone, conferred by Bumble from an alphabetically ordered list, indicates his place in an

impersonal system: "The last was a S, -- Swubble, I named him. This was a T, -- Twist, I named him." (Ch. 2, p. 7) The reader takes an interest in Oliver not only because he is the victim of such a hideous system of deprivation, but because his sensitivity and virtue make him seem deserving of a much better lot in life. Much of the novel centres on the circumstances that will contribute to Oliver's worldly advancement and make his life more than a mere battle for survival; Oliver's social origins are finally established, and he is liberated from the bureaucratically-assigned place in the world to one for which he seems more fitted by his nature and his social origins.

Oliver, like Dickens's later apprenticeship heroes, in their childhood phase, is emotionally starved, and suffers infinitely, with his sensitive consciousness, in an unfeeling world. His earliest years, under Mrs. Mann (the name implies the lack of maternal interest she took in her charges), and the subsequent direction of his life by the 'Board' of the Workhouse, show that his genuine needs for emotional satisfaction remain unsatisfied. In Chapter Four, the omniscient narrator explicitly describes Oliver's sensitivity: "The simple fact was, that Oliver, instead of possessing too little feeling, possessed rather too much; and was in a fair way of being reduced, for life, to a state of brutal stupidity and sullenness by the ill-usage he had received." (Ch. 4, pp.22-3) A demonstration

of this sensitive awareness of his emotional deprivation is the scene in which he accompanies Bumble to Mr. Sowerberry's:

> 'No, no, sir,' sobbed Oliver, clinging to the hand which held the well-known cane; 'no, no, sir; I will be good indeed; indeed, indeed I will, sir! I am a very little boy, sir; and it is so———so———'
> 'So what?' inquired Mr. Bumble in amazement.
> 'So lonely, sir! So very lonely!' cried the child. 'Everybody hates me. Oh! sir, don't, don't pray be cross to me!' The child beat his hand upon his heart; and looked in his companion's face, with tears of real agony.
> (Ch. 4, p. 23)

Yet, although Oliver's sensitive nature is outlined, the reader never enters the young hero's mind to share his thoughts and feelings for any sustained length of time. The narrator observes him from a certain sympathetic vantage point, but does not draw close enough to explore his inner being. He is presented unlike David and Pip, who, as first-person narrators, explore their own growth through analysis of their experience and observation. Oliver is presented as a less complex and less interesting character; he is simply an innocent, good boy who is the victim of an evil world. It is the circumstances of birth and of his life that are interesting and the narrative focus falls on the mysterious aspects of his circumstances rather than on his growth.

Oliver, like David and Pip, goes to live in London early in life, and there the battle for Oliver's soul begins in earnest. Yet Oliver, and the readers until the closing chapters, are unaware of the full magnitude of that battle. Fagin's world is threatening enough, but the alliance of Fagin and Monks is formidable (as the alliance of Orlick and Compeyson will be in Great Expectations). Fortunately for Oliver, however, the forces of good also unite to save him; Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies rescue Oliver from the hands of Fagin, and later from Fagin and Monks combined, and set about establishing the truth of his circumstances. The reader fears little for Oliver's moral welfare, since his goodness is wholly exemplary. The rationale behind the fear the reader does feel is that no one is incorruptible. Nancy is the living evidence of this principle; in her goodness and sympathy, she resembles Oliver, but she was sucked into the corrupt world to the extent that she even declines Rose Maylie's offer of redemption. She indicates what Oliver could become, were his goodness to be undermined. Certainly Monks and Fagin have the greatest faith in Oliver's evil future; they believe they simply have to create the conditions that will make him evil. Oliver's own personality, however, is a sufficient buttress against their moral assault on him. He can inspire goodness in Nancy, and his innocence shines forth so as to convince Mr. Brownlow and

the Maylies that he deserves to be rescued. They need to save him only socially, of course, since he has not sinned.

Since the centre of the story is Oliver's progress in the world, Monks, rather than Fagin, must be seen as the villain who impedes that progress; Fagin is merely the agent. Fagin, like Sowerberry, and like the Workhouse Board that offers five pounds for Oliver Twist, treats Oliver as a mere commodity in Fagin's own self-interested organisation. Fagin, initially, would have the boy steal, with the sole intention of acquiring Oliver's small gains. Monks, however, is determined to destroy Oliver's goodness. It is significant that his motivation is financial; Dickens will explore the corruptive power of money more fully in Great Expectations, but even in Oliver Twist he shows its evil influence in Fagin's and Monks's actions, and in the whole story of Oliver's early years at Mrs. Mann's and the Workhouse, where he is starved so that those who feed him benefit from what they save by depriving him.

Oliver's rescure establishes him in the world; it signifies the end of deprivation: material, emotional, and moral. Mr. Brownlow dresses him well and encourages him to read, and he satisfies Mr. Brownlow's emotional needs since that gentleman already suffers from a sense of loss before Oliver arrives: "The persons on whom I have bestowed my dearest love, lie deep in their graves. . . . I have not made a coffin of my heart, and sealed it up, for ever, on my best

affections." (Ch. 14, p. 85) Oliver's rescue provides him with models of goodness and love after whom he can mold himself, and these models contrast with those Fagin offered: speaking of the Dodger, Fagin says to Oliver: "He'll be a great man himself; and will make you one too, if you take pattern by him." (Ch, 9, p. 55)

It is inevitable that Oliver should develop as a result of his experiences. The meditative, observant, and sensitive quality of the hero is evident throughout. This same quality will become the strongest base of Pip's and David's character. At the end of Chapter Five, for example, when Oliver, in his capacity as the undertaker's apprentice, sees extreme poverty, grief, and death, he "walked back to the shop: thinking over all he had seen and heard." (Ch. 5, p. 34) The title of Chapter Ten specifies that Oliver learns as a result of experience and observation: 'Oliver Becomes Better Acquainted With the Characters of His New Associates; And Purchases Experience At A High Price.' Yet the scope of Oliver Twist is greater than the scope of its hero's development. It is the third-person narrator, with his mature and critical eye fixed upon the world, who places Oliver and his history in its larger context; the young Oliver is totally unequal to the third-person narrator's degree of perception. David Copperfield and Pip define the limits of their autobiographies, and their consciousness controls and determines to a great extent the nature

and quality of the reader's response. Oliver is very much a small boy, despite the magnitude of his experiences. He can scarcely understand the depths of Nancy's degradation, her attachment to Sikes, or Rose's relationship to Harry. These are matters that the omniscient writer presents to the adult reader as they are beyond the scope of the boy's experience, and Oliver has not grown enough to understand them. Essentially, it is the reader of Oliver Twist who grows, and not the hero. The extremes of evil and of good, the criminal world and its assorted inhabitants, the Workhouses, foster homes, masters and apprentices are all presented in a social commentary that Oliver himself, despite his first-hand knowledge, is not articulate enough to make and scarcely old enough to understand. His goodness as well as his years prevent him from fully understanding the nature of the evil to which he has been exposed. In the penultimate chapter, the moral contrast is stark when he visits Fagin in prison and begs to pray for him. "'Oh! God forgive this wretched man!' cried the boy with a burst of tears." (Ch. 52, p. 364) His goodness and kind heart are fully in evidence, but he does not perceive the full depths of Fagin's evil; clearly, it requires more than a simple boy's prayer to move the man's heart to goodness.

Dickens, in the last chapter, is faced with a difficulty that will present itself again in the bildungsroman. The

narrative has closed satisfactorily with the exposure of Monks, the destruction of Fagin's gang, and the establishment of Oliver in his proper place in the world. The hero, however, and his associates, continue to live on, and the reader is interested in their life as it extends beyond the scope of the novel. Hence, an epilogue is necessary. In Oliver Twist, as in David Copperfield and Great Expectations the epilogue attempts to be in keeping with the general tenor of the novel. Here, the good are rewarded and enjoy a pastoral existence removed from the impure metropolis, and the evil are justly punished. Most importantly the hero is seen to be at the beginning of a whole new existence made possible by the preceding events in the novel:

> How Mr. Brownlow went on, from day to day, filling the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge, and becoming attached to him, more and more, as his nature developed itself, and shewed the thriving seeds of all he wished him to become . . . these are all matters which need not be told. (Ch. 53, pp.367-8)

In David Copperfield and Great Expectations, the chronological scope of the novel is greater; the heroes become young men, fall in love, have financial responsibilities and pursue careers. Oliver has not yet entered this phase of development,

although he has spent time in the world. His time, however, has not been truly formative. His goodness and gentleness are inherent and the repulsive nature of evil merely strengthens his moral qualities instead of undermining them. Oliver, because of his years, is a relatively passive character; although he resists evil, he does not have the practical knowledge to destroy Fagin and Monks; he relies on his good friends to fight his worldly battles for him. His moral battle with evil, though, he fights entirely by himself. Oliver's age, then, when the novel ends, and the simplified presentation of his character in all its aspects, including the psychological and the moral, prevent us from considering the novel as a bildungsroman. It is a novel, rather, of a child's premature introduction to a less innocent world than that of childhood, and his rescue from that world until such time as he is more fit to resume his progress.

NOTES

[1] Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist, ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). All quotations from the text will be documented at the end of each citation.

CHAPTER II

David Copperfield: Dickens's First Bildungsroman

The first sentence in David Copperfield[1] is somewhat disconcerting for those who would view the novel as a bildungsroman. "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." The centrality of David Copperfield should never be seriously in doubt if the novel is truly a bildungsroman. Happily, the remainder of the novel dispels any doubts which the novel's first timid sentence might raise. The sentence is an important indication, though, of the narrator's stature in his narrative. His observations of other lives are as important to his development as the actions in his own life. In the end it is David's self-interest that absorbs and synthesizes the diverse elements which he observes, and evaluates them in relation to his own development. The second chapter is called, significantly, "I Observe"; the title of Chapter Nineteen reiterates the value of observation: "I Look About Me, and Make a Discovery." Indeed, all the chapters might appropriately bear either of these titles, since the course of David's development is recorded as a prolonged sequence of observation and discovery, where the hero learns as much from his sensitive perception of others' experiences as he does from his own experiences. If the reader sometimes

feels that the affairs of Mr. Peggotty and little Emily, of the Micawber or the Strong family, or of Heep and Wickfield, are being presented with more pressing interest than David's own personal affairs, then the feeling is a false one; the objects of observation do not obscure the observer, but rather reveal his sensitivity. The experiences of the observed others are impressive because David makes them, in a way, his own.

David's sensitive observations, his responsiveness to moods and feelings, are underlined from the earliest chapters. "I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy." (Ch. 2, p. 24) This quality of observation does not confine itself to noting physical detail; it expresses David's sensibility. On the subject of the best parlour, David says:

> There is something of a doleful air about that room to me, for Peggotty has told me - I don't know when, but apparently ages ago - about my father's funeral, and the company having their black cloaks put on. (Ch. 2, p. 26)

Later, as the child develops, his observations will become less impressionistic and more precise. David's observant development is accelerated as the secure, impressionistic childhood world, where the melancholy atmosphere of best parlours has something sweet, is threatened by the intrusion of the Murdstones.

To observation is now added accurate analysis; of his mother's and Murdstone's relationship, David says:

> I knew as well, when I saw my mother's head lean down upon his shoulder, and her arm touch his neck - I knew as well that he could mould her pliant nature into any form he chose, as I know, now, that he did it. (Ch. 4, p. 55)

There is a careful distinction between the 'now' and 'then' in the quotation above, to eliminate any doubt that actual childhood observation might be confused by the narrator with retrospective knowledge. Retrospective knowledge merely confirms what the child knew from observation and intuition. David's description of Miss Murdstone's personality is based on a series of details that, though concrete in the simple way that a child would note them, describe that lady's hard personality in symbolic terms:

> She brought with her two uncompromising hard black boxes, with her initials on the lids in hard brass nails. When she paid the coachman she took her money out of a hard steel purse, and she kept the purse in a very jail of a bag which hung upon her arm by a heavy chain, and shut up like a bite. (Ch. 4, p. 57)

Added to this is David's comment that Miss Murdstone has extended the limited scope of his observation: "I had never, at

that time, seen such a metallic lady altogether as Miss Murdstone was." (Ch. 4, p. 57)

Throughout the childhood episodes, David's emotional needs are exposed, and these needs strengthen his sensitive response to others. Leaving Mr. Peggotty's boathouse to return to his own changed home, David says: "We were greatly overcome at parting, and if ever, in my life, I have had a void made in my heart, I had one made that day." (Ch.3, p. 51) On the night before David is to be sent away to school, Peggotty comes to comfort him when he is locked in his room. "She did not replace my mother -- no one could do that -- but she came into a vacancy in my heart, which closed upon her, and I felt towards her something I have never felt for any other human being." (Ch. 4, p. 71) This sensibility to mood and feeling pervades the first episodes. Having returned from school, David finds his mother and Peggotty alone because the Murdstones are out visiting; when the latter return: "It appeared to my childish fancy, as I ascended to the bedroom where I had been imprisoned, that they brought a cold blast of air into the house which blew away the old familiar feeling like a feather." (Ch. 8, p. 124) After his mother dies David is capable of analyzing Mr. Mudstone's feelings, accurately, for Peggotty:

> "Mr. Murdstone likes me less than he used to. He never liked me much, Peggotty, but he would rather not even see me now, if he

> can help it."
> "Perhaps it's his sorrow," said Peggotty, stroking my hair.
> "I am sure, Peggotty, I am sorry too. If I believed it was his sorrow, I should not think of it at all. But it's not that, oh no, it's not that."
> "How do you know it's not that?" said Peggotty. . . .
> "Oh, his sorrow is another and quite a different thing. He is sorry at this moment, sitting by the fireside with Miss Murdstone, but if I was to go in, Peggotty, he would be something besides."
> "What would he be?" said Peggotty.
> "Angry," I answered, with an involuntary imitation of his dark frown. "If he was only sorry, he wouldn't look at me as he does. I am only sorry, and it makes me feel kinder." (Ch. 10, p. 143)

In this dialogue, David's perceptions and powers of analysis clearly surpass those of the adult Peggotty. His discernment of feeling and of the essence of relationships is obvious.

