

## Innocent Characters in the Novels of Dickens

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Dickens' novels from *Dombey and Son* are best seen as an artistic continuum. After this turning point, the unity of action, design, and feeling was more or less achieved. The uneasiness felt over the contemporary society was carefully instilled into the atmosphere of each novel. His exuberant proliferation of characters and scenes was adjusted so as to concentrate on a single unifying theme, namely, the innocence theme. The ideas were incarnated and dissolved into this complex theme. The relations between the theme and the characters were organized and conceived as a whole. In short, the increasing consciousness and control of his artistry, the astonishing range and depth of his creative originality converged into the interfusion of the innocence theme and the innocent characters.

Dickens started with child heroes and heroines (*Oliver Twist*, *Little Nell*) or child-like characters (*Mr. Pickwick*), but, as he gained his artistic maturity, he found them inadequate centers for the complex social and moral structures he was trying to compose. He achieved a higher level of realism by removing the children from the center of the stories. But to the end, Dickens remained open to the imagination of childhood. Monroe Engel explains the reason as follows: "For Dickens never reconciled to his own abused childhood, ideas of nurture, fostering and education were always important; and the different re-

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1) Monroe Engel, *The Maturity of Dickens* (Cambridge:Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), p.111.

lations of parent and quasi-parent to child are played off against each other in great detail."<sup>1</sup> Engel's argument is partly true.

Dickens' use of children at the center of the novel was unprecedented. His concern with proper education is brilliantly described through many parallel situations showing what affection and protection would have done. But Engel's view is still a very limited one. We must take into consideration the fact that Dickens was also interested in hereditary influences, social conditions and etc.. What is more, he could transform the unpredictability of life into the flexibility of art. If not, he couldn't have created so many characters based on one single theme of innocence. If it were only for the obsession of his own childhood, he couldn't have achieved the diversity of his characters. Besides, the sufferings of children at the factories and mines give the theme a contemporaneous, social relevance. A child, in Dickens' version, is characterized by its passivity.

In the upheaval of change and progress, it is natural that a child should fall into a victim. The process of victimization usually goes side by side with the innocence theme. Hence the recurrent motif of "the innocent suffers in place of the guilty."<sup>2</sup> For Dickens, the romantic image of childhood is slowly replaced by the sociologically realistic child by the time he writes *Dombey and Son*. The innocence is threatened not only by the darkness of their surroundings but also by the internal, self-indulging egocentric characteristic of a child. I want to develop this issue in the following: how the threatened innocence disfigures and deteriorates into a monstrous being; yet, how some inexplicable quality of the undestructible innocence prevails. In other words, I'll trace the transition and variation of the innocent characters rooted in the innocence theme.

The variation of the romantic child image based on the innocence theme are closely related to the development of Dickens as an artist. He was only partly aware of what he was doing, but the result was

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2) A.O.J. Cockshut, *The Imagination of Charles Dickens* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1961), p.61.

still there. From *Dombey and Son* to *Great Expectations*, his preoccupation with the innocence theme and its characters is apparent. His development, of course, was very complex. At the same time, it was extraordinarily continuous. This continuity derives its force from the coherence of the theme and characters. To justify this statement, we will make resort to a rather old-fashioned critical expediency, character-grouping.

### 1. Childlike characters

We shall start with childlike characters. Mr. Pickwick is an archetypal hero here. His character is depicted as an elderly child, who has the spontaneity, the simplicity and the undirected gaiety of an ideal boy. Yet, however lovable his innocence seems to be, it is also shown to be dangerous. He needs Sam Weller to guide his way through the maze of London. Moreover, his childlike innocence is comically contrasted with the worldly wisdom of Sam. *The Pickwick Papers* derives much of its success from this contrast.

In *Dombey and Son*, the childlike characters dwindle into secondary roles. Mr. Cuttle is an obsolete sailor whose innocent goodness, I find, is not only incredible but also dull. Even his faithful friendship for Sol Gills and his nephew is rather tiresome. Sol Gills is his double. He is the master of Midshipman, the old-fashioned nautical instrument-maker, who cannot cope with the rapidity of change. His journey to regain his nephew is pathetic, but it does not render much significance to either theme or plot.

