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LOVE, ADVERSITY, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF IDENTITY: A STUDY OF THE YOUNG MEN IN THE NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS

by
Robert John Heaman

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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A B S T R A C T

LOVE, ADVERSITY, AND ACHIEVEMENT OF IDENTITY: A STUDY OF THE YOUNG MEN IN THE NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS

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Robert John Heaman

Chairman: Bert G. Hornback

A major concern in Dickens's novels is with arresting the disintegration of society. In the early novels, The Pickwick Papers (1837) through Barnaby Rudge (1841), he looks to benevolence and the principle of community as integrating forces. Later Dickens becomes worried about whether or not goodness can resist the predominately evil forces in society. Mr. Micawber's epithet for Uriah Heep--"you--you--you HEEP of infamy"--serves as a metaphor for Dickens's conception of the composition of society. The world is a dung hill. It is no longer enough to say that good people exist in the midst of a disintegrating society. It must be demonstrated that this goodness can arrest the disintegration.

Dickens conceives of human nature as mixed, sees men as having both a better and a worse nature. Life is a conflict between these; once the conflict has been resolved, however, once the better or worse nature fulfills itself, the ascendant nature determines what the person is. This conflict is, for Dickens, the mark of adolescence; its resolution, the mark of maturity.

Dickens is not concerned primarily with morality, with being good; rather he is concerned with a metaphysical problem, with being and becoming. Dickens's heroes become what their better natures will allow them to become.

Love and the fulfillment of the better nature are interdependent in Dickens. The love which Dickens regards as serving as an integrating force in society is human love which seeks the good of its object. His view of the nature of love develops as he becomes more and more concerned with the problem of evil. In the early novels, before Dickens sees society as a dung heap, he is content with benevolence. With Martin Chuzzlewit Dickens becomes more concerned with selfless love: Mark's generous love for Martin enables Martin to acknowledge the meanness of his own nature. In David Copperfield the concern is with selfless love of man for woman: David's selfless love for Agnes saves him. With Great Expectations Dickens begins to deal with the mature love of man for woman as woman. He recognizes, in his last novels, that if love is to be a generating force in society, it must indeed be romantic.

After Dombey and Son (1846-48), then, love replaces benevolence, and the notion of achieved identity replaces the principle of community as the dominant values in Dickens's thinking. Through love individuals fulfill their better natures and become capable of moral action. Dickens's metaphor for the achievement of identity is one of death and resurrection. The inadequate self must die in order to return to life--to be resurrected to an essential life--in order for life to have a meaning.

The most important element in the development of the characters who move from youth to maturity in the course of their novels is that all of them go through a critical period of severe illness or near death and emerge from it spiritually and metaphysically whole. Martin Chuzzlewit has to encounter death before he can recognize the value of selfless love and fulfill his better nature; David Copperfield is driven by the death of Dora to his dark night of despair, a despair from which his love for Agnes enables him to arise to a useful life in which he is able to cope with things as they are. This general pattern is continued until, in Our Mutual Friend, the death-resurrection theme pervades the novel: John Harmon, Bella Wilfer, and Eugene Wrayburn must die to their worse natures before they are capable of realizing the worth of love.

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It seems superfluous to express my gratitude to my wife for typing the original drafts, particularly since that is the least of her contributions to this study.

My greatest debt, of course, is to Mr. Charles Dickens.

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INTRODUCTION

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:24)

Ever since Edmund Wilson's Essay, "Dickens: The Two Scrooges,"[1] appeared in 1942, Dickens scholars have devoted more and more attention to Dickens's later novels. Very few recent critics have shared Chesterton's regret that Dickens moved away from the laughing exuberance of the early novels to the somber gloom of the later ones. The novels after Dombey and Son (1846-48) are, it is generally conceded, artistically superior to those written earlier. It seems to me that the greater emphasis on the later novels is right not only because these novels are aesthetically better than the earlier novels but because they resolve more convincingly the problems Dickens is interested in throughout his career. In this dissertation I am concerned with discovering Dickens's solution to the problems he raises in the novels. The Introduction is a summary of my general argument which, I believe,

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[1] The Wound and the Bow (A Galaxy Book, Oxford University Press, New York, 1965), pp. 3-85.

will be substantiated in later chapters with evidence drawn from particular novels.

Dickens's view of society is reflected naturally in his view of the family. The family is the basis of society--without it society would collapse. The family can also be viewed as society in miniature: the same kind of order, reciprocal duty, mutual responsibility, and concern for others that is the ideal of society is also the ideal of the family. And just as society cannot function properly unless it is composed of harmonious parts, neither can the family function properly as a family unless it is complete (that is, has father, mother, and children) and well ordered. Family, then, is both the most important institution in society and, in turn, symbolic of the order and harmony of society. If society is to be complete and orderly, the family must be complete and orderly. The breakdown of civil order in Barnaby Rudge, for instance, is reflected in the breakdown of the family unit in the world of that novel. There is no complete, happy family until the end of Barnaby. The breakdown of the family unit is to be seen as the final cause of the civil disorder in that society and as a reflection of that disorder.

Although I can find no place where Dickens specifically says so, a major concern in his novels is with finding some force in society which will prevent its collapse. Dickens, of course, is not an analytic philosopher or, for that matter, a systematic thinker. The dominant symbols of his novels, however, suggest that society is disintegrating. Toppling houses,

enshrouding fogs, infectious dung hills and dust mounds all reveal, at least unconsciously, Dickens's concern. Eugene Wrayburn's cynical observation to Mr. Boffin--the "Golden Dustman"--is a metaphor for Dickens's view of the disintegrating society: "My dear Boffin," says Eugene, "everything wears to rags"; Mr. Boffin's reply furnishes the "solution" to the problem: "I won't go so far as to say everything, . . . because there's some things that I never found among the dust."[2] It is the purpose of this dissertation to discover what "things" Noddy "never found among the dust," to discover what forces Dickens thinks are powerful enough to integrate society. We must keep in mind, however, that Dickens is first an artist and only secondarily a social reformer, and it is a mistake to think that he has a systematic program for the salvation of society. Dickens's "solution" is to be found within the novels as theme rather than program. Through the evidence gathered from a close reading of the novels I hope to demonstrate how Dickens thought the disintegration of society might be arrested.

In the early novels Dickens's solution to the problem is the human virtue of benevolence. Later he rejects this solution as inadequate. After Barnaby Rudge Dickens looks to

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[2]Our Mutual Friend, I, 8. Because a standard edition of Dickens's novels is not readily available I use chapter references rather than page numbers to identify the quotations. The Arabic numerals refer to the chapters. For those novels divided into books, I use Roman numerals to refer to the book, Arabic numerals to refer to the chapter.

love as a means of integrating society. In this Introduction I will indicate why Dickens thinks benevolence is inadequate to prevent the collapse of society, and outline briefly his later "solution" to the problem, keeping in mind that this "solution" is never systematic. The rest of the dissertation will be devoted to a detailed analysis of how love serves as the integrating force in society.

In Barnaby Rudge, Mr. Varden represents the stabilizing force around which the family as a whole is to be rebuilt; he is to the society of this novel what Mr. Pickwick is to The Pickwick Papers, Mr. Brownlow is to Oliver Twist, the Cheeryble brothers are to Nicholas Nickleby, and Mr. Garland is to The Old Curiosity Shop. Humphry House sums up the "main symptoms" of benevolence in Dickens's early novels:

> (1) Generosity, in money, and in kindness that costs nothing. Both kinds of generosity are chiefly shown by the poor towards each other and by the benevolent well-to-do towards the poor.
>
> (2) An acute feeling for suffering in all forms, whether caused by poverty, sickness, cruelty (mental or physical) or injustice. The feeling becomes most acute when all these causes of suffering are combined in the sufferer, and there is somebody who has power to relieve them all.
>
> (3) Righteous, if ineffectual, indignation against all anomalies, abuses, and inefficiency in social organizations or government which cause suffering of any kind. This is the Benthamite strain, found more in Dickens's own words than in the words of his characters.
>
> (4) An equable and benign temper in the benevolent person, which is on the whole immune from the changing moods which make human beings interesting in themselves.[3]

Dickens's resolution of the problems of disintegration in the early novels is, as Hillis Miller points out,

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[3]The Dickens World (Oxford University Press, London, 1965), p. 46.

> community, the establishment in the present of an elaborate network of familial or amicable relations crisscrossing within a large group living in a perpetual holiday of feasts, birthdays, weddings, anniversary celebrations, and christenings. These festivities will be made secure by the benevolent presence of some fatherly figure for whom, since he has money and is a gentleman, none of the problems of alienation arise.[4]

The element of community, of companionship, that accompanies the holiday season is the reason Dickens has such a special regard for Christmas:

> And numerous indeed are the hearts to which Christmas brings a brief season of happiness and enjoyment. How many families, whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide, in the restless struggles of life, are then reunited, and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual goodwill, which is the source of pure and unalloyed delight, and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world, that religious belief of most civilizations, and the rude traditions of the roughest savages, alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence, provided for the blest and happy! How many old recollections, and how many dormant sympathies, does Christmas time awaken! (28)

But the limitations of community, even community "made secure by the benevolent presence of some fatherly figure," can be seen both in this passage and in the novel from which it is quoted, Pickwick Papers. The fact that the "pure and unalloyed delight" which derives from the "happy state of companionship and mutual good-will" is "one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world" indicates the limitations of the principle of community. At the end of Pickwick Papers Mr. Pickwick stands in the midst of the wedding given at his place of retirement,

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[4] Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 96.

> his countenance lighted up with smiles, which the heart of no man, or woman, or child, could resist: himself the happiest of the group: shaking hands, over and over again with the same people and when his hands were not so employed, rubbing them with pleasure: turning round in a different direction at every fresh expression of gratification or curiosity, and inspiring everybody with his looks of gladness and delight. (57)

Pickwick serves wonderfully well as the benevolent presence in the midst of "gladness and delight." But there still remain the "cares and sorrows of the world," and one recalls the inadequacy of Pickwick's benevolence in the Fleet: "'I have seen enough,' said Mr. Pickwick, as he threw himself into a chair in his little apartment, 'My head aches with these scenes, and my heart, too. Henceforth I will be a prisoner in my own room'" (45). And he is--for three months! No one can blame Pickwick for being unable to relieve the poor wretches of the Fleet--we remember his generous conduct to Jingle and Job Trotter in that place. There are simply too many "cares and sorrows" in the world for one man to hope to cure them all. The best he can do is to reduce misery among those in his immediate circle, starting, of course, with his family and friends.

The principal limitation of benevolence is that it does not spread, it does not generate further benevolence which in turn generates further benevolence. Usually, one man is able to help, ordinarily with money, those he comes into immediate contact with. These people are not financially able, in turn, to relieve the economic distress of others in their sphere. Furthermore, since the benevolent figure cannot relieve the suffering of everybody in society he

generally selects his own limited community over which to watch. Once Pickwick realizes that he has "seen enough" he retires to his room. After he gets away from the Fleet, he "determine[s] on retiring to some quiet pretty neighborhood" where he "may yet live to spend many quiet years in peaceful retirement" (57). He exercises his benevolence within the limited society he encounters in the country.

Another limitation of benevolence and of the benevolent man acting as the stabilizing force in society is that this fatherly figure is an unsocial being. Pickwick, Brownlow, the Cheerybles, and Garland are all bachelors. Varden is virtually a bachelor in the same way the Tony Weller is virtually a bachelor--their wives have denied their roles as wives. The fact that the benevolent men in Dickens are bachelors shows, I think, the nature of benevolence, which, unlike love, is a personal virtue. One gives something to another and one feels better for having done so. The fact that the other is relieved is almost incidental. The generous man begins by giving to others for their sake, but the feeling that ensues from the generosity becomes so pleasurable that he becomes a benevolent man, and it would actually be painful for the benevolent man not to relieve the distress of others when he can. The fact that benevolence is a personal virtue does not in any way reduce its excellence as a virtue. Its limitation is that it does not extend far enough. The benevolent man is unable to come to terms with the evil in society. He is only able to operate in his own limited society and that

society is in "some quiet pretty neighborhood"--away from "the cares and sorrows of the world."

In the early novels Dickens attempts to demonstrate that the general disintegration of society can be stopped by the presence of "good" people. The Pickwicks, Brownlows, Cheerybles, Vardens, and Garlands are taken for granted. Dickens is not concerned with how they got to be good men. They exist, and he hopes they can serve as a stabilizing influence in society. Dickens recognizes, however, that there is evil in the world. In Oliver Twist Dickens chooses, as he points out in the 1841 Preface to that novel,

> to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really do exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives; to show them as they really are, for ever sulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they may.

In "little Oliver," Dickens shows "the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance, and triumphing at last." Dickens, however, is not concerned with demonstrating how Oliver became "good." He wants to show that good people can remain good in the midst of evil. Neither is Dickens concerned with how people become evil. About evil, Dickens "merely say[s]" in the same Preface,

> that I fear there are in the world some insensible and callous natures, that do become, at last, utterly and irredeemably bad. But whether this be so or not, of one thing I am certain: that there are such men as Sikes, who, being closely followed through the same space of time, and through the same current of circumstances, would not give, by one look or action of a moment, the faintest indication of a better nature.

The Sikeses, Fagins, Quilps, and Nicklebys inhabit the same world as the Brownlows and Cheerybles.

After the early novels Dickens becomes worried about whether or not goodness can resist the predominately evil forces in society. Mr. Micawber's epithet for Uriah Heep--"you--you--you HEEP of infamy"--serves as a metaphor for Dickens's conception of the composition of society. The world is a dung hill. The world of the Fleet, of Fagin's underground, becomes the dominant concern in the later novels. It is no longer enough to say that good people exist in the midst of a disintegrating society. It must be demonstrated that this goodness can arrest the disintegration. In the 1849 Preface to Martin Chuzzlewit Dickens explains, in part, how depravity can be generated:

> I conceive that the sordid coarseness and brutality of Jonas would be unnatural, if there had been nothing in his early education, and in the precept and example always before him, to engender and develop the vices that make him odious. But, so born and so bred; admired for that which makes him hateful, and justified from his cradle in cunning, treachery, and avarice; I claim him as the legitimate issue of the father upon whom those vices are seen to recoil.

Jonas's environment and education are to be seen as the chief causes of his coarseness and brutality. This is as close as Dickens ever comes to analyzing the degeneration of men to that state of "sordid coarseness and brutality." He is not as interested in examining the process of infection (except as he associates those infected with the dung hill they inhabit) as he is with demonstrating that goodness can be established in an evil world.

The focus of Dickens's attention, both in the creation of individual characters and in the themes of the various novels, is how one can achieve that degree of stability which will allow one to resist the evil forces of a corrupt world. He believes in the possibility of goodness, but at the same time he accepts as "certain" the evil of "such men as Sikes" who do not give "the faintest indication of a better nature." Further, Dickens is committed to the demonstration of how goodness and love act as those forces which can prevent the disintegration of society.

After Dickens experiments with Oliver as the "principle of Good," he leaves the world of painless comic idealization for the "real" world of chance, growth, and change. And after Nicholas Nickleby and The Old Curiosity Shop, he begins to move away from the idea of benevolence toward the more comprehensive, more efficacious idea of love. But both goodness and love must be earned. The influence of evil in the disintegrating world is such that most people--at least most of the people Dickens cares to deal with in detail--are distracted and distorted from their better natures, from that goodness which Dickens believes to be inherent in human nature.

Dickens believes that there is goodness in man, what he calls "our better natures." These "better natures" are often "deformed" by our "prejudices and passions."[5] And although the better nature is inherent in men, it seems, it can sometimes be

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[5]Sketches by Boz, "A Christmas Dinner," II, 2.

so deformed, so disguised, as to be lost. The children of Newgate prisoners, he says, "have entered at once upon the stern realities and miseries of life,and to their better nature it is almost hopeless to appeal in after-times."[6] Dickens conceives of human nature as mixed: when speaking of Charlie Hexam's relationship with his sister, Lizzie, in Our Mutual Friend, Dickens says, "It was his better nature to be true to her, if it were his worse nature to be wholly selfish. And as yet the better nature had the stronger hold" (II, 1).

Dickens sees life as a conflict between the better and worse nature. Once the conflict has been resolved, however, once the better or worse nature fulfills itself, the ascendant nature determines what the person is. At this point in Charlie Hexam's life "the better nature had the stronger hold." The conflict is unresolved. Eventually, however, Charlie's worse nature is triumphant. While Charlie is growing up his better nature is struggling with his worse nature. This conflict is, for Dickens, the mark of adolescence. Or, perhaps better, during adolescence one's better and worse natures may be in conflict. The resolution of this conflict is the mark of maturity--in the literal sense of that word. The process of maturation is completed when the conflict between the two natures is resolved. Charlie's worse nature has so asserted itself that Charlie becomes even more despicable than Bradley Headstone. There is little chance that the better nature can

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[6] Ibid., "A Visit to Newgate," I, 25.

be reasserted once it has been defeated. This is why "it is almost hopeless to appeal in aftertimes" to the "better nature" of the children of the Newgate prisoners. This is also why Tom Gradgrind's change of character at the end of Hard Times is unconvincing.

Dickens's heroes are for the most part young men growing up. The struggle between their two natures has not yet been resolved. It is this struggle that he focuses on. They can either fulfill the potentiality of their better natures or be distorted from this and allow their worse natures to assume command. Dickens is not concerned primarily, however, with morality, with being good; rather he is concerned with a metaphysical problem, with being and becoming. Dickens's people either become what their better natures will allow them to become or what their worse natures will damn them to. While the struggle between the two natures is being waged, they are in a state of "adolescence."

It is the resolution of this conflict that I refer to hereafter as the achievement of an identity. Or, more precisely, since Dickens's heroes do fulfill the potentiality of their better natures, it is the positive resolution of the conflict that I label the achievement of an identity. Dickens's heroes discover a mature scale of values in which they have confidence and are able to act according to these values. This is the resolution of the struggle between the better and worse nature.

That Dickens is concerned more with the problem of becoming than of becoming good can best be seen by looking

backward from Our Mutual Friend. At no point in the novels does Dickens say his concern is primarily metaphysical rather than moral, but in light of Our Mutual Friend, this seems to be so. Many of the themes Dickens has been dealing with throughout his career crystallize in Our Mutual Friend; many of the metaphysical and moral problems are dramatized. So too with the struggle between the better and worse natures. Eugene Wrayburn is trapped in the society of the Veneerings, a society he regards as superficial, and so Eugene cannot reconcile its superficial values with the moral and metaphysical struggle within himself. In Eugene we have a dramatization--an exaggeration--of the general conflict in Dickens's young men between the two natures. Because Eugene does not or cannot act, he cannot resolve the conflict and fulfill the potentiality of either his better or worse nature. By seducing Lizzie, as Mortimer fears, Eugene would give in to his worse nature. By marrying her, he would begin to fulfill his better nature. But, because Eugene is in a state of moral and metaphysical suspension, he cannot make a choice. Not until Eugene's near death by drowning is he able to resolve the conflict, to realize the potentiality of his better nature, to achieve an identity. John Harmon's struggle is also primarily metaphysical--a problem of becoming. Harmon must assume the physical identities of Julius Handford and John Rokesmith before he can become John Harmon. And Bella Wilfer must witness Noddy Boffin's apparent avarice before the "little mercenary wretch" can fulfill the potentiality of her better

nature and become what Noddy has known her capable of becoming all along--"true golden gold at heart."

Eugene, John, and Bella are, of course, better at the end of Our Mutual Friend than at the beginning, because they have realized the potentiality of their better natures; they have become complete. Eugene's problem, again, was not that he was immoral, but that he was incapable of action. Eugene was amoral. Once he fulfills his better nature, once he achieves an identity, he becomes a man capable of action--of moral action. He is also capable of love, which is itself a moral action for Eugene (Jenny Wren says Eugene wishes to marry Lizzie so that his "reparation may be complete") and the source of all future moral action.

When we regard the earlier novels in the light of Our Mutual Friend (1864-65) we discover that Dickens's concern since Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-44) has been more with the problem of being and becoming than with the problem of being good. The difference between Oliver and, say, a mature David Copperfield is not that David is more or less moral than Oliver, but that David has "grown up." It is significant that the hero of Oliver Twist--the only novel with which Dickens is content to allow his hero to remain a boy--is a "principle of good." Dickens's concern after this novel is with young men growing up, not with young men who are "principles of good"--whom Dickens does not bother to allow to grow up.

In Martin Chuzzlewit, Martin, Tom Pinch, and Mercy Pecksniff are able to fulfill the potential of their better

natures. Martin is, ironically, "selfish"--ironic because Martin is metaphysically empty and has very little "self." Through love and adversity the selfish Martin is able to become a generous and loving Martin. Tom Pinch's naive, simple view of life becomes fuller and more realistic when he discovers Pecksniff to be a miserable hypocrite. Tom must break his ties with Pecksniff and is forced to assume an identity of his own. Merry Pecksniff, the mean, flighty tease, becomes Mercy Pecksniff, a mature, generous woman, as a result of Jonas's abuse.

David Copperfield must recognize that his marriage to Dora was the "first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart" before he is able to "discipline" his heart. When David emerges from "the night that fell on [his] undisciplined heart," he is able to marry Agnes, his "trew wife" according to Pegotty, the "real heroine" of the novel according to Dickens's notes.[7] David proves his identity with his art, for, as Mr. Micawber's letter from Port Middlebay indicates, David is an artist in the classical definition of that term: "The inhabitants of Port Middlebay may at least aspire to watch [David's career], with delight, with entertainment, with instruction!"

In Bleak House Richard Carstone and Esther Summerson must both achieve identities. Because Richard is caught up in the Chancery world of Jarndyce and Jarndyce he is unable to achieve identity until he has been broken by the law suit.

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[7]John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at Work (Fair Lawn, New Jersey, 1958), p. 128.

Only then can he realize the futility of the suit and promise, on his death bed, to "begin the world." Esther must discover her actual identity--as the daughter of Lady Dedlock--before she can achieve identity, before she can accept the evil in the world. And Esther's fulfillment of her better nature is reflected even in the quality of her narration, as I shall demonstrate when I deal with the novel.

In Hard Times Tom Bounderby is unable to withstand the effect of the Gradgrindery and does not achieve an identity beyond that of a "whelp." Loo is able to discover her loving nature through her extended illness and to reject the passive, indifferent attitude that marked her former self.

In Little Dorrit Arthur Clennam, who has "no will" at the beginning of the novel, is able to discover his love for Amy in his "unnatural peace" at the Marshalsea. Because of his love for Amy, Arthur is able to lead a "happy" and "useful" life.

In Great Expectations Pip and Estella are able to fulfill their better natures, to achieve identities, Pip as a true gentleman, Estella as a loving woman, because of the suffering both have undergone. And once Pip and Estella do so they are able to love one another.

As these summaries suggest, Dickens is not concerned with demonstrating that people are good, or can become good. Oliver is "good," but Oliver is also helpless. It is inconceivable that Oliver can serve as an integrating force in society. He cannot divert, say, Master Bates from his evil

ways. And Oliver cannot serve as a stabilizing force in society because Oliver has not resolved convincingly the struggle between a better and worse nature; he is merely a "principle of good." It is the resolution of the struggle between the two natures, the fulfillment of the better nature, the achievement of identity, that Dickens becomes more and more concerned with; an identity which is "good" but, more importantly, an identity which can withstand the vicissitudes of an increasingly chaotic society.

Oliver "comes . . . to have any name at all" because Bumble "inwented it": "We name our fondlings in alphabetical order" (2). And Oliver's "identity," like his name, is fortuitous. After Dombey and Son identities must be discovered and achieved, as must names very often. David Copperfield is Davy, Daisey, Trotwood, Master Copperfull, and Doady, before he achieves his identity as David Copperfield. Esther Summerson is "called [italics mine] Old Woman, and Little Old Woman, and Cobweb, and Mrs. Shipton, and Mother Hubbard, and Dame Durden, and so many names of that sort that my own names soon became lost among them" (8), until she discovers her identity as Esther Summerson and is enabled thereby to become Esther Woodcourt. Philip Pirrip "called [him]self Pip, and came to be called Pip" (1). And John Harmon must assume the name--and the identity--of Julius Handford and later John Rokesmith ("But it was not I. There was no such thing as I, within my knowledge") before he can become John Harmon. Dickens's playing with names is not accidental. He is concerned with his heroes' discovering

and achieving their identities, with their fulfilling their better natures and becoming stable people, people who can serve as integrating forces in a disintegrating society.

Love and the fulfillment of the better nature are interdependent in Dickens. It is never clear whether one is able to love because one has fulfilled one's better nature or one fulfills one's better nature because one has loved. David is not able to love--or at least is unable to recognize his love for--Agnes until he achieves identity, but he is unable to achieve identity without loving Agnes. So too with Martin and Mary, Esther and Allan Woodcourt, Arthur and Amy, Pip and Estella, Bella and John, and Eugene and Lizzie. But the resolution of this paradox is not important. What is important is the recognition that Dickens regards love and the achievement of identity as those forces, or that force, which can arrest the process of disintegration in society. And, beyond this, that Dickens regards love and moral action to be inseparable.

The love which Dickens regards as capable of serving as an integrating force in society is human love which seeks the good of its object. Dickens assures us in Our Mutual Friend, his last complete novel, that "'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love that makes the world go round" (IV, 5). By this he means that love serves as a cohesive force in society. Through love families, stable families, are created. The world of Dickens's novels is populated with fragmented families. As I suggested earlier, this is to be seen as a reflection of the

fragmentation of society generally. Nicholas, Oliver, Little Nell, Barnaby, Martin, David, Esther, Richard Carstone, Pip and John Harmon are either bastards or orphans. The "complete" families during the course of the novels are families like the Micawbers, Gradgrinds, or Dorrits; that is, families which do not function as families, as units of mutual love and responsibility, units composed of harmonious parts, complete and well ordered. Through love Dickens's heroes are able, at the end of the novels, to create complete families, families which, in the context of the world of their novels, will serve as integrating forces.

Dickens's view of the nature of love--or at least his idea of the kind of love which can make the world go round--develops as he becomes more and more concerned with the problem of evil in the novels. In the early novels, before Dickens sees society as a dung heap, he is content with the general, vague kind of love I have labeled as benevolence. Generosity, sensitivity to suffering and injustice, and kindliness are seemingly sufficient in the early novels. With Martin Chuzzlewit Dickens becomes more concerned with selfless love. It is Mark's generous, selfless love for Martin that enables Martin to acknowledge the meanness of his own nature. In David Copperfield the concern is with romantic and selfless love. David is "in love" with Dora. He regards her, however, not as a human being but as "a Fairy, a Sylph," and she calls him by the pet name "Doady." Doady and his Sylph love in a "gossamer" world, not in the actual world, and so their love

is incapable of coming to terms with the evils of the actual world. David's enchantment with Dora prevents him from doing his duty in society, prevents him from moral action.

When Doady achieves his identity as David he and Agnes are able to share a human love, are able to achieve a relationship which can both withstand the evils of the actual world and serve as an integrating force in that world. David's love for Agnes makes moral action possible to him. After Dora's death David has "no purpose, no sustaining soul within me," until Agnes reminds him that he must now "teach others" what he has learned through suffering.

David's "love" for Dora was romantic--they loved in a "gossamer" world. David's love for Agnes is romantic in the other sense of that term--love of man for woman--but, more importantly, it is selfless. Dickens becomes more and more concerned with the selfless quality of love. It is because there is "no alloy of self" in what David feels for Agnes that David and Agnes are able to marry.

The selfless love which David and Agnes share becomes for Dickens that love which can serve as the stabilizing force in society. The ending of Little Dorrit indicates the role of love in a disintegrating society. Arthur and Amy discover their mutual love and are married. They leave the church and go down into the streets of London:

> Went down into a modest life of usefulness and happiness. Went down to give a mother's care, in the fulness of time, to Fanny's neglected children no less than to their own, and to leave that lady going into Society for ever and a day. Went down to give a tender

> nurse and friend to Tip for some few years. . . . They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed along in sunshine and in shade, the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward and the vain, fretted and chafed, and made their usual uproar. (II, 34)

Rhetorically, the passage is significant. The absence of the noun ("Went down . . . Went down . . . Went down . . .") emphasizes the predicate. The effect is one of action, of doing. Arthur and Amy are to be "useful"; unlike the benevolent men of the early novels, Arthur and Amy do not retreat; they go "down into a modest life of usefulness and happiness" among "the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward and the vain." And they remain in London, the symbol, for Dickens, of the fragmented and disintegrating society. Arthur and Amy are, like David (who has a "power of doing good"), Allan Woodcourt, and John Harmon (who is able to use the Harmon fortune to do good in London), useful in a way that the benevolent men are not. They are able both to contribute to the re-ordering of society by creating a complete, harmonious family and quietly to reduce the "uproar" of the society they do not retreat from.

David's love for Agnes, Arthur's for Amy, and Esther's for Allan are selfless loves. They are also productive; that is, the love allows them to do good in society. The signal of the productive nature of this love is that at the end of their novels all have families. Before Dombey and Son (1846-48) Dickens is not concerned with the productive nature of love. He does not indicate, for instance, that Martin and Mary

Chuzzlewit ever have any children. Walter and Florence Gay do have a family, but with Mr. Dombey living among them and with Sol Gills, Cuttle, Mr. and Mrs. Toots, and Miss Tox "not unfrequently of the family party," one is reminded of the "oyster" existence that George Orwell ridiculed.[8]

With David Copperfield (1849-50) Dickens begins to emphasize the productive nature of love. However, even as late as A Tale of Two Cities (1859) he shares the general Victorian reticence in dealing with sexual matters. Most of Dickens's heroes have more a brother-sister or parent-child relationship than a lover-beloved relationship. David regards Agnes as his sister throughout most of the novel. Esther Summerson is willing to marry Jarndyce, until he gives her to Woodcourt. Richard Carstone lives as a brother to Ada Clare before they are married. Loo Gradgrind marries Bounderby and, after they are divorced, lives with Sissy Jupe (who is given no husband Dickens mentions). And Arthur Clennam regards Little Dorrit as a "child" whom he must protect through the greater part of their novel.