What emerges from the early chapters is a portrait of a highly sensitive boy, interested in his own development, and exhibiting, even in these early years, a fine understanding of the events and characters that influence his growth. His sense of deprivation when his mother marries again, and later when she dies, creates special emotional needs; his education under Mr. Murdstone, and later under Creakle, implies certain intellectual needs to be fulfilled in an educational environment that should take account of his individual sensibility. David is clearly aware of these needs, as he is aware of the

environment, the circumstances and the characters that deprive him. It is difficult, therefore, to accept Howe's judgement on David Copperfield and Pip that "they are not imaginative enough or reflective enough to see the wider implications of what has happened to them."[2] David is imaginative and reflective even in his early years, and his development to adulthood further refines such qualities to the point where he is perceptive enough, and far-ranging and objective enough, to conduct a retrospective survey of the development of these qualities in himself. David, in the end, satisfies his emotional and intellectual needs as his awareness of them becomes more precise. I cannot agree, either, with Howe's opinion that Pip and David "have not developed through any inner realisation of their own powers and the resolve to make their experience function."[3]

One can best understand how David Copperfield is a bildungsroman by observing how the narrator charts the growth of his sensibility. David's apprenticeship to life is begun remarkably early, and life takes its most hideous and adverse form in the combined personalities of the Murdstones. Miss Murdstone, particularly, is lacking in those qualities of feeling David had found in the other two important women in his life, his mother and Peggotty, because her character is based on a business system which precludes emotion.

> I do not doubt that she had a choice pleasure in exhibiting what she called her self-command, and her firmness, and her strength of mind, and her common sense, and the whole diabolical catalogue of her unamiable qualities. . . . She was particularly proud of her turn for business, and she showed it now in reducing everything to pen and ink, and being moved by nothing. (Ch. 9, p. 137)

In the months after his mother's death, the Murdstones display the same systematic lack of feeling to the extent that David is emotionally ravaged. "I was not actively ill-used. I was not beaten, or starved, but the wrong that was done to me had no intervals of relenting, and was done in a systematic, passionless manner. Day after day, week after week, month after month, I was coldly neglected." (Ch. 10, p. 157) The destructive intentions of the Murdstones soon become quite explicit; they have no time for his introspection and feelings ("moping and droning") and prescribe a course of activity to crush his sensibility.

> "I say, David, to the young this is a world for action, and not for moping and droning in. It is especially so for a young boy of your disposition, which requires a great deal of correcting, and to which no greater service can be done than to force it to conform to the ways of the working world, and to bend it and break it."
> "For stubborness won't do here," said

> his sister. "What it wants is, to be crushed. And crushed it must be. Shall be, too!" (Ch. 10, pp. 159-60)

Thus David's apprenticeship to life begins under the tutelage of people who understand neither David nor life. They see an antipathy between David's spirit and life, when they should conceive, rather, that there might be a kind of life that would foster David's spirit. Mr. Murdstone sends David into the world with the terrible words: "What is before you is a fight with the world, and the sooner you begin it, the better." (Ch. 10, p. 160)

David's educational and emotional preparation for the life that Murdstone designs for him has been undeniably apt, though the reader will bear in mind that both the preparation and the designed life are, from what David has given the reader to know of himself, highly undesirable. His education under Murdstone, at home, is as destructive in its design as Murdstone's later commission of him to the world. David had been "apt enough to learn, and willing enough," when his mother had taught him. (Ch. 4, p. 62)

> But these solemn lessons which succeeded those, I remember as the death-blow at my peace, and a grievous daily drudgery and misery. They were very long, very numerous, very hard - perfectly unintelligible, some of them, to me - and I was

> generally as much bewildered by them
> as I believe my poor mother was herself.
> (Ch. 4, p. 63)

The lessons are designed to implant in both David and his mother the Murdstone principle of firmness. The lessons are so vivid in David's memory that, as his narrative shows, he can relive them intensely in the present tense. What keeps David from being 'almost stupefied' by this education is his discovery of his father's collection of novels. "They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time." (Ch. 4, p. 65) David's fancy does manage to survive the adversities David is to encounter; at Creakle's school, it enables him to win the favour of the esteemed Steerforth as he exercises his own narrative powers to summarise his explorations in fiction. Later still, of course, the reader gathers from his modest references in his history that he went beyond summary and impressed the reading public with his own literary expressions of fancy. An important aspect of this personal education in literature is that it connects him with the father he never knew, the father whom Aunt Betsey condemns now and then as a hopeless dreamer. This connection is stronger, in the long run, than the ties with which Mr. Murdstone attempted to link David to the Murdstones' values.

Before David's working life begins in the firm of Murdstone and Grinby, his earlier excursions into the world offer valuable formative lessons. His experiences at Creakle's school are at least as important as those very contrasting lessons in the benevolent world of Yarmouth, since David, at school, begins entirely alone and is obliged to develop his own resourcefulness. His experience with the waiter at the inn, who eats David's food and drinks his ale and takes one of his "three bright shillings" from him, does not dispel his naïveté immediately: "I had no serious mistrust of him on the whole, even then." (Ch. 5, p. 79) It takes a number of similar experiences for David to realise that in his dealings with the world he must exercise some care with his money. In the following chapter Steerforth soon asks him what money he has, then appoints himself the custodian of David's seven shillings. Listening to Steerforth's plans for its quick and frivolous disposal, David "was a little troubled in /his/ mind . . . ." Steerforth "was as good as his word, if that were all right." (Ch. 6, p. 94) Yet David's innocence is seen to persist as he adds, "though I had preserved the piece of paper they were wrapped in, which was a precious saving."(Ch. 6,p.94) This sentimental attachment is not seen to be entirely laudatory, especially when it is viewed in the context of David's fully experiences in Creakle's school. One of the most dramatic moments is Steerforth's public humiliation of Mell. Both had shown

kindness to David; Mell's, one feels, was a disinterested kindness, based on a professional and personal recognition of David's qualities. Yet, Steerforth's abominable behaviour to Mell does not destroy David's hero worship. Steerforth's subsequent comments on Peggotty and his class, like the comments Rosa Dartle and Mrs. Steerforth would make, are also taken mildly by David, who, easily able to follow Steerforth's advice, can remember his friend at his best, despite Steerforth's crimes against David's best friends.

It is not noticeable of David's apprenticeship to life that he grows more rapidly in worldly knowledge than in the more important knowledge of 'the heart.' His working life at Murdstone's and Grinby's and his first contacts with the Micawber family are intimately connected. "I know enough of the world, now, to have almost lost the capacity of being much surprised by anything, but it is matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age." (Ch. 11, p. 161) This perception of being 'thrown away' signifies David's important recognition of his own value; the most important aspects of his early formation are seen clearly because they are gravely threatened. The narrator speaks of: "The misery it was to my young heart to believe that day-by-day what I had learned, and taught, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, would pass away from me, little-by-little, never to be brought back any more. . . ."

(Ch. 11, p. 163) The self-conscious quality of David's development cannot be in doubt after reading these items. David knows who and what he is and recognizes the disparity between what he has become and what he might have been, given kinder circumstances.

Yet in this grim world to which David has been consigned, or apprenticed, Micawber in many ways acts as a saviour. This role will be confirmed in his subsequent exposure of Heep. Micawber, on the most superficial level, might be taken as continuing the line established by the crafty waiter, and by Steerforth, in that David is again separated from his money, but given that Micawber exerts such positive influence in the novel, he must be seen in a more favourable light. Micawber's good intentions and good will, his congenital improvidence, his family's amiability, his active hostility to the doctrines of firmness, and his affection and esteem for David (at a time when no one else in the world, except for the distant Peggotys, had any positive feelings for him) endear Micawber to the reader. He provides a model of family warmth that encompasses the solitary David, as Peggotty and his adopted family's warmth had embraced him. David, in sharing Micawber's difficulties, can forget for a while his own troubles:

> Mr. Micawber's difficulties were in addition to the distressed state of my mind. In my forlorn state I became quite attached to the family, and used to walk about, busy with Mrs. Micawber's calculations of ways and means, and heavy with the weight of Mr. Micawber's debts. (Ch. 11, p. 170)

Micawber's life, in itself, is instructive to the observant David. Micawber himself pithily summarizes the source of his difficulties in a financial formula for David: "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery." (Ch. 12, p. 182) Thus David continues his worldly education; he carries the Micawber's portable property to the pawn shops and negotiates for a fair price; in the end he sees his friend incarcerated in the King's Bench Prison. Micawber had afforded David a strongly emotional environment in what must otherwise have been a sterile existence and taught him a valuable lesson about management and finances.

It is David's education in the world thus far that allows him to "form a great resolution" as the title of Chapter Twelve states. He had been consigned by Murdstone to a harsh life in London; now he acts as an independent person, leaving the relative security of his London existence to undertake the journey to Dover. The fact that David is robbed of his money

and box before he even sets out, that he pawns his clothing on the way, and finally that he arrives bedraggled and weary, clearly indicate that his education in the world, begun remarkably early, has been harsher than he deserves and that in an emotional and material sense he has lost much and learnt much thus far. He can give a precise summary of his identity, shaped from his preceding miserable experiences, when he arrives at his aunt's in Dover.

> "I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk - where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey." (Ch. 13, p. 198)

David, until now, is clearly the centre of his own story, much as the child perceives himself to be the centre of his own world. Having reached this lowest point, his fortunes can only improve. He begins in the world again under more benevolent auspices; he observes at least as much as he acts, and his history becomes more thoughtful and analytical as he sees other lives in relation to his own development. His first such observation is selfish, and understandably so given the depth of his distress as he relates Mr. Dick's relationship with his

aunt to his own relationship with her: "At the same time, I must say that the generosity of her championship of poor harmless Mr. Dick not only inspired my young breast with some selfish hope for myself, but warmed it unselfishly towards her." (Ch. 14, p. 212) Besides giving David, in her own way, her affections she effectively destroys the threat of his former existence to his present happiness in the defeat of the Murdstones, and shows herself in a distinctly contrasting light: "'We must not forget your education,'" she tells him, even though David's schooling at Canterbury will mean a mutually painful separation for them (Ch. 15, p. 222) She enquires if he is happy (Ch. 15, p. 223), unlike the Murdstones who see David's education as a grim ordeal.

The next phase of David's development corresponds to the period he spends in Canterbury. Although we know that he made remarkable progress in his studies, enough to become Dr. Strong's personal secretary at a later date, it is the development of his character generally, rather than his academic progress, which is chiefly recorded. His earliest years in Canterbury constitute a period of transition, where he still bears the scars of his previous experience and has difficulty in relating to his more inexperienced peers. The healing influence comes, however, not in Dr. Strong's, but in Mr. Wickfield's house.