Their innocence, goodness, and unworldliness are always threatened by the outer sinister forces. And the exuberance, optimism, and light humor of *The Pickwick Papers* disappear slowly from Dickens' later works. The idyllic world of *The Pickwick Papers*, where the threat is mixed with humor and laughter, gradually turns into a real and uncomfortable world of *Bleak House*. Mr. Jarndyce and Mr. Boythorn are childlike but discomfited characters in this Chancery world. Mr. Jarndyce is untainted by the mental fog of the Chancery Court. He is the

generous benefactor to Esther. But his generosity is futile as it is shown by his relations with Mrs. Jellyby and other misguided philanthropists. Mr. Boythorn is a boisterous fellow sympathetically modeled after Walter Savage Landor. But he cannot satisfy himself with his exquisite little house. He is so litigious that he must keep on suing and being used by Sir Leicester Dedlock.

The last specimen of the childlike characters is Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations*. He is the last, but not the least, for he synthesizes the characteristics of all childlike characters. It seems that Dickens' first conception of Joe had been, "foolish, good-natured man." Q.D. Leavis adds to this: "subsequent accretions of virtues tend to disguise this but though gentle and affectionate he remains a very limited person"<sup>3</sup> In other words, he is conceived as a grown-up child. Thus, he cannot protect Pip from the outrageous hands of Mrs. Gargery. In fact, he himself is another persecuted child. But as the novel develops, he becomes the fixed point by which Pip's degeneration is measured. Leavis underestimates the importance of Joe by stating that, "Joe, in spite of Dickens's effort to elevate him here, really represents the novelist's final disenchantment with the Romantic image of the child"<sup>4</sup> I don't deny the fact that the romantic image of a child which is incarnated in Oliver, Little Nell, and Florence changes into a more realistic picture. But Joe Gargery is not the bitter picture of disillusionment. His marriage with Biddy is suggestive in that the two good persons are united to form a higher value of love and sympathy. This will be more conveniently explained in the next section. What I'd like to say here is his contrast with Jaggers. Joe lives by truth to feeling, and Jaggers by truth to fact. One embodies the poetic view of experience and the other the analytic. Their parallelism is completely detailed, and I am surprised that Leavis, who has shown so much admi-

3) F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p.392.

4) *Ibid.*, p.422.

ration for the characterization of Jagers,<sup>5</sup> should undervalue Joe as "a good-natured foolish man" who has outgrown the original role.

## 2. Angelic Figures

Another branch of the indestructible innocence is to be found in the angelic figures—usually the young heroines: Florence Dombey, Agnes Wickfield, Esther Summerson, Sissy Jupe, and Biddy. Although they fall by and large into the same category, they are not always exactly the same. Each of them has her own identity, and they are not mere statue of virtue. Moreover their status varies with the development of the Dickens' maturity.

Florence Dombey, for instance, is a perfect exemplar of passive virtue. She is constant and steady, always yearning to be loved by her proud, frigid father, always loving and kind. Her characterization is extremely simple, but I don't find her dull and monotonous like other angelic figures, let's say, Amelia Sedley of *Vanity Fair*. Why isn't she insipid when she is incorrigibly "flat"? Dickens' conception of her as a child might be a clue here. She first appears in the novel as a six-year-old child by the side of her dying mother. This deathbed scene is so vividly portrayed that she remains a child to both Dickens and the readers. Even after her marriage with Walter Gay, and her reconciliation with her father, she remains essentially a child.

Agnes Wickfield is another type of perfect virtue. In fact, she is Dickens' most abstractly perfect heroine. It can be plainly seen that her virtue is quite different from Florence's childlike innocence. We meet her through David's eyes whose sensitivity detects "a quiet, good, calm spirit" in a child nearly of his age. To her father and to David, she is not a child but a little woman. She is always "a good angel" but she lacks the childlike sweetness of Floy, thus losing the life and charm of her.

Esther Summerson shares the excessive maturity with Agnes. She

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5) *Ibid.*, p.403.

isn't called "Dame Durden" and "Little Old Woman" for nothing. This wise, womanly, moralizing, busy little creature lacks the childlikeness as much as Agnes. Her childhood ends within the first three chapters of the novel. But she differs from Agnes in the sense that she is not an angel—I mean I can't imagine an angel with smallpox. In other words, she is not sexually attractive as other angelic figures. She is poor. She is illegitimate. She lives with the heavy burden of her aunt's terrible verdict: "It would have been far better, little Esther, that you had had no birthday; that you had never been born!" (Chap. III) To make it worse, her beauty is marred by smallpox. With these disadvantages, she undertakes the role of part-narrator in *Bleak House*. Her repeated avowal of modesty in the narrative is sometimes boring. She is, like other non-comic characters, rather insipid. But altogether, she is not idealized to sentimentality as it is the case with Agnes. She is more acceptable than Agnes who "fits too snugly into a symbolic role of duty and aspiration," and who "represents an impossible ideal."<sup>6</sup> Esther shows an advance from other angelic figure of the previous novel. In short, she embodies the function of David and acts the part of Agnes. She occupies a peculiar position by her neutrality.