With Great Expectations (1860-61) Dickens begins to deal with romantic love--that is, love of man for woman--in a convincing manner. Pip is irresistibly drawn to Estella, in spite of himself. His attraction to Estella is romantic, as is Eugene's to Lizzie and John's to Bella in Our Mutual Friend. In these last two finished novels Dickens is eager

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[8]Dickens, Dali, and Others (Reynal and Hitchcock, New York, 1946), p. 54.

to demonstrate that the love which he thinks can serve as an integrating force in society is the mature love of man for woman as woman. In the novels after Dombey and Son he acknowledged that this love must be productive, but he did not see it as romantic, necessarily. With Great Expectations he recognizes that if this love is to be productive, if it is to be a generating force in society, it must indeed be romantic.

After Dombey and Son (1846-48), then, love replaces benevolence and community as the dominant value in Dickens's thinking. Through love individuals fulfill their better natures and become capable of moral action. Dickens's metaphor for the achievement of identity is one of death and resurrection. Edgar Johnson's observation on the near-drownings of John Harmon and Eugene Wrayburn--they are "each a prelude to rebirth into a new identity"[9]--is basic to Dickens's notion of the achievement of identity. The inadequate self must die in order to return to life--to be resurrected to an essential self--in order for life to have a meaning. The Eugene Wrayburn who is trapped in the society of the Veneerings must die in order that the Eugene who is capable of loving Lizzie may be born. After Dombey and Son Dickens moves from the secular value of benevolence to the Christian principle of selfless love as the solution to the problems created by chaotic society: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of

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[9] Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (New York, 1952), p. 1024.

wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). For the rest of his career Dickens is concerned with demonstrating the meaning of Christ's words. He is not concerned, however, with the rebirth of man into heaven; he is more interested in the application of this message to life on this side of the grave. One must die to one's worse self if one is to fulfill one's better nature and contribute to the stability of society.

Since Dickens's concern in the later novels becomes the fulfillment of the better nature through love and adversity, the development can best be seen in those young people in his novels who do move from youth to maturity within the course of the novel. One thinks immediately of Martin Chuzzlewit, David Copperfield, and Pip, in this context, but there are others: Esther Summerson and Richard Carstone (Bleak House), Loo Gradgrind (Hard Times), Arthur Clennam (Little Dorrit), Sidney Carton (Tale of Two Cities), Bella Wilfer, John Harmon, and Eugene Wrayburn (Our Mutual Friend). The most important element in the development of these characters is that all of them go through a critical period of severe illness or near death and emerge from it spiritually and metaphysically whole. Martin Chuzzlewit has to encounter death before he can recognize the value of selfless love and fulfill his better nature; David Copperfield is driven by the death of Dora to his dark night of despair, a despair from which his love for Agnes enables him to arise to a useful life in which he is able to cope with things as they are; Esther Summerson's illness allows her to

learn the truth about her own birth and, consequently, to arrive at an awareness of the nature of her world and acceptance of the evil in it; Loo Gradgrind must suffer the adversity and ensuing illness of her near-fatal relationship with Harthouse before she can rise above the Facts, Facts, Facts of the philosophy which almost destroys her loving nature; Arthur Clennam does not become aware of his love for Amy Dorrit until his serious illness at the Marshalsea; Pip discovers in the fevered hallucinations of his illness that he cannot dissociate himself from the evil in the universe and that he can only become a true gentleman by being true to himself; in Our Mutual Friend the death-resurrection theme pervades the novel: John Harmon, Bella Wilfer, and Eugene Wrayburn must die to their worse natures before they are capable of realizing the worth of love.

The importance of the critical stage that these young people go through can be seen in Little Dorrit. During his "unnatural peace" at the Marshalsea, Clennam recognizes now for the first time that he owes what resolution of character he possesses to the influence of Amy Dorrit. Dickens comments:

> None of us clearly know to whom or to what we are indebted in this wise [resolution of character] until some marked stop in the whirling wheel of life brings us the right perception with it. It comes with sickness, it comes with sorrow, it comes with the loss of a dearly loved; it is one of the most frequent uses of adversity. (II, 27)

Adversity, then, can teach us the truth about ourselves and those around us.

Many Victorian writers are concerned with the finding of true self and with the role of adversity in that search. From Carlyle's "Everlasting No" to Tennyson's mental and spiritual breakdown, we find the Victorians struggling with the same problems that Dickens is concerned with in his later novels. Dickens's "solution" is different from that of the others. Tennyson is able to rebuild his universe by not shutting himself out from his fellow man; Carlyle by finding a transcendental philosophy congenial to his Calvinistic background. Arnold and Mill are closer to Dickens in their concern for arriving at the true self. Mill would have us cultivate our "individuality" so that we will become "well-developed human beings," and so come "nearer to the best thing [we] can be."[10] Arnold speaks of "our best self," that "self which culture, or the study of perfection, seeks to develop in us; at the expense of our old untransformed self, taking pleasure only in doing what it likes or is used to do, and exposing us to the risk of clashing with every one else who is doing the same."[11] Arnold's "best self" and Mill's "well-developed human beings" are close to Dickens's idea of the fulfillment of our better natures. Arnold's and Mill's manner of arriving at the "best self" or the "best thing" we can be, however, is different from Dickens's. Arnold would have us engaged

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[10]Poetry and Criticism of Mathew Arnold, ed. A. Dwight Dwight Culler (Riverside Edition, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1961), p. 443.

[11]On Liberty, ed. Alburey Castell (Appleton Century Crofts, New York, 1947), p. 63.

in the study of perfection, Mill in the cultivation of individuality. With Dickens, on the other hand, one fulfills the better nature through love tempered by adversity.

In Martin Chuzzlewit Dickens begins examining the conflict between the better and worse nature, and the means to fulfillment of the better nature. This remains his major concern until the end of his career.

CHAPTER I

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

> . . . he felt how nearly Self had dropped into the grave and what a poor dependent, miserable thing it was.

After Dickens has seen Martin Chuzzlewit and Mark Tapley safely off to America in their novel (1843-44), he returns to affairs in England and comments:

> Change begets change. Nothing propagates so fast. If a man habituated to a narrow circle of cares and pleasures out of which he seldom travels, step beyond it, though for never so brief a space, his departure from the monotonous scene on which he has been an actor of importance, would seem to be the signal for instant confusion. As if, in the gap he had left, the wedge of change were driven to the head, rendering what was a solid mass to fragments, things cemented and held together by the usages of years burst asunder in as many weeks. The mine which time has slowly dug beneath familiar objects is sprung in an instant and what was rock becomes but sand and dust. (18)

Once step outside the familiar world, once change environments, the universe that you had known intimately seems chaotic, when you take a backward glance at it. Obviously, however, the world does not change because you have stepped out of it. Your perception of it changes. The world has been changing all along. It is that you yourself are part of the change, that you are too close to this world to

recognize the change. Irving Babbit justly observes in his introduction to Rousseau and Romanticism:

> Life does not give here an element of oneness and there an element of change. It gives a oneness that is always changing. The oneness and the change are inseparable. Now if what is stable and permanent is felt as real, the side of life that is always slipping over into something else or vanishing away entirely is, as every student of psychology knows, associated rather with the feeling of illusion. . . . To admit that the oneness of life and the change are inseparable is therefore to admit that such reality as man can know positively is inextricably mixed up with illusion. Moreover man does not observe the oneness that is always changing from the outside; he is part of the process, he is himself a oneness that is always changing.[1]

The problem for man of course is to discover the "oneness" so as not to become so much a part of the process of change as to lose entirely his identity. The "oneness" that Babbit speaks of can be viewed as an achieved identity, the resolution of the conflict between the better and worse nature. Man must achieve identity so that he does not become totally lost in the welter of change. But if a man has not yet achieved identity, he must "change," or, more accurately, he must develop to the point at which he fulfills his better nature, achieves identity. If he is unable to "change" in this sense--in the sense that he achieves an identity--he is irrevocably lost.

As Dickens states, it is impossible for a man to recognize that change has been going on all along until he

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[1]Meridian Books, The World Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York, p. 7.

departs from "the monotonous scene on which he has been an actor of importance." So too it is impossible for a man to recognize that he has not fulfilled the potentiality of his better nature, that his identity is incomplete, until something allows him to move beyond that incompleteness and recognize its inadequacy. Only then can he become what his better nature will allow him to be, only then can he "change." Dickens solves the problem of the recognition of change on a literal level fairly easily: in order for Martin to perceive that things do change in his familiar world (England) he must step outside this world into an unfamiliar one (America); when he returns to his familiar world he will recognize that things are no longer the same as they seemed when he left. There is really not a great deal of difference between Eden and London, but Martin must encounter the chaos of Eden before he can discover the order of London. This, however, is only recognition of change in a literal sense. In order to recognize the inadequacy of an incomplete identity, one must "depart from the monotonous scene on which he has been an actor of importance." Martin Chuzzlewit is a novel about how one achieves identity by resolving the conflict between the better and worse nature.

Many characters in Martin Chuzzlewit change, and those who do not are damned. Martin and his grandfather, Old Martin, Tom Pinch, Mercy Pecksniff, even Mark Tapley "change"--move away from an inadequate selfhood and achieve an essential selfhood--and they are therefore able to lead happy, decent

lives. Pecksniff, Jonas, Montague Tigg, and Charity Pecksniff are unable to change--and they are consequently damned (Tigg and Jonas quite literally). Those people who do change, do so because they are able to respond to a permanent value in life, a value which allows them to get beyond an inadequate selfhood, to get outside the world of self and to see things as they are. In the world of Martin Chuzzlewit this permanent value is human love--the same value that Dostoyevsky recognizes as essential to salvation in The Brothers Karamazov when he has Father Zossima say "Father and teachers, I ponder 'What is hell?' I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love."[2] In Martin Chuzzlewit the inability to love condemns one to a world of eternal flux. Jonas Chuzzlewit's and Montague Tigg's greed makes it impossible for them to establish human relationships. By splitting his being into a public and private self and presenting only his public self to the world, Pecksniff does not allow for the possibility of a human relationship between him and someone else--because he is not even presenting what he regards as himself to another. Pecksniff is a hypocrite. The response to Pecksniff, then, must be a response to someone whom Pecksniff himself considers as false, false because Pecksniff recognizes that it is not the same person he regards himself to be. So too with Charity Pecksniff. Charity is unable to become what her better nature might allow her to be because she has already fulfilled her

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[2]Modern Library Edition, 1950, p. 387.

worse nature. Charity is spiteful. It is impossible now for Charity to be saved through the redemptive merits of human love because she is now incapable of love. Charity does not act for herself, she reacts against others. Thus her supposed attachment to Augustus Moddle is, as Augustus knows, not a sincere relationship. Charity woos Moddle not because she loves him but because he loves Mercy, Charity's sister. By marrying Moddle, Charity reasons, she will have a husband superior to Mercy's and thus will spite both Mercy and Jonas for the "injury" they have done her. Charity does not act out of love but out of hate. Consequently the only attachments she is able to establish are those engendered by hate.

There are several characters who do change. Since my primary concern in this study is the development of the young people in Dickens, I will focus my attention in Martin Chuzzlewit on the young people who do develop--Martin, Tom Pinch, and Mercy Pecksniff. The other young people in the novel, Ruth Pinch, Mary, and John Westlock are not fully realized characters and, therefore, outside of the area of my study. Mark serves as a foil to Martin. The other characters in the novel who change are, like Martin Sr., older and, again, outside of the area of this study. The pattern of development that we see in Tom, Mercy, and Martin is, however, of the same quality in these characters too.

The process of becoming what the better nature allows one to be, of achieving identity through love, can be seen

most easily in its simplest and, I think, least successful form, Tom Pinch. Tom is a relatively uncomplicated character--he is a "good" man. But, as John Westlock recognizes, Tom has not "half enough of the devil in you. Half enough! You haven't any" (2). And John is right when he insists that Tom is "all the worse for it." Tom's identity depends, to a great extent, on Pecksniff's supposed goodness, and insofar as it does Tom's goodness is qualified. His absolute faith in Pecksniff's goodness both prevents him from becoming what his better nature would allow him to be and indicates the inadequacy of what he is. So long as Tom believes in Pecksniff he allows Pecksniff to manipulate his life. And that Tom is naive enough to be fooled by Pecksniff demonstrates that Tom has yet to come to grips with the actuality of the world he inhabits.

Tom's inability to recognize evil in the world causes him to be unjust to those who see the world truly. Tom's failure to see Pecksniff as a miserable hypocrite results in the more serious error of treating unfairly those who see Pecksniff as he is. Tom regards John Westlock as "a fine lad, an ingenuous lad, [who] has but one fault that I know of--he don't mean it but he's most cruelly unjust to Pecksniff" (3). Because of Tom's insistence on Pecksniff's goodness he refuses to listen to the truth about him. When, at the dinner party given for Tom and Martin, Westlock speaks plainly about Pecksniff, Tom will not "bear it." He puts on his coat and is prepared to ruin the evening by leaving:

> "You must excuse me, John. I have great esteem and friendship for you, I love you very much and have been perfectly charmed and overjoyed to-day to find you just the same as ever, but I cannot listen to this."
>
> "Why, it's my old way, Tom, and you say yourself that you are glad to find me unchanged."
>
> "Not in this respect," said Tom Pinch. "You must excuse me, John. I cannot, really; I will not. It's very wrong." (12)

John, of course, graciously agrees to avoid the subject and the night is saved. The point is, however, that Tom's blindness to Pecksniff's true character causes him to be unjust to others.

Nobody is able to convince Tom of Pecksniff's depravity. Even when Mary, the girl Tom secretly loves, begins to tell him about Pecksniff, Tom protests that Pecksniff is the "best of men" (31). When Mary expresses "dissent," Tom continues "with honest energy": "Well I don't know how it is, but it always happens, whenever I express myself in this way, to anybody almost, that I find they won't do justice to Pecksniff. It is one of the most extraordinary circumstances that ever came within my knowledge, but it is so" (31). When Mary reveals Pecksniff as the "falsest, craftiest, cruelest, most sordid, most shameless" (31) of men, Tom is able to admit the cruel truth, to admit that Pecksniff is a "scoundrel" and "most intolerable villain" (31) because it is Mary who has told him this. Mary's evidence is no more substantial than Westlock's or Martin's. The difference is that although Tom loves Westlock and Martin he loves them as fallible human beings. Tom does not see Pecksniff as fallible, however, but as perfect. He does not see him as

human. Consequently he is able to disregard mere "human" evidence. Tom loves Mary, however, not as a human being--not as a woman with whom one eats and sleeps and has children--but as an angel who "glides" about as he plays the organ (5). Tom is able to accept her evidence. This evidence from a "super-human" source about a "super-human" being enables Tom to recognize the possibility of evil in the world--puts the "devil" in him.

When Tom learns about Pecksniff he is crushed: "Oh Pecksniff, Pecksniff," Tom laments, "there is nothing I would not have given to have had you deserve my old opinion of you; nothing!" (31) And yet this disastrous truth has to be learned. Tom has to learn to see life as it is, if he hopes to lead a useful and happy life in the world. And he does learn the truth. We see that he has in his next encounter with Charity Pecksniff. Tom is struck by the ambiguous kinds of remarks she makes about her sister: "If I had not already known what shocking things treachery and deceit are in themselves, Mr. Pinch, I might perhaps have learnt it from the success they meet with--from the success they meet with" (37). Tom's interest is "piqued" by Charity's manner: "An uneasy thought entered Tom's head--a shadowy misgiving that the altered relations between himself and Pecksniff were somehow to involve an altered knowledge on his part of other people and were to give him an insight into much of which he had no previous suspicion" (37). Once Tom admits that he was mistaken about Pecksniff he himself becomes different--becomes

more human. He becomes more human because he is now able to see things as they are. When he thought Pecksniff was worthy of his complete confidence, Tom allowed himself to be manipulated by him. Tom is forced now to act on his own. Further, Tom is now able to accept the presence of evil in the world. He is no longer naive.

The development of Tom Pinch is, however, unsatisfactory. We are never convinced that Tom has enough of the "devil" in him to exist in this world. We feel that Tom has progressed from the innocent Pecksniff-loving stage to a more mature stage--a stage in which he can see the evil of a Charity Pecksniff. But we are never convinced that Tom can function in the normal world (of course Dickens never puts him to the test) because we are never convinced that Tom leaves his fantasy world for any prolonged period of time. And Tom does have his fantasy world, a world which is far removed from the actual world. It is a curious blend of the Ivory Tower and the world of childhood:

> Great thoughts and hopes came crowding on his mind as the rich music [that Tom was playing on the church organ] rolled upon the air, and yet among them--something more grave and solemn in their purpose, but the same--were all the images of that day, down to its very lightest recollection of childhood. The feelings that the sounds awakened, in the moment of their existence, seemed to include his whole life and being, and as the surrounding realities of stone and wood and glass grew dimmer in the darkness, these visions grew so much the brighter that Tom might have forgotten the new pupil. (5)

Dickens says that Tom's talk with Martin went "on, and on, and on--in the language of the story-books" (5). It is the

world of the story-books that Tom lives in. When Tom gets his "job" marking and classifying books in a dusty old room, not even the books themselves supply a greater fantasy world than the one he is able to create:

> But, although the books were never so interesting and never so full of novelty to Tom, they could not so enchain him, in those mysterious chambers, as to render him unconscious for a moment of the lightest sound . . .
> . . . Misgivings, undefined, absurd, inexplicable, that there was some one hidden in the inner room--walking softly overhead, peeping in through the door-chink, doing something stealthy, anywhere where he was not--came over him a hundred times a day, making it pleasant to throw up the sash and hold communication even with the sparrows who had built in the roof and water-spout and were twittering about the windows all day long. (40)

Tom is aware of the evils of the story-book existence, particularly after he has come to acknowledge the possibility of the evil in the actual world, and to recognize that one does not always find a happy ending in life. When Ruth, lamenting Tom's unrequited love, cries, "Oh Tom, dear Tom, will <u>this</u> be set right too? Will it, Tom? Will you always have this sorrow in your breast--you who deserve to be so happy--or is there any hope?" Tom answers philosophically:

> "You think of me, Ruth," said Tom, "and it is very natural that you should, as if I were a character in a book, and you make it a sort of poetical justice that I should, by some sort of impossible means or other, come at last to marry the person I love. But there is a much higher justice than poetical justice, my dear, and it does not order events upon the same principle. Accordingly, people who read about heroes in books and choose to make heroes of themselves out of books, consider it a very fine thing to be discontented and gloomy; and misanthropical, and perhaps a little blasphemous, because they cannot have everything ordered for their individual accommodation. Would you like me to become one of that sort of people?" (50)

An admirable protest. But for all of his philosophy, Tom is a story-book hero. It is inconceivable that Tom, "dear Tom, old friend," should have a family. Tom remains a fine uncle, but he could never be a good father, because Tom himself never leaves his Ivory Tower fantasy world. Dickens recognizes this and that is why he leaves Tom on the country estate with his sister living what Orwell would term an "oyster" existence:

> And coming from a garden, Tom, bestrewn with flowers by children's hands, thy sister, little Ruth, as light of foot and heart as of old days, sits down beside thee. From the present and the past, with which she is so tenderly entwined in all thy thoughts, thy strain soars onward to the future. As it resounds within thee and without, the noble music, rolling round ye both, shuts out the grosser prospect of an earthly parting and uplifts ye both to Heaven. (54)

A beautiful picture--but it will prove an unsatisfactory one. Unsatisfactory because in Dickens's mature view young men ought to develop into fine fathers, not fine uncles and brothers. Dickens recognizes eventually that Brownlows and Cheerybles are unsatisfactory because they are unsocial beings. He puts high premium on family as the organizing force in society, and family is continued through husbands and fathers, not uncles and brothers.

Tom's development, then, is adequate, as far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. Tom is able to develop from a simple, naive person, is able to accept the possibility of evil in the world. But his awakening is unsatisfactory because it does not allow him to come to terms with the actual world. Tom's discovery of the evil in the world is not

balanced by anything. His discovery of Pecksniff's evil nature confuses him: "His compass was broken, his chart destroyed, his chronometer had stopped, his masts were gone by the board, his anchor was adrift ten thousand leagues away" (31). Even after Tom and Ruth set up house together, Tom's vision of reality is not re-ordered:

> Tiers upon tiers of vessels, scores of masts, labyrinths of tackle, idle sails, splashing oars, gliding rowboats, lumbering barges, sunken piles, with ugly lodgings for the water-rat within their mud-discoloured nooks; church steeples, warehouses, house-roofs, arches, bridges, men and women, children, casks, cranes, boxes, horses, coaches, idlers and hard-labourers--there they were all jumbled up together any summer morning, far beyond Tom's power of separation. (41)

Tom's confused state does not allow him to penetrate through the welter of actuality. Perhaps because the source of Tom's discovery of evil in the world, his idealized love for Mary, was not of this world, the discovery itself could not be one that would enable him to cope with the world.

Martin's development is more complete and more convincing than Tom's. At the beginning of the novel, Martin is selfish, obstinate, even cruel--from "mere thoughtlessness of character" (48). Martin's failings can best be seen, perhaps, by looking at his relationship with Mary--the one whom we might expect would provide him with the means of getting outside of himself. Martin tells Tom Pinch about his love:

> "I say I am in love. I am in love with one of the most beautiful girls the sun ever shone upon. But she is wholly and entirely dependent upon the pleasure of my grandfather and if he were to know that she favoured my passion, she would lose her home and everything she possesses in the world. There is nothing very selfish in <u>that</u> love, I think?"

Tom, mistaking Martin's meaning, eagerly responds:

> "Selfish!" cried Tom, "You have acted nobly. To love her as I am sure you do and yet in consideration for her state of dependence, not even to disclose--"
> "What are you talking about, Pinch?" said Martin pettishly; "don't make yourself ridiculous, my good fellow! What do you mean by not disclosing?"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "If I didn't tell her I loved her, where would be the use of my being in love?" said Martin, "unless to keep myself in a perpetual state of worry and vexation?" (6)

This exchange captures Martin's problem. He is selfish. And this selfishness does not allow him to love in a way which Dickens approves, does not allow him to establish the one relationship which can win him from his selfish nature. Martin's "love" for Mary is reflexive: "for though she is poor, her beauty and intellect would reflect great credit on anybody, I don't care of what pretensions, who might become her husband" (6). Martin's love for Mary does not seek the good of its object but the good of self. If Martin is to get out of his selfish world he will have to look to a source other than Mary to help him.

Martin has no place to turn when Pecksniff dismisses him. (His grandfather has already abandoned him.) He decides to go to America to seek his fortune, and this journey to the new land is also a journey to a new identity. Martin goes to America for change: "I shall have change of scene and change of cares and hopes! Time will wear wings indeed! I can bear anything, so that I have swift action, Mary" (14). Not "you"

but "swift action." Dickens is showing us Martin at his most selfish:

> Was he thinking of her care for him when he took so little heed of her share in the separation, of her quiet monotonous endurance, and her slow anxiety from day to day? Was there nothing jarring and discordant even in his tone of courage, with this one note "self" forever audible, however high the strain? (14)

The feverish description of the strife of the ocean during Martin's journey to the new world foreshadows the strife that will prevail during Martin's journey to a new identity:

> On, on, on, over the countless miles of angry space roll the long heaving billows. Mountains and caves are here and yet are not, for what is now the one, is now the other; then all is but a boiling heap of rushing water. Pursuit, and flight, and mad return of wave on wave, and savage struggle ending in a spouting-up of foam that whitens the black night; incessant change of place, and form, and hue; constancy in nothing but eternal strife. (15)

Martin is not able to respond to the good that the strife of the ocean brings about:

> Every kind of domestic suffering that is bred in poverty, illness, banishment, sorrow, and long travel in bad weather was crammed into the little space and yet was there infinitely less of complaint and querulousness and infinitely more of mutual assistance and general kindness to be found in that unwholesome ark than in many brilliant ball-rooms. (15)

But Martin lies in bed and complains. And his reason? "I lie here because I don't wish to be recognized in the better days to which I aspire by any purse-proud citizen as the man who came over with him among the steerage passengers. I lie here because I wish to conceal my circumstances and myself and not arrive in a new world badged and ticketed as an utterly poverty-stricken man" (15).

Martin and his faithful companion Mark Tapley arrive finally at Eden, the land of innocence and promise, the land which Martin mistakenly thinks will allow him to become the "successful" man that he was unable to become in the old corrupt world he left behind:

> A flat morass, bestrewn with fallen timber; a marsh on which the good growth of the earth seemed to have been wrecked and cast away, that from its decomposing ashes vile and ugly things might rise; where the very trees took the aspect of huge weeds, begotten of the slime from which they sprung, by the hot sun that burn them up; where fatal maladies, seeking whom they might infect, came forth at night in misty shapes and creeping out upon the water, hunted them like spectres until day; where even the blessed sun shining down on festering elements of corruption and disease, became a horror -- this was the realm of Hope through which they moved. (23)

This antediluvian setting is a fit environment in which Martin may come to grips with himself. Martin becomes ill immediately and tells Mark, who offers to bring aid, not to bother because he is "destined to die in this place" (23). And Martin is right, for he does die--that is, his worse nature dies.

Up to the time of his dangerous illness, Martin is a selfish person. When Mark says that he can "come on strong" best by being "jolly to the last" (33), here in Eden, Martin responds "with a thrill of terror": "'In Heaven's name, don't talk of that . . . what should I do, Mark, if you were taken ill.' Mr. Tapley's spirits appeared to be stimulated by this remark, although it was not a very flattering one." All Martin has learned up to this point is that he needs Mark. He does not need Mark for Mark's sake, however, but for his own sake. When Martin is taken ill and "very near his death" Mark nurses

him. Mark "remembered nothing but the better qualities of his fellow-wanderer and was devoted to him, heart and hand" (33). When Martin is on his way to recovery "the misfortune he had so much dreaded fell upon them. Mark was taken ill." Martin now has the opportunity to exchange places with a selfless fellow being:

> If Mark's friends had been kind to Martin (and they had been very), they were twenty times kinder to Mark. And now it was Martin's turn to work, and sit beside the bed and watch, and listen through the long, long nights, to every sound in the gloomy wilderness, and hear poor Mr. Tapley; in his wandering fancy, playing at skittles in the Dragon, making love remonstrances to Mrs. Lupin, getting his sea-legs on board The Screw, travelling with old Tom Pinch on English roads and burning stumps of trees in Eden, all at once. (33)

Martin, that is, is forced to see Mark as a human being. A living, breathing, eating, working, loving Mark who is now on the brink of death--as Martin was. And Martin witnesses Mark's reaction to his own fevered illness: "But whenever Martin gave him drink or medicine or tended him in any way, or came into the house from some drudgery without, the patient Mr. Tapley brightened up and cried, 'I'm jolly, sir; I'm jolly!'" (33) Martin, when he "began to think of this and to look at Mark as he lay there," starts to reflect, particularly on the differences between "this man who had had so few advantages" and himself "who had had so many." Martin begins "to ask himself in what way they differed." He recalls Mark's generous and untiring work helping others on The Screw and associates Tom Pinch with this same kind of generous giving of himself. He decides that his grave fault is selfishness: "He never would

have known it, but being newly risen from a bed of dangerous sickness, to watch by such another couch, he felt how nearly Self had dropped into the grave and what a poor dependent, miserable thing it was" (33).

Martin then asks himself "which of them could be the better spared and why?" The answer is obvious enough. Martin continues to reflect:

> He asked himself, besides, when dreading Mark's decease (as all men do and must, at such a time), whether he had done his duty by him and had deserved and made a good response to his fidelity and zeal. No. Short as their companionship had been, he felt in many, many instances that there was blame against himself, and still inquiring why, the curtain slowly rose a little more and Self, Self, Self dilated on the scene. (33)

Martin, in the "hideous solitude of that most hideous place, with hope so far removed, ambition quenched, and death beside him rattling at the very door" (33) learns the truth about himself and makes a "solemn resolution" to alter. Ironically, "Eden" has allowed Martin to fulfill the potentiality of his better nature.

Unless Martin has Mark's selfless love to measure his selfish nature against his discovery of "what a poor dependent, miserable thing [Self] was" when "he felt how nearly Self had dropped into the grave" would be meaningless because this discovery would lead him nowhere. If he were to discover this independent of any other truth, he might just as well end that "Self" as do anything else. But when, in the process of discovering the truth of "Self," he discovers the truth of selflessness, the truth of a giving, generous love, then Martin is

able solemnly to resolve to abandon the old self in favor of a more humble, steadfast, and giving self. Both elements--the dangerous illness and Mark's presence--must exist in order for Martin to arrive at the truth: near death in order to demonstrate the insignificance of self and Mark to demonstrate the importance of selflessness.

Martin's discovery of the truth about himself leads him to greater awareness of the world around him. His resolution to return to England is the most obvious instance of this. He is also more perceptive about less important matters. Martin realizes now, for instance, that Mary bought the ring she gave him at his departure: "She bought it--bought it--knowing I was poor and proud (Heaven help me! Proud!) and wanted money" (33). When asked how he knows this, Martin replies:

> I thought of it, my good fellow, hundreds of times while you were lying ill. And like a beast I took it from her hand, and wore it on my own, and never dreamed of this even at the moment when I parted with it, when some faint glimmering of the truth might surely have possessed me!