> But there was such an influence in Mr. Wickfield's old house, that when I knocked at it, with my new school-books under my arm, I began to feel my uneasiness softening away. As I went up to my airy old room, the grave shadow of the staircase seemed to fall upon my doubts and fears, and to make the past more indistinct. (Ch. 16, 234)

The serious atmosphere and healing influence are later identified with Agnes. The most important aspect of Copperfield's education in Canterbury consists of other relationships and other lives. One sees him sensitively observing the sensitive Agnes, for example: "[Mr. Wickfield] was, for the most part, gay and cheerful with us, but sometimes his eyes rested on her, and he fell into a brooding state, and was silent. She always observed this quickly, I thought, and always roused him with a question or caress." (Ch. 15, p. 230)

Copperfield's years in Canterbury are not purely happy, even though he has exchanged his past life for a better one. Although there are no major disturbances in his own life, he is made vaguely uneasy on account of those people who help to make his own life happy. In this Eden, there are the serpents of Heep and Jack Maldon, who threaten to destroy the households of Wickfield and Strong, respectively, and Copperfield is aware of the threatening presence, even without fully understanding it. The field of his observation is becoming more complex as he grows older. A marriage and a business relationship difficult

to understand provide matter for his observations. From Wickfield's apparent suspicions of Mrs. Strong's fidelity, David acquires his own: "As the Doctor turned his kind face, with its smile of simplicity and gentleness, towards her, she dropped her head more. I noticed that Mr. Wickfield looked at her steadily." (Ch. 16, p. 247)

Copperfield is becoming more aware of the undercurrents in human relationships. During this same period, he discovers the blight in his aunt's life when the innocent Mr. Dick asks him for information about "the man" to whom his aunt gives money. The story of her unhappy marriage does not emerge until much later. It is Agnes, who has replaced Wickfield's deceased wife in his life, who shows David a relationship based on love and truth and goodness. "The influence for all good, which she came to exercise over me at a later time, begins already to descend upon my breast." (Ch. 16, p. 237)

These sources of good and evil turn the focus of David's attention from himself to the world, though ultimately, of course, the world relates back to himself. By observing these details in the lives of Wickfield, Strong, Agnes, Heep and his Aunt, David learns more about life's complexities. His powers of observation and understanding are sharpened. They are still not sharp enough to discern the true feelings of Agnes towards him, or to understand the full implications of Heep's humbleness or of his own suspicions of Mrs. Strong. They are

sufficient, however, for the present, and establish a groundwork for those revelations which will come in the later part of the novel.

It is obvious that, at the end of David's Canterbury period, his preparation for life is inadequate. He has gained much, in intellectual and social terms, but he is attracted by a dream of life rather than by life itself. This, in itself, speaks well, perhaps, of his education. Murdstone's objective was to kill that part of David's personality that inclined him towards fancy; his aunt, Dr. Strong, and Wickfield provided an environment which encouraged, rather than repressed, feeling and imagination.

> Misty ideas of being a young man at my own disposal, of the importance attaching to a young man at his own disposal, of the wonderful things to be seen and done by that magnificent animal, and the wonderful effects he could not fail to make upon society, lured me away. (Ch. 19, p. 278)

The hyperbole in this sentence suggests that Copperfield has now gained the wisdom to view such earlier schemes with a mixture of nostalgia and irony. "Life was more like a great fairy story, which I was just about to begin to read, than anything else." (Ch. 19, p. 278)

The great fairy story, however, is intruded upon by the

reality of adverse circumstances. Copperfield sees the affairs of his best friends, his Aunt, the Peggotty family and the Wickfield family in a state of decline and he suffers insofar as he is directly related to them. These circumstances, and not the fulfillment of vague adolescent dreams, will ultimately form his character. He will develop under the tutelage of his Aunt--and, of course, Agnes. Betsey Trotwood addresses him as he is prepared to set out into the world on his own:

> "But what I want you to be, Trot," resumed my aunt, "--I don't mean physically, but morally, you are very well physically--is a firm fellow. A fine firm fellow, with a will of your own. With resolution," said my aunt, shaking her cap at me, and clenching her hand. "With determination. With character, Trot. With strength of character that is not to be influenced, except on good reason, by anybody, or by anything. . . . (Ch. 19, p. 280)

Betsey Trotwood's language echoes that of Murdstone, but its underlying intentions and its content are kinder. Copperfield is sent on his trip alone "to have a reliance upon [himself] and to act for [himself]." It is a "kind scheme," and, he is "tenderly dismissed . . . and no other conditions were imposed upon [his] freedom than the before-mentioned thinking and looking about [him]." (Ch. 19, pp.280-81) Thus, his aunt values the place of observation and reflection in Copperfield's conscious

apprenticeship to life. Copperfield is now at a stage where there is an interesting conflict between childlike innocence and worldly wisdom. His suspicion of Annie Strong signifies his own loss of innocence, his increasing awareness of the corrupt world:

> And now, I must confess, the recollection of what I had seen on that night when Mr. Maldon went away, first began to return upon me with a meaning it had never had, and to trouble me. The innocent beauty of her face was not as innocent to me as it had been; I mistrusted the natural grace and charm of her manner. (Ch. 19, p. 287)

The loss of innocence, as subsequent events prove, is not Annie's but David's. His observation is ill-founded and misdirected. He is partly justified, however, in that he is inexperienced and that he shares the suspicions of the more mature, and kindly, Wickfield. Yet, when David should be cautious, he exercises no caution whatsoever. He believes the best of Steerforth. Steerforth himself is amazed at his friend's naiveté; "'The daisy of the field, at sunrise, is not fresher than you are!'" (Ch. 19, p. 293) David ignores Steerforth's own warnings about his bad character, and rejects Agnes's cautions; he insists on believing in Steerforth. Steerforth does show a keen, moral lucidity: "' David, I wish to God I had had a judicious father these last twenty years!

. . . I wish with all my soul I had been better guided! . . . I wish with all my soul I could guide myself better!'" (Ch. 22, p. 326) The Murdstones, David's aunt, Dr. Strong, the Wickfields, all exercise a guiding influence, for good or ill on David. There is no doubt that Steerforth, although not an evil influence in David's life, is an evil presence; one which is hostile to the contrasting presence of Agnes. His presence is actual, vital, and charming; Agnes's has the remoteness and beauty of 'angels' and stained glass windows.

> I was never unmindful of Agnes, and she never left that sanctuary in my thoughts - if I may call it so - where I had placed her from the first. But when he entered, and stood before me with his hand out, the darkness that had fallen on him changed to light, and I felt confounded and ashamed of having doubted one I loved so heartily. I loved her none the less; I thought of her as the same benignant, gentle angel in my life. (Ch. 28, p. 427)

David, in one sense, is blind and indiscriminate in his affections, as his later realization of Agnes's actual worth will show. In another sense, however, he is struggling to form a complete moral portrait of Steerforth, remembering his former kindness and friendship and recognizing a potential for good, which circumstances have virtually destroyed. When Steerforth breaks up Peggotty's home, even David's own grief for this destruction cannot obliterate his affection and esteem

for Steerforth. On the contrary, his positive attitude toward Steerforth seems to strengthen:

> In the keen distress of the discovery of his unworthiness, I thought more of all that was brilliant in him, I softened more towards all that was good in him, I did more justice to the qualities that might have made him a man of a noble nature and a great name, than ever I had done in the height of my devotion to him. (Ch. 32, p. 457)

This is clearly a time of moral crisis for David; his allegiances are questionable. His devotion to Peggotty's family is in some degree mitigated by his devotion to the destroyer of that family. It is also a time of intense learning. Even from Mrs. Gummidge, who suddenly musters strength and courage and renounces her lone, lorn state, something can be learned: "I could not meditate enough upon the lesson that I read in Mrs. Gummidge, and the new experience she unfolded to me." (Ch. 32, p. 461) The new experience is based on what his aunt prescribes for David: firmness of character and resolution. These qualities are equally evident in Peggotty, who undertakes to find Emily, and, contrastingly, in Mrs. Steerforth. David is present at the debate between these two contrasting guides of youth: one who has molded the character of the innocent Ham and Emily, the other who has shaped the destructive character of Steerforth. From his observation, during the debate, his

lesson on character formation is continued. Observing Mrs. Steerforth: "All that I had ever seen in him of an unyielding, wilful spirit, I saw in her. All the understanding that I had now of his misdirected energy, became an understanding of her character too, and a perception that it was, in its strongest springs, the same." (Ch. 32, p. 472)

At this point, the dream of life might seem almost dead. With Peggotty's home destroyed, Barkis's death, the still unexplained threatening presence of the man in his aunt's life and the insinuations of Heep, little is left to stimulate fancy. What is left is Dora. David seeks consolation in his own raptures about her charm and the benign influence of Agnes is temporarily weakened:

> All this time, I had gone on loving Dora, harder than ever. Her idea was my refuge in disappointment and distress, and made some amends to me, even for the loss of my friend. The more I pitied myself, or pitied others, the more I sought for consolation in the image of Dora. The greater the accumulation of deceit and trouble in the world, the brighter and the purer shone the star of Dora high above the world. I don't think I had any definite idea where Dora came from, or in what degree she was related to a higher order of beings, but I am quite sure I should have scouted the notion of her being simply human, like any other young lady, with indignation and contempt. (Ch. 33, p. 475)

The hyperbole again denotes self-irony, as if David had, at

the time of writing, grown to recognize, and affectionately tolerate, the limits of his escapist fancy. Agnes might have led David to confront the almost intolerable realities; Dora, his child-wife to be, with the horror of poverty, of beggars, and of practical domestic concerns, tempts him to flee from reality. During this period of emotional turmoil, David is also receiving a more practical education in the world. Looking after the widowed Mrs. Barkis's interests, David realizes the one thousand pounds to apprentice him in the Doctors' Commons has not been misspent. He becomes, in an adult way, Peggotty's 'referee and advisor on every point.'

> I felt myself quite a proctor when I read this document [Barkis's will] aloud with all possible ceremony, and set forth its provisions, any number of times, to those whom they concerned. I began to think there was more in the Commons than I had supposed. I examined the will with the deepest attention, pronounced it perfectly formal in all respects, made a pencil-mark or so in the margin, and thought it rather extraordinary that I knew so much.
> (Ch. 31, p. 449)

David's practical education and the development of his character are continued when he learns of his aunt's financial ruin. "'Trot, have you got to be firm, and self-reliant?'" asks his aunt, (Ch. 34, p. 499) aware that only strength of character will help them. His aunt's philosophy is one that Copperfield

will learn to share: "'We must meet reverses boldly, and not suffer them to frighten us, my dear. We must learn to act the play out. We must live misfortune down, Trot!'" (Ch. 34, p. 500) Thus Copperfield learns once again the meaning of struggle for survival, as he sets about acquiring new skills to make enough money to help them in their altered situation.

David's man-of-the-world character inevitably conflicts with his penchant for escapism, expressed most essentially, at this period, in his infatuation with Dora. His aunt comments on how remote this infatuation is from the claims of real life: "And so you think you were formed for one another, and are to go through a party-supper-table kind of life, like two pretty pieces of confectionery, do you, Trot?" (Ch. 35, p. 504) This is what Dora, rather than David, thinks. His aunt's practical wisdom and his own experience in the world teach him that his relationship with Dora is fragile. In the end, it is threatened neither by his own character, nor by Dora's, but by Miss Murdstone's interference and Mr. Spenlow's incomprehension. Dora's father cannot consider marrying his daughter to the young man who had only recently tried to recover part of the thousand pounds which his aunt had invested in his education at the Doctors' Commons. David's efforts in the world are in part inspired by his infatuation with Dora:

> With the new life came new purpose, new intention. Great was the labor, priceless the reward. Dora was the reward, and Dora must be won . . . . I wanted to be cutting at those trees in the forest of difficulty, under circumstances that should prove my strength. (Ch. 36, p. 521)

It is significant that this ironic rhapsody, with its self-conscious use of the language of romance and chivalry, should follow shortly after the more sober recollection of Agnes's influence upon him at this same period.

> She filled my heart with such good resolutions, strengthened my weakness so, by her example, so directed . . . the wandering ardour and unsettled purpose within me, that all the little good I have done, and all the harm I have forborne, I solemnly believe I may refer to her. (Ch. 35, pp. 519-20)

Comparing Agnes with Dora at this point, the words "Blind! blind! blind!" come back to him, referring to his infatuation with Dora, which obscures for him the value of Agnes.