The next angelic figure comes with *Hard Times*. Sissy Jupe distinguishes herself by her natural vitality, which is sharply contrasted with Bitzer, the model student of Utilitarianism. Another aspect is the role she plays in the whole machination of the novel. The other angelic figures, however good they may be, are more or less passive. Things are done to them rather than initiated by them. Sissy Jupe, on the contrary, brightens up the little Gradgrinds who "had never learned the silly Jingle, Twinkle, little star; how I wonder what you are." She persuades Mr. James Harthouse to leave the town, thereby removing the possibility of Louisa's entanglement with him. She is the mediator who makes possible Tom's Quixotic escape. She is, as Mr. Gradgrind endorses, a good fairy in his house.

6) John Lucas, *The Melancholy Man: A Study of Dickens's Novels* (London: Methuen, 1970), p.198.

Biddy is, no doubt, the most obscure character in all angelic figures. Dickens himself avoids idealizing her, and it is quite obvious that his romantic image of a perfect woman dims in *Great Expectations* because of the realistic touches. She is good, and yet she can gain no hold on Pip's imagination because her scope is so narrow. She can never fill the place of Estella who is posited as a Temptress archetype, a Siren. This degradation of the angelic figures comes from the maturity of Dickens. By the time he wrote *Great Expectations*, he no longer had much confidence in women as the perfect virtue. Hence, Biddy's marriage with Joe Gargery is symbolic in that their goodness becomes whole by their mutual complement. In a sense, Biddy and Joe as a couple is the very angelic figure in the novel.

### 3. The "Enfant Terrible" Figures

Up to now, we have look into the innocence theme in the first level of its meaning. We have classified the childlike characters who retain their innocence to the adulthood. These grown-up children are sometimes ridiculous and pathetic; nevertheless, they are innocent to the core. And we have noted the degradation of the angelic figures. The touch becomes realistic in the latter novels, but their goodness and innocence pervade to the last. In this section, we shall inquire into the distortion of the romantic image of a child. In other words, the transformation of the typically innocent child into the very antithesis of innocence will be examined.

The archetypal hero is Paul Dombey. I think little Paul is one of the finest creation among Dickens' characters in that he shows the psychological insight of the novelist. Paul isn't simply the child-victim like Oliver or Little Nell. As Engel observes, "Paul seems really to have one foot in the grave at birth, and it is this which gives him his power to pierce false appearance and delusion—makes him an old-child.<sup>7</sup> He is the child who has already obtained a certain amount of

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7) Engel, p.113.

knowledge about the ways and miseries of the world. Paul's disconcerting precocity derives from his own aching need of love. It is not that he is unloved or neglected. He is loved by his father, a man whose love is selfish, destructive, and whole-devouring. Paul occupies so large a part in the novel that *Dombey and Son* virtually breaks down with the death of Paul, unable to sustain its previous steady focus on the theme.

No one understood better the nature of the age he lived in than Dickens did. And particularly he was aware of the children as reflections of the inhuman horror of Mid-Victorian England vices. The age produced children of an exceptional kind and of extraordinary psychological traits. This kind of children abounds in *Bleak House*. It seems that the poor children of this age were prematurely forced to be little adults, responsible, stoical, and sobered by extreme hardships. Charlie of Bell Yard is "a very little girl, childish in figure but shrewd and older looking in the face—pretty—faced too wearing a womanly sort of apron." Her heroic temperation and responsibility are feelingly rendered, especially in contrast with Harold Skimpole, the decadent.