Martin is also more aware of the danger of American manners. Before his ordeal Martin never really replied to the Americans he encountered. Now, when Elijah Pogram (on the journey from Eden to "civilization") defends a "good citizen" who "sucked his knife for some moments and made a cut with it at the butter just as Martin was in the act of taking some," and defends him as a "na-tive of our country . . . naturally bright and spry, of course," Martin makes perhaps the most perceptive criticism of American manners in the entire novel:

> "Now observe what this comes to, Mr. Pogram," pursued Martin. "The mass of your countrymen begin by stubbornly neglecting little social observances which have nothing to do with gentility, custom, usage, government, or country, but are acts of common, decent, natural, human politeness. You abet them in this by resenting all attacks upon their social offences as if they were a beautiful national feature. From disregarding small obligations they come in regular course to disregard great ones, and so refuse to pay their debts. What they may do or what they may refuse to do next, I don't know, but any man may see if he will that it will be something following in natural succession and a part of one great growth, which is rotten at the root." (34)

Even Martin's outlook on life is changed. When he left England it "was raw, damp, dark, and dismal; the clouds were as muddy as the ground, and the short perspective of every street and avenue was closed up by the mist as by a filthy curtain" (14). One suspects that the weather conditions were about the same when Martin returns: "the canopy of smoke that overhung the town was brighter and more beautiful to them than if the richest silks of Persia had been waving in the air" (35). The difference, of course, is state of mind.

Because Martin is altered, because he rids himself of selfishness, pride, and obstinacy, he gains his inheritance, wins his love, and lives happily ever after. But Martin's development, like Tom Pinch's, is not altogether satisfactory. Martin develops into a fine young man, but he is dependent upon others for his happiness. It is fair to speculate on just what would have happened if Old Martin were really in Pecksniff's grasp--we are, after all, convinced of this throughout the major portion of the book. Where could Martin turn? When Martin comes to London he turns to Tom Pinch! Tom

Pinch, who can get no farther in a description of his "qualifications" for a job than "A respectable young man, aged thirty-five" (39). And Martin comes to him for advice about how to get a job. This is almost as absurd as Tom Pinch himself going to John Westlock--who inherited his fortune--for advice. Tom, of course, is hired by Old Martin after he loses his place with Pecksniff. After that he merely plays the organ and reads books in John Westlock's library. Martin inherits his grandfather's wealth. Neither he nor Pinch nor, for that matter, Westlock, demonstrate that they are self sufficient, that their achieved identities are not dependent upon fortuitous aid. Martin is saved by his grandfather and is able to marry Mary Graham. He is not forced to continue on his own efforts. One wonders if he could have. Dickens is not at this point in his career prepared to place full confidence in the ability of his young men to control their own destinies. Old Martin is in the line of the Brownlows and Cheerybles. He supplies Martin with the means to continue a happy useful life. But by doing so, he denies Martin the opportunity of determining his own lot. He must even give Martin permission to marry Mary. We gather that Martin is a promising young architect and feel that he could have provided for Mary and himself. But the presence of Martin Sr.'s wealth makes it impossible for Martin to discover if he could have made an adequate living. In a sense, Martin is denied the opportunity of testing his achieved identity, denied the opportunity of discovering whether he is now

capable of solving all the problems, including the financial ones, of life.

Mercy Pecksniff is the third young person in Martin Chuzzlewit to achieve identity. Mercy's is a curious kind of development--but essentially it is similar to that of Tom Pinch and Martin. Dickens differentiates Mercy from her sister when we first see them. Pecksniff tells them that there is to be a new student at their home:

> "Is he handsome, Pa?" inquired the younger daughter.
> "Silly Merry!" said the oldest, Merry being fond for Mercy. "What is the premium, Pa? tell us that!" (2)

Mercy is a silly, flighty, catty, thoughtless, at times cruel girl, but she is never spiteful or malicious as is her sister. And when her sister goads her on sometimes, "Mercy, who really had her share of good humour" (11), is able to retort with a laugh.

Mercy tells Jonas that if she agreed to marry him, she would only do so that "I might hate and tease you all my life" (20). When Old Martin seeks to counsel Mercy about the ill-advised match, he perceives properly that she "may have lapsed into this engagement in very giddiness. It may have been the wanton act of a light head. Is that so?" Mercy's response demonstrates her flightiness: "'My dear Mr. Chuzzlewit,' simpered Mercy, 'as to lightheadedness, there never was such a feather head as mine. It's a perfect balloon, I declare'" (24). Yet Mercy goes on with her plans and marries the brutal Jonas. He, of course, abuses her. When we see Mercy next, it is through Bailey's eyes: "It was the merry

one herself. But sadly, strangely altered! So careworn and dejected, so faltering and full of fear; so fallen, humbled, broken, that to have seen her quiet in her coffin would have been a less surprise" (28). When Tom Pinch sees Mercy and she becomes convinced of his heartfelt sorrow for her state, Mercy shows Tom just how much she has altered. She asks Tom to tell Old Martin that she recalls his words of advice: "'If he should ever know this through your means, dear Mr. Pinch,' said Mercy, 'tell him that I sent the message not for myself, but that he might be more forbearing and more patient and more trustful to some other person in some other time of need'" (37). Mercy has come a long way. At the gathering at Jonas's house, Mercy sits next to old Chuffey:

> As she took her seat upon a low chair by the old man's side and put herself within the reach of his hand, she looked up once at Tom. It was a sad look that she cast upon him, though there was a faint smile trembling on her face. It was a speaking look, and Tom knew what it said. "You see how misery has changed me. I can feel for a dependent <u>now</u>, and set some value on his attachment." (46)

At the end of the novel, Mercy talks to Old Martin:

> "How can I hope," she said, "that your interposition would have prevailed with me, when I know how obdurate I was! I never thought at all, dear Mr. Chuzzlewit, I never thought at all; I had no thought, no heart, no care to find one at that time. It has grown out of my trouble. I have felt it in my trouble. I wouldn't recall my trouble, such as it is and has been--and it is light in comparison with trials which hundreds of good people suffer everyday, I know--I wouldn't recall it to-morrow, if I could. It has been my friend, for without it, no one could have changed me; nothing could have changed me." (54)

We do not actually see Mercy change--do not actually watch the process of the better nature being fulfilled as we do with Martin--but we know that it is like Martin's. Mercy is taken out of her familiar world, her world of "girlishness, and playfullness, and wildness, and kittenish buoyancy," into Jonas's world, a world of abuse and brutality. She has been made miserable. Mercy does not have to make a conscious effort to change. Jonas changes her from a flighty girl to a miserable woman. But, as with Martin, adversity is only half the answer. Adversity forces a man to come to terms with himself, to recognize, often, that there is a struggle going on within him between his better and worse natures. But he has still to resolve that struggle, to fulfill the potentiality of his better nature, to achieve an identity. And as Mark's selfless love inspires Martin with the nature that this identity must assume, so, it seems, old Chuffey furnishes Mercy with the clue to her identity. Mercy's look indicates this to Tom: "You see how misery has changed me. I can feel for a dependent <u>now</u>, and set some value on his attachment." Mercy is able to see Chuffey in the same way that Martin sees Mark in Mark's illness, as one who is now dependent upon her as she had been dependent upon him. And Mercy is able to respond to Chuffey because like Martin, she recognizes that she had been selfish and that her selfishness had been the basis of her misery. If she is to be happy, she must, Mercy reasons, be generous; she must reach out to those

who, like Chuffey, are dependent upon her. Because the taking selfishness of Merry's nature failed, Mercy determines to form herself according to the values of a giving love. Mercy becomes what her better nature will allow her to be--a generous, loving woman. She has found the "heart" that she had "no care to find" at the time that Old Martin tried to reason with her about marrying Jonas.

In Martin Chuzzlewit Dickens makes it clear that if a person is to be happy he must resolve the conflict between his better and worse nature, must fulfill the potentiality of his better nature, must achieve an identity. He does this through the influence of love and adversity. In adversity he recognizes that he is incomplete, morally and metaphysically. He is able then to respond to a human love that he sees about him and to orient himself with reference to the selfless human love he has responded to. Martin's development can be established as the general pattern of development for Dickens's young men: a development in which one fulfills the potentiality of one's better nature through the enlightening effect of adversity and under the guidance of love.

CHAPTER II

DAVID COPPERFIELD

> "But what I want you to be, Trot, . . . 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. . . . With determination. With character, Trot."

Between the writing of Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-44) and David Copperfield (1849-50), Dickens did not concern himself with the theme of achievement of identity. In Dombey and Son (1846-48), the only novel he wrote in this period, Dickens is concerned principally with the effect of selfless love. Florence Dombey's love for all around her is closer to Christian caritas than to the human love of Mark Tapley. Dickens is interested in demonstrating the power of love that can withstand even total rejection by the person most loved--in this case Mr. Dombey. Florence's love is powerful enough to redeem Dombey and Edith. She bridges the gap between the business world of Dombeyism and the romantic world of Sol Gills (the world of witches and castles and oracles and shipwrecks and reconciliations and resurrections). Walter Gay is almost destroyed when he steps into the world of Dombeyism (Dickens had originally intended to have Walter "gradually and naturally" corrupted at the Dombey House), but Sol Gills cannot

survive without Dombeyism (Dombey must lend him the money to save his shop). For all its evils, then, Dombeyism is necessary to the world in Dombey and Son. Florence's marriage to Walter joins the two worlds. We do not, however, in Dombey and Son witness the moral and metaphysical struggle that is central to Martin Chuzzlewit, except, of course, for Dombey's rather unconvincing change of heart at the end of the novel.

It is not until David Copperfield that Dickens returns to the theme that will be his major concern for the rest of his career: the achievement through adversity and love of identity. David Copperfield undergoes the same kind of growth as Martin Chuzzlewit, but while it can be argued that Martin's major shortcoming is his insensitivity, David can be seen, from one point of view, as a young man who has problems adjusting to the world around him precisely because he is too sensitive. David has the artist's temperament--as Miss Needham points out, if David Copperfield had been written in the eighteenth century it might well have been called "The History of a Man of Feeling"[1]--and this accounts both for David's many problems and his many successes. It is not until David is able to find the proper balance between his artistic sensibility and "firmness," not until he is able--in Annie Strong's words--to "discipline" his heart, that David can be happy.

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[1]Gwendolyn Needham, "David Copperfield and the Undisciplined Heart," Nineteenth Century Fiction, IX, 85.

David has a "poor unfortunate Baby" for a mother and is the posthumous son of a man "who was always running after wax dolls from his cradle" (13). It is not surprising, then, to find the child David imagining the pulpit as a castle when he attends church--a castle on which he would fight off "another boy coming up the stairs to attack it" (2). David's imagination is nurtured by reading crocodile books to his nurse and, later, by escaping from his fanatically firm stepfather into a world of fiction--the world of Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe. These, David tells us, "kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time" (4). And David is able to console himself "by impersonating my favorite characters in them--as I did--and by putting Mr. and Miss Murdstone into all the bad ones--which I did too" (4). David then tells us that we, the readers, "now understand, as well as I do, what I was when I came to that point of my youthful history to which I am now coming again." (He is referring to the time when he bites Murdstone's finger.) What "was" David? A sensitive boy who has seen his weak mother give in to a cruel stepfather; an imaginative boy who escapes from the cruelty of this stepfather by living in a story-book world; a boy who feels that the justice which prevails in the story-book ought also to exist in reality. David's principal problem--a problem of identity, of the kind of person he is--is that he confuses the world of fiction with the actual world.

When David is sent to Salem House his fancy is further intensified in telling the stories he has read to Steerforth and the others: "Whatever I had within me that was romantic and dreamy," David acknowledged, "was encouraged by so much story-telling in the dark, and in that respect the pursuit may not have been very profitable to me" (7). David realizes that it may not have been very profitable to encourage this romantic and dreamy tendency in him because he is aware that when one is too romantic and too dreamy one is unable to see reality clearly. If one is guided by what one reads in books, one's response to reality might very easily become an aesthetic response--one might prefer a Steerforth to a Traddles simply because a Steerforth appeals more to one's romantic nature. The results of heightening his romantic and dreamy tendencies can be seen in David's quickened romantic sensibility. When David returns home after his first half at Salem House, he finds the Murdstones out for the afternoon. His mother

> called me her dear Davy, her own boy! and coming half across the room to meet me, kneeled down upon the ground and kissed me, and laid my head down on her bosom near the little creature that was nestling there, and put its hand up to my lips. (8)

A lovely scene. But David's reaction is not a healthy one: "I wish I had died. I wish I had died then, with that feeling in my heart! I should have been more fit for Heaven than I ever have been since." It is wrong to put such high premium on feeling. Surely feeling is not the criterion for entrance into Heaven.[2]

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[2]Although the mature David is saying this, this does not represent his attitude as writer. Rather it represents the boy David's attitude at the time. The mature David will repudiate this kind of response.

David's romantic sensibility also causes him to pose at times. His admirable honesty about the importance he could not help feeling among the other boys when he learns of his mother's death is a fine touch, but it is also a rather uncomfortable bit of posturing--of seeing himself as he thinks others ought to see him and adjusting his actions to his aesthetic vision. David knows that something special has happened to him, and he cannot help playing the rôle of the orphan.

David's romantic and dreamy temperament has its bad side, but there are also compensations. Having lost his mother, David is able to dismiss the unattractive memories of her and to ignore that weakness which made her too susceptible to what Murdstone regarded as firmness; a weakness which made David's life miserable.

> From the moment of my knowing of the death of my mother, the idea of her as she had been of late had vanished from me. I remember her, from that instant, only as the young mother of my earliest impressions, who had been used to wind her bright curls round and round her finger, and to dance with me at twilight in the parlour. . . . In her death she winged her way back to her calm untroubled youth, and cancelled all the rest. (9)

In many ways this is fortunate. But David goes on: "The mother who lay in the grave was the mother of my infancy; the little creature in her arms was myself, as I had once been, hushed for ever on her bosom." David is doubly mistaken here. He is not dead. By idealizing the memory of his mother he is neglecting the actuality of his own experiences--experiences for which she is largely responsible. While this may be charitable, it

is not seeing things as they are. And failure to see things as they are can, as David is later to discover, create many needless problems. If David had remembered his mother as she really was--cruel as this memory would be at times--would he not have taken a more sensible view of his relationship with Dora?

But David refuses to abandon his dream world. When he and little Em'ly accompany Barkis and Pegotty on their wedding journey, David remembers how he loved Em'ly.

> What happiness (I thought) if we were married, and were going away anywhere to live among the trees and in the fields, never growing older, never growing wiser, children ever, rambling hand-in-hand through sunshine and among flowery meadows, laying down our heads on moss at night, in a sweet sleep of purity and peace, and buried by the birds when we were dead! Some such picture, with no real world in it, bright with the light of our innocence, and vague as the stars afar off, was in my mind all the way. (10)

The mature David, the narrator, points out the potential danger of such "picture[s], with no real world" in them. He knows it is not seeing the world as it is. But it is understandable that David do something to escape his sordid surroundings. His world is pervaded with evil--from the Murdstones to the waiter who "helps" him eat his chops, from the bottling factory to the "long-legged young man" who confiscates his box and half-guinea because "this is a pollis case," from the ogre ("Oh my lungs and liver, . . . no! Oh, my eyes, no! Oh, my limbs, no! Eighteenpence. Goroo!") who beats him out of his jacket, to the tramp who steals his silk handkerchief. David is surrounded by evil. And it is understandable that he attempt to fit "my old

books to my altered life" (11) and to make "stories for myself, out of the streets, and out of men and women." David is, after all, "an innocent romantic boy, making his imaginative world out of such strange experiences and sordid things" (11). And it is quite natural that this foot-worn, tired, hungry, half-naked romantic boy should, on his journey to his fairy godmother, find beauty on the highways of nineteenth-century England--highways where tramps beat women and children:

> When I took the road again next morning, I found that it lay through a succession of hop-grounds and orchards. It was sufficiently late in the year for the orchards to be ruddy with ripe apples, and in a few places hop-pickers were already at work. I thought it all extremely beautiful, and made up my mind to sleep among the hops that night, imagining some cheerful companionship in the long perspective of poles, with the graceful leaves twining round them. (13)

David's evil surroundings force him more and more to create fantasies to indulge his romantic sensibilities. The more David escapes from reality, however, the less equipped is he to deal with it when he must.

David makes his way to his fairy godmother, Betsey Trotwood, and begins his "new life, in a new name, and with everything new about" him (14). But is this really a new life or are the circumstances merely new? David has the same old problems. He must cope with the evil in the world, the evil that is inevitably in the world no matter how much circumstances may be altered, and he must come to terms with his own romantic sensibility. For every Aunt Betsey in this new world there is an evil husband lurking behind the scenes, for every Agnes

Wickfield there is a Uriah Heep, for every Dr. Strong a Jack Maldon. David is going to have to find room in his "new life" for these people.

When David "Makes another Beginning" he learns "never [to] be mean in anything; never be false; never be cruel" (15). Betsey says that if David can avoid these three vices she "can always be hopeful" of him. But we never suspected David of meanness, cruelness, or falseness. He is much too large natured for this. Betsey's second bit of advice to David is more pertinent:

> "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. . . . With determination. With character, Trot. With strength of character that is not to be influenced, except on good reason, by anybody, or by anything." (19)

Betsey says that what she wants David "to be" is "a firm fellow." Not physically, she says, but morally. Betsey does not mean simply morally either. She means metaphysically. David must <u>be</u> a firm fellow. David's problems stem from an undisciplined heart rather than from meanness, falseness, or cruelness. And Betsey is aware of this. If David is to become moral--in Betsey's terms--he must become firm metaphysically, he must achieve stability of character. As her comments suggest, the central problem for David--as for most of Dickens's young men--is a moral and metaphysical problem at once. When Betsey says that she wants David to "be . . . a firm fellow," she implies that David cannot be "moral" unless he is a stable entity, unless he achieves identity.

David Copperfield is concerned largely with how David does become a fine firm fellow. And since the element in David which distracts him from firmness of character is his romantic sensibility (because it influences his ability to deal with the world as it is), David Copperfield is concerned largely with how David goes about controlling his romantic sensibility, with how he strikes a just balance between firmness and romantic sensibility, between the head and the heart. David is himself a bit suspicious of firmness of character--he has seen what it did to his mother:

> Firmness, I may observe, was the grand quality on which both Mr. and Miss Murdstone took their stand. However I might have expressed my comprehension of it at that time, if I had been called upon, I nevertheless did clearly comprehend, in my own way, that it was another name for tyranny, and for a certain gloomy, arrogant, devil's humour, that was in them both. (4)

Murdstone's "strength of character" killed David's mother. But David's mother has virtually no strength of character--she allows Murdstone to "discipline" David without a word of protest. If David is to be happy, he must find a balance between these extremes.

David is surrounded with examples of the faults of the disciplined and the undisciplined heart: Steerforth and Traddles, Dora and Agnes, Little Em'ly and Annie Strong. Until he is able to control his romantic sensibility so that he can respond realistically and not merely romantically to life, however, David is unable to value properly the worth of the disciplined heart.

David continues to indulge his romantic sensibility even after hearing Betsey's advice. After he has completed school, where he does a bit of posturing for the young ladies and schoolboys, he goes to visit Yarmouth to think about what course he wants to pursue in life. On his way to Yarmouth he stops at London and decides to go to a play. When David emerges from "such illimitable regions of delight" to the rainy London street, he "felt as if I had come from the clouds, where I had been leading a romantic life for ages, to a bawling, splashing, link-lighted, umbrella-struggling, hackneycoach-jostling, pattern-clinking, muddy, miserable world" (19). But it is, unfortunately, the world he must live in--ugly as that world is. David continues to indulge his sensibility when he arrives at Yarmouth. When Ham tells David about his love for Em'ly, David "was filled with pleasure, that very little would have changed to pain" (21). David "haunts" the old spots and lingers about his parents' grave. He "used to linger about [his] native place, until the reddening winter sun admonished [him] that it was time to start on [his] returning walk." Then he would return to Yarmouth, and "it was delicious to think of having been there" (22).

When David meets Dora he has not developed the virtues of firmness of character and moral resolution. He has not been subjecting his romantic sensibility to his judgment, has not been trying to adjust to the world as it is. He responds to reality as he might to a work of art. In the chapter "Good and Bad Angels" (the chapter immediately before that in which

he meets Dora), David is able to see Uriah Heep as Agnes's evil genius and the basis of this vision is largely aesthetic. When Heep sleeps at David's place, David comes out "every half hour or so" to look at him because "he was so much worse in reality than in my distempered fancy that . . . I was attracted to him in very repulsion" (25). David's attraction to Steerforth is, quite obviously, also aesthetic. He is attracted by Steerforth's charm, good looks, and wonderful way with people. When Agnes warns David against his "bad Angel"--"judging" Steerforth on the influence he has over David--David protests:

> "Does he not look intelligent, gallant, high-spirited?"
> "Yes."
> "A gentleman, and a manly handsome fellow?"
> "Yes."
> "And do you think it natural, or not, that I should trust in him, and be attracted to him, and fond of him?"
> "Natural, perhaps," said Agnes, "but not wise. No, Trotwood," raising her eyes to mine, and looking full upon me while she spoke, "not wise. It may only be too natural, but it is not wise, and not hopeful." (25)[3]

Later Miss Mowcher tells David essentially the same thing: "'You are a young man,' she said, nodding. 'Take a word of advice, even from three foot nothing. Try not to associate bodily defects with mental, my good friend, except for a solid reason'" (32). David is guilty of associating bodily defects with mental defects and physical beauty with spiritual beauty. As Agnes says, this "may only be too natural, but it is not wise." And Agnes knows why it will be difficult for David to

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[3]Excised by Dickens before publication.

change his opinion--because "it is a sentiment that is rooted in [David's] trusting disposition" (25). David's willingness to respond aesthetically to things in life works all right with a Uriah Heep, but it blurs his judgment of the true worth of, say, Steerforth and Traddles. David's attraction to Steerforth is based solely on superficial merit. Because Steerforth is physically more attractive than Traddles he appeals more to David's romantic and dreamy nature.

It is not at all surprising, in light of David's propensity to judge the value of things on an aesthetic scale, that "All was over in a moment" when David meets Dora. Dora is "more than human" to David; she is "a Fairy, a Sylph." David thinks he has fulfilled his "destiny": "I was a captive and a slave" (26). David's love for Dora is romantic in the sense that he sees her existing in a fantasy world, a "gossamer" world. And David assumes the rôle of the silly panting lover--called Doady, not David--a rôle ironically appropriate to the excesses of this romantic world.

Between the time that David meets Dora and the time that his Aunt is financially ruined, between the time that he meets Dora and is discovered by Mr. Spenlow, many things happen which ought to cause him to reassess the wisdom of responding to life as one might respond to literature. David begins to discover the worth of Traddles and sees the disastrous result of Steerforth's charm--the "Greater Loss" of Little Em'ly. He has seen Barkis die, the Pegotty home ruined, the Steerforth home ruined. David's reaction to the evils of

the world, however, is typical of him at this point in his development:

> 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 shown the star of Dora high above the world. (33)

David refuses to face the reality of the world about him. The more complex the world becomes, the more David retreats into his fantasy world with Dora. This "moon-struck slave of Dora" (31) has not profited much from the sufferings of others or from exposure to the reality of evil in the world.

When David learns of his aunt's financial losses and is forced to make his own way in the world again, his response is still not sensible. Miss Betsey asks David if he has "got to be firm, and self-reliant," and on David's responding that he "hopes" and "thinks" so, Betsey tells him about her loss (35). David's prime concern is, perhaps naturally enough, the effect it will have on his relationship with Dora. When David tells Betsey about Dora, he is not at all receptive to reality's intruding itself upon his "gossamer" world in the form of Betsey's common sensical response: "Poor little couple! And so you think you were formed for one another, and are to go through a party-supper-table kind of life, like two pieces of confectionery, do you, Trot?" (35) David does not perceive the significance of Betsey's "blind, blind,

blind" but he does feel "a vague unhappy loss or want of something overshadow me like a cloud" (35). Betsey realizes that David is not yet a "fine firm fellow"--not in the way she means:

> "Someone that I know, Trot," my aunt pursued after a pause, "though of a very pliant disposition, has an earnestness of affection that reminds me of poor Baby. Earnestness is what Somebody must look for, to sustain and improve him, Trot. Deep, downright, faithful earnestness." (35)

David realizes that his love for Dora is a love that is not compatible with "Deep, downright, faithful earnestness." His first concern about Betsey's losses is that now he will have to "wear a shabby coat, and to be able to carry Dora no little presents, and to ride no gallant greys, and to show [him]self in no agreeable light!" (35) David is aware of the selfishness of his thought, but it appeals to his romantic and dreamy nature to torture himself:

> Sordid and selfish as I knew it was, and as I tortured myself by knowing that it was, to let my mind run on my own distress so much, I was so devoted to Dora that I could not help it. I knew that it was base of me not to think more of my aunt, and less of myself, but, so far, selfishness was inseparable from Dora, and I could not put Dora on one side for any mortal creature. How exceedingly miserable I was, that night! (35)

David's love for Dora makes him selfish. After he learns that he cannot cancel his articles with Spenlow and Jorkins, David leaves the office "in a state of despondency, which I remember with anything but satisfaction, for I know it still had too much reference to myself (though always in connexion with Dora) . . ." (35). At this moment David encounters Agnes:

> A fair hand was stretched forth to me from the window, and the face I had never seen without a feeling of serenity and happiness, from the moment when it first turned back on the old oak staircase with the great broad balustrade, and when I associated its softened beauty with the stained glass window in the church, was smiling on me. (35)

Agnes too has fallen into adversity, but she trusts that "simple love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune in the world" (35). David does not know if this faith is valid, but asks, "'who that saw your face and heard your voice, when you profess it, could hold any other?' And I said it from my soul, for she inspired me against adversity, and made me a new creature."[4] Agnes tells David of a part-time job with Dr. Strong and David is grateful to his "good angel " (35). After seeing Agnes, David is now prepared to meet his adversity:

> She filled my heart with such good resolutions, strengthened my weaknesses 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. (35)

Agnes has inspired David with sufficient resolution of purpose to withstand the adversity he suffers from Betsey's loss of fortune. But, unfortunately, David has yet to control his romantic sensibility, is still in love with Dora, and is still capable of posturing. The "Enthusiasm" of Chapter 36 is not, of course, to be attributed to Agnes but rather to David's romantic and dreamy temperament. Agnes inspires

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[4] Excised by Dickens before publication.

David to resolution of purpose. David's romantic disposition idealizes the reality:

> With the new life came new purpose, new intentions. Great was the labor, priceless the reward. Dora was the reward, and Dora must be won.
>
> I got into such a transport, that I felt quite sorry my coat was not a little shabby already. I wanted to be cutting those trees in the forest of difficulty, under circumstances that should prove my strength. (36)

When Traddles tells David that he must learn shorthand if he hopes to report debates in Parliament, David replies that he will "work at it at the Commons, where I haven't half enough to do" (36). David "made a perfect victim of himself" for "more than a week" (37).

David realizes he is "flying too high, and should never get on so" (38) and so he "resorts" to Traddles for advice, and is able, after much perseverance, to conquer shorthand and to report the Parliamentary debates. David is growing firm. When he next sees Agnes--he has not yet received the approval of Dora's aunts for her hand--he tells Agnes that he has missed her, that he seems to "want some faculty of mind" (39) for which Agnes supplies the gap. He had gone to Agnes for "counsel and support" so often in their youth that somehow, he fears, he "missed acquiring it." David does not know what this faculty is--he feels he is earnest and persevering enough, so it must be something else. David and Agnes are unable to determine what it is that David lacks; David "only know[s] that I was fervently in earnest, when I felt the rest and peace of having Agnes near me." And so, unable to discover

his failing, David marries Dora--a "fairy marriage [which] is real enough to fill [him] with a sort of wondering pity for the unfortunate people who have no part in it, but are sweeping out their shops, and going to their daily occupations" (43). David thinks that he can have a successful marriage in a vacuum even after he has heard Mr. Wickfield say "I thought it possible that I could truly love one creature in the world, and not love the rest" (35). Dora's response to David's defending Traddles as the "best creature," indicates the unsocial nature of their relationship: "Oh, but we don't want any best creatures!" (41) David should have realized from Mr. Wickfield's failure that love, finally, must be social. Dora is as mistaken as Mr. Wickfield if she feels that hers and David's love can flourish in a vacuum.

David learns early the "disparity" between Dora and him: "Don't be serious!" (44) Dora pleads. And when David invokes the support of his aunt, Betsey--remembering Miss Murdstone's support of her brother--wisely counsels David to work things out for himself: "Remember your own home, in that second marriage, and never do both me and her the injury you have hinted at" (44). Betsey tells David that he must adapt himself to existing conditions, that he must come out of his dream world and adjust himself to the facts of life:

> "It will be your duty, and it will be your pleasure too . . . to estimate her (as you chose her) by the qualities she has, and not by the qualities she may not have. The latter you must develop in her, if you can. And if you cannot, child . . . you must just accustom yourself to do without 'em." (44)

David has made a mistake in his marriage. Just as he had been unable to see the superiority of a Traddles to a Steerforth because he had made his judgments from an aesthetic point of view, so has he considered a wife simply on aesthetic grounds. Dora is a pretty, foolish thing. David was only concerned with the prettiness.

David is aware of his mistake and responds to Dora's plea that he think of her as a "child-wife." He lets her hold his pens while he writes his novels. David accepts Dora's inefficiency as a housekeeper and allows her to "make-believe" house-keep; and Dora "was as merry as if we had been keeping a baby-house, for a joke" (44). Immediately after David accepts his "baby-house" existence, Annie Strong articulates for him precisely what is the matter with his marriage: "There can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose" (45). David perceives dimly that his own marriage is "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart." He knows his love was not "founded on a rock" (45). David realizes that earnestness is not enough; one must exercise good judgment, not just aesthetic satisfaction in the selection of a spouse. When Betsey tells David about her own miserable marriage, she exclaims, "I was in earnest, Trot, if ever a woman was" (47). Earnestness of itself guarantees nothing when one is dealing with others. One must have a "disciplined heart" if one is to choose wisely a spouse. And a disciplined heart is that heart which has found the proper balance between sensibility and judgment--between the mind and the heart.