David also gains valuable experience as Dr. Strong's private secretary. This worldly education will better enable him to become Dora's husband-protector, later on. Dr. Strong gives a revealing description of David's character, achievements,

and potential when the young man presents himself for employment:

> " . . . don't you think you could do better? You achieved distinction, you know, when you were with us. You are qualified for many good things. You have laid a foundation that any edifice may be raised upon, and is it not a pity that you should devote the springtime of you life to such a poor pursuit as I can offer?" (Ch. 36, p. 523)

That he should remain close to Dr. Strong's household is important, because his position in it enables him not only to acquire further academic knowledge, but to learn, too, about marriage and feelings and relationships. In choosing employment that is not the most materially advantageous, Copperfield strengthens his character through observation and resolution. He contrasts with Jack Maldon, who turns up again in Dr. Strong's household and who affects a languor that contrasts sharply with Copperfield's curiosity and observation: "A display of indifference to all the actions and passions of mankind," is what characterizes Maldon. (Ch. 36, p. 525)

Copperfield's development is stimulated by worldly adversity; his determination to learn short-hand impresses Traddles: "'Dear me,' said Traddles, opening his eyes, 'I had no idea you were such a determined character, Copperfield.' I don't know

how he should have had, for it was new enough to me." (Ch. 36, p. 528) Thrown upon his own resources Copperfield passes all the tests that the world sets for him. The inspiration is partly his infatuation with Dora, his desire to live up to Agnes's image of him, and the love and gratitude that he owes his aunt. After his aunt loses her fortune, the next major turning point in David's life is the death of Mr. Spenlow. David's worldly education becomes particularly relevant now that he chooses to take a "child-wife." Until this point, he had worked mainly as the protector of his aunt and Mr. Dick, but these two had shown, in different ways, the kind of character that outbraves misfortune and the resourcefulness to survive. Dora, on the contrary, is totally dependent and wholly ignorant of the world in which David has lived. After Spenlow's death, as after Barkis's, David shows a knowledge of how to manage the deceased's estate, which speaks well of his education in the Doctors' Commons. It is significant that Spenlow, with all his outward pretensions to worldliness, neglected and confused his own affairs, and that it is the mere apprentice, David, who has to impose order on them. Thus already, but in a more organized way, David assumes Mr. Spenlow's paternal position in Dora's life. Dora becomes more accessible now, not only because she is under the protection of two aunts instead of a father hostile to poor suitors, but because Copperfield can demonstrate that he has developed the character and resourcefulness to look after

her. In their marriage, he tends to have some of the pre-occupations with firmness that Murdstone had, when his wife is a mere blossom, but it is tempered by kindness, consideration, and love, and by his aunt's wisdom.

The opening paragraph of Chapter Forty Two contains a moral analysis and summary of David's development to this point. The narrator speaks of:

> . . . my perseverance at this time of my life, and of a patient and continuous energy which then began to be matured within me, and which I know to be the strong part of my character, if it have any strength at all. . . . I never could have done what I have done, without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one object at a time. . . . My meaning simply is that whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well. . . . I have never believed it possible that any natural or improved ability can claim immunity from the companionship of the steady, plain, hard-working qualities, and hope to gain its end. (Ch. 42, p. 605)

Thus Copperfield sees these years of struggle in the world, under his aunt's guiding wisdom instead of under her financial protection, as among the most formative years in his moral growth. All his experiences are synthesized in the moral commentary above; they become part of the pattern of growth that has made him what he is.

Yet, it is not Copperfield, but Mr. Dick and Micawber, two of the most ineffectual characters in the novel, who show themselves capable of resolving the major crises. Mr. Dick takes full advantage of the latitude that his position of 'fool' allows him, to probe into Dr. Strong's marriage, to dispel the false suspicions and reinaugurate the truth. Copperfield is obliged to compare himself with Mr. Dick when he sees how well the old man conducts his relationship with both Dr. Strong and Annie during their difficult marriage: "I really feel almost ashamed of having known that he was not quite in his wits, taking account of the utmost I have done with mine." (Ch. 42, p. 622) Copperfield is aware that he has learnt a tremendous amount from his observation of Dr. Strong's marriage. He can relate this marriage, though still only in an imprecise way, to his own experience. After Mr. Dick has brought the truth to light:

> I was thinking of all that had been said. My mind was still running on some of the expressions used. "There can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose." "The first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart." "My love was founded on a rock." (Ch. 45, p. 662)

Dora herself realized the limitations of their marriage. It seems virtually inevitable that David should grow beyond his need for Dora and that Dora should accept her death as a normal

end to their relationship.

It is significant that Traddles, and not David, is given power of attorney in Wickfield's affairs, and assists Micawber at the explosion--this, despite David's previous legal experience. It may be due in part to the fact that Dora is dying, and it would be unfair to burden David any further with Agnes's father's affairs, but it may also be a reflection upon the relative immaturity that binds David to Dora. He is not yet worthy of being Agnes's protector, too. Yet Betsey Trotwood's comments after the Heep-Wickfield crisis make it clear that this has indeed been a period of growth for Copperfield, which she has in part contrived by holding in reserve £1,000 of her fortune without telling her nephew: "'I wanted to see how you would come out of the trial, Trot, and you came out nobly—perserving, self-reliant, self-denying!'" (Ch. 54, p. 772)

The dying Dora extends the scope of Copperfield's experience. His melancholy feelings in Canterbury, despite the defeat of Heep, pervade everything, and he underlines his own personal sorrow: "Yet the bells, when they sounded, told me sorrowfully of change in everything, told me of their own age, and my pretty Dora's youth, and of the many, never old, who had lived and loved and died. . . ." (Ch. 52, p. 738) When Dora dies, the narrow emotional world they had constructed together is shattered, and David finds himself at another turning point, another beginning. He is still eager to put his bad experience

to good use: "As the endurance of my childish days had done its share to make me what I was, so greater calamities would nerve me on, to be yet better than I was." (Ch. 58, p. 810) Agnes recognizes this quality in Copperfield, this ability to learn, to shape his moral being; he remembers the letter she wrote him abroad:

> She knew (she said) how such a nature as mine would turn affliction to good. She knew how trial and emotion would exalt and strengthen it. She was sure that in my every purpose I should gain a firmer and a higher tendency, through the grief I had undergone. (Ch. 58, p. 810)

The portion of David Copperfield, from the death of Dora to David's marriage with Agnes, is concerned essentially with that "higher tendency," defined in his growing love for Agnes. It is concerned with his emotional maturing.

> In the beginning of the change that gradually worked in me, when I tried to get a better understanding of myself and be a better man, I did glance, through some indefinite probation, to a period when I might possibly hope to cancel the mistaken past, and to be so blessed as to marry her. (Ch. 58, p. 812)

The feeling in the lines above is not entirely mature, since it would be better to use "the mistaken past" constructively than

to cancel it. Yet, the objective is worthy, even if the method is wrong. His love for Agnes is the opposite to that for Dora; it is not conducive to escapism; it makes him feel he should be more than a boy-husband; it encourages him to think more honestly and seriously about himself and to correct his shortcomings. Even in the period of frustration when he has lost all hope of marrying Agnes, "I endeavoured to convert what might have been between myself and Agnes, into a means of making me more self-denying, more resolved, more conscious of myself, and my defects and errors." (Ch. 58, p. 813) He becomes better because Agnes represents an ideal of behaviour and feeling to which he can aspire: "What I am, you have made me, Agnes." In the end, Agnes's and Copperfield's mutual recognition of each other's feelings signifies that David has at last reached that state where he becomes worthy of Agnes. His marriage is a sign that the process of maturing is complete, that he has developed that firmness and sensitivity of character that others have wished for him, and that he had desired for himself.

"This narrative is my written memory," David Copperfield says (Ch. 58, p. 811), and clearly it is a memory that is lucid, and morally informed. The narrator traces his development towards an ideal, noting on the way the personal qualities that had to be developed, or eliminated, and noting the most important influences upon him. In the end, his development involves a complex composite of intellectual, moral, social and emotional

qualities. The fact that the narrator could undertake such a far-reaching survey and analysis reflects the moral discernment he has developed. There is never any doubt that the narrator is keenly interested in his own progress, in every aspect of his apprenticeship; and whether the influences upon his development exert themselves by accident or design, he appreciates the extent of the influence nevertheless.

David Copperfield does include within its scope the major concerns of the bildungsroman. Much of the narrative serves to demonstrate the hero's sensitivity, the foundation of his development. The reader is offered a limited functional gallery of young men with whom the narrator can be compared. There is the morally noble Ham, capable of experiencing a perfect love within the limits of his class and nature, showing sacrifice, generosity, strength and courage. There can be less interest in his development than in David's, since he is already exemplary when the reader first comes to know him, and his nature, and the influences exerted upon it, are pure and simple. Traddles is also on the morally positive side, naively in love with the dearest girl in the world, and struggling like Copperfield to establish himself in the world. He, too, is remarkably developed when one comes to know him at Creakle's school--genial and good-hearted. The reader is interested in his fortunes only insofar as one wonders if he will acquire his Sophie as David acquires his Dora. On the morally negative side are Jack Maldon, Heep, and Steerforth.

Jack Maldon is of the least interest, since his appearances in the novel are only sporadic, and his influence upon Copperfield's history is less far-reaching and profound. Steerforth is ambivalent since Copperfield's affection and esteem prevent him from appearing as an out-and-out villain. Yet, his influence is at least as destructive as Heep's, since he shatters the harmony of a happy home and breaks many hearts. Heep is the absolute personification of Evil. Unlike Steerforth, he seems never to have had any potential for good. He directly threatens Copperfield, by taking a repulsive interest in Agnes; his progress in the world is ruthless; although he begins at as disadvantaged a stage as Copperfield, he employs very contrasting means to better his position. Copperfield, by observing Heep and listening to him, as he had observed Steerforth's relationship with his mother, learns an important lesson about the nature of development. Heep attributes his own humility to the kind of schooling he received:

> Father and me was both brought up at a foundation school for boys, and Mother, she was likewise brought up at a public, sort of charitable, establishment. They taught us all a deal of umbleness--not much else that I know of, from morning to night.' (Ch. 39, p. 574)

Copperfield is brought to reflect upon the origins of humility and of the influences of environment and heredity upon development:

"I had seen the harvest, but had never thought of the seed." (Ch. 39, p. 574) Heep, like the good Traddles and Ham, has already chosen his simple direction when the reader comes to know him, and there is little interest in his personal development, given its simple course and its inevitability.

David's education in the world is also charted in a detailed way, with a wealth of characters and incidents invoked. The Murdstone and Grinby firm, the trip to Dover, Heep's designs on Wickfield, the loss of Betsey Trotwood's fortune, David's education with Spenlow and his attempts at domestic management--all illustrate the course of David's progress. There is not an undeliberated accumulation of incidents; David progresses from naïveté to resourcefulness and strength, and in the end enjoys some wordly success. He becomes a better person and is rewarded by realizing his ambitions.

The ultimate interest, of course, is not in David's worldly progress, but in his emotional and moral development. The end of this development is seen to lie in a deeply meaningful relationship consummated in marriage. Various aspects of marriage are presented to illustrate its limitations and possibilities. Clearly, Mudstone's relationship with David's mother is not to be imitated, though David comes dangerously close to imitating it in his relationship with Dora, in his attempts to form her mind. Peggotty and Barkis are a charming, but limited couple; Dr. Strong and Annie reveal the dangerous undercurrents of mistrust;

the Micawbers survive miraculously; Rosa Dartle shows the horror of unrequited love. David observes and evaluates their various aspects of love and marriage, but in the end none can equal his relationship with Agnes. He transcends the intellectual, emotional, moral, and social limitations that characterized the other relationships and can live with Agnes on ideal terms of equality.

Thus, the reader leaves David, in the end, at another new beginning. His future development can be watched over more closely by Agnes, and he will be more fully conscious of her value. The last two chapters of David Copperfield inform the reader of the events and developments in the lives of the characters after the novel has reached its logical conclusion in its tracing of David's growth to emotional maturity and worldly wisdom. The gallery of characters is surveyed for the last time, and it is notable that David's life is now less entangled with those other lives that had a profound effect on his own. He is dependent on nobody except Agnes, and there is a fruitful dependence upon her. In terms of the novel's preoccupation, then, with the sensitive and highly conscious hero's emotional, moral, and worldly growth, in terms of its analysis of David's mentors and of the obstacles in the way of his development, there is no doubt that David Copperfield is a bildungsroman.

NOTES

[1] Charles Dickens, David Cooperfield, Afterward by Edgar Johnson (New York: The New American Library of World Literature Inc., Signet Classics, 1962). All quotations from the text will be documented at the end of each citation.

[2] Howe, Kinsmen, p. 14.

[3] Ibid.