Another conception of the enfant terrible figure is the child in Utilitarian society. Bitzer is a ready example of this type, but Mr. Guppy is more complex and interesting compared with him. The artificiality of his legal jargon and his repeated proposals to Esther and ensuing withdrawals of his proposal are not only funny in itself but also serves Dickens' satiric purposes. We can laugh at Mr. Guppy, but we can only be repelled by the Smallweeds. Dickens introduces the Smallweed family as follows: "Hence the gratifying fact, that it has had no child born to it, and that the complete little men and women whom it has produced, have been observed to bear a likeness to old monkeys with something depressing on their minds" (Chap. XXI). What can be more horrible than this description? It is the uttermost instance of fictional embodiment of the vices of his society.

Now we come to the abstraction of the enfant terrible figure, Bitzer of *Hard Times*. I've placed him as a foil to Sissy Jupe in the last



section, so the study of his character will be based on the conversation with Mr. Gradgrind in Book the third. Bitzer claims to take Tom prisoner, and Mr. Gradgrind, half broken by the interruption, asks him if he had 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.'" Any convincing essay on the irrelevance of Utilitarian education couldn't have done better than these chilling words. It is a bitter attack on Utilitarianism especially because its model student has not even the small remnant of a "heart". Mr. Guppy is humane compared with him. And if the Smallweeds are monkeys, Bitzer is a machine! The extreme caricature of Bitzer coincides with the ironic tone of the novel. Only the last exit of Bitzer, funny in itself, is inconsistent with the whole context.

#### 4. Childish characters

Now the focus is on the childish characters which can be formulated as childlike characters *minus responsibility and integrity*. The childish characters grow to be parasite figures who are simply childish and have nothing to do with humanity. The uncritical acceptance of the romantic image of childhood was shown to be exposed to criticism by the distortion of the *enfant terrible* figures. In this section, we shall follow the dangerous innocence of Mr. Pickwick which gets a twist into childish egocentricity. It is not that the innocence is a danger to himself. It is that the assumed innocence is accompanied with irresponsibility. Here, the innocence theme is uneasily reconsidered.

Mr. Micawber is a fantastic, lovable grown-up child. Cockshut poses an interesting question as regards him: "What could Pickwick be if he had no money?"<sup>8</sup> As the question implies, the answer is Mr. Micawber. This indigent Pickwick is a major contributor to the meaning of

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8) Cockshut, p.128.

*David Copperfield*. It is a novel about growing up of the hero. We see David on every stage of his life, and Mr. Micawber plays an important part in his development. They contract a quasi-parent-child relationship, and what's more interesting, their roles are reversed. David, who is small in stature and inexperienced for his age, tries to look after this man, who has reduced himself and his family to poverty by nonchalance. David matures to adulthood, and he remains a child. His attitude to Mr. Micawber, though clear-sighted, never degenerates into bitterness.

Mr. Turveydrop of *Bleak House* is another variation. He is introduced as the "model of deportment," but he is not so simple as the appellation implies. He is a selfish parent like Mrs. Jellyby, who sacrifices his son and daughter-in-law for his own comfort. He is a preserver of dead forms like Sir Dedlock. He is an infantile egocentric like Mr. Skimpole. His complexity displays another distinctive merit of Dickens' characterization. By combining the peculiarities of diverse characters, he moulds another interesting personality.

Now we come to the most picturesque character in *Bleak House*, Mr. Harold Skimpole. Mr. Jarndyce introduces him as "the finest creature upon earth, a child." He expatiates on this child subsequently: "I don't mean literally a child...not a child in years—but in simplicity, and freshness, and enthusiasm, and a fine guileless inaptitude for all worldly affairs, he is a perfect child" (Chap. VI). Dickens confronts this perfect child with Esther, Ada, and Richard, who are described as "the children in the wood." Their first impact is successful, and they are all fascinated by him. But there are some uneasiness especially on the part of Esther, who sensibly relates as follows: "he told us, not only with the utmost brilliancy and enjoyment, but with a certain vivacious candour—speaking himself as if he were not at all his own affair, as if Skimpole were a third person, as if he knew that Skimpole had his singularities, but still had his claims, too" (Chap. VI). In plain English, he is a parasite. He doesn't recognize that other people exist in their own right; he would rather ask them to do this and that for

his own pleasure.

His inhumanity bares itself in what he does to feverish Jo. He advises Jarndyce to turn him out: "...but I *am* a child, and I never pretend to be anything else. If you put him out in the road, you only put him where he was before. He will be no worse off than he was" (Chap. XXXI). The horror of his callousness is heightened by his pretension to the child. And the final irony is that he was once a medical man. He hands Jo over to Mr. Bucket for money, but it is no longer a surprise for us. He is to be remembered by the phrase entered in his diary: "Jarndyce, in common with most other men I have known, is the Incarnation of Selfishness." Not Jarndyce, but he himself is the "Incarnation of Selfishness."