When David realizes that his "baby-house" existence cannot continue because he and Dora "are positively corrupting people" (48), particularly their household help, David decides to "form her mind" (48). Of course that fails. David suspects that perhaps her mind is already formed and resolves to accept things as they are: "I loved my wife dearly, and I was happy, but the happiness I had vaguely anticipated, once, was not the happiness I enjoyed, and there was always something wanting" (48). David is writing novels now, and perhaps he is able to spend some of his romantic and dreamy tendencies on things literary. In any event he is able now to take a more realistic--if perhaps still mistaken--view of life: "What I missed, I still regarded--I always regarded--as something that had been a dream of my youthful fancy, that was incapable of realization, that I was not discovering to be so, with some natural pain, as all men did" (48). David realizes, however, that things could have been better: "But that it would have been better for me if my wife could have helped me more, and shared the many thoughts in which I had no partner, and that this might have been, I knew" (48). David recognizes his "dilemma," but that he regards it as a dilemma indicates that he is still unaware of the nature of that "faculty" he has told Agnes he finds lacking in himself. Actually David lacks no faculty; what he misses is a mature mutual love:

> Between these two irreconcilable conclusions: the one, that what I felt was general and unavoidable, the other, that it was particular to me, and might have

> been different, I balanced curiously with no distinct sense of their opposition to each other. When I thought of the airy dreams of youth that are incapable of realization, I thought of the better state preceeding manhood that I had outgrown. And then the contented days with Agnes, in the dear old house, arose before me, like spectres of the dead, that might have some renewal in another world, but never never more could be reanimated here. (48)

To regard the "state preceeding manhood" as "better" is, at best, a romantic conception of life; and it is clearly negative, for it denies a basis for striving for maturity. That David feels that the better portion of his life is behind him reveals that he has yet to come to terms with life maturely.

David has made advances,however. He is willing to bear "the weight of all our little cares, and all my projects" (48). David realizes that his "own heart was undisciplined when it first loved Dora, and that, if it had been disciplined, it never could have felt, when we were married, what it had felt in its secret experience" (48). But David does accept things as they are, does realize that it is his responsibility to make his and Dora's life as happy as possible: "It remained for me to adapt myself to Dora, to share with her what I could, and be happy, to bear on my own shoulders what I must, and be still happy" (48). The tragedy of David's and Dora's life together is that they can share so little. The closest Dora is capable of coming to David's world is to hold his pens while he writes. Dora does not share David's anxieties about the Steerforth-Em'ly relationship, the Wickfield-Heep treachery, the Dr. Strong-Annie suspicions. She moves in a world different from David's--a "gossamer" world. And yet David is

willing to adapt himself to Dora: "This was the discipline to which I tried to bring my heart, when I began to think" (48). A noble discipline. David is thinking now and because he is responding rationally rather than aesthetically he is able to make the right decisions in life. He is dealing with things as they are.

David is prepared, now, to meet his great crisis, Dora's death. To regard Dora's death as a flaw in David Copperfield is, I think, to miss the point of the very important lesson that David has learned. He recognizes the mistake of his marriage to Dora and is willing to accept the consequence of his mistake and, more, to accept Dora as she is. He assumes the responsibility for his own undisciplined heart. And this recognition has taught him to view life in a proper perspective--to realize that one must live in a world which includes evil and accept the consequences of one's own mistakes. David's education has been completed so far as it goes: he has disciplined his heart. He is able to live a tolerably happy life because he is now able to accept life, including the mistakes he has made in it, as it is. But Dickens wants to go further. He wants to demonstrate more completely the truth of the lesson that David has learned. And so he allows David the opportunity of correcting his own mistake. Betsey Trotwood has, in her excellent common sense approach to life, cautioned David about the past, about the might-have-been: "It's vain, Trot, to recall the past, unless it works some influence upon the present" (23). David has

recalled his relationship with Agnes, while Dora was alive, only so that he might better understand his own failings. When he suffers his great adversity he is able to recall that relationship again--so that it may again work some influence upon the present.

When David goes abroad and mourns Dora's death, he enters into a psychological state similar to Carlyle's "Everlasting No": "It was a long and gloomy night that gathered on me, haunted by the ghosts of many hopes, of many dear remembrances, many errors, many unavailing sorrows and regrets" (58). David is "left alone with [his] undisciplined heart, [and] had no conception of the wound with which it had to strive" (58). He becomes more and more depressed:

> By imperceptible degrees, it became a hopeless consciousness of all that I had lost--love, friendship, interest, of all that had been shattered--my first trust, my first affection, the whole airy castle of my life, of all that remained--a ruined blank and waste, lying wide around me, unbroken, to the dark horizon. (58)

David must suffer through "the night that fell on [his] undisciplined heart" (58).

David "had no purpose, no sustaining soul within [him], anywhere." Then, like Esther Summerson when she discovers the truth about her birth, he is able to respond to "a packet of letters awaiting" him from a dear friend. Agnes writes and tells David that she knows that "sorrow could not be weakness, but must be strength. As the endurance of my childish days had done its part to make me what I was, so greater calamities would nerve me on, to be yet better than

I was, and so, as they had taught me, would I teach others" (58). David sees the "shadows clearing" from his despair, and "there was no name for the love I bore her, dearer to me, henceforward, than ever until then" (58). In his dark suffering David is able to see more clearly; is able to see Agnes no longer as a sister but as a loved one. This love--unlike Dora's, which does not "want any best creatures"--permits David to admit to his "breast the human interest I had lately shrunk from" (58). David realizes that "in my wayward boyhood, I had thrown away the treasure of her love." He feels that it is too late now to recapture Agnes's love and feels "left so sad and lonely in the world" (58). David realizes that Agnes has been responsible for any good that he might have done but feels that because he has "bestowed his passionate tenderness upon another object, he cannot hope to realize complete happiness with Agnes. He feels that he must be satisfied with the good influence she has exerted upon him:

> 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. But as time wore on, this shadowy prospect faded, and departed from me. (58)

David is correct in attributing to Agnes the "change that gradually worked" in him. He has been "changing," has been "getting a better understanding of [him]self and be[coming] a better man" (58) throughout the novel. Before he becomes

David Copperfield, he is Davy, Daisey, Trotwood, Master Copperfull, and Doady. As a result of Agnes's influence he is able to withstand his great adversity and to achieve an identity, to become a "fine firm fellow," to "be a better man," David Copperfield.

Because of a mistaken sense of justice, however, David feels that he must sacrifice Agnes. Because he has mistakenly "bestowed [his] passionate tenderness upon another object," David reasons, he cannot hope to realize his love with Agnes. What makes David feel that things must work this way is that same sense of story-book justice which the young David felt ought to prevail in the world of reality. It is no more poetically just that David should be happy with Agnes after he has yielded to "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart," that it was that the boy David should suffer under Murdstone's gloomy tyranny. Just as the boy David felt that one ought not be punished when one is not "bad," the man David feels that one ought be punished when one is "bad." And the older David goes finally to the same source as the boy to support his conclusion:

> She in whom I might have inspired a dearer love, I had taught to be my sister. She would marry, and would have new claimants on her tenderness, and in doing it, would never know the love for her that had grown up in my heart. It was right that I should pay the forfeit of my headlong passion. What I reaped, I had sown. (59)

According to what scheme of values does David feel it is "right" that he should "pay the forfeit of [his] headlong passion"? According to the New Testament: "What I had reaped,

I had sown." But Mr. Chillup (four pages later) is not able to "find authority for Mr. and Miss Murdstone in the New Testament!" (59). And neither is David. Maybe one ought not go to books for authority. Maybe the justice that works in books--even books as sacred as the New Testament--cannot be applied literally to life as it is. Perhaps one has to capture the spirit of the message of the New Testament and to take life as it comes--with its Murdstones and its less than divine justice.

In reverting to his story-book world, David feels that it is right to "discipline my heart, and do my duty" to Agnes (60). In a different but equally mistaken and equally romantic sense, David feels that he can love Agnes as he has loved Dora--in a dream world: "I might yet love her with a love unknown on earth" (60). Heaven is quite as bad as fairyland when one is involved in a human love. David's love for Dora, the "Fairy," the "Sylph," who is "more than human," is doomed from the start because it is not able to cope with reality; his love for Agnes he associates with the stained-glass windows is equally unrealistic, from a human point of view.

Fortunately, David is able to recognize that Agnes loves him. David's romantic sensibility, that same sensibility which has been getting him into trouble all his life, finally comes to his aid. That same "mind of heart" which enabled Mr. Dick to perceive the truth about the Strongs, enables David to perceive the truth of Agnes's heart. When

David presses Agnes about her "secret" and Agnes "bursts into such tears as smote me to the heart," David has "something awakened" in him, "bringing promise to my heart": "Without my knowing why, these tears allied themselves with the quietly sad smile which was so fixed in my remembrance, and shook me more with hope than fear or sorrow" (62). David has disciplined his heart to the point that he, like Agnes, is willing to sacrifice himself for her love. He believes that Agnes loves another and he is willing--selflessly--to keep his love for Agnes to himself. Now that David has truly disciplined his heart, now that David is able to deny to himself his heart's dearest wish, he achieves the insight possessed by persons with special attachments: "There is a subtlety of perception in real attachment, even when it is born towards man by one of the lower animals, which leaves the highest intellect behind" (42). David has been granted this insight and is able to declare his love to Agnes: "You have not taught me quite in vain. There is no alloy of self in what I feel for you" (62). It is through the selflessness of David's love for Agnes that he is able to perceive the truth of Agnes's feelings for him. Because David's love is selfless, because it seeks the good of its object, the love is realized. Because David is concerned with discovering what Agnes's feelings are rather than with declaring his feelings, he is able to discover her love for him.

David is to be happy. He has worked hard and suffered much for what he has gained. David suffered much

because he was capable of suffering much--he is a sensitive man. And David has had to work hard because of this same quality. David has had to control his romantic sensibility in order to be happy.

In "A Last Retrospect" we learn what becomes of Julia Mills, David's and Dora's confidante who loves the romantic and mysterious. Julia's romantic temperament is similar to David's. Julia's fate is, one suspects, the logical outcome of undisciplined romantic sensibility:

> But Julia keeps no diary in these days, never sings Affection's Dirge, eternally quarrels with the old Scotch Croesus, who is sort of a yellow bear with a tanned hide. Julia is steeped in money to the throat, and talks and thinks of nothing else. I liked her better in the Desert of Sahara.
>
> Or perhaps this is the Desert of Sahara. For though Julia has a stately house, and mighty company, and sumptuous dinners every day, I see no green growth near her, nothing that can ever come to fruit or flower. (64)

Undisciplined romantic sensibility is sterile, finally, and because of the sterility of undisciplined romantic sensibility one is unable to fulfill oneself through it. And so one seeks an easier way to fulfillment--easier because it does not involve discipline. But fulfillment is impossible without discipline; it becomes surfeit. And Julia is "steeped in money to the throat." Just as Little Em'ly's dreamy, romantic nature almost destroys her life and the Pegottys' happiness, just as Dr. Strong's dreamy nature almost destroys his relationship with Annie, just as Mr. Wickfield's unrealistic concept of love and death turns his love to disease, so Julia's romantic concept of life leads her to her own Desert of Sahara.

Until he achieves full identity, David is not capable of moral action. And in the "long and gloomy night that gathered" on him after Dora's death, David is incapable of action--he "shrinks" from human "interest." Agnes's love indicates his duty as Dora's could not. Agnes would have David "teach others": "Your growing reputation and success enlarge your powers of doing good," Agnes tells David, "and if I could spare my brother . . . perhaps the time could not" (60). David proves his identity--and the sufficiency of that identity--through his art. Now that he has learned to control his romantic and dreamy nature and to discipline his heart, now that he has achieved identity, David is able to write more than mere novels of social protest. Mr. Micawber writes David from Australia and informs him that the "inhabitants of Port Middlebay" read David's novels "with delight, with entertainment, with instruction!" (64) The end of art is, according to its classic definition, to delight and to instruct. David is now writing works of art, the best of which is David Copperfield.

CHAPTER III

BLEAK HOUSE

> . . . I had for a moment an indefinable impression of myself as being something different from what I then was.

In Bleak House (1852-53) Dickens continues examining the theme of the achievement of identity. Richard Carstone is unable to settle to anything because he is caught up in the Chancery world of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. As he tells Esther he cannot "be more settled" because he lives constantly in a temporary condition:

> "My dear Esther, I am a very unfortunate dog not to be more settled, but how can I be more settled? If you lived in an unfurnished house, you couldn't settle down in it; if you were condemned to leave everything you undertook unfinished, you would find it hard to apply yourself to anything; and yet that's my unhappy case. I was born into this unfinished connection with all its chances and changes, and it began to unsettle me before I quite knew the difference between a suit of law and a suit of clothes; and it has gone on unsettling me ever since." (23)

The lawsuit has so dominated Richard's life that it has made it impossible for him to resolve the conflict between his better and worse nature, to achieve identity. His self is not "settled": "My dear Esther," he says, "I wish to heaven I were a more constant sort of fellow. I don't mean constant to Ada,

for I love her dearly--better and better every day--but constant to myself" (23). Esther has hope for Richard because she sees that Richard has "a noble nature, and Ada's love may make [him] worthier every day." Richard admits Esther's truth about the nature of love, but he fears that Ada's love cannot help him because he is so "unsettled" by the lawsuit: "I know what the thought of Ada ought to do for me, but it doesn't do it. I am too unsettled even for that. I love her most devotedly, and yet I do her wrong, in doing myself wrong every day and hour" (23). The wrong Richard is doing himself is permitting his potentially "noble nature" to become so distracted by the lawsuit, that it is not being fulfilled.

The exchange between Richard and Esther goes to the center of the problem of identity in Dickens. Esther recognizes that Richard has "a noble nature" and thinks that Ada's love for him will allow him to realize that nature. The problem for Richard, as for so many of Dickens's young men, is not that of immorality but--as Betsey Trotwood puts it--of becoming a firm fellow, of achieving the stability of a full identity. Richard has a noble nature but that nature is incapable of noble action until Richard himself is capable of action, until Richard attains full existence as "noble" Richard. Other of Dickens's young men achieve identity, fulfill the potentiality of their better nature, through love and adversity. And Richard recognizes "what the thought of Ada ought to do" for him--allow him to achieve identity--but he is "too unsettled even for that."

Love operates in Dickens as that force which helps one to achieve identity. But, as we have seen in the introduction, the love-identity relationship is complex. It is impossible to love unless one exists, of course, but if love is the important element in the achievement of identity, one must love in order to complete that identity. Rather than labor the paradox, though, it is enough, I think, to assume that the achievement of identity and the ability to love are interdependent. Richard is too "unsettled" for Ada's love to do for him "what the thought of Ada ought to do"; that is, make him "constant to [him]self." Richard has not realized enough of his "noble nature" yet for love to permit him to fulfill that nature. And the quality of his love for Ada suggests this. Richard lives almost as a brother to Ada. Their love is not productive; it cannot be until Richard achieves an identity.

It is not until Richard experiences his great adversity, not until he is ruined--in mind first, and then in health--by the lawsuit, that he is able at last to fulfill his better nature. Richard realizes only on his deathbed that his life has been "a troubled dream," and only then is he able to "begin the world" (65), to resurrect at last to a meaningful life. But of course the world Richard is about to begin is not "this world, oh, not this." It is rather, "the world that sets this right" (65).

On his deathbed Richard also realizes that his love for Ada has not been generous: "I have done you many wrongs,

my own. I have fallen like a poor stray shadow on your way, I have married you to poverty and trouble, I have scattered your means to the winds" (65). Now that Richard is no longer a "shadow" of what he should be, now that he has become "settled," achieved full identity, Richard is able to love Ada generously. But the fulfillment of their love, like the fulfillment of Richard's identity, comes after his death. Richard's and Ada's child is posthumous.

Richard Carstone is not the only one who must achieve identity in Bleak House. Esther Summerson, the alternate narrator of Bleak House, is an orphan who must discover both her physical and metaphysical identity in the course of the novel. Because of Esther's role as alternate narrator, many critics have failed to see the development of her character. In fact some critics have judged Bleak House to be flawed because of Esther's narrative. Esther is, they argue, a simple person--far too simple for Dickens's genius. Esther must relate half of the novel--in her own words. At times Dickens cannot resist being Dickensian, cannot resist those brilliant metaphors of his and so he puts them on Esther's lips. Geoffrey Tillotson's argument is typical.[1] It is not Esther, he says,

> but Dickens who writes of Mrs. Rachael's parting kiss as "like a thaw-drop from the stone porch," of Mrs. Jellyby's dress that it "didn't nearly meet up the back, and that the open space was railed across with

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[1]Geoffrey Tillotson's Afterword to the Signet Classic edition of Bleak House, 1964, pp. 889-90.

> a lattice-work of stay-lace--like a summer house," and of her hair, a little later in the story, that it looked like "the mane of a dustman's horse, . . ."

Esther, the argument goes, is incapable of seeing things that way, is too simple for the kind of vision that allows these insights. Many feel she is, in fact, insipid.

I would like to look at Esther closely to try to discover if Esther is capable of thinking of those images Dickens has her relate, if she is not more complex than many have judged her to be. It is important, at the outset, to establish the legitimacy of Esther's language as Esther's. It is not enough to dismiss Esther's insights--and metaphors--as Dickens's, to say that Esther is only his "spokesman." Esther's language as narrator must be taken as seriously as any other character's language. After all, all characters are finally only speaking the language the author lets them speak. The point is that the author has one character say things that he does not have another say in order to establish that character's identity. So too with Esther. Dickens is careful throughout not to allow Esther to say anything as narrator that he would not have her say as character. The false distinction between Esther as character and Esther as narrator has led, I believe, to an oversight of the importance of Esther's development in the course of Bleak House. Since Esther the character is narrating half the novel, any development of Esther's character must be reflected in her narration. For it is equally mistaken to regard Esther the character in the novel to be as developed or as informed as the Esther who

is writing the novel. She allows us her insights at the time they occur to her in the course of narration; for example, Esther knows at the time she is writing about Lady Deadlock that she is her mother, but she does not relate this information to us until she reaches that point in the story in which the discovery takes place.

We can best examine Esther's language, I think, by seeing it in context--by seeing if one situation does not elicit from her a different quality of metaphor than another--and by seeing if there is any development to her language. Esther tells us as a child that although she is not clever she "had always rather a noticing way . . . a silent way of noticing what passed before me and thinking I should like to understand it better" (3). And although Esther lays no claims to a "quick understanding," she admits that "when I love a person very tenderly indeed, [my understanding] seems to brighten." Esther is given virtually no one to love tenderly as a child. Her aunt and maid are "austere": she is allowed no friends, no "holidays," no "rejoicings." She has no companions. In order to find some joy in life Esther must retreat into a fantasy world--a world where she can get love and understanding and encouragement and conversation from her doll, her "solitary friend." Like David Copperfield, Esther must, in order to survive as a child, create a fantasy world: her inability to love her gloomy godmother as she feels she ought to makes Esther "more timid and retiring than I naturally was and cast me upon Dolly

as the only friend with whom I felt at ease" (3). After Esther's godmother tells her that her mother is her disgrace, and that she is "set apart," Esther feels that she "was to no one on earth what Dolly was" to her; that is, a source of joy. Esther is forced to turn to her fantasy world in order to escape from her gloomy surroundings. She must use her imagination--her poetic faculties--to create this world.

It is not at all surprising, I think, that when Esther must leave after her aunt's death the only world she has ever known and embark on a whole new life, when she is left quite alone in the world and is taking leave of the last contact with her past life (she has already buried her doll), Mrs. Rachael, and when she is rejected by that last link, that Esther should be able to view Mrs. Rachael's parting kiss poetically:

> Mrs. Rachael was too good to feel any emotion at parting, but I was not so good, and wept bitterly. I thought that I ought to have known her better after so many years and ought to have made myself enough of a favourite with her to make her sorry then. When she gave me one cold parting kiss upon my forehead, like a thaw-drop from the stone porch--it was a frosty day--I felt so miserable and self reproachful that I clung to her and told her it was my fault, I knew, that she could say goodbye so easily! (3)

When Esther's emotions are aroused, when she feels strongly about something, her imagination is aroused also and she is able to express herself poetically. She was forced to create a fantasy world for herself when she was hurt as a child, and she retains this faculty to see imaginatively throughout life.

But Esther's metaphors are seldom clever. They are apt. When Esther describes anything cleverly Dickens is careful to have her report it as spoken by someone else: "and the fire, which had left off its roaring, winked its red eyes at us--as Richard said--like a drowsy old Chancery lion" (3); Mrs. Jellyby's eyes "had a curious habit of seeming to look a long way off. As if--I am quoting Richard again--they could see nothing nearer than Africa!" (4); Boythorn is "incapable, as Richard said, of anything on a limited scale, and firing away with those blank great guns because he carried no small arms whatever . . ." (9). Esther is incapable of describing Lord Dedlock as one who "carries himself like an eight-day clock at all times, like one of a race of eight-day clocks in gorgeous cases that never go and never went" as Boythorn does or "as if he were a considerable landed proprietor in heaven" as Skimpole does (18). These are simply too clever for Esther. And besides, her feelings are not aroused by the situations.

Esther's metaphors are of a different quality from Richard's or Skimpole's. Richard's and Skimpole's metaphors are decorative, "literary." Esther's are not extremely striking, but unlike Richard's and Skimpole's, they do grant us insight. And they are drawn from areas Esther is familiar with. To compare Mrs. Jellyby's hair to the "mane of a dustman's horse" (30) is, it seems to me, fitting. And, judging from Mrs. Jellyby's habits, it is not altogether an unjust comparison. And when Esther "could not help noticing that

[Mrs. Jellyby's] dress didn't nearly meet up the back and that the open space was railed across with a lattice-work of stay-lace--like a summer house" (4), she is again making a fairly neat comparison--not at all farfetched. And, again, it is a comparison between things she is familiar with. The quality of all of Esther's metaphors is the same: Krook's "throat, chin, and eyebrows were so frosted with white hairs and so gnarled with veins and puckered skin that he looked from his breast upward like some old root in a fall of snow" (5); "as the prospect gradually revealed itself and disclosed the scene over which the wind had wandered in the dark, like my memory over my life . . ." (7); Peepy's "boots were, on a small scale, the boots of a ploughman, while his legs, so crossed and recrossed with scratches that they looked like maps . . ." (14). All of these metaphors are drawn from areas of Esther's immediate experience.

A good line does not, however, make a poet, and Esther is a poet--a better poet at the end of Bleak House than at the beginning. And Richard and Skimpole, who have the ability to write good lines, are not poets. They are clever. Esther is a poet because she is able to see beyond the surface of things and to convey what she sees to the reader. She has poetic vision. And she has a fuller poetic vision after her illness and pock-marked face (which is the emblem of her illegitimate birth) and her discovery of her birth, because she has a truer and fuller vision of life.

Esther says that when she "loves a person very tenderly indeed" her understanding "seems to brighten." The converse is also true. When Esther confronts a "bad" person, a Mrs. Jellyby or a Turveydrop, she responds intuitively. She is able to see them as they truly are for she is able to see beyond the surface. It is not out of character for Esther to say of Mr. Turveydrop, "As he bowed to me in that tight state, I almost believed I saw the creases come into the whites of his eyes." It is not out of character because Esther has "seen through" Turveydrop's facade:

> He was a fat old gentleman with a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers, and a wig. He had a fur collar, and he had a padded breast to his coat, which only wanted a star or a broad blue ribbon to be complete. He was pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down, as much as he could possibly bear. He had such a neckcloth on (puffing his very eyes out of their natural shape), and his chin and even his ears so sunk into it, that it seemed as though he must inevitably double up if it were cast loose. He had under his arm a hat of great size and weight, shelving downward from the crown to the brim, and in his hand a pair of white gloves with which he flapped it as he stood poised on one leg in a high-shouldered, round-elbowed state of elegance not to be surpassed. He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuff-box, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but any touch of nature; he was not like youth, he was not like age, he was not like anything in the world but a model of deportment. (14)

For all of the description, we cannot visualize Mr. Turveydrop. There is nothing to see. Poetic vision enables one to pierce into the inner reality of a thing. But Turveydrop has no inner reality and so nothing can be penetrated to. Esther is only able to describe the facade, which is "not like anything in the world." Esther sees Mrs. Jellyby, Quale, and others in the same way.

Esther is able not only to see poetically, but to render her vision to us as well. Richard's and Ada's entire relationship is captured in this vignette:

> Ada sat at the piano; Richard stood beside her, bending down. Upon the wall, their shadows blended together, surrounded by strange forms, not without a ghostly motion caught from the unsteady fire, though reflecting from motionless objects. Ada touched the notes so softly and sang so low that the wind, sighing away to the distant hills, was as audible as the music. The mystery of the future and the little clue afforded it by the voice of the present seemed expressed in the whole picture. (6)

And Esther is fully aware of the significance of her vignettes--even at the time that she sees them:

> The door stood open, and we both followed them with our eyes as they passed down the adjoining room, on which the sun was shining, and out at its farther end. Richard with his head bent, and her hand drawn through his arm, was talking to her very earnestly; and she looked up in his face listening, and seemed to see nothing else. So young, so beautiful, so full of hope and promise, they went on lightly through the sunlight as their own happy thoughts might then be traversing the years to come and making them all years of brightness. So they passed away into the shadow and were gone. It was only a burst of light that had been so radiant. The room darkened as they went out, and the sun was clouded over. (13)

One feels that the significance of this scene is not derived from any later knowledge that Esther gains of Richard and Ada but from her feelings at the time that she was impressed by the scene. Obviously, we feel, had the scene not impressed her for its own sake, she would not have remembered it.

Esther is poetically receptive. She responds poetically to scenes about her. In Wordsworth's language, she "half-creates" what she sees. So, after her encounter with her mother, things look different:

> I was alone, and calm and quiet below me in the sun and shade lay the old house, with its terraces and turrets, on which there had seemed to me to be such complete repose when I first saw it, but which now looked like the obdurate and unpitying watcher of my mother's misery. (36)

It is wise to keep this "half-creating" quality in mind when we examine Esther's description of nature: "Oh, the solemn woods over which the light and shadow travelled swiftly, as if heavenly wings were sweeping on benignant errands through the summer air. . . ." Esther describes the "serene and peaceful hush" of the scene and concludes that "there seemed to be such undisturbed repose" there (18).

Esther ascribes religious attributes to nature very often, as in the solemnity of this scene. At times, she specifically attributes religious qualities to a scene, qualities which are not literally there.

> Seated among these, we looked through a green vista supported by thousands of natural columns, the whitened stems of trees, upon a distant prospect made so radiant by its contrast with the shade in which we sat and made so precious by the arched perspective through which we saw it that it was like a glimpse of the better land. (18)

Just before Esther meets her mother for the first time, she describes nature, as Hillis Miller points out, as "the abiding place of a beneficent Providence":[2]

> It was grand to see how the wind awoke, and bent the trees, and drove the rain before it like a cloud of smoke; and to hear the solemn thunder and to see the lightning; and while thinking with awe of the tremendous powers by which our little lives are encompassed,

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[2]Miller, Charles Dickens, p. 211.

> to consider how beneficent they are and how upon the smallest flower and leaf there was already a freshness poured from all this seeming rage which seemed to make creation new again. (18)

Esther now meets her mother. She regards the meeting as providential, in the same way that she regards as providential the fact that her physical identity has been altered beyond the point of recognition: ". . . I felt . . . a burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness, as that nobody could ever now look at me and look at her and remotely think of any near tie between us" (36). The faculty which allows Esther to "half-create," to view nature as "solemn" and "serene and peaceful," to discover "undisturbed repose" in it, to see in nature a "glimpse of the better land," and to regard the "tremendous powers by which our little lives are encompassed" as "beneficent," is the same faculty which allows her to see an immanent Providence in nature and in the workings of the universe--the poetic faculty, the imagination.

And it is Esther's imagination that "half-creates" the scene in which she gains an insight into her identity. Immediately before meeting Jo at the brickmaker's, Esther looks at the sky:

> The sky had partly cleared, but was very gloomy--even above us, where a few stars were shining. In the north and north-west, where the sun had set three hours before, there was a pale dead light both beautiful and awful; and into it long sullen lines of cloud waved up like a sea stricken immovable as it was heaving. Towards London a lurid glare overhung the whole dark waste, and the contrast between these two

> lights engendered of an earthly fire, gleaming on all the unseen buildings of the city and on all the faces of its many thousands of wondering inhabitants, was as solemn as might be. (30)

Esther says that precisely at that moment she "had for a moment an indefinable impression of myself as being something different from what I then was. I know it was then and there that I had it." Esther's "impression" is the discovery of her identity. Immediately after this scene Esther meets Jo, takes him to Bleak House, and is exposed, finally, to Jo's disease. As a result of the disease two things happen: Esther is branded for life with a symbolic sign of her birth, and she learns of her illegitimacy, Esther discovering the secret of her birth while she is recuperating from her disease at Chesney Wold.