CHAPTER III

Great Expectations and The Increasing Complexities of The Bildungsroman Genre

The years between David Copperfield (1849-50) and Great Expectations[1] (1860-61) were a difficult period in Dickens's life, and his embittered attitude is reflected, to a very marked extent, in this latter novel. David Copperfield had certainly contained its darker vision of life, its portraits of villainy and exploitation and cruelty, but the darker side is counterbalanced by a buoyant hope in the young hero's future.[2] There is a firm belief in the powers of worldly success and of love. At the end of the novel, young David Copperfield is building a modest reputation for himself as a writer; he has good friends in London and Dover, and even Mr. Peggotty in Australia is willing to travel thousands of miles to see him; David is at the centre of the happy universe that esteems him for his qualities; in addition he has coped with the death of Dora and won the higher love of Agnes. Pip's fate is very different from David's; he has handled his wealth less responsibly than he might have, and then discovers that his gentlemanliness is tarnished; he loves a heartless creature, devoid of the spiritual and moral qualities of an Agnes, and he loses her to an inferior rival; he is the wanderer at the end who can only visit Joe's home or Satis House and is accomodated by Hebert and his wife, but

truly he belongs nowhere. There is, in short, a keen awareness of the limitations, or even the ugliness, of worldly success in Great Expectations. There is consciousness, too, of the pain, rather than the consolation, of love. Great Expectations is a novel that explores the implications of disappointment rather than achievement.

The more sombre vision of Great Expectations can be explained in part by the writer's own disappointments and achievements. His interest in public affairs had grown; he was concerned about the generally low standards of living; he felt himself called upon, for example, to lecture the public on such matters as sanitation; he founded Household Words and All Year Round, two magazines that were as much a platform for his ideas as an outlet for his fiction. His fiction itself was taking on a more sombre quality. There is a considerable difference between the indulgent satire of the Doctors' Commons in David Copperfield and the more devastating presentation of Chancery in Bleak House. Bleak House (1854), Hard Times (1855-57), Little Dorrit (1855-57), and A Tale of Two Cities (1859) all reflect a strong social consciousness of the exploitation and cruelty that so predominate ordinary lives that even in fictitious accounts of those lives there is little possibility of a happy ending. In Dickens's personal life, there were several reasons for pessimism: his children disappointed him; his separation from his wife gave rise to a public controversy; and his infatuation with

the young actress Ellen Ternan (with whom Estella has been identified) made him deeply unhappy.

In Great Expectations, then, Pip, whether moving in the world as a gentleman, or coping with the most private affairs, seems doomed to failure. His expectations on every side are to be thwarted because he lives, quite simply, in a world that refuses to indulge the hopeful dreams of young men. On the contrary, it brings them to a great consciousness by stripping them of their illusions and forcing them to grow through a painful consciousness of the world's and their own limitations. Great Expectations, then, although it might be read as an exciting story with several high points in its plot, is also a thoughtful examination of an imperfect young man's progress in a very imperfect world.

There is no doubt that many of the events and situations in Great Expectations are 'sensational': Miss Havisham's obsession with revenge and her indirect connection with the criminal world through Compeyson and Estella, Magwitch's flight from justice, the attempted murder of the hero and the circumstances of the proud Estella's birth. All of these events might suggest that Dickens was primarily interested in composing a novel whose plot depended on mystery and startling revelations for its tension and on a series of coincidences for its coherence. It might seem to read more like a tale than a personal history with

a balanced focus on outer circumstances and inner life. Yet Great Expectations cannot truly be considered a great novel in terms of plot. The events have most resonance and coherence when they are considered in relation to the narrating hero's development. The external world in which Pip moves is often strange and always exciting. Pip's interior world, however, is the true focus of the narrating hero's analysis. The ultimate consequences of the series of narrated events are to be seen in terms of Pip's personality. Numerous passages of self-analysis and moral commentary show Pip to be as sensitive to the shaping influences upon him as David Copperfield is.

The most traumatic period of David Copperfield's life is his childhood, before David arrives at his Aunt Betsey's in Dover. Although he has to bear certain significant trials after the healing period at Canterbury (the loss of Dora, for example), these trials are surpassed in intensity by those of Mr. Peggotty and Ham, and of Agnes's father. David, in other words, learns a great deal from his observations of other people's trials. That is the reason for the opening sentence in the novel, where he wonders if he is the hero of his own history, or the spectator and narrator of other lives. Pip raises no such doubts about his own central position in the narrative. His trials, unlike David's, are magnified after he reaches his 'majority' and are never fully resolved, since his lot in the end is based on resignation at having lost an

ideal, whereas David has achieved the ideal.

In accordance with the sensational quality of its plotting, Great Expectations begins with a climactic event -- the most memorable in Pip's childhood and designed to influence his life profoundly. For the first few hundred words of the narrative, Pip does not seem greatly dissimilar from David Copperfield -- solitary, sensitive, introspective, meditating on the mysteries of life and death. The mood of meditation based on observation, which permeates the early chapters of David Copperfield, does not last long, however, in Great Expectations. "A terrible voice" and a convict threatening to cut the young Pip's throat shatter the mood established by Pip's meditations on the marshes, and thus the dual tones of the narrative are established. Pip is destined to develop because of such startling interruptions in the course of life. There is no smooth evolution of the personality, but rather a progress by fits and starts, each sensational revelation or event pushing Pip forward to a new level of awareness. The last paragraph of the first chapter underlines the progress that Pip has made in one significant day. His imagination has been fired with horror by a threatening presence, wholly alien to his limited world. The reader sees Pip gazing into the distance; the first of his observations had been confined to the churchyard, to the letters on the headstones, and the immediately surrounding marsh; now:

> The marshes were just a long black horizontal line then, as I stopped to look after him; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines intermixed. (Ch. 1, p. 39)

In this wide vista, the striking details are a beacon and a gibbet, and the convict limping away.[3]

In the following chapters, the moral complexity of Pip's course of development is introduced. He performs a humanitarian act, in a world that is palpably cruel or ungenerous, depriving himself of his supper and incurring the administration of Tar-Water, stealing food from his sister and a file from Joe, compelled by a strange mixture of fear and pity. It is Pip's sympathies that the convict subsequently chooses to recognize, shielding the boy from the suspicion of the theft by confessing to the theft himself, and later rewarding Pip financially. It is Pip's fear, however, that seems to predominate; the day's events prey upon his sensitivity and imagination: "If I slept at all that night, it was only to imagine myself drifting down the river on a strong spring-time, to the Hulks; a ghostly pirate calling out to me through a speaking-trumpet . . . . (ch.2,p.47) If Pip's world has been expended by his imaginative response to this experience, it is shown to be remarkably restricted otherwise. His series of questions to

his sister about the convict is met with impatience: "People are put in the Hulks because they murder, and because they rob, and forge, and do all sorts of bad; and they always begin by asking questions." (Ch. 2, p. 46) If Pip is being brought up by hand, it is a hand that represses rather than fosters his growth. The dialogue with his sister reveals his enquiring spirit being thwarted at every turn. His subsequent comments on Mr. Wopsle's great aunt's educational "system" in the village schoolroom confirm what we learn in this dialogue; his teacher is another repressive presence, indifferent to his needs, to his enthusiasm for learning that can survive only with difficulty in such an environment. The early chapters describe the intellectual limitations of life in the marshes from which Pip must escape.

> This life, though Pip looks back on it as innocent and worthy, is one of minimal promise and thwarted potential. Here Pumblecook can pose as a Maecenas and Wopsle as a great actor. (The latter's own escape and downfall are a light counterpoint to Pip's.) 4

To escape, however, he needs direction -- more direction than his ungoverned imagination can afford him, being at the mercy, as it is, of every accidental stimulus.

The sixth chapter is a carefully placed passage of moral

analysis. The first five chapters had dealt with the strange relationship between Pip and the convict -- a relationship that shows the limits of the social world Pip had inhabited until now. It was also a morally uncomplicated world where the greatest punitive force was the arbitrary administration of "Tickler." Henceforth, however, Pip is to be punished most severely by the lacerations of his own conscience. The sixth chapter describes this awakening of conscience, and of self-consciousness. Pip, in the retrospective narrative, refers ironically, or self-deprecatingly, to his moral cowardice, which will not allow him to spoil his good relationship with Joe by confessing his misdeeds:

> In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong. I had had no intercourse with the world at that time, and I imitated none of its many inhabitants who act in this manner. Quite an untaught genius, I made the discovery of the line of action for myself. (Ch. 6, p. 72)

The sixth chapter effectively closes the section dealing with the convict by examining the long-term effects upon Pip's mind. The seventh chapter introduces a new area of experience, at Miss Havisham's, though not without first describing in some detail the limitations of Pip's school environment, which merely strengthen the limitations of his home environment. The confict

had allowed Pip to glimpse a different social world, and stimulated the boy's development by intimidating him into incriminating himself and leaving him to cope with the moral consequences. Miss Havisham, in a different way, shows Pip the inadequacies of the social world he has inhabited. She shows him something opulent and elegant, though not without its warning decay. Pip does not realize that what the convict and Miss Havisham show him is ultimately the same: an abyss. Yet he flees from one, and will continue to flee right through the novel, and will aspire toward the other. In the end, they become totally confused, when Pip realizes the source of his own wealth is not Miss Havisham, his childhood symbol of opulence, but Magwitch, his childhood symbol of horror and deprivation, and when he realizes that his ideal, Estella, was born in the world from whose influence he attempts to flee, and belongs only by accident in the world to which he aspires.

Miss Havisham, in her own way, and in her own prison is as frightening as the convict, and her effect on Pip is potentially devastating since she has designs to break his heart:

> 'Look at me,' said Miss Havisham. 'You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?'
> I regret to state that I was not afraid of telling the enormous lie comprehended in the answer 'no'.
> 'Do you know what I touch here?' she said. . . .
> (Ch. 8, p. 88)

Miss Havisham touches her broken heart, and thus Pip is introduced into the adult world of emotional relationships, and unwittingly becomes a victim in Miss Havisham's scheme of revenge.

Pip sees his limitations clearly once he has been introduced to Miss Havisham and Estella. In the preceeding chapter, Joe's honest statement of his feelings had ennobled Pip:

> Young as I was, I believe that I dated a new admiration of Joe from that night. We were equals afterwards, as we had been before; but, afterwards at quiet times when I sat looking at Joe and thinking about him, I had a new sensation of feeling conscious that I was looking up to Joe in my heart. (Ch. 7, p. 80)

Joe has become generous rather than embittered by his experiences. He has seen "so much in his mother, a woman drudging and slaving and breaking her honest heart" that he wishes to give his own wife a totally different kind of life. (Ch. 7, p. 80). Pip's appreciation of generous feelings is gravely threatened, however, by the genteel and heartless world which Miss Havisham and Estella inhabit and that he comes to admire: "I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call those picture-cards, Jacks, which ought to be called knaves. I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so too." (Ch. 8, p. 92)

Pip's experiences at Miss Havisham's might amount to

'development,' but in a limited sense of that word only. He becomes a severe critic of the social inadequacies of Joe's world, but he fails to weigh these inadequacies against the real qualities of that world to arrive at a just estimation. His devotion to the unworthy Estella inhibits his development: he is socially blinded by superficial appearances, and his selfish obsession with the sufferings of his own heart blinds him to the feelings of others.

Pip appears highly complex throughout this period. Even though his social horizons are being expanded, the glamour of his new world blinds him. On the one hand, he is an acute observer of detail, a realist in a sense, and meditates on his observations; he goes home "pondering, as I went along, on all that I had seen, and deeply revolving that I was a common labouring-boy." (Ch. 8, p. 94) On the other hand, Pip is still imaginative, in his uncontrolled way (as he had shown himself in the first chapter): " . . . a strange thing happened to my fancy. I turned my eyes . . . towards a great wooden beam in a low nook of the building near me on my right hand, and I saw a figure hanging there by the neck." (Ch. 8, pp. 93-4) This is a fantastic vision of Miss Havisham hanging. Pip displays his imagination in a more calculating way on his first return home from Miss Havisham's, when he is called upon to describe Satis House and its inhabitants for the benefit of his sister and Pumblechook. Here, a sense of delicacy, the desire to protect

the very vulnerable world of Miss Havisham from vulgar prying, induces him to fabricate and embellish for the gratification of his curious listeners. But at least he makes some moral progress; this time he has the courage to confess his misdemeanour to Joe, and is let off with a friendly warning to sin no more.

The significance of Pip's introduction to Miss Havisham is fully appreciated by the narrator, in terms of its influence upon his development. The last paragraph of Chapter Nine leaves the reader in no doubt that Pip's narrative is composed of a number of significant days or significant periods that are to be seen as milestones in the young man's development:

> That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But, it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day. (Ch. 9, p. 101)

This one memorable day marks the beginning of a significant period in Pip's life, and he constantly shows his sensitivity to the relationship between his environment and the formation of his character: "What could I become with these surroundings? How could my character fail to be influenced by them?