As we have seen, Mr. Skimpole, unlike Mr. Micawber, is portrayed with all the bitterness of personal disillusionment. It is plain that he is quite unnecessary to the plot, but he is essential to the innocence theme which has come to an uncomfortable jerk. Dangerous innocence of Pickwick and David has changed into Mr. Micawber's irresponsible childishness. In Mr. Skimpole, the bitterest variation, we find the heartless selfishness and vicious self-indulgent sentimentality with the assumed innocence and guilelessness. Mr. Skimpole, perhaps, is the direct descendant of Mr. Micawber. They share some peculiarities, and fascinates the readers in nearly the same way. Yet, it is impossible to overlook the deep, snarling satire of Dickens that saturates the subtlest character of all Dickensian people—this degenerated doctor and amateur artist.

The childish characters are personifications of the irresponsibility, egocentricity, inhumanity, and snobbery. Now, another variation emerges as child-wife figures. This type abounds in *David Copperfield* in which David moves from one child-wife to another. His maturity is achieved only when he is able to break off from these childish women. He is a full grown man, physically and mentally, only when he stands by the side of Agnes as her husband. The innocence theme plays an important part in this branch of the childish characters.

Clara Copperfield, Little Em'ly, and Dora Spenlow are all innocent. But their innocence is annoying and cumbersome, because it implies "want of knowledge or sense, ignorance, silliness." Clara Copperfield marries when she is not yet twenty, and she is, as Miss Betsy appropriately names her, a mere "wax doll." She herself admits that she is a childish widow and a childish mother. With all her tender love, therefore, she cannot protect her dear Davy from the hardened-hands of the Murdstones, and she dies leaving him penniless in the world. Now, the point here is that her death does not end the connection with her son. Q.D. Leavis points out that Clara becomes "the girlwife whom her son registers as the ideal woman" and that "he inevitably associates love of woman with her personally, with her curls, gaiety, vanity, her pettishness even, and extreme youthfulness."<sup>9</sup> What can be so exact a portrait of Dora?

Dora plays the most important part in the progress of David. She seems to relish being treated as if she were a pretty toy or plaything. Miss Betsy calls her "Little Blossom." And she asks David to think of herself as "Child-wife," saying that, "...when you are going to be angry with me, say to yourself, 'it's only my child-wife!' Her inaptitude in the housekeeping, her childish langour and sweetness, and her premature death completes the parallelism between her and Clara Copperfield. I think the deathbed scene of Dora pathetic (though not so painfully poignant as Jo's), but there is another breach of coherence comparable to that of Mr. Micawber's transfiguration.

"Oh, Doady, after more years, you never could have loved your child-wife better than you do; and after more years, she would so have tried you and disappointed you, that you might not have been able to love her her half so well! I know I was too young and foolish. It is much better as it is!" (Chap. LIII)

If she is willing to die for her husband's sake as her words imply, she is a much more sensible woman than she is usually credited to

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9) Leavis, p.77.

be. "It is much better as it is." —it sounds not like her words but Dickens'. A fragment of the child-wife figure can be found in Mrs. Pocket. She is what Dora might have been, if she had survived her youth and become the mother of eight children. But she is not so tenderly drawn as other girl-wives have been. She is helpless and useless in household works, and besides, she is a snob whose grandfather "would have been made a baronet but for somebody's determined opposition..." (Chap. XXIII). Her children are not being brought up, but are "tumbling up." Everything is in a mess, and the servants take advantage of this confusion. Her snobbery, ignorance, and insensibility together with her uselessness in housekeeping disfigure the dim and mellow picture of preceding child-wife figures. Her appearance in *Great Expectations*, not helping the plot in the least, deepens our suspicion of Dickens' continuous preoccupation with this type of women. And it is significant that the last portrait is dismal.

### 5. From Innocence to Experience

In this section, we shall look into the relation between the innocence and the initiation themes. How do the innocent characters shed off their innocence and reach the state of sophistication and worldly wisdom? Do they succeed or fail in their initiation? Do they learn from their experience that actually life is not as Edenic as they assumed it to be? The initiation theme usually incorporates a number of archetypal motifs. First of all, it focuses upon the youthfulness of the protagonist, and then it involves pain, sexual experience, and an awareness of evil and death.