It is through Esther's imagination that she achieves her identity. Esther has discovered metaphysically--at the moment that she has "an undefinable impression of myself as being something different from what I then was"--what she is later to discover physically, her identity. Esther discovers her physical identity as the illegitimate daughter of Lady Dedlock immediately after her physical appearance has been altered. She has already become "something different from what I then was" at the time that she perceives the contrast between the heavenly light and the "lurid glare" over the "dark waste" of London. At this moment the full impact of the existence of evil in this world is felt by Esther. And through the realization of the existence of evil Esther is no longer the pious innocent she was when she was "called Old Woman, and

Little Old Woman, and Cobweb, and Mrs. Shipton, and Mother Hubbard, and Dame Durden, and so many names of that sort that [her] own name soon became quite lost among them" (8). Nor is she Esther Hawdon or Esther Dedlock. She has no precise name yet. She is "unsettled" (though far less so than Richard) while waiting for Jarndyce to marry her and while she is confused about her feelings toward Woodcourt. Esther fulfills her identity in her mutual love with Allan and becomes Esther Woodcourt.

When Esther learns of her birth from her mother, she feels "through all my tumult of emotion, a burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness, as that nobody could ever now look at me and look at her and remotely think of any tie between us" (36). Esther feels that it would have been better if her existence had never been made known to her mother, feels "as if I knew it would have been better and happier for many people if indeed I had never breathed" (36). She is so "confused and shaken as to be possessed by a belief that it was right and had been intended that I should die in my birth, and that it was wrong and not intended that I should be then alive" (36). Esther has a nightmare vision of Chesney Wold and a nightmare walk down Ghost's Walk before she returns to her room and finds letters from Ada and Jarndyce which restore her to herself. The letters "made me think how far beyond my deserts I was beloved and how happy I ought to be. That made me think of all my past life; and that brought me,

as it ought to have done before, into a better condition" (36). Esther reasserts her faith in the workings of Providence:

> For I saw very well that I could not have been intended to die, or I should never have lived; not to say should not have been reserved for such a happy life. I saw very well how many things had worked together for my welfare, and that if the sins of the fathers were sometimes visited upon the children, the phrase did not mean what I had in the morning feared it meant. I knew I was as innocent of my birth as a queen of hers and before my Heavenly Father I should not be punished for birth nor a queen rewarded for it. I had had experience, in the shock of that very day that I could, even thus soon, find conforting reconcilements to the change that had fallen on me. (36)

The "change" that has fallen on Esther is the change from a fair orphan to an ugly, pock-marked bastard. Esther's discovery of the evil circumstances of her birth makes her aware of the existence of evil in the world. Esther's discovery of her physical identity allows her to achieve full identity--an identity beyond that of the innocent Dame Durden.

After Esther learns of and accepts her illegitimate birth she gains a fuller vision of life, a vision which includes evil. Immediately after her encounter with her mother, Esther learns that Skimpole has attached himself to Richard and she realizes that Richard "could scarcely have found a worse friend than this" (37). Skimpole tells Esther that as a result of her illness he "began to understand the mixture of good and evil in the world now" (37). Skimpole, of course, is too caught up in the world of his own selfishness ever to be able to understand the true nature of the world about him. It is Esther who has learned "the mixture of good and evil in

the world." Whereas in the past Esther could only intuit the evil of a Mrs. Jellyby or a Turveydrop, she is now able to articulate it: "It struck me that if Mrs. Jellyby had discharged her own natural duties and obligations before she swept the horizon with a telescope in search of others, she would have taken the best precaution of becoming absurd, but I need scarcely observe that I kept this to myself" (38). And when Caddy tells Esther that she and her husband "lived most happily together" with Turveydrop, Esther is not fooled: "(When she spoke of their living together, she meant that the old gentleman had all the good things and all the good lodging, while she and her husband had what they could get, and were poked into two corner rooms over the Mews)" (38). Esther's fuller vision is a darker one because it encompasses the evil in the world. Perhaps the best single image to illustrate Esther's fuller vision--a fuller vision which makes her a better poet--is the image she gives of the ropemakers after she has learned of Richard's complete involvement in the lawsuit. Vholes has visited her and Jarndyce and informed them of Richard's state. Esther, a bit depressed, is going to Richard to try to talk some sense into him. She approaches his lodging: "The sea was heaving under a thick white fog; and nothing else was moving but a few early ropemakers, who, with a yarn twisted round their bodies, looked as if, tired of their present state of existence, they were spinning themselves into cordage" (45). The metaphor expresses

the state of Richard's existence: by pursuing the futile lawsuit Richard is spinning himself into destruction.

Esther's entire characterization of Vholes is couched in nightmare imagery. Esther can now see evil as it is. And to Esther, Vholes is wholly evil: "One morning when I had done jingling about with my basket of keys, as my beauty and I were walking round and round the garden I happened to turn my eyes towards the house and saw a long shadow going in which looked like Mr. Vholes" (45). The juxtaposition between the bright Ada and the "long shadow" captures the effective roles Ada and Vholes play in Richard's life. Esther walks in and sees Vholes and Jarndyce "looking at one another across a table, the one so open and the other so close, the one so broad and upright and the other so narrow and stooping, the one giving out what he had to say in such a rich ringing voice and the other keeping it in in such a cold-blooded, gasping, fish-like manner that I thought I never had seen two people so unmatched" (45). Esther cannot abide the man: "Mr. Vholes remained immovable, except that he secretly picked at one of the red pimples on his yellow face with his black glove" (45). He "gauntly stalked to the fire and warmed his funeral gloves" (45). When he leaves,

> Mr. Vholes put his dead glove, which scarcely seemed to have any hand in it, on my fingers, and then on my guardian's fingers, and took his long thin shadow away. I thought of it on the outside of the coach, passing over all the sunny landscape between us and London, chilling the seed in the ground as it glided along. (45)

Vholes is "so slow, so eager, so bloodless and gaunt, I felt as if Richard were wasting away beneath the eyes of this

adviser and there were something of the vampire in him" (50). Vholes sat "very slowly rubbing his gloved hands, as if, to his cold sense of touch, they were much the same in black kid or out of it" (50). He "occasionally made a gasp which I believe was his smile" (50). Finally, after Richard has been destroyed by the suit, Vholes

> gave me that slowly devouring look of his, while twisting up the strings of his bag before he hastened with it after Mr. Kenge, the benignant shadow of whose conversational presence he seemed afraid to leave, he gave one gasp as if he had swallowed the last morsel of his client and his black buttoned-up unwholesome figure glided away to the low door at the end of the Hall. (65)

Esther's characterization of Vholes is as good as anything in the novel. And it is so good because it is presented by Esther; it is only Esther who is able to see Vholes this way because Esther is the only real poet in the novel--except for the omniscient narrator. Dickens could have Esther report these metaphors as spoken by someone else as he does with the clever metaphors earlier in the novel. But he wants to demonstrate Esther's growth, to show that she is no longer the pious Dame Durden. The development in Esther's language reflects her personal development--she is now a poet. To isolate any one of the images Esther uses to depict Vholes and to point to it as out of character for Esther is, I think, to fail to understand both Esther's complexity and the consistency of her vision. Esther's vignette of Vholes driving Richard to his death in a hearse is typical of her vision of him:

> I shall never forget those two seated side by side in the lantern's light, Richard all flush and fire and laughter, with the reins in his hands; Mr. Vholes quite still, black-gloved, and buttoned up, looking at him as if he were looking at his prey and charming it. I have before me the whole picture of the warm night, the summer lightning, the dusty track of road closed in by the hedgerows and high trees, the gaunt pale horse with his ears pricked up, and the driving away at speed to Jarndyce and Jarndyce. (37)

Esther captures the essentially parasitical nature of Vholes in this scene. But if Esther fails to portray Vholes throughout the way she does, the scene becomes meaningless. And it is because Esther sees Vholes the way she does see him--because Esther is incapable of rendering Vholes in any other way--that her portrayal of him is so memorable.

Esther's poetic vision allows her to see beyond the surface of things, to see the evil in the universe. Esther is willing to accept the evil with the good in the world and attempts to offset the evil with the good. That Esther is the most effective person in the novel, that she can do good where others cannot, indicates the extent to which Dickens has moved from benevolence to love as the answer to the problems he is concerned with in his novels. John Jarndyce belongs to the same class as Brownlow and the Cheerybles. He is the benevolent fatherly figure. The limitation of benevolence is hinted at when Jarndyce offers the crying orphan girl, Esther, some pie and "the best plum-cake that can be got for money" to try to cheer her up. Esther replies, "thank you very much indeed, but I hope you won't be offended--they are too rich for me" (3). Jarndyce is unable to cheer Esther up and finally he

must leave. Esther "was relieved by his departure." When Ada, Richard, and Esther tell Jarndyce about the true state of the Jellyby children, Jarndyce asks "Couldn't you--didn't you--now if it had rained sugarplums, or three-cornered raspberry tarts, or anything of that sort!" Ada's response points out the difference between Jarndyce and Esther, between benevolence and love: "It did better than that. It rained Esther" (6). It is not Jarndyce but Esther who is able to help Richard and Little Jo and Caddy Jellyby. Jarndyce, because he lacks the penetration of Esther, is helping people like Skimpole and Mrs. Jellyby. And when he does help those deserving of help, his aid is finally no more effective than Mr. Snagsby's half-crowns. Like Snagsby he is able only to relieve the immediate problem, or, perhaps better, is able only to relieve his own distress that these problems call forth.

Bleak House, then, marks a further development in Dickens's ideas from benevolence and the principle of community towards selfless love as the answer to the problems of a disintegrating society. In Bleak House the fatherly figure is still a factor--Jarndyce must give Esther to Woodcourt and community is still important--Esther and Allan have a "growlery" built in the cottage for Jarndyce. But from now on there will be no cottages and the Jarndyces will be replaced with Casbys ("The Patriarch") and Magwitches and Boffinses.

CHAPTER IV

HARD TIMES

"But there is something--not an ology at all--that your father has missed, or forgotten, Louisa."

Hard Times (1854) demonstrates the evils of attempting to lead a life of what Mrs. Gradgrind refers to as the "ologies"--a life which ignores the heart in man. Tom Gradgrind is not very different at the start of Hard Times from Pip at the start of Great Expectations. It is more difficult, however, for Tom to develop from selfishness to generosity because he has been corrupted by Gradgrindism. So much consideration has been given in this education to purely utilitarian values that those human values which are opposed to the immediate well-being of the self--love and selflessness--are largely ignored. Dickens attempts to fit Tom into the general adversity-love-identity pattern when, at the end of the novel, he reports that Tom "died in hospital, of fever . . . and died in penitence and love of [Loo], his last words being [her] name" (III, 9). But Tom's change of heart is unconvincing. Tom has sealed his fate when he commits the unpardonable sin for Dickens, the sin of using one who loves you. Once Tom uses his sister, Loo, to further his own ends, he becomes sub-human, becomes a "whelp,"

and cannot be saved. Since it is only through love that one can be saved, it seems, in Dickens's world, salvation is not possible if one uses its source, love, for selfish reasons. This is precisely why Charlie Hexam, Tom's counterpart in Our Mutual Friend, becomes even more despicable than Bradley Headstone. Tom's conversion is unconvincing because he has used the only person who has loved him and who could inspire him to selflessness. We cannot believe that something else--particularly the absence of the one who loves him--is going to inspire him to generosity and love unless that something else is demonstrated to us. Perhaps this is why Dickens merely asserts the change of heart in Tom without showing it to us.

Dickens does show us the fulfillment of the better nature in Louisa. Loo is a rather sensitive young girl who, like Lizzie Hexam in Our Mutual Friend, is able to see eternal truths in watching a fire burn a log to ashes. Her sensitivity is suppressed, however, by her being forced into an education crammed full of Facts, Facts, Facts. Yet Loo does not lose her capacity to love. Unfortunately, the only immediate object upon which she can bestow that love--her brother--is unworthy of it, is selfishly capable of capitalizing on that love. Tom Gradgrind is willing to allow his sister to prostitute herself to Bounderby so that he may further his own ends. And Loo, not knowing of any possibility of human love, is willing to sacrifice herself for "the whelp" because of a mistaken sense of duty. After all, says Loo, "what does it matter" (I, 15).

Harthouse, the John Chester-Carker-Steerforth figure, drifts into Loo's life ("It is the drifting icebergs, setting with any current anywhere, that wreck the ships" [II, 8]) and seduces her from her apathy to near-infidelity. Harthouse sparks the first bit of passion Loo has known. Her marriage to Bounderby is mere formality; it brings neither love nor passion to her life. When passion is kindled in Loo by Harthouse, when she finally experiences human emotion, she feels it is natural to respond. In a sense, Loo is right. It is more natural, more human, to become involved in an illicit love relationship than to be a machine wife to a machine: "Now, Mr. Bounderby does not do you the injustice, and does not do himself the injustice, of pretending to anything fanciful, fantastic, or (I am using synonymous terms) sentimental" (I, 15), Mr. Gradgrind informs Loo when she asks if Bounderby expects Loo to love him. In responding to human emotion, to her passion for Harthouse, Loo is acting more naturally--more humanly--than she acted in consenting to marry Bounderby.

But Loo realizes that while it might be more natural to go off with Harthouse than remain with Bounderby, it is nonetheless wrong. She returns to her father's house, and becomes severely ill. Loo's illness, like the other severe crises in Dickens, is not mere plot development. Her illness is the physical counterpart of the psychological and moral crisis she has just undergone. Dickens's young people fall ill at that critical point in their fulfillment of the better

nature--the point at which they become aware of the conflict between the better and worse nature. The physical struggle becomes a metaphor for the psychological and moral struggle they are involved in. Dickens's heroes arise from the sick bed, emerge from the physical crisis, generally having resolved the conflict between their better and worse nature, having fulfilled the potentiality of their better nature, having achieved identity.

As a result of her near adultery and ensuing sickness, Loo once again encounters Sissy Jupe. Sissy represents everything that Louisa is not. Loo is a product of Gradgrindism, a philosophy that ignores the fanciful and poetic in man. Sissy grew up with the Sleary Riding Circus, the reverse of the Gradgrindery. The Sleary Riding Circus people

> all assumed to be mighty rakish and knowing, they were not very tidy in their private dresses, they were not at all orderly in their domestic arrangements, and the combined literature of the whole company would have produced but a poor letter on any subject. Yet there was a remarkable gentleness and childishness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practise, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another, deserving often of as much respect, and always of as much generous construction, as the every day virtues of any class of people in the world. (I, 6)

But for all their sensitivity and sympathy, the circus people do not present us with an adequate alternative to Gradgrindism. It would be impossible to form a society based solely on the values represented by the Sleary Riding Circus. The limitations of the circus are indicated in Sissy's father's abandoning her. Once Jupe loses his ability to entertain, he loses

his ability to provide for his family. The obvious conclusion to draw from Jupe's abandoning Sissy is that, finally, he is no more adequate as a father than is Gradgrind, cruel as this conclusion seems. Gradgrind cannot supply Tom and Loo with the means of coming to terms with the poetry within them, but Jupe is unable to supply Sissy with the means of sustenance.

Neither Gradgrindism nor what the Sleary Riding Circus represents is, by itself, adequate. As Mr. Gradgrind tells Sissy, in attempting to convince her that she should live with his family, "it is highly desirable to have a sound practical education, and . . . even your father himself, from what I understand, appears, on your behalf, to have known and felt that much" (I, 6). This is the part of life that the Sleary Riding Circus cannot supply. Sleary himself points out the side of life that Gradgrindism ignores in his speech to Mr. Gradgrind: "People must be amuthed, thquire, thomehow. . . . They can't be alwayth a-working, nor yet they can't be alwayth a-learning. Make the betht of uth, not the wurtht" (I, 6). A balance must be struck between the two worlds, just as a balance had to be found between the head and the heart in David Copperfield. If society is to be educated properly, it must take the best of what the Gradgrinds and the Slearys have to offer. Man, as a total creature, has both an intellectual and an emotional being. To develop one side to the point of ignoring the other is to deny man's completeness. To emphasize only the head results

in making man an unfeeling being; to give free reign to the emotions without rational checks is to develop only that in man which he has in common with the animal. Sissy Jupe represents a movement in the direction of this union of head and heart. Loo is able to respond to Sissy's love and, consequently, is able to correct the errors wrought by the Gradgrindery. Sissy has been exposed long enough to Gradgrindism to become articulate, and she is now able to encounter Harthouse and to dismiss him. Through Sissy and Loo the other problems of the novel are solved.

Sleary tells Gradgrind at the end of the novel about the wonderful something--"I'm bletht if I know what to call it"--which enables a dog like Merrylegs to find its way back to its home (III, 8). When Gradgrind tells Sleary that Sissy still keeps the bottle of ointment that her father sent her for on the day of his departure, Sleary concludes two "thingth": "one, that there ith a love in the world, not all Thelf intertht after all, but thomething very different; t'other, that it hath a way of ith own of calculating or not calculating, whith thomehow or another ith at leatht ath hard to give a name to ath the wayth of the dogth ith!" (III, 8) This irrational knowing through selfless love is very like the "mind of the heart" that Dickens tells us enables Mr. Dick to perceive the truth of the Strongs: that "subtlety of perception in real attachment, even when it is borne towards man by one of the lower animals, which leaves the highest intellect behind." This "mind of heart" is very admirable but it is not

granted to the normal creature. One suspects that Sissy Jupe has been endowed with it. It is that quality in Sissy which allows her to perceive the truth about Harthouse and to dismiss him. But the Sissy who says "stutterings" for "statistics" would not have been capable of effectively encountering Harthouse, would not have been able to use the language she does use to dismiss him: "'Mr. Harthouse, . . . the only reparation that remains with you is to leave here immediately and finally. I am quite sure that you can mitigate in no other way the wrong and harm you have done. I am quite sure that is the only compensation you have left it in your power to make'" (III, 2). Harthouse would no sooner have listened to an inarticulate Sissy than he would to a Stephen Blackpool. For all of Sissy's "mind of heart," had she not gained some practical value from her years at the Gradgrindery she would have been ineffective finally.

The end of art, we were reminded in David Copperfield, is to instruct and to delight. Perhaps, too, if one is to lead a full life, one must lead a life of delight as well as instruction. As Sleary says, "People must be amuthed . . . they can't be alwayth a-working, nor yet they can't be alwayth a-learning." The Gradgrindery, in ignoring that side of man which must be amused, denied the importance of anything in man but the head. Bitzer, Mr. Choakumchild's prize student, demonstrates the extent to which the Gradgrindery concerns itself with the total man in his response to Mr. Gradgrind's painful query when Bitzer discovers Tom:

> "Bitzer," said Mr. Gradgrind, broken down and miserably submissive to him, "have you a heart?"
> "The circulation, sir," returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, "couldn't be carried on without one. No man, sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey relating to the circulation of the blood can doubt that I have a heart." (III, 8)

Gradgrindism is not concerned with things of the heart. The Sleary Riding Circus is concerned only with delighting, not with instructing: "the combined literature of the whole company would have produced but a poor letter on any subject." And Sleary's corrupted speech--his lisp--is symbolic of the corruption that total concern for amusement can lead to. He is, after all, a drunkard. If society is to function properly, the head and the heart must be granted equal emphasis. Sleary's advice to "make the betht of uth, not the wurtht" must be followed by Gradgrind if he hopes to teach young people how to make the world a happy, decent place to live in. Gradgrindism must include what the Sleary Riding Circus represents if it is to be successful. There must be a marriage of the head and the heart. We see something of this marriage in the final scene of the book: Sissy, heart qualified by head, has "happy children" but no husband that Dickens mentions; Loo, head qualified by heart, is not herself to be a mother but is to have "happy Sissy's happy children loving her." The union of head and heart, then, is seen in the curious union of Sissy and Loo. This is perhaps why Dickens gives Loo a male nickname and why Sissy has no father to her brood.

During Loo Gradgrind's serious illness following her near elopement, she discovers the shortcoming of her education.

Sissy spends hours at Loo's bedside and Loo discovers through her illness the beauty of Sissy's selfless, loving heart. Like Martin Chuzzlewit, Richard Carstone, and David Copperfield, Loo is granted special insight at the time of her extreme illness. Now that Loo has suffered her adversity, she is able to respond to Sissy's selfless love: "Forgive me, pity me, help me! Have compassion on my great need, and let me lay this head of mine upon a loving heart!" (III, 2) Loo's laying her head on Sissy's heart symbolizes the union of head and heart that Dickens is working toward in Hard Times. And Loo's ability to discover love, the "something--not an ology at all--" (II, 9) that her mother tells her Gradgrind has missed, allows her to realize her identity as a complete human being, as a feeling and thinking being, a being made up of heart and head.

CHAPTER V

LITTLE DORRIT

> "If you loved anyone, you would no more be yourself, but you would quite lose and forget yourself in your devotion to him."

Lack of communication is to Little Dorrit (1855-57) what an education which ignores the fanciful and poetic side of man is to Hard Times, that is, a source of distraction from fulfilling the potentiality of the better nature. Just as Gradgrindism almost prevents Loo Gradgrind from saving herself through love, the lack of communication in the world of Little Dorrit prevents Arthur Clennam from discovering an identity and establishing a human relationship, from loving his fellow beings. If one cannot communicate with one's fellow man, one cannot learn to know him well enough to discover anything in him worthy of love. Little Dorrit is, in many ways, a novel about the lack of communication. "The distinguishing quality of Dickens's people" is, as V. S. Pritchett points out, "that they are solitaries. They are people caught living in a world of their own. They soliloquize in it. They do not talk to one another; they talk to themselves."[1] This is especially

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[1] The Living Novel (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947), p. 188.

true in Little Dorrit, a novel dominated by the symbol of imprisonment. Virtually all the characters in the novel have a secret, and either because they are unable (as Mistress Affrey) or because they are unwilling (as Mrs. Clennam) to divulge the nature of their secret, they cannot communicate with one another. People are always at cross purposes with one another in Little Dorrit.

Arthur Clennam has never been able to communicate with his parents: "To sit speechless himself in the midst of rigid silence, glancing in dread from one averted face to the other, had been the peacefullest occupation of his childhood" (I, 3). When he returns from China he is unable to break through the wall of silence built up between himself and his mother because of the "secret remembrance" which Arthur suspects troubled his father (I, 4). The "grim home of Clennam's youth" has "always affected his imagination as wrathful, mysterious, and sad" because that house and the neighborhood in which it is situated "seemed all depositories of oppressive secrets" (II, 10). Arthur attributes the lack of communication to his mother. He feels that the house's

> close air was secret. The gloom, and must and dust of the whole tenement, were secret. At the heart of it his mother presided, inflexible of face, indomitable of will, firmly holding all the secrets of her own and his father's life, and austerely opposing herself, front to front, to the great final secret of all life. (II, 10)

The horror of this lack of communication between Arthur and his mother is that it renders him powerless:

> The purpose he had brought home to his native country, and had ever since kept in view, was, with her greatest determination, defeated by his mother herself, at the time of all others when he feared it pressed most. His advice, energy, activity, money, credit, all his resources whatsoever, were all made useless. If she had been possessed of the fabled influence, and had turned those who looked upon her into stone, she could not have rendered him more completely powerless (so it seemed to him in his distress of mind) than she did, when she turned her unyielding face to his, in her gloomy room. (II, 23)

Mrs. Clennam's refusal to give Arthur the information he needs prevents him from making restitution for the injustice he suspects his father of having committed.

Mrs. Clennam is not, however, the only one in Arthur's world who fails to communicate either with him or with others. In fact, virtually nobody in this world communicates, including Arthur himself. When we first see Arthur and Mr. Meagles we discover that Mr. Meagles can talk with very few people on the boat because of his refusal to bother learning a non-English language. Tattycoram is made miserable by her inability to tell the Meagles the exact nature of the frustrations she suffers. The Father of the Marshalsea's conversation is--ha--fragmentary--hum--at best. Mr. Plornish's conversation is generally "a little obscure" (I,12):

> "He is Mr. Casby, by name, he is," said Plornish, "and Pancks, he collects rents. That," added Mr. Plornish dwelling on the subject, with a slow thoughtfulness that appeared to have no connection with any specific object, and to lead him nowhere, "that is about what <u>they</u> are, you may believe me or not, as you think proper." (I, 12)

Mrs. Chivery's "peculiar power of construction" rather obscures her messages: "never was like what he has been since, not from

the hour when to this house seven year ago me and his father and tenants by the quarter, came!" (I, 22) And her son John's sentence construction is not much better when he is excited--unless, of course, he decides to write an epitaph for himself.

Things are no better in the Casby household. The Patriarch himself, "well accustomed to get on anywhere, by leaving everything to his bumps and his white hair, knew his strength to lie in silence" (II, 9). Flora's "disjointed volubility" makes her incoherent enough, but when she enshrouds herself in "dark mystery" ("Arthur for mercy's sake don't breathe it to papa!" (II, 9) she is quite unintelligible. Mr. F's Aunt's "Sibyllic apostrophes" after having elaborated "some grievous scheme of injury in her mind" (II, 34) represent fairly well the disease that lack of communication can lead to: mistrust and hatred of those one does not understand. Although Mr. F's Aunt is a humorous character, we can see the evil of her nature. Like Miss Wade, Mr. F's Aunt broods silently over some imagined injury, distorts others' actions and words, refuses to discuss the supposed offense and finally becomes paranoid as a result. Mr. F's Aunt is the most exaggerated instance of the general failure to communicate in Little Dorrit.

It is difficult to find anyone in the novel who does communicate. Young Barnacle is "conversationless at any time" (I, 17). Mrs. Merdle ("Bird, be quiet!") must "put up her glass to refresh her memory as to whom she was

adressing" in her "conversation" with Fanny (I, 20). Mrs. Gowan perversely misinterprets Clennam's statements about Meagles's actions with relation to her son. Gowan treats Clennam "with his usual ease, and with his usual show of confidence, which was no confidence at all" (I, 34). Mr. Merdle stops in the middle of a "conversation" and looks at the tablecloth, "as he usually did when he found himself observed or listened to" (II, 12). Sparkler's powers of conversation are limited to formulae: "a doosed fine gal--well educated too--with no biggod nonsense about her" (I, 21). When he tries to go beyond these limitations, he is pathetic.

> "No speciality?" said Mr. Dorrit.
> This being a long word for Mr. Sparkler, and his mind being exhausted by his late effort, he replied, "No, thank you. I seldom take it."

The most meaningful thing Mrs. General ever says is "Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes, and prism."

It is impossible for one to establish a relationship with a person with whom one cannot communicate. This is Arthur Clennam's problem. When we first meet Arthur we discover that he has "no will." He is "such a waif and stray everywhere, that [he is] liable to be drifted where any current may set" (I, 2). We recall, in Hard Times, that Dickens points out--when speaking of Harthouse--that it "is the drifting icebergs, setting with any current anywhere, that wreck the ships." Because Clennam has "no will" he is in danger of becoming like Harthouse. And Clennam has no will

because he has not learned the values of forming a stable character as a child. Clennam tells Meagles that he is the

> only child of parents who weighed, measured, and priced everything; for whom what could not be weighed, measured, and priced, had no existence. . . . Austere faces, inexorable discipline, penance in this world and terror in the next--nothing graceful or gentle anywhere, and the void in my cowed heart everywhere--this was my childhood, if I may so misuse the word as to apply it to such a beginning of life. (I, 2)

Because Arthur has not learned to communicate in the home, he has been unable to establish satisfactory relationships in life.

Arthur's parents are "strict people": "professors of a stern religion, their very religion was a gloomy sacrifice of tastes and sympathies that were never their own, offered up as a part of a bargain for the security of their possessions" (I, 2). It is probably as a reaction against this kind of "religion" that Clennam makes it his "constant effort not to be betrayed into a new phase of the besetting sin of his experience, the pursuit of selfish objects by low and small means, and to hold instead to some high principle of honour and generosity" (I, 26). Little Dorrit offers the best means of escape from the pursuit of selfish objects in her advice to her sister: "If you loved anyone, you would no more be yourself, but you would quite lose and forget yourself in your devotion to him" (II, 14). The ability to "lose and forget yourself," is central to Dickens's idea of the relationship between love and self-realization. By loving another you complete yourself, you realize your full identity.

Arthur is a perfectly respectable, admirable Englishman. His only problem is that he has nothing to do or, perhaps more accurately, that he is unable to do anything. His life has no direction because he has not discovered within himself the ultimate meaningfulness of life. He could not because of his upbringing. If Arthur hopes to escape "the besetting sin of his experience" and to give direction to his life he must learn from someone else the meaningfulness of life. But before he can learn this from another he must, of course, establish a personal relationship, must learn to communicate. In Dickens's world, one cannot hope to lead a meaningful life in isolation.

When Arthur meets Little Dorrit and associates her with the vague sense of reparation that he feels he must make for the sins of his parents, his life begins to assume some direction. He will do what he can to help the Dorrits out of the Marshalsea. In the course of attempting to learn something about the Dorrit case, Arthur goes to the Circumlocution House. As its name implies the Circumlocution House is the symbol in Little Dorrit of the silence, secrecy, inarticulation which pervades the novel. It is the physical (and political) representation of the spiritual breakdown of values resulting from the failure to communicate. At the Circumlocution House Arthur meets Daniel Doyce. Doyce offers Arthur a positive direction in which to channel his energies. Doyce "has been ingenious, and he has been trying to turn his ingenuity to his country's service," Mr. Meagles informs Arthur.

"A dozen years ago, he perfects an invention (involving a very curious secret process) of great importance to his country and his fellow-creatures" (I, 10). Doyce, of course, is almost ruined in trying to get the Circumlocution House to accept this discovery, "It is much to be regretted," Clennam suggests, in light of what Doyce has had to suffer in trying to do good for his country,

> "that you ever turned your thoughts that way, Mr. Doyce."
>
> "True, sir--true to a certain extent. But what is a man to do? If he has the misfortune to strike out something serviceable to the nation, he must follow where it leads him."
>
> "Hadn't he better let it go?" asked Clennam.
>
> "He can't do it," said Doyce, shaking his head with a thoughtful smile. "It's not put into his head to be buried. It's put into his head to be made useful. You hold your life on the condition that to the last you shall struggle hard for it. Every man hold a discovery on the same terms. (I, 16)

It is Doyce's "misfortune" to have produced "something serviceable to the nation"--a nation which is so inextricably enmeshed in the bureaucratic web that to try to turn one's ingenuity to his country's service "makes him a public offender directly, sir" (I, 10). But, as Doyce tells Arthur, an invention is not put into a man's head "to be buried. It's put into his head to be made useful." Doyce is telling Arthur that man has obligations outside of himself, that if a man discovers "something serviceable to the nation," he has an obligation to do all in his power to make the nation accept it.