Is it to be wondered at if my thoughts were dazed, as my eyes were, when I came out into the natural light from the misty yellow rooms?" (Ch. 12, p. 124) Pip's thoughts, however, are not really dazed. While becoming less appreciative of Joe's simplicity and goodness, he is becoming more aware of the blacksmith's genuine limitations. It is this increased awareness of social stratification that provokes the first real crisis in Pip's adolescent life. Chapter Fourteen performs the same function as Chapter Six. It contains an important passage of self-analysis marking the beginning of a new level of consciousness.

> There have been occasions in my later life (I suppose as in most lives) when I have felt for a time as if a thick curtain had fallen on all its interest and romance, to shut me out from anything save dull endurance any more. Never has that curtain dropped so heavy and blank, as when my way in life lay stretched out straight before me through the newly-entered road of apprenticeship to Joe. (Ch. 14, p. 135)

This is the kind of crisis that David Copperfield had to go through when he was consigned to Murdstone's and Grinby's, the kind of crisis that Dickens himself had first-hand knowledge of, when his family preferred that he should work rather than receive an education. The hero feels forced to lead a life unworthy of his merits. Yet, Pip's feelings are more complex than David's.

Mr. Murdstone is a downright villain, and the boy is palpably the victim of his villainy. Joe, on the contrary, although he symbolizes the repressive social world that Pip is forced to inhabit, also impresses the young protagonist to such an extent with his simple qualities, that Pip can feel ashamed of his own sense of shame -- though not so ashamed that he can reject the criterion, Estella at Satis House, which makes him judge Joe's world unfavorably. At this point the bildungsroman hero is in a classic situation. His provincial life is a trial to him, and he longs for something better. This is not a vague longing on Pip's part; its motivation is clearly emotional: to impress Estella by becoming a more dignified social being. Pip is not intimidated by the possibility of having to sacrifice such human qualities as Joe represents in order to become this social being; he is not forewarned by the emotional desolation in Satis House, by the deadened hearts of Miss Havisham and Estella, and the petty bickering among the self-interested relatives of Miss Havisham. Pip fails to make a clear moral contrast between Satis House and life at the forge. He is attracted, rather, by what each most ostensibly represents for him. Thus one can see the hero at this time prepared to embark on a course of social and intellectual refinement, but taking no account of the moral qualities that should steer his progress.

Pip's redemption from provincial life, by its very nature, demands no moral examination on his part. The offer of the

mysterious benefactor has some elements of the fairy- or folk-tale and encourages Pip to remain satisfied with a partial knowledge, or even ignorance, of his circumstances. It is the full knowledge that Magwitch's revelation will bring, later in the novel, that kills Pip's dream of life and forces him to make those kinds of moral considerations that were irrevelant when he did not know the identity of his benefactor. Thus, the elements of the folk-tale are in themselves illusory, and Pip is deceived by them: deceived enough to cast himself as the magically prospering hero. In the end, when these elements are perceived for what they really are, in their connection with the lowest kind of life imaginable to Pip, truth replaces fiction and his moral apprenticeship begins in earnest.

The structure of the novel is based on such a perception of Pip's apprenticeship. The first phase shows the hero wrestling with the limitations of his environment and apparently condemned to live within them, until the closing moment introduces a new phase. This new phase (Chapters Twenty to Thirty-Nine) shows the full blossoming of Pip's dream, describing his growth in London until the age of twenty-three, when the closing chapter shatters the dream. From Chapter Forty to the end, the reader sees Pip coping with the harsher aspects of life imposed upon him as he is no longer protected by his illusions and the false glamour of his expectations. The final phase, therefore, is most essentially an examination of Pip's moral development.

This development seems all the more necessary to the reader in view of the exposure of him in the second section as irresponsible and snobbish. He is, however, not seen to be without redeeming features, which sustain the reader's interest in his development by making him deplore the waste of moral potential, and which make his subsequent moral development a welcome and plausible conclusion.

The second section of the novel describes Pip's progress in the world, as a gentleman. Although Pip's worldly education takes place against the cosmopolitan backdrop of London, the range of influences upon him is remarkably small, but intense. It is as though he cannot grow beyond the limits established in his early life in the marsh country, however gentlemanly his lifestyle becomes. He is caught in an inhibiting web of relationships, that becomes more complex as the plot develops in its London setting. Pip is recommended to Matthew Pocket by Mr. Jaggers, and Pocket is of course also connected with Miss Havisham. Pip's good friend, Herbert Pocket, turns out to be the pale young man whom he had fought once at Miss Havisham's; Jaggers is connected with both Miss Havisham and Magwitch and thus involuntarily originates Pip's misconceptions about Pip's own rise in fortune. Magwitch is connected with both Estella and Pip, since he is Estella's real father and has adopted Pip. Even a character like Bentley Drummle easily becomes entangled in this web, educated like Pip by Mr. Pocket, encouraged by

Mr. Jaggers, and eventually marrying Estella. One can see from all this that Pip's attempts to portion out his life into unrelated parts give him a false perception of the patterns in his growth. The distance he creates between his London life and his former life is illusory. Even apart from the connections between past and present sustained by the relationships I have mentioned above (many of the connections being unknown until Pip comes to seek out the truth), Estella and Joe appear now and then to remind Pip of life's continuum; although he chooses to cultivate his relationship with Estella and remain on good terms with Miss Havisham by paying her visits that do not take in the neighbouring Joe, he is embarrassed by what he considers to be the cruder aspects of his life as Joe represents them.

The connections between the many characters in the novel demonstrate the connected aspect of Pip's life itself. It is a connectedness he would prefer to disregard, believing he can construct a wholly new life without much relation to the past. This life, however, comprises multiple levels, and a token of his moral development is that he can eventually come to terms with these levels. The unique level, which he perceives for himself, that of gentleman, has the crudest origins and is sustained only by his ignorance or illusions. It is from the connections between past and present that Pip ultimately comes to terms with the truth: with the truth of Estella's birth and

his own sudden rise in fortune. Pip learns, in brief, to be more than a gentleman with the merely financial and social implications of that word; he learns to be a man, with a developed moral consciousness of himself and of his place in the world.

Pip is older than David Copperfield when he begins his life in London, and although he begins under better circumstances than David, he shows a caution with his money, at least in the beginning, which David clearly lacked:

> 'How much?' I asked the coachman.
> The coachman answered, 'A shilling--
> unless you wish to make it more.'
> I naturally said I had no wish to
> make it more.
> 'Then it must be a shilling,' observed
> the coachman. (Ch. 20, p. 187)

Later, as he becomes accustomed to the life of a gentleman, his attitude towards money becomes more lax; his expenditures are uncontrolled despite his best intentions. It is clear that a gentlemanly life of self-indulgence and reckless spending inhibits rather than develops Pip's moral progress. Moreover, it even threatens his innocent friendship with the pure and simple Herbert, by turning their relationship into a fellowship in decadence. Chapter Thirty Four, concerning Pip's financial affairs, has a complex mixture of tones. On the one hand, there is severe self-reproach, unalleviated by any

touch of comedy or self-irony. When Pip considers his own bad influence upon Herbert: "My lavish habits led his easy nature into expenses that he could not afford, corrupted the simplicity of his life, and disturbed his peace with anxities and regrets." (Ch. 34, p. 292) On the other hand, there is more humorous self-deprecation when Pip describes his own and Herbert's joint effort to "look into" their affairs. This involved an elaborate ritual of secluding themselves in their rooms with papers and pens, and investigating their expenditures in what they supposed to be a highly orderly manner. The consequences of these efforts, however, were ephemeral, and led only to renewed expenditure; "leaving a margin," by bringing the sum of their debts to a round sum that exceeded the actual debt, justified their future expenditure, they felt. The effects of the business exercise, in the end, are therapeutic rather than economic:

> . . . there was a calm, a rest, a virtuous hush, consequent on these examinations of our affairs that gave me, for the time, an admirable opinion of myself. Soothed by my exertions, my method, and Herbert's compliments, I would sit with his symmetrical bundle and my own on the table before me among the stationery, and feel like a Bank of some sort, rather than a private individual. (Ch. 34, p. 296)

Pip expresses here his sense of complacency in being a gentleman.

Whether things are going well, or badly, Pip's remarkable ability to shield himself from the truth, with cash in hand, or with the prospects of it, prevents him from assuming the responsible attitudes of a mature young man.

Pip's education under Mr. Pocket is geared toward his life as a gentleman. Just as Pip's education under Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt would have prepared him for a future of relative ignorance in a small village, Mr. Pocket's educational system is academic and supports the view that learning is a gentlemanly accomplishment, rather than a practical aid to living or a rigorous intellectual discipline:

> [Mr. Pocket] knew more of my intended career than I knew myself, for he referred to his having been told by Mr. Jaggers that I was not designed for any profession, and that I should be well enough educated for my destiny if I could 'hold my own' with the average of young men in prosperous circumstances. (Ch. 24, pp. 219-20)

Mr. Pocket is a man of principle, as his relationship with Miss Havisham shows. He depends, for his livelihood, however, on young men in prosperous circumstances, such as Pip is, and instead of educating them to bring some moral awareness to their worldly position, he upholds the status quo uncritically and prepares gentlemen to compete with one another, or hold their own, in a society governed by the money ethic. As such

Pip's education in London, while preparing him for his worldly status as gentleman, has no relation to his moral development.

London, however, is large and varied enough to exert some kind of more positive, humanising element in Pip's life, which maintains and fosters the core of goodness that had been evident when he lived at the forge. The two contrasting aspects of London life are to be found in Jaggers's office from which Pip first views London. First, there is Jaggers, with his businesslike manner and lack of feeling. He is in perfect control of his affairs. He had earlier warned Pip that he took no personal interest in the boy's affairs, that he acted merely as an agent. Jaggers remains true to the character he establishes for himself. His business, although it brings him to deal with the most horrifying and pitiful aspects of human life, is conducted in a passionless manner. Second, there is Wemmick, with his Little Brtain personality, based on Jaggers's businesslike expectations of him. At home, he allows himself to be governed by more human feelings, in a more relaxed environment. His treatment of his financée, Miss Skiffins, and of the Aged Parent, shows a side of his personality that he feels obliged to supress in Jaggers's office. Wemmick has knowingly cultivated this split in his personality; Pip, for example, asks for his advice on investing money in Herbert's future, and Wemmick discourages such an unbusinesslike venture:

> 'And that,' said I, 'is your deliberate opinion, Mr. Wemmick?'
> 'That,' he returned, 'is my deliberate opinion in this office.'
> 'Ah!' said I, pressing him. . . 'but would that be your opinion at Walworth?'
> (Ch. 36, p. 310)

Wemmick is as absurd in his own way as the Pockets are in theirs, with his gothic pretensions expressed on a miniscule scale. The Pockets, however, despite the fact that they are a large family, represent the more sterile aspect of London life, with its respect for gentlemanliness perceived only in terms of good blood and money. Herbert has broken away from his family's absurd and irresponsible way of living and established his independence; he has fallen in love with a girl "rather below [his] mother's nonsensical family notions. Her father had to do with the victualling of passenger-ships. I think he was a species of purser." (Ch. 30, p. 272) Herbert establishes wholesome standards, contrary to Pip's, by which Pip's behavior is to be judged. Pip aspires to Estella and cannot truly appreciate Biddy. Pip is perhaps infatuated by what Estella represents; Herbert loves what Clara really is, and she is lovable even in the lowliest setting. Herbert is a force of goodness, capable of bringing out the best in Pip, as Pip will bring out the worst in Herbert by tempting him to share his gentlemanly decadence. Pip's life in London cannot be wholly sterile because of his good feelings towards Herbert, whom he discreetly

establishes in business, and because of his recognition of Wemmick's qualities once that man is emancipated from his 'official sentiments' and becomes his friend at Walworth.

In this section, too, Pip acquires a greater knowledge of what Estella really is and how and why she has become what she is. This knowledge, however, does not destroy his infatuation with her. She remains, irrationally, his ideal. Pip has already learnt much of Miss Havisham's story from Herbert, and just as Pip is being fashioned by the convict to be a gentleman, so Estella is being molded to be a lady. When Miss Havisham reproaches Estella for her cold heart, Estella replies: "'I am what you have made me. Take all the praise, take all the blame; take all the success, take all the failure; in short, take me.'" (Ch. 38, p. 322) Estella's life before she came to Miss Havisham's has had no influence upon her; she is formed into an absolute in an extreme environment. Pip, however, is formed under two different, and contrasting, sets of conditions, and therefore his development must be more complex and uncertain.