*David Copperfield* is a conspicuous example of the Bildungsroman that deals with emergence of youth into adulthood. David is different from *Oliver Twist* and *Paul Dombey* in this aspect, although they are all victimized children. Oliver is a mere puppet used by Dickens to accuse the social evils like the Poor Law. Paul, though a more complex character, acts as a medium to denounce the money-pride and money-faith of Mr. Dombey. David is a victim, too. Dickens intended his

innocence to be exploited from the start. His growth to adulthood is followed by a series of deprivation. He is an orphan, he loses his name twice along with his house, the Rookery. His own paradisiacal innocence is finally destroyed by Steerforth, his sophisticated friend he admires so much. The marriage with Dora makes it impossible for him to gain quiet repose at home. Again, he loses his first wife. But he is ultimately successful in his conflict with the world. What, then, is the moment of insight that leads him to the initiation?

I think it comes with Mrs. Strong's words: "There can be no disparity in marriage like unsuitability of mind and purpose" (Chap. XLV). They keep on reverberating in the ears of David. They awaken him to the real state of his relations with Dora. It might be hard to recognize his marriage as "the first mistaken impulse of an undisciplined heart." But he endures the shock of recognition of his childish blindness, thus achieving the growth of character, and the development of self-knowledge. He gradually comes to accept both the loss of the paradisiacal world of childhood and young love, and to undertake personal responsibility for himself and others related with him.

*Great Expectations* can be best analogized with *David Copperfield*. It is also a first person narrative deeply inveterated in the initiation theme. There are many similarities which make the parallel between some aspects possible. Above all things, David and Pip embody the basic problem of growing up in the first part of nineteenth century. But there are changes in perspective which makes *Great Expectations* a very different novel. *David Copperfield* is essentially a success story, pathetic and uncomplicated. The shock of recognition that David has to face is a little mortification; that he was blind to marry such a feather-head like Dora. Though he matures into adulthood, he never loses much of his boyishness. The mature David remains basically the same childish David. He grows wise and prudent, but he never tastes the deep frustration of Carstone nor is he so passively victimized as Stephen Blackpool. Neither does he experiences the shock of recog-

nition so painfully as Pip does. It is a story of a child growing up and gradually shedding illusions and being assimilated to the ways of society.

*Great Expectations* is rather a movement away from success. Its tone is ironic and the structure complicated. Pip is not like David in the sense that he becomes a real middle-aged man. It is, in fact, a story that describes the process of deterioration of innocence. In some way, it can be called autobiographical like *David Copperfield*. While the latter uses Dickens' own experience as material, the former is a sort of symbolic autobiography. Hence, it avoids the sentimental self-mockery or self-pity of *David Copperfield*, and establishes the inner logic which its predecessor lacks. As Q.D. Leavis observes, Dickens succeeded in dissociating "himself from Pip throughout the novel; very skilfully, though the method is subtle and easy to overlook, since the narrative is auto biographical."<sup>10</sup>

*Great Expectations* is circular in its pattern. Joe Gargery's forge in the marsh is an Edenic world, despite its gloom and the termagant Mrs. Gargery, where the innocence is preserved through the reciprocity of love between Joe and Pip. But there is the sense of guilt which is latent in Pip. Pip is an orphan brought up by the hand of his sister who keeps on reminding him that he is unwelcome. Therefore, the sense of guilt arises from the need to apologize for his existence. Moreover, the theft he commits for Magwitch, deepens his childish sense of guilt. Besides, the innocence of Pip's soul is fractured by expectations of great property and love.

The combination of property and love complicates the progress of Pip's degeneration. Dabney puts it this way: "The essentially infantile but evidently widely prevalent notion that one is entitled to comfort, ease, and power over the labour of others without doing anything in return is camouflaged by the anxieties and urgencies of romantic

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10) Leavis, pp.361-62.

love."<sup>11</sup> Pip dreams of marrying the beautiful lady, Estella (as far from his social status as a star is), whom he loves to distraction, and of living happily ever after on the money inherited from Miss Havisham. The dream corrupts the dreamer, and closer it seems to realization, the more it corrupts him. The shock of recognition comes with the discovery of the source of his expectations. Magwitch, the convict, comes to claim for his London gentleman. Thus the pseudo-parent-child relationship with Miss Havisham and his false anticipation that he and Estella are meant for each other, are shattered to pieces. His deepest remorse comes from his sense of guilt ever deepening in the presence of the immaculate pair, Joe and Biddy.