It is fair to speculate on the nature of this "invention (involving a very secret process) of great importance to his country and his fellow creatures." Doyce is, as we shall

see, the only character in the novel with whom Arthur is able to communicate; between Arthur and Doyce there is perfect understanding. In fact, Doyce is the only person in the novel who is able to communicate with "his fellow creatures," with everyone he encounters except the people of the Circumlocution Office. Communication is essential to love; before one can love another, one must be able to communicate with him. And perfect communication is love. As Dickens will assert in Our Mutual Friend love "makes the world go round." Doyce's great invention might be the discovery of "something--not an ology at all--" which Mrs. Gradgrind recognizes that her husband has missed. Doyce may have discovered a device, something "involving a very curious process," to make "the world go round"--love. This would account for Doyce's ability to communicate with those around him. It would also account for the Circumlocution Office's refusal to accept the invention. The Office is, after all, the symbol of non-communication in the novel.

Doyce needs a partner. Arthur has now a positive course in life to pursue. He will serve as Doyce's business partner and will take up where Doyce left off at the Circumlocution Office trying to convince them to accept this invention: "So Arthur resumed the long and hopeless labour of striving to make way with the Circumlocution Office" (II, 8). One hardly knows what to make of Arthur's decision to carry on Doyce's work. The indictment, of course, is of the bureaucratic system, not of Doyce and Arthur. The invention must be

made available to the people--it is "of great importance" to mankind. And certainly Doyce and the struggle that he has gone through commend every bit of our respect. We must, then, regard Arthur's decision as admirable--even though we know he is doomed to failure. The point is that Arthur is willing to sacrifice himself for the good of his fellow creatures. He now has a positive and an admirable goal in life. He now has something to do.

Between Doyce and Arthur there is perfect communication--and this is the only instance of effortless understanding between two people in the entire novel. Arthur sympathizes with Doyce's achievements and he respects his "great patience" and "great forbearance" (I, 10). Doyce welcomes Arthur's interest and is eager to have him as a partner in his business. When communication between Arthur and Doyce almost breaks down--when Doyce fears Arthur might misinterpret his discussing the need for a business partner--Meagles is able to act as mediator and to bring about an understanding between them. After this they communicate perfectly. Doyce "had the power, often to be found in union with such a character, of explaining what he himself perceived, and meant, with the direct force and distinctness with which it struck his own mind. His manner of demonstration was so orderly and neat and simple, that it was not easy to mistake him" (II, 8). And Arthur brings order to Doyce's business: "It's all beautiful, Clennam, in its regularity and order. Nothing can be plainer. Nothing can be better."

Arthur and Doyce each understand fully what the other is doing because each has the ability to communicate clearly the nature of his work. The one time that communication between them does break down--when Arthur invests the firm's money--it does so because Doyce is out of the country. Arthur would not have invested the money without Doyce's approval if he had been present.

Arthur and Little Dorrit are not able to communicate as Arthur and Doyce do. When Arthur first meets Amy, his language is stilted: "I followed you tonight. I did so that I might endeavor to render you and your family some service" (I, 8). Even after he has seen her a second time, Arthur is uncomfortable with Amy: "Will you allow me to walk a little way in whatever direction you may be going? I can then speak to you as we walk, both without detaining you here, and without intruding here longer myself" (I, 9). When Arthur is better acquainted with Little Dorrit, he understands her goodness and simplicity but he is not aware of its potential influence for him: "Little Dorrit seemed the least, the quietest, and the weakest of Heaven's creatures." His attitude is one of condescension: "With a comfortable impression upon him, and quite an honest one in its way, that he was still patronizing Little Dorrit in doing what had no reference to her, he found himself one afternoon in the corner of Mr. Casby's street" (I, 13).

Little Dorrit falls in love with Arthur. This is her "secret"--the secret which prevents the possibility of further

communication between her and Arthur. Arthur is unable to respond to Little Dorrit's love because he is unable to see her as other than an innocent child. He constantly calls her "my child" and sees her in the same terms:

> So diminutive she looked, so fragile and defenseless against the bleak damp weather, flitting along in the shuffling shadow of her charge [Maggie], that he felt, in his compassion, and in his habit of considering her a child apart from the rest of the rough world, as if he would have been glad to take her up in his arms and carry her to her journey's end. (I, 14)

Arthur is unable to dissociate Amy's innocence and goodness--her moral childlikeness--from her physical childlikeness. When Mrs. Chivery tells him about John's love for Amy, he is a bit disconcerted.

> He had come to attach to Little Dorrit an interest so peculiar--an interest that removed her from, while it grew out of, the common and coarse things surrounding her--that he found it disappointing, disagreeable, almost painful, to suppose her in love with young Mr. Chivery in the back-yard, or any such person. On the other hand, he reasoned with himself she was just as good and just as true, in love with him, as not in love with him; and that to make a kind of domesticated fairy out of her, on the penalty of isolation at heart from the only people she knew, would be a weakness of his fancy, and not a kind one. Still her youthful and ethereal appearance, her timid manner, the charm of her sensitive voice and eyes, the very many respects in which she had interested him out of her own individuality, and the strong difference between herself and those about her, were not in unison, and were determined not to be in unison, with this newly presented idea. (I, 22)

Arthur cannot, at this point, reconcile sexual love with innocence. If Amy is good and innocent she is so, he reasons, because she is childlike. Further, if she is like a child morally then she is like a child physically and, consequently, is incapable of experience, of sex, of human love. His

attitude towards innocence is like the prostitute's who will not let Amy kiss her: "'You can't do it,' said the woman. 'You are kind and innocent; but you can't look at me out of a child's eyes. I never should have touched you, but I thought that you were a child'" (I, 14). Both feel that innocence is incompatible with adulthood. The only difference is that Arthur denies Little Dorrit's adulthood.

Arthur feels "depressed and cast away" (I, 13) after his encounter with Flora because she "necessarily recalled to him his life, with all its misdirection and little happiness" (I, 13). He regrets the "gloomy vista by which he had come to that stage of his existence. So long, So bare, So blank. No childhood; no youth, except for one remembrance [Flora]; that one remembrance proved, only that day, to be a piece of folly" (I, 13). Arthur Clennam is what we might expect David Copperfield to have become if he were brought up by the Murdstones and did not marry Dora, the young Flora's counterpart. Fortunately, Arthur's Murdstones were not able to destroy the romantic and dreamy nature he shares with David:

> He was a dreamer in such wise, because he was a man who had, deep-rooted in his nature, a belief in all the gentle and good things his life had been without. Bred in meanness and hard dealing, this had rescued him to be a man of honourable mind and open heart. Bred in coldness and severity, this had rescued him to have a warm and sympathetic heart. Bred in a creed too darkly audacious to pursue, through its process of reversing the making of man in the image of his Creator to the making of his Creator in the image of erring man, this had rescued him to judge not, and in humility to be merciful, and have hope and charity. (I, 13)

Arthur ponders the waste of his life "from the unhappy suppression of my youngest days, . . . down to the afternoon of this day with poor Flora," and asks "'what have I found!' His door was softly opened, and these spoken words startled him, and came as if they were an answer: 'Little Dorrit'" (I, 13).

Arthur, of course, is unable to recognize what he has found because he cannot see Amy as someone with whom he can fall in love. Even after he has sacrificed Pet and "got wiser," he is unable to recognize what he has found in Amy:

> He heard the thrill in Amy's voice, he saw her earnest face, he saw her clear true eyes, he saw the quickened bosom that would have joyfully thrown itself before him to receive a mortal wound directed at his breast, with the dying cry, 'I love him!' and the remotest suspicion of the truth never dawned upon his mind. No. He saw the devoted little creature with her worn shoes, in her common dress, her jail-home; a slender child in body, a strong heroine in soul; and the light of her domestic story made all else dark to him. (I, 32)

Arthur's inability to perceive Little Dorrit's secret leads to the most painful instance of lack of communication in the novel. Arthur comes to Amy to relate to her a "piece of great good-fortune" (I, 35). Amy, of course, thinks Arthur is going to propose to her. The great good-fortune, however, is that Mr. Dorrit has inherited a fortune. This is no happy news for Amy, for now she is forced to go abroad and be separated from Arthur.

It is not until Arthur experiences his "unnatural peace" at the Marshalsea that he is granted clarity of vision. Like Martin Chuzzlewit, David Copperfield, and Esther Summerson

in their great adversities, Arthur can now "think of some passages in his life, almost as if he were removed from them into another state of existence" (II, 27). Arthur realizes that it is Little Dorrit who "had influenced his better resolutions": "None of us clearly know to whom or to what we are indebted" for resolution of character, Dickens says, "until some marked stop in the whirling wheel of life brings the right perception with it. It comes with sickness, it comes with sorrow, it comes with the loss of the dearly loved, it is one of the most frequent uses of adversity. It came to Clennam in his adversity strongly and tenderly" (II, 27). As a result of his adversity, Arthur comes to realize how important Amy has been to his life. When John Chivery informs him that Amy has loved him all along, Arthur becomes aware of the nature of his feelings towards Amy. But now, he feels, it is too late. He is in debtors' prison, and Amy is wealthy.

Arthur is not able to share Amy's fortune so that he might get out of the Marshalsea. While he is in prison he and Amy are isolated. It is Doyce who is responsible for freeing Arthur from the Marshalsea. Doyce has already taught Arthur how to communicate. Arthur was willing to sacrifice himself in order to convince the world that it must accept Doyce's invention. This generosity results finally in Arthur's freedom--freedom both from "mean and selfish pursuits" and from the Marshalsea.

Now that Amy has lost her wealth she can share with Arthur this great good fortune--the wealth of their mutual

love. In freeing Arthur, Doyce allows Arthur and Amy to communicate. While Arthur and Amy do not communicate, they cannot love. Before they love they must communicate, and perfect communication is love. In his love for Little Dorrit, Arthur is able to "quite lose and forget himself" and is freed from "mean and selfish pursuits."

Arthur was not allowed to marry Pet Meagles and live in the Meagles retreat, with all the ease which that life would entail:

> A tranquil sunset shone upon him as he approached the end of his walk [at Meagles's retreat], and passed through the meadows by the riverside. He had that sense of peace, and of being lightened of a weight of care, which country quiet awakens in the breast of dwellers in towns. Everything within his view was lovely and placid. The rich foliage of the trees, the luxuriant grass diversified with wild flowers, the little green islands in the river, the beds of rushes, the water-lilies floating on the surface of the stream, the distant voices in boats borne musically towards him on the ripple of the water and the evening air were all expressive of rest. (I, 29)

This is all very attractive, but Arthur has learned of far more important things in his life:

> As the fierce dark teaching of his childhood had never sunk into his heart, so the first article in his code of morals was, that he must begin in practical humility, with looking well to his feet on Earth, and that he could never mount on wings of words to Heaven. Duty on earth, restitution on earth, action on earth: These first, as the first steep steps upward. Strait was the gate and narrow was the way . . . (II, 27)

And so the quietly triumphant ending of Little Dorrit. An ending not bedecked with "rich foliage" and "luxuriant grass," but, in a truer sense, a happy ending: "They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed

along in sunshine and in shade, the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward and the vain, fretted, and chafed, and made their usual uproar" (II, 34). Arthur and Amy have descended "into a modest life of usefulness and happiness" (II, 34).

Once Arthur is able to communicate with Doyce and Amy, he is able to find meaning in life. But it is not until his great adversity--that strange period of almost non-existence at the Marshalsea--that Arthur discovers his love for Amy and, in the act of that discovery, achieves an identity. In arguing that a man must "follow" where his invention leads him, that he must attempt to make it "useful," Doyce says to Arthur, "You hold your life on the condition that to the last you shall struggle hard for it. Every man holds a discovery on the same terms." Arthur has now discovered his identity and it must "be made useful." It is. Arthur is now capable of moral action, capable of entering into a life of "usefulness, and happiness" with Amy.

Arthur's and Amy's love, however, does not convince one of being romantic. Arthur is a man of forty at the start of the novel. Amy is so small physically that she is often mistaken for a child. Before Arthur becomes ill, in fact, he regards Amy as a child whom he must protect. After Amy nurses him, the dependency is reversed, and the relationship is one of nurse-patient. It is never love of man for woman.

It is strange that Dickens makes Arthur a "young man" of forty. As I have pointed out in the introduction,

however, very few of the love relationships up to this point in Dickens's career strike one as romantic. Walter Gay and Florence, David and Agnes, Richard Carstone and Ada Clare all have brother-sister relationships before marriage. Esther Summerson is willing to marry Jarndyce, and Arthur Clennam is old enough to be Amy's father. Much of Dickens's reluctance to deal with a lover-beloved relationship can be explained, no doubt, by the general Victorian reticence about sex. In the last few novels, however, Dickens deals with a mature love of man for woman. It is his willingness to deal with love in this way, perhaps, rather than the previous reticence, which must be examined.

In A Tale of Two Cities Dickens comes closer to treating romantic love than he has in any previous novel. Earlier Dickens's lovers speak as one might expect a brother to speak to his sister. But it is impossible for Sydney Carton to pretend that he can have a brother relationship with Lucie Manette--she is a married woman when he discovers his love for her. We have here what amounts to a triangle, with the third party sacrificing himself for the happiness of the other two. In the novels that follows this one, there will be more triangles--Pip-Estella-Drummle, Wrayburn-Lizzie-Headstone, Drood-Rosa-Jasper--but these will not be resolved so easily.

Dickens's eagerness to deal with romantic love in the last few novels suggests that he has become aware of the full significance of the nature of the love he thinks

can serve as an integrating force in society. In the middle novels--David Copperfield to Little Dorrit--he recognized that this love must be productive if it is to arrest the disintegration of society. We are told at the end of their novels that the Copperfields, Woodcourts, and Clennams have children. But it is impossible simply to give birth to children--as Sissy Jupe seems to have done. They must be conceived. In the last phase of his career--particularly in Great Expectations (1860-61) and Our Mutual Friend (1864-65)--Dickens acknowledges that if this love is to be productive it must first be romantic. The love, then, which is to serve as the guiding force in the achievement of full identity must itself be romantic love. In Great Expectations Dickens deals with a romantic relationship as such for the first time in his career.

The latent romantic attraction in A Tale of Two Cities is idealized so that Sydney Carton, the attracted figure, sacrifices himself for the happiness of the woman he loves. The primary concern in the novel becomes the death-resurrection theme that has served as Dickens's plot-metaphor for the achievement of identity. Doctor Manette is "Recalled to Life" (Dickens had considered this phrase as a title to A Tale of Two Cities) in the opening chapters of the novel. Lucie Manette is "resurrected" to her father. Charles Darnay escapes from death through the legal assistance of Sydney Carton. Roger Cly has "feigned death and come to life again" as the "Resurrection-Man," Jerry Cruncher, knows only too

too well. Doctor Manette is able to recall Charles Darnay to life once again because of the eighteen years he has spent in his "tomb," but only temporarily. It is Sydney Carton who is able to preserve Doctor Manette, Lucie Darnay, and her daughter from death, who is willing to sacrifice his own life that his "double," Charles Darnay, may live, and who himself arises to a worthwhile life through his selfless act. Carton's love is, in an idealistic sense, greater love.

Sydney Carton represents the full significance of what Dickens intends the death-resurrection theme to represent. He is influenced away from a meaningless life through his love for Lucie Manette. This love becomes so completely selfless that it inspires him to do the one meaningful thing of his life--sacrifice that life so that the woman he loves may continue a life of happiness with the man she loves. As a result of Sydney's love for Lucie he is able to achieve full identity--but Sydney's achieved identity, like Richard Carstone's, is to be fulfilled in a "better land." Dickens quotes Christ's words as Sydney approaches the Guillotine: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die!"

CHAPTER VI

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

> . . . Joe and Biddy would never know how sorry I had been that night, none would ever know what I had suffered, how true I had meant to be, what an agony I had passed through.

Before Dickens started Great Expectations (1860-61) he read David Copperfield again "to be quite sure [he] had fallen into no unconscious repetitions." David and Pip have much in common. They are both orphans who, because of their sensitive natures, suffer more than normal boys do from the injustices of the world. Pip's sensitivity also makes him feel alone in the world:

> My sister's bringing up had made me sensitive. In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finally perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter. . . . Through all my punishments, disgraces, fasts and vigils, and other penitential performances, I had nursed this assurance [that his sister had been unjust to him]; and to my communing so much with it in a solitary and unprotected way, I in a great part refer the fact that I was morally timid and very sensitive. (8)

Pip often "communes" with things "in a solitary and unprotected way" (8). He has no one to turn to for support.

Pip is so alone in the universe that he has to give himself his own name: "My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" (1). Pip is totally alone in a world devoid of warmth:

> My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Phillip Pirrup, Late of this Parish, and also Georgiana Wife of the Above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry was Pip. (2)

Not only is the universe no more concerned with the small bundle of shivers than with the low leaden line beyond, the fact that this bundle of shivers happens to be Pip and not Alexander or Bartholomew is purely accidental. So far as the "universe" is concerned Pip might just as well be in the grave and Alexander or Bartholomew reading his name on the headstone. Pip does not count as Pip. He is aware of the lack of concern of the universe for the individual: immediately before he learns that he is to "play" at Miss Havisham's, Pip "looked at the stars, and considered how awful it would be for a man to turn his face up to them as he froze to death, and see no help or pity in all the glittering multitude" (7).

Pip's feelings of injustice and loneliness can be seen in his dissatisfaction with his lot. Joe does not care to become a scholar because Mrs. Joe "ain't over partial to having scholars on the premises . . . and in partickler would not be over partial to my being a scholar, for fear as I might rise. Like a sort of rebel, don't you see?" (7) Pip does not see, and he pursues his studies in order that he "might rise." Unfortunately for Pip his eagerness to rise becomes distorted after his first encounter with Estella: "I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt for me was so strong that it became infectious, and I caught it" (8). Pip wants to "rise," to become something different from himself. He is ashamed of his own hands and contemptuous of himself. Pip's shame for his own hands is the signal of his downfall. He rejects his literally real self in favor of some other "gentlemanly" self he hopes to become. His identity at the forge is challenged by Mrs. Joe's antagonism to his continuing to "be" ("I was always treated [at the forge] as if I had insisted on being born in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, and morality, and against the dissuading arguments of my best friends" [4]), and now, in his new environment at Miss Havisham's, he learns to reject the hands of that forge existence, too.

Pip's desire to become a "gentleman" dates from his meeting with Estella, and his concept of what a "gentleman" should be is derived from it. After describing a day at Miss

Havisham's, Pip asks: "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 sunlight from the misty rooms?" (12) Pip's thoughts are dazed, as he suggests in his metaphor, by Miss Havisham's and Estella's dark, sordid world. But when one realizes the emptiness and lack of identity Pip feels in the world he inhabits, one cannot wonder at the influence Satis House has upon him. Pip yearns to have a sense of belonging and he is not allowed any sense of belonging to his world. He treats the only person he loves, Joe ("perhaps for no better reason in those early days than because the dear fellow let me love him" [6]), as "a larger species of child, and as no more than my equal" (2). Pip has no family ("N.B. I was not allowed to call [Uncle Pumblechook] uncle, under the severest penalties" [4]), is constantly regarded as criminal (the young are "naterally vicious" [4] according to Mr. Hubble), and feels that he cannot fulfill himself at the forge. When Pip meets Estella--who represents everything that he is not--it is no wonder that he is attracted to her, that she becomes the symbol to him of everything that is desirable.

Estella becomes for Pip what Agnes is to David, his inspiration; an inspiration, however, to an evil end. When Joe meets Miss Havisham in order to discuss Pip's premium, Pip is embarrassed: "I am afraid I was ashamed of the dear good fellow--I <u>know</u> I was ashamed of him--when I saw that

Estella stood at the back of Miss Havisham's chair, and that her eyes laughed mischievously" (13). Estella makes Pip ashamed of the only good thing that has ever come into his life. She inspires Pip not to a better way of life but to a way of life which is different from his and therefore considered better by Pip because different. Pip feels that by emulating what Estella is, or what he considers her to be, he can become better. But Estella is all facade. Miss Havisham has so distorted her that by her own admission she has "no heart" (29) and is incapable of loving. Estella's beauty does not extend beyond the brilliant jewelry she wears. Pip fails to recognize the truth of Herbert Pocket's statement: "it is a principle of [my father's] that no man who was not a true gentleman at heart, ever was, since the world began, a true gentleman in manner. He says, no varnish can hide the grain of wood, and that the more varnish you put on, the more the grain will express itself" (22). Pip's thoughts are dazed and because they are dazed he is unable to see through Estella's glittering facade, unable to see that Estella is no lady. And so he allows her to inspire him to be what she herself has become--all varnish. There is nothing to love in Estella beneath the varnish. She has "no heart." Eventually the bad grain shows through for both Estella and Pip.

Pip is unable to recognize his true source of inspiration, Biddy. When Pip begins to consider himself coarse and common, he feels that "the best step I could take towards

making myself uncommon was to get out of Biddy everything she knew" (9). He "reposed complete confidence in no one but Biddy" (12). But after Pip becomes enraptured with Estella he is no longer able to appreciate Biddy fully:

> "If I could have settled down," I said to Biddy" . . . and been but half as fond of the forge as I was when I was little, I know it would have been much better for me. You and I and Joe would have wanted nothing then, and Joe and I would perhaps have gone partners when I was out of my time, and I might even have grown up to keep company with you, and we might have sat on this very bank on a fine Sunday, quite different people. I should have been good enough for <u>you</u>; shouldn't I, Biddy?" (17)

Pip continues to discuss Estella with Biddy. In the course of the discussion, he realizes that if "Estella were beside me at that moment instead of Biddy, she would make me miserable" (17). He recognizes Biddy's superior qualities and is aware that, unlike Estella, Biddy "would have derived only pain and no pleasure, from giving me pain; she would far rather have wounded her own breast than mine. How can it be, then, that I did not like her much the better of the two?" Just as David's romantic sensibility had prevented him from discovering his love for Agnes, so Pip's desire to be a "gentleman" affects his whole scheme of values--influences him to love Estella, the lesser good, over Biddy, the greater good. Pip's desire to be what he regards as a gentleman distorts his outlook.

In attempting to "rise," to become what Estella is, Pip is moving farther and farther away from achieving an identity, or what Dickens considers to be his true and proper identity. His attempt to "rise" distorts him and distracts

him from fulfilling his better nature. Further, his attraction to Estella intensifies the problem. He is attracted to her brilliant facade, is attracted to her not as a person but as the symbol of everything that Biddy and the forge are not. When Pip is presented with great expectations, he quite naturally assumes Miss Havisham to be his patroness. When he goes to his room the night he learns of his expectations he "fell into much the same confused division of mind between it and the better rooms to which I was going as I had been in so often between the forge and Miss Havisham's, and Biddy and Estella" (18). Pip is able to see rather clearly the difference between the two value systems, but is unwilling to admit the superiority of that represented by the forge and Biddy over that represented by Satis House and Estella. Having been attracted to that world represented by Estella initially because he did not feel a sense of belonging to his own world, Pip goes to bed "feeling it very sorrowful and strange that this first night of my bright fortunes should be the loneliest I had ever known" (18). He does not realize, of course, that his expectations are themselves more coarse and common than he has been, that his desire to be a gentleman only further alienates him from everything that his better self regards as fine, and that Estella--whom he associates with his great expectations--is his inspiration to an evil end. That Pip is ashamed to have Joe see him off to London and is, in return, ashamed of himself for being ashamed of Joe, indicates both the sordidness and the power of Pip's

expectations. It also indicates that Pip still possesses a sense of right and wrong which has been obscured by his expectations, that his better nature has not yet been lost to his worse nature.

Pip's expectations are to him what the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit is to Richard Carstone--a blight. Like Richard, Pip is unable to settle down to anything because he does not feel he has to. Pip is, according to Herbert Pocket, "a good fellow, with impetuosity and hesitation, boldness and diffidence, action and dreaming curiously mixed in him" (30). Pocket tells Pip that Pip's attraction to Estella "having been so strongly rooted in the breast of a boy whom nature and circumstances make so romantic renders it very serious" (30). Pip himself has recognized the romantic quality of his feeling for Estella. He assumes that Miss Havisham is his patroness and expects Estella to be part of her plans for him:

> She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a-going and the cold hearths a-blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin--in short, do all the shining deeds of the young knight of romance, and marry the princess. (29)

Pip's love for Estella is romantic in the sense that it does not treat things as they are; it is chivalric. In Pip's dream (romance) he is the gentleman (young knight) who will marry the glittering Estella (the princess). Although Pip is capable of "painting brilliant pictures" like these, and although Pip

realizes that "Estella was the inspiration of it, and the heart of it, of course" (29), Pip does not idealize her:

> But though she had taken such strong possession of me, though my fancy and my hope were so set upon her, though her influence on my boyish life had been all-powerful, I did not, even that romantic morning, invest her with any attributes save those she possessed. I mention this in this place, of a fixed purpose, because it is the clue by which I am to be followed into my poor labyrinth. . . . The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. (27)

This is the first time that we find a convincing, romantic love in Dickens, love of man for woman as woman. Pip is attracted to Estella irresistibly. Even though she makes him miserable, even though he realizes that she is not as good for him as Biddy, Pip is helplessly in love with Estella: "Once for all: I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be" (29).

It is difficult to determine whether Pip was attracted to Estella initially because she represented everything that he desired in terms of "rising" in the world or if he wanted finally to rise in the world because he was attracted to Estella. We saw in his conversation with Joe about education (Mrs Joe "would not be over partial to my being a scholar, for fear as I might rise") that Pip has the seeds of discontent planted in his nature long before he meets Estella. On the other hand, however, Pip's outlook is distorted once he meets Estella, and he feels that he could not

now possibly be content at the forge, and has only contempt for himself. Further, Pip feels that if he is to be happy he must become "worthy" of Estella. But Estella's worth is only superficial and so what Pip is attempting to become is mere facade. He must not only not be a blacksmith, he must be a "gentleman." Pip, of course, is aware of the problem. It is Pip's awareness that there is a better, "truer," nature which he is distorting which indicates to us that he will reform:

> 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 as much as possible, but I knew very well that it was not all good. I lived in a state of chronic uneasiness respecting my behavior to Joe. My conscience was not by any means comfortable about Biddy. (34)

Pip feels that had he never met Miss Havisham he should have been "happier and better" and would have "risen to manhood content to be partners with Joe in the honest old forge" (34). But then Pip thinks of Estella and recognizes that she "was so inseparable from all my restlessness and disquiet of mind that I really fell into confusion as to the limits of my own part in its productions. That is to say, supposing I had had no expectations, and yet had had Estella to think of, I could not make out to my satisfaction that I should have done much better." Estella and the expectations are, at this point, one. They represent something different from Joe, Biddy, and the forge and must, to Pip's confused mind, be considered in the same context. A further dimension of confusion is added

when Pip mistakenly believes that Estella is herself to be part of the expectations.

Pip really does love Estella, and it is too bad for Pip that Miss Havisham has formed Estella's nature to the point that she has "no heart": "'Oh! I have a heart to be stabbed in or shot in, I have no doubt,' said Estella; 'and, of course, if it ceased to beat I should cease to be. But you know what I mean. I have no softness there, no--sympathy--sentiment--nonsense'" (29). Estella is used by Miss Havisham ("We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions" [33]) to avenge the decaying woman's broken heart by breaking the hearts of those who are attracted to Estella: "Love her, love her, love her! If she favours you, love her. If she wounds you, love her. If she tears your heart to pieces--and as it gets older and stronger it will tear deeper--love her, love her, love her" (29). But Estella has a real regard for Pip, and tries to spare him his inevitable pain: "Pip, Pip, . . . will you never take warning?" (38) Estella realizes that because of Miss Havisham's blighting influence, she is incapable of loving. When Miss Havisham demands of Estella why she does not return her mother by adoption's love, Estella asks:

> if you had taught her [your "adopted daughter"], from the dawn of her intelligence, with your utmost might, that there was such a thing as daylight, but that it was made to be her enemy and destroyer, and she must always turn against it, for it had blighted you and would blight her--if you had done this, and then, for a purpose, had wanted her to take naturally to the daylight and she could not do it, you would have been disappointed and angry? (38)

Estella has so little regard for the worth of her affections that she is willing to throw them away on the "contemptible, clumsy, sulky booby" (38), Bentley Drummle. Pip is appalled by the notion: "To the present moment, I believe it to have been referable to some pure fire of generosity and disinterestedness in my love for her that I could not endure the thought of her stooping to that hound" (38). Pip's love for Estella is generous--but no more so than Estella's regard for him:

> "There is no doubt you do [stoop to the boor, Drummle]," said I something hurriedly, "for I have seen you give him looks and smiles this very night, such as you never give to--me."
> "Do you want me then," said Estella, turning suddenly with a fixed and serious, if not angry look, "to deceive and entrap you?"
> "Do you deceive and entrap him, Estella?"
> "Yes, and many others--all of them but you." (38)

Estella is generous to Pip, generous enough not to give him her attentions.