Pip's uncertain progress and the real moral dangers of his gentlemanly status are seen most clearly in his reaction to Joe's visit to London. Pip is prepared even to use his financial resources to rid himself of the embarrassment of Joe's presence; he looked forward to Joe's visit:

> Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many ties; no; with considerable disturbance, some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money. (Ch. 27, p. 240)

Joe's visit, of course, creates keen embarrassment on both sides. Joe, however, seems to draw the clearest lesson from the experience and is able to communicate it to Pip:

> 'Pip, dear old chap, life is made of ever so many partings welded together, as I may say, and one man's a blacksmith,and one's a whitesmith, and one's a goldsmith, and one's a coppersmith. Diwisions among such must come, and must be met as they come. If there's been any fault at all to-day, it's mine. You and me is not two figures to be together in London; nor yet anywheres else but what is private, and beknown, and understood among friends.' (Ch. 27, 246)

Joe's speech defines a crucial point in Pip's moral progress. It shows the distance Pip has travelled from his old values, and how quickly and easily he has been swayed by the power of money. Yet, Joe is not entirely blameless in this scene; he, too, is overawed by the power of money as it is vested in Pip, and it renders him awkward and virtually inarticulate; more important, though, is the fact that it incapacitates him in his role of redeemer, or as a force of good, and sends him flying back to the safety of the forge, wishing

Pip well but reluctant to meddle with the affairs of a gentleman. Joe's influence on Pip, then, is greatly diminished after this scene. Pip is touched by Joe's resignation to the differences in their fortune which separate them; "As soon as I could recover myself sufficiently, I hurried out after him and looked for him in the neighbouring streets; but he was gone." (Ch. 27, p. 247) Pip's worldly preoccupations soon reassert their control over him.

Throughout the second section there are scattered comments, or even substantial passages of self-analysis, which bring alive the reader's faith in the possibility of Pip's redemption. His sense of shame at his attitude towards Joe does not last long, although it is keenly felt. Pip is confined, too, by the contrasting influences shaping him and is obliged to examine his identity; the fact that he feels the need to do so, however misplaced his priorities, gives grounds for hope:

> 'I am ashamed to say it, . . . and yet it's no worse to say it than to think it. You call me a lucky fellow. Of course, I am. I was a blacksmith's boy yesterday; I am--what shall I say I am--to-day?' (Ch. 30, p. 269)

He does not have the satisfaction of having made himself: "I know I have done nothing to raise myself in life, and that Fortune alone has raised me . . . I cannot tell you how uncertain

I feel." (Ch. 30, p. 269) It is this very uncertainty and self-consciousness that make the defences that this gentlemanly position have given him less than impregnable and that provide the grounds for his future moral growth in the right direction. Thus, in another chapter, Pip offers his own criticism of the influences of his expectations upon him:

> As I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me. Their influence on my own character, I disguised from my recognition as much as possible, but I know very well that it was not all good. (Ch. 34, p. 291)

The last chapter in the second section describes the sudden end of Pip's illusions when Magwitch reveals the truth to him. Because Pip feels he no longer has the right to be a gentleman, his real moral progress, based on the most sustained examination of his life and identity, begins. The connections between past and present are now tightly drawn by the presence of Magwitch:

> . . . he stood at the table drinking rum and eating biscuit; and when I saw him thus engaged, I saw my convict on the marshes at his meal again. It almost seemed to me as if he must stoop down presently, to file at his leg. (Ch. 39, p. 340)

The reader should remember, at this point, Pip's meditation at the end of the chapter, when he returned from his first visit to Miss Havisham's: when he perceives that the subsequent events of his life were formed by the forging of the first link on one memorable day; the strongest link was forged, however, during his encounter with Magwitch, since the convict then undertook to shape the boy's future. As Magwitch himself describes their relationship: "Look'ee here, Pip. I am your second father. You're my son--more to me nor any son." (Ch. 39, p. 337) Pip, at this moment, is capable of seeing only the destructive effects of Magwitch's revelation. He is initially hostile to the truth: "All the truth of my position came flashing on me; and its disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences of all kinds, rushed in in such a multitude that I was borne down by them and had to struggle for every breath I drew." (Ch. 39, p. 336)

Pip expresses the destructive effects in a memorable image: ". . . it was not until I began to think, that I began fully to know how wrecked I was, and how the ship in which I had sailed was gone to pieces." (Ch. 39, p. 341) The revelation kills Pip's illusions: "Miss Havisham's intentions towards me, all a mere dream; Estella not designed for me; I only suffered in Satis House as a convenience . . . . "(Ch.39,p.341) Pip's dreams, however, are replaced by a painful sense of reality, an awareness of what he considers his shameful behaviour; although his

denial of Joe's qualities is replaced by a denial of Magwitch's, there are still strong grounds for hope in his gradually awakening sense of guilt:

> I would not have gone back to Joe now, I would not have gone back to Biddy now, for any consideration: simply, I suppose, because my sense of my own worthless conduct to them was greater than every consideration. No wisdom on earth could have given me the comfort that I should have derived from their simplicity and fidelity; but I could never, never, never, undo what I had done. (Ch. 39, p. 341)

Pip, at the end of this chapter, is a hopeless child once again--worse off, in many senses, than the young Pip, since he feels cast out from the worlds of both Estella and Joe. Something of the old fear that the convict had inspired in him at their first meeting returns again to destroy his false gentlemanly assurance. Out of his childhood remembrances, "I brought into the light of the fire, a half-formed terror that it might not be safe to be shut up there with him in the dead of the wild solitary night." (Ch. 39, p. 341)

Pip does not realize that on this memorable night he has been destroyed only to be renewed. Just as King Lear has to leave behind all the trappings of kingship in order to become a poor bare fork'd animal, Pip has to realize the falsity of his gentlemanly pretensions and renounce them in order to become

a man. The third section describes his moral entry into manhood; he develops a worthy relationship with Magwitch, perhaps the most important of his life since it is based on understanding and compassion, and makes such severe demands upon him that he is obliged to go beyond the limits that his snobbishness had imposed upon him. Moreover, now that his illusions have been destroyed, and he has been struck by the force of the truth, he feels compelled to explore areas where he remains partially ignorant -- establishing the facts of Estella's parentage, which even Mr. Jaggers did not know. He also has the responsibility of deciding what to do with his new-found truths: whether to damage Estella's poise with futile revelations or to guard the facts from those whom they most concern. If the third section contains a series of sensational events (e.g. the pursuit of Magwitch, Orlick's attack on Pip, the burning of Miss Havisham), they are all related to Pip's developing humanity in the most plausible way, to the development of his difficult but worthy relationship with Magwitch and the pursuit of the truth.

Pip's first consideration on the morning after the revelation is for himself, as the sentence beginning the third section shows:

> It was fortunate <u>for me</u> that I had to take precautions to insure (so far as I could) the safety of my dreaded visitor; for, this thought pressing

> on me when I awoke, held other thoughts in a confused concourse at a distance. (Ch. 40, p. 342, emphasis added)

Clearly, Magwitch's revelation, which brings Pip to a consciousness of his shameful behaviour, is not enough to bring about a sudden remarkable improvement in Pip's character; his redemption will be gradual. Mixed in with his self-interested feelings, however, is a welcome concern for the convict's safety; this is enough to counteract his initial feelings of repulsion for Magwitch and in the end to kill that repulsion.

The dangerous position in which Pip finds himself as a result of Magwitch's presence is underlined in the first pages of the new section, when Pip discovers somebody lurking on the stairs. The sensational quality of the narrative is thus immediately evident. Pip, as the subsequent events show, is watched by Orlick and Compeyson. The threat to Magwitch's life is so real and immediate that it forces Pip into an alliance which, though initially repulsive, develops in him a worthy concern for a life other than his own.

Pip's feelings at this point are highly complex. On the one hand, he can say: "Every hour so increased my abhorrence of him...." (Ch. 40, p. 353) On the other hand, he realizes that the convict has braved death itself to seek him out, that his intentions towards the boy, however, misguided, are exceedingly good. In this state of confusion, Pip visits Jaggers--

Hoping against hope that what Magwitch has said is untrue but knowing in his heart it is true. "I have no hope of its being untrue, but at least I may verify it." (Ch. 40, p. 350)

The reappearance of Herbert strengthens Pip's feelings against Magwitch because he sees reflected in Herbert his own gentlemanly reactions to the convict's presence, and considers them to be the most natural reactions under the circumstances. He is wholly incapable of bearing the burden of Magwitch's generosity to him at this point: "'Yet I am afraid the dreadful truth is, Herbert, that he is attached to me, strongly attached to me. Was there ever such a fate!'" (Ch. 41, p. 357) The anonymous source of Pip's fortune had caused no such trauma. Once the source is seen to lie in the affection and gratitude of a convict, however, it becomes embarrassing. Pip is as yet unable to distinguish between nobility of feelings and superficial nobility conceived in terms of class. It is as if he feels that such a man should be incapable of the highest impulses.

Yet Herbert and Pip do recognize the dangerous consequences of Magwitch's decision to come to England and realize that Pip, however unwittingly, is responsible for that decision. Thus, there is at least a sense of responsibility in the young men, even if they are as yet unable to feel true gratitude and compassion. This is why Herbert advises Pip: "You must get him out of England before you stir a finger to extricate yourself."

(Ch. 41, p. 359) This decision gives rise to further sensational developments in the plot. These developments are most important, however, not as exciting narrative, but as strenuous tests of Pip's character and of his allegiances.

Magwitch's constant presence ultimately forces upon Pip an acceptance of truth, or reality. Pip no longer has the same desire to protect himself with illusions. "We want to know," says Pip, asking Magwitch for the full details of his convict history. This expresses in part a genuine desire for knowledge of the facts, partly the need to banish his apprehension that his benefactor might have committed the worst of crimes. Magwitch's story is the first that will allow Pip to piece together a complete history of the relationships between Magwitch, Jaggers's housekeeper, Estella, Miss Havisham, and Compeyson. The two contrasting worlds, the elegant and the criminal, as Pip is to find out for himself, are closely bound -- more closely than any of their respective inhabitants admit. The second portion of the story is told by Miss Havisham herself, and confirms Pip's suspicions that Estella is Jaggers's housekeeper's daughter. The third story, narrated by Magwitch to Herbert and subsequently related to Pip adds the part that startles even Jaggers: Magwitch is Estella's father. Thus Pip, once his illusions are shattered, feels compelled to seek out the full force of the truth. He is ashamed of Magwitch because of what Estella might say: "Why should I pause to ask

how much of my shrinking from Provis might be traced to Estella?" (Ch. 43, p. 367) Then there is the supreme irony of Estella's parentage, which demolishes Pip's criterion for judging people according to their class pretensions; the result is that he must devise his own more humane standards of judgement. The very pitifulness of Magwitch's tale of his criminal ways, when the guilty middle classes escaped justice and the guilty poor suffered doubly to compensate, enlarges Pip's vision of man.

The second shock to Pip's illusions comes soon after the first, when he learns not only that he must renouce his expectation, but that he has lost Estella. "Why not tell you the truth?" says Estella to him; and Pip's task of grappling with difficult facts must begin all over again. (Ch. 44, p. 377) In the third chapter after she announces her marriage Pip says:

> As the time wore on, an impression settled heavily upon me that Estella was married. Fearful of having it confirmed, though it was all but a conviction, I avoided the newspapers, begged Herbert (to whom I had confided the circumstances of our last interview) never to speak of her to me. Why I hoarded up this last wretched little rag of the robe of hope that was rent and given to the winds, how do I know! Why did you who read this, commit that not dissimilar inconsistency of your own, last year, last month, last week? (Ch. 47, p. 394)

Gone is Pip's old assurance, his blithe confidence in the future. He is now willing to throw in his lot with common humanity. Yet, the loss of Estella, although acutely painful, is absorbed into a larger, more general sense of unhappiness and loss, as he assures the distraught Miss Havisham when she begs his forgiveness. He cannot bear the final confirmation that he has lost Estella, but the general knowledge that he has lost everything that he has once most valued, is slightly more bearable. Pip's recourse, at this point, as the first sentence of the third section indicated, lies in action--in setting about securing Magwitch's safety.

Pip's sense of the real world and of the quality of his own life is inevitably increased by his sense of loss. ". . . however slight an appearance of danger there might be about us, danger was always near and active." (Ch. 47, p. 399) The use of the first person plural indicates his total alliance with Magwitch at this point; it is an alliance, however, that is based now on more than a sense of duty or responsibility. There is no doubting the mutual affection in the following lines, when Pip reciprocates rather than repulses Magwitch's feelings.