But he is not beaten down by this blow. When Magwitch is arrested and is sentenced to death, Pip stands by his side unshamed. After Magwitch's death, he falls ill penniless and friendless in London. At this critical moment, Joe comes to nurse him. The crisis and delirium being over, he feels as if he were a child again by the side of Joe: "I was slow to gain strength, but I did slowly and surely become less weak, and Joe stayed with me, and I fancied I was little Pip again" (Chap.LVIII). The circular pattern becomes complete when Pip revisits his home, but it is also dialectic. He cannot return to his innocent self. In other words, Pip achieves a partial synthesis of the virtue of his innocent childhood and the melancholy insight of his experience. Stange concludes: "At the end of the novel Pip finds the true light on the homely hearth and in a last twist of the father-son theme, Joe emerges a true parent ...one that remains a child."<sup>12</sup>

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So far, I have traced the extraordinary continuity of Dickens' works and have tried to grasp the novels as a continuous whole. He achieves

11) Ross, H. Dabney, *Love and Property in the Novels of Dickens* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), p.92.

12) G. Robert Stange, "Expectations Well Lost: Dickens' Fable for His Time," *The Dickens Critics*, eds. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr. (Cornell Univ. Press, 1961), p.302.



a different kind of success from each of his novels, but they also form, when put together, an organic whole. The ideas and images which spring from the innocence theme persist in every novel. His theme and characters are absorbed into one idea—his preoccupation with the childhood. His novels either show the child's view of human beings or the adult remembering his childhood. The innocence theme has its relevance in this point. But Dickens' development is not so simple as to be explained away through the examination of any one specific theme. I have suggested the complexity of his development in my character-studies, especially that of Skimpole, and I think it is worthwhile to synthesize it before we come to the conclusion.

The line of Oliver to Paul Dombey and again to Bitzer, and another line of Pickwick and Micawber to Skimpole represent his development in a typical way. The light and buoyant optimism turns to weighty bulk of pessimism. Humor shifts to satire, comic dialogue and fantasy decreases with his maturity. On the other hand, the depth of meaning and the skill of arrangement intensify by degrees. The modification of sentimentality comes hand in hand with rigorous control of detail and simple organic pattern. In *Great Expectations*, he no longer divides his characters into good and bad groups. He presents us a vision that "good and evil, what we most desire and what we most loathe, are inextricably intertwined, involved with one another in such a way that no human hand can sort out."<sup>13</sup>

The greatest problem that faces the Dickensian critics is that he does not seem to fit into any one theory of the novel. We cannot expect to do him justice or see how truly great he is by applying to his novels terms invented for other novelists. He seems to elude our idea of the novel so that we are baffled in our critical evaluation of his works, no matter whether it be praise or depreciation. So I have tried to minimize my confusion by adopting a single theme and developing

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13) Paul Pickrel, "Great Expectations," in Martin Price, ed., *Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p.165.

my logic within the limits of that theme.

Dickens is a great, original genius, although he is "undisciplined" as his *David Copperfield* is. In his earlier books, he owes something to the eighteenth century novelists, especially in the picaresque aspects of the novel. He had his faults, large as well as small. But the small faults seem to me too obvious and harmless to be bothered in anyway, while the large ones frequently turn out to be so peripheral as not to matter at all not at least when we realize how much he has achieved. This is not to say that we should ignore the fault, but only that we should remember the scale and greatness of his accomplishment.

Dickens is the greatest comic novelist in English and the most truly poetic one. Jane Austen is another great comic novelist but she is in no way poetic. Her genius is much different from Dickens'. She is admirable within her limits, and it is commonplace that she knew her limits too well. The criticism of her novels starts from the recognition of her limits. As for Dickens, he is an "undisciplined" genius. But where do the limits of Dickens begin—or end? He is, in fact, inscrutable. This, I think, is the chief source of the bafflement that Dickensian critics always meet. In short, Austen can be compared to a diamond, hard, bright, and sparkling, but Dickens can be compared to a burning flame, warm, formless, and forever changing. So the comparison between them is quite meaningless, if not impossible. I can only say that he has affinity with Balzac in the common use of the fantastic realism, and with Dostoyevsky in the intensity of symbolism.