When Pip learns that Miss Havisham is not the source of his expectations and that Estella is not intended for him, he is able to tell her of his love for her: "While I thought you could not help yourself, as it were, I refrained from saying it" (44). Pip declares his love passionately, but Estella like Loo Gradgrind, knows nothing of love:

> "It seems," said Estella very calmly, "that there are sentiments, fancies--I don't know how to call them--which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I know what you mean as a form of words, but nothing more." (44)

When Pip protests that this kind of reaction "is not in nature," Estella tells him it "is in <u>my</u> nature, . . . It is in the

nature formed within me" (44). Pip unwillingly accepts Estella's dismissal of him, but pleads with her not to carry through her plans to marry Drummle. Pip's love for Estella is generous: "Estella, dearest, dearest Estella, do not let Miss Havisham lead you to this fatal step. Put me aside for ever--you have done so, I well know--but bestow yourself on some worthier person than Drummle. . . . Take [another who loves you], and I can bear it better for your sake" (44). But Pip still does not understand the generosity of Estella's nature. Estella tells Pip that Drummle is her own choice and Pip asks, "Your own act, Estella, to fling yourself away upon a brute?" Estella's answer reveals her generosity: "'On whom should I fling myself away?' she retorted, with a smile. 'Should I fling myself away upon the man who would soonest feel (if people do feel such things) that I took nothing to him?'" (44) Estella can take "nothing" to the man who loves her because Miss Havisham has so deformed her nature that she is incapable of love. Still, Pip is right--for Dickens--in saying that to be incapable of love is "not in nature," that this Estella is not natural.

When Estella tells Pip that he will put her out of his thoughts in a week, Pip responds with the most memorable avowal of love in Dickens, one which is reminiscent of Cathy Linton's description of her love for Heathcliff:

> "Out of my thoughts! You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read, since I first came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then. You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since--on the river, on the sail of the ships, on the marshes, in the clouds,

> in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets. You have been the embodiment of every graceful fancy that my mind has ever become acquainted with. The stones of which the strongest London buildings are made are not more real, or more impossible to be displaced by your hands, than your presence and influence have been to me, there and everywhere, and still will be. Estella to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil. But in this separation I associate you only with the good, and I will faithfully hold you to that always, for you must have done me far more good than harm, let me feel now what sharp distress I may. O God bless you, God forgive you!" (44)

Pip's love for Estella is different from the love we have previously encountered in Dickens. It is more human. Agnes could not be "part of the evil" in David, or Little Dorrit in Arthur. They are good angels, idealized beings associated only with the good. Estella has been part of Pip's great expectations, and, just as the expectations have had an evil influence on Pip, so has Estella. But what Pip feels for Estella is genuine love, and insofar as it is love, it is good.

The evil of Pip's attraction to Estella is not to be confused with his love for her. Pip is attracted originally only to Estella's brilliant facade, to that "nature formed within" her by Miss Havisham. Pip's attraction to the distorted Estella causes him to distort his own nature. Pip is willing to give up himself--to give up his hands, for example--to become a Pip that Estella can "love," a "gentleman." He thinks this identity can be achieved socially. Pip's distorted attraction to a distorted Estella causes him to distort his own nature.

But there is still something in Estella that has not been distorted by Miss Havisham, that which prevents her from "flinging" herself away "upon the man who should soonest feel . . . that [she] took nothing to him." It is this potentially good Estella that the good in Pip loves, genuinely loves. It is not the "gentleman" Pip who loves Estella in any true sense. Fortunately Pip has not yet distorted himself to the point that he has become a Turvey-drop, that he is all facade. That is why there can be "some pure fire of generosity and disinterestedness in [his] love for her." But while Pip is unable to distinguish between the false "nature formed within" Estella--the Estella he associates with his great expectation--and the potentially good Estella--the Estella who is generous enough not to marry him--, Pip is unable to recognize what in Estella is "part of the little good in [him], part of the evil." Pip is right, Estella "cannot choose but remain part of [his] character." But as long as Estella is the Estella distorted by Miss Havisham and as long as Pip is attracted to this false Estella, the "character" that she is part of will be partly "evil."

Like other young men in Dickens, Pip will be able to correct the "evil" him, will be able to overcome his worse nature and to fulfill his better nature, will be able to achieve identity as Pip--a Pip who is not ashamed of his own hands--only through a selfless love. Insofar as Estella is associated with Pip's expectations, his love for her cannot

be selfless. He is, however, given the opportunity of achieving a selfless love when he learns that the source of his great expectations is Magwitch, his "second father" (39). Pip realizes that his expectations are doubly sordid; first because they come from a convict and secondly because they are given on false pretenses. Magwitch bestows the great fortune on his "dear boy" because "you acted nobly, my boy. . . . Noble Pip! And I have never forgot it!" (39) The fact is that Pip did not act nobly, but stole the file and food for Magwitch because

> "I was in mortal terror of the young man who wanted my heart and liver; I was in mortal terror of my interlocutor with the iron leg; I was in mortal terror of myself, from whom an awful promise had been extracted; I had no hope of deliverance through my all-powerful sister, who repulsed me at every turn; I am afraid to think of what I might have done on requirement, in the secrecy of my terror." (2)

Pip's was not a noble action, but a selfish one. And so Pip discovers that his fortune comes from a convict for a deed that Pip himself realizes was done from selfishness.

Pip is repelled by Magwitch, who has "made a gentleman on" him (39) so that Magwitch himself could experience the joy of owning a "gentleman": "If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learning, I'm the owner of such." Magwitch's expression--that he has "made a gentleman on" Pip--is ironically accurate: Pip is only superficially a gentleman. Magwitch's motives are just as selfish as were Pip's in assisting him on the marshes. He risks his life by coming back to England not that he might see Pip but that he might experience the pleasure of seeing what he has made: "'I've come to the old country

fur to see my gentleman. That'll be my pleasure. My pleasure 'ull be fur to see him do it. And blast you all! . . . Blast you every one, from the judge in his wig to the colonist a-stirring up the dust. I'll show you a better gentleman than the whole kit of you put together'" (40). When Magwitch sees Pip's reaction to this statement he realizes that what he said was "low" and promises that he "ain't a-going to be low" (40). Pip has a softening influence on Magwitch and the longer Magwitch is with Pip the less does he become "low."

Now that Pip has learned the source of his expectations, now that he is stripped of his illusions, he becomes capable of generous action. He is able to forgive Miss Havisham: "'Oh, Miss Havisham,' said I, 'I can [forgive you] now. There have been sore mistakes; and my love has been a blind and thankless one; and I want forgiveness and direction far too much to be bitter with you'" (49). When Pip hears the story of Magwitch's life (which parallels Pip's own youth) and learns to know him better, he is no longer repelled by him. Pip can gain nothing from loving Magwitch; he has already secretly resolved not to take further money from him. But Pip and Magwitch have a mutual influence on one another: "What was to follow [getting Magwitch out of London], I did not touch upon; neither, indeed, was I at all clear or comfortable about it in my own mind, now that I saw him in that softer condition, and in declared peril for my sake" (46). Pip has a softening influence on Magwitch, and Magwitch, in becoming softer, brings out Pip's generous impulses. Pip is determined to

protect his erstwhile provider because he has developed a genuine love for him. Pip resolves to help Magwitch escape the law a second time. And this time it is "Noble Pip" who is willing to risk helping Magwitch. In the marshes Pip was motivated by selfish reasons--fear. Now Pip is helping Magwitch out of genuine concern for him: he would lose nothing by giving Magwitch over to the authorities, and he risks much by helping a convicted felon escape the law.

Pip's accepting Magwitch as he is and, by extension, assuming his own share of the guilt in the universe, allows him to achieve a fuller knowledge of the meaning of guilt than even Jaggers has. Jaggers is constantly cross examining Pip (and everyone else). He insists that every inquiry be put in the form of a question ("That's no question as it stands, you know") and demands an accurate answer for every inquiry he makes. He knows his opponent's every move, and will not give an inch once he has him cornered: "And as I felt that [my breath] came quicker, and as I felt that he saw that it came quicker, I felt that I had less chance than ever of getting anything out of him" (36). Jaggers is so aware of the general evil in the world and of individual guilt which accompanies evil, that he makes everyone he comes into contact with feel guilty: "And Mr. Jaggers made not me alone intensely melancholy, because, after he was gone, Herbert said of himself, with his eyes fixed on the fire, that he thought he must have committed a felony and forgotten the details of it, he felt so dejected and guilty" (36).

After Pip accepts Magwitch, he begins to hold his own with Jaggers because in accepting Magwitch Pip is symbolically acknowledging his share of the guilt in the universe:

> "As we are going in the same direction, Pip [said Jaggers] we may walk together. Where are you bound for?"
> "For the temple, I think," said I.
> "Don't you know?" said Jaggers.
> "Well," I returned, glad for once to get the better of him in cross-examination, "I do not know, for I have not made up my mind." (48)

And, finally, when Pip realizes the universality of guilt, when Pip realizes that his shining star, Estella, is the daughter of Magwitch and realizes this because he himself is willing to pursue the truth and to accept the implications of that truth, then Pip is Jaggers's superior in knowledge and in the ability to "cross-examine." Pip hopes to have his discovery about Estella's background verified by Jaggers, but can get no reaction from Jaggers until he demonstrates the extent of his own knowledge about Estella: "'Perhaps I know more of Estella's history than even you do,' said I, 'I know her father, too'" (51). Here Pip detects a "certain stop" in Jaggers's manner: "he was too self-possessed to change his manner, but he could not help its being brought to an indefinably attentive stop." When Jaggers asks how Pip knows Magwitch to be Estella's father, he uses his favorite device of putting his handkerchief half-way to his nose. Pip answers that only he, Pip, not even Magwitch the father, knows: "For once, the powerful pocket-handkerchief failed. My reply was

so unexpected that Mr. Jaggers put the handkerchief back into his pocket without completing the usual performance, folded his arms, and looked with stern attention at me, though with an immovable face" (51). When Pip tells Jaggers "all I knew and how I knew it," and Jaggers attempts to dismiss him by returning to official business ("What item was it you were at, Wemmick, when Mr. Pip came in?"), Pip makes a "passionate, almost an indignant appeal to him to be more frank and manly with me." Pip's final resort is a plea to Wemmick as "a man with a gently heart" to intercede for him: "I have seen your pleasant home, and your old father, and all the innocent cheerful playful ways with which you refresh your business life" (italics mine) (51). Jaggers, of course, is astonished both by the fact that Wemmick does lead a human life outside the office--an innocent one at that--and that Pip knows more about Jaggers's own partner than Jaggers knows. Jaggers has been able to establish his superiority over people, even innocent people like Herbert Pocket, because of his profound knowledge of evil. But now that Pip has been able to accept Magwitch, he has knowledge of the meaning of guilt. But Pip has also knowledge of good. He knows about the innocent side of Wemmick, a side Jaggers has never even considered possible. Because of his knowledge of good and evil, Pip is able to have his findings about Estella verified.

Because Pip is able to love Magwitch, to accept him for what he is, he is able to move toward an achieved identity. Pip repudiated Joe, Biddy, the forge--even his own hands--in

trying to become a "gentleman." He has been moving farther and farther away from achieving an identity because he has been distorted by the false values that his great expectations present to him. In accepting the criminal Magwitch he accepts someone on the social scale--and this is the scale by which he measures what he is trying to become--lower than Joe Gargery. He can now accept that very "indifferent" pair of hands. But Pip has yet to achieve full identity. Like Martin, David, and Arthur Clennam, Pip must undergo a great crisis before he can achieve this identity before he can resolve the conflict between the better and worse nature. The crisis started, of course, when he discovered Magwitch to be his patron. The more Pip is stripped of illusion, the greater his awareness becomes. But his great crisis, his confrontation with death, occurs in the old sluice-house, where Orlick intends to kill him. Pip expects to die, and in the moment of his anticipation of death, he recognizes that he is different than he was, and his agonizing concern is that no one will know that he is no longer a "gentleman," that he intends now to be "true":

> My mind, with inconceivable rapidity, followed out all the consequences of such a death. Estella's father would believe I had deserted him, would be taken, would die accusing me; . . . Joe and Biddy would never know how sorry I had been that night, none would ever know what I had suffered, how true I had meant to be, what an agony I had passed through. The death close before me was terrible, but far more terrible than death was the dread of being misremembered after death. (53)

Pip is granted the opportunity of righting the wrongs of life when he is rescued by Herbert and Trabb's boy. Pip's concern

now is that the suffering he has undergone at the sluice house will prevent him from accomplishing his one important goal--saving Magwitch: "My terror, as I lay there, of falling ill and being unfitted for to-morrow, was so besetting that I wonder that it did not disable me of itself" (53).

Pip is able to effect the preliminaries of Magwitch's escape, but they are followed and Magwitch is captured. When Magwitch is taken Pip assumes his "place by Magwitch's side"; "I felt," he says, "that that was my place henceforth while he lived" (54). Pip has learned not only to accept Magwitch as he is, but to love and respect him for what he is:

> 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. (54)

And Magwitch himself has "softened" under Pip's influence to the point that he now has no selfish motives in his love for Pip: "Dear boy, . . . I'm quite content to take my chance. I've seen my boy, and he can be a gentleman without me" (54). Pip realizes that Magwitch's possessions would be forfeited, but does not destroy Magwitch's illusion that he has made a gentleman, for finally Magwitch has made two gentlemen: "I will never stir from your side . . . when I am suffered to be near you. Please God, I will be as true to you as you have been to me!" (54) And he is.

The illness that has been working on the exhausted Pip ever since he was captured by Orlick overcomes him after

Magwitch's death. Like Esther Summerson ("Dare I hint at that worst time when, strung together somewhere in great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which I was one of the beads! And when my only prayer was to be taken off from the rest and when it was inexplicable agony and misery to be a part of the dreadful thing"), Pip has delirious visions of guilt associations in his fevered state:

> That I had a fever and was avoided, that I suffered greatly, that I often lost my reason, that the time seemed interminable, that I confounded impossible existences with my own identity; that I was a brick in the house wall, and yet entreating to be released from the giddy place where the builders had set me; that I was the steel beam of a vast engine, clashing and whirling over a gulf, and yet that I implored in my own person to have the engine stopped, and my part in it hammered off; . . . (57)

Pip's delirious associations with guilt are in the form of "confound[ing] impossible existences with [his] own identity." The most impossible existence that he has confounded with his identity is that of being a "gentleman." And herein lies his guilt. Pip's final illusion is that his part in the universal guilt can be hammered off, that he can return to innocence. Pip has already conjugated the sentence which indicates his own position as regards returning to innocence: "I may not and I cannot go home: and I might not, could not, would not, and should not go home" (45). When Joe nurses Pip to health, however, Pip thinks he can go home again: "and I fancied I was little Pip again" (57). When Joe leaves, Pip determines to return to the marshes, recapture his innocence, and marry

Biddy, who "will surely make it a better world for me" (57). Pip's final illusion, that he can go home, is shattered when he discovers that Biddy is married to Joe.

Biddy is not going to "make it a better world" for Pip--nobody is or can. If Pip wants a better world he must start to better it himself, not to have it made better for him. Just as Pip has discovered that he cannot be "made" a gentleman by having enormous wealth heaped upon him from an outside source, so must he discover that it is up to him to better the world for himself. That is why it is not enough simply for Pip to return from the East and find "himself": "and there, fenced into the corner with Joe's leg, and sitting on my own stool looking at the fire, was--I again" (59). Pip has achieved too much simply to be allowed a vicarious existence. He knows the meaning of good and evil and, in spite of--or perhaps because of--that knowledge, he has learned to love selflessly. Pip has achieved too much to be allowed to remain "quite an old bachelor" (59). He deserves, according to Dickens's scheme of values, a second chance--for the same reasons that David Copperfield and Arthur Clennam deserve a second chance: because he has suffered much and learned much. Pip is granted his second chance when he meets Estella in Miss Havisham's garden. When Estella asks him if he does well, Pip's response is: "I work pretty hard for a sufficient living, and therefore--Yes, I do well!" (59) The "therefore" is important. Pip realizes now that if one works pretty hard one cannot only make a

sufficient living but can "make it a better world." Estella has learned too. She has been abused by Bentley Drummle and, for her, "suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be" (59). Pip and Estella are granted the second chance because both have deserved it.

Pip and Estella both achieve identities, identities different from those which they started toward. Earlier, because of Miss Havisham's evil influence, Estella is distorted to the point that she believes it is her "nature" to know "love" only as a "form of words, but nothing more. " This failure to "comprehend sentiments, fancies--I don't know how to call them--" is, she tells Pip, in her nature: "It is in the nature formed within me." But Pip is right when he says "it is not in nature." It is not natural, Pip is suggesting, for man not to love. Estella's nature, however, has been distorted by Miss Havisham. Fortunately through the course of life "suffering has been stronger than all other teaching" for Estella, and through suffering and, one supposes, through Pip's love for her, Estella is able finally "to understand what [Pip's] heart used to be."

Suffering is essential to the achievement of identity in Dickens's world. The importance of Estella's statement that "suffering has been stronger than all other teaching" can be seen in that it appears in both conclusions to Great Expectations. Estella's nature was distorted by Miss Havisham's "teaching," but because she has suffered much she

has been able to overcome that teaching. She has been able to correct her distorted nature and to achieve, like Pip, a "true" identity, to discover that she does have a "heart," a heart capable of understanding what Pip's "heart used to be." Pip also achieves identity, an identity different from the one he attempts to achieve by becoming a "gentleman." Pip achieves his identity as a true gentleman because he has been able to love Magwitch. Through his love for Magwitch Pip corrects his distorted nature--does not become the kind of "gentleman" he thought he must become in order to marry the Estella he was attracted to originally. The new Pip and the new Estella are able to fulfill themselves and to realize their mutual love in marriage.

In David Copperfield and Little Dorrit the hero achieves identity by recognizing his love for his "good angel"--for the one who has been his inspiration to good. In Great Expectations Pip achieves identity by being willing--becoming able--to love Magwitch, that person who is largely responsible for the evil in his life. Because Pip has achieved this identity through love, he is now able to share another kind of love with Estella. And that love is no longer tainted.

In Great Expectations Dickens deals with a convincing romantic love for the first time. Pip's attraction to Estella is irresistible from the start--in a way that David's to Agnes and Arthur's to Amy is not. In Great Expectations, however, Dickens is not as convinced of the power of romantic love as his use of it as the integrating force in society would suggest.

It is not Pip's love for Estella but rather his love for Magwitch which allows him to become a true gentleman. Had Pip never come to love Magwitch, he could not, we gather, be happy with Estella. It is not until Our Mutual Friend (1864-65) that romantic love becomes, with adversity, both the means to the discovery of identity and the achieved end of that discovery.

CHAPTER VII

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

"No man knows till the time comes what depths are within him."

When Fascination Fledgeby goes to the offices of Pubsey and Company to talk to Riah, he finds that the old man has been on the roof with Jenny Wren and Lizzie Hexam. Fledgeby asks them why they go up there, and Jenny tells him they "come here for rest." It is, says Jenny, "The quiet, and the air," which attracts them. Fledgeby laughs at the notion of quiet and air in roaring, smoky London. Jenny's response is important: "But it's so high. And you see the clouds rushing on above the narrow streets, not minding them, and you see the golden arrows pointing at the mountains in the sky from which the wind comes, and you feel as if you were dead" (II, 5). This life in death theme is central to Our Mutual Friend (1864-65): Jenny, "looking down out of a Glory of her long bright radiant hair," musically repeats "come up and be dead! Come up and be dead!" When asked how one feels when dead, Jenny answers: "Oh, so Tranquil! . . . Oh, so peaceful and so thankful! And you hear the people who are alive, crying, and working, and calling to one another down

in the close dark streets, and you seem to pity them so. And such a chain has fallen from you, and such a strange good sorrowful happiness comes upon you." It is clear that what Jenny means by feeling as if she were dead is that she feels as if she has gotten beyond the everyday problems of this world, that she has responded to something more permanent than what is going on down in the "close dark streets" and by being able to respond to this more permanent value, she feels she is able to put the "crying, and working, and calling to one another" in perspective. Jenny feels peaceful and tranquil because she realizes that whatever the clouds and the sky and the wind represent, they do represent something far more important than what is going on down in the streets. The assurance for Jenny that her bad back and queer legs and naughty child are not all that she has to look forward to in this universe is understandably comforting. Fledgeby, of course, is incapable of responding to values more permanent than those found in the physical universe because he directs all his energies to the accumulation of money. He cannot, as Jenny Wren knows, be "dead"--cannot feel the comfort of knowing there is something beyond the close dark streets--and must be dismissed from the roof: "Get down to life!" says Jenny (II, 5).

John Harmon experiences a contact with permanency similar to Jenny's when he returns to England. Like Arthur Clennam, John Harmon does not look forward to his return:

> When I came back to England, attracted to the country with which I had none but most miserable associations, by the accounts of my fine inheritance that found me abroad, I came back, shrinking from my father's money, shrinking from my father's memory, mistrustful of being forced on a mercenary wife, mistrustful of my father's intention in thrusting that marriage on me, mistrustful that I was slackening in gratitude to the two dear noble honest friends who had made the only sunlight of my childish life or that of my heartbroken sister. (II, 13)

On his return to London, John is drugged and thrown into the Thames. He struggles with the drug and the blows inflicted on John Harmon: "I could not have said that my name was John Harmon" (II, 13). He feels a loss of identity: "But it was not I. There was no such thing as I, within my knowledge." When he is thrown into the water, John realizes that it is he who is drowning: "This is John Harmon drowning! John Harmon, struggle for your life. John Harmon, call on Heaven and save yourself." John does save himself. But as a result of his near death John is also able to save himself from what he was mistrustful that he might become, avaricious and ungrateful, and from what he was mistrustful might be thrust upon him, a mercenary wife. John Harmon is able to assume a new identity in order to test Bella: "So John Rokesmith was born" (II, 13). John is able to accomplish a great many things as Rokesmith that he could not have as Harmon. As John Rokesmith he can prevent John Harmon and Bella Wilfer "being forced on one another and perpetuating the fate that seemed to have fallen on [his] father's riches--the fate that they should lead to nothing but evil" (II, 13).

Although John knows that Bella is "So insolent, so trivial, so capricious, so mercenary, so careless, so hard to touch, so hard to turn" (I, 16), he knows also that she is "so pretty, so pretty!" (I, 16) Like Pip, in his attraction to Estella, John loves Bella almost in spite of himself: "I cannot help it; reason has nothing to do with it; I love her against reason" (II, 13). John's attraction to Bella is romantic: "she looked very pretty, she looked very, very pretty" (II, 13).

Bella surely is all of the things John knows her to be. But while Bella is willful and capricious, she is also kind and considerate, particularly to her father. Bella has been especially spoiled by the knowledge that she has an opportunity to escape her humble surroundings by marrying John Harmon. Bella has no illusions about the Harmon will. She realizes that old Mr. Harmon put the provision that John marry Bella in the will because old Mr. Harmon felt that the stamping, screaming little girl beating her father with her bonnet was "a very nice girl; promising girl" (I, 4). Mr. Harmon judged that Bella would make John's life sufficiently miserable. Even though Bella is aware that Mr. Harmon made a fool of her ("not to mention himself as he is dead"), she would still like to get some of the Harmon money in spite of the fact that it is, as Mr. Wilfer points out, "neither reasonable nor honest" to want it: "Maybe not, Pa--very likely--but it's one of the consequences of being poor and of thoroughly hating and detesting to be poor, and that's my case" (I, 4).

When Bella accepts the Boffins's offer to live with them, she becomes even more mercenary. When Rokesmith finds her with a book and asks if it is a love story, Bella replies, "Oh, dear no, or I shouldn't be reading it. It's more about money than anything else" (I, 16). When Bella next sees her father, she confesses to him that she is "the most mercenary little wretch that ever lived in the world." Bella realizes that her exposure to the Harmon wealth has a corrupting influence on her:

> "When I was at home and only knew what it was to be poor, I grumbled, but didn't so much mind. When I was at home expecting to be rich, I thought vaguely of all the great things I would do. But when I had been disappointed of my splendid fortune, and came to see it from day to day in other hands, and to have before my eyes what it could really do, then I became the mercenary little wretch I am." (II, 7)

Bella thinks that she has a realistic, if cynical, view of the matter: "Talk to me of love! . . . Talk to me of fiery dragons! But talk to me of poverty and wealth, and there indeed we touch upon realities" (II, 7). Bella, however, is not happy with her mercenary values: she wept "very heartily" that night in her room "as she wished now that the deceased old John Harmon had never made a will about her, now that the deceased young John Harmon had lived to marry her."'Contradictory things to wish,' said Bella, 'but my life and fortunes are so contradictory altogether that what can I expect to be!'" (II, 10)

That Bella's concern for money is a departure from her better nature can best be seen by Our Johnny's reaction to her.

Boffin, like John Jarndyce, is able only to give Johnny a few nice toys to play with when he is dying. The toys, of course, are fine for boys with broken legs (one of whom Johnny finally gives the toys to) but a dying boy needs more. Bella assumes a relationship with Johnny rather like Esther's to Little Jo, although she is not his nurse. She is a "boofer lady," a lady on whom Johnny bestows "all he had to dispose of" in this world with his dying breath: "A kiss for the boofer lady" (II, 11). Bella is touched by Johnny's "admiration of what is young and pretty," and her behavior towards him is "very tender and very natural." When Bella is not tender, when she is pursuing money, she is, we gather, not being true to her better nature. She is not being what her better nature would allow her to be, but what her worse nature makes her,"a mercenary little wretch."

But Bella continues to pursue money, and her concern for money allows her to distort the motives of others. She refuses to allow herself to become attracted to John Rokesmith because she realizes he has no wealth. But she misinterprets John's motives in becoming Boffin's secretary. She is so concerned with money that she believes everyone, including Rokesmith, acts only for mercenary reasons: "Would it be generous and honourable to step into your place," Bella asks John, "anticipating, or knowing beforehand, that I should come here, and designing to take me at this disadvantage?" (II, 13) When Bella sees the change that has apparently come over Noddy Boffin, she does "have before [her] eyes what [money] can really do":

> "If ever a good man were ruined by good fortune, it is my benefactor. And yet, Pa, think how terrible the fascination of money is! I see this, and hate this, and dread this, and don't know but that money might make a much worse change in me. And yet I have money always in my thoughts and my desires; and the whole life I place before my self is money, money, money, and what money can make of life!" (III, 4)

Because Bella has become overly concerned with money, she is in danger of allowing money to do to her what Gradgrindism has done to Loo Gradgrind and what Miss Havisham has done to Estella: "I am convinced I have no heart, as people call it, and that I think that sort of thing is nonsense" (III, 5). Bella has not yet learned her better, truer nature, that which Noddy Boffin recognizes in her becoming "true golden gold at heart" (IV, 13). She has not discovered within herself that special beauty which attracted Johnny to her. This is because "the whole life [Bella] place[s] before [her] self is money, money, money, and what money can make of life."

At Betty Higden's funeral, Bella begins to learn more about herself. Lizzie Hexam is "the unconscious means of bringing [Bella and John] together." Lizzie is called away while talking to John and Bella, leaving the two alone for the first time since John attempted to declare his love to Bella. In the lapse in the conversation, Bella suddenly turns to John and pleads: "Oh, Mr. Rokesmith, don't be hard with me, don't be stern with me; be magnanimous!" (III, 9) John explains that he has forced himself to be constrained, "lest [Bella] might misinterpret [his] being more natural." Now that "the shadow so long on him [is] quite thrown off and

cast away," John takes Bella into his confidence regarding Lizzie. He fears that Lizzie is living in secrecy because of the accusation made against her father: that he is responsible for the death of John Harmon. Without telling Bella why this should be particularly distressing to him, John asks Bella to attempt to discover the reasons for Lizzie's retiring: "You may not have noticed, Miss Wilfer, that she has the same kind of interest in you that you have in her. Just as you are attracted by her beaut--by her appearance and manner, she is attracted by yours." John is "quite sure that a natural and easy confidence would arise" between Bella and Lizzie. Bella tells John that she would be happy "to be of the least use, for I feel, after the serious scene of today, that I am useless enough in the world." John protests that Bella does "lighten the burden" of the world at least for her father. They go on to discuss the change in Noddy Boffin, and Bella regrets that fortune is spoiling Mr. Boffin. When John says he is pleased to discover that fortune is not spoiling Bella, the "little mercenary wretch" disagrees:

> "Oh, don't speak of <u>me</u>," said Bella, giving herself an impatient little slap with her glove. "You don't know me as well as--"
> "As you know yourself?" suggested the Secretary finding that she stopped. "<u>Do</u> you know yourself?" (III, 9)

Quite clearly Bella does not know herself. And Bella must go to Lizzie Hexam--who represents both everything that Bella is not and everything that she is potentially--to discover herself. Bella has set "money, money, money" before her "self," and this

has distracted her from realizing that "self," from becoming "true golden, gold at heart," from becoming, like Lizzie, generous and loving.