> 'I don't like to leave you here,' I said to Provis, 'though I cannot doubt your being safer here than near me. Good-bye!' 'Dear boy,' he answered, clasping my hands,

> 'I don't know when we may meet again, and I don't like Good-bye. Say Good Night!' 'Good Night! Herbert will go regularly between us, and when the time comes you may be certain I shall be ready. Good Night, Good night!' (Ch. 46, p. 392)

Pip's compassion for Magwitch is paralleled by his generous behaviour towards Miss Havisham. When she begs his forgiveness for having caused him to suffer what she has suffered, he is reluctant to adopt the superior moral position which doles out forgiveness, but is willing to do so if it brings comfort to her. "There have been some mistakes; and my life has been a blind and thankless one; and I want forgiveness and direction far too much, to be bitter with you." (Ch. 49, p. 410) It is easy to approve of Pip's attitude here, in a novel that shows the driving force of revenge: in Miss Havisham's preparation of Estella to break men's hearts in Estella's mother's decision to kill her rival for her husband's affection and pretend that she had murdered her daughter, in Magwitch's attitude to Compeyson when they both escape from the Hulks. Pip's generosity is given an immediate test when he rescues Miss Havisham from the fire, incurring burns himself. The fire at Satis House is not to be considered merely as another sensational event. It is Satis House and its inhabitants that had sustained Pip's expectations about his worldly and emotional future for so long. Now with Estella gone and Miss Havisham

a vulnerable old woman begging for forgiveness, Pip can see people for what they really are, behind their convict rags or their opulent trappings.

Pip's relationship with Herbert, which gave the strongest grounds for his redemption, is aided by Miss Havisham at this point; Pip asserts his own financial independence of her by directing her attention to Herbert's needs, although Jaggers and Wemmick, with their money ethic, consider him a fool for declining Miss Havisham's offer. Of his aid to Herbert, Pip can say, "It was the only good thing I had done, and the only completed thing I had done, since I was first apprised of my great expectations." (Ch. 52, p. 427) His goodness is soon to receive a greater test when Magwitch attempts to escape from his enemies and from the law.

Chapters Fifty Three and Fifty Four constitute a double narrative climax in the novel, when Orlick attempts to murder Pip and when Magwitch is finally taken. Once again the connected aspect of Pip's life is clear. Orlick has long been brooding on revenge, ever since Pip used to enjoy a special relationship with Joe at the forge; Pip's relationship with Biddy, with whom Orlick seemed infatuated in his own way, and Pip's recommendation that Orlick should not be allowed to keep his job at Satis House, add fuel to Orlick's fire. Orlick's observation of Pip in London causes Orlick to come in contact with Magwitch's enemy and thus Pip's and Magwitch's enemies

join forces to constitute a formidable threat to the lives of both the hero and his benefactor. Yet the magnitude of the conflict and the dramatic tensions in Chapters Fifty Three and Fifty Four, when Pip and Magwitch stand poised between life and death, are only part of the interest in this section of the book. More important from the perspective of the bildungsroman conventions are their effects on the young hero's development.

The effects are profound. Because Orlick has hounded the hero and put him in a position similar to the hounded Magwitch, Pip is able to identify in an important sympathetic way with the convict. After Magwitch has been taken and Pip has decided to cast in his lot totally with Magwitch's, Pip's vision is never clearer:

> For now, my repugnance to him had all melted away, and in the hunted wounded shackled creature who held my hand in his, I only saw a man who had meant to be my benefactor, and who had felt affectionately, gratefully, and generously, towards me with great constancy through a series of years. I only saw in him a much better man than I had been to Joe. (Ch. 54, pp. 456-7)

The clauses in the quotation above, "I only saw," suggest that Pip had once seen much more in Magwitch, but he realizes that in fact he had seen much less than what he sees now; he

saw the convict as a type rather than as a suffering individual with feelings and ideals. His earlier descriptions of the convict eating his food in an animal way are made redundant by the more sympathetic description of him here as a "hunted wounded shackled creature." Pip's earlier gentlemanly alliance with Herbert in a life of relative indolence and decadence is to be contrasted with Pip's more worthy fellowship with the convict in his suffering. In Chapter Forty Six when Magwitch lies dying in prison, the convict summarizes their relationship most pithily: ". . . 'you've been more comfortable alonger me, since I was under a dark cloud, than when the sun shone. That's best of all.'" (Ch. 56, p. 469)

After Magwitch's death, the process of Pip's own healing begins in earnest. Magwitch had brought Pip away from the social limitations of life at the forge and afforded him larger glimpses of life from a Londoner's perspective; then, he had developed Pip's humanity by destroying all that was most false in his gentlemanly identity and replacing it with more generous human feeling. It remains to Pip to re-establish the connections between the different phases of his life, using the virtues that his relationship with Magwitch have developed in him.

The healing process, delineated in Chapter Fifty Seven, begins with Pip in a passive role. Instead of Pip's going to

Joe, Joe comes generously to him, nurses him and pays the debts for which Pip had been arrested. Thus Joe is made to appear superior to Pip both morally and financially; Pip is merely the helpless recipient of Joe's goodness. This in part establishes the connection with Pip's past: ". . . Joe stayed with me, and I fancied I was little Pip again." (Ch. 57, p. 476) This is a dangerous fancy, however. It suggests that Pip believes too easily that the immediate past can be blotted out, just as he had once believed his past at the forge could be blotted out. Events at the forge, however, have developed rather than remained static during his absence in London so that he cannot easily resume his former life where he had left it off when he was scarcely more than a child. The world of Joe is just as limited and Pip is probably even more unfit to inhabit it. Hence he perceives it now only as a moral ideal, which he had once rejected, rather than as a real place. His momentary disappointment when he learns of Biddy's and Joe's marriage finally shatters his vision of a morally secure future in a sheltered village; his quick recovery and generous congratulations and decision to establish himself elsewhere show that the village was a highly arbitrary choice for him in the first place. His task is to live a life of goodness in the world, wherever he may find himself.

The two endings of Great Expectations raise the question:

which is the more appropriate ending for a bildungsroman? In the revised ending, it is strongly suggested that Pip marries Estella, in the lines "...in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her." (Ch. 59, p. 493) The imagery of mists and vision which Dickens had used to great effect in the novel provides a fitting conclusion here, in one sense. In Chapter Nineteen, as Pip is setting out for London: "the light mists were solemnly rising, as if to show [him] the world. . . ."(Ch.19, p.186) Yet, the light mists rising were not enough to afford him a clear vision; in all his London period, until Magwitch's return, his view of life is clouded by his illusions. Is there any guarantee that his vision in the last chapter, when the mists rise once again, will be any clearer? Leaving the ruins of Satis House with Estella, he believes in his future happiness with her. One must wonder, though, how well he knows Estella, despite the evidence that she has suffered too, and on what grounds they can build a future life based on an infatuation of Pip's which has lasted since childhood, and on Pip's remorse.

In the first ending, Pip meets Estella in London; she takes Joe's son, Pip, to be Pip's son, and the elder Pip does not correct her error. Pip recognizes that Estella has suffered, and the novel ends with the satisfying knowledge that Estella, like Pip, has grown through suffering and living in the world. Pip expresses no desire to resume their relationship, no false

emotional satisfaction; from her formation under Miss Havisham, it is unlikely that she will foster his moral development in any significant way, as Agnes had the power to shape David's moral identity. In the end, if he marries her, he merely satifies an irrational craving. The marriage might provide a happy ending in the most conventional sense, but it does not really provide the most satisfactory conclusion to the chronicle of Pip's growth. Yet the fact that Pip in the end becomes a marginal character in life does not mean he is a rebel or unconventional. He desires the conventional institutions of society intensely; he respects and envies the domestic happiness of Biddy and Joe, and of Herbert and Clara, but life has made him unfit for such simple happiness; early in life he aspired to an extraordinary ideal, lost that ideal and cannot truly be satisfied with anything less. His idea of winning Biddy, before he realizes Joe will make her his own wife, is a final attempt to recover the simple way of life he had renounced in early adolescence. In the end, he is left yearning not only for a lost ideal, in the form of Estella and wealth and beauty, but for a more ordinary way of life that others are better fitted to lead than he. He becomes a solitary character, left to meditate on the strange course of events which has made him what he is. His final solitude is not conducive to escapism, but rather leads him to a fuller realization of what he is. From this realization, the chronicle of his development grows.

Great Expectations, I would conclude, is a powerful representation of the bildungsroman genre. Although it puts a greater emphasis on plot than the bildungsroman usually does, this emphasis does not undermine the revelation of the young hero's inner life. On the contrary, the sensational events create the extraordinary course of the young man's development. Pip is forced to ponder upon the strangeness of the events the narrative has described, and the plot, whatever its sensational qualities, is part of a disciplined process of self-examination. The morally complex hero is severely tested by the world and becomes a grander person as a result of those tests. His solitary position, as solitary at the end as at the beginning, compels him to examine his growth and the influences upon him. As Pip himself says: "'My dear Biddy, I have forgotten nothing in my life that ever had a foremost place there, and little that ever had any place there.'" (Ch. 59, p. 490) The memories of those places, people, events and influences are woven into a highly-wrought narrative which is unified by the hero's pervading consciousness of himself growing in the world.

NOTES

[1] Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, ed. Angus Calder (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1965).

[2] Monroe Engel, The Maturity of Dickens (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 146-47.

[3] John P McWilliams, Jr. "Great Expectations: The Beacon, the Gibbet and the Ship." Dickens Studies Annual 2 (1972), pp. 255-263.

[4] Angus Calder, Introduction to Great Expectations, p. 25.

CONCLUSION

My reading of David Copperfield and Great Expectations, with its focus on the hero's character and the chief line of his development, shows that these two novels fulfill what I perceive to be the principal objectives of the bildungsroman: to trace the development of a sensitive, introspective young hero as he passes through various significant experiences to reach a desirable degree of self-awareness.

Each of the novels, despite their vastly different characters and their different mode of plotting, has a common structural principal and related thematic core which they share with other bildungsroman: their structure is based on the chronologically sequent study of a young man's life to a desirable point of maturity; their plot is based on a selection of the most significant events in the hero's formative years, and their gallery of characters is composed solely of those who influenced the hero's development to varying degrees

Maturation is always viewed, in the novels, in terms of time. In Oliver Twist the time span is so restricted that the hero does not develop to the extent that the bildungsroman hero does; notwithstanding the intensity and variety of Oliver's experience he still remains a child at the end. In David Copperfield, the mature narrator looks back in time, even to the events immediately preceding his birth, and conscientiously

charts the growth of his own mind through various phases to the point where he is mature enough to record and evaluate his growth. His childhood, adolescence, early working life and two marriages are all distinctive though related periods in his unified development. The last two chapters, describing the fate of the characters ten years after the hero has reached young manhood, emphasize to the very end the narrator's consciousness of the importance of time. Great Expectations is divided into three parts, each describing a certain phase of the young hero's development. The first phase describes a childhood so restricted that it breeds dreams of a more beautiful and free future; the second phase describes the realization of those dreams, but as the future becomes time present the ideals come to be seen in a more sordid light; the third phase describes the consequences of the destruction of those dreams, and hints of the lonely kind of life the hero leads once he has awakened to reality through a painful extension of his vision of life. Behind the organization of these three phases is the critical consciousness of the narrator looking back in time constantly makes itself felt and the measure of his maturation is his degree of criticism, objectivity and self-irony. My reading of the novels deliberately followed the various phases which each novel itself chronicles. I commented on the quality of the hero's self-evaluative attempts and showed how the hero's development is connected to the selected characters and events in a

logical progression towards a desired point of maturity. My method of reading the novels, tracing the line of development from one character, or group of characters, to another, is an attempt to outline and evaluate this logical progression that establishes not only the coherent pattern of the hero's development but also the coherent structure of each novel.

Each of my chapters has utilized the basic definition of the bildungsroman that I presented in my Introduction. The major thematic concerns (love, money, development in a metropolitan setting, careers) are related to the great synthesizing theme: the hero's maturing process. Each chapter has also remarked on the progression from a simple kind of novel like Oliver Twist, with its morally-simplified antagonistic groups and its young and pure hero, through the more complex and ambitious David Copperfield, with its larger chronological scope and fuller view of 'apprenticeship,' to Great Expectations with its morally complex hero and its structurally complex plot that utilizes, besides the bildungsroman conventions, elements of the folktale and the tale of mystery.

Of the three novels, David Copperfield is the clearest representative of the bildungsroman genre, but one sees in Oliver Twist how Dickens was preparing to write within this genre and how, in Great Expectations, he was prepared to go beyond it, integrating rather than renouncing it in his complex

fictional framework. This focus on Dickens's use of bildungsroman conventions, then, shows one important line of development in his career as a writer: there is an increasingly complex moral vision and a correspondingly complex view of the maturing process that compel him to write with increasingly greater technical skill and virtuosity.

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