Bella and Lizzie are associated with the Harmon murder accidentally. Bella explains to Lizzie that she is the "willed-away girl who was to have been married to the unfortunate gentleman." She sees what she has in common with Lizzie: "So I was dragged into the subject without my consent, and you were dragged into it without your consent, and there is very little to choose between us" (III, 9). There is, of course, very much to choose between Bella and Lizzie at this point. Bella is a mercenary wretch, and Lizzie a selfless woman. But Bella is right; potentially she is every bit as fine as Lizzie. Bella and Lizzie establish a firm friendship immediately. Lizzie takes Bella into her confidence and tells her about Bradley Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn. Bella asks Lizzie if she would not "gain in peace, and hope, and even freedom" by leaving her "secret life in hiding" which shuts Lizzie out from her "natural and wholesome prospects." Lizzie in response points out the difference between her and Bella, and Bella feels it deeply:

> "Does a woman's heart that--that has that weakness in it which you have spoken of [i.e., love]," returned Lizzie, "seek to gain anything?"
>
> The question was so directly at variance with Bella's views in life, as set forth to her father, that she said internally, "There, you little mercenary wretch! Do you hear that? Ain't you ashamed as yourself?" and unclasped the girdle of her arms, expressly to give herself a penitentive poke in the side. (III, 9)

Bella realizes that her mercenary pursuits are preventing her from becoming a loving, generous woman like Lizzie. She is "enchanted" by the "unselfish passion of this girl or woman of her own age, courageously revealing itself in the confidence of her sympathetic perception of its truth." By contrasting herself with Lizzie, Bella begins to learn the truth about what she might be. She is dissatisfied by the contrast of her mercenary self with the generosity of Lizzie. But Bella also begins to learn her better nature by discovering that, after all, there is something within her that allows a Lizzie Hexam to feel that she can place full confidence in her: "I had no thought of ever parting with a single word of [my love for Eugene Wrayburn] a moment before you came in," Lizzie tells Bella; "but you came in, and my mind changed." When Bella tells Lizzie that she is a "limited little brute," Lizzie, echoing John Rokesmith, responds: "Do you think . . . that I don't know better?" Lizzie goes on to read Bella's future in the fire. She sees a "heart well worth winning and well won. A heart that, once won, goes through fire and water for the winner, and never changes, and is never daunted" (III, 9). When Bella says that this heart must belong to Lizzie, Lizzie replies, "No. Most clearly and distinctly yours." Both are right for both Lizzie and Bella's hearts are the same. It is up to Bella to discover the truth of her own heart and to throw off her worse nature, her mercenary nature, so that she can fulfill the potentiality of her better nature.

Now that Bella has seen how mean her ambitions are when placed against the generous love of Lizzie Hexam, she is prepared to profit by the object lesson given by Noddy Boffin. Noddy dismisses Rokesmith for the "Insolence and Presumption" of his addresses to Bella. When John defends what he did on the grounds that he and Bella would have been happy if he were so fortunate "as to win her affections and possess her heart," Noddy demonstrates to Bella the meanness of a mercenary nature:

> "Win her affections," retorted Mr. Boffin, with ineffable contempt, "and possess her heart! Mew says the cat, Quack-quack says the duck, Bow-wow-wow says the dog. Win her affections and possess her heart! Mew, Quack-quack, Bow-wow!" (III, 15)

Mr. Boffin says that he knows "this young lady, and we all three know that it's Money she makes a stand for--money, money, money--and that you and your affections are a Lie, sir." This dramatization allows Bella to see the horror of placing money before human affection, and she is now willing to sacrifice her share of the Harmon fortune to preserve her humanity: "Oh, Mr. Rokesmith, before you go, if you could but make me poor again! Oh! Make me poor again, Somebody, I beg and pray, or my heart will break if this goes on." Bella makes herself "poor" by leaving Mr. Boffin and all the wealth that he is willing to bestow upon her.

Now that Bella recognizes the sordidness of her mercenary desires, she is able to see the value of her love for John Rokesmith. They are married. John and Bella go to

their "modest little cottage" and begin to lead a happy and useful life:

> So, she leaning on her husband's arm, they turned homeward by a rosy path which the gracious sun struck out for them in its setting. And O there are days in this life worth life and worth death. And O what a bright old song it is, that O 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round! (IV, 5)

Now that John and Bella are married, one guesses, they are to live happily ever after. Bella has passed John Harmon's test, has proved that she is above pure worldly pursuits, that she is, in Noddy Boffin's terms, "true golden gold at heart" (IV, 13), that she is capable of a giving love, that she, too, can respond to the same quality of permanency that Jenny Wren experiences when she feels as if she were dead. Bella has fulfilled her better nature. But Dickens is not satisfied to leave it at this. Dickens is claiming that, indeed, "'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round," and a claim of this magnitude needs to be more than asserted. It must be demonstrated. Dickens is not content to tell us that once the happy couple are married and living in their cozy cottage, everything will be all right. Experience belies this, and if Dickens is to make such large claims for the power of love, he must convince us of the validity of the claim.

When Bella visits her mother, she explains that she was unable to tell her mother of her intentions to marry John because she felt her mother believed that she was "incapable of marrying for love." "Because, you see, you didn't know how much of Good, Good, Good I had learnt from John" (IV, 5). She

tells her mother of the lovely "doll's house" they live in. When John starts to tell Mrs. Wilfer his opinion of his wife, Bella interrupts him: "Stop, sir! No, John dear! Seriously! Please not yet awhile! I want to be something so much worthier than the doll in the doll's house" (IV, 5). Bella realizes what John does not yet know: that the power of her love for him has not yet been tested. It is only too easy, Bella knows, to be the doll in the doll's house. It is only Bella who has been "proved" by John Harmon, not her love for him. He has found her not to be mercenary. But Bella knows this is not enough. If it is love that makes the world go round, then this love has to be capable of the greatest reverses. She realizes that "Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds, / Or bends with the remover to remove." She has full confidence in the power of her love for John: "Try me through some reverse. John--try me through trial--and tell them after <u>that</u>, what you think of me" (IV, 5). Bella has that much confidence in the power of her love for John to be willing to subject that love to any of Jenny Wren's close dark streets. Just as Bella's better nature was realized as a result of adversity, just as Bella became what she is through trial, so, Bella is saying, the truth of the quality of her love for John will be able to withstand any trial and the truth of that love can only be discovered in trial.

John Rokesmith knows that at any time he can reassume his identity as John Harmon and give Bella all the wealth that she had previously dreamt of. He constantly asks her if she

would not like to be rich. Bella answers that she is perfectly content "without the riches." When John asks why she does not say "--instead of that phrase--being poor?," Bella responds, "it's not possible that you suppose I think we are poor." Bella is rich in John's love. And her wealth and seriousness ("--I sometimes think, John, I feel a little serious") increase when she realizes that she and John are to have a child. Since Bella is more serious than the doll in the doll's house, she is granted even greater wealth, "a little baby, John" (IV, 5).

Bella's love is tested when Lightwood happens to meet John in the street for the first time and recognizes him as Julius Rokesmith. When John and Bella return home, John asks her if she wonders why he bore that name. Bella has faith in him: "No John love. I should dearly like to know, of course . . . but I won't until you can tell me of your own free will. You asked me if I could have perfect faith in you, and I said yes, and I meant it" (IV, 12). The trial becomes expensive, however, when Bella's husband tells her that Julius Rokesmith is accused of the murder of John Harmon, Bella's intended husband. Bella's love is powerful enough to withstand even this: "I can trust you, John dear, with all my soul. If I could not trust you, I should fall dead at your feet"(IV, 12). Bella tells John "that if all the world were against him, she would be for him; that if all the world repudiated him, she would believe him; if he were infamous in other eyes, he would be honoured in hers; and that under the worst unmerited suspicion, she could devote her life to consoling him and imparting

her own faith in him to their little child"(IV, 12). When the Inspector comes to John and Bella's and attempts to arrest John, John secretly tells him the truth of the situation. John, Bella, and the Inspector must go to the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters to confirm John Rokesmith's identity as John Harmon. On the way to the tavern, Bella as a result of emotional and mental fatigue goes into a trance-like state similar to the state John Harmon was in when he was struggling with the Thames:

> When he and she and John, at towards nine o'clock of a winter evening, went to London and began driving from London Bridge, among low-lying waterside wharves and docks and strange places, Bella was in the state of a dreamer; perfectly unable to account for her being there, perfectly unable to forecast what would happen next, or whither she was going, or why; certain of nothing in the immediate present but that she confided in John and that John seemed somehow to be getting more triumphant. But what a certainty was that! (IV, 12)

This trance-like state can be seen as the physical counterpart of the psychological state that Bella has been in since her discovery that her husband has assumed the name of Julius Handford. Bella has been unable to act, has had to place implicit trust in her love for her husband. It is this ability to trust the power of her own love that enables Bella to pass the real trial, the one that John does not intentionally put her through. Had Bella wavered in her trust for John, neither of them would ever be able to place full confidence in the love of the other. Bella's trance-like state--a state in which she has no will, only the full confidence of her love for John--is similar to John's confrontation with death and

with Jenny Wren's contact with the clouds and the sky and the wind: she too encounters a permanency. Bella has already died to her own mercenary nature. Here, when she is in "the state of a dreamer," Bella experiences that contact with permanency that Jenny Wren and John Harmon have experienced. The difference is that the source of Bella's permanency is her love for John. Love functions in Bella's "death" as whatever the clouds, sky, and wind represent functions in Jenny's "death," and as the near drowning does in John's. And it is love, of course, which led Bella away from her worse nature toward the fulfillment of her better nature.

Bella is emphatically not the doll in the doll's house now. She has proved the power of her love and has demonstrated that love to be worthy of something greater than a cozy cottage. This is the significance of John's and Bella's return to London. We are not to understand their coming into the Harmon inheritance as a reward for the truth of Bella's love. If this were so, it would represent a return in Dickens's attitude to values of the early novels. We are rather to view the acceptance of the Harmon fortune as a final development in the growth of Bella. When Bella could be regarded as merely a doll in a doll's house, she was capable only of being a happy wife in a modest cottage. Now that she is more serious, now that she has resolved the conflict between her better and worse nature and is "true golden gold at heart," now that she has demonstrated the power of

her love for John, she is given the responsibility of sharing a great fortune, a fortune which had previously been a corrupting influence. And she and her husband are to manage that fortune in London, where they can do the most good with it. It is John and Bella who are to efface the "old rust and tarnish on the money" (II, 13), and make it do good. They take "possession of their rightful name and their London house" (IV, 14), and become, fully, the new Mr. and Mrs. John Harmon.

John and Bella are to use the Harmon fortune to do good, as the Boffins know:

> "It looks as if the old [John Harmon's] spirit had found rest at last, don't it?" said Mrs. Boffin.
> "Yes, old lady."
> "And as if the money had turned bright again, after a long, long rust in the dark, and was at last beginning to sparkle in the sunlight?"
> "Yes, old lady."
> "And it makes a pretty and a promising picture, don't it."
> "Yes, old lady." (IV, 14)

The Harmon fortune has, like the people in Dickens's world, it seems, the potential for doing good. Now that John and Bella have themselves fulfilled the potentiality of their better natures, they can realize the potential good of the fortune. Noddy, the ironically benevolent man in the novel, is prevented from indiscriminately doling out money to all who ask for it by his secretary, John Rokesmith. John and Bella, unlike the benevolent fatherly figures who had control of great wealth in the early novels, are married; they have personal responsibilities to their own family. It is they

to whom Dickens gives the control of the fortune which has such potential for good. Dickens seems to be saying, in this last finished novel, that the principle of benevolence is not necessarily limited. It must, however, be placed in perspective. Money can only alleviate the apparent problems; the profound problem of a fragmented society can only be solved through the creation of stable families. And stable families can only be created through love.

Dickens's claim that it is love that makes the world go round is supported by Bella and John's relationship. The claim, however, seems to be qualified by Bradley Headstone's passionate love for Lizzie Hexam. But the full meaning of Dickens's claim is not qualified when we understand that, for Dickens, the only kind of love which is love at all is selfless love. Bradley's passionate desire for Lizzie is not love, for it does not seek the good of its object. It is lust.

Bradley is a schoolmaster who has worked his way out of obscurity to attain the modest position he holds. In order to maintain his position, Bradley must hold his passionate nature in check:

> Suppression of so much to make room for so much had given him a constrained manner, over and above. Yet there was enough of what was animal, and of what was fiery (though smouldering), still visible in him to suggest that if young Bradley Headstone, when a pauper lad, had chanced to be told off for the sea, he would not have been the last man in a ship's crew. (II, i)

But, unfortunately, Bradley is a schoolmaster, not a sailor, and a schoolmaster who is very much concerned about his lowly origins. It is the concern for his social position which first

indicates that Bradley's original attraction to Lizzie is unlikely to blossom into a selfless love: "Some man who had worked his way," Bradley tells Charlie Hexam, "might come to admire--your sister--and might even in time bring himself to think of marrying--your sister--and it would be a sad drawback and a heavy penalty upon him if, overcoming in his mind other inequalities of condition and other considerations against it, this inequality [of learning] and this consideration remained in full force" (II, 1). Bradley is unable to control the passion welling up within him:

> It seemed to him as if all that he could suppress in himself he had suppressed, as if all that he could restrain in himself he had restrained, and the time of self-command had departed from him. Love at first sight is a trite expression quite sufficiently discussed; enough that, in certain smouldering natures like this man's, that passion leaps into a blaze and makes such head as fire does in a rage of wind, when other passions, but for its mastery, could be held in chains. (II, 11)

The passion here described could not possibly be love because it cannot possibly be concerned with anything other than fulfilling its own end.

When Bradley attempts to propose marriage to Lizzie, he asserts that she is the ruin of him: "Yes! You are the ruin--the ruin--the ruin--of me. I have no resources in myself when you are near me or in my thoughts. And you are always in my thoughts now. I have never been quit of you since I first saw you. Oh, what a wretched day for me! That was a wretched, miserable day!" (II, 13) One recalls Pip's love for Estella. But one also remembers that while there

was this aspect in Pip's feeling for Estella, this was associated only with the bad in Pip. It was something that had to be purged from Pip's feelings for Estella. Bradley's feeling for Lizzie is fully as irresistible as Pip's for Estella, or John Harmon's for Bella: "You draw me to you. If I were shut up in a strong prison, you would draw me out. I should break through the wall to come to you. If I were lying on a sick bed, you would draw me up--to stagger to your feet and fall there" (II, 13). Bradley tells Lizzie of the depths of his feeling: "No man knows till the time comes what depths are within him. To some men it never comes; let them rest and be thankful! To me you brought it; on me you forced it; and the bottom of this raging sea . . . has been heaved up ever since" (II, 13). Bradley finally declares his love for Lizzie:

> "I love you. What other men may mean when they use that expression, I cannot tell; what I mean is that I am under the influence of some tremendous attraction which I have resisted in vain and which overmasters me. You could draw me to fire, you could draw me to water, you could draw me to the gallows, you could draw me to any death, you could draw me to anything I have most avoided. You could draw me to any exposure and disgrace. This and the confusion of my thoughts, so that I am fit for nothing, is what I mean by your being the ruin of me. (II, 13)

This is surely a powerful attraction, but it is not love. It does not share the selfless quality which allowed David to keep his love for Agnes to himself when he thought she loved another; that quality which made Pip willing to give Estella up to anybody who truly loved her; that quality which made John Harmon willing to conceal his true identity for Bella's sake and

which made Bella willing to give up a fortune for John Rokesmith. If Bradley truly loved Lizzie, he would be willing to give her up to Eugene Wrayburn. That he attempts to kill the man Lizzie loves indicates the quality of Bradley's passion. Because Bradley cannot love, he cannot, in Jenny Wren's terms, "come up and be dead." Because Bradley distorts love he is incapable of salvation. He goes down to death with Rogue.

Eugene Wrayburn's attraction to Lizzie is more complex than Bradley's. Eugene finds life meaningless. He is trapped in the society of the Veneerings--a society he regards as superficial--and so Eugene cannot reconcile its superficial values with the profound moral and metaphysical struggle within himself: "Everything is ridiculous" (I, 14) he says. He feels, however, that were he presented with a worthy object in life, he would be able to respond to it: "But show me a good opportunity, show me something really worth being energetic about, and I'll show you energy" (I, 3). When Eugene meets Lizzie, he finds something really worth being energetic about. Eugene offers to tutor Lizzie: "I propose to be of some use to somebody--which I never was in this world, and never shall be on any other occasion" (II, 2). Eugene is "genuinely disappointed" at Lizzie's refusing his offer: "I hate to claim to mean well, but I really did mean honestly and simply well, and I want you to know it" (II, 2). Lizzie finally accepts Eugene's proposal, but Eugene's tutoring Lizzie a few nights a week is not enough to give meaning to his life, and he knows it:

> "You must take your dear friend as he is. You know what I am, my dear Mortimer. You know how dreadfully susceptible I am to boredom. You know that when I become enough of a man to find myself an embodied conundrum, I bored myself to the last degree by trying to find out what I meant. You know that at length I gave it up and declined to guess any more. Then how can I possibly give you the answer that I have not discovered? The old nursery form runs, "Riddle-me-riddle-me--ree, p'raps you can't tell me what this may be?" My reply runs, "No. Upon my life, I can't." (II, 7)

Eugene does not know who he is. He has no idea of the meaning of his own actions. When Mortimer asks if he has "some design in his mind," Eugene's response indicates the extent to which he has figured out the riddle of his own identity: "Upon my soul, I don't know. I know less about myself than about most people in the world, and I don't know" (II, 7). Because Eugene knows so little of himself he is "utterly careless" and acts with "reckless indifference." And Eugene is aware of the problem. That is why he speaks cynically of his unused kitchen as having "moral influence" on him and forming "domestic virtues" in him (II, 7). Eugene has just as much opportunity to learn the "domestic virtues" in an unused kitchen as he does to form other virtues in an empty identity. Because Eugene knows so little about himself he is unable to answer Mortimer's important questions: "What is to come of it? What are you doing? Where are you going?" (II, 7). Eugene would answer the questions if he could:

> "And my dear Mortimer, . . . believe me, I would answer them instantly if I could. But to enable me to do so, I must first have found out the trouble--some conundrum long abandoned. Here it is. Eugene Wrayburn." Tapping his forehead and breast. "Riddle-me, riddle-me-ree perhaps you can't tell me what this may be?--No, upon my life I can't. I give it up!" (II, 7)

Eugene is unable to riddle out who he is. And, as Eugene recognizes, before he can know the meaning of what he does, he must first discover who he is.

There is a great deal of truth in Bradley Headstone's pathetic observation at the time of his cruel encounter with Eugene: "Oh, what a misfortune is mine . . . that I cannot so control myself as to appear a stronger creature than this, when a man who has not felt in all his life what I have felt in a day can so command himself!" (II, 7) Headstone's problem is that he feels too much; Eugene's is not feeling enough. Eugene does have strong feelings for Lizzie though--feelings strong enough to make him pursue her to her retirement. When Lizzie asks Eugene to leave, he protests that he cannot, "because you won't let me" (IV, 6). When Lizzie explains that she has left London to escape Eugene and begins to cry because Eugene has come there "to put [Lizzie] to shame," Eugene "looked at her with a real sentiment of remorseful tenderness and pity. It was not strong enough to impel him to sacrifice himself and spare her, but it was a strong emotion." Eugene attempts to explain to Lizzie the nature of his feelings for her:

> "Lizzie! I never thought before that there was a woman in the world who could affect me so much by saying so little. But don't be hard in your construction of me. You don't know what my state of mind towards you is. You don't know how the cursed carelessness that is over-officious in helping me at every other turning of my life WON'T help me here. You have struck it dead, I think, and I sometimes almost wish you had struck me dead with it." (IV, 6)

When Eugene leaves Lizzie, he debates with himself what he ought to do: "Out of the question to marry her, . . . and out of the question to leave her."

While Eugene is weighing the advantage of his social position against the strength of his feelings for Lizzie, he encounters Bradley Headstone, who bludgeons him almost to death and throws him into the river. Lizzie hears the struggle and pulls the dying Eugene from the water, praying "that through me he may be raised from death and preserved to some one else to whom he may be dear one day, though never dearer than to me!" (IV, 6) Eugene is in a "desperate struggle" with death for weeks: "This frequent rising of a drowning man from the deep, to sink again, was dreadful to the beholders" (IV, 10). One of Eugene's first actions in his conscious moments is one of his most generous: he tells Mortimer not to have Headstone brought to justice because he knows that Lizzie's "innocent reputation would be ruined" if he were. In his severe illness Eugene discovers the value of his love for Lizzie. Jenny Wren is able to interpret Eugene's inarticulate plea, when his consciousness returns: "Your mind will be more at peace, lying here, if you make Lizzie your wife. You wish me to speak to her, and tell her so, and entreat her to be your wife. You ask her to kneel at this bedside and be married to you, that your reparation may be complete" (IV, 11). Eugene is married to Lizzie, recovers, and resolves to lead a useful life.

Eugene has finally riddled out the meaning of his life, and in so doing has fulfilled the potentiality of his better nature, has achieved an identity. As he tells Mortimer, now that he knows who he is "the little that I can call my own will be more than it has ever been. It need be more, for you know what it always has been in my hands. Nothing" (IV, 16). The "little" that Eugene could call his own was "nothing" in his hands because Eugene himself was "nothing." Now that Eugene is something, he can act: "In turning to at last," he tells Mortimer, "we turn to in earnest" (IV, 16). Now that Eugene has riddled out his existence, now that he has achieved identity, he will be able to form those "domestic virtues" he could not form in his unused kitchen. Lizzie, not the bachelor's empty kitchen, is Eugene's "moral influence," and he will form the "domestic virtues" at home in London. Eugene will not retreat from the society of the Veneerings; he abandons his idea "of taking [him]self and [his] wife to one of the colonies and working at [his] vocation there." Eugene and Lizzie will use their kitchen in London--and will contribute to the ordering of society by producing a stable family.

In his near death Eugene is able to see life in true perspective. He sees that love is of greater importance than social position, and accepts willingly the social consequences of marrying someone beneath his station for love. Like Bella, Eugene is able to marry the person he loves because he has died to his worse, his selfish, nature. He has come

into contact with a permanency greater than that of social structures, and has discovered that it is love that makes the world go round.

John Harmon, Eugene Wrayburn, Rogue Riderhood, and Bradley Headstone all die or almost die through drowning. As a result of John Harmon's near-death by drowning he is able to assume the identity of John Rokesmith and, as John Rokesmith, accomplish what he could not accomplish as John Harmon. John is able to save himself from avarice and ingratitude, and is able to prevent having a mercenary wife thrust upon him. Because of John Harmon's near death, John Rokesmith has complete control of his destiny. Noddy Boffin, in a curious and ironic way, assumes the role of the benevolent fatherly figure in Our Mutual Friend. Noddy is in the line of Brownlows, Cheerybles, and Vardens. He even trots as they do. But rather than Noddy's bestowing the wealth on John Harmon, John, by remaining Rokesmith, has the power himself to determine who should have the Harmon fortune. That the final will gives the fortune to Boffin is incidental, as is the fact that Boffin has known who Rokesmith is for the last half of the novel. It is John Harmon disguised as John Rokesmith who has ultimate control of the goings-on in the novel. John Harmon is able to set his own world in order and to fulfill the potentiality of his better nature--without the influence of his father's will--as a result of his near drowning.

There is a significant difference between the two "incidents" of the final Harmon will and John Harmon's near drowning which indicates the degree to which plot becomes incidental in Dickens. It is convenient, for the sake of the plot, that both things happen. Just as it is convenient in Measure for Measure for the Duke to pretend to go on a journey so that he might disguise himself and have complete control of the goings-on in Venice, so it is convenient to the plot of Our Mutual Friend that John Harmon be able to observe the goings-on in his world incognito. But here is where philosophy becomes more important to Dickens than plot. Rather than have Harmon simply disguise himself as Rokesmith, Dickens has him encounter death physically so that he might spiritually die to his worse nature and emerge with a new identity, physically and spiritually. Similarly with Noddy Boffin. It is convenient, for the sake of plot, that Noddy appear to have been changed by the Harmon fortune. But the Harmon fortune represents for Noddy what crisis represents for Dickens's young men. It is that which allows Noddy to realize his true nature. As Bradley Headstone points out, "No one knows till the time comes, what depths are in him." Noddy is a generous man. The Harmon fortune allows him to demonstrate that generosity by restoring it to its rightful heir, John Harmon.

It is the function of adversity and suffering to allow one to discover "what depths are in him"; to allow one to resolve the conflict between the better and worse nature; to

achieve an identity. Eugene Wrayburn, for example, does not have any identity that he knows about until he almost loses what little life he does possess in his near drowning: "I know less about myself than about most people in the world," Eugene tells Lightwood early in the novel (II, 7). Eugene's attraction to Lizzie brings him closer and closer to realizing an identity. But not until he is bludgeoned by Bradley Headstone and left to drown does Eugene achieve that identity. In his "desperate struggle" for life, when his consciousness in constantly coming and going, Eugene attains an identity, and becomes a man. Jenny Wren must articulate for Eugene the direction this identity will assume, but she is articulating his own fondest wish. Marrying Lizzie, Eugene resolves to "fight it out to the last gasp, with Lizzie and for her, here [in London] in the open field." As a result of his near death Eugene is able to marry Lizzie and to find with her his own identity, as husband, lover, and earnest young man. "In turning to at last," he says to Mortimer, "we turn to in earnest."

Rogue Riderhood also almost drowns and is resurrected. Pleasant Riderhood, as she sees her father struggling with death, has "some vague idea that the old evil is drowned out of him, and that if he should happily come back to resume his occupation of the empty form that lies upon the bed, his spirit would be altered" (III, 3). But when Rogue does recover he is the same evil Rogue. For all of the emphasis Dickens puts on crisis and on the death-resurrection theme, he never once suggests that great suffering or great adversity will change

anyone necessarily or of itself. Noddy Boffin was willing to subject Bella to the strongest proofs for John because he knows she is potentially "true golden gold at heart." Noddy knows that the true nature of a person will come out in a severe crisis. That is why Dickens is constantly subjecting his young people to great crises: in order to prove their possibilities. And that is why Rogue Riderhood cannot have the "old evil" drowned out of him. A critical situation cannot change a person, it can only serve to allow him to discover "what depths are in him."

When Bradley Headstone finally drowns Rogue--and he has just been disguised as Rogue himself--he is symbolically drowning the brutal side of his own nature. Once Bradley has allowed his passion to attempt to destroy the object of that passion's love, he has perverted the meaning of love. Once this is done, there is no hope for salvation, for it is love that makes the world go round. Bradley cannot "come up and be dead" with Jenny Wren. He must go down and be dead with Rogue Riderhood.

CONCLUSION

In Our Mutual Friend we have the final development of Dickens's views. Selfless love has replaced benevolence, and the idea of individual identity has replaced the philosophy of community as those forces--or, again, that force--to be looked to for the salvation of society. Dickens is convinced that "O 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!" When one recalls that the circle is the symbol of perfection and wholeness, one arrives at the significance of love and the fulfillment of self in Dickens's value system.

Dickens always placed high premium on selfless love. In Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend, however, he is able to deal with this selfless love as a romantic love. In Great Expectations, the force of the significance of romantic love is qualified by having Magwitch as the figure to be loved before Pip can be saved. When Pip becomes a true gentleman through loving Magwitch, he can then marry the Estella for whom "suffering has been stronger than all other teaching." In Our Mutual Friend the power of selfless love is not at all qualified. Romantic love operates, in Our Mutual Friend, in the same way that a great crisis operates: it brings out the true nature of the person. Sexual love and great crises are now

interchangeable as forces that make apparent the "depths" that are in man. As Rogue Riderhood's near death by drowning makes him even more evil (Rogue feels now he is immune to death by drowning and this gives him greater opportunity to practice his waterway evils), so Bradley Headstone's attraction to Lizzie makes him a murderer. As Eugene Wrayburn's near death by drowning allows him to achieve an identity, so Bella Wilfer's love for John Harmon allows her to discover her truly golden gold heart.

In Our Mutual Friend we reach the culmination of love as the ultimate value in Dickens's view. Throughout his career Dickens has been searching for some value upon which to rebuild a society which he clearly feels is disintegrating. In the early novels he posits benevolence and the philosophy of community as those values which might be stabilizing forces. He recognizes, however, even as early as The Pickwick Papers, the limitations of these values. They are not self generating. Dickens realizes that if society is to be redeemed, it must be on an individual level. Each man must achieve, for himself, an identity, an identity that can withstand the vicissitudes of the world. He feels that this identity is best achieved in the face of great adversity, when identity is most threatened. This is when a man discovers, in Bradley Headstone's terms, "what depths are in him."

In Dickens's solution to the problems of a disintegrating society, love replaces benevolence and achieved individual identity replaces the idea of community. In the

early novels benevolent men were to serve as the redeeming force in society. They failed the test, or were never tested; they retreated. Pickwick, for example, locks himself in his room at the Fleet, and then retreats to a country estate. With Martin Chuzzlewit Dickens begins to test his young men. They grow, through adversity and suffering, into what Miss Betsy calls "fine, firm fellows." Once they have achieved this stability, they are able to love. The love, adversity, and achieved identity are often interdependent. Sometimes, as with David, it is love which allows them to withstand the adversity. Sometimes, as with Pip, it is the adversity which allows them to achieve the best kind of love, a selfless love. In any case love and the achievement of identity are interdependent. Eugene Wrayburn discovers his strength of character, achieves an identity, and recognizes his love for Lizzie at once. One depends upon the other, for Eugene.

In David Copperfield Dickens moves from the concern with the achievement of identity on an individual level to the achievement of identity on a social level. Whereas in Martin Chuzzlewit the major concern is with Martin moving away from selfishness to selflessness so that Martin may lead a happy, useful life, in David Copperfield the concern is that David will achieve identity through the aid of adversity and under the guidance of love so that David and Agnes together may raise a healthy, complete family and contribute to the reordering of society. In the novels from David Copperfield through A Tale of Two Cities Dickens is concerned with

demonstrating that love and achieved identity are interdependent. After the young man achieves identity, he marries, and has a family--presumably a stable family. The love is productive. In this period, however, Dickens does not indicate that in order for love to be productive it must also be romantic. Sissy Jupe, for instance, has a brood of children, but no husband that Dickens tells us about. Symbolically, Loo Bounderby is their father.

In Great Expectations Dickens deals with a romantic relationship, but the love of Pip for Estella is not as important to Pip's becoming a gentleman as is Pip's selfless love for Magwitch. In Our Mutual Friend romantic love is that force which allows one to achieve identity, again, with the aid of adversity.

Society can only be ordered properly if the families that make up that society are complete and harmonious. Not until the individual achieves identity is he capable of enough stability to produce a harmonious family. Through adversity and selfless love this identity can be achieved. Through a healthy sexual relationship the family can be made complete. It is love, productive and, consequently, romantic, that Dickens thinks can serve as the stabilizing force in society.

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